

## **China data: March crude throughput rises 6% on year to 11.23 mil b/d**

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China's crude refinery throughput in March rose 5.9% year on year to 47.5 million mt, or an average of 11.23 million b/d, preliminary data released Monday by the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

This was the highest year-on-year growth in refinery runs since September 2015. The last highest year-on-year growth in refinery runs was 6.5% in August 2015.

On a daily basis, however, the refinery throughput was slightly down from the average of 11.28 million b/d over January-February. The average for the first two months of the year was combined as NBS does not provide separate data for January and February.

The drop in refinery runs was somehow in line with the trend showed by a survey done by S&P Global Platts in March -- some of the largest state-owned refiners in China saw average utilization rate move down to 79% of nameplate capacity, compared with 85% in February and 83% in January.

The survey covered 31 refineries, comprising 17 Sinopec, 13 PetroChina refineries, and China National Offshore Oil Corp.'s sole Huizhou facility.

The drop in month-on-month run rate was seen across all three state-owned oil companies, as a growing number of refineries, especially those under Sinopec, have gone offline for turnarounds from March.

Seven refineries are undergoing maintenance in March -- five at Sinopec and two at PetroChina -- compared with two in February, the survey showed.

Meanwhile, China's independent refineries in eastern Shandong province were estimated to lift their run rates to a record high of 64.6% in March, up from 57.8% in February, amid widening refining margins.

The average run rate of 37 independent refineries in the region was surveyed by JLC, a Beijing-based energy information provider, formerly known as JYD.

This was believed to have offset the crude throughput decline from state-owned refineries to a certain extent last month.

During the first quarter of the year, total refinery runs across the country were 4.5% higher than the same period last year at 138.22 million mt, or an average of 11.26 million b/d, data from the bureau showed.

This is a higher pace of growth than Q1 2016, when refinery runs were up 3.1% year on year.

In the upstream segment, China's crude oil production in March moved down 4.6% year on year to 16.57 million mt, with year-to-date output also down 6.8% to 48.02 million mt, according to NBS.

But natural gas production in March increased 10.5% to 13.6 Bcm, while output over January-March rose 3.4% from a year earlier to 38.7 Bcm.