CAO Chief:

Iran, China Finalizing $2bn Investment for Developing IKIA

TEHRAN – The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Muhammad Muhammadibakhsh said a $2-billion investment by Iran and China as a joint venture (JV) for the development of phase II of the Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) will be finalized soon.

The Chinese side is also going to export raw materials to Iran needed for manufacturing plane parts and equipment, Muhammadibakhsh said.

The joint investment by Iran and China for the development of Phase II of Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) will be finalized in the current week, he added.

The investment will be made for increasing cargo and passenger transport capacity and also equipping the runway, Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT), etc.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the deputy roads minister put the number of planes active in the air fleet of the country in September 2021 at about 100, adding that the number has increased to 190 now.

According to the scheduled program, the number of active passenger planes will increase to 250 by the yearend (to end March 21, 2024), CAO chief stated.

Report: Iran 13th Biggest Wheat Producer in World

TEHRAN – Iran is the world's biggest wheat producer in 2023, producing 14 million tons of wheat, according to the statistics of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In its latest report on the situation of grain production in the world, the department said Iran produced over 14 million tons of wheat in the 2023 Crop Year, showing an 800,000-ton hike compared to the same period last year.

Iran's wheat production in 2023 registered a six percent growth compared to last year's corresponding period, the report added.

Iran had produced 13.2 million tons of wheat in 2022.

In 2023 countries in the world produced 782 million tons of wheat in total, indicating a seven million tons slump compared to a year earlier.

China became the world's biggest wheat producer in 2023, producing more than 137 million tons of wheat in this period, followed by the European Union and India.

BRICS Membership to Ease Money Transfer Between Iran, Brazil

TEHRAN – **Chairman of the Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce Fakhreddin Amerian said on Monday that Iran's membership in the BRICS group of emerging economies can facilitate the financial exchanges between Tehran and Brasilia.**

Speaking in his meeting with the new ambassador of Brazil to Iran on Monday, Amerian called for strengthening the bilateral trade cooperation between Tehran and Brasilia.

Currently, money transfer between Iranian and Brazilian traders is a pressing problem resolving which hat should be taken into consideration, he said.

"Under the current circumstances, Iran's membership in BRICS can settle the problem and setting up a joint monetary fund between banks of the two countries can remove problems facing the import and export activities of the country to a great extent."

The Brazilian Embassy can play a leading role in this regard, Amerian added.

The ambassador of Brazil to Iran, for his part, pointed to the long-standing history of trade relations between Tehran and Brasilia and stated that developing and promoting the level of trade and economic interactions with Iran is the main program followed up at the embassy.

Eduardo Ricardo Gradilone Neto said that strategic interaction with the Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce can remove many of the problems on the way of bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Iran and Brazil have established trade relations mainly in the agricultural sector, he said, putting the trade volume exchanged between the two countries in 2022 at above $6 billion.

He went on to say that Iran and Brazil have the potentials to further boost bilateral trade.

Oil Rises on Expectations of Further OPEC+ Supply Cuts

LONDON (Reuters) - **Oil futures rose more than $1 on Monday, extending gains on the prospect of OPEC+ deepening supply cuts to shore up prices after four weeks of decline on demand worries.**

Brent crude futures rose $1.78 to $82.39 a barrel by 1350 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was up $1.71 at $77.60.

The front-month December WTI contract expires later on Monday. The more active January futures gained $1.79 to $77.83.

Both contracts settled 4% higher on Friday after three OPEC+ sources told Reuters that the producer group, comprising the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies including Russia, is set to consider whether to make additional supply cuts when it meets on Nov. 26.

Oil prices have dropped by almost 20% since late September while prompt inter-month spreads for Brent and WTI slipped into contango last week. In a contango market prompt prices are lower than those in future months, signalling sufficient supply.

"In light of last week's obliteration of oil bulls, some kind of response was forthcoming from the (OPEC) producer group," said Tamas Varga of oil broker PVM.

"If additional cuts are agreed, a short-term price boost is expected, but its longer-term price impact seems dubious as enforcement and adherence will be the salient issue."

Investors are also keeping an eye on Russian crude oil trade after Washington imposed sanctions on three ships that have sent Sokol crude to India.

On Friday Moscow lifted a ban on gasoline exports which could add to global supplies of the motor fuel. That came after Russia scrapped most restrictions on exports of diesel last month.

U.S. energy companies last week added oil and gas rigs for the first time in three weeks, energy services business Baker Hughes said on Friday. The oil and gas rig count serves as an early indicator of future output.

Meanwhile, U.S. oil refiners are expected to have 264,000 barrels per day (bpd) of capacity offline for the week ending Nov. 24, increasing available refining capacity by 559,000 bpd, research company IIR Energy said on Monday.

In the Middle East, U.S. and Israeli officials said a deal to free some of the hostages held in the besieged Gaza enclave was edging closer despite fierce fighting.

German Government Faces Budget Crisis

BERLIN (DW) - **The German government is at a breaking point over a €60 billion ($65.3 billion) hole in its budget. That's because the Constitutional Court has ruled that a financial maneuver on climate mitigation policies is illegal.**

The Constitutional Court's verdict on November 15 was a political bombshell for Chancellor Olaf Scholz and his federal government. It ruled that the government cannot reallocate €60 billion meant to fight the COVID-19 pandemic to instead address climate change.

Whether for more efficient heating, expanded rail or subsidizing energy costs, virtually none of the climate-friendly projects the government had envisioned can be funded as currently planned. More money, in the form of credit, was earmarked for the pandemic than turned out to be necessary.

Shortly after coming to power in late 2021, the current government led by the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) in coalition with the Greens and neoliberal Free Democrats (FDP) transferred the remaining allowance to a climate transformation fund. The fund was to be used to finance energy-efficient refurbishment of buildings and

electromobility projects, but also for the modernization of Germany's rail network.

The court has ruled this fund to be unconstitutional, because it violates Germany's debt rules — the so-called "debt brake" enshrined in the country's constitution. It restricts new debt to 0.35% of nominal GDP annually for the federal government and also banks it for Germany's regional states.

The rule was written into Germany's Basic Law in 2009 in the aftermath of the European financial crisis to ensure the nation's debt-to-GDP ratio does not exceed the 60% threshold fixed in the European Union's Maastricht Treaty.

The debt rules were suspended to fight the COVID pandemic, as it was classified as an emergency exception.

Climate change, which some have called a crisis, has not been officially designated as such and therefore the normal debt rules still apply. The government, the court said, therefore can't borrow the money.

The latest ruling was in response to a lawsuit filed by the conservative opposition bloc of Christian Democrats and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU). After the verdict, its lawmakers have been jubilant. The conservatives were in power until two years ago, and are again polling ahead of their competitors.

So what options does the government have now? And, first and foremost: Can the ruling coalition survive this crisis? The high court's ruling lays bare the tensions inherent among the coalition parties.

The SPD wants to financially protect low- and middle-income voters, who it believes have shouldered enough of a burden.

Given the multitude of crises and projects facing Germany, voices within the SPD have been calling for higher taxes for some time already. In his reaction to the ruling, party leader Lars Klingbeil stopped short of explicitly demanding tax hikes, but he hinted at turbulent negotiations.

"It's important that we do not now stop modernizing this country. In the coalition, we're going to put our heads together, with the government, the parliamentary groups and with the parties. We'll have to discuss a lot of fundamentals," he said.

Tax hikes, however, are a no-go for the FDP, the party of Finance Minister Christian Lindner. An end to the debt brake is likewise off the table. The FDP has maintained its budget-cutting ways, and considers the Greens' investment plans exaggerated. They have now suggested cutting back on social spending.

As Lindner has repeatedly said, the FDP rejects any tinkering with the debt brake. And, in any case, changing the mechanism would require a two-thirds majority in parliament. With the opposition CDU-CSU firmly backing the debt brake, that would be currently impossible.

Green Party co-leader Ricarda Lang has rejected the idea of saving on social issues. "We know that right-wing parties in particular are constantly mobilizing people's social concerns and fears," she told public broadcaster ZDF.

With the debt brake staying in place and tax hikes likely doomed to fail against the resistance of the FDP and opposition CDU-CSU, the only option remaining is tight-fisted austerity. That would hit the Greens hardest, for whom investments in climate change mitigation have become an existential necessity.

The Greens — the only party in government that has not seen its voter support diminished since the 2021 general election — see the expensive climate-friendly retooling of the state as the core reason for their participation in government. They are willing to take on new debt to finance their plans.

Tehran to Host 4th ECO Experts Meeting

TEHRAN – **Manager of the Public Relations Department of the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) for International Affairs Hanieh Bakhshaei said on Monday that Tehran will host the fourth meeting of experts of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)'s member states on November 26-29 in order to investigate the reduction of risk of disaster in the region.**

Sharing new ideas and views on solving the problems of geological hazards with a special emphasis on the phenomenon of subsidence and earthquakes in the region are among the most important goals of the meeting, she mentioned.

The third meeting of experts of ECO's member states was held in Turkey in 2021, Bakhshaei said, adding, "After the Geological Survey Organization of Iran joined the Committee on Human Resources and Sustainable Development of the ECO, the organization undertook to host the 4th meeting."