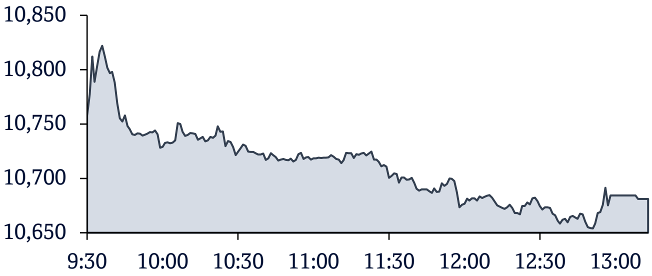
Daily Market Report

Monday, 02 January 2023

QSE Intra-Day Movement



Qatar Commentary

The Market was closed yesterday. The QE Index declined on December 29 by 1.1% to close at 10,681.1. Losses were led by the Insurance and Industrials indices, falling 2.6% and 1.5%, respectively. Top losers were Qatar Industrial Manufacturing Co. and Qatar Insurance Company, falling 4.2% and 3.8%, respectively. Among the top gainers, Qatar Navigation gained 1.4%, while Ooredoo was up 1.3%.

GCC Commentary

Saudi Arabia: The TASI Index gained 0.7% to close at 10,546.7. Gains were led by the Capital Goods and Consumer Durables & Apparel indices, rising 2.4% and 2.0%, respectively. Middle East Specialized Cables Co. rose 9.9%, while Saudi Arabia Refineries Co. was up 9.7%.

Dubai: The Market was closed on January 01, 2023.

Abu Dhabi: The Market was closed on January 01, 2023.

Kuwait: The Market was closed on January 01, 2023.

Oman: The MSM 30 Index gained 0.3% to close at 4,872.7. Gains were led by the Financial and Industrial indices, rising 0.7% and 0.3%, respectively. Takaful Oman rose 8.2%, while Voltamp Energy was up 5.6%.

Bahrain: The Market was closed on January 01, 2023.

Market Indicators	29 Dec 22	28 Dec 22	%Chg.
Value Traded (QR mn)	329.8	231.7	42.3
Exch. Market Cap. (QR mn)	608,215.9	614,447.1	(1.0)
Volume (mn)	73.7	62.3	18.3
Number of Transactions	9,281	9,436	(1.6)
Companies Traded	44	46	(4.3)
Market Breadth	10:32	27:17	–

Market Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	YTD%	TTM P/E
Total Return	21,878.31	(1.1)	(2.8)	(4.9)	11.9
All Share Index	3,450.41	(1.0)	(3.3)	(7.6)	125.1
Banks	4,430.72	(1.0)	(3.4)	(11.6)	13.3
Industrials	3,781.14	(1.5)	(2.1)	(6.0)	10.3
Transportation	4,335.60	(0.9)	(2.0)	21.9	13.8
Real Estate	1,560.01	(0.9)	(4.3)	(10.4)	16.6
Insurance	2,186.43	(2.6)	(2.0)	(19.8)	14.8
Telecoms	1,318.50	1.0	(0.3)	24.7	11.9
Consumer Goods and Services	7,915.13	(0.1)	(1.8)	(3.7)	22.0
Al Rayan Islamic Index	4,591.46	(0.6)	(3.2)	(2.7)	8.4

GCC Top Gainers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Aluminum Bahrain	Bahrain	1.09	3.8	415.1	NA
Bahrain Telecom. Co.	Bahrain	0.48	3.2	40.7	0.0
Acwa Power Co.	Saudi Arabia	155.00	2.0	122.9	2.0
Bank Muscat	Oman	0.28	1.8	2,031.4	1.8
Agility Public Warehousing	Kuwait	0.72	1.3	12,068.5	NA

GCC Top Losers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Qatar Gas Transport Co. Ltd	Qatar	3.66	(2.7)	1,625.3	11.0
Q Holding	Abu Dhabi	4.00	(2.0)	3,366.1	NA
Qatar Int. Islamic Bank	Qatar	10.40	(1.9)	1,347.2	12.9
Omani Qatari Telecom.	Oman	0.43	(1.8)	49.8	(1.8)
Masraf Al Rayan	Qatar	3.17	(1.4)	12,657.3	(31.7)

Source: Bloomberg (# in Local Currency) (## GCC Top gainers/ losers derived from the S&P GCC Composite Large Mid Cap Index)

QSE Top Gainers	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Qatar Navigation	10.15	1.4	174.2	32.9
Ooredoo	9.20	1.3	1,039.0	31.1
Al Meera Consumer Goods Co.	15.78	1.0	56.3	(19.5)
National Leasing	0.70	0.7	7,047.9	(25.1)
Gulf Warehousing	4.05	0.6	26.6	(10.8)

QSE Top Losers	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Qatar Industrial Manufacturing Co.	3.21	(4.2)	61.2	4.6
Qatar Insurance Company	1.92	(3.8)	94.1	(30.1)
Inma Holding	4.11	(3.0)	140.5	4.2
Dlala Brokerage & Inv. Holding Co.	1.14	(2.9)	867.9	(38.0)
Qatar German for Med. Devices	1.26	(2.8)	2,118.1	(60.5)

QSE Top Volume Trades	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Masraf Al Rayan	3.17	(1.4)	12,657.3	(31.7)
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.52	(2.4)	8,638.0	(15.6)
National Leasing	0.70	0.7	7,047.9	(25.1)
QNB Group	18.00	(1.1)	4,700.3	(10.8)
Barwa Real Estate Company	2.87	(1.6)	3,860.5	(6.1)

QSE Top Value Trades	Close*	1D%	Val. '000	YTD%
QNB Group	18.00	(1.1)	84,705.6	(10.8)
Industries Qatar	12.81	(2.1)	47,317.1	(17.3)
Masraf Al Rayan	3.17	(1.4)	40,316.9	(31.7)
Qatar Islamic Bank	18.56	(0.6)	30,473.5	1.3
The Commercial Bank	5.00	(0.4)	14,712.2	(25.9)

Regional Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	MTD%	YTD%	Exch. Val. Traded ($ mn)	Exchange Mkt. Cap. ($ mn)	P/E**	P/B**	Dividend Yield
Qatar^	10,681.07	(1.1)	(2.8)	(10.4)	(8.1)	90.56	165,982.1	11.9	1.4	4.3
Dubai#	3,336.07	0.2	0.2	0.4	4.4	39.02	158,461.2	9.4	1.1	3.3
Abu Dhabi#	10,188.57	(0.7)	(0.5)	(3.2)	20.3	291.71	686,184.0	18.1	2.9	2.0
Saudi Arabia	10,546.67	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	599.59	2,651,445.9	16.3	2.1	2.7
Kuwait^	7,292.12	(0.2)	1.1	(3.9)	3.5	142.86	152,975.4	19.7	1.7	2.8
Oman	4,872.67	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	3.95	22,413.6	13.9	1.0	3.6
Bahrain^	1,895.27	0.8	2.3	1.6	5.5	4.87	66,152.4	5.2	0.7	5.6

*Source: Bloomberg, Qatar Stock Exchange, Tadawul, Muscat Securities Market and Dubai Financial Market (** TTM; * Value traded ($ mn) do not include special trades, if any #Data as of December 30, 2022, ^ Data as of December 29, 2022)*

Qatar Market Commentary

- The Market was closed yesterday. The QE Index declined on December 29 by 1.1% to close at 10,681.1. The Insurance and Industrials indices led the losses. The index fell on the back of selling pressure from foreign shareholders despite buying support from Qatari, GCC and Arab shareholders.
- Qatar Industrial Manufacturing Co and Qatar Insurance Company were the top losers, falling 4.2% and 3.8%, respectively. Among the top gainers, Qatar Navigation gained 1.4%, while Ooredoo was up 1.3%.
- Volume of shares traded on Thursday rose by 18.3% to 73.7mn from 62.3mn on Wednesday. However, as compared to the 30-day moving average of 103.1mn, volume for the day was 28.5% lower. Masraf Al Rayan and Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co. were the most active stocks, contributing 17.2% and 11.7% to the total volume, respectively.

Overall Activity	Buy %*	Sell %*	Net (QR)
Qatari Individuals	19.20%	19.50%	(993,831.1)
Qatari Institutions	27.78%	24.78%	9,909,070.3
Qatari	**46.99%**	**44.28%**	**8,915,239.3**
GCC Individuals	0.38%	0.11%	872,205.1
GCC Institutions	12.19%	6.85%	17,616,653.7
GCC	**12.57%**	**6.96%**	**18,488,858.8**
Arab Individuals	9.66%	8.82%	2,751,763.5
Arab Institutions	0.04%	0.00%	124,670.9
Arab	**9.69%**	**8.82%**	**2,876,434.4**
Foreigners Individuals	2.78%	2.67%	373,866.1
Foreigners Institutions	27.98%	37.27%	(30,654,398.5)
Foreigners	**30.75%**	**39.94%**	**(30,280,532.4)**

*Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (*as a % of traded value)*

Global Economic Data and Earnings Calendar

Global Economic Data

Date	Market	Source	Indicator	Period	Actual	Consensus	Previous
12-29	US	Department of Labor	Initial Jobless Claims	Dec	225k	225k	216k
12-30	UK	Nationwide Building Society	Nationwide House PX MoM	Dec	-0.10%	NA	-1.40%
12-30	UK	Nationwide Building Society	Nationwide House Px NSA YoY	Dec	2.80%	NA	4.40%
12-29	EU	European Central Bank	M3 Money Supply YoY	Nov	4.80%	5.00%	5.10%
12-31	China	China Federation of Logistics	Manufacturing PMI	Dec	47	47.8	48
12-31	China	China Federation of Logistics	Non-manufacturing PMI	Dec	41.6	45	46.7

Source: Bloomberg (s.a. = seasonally adjusted; n.s.a. = non-seasonally adjusted; w.d.a. = working day adjusted)

Earnings Calendar

Tickers	Company Name	Date of reporting 4Q2022 results	No. of days remaining	Status
QNBK	QNB Group	11-Jan-23	9	Due
QIBK	Qatar Islamic Bank	16-Jan-23	14	Due

Source: QSE

Qatar

- **GCC Index declines in 2022 led by Qatar and Saudi Arabia -** GCC equity market index closed 2022 with a decline of 6.4% after demonstrating one of the biggest gains globally last year. Qatar reported the biggest decline during 2022 with the QE Index receding 8.1% followed by Saudi Arabia that dropped by 7.1%. This was the first decline in the Saudi index after six consecutive years of gains, said Kamco Invest, an investment company based in Kuwait. On the other hand, Abu Dhabi was once again the best performing market in the GCC with a gain of 20.3% followed by Oman and Bahrain with gains of 17.6% and 5.5%, respectively. Dubai was up by 4.4% in 2022. (Bloomberg)
- **GISS working towards accomplishing merger of Amwaj with Shaqab and Atyab -** Gulf International Services, has successfully accomplished valuation and negotiations with Manaya Holding Group, in relation to a potential all-share merger of Amwaj Catering Services Limited ("Amwaj"), wholly owned subsidiary of GISS, with selected entities of Shaqab Abela Catering Services Co. ("Shaqab") & Atyab Fruits and Vegetables ("Atyab"), with QInvest LLC acting as exclusive financial adviser to GISS. The merged entity will have three shareholders namely – Gulf International Services representing 100% of Amwaj alongside Tamween Capital W.L.L. and Abela Qatar International W.L.L. both representing 100% of Shaqab and Atyab. The merger is expected to be accomplished during early 2023 subject to all shareholders entering into definitive agreements and proceed to obtain regulatory approvals, along with respective general assembly meeting approvals. Upon a definitive merger agreement, full details about the merger will be announced. About Shaqab & Atyab: Selected entities of Shaqab included in the merger provide flagship hospitality and life support solutions. This includes services ranging from catering to facilities management services, as well as provision of managed and serviced staff accommodation solutions. Atyab is an importer and wholesaler of food and non-food products, primarily serving Shaqab and other institutional clients. The Company specializes in a wide range of dry, fresh & frozen food, catering related products and operates a supply chain, allowing it to support its clients' requirements competitively. Shaqab and Atyab are owned by Manaya Holding Group W.L.L. About Amwaj: Amwaj was incorporated in 2006 as a wholly owned subsidiary of QatarEnergy and was subsequently 100% acquired by Gulf International Services (GISS) on 1 June 2012. In addition to its original objective of providing high quality catering services, Amwaj has diversified to encompass cleaning, pest control, manpower supply, facilities management, camp management, retail and VIP catering. With soft facility management services, which include commercial cleaning services that cover both internal and external areas, the company offers comprehensive and efficient services that include cleaning & janitorial and laundry services for clients. Amwaj also offers distinguished and high-quality corporate hospitality and VIP dining services for small exclusive gatherings or large high-profile celebrations, along with catering for Wedding Banquets, etc. (QSE)
- **Qatar Islamic Bank to disclose its Annual financial results on January 16 -** Qatar Islamic Bank to disclose its financial statement for the period ending 31st December 2022 on 16/01/2023. (QSE)
- **Qatar November Foreign Reserves QR223.99bn -** Qatar's foreign reserves were QR223.99bn in November, according to the Qatar Central Bank. (Bloomberg)

- **Ooredoo Oman CFO Razzaq Al Balushi Resigns -** Ooredoo Oman names Nasser Muhanna Al Yaarubi as acting CFO, effective Jan. 1. (Bloomberg)
- **Qatar Insurance Company announces the resolutions of extraordinary general meeting of Oman Qatar Insurance Company -** Further to the disclosures made in April 2022 and 8 December 2022, Qatar Insurance Company would like to announce the Resolutions of the Extraordinary General Meeting of Oman Qatar Insurance Company – subsidiary to the Group – with respect to the merger of Oman Qatar Insurance Company with Vision Insurance. The Resolutions are as follows: 1) Approval of the merger proposal of Oman Qatar Insurance Co SAOG with Vision Insurance SAOG through a merger by incorporation process in accordance with Articles 33(1) and Article 35 of the Commercial Companies Law (Royal Decree 18/2019). 2) Approval of the increase of the authorized capital from RO 20mn to RO 30mn and approve the amendment of Article [5] i.e., Company's Capital, of the Articles of Association of the company. 3) Approval of the increase of issued capital of the Company from OMR 10mn to maximum OMR 22mn and allot the increase shares to Qatar Insurance Company Q.S.P.C. and Al Hosn Investment Co. S.A.O.C at a price of Bz.196 and the amendment of Article [5] i.e. Company's Capital, of the Articles of Association of the company upon completing the merging procedures and registration of the new capital at the registrar. 4) To authorize the Board of Directors of the company or whoever is assigned by them to complete all the procedures and approvals required to implement the decisions of the aforementioned assembly with any of the concerned authorities. (QSE)
- **Disclosure of Appeal court judgment No. 1169/2022 came in favor of Dlala Brokerage Company, a subsidiary of Dlala Holding Company -** The Appeal Court issued its judgment in Case No. 1169/2022, filed by Dlala Brokerage Company, a subsidiary of Dlala Holding Company, against one of its clients, corroboration the judgment of the primary Court, which ruled that the defendant pay to Dlala Brokerage Company an amount of (2,961,611) in addition to (300,000) thousand Qatari riyals as compensation for the damage. (QSE)
- **QSE focuses on liquidity, ESG incentives in 2022 amidst rising rate challenges -** The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE), which celebrated its silver jubilee this year, appears to have adopted a strategy of working hard in silence and let success make the noise to the regional and global investment community. Braving the odds of a hefty 425 basis points interest rate hike so far due to the country's fixed exchange parity with the US dollar, the local bourse, which is year-to-date down more than 8%, has kept focus intact on improving liquidity and has been on the forefront in devising a strategy to incentivize firms to embrace ESG (environment, social and governance) framework as Doha strives to become an investment destination of choice. The QSE, which was seen outperforming the regional peers in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) for most part of the year, drew strength from an enabling regulatory and legal environment and infrastructure to improve organic liquidity and help it become a reliable platform for sustainable economic diversification in support of the Qatar National Vision 2030. The year saw the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), the country's sovereign wealth fund, allow the QSE-licensed market makers to access some of its stock inventory, which comes as part of its efforts to attract foreign asset managers as well as to support and develop local economy. The QIA's commitment to deepening its capital market is an important step to attracting foreign asset managers to invest in Qatar, and to stimulate retail participation that will help diversify and broaden the market. This QIA-sponsored market making initiative is a first step towards this goal and helps to further develop the Qatari financial markets. The need for strengthened market makers comes in view of more exchange traded funds or ETFs expected to be traded on the QSE, which is working to attract more listings, introduce more ETFs and derivatives to help investors diversify their portfolios and better manage their investment risks. The increase of foreign ownership limit in listed companies up to 100% (especially in QNB Group, Qatar Islamic Bank, Commercial Bank, Masraf Al Rayan, QIIK and Doha Bank); higher levels of market activity; and economic growth and diversification across the wider GCC were recognized as strong regional economic catalysts. The Qatar bourse, as part of its wider reform strategy, has been working on various initiatives to enhance liquidity in its market and is working closely with the Qatar Financial Markets Authority (QFMA) and the Qatar Central Securities Depository (QCSD) on this important program. The QFMA was seen issuing rules relating to covered short selling and securities lending and borrowing (SLB) as part of efforts to increase liquidity and volumes as well as to expand the investment instruments for the investors. The importance of the new rules is that they add new financial services activities aimed at increasing the volume of activities and businesses of financial services companies, raising the ability of such companies to provide various investment alternatives for market investors. This contributes to increasing trading volumes and liquidity rates in the market, maximizing the returns of stakeholders in the Qatari capital market, as well as broaden the scope of borrowing securities for various purposes, including the establishment of ETF units, executing short selling transactions, or for the purpose of returning previously borrowed securities. The QSE was seen engaged with various stakeholders to further increase the free float in the market. The major companies' decision to remove foreign ownership limits is part of an overarching plan to enhance access for foreign investors. The 47 listed companies in the QSE was seen cumulatively reporting QR39.4bn in net profit in the first nine months of this year, showing a healthy 19%-plus growth on an annualized basis. With Mekdam Holding getting transferred from the venture market to main market and Beema foraying with a direct listing, the new year begins with QSE witnessing the number of listed entities expanding to 49. (Gulf Times)
- **The Group, QNBFS dominate stock broking business with 70% share in trade turnover in 2022 -** The Group Securities and QNB Financial Services (QNBFS), a subsidiary of QNB Group, together accounted for more than 70% of the share trade turnover of the brokerages in the Qatar Stock Exchange this year. Four of the seven stock brokerages witnessed gains in turnover on an annualized basis in January-December 2022, according to the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) data. The Group Securities' share stood at 37.74% in 2022 compared to 42.56% the previous year. Its trading turnover surged 17.35% year-on-year to QR124.53bn. The transactions through it expanded 25.51% on an annualized basis to 3.05mn, even as volumes fell 13.07% to 53.74mn equities at the end of December 2022. The QNBFS' trade turnover amounted to QR107.48bn, which constituted 32.57% of the total traded value during 2022 against 31.59% a year ago. The turnover zoomed 36.43% year-on-year as volumes zoomed 36.41% to 15.06mn stocks on more than doubled transactions to 3.04mn in the review period. The Commercial Bank Financial Services accounted for 12.72% of trade turnover compared to 8.23% during January-December 2021. The brokerage house's trade turnover more than doubled year-on-year to QR41.98bn as volumes soared 78.54% to 9.57mn shares and deals more than doubled to 1.14mn in the review period. Qatar Securities accounted for 7.22% of trade turnover during January-December 2022 compared to 6.8% the previous year period. The brokerage's trading turnover expanded 40.39% year-on-year to QR23.81bn although volumes through it fell 10.8% to 3.8mn equities despite 70% surge in transactions to 0.51mn at the end of December 2022. Dlala Brokerage, a stock broking business arm of Dlala Holding, accounted for 4.31% of trade turnover (QR14.23bn), which grew 2.6% year-on-year. The brokerage's share was 5.56% the previous year period. The deals through it expanded 22.73% on a yearly basis to 0.27mn but volumes shrank 37.22% to 4.2mn stocks at the end of December 2022. Wasata Financial Securities' share was 3.69% of trading turnover during January-December 2022 compared to 2.92% in the comparable period of 2021. Its trade turnover zoomed 67.22% year-on-year to QR12.19bn as volumes shot up 21.57% to 3.72mn shares and transactions by 83.33% to 0.22mn at the end of 2022. Al-Ahli Brokerage, a subsidiary of Ahlibank Qatar, saw its trade turnover expand 65.52% on an annualized basis to QR5.76bn, cornering a market share of 1.74% in 2022 compared to 1.4% a year ago period. The volumes handled by the banking subsidiary grew 25.53% to 1.18mn equities and deals through it more than doubled to 0.13mn during the review period. (Gulf Times)
- **2022 exceptional year for Qatari economy, striking indicators and giant projects -** The year 2022 is an exceptional year for the Qatari economy, it is the year of the country's resounding success in hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and the Qatari economy has shown record performance during it, its latest indicators highlight the achievement of a real growth rate at constant prices of 6.3% during the second quarter of this year on an annual basis, compared to the same period last year, with inflation

controlled at around 5.30% last November at an annual rate. Financial surplus, at the level of public finances, the actual data of the budget of the State of Qatar, during the first nine months of 2022, showed the achievement of a surplus exceeding QR77bn, compared to QR4.9bn, during the same period of 2021, and this surplus came mainly from the noticeable increase in total revenues, which reached the level of QR232.6bn, with the control of expenditures recorded QR155.2bn, and this coincided with the recovery of oil prices, which during the past period fluctuated between 80 to 100 dollars per barrel, noting that the price of the budget of the year the current is based on 55 dollars per barrel, which has maintained the financial balance and reduced the effects of oil price fluctuations on the performance of public finances. Powerful ratings, despite the fluctuations and crises witnessed by the global economy in recent years, the solidity of the Qatari economy has been confirmed by international rating agencies. The year, which is marking its departure after a few hours, was crowned with excellent ratings for the Qatari economy, as the Standard & Poor's credit rating agency raised the rating of the State of Qatar from "-AA" to "AA" during the year 2022, and Moody's credit rating agency raised the outlook for the country from stable to positive. In the same context, Fitch and Capital Intelligence agencies have continued to rate Qatar's sovereign rating at the "AA" level with a stable outlook, which reflects the State of Qatar's strong creditworthiness. Regarding the developments in the energy sector, 2022 witnessed great vitality converted with the signing of agreements for completing the two expansions projects of the North-East and South fields to increase the capacity of Qatar's natural gas production from 77mn tons to 126mn tons per year, in addition to local projects to increase the global supply of the LNG through QatarEnergy Company which is supplying the global market annually with18mn tons of LNG since lunching the Golden Pass Project production in Texas (US) prior to the end of 2024.Also, QatarEnergy confirmed that it continues to implement its programs to meet the future requirements of its tankers fleet of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) which is connected to the expansion of production in the North Field and Golden Pass projects, and to ensure a reliable supply of additional clean energy to the world. The country's energy sector was enhanced during 2022 with the startup Al Kharsaah solar power plant with a production capacity of 800 megawatts, which occupies an area of 10 square kilometers and produces electricity with photovoltaic technology, and this first its kind project is completed with a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement. In terms of foreign investment, the FDI Markets showed, Qatar attracted 71% of total investments in the Middle East during the second quarter of 2022, providing 6,680 jobs in 11 different projects. With investments valued at $19.2bn, this was reported in a media brief issued last August by the Investment Promotion Agency Qatar (IPA) indicating that the software, information technology and business services sectors, financial services, and the oil and gas ranked in the first place in the investment attractiveness in Qatar as reflected by these reports. Qatar Central Bank (QCB) raised the interest rate on seven consecutive occasions during the current year concurrently with US Federal Reserve Bank interest rate increase. At the same time, QCB increased its international reserves and foreign currency liquidity to reach QR223.985bn last November, an increase of 6.82% compared to QR209.675bn in the same month in 2021. Also, the Stock of gold rose from QR6.943bn to QR18.789bn by the end of November 2022. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Qatar's trade balance surplus increases over 123% in third quarter of 2022 -** The surplus of the trade balance of the State of Qatar, which includes goods, services, income and current transfers, jumped by 123.23%, rising to QR62.826bn at the end of the third quarter (Q3) of this year, compared to QR28.143bn in the third quarter of last year. Qatar Central Bank data showed an increase in the commodity account surplus by 81.75%, to QR106.715bn in the third quarter of 2022, compared to a level of QR58.713bn in the same period of 2021, while the commodity account surplus boosted the increase in exports in the same period from QR82.578bn to the level of QR138.768bn, an increase of QR56.19bn, or 68%. The data revealed that the State of Qatar registered a surplus in the balance of payments in the third quarter (July, August, September) of this year, at a value of QR3.347bn. In the same context, the capital and financial balance deficit amounted to QR55.814bn in the third quarter of this year, compared to QR22.357bn in the same period of 2021. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Assets managed by QFC worth $28.3bn -** Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) Yousuf Mohamed Al Jaida revealed that assets managed by QFC amounted to $28.3bn and its platform today has over 1500 local and global enterprises operating in the financial and non-financial sectors. In an exclusive interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), Al Jaida said that QFC has accelerated the growth of its works in alignment with the evolution of the Qatari economy which became diverse and dynamic more than ever, after it had provided a high-level platform that helps the companies establish their businesses in Qatar, in addition to managing and expanding them to other markets within and without the region. He added that in 2018, QFC announced its objectives for growth by 2022, including the registration of more than1000 companies on its platform and the attraction of investments with the total amount of $25bn, adding that QFC managed to achieve this goal prior to the specified time frame, as the total number of the registered companies on the platform reached 1284 firms by the end of 2021. He pointed out that the platform of QFC includes over 1500 companies whose total manageable assets are amounted to $28.3bn, in addition to a professional business community that includes over 9,000 persons via various companies registered in QFC, indicating that after launching its 2018 growth agenda, QFC specifically focused on developing the financial, sports and digital sectors in the State of Qatar, and since that time the Centre has been witnessing a steadfast growth in the number of companies operating in these sectors, and its current platform has over 180 financial sector registered companies, including 80 fintech companies, over 300 digital companies, including media companies and over 40 sports companies. He pointed out that the new digital companies registered by QFC during the first half of 2022 constitute 25% of all companies, whilst the percentage of the companies operating in the financial sector is amounted to 16%, including fintech companies. Chief Executive Officer of QFC stated that the Centre's qualitative economic contribution is represented in the direct and indirect effects of its activities carried out in employment and gross value added in Qatar, which is contributed by QFC's companies registered on its platform through the job opportunities offered by the Centre along with the earned income, indicating that QFC's contribution to the gross value added in the country has increased by 47%, and by approximately 25% in job opportunities since 2018, according to the latest report issued by QFC on the economic impact. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Qatar makes major strides in sustainable development -** In its efforts to promote sustainable development through green initiatives, Qatar has made great strides to minimize the impact of development on climate change according to a report on Road to ESG Investing by invest Qatar. The 2022 updated sustainability strategy of Qatar Energy envisions reducing the carbon intensity of its liquefied natural gas facilities by 35% by 2030. The establishment of an 800 MW capacity Siraj solar power plant, technological innovation by QSTech and QSTP towards solar energy, Kahramaa's sustainability ambitions, and recent achievements through the Tarsheed program are some of the green initiatives launched by the state, the report notes. It states that the global push on sustainability has deeply impacted all sectors. Governments and private sector entities are feeling the pressure to give due importance to the environmental, social, and governance aspects. In the US, President's climate plan calls for $2tn of investment into low-carbon activities, while the European Union's (EU) Green Deal aims to pump $7tn of investment into low-carbon. Under ESG reporting many initiatives have been undertaken by Qatar such as the launch of ESG guidance by QSE and its initiatives to be ESG compliant Qatar Sustainability Platform to monitor ESG reporting by publicly listed entities in Qatar, the launch of MSCI QSE 20 ESG Index, the opening of Data Portal by TASMU to make the environmental and social data publicly available A number of organizations, including Ooredoo, QNB Group, and Nakilat, report ESG performance, the report states. Qatar is playing an active role in transforming its building standards towards higher sustainability levels by adopting the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) standards. GSAS is a performance-based rating system developed for assessing and rating buildings and infrastructure for their sustainability

impacts. The number of projects registered for GSAS certifications has been rapidly increasing thereby facilitating the transition towards green buildings[1]. Qatar is preparing to host the first carbon-free FIFA World Cup Championship (WC) in 2022, for which multiple projects are ongoing. In January 2020, the Education City stadium became the first WC venue to get a five-star rating from the GSAS. Al Bayt stadium also followed the suit in July 2020. Most of the 2022 FIFA WC stadiums are cooled using a district cooling system. The report also notes that Qatar aims to have its entire public fleet system e-powered by 2030. The country signed an agreement with Volkswagen, 'Project Qatar Mobility', to introduce a fleet of self-driving level 4 electric shuttles in the capital Doha in 2022. Moreover, MoTC has kept a target to have 25% of public transport buses electric by 2022, which includes public buses, public schools' buses, and Doha Metro feeder buses. To achieve this, MoTC conducted a pilot testing of electric buses in Qatar in collaboration with Kahramaa, Mowasalat (Karwa), and China Harbor Engineering Co way back in 2018. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Qatar among joint-top for 5G peak download speed in GCC region -** As 5G is continuing to advance in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatar comes joint-top for 5G peak download speed and upload speed in the GCC. Across the region, 5G is rapidly becoming the most important wireless connectivity technology. According to a report by Opensignal, an independent analytics company specialized in quantifying the mobile-network experience, "The UAE tops 5G download speed in the GCC region, where our users measured 333.3 Mbps on average, followed by Qatar and Kuwait. Both UAE and Qatar are in a statistical tie for the top spot for 5G peak download speed, with statistically tied scores of 792.9-866.3 Mbps and for 5G upload speed with scores of 26.7-28.5 Mbps. "Qatar has made great strides in rolling out 5G infrastructure across the country which was evident during the FIFA World Cup 2022. 5G readiness has enabled the telecom providers to offer consumers a wider range of content and services, assisted by faster and more reliable connections. The report said, "Across the Gulf, the speed metrics of the top placed countries were significantly higher than the bottom ones – with UAE leading Oman by 62.5% in 5G download speed. 5G peak download speed was at least two and a half times as fast as the average 5G download speed in all six GCC markets." Analyzing the user experience while they were connected to an operator's 5G network, all countries in the Gulf measured a 5G video experience score that was either very good (65-75) or excellent (75 or above). Kuwait is top for 5G video experience and is the only market with an excellent experience score of 77.3 points. The story is different for 5G games experience, which is influenced by different types of mobile network conditions including latency, packet loss and jitter – for which UAE and Bahrain were the top performers with 74.4-75.7 points. There was a significant difference in the real-world experience across markets, it added. There was only a modest difference in the 5G voice app experience between markets, equivalent to 2.5 points on the 100-point scale. All countries in the Gulf had a good (75-85) experience score. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Real estate trading volume exceeds QR160m last week -** The volume of real estate trading in sales contracts registered in the Real Estate Registration Department at the Ministry of Justice from December 18 to December 22, 2022, reached QR160,881,300. The weekly bulletin issued by the Real Estate Registration Department stated that the list of real estate traded for sale included vacant lands and residences. Sales operations were concentrated in the municipalities of Al Rayyan, Al Daayen, Doha, Al Wakra, Umm Slal, and Al Shamal. The volume of real estate trading in sales contracts registered in the Real Estate Registration Department at the Ministry of Justice from December 11 to December 15, 2022, reached QR406,661,809. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Airlines operating from Doha International Airport to resume at HIA -** Thirteen airlines will resume their operations at Hamad International Airport (HIA) on Saturday, December 31, 2022, according to a travel alert on HIA website. The airlines listed in the announcement includes Etihad Airways, Flydubai, Air Arabia, Pegasus Airlines, SalamAir, Himalaya Airlines, Pakistan International Airlines, Jazeera Airways, Nepal Airlines, Tarco Aviation, Badr Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, and Air Cairo. The mentioned airlines will end their operations at Doha International Airport (DIA) on December 30, 2022. Etihad Airways has also announced a travel alert on its website regarding the change of airport. "All Etihad flights to and from Qatar moved to Hamad International Airport (DOH) effective from December 31, 2022," the statement said. The 13 airlines commenced their operations at DIA on September 15, 2022, ahead of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 to manage the inflow of fans that was expected during the tournament. Located 15 minutes away from the city center and within 30 minutes from most of the Qatar 2022 stadiums, DIA reopened its doors to ensure a smooth travel experience for fans during the tournament. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Online sales to grow 13.6% CAGR -** As 2022 comes to a close, Qatar's online sales industry is anticipating beaming progress with the constant rise of sales in the Middle Eastern region adding a positive growth at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.6% by 2027. Expanding products on a day-to-day basis, the sector has gained worldwide momentum with more opportunities in all business types, according to a report by Mordor Intelligence. The research expertise advisory firm states that "E-commerce adoption is increasing as more consumers expect their products and services to be delivered digitally, seamlessly, and promptly." The next five years show a noteworthy increase in online trade and purchases bolstering the economy of Qatar. Various retail stores and electronic outlets have reportedly gained profit from the latest products sold through online platforms, especially during FIFA World Cup 2022. "Companies are competing to participate in e-commerce trends. In Qatar, the e-commerce market is showing healthy growth over the next few years, especially in the services sector," it said. Topping the region's largest online marketing industry, Qatar has taken certain steps to fortify the country's economy whilst encouraging and attracting potential entrepreneurs and investors across the globe. The added measures implemented by the State Government have created a dynamic and healthy atmosphere for every type of business venture in Qatar. The Qatari regime in recent years has taken a course of action to enlighten and educate the citizens all about the e-commerce platform to further boost the country's economy and move towards progressive CAGR estimated over the years. The report says that "In addition to the facilities provided to investors, the Qatar government is educating citizens about the mechanism of electronic trading when conducting financial transactions." "Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are among the first countries in the Arab world and the Middle East to transfer municipalities to e-space," it added. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **District cooling cuts Qatar's carbon footprint -** District Cooling Services sector made massive contributions to reducing carbon footprint in the country in 2022, according to Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa). The move is part of Qatar's massive efforts to address climate change and protect local eco-system through various projects and initiatives with the support of government and private institutions. "According to recent reports by Kahramaa's District Cooling Department, the total reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) in 2022 amounted to approximately 927,875 metric tonnes at the level of cooling services sector," Kahramaa said in a tweet. This came as a result of the hard work by Kahramaa to preserve the environment and protect natural resources in Qatar. The district cooling system, the most energy-efficient air-conditioning system, is one of the most important achievements of the construction industry sector, which highlights Qatar's commitment to climate action, in line with its National Climate Change Action Plan 2030. Kahramaa encourages the development and use of the district cooling system (DCS) for areas on a large scale across the country, especially in new development and urban projects. It helps in reducing the cost of energy and infrastructure, enhancing consumption efficiency, and improving the water security of Qatar, through the use of alternative water resources, such as treated wastewater or seawater. The system is also reducing CO_2 emissions by decreasing consumption rates of natural gas needed to produce electricity, preserving the environment and controlling noise pollution. Moreover, by organizing and controlling district central cooling services, the Corporation also aims to rationalize electricity and potable water consumption in line with its vision, which aims to achieve sustainability and preserve the environment in line with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.The growing use of district cooling system boosts Qatar's commitment to reducing its carbon emissions. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Innovative payment solution boosts digital payments -** With just a tap on the phone secure and safe transactions can be performed by using digital wallets as companies are moving towards cardless payments. All global digital wallet services for cards such as Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, and Google Pay are now accepted in Qatar which has enabled visitors especially during the FIFA World Cup Qatar to process and complete their digital payments. Qatari banks have launched several payment services amid growing demand for the popular mobile payment and digital wallet service among banking customers in the country. The largest financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, QNB Group launched Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, and Google Pay to broaden customer access to one of the most advanced and secure digital payment methods. Also, other banks such as Dukhan Bank, QIIK, QIBK, Commercial Bank, Ahli Bank and Doha Bank have introduced innovative payment solution to its customers who use these digital wallet payment platforms. With the rising demand for contactless transactions, and customers preference to use simple and secure payment solutions which offers seamless and convenient digital payment experience. Ooredoo, Qatar's leading telecommunications operator made Apple Pay available on Ooredoo App last year. The payment service is secure payment method for iOS users. Also, it announced the customers with Android devices can use Google Pay on the Ooredoo App which enables in-app, online and in-person contactless payments on Android mobile devices. Ooredoo continues to make it easy for its customers to recharge and pay with options such as Google Pay, Apple Pay, Nojoom Points, and local & international credit cards using Ooredoo App. Vodafone Qatar also introduced Apple Pay for customers to use for easy, secure and private payments in the My Vodafone iOS app. Apple Pay is a secure contactless payment method for in person, in iOS apps, and online purchases that can be authorized and completed directly from any iPhone, cutting the need for cash transactions or carrying physical bank cards. Also last year, Vodafone Qatar's Infinity Payment Solutions (IPS), a separate financial entity and 100% subsidiary of Vodafone, announced the launch of iPay, Qatar's first licensed e-wallet. Recent data released by Visa on December 8, 2022, revealed that 88% of Visa payments at official FIFA World Cup Qatar venues have been contactless. For Qatar 2022, Visa enabled more payment terminals in official venues than ever before. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Kahramaa completes strategic projects, eyes implementing 2023-2027 plan -** The total annual water production in Qatar reached 671mn cubic meters in 2022, according to Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa). Kahramaa continued its achievements and successes in ensuring water security in Qatar through the completion of many projects and works to provide safe and healthy water to all residents. New water networks with a length of 151km, from 100mm to 1600mm, were launched to improve the performance of the water network and connect new customers in response to high demand, urban expansion, and great economic renaissance taking place in the country, said a report by Kahramaa. The report issued by Kahramaa demonstrates its achievements during the previous year. As many as 3,900 new properties were connected to the water distribution network and 35,983 water complaints were successfully dealt with. Maintenance work was carried out in 56 water facilities, including water pumping stations, tank stations and reservoirs. To enhance the water security in Qatar, Kahramaa teams successfully added an additional 64mn gallons in mega reservoir projects, equivalent to 4.5% of the total capacity of the project, bringing the total of what was launched to 1,421mn gallons, 100% of the target capacity. The water storage margin rose to 2,396mn gallons, compared to 2,332mn gallons in the same period in the previous year. To utilize rainfall as much as possible, the work on rehabilitation of 313 wells for water harvesting has also been completed. The Corporation has also completed the groundwater modelling project in the country. To maintain the highest quality of drinking water in Qatar, samples were collected from approximately 11,500 points for testing water quality, including water production plants and reservoirs through the water distribution network during the year. The samples were examined in the water quality laboratory, which adopts pioneering technology in analyzing water specifications ensuring the best international standards of quality and safety. Throughout 2022, Kahramaa continued to enhance the efficiency of the national electricity grid through a wide range of projects and businesses. The planning phase of the North Field projects has been completed, which provides the electrical infrastructure supporting the field's expansion works. The five-year network expansion plan 2023-2027 has been prepared to meet the expected load growth demand. The network achieved exceptional levels of performance, despite peak demand rising by 6%, compared to last year's peak. Kahramaa responded to the requests of major factories in emergency cases and provided them the needed capacity to maintain production rates as a commitment from the Corporation to support the industrial sector in light of its national responsibility as the exclusive distributor of electricity in Qatar. The Corporation inaugurated 10 main high-voltage electrical stations to expand the electric transmission network. It has maintained transformers and electrical switches with a voltage of 11 kV as well as switches for disconnecting and connecting gas to most of the main transmission stations. In addition to the success in raising the efficiency and reliability of the electric transmission network through the inauguration of 50 circuits of high and ultra-high voltage cables with a length of 60.1km, Kahramaa also supported the country's infrastructure projects by issuing 7,774 permits to work in the sector of high- and ultra-high-voltage cables. Four old main stations that are separated from the electric transmission network were demolished. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **Le Royal Meridien Doha is 'World's Best New MICE Hotel 2022' -** Le Royal Méridien Doha, which opened its doors in June 2022, won two awards from the recently concluded 3rd Annual World MICE Awards held in Amman, Jordan. This new Lusail hotel was recognized as the 'World's Best New MICE Hotel' and 'Middle East's Best New MICE Hotel'. "We are so honored that our meeting and conference spaces have been recognized by a respected organization such as Worlds MICE Award," said Gerrit Gräf, Multi-Property general manager, Le Royal Méridien Doha. "The acknowledgment is a reflection of the team's dedication and passion in creating engaging and personalized ONE moments to our clientele." Located in the heart of Lusail city, this Qatar hotel seamlessly connected to Place Vendôme Mall features over 1,000 square meters of multipurpose function space, including the elegant Pétale Royal Ballroom with its own open kitchen and four meeting rooms with natural daylight. A stylish bridal suite is available for any social and wedding events. The hotel also features Le Méridien Hub, a unique lobby concept that has social seating to encourage exchanges among meeting attendees. Le Royal Méridien Doha's meeting facilities feature cutting edge audio-visual technology, such as ultra HD monitor display, built-in LCD projector, video conferencing, wireless presentation, sound system, ceiling beamforming mic aray, AV wall and floor box connectivity panel. The hotel also boasts an innovative event management program called 'Le Caractère' that has a dedicated team of specialists who are experienced in delivering world-class events from conceptualization down to execution. "This year, we are so honored that the hotel already hosted a list of notable events from Qatar's key stakeholders," Gräf said. "Also, being connected to the Place Vendôme Mall, Le Royal Méridien Doha is indeed ideal for luxury fashion brands to host their events in the property or within their respective stores, thanks to our creative off-site catering team." With Lusail City being a new destination in Qatar for the curious and creative-minded travelers, be it for leisure, business or bleisure, Le Royal Méridien Doha ensures that it offers all the facilities and personalized service that cater to the discerning travelers including MICE attendees. Le Royal Méridien Doha is a 15-minute drive from downtown Doha, a 12-minute drive to Doha Exhibition and Conference Centre and is conveniently located nearby the Lusail Tram and Doha Metro stations. Hamad international Airport is a 30-minute drive. (Qatar Tribune)
- **Cargo handling at Qatar ports surges 86% in December -** The ports of Qatar registered a whopping 86% growth in cargo handling in December 2022, when compared to December 2021 on year-on-year basis. "Mwani Qatar ports (Hamad Port, Doha Port, Ruwais Port) handled over 140,000 tonnes of cargo in December 2022, registering a YoY growth of 86%. Livestock increased by 98% and vessels by 5%, compared to December 2021," the Mwani Qatar tweeted. The ports of Qatar handled 128,688 containers, 140,601 tonnes of general cargo, 45,985 tonnes of building materials, 6,263 vehicles and 38,867 heads of livestock in December 2022 while 267 ships docked at Qatari ports. Separately, according to QTerminlas, terminal operating company of Hamad Port, 148 vessels called at Hamad Port last month. Hamad Port handled 127,770 containers, 55,125 tonnes

of bulk cargo, 74,517 tonnes of general cargo, 6,224 vehicles and 1,317 heads of livestock in December 2022.In year 2022, Hamad Port handled 1,408,804 containers, 520,324 tonnes of bulk cargo, 983,033 tonnes of general cargo, 78,588 vehicles and 45,808 heads of livestock, while 1,569 vessels called at Hamad Port the last year. The ports of Qatar also performed a great job during Qatar 2022 as the ports ensured steady supply chains. Hamad Port handled 123,206 containers, 94,128 tonnes of general cargo, 6,684 vehicles and 10,000 heads of livestock from November 18 to December 18, 2022, according to figures shared by Mwani Qatar on its Twitter account recently. The port welcomed 146 vessels during the said period. According to earlier data, Hamad Port had also spent a busy year in 2021 as its handling of containers had witnessed an increase of over 9% compared to 2020. In 2021, Hamad Port handled 1,543,591 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) containers; 267,284 freight tonnes of bulk cargo; 1,303,514 freight tonnes of general cargo; 72,223 vehicles and 45,594 heads of livestock. The port also registered an increase in vessels' arrival as 1,750 vessels called on Hamad Port in 2021, compared to 1,600 in 2020. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Italy confirms participation in Qatar's Expo 2023 Doha -** Having signed up 37 countries, Expo 2023 Doha team reached an important milestone by confirming the Italian participation in the Expo. The development came as a result of the meeting between the Ambassador of the Italian Republic to Qatar HE Paolo Toschi, the Head of Italian Trade Commission to Qatar and Bahrain Paola Lisi, and Expo 2023 Doha Commissioner General Bader Al-Dafa. After the successful completion of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the State of Qatar is moving forward to the next step of its global events plan of action with continued preparations for the first A1 horticultural exhibition in the Gulf, MENA and arid region. Driven by science and innovation, Italian agricultural machines are among the most advanced in the world. They are conceived with the aim of making agri-food production more efficient, resilient and sustainable. One of the global manufacturing leaders and pioneers of international cooperation regarding global nutrition issues, Italy is also at the forefront of the modern 4.0 agricultural technology, including drones, sensors, Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data and artificial intelligence that will be showcased at the Italian pavilion of Expo 2023 Doha. The new Italian agricultural machines pursue the strategic mission of reconciling maximum productivity with environmental protection and making farming possible in every climatic and environmental context, through increasingly up-to-date and high-performance technologies. "Italy and Qatar are long-time partners in multiple and strategic sectors, including sustainability and technological innovation. We are honored to take part in Expo 2023 Doha – an opportunity for us to continue improving our joint capabilities in fighting desertification, bringing sustainable changes in the production processes, and boosting food security on a global level", said H.E. Paolo Toschi, Italy's Ambassador to Qatar. Expo 2023 Doha will also allow countries and regions to engage in productive dialogue and find common solutions to the most pressing environmental and agricultural problems. "In fields like sustainable development, food security and fight against climate change and desertification, we believe that only by sharing our knowledge and our expertise in multilateral fora will we be able to obtain game-changing results. Expo Doha 2023 reflects this approach, and we believe that the partnerships that we consolidate with the public and private sectors during the exhibition will greatly benefit all parties", said Paola Lisi, Italy's Trade Commissioner for Qatar and Bahrain. (Qatar Tribune)
- **Qatar's budget surplus seen widening this year on expected higher energy prices -** Qatar's budget surplus is expected to widen to 12% of GDP in 2023 on the assumption that oil and gas prices will remain high, an analysis has shown. Last year, according to an Emirates NBD estimate, Qatar's budget surplus may have widened to over 10% of GDP. The regional banking group sees the budget surplus widening to 12% of GDP this year. Qatar's budget has benefited from the surge in oil and natural gas prices in 2022, with oil and gas revenues up 67% year-on-year (y-o-y) in the first half of 2022, Emirates NBD said recently. Other revenues have also increased sharply in 2022, with top line revenue up 58% y-o-y in H1. Expenditure growth has been more restrained at 13% y-o-y, focused on capital spending projects. Current spending and wages and salaries have increased 11-12% y-o-y in H1, 2022. According to the Ministry of Finance, the budget for fiscal 2023 estimated a surplus of QR29bn. The budget has set spending at QR199bn with total revenue of QR228bn next year. Qatar's oil revenue is expected to be QR186bn and non-oil revenue QR42bn this year. Higher revenue projected for 2023 (QR228bn) has been mainly due to the adoption of an average oil price of $65 per barrel for fiscal 2023 in place of $55 per barrel in 2022. Higher budget surplus in the first three quarters of 2022 denotes favorable oil and gas prices, which clearly helps Qatar to manage its assets and debts quite remarkably. Recent data from the Ministry of Finance showed Qatar's financial surplus exceeded QR77bn in the first nine months of 2022 compared to QR4.9bn during the period in 2021. Revenues during the first nine months of 2022 reached QR232.6bn, with QR193.9bn coming from oil and gas, and QR38.6bn from non-oil revenues, exceeding the 2021 total revenue of QR193.7bn. Thrice in the last 10 years, Qatar achieved similarly huge surpluses: 2012 (QR77bn), 2013 (QR106.3bn), and 2014 (QR108.6bn). According to QNB Economics, crude oil prices could see a further upside, as the bank expects physical markets to tighten further on the back of supply constraints and stronger global demand. QNB expects prices to be well supported in a range of between $90 and $115 per barrel over the coming quarters. "On the demand side, after several quarters of negative economic growth de-ratings by analysts and international organizations, there is now scope for a more positive outlook. In fact, we expect stronger than previously anticipated economic growth in all major economies over the next couple of quarters, including in the US, Europe and China," QNB Economics said in a recent report. Recently, researcher FocusEconomics noted Qatar's public debt will decline over the next three years from 39.9% this year to 38.7% of GDP in 2026. Next year, the country's public debt has been estimated to be 40.8% and 39.7% in 2025. (Gulf Times)

International

- **IMF's Georgieva warns: Global economy faces tougher year in 2023 -** For much of the global economy, 2023 is going to be a tough year as the main engines of global growth - the United States, Europe and China - all experience weakening activity, the head of the International Monetary Fund said on Sunday. The new year is going to be "tougher than the year we leave behind," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on the CBS Sunday morning news program "Face the Nation." "Why? Because the three big economies - the US, EU and China - are all slowing down simultaneously," she said. In October, the IMF cut its outlook for global economic growth in 2023, reflecting the continuing drag from the war in Ukraine as well as inflation pressures and the high interest rates engineered by central banks like the US Federal Reserve aimed at bringing those price pressures to heel. Since then, China has scrapped its zero-COVID policy and embarked on a chaotic reopening of its economy, though consumers there remain wary as coronavirus cases surge. In his first public comments since the change in policy, President Xi Jinping on Saturday called in a New Year's address for more effort and unity as China enters a "new phase." "For the first time in 40 years, China's growth in 2022 is likely to be at or below global growth," Georgieva said. Moreover, a "bushfire" of expected COVID infections there in the months ahead are likely to further hit its economy this year and drag on both regional and global growth, said Georgieva, who traveled to China on IMF business late last month. "I was in China last week, in a bubble in a city where there is zero COVID," she said. "But that is not going to last once people start traveling." "For the next couple of months, it would be tough for China, and the impact on Chinese growth would be negative, the impact on the region will be negative, the impact on global growth will be negative," she said. In October's forecast, the IMF pegged Chinese gross domestic product growth last year at 3.2% - on par with the fund's global outlook for 2022. At that time, it also saw annual growth in China accelerating in 2023 to 4.4% while global activity slowed further. Her comments, however, suggest another cut to both the China and global growth outlooks may be in the offing later this month when the IMF typically unveils updated forecasts during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Meanwhile, Georgieva said, the US economy is standing apart and may avoid the outright contraction that is likely to afflict as much as a third of the world's economies. The "US is most resilient," she said, and it "may avoid recession. We see the labor market remaining quite strong." But that fact on its own presents a risk because it may hamper the progress the Fed needs to make in bringing US inflation back to its targeted level from the highest levels in four decades touched last year. Inflation showed signs of having passed its peak as 2022 ended, but by the Fed's preferred measure, it remains nearly three times its 2% target. "This is a mixed blessing because if the labor market is very strong, the Fed may have to keep interest rates tighter for longer to bring inflation down," Georgieva said. Last year, in the most aggressive policy tightening since the early 1980s, the Fed lifted its benchmark policy rate from near zero in March to the current range of 4.25% to 4.50%, and Fed officials last month projected it will breach the 5% mark in 2023, a level not seen since 2007. Indeed, the US job market will be a central focus for Fed officials who would like to see demand for labor slacken to help undercut price pressures. The first week of the new year brings a raft of key data on the employment front, including Friday's monthly nonfarm payrolls report, which is expected to show the US economy minted another 200,000 jobs in December and the jobless rate remained at 3.7% - near the lowest since the 1960s. (Reuters)

- **New Fed research flags rising risk of US recession -** Just over half of the 50 US states are exhibiting signs of slowing economic activity, breaching a key threshold that often signals a recession is in the offing, new research from the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank report said. That report, released Wednesday, followed another report from the San Francisco Fed from earlier in the week that also delved into the rising prospect that the US economy may fall into recession at some point in coming months. The St. Louis Fed said in its report that if 26 states have falling activity within their borders, that offers “reasonable confidence” that the nation will fall into a recession. Right now, the bank said that as measured by Philadelphia Fed data tracking the performance of individual states, 27 had declining activity in October. That’s enough to point to a looming downturn while standing short of the numbers that have been seen ahead of some other recessions. The authors noted that 35 states suffered declines ahead of the short and sharp recession seen in the spring of 2020, for example. Meanwhile, a San Francisco Fed report, released Tuesday, observed that changes in the unemployment rate can also signal a downturn is on the way, in a signal that offers more near-term predictive value than the closely watched bond market yield curve. The paper’s authors said that the unemployment rate bottoms out and begins to move higher ahead of recession in a highly reliable pattern. When this shift occurs the unemployment rate is signaling the onset of recession in about eight months, the paper said. The paper acknowledged its findings are akin to those of the Sahm Rule, named for former Fed economist Claudia Sahm, who pioneered work linking a rise in the jobless rate to economic downturns. The San Francisco Fed research, written by bank economist Thomas Mertens, said its innovation is to make the jobless rate change a forward-looking indicator. Unlike the St. Louis Fed state data that is tipping toward a recession projection, the US jobless rate has thus far remained stable, and after bottoming at 3.5% in September, it held at 3.7% in both October and November. The San Francisco Fed paper noted that the Fed, as of its December forecasts, sees the unemployment rate rising next year amid its campaign of aggressive rate hikes aimed at cooling high levels of inflation. In 2023, the Fed sees the jobless rate jumping up to 4.6% in a year where it sees only modest levels of overall growth. If the Fed’s forecast comes to pass, “such an increase would trigger a recession prediction based on the unemployment rate,” the paper said. “Under this view, low unemployment can lead to a heightened probability of recession when the unemployment rate is expected to rise.” Tim Duy, chief economist with SGH Macro Advisors, said he believes that to achieve what the Fed wants on the inflation front, the economy would likely “lose roughly 2mn jobs, which would be a recession like 1991 or 2001.” Anxiety over the prospect of the economy falling into recession has been driven by the Fed's forceful actions on inflation. Many critics contend that the central bank is focusing too much on inflation and not enough on keeping Americans employed. Central bank officials have countered that without a return to price stability, the economy will struggle to meet its full potential. What's more, in the press conference following the most recent Federal Open Market Committee meeting earlier this month, central bank leader Jerome Powell said that he didn’t view the current Fed outlook as a recession prediction given the expectation growth will remain positive. But he added much remains uncertain. “I don’t think anyone knows whether we’re going to have a recession or not and, if we do, whether it’s going to be a deep one or not. It’s just, it’s not knowable,” Powell said. (Reuter)
- **Jobless benefits rolls grow but US labor market remains resilient -** The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits edged higher last week and a week earlier the total number on jobless assistance reached the highest since February, but both remain at levels indicating the US job market remains tight, even as the Federal Reserve works to cool demand for labor as part of its bid to lower inflation. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 9,000 to a seasonally adjusted 225,000 for the week ended Dec. 24, the Labor Department said on Thursday, in line with the median estimate among economists polled by Reuters. Meanwhile, the number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid rose 41,000 to 1.710mn in the week ending Dec. 17. After hitting the lowest level since 1969 in May, those so-called continuing claims, a proxy for hiring, have drifted higher since early October. The latest report is the first since February to show them breaching the lower end of the 1.7-1.8mn trend that prevailed in the years leading up to the coronavirus pandemic, a level seen then as emblematic of a tight labor market. And, while the figures for new benefits claims have been choppy in recent weeks, they have held well below the 270,000 thresholds that economists see as a red flag for the labor market. A raft of layoffs in the technology sector and interest-rate sensitive industries like housing have yet to leave a notable imprint on claims as laid-off workers appear to cycle into new jobs with relative ease. (Reuters)
- **UK house prices end 2022 on a weaker note after pandemic boom -** British annual house price growth marked a further "sharp" slowdown in December, mortgage lender Nationwide said, ending the year on a downbeat note as the impact of surging mortgage costs reversed some of the pandemic-led boom in the market. The lender also said that the final month of 2022 saw prices record their worst run since 2008 on a monthly basis, falling 0.1% compared with November in their fourth consecutive monthly price fall. A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to a fall of 0.7%. In annual terms, house price growth slowed to 2.8% in December from 4.4% in November, Nationwide said, compared with the 2.3% growth forecast in a Reuters poll. House prices have weakened in recent months as former Prime Minister Liz Truss's plans for unfunded tax cuts spooked markets and drove up borrowing costs, making home loans less affordable and causing lenders to suspend mortgage products at one point. That has marked a slowdown from last year when price growth reached multi-year highs due to strong demand as people desired bigger homes more suited for remote working during the health crisis. "While financial market conditions have settled, mortgage rates are taking longer to normalize and activity in the housing market has shown few signs of recovery," Nationwide chief economist Robert Gardner said in a statement. "It will be hard for the market to regain much momentum in the near term as economic headwinds strengthen, with real earnings set to fall further and the labor market widely projected to weaken as the economy shrinks." Earlier in December, a survey by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) showed the most widespread house price falls in Britain since early in the pandemic last month. RICS' chief economist Simon Rubinsohn had said the downbeat tone reflected "the uncertain macro environment and the higher cost of mortgage finance". Nationwide's Gardner, who reiterated on Friday a previous prediction that house prices were on track to drop by about 5% next year, also said the recent weakness in mortgage applications may partly reflect an early seasonal slowdown. He said that the housing market remaining buoyant in the first three quarters of 2022 despite weak consumer confidence gave some reassurance that there would be a pick-up in activity in the New Year. "Longer-term interest rates, which underpin mortgage pricing, have returned towards the levels prevailing before the mini-Budget. If sustained, this should feed through to mortgage rates and help improve the affordability position for potential buyers," he added. (Reuters)
- **German industry says: High inflation here to stay for coming months -** Germany's inflation rate is unlikely to decline rapidly at present and the European Central Bank's target of 2% will only become feasible by the middle of the decade, the BDI industry association said in a survey for Reuters published on Friday. Inflation, which slowed slightly to 11.3% in November from a high of 11.6% the month prior, is no longer driven primarily by energy costs but by a host of factors, BDI President Siegfried

Russwurm said in a survey of several industry associations. "A return to a level of 2% is likely to take longer and can only be achieved by the middle of the decade if monetary policy takes effect," he said. The ECB has raised interest rates by a combined 2.5 percentage points since July - its fastest pace of monetary tightening on record - to counter inflation. Russwurm said more measures would be decided on by the ECB, which the BDI expects to dampen investment activity. The heads of the ZDH German association for skilled trade and the DIHK chambers of industry and commerce also do not see inflation cooling off in the near term. "A noticeable slowdown in price increases is probably not to be expected until summer 2023," said ZDH Secretary General Holger Schwannecke. "But even then, the price level will remain high." In DIHK President Peter Adrian's view, the ECB began its interest rate hikes too late, which means it now must raise them all the faster. "This makes corporate financing more difficult and is an additional burdening factor for businesses." (Reuters)

- **Private Survey shows: China home prices fall at faster pace in December -** China's home prices fell at a faster pace in December, according to a private survey on Sunday, reflecting persistently weak demand amid rising COVID-19 cases despite a slew of support measures. China's property market crisis worsened this summer, with official data showing home prices, sales and investment all falling in recent months, adding pressure on the faltering economy. Home prices in 100 cities fell for the sixth month in a row in December, declining 0.08% from a month earlier after falling 0.06% in November, according to the survey by China Index Academy (CIA), one of the country's largest independent real estate research firms. Among the 100 cities, 68 cities posted a fall in monthly prices, compared with 57 in November, the survey showed. China has in recent weeks ramped up support for the industry in a bid to relieve a long-running liquidity squeeze that has hit developers and delayed completion of many housing projects, further undermining buyers' confidence. The moves have included lifting a ban on fundraising via equity offerings for listed property firms. The property sector has also got a slight boost after Beijing abruptly dropped its strict zero-COVID policy in early December, which could lure consumers back to showrooms. But the virus is now spreading largely unchecked and likely infecting millions of people a day, according to some international health experts. "Real estate policies may continue to maintain an accommodative tone with room for policy easing on the supply and demand side in 2023," said the real estate research firm, adding "the housing market is expected to stabilize gradually next year." (Reuters)
- **China December manufacturing contracts sharply as COVID infections soar -** China's factory activity shrank for the third straight month in December and at the sharpest pace in nearly three years as COVID infections swept through production lines across the country after Beijing's abrupt reversal of anti-virus measures. The official purchasing managers' index (PMI) fell to 47.0 from 48.0 in November, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Saturday. Economists in a Reuters poll had expected the PMI to come in at 48.0. The 50-point mark separates contraction from growth on a monthly basis. The drop was the biggest since the early days of the pandemic in February 2020. The data offered the first official snapshot of the manufacturing sector after China removed the world's strictest COVID restrictions in early December. Cumulative infections likely reached 18.6mn in December, UK-based health data firm Airfinity estimated. Analysts said surging infections could cause temporary labor shortages and increased supply chain disruptions. Reuters reported on Wednesday that Tesla (TSLA.O) plans to run a reduced production schedule at its Shanghai plant in January, extending the reduced output it began this month into next year. Weakening external demand on the back of growing global recession fears amid rising interest rates, inflation and the war in Ukraine may further slow China's exports, hurting its massive manufacturing sector and hampering an economic recovery. "Most factories I know are way below where they could be this time of year for orders next year. A lot of factories I've talked to are at 50%, some are below 20%," said Cameron Johnson, a partner at Tidalwave Solutions, a supply chain consulting firm. So even though China is opening up, manufacturing is still going to slow down because the rest of the world's economy is slowing down. Factories will have workers, but they will have no orders." NBS said 56.3% of surveyed manufacturers reported that they were greatly affected by the epidemic in December, up 15.5 percentage points from the previous month, although most also said they expected the situation will gradually improve. (Reuters)
- **Nikkei Reports: Bank of Japan considering raising inflation forecasts to near 2% target -** The Bank of Japan (BOJ) is considering raising its inflation forecasts in January to show price growth close to its 2% target in fiscal 2023 and 2024, Nikkei reported on Saturday. The BOJ jolted markets this month by widening its 10-year yield cap range, a move officially aimed at straightening out bond market distortions but seen by some analysts as a prelude to the exit from its ultra-loose monetary easing. Upgrades to the BOJ's inflation forecast would further fuel such speculation as Governor Haruhiko Kuroda has said the central bank could discuss the exit if achievement of its 2% inflation target in tandem with wage hikes comes into sight. Citing people familiar with discussions at the central bank, Nikkei said the proposed changes would show the core consumer price index rising around 3% in fiscal 2022, between 1.6% and 2% in fiscal 2023, and nearly 2% in fiscal 2024. The previous forecasts released in October were around 2.9%, 1.6% and 1.6%, respectively. Japan's core consumer prices excluding fresh food items rose 3.7% in November, the highest since 1981, government data showed last week. But Kuroda has dismissed the chance of a near-term interest rate hike, saying recent price rises were driven by one-off increases in raw material costs rather than strong demand. The BOJ will release the latest quarterly growth and price outlook after its next policy meeting on Jan. 17-18. Analysts, searching for any clues on a monetary policy shift, are also waiting to see if annual wage negotiations early next year will bring substantial pay hikes, or if the end of Kuroda's 10-year tenure in April leads to any revision to a 2013 policy accord between the BOJ and the government. (Reuters)

Regional

- **UN: Arab economies to continue expansion as fiscal positions improve -** Arab economies are set to expand this year and the next as they continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, record lower inflation rates and benefit from improved fiscal positions, the UN has said in its latest survey. The gross domestic product of 22 Arab countries is forecast to grow an average 4.5% in 2023 and 3.4% in 2024, albeit at a slower pace from 5.2% last year, with some discrepancies as the Ukraine war affects economies differently, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Escwa) said in a report. “While some Arab countries benefited from spikes in energy prices, others suffered from rising energy costs, food supply shortages, and drops in both tourism and international aid inflows,” Escwa said in its Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region. “This outlook faces many risks and uncertainties, including fears of a new COVID-19 wave, a protracted war in Ukraine and expanding sanctions on the Russian Federation, economic collapse in some Arab countries suffering from dire socio-economic conditions and persistence of conflict and political instability.” The regional outlook comes after some Arab countries benefited from a surge in energy prices, while non-oil importing states faced rising energy costs, food supply shortages, drops in tourism and lower international aid inflows in the wake of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. GCC countries will grow at their fastest pace since 2014, expanding 4.6% and 3.3% in 2023 and 2024 respectively, from 6.3% in 2022, as they benefit from a recovery in oil markets that started in 2021. “The current situation presents an opportunity for oil-exporting Arab countries to diversify their economies away from the energy sector by accumulating reserves and investing in projects that generate inclusive growth and sustainable development,” Ahmed Moummi, head of the Escwa survey, said. Arab middle-income countries (MICs) are expected to grow by around 3.6% this year and next, respectively, from 4.3% last year, as most face higher energy and commodity prices and depreciation of their national currencies. Egypt, the Arab world’s third largest economy, will outpace these rates with growth of 5.4% in 2022 and 4.3% over 2023-2024, driven by an increase in demand for and prices of Egyptian gas. Conflict-affected countries or CACs’s collective GDP is expected to grow 6.8% this year and 3.6% the next, up from 2.8% last in 2022, led by Iraq which has benefited from higher oil prices. Arab least-developed countries (LDCs) are forecast to grow by 3.3% and 4.6% in 2023 and 2024 respectively, up from only 0.9% in 2022, the UN said. They face an increase in energy and essential commodities prices, while risking a drop in official development assistance as more aid is redirected to support Ukraine and countries hosting Ukrainian refugees. While inflation rates in Arab countries jumped this year to an aggregate 14%, they are projected to drop to 8% and 4.5% respectively in 2023 and 2024, according to the UN survey. Inflation in MICs is expected to reach as high as 17.7% in 2022 before dropping to 10.9% in 2023, driven mainly by high inflation rates in crisis-hit Lebanon. The country will register an inflation rate of about 86.9% in 2022 and about 13.7% in 2023, as it grapples with an economic and financial meltdown and sharp currency depreciation. The fiscal position of Arab countries is expected to have improved in 2022 as a result of higher energy prices, though this will be partially offset by an increase in metal and food prices, the UN survey said. GCC countries are expected to record a fiscal surplus of 5.6% of GDP in 2022, allowing the bloc to decrease its debt-to-GDP ratio to about 30% in 2022 from 36.4% in 2021. The fiscal deficit in Arab MICs is expected to reach 8% of their collective GDP, as non-oil importing states face higher oil prices. Debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to decline in MICs to 76.3% in 2024 from 79.1% in 2022, as a result of the drop in the value of Lebanese debt following the massive depreciation of its currency. (Qatar Tribune)

- **Unemployment among Saudi citizens increases to 9.9% in Q3/22 -** Unemployment in Saudi Arabia among citizens increased to 9.9% in the third quarter, up 0.2 percentage points from the previous quarter but the overall unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5.8%, data released on Thursday showed. The rate of joblessness among citizens fell from 11.3% in the same period last year however, reflecting a downward trend in unemployment among Saudis that is a key objective of the crown prince's plans to transform the economy. The overall unemployment rate includes non-Saudi residents in the kingdom who comprised just over a third of the total population in 2021, and the majority of whom need an employment contract to live there, as an expatriate. Job creation, especially for Saudi nationals, over 60% of whom are under the age of 35, is a top priority for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the country's Vision 2030 economic transformation plan to diversify income sources. The participation rate of Saudi citizens in the labor market increased to 52.5% in Q3 from 49.8% in the year ago period, figures from the General Authority for Statistics showed. Workforce participation among female citizens is also on the rise. Unemployment in this category fell to 20.5% in Q3 from 21.9% in the year-ago period, making up 37% of the Saudi labor force. Expansion of the private sector is a key pillar of the government strategy, with a wide-ranging program of privatizations and other government-supported initiatives to spur growth. The latest data showed that 93.3% of unemployed Saudis would accept jobs in the private sector. Historically, the public sector has been the principal employer of citizens in Saudi Arabia. (Reuters)
- **Report: Saudi to see drop-in unemployment rate in 2023 -** Unemployment rates are projected to decline in several countries, including Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the UAE, signaling more resilience for jobseekers, according to a report released by the Mastercard Economics Institute. 'Economic Outlook 2023' draws on a multitude of public and proprietary data sets, as well as models that are intended to estimate economic activity across the Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (EEMEA) region. The report explores four themes that will continue to shape the global economic environment — high interest rates and housing, trading down and shopping, prices and preferences, and shocks and omnichannel. (Zawya)
- **SPARK unveils $150mn development agreements with Bin Saedan -** King Salman Energy Park (SPARK) teamed up with Affordable House Company, a subsidiary of Abdullah Bin Saedan and Sons Real Estate Group, to develop a residential complex and workers village at SPARK. The partnership followed of the signing of agreements between SPARK and Bin Saedan at an aggregated value of $150mn, according to a press release. The residential complex spans 30,000 square meters and will be established in two phases. It will provide the residents with a wide range of fully furnished long-term accommodations. The development project will be integrated with sustainable construction technologies, smart systems, and eco-friendly materials, such as green concrete and solar panels. In line with the Saudi Green Initiative, the project aims to lower SPARK's carbon footprint and its effect on the environment. Meanwhile, SPARK and Bin Saedan formed the basis of a new workers village following a deal sealed earlier in 2022. The project will be built over three phases on an area of 110,000 square meters. Having a set of amenities, the village will have a capacity of more than 8,000 beds. Meanwhile, building the first phase of both the residential facility and the village will be completed in 2025. Mohammed Abdullah Bin Saedan, a board member of Bin Saedan, noted: "This partnership marks a milestone for our company as we aim to accelerate our expansion in the Eastern Province. We are committed to making this project the first of its kind in the Kingdom and the region." (Zawya)
- **Saudi: Al-Fadhli approves plan to increase agricultural production in greenhouses -** Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture Eng. Abdulrahman Bin Abdul Mohsen Al-Fadhli, who is also the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Development Fund, has approved the expansion plan in the plant resources sector and greenhouses with new investment worth SR4bn until 2025. This has been made in cooperation with the relevant authorities and private sector companies, which aims to increase the production capacity through encouraging the usage of latest technologies in the agriculture sector. Eng. Al-Fadhli confirmed that the approved plan within 2023 to 2025 will contribute to an additional productivity estimated at 430,000 tons, bringing the total production capacity of the greenhouses to more than 1mn tons annually. About 613.590 thousand tons is the total current production capacity, and it is expected that the rate of increase will be about 70%. This aims to achieve national food security, and increasing the contribution in the local content, and to offer job opportunities in accordance with the goals of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, he said. The expansion plan comes as an extension of the unlimited support that the agriculture sector enjoys in the Kingdom from the wise leadership, Eng. Al-Fadhli said. He added that the loans' value provided by the Agricultural Development Fund (ADF) to the productive sectors during 2022 have exceeded about SR5bn. He said that the greenhouses project is considered as one of the main sectors that is financed by ADF. The plan comes out of the ministry' keenness in raising the efficiency of this vital sector, and to work towards its development, sustainability, as it is an important pillar of food security in Saudi Arabia. It is noteworthy that preparations of the expansion plan in the greenhouses with the latest technologies have started earlier, as this type of cultivation in Saudi Arabia has been used for more than 30 years ago. The cultivation in greenhouses have witnessed significant development in all its technical, productive and protective fields, as it helps in producing crops during off-season, as well as extending its availability. Greenhouses are also considered as a key factor for the success of specialized agricultural production, such as organic farming, providing protection from different climatic conditions and its effects. The results of the studies and research conducted by the ministry have revealed that the usage of the latest technologies in the agriculture sector and greenhouses have contributed in saving irrigation water by up to 60%. This is in addition to raising the production capacity, reducing costs, improving quality, and also increasing farmers' profits. The study also showed that the percentage of investment profits in greenhouses ranged from 15% to 60%, noting that the number of greenhouses in Saudi Arabia reached 73.542 thousand. (Zawya)
- **Expert: Saudi Arabia could become global minerals hub in clean energy race -** Saudi Arabia could be playing a major global role in the supply of precious minerals needed to power the transition to green energy as part of the kingdom's efforts to reach the net zero carbon emissions goal, said Payne Institute for Public Policy at the Colorado School for Mines in US ahead of the Future Minerals Forum (FMF) in Riyadh. The second edition of FMF will kick off at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Centre on January 10 and run until January 12, 2023, drawing more than 200 leading mining executives, analysts, investment firms, technology companies and international mining industry associations. The forum will specifically address the potential of a new mining hub emerging from Africa to Western and Central Asia in supplying the minerals and metals needed to power the clean energy transition, said the organizers, the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources. The ministry pointed out that it was essential to work closely with many, many partners, to build stable markets, making sure that the minerals industry was transparent, fair and highly collaborative. Despite a parallel and significant rise in investment across the Middle East in hydrocarbons, the kingdom plans to attract

$32bn of investment in its bid to become a major player in global mining production, it added. In its paper, Payne Institute stressed that this was "an exciting time for critical minerals" and added that the kingdom could find itself in a powerful position to become a major clean energy player, lying in the middle of the vast mineral-rich super-region stretching from Africa to Central Asia. The topic lies at the heart of international debate taking place at the FMF which explores how critically precious minerals are needed to power clean energy items such as electric vehicles, computers, smartphones, solar panels, microchips and wind farms. During the three-day event, global mining industry leaders, including governments and business executives from around the world, will discuss the new report which states that Saudi Arabia has "all the ingredients to be successful" in mining. The forum will also put spotlight on the theme of creating responsible and resilient minerals and metals supply and value chains in Africa, Western and Central Asia. The US Institute in its paper advises that a long-term commitment and coherent strategy was needed to achieve this goal. "To make the most of this opportunity, international agreement at all levels is vital. Governments, companies and communities will all have to work together to re-think on a global scale how to extract and use minerals, and provide resilient and sustainable mineral supply chains," it stated in the report. However, the Payne Institute acknowledged that any economic switch from hydrocarbons to clean energy would take considerable amount of time. In fact, it will take decades, it stated. High-powered conferences like the second FMF – which has attracted 55 government mining and resources ministers, 200 speakers and 13,000 delegates - must lay the groundwork, forging dynamic discussion with an emphasis on direct and urgent action, said the industry expert in its paper. Saudi Arabia is in a strong position to convene dialogue about how best to uncover the mineral riches of the super-region, it added. (Zawya)

- **Hyundai mulls setting up new assembly plant in Saudi Arabia -** Hyundai Motor Company has signed a MoU with the Saudi Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources to boost co-operation in vehicle manufacturing in the region. The MoU stipulates planning for building a Saudi-based assembly plant with the CKD system for electric cars and internal combustion engines cars, after Hyundai showed high interest and plans to explore joint investment opportunities with the kingdom to achieve entrepreneurship in businesses and projects that guarantee environment safety and sustainability, reported SPA. This comes in line with Saudi Arabia's national strategic goals for industry in developing local manufacturing capabilities and as per the targets of the Saudi Vision 2030 that seeks to diversify the economic base in the kingdom. The agreement was signed in the presence of Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Al Khorayef, Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Al Ibrahim, Deputy Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Engineer Osamah Al Zamel, Saudi Industrial Development Fund CEO Dr Ibrahim Al Mojel and Hyundai Motor Executive Vice President and Head of Global Operations Division Seon Seob Kim. The Saudi National Industry Strategy seeks to localize the vehicle sector and increase investment opportunities in the sector, where light cars sales rates are expected to increase in the kingdom by 2.2% in the upcoming decade, stated the report. The kingdom is interested in developing this sector that will lead to attracting and developing the workforce with focus on products with high added value, it added. (Zawya)
- **UAE, Saudi dominate Arab manufactured goods' export list -** The UAE has ranked first in the Arab world in terms of the value of manufactured exports in 2021, with a total value of $142.5bn, according to the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF). Saudi Arabia comes second to the UAE with approximately $69bn and a 21.2% stake, followed by Morocco with $19.9bn and a 6.1% share, it stated. As per AMF's Joint Arab Economic Report, the UAE's manufacturing industry exports account for 43.9% of overall Arab exports of manufacture, owing to strong growth in the field of re-exports. Manufacturing industry exports in Arab countries totaled $325bn in 2021, up from $244bn in 2020, thus registering a 33.2% increase, thanks mainly to unwinding of Covid-19 restrictions. Egypt stood fourth with a 6.1% share followed by Tunisia (4%), Bahrain (2.2%), Jordan (2.1%), Kuwait (2%) and Algeria (1.1%). The others in the list are Lebanon with 0.8% share, Libya with 0.5%, Palestine (0.5%), Djibouti (0.5%) and Iraq with a 0.1% stake. (Zawya)
- **Saudi Arabia's exports surge to $146.32bn -** Saudi Arabia's exports recorded an increase from SR169bn to SR550bn, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources for Mineral Resources for industrial services, Eng. Mohammad Al-Suwailem said. According to Akhbar24, Eng. Al-Suwailem said that there are 118 commodities targeted to be localized. During a meeting to review the most notably challenges that faces the factories owners in Tabuk which held at the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the most prominent difficulties faced by the Ministry of Industry, Eng. Al-Suwailem noted that the ministry aims to increase the industrial establishments from 10,000 to 32,000 establishments by 2035. He added that the ministry is working to accelerate and implement the customs exemption after legalizing it and placing them under one administration. noting that they have made a reformation of a special committee in this regard. This is in addition to completing the study of the initiative to improve its procedures, and then moving to completing the implementation. The ministry will approve within the next week the electronic evaluation instead of the manual evaluation, which would facilitate the service for the beneficiaries. (Zawya)
- **Trade Minister: Saudi Arabia second top investor in Egypt at $6.12bn -** Egypt's Trade and Industry Minister Ahmed Samir said Sunday that Saudi Arabia ranks second in the list of countries investing in the Egyptian market with total investments of $6.12bn in 6,017 projects in industry, construction, tourism, agriculture, services, finance, communications, and information technology. The trade exchange between Egypt and Saudi Arabia amounted to approximately $4.572bn in 2021, compared to around $3.236bn in 2020, achieving an increase of 41.3%. Samir concluded his visit to Saudi Arabia, which included meetings with the Saudi ministers of industry and mining, trade and the Governor-designate of the Foreign Trade Authority as well as other Saudi officials. Samir highlighted the Egyptian side's keenness to support communication between business communities in two countries by intensifying Egyptian trade missions to Saudi Arabia, which are organized by the Egyptian export councils in coordination with Egyptian Commercial Services office in Jeddah. The minister said that his talks with senior Saudi officials dealt with discussing ways to improve trade and investment relations between the two countries, benefiting from great economic potential in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The minister noted that the two sides discussed mechanisms for achieving industrial integration between Egypt and Saudi Arabia and strengthening cooperation in light of the industrial strategy of both countries, with the aim of launching Egyptian-Saudi industrial partnerships in a large number of productive sectors and benefiting from the great potentials in the two countries. Furthermore, discussed ways to develop industrial and investment relations between Egypt and the Kingdom in a way that raises the level of fraternal and strategic relations that bind the two countries in various fields and at all levels. (Zawya)
- **Cash flow in Saudi private sector exceeds $1tn -** The operating revenues of the business sector in Saudi Arabia during the past year exceeded SR4tn ($1tn), according to official data released by the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) on Wednesday. The report showed that the operating revenues of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the country reached about SR1.2tn ($337bn). The structural business results for the previous year indicated recovery of the business sector from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic that the world witnessed over the past two years. The pandemic had effects of varying dimensions on almost all economic activities. According to the data, signs of improvement in the performance of economic activities emerged at a varying rate between sectors, from complete and noticeable recovery to partial recovery, which contributed to the advancement of the business sector again to the levels of performance in 2019, overcoming the challenges of 2020. Statistics showed that the most revenue-generating activities were registered in manufacturing, mining and quarrying, as well as wholesale and retail trade. The operating expenses of the business sector amounted to SR1.7tn ($465bn), led by the manufacturing industry, followed by wholesale and retail trade, and then the construction sector. The total compensation of workers during last year reached SR388.4bn ($103bn). The official data stated that compared to last year, the operating revenues of business establishments increased significantly,

supported by an increase in many economic activities, reaching 26%. There has been an increase in operating revenues in sports, leisure and entertainment activities by 36.6%. There was also a rise in manufacturing coke and refined petroleum products, in addition to retail trade, excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles, by 36% and 17% respectively. According to GASTAT, operating expenses in the business sector increased during the previous year by 20.9% compared to 2020, as a result of the rise in various economic activities. The statistics showed an increase in operating expenses in the building construction activity by 27.7%, and the manufacture of food products, chemicals and their derivatives by 11.8 and 49.8% respectively. Operating expenses in warehousing and transportation support, computer programming, consultancy and related activities decreased by 6.4% and 7% respectively. The statistics indicated that workers' compensation increased during the past year by 12% compared to 2020. On the other hand, there was an improvement in the performance of many economic activities that were directly affected by the pandemic, which returned during the past year to their normal levels of performance before the outbreak of COVID-19. The results pointed to an increase in the revenues of the activities of travel agencies, tour operators and reservation services by 185.5%, accommodation by 102.8%, and activities of mining and quarrying by 4.6%. The data showed the stability of many economic activities that were not affected by the pandemic and continued to achieve normal growth rates during the past three years, such as communications, computer programming, consulting expertise and related matters, in addition to financial services. The GASTAT also revealed the financial results of SMEs, bringing the operating revenues of this sector to SR1.2tn ($337bn) last year, up by 25% compared to 2020. The authority stated that operating expenses amounted to SR659.5bn ($175bn), an increase of 33%, while compensation for workers in SMEs amounted to SR155.8bn ($41.5bn), an increase of 19%. (Zawya)

- **Saudi Railways signs agreement with SAGO for grains transport -** Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) said it has signed an agreement with Saudi Grains Organization (SAGO) to transport grain from King Abdulaziz Port in Dammam to the organization's branch office in Riyadh. This five-year agreement, a strategic one for the food industry and logistic services sector, will see SAR transport grains from the Dammam port to SAGO's branch office through its railway line linking the Eastern Province with the Saudi capital. It will result in less dependency on trucks on road and hence contribute to reduction of carbon emissions and thus preserving the roads' infrastructure and increasing the safety level for roads users. The contract was signed by SAGO Governor Engineer Ahmed bin Abdul Aziz Al Faris and Saudi Arabia Railway CEO Dr Bashar Al Malik in the presence of Engineer Abdulrahman bin Abdulmohsen Al Fadley, Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture and Engineer Saleh Bin Nasser Al Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistic Services. Al Faris said: "This agreement will help SAGO, which manages and operates silos, work more efficiently and diversify means of transportation, as 300,000 tonnes of grain are transported yearly." Al Malik said it entrenches Saudi Arabia Railways' role and commitment to achieve the objectives of the National Transport and Logistics Strategy (NTLS) and the Kingdom's Vision 2030. "We transport food commodities following the highest international standards to ensure safety and quality," he noted. "Our cooperation with SAGO will contribute to reducing carbon emissions in addition to reducing dependency on trucks on the road which leads to enhancing traffic safety on the roads between Riyadh Province and Eastern Province. The distance between the two provinces is 428 km by the railway," he added. (Zawya)
- **Saudi Aramco announces changes to leadership titles -** Senior executives at the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Aramco) will have new titles starting next year. The state oil giant announced on Thursday that it has updated its senior leadership titles effective January 1, 2023. From next year, the company's senior vice president will be called the executive vice president, while the vice president will carry the title of senior vice president. The general manager will take on the new title of vice president. The updated job titles are aligned with international best practice and reflect the strategic roles and responsibilities of the positions, the company said in a statement on Thursday. "The changes are limited to job titles only and do not reflect organization structure," it pointed out. (Zawya)
- **Clean energy reaches 14% of Dubai's total power production capacity -** Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD and CEO of Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), has announced that the production capacity of clean energy in Dubai has reached 2,027 megawatts (MW) using photovoltaic solar power (PV) and concentrated solar power (CSP). This is about 14% of Dubai's total power production capacity of 14,517 MW. He made the announcement during his visit to the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, which DEWA is implementing. This is the largest single-site solar park in the world using the Independent Power Producer (IPP) model. It will have a production capacity of 5,000 MW by 2030, using photovoltaic solar panels and CSP technologies. Al Tayer inspected work progress in the 4th phase of the park, where 417MW have been connected to DEWA's grid. This includes 217MW from photovoltaic solar panels, and 200MW from CSP using parabolic basins. The 4th phase of the solar park is 92% complete. Al Tayer met with DEWA's Emirati employees who are trained on clean energy projects of the 4th phase of the solar park. This phase is being implemented by Noor Energy 1. DEWA owns 51% of the company while ACWA Power holds 25%, and the Silk Road Fund owns 24%. Al Tayer also inspected the 5th phase of the solar park where DEWA has connected 600MW to its grid. The 5th phase has a total capacity of 900MW and investments of AED 2.058bn. The 300MW third project of the 5th phase is 52.9% complete and will be commissioned in 2023. It uses the latest solar photovoltaic bifacial technologies with Single Axis Tracking to increase energy production. It will provide clean energy for more than 270,000 residences in Dubai and reduce 1.18mn tonnes of carbon emissions annually. (Zawya)
- **Dubai: 30% tax on alcohol removed, personal liquor license to be free of cost -** Dubai has suspended the 30% municipality tax on all alcoholic beverages as well as the personal liquor license fee. From January 1, 2023, personal liquor licenses will be free-to-obtain for those eligible to legally purchase alcoholic beverages in Dubai. A valid Emirates ID, or Passport for tourists, will still be required to apply. A person must be at least 21 to drink legally in the UAE, and alcohol can only be consumed privately or in licensed public places. Tyrone Reid, Group CEO of Maritime and Mercantile International (MMI) & Emirates Leisure Retail said, "Following the announcement by the Government of Dubai to remove the 30% municipality tax on sales of alcoholic beverages, we are pleased to announce that this will be reflected across all alcoholic beverage products in all our 21 MMI stores in Dubai, effective January 1." (Zawya)
- **NWTN delivers first set of range-extended e-vehicles to UAE firm -** NWTN, a pioneering green technology company offering passenger-centric green mobility solutions, has announced that it has delivered 20 range-extended electric vehicles (R-EEVs) to M93 Car Rental Company at its newly constructed facility in the Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi (Kezad). Headquartered in Dubai and with its manufacturing facilities in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, NWTN aims to integrate avant-garde design, life-style personalization, IoT connectivity, autonomous driving technology, and green energy eco-systems to its future mobility solutions, said a statement from the company. The 20 R-EEVs are part of the first batch of vehicles to be delivered to local clients within coming months, it stated. The R-EEVs were the perfect choice for the Emirati car rental firm and are uniquely suited to the UAE market. The vehicle's range-extended technology overcomes the problems of limited charging facilities in the UAE and the long distances often travelled in the country, it added. The delivery kicks off NWTN's plan to provide the UAE market with a range of innovative products and solutions to promote the region's transformation to sustainable energy, said its top official. "We are thrilled to see our products and solutions start contributing to the UAE's Zero Emission Initiative. This is the beginning of our long-term commitment to the UAE and the Middle East market," remarked its Chairman and CEO Alan Wu. "We will continue to promote green mobility lifestyles and bring world leading sustainable technologies to the UAE to help support the country's 'Net-Zero 2050' strategic initiative and energy transformation blueprint," he noted. M93 Car Rental Chairman & CEO Shahram Parvizi said: This is the first time we adopt new energy vehicles into our operation fleet, we are so excited about it. This is in line with the green energy transformation initiatives of our country, and we are very proud to be an active part of it." "I would like to thank NWTN for providing these advanced products and technology to us. We look forward to rolling out

additional new energy mobility technologies and solutions from NWTN in the future," stated Parvizi. According to him, the Kezad assembly facility is NWTN's first facility in the UAE. "The facility will enable NWTN to conduct semi-knockdown production with a greater proportion of software and hardware localization and upgrades to meet the local market needs," he noted. "The Kezad assembly facility is currently in the final phase of installing equipment and conducting trial operations and is expected to be fully operational in the first quarter of 2023," he added. (Zawya)

- **Modon opens new luxury desert resort in Abu Dhabi -** Modon Properties, a UAE-based master developer of sustainable communities, has announced the opening of its new desert project, Bab Al Nojoum - Bateen Liwa Resort, located within the heart of its eco-tourism campsite destination, Liwa, in Abu Dhabi. Designed for families and individuals looking to reconnect with the spectacular natural landscape in comfort and luxury, the resort, which is located in Al Dhafra region, offers an immersive desert experience with a choice of private one-, two- and three-bedroom villas that blend deluxe living with eco-friendly elements and the desert. Offering amenities and services superior to average weekend getaways, every accommodation at Bab Al Nojoum - Bateen Liwa Resort features a private plunge pool, deck loungers, patio, and a fire pit that offers uninterrupted views of the sand dunes, said the statement from Modon. The 50 sq m one-bedroom villa is comfortable for 3 campers, the 86 sq m two-bedroom villa can host five while the 102 sq m three-bedroom villa is ideal for a group of 7. Against the backdrop of rolling sand dunes deep in a tranquil desert environment, the resort also offers a range of cultural, wellness and experiences to cater to the needs of nature and adventure-inspired adults and kids alike, it added. It was inaugurated by Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, in the presence of Jassem Mohamed Bu Ataba Al Zaabi, Chairman, Department of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Modon Properties, CEO Bill O'Regan and other officials. Bab Al Nojoum - Bateen Liwa Resort will help enhance the eco-tourism sector and enrich the portfolio of innovative projects in Al Dhafra and elevate the region's potential as a prominent destination on the UAE's tourism landscape, said Sheikh Hamdan. (Zawya)
- **ENOC opens two new service stations in Dubai -** Enoc Group, a leading integrated global energy player, has launched two new service stations located in Wadi Al Safa and Wadi Al Amardi, bringing the Group's total number of service stations in Dubai to 133 and 180 across the UAE. Over the course of the year, Enoc has opened 6 new service stations across the emirate of Dubai, including locations such as Dafza, Dubai South and Dubai International City. The newly opened Wadi Al Safa service station will benefit motorists crossing the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road whilst the Wadi Al Amardi service station is expected to meet the fueling demands of residents and motorists of Al Khawaneej 1 and 2 heading towards Emirates Road. Furthermore, Wadi Al Safa is located opposite Global Village, and as such will cater to the needs of motorists coming from Sharjah and other neighboring Emirates heading towards Abu Dhabi, Jebal Ali and Dubai World Central. Saif Humaid Al Falasi, Group CEO at Enoc, said: "As a wholly owned entity of the Government of Dubai, we remain committed to developing the UAE's retail infrastructure and contributing towards the country's growing energy needs. Our new service stations will offer customers easy access to fuel as well as automotive and retail services and will add further convenience to meet the daily needs of our customers in the Emirate. Throughout the year, we have opened 6 new service stations in Dubai, which is a strong testament to our commitment to meeting the energy requirements of the Emirate." The service station in Wadi Al Safa spans across 40,900 sq ft featuring a bridged canopy with four dispenser islands and eight dispensers. It is equipped with five double wall fuel tanks with a capacity of 15,000 imperial gallons and includes an EV charging station, advanced Vapor Recovery System and a ZOOM convenience store. The Wadi Al Amardi service station spans across 16,744 sq ft featuring a bridged canopy with three dispenser islands and six dispensers. It is equipped with five double wall fuel tanks with a capacity of 12,000 imperial gallons and includes an EV charging station, a standalone drive through restaurant and a ZOOM convenience store. In line with global best practice for the retail fuel industry, the service station features full retail automation and modern construction standards and is equipped with CCTV surveillance and automatic number plate detection cameras to ensure the highest levels of security. Customers visiting the service station can also benefit from Enoc Group's 'Yes' rewards program by earning points and rewards when paying for fuel, automotive services or when making a purchase at the convenience stores. (Zawya)
- **UAE secured 41.5% of Japan's crude oil needs in November -** The UAE secured 41.5% of Japan's crude oil needs in November, which is equal to 32.17mn barrels, according to the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy in Tokyo. The agency, part of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, stated that the amount of crude that Japan imported during that month amounted to 77.53mn barrels, of which 74mn barrels, or 95.4%, originated from six Arab countries: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, with the Emirates being the Asian nation' top exporter of oil. Oil remains the most significant energy source in Japan, accounting for about 40% of the country's total energy supply, according to the International Energy Agency. (Zawya)
- **UAE leads Arab world in exports of manufactures -** The UAE ranked first in the Arab world in terms of the value of manufactured exports in 2021, with a total value of $142.5bn, according to the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF). According to the AMF's Joint Arab Economic Report, the UAE's manufacturing industry exports account for 43.9% of overall Arab exports of manufacture, owing to strong growth in the field of re-exports. Manufacturing industry exports in Arab countries totaled $325bn in 2021, up from $244bn in 2020, a 33.2% increase due to unwinding of COVID-10 restrictions. The report added that Saudi Arabia comes second to the UAE with approximately $69bn and a 21.2% stake, followed by Morocco with $19.9bn and a 6.1% share, while Egypt had a 6.1% share, Tunisia 4%, Bahrain 2.2%, Jordan 2.1%, Kuwait 2%, and Algeria 1.1%. Lebanon has 0.8%, Libya has 0.5%, Palestine has 0.5%, Djibouti has 0.5%, and Iraq has 0.1%. (Zawya)
- **Dana Steel to develop 50,000 sqm complex in Abu Dhabi -** Dana Steel is to develop a 50,000-square-metre a hot and cold rolling steel complex in Abu Dhabi under an agreement with Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi (KEZAD Group). The new facility, which will have a capacity of 500,000 metric tonnes, aims to replace imported raw materials, such as cold rolled full hard coils, with "Made in UAE" supply. KEZAD Group said the move is in support of the Abu Dhabi Industrial Strategy, which aims to double the size of the emirate's manufacturing sector to AED172bn ($46.8bn) by 2031. "With worldwide demand for quality steel products set to grow, we are quite excited to start this milestone project in KEZAD, which builds upon our efforts to enhance value for our customers across continents," Ankur Dana, CEO of Dana Steel Industry, said. Dana said the project will be the company's ninth industrial facility within the UAE and its first in Abu Dhabi. In addition to metal product building and manufacturing, the plant will also have capabilities to recover and recycle waste acid. (Zawya)
- **KEZAD Group advances Abu Dhabi Industrial Strategy with 500,000-metric tonne Dana Steel project -** Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi (KEZAD Group), the integrated trade, logistics, and industrial hub of Abu Dhabi, has signed a preliminary agreement with Dana Steel, the flagship manufacturing unit of industrial conglomerate Dana Group, for the establishment of its first hot and cold rolling steel complex in Abu Dhabi. Under the terms of the agreement, Dana Steel will invest to develop a 50,000 square meters facility in KEZAD. The new complex will facilitate backward integration of the company's continuous galvanizing and continuous color coating lines and will have 500,000 Metric Tonnes Rolling Capacity. This approach will help boost Dana Steel's manufacturing capacity in the GCC by replacing imported raw materials, such as cold rolled full hard coils, with a new 'Made in UAE' supply. By providing a base for Dana Steel first facility in Abu Dhabi, KEZAD Group is extending its support for the Abu Dhabi Industrial Strategy, which looks to more than double the size of the emirate's manufacturing sector to AED172bn by 2031 through a series of transformational programs. Mohamed Al Khadar Al Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer, KEZAD Group, said, "Owing to the modern infrastructure and efficient transportation network offered by KEZAD and Khalifa Port, investors such as Dana Steel are selecting our industrial ecosystem as a base from which to grow their

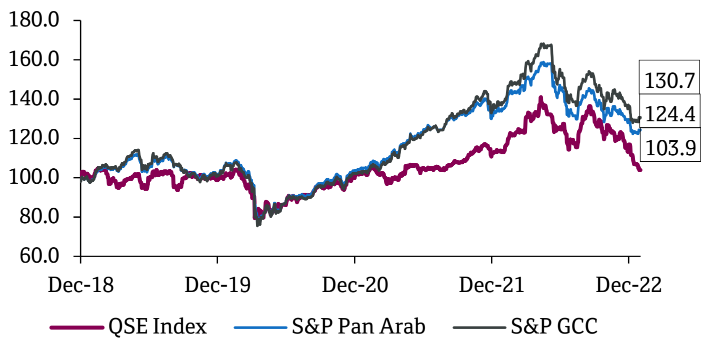
operations in the UAE and globally. By enabling vertical integration of their manufacturing supply chain, we look forward to supporting Dana Steel on its journey to serve customers and expand its international reach." Dr. Ankur Dana, CEO of Dana Steel Industry, said, "With worldwide demand for quality steel products set to grow, we are quite excited to start this milestone project in KEZAD, which builds upon our efforts to enhance value for our customers across continents. This project will be our 9th Industrial Facility within the UAE, several unique factors led us to choose KEZAD for this venture including the world-class infrastructure on offer, in addition to seamless connectivity to global markets and easy access to natural gas at competitive rates." The agreement with KEZAD Group will mark Dana Steel's first venture in Abu Dhabi while ushering in the first Hot Rolled Pickled Oiled (HRPO) and Cold Rolled (CR) steel facility in KEZAD. In addition to hosting facilities for building metal products manufacturing in KEZAD Group's Metals Hub, the plant will also have capabilities to recover and recycle waste acid, enabling the company to pursue a circular economy approach. In phase 2 of the expansion, Dana Steel will install a Continuous Galvanizing Line (CGL) and Color Coating Line (CGL) in the same KEZAD complex. (Zawya)

- **Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank launches ADIB Pay -** Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (ADIB) on Thursday announced the launch of the region's first tokenized, contactless payment methods through the options of clasp and ring "ADIB PAY", in partnership with token enablement service provider Tappy Technologies and global digital payments leader, Visa. Samih Awadhalla, acting global head of Retail Banking at ADIB, said ADIB continues to roll out innovative digital payment services as "we further develop our digital capabilities". "We are proud to launch the region's first tokenized, contactless payment clasp with our partners Tappy Technologies and Visa," he said. The set-up process for ADIB Pay is simple and quick. First, the customer's ADIB Visa card is tokenized via the supporting ADIB Pay application powered by Tappy's Token Enablement Services (TES) solution. Second, using the companion Universal Passive Provisioning Unit (UPPU) that connects to ADIB Pay via Bluetooth, the digital card is automatically provisioned to the chip embedded within the payment clasp. Once provisioning is complete, the customer is ready to make quick and easy payments with the tap of their wristwatch and will be able to instantly view their ADIB Pay transaction history in the application. "As a certified technology partner of Visa, Tappy extends the power of network token service to safeguard customer-sensitive payment credentials on wearable devices. With the Tappy developed UPPU technology, consumers can digitize their payment cards within seconds and transform their traditional timepiece into a contactless payment accessory without ever needing to recharge it," Wayne Leung, CEO of Tappy Technologies, said. Salima Gutieva, vice-president and country manager for UAE at Visa, said wearable tech is a fast-growing segment, especially as the young and digitally savvy generations increasingly demand a seamless cashless payment experience. "By combining Tappy's technology with our highly secure tokenization technology, ADIB can meet their customers' need for security and convenience at a time when contactless payments are very important," Gutieva said. (Zawya)
- **UAE: Residents to pay more for credit cards, loans in 2023 as interest rates set to rise -** The UAE residents will have to shell out more for their mortgage, credit cards and personal and auto loans next year as interest rates will be hiked further by the US and the UAE central banks, say economists. The US Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate seven times this year, the highest in 15 years, from 0-0.25% to 4.25-4.50% in order to rein in inflation which climbed to 9.1% this summer. Since the UAE dirham is pegged to the dollar, the Central Bank of UAE also raised its Base Rate applicable to the Overnight Deposit Facility (ODF) from 1.5% to 4.4% in 2022. Vijay Valecha, chief investment officer, Century Financial, expects Fed to hike interest rates to as high as 5.1% in 2023 before it ends its fight against runaway inflation. "This would take the benchmark interest rate to the target range of 5.0-5.25%. In fact, according to the dot plot, seven of the 19 committee members saw rates rising above 5.25% next year. Tracking the increase in the US federal Fund rate, the UAE base rate for Overnight Deposit Facility (ODF) will also likely increase by 65-75bps to 5.0% in 2023, since the dirham is pegged to the dollar," said Valecha. Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst, AvaTrade, said, the biggest worry for investors is how far the Fed will go with its interest rate. "From their tone, it is very much clear that the Fed isn't afraid of continuing its process of hiking interest rates and recession remains the least concern for them as they want to bring inflation lower at any cost." Daniel Richards, Mena economist at Emirates NBD Research, said the market remains more dovish on the rating outlook, with traders pricing in a peak Fed Funds rate of 5.0% in H1 2023 followed by two rate cuts in H2 taking the benchmark back to 4.5% by the end of next year. (Zawya)
- **ERRA signs cooperation agreement with CADRA to ensure protection of reprographic rights -** The Emirates Reprographic Rights Association (ERRA) signed a cooperation agreement with The Centre for Reprographic Rights Administration of Argentina (CADRA), to defend reprographic rights of authors and publishers, along with protecting and promoting creativity and intellectuality. The agreement was signed by Dr. Alyazia Khalifa, President of the Board of Directors of ERRA, and Luis Quevedo, President of CADRA. It stated that each party shall, on behalf of the other, grant a license to use the rights of member authors and publishers, in order to enhance the cultural exchange between the UAE and Argentina, and promote the creative content. Dr. Alyazia Khalifa stressed that this agreement primarily aims to provide the UAE libraries with works of Argentine authors, while introducing Emirati publishers and authors to Argentine culture. She also indicated that it is in line with ERRA's initiatives and activities that aim to build bridges of communication with international reprographic rights organizations, as well as introduce its practices and scope to all authors and publishers regionally and internationally. She added, "We at ERRA, work with our partners to build a community that serves to increase interest in developing the creative industry and preserving the rights of content creators. We do this by creating a progressive and innovative environment, protecting the publishers' and authors' intellectual property and encouraging the creation and dissemination of content." ERRA was established to protect the intellectual rights of content creators, as a first-of-its-kind organization in the UAE and the Arab region, addressing the challenges related to reproducing works and similar procedures. In addition, the organization instils the principle of collective management for copyright policies and supplements the applicable laws in the UAE related to the protection of intellectual property. ERRA also acts as a representative of member authors and publishers, protecting their intellectual property, including supervising the use of their works by those who have obtained ERRA's education and business licenses, in cooperation with the relevant government entities. (Zawya)
- **Fujairah Chamber board approves 2023 operational plan and budget -** The Board of Directors of the Fujairah Chamber of Commerce and Industry stressed the importance of encouraging private sector companies and institutions in the emirate to improve their products, given the major role they play in driving sustainable and economic development. The board made this statement during its 16th periodic meeting, chaired by Suroor Hamad Al Zuhari, First Deputy Chairman of Fujairah Chamber's Board of Directors, at the Chamber's headquarters, which discussed and approved the Chamber's operational plan for the year 2023 and the budget. Sultan Jemei Al Hindasi, Director-General of Fujairah Chamber, stated that the Council agreed to launch the Economic Excellence Award, one of the Chamber's initiatives, to promote creativity and excellence among companies, institutions and factories in the emirate and enhance quality as per international standards, in line with the vision of HH Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sharqi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Fujairah, to boost economic development in the emirate. Al Hindasi explained that the chamber's 2023 operational plan comprises several programs and activities, including the development of the chamber's electronic system, which contributes to streamlining procedures and achieving better integration across the chamber's departments and sections, besides pushing the emirate's digital transformation forward. The meeting also discussed establishing the new Fujairah Exhibition Centre to help develop a thriving exhibitions sector in the emirate. (Zawya)Kuwait
- **KPI, OQ, SABIC ink project development deal -** Oman Oil Company (OQ), chemical manufacturing company (SABIC), and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI), signed a project development deal for a mutually owned petrochemical complex in Omani special economic zone, Duqm. The agreement aims to develop a petrochemical complex with a steam

cracker, derivatives unit and a Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) extraction facility, as reported by a joint statement. The partners confirmed that they will conduct necessary research and utilize their technical and commercial expertise to develop a unique project that is profitable and globally competitive. The deal was signed by OQ executive director, Talal Al-Awfi, SABIC's executive director Abdulrahman Al-Fageeh and KPI's CEO Shafy Al-Ajmi. Al-Awfi stated that OQ is proud to be part of this monumental deal, especially as it comes in conjunction with Oman's 52nd National Day, and the near completion of the OQ8 Duqm refinery. The agreement, Al-Awfi commented, also goes in line with Oman Investment Authority objectives of attracting foreign investments and achieving Oman 2040 vision through diversification of the economy. On his part, Al-Fageeh underlined that this agreement enables the delimitation and assessment of ambitious and sustainable growth opportunities by bringing together the capabilities, expertise and technologies of the partners. He added that involvement in this project is consistent with the company's growth strategy and Saudi 2030 vision objectives of developing a stronger downstream business and addressing challenges in the petrochemicals industry such as carbon neutrality and providing diversified and sustainable products. KPI's Al-Ajmi commented that they are pleased to work with OQ and SABIC on this pioneering project which supports Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's 2040 strategy for growth in the petrochemical industry and enhances integration between the refining and petrochemical sectors. The project aims to employ the use of latest technologies in the field to minimize carbon footprint, incorporate circular economy aspects and commit to high environmental standards. This would support the region's development aspirations, maximizing socio-economic impacts, as well as add value to these companies. (Zawya)

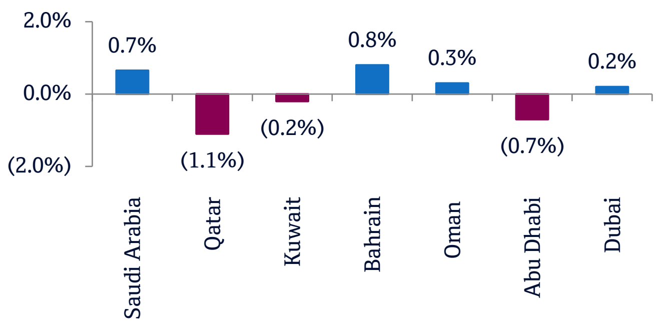
- **Kuwait's spending on technological solutions to reach $10.1bn by 2024 -** The latest electronic performance index for the GCC countries for the year 2022 revealed that all Gulf countries have performed exceptionally well in five major global indicators, which shows that they have made great progress in terms of digital transformation, reports Al- Qabas daily. Kuwait ranked 51.36 in the index prepared by Orient Planet Research (OPR), in collaboration with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) expert and independent researcher Abdul Qadir Al Kamali; the UAE achieved an average rating of 66.22, followed by Saudi Arabia 59.26, and Qatar 57.63. Oman and Bahrain scored average ratings of 54.02 and 53.43, respectively. The electronic performance index evaluates the countries of the region based on several different criteria that indicate growth, which are based on their performance in the main global indicators. The index also highlights the increasing investment by the GCC countries to integrate the latest technological solutions across various sectors including healthcare, technology, food services, aviation and education. The report notes that the development of information and communication technology in the region has enhanced the digital economy and productivity and created effective means of direct access to government e-services. The report indicates an increase in spending by countries in the region on the latest technological solutions to achieve digitally inclusive economies. Kuwait's spending on information and communication technology is expected to reach $10.1bn by 2024, while the UAE's spending will reach $23bn by 2024, while Qatar's spending will reach about $9bn. (Zawya)Oman
- **Oman ok's 2023 budget, had 1.146bn Omani Rials 2022 surplus -** Oman's Sultan ratified a 2023 budget with a deficit of 1.3bn Omani rials ($3.38bn) or 3% of GDP, the finance ministry said on Sunday, adding that the 2022 budget achieved a surplus of 1.146 rials. The 2023 budget sees revenues of 10.05bn Omani rials, 5% lower than 2022, and expenditures of 11.35bn rials, 6.4% lower the previous year. Higher oil prices boosted 2022 revenues to 14.234bn rials, the finance ministry said. Last year's budget had been based on a forecast price of $50 per barrel but the government now estimates the average price in 2022 to be $94. The 2023 budget is based on a price of $55 per barrel. Public spending in 2022 was 13.088bn rials, the ministry said. The surplus allowed the government to reduce public debt from 20.8bn rials in 2021 to 17.7bn rials in 2022. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects Oman, one of the Gulf's weaker economies, to post fiscal and external surpluses over the medium term, due mainly to higher oil revenue, fiscal discipline and the introduction of value added tax. Last month, S&P Global upgraded Oman's credit rating to BB, from BB-, on improved fiscal performance and lower public debt. (Reuters)
- **Finance Ministry to establish Integrated Gas Company in Oman -** The Ministry of Finance (MoF) endorsing its Articles of Association and financial bylaw, has issued a decision to establish an Integrated Gas Company, on Thursday, December 29, 2022. The Ministry of Finance issued a decision to establish an Integrated Gas Company and approving its articles of association and financial bylaw in accordance with the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law No. 18/2019 and its amendments, the Privatization Law issued by Royal Decree No. 51/2019, and Royal Decree No. 80/1998 issued regarding the Capital Market Law and its amendments. The Ministry clarified that the Integrated Gas Company is a government company concerned with managing all allocations, assets, rights and obligations for the purchase, sale, import, export and transportation of natural gas and related products on behalf of the government of the Sultanate of Oman. The ministry indicated that through the establishment of this company, it aims to improve the financial performance indicators of the Sultanate of Oman by excluding expenses for purchasing and transporting gas from the state's general budget, supplying net gas sales revenues to the state's general treasury, raising the efficiency of managing the gas sector and ensuring the efficient application of the terms of contracts signed in this sector, whether with producers or consumers By establishing the company, the Ministry also aims to implement government policies and plans regarding gas selling prices and quantities allocated to sectors, selling gas to gas-based projects, increasing the volume of economic activity and the local added value of the gas sector and related activities. (Zawya)
- **Bahrain's EDB nets record $1.1bn in direct investment in 2022 -** Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB), supported by Team Bahrain, has attracted over $1.1bn of direct investment during 2022, in a record year for the kingdom's investment promotion agency. Announcing the key milestone, EDB said it had exceeded the $1bn target set by its board of directors at the beginning of the year. These investments are from 88 companies with focus on key sectors including financial services, ICT, logistics, manufacturing, and tourism. It is expected to generate more than 6,300 jobs in the local market over the next three years. Under the Economic Recovery Plan, Bahrain will continue to enhance its business environment to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) by more than $2.5bn by 2023, it stated. This includes streamlining commercial procedures to increase their effectiveness and easing business setup, it added. Commenting on the record investments, CEO Khalid Humaidan said: "The size of direct investment attracted this year is a testament to Bahrain's attractiveness to investors. The kingdom's offerings include best value operating costs, the availability of a talented workforce, an advanced digital infrastructure and a forward-looking regulatory environment." This year, Bahrain ranked first in multiple global indices, including the first in Mena for Financial Freedom, Investment Freedom and Trade Freedom according to Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom 2022 and first in Mena for Economic Freedom according to the Fraser Institute. Humaidan said Bahrain's FDI inflows surged by $1.766bn in 2021, marking a 73% year-on-year increase and surpassing the global FDI average growth, according to the 2022 World Investment Report issued by the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Last year, Bahrain's inward FDI stocks grew by 6% to hit $33.47bn. This represented 86% of Bahrain's GDP, ranking Bahrain as the highest in GCC and surpassing the global average of 47%, he added. (Zawya)

Rebased Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Daily Index Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Asset/Currency Performance	Close ($)	1D%	WTD%	YTD%
Gold/Ounce	1,824.02	0.5	1.4	(0.3)
Silver/Ounce	23.95	0.2	0.9	2.8
Crude Oil (Brent)/Barrel (FM Future)	85.91	4.4	2.4	10.5
Crude Oil (WTI)/Barrel (FM Future)	80.26	2.4	0.9	6.7
Natural Gas (Henry Hub)/MMBtu	3.52	(5.9)	(53.0)	(3.8)
LPG Propane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	76.50	6.3	7.4	(32.2)
LPG Butane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	105.50	5.5	9.3	(27.7)
Euro	1.07	0.4	0.8	(5.8)
Yen	131.12	(1.4)	(1.3)	13.9
GBP	1.21	0.2	0.2	(10.7)
CHF	1.08	(0.1)	0.9	(1.3)
AUD	0.68	0.5	1.4	(6.2)
USD Index	103.52	(0.3)	(0.8)	8.2
RUB	118.69	0.0	0.0	58.9
BRL	0.19	(0.1)	(2.4)	5.4

Source: Bloomberg

Global Indices Performance	Close	1D%*	WTD%*	YTD%*
MSCI World Index	2,602.69	(0.4)	(0.1)	(19.5)
DJ Industrial	33,147.25	(0.2)	(0.2)	(8.8)
S&P 500	3,839.50	(0.3)	(0.1)	(19.4)
NASDAQ 100	10,466.48	(0.1)	(0.3)	(33.1)
STOXX 600	424.89	(1.0)	0.2	(18.1)
DAX	13,923.59	(0.8)	0.7	(17.0)
FTSE 100	7,451.74	(0.6)	0.1	(9.8)
CAC 40	6,473.76	(1.2)	0.4	(14.9)
Nikkei	26,094.50	0.0	0.9	(20.3)
MSCI EM	956.38	(0.1)	0.2	(22.4)
SHANGHAI SE Composite	3,089.26	1.5	2.8	(21.8)
HANG SENG	19,781.41	0.2	1.0	(15.5)
BSE SENSEX	60,840.74	(0.3)	1.8	(5.9)
Bovespa#	109,734.60	(0.5)	(2.5)	10.1
RTS	970.60	3.6	0.7	(39.2)

Source: Bloomberg ($ adjusted returns, Data as of December 30, 2022, # Data as of December 29, 2022)*

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