





Qatar participates in G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting



Minister of Finance H E Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari poses for a group photo with dignitaries during the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, in the United States.

WASHINGTON: The State of Qatar participated in the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, held in Asheville, North Carolina, in the United States.

Minister of Finance H E Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari headed Qatar's delegation to a series of sessions held as part of the meeting, which addressed a number of priority economic and financial issues on the agenda, including developments in the global economy and growth prospects, the role of the private sector in supporting economic activity, developments in the banking sector, artificial intelligence and digital assets, as well as monetary policies, sovereign debt, economic imbalances, financial literacy and combating fraud.

During his participation in the sessions, H E the Minister of Finance emphasized the importance of maintaining international coordination and cooperation to address global economic and financial challenges, strengthen the stability of the international financial system, and support sustainable and inclusive growth.

He also underscored the importance of fostering an enabling environment for the private sector, encouraging innovation, and harnessing technological developments to enhance competitiveness and support economic development.

In this context, the Minister highlighted that conflicts undermine economic growth by disrupting trade and increasing energy and transport costs, thereby exacerbating inflationary pressures and adversely affecting investment, particularly in emerging economies.

He stressed the importance of strengthening international cooperation, reaffirming the State of Qatar's commitment to supporting global energy security and market stability, as well as fostering economic partnerships that promote integration and help address geopolitical challenges.

Minister of Finance H E Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari met separately with Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs of the Republic of India H E Nirmala Sitharaman and President of the World Bank Group H E Ajay Banga, on the sidelines of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting held in the United States.

During the two meetings, a number of financial and economic topics were reviewed, in addition to discussions on current developments at both the regional and international levels and the associated challenges, particularly with regard to issues of mutual interest to the State of Qatar, the Republic of India, and the World Bank Group. — ***QNA***

Qatar Central Bank enables direct QA-RTGS access for payment service providers

DOHA: Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has enabled payment service providers to open accounts with the central bank and gain direct access to the Real-Time Gross Settlement System (QA-RTGS), allowing them to conduct settlement operations directly without intermediaries.

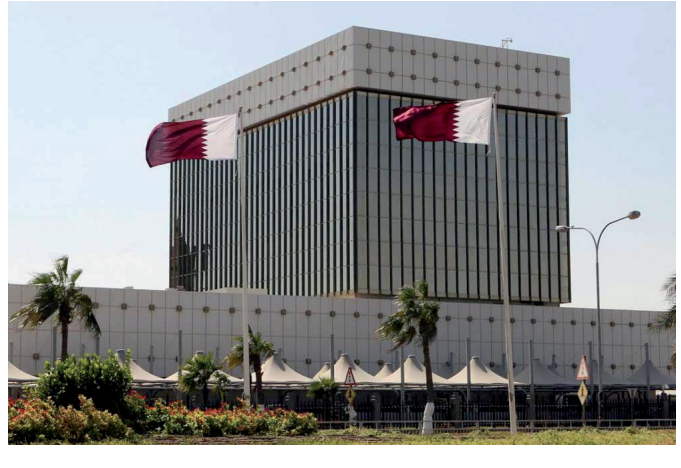
The move is in line with the Third Financial Sector Strategy and forms part of QCB's ongoing efforts to develop the country's payment ecosystem and enhance the efficiency of its financial infrastructure.

In a post on X, QCB said SADAD Payment Solutions and Dibsy are the first two payment service providers to join QA-RTGS, marking the initial implementation of direct access for payment service providers.

QCB said the move will help reduce operational costs for payment service providers and merchants by allowing settlement operations to be conducted directly. It will also simplify the payment cycle by reducing the number of parties involved, supporting faster and more efficient financial transactions.

In addition, the initiative will strengthen QCB's direct oversight and monitoring of settlement operations, the central bank said.

QCB said the initiative forms part of its ongoing efforts to develop the payment ecosystem, with additional payment service providers able to join the Real-Time Gross Settlement System (QA-RTGS) in accordance with the applicable requirements and procedures. — ***QNA***



Qatar ports record strong growth in bulk cargo, livestock handling in August

DEEPAK JOHN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Hamad, Ruwais and Doha ports witnessed an increase in handling of bulk cargo and livestock in August this year compared to the previous month.

In a post on its X platform yesterday, Mwani Qatar stated "Qatar ports handled approximately 120,000 tonnes of bulk cargo in August 2026, marking a 168% increase compared to the previous month. Livestock and vessel calls also rose by approximately 191% and 13%, respectively."

The three ports handled 49,040 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) containers, 30,011 tonnes of general cargo, 119,963 tonnes of bulk cargo, 30 units of RORO, and 5,989 heads of live-stock. Meanwhile the ports received 133 vessels in August 2026.

Qatar ports handled more than 493,000 TEUs and nearly 273,000 tonnes of general cargo during the first half of 2026.



The figures indicate the continuing importance of Hamad, Doha and Al Ruwais port to Qatar's supply chain and wider economic activity. The ports handled more than 324,000 tonnes of bulk cargo between January and June, alongside almost 25,000 RORO units and more than 112,000 livestock. The ports received 866 vessel calls during the period.

Recently, the Ministry of Transport (MoT) completed automating 11 more maritime transportation affairs' services. Now electronic and accessible via the MoT's official website, the 11 fresh e-services cover the transactions related to big vessels and seafarers' affairs.

This brings the total number of e-services available at the MoT's website to 21, while the MoT continues its plans for simpler transactions, less time and effort, and better user experience.

From world-class infrastructure to a growing shipping network, flexible operational processes, and massive capacity that adapts to market shifts, Hamad Port, Qatar's main gateway to world trade, provides integrated logistics solutions that empower your business with greater speed, higher efficiency, and broader access to global markets.

The Centralized Customs Inspection Area (CCIA) at Hamad Port plays a key role in facilitating cargo movement and expediting procedures through a smart operational system that ensures precise inspection and reduced clearance times. This boosts seamless trade flows and enhances supply chain efficiency, further solidifying Qatar as a vital and leading logistics hub on the global trade map.

Situated around 27 km from Hamad Port, the Container Management Station at Jery Musabbeh enhances cargo flow and strengthens logistical capabilities, spanning an area of 88,375 square meters with a capacity exceeding 5,000 TEUs.

The Station offers integrated services including storage, inspection, maintenance, and washing for various types of containers, supporting supply chain efficiency and the broader logistics ecosystem in Qatar.

Meanwhile Ruwais port, Qatar's northern gateway to trade, plays an increasingly strategic role as a regional commercial hub.

By developing its infrastructure and streamlining cargo operations, the port enhances supply chain resilience and drives commercial exchange, in line with the country's economic diversification plans and strategic goals.

Eurozone annual inflation projected at 3.3% in August

BRUSSELS: Eurozone annual inflation is projected at 3.3 percent in August, rising from 2.9 percent in July and reaching its highest level so far this year, according to a flash estimate released yesterday by Eurostat.

Eurozone inflation stood at 3.2 percent in May, before easing to 2.8 percent in June and edging up to 2.9 percent in July. The August reading marked the second consecutive monthly increase.

The acceleration was driven mainly by energy, whose annual inflation rate jumped to 14.3 percent from 10.3 percent in July. Services inflation, by contrast, eased to 3.0 percent from 3.3 percent. The rate for non-energy industrial goods increased to 1.2 percent from 0.9 percent, while food and tobacco inflation remained unchanged at 1.2 percent.

Core inflation, which excludes energy, food, and tobacco, edged down to 2.4 percent in August from 2.5 percent a month earlier.

Among the eurozone's largest economies, Spain posted the highest inflation rate at 4.5 percent in August, up from 3.9 percent in July. Italy and France each saw increases of 0.3 percentage points, to 3.2 percent and 2.7 percent respectively, while Germany edged up to 2.9 percent from 2.8 percent. Lithuania recorded the highest rate among eurozone countries covered by the flash estimate, at 5.8 percent.

Bert Colijn, ING's chief economist for the Netherlands, wrote Tuesday that the rise in headline inflation was driven by higher energy prices, while core inflation remained relatively benign. He said the jump in headline inflation could make a September rate hike easier to sell, while the subdued core rate could fuel debate over a possible subsequent hike into restrictive territory.

Minutes of the ECB's July monetary policy meeting, published last week, showed that policymakers had anticipated a near-term increase in headline inflation. — ***XINHUA***

Oil price extends gains and global stocks mostly down

HONG KONG: Oil prices jumped more than one percent yesterday amid fears of a fresh bout of military exchanges between the United States and Iran following a flare-up at the weekend and Donald Trump's warning that he will hit the country "hard".

The latest strikes between the foes has further stoked worries about inflation that has put pressure on central banks to hike interest rates, which has in turn jolted equity markets.

After six months of war, the conflict remains at an impasse, with Tehran keeping the strategic Strait of Hormuz closed and Washington continuing a counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

The United States carried out strikes on an Iranian island in the waterway on Sunday, with Tehran quickly retaliating by attacking US military targets in the Middle East.

The exchange raised fears of a return to major hostilities, with the US president vowing to respond.

"We're going to hit them hard," Trump said, according to a Fox News reporter who spoke to him briefly. "There will be a response."

US officials said it hit rocket launchers on the island of Larak to prevent Tehran planting mines in the strait, while Iran targeted US forces in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

The exchange of fire came after weeks of relative calm, with the Trump administration recently pivoting to "economic warfare".

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said: "We are going to continue exerting pressure, and we've had very good discussions here already."

He told reporters at a G20 meeting in North Carolina that a turning point in the pressure campaign could come "within weeks or months".

Both main crude contracts rose around 1.5 percent Tuesday, extending the previous day's jump of more than two percent.

"The calibrated nature of the initial actions suggests neither side is actively seeking a return to sustained conflict, but stalled talks and the strategic importance of keeping the Strait open leave the situation vulnerable to further escalation," said National Australia Bank's Rodrigo Catril.

Trump will be meeting oil refining executives on Tuesday in a bid to tame soaring US domestic gas prices that have been a political headache for his Republican Party heading into November's midterm elections.

Stocks mostly fell, with traders now awaiting the release of key data this month ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting on September 16.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Mumbai, Bangkok and Wellington were all down, though Seoul, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta rose.

London slipped as it reopened after a long weekend, while Frankfurt was also down. Paris edged up.

The jobs and consumer price index reports could play a major role in whether the bank hikes rates, with bets on an increase surging after boss Kevin Warsh's hawkish speech on Friday.

Expectations for elevated inflation and rising borrowing costs pushed the yield on 10-year US Treasuries to their highest level since January 2025. — ***AFP***



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, US.



Minister of Finance meets with Minister of Finance of Canada

Minister of Finance H E Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari met with Minister of Finance and National Revenue of Canada H E Francois Philippe Champagne on the sidelines of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, held from August 31 to September 1 ,2026 in Asheville, North Carolina, USA. During the meeting, a range of financial and economic issues was reviewed, in addition to discussing current regional and international developments and the associated challenges, particularly those related to matters of mutual interest between the two countries. Separately, Minister of Finance also met with, H E Luis Andrés Caputo Minister of Economy of the Argentine Republic; H E Giancarlo Giorgetti Minister of Economy and Finance of Italy; and H E Koo Yun Cheol the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of Economy and Finance for the Republic of Korea.

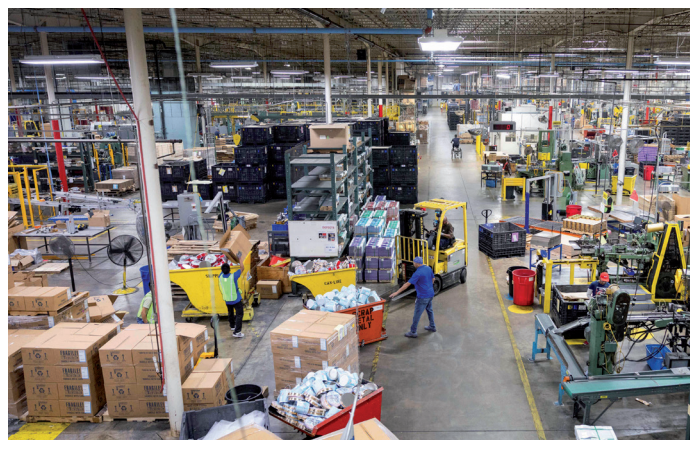
US factory activity expansion slows in August

WASHINGTON: US manufacturing activity grew at a slower pace in August compared to the month before, survey data showed yesterday, with a notable drop in new orders and imports.

The Institute of Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index came in at 54.6 percent, down one percentage point from a month earlier, when it registered a four-year high.

"In August, US manufacturing activity remained in expansion territory, though it has lost ground in a number of key measures -- namely, the New Orders, Backlog and Imports indexes," said ISM survey head Susan Spence.

US manufacturing growth has been sluggish, but ISM's index has remained above the 50-percent figure that separates growth from contraction for eight months.



A general view of the manufacturing facilities of the Independent Can Company in Belcamp, Maryland.

Yesterday's reading was below analyst expectations, with economists polled by Dow Jones Newswires and The Wall Street Journal expecting it to come in at 55.3.

The survey gathers comments from across a range of industries, with 58 percent of respondents listing negative sentiment, ISM said, a marker of elevated uncertainty even as manufacturing activity has increased.

Survey respondents cited pricing volatility, the war with Iran and tariffs -- the latter two being two of US President Donald Trump's key policy moves -- in their comments, the survey said.

The war on Iran has sent energy prices skyrocketing and snarled supply chains for some input materials.

Trump has also upended international trade by imposing a flurry of tariffs on imports into the US, increasing production costs for manufacturers in the world's largest economy and prompting trading partners to impose their own levies on US products.

"We are making great new products but struggling to compete when prices escalate due to things like tariffs and the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz," said one respondent in the chemical industry, referring to the key waterway that has been virtually blocked since the war began six months ago. — ***AFP***

Oman oil exports increase by 11.3 percent in July 2026

MUSCAT: The total oil production of the Sultanate of Oman increased by 11.3 percent by the end of July 2026, reaching 233,803,300 barrels, compared to 210,122,200 barrels during the corresponding period in 2025, according to the Omani National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Preliminary data issued by NCSI suggested that the average oil price rose by 15.7 percent, reaching USD 83.9 per barrel by the end of July 2026, compared to USD 72.5 during the same period in 2025.

On the production front, the average daily oil production recorded a growth of 11.3 percent, reaching 1,102,800 barrels per day by the end of July 2026, compared to 991,100 barrels per day during the corresponding period in 2025, the data added.

In terms of exports, Oman oil exports increased by 1.8 percent, amounting to 181,935,000 barrels by the end of July 2026, compared to 178,746,000 barrels during the same period in 2025. — ***QNA***

John Ternus succeeds Tim Cook as Apple CEO

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple Inc.'s leadership transition took effect yesterday, with John Ternus succeeding Tim Cook as chief executive officer and Cook becoming executive chairman of the company's board of directors.

Apple's updated leadership page lists Ternus as CEO and a member of the board, while Cook is now listed as executive chair.

Apple announced the succession plan on April 20, saying the transition had been unanimously approved by its board and followed a long-term succession planning process. Cook remained CEO through the summer and worked closely with Ternus on the transition. As executive chairman, Cook will continue to assist with certain aspects of the company, including engagement with policymakers around the world.

Cook, who joined Apple in 1998, became CEO in 2011 and led the company for about 15 years. During his tenure, Apple introduced new product categories including Apple Watch, AirPods and Apple Vision Pro, as well as services ranging from iCloud and Apple Pay to Apple TV and Apple Music.

Apple said in April that under Cook's leadership, its market capitalization had grown from approximately $350bn to $4 trillion, while annual revenue had risen from 108 billion dollars in fiscal 2011 to more than 416 billion dollars in fiscal 2025. — ***XINHUA***

IMF reaches agreement with Senegal on new $2.2bn loan programme

DAKAR: The International Monetary Fund has reached an agreement with Senegal on a new $2.2bn debt programme, after a prior deal was suspended following discovery of previously unreported debt.

The 36-month arrangement is meant to support the country's "economic and financial reform program for the 2026-2029 period". But given past under-reporting it will also require "decisive corrective measures to support the authorities' request for a waiver regarding the misreporting of data", the IMF said in a statement.

The staff-level agreement will still need to be approved by the IMF's executive board.

In 2024, Senegal's current government, formed after an opposition electoral victory, accused the former administration of ex-president Macky Sall (2012-2024) of having concealed the true extent of the west African country's worrisome budgetary situation.

As a result, the IMF suspended a $1.8bn aid programme it had agreed upon in 2023, pending further information and commitments from Senegal's new authorities.

The IMF said the 2023 budget deficit was 12.3 percent of GDP, when the last government said it was 4.9 percent.

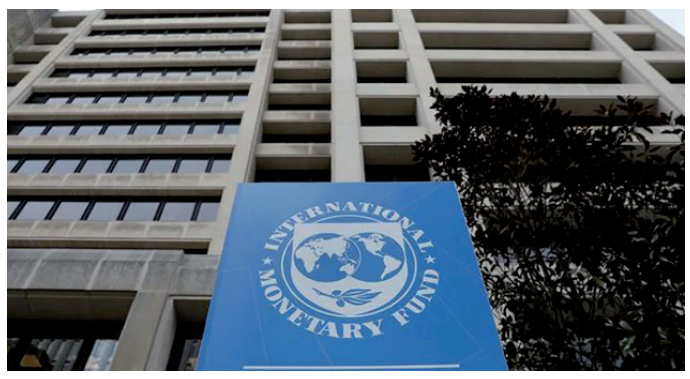
After several IMF visits to Senegal to examine the country's financial situation, the IMF and the government began negotiations in mid-October for a new aid programme.

With a total public sector debt estimated at 132 percent of GDP at the end of 2024, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Senegal is one of the most indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

However its overall fiscal deficit narrowed sharply from 13.4 percent of GDP in 2024 to 6.4 percent of GDP in 2025, mostly driven by spending rationalisation, the IMF said in June.

Senegal has been able to continue financing itself largely through the regional bond market but this comes at higher costs than loans from international financial institutions, development banks or governments, according to global ratings agency S&P.

Senegal President Bassirou Diomaye Faye became embroiled in a political feud with his then prime minister, Ousmane Sonko, earlier this year over a variety of topics, including the IMF programme. — ***AFP***



The 36-month arrangement is meant to support the country's economic and financial reform program for the 2026-2029 period.

Brazil's economy posts slower Q2 growth as consumption falls

BRASÍLIA: Brazil's economy posted slower growth in the second quarter as household spending and exports lost steam, the government reported yesterday.

Gross domestic product in Latin America's largest economy rose 0.5 percent in the April-June period compared to the previous quarter, when GDP expanded 1.1 percent, the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute said.

In the past quarter, household consumption declined 0.4 percent and exports dropped 0.8 percent, the agency said, with presidential elections due in just over a month.

Second quarter GDP growth was fueled by a 2.8 percent rise in farm production and 3.4 percent in extraction industries like mining and oil production.

The government of leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is seeking reelection, has worked in recent months to stimulate domestic consumption in this vast country of 214 million people. — ***AFP***

GWC Group strengthens cold chain supply into Qatar through Oman frozen bulk vessel operations





Matthew Kearns (left) and Haitham Al Rawahi.

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC Group), one of the region's leading logistics groups providing cross-border and integrated logistics solutions, has completed one of the first frozen bulk vessel operations in the Sultanate of Oman extending its cold chain capabilities from vessel handling and temperature-controlled storage to cross-border distribution and creating an additional route for frozen cargo into Qatar.

Frozen goods entering Oman typically arrive in standard containers. Handling a full frozen bulk vessel required specialist cold chain expertise at every phase, from vessel offloading through temperature-controlled storage to onward distribution, maintaining uninterrupted temperature integrity from port to warehouse.

Delivery of the first operation secured GWC Group a second, larger commission: the largest frozen bulk vessel operation the Group has handled to date. The customer subsequently awarded GWC Group a long-term cold storage contract, expanding the relationship from vessel handling into ongoing storage and regional distribution.

The Group also began transporting frozen poultry products by road from Barka in Oman to Qatar and Kuwait, bringing combined volumes to more than 1,000 truckloads of frozen cargo handled, stored and distributed across GCC markets, including Qatar.

Matthew Kearns, GWC Group CEO, said: "This operation demonstrates what our regional network is designed to do. By connecting our capabilities in Oman with our established infrastructure in Qatar, we are creating additional routes for temperature-sensitive goods into the country whilst strengthening resilience across the wider supply chain. As we grow across the GCC, our operations are increasingly working as one network, connecting markets and strengthening the infrastructure behind regional cold chain flows."

Haitham Al Rawahi, General Manager of GWC Oman operations, said: " Frozen bulk vessel handling demands strict, uninterrupted temperature control from port offloading through storage and cross-border transportation. Our teams in Oman delivered this complex operation without compromise, supported by GWC Group's specialised assets and technical expertise."

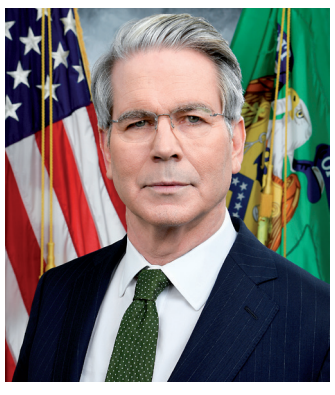
Bond yields soar worldwide as energy shock revives inflation concerns

LONDON: A sell-off of bonds from key countries worldwide deepened yesterday, sending government borrowing costs soaring and equities lower as investors fretted that energy-driven inflation would force central bankers to hike interest rates.

The latest bout of fighting between the United States and Iran pushed oil prices higher, stoking fears of tighter monetary policy that could weigh on economic growth.

Heavy bond selling sent the interest rate on 30-year UK government bonds to the highest since 1998, while the 10-year yield surged to a level not seen since the global financial crisis of 2007-08.

Japan's 10-year bond yield touched a 30-year high of three percent, reflecting worries about plans for massive government spending.



The yield on the 30-year US Treasury bond stood at just under 5.3 percent, not far from levels last seen in 2007, while the 10-year yield rose to its highest level since January 2025.

"The bond sell-off has... been a global affair," said Deutsche Bank's Jim Reid.

He said the "main culprit was the weekend escalation in the Middle East that saw the US and Iran exchange strikes for the first time since late July".

But Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com pointed to underlying fears about inflation and government deficits.

"The result has been a steady uplift for sovereign bond yields that has stirred competition concerns for stocks, as well as general growth concerns," he said.

Wall Street's main stock indices were firmly in the red in late morning trading.

European stocks ended lower, with sentiment hit by official data showing that eurozone inflation hit a three-year high at 3.3 percent in August, cementing expectations that the European Central Bank would raise interest rates next week.

Oil prices jumped over two percent on Tuesday as traders continued to react to the US and Iran resuming military action for the first time in weeks and US President Donald Trump threatened to hit Iran "hard".

Heavy bond selling sent the interest rate on 30-year UK government bonds to the highest since 1998, while the 10-year yield surged to a level not seen since the global financial crisis of 2007-08.

After six months of war, the conflict remains at an impasse, with Tehran keeping the strategic Strait of Hormuz closed and Washington maintaining a counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

"With Trump now threatening further action against Iran, including against Kharg Island, Iran's key oil export hub, supply worries are once again front and centre," said Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club.

Traders are now awaiting key economic data ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy meeting on September 16.

The jobs and consumer price index reports could play a major role in whether the bank lifts rates, with bets on an increase surging after Fed chair Kevin Warsh gave a hawkish speech on Friday.

Data released yesterday showed slowing US manufacturing growth and jobs openings figures came in below expectations.

Asian stock markets were also lower on Tuesday, with Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai all falling.

The yen weakened against the dollar despite US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent **(pictured)** telling CNBC he expected Japan to support the currency, which has lost half the gains made in a historic joint intervention after it hit a 40-year low.

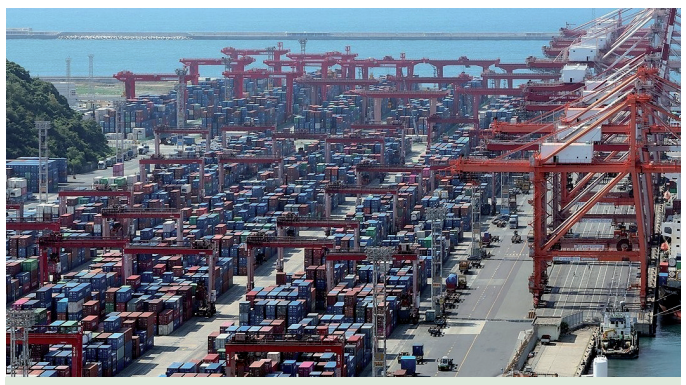
The comments were seen as a signal for the Bank of Japan to tighten monetary policy when it meets this month.

In company news, shares in the fast-fashion giant Shein slumped 10 percent at one point on its long-awaited Hong Kong trading debut, having raised $1.7 billion in a high-profile initial public offering.

It later pared the losses to close almost flat. — ***AFP***

Republic of Korea's Oceans Ministry unveils record 2027 budget to drive maritime growth

SEOUL: Republic of Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries has proposed an 82.6 trillion won ($59bn) budget for 2027, up 10.8 percent from this year, with increased spending planned for fisheries, ports, marine technology and coastal communities.



Busan Port bustles with towering cranes and stacked cargo containers, showing Republic of Korea's gateway to global trade.

The proposed increase would be the largest annual growth rate in the ministry's budget since it was reestablished in 2013, the ministry said in a proposal pre-briefing Monday.

Under the proposal, 38.8 trillion won would go to fisheries and coastal communities, an increase of 11.5 percent from 2026.

Spending on shipping and ports would rise 2.7 percent to 22 trillion won, while funding for marine environmental programs would increase 15.6 percent to 5 trillion won.

Research and development spending would rise 7.8 percent to 9.2 trillion won, including investments in autonomous shipping and marine biotechnology. Policy financing would more than double to 2.5 trillion won.

The ministry said a major focus of the budget would be developing a southern maritime economic zone and strengthening port and shipping infrastructure. Funding would support environmentally friendly shipbuilding, preparations for Arctic shipping routes and the introduction of artificial intelligence-based cargo-handling systems at ports.Port development projects in Gangwon Province's Donghae as well as Saemangeum and Gunsan in North Jeolla Province are included in the spending plan.

The government also plans changes to fisheries management following the enactment of the Sustainable Coastal Fisheries Development Act earlier this year.

The ministry said it would strengthen catch verification and expand the Total Allowable Catch system, which sets limits on catches of designated fish species.

Funding would also be directed toward replacing and modernizing coastal fishing vessels, expanding smart aquaculture facilities and supporting exports of high-value seafood products, including seaweed. Environmental programs include increased efforts to combat illegal fishing and marine debris, including additional patrols and robotic systems designed to collect waste from the ocean.

The ministry also plans to increase investment in marine biotechnology, including facilities to produce biomaterials from algae, and expand projects aimed at storing carbon in coastal and marine ecosystems, commonly known as "blue carbon."

Oceans and Fisheries Minister Hwang Jong-woo said the budget would focus on maritime and fisheries development while supporting broader economic growth. — ***THE KOREA HERALD***

Hungary's GDP grows 1.7% in Q2

BUDAPEST: Hungary's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 1.7 percent year-on-year in the second quarter of 2026, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH) said yesterday in its second estimate.

Compared with the previous quarter, GDP increased by 0.5 percent on a seasonally and calendar-adjusted basis.

In the first half of 2026, Hungary's economy expanded by 1.7 percent compared with the same period last year, according to KSH.

The detailed figures showed significant differences among sectors. Agriculture was the main drag on growth, with its value added falling by 12.4 percent year-on-year due to a persistent and severe drought.

Industry, by contrast, expanded by 3.7 percent, including a 2.7-percent increase in manufacturing.

The manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products contributed the most to manufacturing growth, while coke and refined petroleum production was the largest drag. — ***XINHUA***

Ikea cuts prices on 1,500 products in Europe

STOCKHOLM: Furniture giant Ikea said Tuesday it was cutting prices by up to 28 percent on around 1,500 products in Europe as of September 1 in order to woo customers hit by the rising cost of living.



The change will apply to around 900 products on each market.

Ikea has reduced its prices several times in recent years, even as it caused a hit to the company's revenue and profit in its most recent earnings report. "There's a long-term commitment about lowering the prices to our customers," Jakub Jankowski, the managing director of Inter Ikea Group, the multinational's main holding company, told AFP in an interview.

"Suppliers will not go through any cost pressure because of this," he insisted, noting there was "a high chance that if we are selling more, the suppliers will produce more."

The price reductions will cost Inter Ikea Group, Ingka Group which includes almost all Ikea franchises, and the retailer's other European franchises some 1.2 billion euros ($1.4bn), he said.

The change will apply to around 900 products on each market, Ingka Group said.

To further improve price accessibility beyond Europe, Ingka Group will also invest 70 million euros to offset inflationary and currency pressures in Asia and North America.

Across Europe, prices of popular and iconic Ikea products including some Billy shelving models, Kallax storage solutions, and kitchen equipment will be reduced by 15 to 28 percent.

The selection of products and the scale of the reductions will vary slightly from one market to another, Juvencio Maeztu, chief executive of Ingka Group, told AFP.

After announcing a rare price increase in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, the Swedish flatpack giant has invested between two and three billion euros in lowering its prices by 10 percent since 2023. — ***AFP***

Textile federation seeks over $11 fee on EU fast-fashion imports

PARIS: A federation of European textile associations called yesterday for an import fee of 10 euros ($11.60) on fashion imports, the latest effort to stem the flood of ultra-cheap competition mainly from China.

The plea by Euratex came after the EU imposed in July a three-euro duty on cheap parcels entering the bloc, alleging a financial burden for customs agencies.

It also followed a lacklustre stock debut for Chinese ultrafast-fashion giant Shein, whose fortunes have been hit by the new EU charge as well as a similar clampdown in the United States, two key markets.

France began imposing a levy on ultrafast-fashion items that will eventually reach almost 20 euros per garment.

Euratex president Mario Jorge Machado welcomed the EU fee at an industry conference in Paris but said "we cannot stop there". The group said in a statement that a 10-euro "handling fee" should provide customs authorities with "resources to identify unsafe and non-compliant goods". It also warned against allowing loopholes to the tax such as bulk imports or European warehouses to ensure "a level playing field" for a European industry that includes some 200,000 companies employing 1.3 million people. — ***AFP***

Germany eyes Algerian gas to diversify supply, says Foreign Minister

FRANKFURT: Germany is looking for gas deals with Algeria to diversify its supply, Berlin's top diplomat said Thursday in Algiers, where he joined a business delegation visiting the North African country.

"We need to diversify... We need long-term gas contracts," Johann Wadephul told German public broadcaster ZDF from Algiers, as concerns grow in Germany that gas storage depots are only half full as autumn nears.

Wadephul said that he would meet with Energy Minister Mourad Adjal, and that representatives of German companies looking for long-term contracts were travelling with him. Noting Algerian deals with Spain and Italy, Wadephul said "I also hope that Germany will now be able to secure part of its gas supply here. That is our core interest."



At the moment Germany's gas storage is just 53 percent full compared to an EU average of 65 percent, according to figures from the Aggregated Gas Storage Inventory.

The EU's top economy used to rely on cheap Russian gas but large deliveries stopped after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, dealing a heavy blow to German industry.

Berlin has since largely replaced Russian energy with Norwegian piped gas as well as American liquefied natural gas though LNG prices are usually higher and more volatile than those from long-term piped gas deals.

The US-Israeli war on Iran has put further pressure on gas prices, leading to fears of a possible energy crunch this winter.

At the moment Germany's gas storage is just 53 percent full compared to an EU average of 65 percent, according to figures from the Aggregated Gas Storage Inventory.

"Since there is no prospect of a quick end to both crises it's clear that we need to diversify," Wadephul said. "We need more suppliers."

Following the gas crisis of 2022, the German government introduced mandatory minimum levels for gas storage in a bid to smooth out jumps in spot gas prices, with the state stepping in as a buyer if necessary.

The government has mandated that most gas storage facilities must be at least 80 percent full by November 1. — ***AFP***

South, Southeast Asia poised to benefit from digital trade, says Moody's

SINGAPORE: South and Southeast Asia are well positioned to capture opportunities arising from the expansion of digital trade, supported by the region's high trade openness and rapid digital adoption, Moody's Ratings said yesterday.

The rating agency said in a note that a boom in capital spending on digital infrastructure, particularly data centers, will support gross domestic product (GDP) growth across the region, although the gains will be constrained by reliance on imported equipment and specialist technology.

Moody's expects the economic benefits to be front-loaded in the years leading up to 2030, partly offset by import leakage. Beyond 2030, data center construction is expected to continue at a slower pace. While construction activity will support investment, imported information technology (IT) and specialist equipment could limit domestic economic multipliers and temporarily weigh on external balances, it said.

All markets also stand to benefit from new power generation and network capacity, although policy design will influence how much of the gains are retained domestically, said Moody's.

However, it said the key challenge will be ensuring that investment in digital infrastructure translates into durable. — ***XINHUA***

China says solar power capacity surpasses coal for first time

BEIJING: China's installed solar energy capacity has surpassed that of coal-fired power for the first time, the national energy body said yesterday, hailing the milestone.

China, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases that drive climate change, has pledged to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

"As of the end of July this year, China's installed solar power capacity reached 1.286 billion kilowatts," the National Energy Administration (NEA) said.

"For the first time, photovoltaic installed capacity surpassed coal-fired power, becoming the largest power source category in China," it added.

The country's coal-fired power installed capacity, the energy body said, stood at 1.285 billion kilowatts.

Solar generation rose 15.5 percent on-year in the first seven months of 2026 to 802.4 billion kilowatt-hours, about one-eighth of the country's total, the NEA said in another statement.

It did not detail in these statements what the total generation of coal-powered energy was for the first seven months of this year.



The country's coal-fired power installed capacity, stood at 1.285 billion kilowatts.

The NEA said China's installed solar power capacity and power generation "have maintained a steady trend of rapid growth", with it playing an "increasingly prominent role" in guaranteeing electricity supply and driving the energy transition.

Coal has been China's key power generation source for decades and a key driver of its planet-warming emissions.

But the country's coal-fired power generation fell by nearly two percent in 2025, despite rising energy demand in the world's largest emitter, data reviewed by AFP showed in February.

It marked the first decline in six years, with some analysts saying it was the first time on record that coal generation dropped at the same time as power demand rose.

China has seen an explosive growth in its renewable installation, with coal's share in its energy mix edging down in recent years.

The country installed a record 315 gigawatts of solar power and 119 gigawatts of wind power capacity last year over 80 percent of total newly installed power generation capacity, according to the China Electricity Council. — ***AFP***

AI startup Manus says resumes independent operations

BEIJING: AI startup Manus said Tuesday it had resumed independent operations, months after China blocked Facebook-owner Meta from buying the Chinese-developed, Singapore-based firm.

The two companies announced in December that Meta had agreed to acquire Manus, an artificial intelligence agent, in a deal reportedly worth around $2bn.

But China's top economic planning body said in April that it prohibited the deal, and required "the parties involved to withdraw the acquisition transaction".

Around the same time, Beijing also reportedly restricted travel for two of Manus' co-founders, preventing them from leaving China. "Manus has formally resumed independent operations," the company said in a statement posted to its website.

Some users would be required to back up and restore their data, and would face a "temporary interruption to access", it said.

"Our founding team will continue to lead the company," it added. Manus announced in August its intention to return to independent operations, saying the move was "part of our separation from Meta".

"We must take this step to comply with regulatory requirements in specific parts of the world," it said at the time.

Analysts warned when the deal was announced that it might fall foul of regulators, at a time of fierce technological rivalry between Washington and Beijing.

Meta previously told AFP in a statement that "the transaction complied fully with applicable law".

China has been cracking down on a practice known as "Singapore-washing" in which companies leave the country to take advantage of looser regulations, global customers or funding opportunities.

Manus, a product of CEO Xiao Hong's ambition to create a Chinese company with world recognition, abruptly shifted its approach in 2025, when the firm laid off dozens of staff in Beijing and Wuhan and relocated core personnel to Singapore. — ***AFP***

Shein flattens on Hong Kong debut facing global headwinds

HONG KONG: Fast-fashion retailer Shein made a tepid Hong Kong debut yesterday, having raised $1.7bn in a high-profile initial public offering.

The flotation comes after the company's plans to list in New York and London were derailed by regulatory scrutiny, but it won approval from Chinese officials in July for the sale in the southern financial hub.

But its share price tumbled on opening by as much as 10 percent, before bouncing back to close the day down just 0.1 per cent at HK$48.5.

The long-awaited IPO put the company's valuation at around $26.3bn with its listing price of HK$48.56 -- well short of the nearly US$100 billion during private fundraising rounds in 2022.

Shein, known for its ultra-low prices and rapidly produced clothes, said proceeds from the sale would be used to finance its technological capabilities and boost its international presence.

The online retailer moved its headquarters to Singapore between 2021 and 2022, which analysts say was intended to avoid increasing global scrutiny of Chinese firms. Its European customer base rose to 156 million average monthly users by the end of 2025, making it one of the continent's biggest e-commerce platforms alongside China's AliExpress and US titan Amazon, which have 193 million and around 180 million users respectively.

The company has faced scrutiny over its environmental footprint and allegations of human rights violations and faces growing competition from low-cost e-commerce companies such as Temu and AliExpress.

Executive chairman Donald Tang told AFP last year that the company has "zero tolerance" for forced labour. Morningstar analyst Lorraine Tan said in an August note that revenue growth "has converged to the pace seen by the fast fashion industry at below 10 percent in 2025".

She added the fall in valuation "does reflect that drop-off in investor appetite for Shein's shares".

Yesterday's listing was "not a loss" despite the lukewarm market sentiments, said Han Lin, China director of consultancy firm The Asia Group. — ***AFP***