

# Daimler Tests EU's Will by Suspending Iran Plans



TEHRAN (Press TV) - Daimler AG, the maker of Mercedes-Benz trucks and luxury cars, says it has suspended expansion plans in Iran in response to U.S. reimposition of sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

"We have ceased our already restricted activities in Iran in accordance with the applicable sanctions," the company was quoted as saying in a statement.

The German auto group, which decided to return to Iran in 2016 after the lifting of sanctions under an international nuclear deal, had not resumed operations in the country yet.

The carmaker's re-entry plans for Iran included establishing a joint venture

with Iran Khodro Diesel for local production of Mercedes-Benz trucks and power train components, plus the establishment of a sales company for Mercedes-Benz trucks in Tehran.

Daimler also planned to return as a shareholder in the former joint venture Iranian Diesel Engine Manufacturing Co (IDEM) in Tabriz.

The company has not sold any cars in Iran since 2010 despite having a long presence in the country where it sold up to 10,000 vehicles a year before the sanctions.

While the pullout has little economic significance, it flies in the face of the EU implementing a "blocking statute"

which is purported to protect firms against possible fallout from breaching U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Germany joined France, Britain, and the EU on Monday to underline that they could protect European companies from new US sanctions which were reinstated on Tuesday.

"We are determined to protect European economic operators engaged in legitimate business with Iran," EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said.

The German Economy Ministry said Berlin would continue to offer export and investment guarantees to firms doing business with Iran.

Under the blocking statute, European firms must seek a legal exemption for withdrawing from Iran due to U.S. sanctions and those failing to do so could be penalized by their governments.

Firms, however, can twist the law if they claim that their withdrawal is a business decision, making it a tricky issue.

It is not clear yet whether Daimler's decision would involve penal liability and whether it decided to leave Iran after the blocking statute went into effect.

## Turkey to Continue Natural Gas Import From Iran: Energy Minister

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Turkey's energy minister Fatih Donmez has said that buying natural gas from Iran will continue despite the risk of U.S. sanctions.

In an interview with Turkish Heber Turk TV, the Turkish minister said that his country's imports of natural gas from Iran is based on a long-term contract that will continue until 2026, and Turkey will continue its business with its neighbor

based in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.

Donmez said that Turkey imports 9.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually and it cannot leave Turkish citizens without gas and electricity.

Referring to the risk of U.S. sanctions against Iran, he said that the U.S. unilateral bans have caused problems for European countries as well and Turkey's legitimate trade with its neighbor should be taken into

account by the United States.

On May 8, the U.S. President Donald Trump unlawfully pulled out of Iran nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions on the country. He has called on countries not to trade with Iran while other different countries, including other signatories to the deal, have vowed to resist U.S. pressures. Turkey has already declared that it will not abide by the U.S. unilateral sanctions against its neighbor.

## Mazandaran Caviar Exports Triple



TEHRAN (Dispatches) -Iran's Mazandaran's provincial fisheries chief Valiollah Mohammadzadeh on Wednesday told the media that the country has tripled its caviar exports in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year.

"The export of Iranian black caviar from Mazadaran province has tripled

in the first three months of the Iranian calendar year of 1397 compared with the same period of 1396," Mohammadzadeh said.

The official recounted that in the same period of the last year Iran had exported worth nearly \$3 million of caviar aquaculture production while in the

current year the output trade of caviar has registered \$10 million in the first quarter.

He added that significant investment has been done in the area of aquaculture production in the past couple of years and "from now there would be significant rise in caviar and caviar meat export of Iran in each year".

He forecasted that Iran would have exported 2,000,000 kilograms of sturgeon meat and 2500 kilogram of caviar by the end of the current Iranian year of 1397 on March 21, 2019.

He recounted that currently there are 18 caviar farms in Mazandaran province of Iran.

## Iran Exporting Construction Materials to Europe, Asia

BAKU (Azer News) - The head of Iran's Central Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) Bahman Abdollahi has said the country is currently exporting construction equipment and materials to European and Asian markets.

"Iranian building construction materials are being exported to European, Middle Eastern and Asian markets and this indicates a growth in the production of

such products," Abdollahi told Iran domestic media.

He added that the untapped potential of the construction industry could help create jobs and bring down unemployment in the country.

"High quality of Iranian construction materials has encouraged foreign markets to be among importers of the products," he said.

The Iranian cement industry boasts an output capacity of about 90 million tons, only 56 percent of which are used in the local market.

Exports, the only way out of a domestic demand deadlock, stand at a maximum of 8-9 million tons and in the best-case scenario can reach over 10 million tons by the end of the current Iranian year.

## Denmark's Haldor Topsoe to Cut 200 Jobs Due to U.S. Sanctions on Iran



COPENHAGEN (Reuters) - Danish engineering company Haldor Topsoe, one of the world's leading industrial catalyst producers, said on Wednesday it would cut around 200 jobs from its workforce of 2,700 due to new U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Companies doing business with Iran will be barred from the United States, President Donald Trump said on Tuesday, as new U.S. sanctions took effect despite pleas from Washington's allies.

The company said the reinstatement of U.S. sanctions had made it "extremely difficult" for its customers in Iran to finance new projects.

"We want to ensure that Topsoe remains a competitive business with significant potential for growth. Therefore, due to the current situation, we must unfortunately say goodbye to a number of good colleagues," chief executive Bjerne Clausen said in a statement.

## Iran's Annual Steel Output to Hit 35mn Tons

TEHRAN (FNA) - Head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) Mehdi Karbasian has said that production of the country's steel output will considerably increase in the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2018).

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Tenth International Exhibition of Metallurgy, Steel, Molding, Machinery and Relevant Industries in Isfahan, Karbasian said, "Iran will increase steel production to 35 million tons by the end of the current Iranian year (will end on March 20, 2019)."

He underlined that the current production of steel is 32 million tons and the figure was 21 million tons in 2013.

"Last year, Iran's steel exports hit a record high of nine billion dollars," Karbasian said, adding that Iran's domestic consumption is 16 million tons and the surplus should be exported.

The Tenth International Exhibition of Metallurgy, Steel, Molding, Machinery and Relevant Industries involving 333 pavilions opened in Isfahan.

## Japan to Assess Iran Sanctions Impact on Car Industry



TOKYO (Washington Post) - U.S. sanctions against Iran could negatively impact Japan's auto manufacturers if auto exports to Iran are hurt by the sanctions.

According to the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, Japan exported 20,000 vehicles to Iran in 2017. Mitsubishi

Motors Corp. has car dealerships there and annually exports several hundred vehicles to the country.

Japan's auto exports to Iran are smaller than the 125,000 vehicles it exported to the United Arab Emirates, a major importer of Japanese vehicles in the Middle East. However, if the resumption

of U.S. sanctions causes Japan to export fewer vehicles to Iran, all domestic automakers would be impacted to an extent.

Meanwhile, Japan exported more than 50,000 tons of domestically made iron and steel to Iran in 2017, or about 0.1 percent of all such exports, according to the Japan Iron and Steel Federation. In addition, Japan's imports of iron and steel from Iran are very small. U.S. sanctions will therefore likely have only a small impact on steel and iron-related industries in Japan.

Concerning the resumption of U.S. sanctions against Iran, Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Hiroshige Seko said at a press conference after a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, "We want to closely analyze the impact the sanctions could have on Japanese companies."

## Ryanair Pilots in Germany Call 24-Hour Strike

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Ryanair pilots in Germany plan to strike for 24 hours from Friday, their union said on Wednesday, adding to action already planned in Ireland, Sweden and Belgium.

Ryanair late last year said it would recognize unions, but has so far not agreed any collective labor deals with staff across Europe.

Ryanair has already cancelled

6 percent of the more than 2,400 flights it has scheduled across Europe on Friday as a result of the strikes planned in the other three countries.

The walkout by pilots based in Germany will start at 0101 GMT on Friday, affecting all flights from Germany, Vereinigung Cockpit (VC) said in a statement.

The VC union said last month that talks with management had

ended without the progress they hoped for and they gave Ryanair until Monday to put forward a new offer.

The union is demanding improved pay and conditions for Ryanair pilots, but said on Wednesday that Ryanair had ruled out any increase in staff costs.

Ryanair executives are due to hold a news conference in Frankfurt later on Wednesday.

## U.S. Steel Tariffs a Boon for Some European Producers

LONDON (Reuters) - Washington's tariffs on steel imports have prompted warnings of an earnings hit for European producers, but for companies such as ArcelorMittal with operations in increasingly protected markets, levies are expected to yield a profit bonanza.

The United States slapped 25 percent tariffs on steel imports earlier this year, prompting such shipments to fall 7.5 percent to 18 million tonnes in the first half,

with further declines expected.

The tariff move coupled with strong demand has sent U.S. hot rolled coil steel futures to decade highs around \$900 (£700) a tonne, up 35 percent on the year.

This has been a boon for European steelmakers that can still sell into the United States despite the tariffs, and which since July have been protected by EU steel tariffs imposed in response to the U.S. levies.

European steelmakers are also benefiting from capacity cuts in China and robust global growth.

Despite this, investors are reticent to bid up the stocks due to concerns the global trade rift triggered by Washington's steel tariffs will be protracted, eventually damaging growth and demand.

"Trade wars are a risk, but right now steel stocks are only pricing in negatives," a Swiss-based fund manager said.