

Iran's Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Saturday That Some 172 More Iranians Have Died From Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours as the Death Toll Reached 25,394

IRAN NEWS

Deputy Commander of the Iranian Army Noted That Unlike Some Persian Gulf States Dependent on Western Countries, Iran Is Relying On Its Homegrown Military Equipment to Counter Any Threats

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Iraq's FM in Tehran to Talk on Latest Regional Developments

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN (IP) - The Iraqi Foreign Minister Fouad Hussein who is in Tehran met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Saturday evening.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fouad Hussein who arrived in Tehran this morning (Saturday) to meet with senior officials of the Islamic Republic, met with President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani in Pasteur.

Fouad Hussein also met and consulted with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, hours ago. Zarif and Fouad Hussein discussed regional developments. Both sides are also to review mutual cooperation.

Tehran Berates EU for Interference Under Pretext of Rights Violations



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's ambassador to the UN headquarters in Geneva has lashed out at certain Western governments, especially those in Europe, for interfering in other countries' affairs under the pretext of human rights violations.

Esmacel Baqaee Hamaneh said some Western countries are using human rights as an excuse to reach their goals. "Western countries' approach toward human rights issues will only create discord and standoffs between countries and downgrade human rights to be used as a tool to achieve political objectives," he said.

"Some European countries have turned the Human Rights Council into an arena to meddle in the affairs of developing nations," the top diplomat added.

"It is regrettable that some countries preach about respecting human rights while they have forgotten the crimes that they have committed in the past and present, and they cover up the fact that a great part of the predicaments that others are facing is the fallout from their own colonial policies and domineering mentality," he noted.

"The rule of law is a prerequisite to the protection of, and respect for human rights," he said.

"Exerting pressure on other governments under the banner of human rights in order to change domestic legal systems or interfere in judicial cases is unacceptable," he underlined.

"The best way to realize the objectives of the [Human Rights] Council is dialogue and cooperation based on the principle of neutrality and avoiding stigmatizing and stereotyping others," the ambassador said.

Earlier Foreign Ministry spokesman said Iran has dismissed as 'unacceptable, baseless and selective' a joint statement by European countries on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic, saying it is in fundamental contrast with approaches to promote the issue globally.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran regards the European Union's move to present the joint statement in the Human Rights Council as unacceptable," Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

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Nadal Braced For Most Difficult Ever Roland Garros



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White House Responsible for All Crimes Against Iranians

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has lashed out at the U.S. administration over the imposition of inhumane sanctions and the so-called maximum pressure on the country, saying the White House is responsible for all the hostile measures and crimes against the Iranian nation.

Rouhani made the remarks at a meeting of the National Headquarters for Managing and Fighting the coronavirus in the capital, Tehran, on Saturday.

"The Americans stopped the entry of medicine and food to our country through illegal and inhumane sanctions as well as terrorist operations. We have never seen people with such level of barbarism at the White House. They committed the worst atrocities," Rouhani said.

The Iranian president also censured the US administration in Washington for blocking Tehran's efforts to receive a \$5b loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April to fight against the coronavirus.

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Iran Significantly Boosts Oil Exports Despite Sanctions

LONDON (Dispatches) - Iran is estimated to have exported nearly 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil and condensate so far in September, TankerTrackers told Reuters, in what would be the highest level of Iranian exports in a year and a half and double the observed exports in August.

Two other tanker-tracking firms have also seen an increase in Iranian oil exports so far in September, although not as much as TankerTrackers.com has found, according to Reuters.

Since the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iran's oil industry and exports in May 2018, the Islamic Republic has been using various tactics to ship crude abroad without being detected, including by tankers switching off transponders or documents stating the oil does not originate from Iran.

Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said earlier this week that "America has waged a war against Iran with no blood," referring to the sanctions on Iran's oil.

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Lebanon's PM-Designate Steps Down in Blow To French Initiative

BEIRUT (PressTV) - Lebanon's prime minister-designate quit on Saturday after trying for almost a month to line up a non-partisan cabinet, failing despite French pressure on sectarian leaders to rally together to deal with the worst crisis since a 1975-1990 civil war.

Mustapha Adib, former ambassador to Berlin, was picked on Aug. 31 to form a cabinet. He had tried to form a government of specialists in a nation where power is shared between Muslims and Christians and political loyalties tend to follow sectarian lines.

But his efforts ran into the sand over cabinet appointments, particularly the post of finance minister, who will have a crucial role in drawing up a program to lift Lebanon out of a deep economic crisis. Crushed by a mountain of debt, Lebanon's banks are paralysed and its currency is in freefall.

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Sirjan Jahan Steel Co. Honored as Exemplary Industrial Unit of Kerman Province



Following the holding of Industry and Mining Day in Kerman Province, Sirjan Jahan Steel Company was honored as the exemplary industrial unit of the province and reacting to it, the CEO of the company Mr. Ali Abaslou highlighted the reasons for this accolade. Mr Abaslou in an interview stated that in the Iranian calendar year 1398(2019-2020), Sirjan Jahan Steel Company could achieve successful in the climax of U.S. sanctions and the lack of foreign experts, who sanctions did not attend due to sanctions and refused cooperating in setting up a steel smelter and bullion factory. He further said: These experts left the unit on the threshold of the launch, while it was part of their obligations and responsibilities. He added: "However, with the help of experienced local experts from factories such as Mobarakeh Steel, Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) and Khuzestan Steel Company, our colleagues in the company could set up Factory without the presence of foreigners with their own knowledge, despite their absence, and fortunately we can produce high quality production very soon." He continued: "The quality of the products has been in a level of quality that in the first melts was among the high quality ones without having any waste. So the quality of the products of the company last year was so high that they had export capability" He then stipulated: "In the current year and in the first half of the year, despite sanctions, difficulties to find spare parts, impediment issues and regulation and crisis of COVID-19, we were able to work and manufacture more than company's capacity."The CEO of the Sirjan Company, referring to the production of the company's rolling unit which was 6 to 7% higher than the nominal capacity and the smelting unit has reached 90% of the nominal capacity, said: "This is while the smelters do not reach the capacity quickly and the process to reach the capacity takes 3 years."

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Armenia Extradites Seven Iranian Prisoners

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Armenia extradited seven Iranian prisoners to Iranian Embassy in Yerevan and they arrived in Tehran on Friday.

The move took place in line with Iran's active diplomacy in Armenia and contacts with relevant Armenian officials.

In spite of an Agreement between the two countries of Iran and Armenia on extradition of prisoners, exchange of prisoners was postponed for nearly three years.

Trump More Brutal Than Saddam

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Spokesman of the Government Ali Rabiei wrote in an article on Saturday that Iran has been exposed to war situation by the U.S. inhumane sanctions several times dangerous to humanity compared to coronavirus pandemic.

Rabiei wrote Iran is still in defense position, adding that today's defense is much more complicated, more difficult, and bitterer than the war with Saddam.

Today U.S. President Donald Trump has endangered the livelihood and health of the Iranian people more brutally and savagely than Saddam did in his surprise invasion of Iran in 1980.

Saddam intended to capture Khuzestan, Khorramshahr, and Arvand Rud, but Trump aims to break Iran to pieces and wipe out the national identity of Iranians.

Saddam tore the Algeria Treaty on TV and Trump did the same to the nuclear deal, officially known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Saddam threatened to destroy Iran's cities and villages, and Trump threatens to bombard culture and civilization centers of Iran.

Saddam kept Iranian people under rain of missiles and bombs, and Trump has kept the people under economic, health, and livelihood sanctions. He also attacks Iranians' psychological security as well.



Saddam was defeated and his proxies avenged him by assassinating Lieutenant-General Ali Sayyad-Shirazi, and Trump avenged destruction of the ISIS, the US-made terrorist group, by terrorist attack to assassinate Lieutenant-General Qasem Soleimani.

History repeated itself and the destiny of this villainy will be the same as the previous one.

Resistance means surge in production. Resistance was what happened in the United Nations Security Council: isolation of Washington.

Even if Trump is not re-elected in the upcoming elections, the White House will not put aside Trump's policies easily.

Western Gov'ts, Biggest Violator of Iranian Rights



TEHRAN (IP) - Reacting to the claims of some Western governments about human rights violations in Iran, the Secretary of the Human Rights Headquarters of the Iranian Judiciary, Ali Baqeri stated that the biggest violators of the rights of the Iranian people are the Western governments.

He expressed on Saturday, while western governments were violating the rights of the Iranian people by imposing oppressive sanctions, at the same time they have also brazenly and falsely claimed to protect the rights of one or more individuals accused or convicted.

"Today, Western governments cannot sit in the position of claiming the rights of the Iranian people but must stand in the court and be held accountable for the crimes and damage caused by the oppressive sanctions on the Iranian people," Baqeri explained.

EU members issued a biased statement accusing Iran of human rights violations at the UN Human Rights Council meeting on Friday.

Iranian Diplomat, UN Envoy for Syria Hold Phone Talks



TEHRAN (IFP) - Ali-Asghar Khaji, a senior assistant to the Iranian foreign minister in special political affairs, has held phone talks with UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen on the latest developments in the Arab country.

In the Saturday talks, the two sides exchanged views on the political process and activities of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.

They underlined the promotion of political dialogue, and the continued work of the Constitutional Committee within the framework of respecting the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The phone conversation came a couple of days after the Iranian foreign minister's trip to Moscow, where Mohammad Javad Zarif discussed the latest Syria developments in his talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The Syrian issue needs special coordination, and we will coordinate our measures with Russia and Turkey in the Astana talks," Zarif said upon arrival in Russia.

Iran, Russia and Turkey are guarantor countries that brokered a ceasefire in Syria in December 2016, leading to the Astana talks, which are running parallel to the UN-sponsored Geneva peace talks.

The leaders of the three countries regularly meet for an assessment of the process which focused on Idlib and adjacent areas - the last stronghold of the rebels - and a political process which awaits the formation of a constitutional committee.

Iranian Nation Does Not Tolerate Enemies' Threats

TEHRAN (MNA) - First Vice President Eshagh Jahangiri said on Saturday that enemies must speak the language of respect with Iranians for the nation does not tolerate their threats.

He made the remarks in the inauguration of the second phase of Kaveh steel plant in Hormozgan province.

"Despite the fact that the sanctions brought a lot of difficulties to Iranians, we got the opportunity from the crises to increase the production capacity of the country and turn the wheel of the country's economy," he said.

"Under the coronavirus pandemic, despite the negative economic growth of many countries, we experienced a 2.5 percent growth in the country's industry sector," he added.

"The Americans assumed that under the financial embargo we could not sell oil and non-oil goods but the country exports continue despite the sanctions."

Enemies must speak the language respect with Iranians for the nation does not tolerate their threats, Jahangiri noted.

National Information Network Not Aiming to Replace Worldwide Web

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's National Information Network does not aim to replace the worldwide web, Head of Civil Defense Organization Brigadier-General Gholamreza Jalali said on Saturday.

"We will need a common understanding of the issue and its importance in order to be able to fully establish a National Information Network," Jalali said.

The official said that he does not like the phrase "National Internet" very much and prefers to use "National Information Network" instead as it is not aimed to replace the worldwide web; rather, be used along with the global internet.

National Information Network can even increase the pace of global internet as it did in many other countries including South Korea, China and Singapore, Jalali said.

"We must exercise our national sovereignty in cyberspace," the official said, noting that National Information Network is one of the most vital elements of this sovereignty.

Jalali said that even many European countries are critical about the US dominance over the cyberspace.

Referring to the U.S. president's pressure for blocking foreign-based social network applications like Tik Tok in the United States, the official said that even the US administration is concerned about such threats.

He said that the development of foreign-based social networks create many state, security, legal and economic challenges. "Today the security of employment and businesses of some of the people is in hands of foreigners and in times of crises, the enemies can endanger the country's economic security."

Iran, Syria to Form Strategic Committee of Water Cooperation

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ministers from Iran and Syria have made arrangements to establish a strategic committee on cooperation in the water management industry under an agreement the two countries have signed last year.

In a meeting held via videoconference, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and Syrian Minister of Water Resources Tammam Ra'ad weighed plans to carry out a water cooperation agreement that Tehran and Damascus have inked in December 2019.

They also agreed on the formation of the strategic committee on water cooperation, co-chaired by the deputy ministers, via a videoconference within the next two weeks.

In the online meeting, the Syrian minister of water resources called for the promotion of cooperation with Iran in the water and wastewater treatment projects.

Expressing satisfaction with the involvement of strong and experienced Iranian companies in the water projects in Syria, Ra'ad said his country requires the experience and technical know-how provided by the Iranian companies for reconstruction of the water and sewage treatment plants.

Israel, Biggest Threat to Peace, Security

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Foreign Ministry stated the Israeli Regime, with its 10s of nukes, remains the biggest threat to peace and security.

"In the region, the Israeli Regime, with its 10s of nukes, remains the biggest threat to peace and security and -supported by the U.S.- prevents the Middle East from becoming a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Responsible nations should stand for a Nuke-Free-World," Iran's foreign ministry tweeted on Saturday on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

"This day provides an opportunity for the international community to re-emphasize its commitment to nuke disarmament as a priority," it added. "We believe in a peaceful and secure world, with no state possessing weapons of mass destruction," the ministry tweeted. The foreign ministry also noted that the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is an opportunity to re-express Iran's total rejection of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

"Unfortunately, the U.S. regime's disregard for international treaties and its plans to produce new nukes has brought the world closer to a new arms race, according to the message," said Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Almost 75 years since the adoption of the first General Assembly resolution in 1946, which committed the UN to the goal of ridding the planet of nuclear weapons, the world continues to live in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe," Secretary-General António Guterres said in his message commemorating the day.

"Relationships between states possessing nuclear weapons are characterized by division, distrust, and an absence of dialogue," he warned, noting that as they increasingly choose to pursue strategic competition over cooperation, the dangers posed by nuclear weapons are becoming more acute."

According to the UN chief, all States are responsible for ensuring that such deadly armaments eliminated completely from national arsenals.

Active Resistance Key to Defeat Economic Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said that as Iranians' resistance led to their victory in the Sacred Defense years, the same will also foil enemies' plots of 'economic siege'.

"Defeat of the Abadan siege on September 26, 1981, confronted the illusory Ba'athist enemy with the miracle of Resistance Culture," Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani tweeted in three languages of Persian, Arabic, and English on Saturday, commemorating the day when Iranian forces ended Abadan Siege around one year after the start of the war.

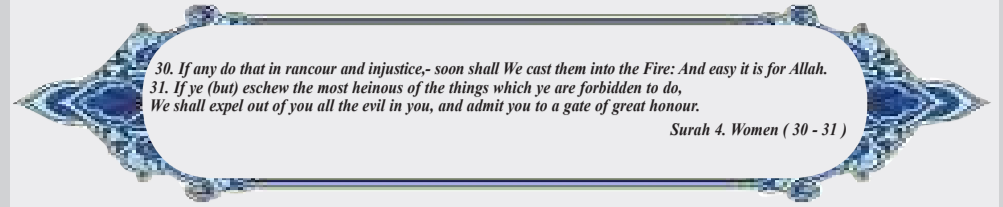
"Even today, economic siege, from an enemy who thinks he is a thousand times stronger than us, will do nothing, with Active Resistance," added the official.

President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018, imposing severe economic sanctions against Iran to pressure Tehran into a 'better deal'.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:34
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:57



Iran Ahead of France and Italy in Steel Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The caretaker of Industry, Mine and Trade Ministry says industry sector of the country has grown positively 2.5 percent in the first quarter of the year and the country in terms of steel production is now ahead of countries like France and Italy.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of the second phase of South Kaveh Steel Company in Hormuzgan Province, Mr. Jafar Sarghini said that Iran's steel production chain has increased from 123 tons in 2013 to 230m tons during the Hope and Prudence Government, adding that the capacity for producing raw steel has reached 37m tons due to endeavors of Iranian experts despite all cruel sanctions.

He added that Iran in steel production now ranks 10th in the world, adding that in the past years, the country has surpassed France and Italy in terms of steel production. Sarghini added that steel production in the world witnessed 3.5 percent growth last year, adding that despite all sanctions and by reliance on the jihadi spirit, the raw steel production in the country has grown by 6.5 percent.

He added that in five years leading to 2012, the country used to export 22 to 23 million tons of raw iron ore but the figure increased to less than 4 million tons last year.

He added that in 2011, the country exported 1.5m tons of steel and in return it imported 6.5m tons of steel but last year, the country set a record in export of steel and it exported some 12m tons of different steel products, reiterating that the country



just imported 200,000 to 300,000 tons of steel in the same period due to the completion of chains.

On the 2025 Outlook and the target for producing 55m tons of raw steel, he said currently, the country has 37m tons ready steel and 20 million tons are also in the works and it can definitely materialize the target of producing 55 million tons of steel by 2025.

Sarghini noted that steel industry has been indigenized and even the country has attained the technology of PERD.

He then pointed to some statistics regarding the production in the country in the first five months of the current year, saying that in petrochemicals, the country has posted 6.3 percent growth, and also 42.5 percent growth in home appliances, 50 percent in aluminum, 8 percent in steel, 15 percent in cement and 1.5 percent in auto industry.

He reiterated that despite sanctions, the growth in the industry sector according to the Central Bank report has grown positively by 2.5 percent.

40% of National Exports Done Via Free and Special Economic Zones

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of the Supreme Council of Iran's Free Trade, Industrial and Special Economic Zones Mr. Bank says some 40 percent of the national exports are done through the country's free trade zones and special economic zones.



Speaking to IRNA on Thursday, Mr. Bank referred to \$169b of exports from these zones during seven years of the Hope and Prudence Government's life, adding that over 40 percent of the national exports are done via these zones.

He added that some part of essential imports in the country belongs to the free zones and special economic zones, noting that the volume of exports comparing to imports in these zones is very considerable.

Mr. Bank stipulated that statistics show that during seven years of eleventh and twelfth governments, the total imports to the free zones and special economic zones have been around \$45b while this figure in the exports sector is around \$132b.

The advisor to the president added that regarding \$37b of exports to the mainland, the total amount of exports from these zones reaches \$169b in the same period.

He further said some currents with negative propagations are trying to hinder the growth of these zones, noting that the figure would have been higher if there had not been the banking limitations due to the sanctions.

He emphasized despite all existing problems, these zones account for 40 percent of total exports of the country.

Mr. Bank added that half of the exports from these zones are petrochemical products.

On the domestic and foreign investment in the zones, he said getting license is a long procedure which should be observed and it creates headache for this sector but there are many people who are ready to tolerate this bumpy road of getting licence for cooperation in these zones.

Iran, Tajikistan Stress Expansion of Economic, Energy Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian held talks with Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan Usmonali Uzmonzoda via videoconference on the expansion of economic and energy cooperation.

During the videoconference, the energy ministers of Iran and Tajikistan stressed the development of economic and energy relations.

The two sides, who also chair the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation between the two countries stressed the need to hold a meeting of the Joint Committee by videoconference to follow up on the issues.



During the meeting, Uzmonzoda also expressed his satisfaction with the participation in the 11th meeting of the Governing Council of the Regional Center for Urban Water Management, emphasizing his country's determination to develop cooperation.

Emphasizing the deep cultural and historical ties between the two countries and the existence of great capacities for cooperation, Iranian and Tajik ministers stressed the further development of relations in all fields, especially in the fields of economy and energy. The two sides agreed to hold the 14th meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation between the two countries on a date to be subsequently agreed through diplomatic channels.

Iran Steel Production Increases

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In its latest monthly report, the World Steel Association (WSA) says that Iran's crude steel production in the first eight months of 2020 grew by more than eleven percent to 18.6 million tons.

The growth has occurred against the fact that in May 2019, the United States imposed sanctions on Iran's metals sector, including its steel, which adds billions of dollars to the country's coffers.

According to the Trade and Development Organization of Iran, the export of iron and its alloys amounted to about \$3.9 billion and copper products to about \$700 million in 2018.

Iran has also exported more than \$840 million worth of iron ore.

However, Iran has not released details of its exports since the beginning of last year, and it is unclear the current state of those exports.

"Due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of this month's figures are estimates that may be revised with next month's production update," WSA reported..

MIMT, Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Trade, also released a monthly report on Thursday, showing that the country's crude steel production in the first five months of the Iranian Calendar year (beginning March 20) increased by 8 percent compared with the same period last year and reached 11.4 million tons.

The manufacturing of steel products also increased by nearly 7 percent to about 9.5 million tons.

MSC Achieves Two New Records

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Manager of Steelmaking and Casting Sector in Mobarakeh Steel Company Mr. Gholamreza Salimi says the hardworking and tireless staff of steelmaking and casting unit of the company in the last month of Iranian calendar year, Shahrivar, set two new records for monthly production of slab and 133 smelters and they took another step for materializing the annual targets of the company.

He said in month of Shahrivar, the unit produced 639,000 tons of slab and in the last days of the month they set record for daily melt 133.

He went on to say that the current record of producing 639,000 tons of slab is 2,000 tons more than the previous record which had been set in June.

Salimi noted that by the way, the unit has produced 3.59m tons of slabs in the first half of the year and the figure shows 6.8 percent growth comparing to the same period last year.



He further said that consecutive record-breaking of his colleagues in all units of the company, especially in the steelmaking unit in the year of surge in production despite sanctions and COVID-19 pandemic, is an indication of strong determination of the jihadi and capable staff of the unit and it eases materialization of the pre-set target.

Head of the continuous casting production section of the

company Mr. Ghasem Khoshdel also said that his colleagues in the casting for the third time this year showed their determination for materializing the targets of the company.

Meanwhile, head of electric arc furnace maintenance department of the company, Mr. Mohammad Nasiri said that in the current dominating condition of the country, the new record in September is an indication to the collective effort and it is the symbol of "determination" which is seen in any one of Mobarakeh Steel Company and steelmaking unit personnel.

Head of the secondary operation unit of the company Mr. Fattah Al-Menan, for his part, said that in the steelmaking and continuous casting unit on September 20, a new record for daily production was set in 133 smelting production. The previous record of 131 smelters had been set in August.

He added that consecutive records in Mobarakeh Steel Company shows that sanctions against the company have been ineffective and it also indicates the strong determination of management and staff of the company.

NPC Defines 27 Projects to Propel Petchem Industry Smartly

TEHRAN (Shana) – The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said the company had devised 27 petrochemical projects to propel the industry in the coming years.

Addressing a ceremony to launch a methanol to propylene semi-industrial unit, Behzad Mohammadi said the projects have been categorized among the second the third petrochemical leaps, adding they will supply propylene, methanol, benzene and ethylene among other items.



"We must move towards diversifying the products of the industry and try to make the country's petrochemical industry stable and resilient," he said.

The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company stated that the capacity of the petrochemical industry in March 2020 was 66 million tons and now it is more than 70 million tons. Of this amount, 22 million tons worth \$10 billion were exported and about 8 million tons worth \$5 billion were sold on the domestic market.

He stated that in 49 projects in the second and third leaps of the petrochemical industry, seven propulsion and strategic projects with a total capacity of 810,000 tons are being implemented. Therefore, 20 propulsion projects have been defined in four branches: propylene, methanol, benzene and ethylene. With the development of these projects, 50% of the import of petrochemical products will be covered.

Mohammadi said 985,000 tons of propylene is currently produced in Iran, adding: "This figure will reach about 2 million tons by 2025 with the projects that are under way today, but with the implementation of propulsion projects, this figure will reach the 4-million-ton annualized output by 2026."

Turkish Airlines' Weekly Flights Kick Off From IKIA

TEHRAN (MNA) – Turkish Airlines resumed its flights to Tehran from Friday on Sept. 25 after six months of hiatus by fully observing health protocols due to the spread of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Vice President of Operations at Imam Khomeini Airport Town Company Alireza Majzoubi broke the news and added, "Turkish Airlines, which had suspended its flights to Tehran for six months due to coronavirus outbreak, is scheduled to resume flights on Istanbul-Tehran route and vice versa."

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the world, "We witnessed the considerable decline in the number of travels and consequently cancelling the flights in most countries such as Islamic Republic of Iran", he said, adding, "According to the Airports Council International (ACI), the number of passengers in the world airports in the first three months of the current year in 2020 hit 26.4 percent slump, the rate of which hit 89.6 percent decline in the second three months of the current year as compared to the same period of last year."

Bolsonaro Undergoes Surgery for Bladder Stone



SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro underwent an operation to remove a bladder stone Friday, the government said, the latest in a series of health issues for the far-right leader.

Bolsonaro, 65, "underwent endoscopic cystolithotripsy surgery," a minimally invasive procedure under general anesthesia that involves using a laser to break up and remove a bladder stone, the communications ministry said in a statement.

"The procedure was carried out without complications, and the bladder stone was completely removed. The patient is in stable condition, without fever or pain," it said. Bolsonaro had previously announced he would undergo the surgery, telling supporters the bladder stone was "bigger than a bean."

Turkey Issues 82 Arrest Warrants Over Deadly Protests



ANKARA (AFP) - Turkish prosecutors on Friday issued arrest warrants for 82 people, including a mayor and several former lawmakers from the pro-Kurdish HDP party, who are accused of involvement in 2014 protests that left 37 dead.

The Ankara chief public prosecutor's office said 20 people had already been detained in connection with the unrest, which spread to Turkey after Islamic State (IS) jihadists fought to capture the mainly Kurdish northern Syrian border town of Kobane. The detained included six former lawmakers from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), as well as current and former party executives.

Pakistan PM Condemns "Islamophobic" Charlie Hebdo Cartoons



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday condemned the fresh publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed by a French satirical weekly, urging UN efforts against what he called rising Islamophobia.

Addressing the UN General Assembly in a prerecorded message, Khan said that rising global nationalism has "accentuated Islamophobia" and said that Muslims "continue to be targeted with impunity in many countries."

"Incidents in Europe including republication of blasphemous sketches by Charlie Hebdo are recent examples," Khan said. "We stress that willful provocations and incitement to hate and violence must be universally outlawed."

"This assembly should declare an international day to combat Islamophobia and build a coalition to fight the scourge." Charlie Hebdo, known for its irreverent humor and absolutist belief in free speech, has repeatedly stirred anger in the Islamic world by publishing cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

Malaysian PM Faces Major Test in State Polls

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's embattled leader faced state elections Saturday that are his biggest political test since taking office, with analysts saying he desperately needs a win to strengthen his tenuous hold on power.

A defeat for Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's allies in Sabah state on Borneo will erode support among his seven-month-old government's coalition partners, increasing pressure for snap national polls, observers warn.

Adding to his problems, the election comes just days after opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim launched a bid to topple his administration, claiming he had mustered enough support from MPs to take over.

Malaysia has been gripped by political turmoil since the collapse in February of a reformist government, which was headed by Mahathir Mohamad and included Anwar, amid bitter infighting.

Muhyiddin seized power without an election and leads a coalition backed by a scandal-plagued party, but his administration has only a wafer-thin majority in parliament and critics say it is illegitimate.

The Sabah elections were called after a Muhyiddin ally launched a bid to take over the opposition-controlled local government. But rather than cede power, the chief minister dissolved the state assembly.

About 1.1 million people are eligible to vote for 73 assembly seats in the state on the northeastern tip of jungle-clad Borneo island, which is home to a dizzying array of indigenous groups.

Loose coalitions are backing the government and the opposition, but analysts say the vote is too close to call. Results are expected today.

The outcome will not directly affect the balance of power at the national level, but it is a key test of Muhyiddin's popularity.

Abbas Asks UN for Int'l Mideast Conference Next Year



NEW YORK (AFP) - Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas appealed Friday to the United Nations for an international conference on the Middle East in 2021, hoping for a new start after US elections and the milestone of Persian Gulf Arabs' recognition of Israel.

In an address to the General Assembly, Abbas asked Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to convene the meeting on the Palestinian issue "early next year" and bring in "all relevant parties."

"The conference should have full authority to launch a genuine peace process based on international law," Abbas told the virtual General Assembly in a recorded address.

"It should aim to end the occupation and grant the Palestinian people their freedom and independence in their own state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and settle final-status issues, notably the refugee question," he said.

Abbas made his appeal amid concerns among Palestinians of dwindling support in the Arab world for their decades-long campaign for an independent state. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain earlier this month agreed to recognize Israel, a major coup for the Jewish state and diplomatic win for U.S. President Donald Trump.

The two Arab states, while saying they still support a Palestinian state, share the concerns of Israel and the United States about neighboring Iran.

Abbas said: "It is delusional to think that the Palestinian people could be sidelined." "You should all know that there can be no peace, no security, no stability or coexistence in our region without an end to the occupation and without a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question," he said.

The Palestinian Authority has refused diplomatic efforts by Trump due to his administration's staunch advocacy of Israel. If Trump loses in November 3 elections, the conference sought by Abbas would take place under a US president Joe Biden, who is also a supporter of Israel but has vowed to promote a two-state solution.

The Palestinians have also agreed to hold elections in early 2021 as the shock of the Gulf Arabs' moves sparks new talks of reconciliation between Abbas' Fatah movement and Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs the Gaza Strip.

U.S. President Donald Trump last week attacked his FBI director Christopher Wray for highlighting the threat posed by Russia in the upcoming November 3 election.

He added that dialogue should be restored between Russian and US officials on key issues of international information security. Professional dialogue should not become "hostage to our political disagreements," Putin said.

U.S. President Donald Trump last week attacked his FBI director Christopher Wray for highlighting the threat posed by Russia in the upcoming November 3 election.

He also suggested that Moscow and Washington strike a deal to prevent cyberspace incidents, comparing that to a 1972 Soviet-American agreement to reduce the possibility of an incident at sea or in the air and an escalation in tensions.

He also called for a global pact agreeing not to use such methods to deal "the first blow" in conflicts. "One of today's major strategic challenges is the risk of a large-scale confrontation in the digital field," the Russian leader said.

"A special responsibility for its prevention lies on the key players in the field of ensuring international information security," he added.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov read out Putin's statement in a video released by the ministry, while the Kremlin chief was visiting massive military drills involving China and Iran in southern Russia. Western countries have for years accused Russia of using hackers and internet trolls to sway the outcome of elections, and US intelligence officials have said that Moscow is once again manipulating social media in favour of Donald Trump as it did in 2016.

Putin's proposal for a non-interference pact in cyberspace came amid Kremlin accusations that Western countries are mounting a "disinformation" campaign against Russia over the poisoning last month of opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Siberia. In his statement, Putin called for the two countries to "exchange guarantees of non-interference in each other's domestic affairs including elections," and particularly noted the use of "information and communication technologies".

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Military Plane Carrying 27 Crashes in Ukraine

KIEV (Dispatches) - A military transport plane carrying air force cadets crashed and burst into flames near a highway in northeastern Ukraine on Friday evening, killing at least 22 people on board, officials said.

The Antonov An-26 aircraft crashed while trying to land during a training exercise, the General Staff of the Armed Forces Ruslan Khomchak said in a statement, adding that at least two more people were critically injured.

Video posted by Deputy Interior Minister Anton Gerashchenko on Facebook showed the plane in flames lying near a road and smoke billowing upwards in the night sky.

Footage taken later showed rescue workers inspecting the smoking wreckage near the town of Chuhuiv.

An investigation has started on what caused the crash. One pilot reported failure in the left engine of the twin-engine plane, said Oleksiy Kucher, the governor of the Kharkiv region, according to Interfax Ukraine, adding this would not have been a critical situation for an experienced pilot.

Citing preliminary information, Kucher said that

some of the people on board managed to jump out of the plane when it was at low altitude.

An eyewitness who was driving along the road towards Chuhuiv told Reuters he saw a man in flames running from the plane after it crashed.

"Another car stopped behind us. We took a fire extinguisher and ran with another driver to help him," said Yaroslav, who gave only his first name.

"Another man came from the plane. He had a cut on his head. We pulled him to the opposite side (of the road). The one who was on fire, we put the fire out."

The crash happened around 2 km (1.2 miles) from a military airport, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine said in a statement. It said 27 people had been on board the plane.

The cadets were from the Kharkiv University of Air Force, which is run by the defence ministry.

"A state commission is being created to identify all the circumstances and causes of this disaster. Search and rescue work continues on the spot," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's office said.



S Korea Calls for N. Korea to Probe Official's Death at Sea



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea said on Saturday it will request North Korea to further investigate the fatal shooting of a South Korean government official who went missing near the tense sea border between the two countries last week.

After a National Security Council meeting, South Korea's presidential office said it would call for a joint probe into the case with the North if needed, saying there were discrepancies in accounts of the incident from the two sides.

The fisheries official was shot by North Korean troops on Tuesday, in a killing that sparked outrage in the South and drew a rare apology from the North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un.

Kim was quoted as saying he was "very sorry" over what he described as an "unexpected, unfortunate incident" in a message sent by Pyongyang's United Front Department, a North Korean government agency in charge of inter-Korean relations.

South Korea's military said on Thursday that the North's soldiers killed the man, doused his body in fuel and set it on fire near the sea border. But the North Korean government said its soldiers shot the "illegal intruder" and denied burning his body. The message from Pyongyang largely passed the blame for the shooting to the South Korean official, claiming that he refused to answer questions and attempted to flee before North Korean troops fired at him.

"We have decided to request the North to conduct an additional investigation and also request a joint investigation with the North if needed," the Blue House said in a statement on Saturday. It said the South will also "swiftly take measures to further strengthen surveillance posture" in waters off the country's western coast to prevent similar incidents.

Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

Elahieh Apt (\$2200)
250sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
pkg, & F.F

Dibaji bldg (\$10000)
3storey
14bdrs, yard
enough pkgs
terrace, storages
renovated

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1800) 2bdrs, 160sq.m
(\$2400) 3bdrs, 220sq.m
(\$3000) 4bdrs, 300sq.m
All with S/p, S, J, F.F

Zaferanieh Villa
2000sq.m, 6bdrs, S/pool
Sauna, Jacuzzi, pkg lots
green yard, fireplace
storages, Nicely Furn

Gheitarieh (\$2000)
180sq.m, 3bdrs, & F.F

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Norway Could Cut Oil, Gas Output by 900,000 boepd

OSLO (Reuters) - Norwegian oil firms plan to close down 22% of the country's oil and gas output, or 900,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, if workers go on strike next week, the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association (NOG) said on Friday. Some 324 out of 7,300 employees on offshore platforms plan to strike from Sept. 30 if annual pay negotiations with employers fail, trade unions Safe, Industri Energi and

Lederne said on Wednesday.

If Norway's state-appointed mediator is unable to broker a deal, union members will be eligible to go on strike and the dispute will escalate.

Norway pumps just over 4 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd), half in the form of crude and other liquids and half from natural gas, making it a major global energy supplier.



G7 Ministers Committed to Debt Relief, Urge Expansion

LONDON (Dispatches) - G7 finance ministers on Friday said they "remain committed" to a debt suspension program announced in April meant to help the poorest nations weather the coronavirus pandemic.

They also again called for private creditors to implement the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) agreed to by the G20 and Paris Club that would suspend debt repayments through the end of the year.

"We reiterate our call for private creditors to implement the DSSI on a voluntary basis when requested by eligible borrowers," a communique issued via the US Treasury by the group of seven most-industrialized nations said.

"Voluntary private sector participation has been absent, which has limited the potential benefits for several countries," it said.

The DSSI has so far freed up \$5 billion for 43 countries to offset the health and economic effects caused by Covid-19 -- but that's much less than Mohammed al-Jadaan, finance minister of current G20 president Saudi Arabia, predicted when the program was announced.

"I welcome the #G7's call for #DSSI extension, more debt transparency, & action on debt relief beyond just suspension. Speed is needed to help the world's poorest fight the impact of #COVID19," World Bank President David Malpass said after the statement's release. As the coronavirus pandemic wreaked havoc on the global economy, finance ministers and central bankers from the G20 had in April endorsed an immediate one-year debt suspension for the poorest countries, which are particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the time, they indicated about 70 countries would be eligible for assistance.

The IMF in June predicted the virus would wipe out \$12 trillion over two years and world GDP would drop 4.9 percent this year, but on Thursday fund spokesman Gerry Rice hinted the outlook may be better than expected.

The situation is still "very challenging" for countries other than China, Rice said, with emerging markets facing "precarious" prospects caused by falling commodity prices, reduced export demand, fewer tourists and declining remittances from abroad.

The G7 bloc composed of the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States acknowledged that sentiment in its Friday statement.

"Recognizing the ongoing financial needs of low-income countries, we support extending the DSSI in the context of a request for IMF financing," the ministers said.

They added that the extension "should reflect the G20's commitment to transparency and creditor coordination... as well as (reflect) the need for fair burden sharing among all creditors."

The ministers also said they "strongly regret" moves by some countries to classify state-owned financial institutions as commercial lenders to avoid participating in the initiative.

G20 finance ministers are meeting next month, and the G7 statement also calls on them to agree on terms for further debt relief for poor nations.

Airbus Holds Jet Output Stable in Face of Crisis Warnings

PARIS (Reuters) - Airbus is set to reaffirm its aircraft production rates, despite warnings that the coronavirus crisis will be deeper and longer than expected, industry sources told Reuters.

After cutting output of its best-selling A320neo single-aisle jet at the start of the crisis, the European planemaker has subjected its targets to a fresh internal review as a second wave of COVID-19 prompts new government restrictions in Europe.

But although it weighed further trimming its monthly output of 40 A320neos, down from 60 before the crisis, this week's review determined Airbus will hold the line on output for now.

"There are no signs of slowing; the contrary in fact," a senior industry source said of the A320neo output.

Airbus declined to comment.

The decision is good news for hundreds of suppliers at risk from volatility in output rates. But it puts pressure on Airbus to keep up deliveries and find homes for some 170 jets already waiting for ailing airlines to collect them.

In a letter to staff last week, Airbus Chief Executive Guillaume Faury warned the crisis was deepening.

Falling demand, combined with billions of dollars of cash tied up in undelivered jets, has prompted a debate on whether to trim production rates by a handful of jets per month.

Although Airbus has expressed confidence in its goals, it had left itself some flexibility after telling staff in May it could make fresh cuts to tackle a second wave.

Contributing to pressure for a new cut, around 30 of the jets due in 2021 belong to lessors who have yet to find an airline able to take them, Ascend by Cirium data shows.

Several others do have a home, but questions remain over whether their designated operators will survive the winter.

Airbus has used a mixture of negotiations and legal warnings to keep deliveries relatively buoyant since the crisis began, but those tactics are running their course as airlines face a tough winter without the reserves generated in a normal summer.



JPMorgan Slashes Its Forecast for U.S. Economic Growth

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Dwindling odds of a new stimulus deal are driving economists to temper expectations for U.S. economic growth. JPMorgan on Thursday became the latest Wall Street giant to follow suit.

Michael Feroli, the bank's chief economist, lowered his gross-domestic-product estimates for the fourth quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. The U.S. economy will expand by 2.5% in the final quarter of 2020, he wrote in a note, down from the firm's previous forecast of 3.5% growth. First-quarter growth will reach 2%, down from the prior 2.5% estimate.

Household incomes will see the "most immediate impact" from the lack of additional fiscal aid, Feroli said. Another spending package would drive a 24% annualized increase in disposable income through a second round of relief checks and the resumption of expanded unemployment benefits, according to the bank. But the lack of a near-term bill would drive a 12% contraction in disposable income next quarter.

Read more: Sunil Thakor's global stock fund has returned more than 500% to investors since 2009 by precisely targeting high-growth companies. He explains how he finds long-term winners in a 'sweet spot' that minimizes risk.

An encouraging trend in households' saving activity kept JPMorgan from lowering its GDP estimates further, the note said. The personal savings rate fell to 18% in July after peaking at 34% in April, and the firm expects a reading of 15% for August. Should job growth continue its upward trajectory this month, Americans may shift some of their saving to spending and lift growth in the fourth quarter, Feroli said.

The absence of a new stimulus bill has its upsides, the economist added. JPMorgan lowered its 2021 fiscal-deficit estimate to \$2 trillion from \$3.5 trillion, citing the lack of a deal. The forecast stands to change before the year is out, as the presidential election could change the outlook for federal spending plans.

Turkish Rate Hike Needs Follow Through for Real Game Change

LONDON (Reuters) - Turkish policymakers are no strangers to unexpected action when in a tight corner, but analysts said Thursday's surprise interest rate hike could herald a change of tack on monetary policy.

Although raising rates by 200 basis points during a global pandemic and slump is unusual, analysts welcomed the Central Bank of Turkey's (CBT) response in the face of rising inflation.

"It was a bold move by the CBT which should restore credibility and improve investor sentiment," said Christian Wietoska at Deutsche Bank, calling it a "game changer".

The hike was swiftly followed by a banking watchdog announcement that limits for banks' FX transactions with foreign entities would be raised, allowing for increased market access and reversing a decision from earlier this year.

"Encouraging moves - suggests the Turkish authorities finally get it," Timothy Ash at BlueBay Asset Management said.

Turkey has frequently squeezed offshore currency markets and its President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sees foreign investment in Turkish financial markets as a hotbed of speculation and has lambasted high interest rates.

The central bank said on Thursday that it hiked its policy rate after a fast recovery from the initial coronavirus shock sent Turkish inflation higher than expected.

Thursday's actions were small steps in restoring confidence, which has been sapped by restrictions on offshore lira markets that have seen trade volumes shrivel in London.

"The answer to foreigners trying to sell lira is not make it harder to sell, as this just encourages people to get out while they can and will deter them coming back," Ash added.

Although Turkey's hike takes its benchmark rate to 10.25% and pulls interest rates level with 12-month inflation expectations, analysts expect Ankara will have little choice but to ramp up interest rates to 12% by year-end.

"The rate needs to be 100 or 200 basis points above inflation -- then we can get much more structurally constructive on the lira," Tatha Ghose, FX & EM analyst at Commerzbank, said.

Global Economic Outlook Better Than June Prediction

LONDON (Dispatches) - The global economic outlook is less bleak than projected in June, an IMF spokesman said, hinting that the organization's forecasts for growth will be raised next month.

"Recent incoming data suggests that the outlook may be somewhat less dire" than projected in the Washington-based crisis lender's World Economic Outlook published in June, spokesman Gerry Rice told reporters, noting that "parts of the global economy (are) beginning to turn the corner."

As the coronavirus has moved through the world, economists have been forced to constantly revise their forecasts for growth. The International Monetary Fund is set to update its global outlook on October 13, though Rice did not reveal details about the new projection.

In its June forecast, the fund said world GDP would drop by 4.9 percent and the virus would wipe out \$12 trillion over two years.

However China and some other advanced economies performed better than expected in the second quarter of 2020, Rice said, partly due to the easing of lockdown measures after the near total shutdowns earlier in the year.

"We're also seeing signs of global trade slowly beginning to recover," Rice said.

"I would emphasize we are not out of the woods," Rice said, calling the outlook "very challenging" with emerging markets facing a "precarious" situation due to the coronavirus.

Economists also fear that a second wave of infections could damage growth. Governments including Britain and France have reinstated some restrictions in recent days, although on a much more limited scale than earlier in the year.

Rice said households and businesses in the United States continue to face challenges and signaled that the fund supports more fiscal support for the economy.



Talks on another round of stimulus are deadlocked in Washington weeks before President Donald Trump stands for a second term in the November polls.

In a column earlier this month, IMF leader Kristalina Georgieva and chief economist Gita Gopinath said governments should continue to support workers and businesses since the unprecedented nature of the crisis could give rise to a wave of bankruptcies and job destruction.

"This crisis, however, is far from over," they wrote. "The recovery remains very fragile and uneven across regions and sectors. To ensure that the recovery continues, it is essential that support not be prematurely withdrawn."

They cautioned that, "Though the world has learned to live with the virus, a full recovery is unlikely without a permanent medical solution."

Hungary to Shore Up Battered Economy With Investments, Tax Cuts

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Hungary wants to kickstart its economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic by boosting investments and reducing taxes, Prime Minister Viktor Orban told Reuters on Friday, adding that extending the government's job support scheme was a backup plan.



Nationalist Orban, who has been in power for more than a decade, faces the toughest challenge of his rule now as the economy is expected to shrink by up to 6% this year while new COVID-19 infections are surging.

Hungary's weakened economic prospects could represent a threat to Orban - once dubbed a "dictator" by the former head of the EU's executive in Brussels - as he prepares to face parliamentary elections in the first half of 2022.

The economy, along with a strong anti-immigration campaign, has been a major vote-winner for the premier whose tax policies have favoured families and relied strongly on the auto industry.

"Investment, investment, investment. Tax reduction and investment," Orban said in an interview in Brussels when asked how he would try to improve the economy. "We concentrate on investments because if we have investments we have jobs."

This, he said, would be enough to get growth going again, even without Hungary's share of the European Union's new recovery fund worth 750 billion euros for the whole bloc.

When asked if the government would extend a job support scheme which expired a month ago, he said: "If there is a reason to do so we will do it but up till now we concentrate more on investment."

The economy shrank 13.6% in annual terms in the second quarter, the deepest contraction on the EU's eastern flank, and the recovery is expected to be slower than previously expected. [nS8N2F006P]

Asked about the forint currency, which dropped to five-month lows versus the euro this week prompting a surprise rate hike by the central bank on Thursday, Orban said the exchange rate was the central bank's job.

"The National Bank is independent and I trust the national bank so it's not my job, simply. It's the policy of the national bank," Orban said.

Karimi Named Jury Member At Antalya Golden Orange

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian actress Niki Karimi has been selected as a jury member at the 57th Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival in Turkey.

Karimi was born in Tehran, Iran in 1971 and started acting for films in 1989. She has since performed in more than 60 films and won many national and international awards, most notably in San Sebastian, Cairo and Nantes. She is famous for her movies 'The Bride' and 'Sara', which brought her awards at

international festivals. She made her directorial debut feature, 'One Night' (2005), which premiered in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival. Following 'A Few Days Later' (2007), 'Final Whistle' (2011) and 'Night Shift' (2015), she shot her new film, 'Atabai' (2020), in Azerbaijan, Iran. Karimi has also served as a jury member for numerous festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Locarno, Karlovy Vary, Edinburgh, Dubai and Damascus.



S&P Affirms India's Long-Term Sovereign Credit Rating

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Rating agency Standard and Poor's reaffirmed India's long-term sovereign rating at the lowest investment grade for the second time in four months on Friday, and it said it expects the economy to rebound from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The news keeps India's hopes alive of keeping its coveted investment grade, with two other rating agencies - Moody's and Fitch - having put it on a negative watch at their lowest investment grade ratings earlier this year.

India's long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit was affirmed by S&P at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook, while the short-term rating was held at 'A-3'.

"The stable outlook reflects our expectation that India's economy will recover following the resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the country's strong external settings will act as a buffer against financial strains despite elevated government funding needs over the next 24 months," S&P said.

The Indian economy will experience a record contraction in the fiscal year to March 2021 on account of the global COVID-19 pandemic but real GDP will recover significantly in FY22, the ratings agency said.

India has the second highest virus cases globally despite seeing one of the strictest of lockdowns and cases are still rising as the economy gradually opens up.

"We expect economic activity in India to begin to normalize in fiscal 2022, resulting in real GDP growth of about 10%."

The Indian government's direct fiscal support has been limited to 1.2% of GDP



so far compared to roughly 3% of GDP on average in other emerging market economies.

S&P noted that the government's reluctance to provide greater direct fiscal support to the economy likely reflects pre-existing fiscal constraints owing to years of high fiscal deficits.

"Although additional stimulus may help to avert a steeper downturn this year, it would also further strain the government's weak finances," it said.

Oil Majors Not In Sync With Global Climate Goals

PARIS (Dispatches) - Oil and gas giants are far from aligning with the global climate change goals they purport to uphold, and only a government-managed decline of the sector can prevent climate catastrophe, according to an analysis released last week.

"We have seen a wave of announcements from oil companies over the last nine months claiming to be part of the solution on climate, but none of their plans measure up to what is needed," co-author Kelly Trout, a senior research analyst at Oil Change, told AFP.

Oil majors have touted measures such as reducing the carbon intensity of their products, transitioning into renewable energy, storing "captured" CO2 underground, and offsetting emissions through reforestation.

The report stacked up the climate commitments of eight oil and gas companies against the Paris climate goal of curbing global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Under the 2015 treaty, nations are enjoined to cap the planet's average rise in temperature at "well below" 2C, and 1.5C if feasible.

A subsequent report from the UN's IPCC climate science panel showed 1.5C to be the safer limit by far, and laid out scenarios for achieving that goal by slashing or sequestering greenhouse gas emissions.

The IPCC has calculated that the additional release of more than 500 billion tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere would push temperatures above the 1.5C threshold.

If global CO2 emissions continue at the recent level of about 40 billion tonnes a year, this "carbon budget" would be used up in less than a decade and a half.

BP, Chevron, Eni, Equinor, ExxonMobil, Repsol, Shell and Total, all based in Europe or the United States, have to varying degrees laid out strategies they say are compatible with the Paris targets.

Using the 1.5C threshold as a benchmark, Trout and colleagues graded 10 components of each company's climate plan along the spectrum of "fully aligned" to "grossly insufficient".

Pledges to stop approving new extraction projects, for example, were judged "grossly inefficient" in all eight oil giants.

The same failing mark was given across the board for committing to a date to end oil and gas extraction; being "honest" about the high carbon content of gas; and -- with the exception of BP -- promising to stop exploration. Even if global use of coal -- which powers 40 percent of electricity generation worldwide -- were phased out overnight, developed gas and oil reserves would still push the world beyond the 1.5C threshold, earlier research has shown.

"The only reason that big oil companies have started to change their tune on climate is that they saw they were at risk of losing their social license as millions of people join climate strikes around the world," said Trout.

Investors and public finance institutions have likewise started to pull back from fossil fuels, though coal has by far taken the biggest hit. The report, entitled "Big Oil: Reality Check", also slams the publically traded firms for relying on hard-to-measure reforestation and embryonic CO2 storage schemes to offset emissions from their products.

In the end, only governments can ensure the managed decline of fossil fuel-based energy, the report concluded.

"We cannot depend on the same companies that got us into this crisis to get us out of it -- we seen a need for governments to step in," Trout said. "An arsonist pledging to light a few less fires is still an arsonist."

Radiation Levels on Moon 2.6 Times Greater Than ISS

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - As the U.S. prepares to return humans to the Moon this decade, one of the biggest dangers future astronauts will face is space radiation that can cause lasting health effects, from cataracts to cancer and neurodegenerative diseases.

Though the Apollo missions of the 1960s and 1970s proved it was safe for people to spend a few days on the lunar surface, NASA did not take daily radiation measurements that would help scientists quantify just how long crews could stay.

This question was resolved Friday after a Chinese-German team published in the journal Science Advances the results of an experiment carried out by China's Chang'E 4 lander in 2019.

"The radiation of the Moon is between two and three times higher than what you have on the ISS (International Space Station)," co-author Robert Wimmer-Schweingruber, an astrophysicist at the University of Kiel told AFP.

"So that limits your stay to approximately two months on the surface of the Moon," he added, once the radiation exposure from the roughly week-long journey there, and week back, is taken into account.

There are several sources of radiation exposure: galactic cosmic rays, sporadic solar particle events (for example from solar flares), and neutrons and

gamma rays from interactions between space radiation and the lunar soil.

Radiation is measured using the unit sievert, which quantifies the amount absorbed by human tissues.

The team found that the radiation exposure on the Moon is 1,369 microsieverts per day -- about 2.6 times higher than the International Space Station crew's daily dose. The reason for this is that the ISS is still partly shielded by the Earth's protective magnetic bubble, called the magnetosphere, which deflects most radiation from space.

Earth's atmosphere provides additional protection for humans on the surface, but we are more exposed the higher up we go.

"The radiation levels we measured on the Moon are about 200 times higher than on the surface of the Earth and five to 10 times higher than on a flight from New York to Frankfurt," added Wimmer-Schweingruber.

NASA is planning to bring humans to the Moon by 2024 under the Artemis mission and has said it has plans for a long term presence that would include astronauts working and living on the surface.

For Wimmer-Schweingruber there is one work-around if we want humans to spend more than two or three months: build habitats that are shielded from radiation by coating them with 80 centimeters (30 inches) of lunar soil.

Nuclear War Cannot Be Won and Must Not Be Fought

TEHRAN (UNIC) – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, 26 September 2020, called on states that possess nuclear weapons to reaffirm the shared understanding that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought.

The full text of his message reads:

Almost 75 years since the adoption of the first General Assembly resolution in 1946 committed the United Nations to the goal of nuclear disarmament, our world continues to live in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe.

Relationships between States possessing nuclear weapons are characterized by division, distrust and an absence of dialogue. As they increasingly choose to pursue strategic competition over cooperation, the dangers posed by nuclear weapons are becoming more acute.

This International Day highlights the need to reverse course and return to a common path to nuclear disarmament. The use of nuclear weapons would affect all States, meaning that all States have a responsibility to ensure that such deadly armaments are never used again and are eliminated completely from national arsenals.

COVID-19 has exposed a wide range of global fragilities, from pandemic readiness and inequality to climate change to lawlessness in cyberspace; our preparedness to address the threat of nuclear weapons is one of those vulnerabilities. We need a strengthened, inclusive and renewed multilateralism built on trust and based on international law that can guide us to our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Those States that possess nuclear weapons must lead. They must return to real, good-faith dialogue to restore trust and confidence, reduce nuclear risk and take tangible steps in nuclear disarmament. They should reaffirm the shared understanding that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. They should take steps to implement the commitments they have undertaken. The death, suffering and destruction caused by the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki must not be repeated. The only guarantee against the use of these abhorrent weapons is their total elimination. The United Nations stands ready to work with all States to achieve this shared goal.

Iran Significantly...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran continues to export oil in defiance of the U.S. sanctions, and it seems to have recently increased its oil exports despite the fact that official figures still put the shipments at very low levels.

China, for example, the world's largest oil importer, is likely receiving much more oil from Iran than the official figures report, according to various reports, media investigations, and tanker-tracking firms.

In August, Iran was exporting a lot more crude oil than U.S. figures suggest, data from TankerTrackers.com has revealed, as reported by NBC News.

According to the data, Iran was exporting as much as 600,000 bpd, using ship-to-ship transfers with transponders turned off to avoid detection, skirting U.S. sanctions. The daily average number compares with an estimate of 227,000 bpd made in a U.S. Congressional report, NBC's Raf Sanchez wrote on Twitter.

Last year, a U.S. State Department official told the media that the department was tracking ship-to-ship transfers and was working with other governments to ensure that they, too, were tracking such moves that became one of few ways for Iran to still get its crude to foreign markets.

Tehran Berates EU...

FROM PAGE 1

He added that any abuse of human rights mechanism and interference in Iran's internal affairs is by no means acceptable.

"This is not a new episode that some European countries remain indifferent and silent vis-à-vis the biggest [cases] of human rights violation [committed] by the very states and their allies."

"They are racing among themselves to sell billions of dollars of weapons to Saudi Arabia and [other] dictators in the region to kill the defenseless Yemeni people," the Iranian official added.

Khatibzadeh emphasized that these European states assume that the suppression of protesters, the killing of Blacks, massacre of minorities, particularly Muslims, and the torture of prisoners as well as exerting pressure on refugees inside the EU borders is tantamount to the implementation of rules but at the same time, they claim that the "enforcement of judicial actions in accordance with criminal law by a fair court in other countries is violation of human rights."

Such a double standard indicates lack of the Europeans' sincerity to support human rights and their use of this concept for political purposes, he said.

"The development and promotion of human rights at national, regional and international levels within the framework of religious commitments and adherence to the constitution and regional regulations as well as international treaties are among enduring priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and it is committed to observing them in practice."

White House...

FROM PAGE 1

During his speech on Saturday, Rouhani told the domestic opponents of his administration that they must not give a "wrong address" to Iranian people about the shortages of medicine and emergency supplies in the country.

"The correct address for all the crimes and pressure on the dear people of Iran is Washington, DC, the White House," he noted. "And those who are inside that building have committed all these crimes against the Iranian people, and you can see that there is pressure and problems on a daily basis." Rouhani went on to say that, "Our people stood firm and resisted, did not knit their brows and did not bow to these bullies."

Stressing that the Iranian people should direct their anger at the White House, the president said, "I have no doubt that the U.S. government will one day surrender and kneel before the Iranians and that the Iranian nation will be victorious." Rouhani also said Washington is angry with the Iranian government's appropriate management of the coronavirus outbreak despite draconian sanctions imposed on the country.

Iran, the hardest-hit country by the new coronavirus pandemic in the Middle East, has been almost on its own fighting the disease as sanctions have seriously hampered its access to drugs and vital medical equipment needed to contain the virus.

Tehran has repeatedly said it does not seek Washington's help in the fight, but wants the White House to lift the illegal economic sanctions so that Iran could mobilize its own resources to tackle the pandemic. Rouhani on Saturday authorized the country's provinces to impose lockdowns wherever necessary to stem any rise in coronavirus cases.

"We are forced to intensify regulations and supervisions, starting in the capital Tehran," Rouhani said.

He said coronavirus task-force offices around the country would make recommendations on restrictions and whether to impose one-week lockdowns.

Measures could include "restrictions or shutdowns" of schools, universities, seminaries, mosques, cafeterias, sports and cultural venues, hair salons.

"If provincial governors deem it necessary, these centers will have to close for a week," Rouhani said.

Lebanon...

FROM PAGE 1

Talks with the International Monetary Fund on a vital bailout package stalled this year. The cabinet's first task would have been to restart negotiations. Adib, a Sunni Muslim based on the sectarian system of power sharing, said he was stepping down from "the task of forming the government" after meeting President Michel Aoun, a Christian.

The cabinet formation hit a roadblock over a demand by Lebanon's two main Shi'ite groups, Amal and the heavily armed Iran-backed Hezbollah, that they name candidates for several posts including finance minister, a position previously held by a Shi'ite. Adib held several meetings with senior Shi'ite politicians but failed to reach agreement on how the minister would be chosen. Shi'ite leaders feared being sidelined as Adib sought to shake up appointments to ministries, some of which have been controlled by the same faction for years, politicians said.

Duplantis Nails 16th Straight Pole Vault Win

DOHA (Dispatches) - Sweden's Armand Duplantis maintained his amazing form to turn the tables on world champion Sam Hendricks for a 16th consecutive victory in the men's pole vault at Friday's Diamond League meet in Doha. American Hendricks was the last person to beat the Swede, in Doha's Khalifa Stadium at last year's world championships. But a couple of kilometres away at the more intimate Qatari Sports Club, Duplantis walked away with victory with a best vault of 5.82 metres, far off the world outdoor record of 6.15m he set in Rome last week.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax: (+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
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Morbidelli Leads After Windblown Catalan Practice

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Franco Morbidelli and Johann Zarco left it late Friday to record the two fastest times of the first day of practice for the Catalan MotoGP. Both were among the riders who crashed on a wind-buffed afternoon, but on their final laps became the only two riders to dip under 1min 40sec all day. Morbidelli, an Italian who rides for Yamaha-SRT, was fastest with Zarco of Ducati satellite Avintia just over one tenth of a second back.

Nadal Braced for Most Difficult Ever Roland Garros

PARIS (AFP) - Rafael Nadal admitted Friday that he faces his "most difficult ever Roland Garros" as he prepares for an assault on a 13th French Open title.

The 34-year-old needs one more Slam to equal Roger Federer's record of 20, but the great Spaniard's mood was as dark as the Paris skies as he addressed the media two days out from the start of the season's concluding major. "The conditions here are probably the most difficult conditions for me ever at Roland Garros for so many different facts," said the world number two. "The ball is completely different. It is super slow, heavy. It's also very cold, slow conditions. "And of course, the preparation has been less than usual."

Nadal, who won his first French Open 15 years ago and has been beaten just twice in 95 matches at the tournament, arrives in a chilly and damp Paris worryingly under-cooked. He skipped the defence of his U.S. Open title for fears over the coronavirus and played just three matches on clay in Rome last week where he exited in the quarter-finals.

That was his first tournament since February and he now faces the prospect of playing a French Open pushed back four months from its traditional May-June slot. The early summer heat and quick conditions, in which he thrives, have been replaced by rain, wind, autumn chill and even a brief deluge of hailstones on Friday.

"The weather is so cold," said Mallorca-based Nadal who was quick to notice that his practice session on Friday took place when the temperature was at a chilly nine degrees (48F). Nadal said he was not happy that the tournament has switched to a new ball supplier this year. He even believes it could pose physical problems for the players.

"I think it's not the right ball to play on a clay court," he said. "I really believe that the organisation needs to take a look at that for the next couple of years, for the health of the players, too, because the ball is super heavy and becomes dangerous for the elbow and for the shoulders."

Nadal is seeded to face world number one Novak Djokovic in the final. The Serb is one of only two men to have beaten the



Spaniard in Paris in 15 years. However, Nadal still holds a 6-1 advantage over the 2016 champion, and 17-time major winner, at Roland Garros.

Djokovic arrives in Paris with a 31-1 record in 2020 -- his only 'loss' coming via default at the US Open.

He also claimed the Italian Open title at the weekend for a record 36th Masters crown, passing Nadal on the all-time list. Djokovic hinted that this year could see Nadal dethroned as champion at Roland Garros. "Yeah, 100% true," admitted Nadal. "I always have been beatable on clay. He beat me a lot of times."

"But at the same time it is true that I had a lot of success on this surface." Nadal will begin his 2020 French Open campaign on Monday against Egor Gerasimov, the 83rd-ranked Belarusian. Should he make it as far as the semi-finals, he is seeded to face Austria's Dominic Thiem who he has beaten in the last two Roland Garros finals.

However, Thiem arrives in the French capital buoyed by capturing his maiden Grand Slam title at the US Open.

Suarez Signs Two-Year Contract With Atletico



MADRID (Reuters) - Luis Suarez has completed his move to Atletico Madrid, signing a two-year deal with the club after passing a medical following his switch from La Liga rivals Barcelona.

Suarez, 33, joined Atletico on a free transfer after Barca agreed to rescind his contract with one year left although the Madrid side will pay the Catalans up to six million euros (\$7 million) in bonuses.

"With the arrival of Suarez, Atletico gets a great goalscorer with a wealth of experience in Europe who has always been characterised for his commitment on the pitch and considered one of the best in the world in his position," Atletico said in a statement.

Suarez, who scored 16 La Liga goals for Barca last season, had his first training session with Atletico on Friday and could make his debut in Sunday's home match against Granada.

Ganna Claims Italy's First World Time Trial Crown

IMOLA (AFP) - Filippo Ganna became Italy's first time trial world champion on Friday by pipping Belgium's Wout Van Aert on home soil in Imola.

Van Aert was 26 seconds behind the 24-year-old Team Ineos rider with Switzerland's Stefan Kueng trailing by 29 seconds in third place. Former Tour de France champion, and Ganna's fellow Ineos rider, Geraint Thomas was fourth with 2019 winner Rohan Dennis in fifth.

This year's worlds have been shortened to four races from Thursday to Sunday and moved from Switzerland to Imola in Italy because of local Covid-19 restrictions.

On Thursday, the U.S.' defending champion Chloe Dygert crashed out allowing the Netherlands' Anna van der Breggen to claim the women's event.

On Saturday, Van der Breggen's compatriot Annemiek van Vleuten will defend her women's road race title just eight days after fracturing her wrist at last week's Giro Rosa.

The worlds finish on Sunday as Tadej Pogacar, fresh from winning the Tour in Paris last weekend, will face competition from the man he beat to the yellow jersey Primoz Roglic for the men's 258.2km race which starts and ends on the Enzo e Dino Ferrari automobile circuit.

Godin Leaves Inter for Cagliari

ROME (Dispatches) - Uruguay captain Diego Godin has signed for Cagliari from Serie A rivals Inter Milan on a three-year deal, both clubs announced.

"Cagliari Calcio are pleased to announce the signing of Diego Godin from Inter," the Sardinian club said in a statement.

"The Uruguayan defender has signed an agreement that ties him to the Rossoblu until June 30, 2023." Godin, 34, joined Inter Milan in 2019 after nine seasons with Atletico Madrid where he was captain and won La Liga in 2014 and two Europa League titles in 2012 and 2018.

"Inter Milan can confirm that defender Diego Godin has signed for Cagliari Calcio on a permanent basis," Inter said in a statement.



Moyes to Take Charge of West Ham Despite Self-Isolation

LONDON (Dispatches) - West Ham assistant boss Alan Irvine has confirmed David Moyes will still manage the team for tonight's game against Wolves even though he is self-isolating at home after testing positive for coronavirus.

The Hammers boss, and players Issa Diop and Josh Cullen, had to leave the London Stadium on Tuesday after they received positive tests for Covid-19.

Irvine took charge of the League Cup tie against Hull and secured a 5-1 win but Moyes will be the man making the

decisions this weekend.

"David will be the manager," Irvine said on Friday. "Everything we do will be run through him first of all and he will make the decisions on everything."

"He would make the decisions anyway but, like for this press conference, I am the messenger."

Irvine confirmed Moyes, Diop and Cullen remained asymptomatic and were all coping well.

"He is fine. I have spoken to him several times this morning and he is not feeling any symptoms," he said of the West Ham manager. "Obviously a bit frustrating for him but he is getting on with other things."

"They (Diop and Cullen) are both fine. Frustrated because they can't come in, but that is the situation and they understand that."

"None of them are feeling anything, which maybe makes it more frustrating."

Schumacher Would Welcome Hamilton Equaling 91-Win Record

SOCHI (AFP) - Michael Schumacher's motor racing son Mick suggested on Friday that his father and family would welcome Lewis Hamilton's success in equalling his record 91 Grand Prix wins if he succeeds in the Russian Grand Prix.

The young German racer, who leads the Formula Two championship this year and is on the verge of moving up to Formula One next year, said his father had always told him "records are there to be broken".

"Lewis has had a very, very good run, a very consecutive and positive run," he said.

"My dad always used to say 'records are there to be broken' - and I think it's everybody's aim in this sport." Hamilton is within one victory of the seven-time champion's record after claiming 69 victories since he replaced Schumacher at Mercedes in 2013.

He won 21 races with McLaren.

"Obviously, it's very good for the sport," added Mick Schumacher.

"And he's been very influential in this sport, too. After that, the next goal would be for me, I guess, if I do make the step up, to try and break that!"

Schumacher senior retired from F1 after a three-year stint with Mercedes from 2010-2012, having previously retired in 2006 after a hugely successful spell, winning five world titles, with Ferrari. He won two with Benetton. In December, 2013, he suffered a severe brain injury in a skiing accident, while with Mick in the French Alps, after which he remained in a medically induced coma, in Grenoble, until June 2014.

Since then, he has been remained under private treatment at his home in Switzerland.

Mick Schumacher added that he had met Hamilton several times.

Hamilton's long-term title rival four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari said he had "mixed feelings" about the prospect of seeing him equal and break Schumacher's records.



Klopp Supports Premier League Bailout For Lower Leagues

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp says the Premier League has a responsibility to help those further down the football pyramid as fears grow that many English clubs will go to the wall in the coming months.

The government delayed plans for a return of supporters to stadiums this week due to a spike in coronavirus infections, with warnings that restrictions could last for up to six months.

Without the huge TV deals of the top-flight, most clubs outside the Premier League rely on matchday income to survive.

The English Football League is negotiating a potential bailout from the Premier League in the form of a loan that could cover losses.

The government has also encouraged the top-flight to help out.

"In general I think that people in a better position should help people in a less good position," Klopp said on Friday.

"But the position for all clubs is at this moment not really easy, we all know."

"I don't know how the government finds time to think about that. I thought they had enough to do with other things, but football should try to help themselves, ourselves, I agree with that."

On the field, Liverpool have enjoyed a bright start to their title defence with victories over Leeds and Chelsea, but they face another side with a 100 percent record, Arsenal, at Anfield on Monday.

The Gunners have beaten the English champions twice in recent months, with Arsenal transformed since the appointment of Mikel Arteta.

"He showed in a pretty short period of time he is an exceptional football manager," said Klopp of the Spaniard.

