

Business

European stock markets falter after Asian markets decline

US markets shut for Independence Day holiday

LONDON: European stock markets faltered yesterday after a mainly downbeat Asian session, but London rose on takeover news and rising oil prices before an OPEC output decision. In early afternoon eurozone deals, Frankfurt stocks dipped and Paris flatlined, as investors eyed poor Chinese data.

With US markets shut for the Independence Day holiday, no momentum was expected from the other side of the Atlantic. London however advanced with sentiment boosted by news of a possible bidding war for British supermarket chain Morrisons. The energy sector was also buoyed by rising oil prices, as top crude producers struggled to reach a deal on lifting output.

China doubts

"Risk-off sentiment is dominating the markets at the start of the week," noted analyst Sophie Griffiths at the OANDA brokerage. "Weaker-than-expected China data is overshadowing signs of economic recovery in Europe," she added.

"The China Caixin services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) revealed the sector grew at its slowest pace in 14 months in June. "The weak print comes following Thursday's manufacturing equivalent, which also revealed that growth was slowing," Griffiths said.

Back in London, Morrisons shares jumped 11 percent after US private equity firm Apollo Global

Management revealed it was mulling a counter-bid for the food retailer. Britain's fourth biggest supermarket on Saturday accepted a separate £6.3-billion (\$8.7-billion, 7.3-billion-euro) takeover from a consortium of investment groups.

That came after Morrisons last month rejected a £5.5-billion offer from US private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier & Rice. "We have now got confirmation of three parties interested in Morrisons—and fear of missing out could attract further interest," noted Russ Mould, investment director at stockbroker AJ Bell.

OPEC's output row

Oil markets edged up as the United Arab Emirates battled with OPEC and other producers over the rate and timing of their next output increase. Saudi Arabia is engaged in a rare public spat with its Emirati allies, escalating tensions before another meeting of the OPEC+ alliance of oil producing countries.

The UAE has bitterly opposed a proposal by the alliance to raise production, causing a stalemate that could derail efforts to curb rising crude prices amid a fragile post-pandemic recovery.

"It's the whole group versus one country, which is sad to me but this is the reality," Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told Bloomberg television, suggesting the UAE were isolated within



TOKYO: Women walk past an electronic board, showing the stock market indices of various countries, outside a brokerage in Tokyo. — AFP

the 23-member OPEC+ bloc. Officials have laboured for days over an agreement to pump more as demand picks up with the global recovery and supplies shrink,

with fears that failure to find common ground could send prices soaring. Crude prices are now around levels last seen in 2018. — AFP

Gulf Bank announces winners of AIDanah monthly draw for June

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its monthly AIDanah draw on Sunday, to announce the winners for June. The 10 lucky winners received cash prizes of KD 1,000 each. The winners are:

Sarra Abdulmajeed Dashty
Abdullah Joudah Sayer Sagheir
Amer Taher Jasim Alqattan
Mohammed Ali Jaber Alenzi
Sumaya Abdullah Mohammed Sakeen
Essa Adnan Khaled Alaslawi
Alanoud Saad Obaid Faleh Al Rasheedi (Minor)
Ali Mohammad Almasri
Ruaa Ghazi Ibrahim Alenzi
Rudaina Abdulla Bader AlKharafi

The AIDanah account is one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with its periodic draws that award valuable prizes and multiple benefits for account holders. Gulf Bank's AIDanah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000.

Numerous Benefits

The AIDanah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year,

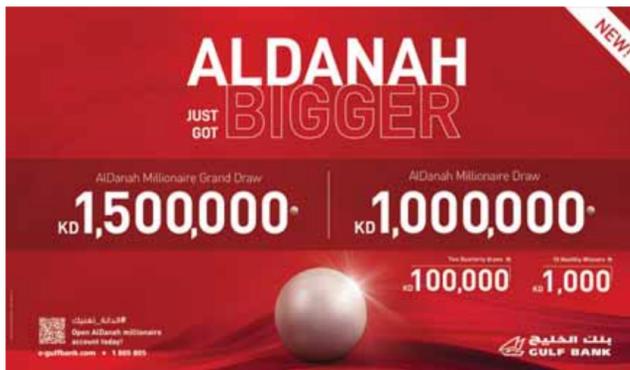
which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the Bank.

Accordingly, all chances gained by existing AIDanah customers in 2020 (from January 1 to December 31, 2020) have been transferred to the 2021 draws. It is also worth noting that all account draws are attended by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with the quarterly and annual draws also reviewed by Ernst & Young. Customers can deposit to win AIDanah cash prizes throughout the year.

To increase their chances of winning, account holders must either keep their account with a minimum deposit amount of KD 200, or increase their AIDanah savings - the more deposits into an account, the more chances accumulated over time. Gulf Bank's AIDanah account holders also have the opportunity to enter and win cash prizes all year long through monthly, quarterly and annual draws.

Opening an AIDanah Account

To enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an AIDanah account today with only KD 200. To open an AIDanah account, existing Gulf Bank customers can apply through Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services, or book an appointment at their nearest branch by using the new "Visit Gulf Bank" app for a faster and more



convenient branch visit. New customers can also open an AIDanah account by visiting their nearest Gulf Bank branch or by scheduling an appointment through the app.

Deposit More for More Chances to Win!

With Gulf Bank, depositing into an AIDanah account is easier and more secure than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts through the following channels: Online/Mobile Banking App which includes the ePay service, ATMs and ITMs, the Customer Contact Center at 1805805 which is available 24/7, in addition to the free standing order service from other Gulf Bank accounts.

Gulf Bank's AIDanah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for

customers to be eligible for the upcoming AIDanah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter Gulf Bank's AIDanah draws throughout the year, for cash prizes totaling up to more than KD 2 Million.

To deposit into an AIDanah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches, or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number. In addition, customers can visit the dedicated AIDanah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD (240) million for (6) months with Rate of Return (1.250%).

Vitasoy shares tumble on China boycott calls

HONG KONG: Shares in Hong Kong's Vitasoy plunged yesterday as the beverage brand was hit by online boycott calls from Chinese consumers after an employee stabbed a policeman and then killed himself. The 81-year-old soy milk manufacturer saw as much as 15 percent wiped off its share price before closing some 12 percent down, its worst performance since the 2008 global financial crisis.

The sudden plunge illustrated the precarious situation many businesses face when they get caught up in Hong Kong's febrile politics as authorities carry out a sweeping crackdown on dissent in the financial hub. Chinese consumers called for a boycott over the weekend after a 50-year-old Hong Kong employee of Vitasoy attacked a policeman with a knife on Thursday night in what local authorities said was a "lone wolf domestic terror" attack.

An internal memo was sent out by a Vitasoy employee mourning the "tragic death" of the man and extending condolences to his family, sparking online anger in mainland China. Vitasoy quickly distanced itself from the memo, saying it did not represent the company and had used "extremely inappropriate wording".

But consumers in China, where the company makes the vast majority of its profits, rounded on the brand. By yesterday afternoon, the topic "Get out of the Mainland, Vitasoy" had some 120 million readers on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform.

China's authoritarian government has cultivated a hyper-nationalist internet where consumer boycotts have been extremely effective at hammering any brand perceived to be disloyal to Beijing.

Hong Kong police said a company on the same street where Vitasoy's headquarters is located also received a false telephone bomb threat yesterday. Hong Kong is a deeply polarised city after huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago were stamped out with arrests and a new national security law.

Many residents view the city's police force as instrumental in the sweeping political crackdown and over the weekend some residents tried to leave flowers for the currently unnamed attacker. Hong Kong's government warned that such gestures could lead to arrest for "sedition" or "supporting terrorism". The police officer who was attacked needed surgery for a punctured lung but is expected to survive his injuries. Hong Kong's new national security unit has taken over the case. — AFP



DANA: This aerial view shows solar panels on the rooftops of buildings in this town east of the Turkish-Syrian border in the northwestern Idlib province on June 10, 2021. — AFP

Rebel-held Syria shifts power towards solar

KILLI, Syria: Huge solar panels poke out of pumpkin and tomato fields in Syria's rebel-held northwest, where after infrastructure was destroyed during a decade of war, many have switched to renewable energy. "We used to rely on diesel-powered generators, but it was a struggle with fuel shortages and price hikes," said Khaled Mustafa, one of dozens of farmers who set up panels in the Idlib region. "So we opted for solar power instead," he said.

More than three million people live in the Idlib region in Syria's northwest, much of which is controlled by jihadist forces and other rebels. Across Syria, at least 90 percent lack a stable power supply, according to the United Nations' Development Program (UNDP). In rebel areas, there is little hope of state-provided electricity.

Instead, the dark blue silicon panels have become common - installed on roofs, in hospitals or between tents in massive displacement camps. Once small and smoky diesel generators used to power

many homes. But with regular fuel shortages sending prices soaring, solar panels are now viewed as a cheaper, more efficient and reliable alternative.

In Mustafa's plot, solar panels hooked to rotating metal plates turn to follow the movement of the sun. They are among 200 solar panels purchased two years ago by an agricultural cooperative of nearly 20 farmers, costing some \$4,000. The panels power water pumps from a well, irrigating three hectares of cooperative farmland, as well as neighboring fields. "Even if (state) electricity is restored, solar energy will remain cheaper," said Mustafa.

Syria's electricity production was slashed by at least half during the conflict, but as fighting has calmed, renewable energy sources have increased, the UN says. "Since armed clashes have decreased, and most of the country is in a more stable situation, solar energy production has spiked as a valid alternative," UNDP said. In regime-controlled areas, solar panels provide power for both homes and public institutions like universities.

As for those under rebel control, one survey found eight percent used solar as the main source of power in their homes, according to a report in the Education and Conflict Review, published by Britain's University College London. It also found a tenth of people used solar for heating water, and a third of people used solar as a secondary source of power, for lighting and charging batteries. — AFP

Croatia's Rimac takes majority stake in Bugatti

BERLIN: Croatian electric carmaker Rimac Automobili will take the controlling stake in Bugatti, in an ownership swap arrangement with the French race-car brand's owner Volkswagen, the companies said yesterday.

Under the deal, Rimac and Volkswagen will set up a joint venture focused on Bugatti. Rimac will hold 55 percent of shares in the new company, while Volkswagen will then delegate its stake of 45 percent to its luxury sports car unit Porsche. The new company will be headquartered in Zagreb and be known as Bugatti-Rimac.

It will be founded in the fourth quarter of 2021, subject to approval from competition authorities, the companies said. No financial details of the transaction were disclosed. Porsche itself holds a minority stake in Rimac. It bought direct shares in the Croatian company in 2018 and has gradually increased its stake to the current level of 24 percent.

Mate Rimac, founder and CEO of Rimac, said the project was "a really exciting moment" that "takes the company to a whole new level". The venture will combine "Bugatti's strong expertise in the luxury car business with Rimac's great innovative strength in the promising field of electric mobility", Porsche CEO Oliver Blume added.

Mate Rimac will be the chief executive of the new company, which is to employ around 300 staff in Zagreb and 130 at Bugatti's existing site in Molsheim, France. It will initially produce two luxury car models—the Bugatti Chiron and the all-electric Rimac Nevera—with more models planned for the future. The European Union is to unveil tougher 2030 CO2 emissions targets and regulatory proposals on July 14, which are expected to force carmakers to speed up the transition to electric cars. Volkswagen said last month it plans to stop producing cars with internal combustion engines in Europe for its eponymous flagship brand between 2033 and 2035. — AFP