

**Egypt: B.Tech set to finalise $32mln securitisation this week**

CIB is spearheading the coordination and management of the issuance, with Dreny & Partners Firm serving as the legal advisor, and Egyptian Gulf Bank acting as the custodian

Egypt - B.Tech, a prominent player in the trade, distribution of home and electronic appliances, and consumer financing services in Egypt, is on track to finalise a short-term securitisation bond issuance worth EGP 1bn. This issuance is part of a larger EGP 5bn multi-issuance program and is expected to be completed by the end of the week.

CIB is spearheading the coordination and management of the issuance, with Dreny & Partners Firm serving as the legal advisor, and Egyptian Gulf Bank acting as the custodian. The issuance is currently pending financial oversight approval.

Seven financial institutions, including CIB, Al Baraka Bank, Arab Investment Bank (AIB), and entities associated with CI Capital Group, Ahli United Bank, and Al Ahli Kuwait Bank, are set to cover the entire issuance. The funds raised will be allocated to settle some of B.Tech’s credit facilities with various banks.

Earlier this year, B.Tech successfully issued securitization bonds valued at EGP 1.038bn in collaboration with CIB. The bonds were divided into three tranches, each with distinct terms, payment priorities, credit ratings, and returns, as part of the EGP 5bn securitization program.

Previously, the Saudi Egyptian Investment Company, linked to the Saudi Public Investment Fund, acquired a 34% minority stake in B.Tech for approximately $150m, reinforcing B.Tech’s position as one of Egypt’s leading home appliance distributors.



# Exports of Egyptian food industries up 15% YoY in 10 months

The Arab world topped the list of receivers of Egyptian food exports from January to October, with $2.344 million worth of imports or 55% of total exports

Exports of Egyptian food industries increased by 15% year on year (YoY) during the first 10 months of 2023 to $4.3 billion, up from $3.8 billion, Chairman of the Food Export Council (FEC) Hani Berzi announced on the launch of Food Africa Expo on December 12th.

The Arab world topped the list of receivers of Egyptian food exports from January to October, with $2.344 million worth of imports or 55% of total exports.

The EU came in second place with $740 million in imports, representing 17% of Egypt’s total food exports, followed by non-Arab African countries with $380 million worth of imports that made up 9% of the country’s total exports.



# African Development Bank lends Tunisia funds for wastewater reuse in agriculture

To be implemented over the period 2024-2028, the project will improve the treatment of wastewater to make it compliant with the standards for its reuse

unisia - The Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group approved a loan of €81.9 million to Tunisia to implement the Treated Wastewater Quality Improvement Project For Climate Resilience Building (PAQEE-RCC) at a meeting in Abidjan on 6 December.

To be implemented over the period 2024-2028, the project will improve the treatment of wastewater to make it compliant with the standards for its reuse. It will improve treatment and energy performance through the renewal of electromechanical and electrical equipment and the use of photovoltaic solar energy in 19 water treatment plants across 11 of the country's governorates. It will also contribute to improving the water balance, to building resilience to climate change and to improving the quality of life for more than 670,000 people.

"This project is an important example of the water-energy-agriculture nexus by upgrading treated wastewater for agriculture and reducing energy costs by using solar energy," said Malinne Blomberg, Deputy Director-General of the African Development Bank for the North Africa Region.

"By using a non-conventional and non-weather dependent resource, this project will make an active contribution to food security (increased production of olives, dates and other fruit, and forage to increase animal, dairy and meat production) against a background of drought and scarcity of water resources, and food product price inflation on the international market," explained Belgacem Ben Sassi, the African Development Bank's regional coordinator for water and sanitation.

More than 3,000 hectares of agricultural land around the water treatment plants involved will be sown using the treated water. The project will create approximately 200 direct temporary jobs (including 20% for women), 50 direct permanent jobs (including 30% for women) and 1,000 indirect jobs, 35% of which will be for women.

This new funding is the Bank's third operation in the urban sanitation subsector to the benefit of Tunisia's National Sanitation Office (ONAS). It brings the total amount of commitments in the drinking water and sanitation sector to more than €400 million since 2011. All these operations have helped to improve access for people, especially those in disadvantaged regions, to drinking water and sanitation services, while promoting the reuse of purified wastewater, particularly in agriculture.



# Gaza war hits neighbouring Arab economies, could cut GDP 2.3% - UN study

The war has come as the three Arab countries face a struggle with fiscal pressures, slow growth and steep unemployment

AMMAN: The economic cost of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza on Arab neighbours Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan could rise to at least $10 billion this year and push more than 230,000 people into poverty, according to a U.N. study.

The war has come as the three Arab countries face a struggle with fiscal pressures, slow growth and steep unemployment, and it has deterred much-needed investment as well as hitting consumption and trade. Lebanon is in a deep economic crisis.

The study, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme, said the cost of the conflict for the three states in terms of loss of GDP may amount to $10.3 billion or 2.3%, and could double if it lasts another six months.

"This is a massive impact," Abdallah Al Dardari, U.N. assistant secretary-general and UNDP's Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) who lead the study told Reuters.

"The crisis was a bomb in an already fragile regional situation... It soured sentiment with fear of what could happen and where things are going," he said.

Israel launched its campaign to annihilate the Hamas militant group that controls Gaza after fighters stormed across the border on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and seizing 240 hostages, according to Israel.

Since then, Israeli forces have besieged the enclave and laid much of it to waste, with more than 18,000 people confirmed killed, according to Palestinian health authorities, and many thousands feared lost in the rubble or beyond the reach of ambulances.

Dardari said the scale of destruction in Gaza within such a brief time was unprecedented since World War Two.

"To lose 45-50% of all housing in one month of fighting ... We have never seen anything like this ... the relationship between destruction level and time, it's unique," Al Dardari said.

The mass displacement of almost 80% of Gaza's population within such a short period eclipsed the more than decade-old Syrian conflict, which sparked the world's biggest refugee crisis.

"It took Syria five years of fighting to reach the same level of destruction that Gaza reached in one month," said Dardari, a former minister for economic affairs in the Syrian government.

Dardari, an expert on reconstruction in conflict zones, said his team was already reaching out to development funds and multilateral financial institutions on post-war reconstruction scenarios for Gaza. "We are not waiting until the battles end... this effort has begun," Dardari said, without elaborating.



# Qatar banking sector assets reach $532bln in October

The overall loan book gained 1.5% in October 2023

Doha, Qatar: Qatar banking sector total assets increased 1.0% MoM (up 1.8% in 2023) in October 2023 to reach QR1.939 trillion and total loan book went up 1.5% MoM (up 1.6% in 2023) and deposits moved up 2.7% MoM (-2.0% in 2023) in the month of October of this year.

Both the public sector and private sector pushed the overall credit higher. As deposits rose in October, the LDR declined to 130.3% vs. 131.8% in September 2023.

The overall loan book gained 1.5% in October 2023. Total public sector loans was higher by 3.1% MoM (-1.6% in 2023). The government segment (represents ~29% of public sector loans) was the main growth driver for the public sector with a surge by 11.2% MoM (-6.8% in 2023). The government institutions’ segment (represents ~64% of public sector loans) edged up 0.1% MoM (-1.6% in 2023). However, the semi-government institutions’ segment moved lower by 1.1% MoM (+31.0% in 2023).

Total private sector loans moved up 0.8% MoM (+3.3% in 2023) in October. The services segment was the main driver for the private sector loan rise. Services (contributes ~31% to private sector loans) increased 2.5% MoM (+9.1% in 2023), while general trade (contributes ~21% to private sector loans) moved up by 0.7% MoM (+5.8% in 2023) and consumption & others (contributes ~21% to private sector loans) was marginally up MoM (+5.4% in 2023). However, the real estate segment (contributes ~21% to private sector loans) declined 0.3% MoM (-5.5% in 2023) in October 2023. Outside Qatar loans moved up by 2.1% MoM (-2.9% in 2023) during the month of October.

Private sector deposits moved higher by 2.7% MoM (+2.8% in 2023) in October 2023. On the private sector front, the companies & institutions’ segment gained significantly by 6.1% MoM (-1.4% in 2023). However, the consumer segment edged down by 0.2% MoM (+7.0% in 2023) during October.

Public sector deposits gained 3.5% MoM (-5.8% in 2023) for the month of October 2023. Looking at segment details, the government segment (represents ~28% of public sector deposits) increased by 5.4% MoM (-14.2% in 2023), while the semi-government institutions’ segment rose 9.3% MoM (+11.1% in 2023). The government institutions’ segment (represents ~56% of public sector deposits) went up 1.0% MoM (-5.5% in 2023) in October 2023.

The non-resident deposits went up by 1.3% MoM (-6.4% in 2023) in October 2023.Qatar banking sector loan provisions to gross loans was at 3.9% in October 2023, compared to 4.0% in September 2023. While, the banking sector liquid assets to total assets was at 31.1% in October 2023, compared to 31.5% in September 2023.



# Central Bank of Oman keeps repo rate unchanged at 6%

The repo rate is the policy rate that allows commercial banks to acquire short term liquidity from the Central Bank as the lender of last resort

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has decided to keep its repo rate for local banks fixed at 6.00%.

The repo rate is the policy rate that allows commercial banks to acquire short term liquidity from the Central Bank as the lender of last resort.

This policy is aligned with the structure and nature of the Omani economy. There are a number of advantages for the Sultanate of Oman that are derived from this policy among which are stability of the Omani Rial, the mitigation of capital outflow and promoting certainty among investors by removing exchange rate risk.



# Oman-Singapore travel connectivity looks to grow with increasing demand

The countries have historical ties dating back to Omani merchants and sailors arriving at the ancient port of Singapore via wooden dhows

The aerial distance between Muscat International Airport (MCT) in Oman and Singapore Changi Airport (SIN) spans approximately 6,267 kilometres.

It is not a new destination for travellers from Oman as in the past. Omani merchants and sailors had arrived in Singapore’s ancient port with wooden dhows. It is 5,000 kilometres by sea, as the wooden ship Jewel of Muscat proved it in 2010.

The countries have historical ties dating back to Omani merchants and sailors arriving at the ancient port of Singapore via wooden dhows. The maritime connection between Oman and Singapore, reminiscent of the Silk Road, saw a revival in the second century, and the Sultanate of Oman in the present millennium not only resurrected maritime routes but also showcased indigenous boat-building skills through the remarkable nail-less dhow, Jewel of Muscat.

Muscat Street, a symbolic reminder of the historical ties between Oman and Singapore, echoes bustling trade from the 1800s to the early 1900s. In the Kampong Glam area, Muscat Street has been adorned with arches, wall paintings, and aesthetic touches inspired by Oman’s rich maritime heritage.

While Omani passport holders enjoy a visa-free short-term stay of 30 days in Singapore, Singaporean passport holders visiting Oman can stay for up to 14 days for tourism purposes, provided they have confirmed hotel reservations and return tickets.

Singapore stands out globally as a finance, technology, and medical tourism hub, ranking second in the medical tourism index. Conversely, Oman, with tourism as a key diversification pillar, invites visitors to experience its unique blend of culture, environment, heritage, and renowned hospitality.

Tourist flows from Oman to Singapore experienced a notable dip in 2009 but rebounded strongly in 2010, with consistent growth until stabilisation in 2013-2015. Subsequently, there was a significant surge in 2016, and since then, the trend has been steady growth.

Recent data from September 2023 reveals 828,315 visitors to Singapore, compared to 1,056,102 the previous month. While this represents a decline, Singapore has historically seen fluctuations, with a record high of 1,397,737 in August 2019 and a low of 1,732 in September 2020.

Beyond tourism, the collaboration between Oman and Singapore extends to education, training, and qualification programmes, marked by numerous agreements and memoranda of understanding. Singapore’s prestigious health institutions have actively offered fellowship programmes to Omani doctors.

Moreover, scholarships such as the Royal Society International Exchange Programme and NUS President’s Graduate Fellowship are available for Omani students in Singapore. This educational exchange strengthens the bonds between the two nations.

Given these historical ties, growing tourism, and deepening cooperation, the question arises: Should there be more flights and direct airline connections between Muscat and Singapore? The answer lies in the increasing demand. As bilateral relations continue to flourish, enhancing air connectivity will boost tourism and facilitate more seamless collaboration and cultural exchange between these two nations.