

Chinese refineries seek immediate Iranian oil cargoes after price drop

Economy Desk

Three trade sources said some Chinese independent refineries that have received new import quotas from Beijing have been seeking immediate crude oil cargoes from Iran following a price drop on Wednesday.

Following Iran and the United States agreeing to a two-week ceasefire, Brent crude oil fell below \$100 per barrel on Wednesday, standing at its lowest level since March 11.

Chinese independent refineries, known as "teapots," had been largely sidelined since the US-Israeli aggression against Iran began on February 28, driving up global oil prices, while Washington temporarily lifted sanctions on Russian and Iranian crude at sea, eliminating discounts for these cargoes.

Tensions had been heightened following the joint US-Israeli aggression on Iran. While major shipping companies suspended operations in the region, tankers linked to Iran continued to transit the strategic waterway.

The country is now selling nearly twice – between 2.4 and 2.8 million barrels of oil per day – as much oil as



before February 28. With the Strait of Hormuz largely closed, last week, the Economist wrote that 15 percent of world oil cannot reach its customers. All Persian Gulf countries reduced their production and were seeing a decline in export revenues, but Iran was an exception. One trader close to Iranian oil trade said on Wednesday, "This morning, with Brent falling to \$90, inquiries have been made." Another trader said although inquiries have been made, few contracts have been signed yet because prices are still significantly higher than pre-war levels.

According to traders, Iranian light oil offers, which before the war were discounted by about \$10 per barrel compared to ICE Brent, are now

at parity or slightly above the benchmark. Also, Bloomberg last week reported that Iranian oil was trading at a price higher than Brent, the global benchmark, for the first time since May 2022. Brent crude traded at \$109 per barrel in last Friday's trading.

Russian oil, thanks to strong demand from Indian refineries, is also about \$8 per barrel higher than previous discounts.

Rising crude costs, coupled with still weak domestic fuel demand, have led independent refineries to plan production cuts for April. However, China's state planning agency last week asked them not to cut refining rates below the two-year average, aiming to maintain domestic fuel supply while state refin-

eries reduce output. Trade sources said maintaining higher rates at current profit margins would lead to significant losses for teapot companies. According to a note published by local consultancy SCI on March 31, the average refining loss for Shandong teapot refineries from March 1 to 27 was 143 yuan (\$20.94) per metric ton. According to Reuters, trade sources and analysts said China issued a new batch of crude oil import quotas of about 55 million metric tons (401.5 million barrels) for independent refineries on Friday to encourage increased refining activity. However, refinery sources said details regarding each refinery's volume and how the quotas would be utilized remain unclear.

Iran, Russia to expand agricultural trade cooperation

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Noori Qezeljeh said the path of agricultural trade and exchanges between Iran and Russia, as well as the joint cooperation of economic actors, merchants, and the banking and financial sectors of the two countries, will expand.

In a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart Oksana Lut on Wednesday, while reviewing economic developments and agricultural trade caused by the regional war, they discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation and ensuring food security in the region, IRNA reported.

Noori Qezeljeh described the US and Israeli aggression against Iran as a clear violation of international law, adding that Iran, with the support of domestic production of essential goods and development of foreign trade with its northern neighbors, has protected the food security of its citizens.

Iran and the US agreed on Wednesday morning, after 40 days since the US-Israeli military aggression against Iran began on February 28, to stop the fighting for two weeks and start negotiations to end the war.

The Iranian minister of agriculture emphasized the need to strengthen trade and develop the transit of agricultural and livestock products between Iran and Russia during wartime, adding that veterinary and phytosanitary stations have been established between Iran and Russia to remove possible barriers to trade between the two countries. Referring to the development of relations



Gholamreza Noori Qezeljeh
● IRNA

under the comprehensive strategic agreement between Iran and Russia signed in January 2025 at the Kremlin by the presidents of the two countries, he said the process of importing mineral fertilizer from Russia to Iran has been facilitated for use by farmers and producers.

Russia, Iran's committed neighbor

Russian agriculture minister said in this telephone conversation, "Russia, as a committed neighbor and trading partner on this path, will provide whatever assistance is necessary and will stand alongside the Islamic Republic of Iran in ensuring food security."

Lut added that suitable cooperation has been formed between the private sector and merchants of the two countries, and with the support of their government, this process will develop further.

Arts, culture have carried Iran's 'message of innocence'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's culture minister said artistic outreach has conveyed to the international community the innocence and suffering of the Iranian people in the brutal US-Israeli war on the country.

Abbas Salehi spoke of the ministry's efforts to ensure the voice of Iranians reaches people around the world.

"Our cultural attachés in 60 to 70 countries have been in contact with various institutions and are working toward that goal," he added.

Salehi pointed out that in the past 40 days, people in cities around the world have shown their heartfelt support. "We are seeing that the voice of the Iranian people is being heard through these cultural consultations," he said.

In recent days, several well-known Iranian singers and musicians have voluntarily stood alongside ordinary people at sites that the United States and Israel had announced as potential future targets, aiming to draw global attention to the criminal nature of those threats, some of which were later carried out.

Ali Zand Vakili, a star of Iranian pop-traditional fusion music, performed a piece about "the homeland" on railway tracks in response to the threats. The performance came just hours after reports emerged that some bridges and railway routes, including major national lines, had been damaged following attacks by the United States and Israel.



Ali Ghamsari, a virtuoso Iranian tar player, poses for a photo before performing near the Damavand power plant to voluntarily place himself as a human shield for the essential infrastructure on April 7, 2026. US and Israel had earlier threatened attacking Iran's power plants.
● IRNA

He also wrote: "Threatening our civilization, culture, and sites that are thousands of years old is no longer about belief, taste, viewpoint, religion, or personal choice. This threat is about the destruction of Iran and the Iranian people..."

After the threat by US President Donald Trump to bomb Iran's infrastructure in violation of international law, several other singers also responded by symbolically appearing on bridges and at power plant sites across the country.

Ali Ghamsari, an internationally known composer and virtuoso tar player, went to the Damavand power plant, Tehran's main power supplier, with his instrument and voluntarily placed himself as a human shield for the facility.

Later, addressing the Iranian people, Ghamsari wrote: "The God of

Damavand is with you. I am well. I have done something I believe in." Iranian pop star Benyamin Bahadori also recited poetry by Hafez on the Tabiat Bridge.

The attacks have prompted numerous reactions from Iranian artists. Many shared statements and images expressing condemnation of the enemy, sympathy with their fellow citizens, and declarations of patriotism.

Some artists also produced works defending the homeland and addressing the global community, while cultural institutions and centers organized programs aimed at promoting national solidarity.

The attacks, in addition to damaging several cultural and artistic centers, have also damaged or destroyed the homes of some artists.

AI education to expand for students, teachers

Social Desk

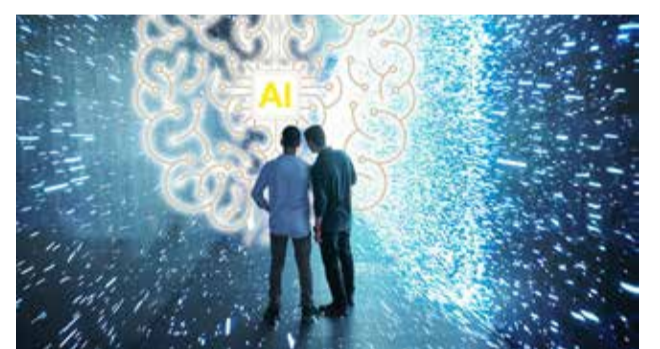
Iran's deputy minister of education announced the implementation of a plan designed to teach students in the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grades basic training in artificial intelligence (AI), while teachers will also become familiar with the applications of AI in education.

Ahmad Mahmoudzadeh made the remarks during an online meeting with principals and founders of non-governmental schools, according to IRNA. Referring to the division of the country into five hubs for implementing the plan, he said training courses have already begun for both public and non-governmental schools in some hubs, including Tehran and Razavi Khorasan, and will later be held in other provinces.

The head of the Organization of Non-Governmental Schools and Centers also announced the training of specialized instructors in this field, noting that around 100 teachers have been trained in each hub.

"After returning to their provinces, they will pass on the specialized training to other teachers and students," Mahmoudzadeh said.

He called on principals and founders of non-governmental schools to facilitate the participation of all students in these



● IRNA

courses and related science competitions, adding that a festival will be held at the end of the process to introduce and honor outstanding students and teachers.

Mahmoudzadeh stressed the need for strict oversight of educational quality in non-governmental schools, saying that academic performance — particularly in grades with final examinations — will be continuously evaluated.

"If average scores are low, the issue will be reviewed and decisions will be made by the supervisory council."

The deputy minister expressed hope that with the cooperation of principals, teachers, and founders of non-governmental schools, conditions will be created to improve educational quality and expand modern skills among students.

Referring to the obligations set out in the Seventh Development Plan, he said one of the most important missions

of the education system is to train a skills-oriented workforce aligned with the needs of the labor market and the country's future economy.

Furthermore, since artificial intelligence education for students and teachers has also been identified as one of the key priorities in the Seventh Development Plan, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Communications and several educational institutions, has placed the implementation of this initiative on its agenda.

He added that the martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had, in recent years, emphasized expanding skills-based education for the younger generation. "Human capital, he said, is the country's most important asset, and the economic development depends on the scientific and practical capabilities of this human capital," Mahmoudzadeh concluded.