

Kuwait among least indebted countries

Recent statistics published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) shows that Kuwait is among the least indebted countries in the world, when the government's gross debt is expressed as a percentage of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The IMF list of countries with debt as a percent of its GDP shows Kuwait in 10th rank, and becoming the only Arab country in the top-ten, with debt to GDP ratio of 17.8 percent. Hong Kong and Macao, both special administrative regions (SAR) of China, came out jointly in top position with zero debt.

Brunei in second spot with 2.6 percent of debt GDP, followed by Afghanistan with 6.9 percent, Estonia with 7.6 percent and Botswana with 12.8 percent debt to round off the top-five positions.

Russia ranked sixth among the world's 10 least-debtor countries with 13.8 percent of GDP, the Democratic Republic of Congo came in seventh with 14 percent debt, followed by Solomon Islands with 14.6 percent and Azerbaijan with ninth in debt with 17.6 percent.



Saudi private sector employment growth at 18-month high in September: PMI

DUBAI: Growth in Saudi Arabia's non-oil private sector increased in September at the fastest rate for three months, as output increased and employment growth reached an 18-month high, a survey showed on Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 57.3 in September from 57.0 in August. Any reading above the 50 mark indicates expansion.

Growth has picked up this year after flagging in 2018 because of increases in fuel prices and the introduction of a 5% value-added tax. The PMI averaged 56.9 from

January till September, against a 53.6 average for the same period last year.

"Output among non-oil private sector firms in Saudi Arabia grew at a sharp pace in September, with the rate of expansion quickening to the fastest since December 2017," said Amritpal Virdee, principal economist at survey compiler IHS Markit.

"At current levels, the PMI survey is consistent with year-on-year GDP growth of around 3% as we head into the final quarter of

2019," he said. Saudi GDP contracted in 2017 before recovering to 2.2% growth last



year, helped by strong oil output. Oil output cuts this year mean

GDP is expected to show little growth or to contract.

Employment levels rose in September at the strongest rate of growth since March last year. The sub-index increased to 51.5 from 50.1 a month earlier.

"Non-oil private sector firms sought to add to their payrolls at the most marked pace in 18 months, buoyed by efforts to improve the quality of product offerings," Virdee said.

Output growth increased to 61.7 from 60.7 in August, but new orders edged

down to 62.3 from 63.5 a month earlier.

New export orders rose only slightly, to 52.8 from 52.7, showing domestic demand was driving new business.

Fitch on Monday downgraded Saudi Arabia's credit rating to A from A+, citing rising geopolitical and military tensions in the Gulf following a major attack on its oil facilities last month and a deterioration of the kingdom's fiscal position.

"October data will provide the first opportunity to gauge the impact of the recent attacks on the critical oil processing facilities in Abaqaiq and Khurais on the wider economy," Virdee said.

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Number of expats in Oman on the rise again

Muscat: The total number of expats in Oman nearly crossed the 2 million threshold in September 2019, according to Oman's National Centre for Statistics and Information.

As of 20 September,

Batinah with 265,366 expats and Dhofar with 233,124 expats.

The lowest number of expats were in Musandam with 15,364 expats and in Al Wusta with 24,547 expats, followed by Al Buraimi with



there were 1,999,978 expats in Oman, and this number increased to 2,001,090 compared to 2,674,049 Omanis as of Tuesday, October 2, 2019.

Most expats in Oman — as of August 2019 — were in Muscat with 881,748 expats, followed by North Al

56,770 expats.

The percentage of expats in Oman has decreased from 45.8 per cent in 2016 to 45.5 in 2017, then 44.2 per cent in 2018 and 42.8 per cent in 2019 (so far) as the Sultanate's government's 'Omanisation' drive kicks into high gear.

Mol to terminate expats working in 'sensitive' sectors

KUWAIT: As part of the interior ministry's plans to replace expatriate employees with Kuwaitis, it issued internal instructions to make lists of all expat employees pending terminating their contracts, said informed sources. The sources explained that many expat administrative employees at the traffic, citizenship and passport departments will be laid off in view of the availability of citizens qualified to replace them, in addition to the need to transfer extra Kuwaiti employees from other interior ministry departments to the abovementioned ones.

"The interior ministry believes that the traffic, citizenship and passport departments are closely linked to Kuwait's security, and thus their staff members should all be citizens," the sources explained, reminding of the previous involvement of expat employees in driving license forgeries. The sources added that all expat administrative employees in other interior ministry departments, with the exception of legal advisors, will be laid off within a maximum of two years.



Meanwhile, Kuwaiti daily Al-Qabas quoted well-informed sources as saying that in a bid to resolve the unemployment problem, the Cabinet will discuss a comprehensive government study on nationalizing thousands of jobs in the private sector and replacing expats working as administrative, legal and secretarial staff with Kuwaitis.

The sources added that such a step will increase the amounts paid

by the state in national labor support allowances to around KD 1 billion after laying off 130,000 to 150,000 expats — 8 to 10 percent of the total of 1.6 million expat employees in the private sector. In addition, the sources explained said Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel is coordinating with various bodies to formulate a new strategy to develop and increase Kuwaiti manpower in the private sector.

North Korea: 'Grave moment' as North tests missile fired from sea

North Korea has confirmed it test-fired a new type of a ballistic missile, a significant escalation from the short-range tests it has conducted since May.

The missile - which was able to carry a nuclear weapon - was the North's 11th test this year.

But this one, fired from a platform at sea, was capable of being launched from a submarine.

Being submarine-capable is important as it means North Korea could launch missiles far outside its territory.

According to South Korean officials, the missile flew about 450km (280 miles) and reached an altitude of 910km before landing in the sea.

That means the missile flew twice as high as the International Space Station, but previous North Korean tests have gone higher.

GCC 'leading global efforts for \$1trln circular economy

The GCC is leading global efforts to deliver the \$1 trillion circular economy, particularly in sustainable waste management, through recycling, reusing and re-manufacturing methods, said senior experts ahead of a major industry event in Abu Dhabi.

The EcoWaste Exhibition & Forum is being hosted by Abu Dhabi Waste Management Center - Tadweer from January 13 to 16 and will be co-located at the World Future Energy Summit 2020 in Abu Dhabi.

Driven by population growth, the amount of waste generated across the Middle East and North Africa is expected to double to 255 million tonnes per year by 2050, according to the World Bank.

Furthermore, as economies across the world increase measures to recycle, reuse, and re-manufacturing, the World Economic Forum predicts a \$1 trillion market opportunity for the circular economy, which could create 100,000 new jobs by 2025.

The UAE, through the World Economic Forum's "Scale 360" circular economy initiative and the UAE Vision 2021, aims to divert 75 percent of waste from landfills.

Supporting regional and global waste reduction targets and initiatives, the EcoWASTE

Exhibition & Forum will bring together leading exhibitors and speakers across the recycling, waste management and waste-to-energy industries to advance new business opportunities and share



best practices.

The Abu Dhabi Waste Management Center - Tadweer has signed up as the strategic partner for the event, where it will showcase how their partnership with other government organisations is supporting state-of-the-art waste management and the circular economy.

The GCC's government-led strategies and investment in

embracing the circular economy are paving a bright path for sustainable waste practices that can be shared worldwide, according to the organisers.

The forum will see experts

discuss ways on how integrated waste management can drive sustainable economic growth, protect the environment, and ultimately enhance the quality of people's daily lives.

At EcoWaste, Tadweer will be showcasing best practices from its sustainability initiatives, including state-of-the-art hazardous waste treatment, replacing waste bins, launching

electronic auctions for selling recyclable waste, and supporting residential recycling and agricultural collection points.

Some of the prominent exhibitors at the event include Bee'ah, Dulevo International, and Eldan Recycling.

One of the main goals of the expo is to bring Middle East innovators to a global market, such as the Saudi Arabia-based hazardous waste management company Environment Development Company (Edco).

"As the Middle East faces more demand in waste management, advanced and up-to-date technologies and methods are required to transport, treat, and dispose of hazardous waste, especially those from industrial facilities including oil refineries," remarked its CEO Abdul Wahab Al Ahmari. "EcoWaste has proven to be a unique and distinguishable platform for Edco to grow our business in the Gulf region, and emphasise the importance of the efficiency and feasibility implemented on every step of the waste treatment and disposal being done by Edco in hazardous waste management," he stated.

Multi-national companies, such as the Italy-headquartered Dulevo International, will also showcase their innovations.

Dulevo International is one of the world's top five manufacturers of sweepers for commercial, industrial, and urban cleaning, and is active in over 80 countries.

"The Middle East's growing sustainable waste management market is supported by the upgrading of street sweepers, industrial sweepers, and man-on-board and walk-behind waste management vehicles," remarked Mario Pepe, Global Sales Director, Dulevo International.

"The event is key for Dulevo to expand our cleaning business, especially in showcasing our first all-electric cleaning machines to clear litter and enhance air quality," he added.

The EcoWaste is the key platform for waste and sustainability business leaders to engage with new customers, and showcase innovative products and technologies that can make a difference for the environment and communities, said Grant Tuchten, Group Event Director, World Future Energy Summit.

"The event will highlight how organisations, cities, and countries can leverage the latest innovations to divert waste from landfills, support recycling programmes, and create a more sustainable future," he added. **Courtesy by Trade Arabia**

Benefits of new Qatar Visa Center in Philippines discussed at roundtable – ILO

MANILA - The establishment of a Qatar Visa Center (QVC) in the Philippines and the benefits it will bring to jobseekers were discussed at a roundtable meeting held in Manila

Bringing together representatives from trade unions, civil society and the recruitment industry, the event saw an exchange of insights on how the QVC can effectively serve those planning to migrate to Qatar. Participants also highlighted the need to create awareness amongst those looking for work overseas of the new office and the services it provides. "We are given the opportunity to learn more about this innovative initiative and to discuss the implementation of the Qatar Visa Center based on stakeholders' insights that put premium on international labour standards and core human rights instruments," ILO Country Director Khalid Hassan emphasized.

The QVC was officially inaugurated on 25 September 2019 at the NU Mall of Asia Building, Mall of Asia Complex in Pasay City, Philippines. Its goal is to make recruitment and deployment procedures more transparent for both prospective migrant workers and employers in Qatar. QVCs help facilitate procedures for migrant workers by allowing applicants in all

sectors to digitally sign work contracts before travelling, enrol their biometric data and undergo mandatory medical testing before departure, without having to repeat the tests upon arrival in Qatar. Upon completion of the process, visa applicants are able to track the status of the application online. All the required services of the QVC are free of charge for migrant workers and directly paid by employers in Qatar through bank transfer.

Importantly, QVCs also help reduce contract deception at the recruitment phase and provide workers with detailed information about their rights and obligations, including what living and working in Qatar will be like. Workers can now read their exact contract terms before migrating; giving them greater autonomy to reconsider migrating, if the terms do not correspond to their expectations.

"Developing the QVC system went through a long, consultative process. The different ministries of the State of Qatar coordinated with the Philippine government, thru its Embassy and the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Doha. The QVC system has also benefitted from the feedback of various stakeholders in different pilot countries and from the assistance of the ILO," Department of Immigration Director Mohammed Abdulla

Khalifa Al Mohannadi of the Ministry of Interior said during the discussion.

The ILO is providing technical advice on the development of the Qatar Visa Centers through its Project Office for the State of Qatar, and support to the dissemination of the QVC procedures among trade unions and civil society organizations in the Philippines through its FAIR programme. Taking part in the roundtable discussion held in Pasay City, were representatives of the Qatar Ministry of Interior, the Qatar Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment-International Labor Affairs Bureau, the Federation of Free Workers, the Center of United and Progressive Workers, Building and Wood Workers International, Staffhouse International, Center for Migrant Advocacy, Blas Ople Center and the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch.

In the last Survey on Overseas Filipinos released by the Philippine Statistics Authority in April 2019, Qatar remains one of the top ten destination countries with more than 130,000 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) currently working there.

Sponsors to pay for deportation of workers

Citizens to be denied services in a long-awaited move, the Ministry of Interior (Mol) is to reclaim money due from sponsors for charges related to the deportation of workers under their visa.

The sponsor will have to bear all expenses, including airfare, incurred by the Mol for deporting

of Mol is expected to deliver a severe blow to visa traders, who sell visas to workers at exorbitant prices and then expect the ministry to foot the bill for their deportations.

Visa traders often sell visas to overseas workers under false pretext and then abandon them once they arrive in the country, as they have no jobs to offer the



workers apprehended for violating the residence or labor laws, even if they have been reported absconding by the sponsor. To facilitate the reclaim process, the Mol has tied up with the Citizens Service Centers in all governorates. Accordingly, if a citizen fails to pay what they owe the ministry, all their transactions with the Citizens Service Centers will be blocked.

The belated action on the part

workers. When such workers are apprehended and subsequently deported, the Mol has to bear the expenses including the price of airtickets.

The ministry said it would continue to deport the visa trade victims at its expense, but from now on, the sponsor will have to pay for the expenses incurred or their transactions with the Citizens Service Centers would remain blocked.