

NEWS IN BRIEF

Oil edges higher



Reuters – Oil prices edged higher on Monday, after rising for three straight weeks, as looming supply cuts from Saudi Arabia and other OPEC+ producers offset concern about weakening global growth that may dampen fuel demand. Crude last week jumped more than 6% after OPEC+, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies including Russia, surprised the market with a new round of production cuts starting in May.

Asian shares muted



CNBC – Asian shares inched higher, while the dollar started the week on the front foot after U.S. jobs data pointed to a tight labour market, firming up expectations that the Federal Reserve will again raise interest rates at its meeting next month. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was 0.12% higher, while Japan's Nikkei gained 0.5%. Australian, Hong Kong and European markets are closed for Easter. E-mini futures for the S&P 500 eased 0.02%, while the rate-sensitive Nasdaq was poised for a lower open with Nasdaq 100 e-minis down 0.25%.

China to attend IMF meeting



AFP – Top officials from China will attend the World Bank and International Monetary Fund spring meetings in Washington this week, their first attendance in person in three years after COVID-19 curbs limited them to virtual participation. Yi Gang, governor of the People's Bank of China, will attend the meetings this week, accompanied by a deputy-governor, China's central bank said.

Chinese imports of Iranian oil up 20%

Economy Desk

Chinese imports of Iranian oil surged by 20% in March, according to recent data. The increase is mainly due to private refineries based in Shandong Province buying 800,000 barrels of Iranian crude oil daily. This figure represents a 20% rise from the previous month's sales figures, suggesting a favorable outlook towards Iran.

China's private refineries are increasingly purchasing Iranian crude oil amidst intensifying competition between Chinese and Indian state-owned oil refineries over Russian oil refineries. Iran has been successful in bypassing U.S. sanctions imposed on its oil industry, with its crude oil exports increasing significantly over the past two years. Prior to the sanctions,

China's daily purchase of Iranian oil was limited to 700,000 barrels per day. However, China's consumption has witnessed an approximate 50% increase, reaching nearly 15 million barrels per day. This suggests that China has increased its purchase of Iranian oil by 50%, reaching over one million barrels per day.

Iran's success in the oil sector is due to several factors, including the Iranian president's visit to China, which helped Iran secure traditional markets and attract new customers. The country's utilization of the capacity of extraterritorial refineries has also played a crucial role in boosting its oil exports and revenues. Despite the stringent economic sanctions imposed on Iran, the country has recorded commendable

achievements in the export of crude oil, gas condensate, petroleum products, and petrochemicals. The current government's efficient energy diplomacy and adept handling of restrictions, coupled with diplomatic efforts with countries such as Russia, Iraq, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, China, Oman, Tajikistan, and Japan, have played a vital role in boosting Iran's oil exports and production.

The increase in Iran's oil exports to China suggests that the Chinese are seeking to bolster their commercial cooperation with Iran, including crude oil imports. Reports indicate that Iran's oil sales to China amounted to 1.2 million barrels per day last month. According to statistics, Iran's oil exports to China increased by 193% in 2021 and by 168%



REUTERS

in 2022 compared to the previous year.

This surge in Chinese imports of Iranian oil has been attributed to the signing of the 25-year cooperation agreement between the two countries and the consolidation of ties between Iran

and China following the advent of the current government two years ago. Despite American interventionist policies, China's disregard for the pressure exerted by the United States has facilitated its acceleration of crude oil imports from Iran.



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EXCLUSIVE

Iran is facing a crisis of land subsidence that has raised serious concerns about the safety and well-being of millions of people residing in the country. According to a report by the Iranian Parliament's research center, nearly 8 million residential units and 24 million individuals in Iran are at risk of subsidence. The problem is so severe that it is happening at a rate of 5 to 7 times greater than the global average and at an annual rate of 25 to 30 cm, which translates to one meter every five years. This alarming situation has the potential to cause catastrophic consequences for the populace inhabiting over 9600 cities and villages of the nation.

Escalating crisis

Land subsidence in Iran has been a persistent issue for at least half a century, but the problem has become significantly more severe over the past 25 years. The escalation of the annual gradient of the reservoir deficit, coupled with the burgeoning population and the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors, has culminated in a surge of stress on the subterranean renewable fresh water and an unfavorable balance of the aquifers in Iran. As the subterranean water level drops, compression transpires in the aquifer layers that encompass fine-grained deposits or a blend of different granularities ranging from fine-grained to coarse-grained. This eventually triggers land subsidence on the surface, which commences gradually and perpetuates.

Environmental impact of subsidence

The most significant effect of land

Mitigating perils of land subsidence in Iran: A call to action

subsidence is its deleterious environmental impact. The decline in the subterranean water level and the inception of subsurface strata compression have caused both the permeability and transferability of the subsurface and alluvial milieu to significantly dwindle, the porosity of the strata to plummet, and the possibility of water accumulation to gradually vanish. The impermeability of the alluvial strata will engender the propagation of surface runoff and flood discharges in the plains and drastic erosion of fertile and agricultural soil, rendering Iran's green and lush plains a barren desert unless effective measures are implemented to mitigate the hazards of land subsidence.

Extent of subsidence zones

The estimated expanse of subsidence zones across the country is at least 185,000 square kilometers (18,500,000 hectares), roughly equaling 11% of Iran's total land area. The provinces of Khorasan Razavi, Tehran, Golestan, and Fars are comparatively more susceptible to the perils of land subsidence. Among the provinces in Iran, Isfahan has the highest number of cities exposed to the risk of land subsidence, followed by Khorasan Razavi, Fars, and Tehran provinces.

Generally speaking, the provinces of Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Fars, and West Azarbaijan bear a relatively greater population at risk of land subsidence and its consequences.

Prioritization of measures to mitigate risks

Given the extent of land subsidence zones in Iran and the successful global practices in land subsidence management, there is an urgent need to implement effective measures in various domains to reduce the perils of land subsidence in the country. The dynamic nature of the land subsidence phenomenon entails that there is only a limited window of opportunity available to policymakers and experts to curb its risks.

Experts contend that the paramount strategy for mitigating land subsidence risks is the promulgation of comprehensive national regulations, which must be efficaciously proclaimed by the highest executive authority. These regulations should encompass a plethora of areas, necessitating coordinated and comprehensive measures for success.

One of the crucial facets of reducing land subsidence risks is the implementation of sustainable

water management practices. This would involve measures such as promoting water conservation, reducing wastage, and increasing the efficiency of water distribution systems. Additionally, the adoption of new technologies and innovations can help mitigate the effects of land subsidence. For instance, the use of precision irrigation systems that deliver water directly to crops' roots can reduce water consumption and minimize subsidence caused by groundwater depletion. Moreover, promoting public awareness and education programs can play a vital role in reducing land subsidence risks. This can include raising awareness of the negative impacts of excessive groundwater pumping, encouraging responsible water use, and promoting the use of alternative water sources.

Ultimately, addressing the issue of land subsidence in Iran will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including policymakers, scientists, and the general public. By implementing comprehensive regulations, adopting sustainable water management practices, and raising public awareness, it is possible to reduce the risks of land subsidence and protect the country's vital resources.

Iran's electricity production capacity up by 6.1 GW in year to late March

Iran raised its electricity production capacity by 6.1 gigawatts (GW) in the calendar year to late March amid efforts to respond to a rising demand for power in the in the country's household and manufacturing sectors.

Head of Iranian Energy Ministry's department for electricity Homayoun Haeri said that Iran had launched 4,150 GW of new

power plants over the past calendar year, Press TV reported.

Haeri said that the capacity at other power plants in Iran had increased by 1,350 GW over the year to March while another 0.6 GW had been added to the country's power generation capacity as a result of repair projects implemented on idle or damaged electricity stations.

"Another record registered last (calendar) year was the increase in the efficiency rate at power plants which reached 39.1%," he said.

The official added that some 1,316 GW of new power plants launched in Iran in the year to March were of the efficient combined cycle type which rely on a system in which the exhaust heat from a

first turbine is used to raise steam in a boiler.

"That helped save some two billion liters of fuels," said Haeri.

Iran relies on thermal power plants for a bulk of its electricity demand. Government figures show the country has a power generation capacity of around 90 GW and a peak demand of nearly 66 GW over hot summer days.



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