

NEWS

Port of Hamburg to receive first Iranian petchem shipment

ECONOMY TEHRAN — After seven years, the first consignment of Iranian petrochemical products to Europe will arrive in the Port of Hamburg within the next few days, said the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) Managing director Mohammad Saeidi.

Following 2520 days of travel, Saeidi said, the ship would first dock at the Port of Hamburg and then it would set sail for the port of Antwerp in Belgium, the Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

After the removal of U.S. and UN sanctions against Iran on January 16, shipping cargo to European ports is back on track.

Referring to the establishment of joint shipping companies in Germany and Italy to cover the northern and southern ports of Europe, the official said, "We are also planning to launch shipping lines to the ports in Latin America."

According to Saeidi, Iran is planning to launch shipping lines to the ports in Latin America, Central America and North Africa in the coming months, adding that the country would also resume overseas trade with Canada in near future.

The official noted that the IRISL fleet is aiming to rise to the place of 15th largest shipping line in the next two years with a broad objective to get among the top ten in the course of five years.

The fleet currently ranks 21, he added.

In the course of development, Saeidi said, Iran is negotiating with a number of European, Chinese and South Korean as well as domestic companies for building ships.

Iran has recently established joint shipping companies in Germany and Italy to cover the northern and southern ports of Europe.

Earlier this week, Saeidi put the number of IRISL fleet at 160 vessels with a total capacity of five million tons.

Sanctions barred IRISL fleet from sailing in the international waters. They also prohibited international shipping companies from calling on Iranian ports.

South Korea cozies up to Iran as exports down again

South Korean exports in February decreased by 12.2% from a year earlier in their 14th consecutive month of year-on-year declines, the longest slump in the country's modern history, according to a monthly trade report released on Tuesday by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

The drop is due to lower oil prices and the weakening global economy, especially China. Exports to the second biggest economy decreased 12.9% in February from a year earlier, which is worrisome for South Korea as China has been its biggest trade partner since 2004, contributing some 25% of its total exports.

With China's slowdown expected to continue to slow down, South Korea is looking for other trade partners. One of them is the second largest economy in the Middle East, which recently had its sanctions lifted – Iran.

Despite South Korea's ties with the United States, Iran and South Korea managed to have a healthy trade relationship and have recently rolled out new initiatives to further develop their partnership.

For example, on Monday, Korea Trade Promotion Corporation (KOTRA) and Iran Trade Promotion Organization (ITTO) signed on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), usually the first stage in the formation of a formal contract, for promoting bilateral trade.

On Sunday, the Korea-Iran Forum, an event organized by Korea-Iran Joint Economic Committee, kicked off in Iran's capital Tehran, where South Korea's Trade Minister Joo Hyung-hwan met with Iranian counterparts, including Central Bank Governor Valiollah Seif and Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ali Tayebnia. The two parties agreed to expand trade and investment between the two nations, and mutual support on technology, investment, and financing, among others.

It is expected that South Korean president Park Geun-hye will also visit Iran soon. A spokesperson for the Blue House (South Korea's White House) said that at a Jan. 27 briefing that the president is planning on visiting Iran and expects to seal more business opportunities for Korean companies, including chemical and power plants, infrastructure and Information technology finance. (Source: Forbes)

India-Iran-Afghanistan transit corridor talks in progress: Singh

New Delhi (PTI) — After inking a pact with Iran for development of Chabahar port, negotiations for strategically important India-Iran-Afghanistan Trilateral Transit Corridor have made progress and a meeting of experts to finalize the clauses will be held in India shortly, Lok Sabha was informed today.

Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State of External Affairs V.K. Singh also said RBI has sought the concurrence of Finance Ministry for reinstating Iran under the Asian Clearance Union (ACU) as the Iranian bank accounts in India can only be activated after that.

Also, requests of Iranian banks regarding reactivating their accounts in various Indian banks and opening branches in India are under consideration of the government and RBI, Singh said.

"Negotiations on an Agreement on India-Iran-Afghanistan Trilateral Transit Corridor have made progress and the next meeting of Experts to finalize the clauses will be held in India shortly," the minister said.

The transit corridor, which will bypass Pakistan, will be significant for Afghanistan, which has expressed keenness to revitalize the Silk Road and act as a regional hub for connecting South Asia with Central Asia.

Cypriot trade delegation due in Tehran on Mar. 6

ECONOMY TEHRAN — A business, finance and industrial delegation comprising directors of 50 Cypriot companies and banks would visit Tehran from March 6 to 8, said Mohammad-Reza Sabzalipour, the chairman of the Iran World Trade Center.

In the wake of removal of sanctions against the Islamic Republic, Sabzalipour said, the delegation aims to boost industrial and commercial relations between the two countries and raise the bilateral trade.

This is the largest Cypriot trade mission traveling to Iran after years of sanction, during which the trade between Tehran and Nicosia was significantly downgraded.

Christos Michaelides, president of the Cyprus Employers and Industrial-



ists Federation (OEB) and Nicos Kouyialis, Cyprus minister of agriculture, natural resources and environment would lead the delegation while visiting high-ranking Iranian officials during their visit.

According to Sabzalipour, expansion of cooperation between the two sides' banks and insurance companies are among the high priorities, adding that a number of Cypriot banks are expected to initiate collaborating with Iran's private sector in the near future.

Given Cypriots' experience in tourism industry, Sabzalipour said, Iranian companies could benefit from their knowledge and skills in the field.

Launching direct flights between the two countries and establishing a joint chamber of commerce are among other objectives, he noted.

Kabul hosting Iran's third specialized trade exhibition

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's third specialized trade exhibition in Kabul, opened yesterday, would wrap up on March 5, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) reported on Wednesday.

During the exhibition, Iranian firms would showcase their products in the

fields of mining, energy, automobile, civil services, telecommunication, housing and construction.

Food stuff, home appliances, rugs and carpets, medicine and medical equipment are among the products on display.

Meanwhile, Afghan Commercial At-

taché in Iran Abdolhamid Farhang said Afghans have a preference for Iranian goods, yet, the companies need to bring their most qualified products into display in order to play in the market.

Afghanistan was the fourth largest importer of Iranian goods in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calen-

dar year (March 21, 2015-February 19, 2016), Iran's Customs Administration reported.

Iran has set a target of \$77.5 billion in non-oil exports for the current Iranian calendar year, according to Mojtaba Khosrotaj, the Iranian deputy industry, mining, and trade minister.

PICTURE OF THE DAY IRIBNEWS



President Hassan Rouhani unveiled Saina, a new car model manufactured by automaker Saipa Group, and also a diesel engine produced by Iran Khodro Industrial Group in the 3rd Iran Automotive Industry Exhibition, which kicked off in Tehran on March 1 and will wrap up today.

Iran, Belarus gearing up for session of trade intergovernmental commission

MINSK (BeTA) — The Iranian side pins big hopes on the next session of the Belarusian-Iranian intergovernmental commission for trade and economic cooperation, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Iran to Belarus Mohammad Reza Sabouri told BeTA.

"The session is scheduled to be held in Minsk in two to three months," the diplomat said. The parties will discuss new ways and opportunities for bolstering the Belarusian-Iranian cooperation. The ambassador noted that in 2015 the trade between the two countries totaled some \$75 million.

Belarus exported around \$65 million worth of goods to Iran. Mohammad Reza Sabouri pointed out that the trade is expected to triple in 2016, bearing in mind the new opportunities. "The Iranian government is eager to buy as many Belarusian products as possible," the diplomat stressed.

He also emphasized the difficulties with mutual cargo transportation arising from the long geographical distance between the countries and considerable transportation costs. Mohammad Reza Sabouri believes that Belarusian and Iranian partners should reach long-term mutually beneficial agreements and develop a system for cargo delivery.

Iran is ready to help Belarusian companies sell their products to other countries of the region. The ambassador noted with regret that Belarus does not make full use of the opportunities for the export of heavy-duty vehicles to Iran.

Mohammad Reza Sabouri also stressed the need to use modern methods in the bilateral trade. The diplomat believes that the two countries have great prospects for cooperation in the banking sector, since many economy and investment projects are implemented using bank loans. In Belarus there are banks with Iranian capital.

Iranians to use Asian credit cards soon

Iran says it is preparing the grounds for its nation to use credit cards provided by Asian banks until the restrictions for using American payment operators like Visa and MasterCard are removed.

The country's media have quoted an official with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) as saying that negotiations to the same effect are currently underway with Japan Credit Bureau (JCB) as well as China UnionPay (CUP).

Davoud Mohammad-Beigi, the CBI director for payment affairs, has been quoted as saying that JCB and CUP cards will be available to the Iranians before September.

Mohammad-Beigi has further emphasized that the CBI is determined to bring the global credit card payment systems into the country, stressing that the related technical talks on the same front have been going on with international suppliers for the past five months.

The official added that certain steps have also been planned to prepare the infrastructure required for using international credit cards in Iran, including connecting the domestic interbank payment system to overseas payment networks like the ones that Visa and MasterCard are using.

Mohammad-Beigi said the conditions for using Visa and MasterCard services are not prepared yet. This, he added, is because both are U.S. enterprises and are still subject to the sanctions that the U.S. government has put in place in dealing with Iran.

The legal department of the CBI is nonetheless preparing to take actions to remove the obstacles that are hindering Visa and MasterCard from operating in Iran in light of the openings that have been created after the January removal of anti-Iran sanctions, Mohammad-Beigi emphasized.

(Source: Press TV)

NEWS IN BRIEF

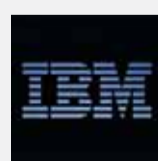


Debts rise at China's big steel mills, consumption falls

China's major steel mills added to their debt pile in 2015 while consumption of steel products fell for the first time in two decades, a senior official said on Wednesday, adding to the industry's difficulties as it tries to tackle a crippling glut.

The debt ratio of major steel mills rose 1.6 percentage points to 70.1 percent from a year ago, taking the big mills' debt to 3.27 trillion yuan (\$499 billion), Li Xinchuang, the vice secretary general of the China Iron & Steel Association (CISA), told a conference.

At the same time, steel product consumption in China fell 5.4 percent to 664 million tons in 2015 from a year ago.



IBM plans to sell up to \$150 million worth of Lenovo Group shares: IFR

Computing giant International Business Machines Corp (IBM) plans to sell up to \$150 million worth of shares in China's Lenovo Group Ltd, IFR reported on Wednesday, citing a term sheet of the deal sent to investors.

IBM is offering 182 million shares in an indicative range of HK\$6.26 (\$0.8052) to HK\$6.42 each, added IFR, a Thomson Reuters publication. The price is equivalent to a discount of up to 6.4 percent to Lenovo's closing price on Wednesday.

IBM and Lenovo didn't immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment on the sale.

Goldman Sachs was hired as sole bookrunner for the deal, the terms showed.



Toyota shakes up corporate structure to focus on product lines

Toyota Motor Corp announced an overhaul of its corporate structure on Wednesday as the world's biggest-selling carmaker seeks to streamline decision-making and improve the way it manages its production as output hits record highs.

Effective April, the number of business divisions will be increased to nine from the present four, with the aim of creating a company "built around product-based rather than function-based organizations," it said in a statement.

Three new divisions will separately focus on compact, mid-size and commercial vehicles, alongside divisions dedicated to connected cars and to research and engineering.