

## New initiatives and Qatar National Vision 2030



**QATAR**

By Amjad Hussain

**Qatar has been ranked as one of the 'Global Top 10 Countries by Islamic Assets' by the UAE-based investment banking firm Alpen Capital, as its Islamic finance assets reached US\$144 billion in 2019, making up 40% of the country's GDP that year. In its latest 'Islamic Finance and Wealth Management Report', Alpen Capital noted that Qatar registered a compound annual growth rate in its Islamic finance assets of 10.7% between 2014 and 2019, which is the fourth-highest growth rate in the world.**

Qatar Development Bank (QDB) recently announced its new initiative, Jahiz, which is aimed at supporting entrepreneurs and small- to medium-sized industrial enterprises in setting up and operating their businesses.

Through Jahiz, QDB will lease fully equipped and ready-to-use factories for manufacturing to assist entrepreneurs and entities in setting up their operations expeditiously, and will also provide them with guidance and support throughout this period.

Applicants wishing to participate in the Jahiz initiative are required to submit an application to QDB, which will then assess whether they meet the required criteria and standards.

Qatar First Bank (QFB) has disclosed its financial statements for the six months ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

The reports show a net profit of QAR41 million (US\$11.23 million), which is the highest half-yearly net profit that QFB has achieved in five years. QFB also recorded a total income of QAR107.2 million (US\$29.37 million), of which QAR37 million (US\$10.14 million) is from real estate products.

The combined profits of the banks listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) reached QAR12.7 billion (US\$3.48 billion) during the first half of 2021, recording a growth of 10.4% compared with the same period last year.

This growth reflects the strength of the economy and the attractive investment climate in Qatar, which is supported by the legal and regulatory developments in Qatar, as well as the restoration of ties between Qatar and its neighboring GCC

countries. The QSE expects its profits to improve further going forward.

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) acquired a 4.69% stake in QuantumScope, a company that develops solid-state lithium-metal batteries for electric vehicles. QuantumScope's current market value is US\$9.5 billion, with the QIA's share in the company being nearly US\$446 million.

Qatar has strengthened its investments in electric cars and renewable energy sources, aiming to reduce its dependency on hydrocarbon and diversify its economy, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

In a report issued by the US Qatar Business Council, the council stated that: "Qatar has been heavily investing in replacing its older power plants with new ones with better efficiency, state-of-the-art technologies and low emissions. By 2022, 25% of Qatar's public transportation will be electric and 100% will be electric by 2030." (👉)

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## Islamic Bank of Thailand announces debt moratorium in provinces under lockdown



**THAILAND**

By Asas Worasutr

**Lockdown measures have been initiated from the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration in 29 provinces in Thailand to contain the pandemic. These provinces are home to 40% of Thailand's population and produce three-quarters of the country's GDP.**

Following the aforementioned measures and upon recognizing the suffering of debtors and the urgent need for financial assistance, the Islamic Bank of Thailand (iBank) launched a debt moratorium for two months (August and September 2021) for those in the affected provinces.



The suspension of debt payment for two months will not be an extension of the contract period, but to be paid in the last installment as per the original contract with the exception of penalties incurred during the debt moratorium.

The debt moratorium is only for debtors of SME business loans or small MSMEs. The measure is expected to help the aforementioned to strengthen their working capital during the pandemic.

As for debtors not residing in the provinces under lockdown, but their revenues declined due to government measures to control the outbreak, iBank will consider providing assistance in accordance with other measures, such as economic assistance, Phase 3 debt restructuring measures for retail debtors or debt consolidation measures. (👉)

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