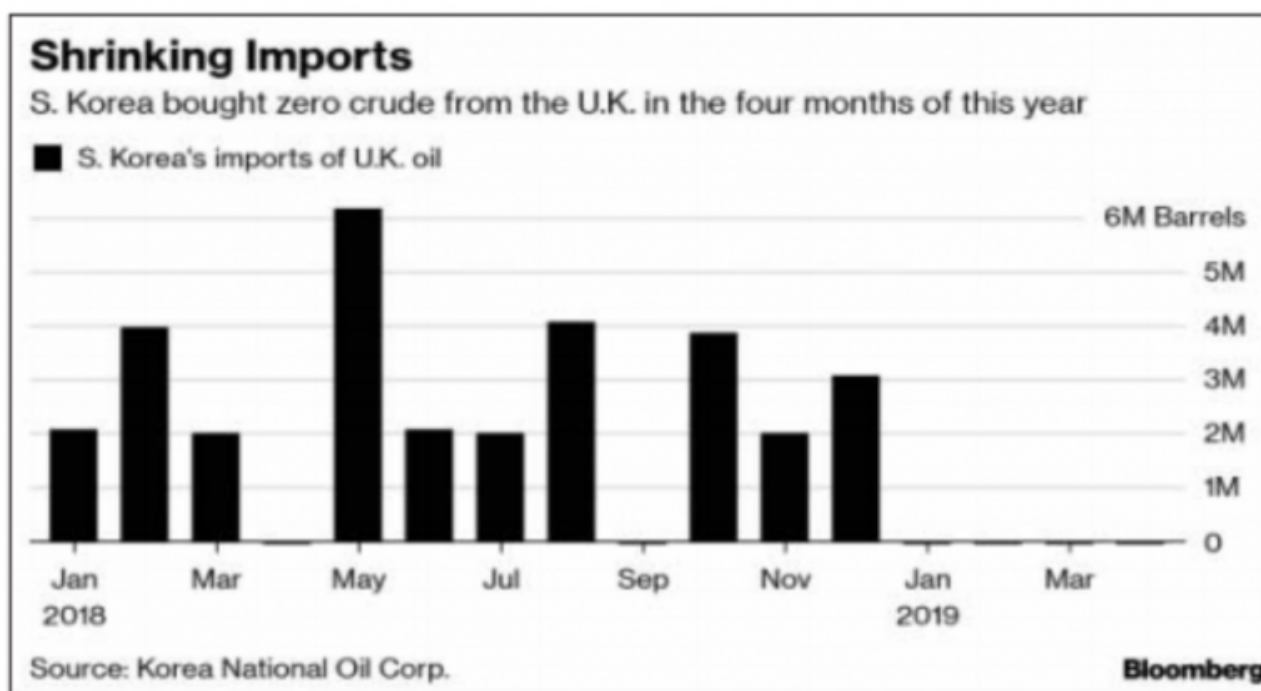


UK oil's appeal returns for S Korea even as Brexit looms



After staying away for four months, South Korea is back in the market for North Sea crude. Hyundai Oilbank Co bought 2mn barrels of North Sea Forties crude for August delivery, a rare purchase this year, said traders who asked not to be identified because the information is private. The import was made after refiners in the Asian nation were given incentives to look beyond the Middle East for oil, and it followed a discharge of UK crude in May, the first such purchase this year. South Korea imported zero oil from the United Kingdom in the first four months of this year as the possibility of Brexit threatened to erode the appeal of the crude to one of Asia's top refining hubs. Britain's exit will mean the return of a 3% import tariff on Forties purchases that was waived by South Korea under a free-trade agreement with the European Union since 2011. While the Asian country is a steady buyer of UK oil, purchasing an average of over 2.6mn barrels a month in 2018, refiners were reluctant to bring cargoes earlier this year as the government delayed renewing a freight rebate scheme that encouraged purchases from regions other than the

Middle East. The very-large crude carrier Farhah is scheduled to load Forties crude from Hound Point on June 20 for delivery to Daesan in August, according to traders and shipping fixtures compiled by Bloomberg. Last month, supertanker Athenian Freedom also made a similar voyage, discharging a smaller cargo of the grade, ship-tracking data showed. Hyundai Oilbank operates a refinery in Daesan with crude processing capacity of 650,000 barrels a day.