

Petroleum Minister:

25 Giant Oil Projects to Come on Stream



Petroleum Minister Javad Owji speaks with reporters on the sidelines of the 26th International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition.

TEHRAN - Iranian Petroleum Minister Javad Owji said on Friday that construction operation of a number of 25 giant oil projects will start in the current Iranian calendar year in 1401 (started March 21, 2022).

Iranian Oil Ministry is making its utmost effort to complete and put into operation a number of 48 prioritized macro- and semi-finished projects, costing \$13 billion, in the oil industry by the end of the current year, the Owji said.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 26th International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition of Iran (Iran Oil Show 2022) in Tehran on Friday, the minister said, "As one of the most prestigious exhibitions in world's oil industry, Iran's oil industry exhibition is a platform for interaction of domestic and foreign activists in this field."

He pointed to the motto of the exhibition entitled "Knowledge-based Oil, Iranian Production, Global Export" and stated that turning oil industry into

knowledge-based one and paying attention to domestic manufacturing of oil equipment are the main priority of the Ministry of Oil.

Participation of 23 universities and research centers, more than 100 knowledge-based companies, startups, scientific and technology parks in this edition of the exhibition is a sign of seriousness of the Ministry of Oil in this regard, he underlined.

He then pointed to the motto of the current year named after by Leader entitled "Production: Knowledge-based, job-creating" and said that selection of the motto by the Leader has doubled the responsibility of the ministry to a great extent to realize its objectives.

The Ministry of Oil is seeking to activate the innovation centers in the vicinity of universities and academic centers as well as establishment of knowledge-based companies and startups in the Petroleum Technology Park, the oil minister added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the tough sanctions imposed against

the country and stated that confronting sanctions and boosting strong energy diplomacy is one of the priorities of the ministry.

Under the current circumstances, Iranian oil industry is at the forefront of economic battle as well as confronting enemy in this field, Owji added.

"We have to pay special attention to knowledge-based firms and develop their activities in the oil industry," he stressed.

The 26th International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition kicked off during an opening ceremony at Tehran's Permanent Fairground on Friday and will run through Monday, May 16.

The four-day exhibition will be host to 1,200 Iranian and 44 foreign companies or their agents.

Apart from domestic participants representing Iran, foreign companies are from Italy, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, Ukraine, South Africa, and Belgium.

The companies and other participants are showcasing their latest achievements and products in 908 pavilions, of which 815 are the stands for companies, 23 for universities as well as scientific and research centers, and 70 for knowledge-based firms, startups, and industrial parks.

In addition, 27 expert-level sessions revolving around the topics of "knowledge-based firms, energy policymaking, future of gas market, new means for financial supply, and other main issues in the oil industry" will be held.

Of the expert-level sessions, eight will shed light on the oil industry's needs in upstream and downstream sectors, calling for the participating knowledge-based firms to help meet them.

Gold Heads for Fourth Weekly Dip

NEW YORK (CNBC) - Gold fell on Friday and was headed for a fourth consecutive weekly decline pressured by overall strength in the dollar on prospects of aggressive interest rate hikes by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Spot gold fell 0.2% to \$1,817.39 per ounce by 1039 GMT, after hitting \$1,810.86, its lowest since Feb. 7. Bullion has lost over 3% so far this week.

U.S. gold futures dropped 0.5% to \$1,816.40 per ounce.

The Fed being the most hawkish of major central banks and safe-haven flows into the greenback are weighing on gold, said Fawad Razaqzada, market analyst at City Index.

"Gold has not found any kind of support in times like now, when you'd expect haven demand to be strong... We've seen lots of support levels breakdown, which is discouraging for short-term traders," Razaqzada added.

The dollar index was bound for a sixth consecutive weekly gain, hovering near a 20-year high, as concerns persisted the Fed's actions to tame inflationary



pressures would crimp global economic growth.

Last week, the Fed increased its benchmark overnight interest rate by an aggressive half-a-percentage point.

Rising U.S. interest rates and bond yields raise the opportunity cost of holding bullion.

"Gold's current trading level below \$1,830 looks too cheap, yet any gains

are likely to be capped with a series of rate hikes diminishing gold's appeal as a non-yield bearing asset," Kinesis Money analyst Rupert Rowling said in a note.

Gold's recent slide has wiped out most gains made in an initial rally driven by safe-haven demand amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which had pushed prices to near-record levels in mid-March.

month periods - "has just risen".

On Wednesday, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research think tank warned that the squeeze on household incomes would cause the UK to fall into recession in the final half of 2022.

Last week, the Bank of England forecast that inflation - the rate at which prices rise - could reach more than 10% by the end of the year.

The Bank said has warned the UK faces a "sharp economic slowdown", with prices rising at their fastest rate for 30 years, driven by soaring fuel, food and energy costs.

The main boost to the economy came in January, as hospitality and travel industries recovered from coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

However, that came before the war in Ukraine and before households began to feel the pinch of higher prices.

Paul Dales, chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said the latest figures "suggest the economy had less momentum than we thought even before the full hit from the cost of living crisis has been felt".

He added that the risk of recession - defined as the economy getting smaller for two consecutive three-

Iran, Armenia to Further Boost Energy Cooperation

TEHRAN - Iranian Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian and Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mehr Grigoryan in a meeting in Yerevan have conferred on ways to increase energy cooperation between the two neighboring states.

During the meeting on Wednesday, Mehrabian and Grigoryan stressed the need to enhance and broaden their cooperation.

The two officials stressed the need to enhance their cooperation in various fields, specially in the field of energy.

They emphasized the need for the implementation of bylaws and regulations.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed issues in the fields of transit, transportation, and facilitation of trade and commerce between the two countries as well as wider cooperation in the field of energy.

Boosting and developing relations between the two countries of Iran



and Armenia has been cited as the main aim behind holding the 17th Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Cooperation Commission.

Also, it was envisioned that Minister of Infrastructure and Land Management of Armenia will travel to Iran along with Armenian Deputy Energy Minister to follow up issues in energy sector.

Armenia has low hydrocarbon re-

serves and is dependent on importing fuel and the nuclear power plant that was built during the former Soviet Union to provide the energy.

Tehran and Yerevan signed a 20-year gas and electricity purification agreement in 2004, according to which Iran's gas will be used by the Armenian power plants and in exchange, Iran imports electricity from Armenia.

IKCO Reports Record Daily Output



TEHRAN - Iran's largest carmaker the Iran Khodro Company's (IKCO) has reported a record daily output figure amid efforts in the company to improve production processes.

The Iran Khodro Company's news service said that the combined production of cars and heavy-duty vehicles had reached an all-time high of 3,616 units on May 11.

"The registered output record in the

fields of cars and heavy and semi-heavy duty commercial vehicles is unprecedented in the history of the IKCO group," said the company in a statement.

It said 68% of the vehicles produced on May 11 had been finished cars that were ready to be sent to dealerships, adding that the figure is a record in the past six years.

The IKCO has been facing criticism

for lack of ability to deliver products on time. It has blamed the issue on parts shortages, especially for items that are supplied from abroad.

The company said in its Thursday statement that it will bring the number of unfinished cars in its production lines to zero on May 22.

The record daily output in the IKCO comes amid a government-led campaign to introduce reforms in Iran's homegrown car industry.

The campaign started in early March following a major decree by the Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi who personally visited production facilities and yards run by the IKCO in west of Tehran.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has also been critical of the low quality of cars produced inside Iran.

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated the criticism in a speech to laborers earlier this week and said that domestic automotive companies need to do more to boost the quality and competitiveness of their products.

China May Chalk Up More Debt as Lockdowns Hit Economy

BEIJING (CNBC) - China may have to issue more debt as it tries to keep growing in the face of COVID lockdowns that are stunting its economy.

The country has signaled in recent weeks that it still wants to meet its growth target of 5.5% this year.

China's Politburo meeting on April 29 sent a "strong signal that policymakers are committed to this year's GDP target despite downside risks from COVID-19 disruptions and geopolitical tensions," ANZ Research analysts wrote in a note on the same day.

Chinese state media on Friday reported details of that Politburo meeting, in which officials promised more support for the economy to meet the country's

economic growth target for the year. That support would include infrastructure investment, tax cuts and rebates, measures to boost consumption, and other relief measures for companies.

That's as foreign investment banks are predicting growth will fall significantly below the 5.5% number, with manufacturing activity slumping in April.

That means China is likely to rack up more debt as it tries to meet its growth targets, according to market watchers.

"To attain the 5.5% target, China may be borrowing from the future and incur more debt," said ANZ Research's senior China economist, Betty Wang, and senior China strategist, Zhaopeng Xing.

Russia Set to Reap Largest-Ever Wheat Harvest

MOSCOW (RT) - Russia is expecting a bumper crop this year, including a record wheat harvest, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday, citing preliminary data.

"A good harvest is expected this year. According to experts - of course, these are preliminary estimates - grain harvest can reach 130 million tons, including 87 million tons of wheat," Putin said, noting that "this can become a record wheat harvest in the entire history of Russia."

According to the Russian president, such a result "will allow not only to meet domestic needs with a margin, but also to increase supplies to the global market for our partners, which is very important for the world food markets."

Putin added that a number of countries are facing the threat of



famine, pointing out that the blame for that lies entirely on "the Western elites."

Russia's largest grain harvest was recorded in 2017, which came in at 135.5 million tons, including 86 million tons of wheat.

In 2020, the figure was 133.5 mil-

lion tons of grain (including 85.9 million tons of wheat). Last year, the harvest stood at 121.4 million tons (with 76 million tons of wheat).

Russia is projected to retain its leadership in the world's wheat market in the coming years.

UK Recession Fears Grow as Rising Prices Hit Spending

LONDON (The Guardian) - The risk of a recession has risen, analysts have warned, after the economy shrank during March just as the UK had recovered from the pandemic.

Higher prices are "beginning to bite", the UK statistics body said, with people spending less and cutting down on car journeys due to high fuel costs.

The impact of higher energy bills in April has also yet to be seen.

The economy grew by 0.8% over the first three months of the year, but in March it shrank by 0.1% as people cut back.