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UK offers extra $6.2bn to firms to soften new Covid recession

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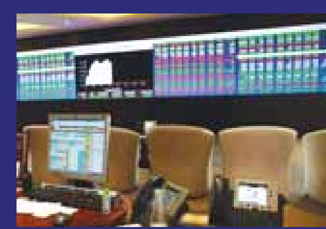
GULF TIMES
BUSINESS



REDUCED RISKS : Page 8

Qatar-Saudi border reopening boosts sentiments on QSE

Qatar set to post GCC's best growth rate of 3% in 2021: World Bank

By Pratap John
Business Editor

Qatar economy is set to rebound this year with the World Bank forecasting it to grow 3%, which will be the best in the entire GCC region.

According to the World Bank, Qatar's economy is estimated to have contracted with a -2% growth in 2020.

For 2022, the Bank has forecast a 3% growth for Qatar economy.

The other GCC countries are forecast to grow between 0.5% and 2.2% this year.

In an online briefing, the World Bank said economic activity in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) is forecast to recover modestly to 2.1% in 2021, reflecting the lasting damage from the pandemic and low oil prices.

The recovery is contingent on containment of the pandemic, stabilising oil prices, no further escalation of geopolitical tensions, and the assumption of a vaccine rollout in the second half of the year.

By 2022, after two years of expected recovery, output is still about 8% below the output projected prior to the pandemic, with a larger impact on oil importers than exporters.

Among oil exporters, growth is expected to recover to 1.8% this year, supported by normalising oil demand, the scheduled easing of the Opec+ oil production cuts, policy support, and the gradual phasing out of domestic pandemic-related restrictions.

Growth in oil importers is expected to rebound to 3.2% in 2021 as mobility restrictions are gradually eased and exports and domestic demand recover slowly.

The World Bank has also forecast a 3% growth for Qatar economy in 2022

Morocco is expected to rebound to 4% in 2021 as the country's agricultural output recovers from drought and the government eases domestic lockdowns.

According to World Bank, the Covid-19 pandemic caused output losses in the region of an estimated 5% in 2020. Employment losses spiked in many economies and employment remains depressed.

The income shock from the pandemic is expected to increase the number of people below the $5.5 per day poverty line in the region by tens of millions this year.

Output by Mena oil exporters is estimated to have contracted by 5.7% last year. Oil sector output growth continues to be constrained by commitments to the Opec+ production cut agreement, the World Bank noted.

Oil importers experienced a milder contraction of 2.2% in 2020, reflecting an initially limited Covid-19 outbreak in the first half of the year and lower oil prices. However, the pace of new infections has risen rapidly and fresh policy uncertainty has compounded the impact of pandemic-related disruptions to activity.

Most economies in the region have announced fiscal stimulus packages that include increased spending on health and social safety nets, tax payment reductions and deferrals, and loans and guarantees to firms. Monetary policy adjustments, the World Bank said, have also helped to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic, with the average interest rate cuts of over 125 basis points. Pages 2, 8

QLM awaits regulatory approval for QSE debut

QLM Life and Medical Insurance, which recently closed its initial public offering (IPO), is awaiting regulatory approval for its debut on Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE).

The listing was scheduled for January 6 as per its initial public offer (IPO) prospectus, but a company spokesman said it will provide an update on the precise date "as soon as regulatory approvals are obtained and the date is confirmed."

After QLM starts trading, expected to be in this month itself, it will join the insurance sector, which already has Qatar Insurance, Qatar General Insurance and Reinsurance, Al Khaleej Takaful, Qatar Islamic Insurance and Doha Insurance.

QLM, which had offered 210mn ordinary shares at QR3.15 a piece (including QR2.14 premium), saw "high" demand from retail and corporate investors and was oversubscribed, reflecting investors' enthusiasm and trust in the company.

QLM's IPO, which corresponds to a total market capitalisation of QR1.1bn, was the first maiden offer in Qatar where the vast majority of subscriptions were placed using online platforms, reflecting the rapid development of Qatar's capital markets.

QSE chief executive Rashid bin Ali al-Mansoori had recently said in a tweet that QLM "will act as a gateway for investment diversification, deepening the market, and attracting more local and foreign investments."

At present, QSE has 47 listed companies with 13 in the banks and financial services sector, 10 each in industrials and consumer goods, five in insurance, four in the real estate, three in the transport and two in the telecom sector.

QLM's IPO saw "high" demand from retail and corporate investors and was oversubscribed

'Reopening of Qatar-Saudi border to create 'new wave of business opportunities'

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

The reopening of Saudi Arabia's borders and airspace to Qatar, which was announced on the eve of the 41st GCC Summit, is seen as a key step to revive economic ties of both countries, a business council official has said.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani led the Qatari delegation, which attended the summit held yesterday in the city of Al-Ula in Saudi Arabia.

This was a "welcome development" towards resolving the economic blockade imposed on Qatar by its Arab neighbours in June 5, 2017, according to Qatar-Indonesia Business Council (QIBC) president Farhan al-Sayed.

According to al-Sayed, the developments announced during the summit, is seen to create a "positive effect" on the economies of both countries. He said the Qatar-Saudi border in Abu Samra is a strategic corridor where a large majority of Saudi exports to Qatar pass through.

"Qatar has managed to overcome the economic impact of the blockade, and has emerged stronger because of its fiscal and economic reforms, as well as the many initiatives it has implemented in the past three years to transform the country into a robust and self-sufficient state in the GCC region. The opening of the Abu Samra border is expected to boost Qatar's economic growth now that trade ties with Saudi Arabia is expected to resume."

Al-Sayed pointed out the reopening of Qatar's only land border with Saudi Arabia "will create "a new wave of business opportunities," citing "the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir had played a key role in ending the Gulf crisis."

"Resumption of air travel to Saudi Arabia will be significant for Qatar Airways as this will revive the travel and tourism industry, especially in Qatar. People in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, especially across the border, love Qatar and they travel frequently to the country, particularly during the weekends. "Prior to the blockade, hotels in Qatar record high occupancy rates from Thursday because of local tourist inflow from the GCC. Qatar is accessible from Saudi's Eastern province in just a few hours, so we hope that tourist influx from this area would resume soon, and this is the perfect time to enjoy the tourism destinations across the country. If other neighbouring countries follow suit, it would be a 'win-win' situation for all concerned," al-Sayed told *Gulf Times* earlier yesterday.

QIBC president Farhan al-Sayed.

"Aside from the blockade, Qatar also hurdled the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the government was able to protect both its citizens and expatriates from the infection. With the ongoing vaccination campaign, this only provides a glimpse of the positive direction the country is headed this 2021," he added.

End to the Gulf crisis seen boosting Qatar economy

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

The resolve to the more than three-year-long Gulf crisis is seen as the "beginning of the openness", the effects of which will be felt in the medium term, whereby the positive impact will be more on Qatar's economy, especially on liquidity and connectivity, said a top official of Aventicum Capital, a joint venture between the Qatar Investment Authority and Credit Suisse.

Expecting Islamic banks, logistics and transportation and tourism sectors to be the major beneficiaries in the medium term; Talal F Samhouri, portfolio manager of Aventicum Capital said Qatar's private sector will also evaluate the benefits of re-establishing their business links.

"The biggest beneficiary and perhaps the fastest will be Islamic banks because traditionally they used to draw lot of interests in deposits from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries because of the higher interest rate regime in Qatar," he said, adding such funds from the regional markets would lower the cost of funds and therefore will be positive for them in terms of both topline and bottom line.

Talal F Samhouri, portfolio manager, Aventicum Capital

Overall the economies of both the country would stand to benefit but the positive impact would be more on Doha's in terms of liquidity, according to Samhouri.

Terming the opening of border as "the beginning of openness to other countries" in the neighbourhood; he said the effect of it would be felt only in the medium term because of the time taken in establishing the commercial contacts.

Doha would also benefit more from the connectivity as more travellers from Saudi Arabia would come, Samhouri said, highlighting that annually 1bn-1.5bn people from Saudi used to visit Qatar before blockade. In this regard, the move would be positive, specifically for Qatar Airways and generally for the tourism, hotel and real estate sectors.

On Qatar Airways, he said the lifting of airspace blockade will result in fuel and cost savings for the national carrier in the medium term, which would reflect in their pricing structure.

Krisjanis Krustins, director (Sovereign Ratings), Fitch Ratings, is of the view that a resumption of travel links will eventually lift tourism inflows, and greater interest from regional buyers could support the real estate market, which has been in a multi-year downturn.

The normalisation of relations between Qatar and its neighbours, signalled by the reopening of borders with Saudi Arabia, will help Qatar's non-oil economy, according to him.

Companies from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries would now have to compete with what Doha has built in, especially after the blockade, which had strengthened its self-sufficiency measures, Samhouri said, hinting that their pricing would have to be on competitive terms.

BUSINESS

Swelling Iraqi oil sales mean trouble for Opec+ output plans

Flames emerge from flare stacks at the oil fields in Basra (file). Crude shipments from Iraq, the second largest producer in Opec, rose 4% last month to 3.26mn barrels a day, according to tanker-tracking and port-agent data compiled by Bloomberg.

Bloomberg
Baghdad

Iraq boosted crude exports in December and may have exceeded its Opec+ output quota, which could complicate talks between major producers over whether to boost oil supplies.

Crude shipments from Iraq, the largest producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries after Saudi Arabia, rose 4% last month to 3.26mn barrels a day, according to tanker-tracking and port-agent data compiled by Bloomberg.

Opec and its allies such as Russia are weighing recent price gains against fresh coronavirus lockdowns that could stifle energy demand as they try to determine whether to increase oil output next month.

The Opec+ alliance agreed in early December to pump an extra 500,000 barrels a day in January, and it's meeting this week to consider an increase of the same size in February.

As Opec+ members begin opening their taps, more will end up exceeding their quotas, said Bob McNally, president of consultant Rapidan Energy Group and a former White House official. For now, Russia and Iraq are "by far" the biggest quota-busters, he said to Bloomberg Television.

Iraq, mired in an economic crisis, has pumped above its cap on several occasions since Opec+ agreed to cuts in April. Oil prices rallied after the group started its cutbacks, but still fell about 25% during 2020. Brent crude dropped a second day on Tuesday, sliding 0.5% to $50.85 a barrel by 3.09pm in Singapore.

Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabbar said in December that his nation would respect its production cap even as it raised exports over the course of the month.

Baghdad's quota was about 3.8mn barrels a day in December, before accounting for compensation cuts that it promised for the earlier breaches. Iraq pumped 3.86mn barrels daily in November, according to a Bloomberg survey, when exports were 3.13mn barrels a day. A survey showing Opec's December production will be published later this week.

Although exports aren't a direct gauge of production, they do shed light on a country's actual output. Iraq can consume as much as 650,000 barrels a day of crude in its refineries and often uses oil in power plants. To have met its quota last month, Iraq would have had to curb domestic use or sell crude held in storage.

Exports from neighbouring Iran also rose in December, reaching the highest level since March, according to tanker-tracking data.

Iran is exempt from an Opec+ production limit, however, due to US sanctions. Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said in mid-December that his country planned to roughly double production in the next year to 4.5mn barrels daily as it anticipates a loosening of sanctions after Joe Biden becomes president.

Russia has breached its output targets as well, according to data from the International Energy Agency. Moscow's compliance with the Opec+ deal has averaged 95%, meaning it has pumped about 100,000 barrels a day above its limit.

"For some reason, Russia and Iraq have been given a little bit of leeway to lag," McNally said. He sees "no sign really of them coming into full compliance soon, much less making up for their owed barrels."

Saudi 'offers extra oil output cut' as part of Opec+ deal

New virus variants, lockdowns threaten demand; vaccine rollouts support recovery outlook

Reuters
Moscow/London

Saudi Arabia has offered to make voluntary cuts in its oil output in February in a bid to persuade fellow Opec+ producers to hold steady amid concerns that new coronavirus lockdowns will hit demand.

Two Opec sources said Saudi Arabia made the offer on Tuesday at a meeting of Opec+, which combines Opec producers and others including Russia, after failed talks on Monday.

It was not clear how much Saudi Arabia offered to cut on its own.

Opec+ sources told Reuters that Russia and Kazakhstan were pushing for the group to raise production by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) while Iraq, Nigeria and the UAE suggested holding output steady.

An internal Opec+ document, seen by Reuters on Tuesday and dated January 4, set out several scenarios for 2021, including the possibility of cutting by 500,000 bpd in February.

It highlighted bearish risks and "stressed that the reimplementation of Covid-19 containment measures across continents, including full lockdowns, are dampening the oil demand rebound in 2021".

Three Opec+ sources said chances of a collective cut were slim as very few producers supported it and most countries favoured either steady supply or an increase in February.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman on Monday said Opec+ should be cautious, despite a generally optimistic market environment, as demand for fuel remained fragile and variants of the coronavirus were unpredictable.

New variants of the coronavirus first reported in Britain and South Africa have since been found in countries across the world.

Opec+ producers have been curbing output to support prices and reduce oversupply since January 2017.

As Covid-19 hammered demand for gasoline and aviation fuel, benchmark Brent oil futures plunged below $16 a barrel last April, forcing Opec+ to boost its output cuts to a record 9.7mn bpd in mid-2020.

With Brent holding above $50 per barrel, Opec+ took the opportunity to raise output by 500,000 bpd in January, putting its current cuts at 7.2mn bpd.

Brent was trading up nearly 4% at above $53 per barrel at 1626 GMT.

Opec+ producers have been curbing output to support prices and reduce oversupply since January 2017

Turkey targets tax and price rises to lessen inflationary impact, say bankers

Reuters
Ankara

Turkish authorities are raising taxes and prices for 2021 only on items that would have a limited impact on inflation, two bankers said on Tuesday.

Inflation ended 2020 above government forecasts at 14.6%, mainly due to a sharp decline in the lira and surging food prices.

The central bank has lifted its policy rate by 675 basis points in its last two meetings to 17%, as it aims to bring inflation down to 9.4% by the end of 2021.

Bankers said the government, in a departure from previous years, is hiking taxes and prices on items that account for only a small portion of the inflation basket.

Ankara has recently lowered tax on tobacco products, which account for 5.71% of the inflation basket, while increasing tax on beverages or highway tolls, which have a much lower weighting, by 17%-26%.

"We are seeing that the state is moving its price hikes to areas that will not have an impact on inflation," one banker said, adding that the strategy would support the central bank's disinflationary policy with only a limited impact on the budget.

A second banker said only the 21.56% rise in gross minimum wage this year would increase inflation, while for all other decisions, inflation was the "sole determinant."

Turkey's EPDK energy regulator hiked the price of electricity for consumers by around 6%, which would add 17 basis points to inflation in January.

BOTAS, Turkey's state natural gas distribution company, raised the price on natural gas for some users by 1%, which would contribute another 2 basis points to inflation. Inflation is expected to continue rising in the first four months of 2021 but start to decline afterwards.

Governor Naci Agbal has said the central bank's main aim is price stability, and that it will also work to build its reserves transparently.

The bank sold off an estimated $130bn to stabilise the ailing lira, which ended last year down some 20%, leading to a drawdown in net forex reserves.

World Bank tips fragile recovery for Mena in 2021

AFP
Dubai

The World Bank on Tuesday predicted a moderate economic recovery for the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) in 2021, while highlighting the many challenges still posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Washington-based institution said the pandemic had seen the region's economies shrink by about 5.0% in 2020, inflicting heavy job losses and a sharp increase in the number of people living below the poverty line of less than $5.50 a day.

"Among oil exporters, growth is expected to recover to 1.8% this year, supported by normalising oil demand, the scheduled easing of the Opec+ oil production cuts, policy support, and the gradual phasing out of domestic pandemic-related restrictions," it said in a report.

Saudi Arabia, the largest economy in the Arab world, will benefit from the resumption of public projects, which had been postponed at the beginning of the crisis, and the recovery of demand after a sharp rise in VAT, it said, tipping a 2.0% expansion.

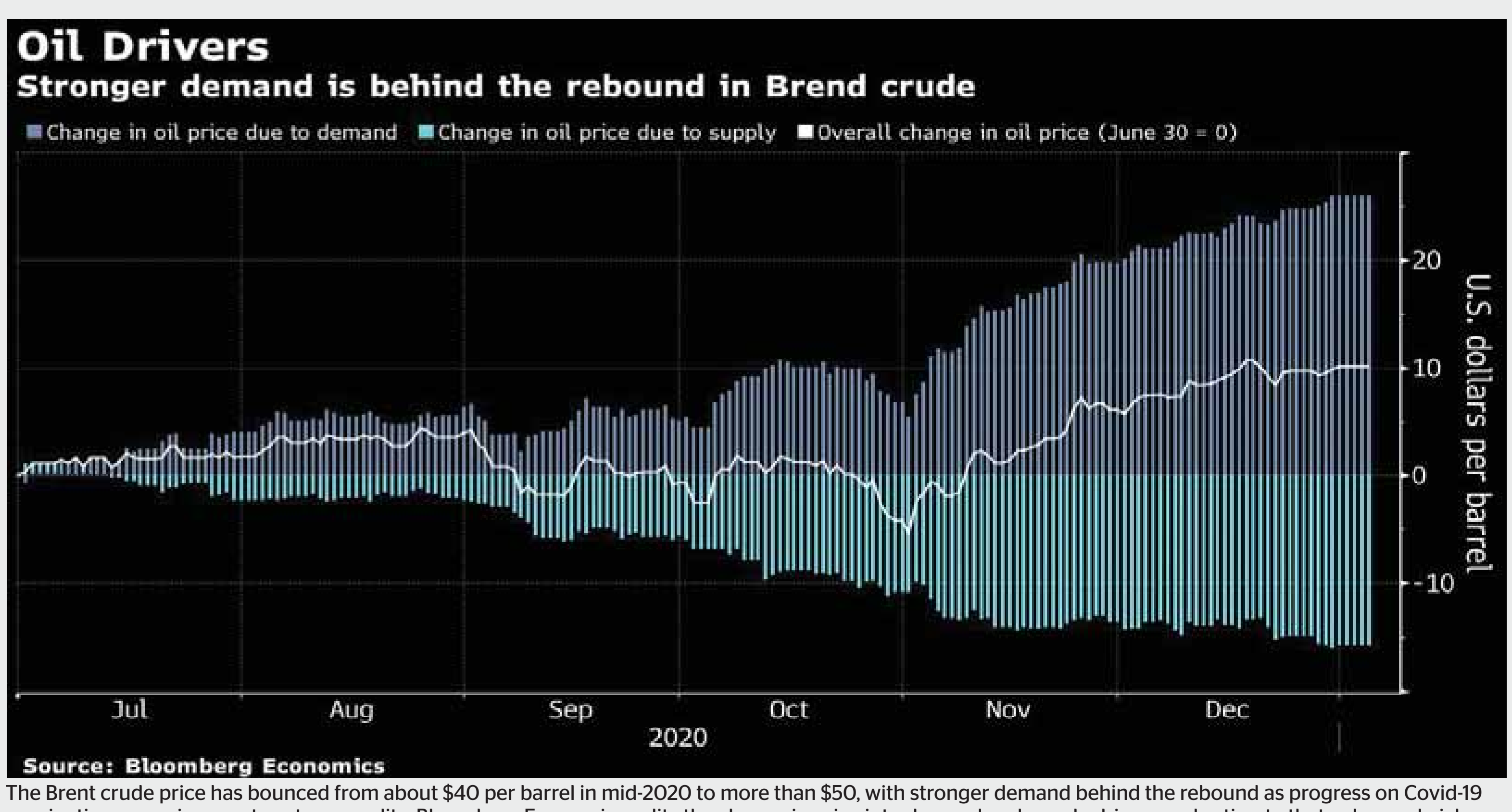
Growth should also accelerate to 1.5% in Iran thanks to the recovery of domestic consumption and tourism and the mitigation of the effects of Covid-19, they added.

Growth in other countries in the region is expected to reach 3.2% in 2021 due to the easing of travel restrictions and a slow recovery of domestic demand. However, it is expected to reach only 2.7% in Egypt, the most populous country in the region, following the "collapse" of various sectors, notably tourism and gas extraction.

The World Bank warned that regional economies faced a variety of hurdles as they try to get back on their feet.

"The recovery is contingent on containment of the pandemic, stabilising oil prices, no further escalation of geopolitical tensions, and the assumption of a vaccine rollout in the second half of the year," it said.

Stronger demand seen behind oil price rebound



The Brent crude price has bounced from about $40 per barrel in mid-2020 to more than $50, with stronger demand behind the rebound as progress on Covid-19 vaccinations promises a return to normality. Bloomberg Economics splits the change in price into demand and supply drivers and estimate that a demand pick-up accounted for $25 of the gain over the last six months. Higher supply has weighed on prices, though, subtracting $15 per barrel.

QATAR

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Zad Holding Co	15.00	0.00	64,596
Widam Food Co	6.27	-0.44	558,543
Vodafone Qatar	1.36	-0.07	3,709,361
United Development Co	1.67	-0.36	7,868,097
Salam International Investme	0.66	1.07	44,727,379
Qatar & Oman Investment Co	0.89	0.91	2,159,785
Qatar Navigation	7.05	0.00	1,278,629
Qatar National Cement Co	4.30	0.99	587,004
Qatar National Bank	18.49	2.44	4,743,055
Qatar Islamic Insurance	6.91	2.37	140,024
Qatar Industrial Manufactur	3.21	0.00	22,269
Qatar International Islamic	9.30	0.91	1,533,183
Qatari Investors Group	1.84	1.83	1,097,034
Qatar Islamic Bank	17.46	1.75	856,836
Qatar Gas Transport(Nakilat)	3.31	3.44	8,766,158
Qatar General Insurance & Re	2.55	-3.74	42,940
Qatar German Co For Medical	2.22	0.68	2,245,906
Qatar Fuel Qsc	18.98	0.48	1,827,032
Qatar First Bank	1.72	1.29	7,060,042
Qatar Electricity & Water Co	18.23	1.84	755,892
Qatar Exchange Index Etf	10.37	0.76	61,912
Qatar Cinema & Film Distrib	3.66	-8.31	16,170
Al Rayan Qatar Etf	2.42	0.92	596,444
Qatar Insurance Co	2.50	2.88	5,319,505
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing	0.98	1.24	8,795,052
Ooredoo Qpsc	7.55	0.83	2,405,173
National Leasing	1.26	0.32	9,107,585
Mazaya Qatar Real Estate Dev	1.28	0.08	20,527,742
Mesaieed Petrochemical Holdi	2.07	1.27	2,842,751
Al Meera Consumer Goods Co	20.64	-1.20	73,234
Medicare Group	8.85	-0.27	360,126
Mannai Corporation Qsc	3.02	0.50	753,167
Masraf Al Rayan	4.56	1.00	8,635,215
Al Khalij Commercial Bank	1.88	0.16	6,358,679
Industries Qatar	10.93	0.74	1,033,545
Islamic Holding Group	5.17	1.73	1,574,868
Investment Holding Group	0.60	0.50	167,306,042
Gulf Warehousing Company	5.15	0.59	4,082,477
Gulf International Services	1.73	-0.75	4,937,973
Ezdan Holding Group	1.80	0.90	13,632,197
Doha Insurance Co	1.40	0.14	109,750
Doha Bank Qpsc	2.39	0.13	487,833
Dlala Holding	1.80	-0.11	998,626
Commercial Bank Pqsc	4.40	1.03	3,240,581
Barwa Real Estate Co	3.42	0.68	3,580,450
Al Khaleej Takaful Group	1.80	0.00	6,922,425
Al Ahli Bank	1.92	0.47	906,000
	0.87	1.17	6,249,205

KUWAIT

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Sultan Center Food Products	98.70	0.10	5,000
Kuwait Foundry Co Sak	263.00	-1.87	11,200
Kuwait Financial Centre Sak	82.90	-0.72	81,952
Ajial Real Estate Entmt	185.00	0.00	58,769
Kuwait Finance & Investment	43.00	-0.46	64,569
National Industries Co Ksc	156.00	0.00	-
Kuwait Real Estate Holding C	23.60	0.43	27,778
Securities House/The	42.80	-0.47	785,993
Boubyan Petrochemicals Co	655.00	3.15	313,239
Al Ahli Bank Of Kuwait	212.00	0.00	218,973
Ahli United Bank (Almutahed)	289.00	0.35	170,120
National Bank Of Kuwait	850.00	1.43	7,861,589
Commercial Bank Of Kuwait	500.00	0.00	-
Kuwait International Bank	208.00	0.48	2,355,430
Gulf Bank	219.00	0.92	15,501,458
Al-Massaleh Real Estate Co	33.00	-5.17	10,050
Al Arabiya Real Estate Co	25.70	0.00	233,940
Kuwait Remal Real Estate Co	20.10	-0.99	68,000
Alkout Industrial Projects C	675.00	0.00	-
A'ayan Real Estate Co Sak	58.50	1.04	74,500
Investors Holding Group Co.K	18.20	-0.55	9,976,737
Al-Mazaya Holding Co	57.40	1.77	178,819

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Al-Madar Finance & Invt Co	90.80	0.00	191,136
Gulf Petroleum Investment	19.30	-1.03	6,619,738
Mabanee Co Sakc	675.00	3.53	2,338,224
Inovest Co Bsc	67.80	7.28	1,006,252
Al-Deera Holding Co	16.00	0.00	-
Mena Real Estate Co	26.80	-1.11	292,191
Amar Finance & Leasing Co	48.70	0.00	-
United Projects For Aviation	245.00	-18.87	3,639,327
National Consumer Holding Co	48.50	-4.90	45,030
Amwal International Investme	33.70	0.00	-
Equipment Holding Co K.S.C.C	28.10	-5.70	396,232
Arkan Al Kuwait Real Estate	87.50	1.74	46,050
Gfh Financial Group Bsc	50.10	3.30	783,470
Energy House Holding Co Kscp	28.30	4.81	101,115
Kuwait Co For Process Plant	400.00	-0.50	145,113
Al Maidan Dental Clinic Co K	1,240.00	0.00	-
National Shooting Company	19.80	2.06	4,201,142
Al-Ahleia Insurance Co Sakp	474.00	0.00	-
Wethaq Takaful Insurance Co	20.40	0.00	160,000
Salbookh Trading Co Kscp	37.30	1.91	151,862
Aqar Real Estate Investments	60.70	2.88	35,001
Hayat Communications	52.00	1.96	15,000
Soor Fuel Marketing Co Ksc	122.00	-0.81	11,848
Tamkeen Holding Co	5.20	0.00	-
Alargan International Real	110.00	0.00	-
Burgan Co For Well Drilling	151.00	2.03	8,150
Kuwait Resorts Co Kscc	63.90	0.63	272,400
Oula Fuel Marketing Co	122.00	0.00	12,499
Palms Agro Production Co	61.90	0.00	-
Mubarrad Holding Co Ksc	74.40	4.79	1,112,679
Shuaiba Industrial Co	155.00	0.00	-
Aan Digital Services Co	12.40	0.00	497,530
First Takaful Insurance Co	36.00	2.27	902
Kuwaiti Syrian Holding Co	31.90	0.00	-
National Cleaning Company	51.60	0.19	156,388
United Real Estate Company	47.00	0.00	-
Agility	684.00	1.18	3,072,187
Kuwait & Middle East Fin Inv	119.00	0.00	-
Fujairah Cement Industries	34.20	0.00	-
Livestock Transport & Tradng	181.00	1.69	10,000
International Resorts Co	177.00	-0.56	1,175,602
National Industries Grp Hold	83.50	-0.36	181,685
Warba Insurance Co	41.10	0.49	239,000
First Dubai Real Estate Deve	198.00	0.00	-
Al Arabi Group Holding Co	62.00	0.00	-
Kuwait Hotels Sak	616.00	1.15	7,059,098
Mobile Telecommunications Co	20.50	0.00	-
Effect Real Estate Co	257.00	0.00	900
Tamdeen Real Estate Co Ksc	18.60	-5.58	3,898,518
Al Mudon Intl Real Estate Co	231.00	0.87	24,799
Kuwait Cement Co Ksc	42.20	0.00	-
Sharjah Cement & Indus Devel	790.00	0.51	1
Kuwait Portland Cement Co	338.00	0.00	-
Educational Holding Group	200.00	0.00	-
Bahrain Kuwait Insurance	38.00	1.06	610,727
Asiya Capital Investments Co	121.00	0.00	243,262
Kuwait Investment Co	211.00	-0.94	1,764,174
Burgan Bank	159.00	0.00	1,108,721
Kuwait Projects Co Holdings	15.70	0.64	1,448,372
Al Madina For Finance And In	397.00	-0.50	5,000
Kuwait Insurance Co	24.50	-1.61	808,451
Al Masaken Intl Real Estate	61.00	2.87	5,039,736
Intl Financial Advisors	43.30	-2.26	65,490,845
First Investment Co Kscc	5.90	0.00	-
Al Mal Investment Company	41.10	-1.44	10,310
Bayan Investment Co Kscc	355.00	0.00	-
Egypt Kuwait Holding Co Sae	48.20	0.00	-
Coast Investment Development	40.50	1.76	10,000
Privatization Holding Compan	77.40	0.00	-
Injazzat Real State Company	34.50	0.00	-
Kuwait Cable Vision Sak	213.00	-0.93	880,596
Sanam Real Estate Co Kscc	55.50	0.18	2,842,886
Ithmaar Holding Bsc	10.70	0.00	-
Aviation Lease And Finance C	39.50	1.54	330,161
Arzan Financial Group For Fi	84.50	-0.59	1,000
Ajwan Gulf Real Estate Co	79.40	-0.75	5,000
Kuwait Business Town Real Es	7.30	0.00	-
Future Kid Entertainment And	68.90	0.00	26,694
Specialities Group Holding C	28.50	0.00	547,919
Abyaar Real Eastate Developm	201.00	1.01	196,505
Dar Al Thuraya Real Estate C	43.80	0.00	290,154
Kgl Logistics Company Kscc	48.60	0.00	-
Combined Group Contracting	84.00	-0.71	400,148
Jiyad Holding Co Ksc	569.00	0.71	2,177,873
Warba Capital Holding Co	217.00	-2.25	31,701,019
Gulf Investment House Ksc	90.00	0.00	-
Boubyan Bank K.S.C	84.40	0.48	160,000
Ahli United Bank B.S.C	341.00	0.29	371,534
Osos Holding Group Co	570.00	0.00	-

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Al-Eid Food Ksc	15.40	0.00	560,700
Qurain Petrochemical Industr	28.00	3.70	50,512
Advanced Technology Co	90.00	0.00	-
Ekttitab Holding Co Sak	73.70	-0.27	32,500
Real Estate Trade Centers Co	1,049.00	0.00	-
Acico Industries Co Kscc	111.00	0.91	6,769,464
Kipco Asset Management Co	65.00	0.00	-
National Petroleum Services	209.00	0.00	-
Alimtiaz Investment Group	53.20	-0.37	114,062
Ras Al Khaimah White Cement	3,798.00	1.28	10,154
Kuwait Reinsurance Co Ksc	68.50	0.59	36,000
Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport	55.00	1.85	428,198
Humansoft Holding Co Ksc	60.00	0.00	-
Automated Systems Co Kscc	48.70	-0.41	87,857
Metal & Recycling Co	635.00	1.28	42,429
Gulf Franchising Holding Co	66.70	5.21	499,314
Al-Enma'a Real Estate Co	42.00	0.00	-
National Mobile Telecommuni	25.50	-0.39	1,337,696
Sanad Holding Co Kscc	56.40	-1.05	20,100
Unicap Investment And Financ	31.80	1.27	699,099
Al Salam Group Holding Co	48.90	12.16	12,020,076
Al Aman Investment Company	740.00	-0.40	195,940
Mashaer Holding Co Ksc	115.00	-2.54	5,344
Manazel Holding	81.00	-1.58	150,000
Tijara And Real Estate Inves	19.60	-2.00	1,944,300
Jazeera Airways Co Ksc	397.00	-0.25	414,879
Commercial Real Estate Co	75.40	0.00	541,636
National International Co	21.40	1.90	498,784
Taameer Real Estate Invest C	755.00	0.00	-
Gulf Cement Co	11.80	0.00	-
Heavy Engineering And Ship B	475.00	0.00	18,500
National Real Estate Co	107.00	0.00	1,467,605
Al Safat Energy Holding Comp	510.00	0.59	114,750
Kuwait National Cinema Co	757.00	-0.39	118,131
Danah Alsafat Foodstuff Co	682.00	0.59	7,022,088
Independent Petroleum Group	64.30	-1.23	69,461
Kuwait Real Estate Co Ksc	91.00	0.00	-
Salhia Real Estate Co Ksc	80.00	0.00	56,939
Gulf Cable & Electrical Ind	810.00	0.00	-
Kuwait Finance House	71.40	-4.80	2,750
Gulf North Africa Holding Co	95.80	3.01	21,156,300
Hilal Cement Co	49.90	3.96	700
Osoul Investment Kscc	132.00	1.54	1,264,219
Gulf Insurance Group Ksc	187.00	-1.58	11,000
Umm Al Qaiwain General Inves	620.00	-14.13	525
Aayan Leasing & Investment	274.00	0.00	-
Alrai Media Group Co Ksc	90.20	0.00	-
National Investments Co	70.40	0.00	-
Commercial Facilities Co	171.00	0.59	148,228
Yiaco Medical Co. K.S.C.C	330.00	0.00	-
Dulaqan Real Estate Co	22.00	0.00	-
Real Estate Asset Management	22.50	8.70	5,532,469

OMAN

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Voltamp Energy Saog	0.13	0.00	147
Vision Insurance Saoc	0.08	0.00	-
United Power/Energy Co- Pref	0.90	0.00	-
United Power Co Saog	0.99	0.00	-
United Finance Co	0.05	0.00	-
Ubar Hotels & Resorts	0.13	0.00	-
Takaful Oman	0.12	0.00	-
Taageer Finance	0.08	0.00	-
Sweets Of Oman	0.55	0.00	-
Sohar Power Co	0.05	0.00	-
Sohar International Bank	0.09	0.00	-
Smn Power Holding Saog	0.08	0.00	-
Shell Oman Marketing - Pref	1.05	0.00	-
Shell Oman Marketing	1.00	0.00	-
Sharqiyah Desalination Co Sa	0.16	0.00	-
Sembcorp Salalah Power & Wat	0.10	1.01	110,000
Salalah Port Services	0.60	0.00	-
Salalah Mills Co	0.55	0.00	-
Salalah Beach Resort Saog	1.38	0.00	-
Sahara Hospitality	3.12	0.00	-
Renaissance Services Saog	0.34	0.00	-
Raysut Cement Co	0.34	-2.30	298,276
Phoenix Power Co Saoc	0.06	5.77	8,302
Packaging Co Ltd	2.21	0.00	-
Ooredoo	0.39	-0.51	55,672
Ominvest	0.34	0.59	21,500
Oman United Insurance Co	0.40	0.00	247,500
Oman Telecommunications Co	0.73	1.67	39,679
Oman Refreshment Co	1.06	0.00	-
Oman Qatar Insurance Co	0.10	0.00	-

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Oman Packaging	0.31	0.00	-
Oman Oil Marketing Company	0.80	0.00	-
Oman National Engineering An	0.10	0.00	-
Oman Investment & Finance	0.09	1.10	836,021
Oman Intl Marketing	0.52	0.00	-
Oman Flour Mills	0.70	0.00	4,700
Oman Fisheries Co	0.09	2.33	15,000
Oman Europe Foods Industries	1.00	0.00	-
Oman Education & Training In	0.25	0.00	-
Oman Chromite	3.64	0.00	-
Oman Chlorine	0.27	0.00	-
Oman Ceramic Company	0.42	0.00	-
Oman Cement Co	0.25	0.00	501,000
Oman Cables Industry	0.44	5.21	25,000
Oman & Emirates Inv(Om)50%	0.19	0.53	33,900
Natl Aluminium Products	0.05	2.22	20,000
National Real Estate Develop	0.09	2.25	80,000
National Mineral Water	5.00	0.00	-
National Life & General Insu	0.09	0.00	-
National Gas Co	0.34	0.00	-
National Finance Co	0.15	0.00	1,100
National Detergent Co Saog	0.13	0.00	-
National Biscuit Industries	0.67	0.00	-
National Bank Of Oman Saog	3.92	0.00	-
Muscat Thread Mills Co	0.16	0.00	-
Muscat Insurance Co Saog	0.08	0.00	-
Muscat Gases Company Saog	0.35	0.00	-
Muscat Finance	0.21	0.00	-
Muscat City Desalination Co	0.04	10.00	118,492
Majan Glass Company	0.10	0.00	-
Majan College	0.31	0.00	-
Hsbc Bank Oman	0.18	0.00	-
Hotels Management Co Interna	0.16	0.00	5,000
Gulf Stone	0.09	0.00	-
Gulf Mushroom Company	1.25	0.00	-
Gulf Investments Services	0.12	0.00	-
Gulf Invest. Serv. Pref-Shar	0.31	0.00	-
Gulf International Chemicals	0.10	0.00	-
Gulf Hotels (Oman) Co Ltd	0.32	0.00	-
Global Fin Investment	0.11	0.00	44,484
Galfar Engineering&Contract	3.88	0.00	-
Galfar Engineering -Prefer	0.06	0.00	-
Financial Services Co.	0.05	0.00	1,833,850
Financial Corp/The	0.39	0.00	-
Dhofar Tourism	0.18	0.00	-
Dhofar Poultry	0.08	0.00	-
Dhofar Intl Development	0.49	0.00	-
Dhofar Insurance	0.18	0.00	-
Dhofar Generating Co Saoc	0.29	0.00	-
Dhofar Fisheries & Food Indu	0.16	0.00	-
Dhofar Cattlefeed	0.19	0.00	-
Dhofar Beverages Co	1.28	0.00	-
Construction Materials Ind	0.09	0.00	-
Computer Stationery Inds	0.26	0.00	-
Bankmuscat Saog	0.03	0.00	-
Bank Nizwa	0.26	0.00	-
Bank Dhofar Saog	0.40	0.00	527,500
Arabia Falcon Insurance Co	0.10	0.00	322,750
Aloula Co	0.10	2.04	786,000
Al-Omaniya Financial Service	0.08	0.00	-
Al-Hassan Engineering Co	0.10	0.00	-
Al-Fajar Al-Alamia Co	0.08	0.00	-
Al-Anwar Ceramic Tiles Co	0.07	5.88	501,128
Al Suwadi Power	0.01	0.00	-
Al Sharqiya Invest Holding	0.70	0.00	-
Al Maha Petroleum Products M	0.28	1.82	40,000
Al Maha Ceramics Co Saoc	0.05	0.00	-
Al Madina Takaful Co Saoc	0.07	1.37	819,266
Al Madina Investment Co	0.67	0.00	700
Al Kamil Power Co	0.23	0.00	22,900
Al Jazerah Services -Pfd	0.08	-1.28	72,000
Al Jazeera Steel Products Co	0.02	0.00	-
Al Jazeera Services	0.32	0.00	-
Al Izz Islamic Bank	0.55	0.00	-
Al Buraimi Hotel	0.15	0.00	106,500
Al Batinah Power	0.25	3.67	583,916
Al Batinah Hotels	0.88	0.00	-
Al Batinah Dev & Inv	0.05	0.00	10,886
Al Anwar Holdings Saog	1.13	0.00	-
Al Ahlia Insurance Co Saoc	0.07	0.00	-
Ahli Bank	0.07	0.00	340,837
Acwa Power Barka Saog	0.36	0.00	-
Abrasives Manufacturing Co S	0.13	0.00	-
A'saffa Foods Saog	0.48	0.00	-
OMan Oil Marketing Co-Pref	0.05	0.00	-
#N/A Invalid Security	0.55	0.00	-
#N/A Invalid Security	0.25	0.00	-

LATEST MARKET CLOSING FIGURES

NYSE scraps plan to delist three Chinese telecom firms

Reuters
Hong Kong/Singapore

The New York Stock Exchange said it no longer intends to delist three Chinese telecom giants — a shock reversal of an announcement made only last week and deepening confusion over a US crackdown on firms said to be linked to China's military.

The bourse, which had planned to delist the companies before January 11, said in a brief statement it had made the decision "in light of further consultation with relevant regulatory authorities."

Hong Kong-traded shares in the state-backed firms, China Mobile Ltd, China Telecom Corp Ltd and China Unicom Hong Kong Ltd, surged following the news.

Coming in the final weeks of Donald Trump's presidency, the flip-flop has underscored the lack of clarity about the implementation and implications of the US ban on investment in 35 Chinese companies deemed to have military links.

"(It) shows how little light there is in that set of regulatory guidance so far, especially around the time the US is changing administrations," said Tariq Dennison, managing director at GFM Asset Management in Hong Kong.

Dennison's funds hold China Mobile shares in both Hong Kong and New York.

He has almost entirely unwound New York positions in anticipation of needing to find US clients investments with less exposure to risks associated with the investment bans.

Some analysts said they believe the exchange had been told by the Office of Foreign Assets Control, which is responsible for enforcing sanctions, that delistings were unnecessary even though investment in related companies was banned.

Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (file). The bourse said it no longer intends to delist three Chinese telecom giants — a shock reversal of an announcement made only last week and deepening confusion over a US crackdown on firms said to be linked to China's military.

"We think this is the logical conclusion," said Jefferies analyst Edison Lee, who called the about-face "bizarre".

Others added that the reversal made sense for the bourse.

"China accounts for at least one-fourth of US (stock exchanges') foreign income. It's a smart thing to do," said Francis Lun, CEO of Geo Securities.

The November order from Trump's administration has prompted index makers including FTSE Russell and MSCI Inc to cut a dozen Chinese companies on the list from their benchmarks, but none removed the three telecom firms, all of which have major passive US funds amongst their top shareholders.

The three telecom firms said in statements that they had taken note of the NYSE's latest announcement and would release information in accordance with regulations, adding that investors should pay attention to investment risks.

Japan historic power market rally triggers probe

Bloomberg
Tokyo

Japan's government is investigating if any speculative actions are accelerating the record-breaking surge in wholesale power prices, along with a winter supply crunch.

Spot power prices hit a historic high for the fourth straight day on Tuesday. The Electricity and Gas Market Surveillance Commission is investigating whether inappropriate actions are driving up rates, according to a spokeswoman.

Prices began to rally last month as colder-than-normal winter weather boosted demand for heating. To make matters worse, utilities were forced to curb generation at gas-fired power plants due in part to lower-than-normal inventories of the fuel.

Japan's power surveillance commission, which sits under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, is also investigating if any electricity producers are purposefully withholding capacity from the market, the spokeswoman said. The commission hasn't yet discovered any evidence of wrongdoing, she said.

The 24-hour average spot electricity price for next-day delivery jumped 27% to ¥79.4 ($0.77) per kilowatt-hour on Tuesday, according to the Japan Electric Power Exchange. That is the highest level since trading started in 2005, and well above the previous year's average of ¥6.5.

Japan's top electricity supplier has been unable to meet increased demand from its customers over the last few days. To avert a supply shortage, Japan's grid manager ordered rival utilities to send power to the grid-operating subsidiary of Tokyo Electric Power Co on Sunday and Monday.

Sky-high power prices are likely to negatively impact the nation's smaller electricity retailers, which have little generation capacity and are most reliant on the spot market. Most households and businesses won't be affected by the volatility, as nearly all power supply contracts are linked to rates independent from the spot market.

BUSINESS

DJIA

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Apple Inc	130.60	0.92	5,503,893
American Express Co	224.56	-0.93	129,659
Boeing Co/The	117.25	-0.67	90,626
Caterpillar Inc	207.88	2.55	874,554
Cisco Systems Inc	183.95	0.99	291,917
Chevron Corp	220.00	-0.14	350,643
Walt Disney Co/The	43.44	-1.18	1,523,239
Dow Inc	87.15	2.88	457,246
Goldman Sachs Group Inc	178.38	0.39	472,001
Home Depot Inc	54.61	1.05	149,988
Intl Business Machines Corp	268.26	1.23	217,709
Intel Corp	263.18	-0.28	194,813
Johnson & Johnson	207.34	-0.29	119,629
Jpmorgan Chase & Co	124.80	0.69	320,399
Coca-Cola Co/The	50.03	0.71	2,086,374
Mcdonald's Corp	155.40	-0.70	546,041
3M Co	124.02	-1.47	687,036
Merck & Co. Inc.	52.20	-1.06	1,114,074
Microsoft Corp	210.21	0.00	206,732
Nike Inc -Cl B	170.68	-0.69	106,105
Pfizer Inc	80.00	-1.19	599,954
Procter & Gamble Co/The	216.92	-0.35	1,984,309
Travelers Cos Inc/The	140.28	0.13	304,122
Unitedhealth Group Inc	136.52	-0.94	342,343
United Technologies Corp	133.38	-1.67	38,900
Visa Inc-Class A Shares	345.73	-1.08	183,166
Verizon Communications Inc	214.53	-1.48	442,915
Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc	58.52	-0.56	821,554
Walmart Inc	41.05	-0.85	801,831
Exxon Mobil Corp	144.69	-1.26	529,045

FTSE 100

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Anglo American Plc	2,570.50	-0.06	1,307,269
Associated British Foods Plc	2,209.00	-0.76	646,471
Admiral Group Plc	3,029.00	1.00	125,845
Ashtead Group Plc	3,514.00	0.40	442,611
Antofagasta Plc	1,501.50	-0.03	373,728
Auto Trader Group Plc	600.60	-0.76	775,417
Aviva Plc	328.00	0.43	4,186,718
Astrazeneca Plc	534.00	0.28	753,451
Bae Systems Plc	3,536.00	7.97	297,226
Barclays Plc	7,379.00	-0.58	1,057,310
British American Tobacco Plc	500.00	1.24	1,672,195
Barratt Developments Plc	142.92	-0.42	23,985,942
Bhp Group Plc	2,783.00	1.07	1,121,365
Berkeley Group Holdings/The	656.20	0.95	1,603,069
British Land Co Plc	2,057.00	1.08	1,887,776
Bunzl Plc	4,698.00	0.06	254,734
Bp Plc	465.80	-2.10	1,664,852
Burberry Group Plc	532.20	1.68	959,641
Bt Group Plc	2,523.00	-0.28	146,611
Coca-Cola Hbc Ag-Di	270.60	6.33	29,028,010
Carnival Plc	1,792.50	-1.48	520,379
Centrica Plc	135.20	-0.44	5,651,032
Compass Group Plc	2,386.00	0.13	192,479
Croda International Plc	1,394.50	1.68	968,186
Crh Plc	6,620.00	-0.21	129,273
Dcc Plc	3,131.00	-1.23	264,529
Diageo Plc	5,354.00	0.22	151,176
Direct Line Insurance Group	2,940.00	-0.27	1,069,179
Evraz Plc	489.20	-0.59	708,037
Experian Plc	2,849.00	-2.06	1,256,141
Easyjet Plc	8,758.00	-1.02	180,242
Ferguson Plc	15,460.00	-0.26	88,965
Fresnillo Plc	1,234.50	-1.16	562,622
Glencore Plc	251.65	2.55	15,596,155
Glaxosmithkline Plc	1,373.40	-0.19	2,764,045
Gvc Holdings Plc	0.00	0.00	-
Hikma Pharmaceuticals Plc	2,600.00	1.05	157,986
Hargreaves Lansdown Plc	1,499.50	0.03	325,595
Halma Plc	2,510.00	-0.79	179,831
Hsbc Holdings Plc	377.35	-0.79	7,458,786
Hiscox Ltd	1,070.00	-0.65	215,710
Intl Consolidated Airline-Di	150.00	0.10	32,377,599
Intercontinental Hotels Grou	1,716.00	-0.41	200,894
3I Group Plc	4,723.00	1.16	149,022
Imperial Brands Plc	1,159.50	-1.02	308,828
Informa Plc	1,564.00	0.87	419,768
Intertek Group Plc	536.60	-0.81	1,017,735
Itv Plc	5,784.00	-1.47	34,869
Johnson Matthey Plc	824.60	1.25	550,498
Kingfisher Plc	8,674.00	2.19	118,492
Land Securities Group Plc	2,542.00	1.32	234,277
Legal & General Group Plc	282.70	2.54	2,849,183
Lloyds Banking Group Plc	659.80	-0.75	867,717
London Stock Exchange Group	258.10	-1.00	7,264,149
Micro Focus International	35.09	0.73	157,511,224
Marks & Spencer Group Plc	9,042.00	-2.38	119,519
Mondi Plc	1,736.50	-0.86	317,467
Melrose Industries Plc	196.15	-0.78	2,467,111
Wm Morrison Supermarkets	176.45	-0.62	4,427,155
National Grid Plc	180.10	-0.55	4,086,329
Nmc Health Plc	867.00	-1.77	1,541,881
Next Plc	155.90	-1.83	10,427,202
Ocado Group Plc	7,456.00	7.87	360,828
#N/A Invalid Security	2,377.00	0.72	689,578
Prudential Plc	705.20	-0.14	542,205
Persimmon Plc	941.80	-1.15	380,791
Pearson Plc	1,829.50	-0.65	1,104,337
Reckitt Benckiser Group Plc	1,381.00	-0.22	2,113,136
Royal Bank Of Scotland Group	2,715.00	-0.18	355,947
Royal Dutch Shell Plc-A Shs	667.60	-2.08	565,870
Royal Dutch Shell Plc-B Shs	6,704.00	-1.18	307,743
Relx Plc	1,388.60	6.63	3,019,232
Rio Tinto Plc	1,335.20	6.09	4,458,185
Rightmove Plc	1,817.50	-1.12	976,226
Rolls-Royce Holdings Plc	5,736.00	-0.30	737,505
Rsa Insurance Group Plc	641.00	-1.60	672,837
Rentokil Initial Plc	108.00	4.65	26,335,950
Sainsbury (J) Plc	678.20	-0.26	1,088,857
Schroders Plc	524.40	-0.83	933,948
Sage Group Plc/The	225.30	-0.31	3,324,210
Segro Plc	3,413.00	-0.06	72,370
Smurfit Kappa Group Plc	581.60	-1.16	1,081,240
Standard Life Aberdeen Plc	975.40	-0.16	1,211,613
Ds Smith Plc	3,474.00	-3.02	105,206
Smiths Group Plc	285.60	-0.45	1,939,394
Scottish Mortgage Inv Tr Plc	384.20	-0.23	2,428,850
Smith & Nephew Plc	1,537.50	-0.49	198,855
Spirax-Sarco Engineering Plc	1,221.00	0.08	2,255,240
Sse Plc	1,572.00	0.32	449,837
Standard Chartered Plc	11,435.00	-2.14	26,682
St James's Place Plc	1,512.50	-1.56	588,091
Severn Trent Plc	464.20	0.17	1,765,584
Tesco Plc	1,149.50	0.57	351,060
Tui Ag-Di	2,310.00	-1.11	200,639
Taylor Wimpey Plc	237.70	0.30	9,321,557
Unilever Plc	160.00	1.39	5,354,731
United Utilities Group Plc	4,420.00	-0.92	1,529,437
Vodafone Group Plc	894.20	-1.95	364,302
John Wood Group Plc	123.78	0.11	19,662,123
Wpp Plc	774.60	-2.81	1,460,615
Whitbread Plc	3,030.00	0.40	341,265
			-

TOKYO

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Japan Airlines Co Ltd	7,763.00	-2.07	928,300
Recruit Holdings Co Ltd	1,529.50	-0.49	2,507,100
Softbank Corp	1,876.50	0.08	2,382,300
Kyocera Corp	16,115.00	-2.01	735,100
Nissan Motor Co Ltd	4,269.00	-1.11	577,500
T&D Holdings Inc	2,079.00	-0.88	1,643,000
Toyota Motor Corp	9,283.00	-1.02	583,800
Kddi Corp	5,190.00	-0.46	1,003,200
Nitto Denko Corp	3,255.00	-2.02	2,116,800
Hitachi Ltd	1,048.00	0.53	2,175,000
Takeda Pharmaceutical Co Ltd	2,360.50	-0.59	1,506,900
Jfe Holdings Inc	677.40	1.07	5,103,800
Sumitomo Corp	450.70	-0.07	33,068,600
Canon Inc	617.80	-0.52	3,499,700
Eisai Co Ltd	25,400.00	-0.18	586,200
Nintendo Co Ltd	3,092.00	0.52	1,071,100
Shin-Etsu Chemical Co Ltd	2,197.50	-1.74	2,127,200
Mitsubishi Corp	3,613.00	-0.88	1,615,700
Smc Corp	354.50	-1.09	11,159,400

WORLD INDICES

Indices	Lt Price	Change
Dow Jones Indus. Avg	30,163.80	-60.09
S&P 500 Index	3,703.83	+3.18
Nasdaq Composite Index	12,726.52	+28.07
S&P/Tsx Composite Index	17,571.42	+43.65
Mexico Bolsa Index	44,755.97	+52.97
Brazil Bovespa Stock Idx	117,597.70	-1,257.00
Ftse 100 Index	6,592.77	+20.89
Cac 40 Index	5,541.57	-47.39
Dax Index	13,621.20	-105.54
Ibex 35 Tr	8,073.10	-26.10
Nikkei 225	27,158.63	-99.75
Japan Topix	1,791.22	-3.37
Hang Seng Index	27,649.86	+177.05
All Ordinaries Indx	6,955.73	+2.06
Nzx All Index	2,199.54	+44.14
Bse Sensex 30 Index	48,437.78	+260.98
Nse S&P Cnx Nifty Index	14,199.50	+66.60
Straits Times Index	2,859.68	+0.78
Karachi All Share Index	31,266.16	-15.86
Jakarta Composite Index	6,137.34	+32.45

TOKYO

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Nidec Corp	795.20	-0.80	4,722,100
Isuzu Motors Ltd	8,766.00	0.34	757,200
Unicharm Corp	1,333.00	-0.78	2,333,200
Nomura Holdings Inc	1,932.00	2.74	5,560,000
Daiichi Sankyo Co Ltd	7,244.00	-0.71	726,600
Subaru Corp	66,090.00	0.82	874,400
Sumitomo Realty & Developmen	2,514.00	-0.59	3,140,900
Ntt Docomo Inc	64,000.00	1.30	143,500
Sumitomo Metal Mining Co Ltd	2,607.50	-0.57	802,000
Orix Corp	4,837.00	-0.27	657,900
Asahi Group Holdings Ltd	18,060.00	1.26	814,500
Keyence Corp	3,069.00	-0.94	727,500
Mizuho Financial Group Inc	4,692.00	1.21	1,237,200
Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Holdin	1,567.00	-0.03	3,871,200
Japan Tobacco Inc	4,169.00	-0.67	811,000
Sumitomo Electric Industries	56,980.00	-1.18	675,000
Daiwa Securities Group Inc	13,330.00	1.41	2,063,400
Softbank Group Corp	1,312.50	0.69	5,331,200
Panasonic Corp	560.00	3.76	19,577,300
Fujitsu Ltd	3,510.00	-2.90	3,685,700
Central Japan Railway Co	2,003.50	-1.33	2,839,700
Nitori Holdings Co Ltd	3,156.00	-0.35	958,900
Ajinomoto Co Inc	2,037.50	-0.71	5,124,300
Daikin Industries Ltd	659.10	3.50	26,233,200
Mitsui Fudosan Co Ltd	1,341.00	-0.15	1,933,400
Ono Pharmaceutical Co Ltd	469.30	-0.30	3,059,200
Toray Industries Inc	8,020.00	0.15	13,213,000
Bridgestone Corp	2,361.00	1.20	1,546,600
Sony Corp	22,690.00	-1.39	590,700
Astellas Pharma Inc	2,053.00	-1.75	2,890,400
Hoya Corp	3,061.00	-1.16	887,000
Nippon Steel Corp	601.90	0.18	4,490,800
Suzuki Motor Corp	1,576.50	-1.75	5,847,200
Nippon Telegraph & Telephone	3,341.00	-0.15	1,646,200
Jxtg Holdings Inc	10,570.00	1.29	4,996,200
Murata Manufacturing Co Ltd	14,215.00	-1.93	927,800
Kansai Electric Power Co Inc	369.30	0.35	15,730,700
Denso Corp	1,319.50	-0.11	3,140,300
Sompo Holdings Inc	4,829.00	-1.45	1,558,100
Daiwa House Industry Co Ltd	2,676.50	-1.36	8,270,300
Dai-Ichi Life Holdings Inc	6,072.00	-0.93	1,435,800
Mazda Motor Corp	4,069.00	-0.66	568,000
Komatsu Ltd	2,999.50	-1.40	1,187,100
West Japan Railway Co	5,171.00	-0.77	711,300
Kao Corp	2,833.50	0.39	2,796,900
Mitsui & Co Ltd	9,619.00	2.26	2,525,700
Daito Trust Construct Co Ltd	974.90	-0.78	2,053,300
Otsuka Holdings Co Ltd	6,314.00	0.75	722,200
Oriental Land Co Ltd	538.60	-2.60	19,036,300
Sekisui House Ltd	1,303.50	-0.50	8,175,500
Secom Co Ltd	13,890.00	-2.11	719,800
Tokio Marine Holdings Inc	21,785.00	1.87	311,400
Aeon Co Ltd	7,812.00	-1.46	5,857,100
Asahi Kasei Corp	3,098.00	0.06	4,614,400
Kirin Holdings Co Ltd	2,354.50	-0.70	1,134,300
Marubeni Corp	38,880.00	2.56	1,044,900
Mitsubishi Ufj Financial Gro	1,230.50	3.23	8,756,700
Mitsubishi Chemical Holdings	15,040.00	1.31	621,700
Fanuc Corp	10,085.00	-0.93	3,204,900
Fast Retailing Co Ltd	6,521.00	-1.91	1,417,200
Ms&Ad Insurance Group Holdin	2,956.50	0.00	2,199,700
Kubota Corp	5,629.00	3.80	3,039,200
Seven & I Holdings Co Ltd	1,248.50	0.28	1,312,400
Inpex Corp	1,630.00	-0.64	2,904,100
Resona Holdings Inc	12,630.00	0.08	336,900
Fujifilm Holdings Corp	6,938.00	-2.90	1,273,200
Yamato Holdings Co Ltd	5,542.00	-1.51	838,800
Chubu Electric Power Co Inc	3,242.00	2.05	1,666,500
Mitsubishi Estate Co Ltd	4,201.00	-1.34	1,364,800
Mitsubishi Heavy Industries	3,167.00	0.25	3,964,400
Sysmex Corp	2,147.50	-1.36	3,611,800
Shiseido Co Ltd	23,980.00	0.02	125,100
Shionogi & Co Ltd	2,817.50	-1.54	4,288,700
Terumo Corp	89,170.00	-2.06	560,900
Tokyo Gas Co Ltd	4,201.00	-1.48	3,349,200
Tokyo Electron Ltd	4,085.00	1.49	2,421,300
East Japan Railway Co	3,665.00	-1.48	4,100,500
Itochu Corp	5,327.00	-2.19	1,816,100
Ana Holdings Inc	2,204.50	-1.23	3,233,200
Mitsubishi Electric Corp	1,571.50	1.98	4,145,800
Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Gr	0.00	0.00	-

SENSEX

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Adani Ports And Special Econ	499.45	0.11	5,135,408
Asian Paints Ltd	2,793.85	1.46	1,299,589
Axis Bank Ltd	664.45	6.36	37,973,963
Bajaj Finance Ltd	5,119.00	-1.86	3,953,400
Bharti Airtel Ltd	514.00	-0.60	10,492,428
Bharti Infratel Ltd	3,492.65	-0.85	561,562
Bajaj Auto Ltd	8,820.85	-0.88	486,214
Bajaj Finserv Ltd	392.00	-0.85	4,532,068
Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd	3,551.10	-0.05	725,278
Cipla Ltd	827.25	-0.60	4,559,213
Coal India Ltd	135.15	-1.53	12,371,842
Dr. Reddy's Laboratories	3,842.10	-0.52	621,125
Eicher Motors Ltd	5,286.90	0.28	954,184
Gail India Ltd	2,674.90	0.72	1,494,362
Grasim Industries Ltd	129.30	1.02	24,858,763
Hcl Technologies Ltd	961.30	-0.33	1,511,818
Housing Development Finance	991.35	1.12	7,150,252
Hdfc Bank Limited	2,651.85	2.84	5,870,743
Hero Motocorp Ltd	1,426.70	0.76	7,193,412
Hindalco Industries Ltd	713.75	2.57	6,955,494
Hindustan Petroleum Corp	3,067.20	0.77	1,150,326
Hindustan Unilever Ltd	250.30	-1.57	12,297,457
Icici Bank Ltd	2,450.55	0.99	2,356,303
Indiabulls Housing Finance L	537.25	1.04	23,311,516
Indusind Bank Ltd	921.65	2.65	11,907,501
Infosys Ltd	1,293.80	0.43	8,145,280
Indian Oil Corp Ltd	93.00	-0.91	18,715,045
Itc Ltd	211.45	-0.91	18,024,083
Jsw Steel Ltd	395.25	-1.95	6,190,435
Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd	1,959.75	-0.30	3,263,230
Larsen & Toubro Ltd	1,306.30	-0.63	2,833,637
Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd	740.10	-1.20	3,551,554
Maruti Suzuki India Ltd	7,655.45	-0.61	562,668
Ntpc Ltd	18,558.25	0.98	83,673
Oil & Natural Gas Corp Ltd	97.60	-1.46	23,510,160
Power Grid Corp Of India Ltd	94.95	-2.06	26,998,014
Reliance Industries Ltd	188.00	-0.24	5,894,373
State Bank Of India	1,966.10	-1.24	11,132,803
Sun Pharmaceutical Indus	905.55	-0.64	1,209,912
Tata Steel Ltd	281.75	0.25	27,393,072
Tata Consultancy Svcs Ltd	23,895.50	-0.58	47,363
Tech Mahindra Ltd	603.45	-0.16	7,790,158
Titan Co Ltd	680.55	-1.80	21,545,254
Tata Motors Ltd	3,093.00	1.76	5,801,309
Upl Ltd	1,003.85	0.19	4,040,321
Ultratech Cement Ltd	1,570.95	1.29	1,351,709
Vedanta Ltd	193.20	0.99	75,752,593
Wipro Ltd	471.25	-0.40	3,226,777
Yes Bank Ltd	5,341.20	0.26	530,958
Zee Entertainment Enterprise	406.30	2.50	25,156,747

A visitor looks at a ticker of share prices at the London Stock Exchange. The FTSE 100 rose 0.6% at 6,612.25 points yesterday.

European equities slip as defensives weigh; UK shrugs off new lockdown

BP, Shell biggest boosts to UK's FTSE 100; Next jumps after Christmas sales update; Dialog Semi gains on upbeat Q4 sales forecast

Reuters, AFP
London

European stocks slipped yesterday as losses in defensive sectors offset gains in oil and retail stocks, while investors looked past a new national lockdown in Britain aimed at curbing a coronavirus surge.

UK's FTSE 100 rose 0.6% at 6,612.25 points, boosted by oil majors Royal Dutch Shell and BP, as crude prices inched higher with deadlocked talks between major producers about potential changes in February output set to continue.

The domestically focussed midcap index gained 0.9% as UK's finance minister Rishi Sunak announced plans to support businesses struggling under a third Covid-19 lockdown.

"The stock market reaction to a new lockdown in England could have been a lot worse, but it is fair to say there were plenty of signs in recent days that full lockdown was coming, such as similar restrictions being announced in Scotland yesterday," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"Nonetheless, given the severity of the lockdown restrictions one might have expected a repeat of last year's trends with lockdown losers slumping on the stock market and beneficiaries rallying. That's not entirely the case this time round."

European stocks rallied to fresh February highs on the first trading session in 2021 on Monday on hopes the vaccines will spur a speedy economic rebound.

The global mood dampened yesterday ahead of the Senate election outcome, which could have a big impact on incoming US President Joe Biden's ability to pursue his preferred economic policies.

Stocks considered as safe-havens like utilities, healthcare and food & beverage were among the biggest sectoral decliners in Europe.

Germany's DAX index dropped 0.6% at 13,651.27 points with the government looking to extend a lockdown, while France's CAC 40 slipped 0.4% to 5,564.60 points. The pan-European STOXX 600 index fell 0.2%, following losses on Wall Street over worries about Senate runoffs in the US state of Georgia.

Retailers were a bright spot, with Britain's Next jumping 8.0% after it said its Christmas sales were much better than expected.

Shares in Marks and Spencer, Morrisons and Tesco rose between 0.2% and 1.2% after market researcher Kantar said British grocery sales hit a record high in December.

German chipmaker Dialog Semiconductor PLC gained 2.7% after it gave an upbeat fourth-quarter revenue forecast due to strong demand for 5G phones and tablets.

ASML rose 0.2% after analysts at RBC and Liberum raised their price targets on the stock.

Oil prices shot higher yesterday as Opec and its partners discussed whether or not to raise production, while stocks were mixed.

The price of the main US oil contract, WTI, jumped more than five % higher at one point to hit $50 a barrel for the first time since February.

Opec and its partners are discussing whether to add 500,000 barrels of oil onto the market next month or to hold off given the rash of tighter coronavirus lockdowns that will likely dampen demand.

"Brent crude oil and WTI are showing solid gains as there is talk that OPEC+ are edging towards a compromise whereby the current output level will be maintained," said market analyst David Madden at CMC Markets UK.

The news of fresh lockdowns and slow vaccination campaigns kept European stocks mostly on the back foot.

The UK began implementing yesterday new national restrictions set to last weeks as the country is beset by a new variant of the coronavirus that apparently spreads faster.

For the markets, the news was counterbalanced in part by the announcement of an extra £4.6bn package for virus-battered businesses.

"The mood has soured somewhat as a result of the national lockdowns which are once again coming into force or being extended," OANDA analyst Craig Erlam told AFP.

"This was maybe inevitable anyway as a result of the (Christmas) festivities taking place in the midst of an already severe wave of Covid-19 but the new variant has thrown another spanner in the works."

In recent months, governments worldwide have tightened or prolonged lockdown restrictions to combat the health crisis.

While analysts are broadly upbeat about the long-term outlook this year, the nascent Covid-19 vaccine programmes have yet to have an impact, meaning the first few months of this year will likely be bumpy.

Wall Street's main stock indices were higher in late morning trading meanwhile, with the Dow up less than 0.1%.

Investors watched anxiously as voters in Georgia cast ballots in run-off elections for two Senate seats which will decide the balance of power in the upper house of Congress.

"Today's price action alone offers few if any hints over what any given result would mean for financial markets," said Stephen Innes, chief global market strategist at Axi. He said it was unclear whether markets would welcome a Democratic win as a harbinger of more government spending or spurn it as it would likely mean tax increases and more regulation.

HONG KONG

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Ck Hutchison Holdings Ltd	56.00	0.63	6,587,213
Hang Lung Properties Ltd	20.05	-0.74	5,814,852
Ck Infrastructure Holdings L	42.75	1.18	1,640,531
Hengan Intl Group Co Ltd	58.25	4.02	7,347,809
China Shenhua Energy Co-H	7.90	-1.00	68,147,276
Cspc Pharmaceutical Group Lt	138.20	0.88	2,215,486
Hang Seng Bank Ltd	31.00	0.00	10,702,069
China Resources Land Ltd	40.70	1.24	8,039,172
Ck Asset Holdings Ltd	7.60	-1.30	59,015,302
Sino Biopharmaceutical	31.75	2.75	4,730,771
Henderson Land Development	98.75	0.20	21,310,166
Aia Group Ltd	4.81	-0.82	284,971,068
Ind & Comm Bk Of China-H	106.60	3.19	7,647,687
Want Want China Holdings Ltd	37.05	0.68	3,797,593
Sun Hung Kai Properties	26.35	-2.04	81,057,545
New World Development	35.30	0.14	172,278,597
Geely Automobile Holdings Lt	45.95	3.37	1,834,987
Swire Pacific Ltd - Cl A	34.20	0.74	8,106,847
Sands China Ltd	42.05	2.44	5,634,596
Wharf Real Estate Investment	73.45	0.55	3,280,528
Clp Holdings Ltd	9.99	-1.87	35,733,674
Country Garden Holdings Co	45.15	1.92	10,702,301
Aac Technologies Holdings In	101.90	-1.26	141,905,809
Shenzhou International Group	151.00	0.40	3,615,576
Ping An Insurance Group Co-H	93.75	-0.58	23,252,847
China Mengniu Dairy Co	51.30	7.32	27,302,522
Sunny Optical Tech	181.10	2.32	8,055,483
Boc Hong Kong Holdings Ltd	24.40	1.67	10,843,012
China Life Insurance Co-H	16.90	-1.17	49,085,434
Citic Ltd	5.58	0.72	24,816,263
Galaxy Entertainment Group L	60.10	-1.15	7,973,681
Wh Group Ltd	7.17	6.70	72,586,977

HONG KONG

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Hong Kong & China Gas	11.84	1.20	26,327,548
Bank Of Communications Co-H	4.11	0.74	19,805,672
China Petroleum & Chemical-H	3.53	0.00	102,172,968
Hong Kong Exchanges & Clear	457.00	3.44	7,687,814
Bank Of China Ltd-H	2.64	1.15	227,298,426
Hsbc Holdings Plc	40.15	-0.74	17,133,338
Power Assets Holdings Ltd	42.65	-0.12	3,670,632
Mtr Corp	45.10	2.15	5,883,886
China Overseas Land & Invest	114.90	0.52	4,377,129
Tencent Holdings Ltd	15.80	-4.24	142,546,749
China Unicom Hong Kong Ltd	583.50	1.92	18,668,061
Link Reit	4.85	8.50	292,474,422
Sino Land Co	73.10	1.88	8,683,349
China Resources Power Holdin	2.38	-0.83	85,782,067
Petrochina Co Ltd-H	7.06	0.14	624,374,651
Cnooc Ltd	5.75	-0.35	221,592,357
China Construction Bank-H	46.10	5.13	225,016,589
China Mobile Ltd	223.00	-2.02	35,061,260

GCC INDICES

Indices	Lt Price	Change
Doha Securities Market	10,618.39	+141.27
Kuwait Stocks Exchange	4,557.53	-3.13
Oman Stock Market	3,714.91	+19.75

Asian markets rebound as outlook hopes top virus fear

AFP
Hong Kong

Most Asian markets reversed early losses yesterday as hopes for the economic outlook trumped worries over a coronavirus surge, new lockdowns, a slow vaccine rollout and uncertainty over US Senate elections.

While analysts are broadly upbeat about the long-term outlook this year, the nascent inoculation programmes have yet to have an impact, meaning the first few months will likely be bumpy.

And the task ahead was laid bare by data showing almost 280,000 Americans were infected in one day, while the country's death toll passed 300,000.

And as a new, potentially more transmissible strain rampages around the world, governments are being forced to tighten containment measures again, with England going into a six-week full lockdown after officials warned hospitals could soon face collapse.

Such measures are fuelling concerns the already stuttering economic recovery could be jolted off course in the first quarter, while the rollout of vaccines has been slower than hoped, adding to the market jitters.

“The first quarter will no doubt be tough; the spread has been horrific throughout the festive period and restrictions are being tightened and extended,” said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA.

“The toll on the economy will be significant but, thanks to the vaccine, consigned mostly to the first quarter.”

All three main indexes on Wall Street fell more than 1%, having ended 2020 at or near record highs, with dealers there also keeping tabs on runoff senate elections in Georgia, which will decide the balance of power in the upper house of Congress.

Both Democratic candidates held narrow leads going into the vote yesterday, and observers said there were concerns on trading floors that a win for the party would give them control of Capitol Hill and power to pass market-unfriendly measures such as tax hikes and tighter regulation.

Markets have been buoyed in recent months by the prospect of Republicans holding the Senate and providing a check on the Democrats but analysts said a “blue wave” scenario has spooked investors.

“If the Democratic Party...(controls) both houses, we could see an equity market correction, especially if investors worry that such checks and balances around tax and tech regulation will disappear,” said Axi strategist Stephen Innes.

However, Gorilla Trades strategist Ken Berman added: “Most analysts agree that a Democratic sweep would pose a risk for stocks, but with all the positive trends in mind, it's unlikely that bulls will have to deal with anything more than an orderly correction.”

Asian equities struggled early yesterday but many managed to bounce back.

Hong Kong was among those that shifted from red to green, helped by news that the New York Stock Exchange had abandoned plans to delist three state-owned Chinese telecom companies.

The move reversed a weekend decision that further dented already strained relations between the world's two superpowers. Jackson Wong, at Amber Hill Capital, said: “Some funds that had an obligation to unload these shares will now need to buy them back.

“Some investors are also starting to pricing in a scenario that the decision to halt delistings could be a start of a de-escalation in tensions between China and the US.” The three firms all rallied, having tumbled on Monday.

China Unicom rose as much as 11% at one point, while China Mobile and China Telecom jumped more than 8%.

Shanghai hit a 13-year high, while the yuan strengthened against the dollar.

There were also gains in Sydney, Seoul, Taipei, Jakarta, Bangkok and Wellington, though Tokyo, Mumbai, Singapore and Manila fell.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 closed 0.4% down at 27,158.63 points, Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended 0.6% up at 27,649.86 points and Shanghai's Composite finished 0.7% higher at 3,528.68 points.

Analysts said while there were lingering virus concerns, traders remain upbeat about the future.

“The light at the end of the tunnel is there for all to see and it grows brighter by the week,” said Berman.

Oil prices remained under pressure from immediate worries about demand as containment measures go into force, while dealers were also fretting after a meeting of Opec and other top producers ended without agreement on new output levels for next month.

Bitcoin was sitting at $31,000 after seeing recent wild swings, that saw it hit a record near $35,000 before diving to $28,000 within the space of a day.

London, Paris and Frankfurt all fell at the open.

UK offers extra $6.2bn to firms to soften new Covid recession

UK offers more grants to firms affected by lockdown; economy seen contracting again in first quarter; Sunak says measures will help ready workers for recovery; British Chambers of Commerce urges full-year support plan

Reuters
London

A lone pedestrian walks through Leadenhall market in the City of London. Britain's economy looks likely to tip back into recession — shrinking in the final quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 — following a record 25% fall in output in the first two months of lockdown in 2020.

Britain offered a £4.6bn ($6.2bn) support package for businesses yesterday to soften an expected recession caused by a surge in Covid-19 cases that has triggered a third national lockdown.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the lockdown on Monday, saying a highly contagious coronavirus variant risked overwhelming the health service within 21 days.

Most people must work from home and schools have closed for almost all pupils.

Hospitality venues must stay shut, as well as non-essential shops.

Britain's economy looks likely to tip back into recession — shrinking in the final quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 — following a record 25% fall in output in the first two months of lockdown in 2020.

The new downturn is expected to be far softer, with most businesses now much better adapted to working remotely and construction sites and factories expected to stay open.

But economists at JP Morgan still predicted a 2.5% fall in output for the first three months of 2021.

Finance minister Rishi Sunak has previously announced emergency help for the economy worth £280bn, including a massive job protection scheme that will run until the end of April.

Under yesterday's additional measures, retail, hospitality and leisure companies will be able to claim one-off grants worth up to £9,000 to get them through the coming months, costing up to £4bn in total, along with £600mn of grants for other businesses.

“This will help businesses to get through the months ahead — and crucially it will help sustain jobs, so workers can be ready to return when they are able to reopen,” Sunak said.

Government forecasters in November predicted almost £400bn of borrowing this financial year, equivalent to 19% of GDP — a peacetime record but one that, at least for now, can be financed at record-low interest rates.

The Bank of England is buying government debt and in November ramped up its asset purchase programme to almost 900bn pounds with the intention of using it throughout 2021.

However, the British Chambers of Commerce said Sunak's “drip-feed approach” to support for businesses would see many go to the wall as they would not qualify for sufficient assistance.

“While this immediate cash-flow support for business is welcome, it is not going to be enough to save many firms,” BCC director general Adam Marshall said.

The opposition Labour Party said millions of people had been let down by Sunak's announcement. “Instead of delivering the support that Britain needed, he's ploughing on with plans to hit people in their pockets with pay cuts, benefits cuts and tax rises,” its finance spokeswoman Anneliese Dodds said.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has estimated Britain's economic recovery by the end of this year will be the slowest of all its member countries except Argentina.

Sensex completes longest run of gains since Oct

Bloomberg
Mumbai

India's stock benchmark rose, after seesawing for a large part of the session as investors weighed the risk of stricter social restrictions to rein in coronavirus cases against the prospect of an improvement in company earnings.

The S&P BSE Sensex increased 0.5% to 48,437.78 in Mumbai, completing a 10th consecutive session of gains for the longest streak for the gauge since mid-October. The NSE Nifty 50 Index advanced by a similar magnitude. Both measures climbed to fresh records.

While the promise of vaccines quelling the coronavirus pandemic has helped India's equity indexes touch successive new highs, renewed lockdowns from Australia to the UK have given some investors pause.

The quarterly earnings season beginning this week may provide guidance from companies for the months ahead.

“There is a short pause but it continues to remain a ‘buy on dips’ market for investors,” said Gaurav Garg, head of research at Indore-based CapitalVia Global Research Ltd. “With technology demand staying strong, we remain optimistic about earnings for the entire technology pack.”

Asia's largest software exporter, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, is scheduled to announce results on Friday.

The rupee weakened 0.2% to 73.18 per US dollar, while the yield on 10-year government bond was steady at 5.82%.

Thirteen of 19 sector indexes compiled by BSE Ltd rose yesterday, led by a gauge of lenders. Housing Development Finance Corp contributed the most to the Sensex advance, increasing 2.8%, while Axis Bank Ltd had the largest gain, rising 6.3%.

Electric cars rise to record 54% market share in Norway

Reuters
Oslo

The sale of electric cars in Norway overtook those powered by petrol, diesel and hybrid engines last year, with German auto-maker Volkswagen replacing Tesla as the top battery-vehicle producer, new data showed yesterday.

So-called battery electric vehicles (BEV) made up 54.3% of all new cars sold in the Nordic country in 2020, a global record, up from 42.4% in 2019 and from a mere 1% of the overall market a decade ago, the Norwegian Road Federation (OFV) said.

Seeking to become the first nation to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2025, oil-producing Norway exempts fully electric vehicles from taxes imposed on those relying on fossil fuels.

The policy has turned the country's car market into a laboratory for automakers seeking a path to a future without internal combustion engines, vaulting new brands and models to the top of bestseller lists in recent years.

While the sale of BEVs had broken the 50%-mark in individual months, 2020 was the first time that fully electric cars outsold the combined volume of models containing internal combustion engines for a year as a whole.

“We're definitely on track to reach the 2025 target,” OFV chief executive Oeyvind Thorsen told a news conference.

BEV sales accelerated in the final months of 2020, hitting its highest level for any single month in December, with a 66.7% share of the car market.

Volkswagen's Audi brand topped the 2020 leaderboard with its e-tron sports utility and sportsback vehicles as the most sold new passenger cars in Norway last year, while Tesla's mid-sized Model 3, the 2019 winner, was relegated to second place.

Electric vehicle sales are set to continue to soar in 2021, industry analysts and car distributors said, as more models are brought to the market.

“Our preliminary forecast is for electric cars to surpass 65% of the market in 2021,” said Christina Bu who heads the Norwegian EV Association, an interest group. “If we manage that, the goal of selling only zero-emission cars in 2025 will be within reach.”

So-called battery electric vehicles (BEV) made up 54.3% of all new cars sold in the Nordic country in 2020, a global record, up from 42.4% in 2019

Tesla's mid-sized sports utility vehicle, the Model Y, is set to reach the Norwegian market this year, as are the first electric SUVs from Ford, BMW and Volkswagen.

By contrast, cars with diesel-only engines have tumbled from a peak of 75.7% of the overall Norwegian market in 2011 to just 8.6% last year.

New car sales in the country last year were 141,412, of which 76,789 were fully electric.

While the electric market share will keep rising, there is uncertainty around how many cars producers will allocate to Norway as European demand is increasing, said Harald Frigstad, chief executive at Norwegian car importer Bertel O Steen.

The seller of Daimler's Mercedes-Benz as well as the Kia, Peugeot, Opel, Citroen, DS and Smart brands, predicted around 70% of its sales would be of fully electric models in 2021.

Buoyant German retail sales, jobs data belie broader Covid gloom

Reuters
Berlin

German retail sales rose in November and jobless numbers fell last month, against forecasts that both readings would worsen, suggesting that parts of Europe's largest economy have weathered the impact of the coronavirus unexpectedly well.

Retail sales rose 1.9% in November, when markets had anticipated a contraction, the Federal Statistics Office said yesterday, adding that it expected sales to have grown around 4% during 2020 as a whole — exceeding 2019's 3.2% expansion.

The monthly increase — covering a period when Germany was in partial lockdown with shops still open — was driven by online transactions and spending on home improvements, the office said yesterday.

In separate data, the Federal Labour Agency said the number of jobless fell a seasonally-adjusted 37,000 year on year in December, when the lockdown was tightened, with most shops forced to close from mid-month.

A view of the luxury retail street on Maximilianstrasse in Munich. Retail sales in Germany rose 1.9% in November, when markets had anticipated a contraction, the Federal Statistics Office said yesterday.

Analysts had expected an increase.

“The apparent resilience of the German economy in late 2020 bodes well for the new year,” said Berenberg chief economist Holger Schmieding.

“Despite a likely setback early this year, we look for a strong rebound starting no later than April.”

The employment numbers — which ING analyst Carsten Brzeski cautioned should be taken with “a big spoon of salt” — were boosted by a state-backed part-time work scheme designed to protect jobs that some 666,000 people were placed on in December.

Germany is expected to further extend its tougher anti-Covid restrictions yesterday as infection rates have remained high.

The Statistics Office said its provisional full-year retail sales growth figure — contrasting with an expected drop of 5.5% in gross domestic product, according to the Bundesbank — included December's full lockdown.

The office also said the estimate was “freighted with greater uncertainties” than usual due to the pandemic.

November's biggest winners were in online and delivery retail, where revenues rose 31.8% year on year, while spending on household decorations, appliances and building materials rose 15.4%. Mixed retail, including department stores, fell 6.1%.

FOCUS

Petroleum services companies' expansion to benefit oil and gas sector

- Expansion of petroleum services companies supports competition and the oil and gas sector in future
- Expanding the competition circle will provide services to oil and gas and petrochemical companies at the lowest costs and boost revenues
- Localising the local manufacturing of petroleum equipment and tasks necessary for oil and gas activities and future projects

By Saad al-Kuwari

With the complexity of the oil, gas and petrochemical production process, the gas-to-liquids industry, and the numerous transformational industries, companies in this sector vary between producing, transporting and distributing, and supporting production, transportation, storage, export and marketing operations.
Some companies may perform more than one job at the same time, and I mean here national oil and gas companies and global producers.

What are oil and gas services?

Oil and gas services are a supportive part of oil companies, and these multiple services include maintenance of oil and gas wells, completion, production, warehouses, supply, factory maintenance, logistical support services on both land and sea, air and sea transportation, food, hospitals, technical and engineering consultations, training and development, and others.
If we address, for example, the "oil and gas field services market", it provides services for the manufacture, repair and maintenance of equipment used in oil or gas extraction, transportation and storage of products such as oil, refining services, petroleum derivatives, petrochemical complexes or mining, and exporting them through export ports.
The global oilfield services and production market is expected to reach $177bn in 2025 from $135.1bn in 2020, and grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4% and these tasks or services such as seismic testing, transportation services, and directional services for drilling rigs.
Horizontal well construction, production and completion services are generally what most people usually think of when an oilfield services company comes to mind.
However, the range of products and services under the oil and gas services umbrella is broad and includes several technology-based services that are vital to successful field operations.
These services include energy source identification, energy data management, drilling and formation assessment, geosciences, and others.

How does the oil and gas industry operate?

The oil and gas industry is one of the largest sectors in the world by dollar value, and generates estimated revenues of $3.5tn annually.
Oil, as well as gas, is important to the global economic framework, especially for the largest oil and gas producers in the world and with the increasing demand for oil and gas in the world during the past few decades and this is driven by many factors that include the increase in global economic activities.
Investors looking to enter the oil and gas industry in its various aspects can be overwhelmed by the complex terminology and unique metrics used throughout the sector. Therefore, this article is designed to help you understand the fundamentals of companies operating in the oil and gas sector by explaining the basic concepts and measurement criteria.

What do oil and gas service companies do?

You may ask or wonder what oil and gas service companies do. The truth is that they do a lot, and they provide a lot of services to support exploration, production, refining, liquefaction, transportation, storage and export activities for oil and gas.
For example, they build drilling rigs, design pipelines, provide engineering services, and carry out construction, technical and technical work that ranges from mechanical and electrical to supplying goods.
You will also find other service companies providing services such as hospitality or food and security services, transportation, logistics, sea and air transportation, engineering and technical consulting, and more.
Most of these companies involved in providing petroleum services were established in their modern form in the late 1990s through a combination of factors dating back to the low oil prices in the late 1990s and the massive mergers of BP-Amoco in 1998 and ExxonMobil in 1999.
The oil and gas services sector is a global industry with billions of dollars, and the petroleum sector is a diversified sector, so the expansion of petroleum services companies and the opening of the market to the private sector or through partnership with foreign companies operating in Qatar ensures the creation of a state of equal competition that guarantees the best offers and supports the local economy.
The oil, gas and petrochemical industry will face great technical and technical challenges, so the sector always needs the help of international companies to implement its strategy under the system of developed and comprehensive technical services.
In most cases, contracting with external sources may lead to increased operator risks, delay in implementation, and even poor contract pricing, and therefore the presence of national companies that guarantee delivery as planned and fair pricing for service contracts.
In Qatar, there are a very small number of national or joint stock companies, and the private sector lacks these service companies specialised in the oil and energy sector.
The only Qatari shareholder company in this respect – Gulf International Company – provides services in drilling, insurance, food, and air transport.
Creating future investment opportunities and support for petroleum services in the energy, gas, petroleum and industry sectors, and developing an integrated and comprehensive strategy that attaches increasing importance to deepening and localising the local manufacturing of petroleum equipment and tasks necessary for oil and gas activities because it represents a safety component and increases the ability to rely locally on the manufacture of petroleum equipment as well as reducing imports while adhering to international standards, as well as providing the largest amount of oil, gas and petrochemical companies' needs in the local market and optimising the utilisation of our hydrocarbon resources.

■ *Saad Abdulla al-Kuwari is an expert in oil and gas and is exploring the future of energy.*

Qatar-Saudi border opening boosts sentiments on QSE; key index jumps 141 points

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

The perception of reduced risks and boost in sentiments due to opening of Qatar and Saudi border coupled with coincident passive inflows due to MSCI emerging market index rebalancing yesterday helped the Qatar Stock Exchange gain 141 points in key index and QR8bn in capitalisation.

An across the board buying – especially in transport, banks and insurance – lifted the 20-stock Qatar Index 1.35% to 10,618.39 points, although it touched an intraday high of 10,670 points.

About 72% of the traded constituents extended gains to investors in the market, which is up 1.75% year-to-date.

Akber Khan, senior director (Asset Management Group), Al Rayan Investment, said the market jump at the open reflected the long awaited good news but then prices softened over the day.

Coincidentally, the market also benefited from passive inflows due to a rebalancing of the MSCI emerging market index.

Talal F Samhouri, portfolio manager of Aventicum Capital Management, is of the view that the beginning of the normalisation of relations has "significantly" reduced the risks; thereby leading to improved valuation of the Qatari stocks, which are even otherwise cheapest in the region.

Foreign and Gulf funds as well as Arab individuals were seen net buyers on the bourse, whose capitalisation gained 1.38% to QR613.57bn, mainly on large and small cap segments.

Trade turnover and volumes were on the increase on the market, where the industrials sector alone accounted for more than 52% of the total trading volume.

Islamic equities were seen gaining much slower than the other indices on the bourse, which saw local retail investors were increasingly net sellers. A total of 658,356 exchange traded funds (Masraf Al Rayan sponsored QATR and Doha Bank sponsored QETF) valued at QR2.09mn changed hands across 79 deals; while on the debt market, there was no trading of sovereign bonds and treasury bills.

Electronic boards display price movements on the Qatar Stock Exchange. An across the board buying – especially in transport, banks and insurance – lifted the 20-stock Qatar Index 1.35% to 10,618.39 points, although it touched an intraday high of 10,670 points yesterday.

The Total Return Index gained 1.35% to 20,413.51 points, Al Rayan Islamic Index (Price) by 0.79% to 2,423.31 points and All Share Index by 1.34% to 3,259.93 points.

The transport index surged 1.94%, banks and financial services (1.74%), insurance (1.45%), industrials (0.99%), telecom (0.6%), realty (0.31%) and consumer goods and services (0.05%).

Major gainers included Nakilat, Qatar Insurance, QNB, Qatar Islamic Insurance, Qatar Electricity and Water, Qatar Islamic Bank, Commercial Bank, Qatar First Bank, Inma Holding, Qatari Investors Group, Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding and Qamco; even as Qatar General Insurance and Reinsurance, Al Meera, Gulf International Services and Widam Food were among the losers.

The foreign institutions turned net buyers to the tune of QR79.1mn against net sellers of QR10.27mn on January 4.

The Arab individuals were net buyers to the extent of QR26.37mn compared with net sellers of QR8.23mn on Monday.

The Gulf institutions were net buyers to the tune of QR8.98mn against net sellers of QR0.93mn the previous day.

The foreign individuals' net buying increased notably to QR3.88mn compared to QR2.26mn on January 4. The Gulf individuals were net buyers to the extent of QR1.68mn against net sellers of QR1.69mn on Monday.

However, Qataris' net selling grew significantly to QR107.41mn compared to QR12.21mn the previous day.

The domestic institutions turned net sellers to the tune of QR11.83mn against net buyers of QR31.12mn on January 4.

The Arab funds were seen net profit takers to the extent of QR0.84mn compared with no major exposure on Monday.

Total trade volume more than tripled to 370.3mn shares and value almost tripled to QR646.27mn on more than doubled transactions to 12,104.

The industrials sector's trade volume grew almost 10-fold to 193.63mn equities and value by more than five-fold to QR158.46mn on more than tripled deals to 2,782.

The transport sector's trade volume rose more than five-fold to 14.13mn stocks and value by also more than five-fold to QR58.88mn on more than quadrupled transactions to 1,386.

The insurance sector's trade volume almost quadrupled to 6.52mn shares and value more than quadrupled to QR16.19mn on 76% growth in deals to 284.

The consumer goods and services sector's trade volume almost tripled to 57.55mn equities and value more than doubled to QR93.75mn on more than doubled transactions to 1,545.

The realty sector's trade volume almost tripled to 45.61mn stocks and value more than tripled to QR76.81mn on more than doubled deals to 1,628.

The telecom sector's trade volume more than doubled to 6.11mn shares and value also more than doubled to QR23.18mn on 70% increase in transactions to 766.

The banks and financial services sector saw 15% expansion in trade volume to 46.76mn equities, 68% in value to QR219mn and 82% in deals to 3,713.

GCC logistics industry estimated to grow 4.3% between 2020 and 2025, says Frost & Sullivan

By Pratap John
Business Editor

GCC logistics industry is estimated to grow 4.3% between 2020 and 2025, according to market researcher Frost & Sullivan.
Frost & Sullivan believes that mega-events in the GCC and investment in digital infrastructure upgrade to accommodate the growing demand from the e-commerce sector will drive logistics industry growth in the region.
The logistics industry in the Gulf Co-operation Council region is evolving rapidly driven by increasing non-oil sector contribution to the GDP, infrastructure development, the emergence of free trade zone, industrial parks, and increased trade co-operation.
Governments in the region have undertaken policy measures to reduce their dependency on oil exports by strengthening economic diversification initiatives, tax reforms, improving the investment climate, increasing investment in food security and encouraging private sector participation.
Covid-19 related disruptions caused significant slowdown during H1, 2020.
National and regional lockdowns, travel restrictions, slowdown in customs clearance, port congestions and restrictions, increasing last-mile delivery costs, are some of the factors disrupting the logistics operations in the region and contributing to the faster adoption of digital technologies.
During the rebound phase from the pandemic, digital transformation initiatives will play a crucial role. With governments focusing on digitalisation and increasing contribution of knowledge economic sectors, launch of 5G services supported by several initiatives relating to artificial intelligence, cyber security is expected to aid the transformation of the logistics ecosystem.
The region's geographical location on the transcontinental trade has facilitated its focus on the development of logistics hubs for both domestic and transit goods.
As part of economic diversification initiatives and national infrastructure plans, the development of free zones are given priority to increase trade. Cross border e-commerce is one of the growth areas and contributes to around 40% of total e-commerce value, Frost & Sullivan said.
Several regional programmes and initiatives are targeting to position the GCC region as an innovation and a knowledge hub, it said. Government support measures include development of entrepreneurship and improving the financial system to access capital.
Stimulus programmes announced by the governments included incentives and exemptions such as equity-free grants or exemptions of fees, subsidised housing, office space and health insurance coverage for companies, Frost & Sullivan said.
In times of pandemic, logistics services will be crucial for the healthcare industry to deliver time-critical medical equipment and pharmaceuticals that require cold storage facilities.
Some of the primary factors important for vaccine logistics include cargo monitoring with supply chain visibility and traceability, vaccine temperature monitoring and stability testing.
GCC being a major logistics hub, development of vaccine distribution infrastructure is given priority in some of the key ports, Frost & Sullivan noted.

Frost & Sullivan believes that mega-events in the GCC and investment in digital infrastructure upgrade to accommodate the growing demand from the e-commerce sector will drive logistics industry growth in the region

On what lies ahead for GCC's logistics industry, Frost & Sullivan said shortage of cargo capacity due to reliance on belly cargo, increasing demand for time-critical cargo are some of the key factors that support the growth of air cargo.
Increasing digitalisation will simplify logistics processes of freight segments.
Collaborative development among competitors, logistics service providers and start-ups will eliminate system redundancies.
Warehouse Infrastructure: Infrastructure development will be the area of focus between 2020 and 2025 to improve connectivity.
Investments in cold storage and other warehousing infrastructure is expected to increase cross border e-commerce, it said.
Storage expansions, upgradation of cargo handling facilities, and development of free zones are the other growth areas to watch out for. Digitalisation is expected to be adopted quickly in this segment as automation of warehouse operations would reduce the dependency on the labour force and improve accuracy in picking and sorting, Frost & Sullivan added.

World Bank warns global recovery could erode if virus worsens

AFP
Washington

The World Bank yesterday downgraded its outlook for the global economy, and warned the situation could deteriorate if Covid-19 infections accelerate or the vaccine rollout is delayed.
The coronavirus pandemic also has worsened the risks surrounding the rising debt load in developing nations, and it will take a global effort to avoid a new crisis in those economies, the bank cautioned.
After shrinking 4.3% in 2020, the world economy is projected to grow by 4.0% this year, two-tenths lower than previously forecast, as more than half of countries were downgraded in the semi-annual Global Economic Prospects report.
China was a bright spot with a surprisingly fast recovery in 2020, but advanced countries which did better last year will fare worse in 2021, the bank said.
The report warns the outlook remains "highly uncertain," and GDP growth could be as low as 1.6% this year if the downside risks materialise.
With millions driven into poverty by the coronavirus recession, countries will need to find a way to move beyond direct aid and reignite investment to stimulate growth, the Washington-based development lender urged.
Policymakers face "formidable challenges as they try to ensure that this still fragile global recovery gains traction and sets a foundation for robust growth," World Bank President David Malpass said.
The expectation for a subdued recovery "assumes that vaccine rollout becomes widespread" and the economic reopening continues, Malpass told reporters.
But even if the pace of growth holds steady, global GDP in 2022 will be 4.4% below pre-pandemic levels, the bank said.
And, further out, the "lasting damage to health, education and balance sheets" may lower the global economy's potential output, the report said.
Focus on policies to boost investment will be needed to counter "the pandemic's lasting scars," including through investment in green infrastructure which can boost growth while at the same time addressing climate change, the report said.
Malpass said that would include phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and providing incentives for green technologies.
The Chinese economy is expected to expand by nearly 8% this year, after 2% growth in 2020, while US GDP is projected to gain 3.5% — a half point lower than the June forecast.
Excluding China, developing nations as a group will see growth of just 3.4%, the report said.
The inequality of the downturn and the recovery was "dramatic," and drove a "devastating rise in extreme poverty," Malpass said.
"People at the bottom of the income scale were hardest hit" by the recession, and "unfortunately will likely be the slowest to regain jobs, get healthcare, vaccinations and adjust to the post-Covid economy," he said.
The pandemic also exacerbated the debt risks of developing nations.
"The global community needs to act rapidly and forcefully to make sure the recent debt accumulation does not end with a string of debt crises," said Ayhan Kose, acting World bank vice president for Equitable Growth and Financial Institutions.
"The developing world cannot afford another lost decade."
Malpass said that the situation is a "red alert" with some low-income countries facing deep debt distress, and the more they are forced to pay to service pre-pandemic debt, the less they have for healthcare and investment.
China, which holds 65% of the debt of the lowest-income countries, has a key role to play in addressing the challenge, and Malpass again called on the country to provide transparency on the terms of the loans, including collateral and interest rates.