

China's oil imports from Iran hit eight-month high

China's independent refiners have increased their crude imports from Iran by 4.3 percent in June to an eight-month high of around 6.1 million metric tons.

S&P Global Commodity Insights reported the development, adding that Iranian crudes, which are much cheaper than Russian ESPO crudes, have gained more popularity among independent refineries in recent months.

Iranian Oil Ministry's press service, Shana, republished the report without commenting on the accuracy of the provided statistics.

The full text of the S&P Global Commodity Insights report is as follows:

China's independent refiners, mainly in eastern Shandong Province, increased their Iranian crude imports by 4.3% in June to an eight-month high of around 6.1 million mt to cut feedstock costs and combat weak refining margins, according to sources and S&P Global Commodity Insight data July 4.

The volume was the highest since October 2023, when it hit 6.22 million mt, the data showed.

Iranian crude accounted for about 65.7% of the total feedstock portfolio of small-sized independent refineries in Shandong in June, compared with 54.2% in May.

June's higher imports were mainly due to feedstock requirements of the independent refineries, which have been struggling with weak refining margins for most of 2024 so far, and are more selective with their feedstock, sources said.

Iranian crudes, which are much cheaper than Russian ESPO crudes, have gained more popularity among independent refineries in recent months.

"Other crudes are not [as cheap as] Iranian crudes," said a trader source.

Early deals for August-arrival ESPO sold to China were heard at discounts of around 60-80 cents/b to ICE Brent, according to trade sources.

In comparison, Iranian Heavy was at a discount of around \$9/b to ICE Brent on a DES Shandong basis, about \$3/b lower than that of \$5-\$6/b for Iranian Light crude on the same basis, making it more attractive, especially under the weak margins, sources said.

More Iranian Heavy crude cargoes have been arriving in the Shandong market than Iranian Light crude, due mainly to the relatively lower prices, sources said. Data from local energy information provider OilChem showed the monthly average margin at Shandong independent refineries, from processing imported crudes, fell 32.3% on the week to 83.5/mt July 4, amid high crude benchmarks coupled with lower oil product prices.

Iran's economic growth rate highest in West Asia: *CBI chief*

The governor of the Central Bank of Iran said the Islamic Republic's economic growth rate is the highest among other countries in the West Asia region.

Speaking at the Bank of Russia's Financial Congress in the Russian port city of St. Petersburg on Thursday, Mohammad Reza Farzin noted that Iran registered a five-percent economic growth rate in 2023, which is higher than many countries, including neighboring and regional states, Press TV wrote.

He stressed that the figure puts Iran among the 10 countries in the world with the highest economic growth rate.

The Iranian central banker further noted that Iran managed to lower inflation by more than twofold last year, reducing it from 59% to 23%.

Farzin underlined that Iran is closely observing the international anti-money laundering law.

He also called for the creation of an intergovernmental organization within the framework of the BRICS group of emerging economies, similar to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to



combat money laundering. Farzin proposed that the BRICS bloc of economies create an alternative payment system to the SWIFT financial-messaging

service. Furthermore, Iran's central bank governor called for more financial cooperation with Russia.

The high-ranking officials of Iran and Russia are determined to use the local currencies in bilateral transactions, he said, adding that if Iran uses ruble,

yuan, dirham and rial in transactions between Russia, Iran, China and other countries, a major barrier would be removed in bilateral trade.

Iran export of non-oil products to OIC states up 15%



The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said the country's export of non-oil products to the 56 member states of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) registered a 15% growth.

Mohammad Rezvanifar said Iran exported more than 21.5 million tons of products, valued at \$8.6 billion, to the 56 member states of the OIC in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2023, to June 20, 2024), showing a 6 and 15 percent hike in volume and value

respectively compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

In this period, Iran imported about 5.2 million tons of products, valued at \$6.9 billion, registering a 20 and 7 percent growth in volume and value respectively compared to the same period last year, he added.

The total trade exchanges with the mentioned countries in the first three months of the current year reached 26.7 million tons, valued at \$15.5 billion, registering an 8 and 11 percent hike in weight and value respectively, he went on to say.

Iran, Oman in talks over preferential trade

The head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said the first round of the talks on launching a preferential trade agreement (PTA) between Iran and the Sultanate of Oman has been held in Muscat.

The trade and economic relations between the two countries have been following an upward trajectory in recent years, and the conclusion of the PTA and establishment of close trade-economic relations between the two countries in all trade and economic fields are of paramount importance, Mehdi Zeyghami stated, Mehr News Agency reported.

The deputy industry minister described the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2024) as "unprecedented" and said the launch of the PTA is aimed at strength-



ening the trade-economic relations, increasing the volume of the trade exchanges, establishing a more safe environment for the sustainable growth of trade, facilitating the diversification of the exchanged products, encouraging more competition between the economic enterprises and also removing

the trade barriers facing the two countries.

Back in December 2023, the TPOI chief in a meeting with the director of trade, industry, and investment development of the Sultanate of Oman discussed joint investment, industrial and financial issues between the two countries.

Iran opens dam to revitalize Lake Urmia

Iran opened a major water storage and transfer project as part of efforts to revive Lake Urmia, an endorheic salt lake in the northwest of the country which has shrunk in recent years due to the excessive use of water from rivers and underground water in surrounding regions.

The Iranian Energy Ministry said the Badinabad dam and

canal system were inaugurated in West Azerbaijan Province in a ceremony attended by Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian on Thursday, Press TV reported.

The Ministry said the dam will supply up to 180 million cubic meters per year of water to Lake Urmia.

It said water from Badinabad will be supplied via a 4.5-kilometer canal to the Kani Sib Dam, a nearby reservoir that was opened more than a year ago and is the main source of water supply to Lake Urmia. Repeated spells of drought, dam building on rivers and groundwater pumping has caused Lake Urmia to shrink in size and water supply in recent years. The issue has led to major en-

vironmental problems in Iran and in neighboring countries, including dust storms that have affected the quality of life in the region.

Reports published two years ago indicated that the surface area of the Lake had shrunk to reach 2,324 kilometers and its water had decreased to around 3 billion cubic meters. Experts believe the amount of water in Lake Urmia should reach over 5 billion cubic meters so that it can become stable again.

The Kani Sib water storage and transfer system, which was opened in February 2023, supplies 300 million cubic meters of water to Lake Urmia per year via nearly 36 kilometers of tunnels and 11 kilometers of canals.