

UK PM Sunak Faces Opposition in Parliament for 1st Time



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, left, alongside the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, second left, holds his first Cabinet meeting in Downing street in London, Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2022.

LONDON (AP) — Rishi Sunak faced the opposition in Parliament for the first time as Britain's prime minister Wednesday, seeking to provide assurances that his new government would offer economic stability and continuity after his predecessor's tax plans triggered market tumult.

Sunak, who took office Tuesday, has appointed a government that mixes allies with ministers from the administrations of his two immediate predecessors, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, as he tries to tackle Britain's multiple economic problems. One of his government's first acts was to delay a key economic statement until Nov. 17, ensuring the most accurate possible forecasts can be considered as the government seeks to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

He also quietly reinstituted a moratorium on fracking that was part of the Conservative Party's 2019 election

platform. Truss had scrapped the ban.

"We will have to take difficult decisions to restore economic stability and confidence," Sunak told the House of Commons. "We will do this in a fair way ... I will always protect the most vulnerable. ... we did that in COVID and we will do that again."

Opposition politicians focused on the baggage his new government carried: ministers from the Cabinets of Johnson — who quit in July after a slew of ethics scandals — and Truss, whose government lasted just seven weeks.

A package of unfunded tax cuts Truss unveiled last month spooked financial markets with the prospect of ballooning debt, drove the pound to record lows and forced the Bank of England to intervene — weakening Britain's fragile economy and obliterating Truss' authority within the Conservative Party.

Sunak brought in people from different wings of the Conservative Party for his Cabinet. He removed about a dozen members of Truss' government but kept several senior figures in place, including Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and Defense Secretary Ben Wallace.

He faced a backlash for reappointing Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who resigned last week after breaching ethics rules by sending a sensitive government email from a private account. She used her resignation letter to criticize Truss, hastening the then-prime minister's departure.

A leading light of the Conservatives' right wing who infuriates liberals, Braverman is tasked with fulfilling a controversial, stalled plan to send some asylum-seekers arriving in Britain on a one-way trip to Rwanda.

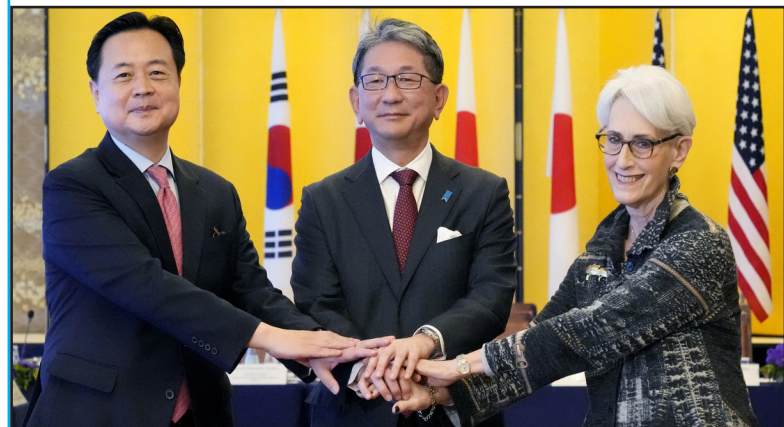
Sunak denied an allegation by Labour leader Keir Starmer that he had made a "grubby deal" with Braverman in return for her support in the leadership contest.

Opponents expressed astonishment that Braverman could be back in her job less than a week after her resignation, and before an investigation of her breach of the ethics rules.

Sunak also kept in place Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt, whom Truss appointed two weeks ago to steady the markets. His removal likely would have set off new tremors.

Hunt, who had planned to deliver a statement on Oct. 31, will now have a few more weeks to outline the government plans to come up with billions of pounds (dollars) to fill a fiscal hole created by soaring inflation and a sluggish economy, and exacerbated by Truss' destabilizing plans.

U.S., South Korea, Japan Threaten North With 'Unparalleled' Action



Japanese Vice FM Takeo Mori, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and South Korean First Vice FM Cho Hyun-dong ahead of their trilateral meeting in Tokyo, Oct. 26, 2022.

TOKYO (Dispatches) — The U.S., South Korea, and Japan on Wednesday warned North Korea that it would face an "unparalleled" response should it test another nuclear weapon.

Their statement comes amid heightened tensions around the Korean Peninsula and long-

running concerns in the U.S. administration that Pyongyang may conduct another atomic test.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Tokyo, Cho Hyun-dong, South Korea's first vice foreign minister, stated that the three allies had "agreed that an unparalleled scale of response

would be necessary if North Korea pushes ahead with a seventh nuclear test." The official delivered his remarks after meeting with Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Takeo Mori and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman.

The new threats came after Sherman promised on Tuesday that the U.S. would use its full military might, including nuclear weapons, against North Korea.

North Korea insists that its nuclear arsenal is intended only for self-defense and that its recent ballistic missile launches came in response to large-scale military exercises by the U.S. and South Korea. Kim Jong-un, the nation's leader, also warned that "irresponsible aggravation of the situation by the U.S. and South Korean regimes" would trigger an even stronger response from Pyongyang.

Pakistan Ex-PM Khan Announces March on Capital to Call for Early Elections

LAHORE (Reuters) - Former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan has announced that he would begin a protest march with his supporters from the eastern city of Lahore to Pakistan's capital Islamabad on Friday to call for early elections.

Smaller protests by Khan's supporters took place last week after Pakistan's top election tribunal found Khan guilty of unlawfully selling gifts from foreign dignitaries and heads of state, removing him of his parliamentary seat.

"I have decided to launch the long march from Friday at 11.00 am from Liberty Square in Lahore to Islamabad," Khan said at press conference in Lahore. The distance between the two cities is about 380 kilometers.

"I am marching to press the government to announce elections immediately," he said, adding his supporters and party members should avoid vio-

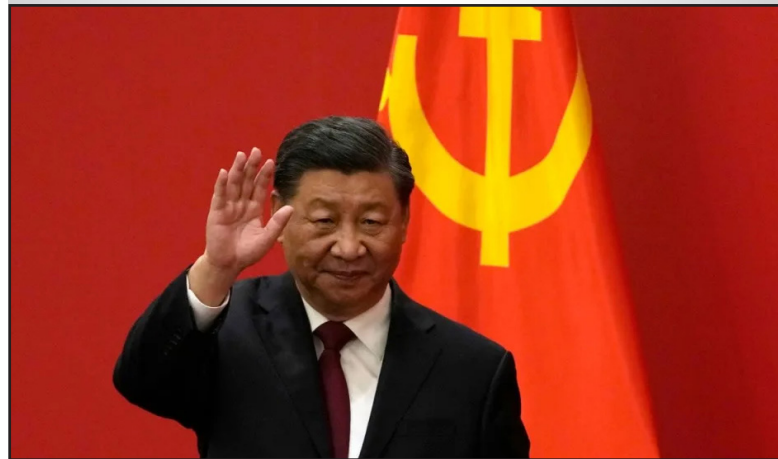


Ousted Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan gestures as he addresses supporters during a rally, in Lahore

lence. Since being removed from office by a no-confidence vote in the legislature in April, Khan has held protests across

the country calling for snap elections, but the government has said they will be held as scheduled in October or November next year.

China Says 'Closer Than Ever' to Reunification With Taiwan



Chinese President Xi Jinping waves at an event to introduce new members of the Politburo Standing Committee at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Spokesman for Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office Ma Xiaoguang China said on Wednesday that his country has taken a historical step towards achieving "complete reunification of the motherland", in reference to Chinese Taipei, days after the country's ruling party concluded a congress that handed President Xi Jinping another five years in power.

The spokesman said in a press conference that China was moving more than ever before in the direction of national rejuvenation, and is more confident and capable than ever before of realizing the reunification of the motherland.

The spokesman's indirect reference to Taipei came after a question about President Xi Jinping's speech at the beginning of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which was held between October 16-22.

There, the general secretary of the Communist Party of China, who won a third term in power, said the wheels of history are once again moving towards the reunification of China and Taiwan.

In the opening of the congress, Xi said despite serious efforts by separatist forces who want the independence of Taiwan, and despite the intervention of foreign forces, Beijing seeks to maintain national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"The complete reunification of

our country must be realized and it can without a doubt be realized," the Chinese president stated.

Xi hoped for a peaceful reunification and said China "never promises to give up resorting to force" to achieve its goals and the possibility of "all necessary measures against the intervention of foreign forces and a very small number."

Xi further emphasized that Beijing's actions will never target Taiwanese compatriots.

In a resolution passed on the last day of the congress on October 22, China underscored the need to adhere to the 'One China' principle and the 1992 consensus between Beijing and Taipei, and to implement the CPC's general policy of resolving disputes.

In a press conference on the eve of the opening of the congress, Sun Yeli, spokesman for the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, said Beijing's goal is to promote the process of peaceful reunification of the island with mainland China. He said "peaceful reunification is in China's interest [and] the number one option for the Taiwan issue."

Accusing "Taiwanese separatists" of provocations and "foreign forces" of using Taiwan to contain China, the spokesman said a military solution to the issue could be a "last resort."

Biden Approval Dips as Democrats Brace for Midterms, Poll Shows



Recent polls have shown Democrats who once had comfortable leads in some Senate races on a knife's edge, and Senate elections that were considered toss-ups between the two parties now leaning Republican as high inflation persists.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — U.S. President Joe Biden's approval rating edged closer to the lowest level of his presidency just two weeks before U.S. midterm elections that will shape the rest of this term, a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll said.

The two-day national poll found that 39% of Americans approve of Biden's job performance, a percentage point lower than a week earlier.

Biden's unpopularity is helping drive the view that Republicans will win control of the US House of Representatives and possibly also the Senate on November 8.

Control of even one chamber of Congress would give Republicans the power to bring Biden's legislative agenda to a halt.

Taking office in January 2021 in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Biden's term has been marked by the economic scars of the global health crisis, including soaring inflation.

This year, his approval rating drifted to as low as 36% in May and June. In this week's Reuters/Ipsos poll, one third of respondents picked the economy as the country's biggest problem, a much larger share than the one in 10 who picked crime.

Only one in 20 pointed to the end of national abortion rights.

The poll, conducted online in English throughout the United States, gathered responses from 1,005 adults, including 447 Democrats and 369 Republicans. It has a credibility interval — a measure of precision — of four percentage points.

News in Brief

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The UN special envoy for Myanmar has warned that the political, human rights and humanitarian crisis in the military-ruled Southeast Asian nation is deepening and taking "a catastrophic toll on the people." Noeleen Heyzer told the UN General Assembly's human rights committee that more than 13.2 million people don't have enough to eat, 1.3 million are displaced and the military continues operations using disproportionate force including bombings, burnings of homes and buildings, and the killing of civilians.

PARIS (Reuters) - French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met in Paris with smiles and a handshake on Wednesday, but ignored questions on their faltering relationship as they headed into the Elysee Palace. Scholz flew into the French capital to find common ground after the French leader postponed a joint cabinet meeting last week over what sources said were differences, including over energy policy and defense. The difficulties come as the EU struggles to reach an agreement on whether to cap gas prices in response to Russia's war in Ukraine. It is also impacting Europe's plans to build its next generation of fighter jets, gas pipeline projects across the EU and German plans to let China invest in its ports.

VLADIVOSTOK (Reuters) — Russia's Soyuz-2.1a rocket has successfully sent into orbit the Progress MS-21 cargo spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, Russia's state space corporation Roscosmos announced Wednesday. The Progress MS-21 spacecraft is scheduled to dock with the Russian section of the International Space Station on Friday. The spacecraft will deliver 2.5 tons of cargo to the ISS, including various equipment, fuel, compressed nitrogen, water and food. Russia's Progress MS series of cargo spacecrafts are dedicated to providing services for orbital stations, including transporting various materials and performing orbit corrections for the ISS. This was the 19th launch of Russian rockets in 2022, and the third with a Progress cargo ship.

SAO PAULO (Reuters) - Brazilian presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's lead over President Jair Bolsonaro has widened slightly to 6 percentage points less than one week ahead of a runoff vote, two polls showed on Wednesday. Both were conducted between Sunday and Tuesday, and the results could have been influenced by Sunday's incident in which Bolsonaro ally Roberto Jefferson shot at police, resisting arrest. Lula would win 53% of the valid votes, up from last week's 52%, against 47% for Bolsonaro, who had 48% in the previous poll, a survey by PoderData said. A poll by Genial/Quaest found Lula widening his lead slightly to 48% of voter support, while Bolsonaro remains at 42%. Excluding blank or annulled votes and the undecided, Lula had 53% of the votes to Bolsonaro's 47%, the same numbers for valid votes as the PoderData poll showed. Brazilians will vote in the second round of the presidential election on Sunday.

GENEVA (AP) - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has called on world leaders to spare no efforts in assisting countries in the Horn of Africa to break the cycle of conflicts and climate crises. Concluding a five-day visit to Somalia and Kenya, Grandi warned, in a statement to the press, that the catastrophic and multifaceted consequences in the region are largely unnoticed as the world's attention remains elsewhere. Latest UN figures showed that in Somalia, the number of people displaced internally this year -- primarily by drought -- is nearing 1 million, and about 500,000 others are displaced due to conflicts and insecurity.