

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday
That Some 207 More Iranians Have
Died From COVID-19 Over the Past
24 Hours as the Country's Daily
Death Toll Exceeded 200**

IRAN NEWS

**Commander of Iran's Navy Rear
Admiral Hossein Khanzadi Has Said
That the Force Precisely Monitors
The U.S. Navy From Their Source
Point to Each Port They Dock and
Every Passage They Are Crossing**

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2 DOMESTIC

**Martyrs Teaching
New Generations to Be
No Afraid of Enemy**

> SEE PAGE 2



3 DOMESTIC

**President Opens National
Tourism, Sports Projects**

> SEE PAGE 3



4 INTERNATIONAL

**Fatah, Hamas Say
Deal Reached on
Palestinian Elections**

> SEE PAGE 4



8 SPORTS

**Martinez Hands Bayern
"Dream"
UEFA Super Cup Win**

> SEE PAGE 8



IRGC Opens New Naval Base at Strait of Hormuz

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has opened a new naval base at Sirik, a coastal Iranian town east of the strategic Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.

The new base, named after Martyr Rahbari, was launched in a Wednesday ceremony attended by IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami.

The base, whose construction started six years ago, has been built in an area of 31 hectares with the aim of giving the country full control over the arrival and departure of ultra-regional vessels in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman.

Addressing the opening ceremony, General Salami said the naval base has been built in the country's most strategic region, and serves both defensive and offensive purposes in the strategic region of Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz.

"With the opening and unveiling of this base, the country's combat operations, ship operations, reconnaissance as well as defensive and offensive operations in the Persian Gulf will further develop," he added.

See Page 7

Tehran Rejects U.S. Envoy's Comments on Its Role in Afghanistan

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian foreign minister's special envoy for Afghanistan has slammed his American counterpart's "untrue and irresponsible" remarks on the Islamic Republic's role in Afghanistan.

In comments on Thursday, Mohammad-Ebrahim Taherian said the untrue and irresponsible remarks made by the US special representative about Iran's role in the current developments of Afghanistan clearly demonstrate Washington's inaccurate understanding of the developments in Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has officially and openly supported the launch of negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban and has expressed readiness to help advance the process of real and sustainable peace in that country," he added.

"Stability in Afghanistan is an indispensable and permanent part of our policy on that country," the Iranian envoy noted.

See Page 7

Iran-EU Trade Down by 16%; Germany Major Trade Partner



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's trade with EU state has stood at 2.6b euros in the first seven months of 2020 which shows over 9 percent decline comparing to the same period in 2019 as Germany is currently Iran's major European trade partner.

According to the Iran Chamber of Commerce's recent study and its released report, Iran's trade volume with EU countries hit 2.6b euros in first seven months which indicates over 9 percent slump.

According to the report, Iran's overall trade with the EU nations fell in seven months to July although export increased slightly.

The spread of the coronavirus pandemic and new U.S. sanctions caused a drop in trade between Iran and the European Union countries in the first seven months this year although Iran sent more shipments the EU over the same period, shows a new report.

The report published Thursday by Tehran chamber of commerce (TCCIMA) said that imports from the EU fell by over 11 percent compared to January-July 2019 to stand at €2.209 billion in value terms.

The report said, however, that Iranian exports to the EU were up nearly five percent at €440 million although non-oil exports had declined by 11 percent over the period.

Germany remained Iran's top trading partner in the EU region and was responsible for nearly 41 percent of all Iran-EU exchanges worth €2.649 billion reported over the seven months to July, it said, adding that trade with Germany and the Netherlands grew against a decline recorded in exchanges with France and Italy.

Iran's trade with France has declined by 37 percent in seven months comparing to the same period last year as the figure shows Iran's trade with France has declined the most among with European states.

April was the worst month on record for Iran-EU trade as pandemic restrictions in both Iran and across the EU caused a decline in exchanges, showed the figures by the TCCIMA.

Iran's imports from the EU reached its lowest point in July with a 29-percent decline year on year, said the report, adding that trade boomed significantly in January before the pandemic and fresh round of American sanctions imposed on Iran caused a visible decline in the value and volume of the shipments.

Trade between Iran and the EU has been flowing despite a raft of sanctions imposed by the US which seek to cut Iran's economic relations with the rest of the world, especially with U.S. allies in Europe.

ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Is Production and Stockpile of A-Bomb Economically Wise?

The world economic growth is on the decline due to the outbreak of the coronavirus and some people in the world sleep the nights with empty stomachs and wait in miles-long lines to get a piece of food from the food banks. In such a condition, governments have increased the expenditures for expanding their arsenals. While the U.S. and Zionists have been talking for over 30 years about Iran's so-called secret nuclear activities and probable production and stockpile of nuclear bombs in order to deviate the public opinion and to deceive the international community and members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reports indicate that they themselves have been expanding their capabilities in production and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, and just the U.S. alone has produced and stockpiled over 6,200 A-bombs with nuclear warheads.

Reports from the reliable sources show that Zionist regime, too, has boosted its arsenal in the past three years and it has increased the number of its A-bombs with nuclear warheads from 77 to 100. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has been founded for conducting research on international peace and its authentic and accurate reports has provided the ground for valid statistical belief. The Swedish think-tank in its recent report, which was released in Stockholm and major important part of it has been covered by the international mass media, has announced that today in the end of 2020, nine countries have stockpiled 13,865 A-bombs that one-fourth of it is enough for annihilating the world.

Following SIPRI's report, Israeli newspaper the Jerusalem Post in an article wrote, "Israel has close to 100 nuclear warheads." While Israel continues its old policy of keeping silence on its nuclear arsenal, according to the Swedish think tank's report released some three years ago (2017), this country has some 30 gravity bomb (without guidance system) which can be delivered by fighter jets. Some of these fighter jets are believed to be equipped for nuclear weapon delivery. Irregardless of the number of Israel's gravity bombs in 2017, the country has had approximately 50 warheads, that can be delivered by land-based ballistic missiles such as the Jericho III intermediate-range ballistic missile.

See Page 7

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Russia Dismisses U.S. Threats on Iran Cooperation

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia on Thursday dismissed the threat of U.S. sanctions and attempts to isolate Iran, saying it intended to trade with Tehran once a UN arms embargo expires next month.

The embargo on conventional arms shipments to Iran is set to expire on October 18 after the United States failed to win support for a new UN resolution.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump says it has decided to unilaterally reinstate virtually all of the UN sanctions on Iran lifted under a 2015 nuclear accord with Tehran.

Washington has said it will seek to prevent Iran from purchasing Chinese tanks and Russian air defence systems.

Speaking alongside visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov dismissed those threats as illegal. "Russia will in no way build its policies on the basis of these aggressive illegal demands which have no legal force," Lavrov said.

He expressed hope that other countries cooperating with Iran would follow suit.

"The fact that the United States threatened to introduce sanctions on all those who will contradict the U.S. interpretation of the current situation once again confirms that Washington wants to behave like a bull in a china shop," Lavrov added.

"In my opinion, the current (U.S.) administration has lost diplomatic skills almost beyond retrieve," Lavrov said.

He added however that Russia and European countries continued talks with Washington on the subject.

Meanwhile Zarif said that the Iranian and Russian presidents are seriously pursuing the implementation of agreements and the process of boosting cooperation between the two countries.

In a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Lavrov, he hailed growing collaboration, saying that mutual cooperation would also improve in fighting coronavirus. "In today's meeting, we reviewed the cooperation between the two countries in the fields of transportation, visas, and the movement of students and businessmen," he said.

"During the talks with the Russian foreign minister, we discussed issues related to energy, economy, banking and holding meeting of the Joint Commission for Economic and Trade Cooperation," he said. JCPOA was also discussed during the meeting, he said, blasting U.S. attempts to reinstate UN sanctions against Iran.

The U.S. suffered a defeat and Russia and China played a key role in the process, Zarif said.

Washington's attempts to restore anti-Iran sanctions drew global opposition, Zarif reiterated.

U.S. Grants Iraq New 60-Day Waiver To Import Iranian Gas

BAGHDAD-(Dispatches) - The U.S. has granted Iraq a 60-day extension to a sanctions waiver allowing it to import Iranian gas for its crippled power grids, an Iraqi official told AFP.

Baghdad relies on gas and electricity imports from its neighbor Tehran to supply about a third of its electricity sector, worn down by years of conflict and poor maintenance.

The U.S. blacklisted Iran's energy industry in late 2018 but has since granted its ally Baghdad a series of temporary waivers to stave off countrywide blackouts.

In May, Washington granted Iraq a four-month extension as a gesture of goodwill toward Mustafa al-Kadhimi, who had just formed a cabinet seen as more U.S.-friendly than its predecessor.

The U.S. has pressured Iraq to use the waivers to become independent from Iranian energy, specifically by partnering with American firms, and had been frustrated by the slow progress under the previous premier, Adel Abdul-Mahdi.

While Kadhimi's Cabinet has sought to fast-track such deals, it has been unable stem the near-daily rocket and IED attacks on Western military and diplomatic interests.

See Page 7

President Felicities National Day of Armenia

TEHRAN (MNA) –President Hassan Rouhani congratulated National Day of the Republic of Armenia in separate messages to the president and prime minister of the country.

In separate messages to the Armenian president and prime minister, Rouhani felicitated the arrival of the National Day of Armenia and expressed hope that Tehran-Yerevan relations expand further in the future.

In a message to Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, Rouhani noted, “I hope that considering the historical, cultural and social ties between the two countries, and in the light of the efforts made by officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Armenia, we will see the expansion of bilateral relations to ensure the interests of both nations.”

U.S. Must Compensate For Damage Caused To Iranian Nation

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that the U.S. must compensate for the damage it caused to the Iranian nation.

In an interview with Sputnik News on Thursday, Zarif noted that the U.S. must compensate for the damage it caused to the Iranian nation, as well as for measures taken by Washington to undermine the nuclear deal, Sputnik News reported.

“The return of the United States to the nuclear deal is the first step that they should take. For this return, [the U.S.] must compensate for the damage it caused to the Iranian nation, as well as for measures taken by the U.S. to undermine the nuclear deal and promise to not do it again,” Zarif added.

Zarif added that every country has a right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but the West has double standards about different states’ nuclear programs.

“We believe that all of the countries have the right for the peaceful use of the nuclear energy, including [uranium] enrichment, and this right must be exercised in a transparent manner in line with regulations issued by the IAEA. The Western countries have double standards in this regard. If a similar control, which is carried out toward Iran, is introduced on other countries that want to have an advanced nuclear program, the international community will be in peace,” Zarif said.



Relations between the U.S. and Iran have soured considerably due to President Donald Trump’s campaign of so-called maximum pressure, stipulating tough sanctions against the Islamic Republic, launched after the US unilaterally withdrew from the Iranian nuclear deal.

Iran is ready to exchange prisoners with dual citizenship who are being held in the country for Iranian prisoners held in the U.S., Zarif added. The minister noted that at present Iran has no American prisoners with single citizenship.

Zarif made clear that Iran was not yet ready for direct negotiations with the U.S. government and would be using other governments, such as the Swiss, “that wish to play a positive role in this regard”, as an intermediary.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates backstabbed Palestine by reaching the normalization deals with the Zionist Regime, but the ceremony in the White House was not a big issue anyway, since The Zionist Regime and the Arab nations have maintained contacts during up to 20 years, Zarif believes.

“What happened in the White House was not a major development, but rather an opportunity to photograph and uncover the relations that have existed for 15 or 20 years between the Arab countries along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf and the Zionist regime. These relations indicate that the slogans voiced by these countries in support of the Palestinian people are untrue, but are in actual fact a stab in the back for the Palestinian cause,” Zarif said.

IRGC to Use All Capacities to Help Iran Thrive

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Major General Hossein Salami made assurances that the IRGC would use all its power and capacities to help the country move on the track of progress despite the US sanctions.

“The IRGC would use all its capacities to help the Islamic Republic continue to make progress,” Major General Salami said on Thursday while inaugurating a petroleum refinery in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas.

Saying that the IRGC will never allow any of the country’s development projects to stop working despite the US sanctions, he stressed that the enemies will be defeated in the face of the Iranian nation’s resolve just as before.

Major General Salami went on to say that the IRGC currently has 220 major infrastructure projects underway.

The IRGC has carried out extensive plans in recent years for the development of border provinces and underprivileged areas, such as in the southeastern province of Sistan and Balouchestan.

Al Saud Policies Turn Riyadh Into ‘Humiliated Creature’ Among Arabs

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry spokesman has categorically rejected recent accusations levelled against the country by Saudi king Salman bin Abdulaziz at his UN General Assembly speech.

In a statement on Thursday, Saeed Khatibzadeh dismissed the charges as unfounded and delusional.

“As the base and birthplace of the ideologies of Takfiri terrorist groups and the main financial and logistical supporter of terrorism in the region, Saudi Arabia has, for years, been pursuing a blame-game policy and seeking to distort realities in order to escape the realities and not to be held accountable for its crimes,” said the spokesman.

“The Saudi regime’s support for, and alignment with the U.S. in its failed policy of ‘maximum pressure’ on Iran, its attempts to expand relations with the usurper Zionist regime of Israel, and paying

billions of dollars of Saudi people’s money in ransom have not only failed to produce any results for Saudi Arabia, but also turned it into a humiliated creature among Arab countries,” he added.

“Saudi Arabia has become delirious due to back-to-back defeats it has suffered both on the ground and on the political front in Yemen, and Riyadh wants to shirk responsibility for the war crimes it has committed against Yemeni women and children,” the spokesman noted.

“In line with its responsible approach in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, time and again, reminded the world of the Saudis’ miscalculations which have imposed a heavy price on the region, and keeps emphasizing its fundamental policy of boosting diplomatic and dialogue-oriented talks in the region and the promotion of relations with all neighbours,” he said.

Guardian Trying to ‘Blackwash’ Its Human Rights Situation

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry spokesman has rejected the recent reports published by the Guardian newspaper, saying it is quite clear why such custom-tailored reports try to blackwash the situation of human rights in Iran, especially at this juncture.

In a statement on Wednesday, Saeed Khatibzadeh said Iran believes the politically-motivated behavior and selective moves of the U.S. and certain European governments have always dealt the heaviest blow to the principle of human rights.

He also described the approach, remarks, and moves of certain European countries as an instance of interference in Iran’s internal affairs, and said authorities at the relevant level have taken, and will continue to take, necessary measures in reaction to the move.

“It is quite surprising and unbelievable to us that these countries have not only refused to show any reaction to the blatant violation of the Iranian nation’s rights caused by the US’ inhumane policy of maximum pressure and its cruel and anti-human sanctions, but are also fanning its flames and practically joining it through their inaction,” he added.

His comments came after Guardian claimed France, Germany and the UK are summoning Iranian ambassadors in a coordinated diplomatic protest against Iran’s detention of dual nationals and its treatment of political prisoners. Guardian says it has seen a letter handed to the Iranian ambassador to the UK, Hamid Baedinejad, which claims “Iran’s policy of arbitrary detention” is seriously undermining its international standing.

The report says the Iranian envoy had been summoned by the Foreign Office on Tuesday to meet senior officials, and the Iranian ambassadors in Paris and Berlin are also being called in this week.

The letter claims British citizens, including dual nationals, are languishing in Iranian prisons, often under harsh conditions and without justification. It argues they have been arbitrarily detained and deserve to be reunited with their families.

Martyrs Teaching New Generations to Be No Afraid of Enemy



TEHRAN (MNA) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei noted that martyrs have taught the generations of the Iranian people to not be afraid of the enemy.

“The passage of time has not been able and will never be to erase the dear martyrs from the memory of the Iranian nation. This shining tablet will always be decorated with the title of martyrdom and the memory of martyrs,” wrote the Leader in a message on Thursday on the occasion of the Sacred Defense Week which marks the start of imposed Saddam Hossein regime’s war on Iran back in 1980.

“This historical reserve will always give our generations hope, determination, and courage to take firm steps towards lofty goals and not be afraid of the enmity of the devils of the world,” added Ayatollah Khamenei.

“The front of justice and truth will achieve great victories with this divine power and arrangement, God willing.”

Gov’t to Impose Some Restrictions After COVID-19 New Wave

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani says that some restrictions will be imposed in society if protocols are not followed up and new wave of coronavirus comes.

President Rouhani made the remarks at a meeting held in Tehran on Thursday with participation of heads of national committees on anti-coronavirus headquarters across the country.

The Iranian president assured that the government will stand by medical personnel and not let pressure be put on them

Then, President Rouhani called for complete implementation of medical and social protocols as preemptive measures to fight the deadly virus.

Since its outbreak in December 2019, the deadly coronavirus pandemic has killed near one million people worldwide, while the number of the dead in Iran is over 25,000.

Iranian, Swedish Diplomats Discuss Ways to End Yemen War

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ali-Asghar Khaji, the Iranian foreign minister’s senior assistant in special political affairs, has held virtual talks with Sweden’s special envoy for Yemen.

In the Wednesday talks, the two sides conferred on the latest developments and situation in Yemen including the difficult conditions caused by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, the ways to resolve the existing problems, and possible avenues for dispatching food and medical aid to the Yemeni people.

They also underlined the need for finding a political solution to end the Yemen war by holding intra-Yemeni negotiations.

Khaji described the bombings and military attacks against the innocent people of Yemen and the blockade imposed on them as an inhumane move in violation of international principles and regulations, and called on the international community to prevent its continuation.

Peace, Friendship Hallmarks of Iranian, Japanese Nations



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary General of Iran-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Association Daishiro Yamagiva said on Wednesday that the two great nations of Iran and Japan have numerous commonalities, including peace and friendship and opposition to warmongering.

Addressing the opening ceremony of Photo and Book Exhibition marking the 40th anniversary of the Sacred Defense in Iran’s Embassy in Tokyo, he added that Tehran and Tokyo should work together to promote peace and stability in the region and world.

About 80 years ago, Japan suffered a lot of casualties in World War II, and that is why the Japanese people hate war, and there is no reason for peoples and nations to be at war, and wars should be prevented as much as possible, he said.

Meanwhile, a message by the Head of the Parliamentary Friendship Group of the two countries, Fomio Kishida, calling for deepening of relations between the two countries was read out during the ceremony.

Sacred Defense Photo and Book Exhibition presented various aspects of resistance and self-sacrifice of the Iranian people amid coronavirus.

Iran Air Force Unveils New Homegrown Radar

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) during a ceremony on Thursday unveiled a new radar system dubbed Soroush.

The radar system that has been designed and developed by the IRIAF experts joined the country’s integrated air defense network at the ceremony, which was attended by Commander of the Iranian Army’s Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard.

It can detect targets with small cross-section area (RCS) at low and medium altitudes within a range of 220 kilometers.

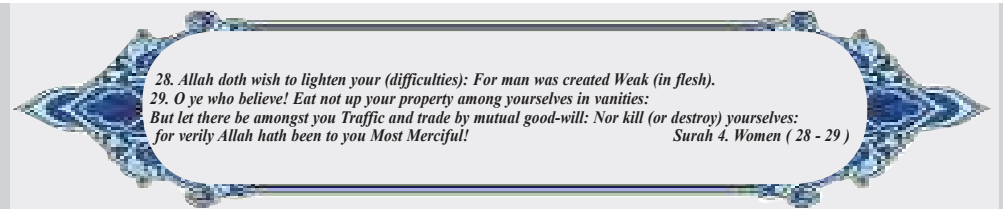
Using semiconductor technologies in the radar system’s design has enabled Soroush to carry out missions in all weather conditions. Another radar system dubbed Misaq, which is a smart system incorporating a mix of both primary and secondary radars, was also unveiled at the ceremony.

Iran has in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of military equipment, including air defense systems that use cutting edge technologies.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:33
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:56



28. Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): For man was created Weak (in flesh).
29. O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities:
But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves:
for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful!

Surah 4. Women (28 - 29)

President Opens National Tourism, Sports Projects

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday inaugurated several cultural, tourism and sports projects across the country via video-conference.

The virtual inauguration ceremony was held on the 25th week of opening of infrastructure and national projects across Iran.

The projects were inaugurated in southern provinces of Fars and Kerman, northwestern provinces of East Azarbaijan and Ardebil, northern provinces of Mazandaran and Gilan and capital Tehran.

During the inaugural ceremony, President Rouhani noted that sport and tourism are two key pillars in boosting vitality and health in society.

The President described sports and tourism as two important pillars in strengthening the vitality and health of the society and very important and emphasized that we should not only protect the cultural heritage of the country for thousands of years but also provide more opportunities to provide it to the world so that by seeing these great and magical works, the world knows what important records this nation has.

Speaking day at the inauguration ceremony of 422 projects, including 335 projects in the field of sports and youth and 87 projects in the field of tourism, Rouhani said, "Any tourism that visits our tourist attractions in Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd, Tabriz, and other countries becomes really fascinated by the civilization of our dear and great Iran and the world sees that this nation is a nation that has a history of more than 7,000 years and its civilizational traces are evident in our land."

The President stressed that the Government of Prudence and Hope has made a



very large move to register historical monuments, return historical objects from different countries, and prepare the ground for attracting domestic and foreign tourists over the past 7 years.

Referring to parts of the report of the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, said, "Over the past 7 years, we have grown by 50% in the construction of hotels and 46% in hotel beds and foreign and domestic tourist attractions."

The President expressed hope that with the end of the coronavirus era, we will see further development of the tourism industry in the country.

The President referred to the development of women's sports in the country and said, "I am very proud of the development of women's sports in the country. Our women's sports show that the propaganda they have carried out against Iran over the past years has been false and inaccurate."

12 hotels, 17 tourism and accommodation complexes, 23 traditional catering and dining units, 5 leisure and entertainment projects, and 30 eco-tourism resorts with an investment of 1.068 trillion Tomans and job creation for 1,746 people were among the tourism projects in East Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Khorasan Razavi, Fars, Kermanshah, Mazandaran, Gilan, Yazd, and Tehran provinces that were inaugurated by the order of the President.

In this ceremony, Sanandaj ports hall, Gorgan sports hotel, 4 sports stadiums in Sabzevar, Neishabour, Kazerun, and Malayer cities, as well as 108 sports fields and 220 rural sports houses were opened in the country.

To implement these plans and projects in the field of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, 345 billion tomans have been invested.

Iran Obtains Technology to Turn Methanol to Propylene

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's petrochemical industry has attained a major achievement by obtaining the know-how to turn methanol into propylene (MPT), a technology which authorities say was previously ring-fenced by two countries.

The development came on Thursday during the inauguration of a semi-industrial petchem plant in southern Iranian port city of Mahshahr where some 120,000 metric tons of propylene will be produced each year from methanol and independently of the original feedstock.

Seyyed Omid Shahidinia, a local Oil Ministry official said during the inauguration ceremony that the commercial use of MPT had been monopolized by two countries which he would not identify.

"(they) would not let us have the technology due to the sanctions, and now Iran is the third country which has obtained this technical expertise," said Shahidinia, making a reference to American sanctions that have sought to hamper Iran's efforts to develop its energy sector.

Concurrent with the inauguration, Oil Ministry officials in Tehran awarded a contract to Fateh Petrochemicals for commercial use of MPT in Iran.

The contract, which is related to the petchem plant in Mahshahr, would enable Iran to significantly increase its propylene output in the upcoming years, according to Behzad Mohammadi, a deputy oil minister and CEO of Iran's largest company in the sector, namely the National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

Mohammadi said Iran had eyed a propylene output of two million tons per year for 2025 but he insisted that the figure would increase to 4 million tons by 2026 through implementing various schemes including the use of MTP technology.

The senior official said Iran's current propylene output is nearly one million tons per year, adding that total production capacity for all petrochemical products has reached around 70 million tons per year.

Mohammadi said actual petchem output in Iran reached 30 million tons worth \$15 billion in the year to March 2020 of which some \$10 billion worth of products were sold to foreign customers

Int'l Water Summit to Be Held in Presence of 15 States

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said that 15 countries will participate in the 11th meeting of the Governing Board of the Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) on Wednesday evening.

Ardakanian said that a center for urban water management was established with the participation of some countries in the region, as well as other countries over past few years.

He went on to say that some international organizations related to water issues, as well as some interesting European countries, have also joined the council.

Referring to the 11th meeting that will be held via video conference in the presence of 15 countries, he added that eight countries at the ministerial level and the rest at the level of deputy ministers and other officials will be attending the conference. "Also, nine relevant international organizations are present at the summit."

The summit will be hosted by Iran on Wednesday evening via videoconference in the presence of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Iraq, Syria, Qatar, Germany, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Switzerland, Oman, Egypt, and India.

Iran Attending Maritime Silk Road Exhibition in China

BEIJING (IRNA) - 21th Century China Maritime Silk Road exhibition opened in China on Thursday in presence of Chinese officials and representatives from different countries in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province.

China Maritime Silk Road exhibition that has been held since 2014 as the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Expo, hundreds of companies from China and partner countries are participating in the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and shows its capabilities in the exhibition.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's pavilion is active in this exhibition with the efforts of the Consulate General of Iran in Guangzhou.

The "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" are initiatives first introduced by President Xi Jinping in the fall of 2013 during visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, respectively to revive the ancient Silk Road which is to connect the Asia-Pacific economic circle in the east and the European economic circle in the west.

IRGC to Build First Domestic Petro Refinery in Bandar Abbas

TEHRAN (MNA) – The construction process of the first domestic petro refinery in Bandar Abbas was initiated in the presence of IRGC commander Major General Hossein Salami on Thursday.

During the ceremony, Salami noted that the construction of this refinery paves the way for the self-sufficiency and economic independence of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He went on to say that IRGC is implementing more than 220 major infrastructure projects in the country and despite the sanctions, no project has been stopped.

"IRGC is using all its capacities to develop Iran, and we will defeat the enemy just as we did in the past," he said.

The director of Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters Saeed Mohammad also said that the refinery will have the capacity to produce 120,000 barrels of natural-gas condensate per day.

Afghan, Iranian Traders Reach Major Agreements

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A three-day Iran-Afghanistan exhibition has concluded in the capital Kabul. The attendees from both sides spoke about major achievements in reaching agreements to boost cooperation in different areas.

Afghanistan and Iran have many commonalities, that's why the visitors also optimistically welcome such exhibitions as an opportunity to further boost and strengthen the ties between Afghanistan and Iran.

A group of 100 Iranian and Afghan companies attended the event. It was the first time that such [an] exhibition was being held in Kabul.

Iran is one of Afghanistan's biggest trading partners and the value of annual trade between the two countries stands at around 3 billion dollars.

In addition to economic support, Tehran has always stood by Kabul in other areas like security. Iran is among the main regional players, which has put its weight behind intra-Afghan talks for a lasting peace in the war-torn country.

Iran, Belarus to Launch Direct Flight

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Belarus Saeed Yari and managing director of the country's National Airline 'Belavia' on Wednesday reviewed the ways to set up direct flight between Tehran and Minsk.

During the meeting, Yari announced his readiness to negotiate removal of existing obstacles, help establish a direct flight from Tehran to Minsk as a very important factor to develop people-to-people communications, tourism, cultural exchanges and economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

The two sides also stressed the need for preparatory actions by the two countries' aviation and airport officials as soon as possible.

Direct flights of Belavia Airlines from Minsk to Tehran were operated for 8 years from 2010 to 2018, but unfortunately this flight was canceled as of 2018 due to some technical issues.

Tehran, Moscow Mulling Scientific Cooperation

MOSCOW (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali and Special Assistant to the President of Russia for Science and Technology Policy and Secretary of the Science and Education Council Andrei Fursenko discussed scientific and educational collaboration between the two countries.

During the meeting, Jalali referred to holding several rounds of vaccine and medicine committees between the two countries' health ministries and institutes, hoping that the Iranian and Russian research institutes will soon start collaboration in producing COVID-19 vaccine.

Fursenko, for his part, dealt with the latest status of producing coronavirus vaccine called "Sputnik V", saying that the vaccine was registered about a month ago, and its injection began two weeks ago in Moscow.

Russia is in talks with some countries to deliver the Russian coronavirus vaccine, and recently reached an agreement with India to sell 100 million doses to it by the end of 2020, he said.

Iran-Russia Trade Volume Hits \$1.8b



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce Mr. Hadi Tizhoosh-Taban says the current trade volume of Iran and Russia is around \$1.8b and Iran's share of exports from this figure is \$500m to \$600m.

Speaking to ILNA, Mr. Tizhoosh-Taban denied reports that Russian banks are not even to trade with Iran on Russian national currency, rouble, adding that in any part of the world, every country is interested in settling its accounts with its own national currency and in Europe it is euro, in the U.S it is dollar and in Russia it is rouble which is the base for trade and this is a global law but it is only in Iran where the settlement should be in dollar and even the national currency rial is not accepted.

He added that what is exported to Russia is paid in rouble and it can be exchanged with rial but Iran's Central Bank should activate the necessary infrastructures in cooperation with Russian bank and it will economic activists to take advantage of it.

He then said currently the trade volume between Iran and Russia is around \$1.8b and Iran's share of exports is between \$500m to \$600m.

Tizhoosh-Taban noted that most of Iran's imports from Russia is wood and livestock feeding which are of the country's major needs and Iran's exports to Russia are dried fruits, vegetables, fruits, light industries and the citrus.

He predicted the current trade between Iran and Russia to decline due to the forex disputes, adding that he also believes that the earned forex from exports should be repatriated to the country but the Central Bank should prepare the infrastructures in a way that economic activists would not suffer losses.

Kosovo War Crimes Tribunal Arrests First Suspect

THE HAGUE (Reuters) - The Kosovo Specialist Chamber, a war crimes court based in The Hague, said on Thursday that a former KLA insurgent commander, Salih Mustafa, had been arrested by prosecutors in Kosovo and he is being transported to the Netherlands.

Mustafa was a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander during the 1998-99 Kosovo conflict. The court said in a statement it had confirmed an indictment and arrest warrant against Mustafa, though it did not detail what charges he may face. Under international law, Mustafa is presumed innocent until proven guilty. The court did not release details of his arrest and it was not clear whether he has yet been appointed a lawyer.

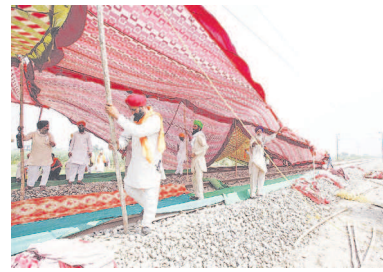


Indian Farmers Intensify Protests Over New Grain Bills

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Indian farmers intensified their protests over three new bills that they believe could pave the way for the government to stop buying grain at guaranteed prices, leaving them at the mercy of private buyers such as traders and retailers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has defended the legislation - recently approved by India's parliament - as reform measures that will help rid India's vast agriculture sector of antiquated laws.

Modi and some of his ministers have said that the new bills would help remove middlemen from farm trade, allowing farmers to sell to institutional buyers and large retailers like Walmart.



Fatah, Hamas Say Deal Reached On Palestinian Elections



GAZA (Dispatches) - Gaza's rulers Hamas and their Fatah rivals in the occupied West Bank agreed Thursday to hold the first Palestinian elections since 2006, united by their opposition to Arab-Israeli normalisation deals.

Polls will be scheduled within six months under a deal reached between Fatah leader Mahmud Abbas and Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh, officials from both sides told AFP.

"We have agreed to first hold legislative elections, then presidential elections of the Palestinian Authority, and finally the central council of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)," said Jibril Rajub, a senior Fatah official.

The last Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006 saw Hamas win an unexpected landslide.

Saleh al-Arouri, a top Hamas official, said the deal was reached during meetings held in Turkey.

"This time we reached a real consensus," he said, speaking to AFP by phone from Istanbul.

"Divisions have damaged our national cause and we are working to end that," Arouri added.

The recent talks have come after two Arab states -- the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain -- normalised their relations with Israel.

Despite peace deals with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, the new accords broke with decades of Arab consensus that further ties with the Jewish state should not be normalised until it has signed a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians.

The most recent Palestinians polls resulted in a brief unity government, but it soon collapsed and in 2007 bloody clashes erupted between the two sides in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas has since ruled Gaza, while Fatah has run the Palestinian Authority based in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Numerous attempts at reconciliation, including a prisoner exchange agreement in 2012 and a short-lived coalition government two years later, have failed to close the rift.

But in a show of unity, Abbas and Haniyeh are due to give joint interviews later on Thursday, aired by Palestine TV, based in the West Bank, and Al-Aqsa in the Gaza Strip.

Including PLO elections in the agreement paves the way for Hamas to join the organisation, which unites various Palestinian factions including Fatah.

The PLO signed the 1993 Oslo peace accords with Israel, which have long since floundered.

Louisville Tense as New Protests Expected

LOUISVILLE (Reuters) - Louisville braced for a second night of protests on Thursday after two police officers were shot during demonstrations over a decision by a grand jury not to file homicide charges against police in the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor.

Protests erupted in the Kentucky city on Wednesday after the state attorney general announced that a grand jury did not bring any charges for the six police bullets that struck Taylor, a Black woman, but instead lesser charges against one of the policemen for stray shots that hit the neighboring apartment.

Civil rights activists decried the outcome as a miscarriage of justice and part of a nationwide pattern of unwarranted police violence against minorities.

The demonstration that started peacefully on Wednesday night turned violent after dark when the two officers were shot and wounded. Police arrested 127 people in Louisville.

It was the latest in a wave of protests that have gripped the country following the killings of African Americans by police, including the May 25 death of George Floyd when a Minneapolis officer knelt on his neck.

Demonstrators, led by activists from the Black Lives Matter movement and others, have demanded an end to racial injustice and the use of excessive police force.

On Wednesday, protests also flared in New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Seattle, where police said 13 were arrested for property destruction, resisting arrest, failure to disperse and assault on an officer.

Biden urges protests be peaceful after prosecutors clear police of criminal charges in Breonna Taylor death

In Portland, Oregon, the scene of more than 100 straight nights of protests, police once again declared a riot on Wednesday in the unrest that followed the grand jury decision.



Maduro Calls U.S. Most Serious Threat to Global Peace

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has called on the international community to rally against unilateral U.S. sanctions against various countries and characterized Washington as the "most serious threat" to global peace and stability.

In a video speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday, Maduro censured the illegal sanctions by an "intransigent and hostile" Washington, and urged the UN member states to counter U.S. sanctions imposed on his country, as well as its Latin American allies, including Cuba and Nicaragua.

"We must demand the cessation of all unilateral coercive measures, of all the alleged sanctions, and that they allow our people to exercise their own rights," Maduro said in his virtual address to the UN.

Underlining that the U.S. is the "most serious threat to peace in this world," the Venezuelan president said the illegal sanctions were endangering the stability of his country and the region, and called on Washington to respect the sovereignty of nations.

Maduro blasted the U.S. for the billions of dollars that have been taken from Venezuela and "frozen and held" in bank accounts in the United States and Europe.

"Any company or government that commercializes any good or service with our country, be it food, medicine, fuel, additives needed to produce gasoline — which our people need — is being persecuted," the president said.

Venezuela sits on the world's largest oil reserves, and its refineries can produce more than 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) of fuel, but they are working at less than 20% of their capacity mainly due to power outages and lack of spare parts amid US sanctions.

Washington has imposed sanctions on Venezuela's state oil company to pressure Maduro to resign, and has thrown its weight behind a putschist opposition figure.

Thai Protesters Angered After Parliament Delays Charter Reform

BANGKOK (AFP) - Thai lawmakers delayed a decision on constitutional reform Thursday, sparking anger among protesters outside parliament demanding changes to the kingdom's military-scripted charter and reform of the unassailable monarchy.

Lawmakers had been expected to vote on setting up a draft reform committee in response to a burgeoning pro-democracy movement that mobilised 30,000 demonstrators last week -- the largest show of force in the kingdom since the 2014 coup.

But the move was delayed when the ruling party proposed a parliamentary committee to further study the six proposed amendments.

Among the more than thousand protesters outside parliament, organiser Tattat "Ford" Ruangprapaikitsree said the government was attempting to "buy time" with the move.

"It shows their insincerity towards the Thai people," he told AFP. "We cannot take it."

Protesters stood on railings to plant pro-democracy stickers high on the closed gates of parliament as guards looked on.

Others spray-painted stencil outlines of a plaque that

had been installed during the weekend protest at the historic Sanam Luang park.

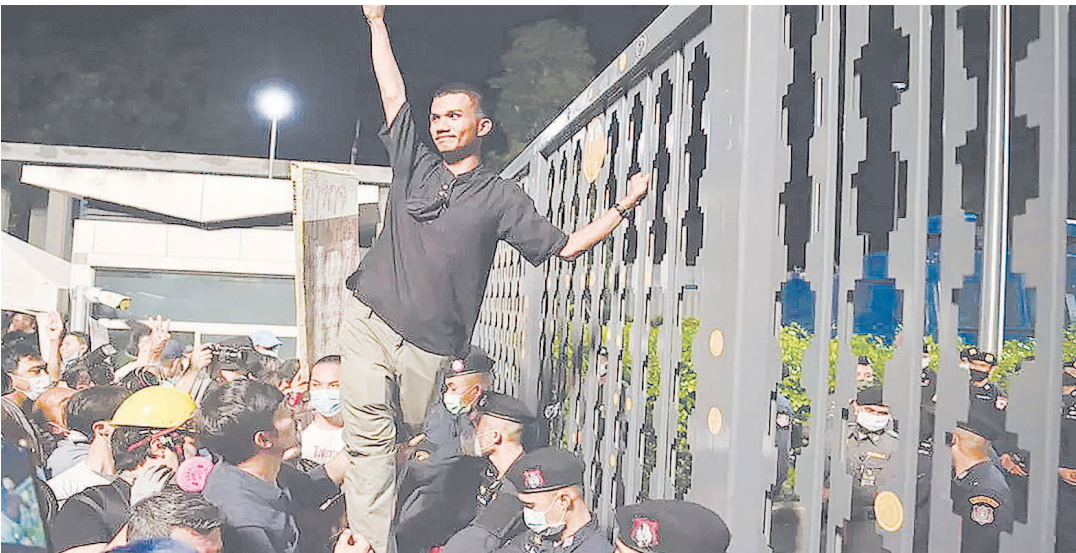
The so-called "People's Plaque" was later removed by police. It was meant to reference a plaque commemorating the end of royal absolutism in 1932, which mysteriously vanished three years ago.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn sits at the apex of Thai power, supported by an arch-royalist military and the kingdom's billionaire clans.

The royal family enjoys support from mostly older conservatives, dozens of whom marched to parliament Wednesday to submit a petition with 130,000 signatories against constitutional change.

The ultra-wealthy monarch spends much of his time in Europe, but he was in Bangkok Thursday to mark Prince Mahidol Day, laying a wreath at his grandfather's statue, according to local media.

The movement -- which students claim is leaderless and inspired by Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters -- is also calling for Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former army chief who masterminded a 2014 coup, to resign and for the government to stop "harassment" of political opponents.



EU Refuses to Acknowledge Lukashenko As Belarus's President

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union refuses to recognise Alexander Lukashenko as Belarus president after his inauguration that lacked "democratic legitimacy" and Brussels is reviewing its relations with Minsk, the EU's diplomatic chief said Thursday.

Lukashenko's secret inauguration on Wednesday triggered fresh condemnation in the West and new mass demonstrations in Belarus that have erupted frequently since the disputed August 9 elections.

The elections were neither free nor fair and "the European Union does not recognise their falsified results," EU high representative Josep Borrell said in a statement. "On this basis, the so-called 'inauguration'" and the new mandate Lukashenko claims "lack any democratic legitimacy," Borrell said.

"This 'inauguration' directly contradicts the will of large parts of the Belarusian population, as expressed in numerous, unprecedented and peaceful protests since the elections, and serves to only further deepen the political crisis in Belarus," the former Spanish foreign minister said.

The EU stands for the right of Belarusians to be "represented by those they freely choose through new inclusive, transparent and credible elections," he said. The EU again threw its full support behind the peaceful Belarus protests and their calls for new elections "despite the brutal repression of the Belarusian authorities," he said.

The EU renews its calls on the authorities in Minsk to "immediately refrain from any further repression and violence directed against the Belarusian people and immediately and unconditionally release all those detained, including political prisoners," said Borrell.

"The EU remains convinced that an inclusive national dialogue and responding positively to the demands of the Belarusian people for new democratic elections are the only way forward in finding a way out of the serious political crisis in Belarus that respects the wishes of the Belarusian people.





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Niavaran Villa (\$4000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

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Gheitarieh (\$2300) 240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, roof garden, F.F
Kamranieh (\$1800) 160sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, roof garden, F.F

Darrous (\$2800) 250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F

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French Business Confidence Grows in September

PARIS (Reuters) - French business confidence rose in September to its highest level since just before the coronavirus outbreak, despite a resurgence of new cases in recent weeks, a monthly survey showed on Thursday. The official statistics agency, INSEE, said its business confidence index rose to 92 from August's 90, reaching its highest level since February, before France went into

a two-month lockdown to contain the outbreak, plunging the economy deep into recession. The closely watched index for the industrial sector improved particularly sharply, jumping to 96 from 92, exceeding the average expectations in a Reuters poll for a reading of 95. The index for the bigger services sector rose to 95 from 93.



Coronavirus Will Weigh on Some Economies for Years

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The coronavirus crisis is lasting longer than expected and it will take some countries years to return to growth, the No. 2 official at the International Monetary Fund said.

The Fund has provided some \$90 billion in total financing to 79 countries, including 20 in Latin America, since the start of the health crisis, an IMF spokeswoman said.

It is continuing to work with member countries on how to contain the pandemic and mitigate its economic impact, First Deputy Managing Director Geoffrey Okamoto told an online event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "We're trying to preserve our financial firepower," Okamoto said. "We're talking about a ... return to growth that's going to take a few years, and many countries along the way that are probably going to need assistance."

Latin American and Caribbean economies are the hardest hit in the world by the pandemic, reporting around 8.4 million coronavirus cases, and more than 314,000 deaths, both figures being the highest of any region.

Okamoto told the event that Fund officials were in talks with the Group of 20 major economies about extending a temporary halt in official bilateral debt service payments by low-income countries under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), and how to kickstart private sector participation.

The G20 initiative approved in April expires at the end of the year, but experts and government officials in many countries have backed extending it into 2021, with a decision expected in coming weeks and months.

The issue could come up when finance ministers from the Group of Seven advanced economies meet online on Friday. In August, the ministers agreed to consider extending the DSSI.

United Nations officials and others have urged the G20 to expand their efforts to include middle-income countries and island nations hit by the collapse of tourism.

The issue of debt sustainability was "top of mind" for Fund officials, Okamoto said, noting that many countries in Latin America had debt distress before coronavirus, which had exacerbated those pressures.

The DSSI is giving the IMF more time to assess the full debt picture for these countries, he said. "It's lasting longer than we anticipated, and so that is going to change a bit the dynamics of what we think is sustainable in the long run."

He said the Fund was continuing to ask rich countries to fund two specific Fund programs that lend to poor countries.

The United States, the largest shareholder in the IMF, has signalled it hopes to contribute, but no funds have been provided for those programs so far.

Sri Lanka Scraps \$1.5b Japan-Funded Light Rail System

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka's president has ordered the termination of a \$1.5-billion Japanese-funded light rail project, saying it is not a "cost-effective solution" for the congested capital Colombo, officials said Thursday.

The deal signed under the previous government is the largest single foreign-funded infrastructure project in Sri Lanka, and was seen as a sign of the island nation reducing its dependence on China.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, elected last year, told the transport ministry to "terminate this project and close the project office with immediate effect", top aide P.B. Jayasundara said in a letter to the ministry.

There was no immediate comment from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which in March last year loaned 30 billion yen (\$285 million) to finance the first phase of the Light Rail Transit (LRT).

Japanese technology including rolling stock was to be used on the rail system, which included 16 stations over 15.7 kilometres (9.8 miles).

Detailed planning and land acquisition for the project in Colombo, which has some of the worst traffic congestion in South Asia, had already been completed and initial construction was under way.

The Japanese loan carries an interest rate of 0.1 percent and is repayable over 40 years with a 12-year grace period. Japan has already funded sections of new expressways and a key bridge to reduce traffic congestion in and out of the capital.

Under former president Mahinda Rajapaksa -- the incumbent's brother -- Sri Lanka borrowed billions of dollars from China for projects including ports, highways and railways.

But several ended up as white elephants and left the country facing a mountain of debt -- mainly to China -- stoking fears about Beijing's "Belt and Road" masterplan for overseas infrastructure.

Unable to service its loans, the then government of prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe leased a Chinese-built port at Hambantota in the island's south to a Beijing company for \$1.12 billion in 2017.

Indian Economy May Not See V-Shaped Recovery

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - The Indian economy may have some growth spurts that look like a fast recovery but it would take until the

September quarter of 2023 for the country and the world to be back to pre-Covid-19 levels, said Kevin Sneader, Global Managing Partner, McKinsey & Company.

Sneader was speaking at the ET Global Business Summit.

He said there are nine scenarios that could play out on how the global economies would recover, even so it would take at least till the third quarter of 2023 for world economies to reach where they were in December 2019.

Sneader said that many economists have been talking about 'V', 'U' and 'K' shape recoveries ever since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

Yet, in all likelihood, there could be an 'X' shaped recovery for global economies, including India.

"Perhaps we are at a crossroads (like X), and this (pandemic) is resulting in a different set of economic impacts in different parts of the world, largely because the health situation is different ... The extent to which the economies are able to combine saving lives and saving livelihoods is also different," he said.

Talking about the Indian economy, Sneader said because of the huge growth contraction, even a small spurt could look like a big leap, as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) base for the country remains low.

India's GDP growth contracted 23.9% in the April-June quarter.

"So, given the steeper decline, small changes will start to look like a more accelerated return. One of the challenges many countries face is that if you are not far enough, anything can look like a V," said Sneader.

Even when global economies go back to where they were, a lot would have changed.

Global Climate Goals Virtually Impossible Without Carbon Capture

OSLO (Reuters) - A sharp rise in the deployment of carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technology is needed globally if countries are to meet net-zero emissions targets designed to slow climate change, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Thursday.

A growing number of countries and companies are targeting net zero carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by around the middle of the century in the wake of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

To reach that, the amount of CO2 captured must rocket to 800 million tons in 2030 from around 40 million tons today, the IEA, which advises industrialized nations on energy policies, said in a report.

Up to \$160 billion needs to be invested in the technology by 2030, a ten-fold increase from the previous decade, it added.

"Without it, our energy and climate goals will become virtually impossible to reach," the IEA head Fatih Birol said in a statement.

The global economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic risks delaying or cancelling projects dependent on public support, the IEA said.

An oil price slide had also reduced revenues for existing CCUS facilities selling CO2 for so-called enhanced oil recovery (EOR).

However, the IEA added: "Economic recovery packages are a unique window of opportunity for governments to support CCUS alongside other clean energy technologies."

Referring to a major investment to build two carbon capture plants and an offshore CO2 storage facility, Birol said: "Norway showed its leadership in Europe by making a major funding commitment to the Longship project. "Nonetheless, the story of CCUS has largely been "one of unmet expectations", marred by lack of commercial incentives, large capital costs and public opposition to storage, especially onshore, the IEA said.

In 2009, the IEA called for 100 large-scale CCUS projects to be built by 2020 to store around 300 million tons of CO2 per year. To date, just 20 commercial projects are in operation, capturing around 40 million tons per year.

Iraq Denies Deal To Up Oil Exports



CAIRO (Reuters) - Iraq's oil ministry on Thursday denied a media report citing Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabbar as saying an agreement was imminent with the OPEC+ group to increase Iraq's crude oil exports.

State news agency INA had quoted Abdul Jabbar as telling state-owned daily newspaper al-Sabah that he expected to reach an agreement soon with OPEC and its allies - known as OPEC+ - over increasing Iraq's crude oil exports.

"The oil minister did not make these comments and did not meet the newspaper's reporter," oil ministry spokesman Asim Jihad told Reuters. The INA article has since been deleted.

"Iraq is committed to the OPEC+ agreement and is working with OPEC and non-OPEC producers on confronting the challenges facing global oil markets, including the spread of COVID-19 which caused a decline in global oil demand," Jihad said.

OPEC's second-biggest producer, Iraq has failed in the past to fully comply with OPEC+ oil output reductions, pumping above its production targets since the pact was first signed in 2016 between OPEC and its allies led by Russia.

The reduction in exports resulting from the OPEC+ cuts has squeezed Iraq's finances, challenging a government struggling to tackle the fallout from years of war and rampant corruption. Iraq relies on oil to fund 97% of its state budget.

Iraq's economy and oil sector were battered by years of wars, sanctions and a stubborn Islamist insurgency triggered by the U.S. invasion. Baghdad has complained it struggled to revive its stagnating oil industry, at a time when other OPEC members benefited and boosted their market share.

Iraq's total exports averaged 2.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in August, down from 2.763 bpd in July.

OPEC+ has been reducing production since January 2017 to help to support prices and reduce global oil stockpiles. It increased the cuts to a record 9.7 million bpd from May to July after demand plunged due to the coronavirus crisis.

U.S. Business Activity Slows, House Price Inflation Accelerates

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. business activity cooled in September, with gains at factories offset by a retreat at services industries, suggesting a loss of momentum in the economy as the third quarter draws to a close and COVID-19 lingers.

The economy's recovery from the pandemic recession is losing speed as government financial help to businesses and the unemployed dries up. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell told lawmakers on Wednesday that Congress and the U.S. central bank needed to remain focused on supporting the recovery.

"We need to stay with it ... the recovery will go faster if there is support coming both from Congress and the Fed," Powell said.

Data firm IHS Markit said its flash U.S. Composite PMI Output Index, which tracks the manufacturing and services sectors, slipped to a reading of 54.4 this month from 54.6 in August. A reading above 50 indicates growth in private sector output. Though the private sector continues to expand, this month's dip in the index was in line with views that the economy's momentum was ebbing.

Gross domestic product is expected to rebound at as much as a record 32% annualized rate in the third quarter after tumbling at a 31.7% rate in the April-June period, the worst performance since the government started keeping records in 1947.

The coronavirus crisis wiped out more than five years of growth, and economists are calling for another aid package from the government to help the fragile recovery. The economy slipped into recession in February. "The question now turns to whether the economy's strong performance can be sustained into the fourth quarter," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit, noting that the uncertainty over the Nov. 3 presidential election had also risen. "Risks therefore seem tilted to the downside for the coming months, as businesses await clarity with respect to both the path of the pandemic and the election."



Moderation in business activity was not confined to the United States. Euro zone business growth ground to a halt this month amid a renewed downturn in the dominant services sector, a separate survey from IHS Markit showed on Wednesday. Six months after the COVID-19 pandemic started in the United States, coronavirus cases remain high, with the death toll in the country exceeding 200,000 on Tuesday - by far the highest number of any nation.

The survey's services sector flash PMI fell to 54.6 this month from a reading of 55.0 in August. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast a reading of 54.7 this month for the services sector, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the U.S. economy. The services industry has been hardest hit by the virus and remains below its pre-pandemic level.

Iran's Drug Distribution Companies Stored Flu Vaccine

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's drug distribution companies have stored imported flu vaccine for 25 days which is expected to be distributed, said the Director-General of Iran's association of pharmaceutical distribution companies.

"Flu vaccine has been imported to warehouses in distribution companies and based on the instructions of the

Health Minister, Saeed Namaki, the following vaccine should be supplied to the Health Ministry for distribution," said Mohsen Abdollah Zadeh.

"The distributing companies play a vital role in providing finances to pharmaceutical producers and importers and if they face problems it would hurt the industry," he added.



Europe Is Facing a Double-Dip Recession

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Europe is now grappling with a second wave of coronavirus infections that could once again wreak significant damage on the region's economy.

The euro zone, the area that shares the single currency, saw its economy tank by 11.8% in the second quarter of 2020, hit by strict lockdown measures used to contain the spread of the virus.

Economists predicted a rebound in the second half of 2020 but are now questioning those forecasts. Many governments are announcing new lockdown restrictions, or a slowing of reopenings, as they deal with a significant uptick in cases.

"The likelihood of a double dip, i.e. another contraction in the fourth quarter, has increased significantly," Carsten Brzeski, a chief economist at ING, told CNBC Wednesday.

He expects more regional lockdowns in the coming weeks such as those already seen in Madrid, Spain, and Lyon, France.

As we head through to (the) fourth quarter, there's obviously a lot more restrictions in place and that's really going to curb growth.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said that as of Sep. 22, there had been 2.9 million confirmed infections in Europe with Spain and France now seeing daily cases rise above the 10,000 mark.

There is a "big risk of a double dip" in the fourth quarter, Chris Williamson, the chief business economist at IHS Markit, told CNBC's "Street Signs" on Wednesday.

Data out this week showed that the recovery has stalled in the euro zone in September. The flash euro zone PMI (purchasing managers' index) composite index — which measures both manufacturing and services — stood at 50.1, just marginally pushing into expansion territory. This latest preliminary number points to a three-month low in economic activity for the region.

"As we head through to (the) fourth quarter, there's obviously a lot more restrictions in place and that's really going to curb growth," Williamson added.

Concerns on the economic shock of further restrictions sent European equities into sell-off mode earlier this week. "The pandemic poses the key risk to our call for a tick-shaped recovery from the March/April plunge in economic activity," Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg said in a note Tuesday. "The risk is rising."

The warnings are similar for the U.K., where the government announced Tuesday that pubs and restaurants needed to close early and people should work from home if possible, rather than commuting to the office.



Cathal Kennedy, RBC's European economist, said that the new measures "will again primarily affect the services sector" and that will lead to slower business activity in the coming months.

The flash composite index for the U.K. came in at 55.7 in September, new data out on Wednesday showed. This was a three-month low and highlighted that the economic recovery has also started to lose momentum on the other side of the English Channel.

British scientific advisors have said there could be 50,000 new infections a day by mid-October and Tuesday's announcements by Prime Minister Boris Johnson were seen as a direct response to those stark warnings.

"It seems apparent once more that higher infections will impede the recovery of the services sector and suggests a difficult road ahead for the U.K.," Ambrose Crofton, global market strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management, said in an email Wednesday.

China Has a New Richest Person, With Jack Ma Dethroned



LONDON (Bloomberg) -- A bottled-water and vaccine tycoon has become China's wealthiest person in a day also marked by massive losses among the world's tech elite.

Zhong Shanshan's net worth reached US\$58.7 billion on Wednesday, US\$2 billion more than Jack Ma's, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Zhong is now Asia's second-richest person, behind India's Mukesh Ambani, and is the 17th wealthiest in the world, ahead of Charles Koch and Phil Knight.

Nicknamed "Lone Wolf" for his eschewing of politics and clubby business groups, Zhong's fortune has jumped US\$51.9 billion in 2020, more than anyone else in the world except Amazon.com Inc.'s Jeff Bezos and Tesla Inc.'s Elon Musk. Both suffered heavy declines on Wednesday as tech stocks stumbled and Tesla plunged after its "Battery Day" event fell short of expectations. Musk's fortune dropped by almost US\$10 billion.

The initial public offering of bottled-water company Nongfu Spring Co. -- which turned out to be Hong Kong's most popular among retail investors -- propelled Zhong to China's top three richest earlier this month. That came after the April listing of vaccine maker Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy Enterprise Co. pushed his net worth to US\$20 billion by early August.

Zhong now leads a wealth ranking in China that is typically dominated by people who made their fortunes from tech companies.

While Zhong has surpassed Ma as China's wealthiest, the tech tycoon might soon regain the top spot, which he's held for most of the past six years after Alibaba went public in the U.S. Ant Group's IPO next month is poised to boost his fortune, with his stake estimated at US\$28 billion if the company achieves the \$250 billion valuation people familiar with the matter have said it's targeting.

Wednesday was brutal for U.S. tech stocks, which tumbled the most since earlier this month. The plunge in Musk's wealth was the biggest among the people on the Bloomberg ranking of the world's 500 richest, followed by Bezos, whose net worth dropped by US\$7.1 billion. Musk is now worth US\$93.2 billion and Bezos US\$178 billion. Zhong added almost US\$4 billion Wednesday, more than anyone else in the index.

Turkish-U.S. Trade Increases Amid Pandemic

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish and American companies will continue to work together in order to seek opportunities to serve the interests of the citizens of both countries, said a board member of the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM).

Speaking at the 38th American-Turkish Conference, Spencer Bachus said Turkey

is an attractive destination for foreign investment and it continues to be a great link between the East and the West.

Drawing attention to two countries' goal of \$100 billion in trade volume, Bachus said: "Despite the economic impact of the pandemic, there was an increase in trade between the two countries in the first half of 2020."

He added especially the energy and aviation sectors played an important role in this increase.

Also, David Satterfield, the U.S. ambassador to



Ankara, emphasized the potential of economic and commercial relations between the US and Turkey.

He said the textile and energy sectors has brought together many Turkish and American entrepreneurs.

He added two countries have been doing extremely significant investments in advanced technologies.

Touching on the S-400 and F-35 issues, he underlined that both parties are making efforts to solve political problems and the basis for dialogue is strongly maintained.

Digital economy, construction and infrastructure sectors were also discussed at the conference.

Focusing on bilateral economic, trade, and strategic ties, the 38th American-Turkish Conference is co-organized by the Turkey-US Business Council (TAIK) of Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) and the US Chamber of Commerce.

Poverty, Joblessness Drives Wildlife Poaching in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - Most people convicted for wildlife poaching and trafficking in South Africa commit the crimes due to poverty and joblessness, a study by an international wildlife conservation group has shown.

A report published Thursday and compiled after interviews with 73 convicted wildlife offenders incarcerated in South Africa's jails, concluded that 70 percent of them were forced into crime just to make a living.

"A variety of reasons led offenders to become involved in illegal wildlife trade, one frequent motivation being a desire to provide for their families given the lack of viable legal economic alternatives," said TRAFFIC.

One study respondent told TRAFFIC: "I just wanted to give my children a better life than I had".

Another said he just wanted to send his "first born to school so that he could get education. I wanted him to have the opportunity which I was denied as a child".

"If I were working, I would not have gone and done this," regreted another respondent.

Yet others took the risk just to keep up with well-to-do friends.

"My friends... used to poach. They were driving cars and I wished to be like them," said another, adding "so I ended up doing illegal things. I was fooled, and I regret what I did."

Offences committed included poaching, transporting, processing, storing and selling the illegally-gotten wildlife commodities. Seventy-four percent of the surveyed offernders were serving sentences for rhino-related offences and the rest for crimes linked to abalone and cycad trafficking.

South Africa, which for years has battled a scourge of rhino poaching fuelled by insatiable demand for their horns in Asia, is also facing high unemployment levels of more than 30 percent.

At least 8,200 rhino have been poached for their horn in the past decade in South Africa, according to TRAFFIC.

Tehran Rejects U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

"The remarks made by the American official result from the gradual revelation of the mistake that architects of the Doha deal made in advancing the peace process and their resort to the blame game in order to justify the ineffectiveness of this policy by accusing the other countries," he concluded.

His comments came after the U.S. negotiator on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, accused Iran of seeking to bog down its archenemy in its longest war in Afghanistan.

In remarks at a virtual event of the U.S. Institute of Peace, Khalilzad said the United States would target any Iran-backed groups "taking action against us," saying Washington was "monitoring them very closely."

Is Production and Stockpile of...

FROM PAGE 1

In such a condition we are facing with an earsplitting propagation which is constantly trumpeted that Iran has been equipped with nuclear weapon. Such a huge amount of false propagation is spread against a country which has the most transparent nuclear program among the IAEA members. Let's have a look at the official reports of the IAEA in the world and all of them says, "22 percent of the total inspections of the agency in the world has been conducted in Iran and all its released reports verify that Iran has the most transparent peaceful nuclear program among the IAEA members."

Iran has voluntarily accepted the request of the IAEA for checking probable safeguard issues. Recently Iran's permanent representative to the IAEA has said, "The recent report of the IAEA Director General shows the steps have been taken by Iran and the international body to reach a common understanding regarding issues in question as well as finding acceptable solutions. The Islamic Republic has officially and strongly announced its stand in opposition to production and stockpile of nuclear weapon, and it has announced the necessity for full destruction of them in the world."

By the way, all the world knows it well that this government of Iran is unwilling to act clandestinely against the western governments. Above all, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran who is the marja taqlid (literally means source of follow) of Shiites in the world in his fatwa (religious ruling) has called the production and stockpile of weapons of mass destruction as haram (forbidden). Quite the contrary, the U.S. is currently equipped with some 6200 nuclear warheads. The Zionist regime, as the Jerusalem Post has announced, has some 100 nuclear warheads and only its 10 nuclear warheads are enough to annihilate the whole Middle East and the West Asian states, and the world has just adopted an astonishing silence policy against this potential danger.

I recommend all conscious people in the world to launch a global campaign for combatting with this sinister phenomenon that in the current tough living Coronavirus condition, it, first, could censure and boycott this process which makes some part of the world economy realize massacre of world people, and secondly prepare protocols for replacing the tools for massacre with a logic of justice for administering the world.

IRGC Opens...

FROM PAGE 1

The naval base was opened a few days after a U.S. aircraft carrier for the first time in ten months sailed through the Strait of Hormuz and entered into the waters of the Persian Gulf, as Washington has threatened to illegally extend an expiring arms embargo on Iran.

The U.S. 5th Fleet said in a statement that the strike group led by the USS Nimitz and including two guided-missile cruisers and a guided-missile destroyer sailed into the Persian Gulf to operate and train with U.S. partners.

Speaking during a ceremony in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said the drones can be used for aerial photography in combat zone to help with the acquisition of moving and stationary targets at sea.

He said the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are also capable of monitoring all maritime movements.

"With the drones having joined [the naval fleet], all missions of the IRGC navy will be covered by indigenous Iranian drones," Tangsiri said.

In the most recent mission, he explained, IRGC drones intercepted the American USS Nimitz aircraft carrier, along with its flotilla of navy ships, before they cruised through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Persian Gulf last week. General Salami also said in the same ceremony that Iran's naval power has not remained confined to the surface of the sea and the Navy has promoted its capabilities in aerial and subsurface warfare.

"We are decisively and steadily bolstering our power. We will never stop and will increase the range of our weapons," he said He said the United States is today largely despised by the people of the world and even Americans themselves.

U.S. Grants Iraq...

FROM PAGE 1

On his trip to Washington in August, Kadhim scored agreements with various U.S. firms for energy development across Iraq, including Chevron, Baker Hughes, Exxon and General Electric.

As OPEC's second-biggest producer, Iraq relies on crude exports to fund more than 90 percent of its state budget, but this year's price collapse has seriously undermined the government's fiscal position.

In a further blow, coronavirus has spread across the country, with more than 330,000 confirmed cases and 8,700 deaths announced by the health ministry.



Van der Breggen Wins World Time-Trial Gold

ROME (Dispatches) - Dutch rider Anna van der Breggen finally struck gold after four consecutive silver medals in the women's individual time-trial as defending champion Chloe Dygert crashed out at the Road World Championships in Imola on Thursday.

European champion van der Breggen finished 15 seconds ahead of Swiss Marlen Reusser with fellow Dutchwomen Ellen van Dijk third at 31sec following the 31.7km race-against-the-clock in Emilia-Romagna.

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Leeds Sign Spain Int'l Llorente

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leeds announced the signing of Diego Llorente from Real Sociedad on a four-year deal on Thursday for a fee reported to be around £18 million.

The 27-year-old Spanish international defender joins compatriot Rodrigo, who moved to Elland Road last month for a club-record £27 million (\$34 million).

Llorente, capped five times by Spain, began his career at Real Madrid and moved to Sociedad in 2017. He made 88 appearances in all competitions for the team, scoring eight goals.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26, 2020

Martinez Hands Bayern "Dream" UEFA Super Cup Win

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Javi Martinez admitted it was "a dream" to be able to write more UEFA Super Cup history for Bayern Munich on Thursday as his header in extra time sealed a 2-1 win over Sevilla in Budapest.

Having equalised with a crucial 120th-minute goal seven years ago when Bayern won the 2013 Super Cup on penalties against Chelsea in Prague, Martinez struck on 104 minutes at the Puskas Arena to hand the Champions League winners a fourth title in 2020.

There were a smattering of travelling Bayern and Sevilla fans among the 15,180 crowd in Budapest as both clubs played for the first time in front of spectators since the Covid-19 pandemic first hit Europe in March.

After Lucas Ocampos converted an early penalty for Sevilla, Leon Goretzka equalised for Bayern, who had two second-half goals disallowed before substitute Martinez, 32, struck from a late corner. Bayern head coach Hansi Flick praised his team for "pulling through with their mentality. In the end, my players went through the pain barrier to win."

Having replaced Goretzka on 99 minutes, it was Martinez - linked to a return to Spain after losing his first-team place - whose header extends Bayern's winning streak to 23 games dating back to February. "Whenever I wear the Bayern shirt, I always try to give my best and I showed that once again today," Martinez told Sky.

"I always want to help the team by scoring a goal. It's a dream come true.

"I'm really happy to win this trophy for a second time after also scoring in 2013."

After also sweeping the Bundesliga, German Cup and Champions League trophies, Bayern can win a fifth title this year when they host Borussia Dortmund in Munich for the German Super Cup on Wednesday.



Champions League winners Bayern fell behind for the first time this season on 14 minutes when the VAR judged David Alaba had fouled Rakitic in the area and Ocampos converted Sevilla's penalty.

Alaba was booked for the challenge and there were nervous glances in the Germans' ranks, especially when defender Benjamin Pavard and Thomas Mueller both missed chances.

Goretzka got Bayern back on level terms when Mueller and Robert Lewandowski combined in the area for the midfielder to smash home the equaliser with 34 minutes gone. It stayed 1-1 at the break, but Bayern turned up the heat on the Europa League holders.

Just six minutes after the break, Lewandowski had the ball in the net after being set up by Thomas Mueller, but the VAR spotted the Poland striker was offside.

With an hour gone, Bayern winger Leroy Sane was left frustrated after his shot powered past Sevilla's Moroccan goalkeeper Bono, but the VAR spotted Lewandowski had fouled a Sevilla defender in the build up.

With 90 minutes almost up, Manuel Neuer underlined his status as one of the world's best goalkeepers with a finger-tip save to deny En-Nesyri after Sevilla attacked from the edge of their own penalty area.

Sevilla made a great start to extra-time with Bayern in all sorts of trouble, as Ocampos had a shot blocked while En-Nesyri's shot clipped the post after crashing off Neuer's leg.

However, the scene was set for Martinez, a veteran of the side which won the 2013 Champions League final in London, to add to his chapter in Bayern's folklore.

"I was so happy when the coach brought Javi on, because I know how good he is with his head from set pieces," said Bayern captain Neuer.

Heat Top Celtics, Move a Game From NBA Finals

LAKE BUENA VISTA (AP) — The youngest player on the floor helped the Miami Heat move a game away from the NBA Finals.

Tyler Herro — still just 20 years old — scored a Heat rookie-record 37 points, Jimmy Butler had 24 and Miami beat the Boston Celtics 112-109 on Wednesday night in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference finals.

Goran Dragic added 22 and Bam Adebayo had 20 points and 12 rebounds to help the Heat take a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series. They can close it out Friday night in Game 5.

Jayson Tatum scored all 28 of his points in the second half for the Celtics. They erased a double-digit deficit to take a one-point lead in the fourth — then saw the Heat run away again. Jaylen Brown scored 21 points, Kemba Walker added 20, Gordon Hayward had 14 and Marcus Smart finished with 10 points and 11 assists.

Brown's 3-pointer with 16 seconds left cut Miami's lead to 107-104. Herro went to the line 2.1 seconds later and coolly swished a pair, stretching the lead back to five. The Celtics got within two points twice, Butler made a free throw with 1.1 seconds remaining, and Boston — out of timeouts — never got a desperation shot off.

Herro made 14 of 21 shots from the floor, 5 for 10 from 3-point range and became just the second 20-year-old in NBA playoff history to score at least 37 points in a game. The other: Magic Johnson, who had 42 in Game 6 of the 1980 NBA Finals for the Los Angeles Lakers.

"I feel good about it," Herro said. "There's a lot of work to be done still. We're up 3-1."

And the Heat rookie playoff record was 27 by Dwyane Wade in 2004; it now belongs to Herro, who scored 17 points in the fourth alone.

He had five straight points in the fourth to help push what was a one-point lead back out to 91-85, his 3-pointer with 4:09 left made it 98-90 and he struck again with 56 seconds left when he took a pass from Butler for a layup and a nine-point edge.

Sevilla midfielder Ivan Rakitic said Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer made the difference with two superb late saves to deny Youssef En-Nesyri.

"We saw tonight how important Neuer is for them," said Rakitic. "We had two great chances to go ahead, but he stopped them.

"Then we gave away a silly corner and they scored. Nevertheless, we can be proud of how we played against the best team in Europe."



Bodo/Glimt later on Thursday, was placed in quarantine at home and the health authorities had been informed.

Ibrahimovic Shrugs Off Positive COVID-19 Test

MILAN (Reuters) - AC Milan's M talismanic forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday and the 38-year-old responded in typically irreverent style, saying it was a bad idea for the virus to challenge him.

Milan said that Ibrahimovic, who will miss the Europa League match at home to

The announcement came one day after his team mate Leo Duarte returned a positive test, however Milan said the rest of the squad, who were also tested, were negative.

"I tested negative for Covid yesterday and positive today. No symptoms what so ever. Covid had the courage to challenge me. Bad idea," said Ibrahimovic on Twitter.

Former Barcelona, Juventus, Ajax and Inter Milan forward Ibrahimovic, who will be 39 in October, is the highest-profile Serie A player to test positive since play resumed in June following a three-month stoppage.

One of Europe's most charismatic players, he has scored 14 goals in 22 matches since returning for a second stint at Milan in January, helping revive his team.

Hamilton Vows To Boost Diversity In Motorsport

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton pledged on Thursday to grow the number of black people in motor racing, announcing members of his Hamilton Commission that aims to tackle the lack of diversity at all levels of the sport.

The British six-time Formula One world champion, who has been vocal in his support of the Black Lives Matter movement, launched the initiative in June. The 14-member body includes Hamilton's former McLaren boss Martin Whitmarsh, former sports minister Tracey Crouch and Hayaatun Sillem, the chief executive of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Hamilton, who will attempt to equal Michael Schumacher's record of 91 Grand Prix wins in Russia this weekend -- is the only black driver in Formula One.

Red Bull's British-born Thai Alexander Albon is the sport's only other non-white competitor.

"What is more concerning is that there are still very few people of colour across the sport as a whole," Hamilton said in a statement. "In F1, our teams are much bigger than the athletes that front them, but representation is insufficient across every skill set -- from the garage to the engineers in the factories and design departments."

Hamilton said change was not coming quickly enough and it was important to know why.

"This is why I wanted to set up the commission," he said. "And I'm proud to be working with the Royal Academy of Engineering and our incredible board of commissioners to identify the barriers facing young black people to take up STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) careers in motorsport."



Lewandowski, Neuer And De Bruyne Nominated For UEFA Player Prize

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich duo Robert Lewandowski and Manuel Neuer have been nominated alongside Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne for the UEFA Men's Player of the Year prize for last season, European football's governing body announced on Wednesday.

The winner will be announced -- along with the UEFA Women's Player of the Year -- on October 1, when UEFA hold the draw for this season's Champions League group stage at their headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland. Lewandowski and Neuer starred as Bayern won the Champions League, beating Paris Saint-Germain 1-0 in the final in Lisbon in August.

Polish striker Lewandowski scored an astonishing 55 goals in 47 games as Bayern won the treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup. He top-scored in the Champions League with 15 goals. Goalkeeper Neuer also played a key role in Bayern's triumphant campaign, while Belgian playmaker De Bruyne scored or set up 33 goals in the English Premier League and was nominated despite City finishing second to Liverpool domestically and going out of the Champions League in the quarter-finals to Lyon.

Barcelona's Lionel Messi just missed out on being shortlisted, coming fourth in the vote by a jury comprising the 80 coaches of the clubs that participated in the group stages of last season's Champions League and Europa League, along with 55 selected journalists, one from each of UEFA's member associations. England star Lucy Bronze is a contender to win the women's prize for the second year running after helping Lyon win the Champions League for the fifth season in a row before recently signing for Manchester City.

