

NEWS IN BRIEF

Forex reserves up by \$4b in three months: CBI

The figures of the Central Bank of Iran showed that the country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$4 billion in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19 to May 22, 2024).

The statistics indicate that the country's foreign exchange reserves in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year reached \$25.5 billion, showing an 18.6 percent growth compared to the same period last year, Mehr News Agency reported.

The CBI put the foreign exchange reserves of the country in the first three months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21 to May 22, 2023) at \$21.5 billion.

In this timespan, \$14.3 billion of products were imported into the country. The trade balance of the country reached \$11.2 billion in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year, registering a 51.3 percent hike compared to last year's corresponding period, the CBI added.

Over 550 wagons added to Iranian rail fleet

A total of 558 brand-new and overhauled wagons were added to the rail fleet of Iran.

In a ceremony attended by CEO of the Railway of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) Miad Salehi, 516 brand-new freight wagons, 12 brand-new locomotives, 5 overhauled locomotives, 8 brand-new passenger wagons, and 17 freight wagons joined the railway fleet, reported ISNA.

He went on to say that these wagons and locomotives have been fully manufactured by domestic engineers.

According to another RAI official, 93 locomotives in the production and renovation fields have entered the nationwide rail network since August 2021 when the administration of the late president Ebrahim Raisi assumed office.

**NIGC signs memo with Gazprom on Russian gas supplies**

Russian energy giant Gazprom signed a memorandum with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) to supply Russian pipeline gas to Iran.

The MoU was signed on Wednesday during a visit by Gazprom's head Alexei Miller to Iran at a ceremony attended by Iran's Interim President Mohammad Mokhber, Reuters reported.

"A strategic memorandum has been signed with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) on working out the organization of pipeline supplies of Russian natural gas to Iran," said a statement by Gazprom.

"The parties proceed from developing long-term mutually beneficial cooperation going forward," the company said.

Referring to the MoU, Oil Minister Javad Owji noted that Iran and Russia have together more than 60% of the world's gas reserves. "The signing of the memorandum will yield favorable changes in the energy balance in the region, while Iran will be fully ready to receive gas from Russia with its infrastructure and gas transmission lines," added the minister.

The gas agreement between Iran and Russia will act as a revolution in the energy and industrial field of the region, Owji said. Iran sits on the world's second-largest gas reserves after Russia, and Moscow has long sought to make inroads into its natural gas business. In July 2022 Gazprom signed an MoU on energy cooperation with

the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) worth around \$40 billion.

Under its terms Gazprom was supposed to help NIOC develop the Kish and North Pars gas fields and six oil fields, and to become involved in the completion of liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects and the construction of gas export pipelines.

Non-oil exports rise 40% in three years to March: IRICA

Iran's exports of non-oil commodities have increased by 40% during three years to March 2024, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

According to the report, Iran's non-oil trade surged from \$74 billion in 2020 to \$116 billion in 2023, marking a 57% increase, IRNA reported.

IRICA's report shows that the weight of non-oil trade reached 167 million metric tons (mts) in 2023, up from 147 million mts in 2020, representing a 20% increase. Additionally, the value of non-oil exports in the mentioned time shows substantial growth, reaching \$49 billion in

2023, a 40% increase compared to the \$35 billion recorded in 2020.

In terms of imports, Iran's total imports amounted to \$66 billion in the previous year. Notably, \$2 billion was allocated to the import of gold bars, and \$2.6 billion was spent on trucks and truck units, as reported.

Furthermore, Iran's foreign trade with neighboring countries increased by 10% in 2023, surpassing \$61 billion. The transit of goods through Iran saw a significant increase, with 17.8 million mts transited in 2023, representing a 54% surge compared to the previous year.

Russia sends coal to India via Iran by train for first time

Russia has for the first time sent two trains laden with coal to India via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which connects Russia to India via Iran, according to a statement by Russia's national railway company.

According to RT, a multimodal route that includes a railway, roadway network and seaports, the INSTC spans 7,200km (4,500 miles) from St. Petersburg to the port of Mumbai in India, IRNA reported.

The corridor is part of Russia's push to find new transport routes in light of Western sanctions, which have forced it to shift trade flows from Europe to Asia and the Middle East.

Construction of the INSTC started in the early 2000s, but developing it further has taken on a new impetus in light of the restrictions facing Moscow.

New Delhi has also touted the



route as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

"For the first time, two trains with Kuzbass coal headed to India along the International North-South Transport Corridor. The trains set off from the Kemerovo region. They followed along the eastern branch of the INSTC through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas," Russian Railways said on Monday in its

Telegram channel.

The coal will be shipped by sea along the final part of the route from Iran's port of Bandar Abbas to the Indian port of Mumbai, according to the statement. Abbreviated as Kuzbass, the Kuznetsk Basin is one of the largest coal mining areas in the whole world. It is located in Southwestern Siberia, geographically in the Kemerovo Region.

NIDC to allocate \$800m for purchasing drilling rigs

Mohsen Khojastehmehr, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), said a license has been issued which allows the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) to spend \$800 million in purchasing drilling rigs as well as drilling related equipment and services.

According to a decision made by the cabinet, NIDC has been excluded from the list of ces-

sion to the private sector which consequently has provided the opportunity for governmental investment in the company activities as the first chain of operations in the upstream sector, Iranian Oil Ministry's official Shana news agency reported. He went on to say that with regard to its experience, expertise, assets and fleet the company enjoys, NIDC is one of the most important operational compa-

nies not only in the region but in the world and that is why it is required to be supported.

According to NIOC director up to now, the NIDC has drilled more than 5,000 oil and gas wells in onshore and offshore sectors of the country along with extracting more than 70 billion barrels of crude oil and gas condensate as well as 5 trillion cubic meters of natural gas from oil and gas fields.