

In a Telephone Conversation With Armenian PM, President Hassan Rouhani Expressed Concern Over the Recent Developments In the Region and the Conflict Between Armenia and Azerbaijan

IRAN NEWS

Iran Dismissed the Claims Raised By the UAE on Three Iranian Islands In the Persian Gulf, Saying Such “Groundless” Comments Would Not Change Anything About Iran’s Sovereignty Over the Three Islands

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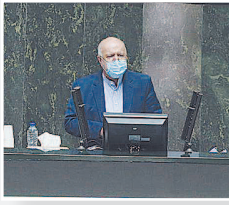


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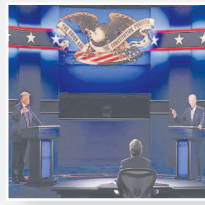


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Unfounded Allegations Will Not Affect Tehran-Baku Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Presidential Office Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that the good, strategic and all-out relations between Tehran and Baku will not be affected by unfounded allegations and the ill-wishers speculation will go nowhere.

Speaking in a phone call with Azeri Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, Vaezi said that Azerbaijan has important and special position in Iran's foreign policy.

Iran has always used any opportunity for reinforcing relations with Azerbaijan, he added.

Expressing his concerns over conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, he said, "We are closely watching recent developments and are ready to help resolve dispute between two countries through negotiations in the framework of international regulations.

He rejected claims made by some media and in the social network with regard to Iran's assistance to Armenia in the conflict, saying that the allegations are unfounded aiming to disturb relations between Iran and Azerbaijan.

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Country Has Been in Economic War Since 2018



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani said that today, non-oil exports are responsible for providing the currency needed by the country.

Rouhani stated on Wednesday that Iran is facing bigger problems in oil exports, and the problem should be compensated by exporting other goods.

The President said: "The Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade is at the forefront of the fight against sanctions, and it is responsible for supplying basic and essential goods."

He thanked the parliament for the vote of confidence to the Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade and said: "In the field of production, our movement should be better than in previous years. Despite the coronavirus spread, statistics in the first four or five months of the current Iranian year show that we are witnessing a growth in production compared to last year."

"People should know that despite the hardships and pressure of sanctions, the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors have grown," he noted.

"In previous years, we were under sanctions, not economic war," Rouhani said.

"In the past, the government exported at least one million barrels of oil a day at a price of \$ 120. In 2013, when oil prices fell, it was \$ 104 a barrel. Our banks were not in the situation today and they had better conditions," the president highlighted.

The president stressed: "In the 11th government, the situation was better and we were removed from the FATF blacklist, and unfortunately, problems arose for us because of the four bills."

"The provision of basic and essential goods is very important for us, and thank God, in the difficult conditions that coronavirus has created for us, our efforts to provide the health and medical goods needed by the people were right."

"We must explain the facts to the people as they are. Sanctions have been in place for years, but the economic war has been going on since 2018. Let us not make mistakes and distort the address and date, and instead tell the facts to the people, which of course does not mean that we are scared and retreated in the face of enemy conspiracies."

"It is true that the government's view is that we must interact with the world, we will repeat it a thousand more times. We said 'constructive interaction', and the Supreme Leader corrected it and said 'extensive constructive interaction', so we should have extensive constructive interaction with the world."

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Hezbollah Ready to Expose Netanyahu's Lies Right Now

BEIRUT (IP) - Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of the Lebanese Hezbollah, invited the media to visit the Janah facility in Beirut that the Zionist Regime of Israel's prime minister referred to in his UN address, "so that the world can watch Netanyahu lie on air."

Referring to Netanyahu's remarks at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, regarding Hezbollah's missile depot in Beirut, Nasrallah said that Lebanon's Hezbollah is ready to expose that point to the world's media right now so that the whole world would know Netanyahu's lies.

During a speech on Tuesday on the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar TV, Nasrallah said that Hezbollah's munitions are not kept in civilian areas, despite claims by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the contrary at the UN.

In response to Netanyahu's baseless claims, Nasrallah invited the media to visit the Janah facility that the Zionist regime minister referred to in his UN address, "so that the world can watch Netanyahu lie on air."

Hezbollah media relations arranged a media tour of the area late on Tuesday "to learn about the reality of the situation there and to uncover the false claims of Netanyahu."

In his speech to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Netanyahu warned that Hezbollah has a secret arms depot next to a gas company that could trigger yet another massive explosion in Beirut.

Netanyahu called on the people of Janah to "act now," and tell Hezbollah to "tear these depots down," warning that Hezbollah and its backers deliberately put them in danger.

In his speech on Tuesday evening, Nasrallah said, "We know very well where we should put our missiles." Nasrallah referred to the continued tensions along the Lebanon-Israel border, saying, "For the first time, the Zionist soldiers do not dare to move on the border between Lebanon and occupied Palestine and they have been on high alert since Hezbollah promised to carry out a revenge attack for its member killed in an Israeli airstrike in Syria."

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Iran Warns of Appeasement of U.S. Criminal Policies

GENEVA (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to the UN office in Geneva has censured Germany and several other countries for baselessly criticizing the human rights situation in Iran while trying to appease the United States by turning a blind eye to its criminal sanctions, which "grossly" violate the Iranian people's most basic rights.

Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh made the remarks at the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council on Tuesday, days after Germany issued a statement to the body on behalf of 47 countries expressing concerns about alleged violations of rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly in Iran.

He said that the allegations raised against Iran in the statement "are not corroborated by hard evidence or facts on the ground," but are rather based on "faulty generalization of twisted or incomplete information about certain individual cases."

"Human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural, are all interdependent, indivisible and interrelated. It has long been proven that external interferences are inherently antithetical to, and damaging for, the promotion of each and every one of these rights," he added.

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IAEA Inspects Second Iranian Site as Agreed With Tehran

VIENNA (Reuters) - The U.N. nuclear watchdog has inspected the second of two suspected former secret atomic sites in Iran, as agreed with Tehran last month in a deal that ended a standoff over access, the agency said on Wednesday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has not named either of the two undeclared sites but it has described activities it suspects took place there in 2003, the year when it and U.S. intelligence services believe Iran halted a secret and coordinated nuclear weapons program.

Although the IAEA says it has the power to carry out snap inspections anywhere in Iran it deems necessary, Tehran had denied it access to the two sites for seven months until the deal was struck for access on specific dates this month.

"As part of an agreement with Iran to resolve safeguards implementation issues specified by the IAEA, the Agency this week conducted a complementary access at the second location in the country and took environmental samples," the IAEA said in a statement.

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Iran, Venezuela Call for Ending Criminal Blockade

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro in a message referred to U.S. unilateral sanctions, saying Iran, Venezuela and other friends call for ending criminal blockade which threatens nations' development.

Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria, Iran, Venezuela and other brotherly countries in the world, we have the right to self-determination and peace.

We are free and independent people who demand the cessation of criminal persecution and the blockade that threatens the development of people.

Earlier, President Maduro said in a TV interview that he can rest assured that the Iranian assistance will help his country develop strategic capacities to carry out economic development projects.

Iran has implemented all programs it had and has been able to create a powerful energy industry in the past 40 years, said Maduro, calling for Iran-Venezuela strategic relations in energy and oil industry.

Saying that Iran has always supported Venezuela's economic development and progress, he added after signing several agreements on manufacturing sector and social fields, the union between the two countries has grown up dramatically.



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Terrorists Martyr 3 IRGC Forces in Southeastern Iran

ZAHEDAN (IP) - The ground forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) in southeastern Iran announced the martyrdom of three IRGC forces in Nikshahr, south of Sistan and Baluchestan province.

The ground forces of the Revolutionary Guards of Southeastern Iran announced in a statement: This evening (Tuesday), two Basij vehicles of Nikshahr city were attacked by an unknown vehicle.

According to the announcement, three members of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps were killed and one was injured in the incident.

Official Criticizes Politicization of Human Rights Issue

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Judiciary's Human Rights Headquarters Mr. Ali Bagheri Kani says the Islamic Republic of Iran has no problem with international human rights bodies and it is even an active members of them and attend their meetings but Iran's problem is that the West and some human rights bodies have politicized the human rights issue in order to use against Iran.

Speaking in a TV program, he pointed to recent western human rights attacks and statements against Iran, adding that those countries and bodies in order to meet their own interests use different tools against Iran, and human rights is a tool for confronting with Iran and Western states have formed an attacking front against the Islamic Republic, and now and then they focus on this topic while they never issue any statement against the violating countries which are their allies.

He added that Iran has no problem with the international human rights bodies and it is even member of these bodies but unfortunately the political approach of these bodies have made the interaction difficult. Bagheri also said that the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief has a political approach in his reports and he does not have any expert and legal approach on the human rights issue.



He also pointed to the discrimination and racism in the western countries, adding that racism has been institutionalized and systematic in those countries but the human rights bodies take no serious action against them.

Bagheri added that human rights have turned into a tool in hands of western media but when Iranian nation's rights are violated, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief remains quiet. He further said that Europeans are serious accomplice of the U.S. in sanctioning Iran, and with this sanction punishes a whole nation which can be considered a crime against a nation.

He also added that western media are after any small issue to blow it up and recently they created ballyhoo over execution of a murderer.

Ayatollah Sistani's Role Everlasting in History of Region



TEHRAN (IP) - The commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps described the role of Ayatollah Sistani, the grand religious authority of Iraq, in the history of the region as lasting and inspiring. Brigadier-General Esmail Gha'ani, Commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, met with veterans of the Sacred Defense in Tehran on Tuesday, referring to recent developments in the region in the face of Takfiri terrorism and the defeat of ISIS sedition, especially in Iraq.

"The role of Ayatollah Sistani as the main reason behind the unity of the Iraqi people has been crucial and irreplaceable," he added.

Brigadier General Gha'ani described the resistance of the Iraqi people and the production of indigenous and popular power in the presence of individuals, and tribes, clans in the country against the American-Zionist and Saudi conspiracy of ISIS as a brainchild of Ayatollah Sistani's tact, intelligence, and the pivotal role played by him and described the senior cleric as the symbol of honor and source of religious authority in Iraq.

The Commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps noted: Ayatollah Sistani's plans in continuous support of the Armed Forces and the Islamic Resistance of Iraq and thwarting the plan of the enemies of the Islamic Ummah have had strategic and historical effects in the region.

Appreciating Ayatollah Sistani, Brigadier General Gha'ani expressed hope that by the grace of God, in the not too distant future, with the cleansing of Iraq from the filth of occupiers and aggressors, the ideals of the martyrs of the Islamic Resistance of this country will be realized.

Iran Not Relying on Others in Supplying Military Equipment

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran does not rely on the assistance of others in the production and renovation of its military equipment, Deputy Commander of Iran's Army for Coordination Affairs Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said on Wednesday.

Rear Admiral Sayyari made the remarks on the sidelines of a visit to an exhibition in which the latest achievements of the Iranian Defense Industries Organization were put on display.

One of the key elements of Iran's defensive power is



having appropriate equipment that is compatible with the type of threats facing the country, he said.

Rear Admiral Sayyari pointed out that one has to compare Iran's capability in the production of military equipment now with that of 1979 when the Islamic system has just been founded following an Islamic Revolution to understand the significance of the issue.

Today Iran can claim to be able to construct all its defensive needs, he further said.

Late Kuwaiti Emir Played Key Role in Creating Regional Balance

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani has offered condolences over the "heart-breaking" demise of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the late Emir of Kuwait, and praised his "prominent" role in establishing balance and moderation in the region.

In a Wednesday message to Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the new emir of Kuwait, President Rouhani said, "I hereby condole you, the Kuwaiti government and nation on the demise of the late emir, who played a significant role in establishing regional balance and moderation."

He also wished divine mercy and blessing for Sheikh Sabah and patience and reward for the survivors.

Known as the "Wise Man of the Region", Kuwait's 91-year-old Emir died on Tuesday.

Born in 1929, Sheikh Sabah is widely regarded as the architect of modern Kuwait's foreign policy.

U.S. Seeking to Increase Meddling in Islamic Countries

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi said that the US is seeking to deal blow and interfere in the affairs of the Islamic countries.

Addressing a ceremony marking the 40th day of demise of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Tashkiri in Baghdad, former head of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought, he added the Americans victimize the Muslims for the Zionists and think only of the interests of Israel and no Islamic state matters to them.

Noting that Ayatollah Tashkiri heralded unity among the Muslims, he added, "Today, we see a lot of efforts

to divide Muslims as Sunnis, Shiites, Arabs and non-Arabs, and anyone who opposes them will be sanctioned, threatened and assassinated."

The Americans themselves reinforce terror and falsely claim democracy, Masjedi reiterated.

Regarding possible talks between Iran and the US, he said that such negotiations will not take place. The precondition for considering any negotiation is first an apology from the US and then a return to the JCPOA and the lifting all sanctions.

"We are not afraid of Trump and the Islamic Republic is strongly moving forward," he said.

Resistance Martyrs' Bloods to Void Compromise With Zionists

TEHRAN (MNA) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani said that the blood of Resistance martyrs voids humiliating compromise with the child-killer regime.

Shamkhani in a tweet on Wednesday wrote, "On the twentieth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Palestinian child Muhammad al-Durrah, what is the response of the compromising rulers with the child-killing Zionist regime to the Islamic world and the oppressed people of Palestine?"

"The result of the compromise is the greater arrogance of the Zionist regime in the continuation of child-killing," he added.

"The blood of the martyrs of the resistance will void this shameful compromise," he said.

The Muhammad al-Durrah incident took place in the Gaza Strip on 30 September 2000, on the second day of the Second Intifada, during widespread protests and riots throughout the Palestinian territories against Israel regime's military occupation. Jamal al-Durrah and his 12-year-old son, Muhammad, were filmed by Talal Abu Rahma, a Palestinian cameraman freelancing for France 2.

The footage shows the pair crouching behind a concrete cylinder, the boy crying and the father waving, then a burst of gunfire and dust. Muhammad is shown slumping as he is mortally wounded by gunfire, dying soon after.

Iranian Ties With Russia, Satisfactory

MOSCOW (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali said on Wednesday that Iranian relations with Russia are satisfactory and of great importance for the two countries.

The relations should be strengthened on a daily basis, said Jalali speaking to IRNA.

Urging the media in both countries to try to strengthen the relations, he said that IRNA, TASS, and Segodnya have close ties

Segodnya consists of RIA Novosti, Sputnik, Russia Today, and RT360.

He added that IRNA and the mentioned Russian media have signed a memorandum of understanding and exchange news outputs and photos, adding that Managing Director of IRNA Mohammad-Reza Noroozpour and the head of TASS Sergei Mikhailov are due to have a webinar in the near future.

Iran's plenipotentiary in Russia said that the 16th Joint Economic Commission of Russia and Iran is to be held in a couple of months.

Regarding the issue of Iran's joining the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), he said that steps are being taken and Iran is expected to join Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Belarus to enjoy the special economic ties, especially under the US unlawful sanctions.

MPs Issue Statement To Help Yemeni People

TEHRAN (IP) - A group of members of Iran's parliament stressed in a statement at the open session of the parliament on Wednesday that the Islamic world and the free people of the world should launch a global campaign to provide welfare facilities for the people of Yemen.

These parliament members stated that the oppressed people of Yemen are in a difficult situation.

"The lack of food, medicine, and medical supplies, as well as the disease caused by the war and the crimes of Saudi Arabia and its supporters, threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis, including children."

"Despite being under the most severe US sanctions, Iran is a pioneer in humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people based on its Islamic and humanitarian mission, and calls on all countries, especially Islamic countries, to join this humanitarian action," the statement stressed.

The statement also called on the Iranian Red Crescent Society to send aid consignments to Yemen as soon as possible and to contact the international aid organizations and invite them to participate in this action.

According to the statement, a group of MPs will voluntarily accompany aid ships to Yemen and invite the Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and parliament representatives of other countries, journalists, local and international media to participate in this humanitarian action. A nation that has sent Iranian-flagged fuel ships to the Atlantic Ocean and the Venezuelan border could deliver humanitarian aid ships to oppressed Yemen," the statement said.

20m Masks Distributed Daily in Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Interior Minister Abodoreza Rahmani Fazli expressed that 20 million masks are distributed daily, and worries regarding raw materials will be removed.

Attending at the press conference after the social committee meeting of the combating coronavirus committee, Iran's Interior Minister Rahmani Fazli stated that the priority of distributing masks are Health Ministry, treatment staff, pharmacies, public transportation, and then schools and universities.

Masks are distributed at two prices of 1,000 and 1,300 toman, the minister noted.

Rahmani Fazli added that various issues were discussed in today's meeting and according to the latest reports, observing health protocols have decreased among people and the result is crystal clear in the death toll.

"All public places and shops must give reports on how they observe health protocols based on schedules," he stressed.

"New policies regarding fining those who do not observe health protocols were also discussed to be implemented in Tehran as a sample."

The interior minister also pointed to the role of media in giving information and persuading people in observing health protocols and said that the only way for combatting coronavirus is cooperation among all organizations.

Piracy in Int'l Waters Nearly Zero

TEHRAN (FNA) - Deputy Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization Jalil Eslami said that piracy against Iranian ships in the free waters has decreased to nearly zero thanks to the efforts of the country's naval forces in the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

"Piracy has zeroed or was close to zero in recent months with efforts of the Iranian naval forces in the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)," Eslami said.

Elsewhere, he said that annually 120,000 marine operations, including relief and rescue operations, are conducted and 6,000 vessels are inspected to guarantee safe shipping. Deputy Commander of the IRGC Navy for Operations Admiral Qana'atpisheh said on Tuesday that Iran has sent its 69th fleet of warships to the free waters to safeguard the country's interests.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:53
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:06
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:37
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:00

37. (Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoy niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed on them; for We have prepared, for those who resist Faith, a punishment that steepens them in contempt;-
38. Not those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men, but have no faith in Allah and the Last Day: If any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!

Surah 4, Women (37 - 38)

Gas Output in South Pars Makes Almost Three-Fold Growth

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh announced Wednesday that gas output in South Pars gas field has reached 700 million cubic meters a year from annual 280 mcm seven years ago.

Zangeneh made the remarks speaking at the Majlis (Parliament) open session this morning to answer to questions of several lawmakers about delay in launch of Phase 14 of the South Pars.

South Pars gas field shared with Qatar and called North Dome by Qatari side is the world's largest gas field with an area of 9,700 square kilometers.

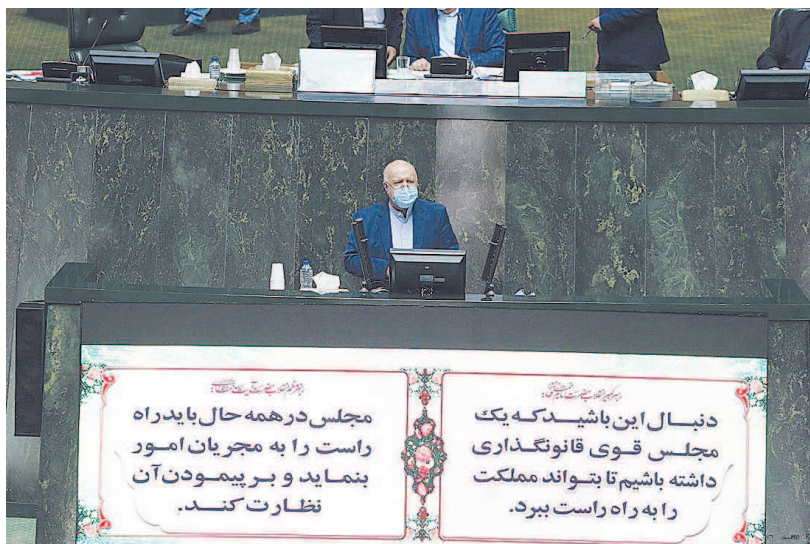
Iran, being among world's top four countries which have the largest proven deposit of crude oil and natural gas, shares broad offshore field with Qatar in the southern Iran in the Persian Gulf.

About the project, Zangeneh said that the issue of Phase 14 is part of the entire project, so the super project of South Pars should be considered totally.

Describing the South Pars gas field as a giant plan, the minister said it is something new in the region.

He further hailed the efforts made by the current Iranian government during its tenure since seven years ago to develop the project.

Since the start of gas production from Phase 14, 22 billion cubic meters of gas has been produced, the minister noted.



First part of Phase 14 refinery of the South Pars gas field will go on stream during the current Iranian year to end on March 20, 2021, he added.

Meanwhile, inauguration of Phase 14 refinery will have no effect on Iran's gas production, Zangeneh stressed.

He said that Phase 14 had not attained even 50 percent progress when the current government took office in August, 2013.

Further, the minister said Iran started development in South Pars ten years later than Qatar; meanwhile, today Iran produces gas from the shared gas field more than what the neighboring country does.

In the meantime, the minister pointed to the issue of sanction as an obstacle to the process of development.

The minister also defended his ministry's performance and pointed to the reasons for delay in the project of Phase 14 of South Pars and blamed the sanctions and management of an inexperienced manager for the project.

Nat'l Information Network Is Not to Cut Connection to Internet

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Information and Communications Technology, Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi, says by launching the national information network it is not to cut the country's connection to the internet and it is a wrong notion among the public.



Speaking on the sidelines of the government meeting yesterday, Azari-Jahromi defended the country's efforts for launching the national information network, adding that people are wrong who think by launching this network, country's connection with the international internet will be cut.

The National Information Network is an independent domestic network which enables Iranians to communicate without reliance on international Internet hubs.

The national scheme comprises several projects including but not limited to the expansion of the local fiber optic network, installation of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and giving a boost to Content Delivery Networks (CDNs).

He added that recent disruption in the international system and especially in the WhatsApp application was because of the problem in the application's own server. He added that Amazon Company which is in charge of transfer of data to Iranian users had imposed some restrictions which were resolved. He reiterated there is no disruption in the internet system. On the problems of the domestic applications, he said they should improve their quality in case more users rush to use the applications.

Azari-Jahromi added that the ministry will support the education ministry for online education during the Coronavirus pandemic and will ease access to the internet services. He added that all 1,100 universities and academic centers will be connected to the optical fiber in order to make education for free.

Tehran, Minsk Discuss Bilateral Cooperation In Field of Energy



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Belarus, Saeed Yari, met with the Minister of Energy of Belarus, Viktor Karankevich, on Tuesday to discuss cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy and ways to develop and strengthen the cooperation.

Explaining the potentials of cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy, the Iranian ambassador stressed the need to implement the agreements reached at the 14th meeting of the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector.

The Belarusian Minister of Energy, in turn, welcomed the development of cooperation between the two countries in the field of electricity and gas industry, referring to the history of cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy and the activity of Bell Energo Company in Iran.

Referring to the capacities of the Iranian company "MAPNA" and the history of its brilliant activities in different countries of the world, Saeed Yari said that the company is ready to implement projects related to the electricity industry in Belarus.

It was decided that the parties exchange their feasibility plans and projects for cooperation.

The Iranian ambassador welcomed the news of the launch of the first phase of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in the near future (November 7, 2020) and congratulated the Belarusian Minister of Energy on this success.

Iran's Exports to Kuwait Drop 40%

TEHRAN (ILNA)- The Chairman of the Iran-Kuwait Chamber of Commerce Hani Faisal told that Iran's total exports to Kuwait had dropped by 36-40 percent.

The Iranian official said that due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and other issues, the exact statistics of exchanges between Iran and Kuwait are not available.

"But unfortunately, our trade with Kuwait has decreased."

He confirmed "Currently, transactions with Kuwait are currently limited to a number of traders who have lived in the country in the past."

The economic analyst stressed that Kuwait does not issue visas to Iranians and it is not possible for new traders to operate.

The Director-General of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran's Arab-African Affairs Office Farzad Piltan also said in another interview that the decline in exports is

due to the lack of direct contacts between Iranian and Kuwaiti business leaders, as well as obstacles to visa issuance for small-scale exchanges,

According to reports, Iran's exports to Kuwait in the last fiscal year (ended March 19) stood at \$180 million, indicating a 26.87% drop compared with the year before (March 2018-19).

A total of \$2.5 billion worth of non-oil commodities were exported from Iran to the littoral states of the Persian Gulf and Middle Eastern countries during the first five months of the current Iranian year (March 20-Aug. 21).

"The export value shows a \$3.5 billion decline compared with the similar period of last year. The fall in value has to do with the closure of borders due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic," the official said.

Car Production Up 23% in H1

TEHRAN (MNA) – Some 468,699 various kinds of cars were produced in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Sept. 22), showing a 23.4 percent as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

According to the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, 425,925 different types of passenger cars were manufactured in the country, registering a 21.9 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

In the same direction, 39,519 pickups were manufactured in this period, recording a 40.4 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Meanwhile, 383 buses were produced in the country, showing a 124 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

Accordingly, 2,345 mini-trucks and trucks were manufactured from March 21 to Sept. 22, indicating a 54.7 percent hike as compared to last year's corresponding period.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, 86,293 different types of cars were produced in the Iranian month of Shahrivar (from August 21 to Sept. 22), showing a 36.4 percent growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Iranian Photographers' Success at UN Photo Contest

TEHRAN (UNIC)—Pictures from two Iranian photographers, Farzad Ariannejad, and Mohammad Moheimani, were selected for #TheWorldWeWant display, a photo exhibition to amplify the hopes and dreams of "WE THE PEOPLES" on United Nations Day 2020.

#TheWorldWeWant is a special collection of 75 photos, curated from more than 50,000 images crowdsourced from over 100 countries.

It is a creative response to the UN Secretary-General's call to hear directly from the peoples of the world about their hopes and dreams for the future. The exhibit will be available to UN entities for use and has been approved by the Exhibits Committee.

The photos express a stunning array of diverse and compelling perspectives capturing humanity's resilience and undaunted hope for a brighter future; a profound awareness of our interconnectedness; a deep aspiration for equality, justice and inclusion; and a sense of awe for nature's beauty and its power to sustain all life in being.

Together the 75 images form a visual manifesto illustrating a collective drive to protect, heal and regenerate our world and demonstrating there is much more that unites us than divides us.

Tehran, Baku Keen on Boosting Agricultural Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) –Referring to the several meetings between Iran and Azerbaijan presidents, Azeri Minister expressed hope that the strategic cooperation between these two neighbors expand in the agricultural fields.

A videoconference held between Iranian Minister of Agriculture Kazem Khavazi and Inam Karimov the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In this meeting, Khavazi expressed Iran's readiness to expand cooperation with Azerbaijan, in scientific fields as well as the fields of greenhouse crop development, introducing various cultivars, especially rice and cotton, embryo transfer and genetic material especially cattle and buffalo embryos, breeding measures in the field of cereals, and sericulture. Inam Karimov, also, for his part hailed the strategic relations of Iran and Azerbaijan in terms of having common borders and noted that agriculture is one of the fields in countries' strategic relations. Stating that the presidents of Iran and Azerbaijan have met each other 13 times so far, he expressed hope that the agricultural cooperation between these two neighbors continues.

Health Science, Technology Center Inaugurated

ZANJAN (IP) - The first Center for Innovation and Idea Generation of Health Science and Technology in Zanjan province in western Iran was inaugurated in the presence of Sorena Sattari, Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology.

Implementing technological ideas in the field of health is the goal of the first center for innovation and idea generation of health science and technology in Zanjan province.

Young people, professors, and students interested in the field of health can attend this center to present their ideas to provide the conditions for the commercialization of them.

The virology laboratory and the analysis laboratory of Zanjan University of Basic Sciences also started working on Tuesday with the presence of Sorena Sattari.

The Vice President of Science and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran also unveiled 8 technological products by attending the Science and Technology Park of Zanjan Province.

Sattari pointed out that today the number of knowledge-based companies is more than 5,300 companies and last year the sales of knowledge-based companies were about 120,000 billion toman (\$4 billion).

Iran to Boost Hendijan Oil Production Capacity

BUSHEHR (Shana) - The CEO of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company announced the successful installation of the second 1000-ton platform in the Hendijan offshore field, saying: "Due to the completion of the installation of platforms 07 and 08, the production capacity of this oil field will increase."

According to the Iranian Offshore Oil Company, Alireza Salmanzadeh, stating that platform 07 of Hendijan field was successfully installed in the desired location, added platform 8 of Hendijan field was also in the desired position last week.

Installation of the platforms allows enhancing productivity of the wells in the field by using methods like water injection, gas injection and pumping.

He stated that the installation of this platform due to the shallow depth of water had a much higher sensitivity and complexity in terms of anchoring, floating, standing, etc. compared to platform number 08.

Once fully operational, the two platforms will enhance crude oil output from the field by 20,000 barrels per day.

Pompeo to Visit Japan, S Korea And Mongolia Next Week

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will travel to Japan, Mongolia and South Korea next week, the Department of State has announced, a crucial visit to solidify ties with regional allies at a time when Washington’s relationship with China remains fraught.



The visit is scheduled to take place from October 4 to 8 and will be Pompeo’s first trip to the region since he went to Thailand in July 2019. After flying to Japan, he will visit Mongolia on October 6 and South Korea on October 7 and 8, the Department of State said on Tuesday. As part of the trip on October 6, Pompeo will participate in the second meeting of “Quad”, a gathering of foreign ministers from India, Australia and Japan. The Quad engagement was revived in 2017 to deepen security cooperation and coordinate alternatives for regional infrastructure financing offered by China.

Taunts Overpower Trump, Biden Visions



CLEVELAND (AP) — The first debate between President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden deteriorated into bitter taunts and near chaos Tuesday night as Trump repeatedly interrupted his opponent with angry — and personal — jabs that sometimes overshadowed the sharply different visions each man has for a nation facing historic crises.

In the most tumultuous presidential debate in recent memory, Trump refused to condemn white supremacists who have supported him, telling one such group known as Proud Boys to “stand back, stand by.” There were also heated clashes over the president’s handling of the pandemic, the integrity of the election results, deeply personal attacks about Biden’s family and how the Supreme Court will shape the future of the nation’s health care.

But it was the belligerent tone that was persistent, somehow fitting for what has been an extraordinarily ugly campaign. The two men frequently talked over each other with Trump interrupting, nearly shouting, so often that Biden eventually snapped at him, “Will you shut up, man?”

“The fact is that everything he’s saying so far is simply a lie,” Biden said. “I’m not here to call out his lies. Everybody knows he’s a liar.”

The presidential race has been remarkably stable for weeks, despite the historic crises that have battered the country this year, including a pandemic that has killed more than 200,000 Americans and a reckoning over race and police brutality. With just five weeks until Election Day and voting already underway in some key states, Biden has maintained a lead in national polls and in many battlegrounds.

Over and over, Trump tried to control the conversation, interrupting Biden and repeatedly talking over the moderator, Chris Wallace of Fox News. The president tried to deflect tough lines of questioning — whether on his taxes or the pandemic — to deliver broadsides against Biden.

The president drew a lecture from Wallace, who pleaded with both men to stop talking over each other. Biden tried to push back against Trump, sometimes looking right at the camera to directly address viewers rather than the president and snapping, “It’s hard to get a word in with this clown.”

Again refusing to commit to honoring the results of the election, Trump spread falsehoods about mail voting. Without evidence, he suggested that — surging in popularity during the pandemic — was ripe for fraud and incorrectly claimed impropriety at a Pennsylvania voting site.

But despite his efforts to dominate the discussion, Trump was frequently put on the defensive and tried to sidestep when he was asked if he was willing to condemn white supremacists and paramilitary groups. Biden attacked Trump’s handling of the pandemic, saying that the president “waited and waited” to act when the virus reached America’s shores and “still doesn’t have a plan.” Biden told Trump to “get out of your bunker and get out of the sand trap” and go in his golf cart to the Oval Office to come up with a bipartisan plan to save people.

Trump snarled a response, declaring that “I’ll tell you Joe, you could never have done the job that we did. You don’t have it in your blood.”

“I know how to do the job,” was the solemn response from Biden, who served eight years as Barack Obama’s vice president.

Trump struggled to define his ideas for replacing the Affordable Care Act on health care in the debate’s early moments and defended his nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, declaring that “I was not elected for three years, I’m elected for four years.”

Trump criticized Biden over the former vice president’s refusal to comment on whether he would try to expand the Supreme Court in retaliation if Barrett is confirmed to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. That idea has gained momentum on the party’s left flank but Biden tried to put distance between himself and the liberal wing, declining to endorse the Green New Deal and rejecting the assertion that he was under the control of radicals by declaring “I am the Democratic Party now.”

The attacks turned deeply personal when Trump returned to a campaign attack line by declaring that Biden’s son, Hunter, had inappropriately benefitted from his father’s connections while working in Ukraine. Biden rarely looked at Trump during the night but turned to face the president when he defended his sons, including his son Beau, an Army veteran who died of cancer in 2015, after the commander-in-chief’s reported insults of those who served in the military.

A new report from two Republican-led Senate committees alleged that Hunter Biden’s work in Ukraine at the same time his father was vice president raised conflict-of-interest concerns for the Obama administration, but the report did not link Joe Biden to any wrongdoing or misconduct. Trump was impeached for pushing Kiev to investigate the Biden family.

More Than 60m Indians May Have Caught Coronavirus

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - More than 60 million people in India -- 10 times the official figure -- could have contracted the novel coronavirus, the country’s lead pandemic agency said Tuesday, citing a nationwide study measuring antibodies.

According to official data India, home to 1.3 billion people, is the world’s second most infected nation, with more than 6.1 million cases, just behind the United States.

But the real figure could be much higher, according to the latest serological survey -- a study testing blood for certain antibodies to estimate the proportion of a population that has fought off the virus.

“The main conclusions from this sero-survey are that one in 15 individuals aged more than 10 have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 by August,” Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) director-general Balram Bhargava said at a health ministry press conference.



World Reacts to Kuwait Ruler Sheikh Sabah’s Death

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) - Tributes and condolences poured in from across the Arab world for Kuwait’s late ruler, Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah as several countries in the Persian Gulf and wider region announced periods of mourning.

The 91-year-old monarch, who died in a hospital in the United States after being there for medical care since July, has been hailed as “the emir of humanity” and a “wise leader” by his counterparts.

His half-brother, 83-year-old Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah, has been announced as the new emir by the country’s cabinet. Having steered Kuwait’s foreign policy for more than 50 years, Sheikh Sabah’s role as leader of Kuwait since 2006 was also marked by efforts to calm regional disputes.

He maintained good ties with Iran, which is considered a rival by many nations in the Gulf, and maintained ties to Qatar when several other Gulf nations severed ties dramatically in 2017.

Regional leaders mourned the emir.

“Today we lost a great brother and a wise leader ... who spared no effort for Arab unity,” Jordan’s King Abdullah said on Twitter as he announced a 40-day mourning period in the kingdom starting on Tuesday. Leaders of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt also mourned Sheikh Sabah saying he was a great leader, and each announced a three-day mourning period.

“The Arab and Muslim world has lost one of its most valuable leaders,” Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said in a tweet.

Bahrain said Kuwait had lost a “wise leader, an emir of humanity who loved what is good for the people”. Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani announced a three-day mourning period for his country, with flags to be lowered at half-mast.

Sheikh Tamim described the late Kuwaiti leader as “a great leader who was wise, moderate and long-term oriented, and dedicated his life to serving his country”. Speaking to Al Jazeera, Qatar’s ambassador to Russia, Fahad Al Attiyah, said the late ruler’s greatest quality was “his integrity and commitment to truth”. “Sheikh Sabah had demonstrated he was a man who sought to listen



UN Chief Appeals for Responsible Pandemic Leadership

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The secretary-general of the UN, Antonio Guterres, called Tuesday for “responsible leadership” in a message released to mark the stunning one million deaths globally from Covid-19.

“Our world has reached an agonizing milestone: the loss of one million lives from the COVID-19 pandemic,” Guterres said in the statement.

“It’s a mind-numbing figure. And still there is no end in sight to the spread of the virus, the loss of jobs, the disruption of education, the upheaval to our lives,” he continued.

The world “can overcome this challenge,” Guterres said.

“But we must learn from the mistakes. Responsible leadership matters. Science matters. Cooperation matters -- and misinformation kills,” he warned. As anger stays high in many countries over social distancing measures, he urged populations to hold the course.

“Keeping physical distance. Wearing a mask. Washing hands. A vaccine must be available and affordable to all,” he said.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused at least 1,005,981 deaths worldwide since the outbreak began in China in December last year, according to a compilation of official figures by AFP at 1100 GMT.



Azerbaijan, Armenia Brush Off Suggestion of Peace Talks

YEREVAN (AP) — Leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia brushed off the suggestion of peace talks Tuesday, accusing each other of obstructing negotiations over the separatist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, with dozens killed and injured in three days of heavy fighting.

In the latest incident, Armenia said one of its warplanes was shot down by a fighter jet from Azerbaijan’s ally Turkey, killing the pilot, in what would be a major escalation of the violence. Both Turkey and Azerbaijan denied it.

The international community is calling for talks to end the decades-old conflict between the two former Soviet republics in the Caucasus Mountains region following a flareup of violence this week. It centers on Nagorno-Karabakh, a region that lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by the Armenian government since 1994 at the end of a separatist war.

The U.N. Security Council called on Armenia and Azerbaijan Tuesday evening to immediately halt the fighting and urgently resume talks without preconditions. The U.N.’s most powerful body strongly condemned the use of force and backed Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’ earlier call to stop the fighting, deescalate tensions, and resume talks “without delay.”

Azerbaijani President Ilkham Aliyev told Russian state TV channel Rossia 1 that Baku is committed to negotiating

a resolution but that Armenia is obstructing the process.

“The Armenian prime minister publicly declares that Karabakh is (part of) Armenia, period. In this case, what kind of negotiating process can we talk about?” Aliyev said. He added that according to principles brokered by the Minsk group, which was set up in 1992 by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to resolve the conflict, “territories around the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region should be transferred to Azerbaijan.”

Aliyev noted that if Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan says “that Karabakh is Armenia and that we should negotiate with the so-called puppet regime of Nagorno-Karabakh, (he is) trying to break the format of negotiations that has existed for 20 years.”

Pashinyan, in turn, told the broadcaster that “it is very hard to talk about negotiations ... when specific military operations are underway.” He said there is no military solution to the conflict and called for a compromise.

But first, Azerbaijan must “immediately end (its) aggression towards Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia,” Pashinyan said. “We all perceive this as an existential threat to our nation, we basically perceive it as a war that was declared to the Armenian people, and our people are now simply forced to use the right for self-defense.”



North Korea Tells UN It Now Has Effective War Deterrent

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - North Korea has a “reliable and effective war deterrent for self-defence” and was now focusing on developing its sanctions-hit economy, Kim Song, North Korea’s United Nations ambassador said on Tuesday.

In an address to the UN General Assembly, Kim said North Korea was still threatened by military hardware like stealth fighters being used on the Korean Peninsula and “nuclear strike means of all kinds are directly aimed at the DPRK”.

“Genuine peace can only be safeguarded when one possesses the absolute strength to prevent war itself,” Kim said. “As we have obtained the reliable and effective war deterrent for self-defence by tightening our belts, peace and security of the Korean Peninsula and the region are now firmly defended.”

Already weighed down by tough international sanctions for its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, Pyongyang is also facing significant economic damage from strict border closures and other measures aimed at preventing a coronavirus outbreak. It is also struggling to cope with damage from recent storms and flooding.

Kim said the pandemic situation in the “under safe and stable control” as a result of measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. North Korea has said it has no confirmed cases, though some have cast doubt on that claim.

“Based on its reliable guarantee for safeguarding the security of the state and people, the DPRK is now directing all its efforts to economic construction,” said Kim, using his country’s formal name – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“It is a matter of fact that we badly need an external environment favourable for economic construction,” he said. “But, we cannot sell off our dignity just in a hope for brilliant transformation – the dignity which we have defended as valuable as our own life. This is our steadfast position.”





Shanon
(adviser)

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J, balcony
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Fully Furn

Fereshteh Villa (\$5000)
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

((\$3000))
Kamranieh
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S/pool, S, J
balcony, & F.F

Jordan (\$14000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, pkg, F.F

Sa'adat abad (\$1700)
3bdrs, S/p, F.F

((\$8000))
Velenjak bldg
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Thyssenkrupp to Cut 800 Jobs at Automotive Business

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - German conglomerate Thyssenkrupp will cut 800 automotive system engineering jobs, it said on Tuesday, and said auto demand could take up to three years to recover. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has added to pressures on Thyssenkrupp, which is striving to turn around its loss-making business units after selling its elevator division, by far its most profitable asset, to a private equity consortium earlier this year. Its shares are trading at their lowest since mid-May when the pandemic's impact on the stocks of industrial companies around the world was severe.



Coronavirus to Keep Asia's Growth at Lowest Since 1967

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The coronavirus pandemic is expected to lead to the slowest growth in more than 50 years in East Asia and the Pacific as well as China, while up to 38 million people are set to be pushed back into poverty, the World Bank said in an economic update.

The World Bank said the East Asia and the Pacific region this year is projected to grow by only 0.9 per cent, the lowest rate since 1967.

Growth in China is expected to come in at 2 per cent this year, boosted by government spending, strong exports and a low rate of new coronavirus infections since March, but held back by slow domestic consumption.

The rest of the East Asia and Pacific region is projected to see a 3.5 per cent contraction, the World Bank said.

The pandemic and efforts to contain its spread led to a "significant curtailment" of economic activity, the report said.

"These domestic difficulties were compounded by the pandemic-induced global recession, which hit [East Asia and Pacific] economies that rely on trade and tourism hard," it said.

Countries in the region may need to pursue fiscal reform to mobilize revenue in response to the economic and financial impact from the pandemic, while social protection programs can help support workers' integration back into the economy, the Washington-based bank said.

"Countries with well-functioning social protection programs, and good implementation infrastructure, pre-COVID, have been able to scale up more quickly during the pandemic," it said.

The economic shock of the pandemic was also expected to lead to a jump in poverty, defined as income of US\$5.50 a day, the bank said, adding that based on past experience and the latest gross domestic product forecasts, poverty could expand by 33 million to 38 million people to see its first rise in 20 years.

The bank said that 33 million people who would have in the absence of the pandemic escaped poverty would remain in it this year.

"The region is confronted with an unprecedented set of challenges," said Victoria Kwakwa, vice-president for East Asia and the Pacific at the World Bank.

"But there are smart policy options available that can soften these trade-offs - such as investing in testing and tracing capacity and durably expanding social protection to cover the poor and the informal sector."

IMF Urges Higher Social Spending in Mideast, Central Asia

DUBAI (Reuters) - Governments in the Middle East and Central Asia need to increase spending in areas such as social protection, education and public health, where vulnerabilities have been exposed by the coronavirus pandemic, the International Monetary Fund said.

The region, spanning around 30 countries from Mauritania to Kazakhstan, still lags global peers in terms of social spending and "socioeconomic outcomes," the Washington-based multilateral lender said in a study published on Tuesday.

"The pandemic has further magnified these challenges and brought into sharp focus the urgent need for higher social spending, particularly on health and social protection, to save lives and protect the most vulnerable," it said.

The IMF has estimated that real gross domestic product across the region will shrink by 4.7% this year as the pandemic hits sectors such as tourism and trade. Low oil prices and crude production cuts are meanwhile straining the finances of regional oil exporters and reducing remittances.

For many countries, the health crisis has exposed long-standing vulnerabilities in health infrastructure and social safety nets, but their ability to address those problems is now facing financial limitations.



"Public finances have been significantly stretched to deal with existing needs as well as the human cost of the pandemic and to contain its economic fallout," said the IMF. "In many countries, financing constraints limit the availability of budgetary resources."

Social spending in the region is generally lower than in other parts of the world, with governments spending about 10.4% of GDP on average, compared to a 14.2% average in emerging markets. Countries in the oil-rich Gulf spend less than advanced economies, said the Fund.

Social protection spending averaged 4.9% of GDP in the region, against 6.6% in emerging markets.

While most countries have increased social spending in response to the pandemic, this may not be sustainable without creating new revenues or using resources more efficiently.

"Even without increasing outlays, boosting the efficiency of spending would help significantly improve socioeconomic outcomes," the IMF said.

"For example, life expectancy at birth could increase by three years in Kuwait if the existing resource envelope was spent at the efficiency level of advanced economies."

Turkey's Economic Growth Forecast to Jump to 5.8% Next Year

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economy is set to grow 0.3 percent this year as it recovers from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, its finance minister said on Sept. 29, pledging more normalization steps to boost the economy as he set out the country's medium-term plan.

Turkey's economy contracted 9.9 percent in the second quarter as a lockdown brought activity to a near standstill, its worst year-over-year performance in a decade, but has since begun to recover.

Presenting Turkey's new medium-term

program, Berat Albayrak said GDP growth would slow in the fourth quarter compared to the third quarter, but would accelerate to 5.8 percent in 2021.

However, he warned the economy may shrink 1.5 percent this year in a worst case scenario and grow 3.7 percent next year.

Economic data "points to a strong V-type recovery in the economy from the third quarter and a clear turn to positive growth figures", Albayrak said, adding Turkey was diverging positively from economies of many developed and developing countries.

But areas such as tourism, transport and the services sector generally had not yet recovered to the desired level. "It is of vital importance to revitalize the services sector which employs around 15 million of our people," he said.

Referring to recent steps taken on interest rates, liquidity, swaps and asset ratios, Albayrak said: "Normalization steps will continue in the coming days and weeks. They will contribute to financial stability and our macroeconomic goals."

Support packages to combat the coronavirus so far had amounted to 494 billion lira (\$63 billion), or 10 percent of gross domestic product, he said.

Gold imports and losses in tourism income due to the coronavirus lockdown prevented a current account surplus in 2020, but Turkey aimed to improve its current account balance and provide sustainable growth, he said.

The program forecast a current account deficit of \$24.4 billion, or 3.5 percent of GDP this year. The budget deficit was seen at 239.2 billion lira or 4.9 percent of GDP.

U.S. Goods Trade Deficit Rises; Inventories Increase

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States' trade deficit in goods increased in August, with imports surging as businesses rebuild inventories which were depleted early in the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting trade could be drag on economic growth in the third quarter.

Still, the widening in the goods trade gap reported by the Commerce Department on Tuesday did not change expectations for a record jump in gross domestic product in the third quarter after output plunged in the April-June period at its steepest pace since 1947.

The economy got a boost over the summer from the reopening of businesses and a rescue package from the government. But new coronavirus cases are rising and money from the government for businesses and the unemployment is running out, resulting in slowing economic activity heading into the fourth quarter.

The goods trade gap increased 3.5% to \$82.9 billion last month. Imports of goods rose 3.1% to \$201.3 billion, eclipsing a 2.8% increase in goods exports to \$118.3 billion.

The rise in imports last month was led by consumer goods, which increased 7%. There were also strong gains in imports of food, capital and consumer goods. But imports of industrial supplies fell 4.6%.

Exports of industrial supplies and food rose. But shipments of motor vehicles and parts, capital goods and consumer goods fell.



Trade could subtract from GDP growth in the third quarter for the first time since the second quarter of 2019. But with much of the imports going to replenish inventories, the hit to GDP growth from the bigger goods trade deficit could be modest.

The Commerce Department also reported on Tuesday that retail inventories increased 0.8% in August after rebounding 1.2% in July. Motor vehicle and parts inventories gained 0.6%. Retail inventories, excluding motor vehicles and parts, the component that goes into the calculation of GDP, shot up 0.9% after climbing 0.6% in July.

Wholesale inventories rebounded 0.5% in August after dipping 0.1% in the prior month. Inventory accumulation is expected to contribute to GDP growth in the third quarter after subtracting from output for five straight quarters.

IATA Reduces Air Traffic Outlook as Crisis Drags on



PARIS (Reuters) - Global airlines reduced their 2020 traffic forecast on Tuesday, after a small summer rebound evaporated amid renewed coronavirus outbreaks and travel restrictions.

Full-year passenger traffic is set to decline 66%, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said, compared with a previously forecast 63% decline.

"The improvement that we saw in the summer months has more or less stopped," IATA Chief Economist Brian Pearce said. August traffic was down 75.3% in terms that reflect passenger numbers as well as distance flown, compared with a 79.5% drop in July.

Airlines are pressing governments to abandon quarantines and other travel curbs blamed for worsening the slump, and instead roll-out rapid COVID-19 testing at airports.

Load factors that measure the proportion of aircraft seats filled fell 27.2 points to a record low of 58.5% in August.

"The industry is restarting but it looks as though it's still burning through cash," Pearce said. Losses will continue to mount throughout 2020, with bookings data pointing to a weak fourth quarter.

August's short-lived improvement was driven by domestic routes, down more most 50% year-on-year, while international traffic was 88% lower.

A rebound in Russia's domestic market, up 3% on last year, contrasts with Australian flights still down 88% and Chinese internal traffic still 19% lower year-on-year, IATA said.

Cargo demand was down 12.6% in August, an improvement on July's 14.4% decline, it also said. The grounding of passenger jets has reduced capacity, supporting prices.

Euro Zone Sentiment Improves More Than Expected in September

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Euro zone economic sentiment improved more than expected in September, data showed on Tuesday, mainly thanks to a rise in optimism in the services sector despite concerns about a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The European Commission's monthly survey showed sentiment in the 19 countries sharing the euro rising to 91.1 points this month from 87.5 in August, beating market expectations of an improvement to 89.0 points.

The gains were mainly a result of sentiment in services, the euro zone economy's biggest sector producing some two thirds of gross domestic product, improving to -11.1 from -17.2. Economists polled by Reuters had expected a rise to only -15.7.

Optimism in industry rose to -11.1 from -12.8, falling short of expectations of a rise to -10.0 and consumer sentiment was in line with expectations rising to -13.9 from -14.7.

Inflation expectations in industry improved to -0.6 from -2.1 but continued to fall among consumers, easing to 12.5 from 16.9 in August.

Shahab Hosseini, Mina Vahid Win Awards at San Francisco IFF

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian actor ‘Shahab Hosseini’ and actress ‘Mina Vahid’ have won awards at 13th Annual Iranian Film Festival in San Francisco, US.

The 13th Annual Iranian Film Festival in San Francisco has announced the winners of the festival. Iranian film ‘Labyrinth’ has won some award at this competition, including Best Film Award, Best Director Award, Best Actor, and Best Screenplay. Shahab Hosseini has won the Best Actor award for his cast in ‘Labyrinth’. Mina Vahid has also won the Best Actress award for ‘One Night in Tehran’.



COVID Will Widen Inequality Without Global Action

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The head of the International Monetary Fund has given a stark warning that Covid-19 will lead to a lost generation unless urgent steps are taken to prevent the pandemic widening the gap between rich and poor countries.

Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF’s managing director, said financial support for the most vulnerable countries had to be stepped up to prevent long-time scarring that would roll back anti-poverty efforts of recent decades.

Writing for the Guardian, Georgieva said failure to act would reverberate around the world, with greater inequality leading to social and economic upheaval.

A reduction in exports, reduced capital inflows, fewer tourists and reduced remittances represented a “poisonous cocktail” for the 70 countries most at risk.

“Just as people with weak immune systems are more vulnerable to the virus, so low-income countries with weak fundamentals are more prone to its economic effects. More than half of these countries were already at high risk of – or actually in – debt distress before the crisis began.”

In her article, the IMF managing director called for a four-pronged approach:

Governments making health their priority to ensure a durable exit from the pandemic, with special focus on the elderly and vulnerable.

Ensuring budgets are well spent by focusing on key areas of spending – such as education – and clamping down on corruption.

Laying the foundations for the future by speeding up the transition to climate-resilient, low-carbon, digital economies.

A stepping-up of support from rich countries, which required an increase not a cut in aid resources in the form of grants, concessional loans and debt relief.

“Make no mistake: without urgent action, we risk deepening the divide – globally – between the rich and poor,” Georgieva said. “The impact will be profound – and not only in low-income countries. It risks reverberating throughout the world with increased inequality leading to economic and social upheaval: a lost generation in the 2020s whose after-effects will be felt for decades to come.”

More than 100 countries have sought help from the IMF since the Covid-19 crisis



began earlier this year and the Washington-based organisation has forecast a near 5% drop in global output in 2020 – the severest slump since the Great Depression.

“The IMF estimates the pandemic’s loss to the global economy at around \$12 trillion over 2020-21. The poorest countries – with limited resources and constrained capacity – are hit hardest: growth in low-income nations will be at a standstill this year, compared to 5% last year.”

Georgieva said debt relief efforts needed to go further. In response to a call by the IMF and the World Bank, the G20 group of leading developed and developing countries suspended official bilateral debt payments from the poorest countries this year, making about \$5bn (£4bn) available to 42 low-income countries. “The initiative could be extended along with increased participation by commercial creditors,” she said.

Germany’s Debt Costs Hit Historic Low Despite Record Borrowing



BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany expects its debt servicing costs to more than halve this year and reach their lowest level despite the government’s decision to take on record new borrowing in the COVID-19 pandemic, two officials told Reuters on Tuesday.

The lower-than-expected borrowing costs, partly enabled by the European Central Bank’s loose monetary policy, could create a windfall of several billion euros which would reduce the pressure to cut spending once the coronavirus is contained.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and Finance Minister Olaf Scholz have since March unleashed an unprecedented array of rescue and stimulus measures to help Europe’s largest economy recover as quickly as possible from the coronavirus shock.

The German parliament has temporarily suspended the constitutionally enshrined debt limits to allow the government finance its measures with net new borrowing of 218 billion euros this year and additional 96 billion euros next year. The finance ministry so far has earmarked 9.6 billion euros for debt servicing in its 2020 budget which already marks a drop from some 12 billion euros in the previous year.

But the ECB’s bond-buying programs and worldwide demand for safe-haven bonds mean that the government now even expects to pay only 5 billion to 6 billion euros, a senior official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Another official said Germany’s debt servicing costs stood at 6.8 billion euros as per end-August, but negative yields were likely to push the overall amount below 6 billion euros until the end of the year - and to possibly even lower levels beyond.

How Coronavirus Could Impact Global Oil Demand to 2030

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global demand for oil is likely to peak in about 10 years time as the world recovers from the impact of coronavirus, according to Musabbeh Al Kaabi, CEO of Petroleum and Resources at the UAE’s Mubadala Investment Company.

Al Kaabi said Covid-19 caused oil demand to drop by 30 percent in March and April, from a peak of 100 million barrels per day at the end of 2019.

However, demand has started to recover, he added, reaching levels seen in the 1990s and will rise further over the coming 12 months.

Reflecting on the long-term impact of Covid-19, Al Kaabi said the post-virus world will be totally different, with fewer people travelling and lower activity in a number of sectors of the economy.

While demand for energy will edge back to 2019 levels, some sectors, such as jet fuel, will take longer to recover than others, he said in a wide ranging interview, conducted as part of the ADIPEC Energy Dialogue series.

“Predicting the oil market is very challenging. Covid-19 has created major disruption to demand and we expect to see the continuation of that disruption in 2021. But if you project the horizon to 2030, we will go back to an acceptable level of growth, potentially peaking in 2030,” said Al Kaabi, pictured below.

His comments follow those of Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser last month who said he was optimistic that the global demand for oil was growing as the worst of the coronavirus pandemic “might be behind us”.

Demand for oil was hit hard by the world-wide shutdowns to counter the pandemic, sliding at one stage by over 20 million bpd.

“While it remains unclear how long the current wave of uncertainty will continue, we see growing evidence that the worst of the crisis might be behind us,” Nasser said.

“We are witnessing a partial recovery in the energy market



in the second half of 2020 as countries around the world take steps to ease restrictions and reboot their economies.”

Addressing concerns over future supply issues, Al Kaabi said climate change pressures, concerns over ESG and government policies are impacting the investment decisions by big international oil companies, which could result in

episodes of disruption of supply. But he added, this would create space for national and privately owned oil companies to invest in the upstream sector.

In July, the International Energy Agency bolstered its outlook for global oil demand, but warned that the recovery could be derailed by the resurgence of coronavirus.

A collapse in fuel consumption during the second quarter was slightly less severe than previously estimated, and demand should rebound sharply over the next three months as economic activity resumes, the agency said in a monthly report.

Al Kaabi added that national and international oil companies should learn from history and be more proactive in dealing with the decarbonisation of their operations.

“In the past companies put themselves in a defensive mode when they should have deployed and promoted innovative technology to minimise the carbon footprint of their production. I see a similar trend in the petrochemicals sector, where it is critical companies address the plastics waste issue and not be in a state of denial,” Al Kaabi said.

However, he added that he is optimistic emerging technology will help the downstream sector address this and other challenges it faces.

Country Has Been...

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“We should talk about the problems, but also explain to the people what has been done and let the people know the facts of our situation. If someone says that all the problems are on the shoulders of the executive management and the government, it is wrong. We all have a heavy burden today. This heavy burden must be borne by the three branches, the armed forces and our dear people until we reach our destination.”

He also urged Iranians abroad to invest in the country and to develop. Rouhani has pointed to the first debate of U.S. Presidential candidates, noting that ‘Americans are enmeshed in a very tough situation’.

Speaking in a Wednesday’s cabinet session, Rouhani pointed to the history of US measures against Iran, saying, “Americans are seeking to devise new plots every day.”

“Americans have been enmeshed in a very tough situation. If you have listened to last night’s debate or have followed up the issue on media, you have seen what a tough situation they have.”

“On the one hand, they had the worst management of the coronavirus and on the other, unemployment has increased. On the one hand, domestic unrest had exacerbated and on the other, they have had no achievement in their foreign policy.” Rouhani noted that the Trump administration’s policies have not only failed against Iran but also against Europe and the Asia Pacific.

“It is normal for a country that has a lot of problems inside to divert these to the outside world.”

Elsewhere, he said that despite the U.S. unilateral sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic, Iran is seeing an increase of production in industrial sectors. Rouhani said that the output in steel, auto, and petrochemical industries have grown in the past five months as compared to the same period last year.

Unfounded...

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Mustafayev, for his part, said two countries enjoy close relations.

We should not let our ties be disturbed by the opposition’s attempts. Referring to religious, cultural and social commonalities between Iran and Azerbaijan, he said Iranian and Azeri officials have made lots of efforts for developing relations.

Conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region began following the breakdown of the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s and lasted till approximately 1994, with both Armenia and Azerbaijan claiming this strategic territory. At that time, the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh had held a referendum boycotted by Azerbaijan where the people chose independence over joining either of the two countries.

IAEA...

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Those samples and others taken at the first site will be sent to labs and analysed for traces of nuclear material, since the agency’s main task is to account for all nuclear material in a country to ensure it is not being used to make weapons.

Iran denies ever having had a nuclear weapons program. It could take several months for the results of the sample analysis to be available. By then the U.S. presidential election will have been held, which should determine whether Donald Trump remains in office and continues to seek to dismantle Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with major powers.

Iran has denounced “attempts to open an endless process of verifying and cleaning-up of ever-continuing fabricated allegations”, strongly suggesting the IAEA was seeking access based on information Israel says it seized from Iran. The IAEA says it verifies all information and takes none at face value.

Iran Warns of...

FROM PAGE 1

Baghaei Hamaneh also stressed Iran’s unwavering determination to improve human rights despite “systemic stigmatization as well as unlawful vindictive sanctions and belligerent bullying and pressure by the United States.”

He further complained that the illegal U.S. sanctions on Iran have blocked the country’s access to medicine amid the coronavirus outbreak. “The challenges we’re facing in addressing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic are twofold due to inhuman unilateral coercive measures that are wickedly levied against Iran and are grossly violating the basic rights of my fellow Iranians to health and to life, including by blocking Iran’s access to medicine and medical devices,” he said.

The countries that contributed to the anti-Iran statement opted to appease Washington by ignoring violations of Iranians’ rights through sanctions and are thus complicit in American crimes, the Iranian diplomat noted.

“The U.S. criminal sanctions are truly the main cause of gross and widespread violations of human rights in the targeted nations and must be recognized as such. Those few States that instigated the initiative of making joint statement against Iran consciously chose to ignore this grave injustice and blatant wrongful act, knowing that they as well share responsibility for the consequences of the U.S. lawless and criminal behavior due to their failure to honor their own commitments vis-à-vis Iran and because of their appeasement approach toward the US illegality. They shall be reminded that ‘complacency and complicity go hand in hand,’” he said.

Baghaei Hamaneh said Tehran’s engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the High Commissioner, is long standing and productive. “Iran is well aware of the substantial importance of constructive engagement with all responsible stakeholders that appreciate the value of interactive dialogue, and do not regard human rights as a bargaining chip to appease their friends and antagonize those who perceive as their adversaries,” he underlined. “We continue our respectful and mutually beneficial dialog with the interested parties on promotion and protection of human rights and dignity,” the official said. Additionally, the Iranian diplomat explained that Iran’s Judiciary is independent and committed to due process in accordance with the applicable laws as well as Iran’s obligations under relevant international instruments. “No State or groups of States are entitled to impose their way of thinking or their legal systems on others. The domestic legal systems of countries are informed on the basis of the specificities of each society as well as relevant norms, rules and principles shared among nations, and should be respected as manifestation of their sovereignty,” he concluded.

Hezbollah...

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Nasrallah warned that the movement is still planning to respond and that “We will see what will happen in the coming days and weeks on the border with occupied Palestine.”

Concerning efforts to form a new government in Lebanon, Nasrallah said that all sides agreed with the French initiative.

Nasrallah stressed that Hezbollah must remain in the government in order to “protect the resistance” and to make sure that state property is not sold to pay off debts. “We are no longer able to allow anyone to form the government due to the delicacy and sensitivity of the economic situation in Lebanon,” said Nasrallah.

The Hezbollah leader stated that Iran does not interfere or dictate to Lebanon what to do. “If you want to know who failed your initiative, look for the Americans who imposed sanctions and are threatening to impose more, and look into King Salman’s UN speech,” said Nasrallah.

“We still welcome the French initiative and we are counting on it; we are ready to hold discussions with the various political forces, but the bullying that has been practiced in the past month cannot continue and we are open for the sake of our country,” added Nasrallah.

Under a French roadmap to lift Lebanon from its crisis, the new government would take steps to tackle corruption and implement reforms needed to unlock billions of dollars of foreign aid to fix an economy crushed by a huge debt.

Sane to Miss Super Cup, Alaba Doubtful

BERLIN (Reuters) - Bayern Munich winger Leroy Sane will miss Wednesday's domestic Super Cup against Borussia Dortmund with a knee injury while defender David Alaba is doubtful, coach Hansi Flick said on Tuesday. Bayern, who won four titles this year, lost Sunday's league game at Hoffenheim 4-1 to suffer their first defeat of 2020. "Leroy is out. He will most likely be out until and will return after the break for international matches (between Oct. 7-13)," Flick told reporters.

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Suarez and Costa Can Play Together

MADRID (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone on Tuesday dismissed suggestions that he would not play Diego Costa and Luis Suarez together. The 33-year-old forward Suarez joined Atletico after six seasons at Barcelona with Costa, 31, saying he welcomed the arrival but would fight for his place in the side. "Of course they can play together, for sure they can play together," said Simeone in the press conference ahead of Wednesday's Liga match against Huesca. "The important thing is that both of them give us the fire they have."

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SPORTS

THURSDAY OCTOBER 1, 2020

Djokovic in Cruise Control At Roland Garros as Row Sparks Video Replay Call

PARIS (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic's bid to become the first man in half a century to win all four Grand Slam titles twice got off to a straightforward start Tuesday at Roland Garros as a 'double bounce' row prompted calls for video replays to be introduced in tennis. World number one Djokovic, returning to Grand Slam action for the first time since his US Open disqualification, eased past Sweden's Mikael Ymer, ranked 80, in straight sets 6-0, 6-2, 6-3. It was his 32nd win in 33 matches in 2020 and kept him on course for a second French Open title following his 2016 triumph, and 18th career major. "It's always a pleasure to return to Paris on Philippe Chatrier, this important court. The atmosphere is a little different this year with few fans but I remain motivated to win the title," said Djokovic, only one of two men to have defeated 12-time champion Rafael Nadal in 15 years in Paris. Djokovic, who suffered no immediate hangover from his U.S. Open controversy by quickly wrapping up a record 36th Masters title in Rome on the eve of Roland Garros, next faces Lithuania's Ricardas Berankis. The 33-year-old is in the second round for a record-equaling 16th time, matching Guillermo Vilas and Nadal. Second seed Karolina Pliskova ended Mayar Sherif's fairytale Grand Slam breakthrough to set up a second round clash against former champion Jelena Ostapenko. Pliskova, a semi-finalist in 2017, squandered eight set points in the opener as world number 172 Sherif, the first Egyptian woman to play in the main draw at a Slam, took a shock lead. However, the Czech's greater experience eventually told as she recovered to progress 6-7 (9/11), 6-2, 6-4.

Mladenovic Calls For VAR in Tennis

PARIS (Dispatches) - Kristina Mladenovic called for a football-style VAR system to be introduced in tennis after her Roland Garros opponent profited from a double bounce to help knock the Frenchwoman out of her home Grand Slam on Tuesday. Mladenovic was 5-1 up and with a set point against Laura Siegemund when the German scooped a winner despite the ball appearing to bounce twice. The incident was missed by chair umpire Eva Asderaki. World number 44 Mladenovic pleaded in vain before Siegemund took full advantage, racing into the next round with a 7-5, 6-3 win. "It would be great to have that," said Mladenovic when asked if video replays should be introduced in tennis. "It'd be a pity to replace a human with a camera but to err is human. I don't see how the umpire could not see it. Unfortunately, she continues at Roland Garros but I do not." It was a second successive miserable Grand Slam for the 27-year-old Frenchwoman who was withdrawn from the doubles at the US Open earlier this month in a row over coronavirus. Despite her disappointment, Mladenovic refused to blame Siegemund for not calling the incident on herself Tuesday. "Well, she would have been the best and most fair player on the tour if she would have done that. Unfortunately, she didn't. I didn't expect her to do it," added Mladenovic.

Hamilton Offers Veiled Apology After F1 Accusations

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton has offered a veiled apology for his claim that Formula One bosses are singling him out after he was hit with a 10-second penalty at the Russian Grand Prix. Hamilton's bid to match Michael Schumacher's record of 91 victories in Sochi on Sunday was wrecked when he was punished with two five-second penalties for pre-race misdemeanours. He had also been given two penalty points on his super license by the race stewards but they subsequently cancelled them and instead fined his team Mercedes.



Latvia's Ostapenko, the world 43, won her first match at the French Open since sweeping to her shock 2017 title when she fired 46 winners past Madison Brengle of the United States to win 6-2, 6-1. "After I won here it was a tough time. I had to get used to the pressure but now it's all gone," said the 23-year-old Ostapenko. Denmark's Clara Tauson, just 17 and a qualifier, unleashed 48 winners to knock out American 21st seed and US Open semi-finalist Jennifer Brady 6-4, 3-6, 9-7. Tauson also saved two match points on her way to a maiden career main draw win. Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin recovered from a break down in the final set to defeat 125th-ranked Russian Liudmila Samsonova 6-4, 3-6, 6-3. Fourth seed Kenin, who dumped out Serena Williams in Paris a year ago, fought back from 2-0 down in the decider to advance to a second-round tie against Romania's Ana Bogdan. Meanwhile Jelena Ostapenko said she believes she can return to the world's top 10 with a little more consistency in her game after securing her first French Open victory since lifting the trophy in 2017. The Latvian, 23, blasted 46 winners en route to a 6-2, 6-1 defeat of Madison Brengle -- her only win at Roland Garros outwith her shock run to the title three years ago. Ostapenko's raw talent and fearless approach powered her to a stunning French Open triumph that saw her become the first unseeded player to win the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen since Britain's Margaret Scriven in 1933. However, Ostapenko admitted she struggled to cope with increased expectations following that fairytale run in Paris, and has added just two minor titles to her collection since beating Simona Halep in the 2017 final.

Schumacher, Ilott Handed F1 Practice Slots

LONDON (Reuters) - Mick Schumacher will take part in first Friday practice with Alfa Romeo at the Nuerburgring next week as Ferrari seek to give their three leading junior drivers Formula One race weekend experience. Britain's Callum Ilott will take part in the same session with the Ferrari-powered Haas team while Russian Robert Shwartzman will get his chance on the final Friday of the season in Abu Dhabi with Haas or Alfa. Schumacher, son of Ferrari great and seven-times world champion Michael, is leading the Formula Two standings ahead of the Eifel Grand Prix weekend at the German circuit. "The fact that my first participation in a Formula One weekend will take place in front of my home audience at the Nuerburgring makes this moment even more special," said Schumacher, 21. Ferrari-powered Alfa Romeo and Haas both have potential vacancies for 2021. All three Ferrari Academy drivers will also test a 2018 Ferrari SF71H at the Italian team's Fiorano track on Wednesday in preparation for their F1 practice debuts, having already had seat fittings.



Real Madrid Don't Need Any More Players

MADRID (Reuters) - Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has no interest in bringing in any more players before the transfer window closes next week, he said on Tuesday. Madrid still looked like a work in progress in Saturday's scrappy 3-2 win over Real Betis after drawing their first game of the season 0-0 at Real Sociedad, but the Frenchman does not believe adding to his squad is the answer. "We already have a lot of players, why would we want to add any more?" Zidane told a news conference ahead of Wednesday's home game against Real Valladolid.

"It is already very difficult to pick a team, because all the players are very good, so why add more. The market is open until Oct. 5 but I'm very happy with what I have. This squad is mine and for me they are the best." Zidane will be without Germany midfielder Toni Kroos against Valladolid and Sunday's trip to Levante, but he said Eden Hazard was getting closer to returning to action. There have been questions about Hazard's weight, but Zidane dismissed any suggestions the Belgian forward had an unprofessional attitude, putting his lack of impact at Real following his 100 million-euro move last year down to two ankle injuries. "I don't think he's unprofessional, he's just had a very big problem which has been bothering him for a long time. What we want is for him to not feel any discomfort again, so we need to wait," he added. "It's a long season and he wants to be back on the pitch with his team mates so he can play well and help us out. "He's getting very close, he's training regularly with us and getting into shape and getting ready to come back."

Klopp Tackles Keane Over Liverpool Criticism

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United great Roy Keane rarely came off second best in a tackle but the outspoken TV pundit was forced to backtrack after Jurgen Klopp took him to task for labelling Liverpool "sloppy" following Monday's 3-1 win over Arsenal. Klopp jumped on Keane's observation after his team's victory, which maintained the champions' 100 percent record after three games. "Did I hear right? Mr Keane said we had a sloppy performance tonight? Did he say that?" said Klopp. Former United and Republic of Ireland captain Keane did not address the question directly. "I think they gave up one or two opportunities, which he will be disappointed with," said the 49-year-old. Klopp, who won the Champions League with Liverpool in 2019 and their first Premier League title last season, pressed on. "Did he say that it was sloppy? I want to hear it," said the 53-year-old German. "I am not sure I heard it right and maybe he was speaking about another game. "It cannot be this game. Sorry, that is an incredible description of this game." Klopp described his team's performance against in-form Arsenal as "exceptional". "This game tonight -- there is nothing bad to say," said Klopp. "It was the opposite of sloppy." Keane, unusually for him, sought to calm the situation. "You might have misheard me," he said. "There were sloppy moments but I think you have been outstanding and I have been giving the club nothing but praise. "I am not sure you heard me correctly, you need to hear the rest of it." Klopp laughed and said: "I will, 100 percent."



LeBron Faces Former Heat Team In NBA Finals

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - An unexpected NBA Finals matchup between the LeBron James-led Los Angeles Lakers and Miami Heat begins this week, capping an unprecedented season interrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak before resuming without fans at Disney World in Florida. This year's showdown marks the first NBA Finals between two teams who missed the playoffs the previous season and it is the Lakers, powered by three-times champion James and Anthony Davis, who are favored in the best-of-seven games series. James, who has reached nine of the last 10 NBA Finals, won his first two championships with Miami in 2012 and 2013, picked up a third in 2016 with Cleveland and joined the Lakers in 2018 with the goal of restoring the franchise's glorious past. The West's top-seeded Lakers last appeared in the NBA Finals in 2010 when they picked up the franchise's 16th championship, one shy of the Boston Celtics' all-time mark. "I'm extremely proud to be a part of this franchise getting back to where it belongs, and that's playing for championships and competing for championships," said James. "This is what I came here for." The Lakers missed the playoffs last season for the sixth consecutive year as James battled a groin injury but his return to health and the acquisition of Davis in July 2019 put them back on the path toward the NBA's elite. Awaiting the Lakers in Game One will be the East's fifth-seeded Heat, a battle-tested team led by Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo and whose surprising run to the Finals has been no fluke. The Heat swept aside fourth-seed Indiana in the first round, upset league Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo's top-seeded Milwaukee team in five games in the East semi-final and then dumped third-seed Boston in six games.

