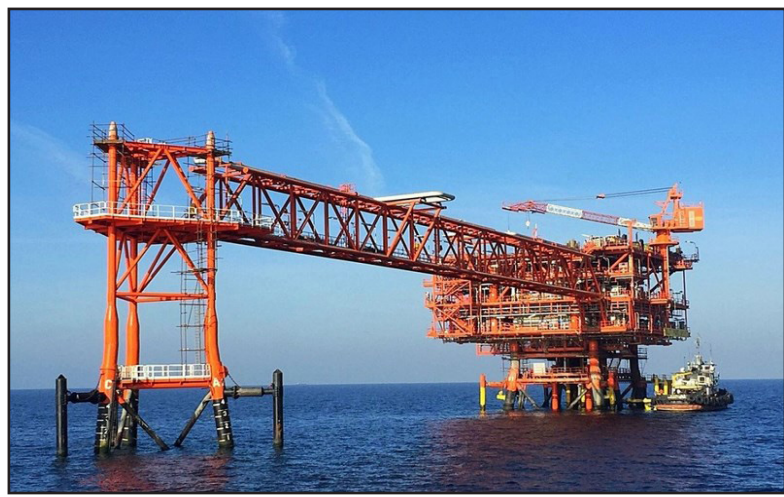


Iran Refutes Kuwait, Jordan Statement on Arash Gas Field



TEHRAN – The Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Nasser Kanaani rejected a joint statement about the Arash gas field issued by Kuwait and Jordan during the Kuwaiti emir's recent trip to Amman, reasserting Iran's right to exploit the field that is shared with its southwestern neighbors.

Reacting to Kuwait's claim to Arash field, Nasser Kanaani said that making a unilateral claim in such statements does not create any right for the claimant.

Pointing to the previous talks between Iran and Kuwait, he advised the Kuwaiti officials to avoid the wrong path of media hype on the matter and instead return to technical and legal negotiations, which would be the best and most appropriate way to deal with the issue.

The spokesman noted that based on its historical rights and previous bilateral talks, Iran is ready to continue negotiations to come up with a framework that

entails respect for mutual interests.

Underscoring the principle of good faith in regional interactions, Kanaani stressed the need for the third parties to avoid interference in the issue.

Undoubtedly, relevant governments can reach a necessary agreement in light of friendly cooperation and in line with mutual interests while keeping away from media controversies, he added.

The dispute over the Arash gas field dates back to the 1960s when Iran and Kuwait were awarded overlapping offshore concessions for the field following its discovery.

The dispute has undergone several rounds of assertions and rebuttals by the involved parties, becoming a friction point among the three neighboring states of the Persian Gulf.

Iran says dialogue is the fundamental means to resolve the dispute.

The Arash gas field is estimated to contain reserves of 20 trillion cubic feet of gas, potentially yielding a daily output of one billion cubic feet. Some studies show approximately 40% of the field lies within Iranian maritime boundaries.

Tehran, Ashgabat to Develop Cooperation in Electricity, Energy Sectors

TEHRAN – Iran and Turkmenistan will expand their cooperation in the fields of electricity and energy.

A high-ranking delegation from Turkmenistan has arrived in Tehran to pursue the development of cooperation in the electricity and energy industries, the director general of the foreign trade office of Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR) said.

Mehrdad Eqlimi added that an expert-level meeting was held at the venue of the company with the aim of expanding relations between the two countries in the relevant fields.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged their views regarding the expansion of the common capacities and the process of facilitation of financing the joint venture project for the construction operation of 3rd electric-



ity transmission line between the two states, he said.

Once the said electricity transmission line is launched, the electricity connection capacity between the two neighbors will increase threefold, Eqlimi emphasized.

An expert-level meeting was also held between the two sides for developing and strengthening cooperation with the neighboring states in the field of exporting electricity equipment and technical and engineering services, he continued.

Investors Brace for 5% Treasury Yields as U.S. Inflation Worries Mount

LONDON (Bloomberg) – U.S. government bond yields extended their retreat from the highest levels since November after an in-line reading of the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation.

Treasury yields declined by at least two basis points as the data were viewed as supporting the case for at least one interest-rate cut this year. The two-year rate, more sensitive than longer-maturity tenors to changes by the Fed, retreated back below 5%. The 10-year yield fell about 4 basis points to 4.66%.

The data allayed concerns that were stoked Thursday by hotter-than-anticipated inflation data in the initial estimates of U.S. GDP the first quarter.

In response, traders scrapped some of their remaining wagers on Fed rate cuts this year, no longer pricing one in before December.

Friday's March personal income and spending data included price deflators that rose in line with expectations from February levels, while the 2.7% year-on-year rate continued to exceed the central bank's 2% target.

"The moderation in rates in our view — and I think in the Fed's view — doesn't require inflation being at target by the end of the year by any means, as long as we can see some progress," Andrew Sheets, global head of corporate credit research at Morgan Stanley, said on Bloomberg Television.

The personal consumption expenditures price index increased 0.3% in March, both overall and excluding the volatile food and energy components.

Thursday's GDP report had stoked expectations for bigger increases, according to Omair Sharif, president of Inflation Insights LLC.

"The concern was that March would also be strong," Sharif wrote in a note. "So the fact that it came in closer to consensus could be viewed with a sigh of relief."

Also, futures open-interest data suggest that Thursday's data motivated traders to set new short positions — wagers on higher yields — that increased the potential for a market rally in response to favorable data.

IMF: France to Fall Out of World Economy Top Ten

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in an updated global outlook has reported that slow economic growth will push France out of the list of the world's ten largest economies within five years.

The Washington-based institution expects France's contribution to global economic growth in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms to drop to 1.98% in 2029, compared to 2.2% recorded by IMF analysts last year.

The fund's latest projections indicate that France's budget deficit will remain above 4% until 2029, with public debt expected to exceed 115% of gross domestic product (GDP). The European Commission previously signalled potential conflicts with EU fiscal rules in its response to France's 2024 budget plan, stressing that the current outlook poses the risks of a negative adjustment by global rating agencies.

According to the database, updated by the organization earlier this month, Britain — whose share of global gross

domestic product growth in 2029 is expected to represent 2.2% on a PPP basis — will be ranked the world's tenth biggest economy. Meanwhile, Turkey is projected to take ninth place, as its share of global growth over the next five years will reach 2.09%.

The top five of contributors to the global economy will be China, projected to account for 19.48% of world GDP growth through 2029, the US (14.72%), India (9.23%), Japan (3.21%) and Indonesia (2.79%). The top ten is also expected to include Germany (2.77%), Russia (2.71%) and Brazil (2.19%).

Earlier this month, the IMF raised its global growth forecast for the current year, concluding that the world economy had proved "surprisingly resilient." The economists expect the global GDP to amount to 3.2% in 2024, up by a modest 0.1 percentage point from its earlier January forecast. Next year, growth is expected to expand at the same pace of 3.2%.

Tajikistan, Iran Ink MoU on Road Transport Cooperation

TEHRAN – Deputy Transport ministers of Iran Dariush Amani and Deputy Transport Minister of Tajikistan Shayesta Moradzadeh signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for boosting road transport cooperation.

The Iran-Tajikistan Joint Road Transport Committee held a meeting in Tehran and an MoU was signed between the Iranian official and the deputy transport minister of Tajikistan for promoting road and transport ties.

During the meeting, Iran's deputy roads minister pointed to the policy taken by the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi for developing relations with its neighboring countries in the re-

gion and called this possibility not only the beginning of a new era for strengthening road transport ties, but also the beginning of deepening relations in other fields.

Amani also highlighted the strategic location of Iran as a bridge connecting China and Central Asia with Western Asia and Europe, the website of Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development reported.

The deputy transport minister of Tajikistan called the meeting an opportunity to use the available capacities to promote ties between the two nations.

Shayesta Moradzadeh emphasized the location of Tajikistan

at the heart of Central Asia, as a country with hidden capacities in various fields of transportation.

In the meeting, the two sides emphasized the necessity of using the capacities of international corridors such as the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) transport corridor, the southern route of the East-West corridor and the eastern part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The head of the Tajik delegation invited the head of Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization to take part in the international conference on "Road to Tien Shan", which will be held next month.

\$1.8bn of Technical, Engineering Services Exported in Two Years

TEHRAN – Chairman of Board of Directors of the Iran Water Industry Federation Reza Haj Karim has said that the country exported \$1.8 billion worth of technical and engineering services over the past two years.

Stressing the importance of exporting technical and engineering services, Haj Karim said giant steps have been taken in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi in the field as compared to the previous years.

Domestic knowledge-based companies have high potential to export technical and engineering services and can do even better with due support from the government, he underscored, IRNA reported.

Haj Karim further noted that Sri Lanka, Indonesia and East Asian countries are among those whose their economic growth is higher than the world average, so this Asian market can be a lucrative



market for Iranian domestic companies.

As a leading country in the water and electricity industry, Iran stands in the first rank in the region in the export of technical and engineering services in this industry, and this shows the high technical and en-

gineering knowledge and ability of Iranian specialists and companies.

Thanks to the efforts of the country's specialists in the years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran is now among the top five power plant turbine manufacturing countries in the world.

Oil Price Could Exceed \$100 a Barrel If Mideast Conflict Worsens, World Bank Warns



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A serious escalation of tensions in the Middle East would push the price of oil above \$100 a barrel and reverse the recent downward trend in global inflation, the World Bank has said.

The Washington-based institution reported that its forecast that crude prices would average \$84 a barrel this year would prove too optimistic in the event of the crisis worsening.

Fears of a full-scale war in the Middle East have already led to a rise in oil prices and dearer fuel costs for motorists. A barrel of Brent crude is trading at \$87, while the average price of a liter of unleaded petrol in the UK has edged above £1.50 for the first time since last November.

The World Bank's latest commodity markets report said: "A moderate conflict-related supply disruption could raise the aver-

age Brent price this year to \$92 a barrel. A more severe disruption could see oil prices surpass \$100 a barrel, raising global inflation in 2024 by nearly one percentage point."

Between mid-2022 and mid-2023, global commodity prices plummeted by nearly 40% and were the driving force behind a near-two-percentage-point drop in global inflation over that period. Since mid-2023, the World Bank said its index of commodity prices had remained essentially unchanged.

Financial markets have already pared back expectations about the scale and pace of interest rate cuts this year in response to stickier than expected inflation.

Indermit Gill, the World Bank chief economist, said: "Global inflation remains undefeated. A key force for disinflation — falling commodity prices — has essential-

ly hit a wall.

"That means interest rates could remain higher than currently expected this year and next. The world is at a vulnerable moment: a major energy shock could undermine much of the progress in reducing inflation over the past two years."

The World Bank said an escalation of the conflict in the Middle East could also drive up prices of natural gas, fertilizers and food. A fifth of liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports pass through the Strait of Hormuz and, if the supply were interrupted, prices of fertilizers reliant on LNG in their production would rise substantially, with the likely effect of driving up food prices.

Assuming the crisis does not deepen, the Bank's baseline forecast is for overall food prices to decline by 6% in 2024 and 4% in 2025. Fertilizer prices are expected to fall by 22% in 2024 and 6% in 2025.

Prices of copper, which is needed for electricity-grid infrastructure and electric vehicles, surged to a two-year high in April and were expected to rise 5% in 2024 before stabilizing in 2025. Prices of aluminium are forecast to increase by 2% in 2024 and 4% in 2025, bolstered in particular by the production of electric vehicles, solar panels and other renewable-power infrastructure.