

# Business

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## BCICAI wins best overseas chapter award

THE Bahrain Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) – BCICAI – has won the ‘Best Overseas Chapter Award for 2022 in Category II’, given by the institute, which is India’s largest professional accounting body.

BCICAI has been winning the award for the last seven years.

There are 44 overseas chapters of ICAI across the world who compete for the annual award in various categories.

Officials from the BCICAI led by chairperson Sharmila Shet received the award from India’s Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal during the 73rd Annual Ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, India.



■ BCICAI officials receive the award in New Delhi

## Gulf markets end lower as recession fears weigh

STOCK markets in the Gulf ended lower yesterday as mounting evidence of a US economic slowdown fuelled worries about a possible global recession.

The US services sector slowed more than expected in March as demand cooled, while a measure of prices paid by services businesses fell to the lowest in nearly three years.

Fed fund futures are indicating a 62.5 per cent chance of the US central bank pausing its rate hikes in May and a 51.3pc chance of a rate cut at its July meeting, according to CME Group’s Fedwatch tool.

Most Gulf Co-operation Council countries, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have their currencies pegged to the US dollar and follow the Fed’s policy moves closely, exposing the region to a direct impact from monetary tightening in the world’s largest economy.

Saudi Arabia’s benchmark stock index TASI eased 0.1pc, extending losses from the previous session, hit by a 1.3pc decline in Retail Urban Development Co 4322.SE.

The Saudi bourse saw more price corrections as traders move to secure gains in the current uncertain atmosphere, said Fadi Reyad, chief market analyst at CAPEX.com.

Global sentiment affected local stocks after US economic data altered expectations.

However, the index posted its third weekly gain of 3pc. Earlier this week, the benchmark registered sharp gains after a surprise announcement by Opec+ to further cut oil production.

Dubai’s main share index DFMGI dropped 0.4pc, with blue-chip developer Emaar Properties losing 1.4pc.

Shares in UAE-based currency exchange company Al Ansari Financial Services climbed 16.5pc above its listing price on its market debut.

In Abu Dhabi, the index retreated 0.3pc, while the Qatari index fell 0.2pc.

Outside the Gulf, Egypt’s blue-chip index tumbled 1.8pc, as most of the stocks on the index were in negative territory.

The Egyptian market is coming under increasing pressure as risk aversion increases among investors on a global and local stage, Reyad said.

# Saudi Arabia assures IMF of financial support to Pakistan

SAUDI Arabia has told the International Monetary Fund it will provide financing to Pakistan, Pakistani junior finance minister Aisha Ghais Pasha said yesterday, a critical step needed to secure IMF funding.

Saudi Arabia’s \$2 billion pledged in external financing support to Pakistan is one of the final conditions for an IMF deal that Islamabad needs to avert a default.

“Apparently Saudi Arabia has committed to IMF, and IMF has indicated to us that there has been a correspondence from them,” Pasha told reporters in Islamabad.

The IMF’s resident representative did not immediately respond to a *Reuters* request for a comment. Saudi Arabia’s finance ministry was not available for comment.

Pakistan’s international bonds rose around 1 cent to trade between 34 cents and 45 cents in the dollar – their strongest level in around a week – data from *Tradeweb* showed.

The IMF has asked Pakistan to secure assurances on external financing from friendly countries and multilateral partners to fund its balance of payment gap for this fiscal year, which ends in June. Islamabad has been hosting an IMF mission since early February to negotiate a series of policy measures to secure \$1.1bn funding for the cash-strapped economy, which is on the verge of collapse.

The funds are part of a \$6.5bn bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical for



■ People shop ration on a discounted price from the Saylani Welfare Trust’s stall, a non-government organisation focusing primarily on feeding the poor and homeless, in Karachi

Pakistan to avert defaulting on external payment obligations.

The deal will also unlock other bilateral and multilateral financing

avenues for Pakistan to shore up its foreign exchange reserves, which have fallen to four weeks worth of import cover, and help it steer out of a

balance of payment crisis.

Pasha said Islamabad was also in talks with UAE to secure an assurance for a foreign reserves deposits in central bank.

# Tunisia president rejects \$1.9 billion bailout package

TUNISIA’S President Kais Saied gave his clearest rejection yet of the terms of a stalled \$1.9 billion IMF bailout package when he said yesterday he would not accept “diktats” and suggested that subsidy cuts could lead to unrest.

Tunisia reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF for the loan in September, but it has already missed key commitments, and donors believe the state’s finances are increasingly diverging from the figures used to calculate the deal.

Without a loan, Tunisia faces a full-blown balance of payments crisis. Most debt is internal but there are foreign loan repayments due later this year, and credit ratings agencies have said Tunisia may default.

When asked whether he would

accept the terms of the loan – which include cuts to food and energy subsidies and a reduction in the public wage bill – Kais Saied told reporters “I will not hear diktats”.

Recalling deadly riots that hit the North African country in 1983 after

the government raised the price of bread, he added: “Public peace is not a game”.

When asked what the alternative was to the IMF loan, the president replied: “Tunisians must count on themselves.”