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GULF®TIMES BUSINESS



FED CUES: Page 2

Foreign funds square off position as QSE settles lower; M-cap makes gains





QNB, NIPL sign deal to enable QR code-based UPI payments across merchant network

NB has announced the execution of an agreement with NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) to enable QR code-based Unified Payments Interface (UPI) merchant payments across Qatar.

This initiative marks a significant milestone by facilitating UPI payment acceptance in Qatar through QNB merchant network, greatly benefiting Indian travellers visiting and transiting through Qatar.

This partnership will provide Indian tourists the option to use their preferred payment method across retail stores, tourist attractions, leisure sites, duty-free shops and hotels.

Local merchants in Qatar will also experience numerous benefits from this innovative payment solution. By adopting UPI payments, merchants can offer a faster and more convenient payment and checkout process, enhancing customer satisfaction.

This, in turn, will open up new opportunities for merchants to attract and serve the growing number of international travellers visiting Qatar, further boost-

ing sales and business growth. Commenting on this, Adel Ali al-Malki, senior executive vice-





president, QNB Group Retail Banking said, "We are thrilled to embark on this pioneering journey with NIPL to bring UPI payments to Qatar, setting a new standard in innovation in the region. With this new digital payment solution, we are revolutionising the way transactions are conducted, enhancing the travel

experience like never before.

"We are confident that the strategic initiative will not only elevate the travel and hospitality sectors but also empower local merchants to thrive in a dynamic and increasingly digital market-

Speaking on the development, Anubhav Sharma, deputy chief (Partnerships and Business Development) at NIPL, said, "We are happy to collaborate with Qatar National Bank to bring UPI payments to Qatar. We believe that enabling UPI acceptance in Qatar will offer substantial benefits to large number of Indians visiting Qatar, simplifying their transactions and ensuring a hassle-free travel experience abroad. Additionally, Qatari merchants will greatly benefit from UPI, gaining access to a wider customer base and more efficient payment and collection processing."

This partnership underscores QNB's dedication to leveraging advanced technology to enhance its service offerings and support Qatar's vision of becoming a global hub for tourism and commerce. By enabling QR codebased UPI payment acceptance, QNB is paving the way for a more connected and digitally inclusive future.

QNB Group currently ranks as the most valuable bank brand in the Middle East and Africa. Through its subsidiaries and associate companies, the Group extends to some 28 countries across three continents providing a comprehensive range of advance products and services.

The total number of employees is more than 30,000 operating through 900 locations, with an ATM network of more than 5,000 machines.

Ooredoo, Qatar Airways collaborate to enhance airline operations, customer experiences with Google Cloud

Ooredoo has entered into a partnership with Qatar Airways to embark on a large-scale cloud adoption journey. In collaboration with Google Cloud, this initiative marks a "significant" milestone in both organisations' commitment to digital innovation in Qatar and positions Ooredoo as a key 'Hybrid Cloud' provider in the region.

This strategic alliance will see Qatar Airways working with Ooredoo to leverage Google Cloud's data analytics and artificial intelligence solutions for enhanced customer experiences and sustainability.

The partnership involves

creating a hybrid multi-cloud environment, combining the vast Al capabilities of Google Cloud with Qatar Airways' 'Private Cloud' environment. This innovative approach is set to further upgrade and enhance Qatar Airways' business processes, commercial capabilities, and overall customer experience. Thani al-Malki, chief business officer at Ooredoo Qatar, stated, "Our collaboration with Oatar Airways represents a pivotal shift in the digital lands harnessing Google Cloud's extensive artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities to gain valuable insights. These insights will help enhance customer services and provide an avenue for continuous improvement. "The strategic partnership aims to drive operational efficiencies

for one of the world's top-



Ooredoo's collaboration with Qatar Airways takes the national airline to new heights with Cloud Transformation on Google Cloud

ranked airlines, showcasing our dedication to delivering cutting-edge cloud solutions that cater to the evolving needs of our customers."

A key component of this collaboration is the use of Google Cloud's services, hosted

Google Cloud's services, hosted in Google's cloud region in Qatar. This setup provides Oatar Airways with crucial controls to help maintain high security standards meet local data residency requirements and compliance standards while also offering the flexibility to scale as their business needs evolve. AT Srinivasan, group chief information officer at Qatar Airways, said, "Qatar Airways is embarking on a transformative data journey with our customers at the heart of this transformation. Our partnership

with Ooredoo and Google Cloud will allow our organisation to leverage the power of cloud computing, Al and Analytics and offer our customers with a hyper-personalised experience across our customer touchpoints.

"Having a 360 degree view of our customers will enable us to anticipate and respond to our customers' needs and provide advanced services that will kee Qatar Airways at the forefront of the airline industry.' Ooredoo's role extends beyond infrastructure provision. The company will deliver a network fabric connecting Qatar Airways' premises directly with Google Cloud's platform, enhancing the efficiency and security of the airline's cloudbased operations.

HIGHEST BUS SALES LHD MARKETS MANNAI TRADING - QATAR

The event was attended by the Eicher leadership team, while Mannai was represented by Rajesh Krishnan, president of Mannai Auto Group, and engineer Khalid Youssef, senior vice-president.

Mannai achieves global recognition at Eicher Annual Dealer Conference

Mannai has won the 'Dealer for the Highest LHD Bus Sales in the World' award for Eicher buses at Eicher Annual Dealer Conference, a remarkable achievement that underscores its market leadership and operational excellence. The accolade is a testament to Mannai's unwavering commitment to quality, customer satisfaction, and strategic market penetration, establishing it as a pivotal player in the global commercial vehicle sector. In addition, Mannai was also honoured as 'Best Service Distributor - Middle East' for the fourth consecutive year. This recognition underscores the company's customer-centric approach to providing exceptional service and support to

its customers.

The event was attended by the Eicher leadership team, while Mannai was represented by Rajesh Krishnan, president of Mannai Auto Group, and engineer Khalid Youssef, senior vice-president. Their presence highlighted the significance of this achievement and reinforced Mannai's commitment to excellence in the commercial vehicles sector. Krishnan expressed pride in the company's accomplishments, stating: "Winning the LHD Global Bus Sales award and being recognised as the Best Service Distributor in the Middle East for the fourth consecutive year is a tremendous honour. "These awards reflect the hard work and dedication of our entire team. We are committed to continuing our legacy of excellence and delivering

the highest quality products and services to our customers." Youssef echoed these sentiments, emphasising the importance of customer satisfaction and innovation: "Our success is driven by our relentless pursuit of excellence and our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our customers. We are proud to be recognised for our efforts and will continue to strive for greatness in all aspects of our business."

Mannai remains dedicated to its mission of providing top-tier products and services, setting new benchmarks for quality and innovation. As the company looks to the future, it aims to build on this success and continue to lead the way in the industry.

VC experts see Qatar as launchpad for regional and global expansion

By Peter AlagosBusiness Reporter

he country's growing ecosystem is providing startup founders with the opportunity to utilise Qatar as a springboard for expanding their operations in the region or other international markets, according to experts from a Qatar-based venture capital (VC) fund manager.

Alexander Wiedmer and Soumaya Ben Beya Dridje, partner and junior partner, respectively, at Rasmal Ventures, were part of a Startup Grind Qatar panel, which discussed Qatar's growing startup ecosystem and how these small businesses have been scaling and commercialising over the last couple of years.

According to Wiedmer, it is a "super exciting time" to set up shop in Qatar. He further discussed current developments in the country's VC and startup ecosystem, particularly citing Qatar Investment Authority's (QIA) \$1bn "fund of funds" to attract VCs here.

During the opening ceremony of the first-ever Web Summit Qatar 2024, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani announced the QIA's billion-dollar investment in international and regional VC funds to support local



Alexander Wiedmer and Soumaya Ben Beya Dridje, partner and junior partner, respectively, at Rasmal Ventures, during a Startup Grind Qatar panel discussion. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

and international entrepreneurs.

Speaking at one of Web Sum-

mit Qatar 2024 panel discussions, QIA chief investment officer – Americas, Mohamed al-Sowaidi said the the QIA's \$1bn investment underlines Qatar's attractiveness as a destination for international funds.

Wiedmer emphasised that this fund of funds will lead to more local and international VCs in Qatar, which will in turn attract more entrepreneurs to the country.

"Qatar has previously not received much attention in terms of innovation due to political reasons, but this is changing. There will be more VCs here. There will be more VCs from the outside looking at the companies in Qatar.

And so it's a very good time to set up a company in Qatar. I think it's only looking up," Wiedmer said. Similarly Ben Beya Dridie

Similarly, Ben Beya Dridje pointed out the strategic advantages of establishing a startup in Qatar, especially for startups targeting regional clients. She noted that the country is an ideal springboard to the regional market and beyond for either local or international startups that want to grow and expand their opera-

Ben Beya Dridje also underscored Qatar's potential in specific sectors, citing for example energy tech. Despite Qatar's small market size, she stressed that the country can be significant for certain industries.



BUSINESS

QIB rewards 500 misk account holders with QR8mn cash prizes

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has awarded more than 500 winners in the ongoing seventh edition of the misk Account, which runs until November

QIB has gained immense popularity with the misk account due to its unique features and unparalleled benefits. With the largest prize pool in Qatar at a staggering QR14.2mn, this programme is rewarding 832 winners throughout its ongoing seventh edition, with four individuals becoming millionaires. By offering a diverse range of prizes through the misk account, QIB showcases its dedication to empowering customers and rewarding their saving habits. Every quarter, one account holder wins a life-changing QR1mn and 15 weekly winners receive QR10,000 each. Additionally, four winners receive a

monthly prize of QR50,000 each.

By Santhosh V Perumal

The US Federal Reserve chairman

Jerome Powell's testimony, which suggests a cautious approach to rate cuts, had its reflection

on the Qatar Stock Exchange, which

yesterday underwent a rollercoaster

ride before settling four points lower.

ing off their position as the 20-stock

Qatar Index fell 0.04% to 10,161.6

points, although it touched an intra-

The Gulf institutions were increas-

About 53% of the traded constitu-

ingly net sellers in the main market,

whose year-to-date losses widened to

ents were in the red in the main bourse.

whose capitalisation however added

QR0.35bn or 0.06% to QR587.31bn on

The foreign individuals were in-

creasingly net profit takers in the main

market, which saw 4,026 exchange

traded funds (sponsored by Masraf

Al Rayan and Doha Bank) valued at QR0.03mn trade across 10 deals.

to be net sellers but with lesser inten-

sity in the main bourse, which saw no

creasingly net buyers in the main market, which saw no trading of sovereign

trading of treasury bills.

the main market.

bonds.

The local retail investors continued

The domestic institutions were in-

The Islamic index was seen declin-

ing faster than then other indices in

the main bourse, whose trade turno-

ver and volumes were on the increase.

0.04%, the All Share Index by 0.02%

and the All Islamic Index by 0.07% in

1.38%, realty (0.61%), industrials

(0.09%) and banks and financial serv-

ices (0.07%); while transport gained

0.61%, telecom (0.6%) and consumer

cluded Qatar Insurance, QIIB, Man-

nai Corporation, QLM, Qatar General

Major losers in the main bourse in-

goods and services (0.29%).

The insurance sector index shed

The Total Return Index was down

the back of microcap segments.

day high of 10,180 points.

The foreign funds were seen squar-

Business Reporter

More than 500 winners and counting You could be next Save more for the chance to win up to QAR 1,000,000

QIB has gained immense popularity with the misk account due to its unique features and unparalleled benefits

position as QSE index settles

...50,000

The seventh edition has already witnessed a significant number of misk account holders celebrating their success. A total of 525 winners have been awarded a combined

Foreign funds square off

lower; M-cap makes gains

1000000

QR8.03mn. Among these winners, two lucky individuals have achieved life-changing milestone by winning QR1mn each.

10000

"This year's misk account goes

beyond a simple savings programme; it empowers our customers to achieve their financial goals. We look forward to rewarding more customers in the coming months," said D Anand, QIB's general manager (Personal Banking Group).

To qualify for the draws, customers are required to open a misk account at least three months before the draw date and maintain a minimum monthly balance of QR10,000. For every additional QR10,000 saved, customers earn an extra chance to

Existing and new QIB customers must open a misk account easily through the OIB mobile app. Customers will receive a free debit card, become eligible to request a free, for the firstyear, credit card against their misk account balance, receive profits on their savings, and have the chance to frequently win cash prizes.

Qatar Stock Exchange

10.960

10,940

10,920

10.900

AICHI

MERS

Lull in Qatar projects amid weak GCC market in Q2: Kamco Invest

By Santhosh V Perumal

Business Reporter

slump in project awards in Qatar, coupled with steep fall in awards in the UAE, dampened the project awards market in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) region during the second quarter (Q2) 2024, according to Kamco Invest.

Future oil and gas projects are slated to play a significant role in the GCC and Middle East and North Africa (Mena) regions' prospective contract awards, Kamco Invest also said in a report.

The aggregate GCC project awards declined 19.7% year-on-year (y-o-y) to \$51.7bn during Q2-2024.

The GCC contract awards was evenly distributed during Q2-2024 as three out of the six countries in the GCC registered annual growth in their project awards, while the remaining three markets declined during the quarter.

Total contracts awarded in the UAE declined by 23.6% y-o-y during Q2-2024 to \$16.3bn. On the other hand, aggregate projects awarded in Qatar fell 98.5% y-o-y to \$162mn during the review period.

"This steep fall of Qatari contracts awarded has dragged down the aggregate growth of GCC contracts awarded during Q2-2024," the report said.

Qatar has had one of its best years in 2023 in terms of value of contracts awarded as a result of the \$10bn LNG (liquefied natural gas) project awarded to develop the North Field South. The aggregate projects awarded in Kuwait jumped 33% y-o-y to \$2.3bn up during Q2-2024.

In terms of sectors, Q2-2024 witnessed a jump in the value of projects awarded in the gas, power and transport sectors. Total GCC gas sector contracts awarded 17.3% to \$14bn during Q2-2024.

Moreover, the total value of contracts awarded in the GCC power and GCC transport sectors reached \$9.8bn each, rising 9.7% and 27.3% y-o-y respectively during Q2-2024.

Future oil and gas projects are expected to play a significant role in the GCC and Mena regions' future contract awards, Kamco Invest said.

According to MEED Projects, currently there are over \$408bn worth of planned and an awarded oil and gas projects in the Mena region of which Saudi Arabia comprises nearly 19% (\$77bn), followed by the UAE at 16.5% (\$67.4bn) and Qatar at 8.7% (\$35.3bn).

Two of the top ten largest by value of upcoming oil and gas projects in the Mena region were in the UAE; namely Upper Zakum full field development project valued at \$16bn and Upper Zakum full field development: UZ1000

that are planned or in pipeline in the GCC stood at \$3.5tn as of July 2, 2024. Saudi Arabia comprised the lion's share of ongoing or upcoming GCC projects (54% or \$1.87tn), the UAE \$856.9bn and Oman \$245.5bn.

Total GCC projects in the pipeline (upcoming projects)

Saudi Arabia also dominated the Mena region's projects in the pipeline representing 51.6% (\$737.2mn) and the UAE 20.4% (\$291.4mn).

expansion project valued at \$6.6bn. According to MEED Projects, the total value of projects UDCD However, the picture was different in terms of only upcoming projects in the region excluding ongoing conreached \$1.43tn as of July 2, 2024.

OLM

The foreign funds were seen squaring off their position as the 20-stock Qatar Index fell 0.04% to 10,161.6 points, although it touched an intraday high of 10,180 points.

Insurance and Reinsurance, Qatari German Medical Devices, Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding and Mazaya Qatar.

8.50

3.23

In the venture market, both Al Mahhar Holding and Techno Q saw their shares depreciate in value.

Nevertheless, Ahlibank Qatar, Milaha, Al Meera, Baladna, Estithmar Holding, Vodafone Qatar and Ooredoo were among the gainers in the main bourse.

The foreign institutions turned net sellers to the tune of OR26.81mn compared with net buyers of OR18.56mn on July 9.

The Gulf institutions' net profit

booking increased perceptibly to QR11.54mn against QR9.86mn the previous day.

The foreign individual investors' net selling expanded markedly to QR4.52mn compared to QR0.84mn on

However, the domestic institutions' net buying strengthened drastically to QR48.96mn against QR19.86mn on

The Oatari individual investors' net selling declined considerably to QR4.51mn compared to QR22.92mn the previous day.

The Arab retail investors' net profit booking weakened noticeably to QR1.24mn against QR3.34mn on Tuesday.

The Gulf individual investors' net selling decreased notably to QR0.35mn compared to QR1.44mn on

The Arab institutions had no major net exposure for the second consecutive day.

Trade volumes in the main market grew 41% to 157.58mn shares, value by

39% to QR508.45mn and transactions by 35% to 19.310. The venture market saw 477% surge

in trade volumes to 1.54mn equities and 26% in value to QR2.86mn but on 16% contraction in deals to 122.

Saudi Aramco share sale rises to \$12.35bn

Saudi Aramco netted \$12.35bn, \$1bn more than expected, from a secondary share sale after exercising an overallotment option, the deal's stabilising manager said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

An additional 154.5mn shares were issued in response to demand from investors, Merrill Lynch Kingdom of Saudi Arabia said, taking the total number to nearly 1.7bn. The offering announced in May was the largest in the Middle Fast since Aramco's record initial public offering (IPO) in 2019, bolstering Saudi Arabia's finances as it spends heavily to pivot its oil-reliant economy.

"Following the exercise of the over-allotment option." the total offering size will be 1,699,500,000 shares, representing a total offering amount of SAR46.31bn (\$12.35bn)," Merrill Lynch Kingdom of Saudi Arabia said

Bloomberg QuickTake Q&A

Why yen is so weak and what that means for Japan

Bv Yoshiaki Nohara

The yen continues to languish near its lowest level against the dollar since 1986, mainly because interest rates in Japan remain much lower than those in the US and elsewhere, diminishing the currency's relative allure. After several failed efforts by Japanese officials to talk the yen higher, the government moved more decisively as the yen breached the 160 level versus the dollar in late April, conducting its biggest ever intervention. Without specifying the precise timing, the finance ministry said it spent ¥9.8tn (\$60.7bn) to support Japan's

1. Why is the yen so weak?

The ven has been the worst performer against the dollar this year among major currencies, falling about 13%. That's mainly because of the wide gap in interest rates between Japan and the US.

Even after the first interest rate hike in 17 years, Japan's new policy setting is by far the lowest in the developed world, at a range of between 0% and 0.1%. Federal Reserve officials have kept the US benchmark federal funds rate in a range of 5.25-5.5%. That's a major gap favouring investments in the US and therefore the dollar. The gap is likely to stay intact longer than previously expected because the Fed has been cautious about premature rate cuts even as the US labour market shows signs of cooling.

2. Will the yen stay weak or rebound?

That will largely depend on the trajectory of the interest rate gap. The Fed has delayed rate cuts and the Bank of Japan (BoJ)'s governor, Kazuo Ueda, has said its inflation goal hasn't been securely achieved vet, even though it has hovered at or above the BoJ's 2% target for more than two years. That means he's unlikely to raise rates fast or by a lot, limiting a possible



Banknotes of Japanese yen and US dollar are seen in an illustration picture. The yen continues to languish near its lowest level against the dollar since 1986, mainly because interest rates in Japan remain much lower than those in the US and elsewhere, diminishing the currency's relative allure.

rebound of the yen. Yet the yen's slide raises the risk of fuelling inflation further by making imports more expensive and putting more strain on companies and consumers.

3. What does the weak yen mean for the economy?

Generally, a weaker yen helps large Japanese companies with

global operations because it increases the value of repatriated overseas profits. A weak currency can also help tourism by boosting the buying power of incoming travellers. Japan hosted a record number of tourists in March as the country saw an early start to the cherry blossom season. On the downside, a soft yen makes imports of energy and food more expensive, hitting consumers. The nation's largest umbrella group of unions announced the largest wage hikes in more than three decades for the current fiscal year. Wage gains exceeding inflation may give consumers more confidence about spending.

4. How did Japan step in to prop up the yen?

While Japanese authorities didn't immediately disclose details of the timing, they eventually acknowledged that they intervened. Trading patterns indicate the first intervention took place on April 29, after the yen hit 160 against the dollar for

the first time since 1990. A sharp rebound in the yen later in the day fed speculation that Japan had stepped back into markets to support its currency. The second round appeared to take place two days later, at the end of the US trading day, following the conclusion of the Fed's twoday meeting and in thin market liquidity. The impact of currency buying proved short-lived as the ven fell close to 162 in July, hitting its lowest level since

5. What's next for the BoJ?

One third of surveyed BoJ watchers forecast the central bank will raise rates on July 31, while many others see a risk of such a move. The economy has contracted in the first three months of this year with consumer spending having fallen for four consecutive quarters, the longest stretch of retreats since the global financial crisis. Recent economic data haven't shown a strong rebound in consumption.



Asia bourses end mixed after fresh records on Wall Street

AFP Hong Kong

A sian markets diverged yesterday after fresh records on Wall Street and remarks by the Fed chief that hinted the US central bank would cut interest rates later this year, without offering a clear timeframe.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 closed up 0.6% to 41,831.99 points; Hong Kong — Hang Seng Index ended down 0.3% to 17,471.67 points and Shanghai — Composite closed down 0.7% to 2,939.36 points yesterday.



Sculptures stand outside the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. The Hang Seng Index closed down 0.3% to 17,471.67 points yesterday.

While Europe's main stock markets were dragged down Tuesday by political uncertainty in France, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq in the US edged to all-time highs. The records came after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell pointed to "modest" progress in the battle to bring down inflation. Although his Senate testimony did not indicate when cuts may come, analysts are predicting the first in September and a second before year's end.

"Fed Chair Powell's testimony overnight was pervaded with a somewhat dovish tone, mentioning that the Fed was confronted with 'two-sided risks," Alvin Tan of RBC Capital Markets said in a note.

"He suggested that the Fed's reaction function is shifting to an easing bias given the 'significantly' cooling labour market, but he nonetheless declined to offer a clear timeline on rate cuts." "In any event,

the market has been pricing in almost two full Fed rate cuts this year, and Powell's statements didn't shift those expectations much," Tan added.

Powell is set to testify before a House committee on Wednesday, and investors will also be eyeing US consumer inflation data due Thursday for further insight that price rises are still easing as hoped.

could be crucial in determining whether the probability of a September rate cut increases further from the current 70%," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"Thursday's CPI data

EM equities decline

Reute

Emerging market equities slipped yesterday, with China's bourses among the top losers after data signalled soft demand in the world's largest consumer, while the Czech crown weakened on signs inflation was back within the

China's main stock indexes ended 0.3% and 0.7% lower after consumer prices rose for a fifth month in June but missed expectations, while producer price deflation persisted, with domestic demand on a slow recovery track despite support measures.

central bank's target

Vladimir Miklashevsky, an independent Finnish analyst, said inflation data is a bit off the radar at the moment because of a potential trade war with Europe over electric vehicles, which could be negative for both parties.

Last week, China announced the next step in its anti-dumping

investigation into European brandy imports, just as the European Commission's provisional tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles took effect. China's June trade data is due on Friday.

MSCI's index tracking emerging markets equities slipped 0.1%, while a currencies gauge was flat against the dollar. The Czech crown weakened 0.3% to a near three-month low after data showed headline inflation fell back to the central bank's target of 2% as policymakers are set to debate whether to scale back the pace of interest rate cuts.

Hungary's forint firmed 0.3%, ahead of the release of the minutes of the local central bank's June rate-setting meeting. Separately, a report said the Hungarian government will phase out windfall taxes on telecommunication and pharmaceutical companies from 2025.

The forint had dropped earlier in the week on new corporate taxation policies as the government tries to balance a budget deficit above European Union limits.

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AT YOUR SERVICE DAILY FOR THREE MONTHS

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AVIATION

Spain's first aviation hydrogen hub in the works

By Alex Macheras

Airbus, Aena, Air Nostrum, Iberia, Exolum and Repsol are partnering to study the creation of the first hydrogen airport hub located in

The six companies have joined forces to address the main challenges to deploy hydrogenpowered aviation in the country. This is the first time that a collaboration brings together the entire value chain from primary energy production, hydrogen ground operations, with two airlines on board and across a complete network of airports at the same time.

This collaboration will provide the partners with a holistic view of the hydrogen-powered aircraft and how it can be integrated into the airport ecosystem. It will not only focus on hydrogen supply and infrastructure, but also on the specific requirements for ground operations at airports. The ultimate goal is to foster and support the growth of the hydrogen aviation ecosystem in Spain.

"At Airbus, the decarbonisation of aviation is one of our most important goals and the deployment of hydrogen powered commercial aircraft with its ecosystem is one of those key levers. Given Spain's great potential in renewables and low carbon hydrogen production, it is essential that the aviation industry as a whole collaborates to secure a future end-to-end hydrogen supply chain up to the airports," said Karine Guenan, Airbus' vice-president ZEROe Ecosystem.

"The decarbonisation of the air transport



sector is a priority for Aena. This collaboration will allow us to gain a broader understanding of how the process of supplying hydrogen to Spanish airports could materialise in the future, in order to establish a roadmap to address the main challenges presented by the introduction of this new energy vector in an airport environment," added Ana Salazar, director of sustainability at Aena.

María José Sanz. Director of Quality and Environment at Air Nostrum, explained: "Our commitment is to be at the side of the developers of new technologies aimed at decarbonising air transport. As a regional airline, we can be relevant in the project because we have

the necessary conditions to become the first implementers of hydrogen technology, thanks to the size of our aircraft and the average distance we flv".

Teresa Parejo, Iberia's Director of Sustainability, added: "Collaboration between the different actors is necessary to advance in the decarbonisation of the sector. Hydrogen will foreseeably be part of the future of aviation, which will come later and will complement the development of sustainable fuels; to reach that future we must start taking the first steps now".

Andrés Suárez Global Strategy & Innovation Lead of Exolum stated: "At Exolum we are committed to the development and operation of infrastructures that contribute to boosting the energy transition and the decarbonisation of air mobility in all its areas and especially with the deployment of hydrogen as a future energy solution for the sector".

Luis de Oyarzabal, Repsol's senior manager of New Business said: "Renewable hydrogen is key in our decarbonisation strategy. Not only will we use it in our industrial applications, but we also envision its potential in the field of mobility. To promote this market, we consider it is essential to collaborate with the best partners, joined together in this hub, to get the most potential out of the opportunity we have".

Airbus launched the "Hydrogen Hub at Airports" programme to promote the further expansion of hydrogen infrastructure in aviation. To date, agreements have been signed with partners and airports in 13 countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Spain, South

Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Hydrogen is a high-potential technology with a specific energy-per-unit mass that is three times higher than traditional jet fuel. If generated from renewable energy through electrolysis, hydrogen emits no CO2 emissions, thereby enabling renewable energy to potentially power large aircraft over long distances but without the undesirable by-product of CO2

Because hydrogen has a lower volumetric energy density, the visual appearance of future aircraft will likely change. This is to better accommodate hydrogen storage solutions that will be bulkier than existing jet fuel storage

Hydrogen has been safely used in the aerospace and automobile industries for decades. The aviation industry's challenge now is to take this decarbonised energy carrier and adapt it to

commercial aviation's needs. Aircraft manufacturers like Airbus and Boeing two primary uses for hydrogen:

Hydrogen propulsion: Hydrogen can be combusted through modified gas-turbine engines or converted into electrical power that complements the gas turbine via fuel cells. The combination of both creates a highly efficient hybrid-electric propulsion chain powered entirely by hydrogen.

Synthetic fuels: Hydrogen can be used to create e-fuels, which are generated exclusively

through renewable energy. In today's aircraft, wings are where the fuel is stored, and they are in no way large enough

to store the hydrogen that would be needed for a long flight.

Hydrogen aircraft of the future could have extra-large fuselages, but more likely they will be what's called blended wing, in which the aircraft are shaped like large triangles. This would allow them to store more fuel, but also reduce fuel consumption to make the aircraft aerodynamics even better.

Aircraft using hydrogen would emit only water, and initial tests suggest they can be just as fast as traditional planes, carrying more than a hundred passengers per flight over thousands of kilometres.

Most of the world's hydrogen today is produced by reforming methane from natural gas - a fossil fuel - which produces carbon dioxide. Efforts continue to develop green hydrogen by using an electric current from a renewable source to convert water into oxygen and hydrogen and reduce emissions in its production. If that is possible, along with no emissions from the planes themselves, aviation could become a green form of travel.

If Europe were to fully achieve the environmental benefits of hydrogen-power - for example, for air travel, the production of clean - or green - hydrogen needs to be dramatically scaled up. Clean hydrogen is produced from water using an electric current from a renewable source, rather than from fossil fuels. Today only a tiny fraction of hydrogen used in Europe is categorically "clean."

■ The author is an aviation analyst. Twitter handle: @AlexInAir

Managing and reducing cabin waste key to airlines' overall sustainability

By Pratap John

Global airline industry has been found generating over 3.6mn metric tonnes of cabin and catering waste annually.

A bulk of this- 65% is food and beverage waste while untouched meals account for 18% of all waste, a recent audit undertaken by IATA and involving some 25 short, medium, and long-haul flights at Singapore's Changi Airport has shown.

Cabin waste is generally made up of two main streams - cleaning waste and catering (galley) waste. A growing challenge for airlines is the sustainable management of millions of tonnes of waste generated within the cabin. Cabin waste is costing airlines money, consuming valuable resources, and undermining the sector's credibility on sustainable operations.

Cleaning waste is leftover rubbish from an to nace such as newspapers, paper towels, plastic bottles, food dropped on the floor, amenity kits and plastic wrapping from blankets, pillows and headsets. Cleaning waste also includes the contents of washroom bins and medical waste such as used syringes

Catering waste comes from inflight meals, snacks and beverages served to passengers and can consist of leftover food, drinks and packaging which is placed back in the trolleys, in static or compactor bins. This waste may contain high volumes of liquid from unconsumed beverages and ice. That said, collecting waste on flights. especially long-haul international flights, and ensuring proper separation (recyclables, organic waste) is logistically complex.

Managing waste storage on aircraft and subsequent transport to appropriate disposal or recycling facilities poses logistical challenges, especially given the limited space on planes.

But major global airlines are taking steps to address the issue and good practices are clearly emerging within the sector.

IATA is collaborating with the Aviation Sustainability Forum (ASF) to launch a standardised Cabin Waste Composition Audit (CWCA), with the ASF Cabin Waste Composition Auditing Platform to be



A cabin attendant carries bags of trash as she conducts her cleaning duties in the cabin of a Japan Airlines airplane at Haneda Airport in Tokyo (file). A growing challenge for airlines is the sustainable management of millions of tonnes of waste generated within the cabin.

Beyond the Tarmac

launched in September this year. Audit data will quide the airline industry and policy makers in their efforts to reduce the levels of waste produced and improve circularity by identifying opportunities for re-use and re-cycling. Previous IATA research identified the lack of a standardised methodology with respect to conducting cabin waste audits and, as a result, harmonised data is not available to underpin decision-making by policymakers, airlines, and caterers regarding waste-related issues.

A standardised audit will help solve these issues and enable the sector to demonstrate progress towards waste reduction and improved circularity.

"Managing and reducing waste is an important component of aviation's overall sustainability. Obtaining standardised and comparable data regarding the composition and quantity of waste from flights will help the industry to reduce the waste it generates. Better data will also help policymakers to harmonise regulations, which in turn can help optimise the industry's capability to sort, re-cycle and safely re-use waste that cannot be avoided. Working with ASF in developing this audit programme is a significant step forward in improving the circularity of the sector," said Marie Owens Thomsen, IATA's senior vice-president (Sustainability) and chief economist.

"The ASF's mission is to help the aviation sector reduce the levels of cabin waste generated and achieve higher levels of waste recovery and circularity. Working with IATA to develop a cabin waste composition auditing standard for the sector

is a significant step forward. Effectively managing cabin waste is a challenge that can be solved with the backing of data. It is the responsibility of the sector and its regulators to come together, understand the problem and align on the needed solutions," said Matt Crane, ASF's founder.

The airline industry has been always the subject of criticism for inadequate cabin waste recycling, which threatens the sec-

tor's environmental reputation. A significant portion of cabin and catering waste often ends up in landfills, contributing to environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions. With a huge growth in passenger numbers expected in the coming decade, the volume of cabin waste could

more than double in the next 10 years! This certainly calls for urgent action towards proper cabin waste recycling across the global airline industry.

■ Pratap John is Business Editor at Gulf Times. Twitter handle: @PratapJohn

Top Thai budget carrier expects 2024 core profit to hit record

Ricomberg

Asia Aviation Pcl, owner of Thailand's biggest low-cost airline, expects record earnings from core operations this year as a surge in overseas visitors boosts seat demand and airfares. Thai AirAsia Co, the company's 100%-owned budget airline unit, also intends to add more flights to China and India to capitalise on a boom in travel from its two biggest markets. Asia Aviation Chief Executive Officer Santisuk Klongchaiya said in a July 4 interview in Bangkok. "China and India will be the major driver for our earnings growth," Santisuk said, noting that more Thais are visiting those countries. "Strong demand should continue to be a tailwind for our earnings for remainder of this year." Thailand welcomed 17.5mn foreign tourists in the first half, a 35% jump from a year earlier, with Chinese visitors making up almost a fifth of the total. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has made tourism a key part of his strategy to revive growth in Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy, and the government is considering an end to a 52-year-old ban on afternoon alcohol and the legalization of casinos. It will als expand airport capacity.

Asia Aviation, which is 40.7%-owned by Malaysia's AirAsia Aviation Ltd, posted a net loss of 409mn baht (\$11.2mn) in the March quarter, as the Thai currency's weakness led to foreign exchange losses of 2.05bn baht on aircraft leasing. But the company posted a core profit of 1.64bn baht in the period, compared to a 203mn baht loss a year

Asia Aviation's core profit peaked at 3.4bn baht in 2016, according to the company's investors relation department. The stock has risen just over 3% this year.

Peers including Thai Airways International Pcl and Bangkok Airways Pcl are rushing to add seats to cater for a rise in international visitors, and while Thai AirAsia plans to expand its fleet to 60 planes with four new aircraft. Santisuk said it's not easy to build capacity.

"We have difficulties in expanding our flight capacity as pent-up travel demand worldwide has put a strain on aircraft production and services,"

Still, strong demand and limited seat capacity will continue to keep airfares in the region at the currently high levels they are versus before the pandemic. The airline's fleet expansion and sustained revival of demand from China will be key to its growth in 2024, Bloomberg Intelligence said in a June 26 note.

United Airlines jet loses wheel in repeat of March incident

Bloomberg

Los Angeles

United Airlines Holdings Inc says another of its Boeing Co aircraft lost a main landing gear wheel while taking off on Monday, a near repeat of an incident in March that helped trigger a federal safety review of the carrier.

No one was injured on United Flight 1001, a United spokesman said in an email. The Boeing 757-200 that took off from Los Angeles about 7:16 am local time and landed at Denver International Airport at 10:10am. The Federal Aviation Administration said it's investigating the incident. The wheel was found in Los Angeles, United said, without

providing details. There have been no reported injuries among people on the ground or the 174 passengers and seven crew on the plane, it said. There are four wheels on each of the plane's two main landing gears. The incident is eerily similar

to a United flight in March that lost a wheel shortly after taking off from San Francisco on a flight to Osaka, Japan. The Boeing 777-200, with 249 people on board, diverted to Los Angeles International Airport where it landed safely. No one was injured, but videos on X.com, formerly Twitter, by RadarBox captured the moment the wheel fell. It damaged vehicles in a parking lot. The FAA began a broad safety review of the airline after a

series of headline-grabbing incidents over several weeks, including the earlier lost wheel, an aircraft running off a Houston runway and a fuselage piece also coming loose in flight. Last month, a United plane returned to a Connecticut airport after losing part of a liner from inside an engine

And on Sunday, a United plane bound for Guam returned to Nagoya's international airport in Japan after detecting a system malfunction, Kyodo News reported. There were no injuries among the 44 passengers and six crew members. United said it's also investigating the latest incident.

Boeing delivers most aircraft since 737 Max blowout

Bloomberg

New York

Boeing Co delivered 44 commercial aircraft in June, the highest monthly total since the company curbed work in its factories in the wake of a harrowing near-catastrophe in early January involving a 737 Max jetliner.

The US planemaker handed over 35 jets from its 737 family during the month, all of them Max models except for one militarised P-8. Boeing also delivered five 777 freighters, three 787 Dreamliners and one 767 to its defence division to be converted to an aerial tanker. The company recorded 14 gross orders against two cancellations in the month.



A Boeing 737 fuselage on a railcar at Spirit AeroSystems' factory in Kansas, US. Boeing delivered 44 commercial aircraft in June, the highest monthly total since the company curbed work in its factories in the wake of a harrowing near-catastrophe in early January involving a 737 Max jetliner.

While the rebound in deliveries is rare good news for the embattled manufacturer, it also underscores the growing market gap between Boeing and rival Airbus SE. The European planemaker delivered 67

jets in the month, including 53 of its narrowbody A320neo models that compete directly with the Max.

Boeing is counting on rising deliveries during the second half of the year to bolster

tered by a production slowdown as it retrained workers and stepped up supplier inspections. The company faces multiple investigations and tougher regulator scrutiny after investigators linked the structural failure on the Alaska Airlines jet in January to a breakdown in protocol within Boeing's factory. During the three months

finances that have been bat-

ending on June 30, Boeing delivered 92 commercial jets, an improvement from its first-quarter tally of 83 aircraft. Executives have predicted that deliveries of the 737, a critical source of cash, will rise close to the 38-jetsper-month cap imposed by US regulators following the Alaska Air accident.