A flyer of Al-Tijari's special offer with Marriott Marquis City Center Doha Hotel.

Al-Tijari announces special offer for its card holders

The Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced a special offer for all credit and prepaid card holders when they stay at Marriott Marquis City Center Doha Hotel in Qatar.

The offer includes a 25% discount on the best available weekend room rate from Wednesday through Saturday in addition to a 15% discount across ten restaurants and lounges and a 15% discount at the Arabian Saray Spa.

The Marriott Marquis City Center Doha Hotel is ideally located in the diplomatic district of the city, just a short walk from the shopping, dining and entertainment areas.

To avail the offer, customers must use the promotional code XPK upon reserving online at www.marriottmarquisdoha.com or by any valid CBK credit or prepaid card at check-in. This special offer is valid until Dec 31, 2017.

The Commercial Bank of Kuwait always endeavors to provide its customers with the best offers as a token of appreciation of their constant loyalty and trust vested in the Bank.

Siemens to cut 2,700

German industrial conglomerate Siemens AG says it's cutting or outsourcing 2,700 jobs as part of efforts to modernize its IT operations and increase efficiency elsewhere. The Munich-based company said Thursday nearly 1,700 jobs will be cut in Germany over the next several years, and 1,000 more will be outsourced. Over the same period, some 9,000 jobs are expected to be added in Germany and Siemens said efforts will be made to retrain those affected by the cuts for the new positions. Siemens says changes to its IT unit include creating the capacity for "new tasks such as cyber security and the expansion of platforms for data analysis." (AP)

BoE holds rate; trims growth forecast

Brexit uncertainties weigh before election

LONDON, May 11, (AFP): The Bank of England on Thursday held interest rates at a record low 0.25 percent and crimped its economic growth forecast, as Brexit uncertainties weigh before next month's general election.

Policymakers voted by 7-1 in favour of keeping the rate on hold, the BoE revealed in a statement, while it also trimmed the 2017 growth forecast to 1.9 percent.

However, the central bank suggested it could raise rates more sharply than expected if Brexit talks go smoothly and the economy remains stable.

Inflation is currently running at 2.3 percent, above the bank's target rate of 2.0 percent, raising the possibility that the bank could lift rates to dampen rising prices.

The BoE put the inflation jump down to the 16-percent fall in sterling since Britain's referendum last year to leave the European Union.

On holding rates, policymakers argued that monetary policy could not prevent "the necessary real adjustment as the United Kingdom moves towards its new international trading arrangements".

"Attempting to offset fully the effect of weaker sterling on inflation would be achievable only at the cost of higher unemployment and, in all likelihood, even weaker income growth," added the BoE.

Bank of England Governor Mark Carney (right), listens as Deputy Governor for Monetary Policy Ben Broadbent speaks during the central Bank's quarterly Inflation Report press conference at the Bank of England in the City of London on May 11.

However, governor Mark Carney later stated that monetary policy could be tightened "if the economy follows a path broadly consistent with the MPC's central projection."

The bank said such a tightening could be "by a somewhat greater extent ... than the very gently rising path" currently implied by the underlying data, assuming that Britain's transition to a "new relationship with the European Union is smooth".

Analyst Peter Ashton from trading firm Eiger FX said there was "arguably a more hawkish undercurrent emerging" at the BoE.

"Two of the key messages given out were that above target inflation can only be tolerated so much, and that rates could rise sooner than perhaps the markets are anticipating."

All eight members of the bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) opted to leave the amount of QE cash stimulus pumping around the economy at £435 billion ($560 billion, 515 billion euros).

On the back of a worse-than-expected first quarter, the BoE nudged growth forecasts back to 1.9 percent, although the forecast had previously been ramped up from 1.4 to 2.0 percent in February.

The MPC expects growth to remain at current levels for the rest of the year, blaming the slowdown on consumer-facing sectors, partly reflecting the effect of sterling's depreciation on spending.

But the committee believes that consumption growth will recover later in the year.

The pound slumped following the announcement, its fall "exacerbated by the bank's assessment about household consumption," said Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at Forex.com.

"However everything else was rather positive, with the BoE predicting real incomes to pick up and said first-quarter GDP growth was likely to be revised up."

The outlook for Britain's economy is heavily dependent on what sort of divorce terms it reaches with the European Union and whether it can secure a trade deal.

Prime Minister Theresa May has two years to thrash out an agreement with European leaders.

The BoE decision came as economists also pored over news of falling industrial production in Britain and a widening of the country's trade deficit.

Industrial output slipped 0.5 percent in March to record a third monthly drop in a row while the trade deficit hit a six-month high on rising imports.

Carmaker urges Brexit pragmatism

BMW makes veiled jobs warning

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, May 11, (AFP): German high-end carmaker BMW issued a veiled warning on Thursday that a bad Brexit deal could see Mini production leave Britain, calling for "pragmatism" from London and Brussels in EU exit talks.

"We hope for pragmatism from all parties in the Brexit negotiations. That means no new barriers to trade. Free movement for skilled workers," BMW chief executive Harald Krueger told investors at the Munich firm's annual general meeting.

"Here, we are planning in terms of scenarios. You know that we make Mini models at VDL Nedcar in the Netherlands. We're flexible," he added, in what appeared to be a hint that production of the landmark British brand could quit the island nation.

BMW employs around 18,000 people in the United Kingdom, and claims that its presence supports a further 46,000 workers.

Its Oxford plant produces a variety of Mini models, while a factory in Hams Hall outside Birmingham builds engines and a Swindon works makes body panels and some sub-assemblies.

BMW has yet to decide whether to build a new all-electric Mini in Oxford, and has refused to confirm or deny press reports that the model will be produced in Germany or the Netherlands instead due to Brexit uncertainty.

The group also owns legendary luxury manufacturer Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, based in Goodwood.

Car producers have become emblematic of the difficulties Britain will face in extricating itself from the 28-nation European Union after a close-run referendum last June.

Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn in October gave the green light to new investments at its plant in Sunderland, northeast England, after receiving private guarantees from London over Brexit fallout. Around 56 percent of the 1.7 million cars made in the UK in 2016 were exported to the European Union, and the country also imports large numbers of vehicles manufactured in France, Germany and Spain.

Meanwhile, complex supply chains mean car parts and sub-assemblies can cross national borders multiple times for different production processes before a final vehicle is assembled.

Brexit supporters have argued that the sheer complexity and the massive potential impact of new barriers to trade will make continental industry lobbies pressure their governments to strike a favourable deal with Britain.

That has so far not been true of Germany's powerful carmakers, whether in statements from the influential VDA industry federation or from individual firms.

Photo from the event

Focus on innovation and efficiency in changing global needs

EQUATE supports GPCA Supply Chain Conference

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a global producer of petrochemicals, sponsored the Gulf Petrochemicals & Chemicals Association (GPCA) Supply Chain Conference for the ninth year in-a-row as part of the company's commitment to create a platform of knowledge exchange with manufacturing bodies, service providers, academic institutions and other stakeholders to address global challenges.

During the conference, EQUATE's Board Chairperson Hosnia Hashim and the President & CEO Mohammad Husain discussed the significance of innovation, technology and organizational structures in driving efficiency and sustainability in the petrochemical industry to address global supply chain developments and trends.

During the welcome address at the opening of the Conference, Husain said, "Today's petrochemical market is volatile, complex and uncertain. Overall collaboration, sustainability, technology and new skill sets are the factors that will influence the way for conducting business in future.

Among these, collaboration is the key for the GCC supply chain to stay competitive and organizations need to explore the possibility of collaborating in each and every area for business, such as strategic, operational, technical and outsourcing of services. Hand in hand, a three-way force consisting of government, manufacturers and service providers needs to be developed and secured to ensure that the total supply chain is ready for the future."

Husain added, "Whereas technology is concerned, the new operating model should include artificial intelligence which is emerging as the next big technology and the automation of workforce will include employment of robots and adding services of drones and self-driving vehicles within a context of Internet of Things (IoT)."

Husain stressed that these dramatic impacts on business will not reduce the importance of developing new skill sets for the new era of supply chain management.

On her part, Hashim spoke about the role of the supply chain's organizational structure in driving efficiencies with a key focus on interfaces and links with other functions, such as procurement, information technology and others.

The Company also supports knowledge sharing through the partnership with academic and research- institutions such as Kuwait University (KU), aiming for progress, innovation, sustainability and training of future professionals who will positively lead the industry. As part of the partnership, a student at the KU College of Petroleum & Engineering and a professor were invited to attend the conference for the opportunity to network with various delegates.

Last year, EQUATE launched a partnership for innovation with KU, which included an Innovation Multiple Intelligence Survey led by Dr Intesar Al-Mudahka, Assistant Professor at KU's College of Sciences, measuring and assessing EQUATE's innovation efforts.

The EQUATE Innovation Program aims to further collaborate with KU through the Company's Innovation Centers. Earlier in 2017, EQUATE and KU signed a comprehensive MoU for collaboration in innovation, its applications and other fields.

Championing environmental sustainability in supply chain, EQUATE has also signed an agreement with Maersk Line to decrease CO2 emissions in ocean transportation. The agreement, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait, is based on EQUATE's and Maersk Line's Sustainability Strategies that include the shared vision to protect and safeguard the environment by decreasing CO2 emissions.

The EQUATE Group is a global producer of petrochemicals that create a better world. The Group combines EQUATE Petrochemical Company (EQUATE), its subsidiaries and The Kuwait Olefins Company (TKOC). The EQUATE Group is the world's second largest producer of Ethylene Glycol (EG) with industrial complexes in Kuwait, North America and Europe that produce Ethylene, EG, Polyethylene (PE) and Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET). The products are marketed throughout Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

As a leading global enterprise, the EQUATE Group strongly pursues sustainability principles and best practices wherever it operates through partnerships with various stakeholders including employees and customers as well as societies as a whole in fields that includes human development, environment, education, health and public awareness. The EQUATE Group's shareholders include Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), The Dow Chemical Company (Dow), Boubyan Petrochemical Company (BPC) and Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company (QPIC). The Group provides reliable services and solutions that enables global customers and stakeholders to grow and attain the success they seek by being "Partners in Success." www.equate.com

With EQUATE as one of its founding members, The Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) represents the downstream hydrocarbon industry in the Arabian Gulf. Established in 2006, the association voices the common interests of more than 240 member companies from the chemical and allied industries, accounting for over 95% of chemical output in the Gulf region. The industry makes up the second largest manufacturing sector in the region, producing up to $108 billion worth of products a year. www.gpca.org.ae

Co seeks to compete with Aramco in Asia

Rosneft's $12.9 bln Essar Oil deal held up over debt issues

NEW DELHI/MOSCOW/LONDON, May 11, (RTRS): Russian state oil firm Rosneft is struggling to close its $12.9 billion acquisition of India's Essar Oil Ltd because six of Essar's Indian creditors have yet to approve the deal, sources close to the talks said.

The state-run banks and financial institutions that are delaying Rosneft's biggest foreign acquisition hold about $500 million of Essar's debt, five industry and banking sources told Reuters.

Kremlin-controlled Rosneft, which sees the deal as vital to expanding in Asia's fastest growing energy market, had aimed to close the deal at the end of 2016. Now a June target for completion may be in doubt.

"Tensions between Rosneft and Essar are running high," said one of the industry sources, who like others asked not to be named.

The sources said the acquisition was still expected to go through, but one of them said Rosneft had written to Essar threatening to change the terms of the deal, including to pay a lower price, if the dispute over debt was protracted.

"The parties are working towards obtaining the approvals," an Essar spokesman said, without giving details about any delays or the creditors involved. "We are hopeful that the deal will be completed in the upcoming few weeks."

Purchase

Rosneft Chief Financial Officer Pavel Fedorov told a conference call on Wednesday that the purchase was now expected to be completed by the end of June. The six institutions holding up the transaction are IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank, Syndicate Bank , Indian Overseas Bank, Life Insurance Corp of India and non-bank financier IFCI Ltd, the sources said.

The six lenders gave no official comment when contacted by Reuters.

Another industry source said Rosneft had wanted to finalise the deal in early June at the St Petersburg Economic Forum, where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is due to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin. But he said those hopes have now faded.

Rosneft won a bidding war to buy Essar against Saudi Aramco, its biggest competitor in the oil export market.

The deal will give Rosneft a 49 percent stake, with a further 49 percent split between Swiss commodities trader Trafigura and Russian fund United Capital Partners. The billionaire Ruia brothers will retain a 2 percent stake.

Russia's VTB bank is acting as advisor on the transaction. It declined to comment on the hold up.

Process

"The process of closing the deal is in its final stages and is expected to conclude soon," a spokesman for Trafigura said, while UCP declined to comment.

The deal is also valuable for Modi's government, as it seeks to clear India's $150 billion in bad debt.

Essar Oil India owed about $5.5 billion to almost 30 Indian lenders. Apart from six, others have approved Essar's transfer of ownership to Rosneft from its current owners Indian brothers Ravi and Shashi Ruia, banking sources said.

The State Bank of India, the country's biggest lender, has given its no-objection to the deal, the sources said.

Among the six institutions blocking the deal, Syndicate Bank was expected to clear the deal with its board in 10 to 15 days, one banking source said. A senior source at Indian Overseas Bank said a no-objection certificate was being processed.

The sources said debt talks were complicated by the fact that some lenders were also owed money by Essar's parent, Essar Global Fund Ltd, or subsidiaries of the conglomerate that has a portfolio ranging from steel to power generation.

Sources said some lenders might be seeking to gain concessions on other debt with Essar units before giving their approval.

Essar Global Fund has previously said it planned to use the proceeds to clear half of the group's debt, which CEO Prashant Ruia has put at about $13.5 billion.

QIB mandates banks

DUBAI, May 11, (RTRS): Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB), the largest Qatari Islamic bank by total assets, has mandated banks ahead of a US dollar-denominated sukuk sale, a document issued by one of the banks leading the deal and seen by Reuters showed on Thursday.

The Regulation S, senior unsecured deal would be a five-year benchmark transaction. Benchmark bonds are usually upwards of $500 million. Citi, Emirates NBD Capital, HSBC, Noor Bank, QInvest and Standard Chartered Bank have been appointed to arrange global fixed income investor calls and meetings in London, starting on May 15, ahead of the potential transaction.

The issuance would be part of an existing $3 billion trust certificate issuance programme. QIB is rated A1 by Moody's, A- by S&P and A+ by Fitch.