

Iran's oil exports to China hit new high despite US sanctions

Economy Desk

Iran's oil exports to China reached 1.91 million barrels per day in March, a 11.9% increase compared to the previous record of 1.71 million barrels per day in August 2024, S&P reported Saturday.

This record is also 19.5% higher than the February imports of 1.6 million barrels per day.

Iran's oil exports to China in March hit a new record high since US President Donald Trump imposed the so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran and pulled his country out of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Trump signed an executive order to restore the maximum pressure campaign on Iran when he returned to the White House with the main goal of "slashing Iranian oil exports to a trickle."

Washington has been adding oil tankers that allegedly transfer Iranian oil to world markets to its list of sanctions.

Improved logistics, including drawing from floating storage in Malaysian waters, as well as competitive pricing compared to alternative feedstocks, contributed to the rise in Iran's oil imports to China, according to informed sources, ISNA reported.

However, market analysts say that the import trend in April may be affected due to the hostile actions of the US in recent weeks.

While some private refineries have adopted a wait-and-see approach amid escalating geopolitical risks, traders expect imports to remain high in April due to Iran's competitive oil pricing at around seven million tons (1.91 million barrels per day).

"If Iran's oil shipments have better economics than other options, Chinese private refineries will continue to purchase them," a trade source said.

According to informed sources, Iran's floating oil storage in Malaysia has decreased as more volumes have been transferred to China.

Traders said that floating storage in March was 426,000 barrels per day, according to Platts, 44% lower than the January and February levels as the transfer to private refineries in Shandong, China, accelerated, according to Kpler.

According to the S&P Global Commodity Insights survey, Iran's crude oil production proved resilient, reaching 3.23 million barrels per day in February, slightly higher than January, and has remained above three million barrels per day since September 2023.



IRNA

Non-oil exports set new record while Iran trade deficit reaches \$14.6 billion



IRNA

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Iran's non-oil exports soared to new heights in the past Iranian year (began on March 20, 2024 -1403), reaching a remarkable value of \$57.8 billion,

according to official data.

Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy for planning and international affairs at the Iranian customs office (IRICA), who provided insights into the country's robust trade performance made the announcement, IRNA re-

ported.

Akbarpour revealed that the total value of imports also witnessed a substantial increase, amounting to \$72.4 billion, with a notable contribution of over \$8 billion in raw gold bullion imports.

In an interview with IRNA regarding Iran's non-oil foreign trade statistics for the 12-month period of the last Iranian year, Akbarpour said, "Last year, we exported over 152 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$57.8 billion, marking a 10% increase in weight and a 15.62% rise in dollar terms compared to the previous year (began on March 20, 2023)."

Last year, "39.3 million tons of goods valued at \$72.4 billion were imported, representing a 0.77% decrease in weight and an 8.22% increase in dollar value compared to the previous year - 1402," he added.

Akbarpour identified Iran's top non-oil export commodities in 1403 as "natural gas, liquefied propane, liquefied butane, methanol, petroleum

gases, liquefied gaseous hydrocarbons, and gas condensates."

"Natural gas was the most significant export commodity in 1403, with an average customs value of \$314 per ton," he said.

The official also highlighted, "Other major export items included petroleum bitumen, urea, unalloyed iron and steel ingots, iron or steel bars, and polyethylene."

China, Iraq and UAE: Iran's top export destinations

According to Akbarpour, Iran's primary non-oil export destinations in 1403 were China (\$14.8 billion), Iraq (\$11.9 billion), UAE (\$7.2 billion), Turkey (\$6.8 billion), Pakistan and Afghanistan (each \$2.4 billion), and India (\$1.9 billion). "Together, these countries accounted for \$47.6 billion, or 82.3% of Iran's total non-oil export value," he said. Regarding imports in 1403, he stated, "Gold equivalent to 10 million tons, valued at over \$8 billion, constituted one of Iran's key import

items, representing 11.12% of total import value. Essential goods — including animal feed corn, soybean meal, genetically modified soybeans, rice, sunflower seed oil — as well as smartphones, tractors, and vehicle spare parts were among the top imported commodities."

UAE leads exporters to Iran

The deputy for Planning and International Affairs at IRICA identified the UAE (\$21.9 billion), China (\$19.3 billion), Turkey (\$12.4 billion), Germany (\$2.4 billion), India (\$1.7 billion), Hong Kong (approximately \$14 billion), and Russia (\$1.3 billion) as Iran's main source countries for imports in 1403.

"These eight countries, with a combined \$60.7 million, accounted for 83.8% of the total dollar value of Iran's imports," Akbarpour said.

The official concluded that, "Despite Iran's non-oil trade deficit reaching \$-14.6 billion last year, over \$8 billion of this deficit was attributed to imports of raw gold bullion."

NIOC: Offshore oil, gas exploration to resume in Persian Gulf

Economy Desk

Iran plans to resume offshore oil exploration activities in shared border areas with neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf for the first time after a five-year hiatus, according to a senior Oil Ministry official. Mohyeddin Jafari, head of Exploration Directorate at the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) expressed hope that Iran's offshore exploration activities in shared border areas with neighboring countries would commence this year, adding that operations had been suspended since 2019 due to offshore rig limita-

tions, Tasnim reported. "With the support of the Oil Ministry and the NIOC, and in collaboration with the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC), we successfully held a tender and selected a contractor with an offshore rig," Jafari said. "Through this tender, for the first time in five years, we managed to sign a contract for an offshore rig in the exploration sector," he added. In an interview with the ministry's official website, Jafari noted that over the past six months, the Exploration Directorate had focused its efforts on the two critical phases of studies

and operational execution. "What we have been planning during this period, particularly under the current administration, is to conduct a precise assessment of exploration activities over the past 30 years," he stated. Highlighting key objectives, he said, "One of our most important goals in the current administration is to accelerate exploration speed in drilling operations by increasing the number of rigs and in geophysical operations through modern equipment. If we succeed in these two areas, we can double the pace of discov-

eries."

Roads minister calls ports, maritime economy top priorities

Iran's minister of roads and urban development emphasized that a maritime-based economy and port development are top priorities for the ministry, adding that expanding the fleet of vessels to boost tourism is also on the agenda.

Farzaneh Sadegh outlined the ministry's key strategic plans, emphasizing that port development and the maritime economy are top priorities. Highlighting recent achievements, Sadegh noted substantial growth in maritime travel. "90 percent of marine trips were conducted via Bandar Abbas and Qeshm. With the addition of two new passenger vessels, we have seen strong public demand," she said as reported by Mehr.

The minister added that plans are underway to expand the passenger vessel fleet to further stimulate marine tourism.

"Our maritime economy strategy fo-

cuses mainly on the southern coasts, including Bandar Abbas, Chabahar, and other provinces along the southern borders," Sadegh said.

"We are drafting a comprehensive plan to promote the southern coastline with a maritime economic approach."

Makoran coastline development

Sadegh also announced plans for dredging the Arvand River to facilitate the navigation of larger vessels to Khorramshahr Port. "This project will significantly boost the local economies of Khuzestan, Khorramshahr, and Abadan, located along the Arvand River," she added.

The minister also stressed the importance of developing the Makoran coastline as a cornerstone for advancing the maritime economy. She mentioned ongoing agreements aimed at increasing the number of vessels to support passenger and tourism growth.

Upgrading northern ports, regional ties

Sadegh reported the commencement of dredging operations at Astara Port on the Caspian Sea. "Although northern ports have considerable potential, improving service quality remains essential," she emphasized. She also referred to the recent Caspian Sea summit, where Iran's proposal to create a comprehensive maritime database and joint information-sharing platform among littoral states was approved.

Sadegh highlighted that enhancing the quality of the maritime transport fleet for both cargo and passengers is the ministry's priority.

"The development of Chabahar must primarily benefit local communities and their livelihoods. Current development efforts are proceeding in cooperation with Indian partners."