Qatar Tribune
Business
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China’s factory activity shrinks as US tariffs hit orders in June PAGE 12

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DEAL TO BOOST INVESTMENT IN QATAR

Issam Abou Sleiman (left), Regional Director for the GCC at the World Bank Group and Saud al Attiyah, Deputy Undersecretary for Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Finance, shake hands after signing an agreement in Doha on Saturday, to conduct an investment climate assessment and an Evaluation on the Business Regulation Environment in Qatar, aimed towards promoting and expanding growth driven by the private sector. (Below) Representatives of the Ministerial Group for Stimulating and Cooperating with the Private Sector in the Economic Development Projects, the Ministry of Finance and the World Bank Group at the signing ceremony. (TNN)

OPEC to extend oil supply cuts if Iran endorses pact

Iraq joins Russia, Saudi Arabia in supporting extension

REUTERS
VIENNA

OPEC and its allies look set to extend oil supply cuts next week at least until the end of 2019 as Iraq joined top producers Saudi Arabia and Russia on Sunday in endorsing a policy aimed at propping up the price of crude amid a weakening global economy.

Iran is the only major OPEC nation yet to have spoken publicly about a need to extend production cuts. Tehran has in the past objected to policies put forward by arch-rival Saudi Arabia, saying Riyadh was too close to Washington.

The United States is not a member of OPEC, nor is it participating in the supply pact. Washington has demanded Riyadh pump more oil to compensate for lower exports from Iran after slapping fresh sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear programme.

OPEC and its allies led by Russia have been reducing oil output since 2017 to prevent prices from sliding amid soaring production from the United States, which has become the world’s top producer this year ahead of Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Fears about weaker global demand as a result of a US-China trade spat have added to the challenges faced by the 14-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in recent months.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday he had agreed with Saudi Arabia to extend existing output cuts of 1.2 million barrels per day, or 1.2 percent of global demand, by six to nine months - until December 2019 or March 2020.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al Falih said the deal would most likely be extended by nine months and no deeper reductions were needed.

Warren Patterson, head of commodities strategy at Dutch bank ING, said OPEC had more to lose by not extending the deal.

“It comes down largely to fiscal breakeven oil prices - the Saudis have a breakeven price of around $85 per barrel, and so they will be concerned about potentially a widening gap between this level and where the market trades,” he said.

Benchmark Brent crude has climbed more than 25 percent since the start of 2019 to $65 per barrel. But prices could stall as a slowing global economy squeezes demand and US oil floods the market, a Reuters poll of analysts found.

The output-cutting pact expires on Sunday. OPEC meets in Vienna on Monday followed by talks with Russia and other allies, a grouping known as OPEC+, on Tuesday.

Iraqi Oil Minister Thamer Ghadhban said on Sunday he expected the deal to be extended by six to nine months.

“Iraq’s position is positive, deals with the reality of the challenges of the oil market and supports all (efforts) related to balancing oil supply and demand,” Ghadhban said.

Iraq has overtaken Iran as OPEC’s second-largest oil producer and its exports have been rising due to investments by Western majors.

Iran’s exports, in contrast, have plummeted to 0.3 million barrels per day in June from as much as 2.5 million bpd in April 2018 due to Washington’s fresh sanctions. The sanctions are putting Iran under unprecedented pressure. Even in 2012, when the European Union joined US sanctions on Tehran, the country’s exports stood at around 1 million bpd. Oil represents the lion’s share of Iran’s budget revenues.

Washington has said it wants to change what it calls a “corrupt” regime in Tehran. Iran has denounced the sanctions as illegal and says the White House is run by “mentally retarded” people.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh has not spoken in recent days about the OPEC meeting. He is due in Vienna on Monday.

ICC Qatar prepares final version of demand guarantee letter

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

THE International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Qatar discussed the final version of the demand guarantee letter in preparation for submission to Qatar Central Bank (QCB) for adoption.

This came during the Banking Commission meeting held with trade finance and legal experts from most of the national banks operating in Qatar in Doha recently.

ICC Qatar said the final wording of the demand guarantee letter was based on the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce for Security Letters (URDG 758), considering international laws and practices in this regard.

The meeting was chaired by Ghassan Azar, Vice Chairman of the ICC Qatar Banking Commission. He stressed the commission is always keen to adopt best practices related to the banking industry.

He said the meeting aimed at finalising the draft letters of credit and bank guarantees before submitting them to the QCB.

Azar hailed Qatar Chamber Chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim bin Mohammed al Thani for his continuous support to the Banking Commission.

He also thanked Sheikha Tamader al Thani, Director of International Relations and Chamber Affairs of ICC Qatar, for her efforts in developing the work of the commission.

QCB is scheduled to hold a meeting with representatives of national banks operating in Qatar to discuss the Demand guarantee letter, with the participation of International Chamber of Commerce Qatar (ICC Qatar) and representatives of Qatari companies.

Trade finance and legal experts from most of the national banks operating in Qatar took part in the ICC Qatar’s Banking Commission meeting in Doha recently.

Establishment of special court for investment, trade will help achieve speedy justice, says SJC president

QNA
DOHA

THE establishment of a specialised court for investment and trade is an important step in the development of the judicial system in Qatar, President of the Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) and Court of Cassations Hassan bin Lahdan al Mohanadi, has said.

In a press statement on Sunday, Hassan lauded the Council of Ministers’ approval for the establishment of the specialised court to achieve speedy justice, develop judicial systems and encourage creative initiatives that contribute to the advancement of the economic and investment sectors in the country.

He said the new court also comes within the framework of creating an attractive environment for investment in Qatar, which has become the focus of many investors.

He noted the establishment of the court keeps pace with the demand for the investment sector in the country and thus is a reassuring message to investors and employers wishing to work in Qatar.

President of the Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) and Court of Cassations Hassan bin Lahdan al Mohanadi

Hassan added the SJC is working hard to develop the judicial system in line with the developments in Qatar.

He pointed out that the council is in the process of preparing for the launch of the Court of Investment and Trade, aimed to accelerate the pace of conflict settlement and achieving justice.

The Judicial Strategy, which is currently being prepared by the SJC, stipulates the importance of developing the judicial system and guaranteeing justice in all fields, ensuring that all litigants have their rights as quickly as possible.

The establishment of the Investment and Trade Court comes after a study prepared by a joint working group comprising representatives of the SJC and the Ministries of Finance, Justice, Trade and Industry in addition to the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Qatar Central Bank, Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Qatar University.

Economy boost

Hassan lauded the Council of Ministers’ approval for the establishment of the specialised court to achieve speedy justice, develop judicial systems and encourage creative initiatives that contribute to the advancement of the economic and investment sectors in the country

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BIS calls on central banks to 'conserve fuel'

AFP
ZURICH

THE Bank of International Settlements on Sunday called on countries to lighten pressure on the world's central banks and to conserve fuel in case of more serious economic downturns ahead.

Presenting the annual report of the Basel-based BIS, considered the central bank for central banks, chief Augustin Carstens warned that a number of factors were weighing on global growth and that "the slowdown appears to be worsening and spreading".

The recovery after the 2007-2008 global financial crisis has relied heavily on central banks using extraordinary monetary policies to restore and fuel growth.

But Carstens warned that "we have seen a slowdown in the pace of expansion since last year." "While the near-term outlook is still good, there are many vulnerabilities further out," he said, stressing the importance of "conserving some fuel to cope with possible headwinds."

The BIS pointed to a number of challenges currently facing the global economy, including swelling debt levels and the ongoing trade tensions, largely attributed to US President Donald Trump's aggressive tariff policies.

"That's probably the main factor that is reducing global economic growth," Carstens told AFP in an interview.

"Even though in a narrow sense they are concentrated in issues between a couple of countries - China, the US - they have an indirect effect in pretty much all the world economy," he said.

"Trade wars have no winners, only losers," he stressed in his presentation.

Carstens insisted that to ensure smooth sailing going forward, countries could not rely solely on the monetary policies put in place by central banks.

"A better mix is required between monetary policy, fiscal policy, macroprudential measures and structural reforms," he said.

The BIS has repeatedly urged governments to put in place true structural reforms, and has long warned that after a decade of extraordinary monetary policies, central banks have limited space to manoeuvre to boost economies.

"Monetary policy cannot be used on a permanent basis to get higher sustainable growth," Carstens said, in what could possibly be seen as a rebuke of the US president.

Trump has bitterly attacked the US Federal Reserve since last year, accusing it of tightening monetary policy too quickly and preventing what he says could be skyrocketing economic growth.

And last week he accused the Fed of acting like "a stubborn child" for not immediately cutting rates.

Amid robust growth last year, the major central banks began gradually tightening their policies. But as trade weakened, many have put their course towards "normalisation" on hold.

The US Federal Reserve has signalled it could ease rates soon if the economic outlook deteriorates.

The European Central Bank has also decided to put off expected rate hikes and has indicated lower rates could be on the horizon.

Carstens cautioned on Sunday that central banks face a difficult "balancing act" between "the risk of slowing to stall speed" and "the risk of burning fuel too fast."

China's factory activity shrinks as US tariffs hit orders in June

● Weak PMI readings spark concerns about stalling economy ● Export, import orders both weaken

Workers make Christmas cards in a factory in Hung Yen, China, recently. (AFP)

REUTERS
BEIJING

CHINA'S factory activity shrank more than expected in June, an official manufacturing survey showed, highlighting the need for more economic stimulus as US tariffs and weaker domestic demand ramped up pressure on new orders for goods.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 49.4 in June, China's National Bureau of Statistics said on Sunday, unchanged from the previous month and below the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis. Analysts polled by Reuters predicted a reading of 49.5.

The weak manufacturing readings are likely to cast a shadow over the apparent progress US and Chinese leaders made at the G20 summit in Japan over the weekend in restarting their troubled talks over tariffs amid a costly trade war.

They will also spark concerns about stalling growth in China and the risk of a global recession, despite slightly better-than-expected export and industrial profits data in May.

Many economists still expect the economy to face strong headwinds in coming months as domestic demand falters and external risks rise.

"Although the outcome of the G20 summit (in Osaka) might boost confidence for some entities, organic growth in the economy is still insufficient, and counter-cyclical stimulus policies need to be maintained," researchers at Huatai Securities wrote in a research note on Sunday.

"The PMI index continued to fall across the board this month, and only the raw material inventory sub-index was up due to weak demand," the research note read.

In June, China's factory output growth slowed, with the subindex falling to 51.3 from 51.7 in May while the contraction in total new orders accelerated to 49.6 from 49.8.

Export orders extended their decline with the sub-index falling to 46.3 from May's 46.5, suggesting a further weakening in global demand.

Import orders also worsened, reflecting softening demand at home despite a flurry of growth-supporting measures rolled out earlier this year.

Southwest Securities said weak new export orders reflected a fading of the front-loading effect, which had temporarily boosted exports as Chinese companies rushed to place orders before more tariffs took effect.

Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping held ice-breaking talks at the G20 summit on Saturday. However, Chinese state media warned on Sunday Beijing and Washington will likely face a long road before the two countries could reach a deal.

Analysts at Nomura expect any gains achieved on a temporary trade deal between China and the United States would prove fleeting with a renewed escalation likely further down the road.

Trump has already imposed tariffs on $250 billion of Chinese goods and is threatening to extend those to another $300 billion, which would effectively cover all of China's exports to the United States. China has retaliated with tariffs on US imports.

To deal with the economic challenges, policymakers have released a range of measures and are expected to launch more. Premier Li Keqiang last week pledged to cut real interest rates on financing for small and micro firms.

Goldman Sachs said the lack of any substantive progress in Sino-US trade talks at the G20 over the weekend suggested stimulus, including cuts to banks' reserve requirements, was likely to be needed.

"We expect more policy easing (two more reserve requirement ratio cuts in 2H this year, more fiscal measures to support infrastructure investment) to come in the next few months," Goldman Sachs said in a note.

Manufacturers continued to cut jobs in June, with the employment sub-index falling to 46.9, compared with 47.0 in May, when it hit the lowest level seen since March 2009.

Deutsche Bank to hire 300 new relationship, investment managers

REUTERS
LONDON

DEUTSCHE Bank plans to hire 300 more relationship and investment mangers for its wealth management business by 2021, as part of a plan to bulk up in areas the German lender hopes will bring steadier revenue streams.

Deutsche Bank is in the middle of a major restructuring as it tries to shrink its investment bank that has struggled to generate sustainable profits since the 2008 financial crisis. The shake up is expected to lead to thousands of job cuts in areas like equities trading.

Chief executive Christian Sewing wants instead to allocate more resources to businesses that have more stable revenue streams, with wealth management one of them.

"This drive to grow our business is now materialising with a big investment push," Fabrizio Campelli, global head of Deutsche Bank Wealth Management told Reuters in an interview.

Under Campelli's plan the number of relationship and investment managers will grow by 300 - around a third of the current numbers - globally. They will be spread across its America, Europe and Emerging Markets regions.

"We need to increase significantly our client footprint, which means the net increase of client facing individuals needs to be material," he said.

Wealth management is attractive to banks as it requires less capital and its earnings tend to be less cyclical.

> "Deutsche's wealth business had 213 billion euros ($242.35 billion) in assets under management (AUM) in the first quarter of the year, up by 14 billion euros from the end of 2018

But it is also highly competitive. Swiss banks UBS and Credit Suisse are already big players, with wealth management at the heart of their business models, while upstart fintech companies are also trying to make inroads.

"The space is very crowded and the market is one that many banks have sought to make a mark on," said Campelli, who has run the business at Deutsche since October 2015.

"We looked at trends we believe Deutsche Bank wealth management can be particularly relevant in and within those areas we are making some very targeted investments".

Campelli said trends they are particularly focused on include the growth in entrepreneurial - as opposed to family - wealth, the increasing number of family offices, and the rise of millennial high net worth individuals, who tend to manage their wealth differently from previous generations.

He declined to say how big the overall investment would be to fund this growth, beyond "several hundred million" euros.

Deutsche's wealth business had 213 billion euros ($242.35 billion) in assets under management (AUM) in the first quarter of the year, up by 14 billion euros from the end of 2018.

It currently trails its major Swiss and US rivals in private banking league tables, tending to sit outside the top ten.

Campelli, an Italian who has been at Deutsche since 2004, would not disclose the bank's long term AUM target but said "if we can't improve from just outside of the top 10 position, I will be very disappointed."

MORE TROUBLE

Google appears to have leveraged Android dominance: India's CCI

The Indian case is similar to one Google faced in Europe, where regulators imposed a $5 bn fine

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

GOOGLE appears to have misused its dominant position in India and reduced the ability of device manufacturers to opt for alternate versions of its Android mobile operating system, Indian officials found before ordering a wider probe in an antitrust case.

A 14-page order from the Competition Commission of India (CCI), reviewed by Reuters this week, found Google's restrictions on manufacturers seemed to amount to imposition of "unfair conditions" under India's competition law.

Reuters reported last month that the CCI had launched a probe in April against Google for its alleged abuse of Android's dominant position to block rivals, but the contents of the directive detailing the initial assessment upon which that investigation was ordered have not been previously revealed.

The Indian case is similar to one Google faced in Europe, where regulators imposed a $5 billion fine on the company for forcing manufacturers to pre-install its apps on Android devices. Google has appealed against the verdict.

By making pre-installation of Google's proprietary apps conditional, Google "reduced the ability and incentive of device manufacturers to develop and sell devices operated on alternate versions of Android", the CCI said in the order. "It amounts to prima facie leveraging of Google's dominance".

Asked for comment, Google referred Reuters to its statement last month, in which it said Android had enabled millions of Indians to connect to the internet by making mobile devices more affordable. Google looked forward to working with the CCI "to demonstrate how Android has led to more competition and innovation, not less", the company said at the time.

The CCI did not respond to a request for comment.

While the order, dated April 16, called for a wider probe against Google, the watchdog's investigations unit could still clear Google of any wrongdoing.

The amount of any fine that could be imposed on Google if the CCI rules against it was not clear.

Android, used by device makers for free, features on about 88 percent of the world's smartphones. In India, about 99 percent of the smartphones sold this year used the platform, Counterpoint Research estimates.

In the EU case, regulators said Google forced manufacturers to pre-install Google Search and its Chrome browser, together with its Google Play app store, on Android devices, giving it an unfair advantage.

In the Indian case, Google argued that Android was an open source platform and pre-installation obligations were "limited in scope", the CCI order said.

The CCI said that complainants in the Indian case - which according to sources involve more than one person - have alleged that Google engaged in abusive behaviour similar to the kind outlined in the European case. They said Google was engaged in anti-competitive practices "with the aim of cementing Google's dominant position".

Google's "impugned conduct may help perpetuate its dominance in online search markets while resulting in denial of market access for competing search apps", the CCI said in its order.

The investigations arm of the CCI should complete the wider probe in the case within 150 days, the order said, though such cases at the watchdog typically drag on for years.

The CCI also said the role of any Google executive in alleged abuse of the Android platform should also be examined.

The investigation is not the only antitrust headache for the Mountain View, California-based company in one of its key growth markets. Last year, the CCI imposed a fine of 1.36 billion rupees ($20 million) on Google for "search bias" and abuse of its dominant position.