

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **141,650** With **26** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration Says Iran Has Exported Commodities Worth \$115m to Russia During the First Quarter of the Current Iranian Calendar Year (March 21-June 21)

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Iran Foreign Debt Falls Over 16%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The latest data released by Central Bank of Iran (CBI) show that the country's foreign debt stood at \$7.246 billion at the end of the third Iranian calendar month of Khordad (July 22), down 16.5 percent from \$8.675 billion at the end of the previous year (March 20).

Based on the CBI data, from the total foreign debt, \$5.481 billion was mid-term and long-term debts while \$1.765 billion was short-term debts, IRIB reported.

External debt is the portion of a country's debt that is borrowed from foreign lenders including commercial banks, governments, or international financial institutions. These loans, including interest, must usually be paid in the currency in which the loan was made.

Foreign debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the ratio between the debt a country owes to non-resident creditors and its nominal GDP.

The ratio of Iran's foreign debt to GDP is very insignificant and considering this figure, Iran is among the countries with the lowest amount of foreign debt in the world due to the U.S. sanctions and their consequent financial restrictions.

Having external debts is an important economic indicator globally, but it is not currently important for Iran since the country has almost no foreign debts.

Iran's external debt has been falling in recent years following a downward trend.

Iran to Put Satellite Into Orbit in Coming Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of Iran's space agency Hassan Salarieh has said that Iran is set to launch a satellite into space in the coming months.

A satellite is prepared to be put in space, Salarieh told IRIB and predicted that as a result of the launch team's good efforts, the satellite would be launched in the Iranian autumn season.

Almost without being active in space, the sovereignty of countries is questionable and the states are unable to have full sovereignty, he underlined.

Management in the agricultural sector, which is associated with people's food security, will be highly costly and extremely incomplete without being active in space programs, he added.

He also referred to the important role of space services in dealing with traffic and transportation.

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Iran, Russia, China Standing Against U.S. Expansionism



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - An advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei defends the country's 'Look to the East' policy and hails growing cooperation among Iran, Russia and China as three independent powers standing against America's agenda of expansionism.

In an interview with the office of Ayatollah Khamenei's website, Ali Akbar Velayati, referred to a decades-long record of America's ill-intention in dealing with the Iranian nation and explained why the Islamic Republic should not count on the West and work instead to strengthen ties with the Easterners, with which it shares many commonalities.

The veteran politician recalled the former Pahlavi monarch's confession to Washington's refusal to stand by its own puppet regime in Iran prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Washington and its Western partners, he added, then moved to provide all-out support to the ex-Iraqi regime's eight war on Iran and impose draconian sanctions aimed at bringing the Islamic Republic to its knees.

Even when Iran and the U.S. reached a nuclear deal in 2015, Washington went on to ditch that agreement "without any justification" and openly showed enmity toward the Iranian nation, Velayati said.

In turn, the European states are increasingly submissive to U.S. policies and unconditionally follow in its footsteps in foreign policy, according to Velayati.

On the contrary, he said, Russia and China offered Iran a helping hand in tough times.

"Under such circumstances, how is it that some simple-minded people argue that we should turn to the West? Which West?! The ones that have constantly been spreading fake propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran, exert political pressure on it, and leave no stone unturned to undermine the Islamic Republic under US pressure and based on the sheer lies of Zionist hawkers," he said.

The former Iranian foreign minister said the reason behind Iran's inclination toward Russia and China is that the three states engage in interactions when it comes to cooperation and offering assistance to one another.

The three powers work together based on a set of shared goals, the official said.

All the three are standing against the US and Western hegemony against the East, while they are independent and do not rely on any outsider, said Velayati.

"The three countries have the support of their nation."

Velayati was also asked for his views on a trilateral summit between Iran, Russia and Turkey held recently in Tehran, with the presence of Russian and Turkish Presidents Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on the Syria peace process.

Following U.S. President Joe Biden's "fruitless and abortive" visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia, the Tehran summit "sent an important message and showed that ties among Iran, Russia and Turkey are original in nature and are growing."

He said visiting U.S. presidents usually look down on regional nations arrogantly.

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Israeli Footprints in Persian Gulf Only Fuel Insecurity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) naval forces says any presence of the Israeli regime in the Persian Gulf region will only fuel insecurity, asserting that regional countries are able to maintain security.

"We believe that the Zionist regime gaining a foothold in the Persian Gulf region will have no result other than sowing sedition and creating insecurity," Brigadier General Alireza Tangsiri said in a meeting with the commander of Oman's navy, Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser Bin Mohsin Al Rahbi.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the presence of foreign forces will not help regional security, but rather will foment insecurity, he said.

The comments come days after sources familiar with the matter revealed that the US and Israel are seeking to lay the groundwork for the so-called security alliance with some regional Arab states to fight off what they call the threat from Iran.

Discussions on the plan are still at an early stage and have already met resistance from several Arab countries who refuse to do business with Israel, Reuters on Thursday quoted four sources as saying.

Iranian officials have repeatedly described Israel's destabilizing activities as the main source of insecurity in the region, warning regional countries about the perils of allowing Tel Aviv to establish a foothold in the region.

"We believe that countries of the Persian Gulf region have the required capacity and capability to preserve the security of this sensible region," the Iranian commander added.

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ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian A Lie Has No Legs

We Iranians really believe in this proverb that the truth will finally come out or "a lie has no legs" and several times the U.S. and the West's lies especially regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran have been revealed and these countries have been disgraced.

One of the biggest lies of the U.S. regarding Iran was told in 1988 when the American forces in the Persian Gulf shot down Iranian passenger plane which killed all of passengers on board.

American officials since the moment their forces shot down the plane have tried to justify this crime by resorting to different lies or getting other Western countries' support for this crime.

On Thursday newly declassified files revealed that the British government offered "immediate" support to the U.S. and assisted in the cover-up of the downing of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988 that killed all the 290 people on board, among them 66 children.

On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes fired two missiles at the Iran Air Flight 655, which was flying over the Hormuz Strait from the port city of Bandar Abbas to a routine trip to Dubai while carrying 274 passengers and 16 crew members. Following the attack, the plane disintegrated and crashed into the Persian Gulf.

In a meeting with UK foreign secretary Robin Cook on March 2, 2000, U.S. General Colin Powell, who had served as Ronald Reagan's National Security Adviser between 1987 and 1989, "spoke frankly," leading Cook to request that the US General's "confidence... be strictly protected."

After the shooting down of the Iranian passenger plane, Gen. Powell recalled, former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's private secretary for foreign affairs Charles Powell "had rung immediately from Downing Street to ask what the Americans wanted the British Government to say."

In a meeting with UK foreign secretary Robin Cook on March 2, 2000, U.S. General Colin Powell, who had served as Ronald Reagan's National Security Adviser between 1987 and 1989, "spoke frankly", leading Cook to request that the US General's "confidence... be strictly protected".

The British government thus offered immediate support to Washington, despite it having killed hundreds of civilians, most of whom were Iranian citizens.

Powell remarked how "America could count on no other government to behave like that."

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Pakistan Embraces Close Cooperation With Iran On Afghan Issues

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari says his country attaches importance to close cooperation with Iran on matters relating to Afghanistan, including refugee management, regional security, and institutional mechanisms.

In a meeting with Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the Iranian special envoy for Afghanistan, in Islamabad, Zardari said Pakistan is committed to a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and connected Afghanistan, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release on Friday.

He highlighted Pakistan's provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, including recent relief efforts in the wake of the devastating earthquake in eastern Afghanistan on June 22, 2022.

The top Pakistani diplomat also reiterated the importance of continued constructive engagement and practical cooperation with the interim Afghan government in order to promote sustainable peace and security in the region.

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At Least 20 Die in Floods in Fars Province

TEHRAN (IFP) - At least 21 people have lost their lives as flash floods triggered by heavy downpours are wreaking havoc in Iran's southwestern province of Fars.

Yousef Kargar, the governor of the city of Estahban, said on Saturday that the flooding happened as torrential rains caused Roudbal River in the area to burst its banks a day earlier.

Specialized rescue teams were quickly dispatched to the affected areas.

The governor said six people still remained missing, while 55 others had been rescued.

FM Calls for Political Solution to Resolve Ukraine Crisis

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has underlined the need for a “political solution” to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, saying the Islamic Republic continues to enhance consultations between Russia and the former Soviet state to achieve the goal.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a phone conversation with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijarto on Friday, during which the two diplomats exchanged views on the growing trend of bilateral relations, international issues of common concern and the Ukraine crisis.

Pointing to the conflict in Ukraine and stressing Iran's principled stance of rejecting wars and sanctions, Amirabdollahian said, “The Islamic Republic urges focus on a political solution to resolve the crisis in Ukraine, and in this regard, continues the efforts and consultations between Moscow and Kiev to strengthen and advance the political solution to speed up the resolution of this crisis.”

The top Iranian diplomat also said Tehran helps ensure energy security and food security across the world following the war in Ukraine, adding, “We have had discussions with Russian and Ukrainian authorities in this regard.”

Referring to the results of his Hungarian counterpart's trip to Tehran last year and the agreements reached between the two countries, Amirabdollahian said “development of relations with Hungary is a priority for the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

The Iranian foreign minister hailed the growing level of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, saying the establishment of a joint economic commission in the near future can provide a suitable platform for accelerating bilateral relations.



Szijarto, for his part, appreciated Iran's efforts to establish stability in the region and the world, saying, “We want peace in Ukraine and stability in the Middle East, and in this regard, we appreciate Iran's role in establishing stability in the region and holding the Astana summit in Tehran.”

The Hungarian foreign minister added, “As a neighboring country of Ukraine and due to the potential dangers caused by the continuation of this crisis and the continuation of conflicts in this country, including a wave of refugees and illegal immigration, we demand an end to the war as soon as possible.”

Elsewhere in the phone call, Szijarto emphasized the need to improve bilateral relations between Tehran and Budapest, saying that the Hungarian government has always supported Iran's balanced approach in international forums and in the further development of bilateral ties.

He expressed readiness for the expansion of relations in various fields with Iran, and welcomed the establishment of a joint economic commission.

Szijarto thanked Iran's attention to the issue of energy security and underscored the importance of energy for Europe and the world, saying, “Iran's stronger entry to the global energy market is in line with the interests of the world's entire countries and nations.”

Taliban to Buy 350,000 Tons Oil From Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Finance Ministry of the Taliban announced on Saturday that it has signed a contract to purchase 350,000 tons of oil from Iran.

According to the Finance Ministry of the Taliban, the contract has been signed in order to reduce the price of fuel in Afghanistan.

Earlier, a high-ranking Afghan delegation had traveled to Iran to discuss oil purchases, price, and transit of petroleum products to Afghanistan, the Taliban Ministry of Finance reported.

According to the ministry, a joint committee has been also formed to sign CNG contracts, construct petroleum pipelines for Afghanistan, as well as long-term contracts.

The report comes as the price of gasoline and fuel has unprecedentedly increased in Afghanistan's energy market.

Terrorists Not Achieved Goals By Scientists Assassination

TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani said that the cowardly assassination of heroes of Iran's scientific prowess didn't help behind-the-curtain terrorists to achieve their goals.

On the anniversary of the assassination of Martyr Darioush Rezaeinejad, one of the Iranian nuclear scientists who was assassinated on 23 July 2011, Nasser Kan'ani in a tweet on Saturday wrote, “Cowardly assassination of heroes of our scientific prowess didn't help behind-the-curtain terrorists to achieve their goals.”

“Peaceful nuclear industry of Iran owes its flourishing to Rezaeinejad & his fellows. Their blood & scientific accomplishments will be safeguarded,” he added.

Darioush Rezaeinejad was shot five times and martyred by motorcycle-riding gunmen in front of his home while he was with his wife after they picked up their daughter from kindergarten. His wife was also wounded in the attack.

The attack was described by an Israeli intelligence interviewed by Der Spiegel as “the first public operation by new Mossad chief Tamir Pardo”.

Between 2010 and 2012, four Iranian nuclear scientists (Masoud Alimohammadi, Majid Shahriari, Darioush Rezaeinejad and Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan) were assassinated, while another (Fereydoon Abbasi) was wounded in an attempted murder. In November 2020, another scientist (Mohsen Fakhrizadeh) was assassinated.

Biggest Solar Panel Production Line

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Ebrahim Raisi unveiled the country's biggest solar panel production line in Markazi Province, in central Iran.

Raisi did the unveiling at Mana Energy Pak Company in the city of Khomein in his 29th provincial trip since he took office last year.

The solar panel production line has a capacity of 500MW of electricity. Following the completion of its complementary phase, the line can produce panels capable of generating 1500MW of electricity.

Iran plans to make solar panel production fully indigenous by the Persian year of 1404.

Mana Energy Pak Company, a private firm, is also manufacturing Iran's biggest solar power plant (solar farm) in the city of Mahalat in Markazi Province with a capacity of generating 100MW of electricity per annum.

Iran to Export 400 Megawatts of Electricity to Iraq in 5 Years

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iraqi ministry of energy says Iran will export some 400 megawatts of electricity to Iraq in five years.

The electricity transfer is part of a strategic energy contract recently signed between Iran and Iraq, the ministry said.

However, the ministry added, the contract is not merely geared to supplying Iraq with electricity. Rather, it added, the deal serves to improve the quality of electricity and enhance Iraq's facilities used to meet local demand for power.

The contract has been drawn up in proportion to Iraq's needs, noted the ministry.

Iranian Energy Minister Aliakbar Mehrabian had already spoken of the conclusion of a comprehensive contract with Iraq in the energy sector.

“Moving to conclude long-term strategic contracts in the electricity sector is one of the pivots of the Iranian government's dynamic regional diplomacy which has had brilliant results for the country,” the Iranian minister added.

“Accordingly, ground has been prepared recently for the first long-term cooperation with Iraq in the power sector, and we have signed an important and strategic agreement with this country,” he said.

He noted Tehran and Baghdad have already worked together on a variety of areas, namely the construction and development of power plants as well as maintenance of power generating units.

U.S. Still Major Cause of Instability in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's president's special representative on Afghanistan says despite its shameful withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US is still the major cause of instability in the war-torn country whereas the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the formation of an all-inclusive government in the neighboring state to end the crisis.

Hassan Kazemi Ghomi expressed these views during an exclusive interview with IRNA in Islamabad on the sidelines of his official visit to Pakistan on Friday.

He said that it was the first anniversary of the US shameful exist from Afghanistan, which is still putting pressure on poor Afghan people through sanctions.

He noted that terrorism has been on the rise in Afghanistan and Daesh is establishing its foothold in the country with U.S. support that is trying to push the country into instability and sectarian violence from far away.

Hassan Kazemi Ghomi said that he had fruitful meetings with senior Pakistani officials and exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan.

He appreciated the constructive role played by Pakistan in Afghanistan and underscored that peace and stability in Afghanistan were essential prerequisites for the region's long-term stability and prosperity.

He further stated that Iran is pursuing a people-friendly policy in Afghanistan which is wise, adding that the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution once said that governments come and go but the nations stay forever.

He said the inclusive government in Afghanistan having all ethnic groups is the solution to the Afghan crisis.

The Iranian official was confident that an all-inclusive government in Afghanistan would not only bring stability to the country but would also encourage the regional states to play their role in the reconstruction of the war-torn country.

Call for Knowledge-Based Methods in Trade

TEHRAN (MNA) - During a visit to industrial and knowledge-based production units of Fars province on Saturday, Head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak emphasized the need to use knowledge-based methods in trade and production.

“Traditional methods of trade should be modified and efforts should be made to open new markets, this will become an engine for the development of the industries of the country's provinces,” the official said.

As the TPO portal reported, Peyman-Pak also stressed the need to complete the production chain in manufacturing units to prevent selling raw materials.

Referring to the remarks of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei regarding

the completion of the value chain of various products, the TPO head said: “The leader has repeatedly emphasized preventing the sale of raw materials.”

According to the official, the best way to have a complete value chain of a product is to establish specialized industrial parks for certain sectors, like the steel industry.

He stated that the export of raw materials should be prevented in order to be able to use the added value resulting from the completion of the value chain to develop the industries.

“With the formation of a specialized steel industrial park and the completion of the steel value chain, we can have a model for other industries to follow,” he added.

Iran Participates in Exhibition of Syrian Oil, Gas Industries

TEHRAN (IP) - The third exhibition of Syrian oil and petrochemical industries with the participation of 52 Syrian and foreign companies, including Iranians, kicked off in Damascus.

At the inauguration of the exhibition, which was held in the presence of the Iranian ambassador to Damascus, Mahdi Sobhani, the Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources of Syria, Bassam Tomeh, stated that the purpose of Damascus in holding such exhibitions is to attract investment from companies of friendly countries to find technologies from different countries to help the Syrian oil sector.

Mehdi Sobhani also highlighted that eight large Iranian companies have participated in the exhibition, among which some export their products to more than 80 countries that are active in oil, gas, petrochemicals, and oil equipment.

The Iranian envoy noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has good and valuable experience in oil, gas and petrochemicals and has reached self-sufficiency in these fields.

He also underlined that Iran could generally cooperate with Syrian companies and companies present in the exhibition.

The exhibition of Syrian oil and petrochemical industries is held for three days, and companies can participate and cooperate in Syrian projects by presenting their facilities and capabilities.

Important Role of Khazar Shipping Lines in Broadening Trade With Russia

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to Russia believes the role of Khazar Sea Shipping Lines Company is very important in developing trade relations with Russia.

Speaking on the sidelines of an international workshop for trade with Russia, Kazem Jalali in speaking with MANA news agency emphasized Caspian Sea (Khazar Sea) is the natural advantage and direct route of Iran for having access to Russian markets.

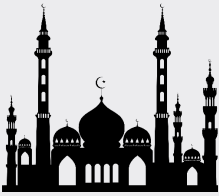
He noted that Khazar Sea Shipping Lines Company and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) have done so far great jobs regarding trade with Russia. He expressed hope that Khazar Sea Shipping Lines Company's fleet in this sea would be reinforced more than ever and stipulated that the fleet needs for reinforcement either by hiring ro-ro ships or bigger freight ships.

Jalali also said that one of the other requirements for broadening trade with Russia is the dredging of Volga River and said that Russian government has promised to start dredging operation next year , adding that but due to Iran's insistence, Russians may start the operation sooner in case the ground is provided.

On the purchase of vessels from Russia for reinforcing the fleet of Khazar Sea Company, he said the government will offer its financial support in this regard but currently the Russian side has no vessel to deliver it to the company and the talks are underway.

Jalali noted that in the past because of lack of strong determination, the trade between the two states had not been developed and now this determination exists but it needs easing the ground either in the bureaucratic or logistic fields.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:10

20:35

04:27

06:07

39. But the Unbelievers;- their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing: But he finds Allah (ever) with him, and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account.

40. Or (the Unbelievers' state) is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds: depths of darkness, one above another: if a man stretches out his hands, he can hardly see it! for any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!

Surah 24. Light (39 - 40)

Iran-Iraq Market To Become the Biggest In 15 Years

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of the Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce Yahya Ale-Ishaq believes in the next 15 years, the market of Iran and Iraq will become the biggest economic environment for both countries.

In a meeting with three trade delegations from different provinces of Iraq, Ale-Ishaq said that the condition of Iran and Iraq is today in a way that it paints a good picture for future economic activists of the two states. He added that Iraq in recent years has been Iran's first or second trade partner, adding that in the next 15 years, market of the two countries will create a big environment for their economic activists and any kind of trade and economic project will be possible. He reiterated that therefore anyone starts faster and becomes pioneer, he will be the most successful one in 15 years.

He pointed to the strong determination of senior officials of the two states for broadening economic ties, adding that in some certain periods, the trade volume between Iran and Iraq has hit \$13b and this figure is to be increased to \$30b, because in different industrial sectors of Iran and Iraq's market this capacity exists for boosting trade.

Ale-Ishaq added that currently there is no balance in trade between the two



countries and export is in favor of Iran and both sides have agreed to balance the trade and this is good opportunity for traders of the two countries.

Meanwhile Head of Iraq's Al-Amarah Chamber of Commerce Mr. Ala Vali Ali, for his part, said that Iran ranks third in earmarking trade tariffs, adding that therefore there is a tough competition between Iran and China and urged Iran to earmark more trade tariffs which will help the trade relation between Iran and Iraq to increase.

He stressed that Iraqi traders expect the trade volume with Iran to exceed \$24b, adding that materialization of this requires strong determination from both sides especially from Iran's private sector because he believes private sector in Iran is the main actor in broadening economic ties.

He reiterated that the goal behind the visit of this delegation to Iran is to remove obstacles in way of trade between the two states as well as acquaintance of Iraqis with Iranian companies and their products.

PR of ABFA of Isfahan Shines at 2nd Festival of Creative Ideas of Public Relations



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The public relations of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) won top award during the second festival on the creative ideas of public relations and received the national award for the innovative public relations.

The festival was the creativity-centered one in planning and implementing operational programs of public relations and innovation in production of contents in the media.

The second festival of innovative ideas of public relations was aimed at making acquainted the public relations with the principles and standards of innovation and designing top ideas of the public relations as well as culturalization and honoring the elites and top models in the field of public relations innovation.

The ceremony for honoring the winners of the festival was held at Avicenna Hall of Isfahan Medical Sciences University in presence of some veteran public relations field as well as university teachers and some officials with honoring the father of Iran's public relations Professor Hamid Notghipooro

It is worth noting that the public relations of ABFA of is the first public relations in the national water and wastewater companies with its 55 years of brilliant service has passed excellence stages successfully and with using the modern technologies and using innovative ideas try to experience more progress and reach brighter future.

Weekly Trade
On IME Exceeds
1.8m Tons

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,894,368 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$413m on its physical market.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,685,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$260m.

On this floor the IME sold 874,842 tons of cement, 531,000 tons of iron ore, 200,460 tons of steel, 63,500 tons of sponge iron,

710 tons of zinc, 12,650 tons of aluminum, 4,100 tons of copper, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate, 1,000 tons of coke and 6 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 203,116 tons of commodities worth more than \$148m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 74,818 tons of polymeric products, 4,200 tons of vacuum bottom, 32,000 tons of lube cut, 34,191 tons of chemicals, 110 tons of sulfur, 2,953 tons of base oil and 54,360 tons of bitumen.

The IME also traded within the same week 6,034 tons of commodities on its side market.



Market Development Concurrent With Attracting Customer Satisfaction

The CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) said: A business will never be successful without customer satisfaction, and therefore, customer satisfaction with the strategy of market studies, creativity and innovation in sales and branding are the priorities of Hormozgan Steel Company in sales development and profitability.

According to Irasin report, on the sidelines of the top management summit of business development with a customer-oriented approach, the CEO of HOSCO Mr. Attaollah Marufkhani said: In the business world, the category of customer satisfaction should never be ignored. Customer satisfaction is one of the most important factors in the success or failure of any business. Customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction has a direct impact on the profitability and growth of the business, and if we want to get the real satisfaction of our customers, we must always be one step ahead of the customers' mental image of our goods and services, and this is without creativity. And innovation is impossible. He added: Paying attention and following customer satisfaction and trying to improve it in order to create loyal customers who are considered as ambassadors of the company's brand, is considered very necessary for the company.

Marufkhani then stated: providing services on time with optimal quality can capture the hearts and souls of customers and differentiate the company's brand from others; Therefore, it is necessary to pay great attention to the quality of the company's products and services.

He said: Our effort is to investigate the issue of customer satisfaction and the reasons for its importance, in addition to improving customer satisfaction, we seek excellence in operations and continuous improvement in providing services and quality of the company's products.

Marufkhani added: Research shows that the cost of acquiring a new customer is several times higher than the cost of keeping a customer. This is why we do our best to keep a loyal customer and take special measures to get customer satisfaction in the best possible way.

He said: Acquiring new customers is a process that is not only more expensive than maintaining existing customers, but also much more difficult. Therefore, it is better to keep this in mind when organizing and managing customer service matters and give the best possible care and attention to our customers.

The CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company further stated: Paying attention to customers' trends actually shows our importance and attention to customers' needs and expectations. If we make paying



attention to the needs of customers among the priorities of our program, customers will have a high passion for the company's products and will trust the company's products, and this will certainly be very profitable for us. In order for customers to have an accurate evaluation of our company's products, it is necessary that we introduce products and services to them with complete honesty, help customers to make the right decision, and avoid forced sales of our products.

He emphasized: Paying attention to the sales trend is a negative factor in communicating with the customer and is in conflict with the customer's trend. If we want to gain customer trust, we should pay more attention to customer orientation. In addition to being a representative of our brand, a loyal customer can introduce our business and product to other customers and colleagues and attract new customers to our products. Apart from the tremendous impact it will have on our brand's reputation and popularity, this will ensure high profitability for the company.

He admitted: sales and marketing operations are the success criteria of all the company's activities. It means that the results of all the activities of design, production, distribution, and marketing result in sales activities, and ultimately, successful sales are equal to understanding customer needs, providing solutions to meet these needs, and obtaining an agreement with the customer to create a win-win relationship for the parties in this process and this cycle repeats again, more sales means more profitability.

Marufkhani continued: «Successful selling is the art and ability to

achieve all marketing efforts, which is manifested in the form of creating a market, maintaining the market or increasing the market share.» Due to the fact that nowadays sales has gone out of its traditional state and has become scientific, the approach of successful companies is focused on conducting market studies and research. Therefore, the marketing research department of the leading companies in the steel industry all over the world will be in charge of market studies and will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's products and services.

He went on to say: "Market studies determine sales strategies based on the capabilities of the sales force, determine potential customers and new target markets and how to penetrate the market, train the sales team to effectively communicate with customers and follow up on the sales process, the current market situation monitors and analyzes and finally provides solutions for innovation in products and services to obtain customer satisfaction."

He clarified: Customer loyalty means repeating his purchase from the company, which means more profit, which means the survival of the organization. In order to have loyal customers and to be able to increase their loyalty, we must pay attention to their demands. In other words, we can conduct surveys from them in order to best meet their demands and take advantage of their suggestions and criticisms in the next productions. Marufkhani stated: Another method is to choose loyal customers and consider special facilities for them. There are also other methods, all of which are focused on meeting the needs of customers. He added: In the world's business environment, customer satisfaction is equal to business success and increased profitability. For this reason, both small and large businesses try to keep their loyal customers as much as possible and develop their business by satisfying potential customers.

The CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company noted: A successful business listens to customer feedback, complaints and objections with complete calmness in order to achieve customer satisfaction. Nothing turns off customers more than an irresponsible and unresponsive business. For this reason, we must pay attention to use various systems for obtaining feedback and opinions from customers in our business. At the end, Marufkhani emphasized: Methods such as sending a survey form to the phone or email of customers, asking them to fill out a survey form at their place of business can be effective in receiving customer comments and criticisms and, as a result, customer satisfaction.

Under questioning on Tuesday from opposition lawmakers alleging use of Israeli-made Pegasus spyware, Digital Economy and Society Minister Chaivut Thanakamanusorn said he was aware surveillance software was being used, for national security and drug-related cases. But in an about-face on the final day of the debate, Chaivut said his comments were general observations not specifically about Thailand.

South Korea and the United States plan to conduct 11 joint field exercises including one of brigade-level this summer, the ministry said. It said they aim to hold more joint field exercises of regiment-level or higher.

"The fact that two parties at war - and still very much at war - have been able to negotiate an agreement of this kind... I think that's unprecedented," one U.N. official said.

The latest fighting started with a gunbattle late Thursday in Ain Zara, a densely populated neighbourhood of eastern Tripoli,

The four new legal procedures do not relate to Britain's new plans, but to the accusation that it has not implemented the protocol.

Northern Ireland is in the EU single market for goods, meaning imports from the rest of the United Kingdom are subject to customs declarations and sometimes require checks on their arrival.

Moscow has accused the West of dragging out the conflict by supplying Kyiv with more arms, and said the supply of longer-range weapons justifies Russia's attempts to expand control over more Ukrainian territory, beyond the eastern Donbas region, for its own protection.



The United States' ambassador to Sri Lanka, Julie Chung, said she had met the new president to express "grave concern" over the violence against protesters in Colombo on Friday.

Climate Change Drives Europe Towards Record Fire Year

PARIS (Dispatches) - The fires that have torched through Europe are on course to make 2022 a record year for forest loss on the continent, as scientists warn climate change is already contributing to ever fiercer blazes.

Fires in parts of France, Spain and Portugal have already burned more land so far this year than in all of 2021 -- some 517,881 hectares (5,000 km²), or the equivalent area of Trinidad and Tobago.

"The situation is much worse than expected, even if we were expecting temperature anomalies with our long-term forecasts," Jesus San Miguel, coordinator of the European Union's EFFIS satellite monitoring service, told AFP.

San Miguel said there could be worse to come, adding that the hallmarks of global heating were all over this year's fire season.

"Ignition is caused by people (but) the heatwave is critical, and clearly linked to climate change," he said. "The fire season used to be concentrated from July to September. Now we are getting longer seasons and very intense fire. We expect climate change to create higher fire conditions in Europe."

Temperatures have warmed just over 1.1 degrees Celsius since the industrial era, and the United Nations Says Earth is currently on track to warm some 2.7C this century.

This additional heat is enough to make the kind of heatwaves that baked Europe this week more likely to occur and to last longer when they do.

EFFIS said close to 40,000 hectares of forest in France have been lost to fire so far this year, more than the 30,000 that burned there in 2021.

Spain -- where more than 500 people died during a 10-day heatwave this month -- has seen 190,000 hectares go up in smoke this year, compared with 85,000 last year.

EFFIS said that Europe could end 2022 with more land burned by area than 2017, currently the worst recorded year for wildfires with nearly 1,000,000 hectares lost.

In all of 2021, 470,359 hectares of forest were lost to fires in Europe, mainly in Italy and Greece.

Yet those two countries have had a relatively good year in terms of wildfires: Italy has lost 25,000 hectares compared with more than 150,000 in 2021 and Greece has lost 7,800 compared with 130,000 a year ago.

This week temperatures topped 40C for the first time on record in Britain, where a relatively high 20,000 hectares have burned since January.

A study in February found that the proportion of July and August days of extreme fire risk in Britain would increase from 9 percent currently to 26 percent with 2C of warming.

Mark Parrington, head scientist at the EU's Copernicus atmospheric monitoring service, said climate change had already contributed to how long wildfires last when they break out.

"What is remarkable is just how long they burn," he told AFP. "This is not the kind of thing we typically see in Europe."

Hotter temperatures combined with near-unprecedented drought conditions across much of Europe contribute to making forests tinder dry, providing the ideal conditions for wildfires to start and then spread.

"There is a lot of fuel," said Parrington. "In central and southern Europe there is a clear upward trend for fire risk."

As well as damaging ecosystems and removing carbon-absorbing vegetation from the land, wildfires themselves contribute to climate change by emitting greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide.

Copernicus this week said fires in June and July in Spain and Morocco had produced some 1.3 million tons of CO₂ -- the highest of any equivalent period since records began in 2003.



Global Manufacturers See Chip Shortage Easing

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Hyundai Motor Co, factory robot builder ABB and Swedish fridge maker Electrolux see the semi-conductor chip shortage easing, executives said Thursday, in a boost for manufacturers after a long struggle for components.

An increased supply of chips will reduce one burden facing an industry that is also battling raw material price inflation, a tight energy market and rising interest rates that are throwing a dampener on consumer demand.

Hyundai turned in its best quarterly profit in eight years on Thursday as a weak won currency lifted the value of its earnings abroad and demand stayed strong for the South Korean automaker's high-margin sport utility vehicles (SUVs).

The carmaker was also boosted by the easing of a global chip shortage, which helped it resume overtime and weekend shifts at domestic plants. It now plans to step up vehicle production in the second half to meet consumer demand.

ABB, a big supplier to the automotive industry, said semiconductor chip bottlenecks were now easing as it reported its second quarter earnings.

The Switzerland-based company, which competes with Germany's Siemens (SIEGn.DE) and France's Schneider Electric, is seen as a barometer of the global economy with its control systems and motors used in the transport industry and factories.

It anticipates double digit-comparable revenue growth in the next three months as the increased supply of chips means it can deliver factory robots, motors and drives ordered by customers.

"The good thing to know, it is easing up," Chief Executive Bjorn Rosengren said about the semiconductor shortages which he said were "severe" at the start of the year.

"Commitments from our suppliers are significantly better," he told reporters.

Production capacity at chip manufacturers was increasing, Rosengren said, while demand from other sectors, such as consumer electronics, seemed to be lower, allowing more chips to be allocated to industrial customers like ABB. "I would not say the problems are over yet, but we have commitments for the second half which look quite good," he said.

Finnish telecom equipment maker Nokia said it expected the global semiconductor shortage to ease later this year, as it reported quarterly operating profit that beat market expectations.

"The overall direction in the semiconductor industry is positive at the moment, but we did continue to have constraints in the second quarter," Chief Executive Pekka Lundmark said.

Volkswagen last month forecast a strong second half of 2022 and progress in catching up with rival Tesla as easing chip shortages start to offset supply chain bottlenecks and rising costs.

ABB's Rosengren said he expected a slowdown in inflation, with commodities prices going down and interest rate hikes by central banks taking effect.

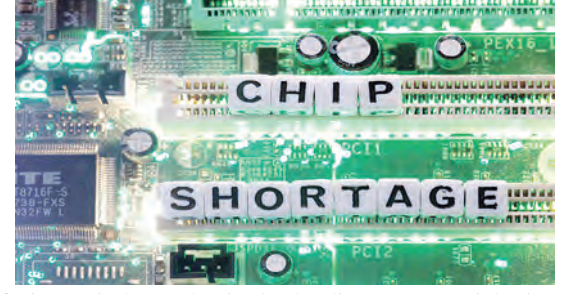
A resumption of gas supplies from Russia to Europe via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline after a maintenance outage also sent "good signals into the market," he said - although gas flows remain at levels below the pipeline's capacity.

But it was not all good news for companies who have already faced disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine and pandemic-related shutdowns in parts of China earlier this year.

Sweden's Electrolux missed second-quarter profit expectations on Thursday hit by supply chain problems and a loss in its North American business.

Europe's biggest home appliances maker said it expected those supply chain constraints to ease in the second half but warned of continued disruption risks ahead related to COVID-19 and the Ukraine crisis.

Still, Chief Executive Jonas Samuelson said the supply situation, including for semiconductors, looked better for the third and fourth quarters versus the preceding quarters.



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Uzbekistan Central Bank Cuts Interest Rates by 100 bps

TASHKENT (Reuters) - Uzbekistan's central bank cut its policy rate by another 100 basis points to 15%, citing a "relative stabilization of the macroeconomic situation due to the reduction of short-term external shocks".

The more stable economic outlook, coupled with a government plan to delay the liberalization of regulated energy prices, increases the probability that inflation at the end of 2022 will be close to the lower end of the bank's 12-14% forecast, the central bank said in its policy statement. The rate rise followed a 100 bps cut in June. In March the bank had lifted its policy rate to 17% from 14% in one move after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent Western sanctions destabilised financial markets across the former Soviet Union.



ECB Hikes Interest Rates in Race To Tame Runaway Inflation

LONDON (Dispatches) - The European Central Bank raised interest rates by more than expected as concerns about runaway inflation trumped growth considerations, even while the euro zone economy reels from the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The ECB raised its benchmark deposit rate by 50 basis points to zero percent, breaking its own guidance for a 25 basis point move as it joined global peers in jacking up borrowing costs. It was the euro zone central bank's first rate hike for 11 years.

Policymakers also agreed to provide extra help for the 19-country currency bloc's more indebted nations – among them Italy – with a new bond purchase scheme intended to cap the rise in their borrowing costs and so limit financial fragmentation.

Ending an eight-year experiment with negative interest rates, the ECB lifted its main refinancing rate too, to 0.50%, and promised more hikes possibly as soon as its Sept. 8 meeting.

At a news conference, ECB President Christine Lagarde fielded repeated questions about how the ECB came to diverge from its original plans for tightening, and how the new yield-capping tool fitted into its core inflation-fighting mandate. "Price pressure is spreading across more and more sectors," Lagarde said. "We expect inflation to remain undesirably high for some time." She listed driving factors including higher food and energy costs and wage rises.

Lagarde said ECB policymakers had unanimously decided that the increasingly evident "materialization" of inflation risks to the economy, together with their agreement to support indebted nations if needed, justified the bigger rate hike.

"We decided on balance that it was appropriate to take a larger step towards exiting from negative interest rates."

The ECB had for weeks guided markets to expect a 25 basis point increase but sources close to the discussion said 50 basis points was put in play shortly before the meeting as indicators pointed to a further deterioration of the inflation outlook.

With inflation already approaching double-digit territory, it is at risk of getting entrenched well above the ECB's 2% target, with any gas shortage over the coming winter likely to push prices even higher, perpetuating rapid price growth.

Economists polled by Reuters had predicted a 25 basis point increase but most said the bank should actually hike by 50 basis points, lifting its record-low minus 0.5% deposit rate to zero.

The euro climbed as much as 0.8% to \$1.0261, having traded at \$1.0198 just before the statement but turned negative on the day as Lagarde spoke.

The new bond purchase scheme, called the Transmission Protection Instrument (TPI), is intended to cap the rise in borrowing costs across the currency bloc as policy tightens.

"The scale of TPI purchases depends on the severity of the risks facing policy transmission," the ECB said in a statement. "The TPI will ensure that the monetary policy stance is transmitted smoothly across all euro area countries."

As ECB rates rise, borrowing costs increase disproportionately for countries like Italy, Spain or Portugal as investors demand a bigger premium to hold their debt.

"The ECB is capable of going big for that," Lagarde said.

S.Africa Gets Biggest Rate Hike in Two Decades

JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - South Africa's central bank delivered its biggest interest rate hike in two decades to try to curb inflation, which surged to a 13-year high in June despite four previous hikes.

Governor Lesetja Kganyago said the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) was determined to act on rising inflation and was cognizant of the risks.

"We hear the cries of South Africans that inflation is eroding their incomes, ... we are determined as the SARB to protect the incomes of South Africans," Kganyago told a news conference.

The latest hike, by 75 basis points (bps), takes the SARB's repurchase rate to 5.50%.

Economists had predicted a 50 bps increase, so the rand rallied after the larger hike was announced.

Thursday's decision was split, with three monetary policy committee (MPC) members preferring the 75 bps rise, one a 100 bps increase and a last member a 50 bps lift.

It was the fifth MPC meeting in a row to raise the rate, in a hiking cycle that started in November last year. Initially the MPC moved in 25 bps increments before a 50 bps increase at the last meeting in May.

The SARB sees headline consumer inflation this year of 6.5%, up from 5.9% in May and compared with an actual reading of 7.4% in June. It revised upwards its 2022 economic growth forecast to 2.0% from 1.7% previously, but lowered its growth forecasts for 2023 and 2024.

The SARB said its policy aimed to stabilize inflation expectations more firmly around the mid-point of its target range of between 3% and 6%, and to increase confidence the target will be hit in 2024.

Inflation Surge Pushes Up Britain's Budget Deficit

LONDON (Dispatches) - A surge in debt costs - pushed up by soaring inflation to twice their previous monthly peak - added to Britain's budget deficit in June, which was its highest since April 2021, data showed.

The Office for National Statistics said public sector net borrowing excluding state-owned banks rose to 22.879 billion pounds (\$27.4 billion) last month from 12.560 billion pounds in May.

A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to a deficit of 23 billion pounds.

The figures showed Britain racked up debt interest of 19.4 billion pounds in June alone, more than double the previous record.

The ONS said the leap in debt costs reflected a big April increase in the retail price index gauge of inflation, which is the benchmark for index-linked government bonds.

The uplift applied in June to these linkers - which represent roughly a third of the stock of British government bonds - was 16.7 billion pounds.

Over the first three months of the 2022/23 financial year starting in April, Britain has borrowed 55.4 billion pounds.

While this is 5.7 billion pounds less than over the same period last year, it represents a roughly 3.6 billion pounds overshoot versus forecasts made in March by the Office for Budget Responsibility watchdog.

The OBR warned that with inflation expected to peak even higher than previously thought, further spikes in debt spending were on the cards.

"With several external forecasters now predicting that the CPI measure of inflation could reach 12% in October - over 3 percentage points higher than the peak in our March forecast - further significant upside surprises in debt interest spending can be expected through the year," the OBR said.

Ruth Gregory, senior UK economist at Capital Economics, a consultancy, said the overshoot of the deficit compared to the OBR's forecasts "may limit the ability of the next Prime Minister to provide more relief for households."

The balance between tax and spending has been hotly debated between the two remaining candidates in the race to replace Boris Johnson as prime minister.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has promised immediate tax cuts, something the other contender, former finance minister Rishi Sunak, says risks fuelling inflation.

In response to the data, finance minister Nadhim Zahawi said he recognised there were risks to the public finances, including from high inflation which struck a 40-year high last month.

U.S. Probes Huawei Over Equipment Near Missile Silos

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Biden administration is investigating Chinese telecoms equipment maker Huawei over concerns that U.S. cell towers fitted with its gear could capture sensitive information from military bases and missile silos that the company could then transmit to China, two people familiar with the matter said.

Authorities are concerned Huawei could obtain sensitive data on military drills and the readiness status of bases and personnel via the equipment, one of the people said, requesting anonymity because the investigation is confidential and involves national security.

The previously unreported probe was opened by the Commerce Department shortly after Joe Biden took office early last year, the sources said, following the implementation of rules to flesh out a May 2019 executive order that gave the agency the investigative authority.

The agency subpoenaed Huawei in April 2021 to learn the company's policy on sharing data with foreign parties that its equipment could capture from cell phones, including messages and geolocation data, according to the 10-page document seen by Reuters.

The Commerce Department said it could not "confirm or deny ongoing investigations." It added that: "protecting U.S. persons' safety and security against malign information collection is vital to protecting our economy and national security."

Huawei did not respond to a request for comment. The company has strongly denied U.S. government allegations that it could spy on U.S. customers and poses a national security threat.

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not respond to the specific allegations. In an emailed statement, it said: "The U.S. government abuses the concept of national security and state power to go all out to suppress Huawei and other Chinese telecommunications companies without providing any solid proof that they constitute a security threat to the U.S. and other countries."

Reuters could not determine what actions the agency might take against Huawei.

Eight current and former U.S. government officials said the probe reflects lingering national security concerns about the company, which was already hit with a slew of U.S. restrictions in recent years.

If the Commerce Department determines Huawei poses a national security threat, it could go beyond existing restrictions imposed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the U.S. telecoms regulator.

Using broad new powers created by the Trump administration, the agency could ban all U.S. transactions with Huawei, demanding U.S. telecoms carriers that still rely on its gear quickly remove it, or face fines or other penalties, a number of lawyers, academics and former officials interviewed by Reuters said.

Japan Posts \$10b Trade Gap In June as Energy Imports Surge



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan ran a trade deficit for the 11th straight month in June as high energy and other commodity costs pushed up imports, highlighting growing economic pressures from a sharply declining yen and global inflation.

Imports surged 46.1% in the year to June, Ministry of Finance data showed, slightly above a median market forecast for a 45.7% gain in a Reuters poll.

That outpaced a 19.4% year-on-year rise in exports in the same month, resulting in a 1.3838 trillion yen (\$9.99 billion) trade deficit, the 11th straight month of shortfalls.

June's deficit was smaller than the 1.510 trillion yen gap expected in a Reuters poll.

Imports swelled due to a surge in shipments of oil from Saudi Arabia and coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Australia. Imports of LNG from Malaysia and coal from Indonesia posted triple-digit surges, the data showed.

"Import volumes outpaced export volumes across Q2 so net trade should have been a small drag on Q2 GDP (gross domestic product) growth," said Marcel Thieliant, senior Japan economist at Capital Economics.

"Car exports remain the Achilles heel of Japan's manufacturing sector as they were only up 0.4% year-on-year, but that marked at least a pick-up from the 7.9% year-on-year fall in May," he added.

By region, exports to China, Japan's largest trading partner, rose 8.3% in the 12 months to June, recovering from two months of declines on stronger shipments of chip parts. China-bound exports of cars posted a sharp 23.2% year-on-year decline, the data showed.

Shipments bound for the United States, the world's largest economy, gained 15.7% in June, thanks to stronger exports of medical products.

The Bank of Japan is expected to maintain its ultra-loose monetary policy later on Thursday, a commitment that could lead to further falls in the yen.

While the yen's slide against the U.S. dollar and other currencies this year has pushed up import costs, Japan's economy is still projected to have returned to growth in the second quarter following a decline in January-March.

U.S. Jobless Benefits Rolls Grow

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The number of Americans enrolling for unemployment benefits rose for a third straight week last week to the highest in eight months and a closely watched gauge of factory activity slumped this month, the newest indications the U.S. economy is slowing under the weight of rising interest rates and high inflation.

The latest data are likely to further fan fears of a recession that were already on the rise with the Federal Reserve lifting interest rates at the most rapid pace in decades to blunt inflation running at the highest levels since the 1980s. A Reuters poll released on Thursday showed economists assign a median probability of recession in the next 12 months at 40%, up from 25% in the previous month's survey.

In the week ended July 16, initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 7,000 to a seasonally adjusted 251,000, the highest since last November, from an unrevised 244,000 a week earlier, the Labor Department said on Thursday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 240,000 applications for the latest week.

Since bottoming out at a near-record low in March, the level of new claims has been grinding upward and is now 85,000 higher than that low point. Meanwhile, the number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid rose by 51,000 - the largest increase since November - to 1.384 million during the week ending July 9, the claims report showed. That was the highest number since April.

The weekly claims report is viewed as among the most timely indicators of the health of the job market and has been closely watched for signs that a clutch of high-profile corporate layoff announcements might be a harbinger of a larger wave of job cuts.



Even with the recent pickup in new claims and in the ranks of ongoing benefits recipients, both remain relatively low by historic measures.

Continuing claims, for instance, had averaged about 1.7 million in the year before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current level, at more than 300,000 below that figure, indicates those who lose their jobs are getting new ones in short order, Jefferies economists Thomas Simons and Aneta Markowska said in a client note.

"Several large companies have indicated that they intend to lay off various numbers of workers, but the claims data does not suggest that much of this layoff activity has begun in any meaningful way," they said. "If it has, then the negative impact is overwhelmed by continued strong demand for labor by other firms."

Scores of Cities Marked as Very High-Risk for Covid Infection

TEHRAN (IFP) - Dozens of Iranian cities have been marked as “very high-risk” locations as far as the coronavirus infection is concerned. The latest report released by the health ministry singles out 57 cities as the very high-risk ones followed by 86 cities which fall into the “high-risk” category. In the same report, 199 cities are marked as “rather high-risk” ones and 106 as “ordinary,” suggesting there is little risk of the spread of the disease for now. The Covid-19 virus reared its ugly head again in Iran in recent weeks following a sharp drop in the number of fatalities and cases.



Brazil’s Presidential Hopefuls Court the Evangelical Vote

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Four years ago, 70 percent of evangelical Protestant Brazilians voted for President Jair Bolsonaro. But according to recent polls, their support has shifted. With his electoral campaign to reconquer Brazil in full swing, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is avidly courting this voting bloc, which is one of Brazilian politics’ biggest prizes and could determine the winner of the next election.

In Rio de Janeiro’s bustling Floriano Square in the city center, residents hurry along to the sound of street vendors and passing tram cars. In this busy setting, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God might almost go unnoticed. However, some 50 people have passed through its doors to worship at lunchtime. Most are women, some still in their work uniforms, and some of whom appear to go into a trance. “Deliver yourself from vice, call on God,” bellows the pastor, mic in hand, in a resounding speech that reverberates up through the roof.

With three months to go before elections in Brazil, most of the faithful become agitated when the issue of political interference in the church – and vice versa – is raised. “There’s no room for politics inside the church. Only Jesus matters here,” insists a woman in her 40s who has come to worship.

However, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of Christ, founded in 1977, is closely linked to the Brazilian Republican Party (PRB). In 2020, two of Bolsonaro’s sons, Flavio (a senator) and Carlos (a city councillor in Rio), as well as his ex-wife Rogéria Braga, rejoined the party.

“Talking about politics during worship doesn’t bother me. If the pastor raises campaign issues, I think that’s absolutely fine,” says Thiago, a 36-year-old mechanic who was leaving the church. Like 70 percent of evangelicals at the time, Thiago voted for the current president in 2018. He intends to vote the same way this October. “Here I find a discussion about the family, something I also like about Bolsonaro,” he says.

The conservative evangelical electorate played a decisive role in winning Bolsonaro the presidency even though the president professes to be a Catholic. Some celebrity evangelical pastors even turned him into a “messiah” figure.

“Jair Bolsonaro used very strong religious rhetoric built around evangelical ideas,” says Institute of Religious Studies (ISER) researcher Magali Cunha. “He created an image. He was baptised by an evangelical pastor in Israel and his own wife is evangelical. He’s also forged ties with the country’s most important church leaders.”

Since Bolsonaro’s election, public opinion has come to associate evangelicals with the far right and conservative values. For Cunha, it is important to remember that this community does not form a single homogenous bloc but embraces multiple and contradictory realities. “There is no such thing as the evangelical vote. It’s a myth. Evangelicals voted for Lula and [former president] Dilma Rousseff for years because they recognised themselves in their proposals. Now, a part of them continues to be loyal to Bolsonaro but it has decreased considerably.”

Only a 10-minute walk from Floriano Square in Rua Carioca, black railings completely conceal the Brazilian Baptist Church’s entrance between the music shops. Inside, the decor is basic. The few dozen plastic chairs are empty on this Friday morning in Rio. Pastor Marco Davi de Oliveira is an imposing figure even with a broad smile on his lips. His church claims to be progressive. It welcomes worshippers of all social backgrounds and all sexual orientations every Sunday. Some 80 percent of church members are Black.

“We must redefine the word ‘evangelical’, which has become pejorative in Brazil,” he says. “Here, we’re evangelical but we also fight for justice, equality and inclusion. That’s also being evangelical.” Four years on, evangelical support for the far-right president is slipping. According to a Datafolha poll published in June, only 36 percent of evangelicals intend to vote for him again this year.

The context of this campaign is different, Cunha says. “In 2018, Jair Bolsonaro was



an unknown. Now Brazilians know who he is. Religious leaders who are loyal to him will not be able to convince voters with the same ease.”

Bolsonaro’s tenure has provoked anger and disappointment for part of the evangelical community, the researcher says.

“Evangelicals in Brazil are mostly poor, Black women living in the marginalised neighbourhoods of large cities. These are the people who have suffered the most from this government. People are suffering from inflation, hunger, unemployment. Most have lost a lot of loved ones to the pandemic.” Covid-19 has killed more than 675,000 people in Brazil, the second-highest mortality rate in the world after the United States.

Liberal pastor de Oliveira says a shift in voting intentions is not “the consequence of wonderful work by the left, but a consequence of people going hungry”.

Galloping inflation and the economic crisis remain challenges for Bolsonaro’s government, affecting tens of millions of Brazilians. Some 33 million people face hunger and more than half the population, or 125 million, live in a state of food insecurity. Brazil once again appeared on the UN’s “hunger map” in 2020, after having successfully tackled widespread food insecurity under Rousseff’s Workers’ Party government. Lula, currently leading in the polls, is looking to reconquer the electorate by any means necessary. The Workers’ Party leader has notably organised several meetings with influential pastors such as Paulo Marcelo Schallenberger of the Assembly of God church. By choosing Geraldo Alckmin, a moderate right-wing Catholic who has good relations with conservatives and evangelicals, as his running mate, Lula is making inroads into this community.

He is avoiding controversial topics like abortion and instead focusing on economic issues like inflation and unemployment. The Workers’ Party even had a short-lived podcast aimed at attracting evangelical voters (the project was shelved due to disagreements within the party).

Lula successfully courted the evangelical electorate during his two winning campaigns in 2002 and 2006, just as Rousseff did in 2010 and 2014. However, winning over other evangelicals is not a foregone conclusion, according to de Oliveira.

“For a long time, the left’s mistake has been to think that evangelicals didn’t represent anything,” he says.

Three months before the election, evangelicals are being courted by political parties across the spectrum. The community represents 30 percent of the electorate and has taken root across the country. “When Lula and Bolsonaro talk to evangelicals, they know they are talking to the whole of Brazil,” Cunha says.

Pastor de Oliveira is convinced this voting bloc will be decisive. “Whoever succeeds in conquering the evangelicals will win this election,” he says.

Revived Qatar Order Caps Boeing Air Show Fightback

FARNBOROUGH (Dispatches) - Boeing secured a revived order for 25 of its 737 MAX 10 airliners from Qatar Airways on Thursday, as the return of Britain’s Farnborough Airshow this week offered hope for the largest version of the planemaker’s troubled best-seller.

Two fatal 737 MAX crashes, an almost two-year worldwide grounding of the plane, and then the global pandemic have left the aviation industry reeling, with rebounding demand now stretching airlines, airports and parts supply.

Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker signed the MAX deal in front of reporters at a ceremony delayed by nail-biting last-minute negotiations.

The order, worth \$3.4 billion at list prices, capped a largely one-sided show dominated by Boeing’s efforts to shore up the MAX 10, whose future lies partly in the hands of regulators and Congress.

Iran Foreign...

FROM PAGE 1

Security issues and monitoring of a country’s borders without being present in space are slow and very incomplete, he further noted. It is essential to make use of the capacities of space in maintaining [full] security in the borders of the country, he pointed out.

He underlined the role of being active in space in monitoring meteorological conditions and dust storms. Elsewhere in his remarks, he touched upon the effectiveness of space-related activities in managing subsidence, drought, and water resources as well as identifying unlawful constructions in mountains and forest resources and control of biological species. Iran launched its first satellite Omid (Hope) in 2009 and its Rasad (Observation) satellite was sent into orbit in 2011. Earlier in April 2022, Iranian Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT), Issa Zare’pour, said that the Islamic Republic of Iran will be turned into one of the main exporters of space-related services in the region in the very near future.

Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 1

Zardari further expressed Pakistan’s keen desire to further strengthen relations with Iran, which are deeply rooted in common faith, shared history, and cultural affinities, calling for regular bilateral exchanges to advance economic and trade relations, energy cooperation, regional security, and connectivity.

The Iranian diplomat, for his part, said Iran attaches significance to its relations with Pakistan. He commended Pakistan’s constructive role in Afghanistan and emphasized that peace and stability in the war-ravaged country are essential prerequisites for lasting stability and prosperity in the region.

In another meeting between Kazemi Qomi and his Pakistani counterpart Mohammad Sadiq, the two sides discussed the evolving situation in Afghanistan and highlighted the importance of pursuing continuous and practical engagement.

The Iranian and Pakistani diplomats also reviewed various trade and connectivity initiatives in the region.

Iran, Russia Expanding ICT Ties

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian minister of information and communications technology says Iran and Russia are set to take the cooperation between their knowledge-based ICT companies to a whole new level.

Issa Zarepour discussed the achievements of his two-day trip to Russia, saying several cooperation agreements were signed to help flourish the bilateral digital economic relations, which is expected to open new horizons for both countries.

He said Iranian ICT companies are filling the vacuum in Russia after Western companies walked out of the country as a protest against the conflict in Ukraine.

Zarepour said, “Iranian knowledge-based companies, by relying on indigenous knowledge and skills, have reached full potential and maturity, and now have a considerable share of international markets by producing a variety of products in the telecommunications, hardware and software industries, network control, digital industries, and the ICT industry.”

He added Iranian experts in the field of communications and information technology, reeling from US-led Western sanctions like other sectors, have turned threats into opportunities by opening up new markets for Iranian products and equipment.

The Iranian minister said, as both Iran and Russia have been targeted by harsh Western punitive measures, removing banking obstacles is indispensable in expanding the digital economic ties between the two countries.

Israeli...

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Pointing to the strong support of Iran for all oppressed nations across the world, especially for Palestinians, he dubbed the Zionist regime as “number one enemy of Muslims”.

The regime was established based on oppression and aggression and has not spared any oppression to secure its existence, he said, noting that the regime will perish just as all sorts of oppression have the same destiny.

For his part, the Omani commander said that foreigners only consider their own interests by being present in the region.

The security of the region, he maintained, is provided by regional countries in the first place

Many countries covet the great wealth of this region, he said, adding that increasing the level of ties in line with strengthening regional security and stability will limit foreigners’ intentions.

A Lie Has No Legs

FROM PAGE 1

Although the United States claimed that the shooting down of the Iranian plane by its Navy was an act in self-defense, it was not true.

As the Pentagon claimed, the plane had not, moved “outside the prescribed commercial air route,” nor had it been “descending” towards USS Vincennes at “high speed.”

The declassified files quoted an article by journalist Solomon Hughes in the Morning Star as saying that the British Foreign Office also developed a “line to take” which was consistent with Thatcher’s public support of the U.S.

The Foreign Office emphasized that “the USS Vincennes issued warnings to an approaching unidentified aircraft but received no response,” and claimed that the U.S. was responding to “an Iranian attack”.

The Foreign Office knew it was isolated in its support for the U.S. An internal memo written in July 1988 noted that “only the UK included a reference to the [U.S.] right to self-defense, thereby attracting criticism from Iran and other countries.”

The U.S. government has never formally apologized for the attack. In 1990, the captain of the cruiser, William C. Rogers, was cleared of any wrongdoing and was even awarded the Legion of Merit for “exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service.”

This has not been the only lie of the U.S. that was disclosed and the interesting point is that its closest ally UK has officially exposed truth behind the lie. There are several other lies attributed by the West to Tehran which have been raised by the U.S. and its allies and Western media have spread them in the world.

The West and mainly the U.S. has always resorted to lies before implementing their vicious intentions in other countries and the independent countries are mainly the targets of spread of lies of the West.

The Persian Gulf war by the U.S. in the 90s happened just because of a false claim against Iraq as Baghdad had been accused of having weapons of mass destruction. After the invasion on Iraq, no weapons of mass destruction were found to once again show the world the U.S. is a genuine liar.

In recent years whenever the U.S. has failed to impress the regional countries or the world, it has resorted to lies which have been mainly for Iranophobia. Iran’s peaceful nuclear plan is one of the issues that the U.S. has tried to overshadow it by resorting to different lies but the world will soon realize that whatever the U.S. has claimed is wrong as the proverb says, the truth will come out no matter how long the U.S. and Western media try to hide it.

Iran, Russia China...

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“It was clear from the start that [Biden’s visit] will be fruitless since [US presidents] have not been successful in shaking the nations down,” he said.

On the contrary, in the Tehran summit, “no country gave orders to others, but the three cooperate with one another while [preserving] their dignity and power,” he said.

Velayati also enumerated Washington’s failed attempts to advance its agenda in the West Asia and elsewhere in the continent, namely Iraq, Afghanistan, Gaza, Yemen, and Syria.

In the case of Syria, the Western states, along with some “uninformed” regional states, mobilized all their resources to eliminate Syria from the regional resistance axis and turn it into a country similar to Libya, but to no avail.

He slammed the U.S. military’s continued occupation of resource-rich regions of eastern Syria.

“The presence of enemies on a country’s soil in anyway is condemned. We will see that the struggles of the Syrian nation and government will eventually force America to leave these regions,” he said.

The Leader’s aide also pointed to Ayatollah Khamenei’s warning for Turkey not to launch a military operation in northern Syria, saying such military action will naturally draw a response from the Syrian army.

Such a military operation “will not only fail to put out the fire of war but will instead fan the flames,” he said.

Velayati said Russia decided to wage war on Ukraine only when NATO reneged on its promises to the ex-Soviet Union that there would be buffer zone between their borders.

He pointed to Ukraine’s inclination toward the Western military alliance and a 2014 coup in the country, which toppled a legitimate government and installed instead a pro-West administration there.

Russia has repeatedly said that NATO reaching its borders was a redline.



Nottingham Forest Sign Free Agent Lingard

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nottingham Forest have signed former Manchester United midfielder Jesse Lingard on a free transfer, the promoted Premier League club said.

Lingard, a United academy graduate, ended his 22-year association with the Old Trafford club following the expiry of his contract last month.

The 29-year-old England international, who made his United debut in 2014, scored 35 goals in more than 200 games for them.

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Former Germany Striker Seeler Dies Aged 85

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Uwe Seeler, who captained West Germany in their 1966 World Cup final defeat by England, died at the age of 85, the country's football association (DFB) and his former club Hamburg said.

The prolific striker scored 43 goals in 72 games for West Germany between 1954-70 and was captain for 40 of them.

DFB President Bernd Neuendorf said Germany had lost one of its greatest players.

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SPORTS

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Thiem Soars Into Gstaad Semifinals

GSTAAD (Dispatches) - Dominic Thiem's comeback stepped up a gear at the EFG Swiss Open Gstaad, where he overcame Peruvian qualifier Juan Pablo Varillas 6-4, 6-3 to reach his first tour-level semi-final of the season.

In a dominant performance, the Austrian pulled the 26-year-old around the court as he took heavy cuts at the ball to dictate the baseline exchanges, advancing after one hour and 47 minutes in their first ATP Head2Head meeting.

"I played a good match yesterday and I was able to back it up today," Thiem said in his on-court interview. "Some things I didn't like that much. I failed to serve out at [5-2], but it was also the nerves a little bit because it is my first semi-final in one and a half years. I need the points to go back up the rankings. I was happy I was able to break the nerves."

The former World No. 3, who missed the second half of last season due to injury, reached the quarter-finals in Bastad last week, earning his first tour-level win of the year in the process.

The 28-year-old has backed up that run in Gstaad and will next face second seed Matteo Berrettini or Spaniard Pedro Martinez. It is the first time Thiem has reached the semi-finals at a tour-level event since May 2021, when he enjoyed a run to the last four in Madrid.

"Tomorrow I can go into the match free, trying to do my best," said Thiem, who is up to No. 195 in the Pepperstone ATP Live Rankings. "When I travelled to Bastad last week I didn't expect to reach the quarter-finals there and then the semi-finals here. It is really, really good and I am happy with the progress."

The 17-time tour-level titlist, who saved one match point in his first-round victory over Hugo Gaston, is aiming to triumph at the ATP 250 clay-court event for the second time, having lifted the trophy in his previous appearance in 2015.

Barcelona Sell Further 15% of Liga TV Rights To U.S. Fund

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona announced they had sold a further 15 per cent of their La Liga television rights to U.S. investment group Sixth Street for the next 25 years.

The Catalan giants had already sold 10 per cent of their league TV rights to the same group last week for €207.5 million.

"In total, Sixth Street will receive 25 per cent of the La Liga club's television rights for the next 25 years," Barca said in a statement.

The club did not say how much they had been paid for the extra 15 per cent, but Spanish press reports put the amount at around 400 million euros.

The agreement will help the five-time European champions continue to make new signings for next season after the arrivals of Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha.

Barcelona have been desperately trying to raise capital after struggling financially in recent years.

Last August, Joan Laporta, who returned as Barcelona president the previous November, said an audit had uncovered total club debts of €1.35 billion.

The club let Lionel Messi leave last June, saying they could not afford to keep him even at a reduced salary.

Pakistan Celebrates Its First Woman to Summit K2

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan on Friday celebrated Samina Baig becoming the first woman from the country to summit K2, the world's second highest mountain.

The 31-year-old reached the top of the 8,611-metre (28,251-foot) peak early Friday as part of a seven-member local team, and was followed hours later by a second Pakistani woman, Dubai-based Naila Kiani.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised Baig and Kiani, with his office tweeting that both "have emerged as symbols of courage and bravery".

Bangladeshi female climber Wasfia Nazreen also became the first person ever from her country to scale the mountain on Friday, her expedition told AFP



Meanwhile Carlos Alcaraz produced a burst of untouchable clay-court tennis at the Hamburg European Open to overcome a slow start in a 7-6(4), 6-3 victory against Filip Krajinovic.

While the Serbian matched the top seed blow for blow in the opening set and served for the set at 5-4, Alcaraz began to find his top level at the crucial moment. He saved four set points in that 5-4 game, then reeled off five straight points to win the tie-break from 2/4.

"I had to play one of my best matches on Tour. I'm really happy with my performance," Alcaraz said after the victory.

In a clean match from both sides, Krajinovic hit five more winners than Alcaraz, finishing with a pristine 27-to-15 winners-to-unforced-errors count. "It was pretty tough. Filip was playing unbelievable. He played really well from the beginning until the end."

Down 2/4 in the tie-break, Alcaraz went from defense to offense as he punished a floated Krajinovic volley to get back on serve. That escape opened the floodgates for a barrage of Alcaraz winners which sealed the set and shifted the momentum firmly onto his side.

The Spaniard raced to a double-break advantage at 4-1 in the second set behind more heavy hitting. Despite giving one break back, Alcaraz closed out the match with ease to set up a quarter-final showdown with Karen Khachanov — a rematch of their Roland Garros fourth-round meeting, which Alcaraz won in straight sets. The seventh-seeded Khachanov defeated Fabio Fognini 6-3, 7-5 earlier on Thursday in Hamburg.

Djokovic To Play For Team Europe At Laver Cup

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tennis fans are used to seeing Rafa Nadal, Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer and Andy Murray fight tooth and nail to beat each other at the Grand Slams but the "Big Four" are set to play together in the same team for the first time at the Laver Cup in London.

Wimbledon champion Djokovic was named as the fourth member of the six-man Team Europe, the 35-year-old Serb joining his long-time rivals at the fifth edition of the ATP-sanctioned event from Sept. 23-25.

Named after Australian great Rod Laver, the three-day team event pits six of Europe's top players against six from the rest of the world.

"It's the only competition where you can play in a team environment with guys that you're normally competing against and to be joining Rafa, Roger and Andy — three of my biggest all-time rivals — it's going to be a truly unique moment in the history of our sport," Djokovic said in a statement.

Nadal, Djokovic, Federer and Murray have dominated men's tennis over the last two decades, winning 66 Grand Slam titles between them.



Mane Named African Footballer of Year Again

RABAT (Dispatches) - Sadio Mane was named African Footballer of Year after a season in which he kicked the winning penalty for Senegal as they claimed their first Africa Cup of Nations title and repeated the feat when they secured World Cup qualification.

Mane finished ahead of Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah, his former Liverpool team

mate, and fellow Senegalese Edouard Mendy in the voting.

It was the second time the 30-year-old Mane, who last month joined German champions Bayern Munich, has won the award.

He was the last winner of the award in 2019. The Confederation of African Football did not hold it over of the last two years and has now changed to recognising accomplishments over the season rather than the calendar year.

Mane converted the winning penalty in February as Senegal beat Egypt in the Cup of Nations final in Yaounde, proving the talisman as his country took a first ever African title.

Six weeks later, he struck the decisive spot-kick as Senegal again edged Egypt in a penalty shootout to win a place at the World Cup finals in Qatar.

He overshadowed Salah on both occasions, although the pair shared success with Liverpool in the FA Cup and League Cup and helped them reach the Champions League final.

Mane also finished ahead of Salah in the 2019 voting. Salah, 30, won the award in 2017 and 2018 with Mane second on both occasions.

"I dedicate this award to the youth of Senegal. I'm very emotional and don't have the words to express how I'm feeling," Mane told the audience at the CAF awards in Rabat after flying in from Washington DC, where he scored in a pre-season friendly for his new club on Wednesday.

Mendy, who plays for Chelsea, was named the best goalkeeper in the world at FIFA's 2021 award, held in January.

Ten Hag Tells Maguire to Win Over Critics

PERTH (Dispatches) - New Manchester United coach Erik ten Hag told skipper Harry Maguire that it is up to him to win over the fans by performing better.

The Dutchman also said that he is still in the market for new players and needs "more options", with United chasing Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong.

Ten Hag has stamped his mark on United during the pre-season tour of Asia and Australia, but kept Maguire as captain despite the England center-back struggling last year and being booed by fans.

The jeering has followed the 29-year-old to Australia, where Maguire was targeted by a smattering of fans in their 3-1 victory over Crystal Palace in Melbourne.

"We heard," Ten Hag told reporters in Perth ahead of United's friendly against Aston Villa on Saturday.

"But you see, if you perform, it slows down. It's about how can we change it.

"The team and Harry can by performing, and that is the only focus." United have impressed in their first games under disciplinarian Ten Hag with convincing friendly victories over Liverpool, Melbourne Victory and Palace.

Their attacking play, hallmarks of Ajax during Ten Hag's reign, has led to renewed confidence ahead of the new Premier League season following their disappointing sixth-placed finish last season.

The Red Devils appear set to start the campaign without Cristiano Ronaldo, who hasn't reported back for pre-season after asking to leave Old Trafford. He is missing the tour due to "a family issue".



Vettel Shrugs Off Retirement Talk At French GP

PARIS (Dispatches) - Sebastian Vettel dismissed speculation about his future and declared he hopes to continue racing in Formula One and is talking to Aston Martin about staying.

The 35-year-old four-time world champion will be out of contract at the end of this year and has been linked to other teams and possible retirement in recent months.

But he told a news conference ahead of this weekend's French Grand Prix he had a clear intention to stay.

"I am racing this weekend and the next one," he responded, when questioned about his plans. "Obviously, I've said that at some point, we will start to talk. I'm talking to the team.

"I think there's a clear intention to keep going and we'll see soon where we stand."

He added that reports suggesting that he may move to McLaren to replace Daniel Ricciardo, if the Australian moved on, were nothing but rumours.

Vettel won his four championships with Red Bull from 2010 to 2013, but struggled to reproduce his best results after moving to Ferrari before joining Aston Martin last year.

Aston Martin team chief Mike Krack has said he wants to keep the German driver, adding that it would be Vettel, who has been active in supporting environmental campaigns, who made the decision.

Vettel has scored 15 points this year, compared to team-mate Lance Stroll, son of the team owner, who has three. The team are ninth in the constructors championship.

Vettel said he was optimistic about improving results this weekend.

"I'm looking forward to it — we had an update for Silverstone, but we didn't fully get on top of it, not yet, so maybe this week we will get more answers.

