

Saudi opens airspace to more flights serving Israel

Reuters | Dubai

Cathay Pacific and Air Seychelles have overflown Saudi Arabia for Israel flights for the first time, aviation data showed on Thursday, after Riyadh announced last month it would open its airspace to all airlines, paving the way for more overflights to and from Israel.

Air Seychelles said it "became the first airline to receive permission from the Saudi Arabian authorities to overfly their territory", with Wednesday evening's Tel Aviv to Mahe flight.

The new route "means a reduction in fuel burn between 500kg-1000kg per flight (and that) the aircraft can now carry an additional 20 passengers per flight," it said in a statement.

"The Saudi air traffic controllers were extremely helpful and allowed us to navigate with optimal conditions for passenger comfort," the airline quoted the flight's captain as saying.

Iran's top negotiator meets EU's Mora in Vienna

Reuters

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator yesterday met the European Union's Enrique Mora, who coordinates indirect talks between Tehran and Washington on reinstating Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, Iranian state media reported.

"Ali Bagheri Kani held a meeting with Mora at the Coburg Palace in Vienna," the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

Oil prices slump to lowest since before Ukraine invasion as recession fears weigh

● **BoE raises rates, warns of recession risks**

● **OPEC+ agrees to raise oil output target by 100,000 bpd**

Reuters | London/New York

Global oil prices dropped yesterday to their lowest levels since before Russia's February invasion of Ukraine as traders fretted over the possibility of an economic recession later this year that could torpedo energy demand.

Benchmark Brent crude futures dropped more than 3% to \$93.81 a barrel after touching a mid-session low of \$93.20, the lowest since Feb. 21. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell 2.7% to \$88.21 after touching the lowest since Feb. 3 at \$87.97.

The fall in oil prices could come as a relief to large consumer nations like the United States and countries in Europe that have been

Saudi posts almost \$21 billion Q2 surplus

● **Revenue in the second quarter reached 370.37 bn riyals**

● **Oil revenue was 250.36 bn riyals**

● **Domestic debt rose to 604.76 bn riyals**

Reuters | Dubai

Saudi Arabia has registered a budget surplus of nearly 78 billion riyals (\$21 bn) in the second quarter of 2022, the finance ministry said yesterday, an almost 50% rise from a year earlier, bolstered by high oil prices.

Revenue in the second quarter reached 370.37 bn riyals and expenditure was 292.46 bn, the ministry said.

"A widening in the fiscal surplus was expected in 2Q with the higher oil price and production level," said Monica Malik,



Cars drive past the King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. "Government spending strengthened, though (it) still remains broadly in line with the budget plans."

Saudi Arabia has pledged to "decouple" state spending from oil price fluctuations. Its ex-

pected surplus for 2022 - which would be its first in nearly a decade - will sit in the government's current account until the government's finance committee decides how to allocate it, likely early next year.

Finance Minister Mohammed

al-Jadaan told Reuters in May the surplus could go towards the Public Investment Fund (PIF), Saudi Arabia's \$600 bn sovereign wealth fund, and the National Development Fund (NDF).

The excess may also go to

foreign reserves at the central bank. As part of a fiscal sustainability policy, the kingdom is in the final stages of determining a floor and ceiling for reserves, as a percentage of GDP.

Oil revenue was 250.36 bn riyals, an 89% surge compared with a year before, the ministry said. That was equivalent to just over two-thirds of total government revenue, while non-oil revenue was 120.00 bn riyals, a 3% increase.

The kingdom posted a first-quarter surplus of more than \$15.3 bn riyals.

Spending in the first half of 2022 was up 10% compared with the first half of last year, while revenue jumped 43%, the finance ministry said.

At the end of June, the government had reserves of 318.65 bn riyals and a current account surplus of 131.45 bn.

Domestic debt rose to 604.76 bn riyals at the end of June from 558.75 at the end of 2021. External debt was down to 361.76 bn riyals from 379.26 bn in the same period.



the year 2022. The meeting discussed the Group's Financial Results as well as the bank's ESG accomplishments. Jean-Christophe Durand, Chief Executive Officer; Russell Bennett, Group Chief Financial Officer, and Abdulrahim Abdulhameed, Group Senior Associate & Sustainability Officer represented the NBB Group as speakers, while Hisham Abu Alfateh, Head of Corporate Communications at NBB, acted as moderator of the meeting. The meeting was concluded with a Q&A session by representatives of the NBB Group including Isa Maseeh, Group Chief Risk Officer; Dana Buheji, Group Chief Human Resources & Sustainability Officer; Hisham Al Kurdi, Group Chief Executive - Corporate & Institutional Investment Banking and Fatima Al Kooheji, Group Financial Controller.

World Bank accuses Lebanese politicians of cruelty over deposit promises

Reuters | Beirut

The World Bank accused Lebanese politicians of being cruel by asserting that deposits in the country's collapsed banking sector are sacred, saying such slogans "flagrantly contradict the reality" in a report on Wednesday.

Lebanon is in the third year of a financial meltdown that has left eight in ten people poor and which the World Bank says is deliberate and may be one of the three worst in modern times.

The new report marked the second time this year the World Bank has berated Lebanon's ruling politicians, having accused them in January of "orchestrating" the country's catastrophic economic meltdown through their exploitative grip on resources.

The collapse has frozen depositors out of savings in the paralysed banking system, and led the local currency to lose more than 90% of its value.

"Political slogans for the sacrosanct of deposits are hollow and opportunistic; in fact, the constant abuse of this term by politicians is cruel," the World Bank said in a report.

"Not only does it flagrantly contradict reality, it prevents solutions to protect most, if not all small and medium deposi-



People queue to buy bread outside a bakery in Beirut, Lebanon

tors, in dollars and in cash," the report said.

Lebanese politicians often say depositors' rights must be preserved in any plan to address losses of some \$70 billion in the financial system, even as their savings have lost around 80% of their value due to the collapse.

"Losses should have been accepted and carried by bank shareholders and large creditors, who have profited greatly over the last 30 years from a very unequal economic model," the World Bank said.

"This should have occurred at beginning of the crisis ... to limit the economic and social pain." Lebanese banks lent heavily to the state, which wracked up huge debts largely due to corruption and bad governance. The World Bank report said "a significant portion" of people savings had been "misused and mispent over the past 30 years".

'Batelco Talks' returns with a session on APIs

● **Session Delivered by Entrepreneur and Investment Advisor Hamad Al Fahad**

TDT | Manama

Batelco recommenced its 'Batelco Talks' series, an in-house initiative, designed to foster a learning environment between Batelco's team members and industry leaders, with a session on Application Program-



Hamad Al Fahad

ming Interfaces (APIs) featuring Hamad Al Fahad. Hamad is an entrepreneur and an investment advisor who helped a number of startups and tech companies to establish a foothold in the market.

During the session, Hamad discussed the growing importance of APIs for all industries. He explained how APIs have become an integral part of everyday life, utilised in all software such as delivery apps, mapping apps, and especially in Open Banking. He elaborated on how businesses can benefit from APIs

and encouraged the audience to increase their knowledge on the subject.

The "Batelco Talks" sessions are held at Batelco Headquarters in Hamala on a monthly basis and are attended by company team members. The sessions feature different topics aimed to expand Batelco team members' horizons and perspectives in fields such as ICT, technology, digital transformation and growth. This initiative reiterates Batelco's commitment to investing in its human capital and being a part of its constant growth.