

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Canada's largest public sector strike frets immigrants



**REUTERS** – As Canada's largest strike by federal workers approaches its third week, thousands of people are in immigration limbo amid canceled hearings and stalled applications, which could make it harder for the country to compete for global talent as employers face a tight labour market.

About 155,000 federal public servants have been on strike since April 19. While wages are a primary sticking point, the union also wants remote work included in its collective agreement.

## Singapore to avoid economic contraction: PM



**BLOOMBERG** – Singapore should avoid an outright contraction in its economy this year, despite being battered by the effects of a global slowdown, the city-state's prime minister said.

While the city-state's economic growth will slow, inflation may moderate in the second half of this year, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in an e-mailed speech.

## G7 should adopt AI regulation: Ministers

**REUTERS** – Group of Seven advanced nations should adopt "risk-based" regulation on artificial intelligence (AI), their digital ministers agreed on Sunday, as European lawmakers hurry to introduce an AI Act to enforce rules on emerging tools such as ChatGPT.

But such regulation should also "preserve an open and enabling environment" for the development of AI technologies and be based on democratic values, G7 ministers said in a joint statement issued at the end of a two-day meeting in Japan.

## Iran's minister of industry voted out by Parliament



Minister of Industry Reza Fatemi Amin walks away from the podium solemnly after answering the questions of lawmakers in the Iranian Parliament on April 30, 2023.

● ISNA

## Economic Desk

Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Reza Fatemi Amin failed to regain the vote of confidence of the Iranian parliament and was removed by law-

makers, terminating the much-criticized minister's term that had begun in August 2021.

Fatemi Amin attended an open session of Parliament on Sunday and took the podium to answer the questions of a number of lawmakers.

At the conclusion of the impeachment, the lawmakers voted for the motion to dismiss the minister, with 162 yes votes, two abstentions, and 102 no votes from a total of 272 votes. Six votes were invalid.

The parliamentarians grilled the minister over the skyrocketing car prices, "the SUV scandal," and his poor handling of industrial and mining developments.

Nine MPs spoke against Fatemi Amin and his handling of the ministry, while only two MPs took their approvals of the controversial minister to the podium and spoke in favor of him.

Fatemi Amin's defendants pointed out his "anti-corruption" record, dismissing all allegations against him. They also encouraged their peers to vote against the dismissal of Fatemi Amin "for the good of the country."

President Ebrahim Raeisi and six of his ministers, his first vice president and vice president for parliamentary affairs also attended the open session to defend Fatemi Amin's performance.

Raeisi lauded the par-

liament's accountability while stating that sustainability in a ministry is of utmost importance, encouraging the lawmakers to vote against Fatemi Amin's dismissal.

The discontent with the ministry's performance started getting out of hand when the self-imposed ban on the import of foreign-made automobiles, which was made more than four years ago in reaction to the harsh economic sanctions on the country, finally caught up with the consequences of ignoring the supply and demand economic model. President Raeisi's predecessor, Hassan Rouhani, had in July 2018 officially banned cars imported in a Completely Built Unit (CBU) format, only allowing the Completely Knocked-Down (CKD) format where cars are imported in parts, not as an assembled unit. As major Western partners withdrew from the Iranian market, the move also left the door open for CKD imports of a variety of Chinese vehicles, which have since flooded the market, according to Al Jazeera.

But a large share of the market remains in control of a small handful of local automakers. Chief among them are the state-run Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), as well as SAIPA, which have been responsible for making cars that have become increasingly unaffordable on the back of the currency crisis and

the rising inflation. As the demand far exceeded the number of cars supplied by domestic automakers, the Iranian people and their representatives in Parliament became outraged at how expensive the price tags have become and how late they can receive the cars on which they have spent their life savings.

What was pursued was a parliamentary impeachment process that blew up as the claims of a scandal circulated by a disgruntled MP.

On Wednesday, Ahmad Alireza Beigi, a lawmaker representing Tabriz, alleged that the Ministry of Industry handed out over 70 SUV remittances to his peers in Parliament as a gift in order to sway their votes against Fatemi Amin in November 2022, when he escaped another impeachment process, with 84 votes for, 182 votes against, and six abstentions.

Fatemi Amin however, vehemently denied the allegations in the open session of Parliament on Sunday, reiterating the statement of his ministry.

In time, the truth of the allegations will surely be revealed to Iranians, but whatever the case may be, eyes will not be turned away from the Iranian Parliament as it prepares itself to consider the next candidate President Raeisi nominates to head the Ministry of Industry.



## Iran-China trade over \$4b in Q1

**MEHR** – Iran's trade with China reached \$4.04 billion during the first three months of 2023, registering a 5.1% increase compared with the corresponding period of the year before.



## Gas exports to Türkiye hit 1.5 bcm in Q1

**IRNA** – Trade exchanges between Iran and Türkiye exceeded \$1.3 billion in the first quarter of 2023, as Iran exported over 1.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Turkey during that time.



## Iran's exports to Oman up 52%

**MEHR** – According to IRI-CA, Iran's exports to Oman stood at 3.34 million tons, worth \$1.08 billion, in fiscal 2022-23 (ending March 20), registering 29% and 52% growth, respectively, compared with the year before.



Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Chang Hua (R) shakes hands with Khuzestan's Governor General Ali Akbar Hosseini (L).

● KHUZESTAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT



## Two major Chinese firms plan to invest in Khuzestan: Envoy

Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua said two major Chinese companies plan to invest in Khuzestan Province, Iran's oil-rich southwest.

During a meeting with Khuzestan's governor general on Sunday, Hua said other Chinese companies could also come forward with any investment plans that involve the Iranian province, reported Iran Front Page.

He expressed hope that given the two countries'

good relations and Khuzestan's tourism capacities, a large number of tourists would travel from China to the Iranian province to visit its historical sites.

As such, Hua emphasized the need to advertise the province's tourist spots to attract visitors. Elsewhere in his remarks, the Chinese ambassador said boosting ties between Iran and China would lead to more Chinese companies entering the Iranian investment market.

He added that Beijing supports Iran's territorial integrity as strongly as it supports its own and has backed "Iran against Western countries, which assail Iran and China under various pretexts for following their interests."

He also said the re-establishment of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia last month — which came after Chinese mediation — was helpful to regional peace and development.