

%15 Decline in Vegetable Oil Output as Oilseed Imports Drop %51

A total of 810,000 tons of vegetable oil were produced in Iran during the first half of the current Iranian year (March 20-Sept. 21), showing a 15% decline compared with the similar period of last year, according to the secretary of Iran's Vegetable Oil Industries Guild Union.

"Over the same period and due to the economic sanctions imposed against the country, which has caused complications in the way of money transfer as well as forex allocation problems, oilseed imports saw a 51% fall year-on-year," Amir Houshang Birashk was also quoted as saying by IRIB News.

The official noted that, at present, 85% of the raw material for vegetable oil production are imported.

"The bulk of imports are palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, soybean oil from Argentina and sunflower oil from Ukraine and Russia," he was quoted as saying last year.

Most of the domestic demand for vegetable oils derived from colza, olives and corn are supplied locally.

The ministry plans to achieve 70% self-sufficiency in the production of oilseeds in a 10-year program to curb the import of oilseeds and vegetable oil.

Alireza Mohajer, director of Agriculture Ministry's "National Oilseed Project", told Mehr News Agency that the plan kicked off in late 2015.

Domestic oilseed production stood at 46,000 tons in the fiscal 2014-15.

Per capita vegetable oil consumption in Iran is about 18-19 kilograms a year while the global average

Iran's demand for unrefined vegetable oils stands at around 1.6 million tons per year.

HI Public Complaints Against Goods, Service Providers Surveyed

A total of 111,337 public complaints were filed against goods and service providers with the industries, mining and trade organizations of Iranian provinces in the first half of the current Iranian year (March 20-Sept. 21). According to the head of Iran Consumer and Producer Protection Organization affiliated to the Ministry of Industries, Mining and Trade, 95,506 complaints (86% of the total sum) pertained to providers of goods. "The lion's share of these complaints pertained to bread, fruit and vegetables," Abbas Tabesh was also quoted as saying by IRNA. The remaining 15,831 complaints (14%), he added, were filed against service providers such as restaurants and cafe nets, accounting for a majority of the complaints.

Tabesh added that profiteering, selling less than due and lacking price tags were the main source of complaints. Complaints filed in the provinces of Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, East Azarbaijan and Alborz increased while the same declined in Semnan, Kerman, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad and Khuzestan. Iranian citizens can file complaints against businesses through the 124 hotline.

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The First Bilingual Economic Newspaper In Isfahan Province

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 » Isfahan Office: Hoora Building, Shahid Mofateh Street, Ahmad Abad Square, Isfahan, Iran
 » Tel: 031-32274500
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» Organization of advertisement: 031-32274517, 32274518, 32274512, 32274505.
 » Fax: 031-32274507, 32274511
 » Lithography and printing: Golriz
 » Isfahan subscribers Office: 031-32274508
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New U.S. Sanctions an effort to stop Meds, Food purchases

President Hassan Rouhani on Friday called new U.S. sanctions on Iran's banks an attempt to prevent purchases of medicine and food.



"The President called the U.S. effort to create serious obstacles for fund transfers for the supply of medicine

and food cruel, terrorist and inhumane," IRIB said.

"Americans have so far done everything they could against the great Iranian nation and that by doing so, they cannot break the Iranian people's resistance," President Rouhani said in a telephone conversation with Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati on Friday.

President Rouhani said that the U.S. government's actions are within the framework of political propaganda and aimed at their own domestic goals. He appreciated the efforts of the Central Bank of Iran in supplying the people's basic needs.

The Iranian president called the U.S. moves and actions in continuation of Trump's strategic mistakes in withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and said that the U.S. government, in the wrong analytical framework, believed that these sanctions would break the Iranian resistance, but the passing of the time showed that this analysis was by far from reality and was inefficient. Referring to the U.S. failures by repeating strategic errors like the snapback mechanism, Rouhani noted that "all nations know that these actions by the U.S. government are completely against international law and



regulations, besides Washington's actions are completely inhumane in the coronavirus pandemic era and human rights claimants on the world should condemn it".

Meanwhile earlier, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed certainty after a frenzy of U.S. sanctions target Iran's banking sector that those starring in the leading and support roles of the inhumane anti-Iran show will eventually face justice. "Amid Covid-19 pandemic, U.S. regime wants to blow up our remaining channels to pay for food & medicine," Zarif tweeted on Thursday right after the United States Treasury Department levied the bans against as many as 18 Iranian banks. "Conspiring to starve a population is a crime against humanity," he lamented.

The foreign minister, however, pledged that "Iranians WILL survive this latest of cruelties," adding, "Culprits & enablers—who block our money—WILL face justice."

The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) specified two of the targets as Iran's

Bank Maskan, and Bank Keshavarzi. The former is relied on by the biggest part of the country's 80-million-strong population for loans assisting them to buy houses, while the latter has the biggest stakes countrywide in the agricultural sector.

Bank Refah Kargaran that is favored by the country's laborers and technical workers, Bank Gharzolhasaneh Resalat that is reputed for its small and low-interest loans, and entrepreneurship-focused Karafarin Bank were three others of the financial institutions. The rest of the sanctioned institutions were named as Pasargad Bank, Saman Bank, Sarmayeh Bank, Tose'e Ta'avon (Cooperative Development) Bank, Tourism Bank, and Amin Investment Bank.

The OFAC alleged that the relatively across-the-board measure was in line with the U.S.' general policy of targeting the Iranian entities that "may" be used to support Iran's nuclear program, missile program or, what it called, its "terrorist" activities and "malign regional influence."

Meanwhile Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman blasted the latest round of U.S. sanctions against over a dozen Iranian banks, saying those who favor the Israeli prime minister's interests over the Americans' are luring the U.S. president into targeting ordinary Iranian people. In a post on his Twitter account, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh referred to the Post report and said, "Frustrated by humiliating failures and futility of 'maximum pressure', Bibi-Firsters lure Trump into doubling down on inhumane targeting of ordinary Iranians."

"The same gang has carelessly gambled with America's interests and reputation for past 4 years. Once again, they'll lose," he added.

In defiance of Europe's humanitarian objections, the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions on 18 Iranian banks on Thursday. The Trump administration took the punitive action with an aim to cut off the Islamic Republic from the world's financial system.

Iran, Russia discuss to resume flights

Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali met and held talks with Head of Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency Alexander Neradko on the resumption of flights between the two countries. Referring to the good relations between Tehran and Moscow in various fields, Jalali stressed the need to facilitate travel for the Iranian businessmen and students.

He called for resuming flights between the two countries.

Stating that Iran-Russia ties and their officials' efforts to increase these relations are significant, Neradko, for his part, said that the coronavirus has mostly affected Russian international flights, especially the airline Aeroflot. Due to the spread of coronavirus, out of 78 international airports in Russia, only 7 airports in 7 provinces operate international flights, he added, saying that although decisions on the resumption of flights and the lifting of restrictions on international flights will be taken by the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarter in Russia, the request of the Iranian envoy will be transmitted to the chairman of headquarter.

During the meeting, some technical issues related to the flight of Mahan Airlines on the Tehran-Moscow-Tehran route were discussed and the Head of Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency provided the necessary instructions to solve the problems.

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News

Iran HI Auto Output Rises 10%

Iran's automotive output increased by more than 10% during the first half of the current Iranian year (March 20-Sept. 21) compared with the year-ago period.

According to data released by Securities and Exchange Organization on Codal.ir, Iran Khodro (IKCO) and SAIPA, Iran's major automakers produced 405,893 sedans during the six-month period, of which IKCO had the lion's share of 208,030 vehicles, up

40% year-on-year.

IKCO also manufactures commercial vehicles, such as pickups, vans, trucks and buses. However, no statistical report has been released in this category.

SAIPA, IKCO's competitor, produced 150,417 vehicles in the four months, marking a 12% decline compared to the year-ago month.

Pars Khodro, a subsidiary of SAIPA, also registered a slight fall in production during the period. The company's output reached 47,446, marking a 13% decline.

Second US presidential debate cancelled

The organizer of the US presidential debates says the second meeting between US President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger Joe Biden, scheduled for next week, is cancelled.

The second presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden has been cancelled, the Commission on Presidential Debates confirmed Friday, a move that came as Trump announced his first in-person events since being diagnosed with COVID-19, Guardian reported. The decision by the nonpartisan commission follows a public disagreement between the two candidates over the debate's format. The commission had previously announced the debate would take place "virtually" due to Trump's diagnosis. Trump, however, said he would refuse to participate in a virtual event, while Biden advocated for it for safety reasons.

But the commission said it would not reverse its decision, citing an abundance of caution and health concerns, particularly for the town-hall-style debate that was to feature questions from voters. "It is now apparent there will be no debate on October 15, and the CPD will turn its attention to preparations for the final presidential debate scheduled for October 22," the commission said in a statement. The third and final debate, scheduled for October 22 in Nashville, Tennessee, is still on.

Iran Allocates \$100 Million to Buy COVID-19 Rapid Test Kits: President

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the administration has allocated \$100 million to purchase the test kits that allow rapid detection of coronavirus infection. In remarks at a Saturday session of the Coronavirus Fight National Headquarters, Rouhani stressed the need for rapid detection of COVID-19 cases in the efforts to contain the pandemic in Iran.

The president said he has ordered the allocation of \$100 million to the purchase of foreign testing kits that diagnose coronavirus in at most 20 minutes. The domestic production of such rapid test kits is also underway, he noted, saying a "major development" is going to take place in the COVID-19 testing process in the country with 10,000 additional daily tests. The president also unveiled new health restrictions for tackling the pandemic, saying people without face masks in Tehran will have to pay a 500,000 rial fine to the Health Ministry. In late September, Rouhani said the new strict health regulations would first come into force in the capital and

will later apply to other big cities across Iran.

The daily death toll from coronavirus infection in Iran has exceeded 200 in recent days, while the total number of cases since the outbreak of the disease in the country has surpassed 490,000. More than 28,000 COVID-19 patients have died in Iran since February.



US sabotaging Iran's access to medicine "criminal act": Lawyer

International Lawyer Mehdi Hojjati said on Saturday that the US unilateral sanctions on Iran, making access of Iranian citizens to medicines and medical equipment impossible, amounted to Crimes Against Humanity.



Violating the basic rights of human beings is unlawful under any pretext, said Mehdi Hojjati, adding that the US government is accountable for the unilateral sanctions that are overt violation of human rights, including the right to life, right to medical treatment, and health.

Hojjati noted that one of the consequences of blocking Iranian banking system from having access to international banking system is indirect deprivation of Iranian people of having access to medicine and medical equipment. The international community should respond to these sanctions to stop them, he said. "Human Rights" should not just be seen in international documents, mottos, and statements; they need to have factual manifestation and be



seen in practice, he said.

The Iranian lawyer added that not only do the US sanctions violate the international law, but, they have also changed into a tool to be used to violate the rights of the Iranian citizens, which is against the philosophy of sanctions. He said that "medical and medicinal terrorism" is an appropriate term for the US move; these sanctions, alongside "economic terrorism", have targeted Iran's economic and financial infrastructure. It may be claimed that the US has not imposed such sanctions, but in practice, the

Iranians' access to medical supplies and medicinal equipment have been seriously endangered. Addressing Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) on September 24, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif termed unilateral coercive measures taken with regard to fighting coronavirus pandemic as economic and medical terrorism. "We need to jointly confront the destructive impact of unilateral coercive measures on efforts to combat the pandemic," Zarif said. "They are nothing but

"We need to jointly confront the destructive impact of unilateral coercive measures on efforts to combat the pandemic," Zarif said.

US sanctions indicate Trump's failure in confronting Iran

Iranian President's Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi said that new US sanctions indicate the failure of the US policy towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. Referring to the Trump administration's defeats in confronting Iran, Vaezi noted that the US has done everything in its power to create

challenges for Iran which have failed so far. He went on to say that the US could not achieve its goals by imposing economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Vaezi further referred to new US sanctions on Iranian banks as completely illegal and underlined that these moves will not undermine the determination of the Iranian government and nation. These remarks came as US Treasury Department imposed new sanctions on 18

Iranian banks in a hostile move on Thursday. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also claimed that US maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic will continue until Iran returns to the negotiating table. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also reacted to new US sanctions on Iranian banks and maintained that the country seeks to blow up Iran's remaining channels to pay for food and medicine amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Iranian lawmaker says Biden will not revive JCPOA

A member of the Iranian Parliament believes that Joe Biden will not revive the JCPOA if elected to the White House because American officials follow a fixed strategy. "Some believe that if Biden wins the election, he would revive the JCPOA but I do not think this will be the case because American officials are pursuing a fixed strategy and seek to bully others;

and we do not give in to this behavior," Fada-Hossein Maleki, representative of Zahedan in the Parliament, told Mehr News Agency on Saturday. The Democratic nominee Joe Biden and his campaign have claimed he would return to the JCPOA but also to maintain pressure on the Islamic Republic. US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal back in May 2018, adopting a so-called 'maximum pressure' policy against Iran to pressure Tehran into a 'better deal' but Iranian officials say that will not succumb to the 'bullying' behavior of the United States. "Whether Biden is elected or Trump,

it will have no effect with regards to policy towards Iran. Also the Islamic Republic of Iran does not favor any side because all US officials have hegemonic characteristics," Maleki, who is also a member of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, added. "The strategy of American officials are the same and a change of presidency will not change their strategy," he said, adding that the hegemonic behavior is what is being decided in America's think tanks and decision making rooms which are under clear influence of the Zionist lobby.

NEWS

Iran welcomes cessation of Nagorno-Karabakh hostilities

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Tehran welcomes a ceasefire between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia that came into effect on Saturday noon. In a tweet on Saturday, Zarif wrote, "Iran welcomes cessation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh as step toward peace."

"We urge our neighbors Azerbaijan and Armenia to engage in substantive dialogue based on respect for international law and territorial integrity."

He also appreciated "constructive efforts" Russia to mediate ceasefire talks. Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to a ceasefire last night which came into effect on Saturday noon local time (0800GMT).

The two countries' foreign ministers held a meeting in Moscow and agreed to start substantive negotiations over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. The breakthrough came after some 10 hours of talks in Moscow, in the early hours of Saturday morning, after nearly two weeks of fierce fighting in the disputed territory.

Spokesman Slams US' Empty Offer of Aid, Urges Unfreezing Iran's Money

Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations condemned the latest round of sanctions imposed by the US against Iranian banks as another inhumane act against the Iranian nation.

"The criminal actions of the US regime in threatening the lives of ordinary people through economic terrorism seem unending," Kazem Gharibabadi wrote in an Instagram post late on Friday.

"On the one hand, they claim that the import of medicine and food is not subject to sanctions, but on the other hand, they completely block the channels available to pay for the import of these items."

"By now, this deviant American game should be known to everyone," he added.

He further called on the European countries to take actual steps against such unilateralism and hawkishness instead of merely expressing regret. Gharibabadi added that Europe has a heavy responsibility in terms of countering US human rights abuses.

The US Treasury Department on Thursday imposed fresh sanctions on Iran's financial sector, targeting 18 banks in an effort to further choke off Iranian revenues.

It claimed in a statement that the prohibitions did not apply to transactions to sell agricultural commodities, food, medicine or medical devices to Iran, saying it understood the need for humanitarian goods.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have soared since Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal struck by his predecessor and began re-imposing US sanctions that had been eased under the accord.

News

Iranian envoy deplures new US sanctions putting at risk life of people

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Kazem Gharibabadi said on Saturday that US news sanctions against 18 banking institutions in Iran put at risk life of people which amounted to Crimes Against Humanity. Writing on his personal Instagram page, Gharibabadi said that there is no end to the US "Economic Terrorism". They claim, on the one hand, that the imports of food and medicine

are not under sanctions, but on the other hand, they block the existing channels for paying the costs of such import items, the ambassador said. He said that Europe holds a heavy duty in this regard if it is honest in its claim of support for human rights. Referring to US officials' claim to continue with their maximum pressure on Iran until the country is forced back into the negotiating table, Gharibabadi said that Washington must have come to know that this approach goes nowhere. Noting that the US has targeted the dignity and everyday life of Iranian people, the ambassador said that Iranians would make every effort to stop the US administration from making use of the issue for its presidential election or for the aftermath of the US election.



ISFAHAN NEWS

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Sunday, October 11, 2020, No. 617

Iranian legendary singer Shajarian laid to rest in Tous

Mastero Mohammadreza Shajarian, Iran's Classic Music legend, and world-acclaimed vocalist was laid to rest in the city of Tous near his hometown, Mashad, on Saturday morning.

Shajarian, who suffered from cancer for years, passed away at a hospital in Tehran on Thursday.

His funeral procession was held in a restricted manner due to health protocols imposed by COVID-19 pandemic to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

Big screens were installed across Mashad streets to allow his fans to watch the funeral procession live.

Shajarian's family had asked for his body to be buried near the tomb of Ferdowsi, the Great Iranian poet.



Headlines

Iran Allocates 100\$ Million to Buy COVID19- Rapid Test Kits: President

US sabotaging Iran's access to medicine "criminal act": Lawyer

Iran, Russia discuss to resume flights

CALL TO PRAYER TIME IN ISFAHAN

Morning call to prayer:

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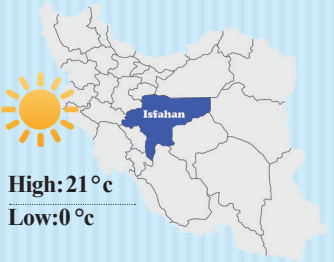
Noon call to prayer:

11:49:57

Evening call to prayer:

17:52:40

WEATHER



Iranians not intimidated by bullying rhetoric of failing US

In reaction to US President's recent insults against Iran, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Iranian people aren't intimidated by the bullying rhetoric of the failing and lawless US regime. In a Friday tweet, Khatibzadeh wrote, "The Iranian people aren't intimidated by the bullying rhetoric of the failing & lawless US regime." "Our people leave no stone unturned in defending Iran's dignity," he added. "WE will choose response to US crimes—incl sadistic sanctions & criminal assassination of ISIS #1 enemy Gen Soleimani," he said.



New U.S. Sanctions an effort to stop Meds, Food purchases

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WFP Chief Seeks Million from Donors, Billionaires for Food

Even before COVID-19 became an issue, World Food Program chief David Beasley was warning global leaders that the world would face the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II in 2020.

While the food crisis is mainly the result of conflict, Beasley said in April that he raised the prospect of a hunger pandemic because of the economic impact of COVID-19.

He said that was because of wars in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere, locust swarms in Africa, frequent natural disasters, and economic crises including in Lebanon, Congo, Sudan and Ethiopia. Then came COVID-19 which quickly became a pandemic that has swept the world, escalating the need for food — and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says it is still not under control, AP reported. Beasley, who got COVID-19 in April, has spent the months since he recovered reaching out to world leaders and visiting stricken countries with a new warning that he delivered to the UN Security Council last month: millions of people are closer to starvation because of the deadly combination of conflict, climate change and the coronavirus pandemic.

He said the WFP and its partners were going all out to reach as many as 138 million people this year — "the biggest scale-up in our history."

Beasley urged donors, including governments and institutions, to help, and he made a special appeal to the more than 2,000 billionaires in the world, with a combined net worth of \$8 trillion, to open their bank accounts.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday to the UN food agency is a tribute not only to its work in the even greater humanitarian crisis than Beasley envisioned in this COVID-ravaged year, but as the Nobel committee made clear it is a plea for unity and multilateral cooperation to tackle global challenges as WFP has done in a world facing increasing nationalism and populism.

Beasley called the award "a humbling, moving recognition of the work of WFP staff who lay their lives on the line every day to bring food and assistance for close to 100 million hungry children, women and men across the world — people whose lives are often brutally torn apart by instability, insecurity and conflict."

He also paid tribute to the agency's government, organizations and private sector partners who help the hungry and vulnerable.

"Every one of the 690 million hungry people in the world today has the right to live peacefully and without hunger," Beasley said in a statement on the WFP website.

"Today, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has turned the global spotlight on them and on the devastating consequences of conflict. Climate shocks and economic pressures have further compounded their plight," he said. "And now, a global pandemic with its brutal impact on economies and communities, is pushing millions more to the brink of starvation."

While the food crisis is mainly the result of conflict, Beasley said in April that he raised the prospect of a hunger pandemic because of the economic impact of COVID-19.

He told the Security Council last month that famine has been averted because of generous donations, but "this fight is far, far, far from over — the 270 million people marching toward the brink of starvation need our help today more than ever. And he said 30 million people who rely solely on WFP for food to survive will die without it, and WFP needs \$4.9 billion to feed them for a year.

"We're doing just about all we can do to stop the dam from bursting," Beasley said. "But, without the resources we need, a wave of hunger and famine still threatens to sweep across the globe. And if it does, it will overwhelm nations and communities already weakened by years of conflict and instability."

Azeri, Armenian FMs Sign Joint Document after Talks in Moscow: Lavrov

A ceasefire agreement in Nagorno-Karabakh starting on 12:00 Moscow time on October 10 has been reached after trilateral consultations in Moscow between foreign ministers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Saturday.

The document also states that Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to begin practical talks with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group representatives on the peace settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"A ceasefire is declared to begin on October 10 at 12:00 (Moscow time) with the humanitarian aim of exchanging prisoners of war and other captured persons as well as to exchange bodies of victims with the facilitation of the International Committee of the Red Cross and in line with its regulations," Lavrov stated early on Saturday citing a joint statement, signed by the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"Detailed parameters of the ceasefire regime will be agreed upon in the near future," the Russian minister stated citing the signed document, TASS reported.

The document also states that Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to begin practical talks with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group representatives on the peace settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"The Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs and based on the principles of conflict settlements, begin practical negotiations with the main task of reaching the peace settlement

as soon as possible," the statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry reads.

"All involved parties have confirmed their adherence to the invariability of the negotiating process," the statement added.

Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to begin practical talks with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group representatives on the peace settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh, a joint statement, adopted by the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers, said.

The Russian, Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers - Sergey Lavrov, Jeyhun Bayramov and Zohrab Mnatsakanyan correspondingly - held talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement for more than 10 hours. Their meeting started at 16.30 Moscow time and Foreign Minister Lavrov appeared to journalists to read out provisions from the adopted statement late after 2:00 a.m. on Saturday.

Renewed clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia erupted on September 27, with intense battles raging in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The area experienced flare-ups of violence in the summer of 2014, in April 2016 and this past July. Azerbaijan and Armenia have imposed martial law and launched mobilization efforts. Both parties to the conflict have reported casualties, among them civilians.

UN Chief marks Mental Health Day, deplores one person dies by suicide every 40 seconds

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2020, while announcing that nearly one billion people live with a mental disorder around the world, said every 40 seconds, someone dies from suicide. According to the United Nations

Information Center (UNIC) in Tehran, the UN Secretary-General said in his message that around the world, nearly one billion people live with a mental disorder, every 40 seconds, someone dies from suicide and depression is now recognized as a leading cause of illness and disability among children and adolescents.

The full text of his message reads: All of this was true, even before COVID-19. We are now seeing the consequences of the pandemic on people's mental well-being, and this is just the beginning. Many groups, including older adults, women,

children, and people with existing mental health conditions are at risk of considerable medium- and long-term ill-health if action is not taken.

Addressing mental health is central to achieving Universal Health Coverage. It deserves our commitment. Too few people have access to quality mental health services. In low- and middle-income countries, more than 75 percent of people with mental health conditions receive no treatment at all. And, overall, governments spend on average less than 2 per cent of their health budgets on mental health. This cannot go on.

