

# Russia shows green light to OPEC oil production pledge

Much of the shortfall has come from Venezuela, where an economic crisis has savaged petroleum

● Iran, bracing for the impact of fresh US sanctions on its oil exports, fiercely objected to raising output targets

AFP | Vienna, Austria

Russia yesterday joined partner countries in backing an OPEC-led pledge to boost oil production in response to growing global demand, Angolan Oil Minister Diamantino Azevedo said.

"We have agreed," Azevedo told reporters after a meeting with OPEC ministers and 10 non-OPEC partner countries in Vienna.

The green light was widely expected after energy ministers from the 14-member Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries already agreed on Friday to raise output by one million barrels a day from July.

Saudi Arabia, supported by Russia, was strongly in favour of pumping more oil to ease fears

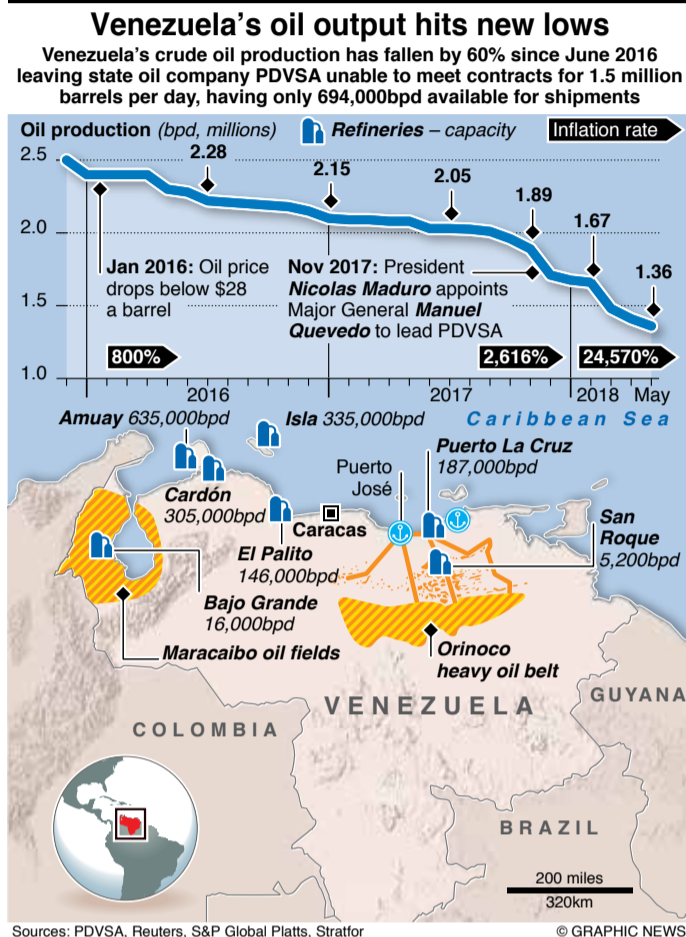
of a supply crunch and quiet grumbles about the higher prices in major consumer countries like the United States, China and India.

But Iran, bracing for the impact of fresh US sanctions on its oil exports, fiercely objected to raising output targets, as did countries like crisis-hit Vene-



It was "timely" for OPEC and its 10 partner countries, known as OPEC+, to raise production

ALEXANDER NOVAK  
RUSSIA'S ENERGY MINISTER  
FINANCE MINISTER



**\$75.55**  
a barrel was the closing price of Brent crude

zuela and Iraq who are unable to raise output in the near term.

In the end, a vaguely-worded statement that made no mention of the one-million figure allowed all sides to save face.

Ministers also acknowledged that production problems in several countries meant the real number of extra barrels coming to the market would be several hundred thousand less.

Markets were disappointed with the modest output hike.

Brent crude added \$2.50 to finish at \$75.55 a barrel, while the US benchmark West Texas Intermediate gained \$3.04 at \$68.58 per barrel.

As one of the world's top producers, Russia's cooperation in the supply-cut deal is seen as crucial.

## Indian state bans single-use plastic

Xinhua | New Delhi

A complete ban on single-use plastic items comes into effect from Saturday in India's western state of Maharashtra, officials said.

The authorities have threatened imposition of heavy fine on people who violate the government ban.

"The use of plastic will become an offence and violators will be fined. Those who will repeat the offence can be jailed for up to three months," a local government official said.

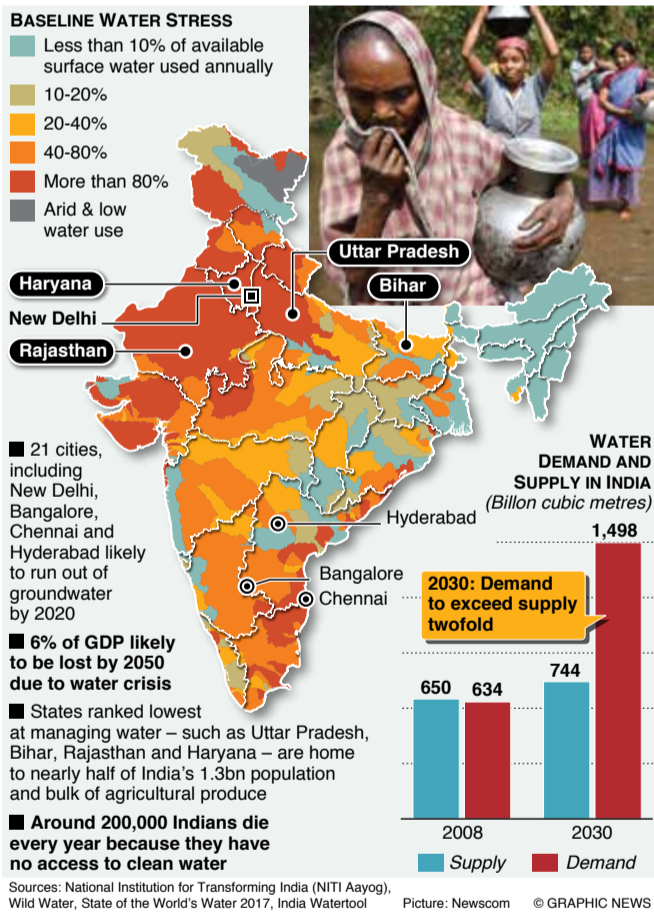
"The fine for the first-time offenders will be 74 US dollars (INR 5,000). For second-time offenders, it will be 148 US dollars (INR 10,000) and a third-time violator will attract a fine of 370 US dollars (INR 25,000) and a jail term for three months."

Environmentalists and common people welcomed the ban ahead of the monsoon season as plastics often lead to choking of drains, thereby causing water logging. Shopkeepers, however, are worried a lot over the switchover.

Earlier on March 23, the local government imposed a ban on manufacturing, use, sale, distribution and storage of plastic materials, especially one-time-use bags, spoons and plates.

## India on brink of worst-ever water crisis

India is suffering from the worst water crisis in its history with some 600 million people facing acute water shortage. The crisis will worsen as demand is projected to be twice the available supply by 2030



## Xiaomi targets Europe as it kicks off IPO

Hong Kong, China

Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi will aggressively target European markets, using part of the proceeds from its initial public offering worth \$6.1 billion in Hong Kong, the company's co-founder said yesterday.

The company is offering 2.18 billion shares at HK\$17-HK\$22 apiece (US\$2.15-2.80), in a bid to raise \$6.1 billion, far less than the \$10bn originally expected, as an escalating trade war between China and the US dampens investor sentiment.

But at a press conference in Hong Kong on Saturday ahead of its expected listing on July 9, the company's co-founders were bullish about its prospects, signalling plans for international expansion in Europe and Southeast Asia.

"Someone asked me if Xiaomi (will) only expand in developing countries? Last year we started to enter the European market and we realised we have a lot of 'Mi fans' in Europe," Lei Jun, Xiaomi's co-founder and



The CEO of Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi, Lei Jun, holds one of his products

CEO said. The company will invest around HK\$8.3bn from its IPO proceeds towards boosting its presence in overseas markets including Spain, Russia and Indonesia.

"We are planning for the US market and will find a proper timing to enter it," Wang Chuan, co-founder and senior vice president of Xiaomi, said on Saturday.

"Xiaomi is very optimistic about the development of China-US trade, as every economic



Xiaomi is now valued at about \$53.9-\$69.8 billion, according to Bloomberg which said the IPO looks set to be the world's biggest in two years

entity is relying on each other," Wang added.

Founded in 2010 by entrepreneur Lei, Beijing-based Xiaomi has grown from a start-up in Zhongguancun -- China's "Silicon Valley" -- to the world's fourth biggest smartphone vendor at the end of last year according to International Data Corp (IDC).

The company shipped 28 million smartphones worldwide from January to March, an 88-percent surge year-on-year.

## Bitfinex chief strategy officer departs

New York

Bitfinex Chief Strategy Officer Phil Potter is leaving the cryptocurrency trading platform, the executive and the exchange told Reuters on Friday.

Potter will be replaced in the interim by Chief Executive J.L. van der Velde, the company said.

"As Bitfinex pivots away from the U.S., I felt that, as a U.S. person, it was time for me to rethink my position as a member of the executive team," Potter said in a statement.

He referred to "new opportunities" in the days ahead but did not elaborate.

Owned by a British Virgin Islands company, Bitfinex is the fourth-largest cryptocurrency exchange in the world by trading volume. It enables traders to buy and sell virtual currencies such as bitcoin and ether.



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, wearing a tie, arrives to address the parliamentary group of leftist Syriza and coalition partner Independent Greeks in Athens

## Greece's Tsipras fulfils bet, wears a neck tie finally

Greece Prime Minister wears a neck tie as promised he would after settling the country's debt issues

Reuters | Athens

After long insisting he would only wear a neck tie when Greece's debt problem was settled, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras duly did so on Friday, after euro zone peers offered debt relief that marks a turn away from the country's long crisis.

The 43-year-old sported a burgundy number -- briefly

-- when addressing an evening meeting of political allies in Athens, a break from the open-necked or polo shirts he usually favours.

"Today is an important day for all, but primarily it belongs to those who for eight years were viciously hit by the crisis, for those who saw a lifetime of toils destroyed and those who carried the burden for the country," Tsipras said.

Euro zone finance ministers offered Greece a 10-year deferral and maturities extension on a large chunk of past loans as well as 15 billion euros (13.2bn pounds) in new credit to ensure Athens can stand on its own feet after it exits its bailout in August.

Debt relief has been an overarching objective of Tsipras's administration since he swept to power in 2015. Greece has

a debt mountain equivalent to almost 180 percent of gross domestic product, the highest in the 19-country euro zone.

Greeks have seen their economy shrink by a quarter, unemployment spike and salaries and pensions slashed by about 40 percent since first falling into crisis in 2010. The country has required three international bailouts.

"Bets are made to be won," a

smiling Tsipras told the meeting of lawmakers from left-wing Syriza and right-wing Independent Greeks which make up the governing coalition. "It's a bit difficult (wearing the tie) but I will get used to it."

But he publicly removed it about half an hour later. "I fulfilled the bet, I put the tie on but all these years I gave battle without a tie," he said, holding the garment aloft.