

ECB hikes borrowing costs to combat Mideast energy shock

AFP | Berlin, Germany

The European Central Bank raised interest rates Thursday for the second time this year as renewed fighting in the Middle East sends energy prices soaring, threatening to push widespread inflation higher.

As widely expected, the central bank for the 21 euro-zone nations lifted its benchmark rate a quarter percentage point to 2.5 percent, its highest level since March last year.

It was the ECB's second increase this year after policy-makers lifted borrowing costs in June for the first time since 2023 in response to the energy shock triggered by the US war on Iran.

"The conflict in the Middle East continues to generate inflation pressures, and inflation is set to remain well above target for an extended period," the ECB said in a statement.

"The outlook remains highly uncertain, with risks to the upside for inflation and to the downside for economic growth," it added.

The central bank kept its inflation forecast for this year unchanged at three percent, but raised it slightly for next year, to 2.5 percent.

It also slightly raised its growth forecasts for this year, to 0.9 percent from 0.8 percent, and for next year to 1.4 percent from 1.2 percent.

All eyes will now be on President Christine Lagarde's press conference for hints on the bank's next move, with some analysts warning that further rate increases could weigh on the eurozone economy.

Fears of higher inflation, which hit 3.3 percent in August, above the ECB's two-percent target, are being fanned by a surge in global energy prices.

Trump's Qatari Air Force One delayed after evacuation slide deployed

AFP | Joint Base Andrews, United States

US President Donald Trump's Qatari-gifted Air Force One was delayed on the tarmac Wednesday after an emergency inflatable slide accidentally deployed, raising fresh questions over the safety of the jet.

Trump -- who was preparing to travel to a Republican Party convention in Dallas from Joint Base Andrews -- had to wait in his helicopter before being able to board the plane following the incident.

The 80-year-old then told reporters that inspectors were checking one of the Boeing 747's inflatable slides used for emergency evacuations.

"They're checking the slide over here, and I think it's going to take 15 minutes," Trump said on the tarmac before boarding.

But a person briefed on the situation later told AFP that



"military personnel accidentally triggered the slide."

The plane's safety has been the subject of recurring questions, and the issue came to a head during a recent dramatic incident in Turkey, where Trump secretly switched to a different aircraft amid security concerns.

Asked by an AFP reporter Wednesday whether Trump was sure the jet was safe, Trump responded: "Yeah I am, or I wouldn't be on it."

Rubio ends South America swing with Peru security talks

AFP | Lima, Peru

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio wraps up a whirlwind tour of Latin America in Peru yesterday, deepening cooperation with a new bloc of conservative governments and pressing the fight against regional drug cartels.

Rubio arrived in Lima after stops in Colombia and Ecuador, where he welcomed closer coordination against criminal gangs that Washington now describes



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and his wife Jeanette Dousdebbs arrive at a military base in Lima

as terrorist organizations.

In Peru, Rubio will meet new President Keiko Fujimori and make joint statements to the press.

The visit comes after Peru joined the "Shield of the Americas," a US-led coalition promoted by President Donald Trump to combat drug trafficking and organized crime across the region.

Peru, one of the world's largest cocaine producers, has faced a sharp deterioration in public security in recent years.

Trump promises Americans \$5,000 if Republicans win Congress

The president did not disclose where the money would come from

● Trump said: "I'm asking you to pretend that I'm on the ballot."

● Opinion polls overwhelmingly show that Trump's approval ratings are in the low 30s

AFP | Dallas, United States

President Donald Trump yesterday promised \$5,000 to every American adult if Republicans retain control of Congress in November, coupling the extraordinary claim with a



US President Donald Trump arrives to speak during the Republican National Midterm Convention at the American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas

plea for his supporters to "pretend" he was on the ballot.

"If the Republicans win, you win with us and you get \$5,000. It will be called the Trump dividend," he told the Republican midterm convention in Dallas, as the party struggles in polls against the Democrats.

The president did not disclose where the money would come from -- with the theoretical bill likely topping \$1 trillion -- saying only that "our country is making so much money."

Doubling down on his bet that

he can help Republicans defy opinion polls and retain both houses of Congress on November 3, Trump said: "I'm asking you to pretend that I'm on the ballot."

"I'm on the ballot, I'm on the ballot -- just one more time," he told the crowd.

Opinion polls overwhelmingly show that Trump's approval ratings are in the low 30s, as voters become increasingly angry about high prices and the war he launched against Iran.

Decision Desk HQ projects Democrats to win the House 230-

205 and the Senate to finish 51-49 in their favor in November.

Vice President JD Vance said US tariffs "generated a lot of revenues" and that the Trump dividend was a way to benefit Americans.

"What the president is just saying is... If you keep us in power and allow us to continue to do these things, then you are going to share in some of the benefit of this incredible wealth," Vance said in a Fox News interview.

"I don't think it's a controversial idea," he added.

Trump defends Iran war

Trump strongly defended the Iran war, predicting victory and linking it directly to lower oil prices -- before suggesting the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz should be renamed after him.

"Food prices and almost every other item are rapidly going down. And by the way oil will be going down as soon as we win the war with Iran, which is taking place right now," Trump said.

Trump also echoed other Republicans at the convention stirring up what he said was a wave of communism threatening the United States.

August hottest month ever recorded globally as huge El Nino emerges

AFP | Paris, France

Europe's climate monitor said yesterday that August was the hottest month ever recorded around the world and warned of worse to come, as an unprecedented El Nino pattern grows stronger.

Global temperatures over land and sea soared to all-time highs in August and capped an extreme summer of heatwaves and wildfires that ranked the hottest on record for western Europe and the contiguous United States.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service said global average air temperatures in August were 16.96C -- surpassing by 0.01C the previous record for a single month set in July 2023. The EU monitor said it considered the two months joint-highest given the narrow difference.

Copernicus observations go



Beachgoers sit on the beach of Moutchic in Lacanau, southwestern France, as clouds of smoke rise into the sky from a wildfire.

back to 1940, but evidence from ice cores, tree rings and coral skeletons puts today's climate in a much starker historical context.

"Humans haven't seen tem-

peratures as hot as today for, arguably, at least the last 100,000 years," Samantha Burgess from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, which oversees Copernicus, told

AFP.

UN climate chief Simon Stiell said the "evidence is irrefutable: this is the spiralling price of humanity's fossil fuel addiction".

'Striking'

The exceptional summer also drove ocean temperatures to record highs for three straight months, said Simon van Gennip from Mercator Ocean International on Thursday.

Marine heatwaves have persisted in some overheated basins for more than 60 days, "highlighting just how unusual and persistent" the situation was, he said.

Global sea surface temperatures set a new all-time daily high in August and equalled the hottest month for oceans ever recorded.

Copernicus said the main driver was global heating from burning coal, oil and gas, but also sharp-rising temperatures in the Pacific, where a historic El Nino is accumulating strength.

El Nino episodes are characterised by unusually warm Pacific waters but trigger major global changes in rainfall and winds, raising the odds of wild weather thousands of miles away.

Global forecasters predict this year's event will peak later this year at an intensity never observed in the modern era.