

NEWS IN BRIEF

Talks underway between Tehran, Kabul for ditching US dollar in bilateral trade



Negotiations are ongoing between Iran and Afghanistan for sidelining US dollar in bilateral transactions.

The deputy governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said that talks are ongoing between the two countries for the implementation of "offshore rial" in Afghanistan, reported Tasnim News Agency.

Mohsen Karimi pointed out that "offshore rial" is used with the aim of supporting the economic activists and exporters of the private sector of the country. The project of ditching the US dollar and using rial in foreign trade exchanges has always been followed up by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to neutralize sanctions, he underlined. Earlier, CBI Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin had announced that using the "offshore rial" in trade with Russia, Afghanistan and Iraq is on the agenda, adding that the idea of ditching the US dollar has produced positive results.

Iran's point-to-point inflation down over 24%:

Khandouzi

Iranian Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said the country's point-to-point inflation rate dropped by 24.6 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year, March 20-April 19, compared to the same period last year.

He made the remarks at a weekly press conference in the Iranian capital Tehran, reported Mehr News Agency.

Citing figures by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), Khandouzi said the country's point-to-point inflation rate dropped to 30.9 percent in the first month of this year, compared with 55.5 percent during March 21-April 20 last year, the first month of Iranian calendar year 2023.

In addition, at the end of the previous year, Iran's liquidity growth rate decreased to 24.3 percent, the minister said, noting it used to stand at above 40 percent at the end of the former administration, early August 2021. The minister added from March 20 to April 19, 2024, Iran's producer price index declined by 6.1 percent compared to the same period last year to reach 31.2 percent.

Handicrafts exports surge 35% post-pandemic

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writers

The head of the Women Commission of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives said that according to the figures by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the export value of the country's handicrafts has reached \$3.5 billion.

Talking to Iran Daily, Khatereh Ostadrezaei also noted that the figure for exports of handicrafts includes official exports and unofficial figures.

"Since Iran's handicrafts are exported through various formal and informal channels, and the country's handicrafts are produced in legal frameworks, including cooperative and non-cooperative workshops and public or private companies, there are no detailed statistics about the exports," she said.

Every year, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts released statistics on the export of handicrafts, which can be considered as the statistics of the government sector of the handicrafts export of the country, Ostadrezaei said.

She went on to say that according to official statistics, the export of handicrafts in the country has increased by 35 percent compared to before the pandemic of Corona. "At the same time, the collection of data from the handicrafts cooperatives sector of the country shows the growth rate of handicrafts exports in the handicrafts cooperatives sector by three to five percent compared to before the pandemic."

According to Ostadrezaei, the figure of exports of handicrafts in the cooperative sector of the



country stands at about \$1.5 billion.

She put the number of cooperatives producing handicrafts across the country at about 8,000 and explained: "This number of cooperatives includes all branches of handicrafts and cooperatives producing handwoven carpets."

The production capacity of handicrafts in the cooperative sector of the country is a very considerable that can be used with proper planning for the growth of production and job creation in

the country, as well as increasing exports and earning foreign currency, Ostadrezaei stated.

"Handicraft cooperatives are now scattered throughout the country, both in urban and rural areas, and are able to benefit from the capabilities of this sector in far and near places." She noted that about 40% of the country's handicrafts are produced in the form of handicrafts cooperatives, and explained the handicrafts cooperatives have a high capacity to use production

capabilities in the rural and remote parts of the country.

"About 1,800 craftspeople are active in the Handicrafts Cooperative Union of Tehran Province. The union operates in 48 fields of handicrafts, as the number of fields of handicrafts in the handicrafts cooperatives of the whole country is more than the figure."

Ostadrezaei noted that in the field of handicrafts, we are facing many problems, including the supply of raw materials, organizing production lines, introduction and marketing, as well as support and welfare issues for artisans

and producers.

"With the efforts of the officials, the handicraft production issues as well as the welfare and support issues of the craftspeople of the sector have improved compared to the past.

We hope that more serious measures to be done in the field of exhibition and supply of handicraft products to the domestic and international markets, she said expressing her hope that the craftspeople are encouraged in the field of production and export, so we witness the prosperity of the country's handicrafts economy.

Iran's heavy crude output tops 3 mbd in April: OPEC



The latest monthly report of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) shows that Iran's heavy crude oil production volume hit 3.212 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) in April 2024, showing a 14,000-barrel hike.

OPEC said that the price of Iran's heavy crude oil in April 2024 increased for the fourth consecutive month, reported Tasnim News Agency.

It said the price of each barrel of Iran's heavy crude oil in April 2024 reached \$88.79, showing a 6.4 percent hike compared to a month earlier. OPEC put the price of each bar-

rel of Iran's heavy crude oil in March 2024 at \$83.48.

The average price of Iran's heavy crude oil has reached \$83.21 since the beginning of the current year.

Oil production by OPEC member states, which is comprised of 12 countries, reached 26.58 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) in April 2024. In this period, the oil production volume both in Iran and Congo increased while the crude oil output decreased in Nigeria, Iraq and Venezuela. The oil production volume by non-OPEC members in the OPEC plus group reached 14.44 mbd in April 2024.

India downplays US sanctions threat over Iran port deal

India's foreign minister said his country will work to communicate the benefits of a strategic port project in Iran, after the United States said Indian firms working on the project risked sanctions.

Iran and India this week signed a contract to develop and equip the long-stalled Chabahar port in an agreement that would give New Delhi 10 years of access to the facility, at a time when its government is seeking to grow trade in west and central Asia, AFP reported. "It's a question of communicating and convincing and getting people to understand that this is actually for everybody's benefit," Indian foreign minister S. Jaishankar said at a public event in the city of Kolkata on Tuesday evening.

"If you look at the US's own attitude to Chabahar in the past, the US has been appreciative of the fact that Chabahar has a larger relevance," he added.

The State Department on

Monday warned that Indian companies working on the project risked US sanctions.

"Any entity - anyone - concerned with business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risks that they're opening themselves up to," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel told a press briefing then.

The deal signed this week will see India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) invest \$370 million into "providing

strategic equipment" and "developing the transport infrastructure of the port" over the coming decade.

India in 2016 agreed to finance the development of the Iranian port as a trading hub for central Asia.

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, both countries agreed to speed up the project after a visit by Jaishankar to Tehran.

Chabahar port is on the Indian Ocean about 100 kilometres (62 miles) west of the Pakistani border.

