QNB FINANCIAL SERVICES

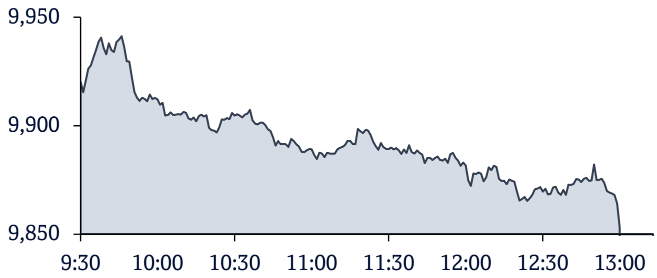
الخدمات المالية

Financial Services

Daily Market Report

Wednesday, 17 April 2024

QSE Intra-Day Movement



Qatar Commentary

The QE Index declined 0.7% to close at 9,853.2. Losses were led by the Transportation and Industrials indices, falling 2.2% and 0.9%, respectively. Top losers were Inma Holding and Qatar Navigation, falling 3.9% and 2.6%, respectively. Among the top gainers, Meeza QSTP gained 9.0%, while Mekdam Holding Group was up 2.1%.

GCC Commentary

Saudi Arabia: The TASI Index fell 1.6% to close at 12,500.4. Losses were led by the Diversified Software & Services and Financials indices, falling 3.4% and 2.6%, respectively. Advanced Petrochemical Co. declined 5.3%, while Elm Co. was down 4.7%.

Dubai: The DFM Index fell 1.4% to close at 4,184.3. The Real Estate index declined 2.2%, while the Consumer Staples fell 2.1%. Union Properties declined 4.3%, while Takaful Emirates Insurance was down 4.1%.

Abu Dhabi: The ADX General Index fell 0.6% to close at 9,194.3. The Telecommunication index declined 2.3%, while the Industrial index fell 2.1%. ESG Emirates Stallions Group declined 4.0%, while Multiply Group was down 3.7%.

Kuwait: The Kuwait All Share Index fell 2.5% to close at 6,930.2. The Industrials index declined 19.5%, while the Consumer Staples index fell 4.8%. Agility Public Warehousing Company declined 44.4%, while First Takaful Insurance Company was down 22.2%.

Oman: The MSM 30 Index gained 0.2% to close at 4,737.6. The Financial index gained 0.2%, while the other indices ended flat or in red. A'Saffa Foods rose 9.7%, while Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Co. was up 9.6%.

Bahrain: The BHB Index gained 0.1% to close at 2,042.1. The Real Estate index rose 0.6%, while the Financials index gained 0.3%. Bahrain Car Parks Company rose 5.1%, while Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait was up 1.2%.

Market Indicators	16 Apr 24	15 Apr 24	%Chg.
Value Traded (QR mn)	492.3	652.6	(24.6)
Exch. Market Cap. (QR mn)	571,789.0	575,424.5	(0.6)
Volume (mn)	150.8	214.6	(29.7)
Number of Transactions	15,351	21,168	(27.5)
Companies Traded	50	51	(2.0)
Market Breadth	13:35	40:07	–

Market Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	YTD%	TTM P/E
Total Return	22,161.75	(0.7)	(0.7)	(4.7)	11.4
All Share Index	3,445.13	(0.6)	(0.7)	(5.1)	11.9
Banks	4,108.52	(0.5)	(0.9)	(10.3)	10.1
Industrials	4,152.42	(0.9)	(1.3)	0.9	2.8
Transportation	4,864.74	(2.2)	1.6	13.5	23.3
Real Estate	1,572.94	0.2	(0.9)	4.8	14.6
Insurance	2,369.14	(0.7)	(0.8)	(10.0)	166.4
Telecoms	1,604.64	0.0	(0.7)	(5.9)	8.6
Consumer Goods and Services	7,322.32	0.4	0.2	(3.3)	243.2
Al Rayan Islamic Index	4,694.16	(0.5)	(0.4)	(1.5)	14.5

GCC Top Gainers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Bank Sohar	Oman	0.12	6.9	6,704.6	29.0
Abraj Energy Services	Oman	0.31	1.3	1,129.7	4.3
BBK	Bahrain	0.50	1.2	133.2	4.6
Saudi Arabian Mining Co.	Saudi Arabia	53.10	1.0	1,937.6	9.4
Qatar Int. Islamic Bank	Qatar	10.49	0.9	599.8	(1.9)

GCC Top Losers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Agility Public Warehousing	Kuwait	286.0	(44)	206,834.	(42.1)
Kuwait Telecommunication	Kuwait	533.0	(8.1)	750.9	(5.3)
Advanced Petrochem. Co.	Saudi Arabia	42.90	(5.3)	911.4	9.7
Sahara Int. Petrochemical	Saudi Arabia	32.70	(4.2)	2,722.9	(4.0)
Saudi Tadawul Gr. Holding	Saudi Arabia	259.0	(4.2)	577.9	38.7

Source: Bloomberg (# in Local Currency) (## GCC Top gainers/ losers derived from the S&P GCC Composite Large Mid Cap Index)

QSE Top Gainers	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Meeza QSTP	3.699	9.0	2,222.9	28.9
Mekdam Holding Group	3.930	2.1	234.0	(2.1)
Medicare Group	4.200	1.2	1,972.2	(23.5)
Barwa Real Estate Company	2.869	0.9	1,426.7	(0.9)
Gulf Warehousing Company	3.470	0.9	1,884.5	10.8

QSE Top Losers	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Inma Holding	3.690	(3.9)	1,242.1	(11.0)
Qatar Navigation	10.50	(2.6)	161.3	8.2
Mannai Corporation	3.880	(2.4)	791.9	(7.6)
Qatar General Ins. & Reins. Co.	1.100	(2.4)	133.0	(25.2)
Qatar Gas Transport Company Ltd.	3.902	(2.1)	1,474.1	10.9

QSE Top Volume Trades	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Dukhan Bank	3.860	(1.3)	29,092.9	(2.9)
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.464	(2.1)	17,498.8	4.6
Baladna	1.190	0.4	13,082.7	(2.8)
Vodafone Qatar	1.667	(1.1)	11,254.3	(12.6)
Masraf Al Rayan	2.500	(0.9)	9,670.3	(5.8)

QSE Top Value Trades	Close*	1D%	Val. '000	YTD%
Dukhan Bank	3.860	(1.3)	113,489.8	(2.9)
QNB Group	14.10	(0.6)	71,843.5	(14.7)
Industries Qatar	12.35	(1.2)	49,172.5	(5.6)
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.464	(2.1)	25,847.2	4.6
Masraf Al Rayan	2.500	(0.9)	24,248.0	(5.8)

Regional Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	MTD%	YTD%	Exch. Val. Traded ($ mn)	Exchange Mkt. Cap. ($ mn)	P/E**	P/B**	Dividend Yield
Qatar*	9,853.16	(0.7)	(0.7)	0.1	(9.0)	135.01	156,784.5	11.4	1.3	4.8
Dubai	4,184.31	(1.4)	(1.4)	(1.5)	3.1	136.11	195,298.2	8.2	1.3	5.4
Abu Dhabi	9,194.32	(0.6)	(0.5)	(0.4)	(4.0)	329.65	707,700.5	20.0	2.8	2.1
Saudi Arabia	12,500.43	(1.6)	(1.6)	0.8	4.5	2,726.00	2,873,931.3	22.5	2.6	3.1
Kuwait	6,930.21	(2.5)	(3.6)	(5.4)	1.7	326.73	146,097.0	15.6	1.5	3.4
Oman	4,737.59	0.2	0.9	2.2	5.0	12.72	24,247.0	12.2	0.9	5.6
Bahrain	2,042.07	0.1	0.1	(0.0)	3.6	8.21	21,418.9	8.3	0.6	8.2

*Source: Bloomberg, Qatar Stock Exchange, Tadawul, Muscat Securities Market and Dubai Financial Market (** TTM; * Value traded ($ mn) do not include special trades if any)*

Qatar Market Commentary

- The QE Index declined 0.7% to close at 9853.2. The Transportation and Industrials indices led the losses. The index fell on the back of selling pressure from Foreign shareholders despite buying support from Qatari, GCC and Arab shareholders.
- Inma Holding and Qatar Navigation were the top losers, falling 3.9% and 2.6%, respectively. Among the top gainers, Meeza QSTP gained 9.0%, while Mekdam Holding Group was up 2.1%.
- Volume of shares traded on Tuesday fell by 29.7% to 150.8mn from 214.6mn on Monday. Further, as compared to the 30-day moving average of 155.3mn, volume for the day was 2.9% lower. Dukhan Bank and Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co. were the most active stocks, contributing 19.3% and 11.6% to the total volume, respectively.

Overall Activity	Buy%*	Sell%*	Net (QR)
Qatari Individuals	22.63%	19.69%	14,475,315.18
Qatari Institutions	41.44%	43.71%	(11,181,640.00)
Qatari	**64.07%**	**63.40%**	**3,293,675.18**
GCC Individuals	0.30%	0.29%	69,621.07
GCC Institutions	7.28%	2.97%	21,229,123.29
GCC	**7.58%**	**3.25%**	**21,298,744.37**
Arab Individuals	8.20%	8.14%	269,380.85
Arab Institutions	0.00%	0.00%	-
Arab	**8.20%**	**8.14%**	**269,380.85**
Foreigners Individuals	2.26%	1.75%	2,518,484.44
Foreigners Institutions	17.90%	23.46%	(27,380,284.84)
Foreigners	**20.16%**	**25.21%**	**(24,861,800.40)**

*Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (*as a% of traded value)*

Global Economic Data and Earnings Calendar

Global Economic Data

Date	Market	Source	Indicator	Period	Actual	Consensus	Previous
04-16	US	U.S. Census Bureau	Housing Starts	Mar	1321k	1485k	1549k
04-16	US	U.S. Census Bureau	Building Permits	Mar	1458k	1510k	1523k
04-16	US	Federal Reserve	Industrial Production MoM	Mar	0.40%	0.40%	0.40%
04-16	US	Federal Reserve	Capacity Utilization	Mar	78.40%	78.50%	78.20%
04-16	US	Federal Reserve	Manufacturing (SIC) Production	Mar	0.50%	0.20%	1.20%
04-16	UK	UK Office for National Statistics	ILO Unemployment Rate 3Mths	Feb	4.20%	4.00%	4.00%
04-16	UK	UK Office for National Statistics	Employment Change 3M/3M	Feb	-156k	74k	-89k
04-16	China	National Bureau of Statistics	GDP YoY	1Q	5.30%	4.80%	5.20%
04-16	China	National Bureau of Statistics	GDP SA QoQ	1Q	1.60%	1.50%	1.20%
04-16	China	National Bureau of Statistics	GDP YTD YoY	1Q	5.30%	4.80%	5.20%
04-16	China	National Bureau of Statistics	Industrial Production YoY	Mar	4.50%	6.00%	--
04-16	China	National Bureau of Statistics	Industrial Production YTD YoY	Mar	6.10%	6.60%	7.00%

Earnings Calendar

Tickers	Company Name	Date of reporting 1Q2024 results	No. of days remaining	Status
QIBK	Qatar Islamic Bank	17-Apr-24	0	Due
QATR	Al Rayan Qatar ETF	18-Apr-24	1	Due
DHBK	Doha Bank	21-Apr-24	4	Due
QNCD	Qatar National Cement Company	21-Apr-24	4	Due
DUBK	Dukhan Bank	22-Apr-24	5	Due
GWCS	Gulf Warehousing Company	23-Apr-24	6	Due
QFBQ	Lesha Bank	23-Apr-24	6	Due
VFQS	Vodafone Qatar	23-Apr-24	6	Due
CBQK	The Commercial Bank	23-Apr-24	6	Due
QEWS	Qatar Electricity & Water Company	23-Apr-24	6	Due
SIIS	Salam International Investment Limited	23-Apr-24	6	Due
ABQK	Ahli Bank	23-Apr-24	6	Due
MCGS	Medicare Group	24-Apr-24	7	Due
IHGS	Inma Holding	24-Apr-24	7	Due
BLDN	Baladna	24-Apr-24	7	Due
UDCD	United Development Company	24-Apr-24	7	Due
MARK	Masraf Al Rayan	25-Apr-24	8	Due
AHCS	Aamal	25-Apr-24	8	Due
MKDM	Mekdam Holding Group	27-Apr-24	10	Due
QIMD	Qatar Industrial Manufacturing Company	28-Apr-24	11	Due
DBIS	Dlala Brokerage & Investment Holding Company	29-Apr-24	12	Due
QETF	QE Index ETF	29-Apr-24	12	Due
QCFS	Qatar Cinema & Film Distribution Company	29-Apr-24	12	Due
QLMI	QLM Life & Medical Insurance Company	29-Apr-24	12	Due
WDAM	Widam Food Company	29-Apr-24	12	Due
MCCS	Mannai Corporation	29-Apr-24	12	Due

QFLS	Qatar Fuel Company	29-Apr-24	12	Due
AKHI	Al Khaleej Takaful Insurance Company	30-Apr-24	13	Due
QISI	Qatar Islamic Insurance	30-Apr-24	13	Due
ZHCD	Zad Holding Company	30-Apr-24	13	Due

Qatar

- **Fitch upgrades QatarEnergy to 'AA'; outlook stable -** Fitch Ratings has upgraded QatarEnergy's (QE) Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'AA' from 'AA-'. The Outlook is Stable. The upgrade reflects a recent similar sovereign rating action on Qatar (AA/Stable). This is because QE's 'AA' rating is constrained by that of its sole shareholder - Qatar - given strong links between the company and the sovereign, in line with Fitch's Government-Related Entities (GRE) and Parent and Subsidiary Linkage (PSL) Rating Criteria. QE's support score under Fitch's GRE Rating Criteria amounts to 55 out of a maximum 60, highlighting the company's strategic importance to the government. We assess QE's Standalone Credit Profile (SCP) at 'aa+', bolstered by its significant liquefied natural gas (LNG) operations, competitive production costs, an extensive reserve base, and its prudent financial leverage. Key constraints include completion risk for large capex projects related to an increase in LNG production, and political risk. (Bloomberg)
- **QCB issues bonds, Sukuk worth QR4.65bn -** The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) issued Government Bonds and Sukuk for tenors of two, three, five, and seven years' worth QR 4.65bn. On its website, QCB said on Tuesday that the issuance of the treasury bills came as follows: QR 1.65bn for two years tenor with a 5% interest rate, QR 1bn for three years tenor for a 4.80% interest rate, QR 1bn for five years tenor for a 4.75% interest rate, and QR 1bn for seven years tenor for 5% rate. The offered bids reached QR 13.95bn. (Qatar Tribune)
- **QIGD's net profit declines 20.2% YoY and 31.7% QoQ in 1Q2024 -** Qatari Investors Group 's (QIGD) net profit declined 20.2% YoY (-31.7% QoQ) to QR43.5mn in 1Q2024. The company's revenue came in at QR133.3mn in 1Q2024, which represents a decrease of 1.0% YoY. However, on QoQ basis Revenue rose 3.0%. EPS amounted to QR0.035 in 1Q2024 as compared to QR0.044 in 1Q2023. (QSE)
- **Doha Bank holds its investors relation conference call on April 23 to discuss the financial results -** Doha Bank announces that the conference call with the Investors to discuss the financial results for the Quarter 1 2024 will be held on 23/04/2024 at 01:30 PM, Doha Time. (QSE)
- **PSA: Higher hydrocarbons extraction, chemicals and food products expansion lift Qatar's IPI in February -** Higher extraction of hydrocarbons as well as production of chemicals and food products led Qatar's industrial production index (IPI) jump 0.4% year-on-year this February, according to official statistics. The country's IPI, however, fell 8.2% on a monthly basis in the review period, according to figures released by the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA). The PSA introduced IPI, a short-term quantitative index that measures the changes in the volume of production of a selected basket of industrial products over a given period, with respect to a base period of 2013. The mining and quarrying index, which has a relative weight of 82.46%, shot up 1% on a yearly basis due to a 1% jump in the extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas; even as there was 7.7% contraction in other mining and quarrying segments. The sector index had seen a 9.5% contraction month-on-month in the review period owing to a 9.5% plunge in extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas; whereas there was a 2.1% increase in other mining and quarrying segments. The manufacturing index, with a relative weight of 15.85%, nevertheless fell 3.1% on a yearly basis on a 21.9% drop in the production of basic metals, 17.2% in refined petroleum products, 9.1% in printing and reproduction of recorded media, 5% in rubber and plastics products, 3.8% in beverages and 0.7% in cement and other non-metallic mineral products; even as there was a 5.3% surge in chemicals and chemical products and 2.9% in food products in February 2024. On a monthly basis, the sector index was down 0.1% on account of a 14.3% decrease in the production of refined petroleum products, 6.2% in beverages, 3.7% in basic metals, 3.7% in cement and other non-metallic mineral products and 0.1% in rubber and plastics products in the review period. However, there was a 5% expansion in the production of food products, 4.8% in chemicals and chemical products, and 4.7% in printing and reproduction of recorded media in February 2024. Electricity, which has a 1.16% weight in the IPI basket, saw its index fall 3% and 11.1% year-on-year and month-on-month in the review period. In the case of water, which has a 0.53% weight, the index was seen increasing 8.5% on an annualized basis whereas it shrank 9.5% on a monthly basis in the review period. (Gulf Times)
- **'Qatar leverages tourism, ICT to diversify economy' -** Qatar has made significant strides in enhancing two critical areas — tourism as well as Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - since the country's successful hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. "The Qatari government has shown commendable dedication to bolstering the country's tourism sector, leveraging the global spotlight from hosting the World Cup," Zumra Group founder Nasser al-Naama told Gulf Times. On the back of strategic investments in infrastructure, hospitality, and cultural attractions, al-Naama emphasized that Qatar has positioned itself as a premier destination for travelers worldwide. These initiatives also include expanding the capacity of the Hamad International Airport (HIA), developing world-class hotels, and promoting cultural events, which have contributed to the growth of Qatar's tourism sector, al-Naama pointed out. Earlier this year, Qatar Tourism (QT) announced that Qatar had crossed the 4mn visitor mark in 2023, exceeding the annual numbers of the past five years. The latest figures highlighted the positive momentum of the World Cup and the country's ongoing efforts and initiatives to promote its tourism sector, QT also stated. Figures previously released by QT had revealed that since the beginning of 2023, "Saudi Arabia (25.3% of total international arrivals) topped the list of visitors to Qatar, followed by India (10.4%), Germany (4.1%), the UK (3.9%), and Kuwait (3.5%). To date, 85% of visitors chose to arrive by air, followed by land (14%), and sea (1%)." Al-Naama also emphasized that Qatar has simultaneously recognized the pivotal role of ICT in driving economic diversification and innovation, citing the government's launch of comprehensive digitalization programs aimed at modernizing various sectors, fostering entrepreneurship, and empowering citizens through digital literacy initiatives. "Qatar's massive investments in advanced telecommunications infrastructure, smart city projects, and digital government services underscore the country's commitment to becoming a regional digital powerhouse," he noted. According to al-Naama, the country's private sector has also demonstrated readiness and enthusiasm to participate in government-led initiatives aimed at advancing the tourism and ICT sectors. "Businesses are eager to collaborate with the government in achieving Qatar's vision for sustainable growth owing to the government's supportive regulatory environment and incentives for private investment," he said. Al-Naama also called for "continued dialogue and collaboration" between key players in the public and private sectors, which is essential in addressing any challenges and ensuring alignment with stakeholders' needs, noting Zumra Group's efforts in realizing these objectives. He emphasized that Zumra Group is "deeply committed" to contributing to Qatar's tourism sector and digitalization journey through programs, such as tourism enhancement and digitalization initiatives. "Zumra is actively involved in promoting sustainable tourism practices and enhancing visitor experiences through innovative technology solutions. We are collaborating with local stakeholders to develop immersive digital platforms that showcase Qatar's rich business environment attractions, ensuring chances and connections for investors," he said. Al-Naama added: "Zumra is at the forefront of supporting Qatar's digital transformation agenda. We are developing cutting-edge digital solutions to address various challenges across sectors, including e-commerce, education, healthcare, and government services. Through partnerships with local and international

tech firms, Zumra aims to accelerate Qatar's journey towards a knowledge-based economy." (Gulf Times)

- **Outlets not providing e-payment option can face temporary closure -** Commercial outlets not providing electronic payment services to consumers can face temporary closure, said a top official. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has mandated all commercial outlets to provide electronic payment option to customers without any additional charge for the service. "The electronic payment services aim to facilitate consumers without taking any extra charges from them," said Head of the Inspection Section at the Commercial Registration and Licensing Department of MoCI, Saif Al Athba. Speaking to Qatar TV, he said the punishment for not providing electronic payment service is to close down the commercial outlets for 14 days or until they remove the violation or administrative closure is renewed. Following a concept of 'less cash more safety', it has been made mandatory for all commercial outlets to provide one of three types of electronic payment services — bank card, bank payment wallet or QR code to customers. It is following the decision No. 70 of 2022 by the Minister of Commerce and Industry for amending some provisions of the decision No. 161 of 2017 regarding general and special conditions that are required from commercial, industrial and general outlets as well as those coming under its purview. Dealing in cash requires lengthy processes such as withdrawing from bank and carrying cash to the banks among others. The electronic payments also help reduce the risk of counterfeit money and cash burglary. MoCI had already issued a circular to all commercial outlets that are offering payment services through bank cards, asking them not to impose any additional charges for use of cards. There are various types and modes of digital payments. Some of these include the use of debit/credit cards, internet banking, mobile wallets, digital payment apps, unified payments interface, unstructured supplementary service data (USSD), bank prepaid cards, and mobile banking, among others. The authorities concerned have intensified efforts to provide a complete infrastructure for electronic payment system in the country. Qatar Central Bank (QCB) develops the infrastructure for payment and settlement systems to provide an advanced payment and financial transfer system that keeps pace with the developments of this sector. Last month QCB officially launched its instant payment service 'FAWRAN', which is one of the innovative and advanced services, in line with the third strategy for the financial sector, and in continuation of QCB's efforts to develop the infra-structure of payment systems and keep pace with the latest developments in the field of payment systems and electronic transfer of funds. 'FAWRAN' reflects QCB's keenness to provide best services to customers of banks and financial institutions in the country and meet their growing needs in line with the increasing demand for financial technology services. FAWRAN also facilitates financial and commercial transactions between the bank accounts of individuals and companies, keeping pace with the rapid development witnessed by the national economy. QCB has also launched Himyan Debit Card (Himyan) in line with the Third Financial Sector Strategy, and in the framework of developing the country's digital payments infrastructure. The launch marks a qualitative addition to e-payment solutions available in Qatar and enriches offerings for local bank customers, while contributing to the promotion of financial inclusion in the country and bringing progress toward its transition to a cashless society. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Lesha Bank CEO figures among Forbes Middle East 'top 30 asset managers' -** Lesha Bank CEO Mohamed Ismail al-Emadi has figured in the elite list of Forbes Middle East's 'Top 30 asset managers', who include leaders of both independent asset management firms as well as the investment arms of financial institutions. Al-Emadi is the only CEO from Qatar to figure in the latest edition of the 'Top 30 asset managers' list. Unveiling the list Forbes Middle East said, "Asset managers are emerging as key players in the region's investment ecosystem. Companies run by these asset managers offer investors an avenue to diversify their portfolios, access professional management expertise, and participate in the region's economic growth story. "The region's stock financial markets have been booming. In Mena, five listings, mainly in the energy and logistics sectors, contributed 58% of the total IPO proceeds raised in 2023, according to EY. "For this year's list, we highlight 30 asset managers who manage assets on a fiduciary basis. The list includes leaders of both independent asset management firms as well as the investment arms of financial institutions. 16 of the top asset managers on this year's list are from subsidiaries of banks, and 14 of them head independent asset management firms." During Q4, 2023, some 19 IPOs raised $4.9bn in proceeds, Forbes Middle East noted. The 30 asset managers featured on this list managed over $340bn in assets in 2023, including local and international equity and debt funds, discretionary portfolios, real estate investments, REITS, and private equity. Al-Emadi has 16 years of experience in the banking sector and was appointed to his current role in 2023. Before joining Lesha Bank, he was the group chief business officer at Masraf Al Rayan. He is also the chairman of Oryx Corniche Developments. Lesha Bank offers high-net-worth individuals and corporates Shariah-compliant financial products and solutions, covering alternative investments focused on real estate and private equity, private banking and wealth management, corporate and institutional banking, and treasury and investments. The company recorded $1.7bn in assets under management in 2023, Forbes Middle East said. (Gulf Times)

- **GWC launches vision-picking technology -** Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC) has unveiled its latest initiative by integrating vision-picking technology into supply chain operations. "With a steadfast commitment to innovation, GWC is the first logistics company in Qatar to implement vision-picking technology, leading the way toward a more efficient, accurate, and safe future for logistics," the company announced Tuesday. Vision picking is a transformative, cutting-edge technology that revolutionizes single and multi-order picking, using computer vision systems, cameras, and augmented reality (AR) devices to help the staff to identify and select items from warehouse locations accurately and efficiently. The initiative optimizes warehouse operations, improving accuracy through providing visual instructions that reduce human error margins; increasing efficiency by helping the staff find and pick items faster; and enhancing inventory management and visibility through real-time tracking options. The integration of vision picking in GWC's warehouse operations has resulted in a notable increase in picking speed. By automating the picking process, the technology has reduced the time and effort required by the human workforce, optimizing warehouse operations, and increasing productivity. Additionally, through its prioritization of workplace safety and its integration with existing protocols, vision picking has provided a safer working environment for GWC's workforce. "Our pioneering efforts in adopting innovative solutions mark a significant step forward in enhancing the logistics landscape, aligning with our commitment to Qatar's sustainable development goals. "This approach underscores our dedication to driving efficiency, accuracy, and safety in warehouse operations, ensuring unparalleled service excellence for our clients," stated GWC Group CEO Ranjeev Menon. GWC has emerged as a leading example of innovation and adaptability amid the industry's changing dynamics, and is poised to navigate forthcoming challenges and prepared to establish pioneering standards of excellence in logistics and supply chain sector. (Gulf Times)

- **Envoy: Qatar, India aims 'greater possibilities' for trade and investments -** The Kerala Business Forum (KBF) hosted a 'curtain raiser' event for the upcoming KBF Business Connect 2024, which will be held on April 30 and May 1. The event took place in the presence of the Ambassador of India to Qatar, H E Vipul; KBF President, Aji Kuriakose; Vice President, Kimi Alexander; General Secretary, Manzoor Moideen and other officials from the Indian Business Professional Council (IBPC), yesterday. Addressing the gathering at the event, the Indian Ambassador noted the excellent ties between the two countries in investments and trade as business forums foster growth and connectivity. He reiterated that the annual trade volume between Qatar and India is positioned firm with $19bn (QR69.17bn), among which $17bn (QR61.89bn) is the energy exports alone. Vipul said "Both our economies are growing very strong. India is the fifth largest economy at present and will soon be the third largest. At the same time, Qatar has a strong economy too. They're looking at further increasing their LNG expansion to almost 140mn tons per annum. And with that, I think there will also be growth in the country including the population itself, as well as the expatriate population will keep coming into the country themselves, and that should mean that between our two countries, there should be much greater possibilities available in terms of business, trade, and investment both in goods and services." The envoy praised the business forum's presence and strength as he remarked that there are over 80,000 people from the Indian state in Qatar, which provides opportunities not merely to Kerala but expanding to 8 more states. "When businessmen and traders get together, they will discuss all the opportunities available on the investment side," the Ambassador said adding that numerous expenditures have been carried out in Indian business firms such as Reliance Group. He also noted that Qatar Investment Authority will be exploring more opportunities for investing in India as the stock market is booming. The official said "There should be very good opportunities for investments both from QIA as well as other family businesses in Qatar, as well as Indians who are living here in Qatar. So I think in terms of the reverse investment, the investments that the Indian community has made, provide a very good environment for us to do that. "We are looking at substantially increasing this partnership and we need to have more forums, and events to talk about these and expect greater involvement of the Qatari community. If they can be brought into these discussions that would be very beneficial for both our countries. I think the event being planned by the KBF is one right step in that direction," Vipul added. Kimi Alexander, Vice Pres-ident of the KBF Business Connect 2024 briefed on the upcoming two-day event. He mentioned that entrepreneurs, capitalists, investors, auditors, general managers, and startup minds are expected during the Business Connect sessions. The event ranges from general discussions to panel sessions to one-on-one interviews enlightening the participants with emerging possibilities across several sectors in India. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Qatar CSR Summit from April 30 -** The Qatar CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Summit's second edition will be held from April 30 to May 2 at the Qatar National Convention Centre, gathering leaders from notable local entities and renowned academic and humanitarian institutions. Under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, the event – themed 'The Future of CSR in a Circular Economy' – aims to promote the integration of CSR into businesses, advocate for inclusivity and equal opportunity, and lay the groundwork for holistic sustainable growth, among others. In addition to a diverse roster of international participants, including UN Global Compact, Unesco, and the International Labor Organization (ILO), the conference – organized by Qatar University (QU) as a component of the Qatar CSR National Program – also features the Mena Business Schools Alliance for Sustainability (Mebas) as its academic partner. Organizers noted that the summit aims to explore how organizations can harmonize their economic, social, and environmental goals with their operational strategies, fostering a more sustainable and responsible business landscape. A major highlight of the summit will be the presentation of the CSR Person of the Year award during the opening ceremony, followed by a series of engaging discussions and keynote presentations, featuring prominent figures in the area of CSR. Among the keynote speakers are: HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi and Ministry of Commerce and Industry's financial and administrative affairs director Mohamed Abdulrazaq al-Siddiqi. Jack Saba, general manager of Mubadara for Social Impact will deliver a speech on "Fostering Social Change: Mubadara's Leadership in Qatar's CSR Landscape". Additionally, representatives from industry giants such as QNB and Ooredoo will share insights on their respective CSR initiatives. The summit will feature panel discussions on pertinent topics such as 'The Circular Economy: The Potential for Sustainable Enterprises and Decent Jobs,' facilitated by respected institutions, including ILO, the Ministry of Labor, and QU's College of Business and Economics. This session will focus on crucial aspects of the circular economy, including government policies, investment acceleration, and job creation. A workshop, titled 'Labor Issues in Responsible Supply Chain Management', will provide insights into sustainable supply chain practices, citing the importance of inclusive economic growth and decent work in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 8. With an array of participants including professionals, industry leaders, academics, and stakeholders from around the globe, organizers noted that the Qatar CSR Summit serves as a prime platform for dialogue, collaboration, and growth in CSR practices. Themes ranging from environmental sustainability to ethical supply chains will be explored, reflecting the evolving landscape of corporate responsibility. (Gulf Times)

International

- **US homebuilding retreats: manufacturing turning the corner -** US single-family homebuilding tumbled in March, and while new construction remains underpinned by a severe shortage of previously owned houses for sale, a resurgence in mortgage rates is pushing potential buyers to the sidelines. The report from the Commerce Department on Tuesday also showed permits for future construction of single-family houses fell to a five-month low. Residential investment rebounded in the second half of 2023 after contracting for nine straight quarters, the longest such stretch since the housing market collapse in 2006. But the recovery appears to be losing steam. "The housing recovery has stalled for now as home builder expectations of sharply lower interest rates this year have faded," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWDBONDS. "One thing is for certain, and that is home prices are going to be on an upward, more unaffordable trend without more supply." Single-family housing starts, which account for the bulk of homebuilding, dropped 12.4% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.022mn units last month, the Commerce Department's Census Bureau said. Data for February was revised higher to show single-family starts rebounding to a rate of 1.167mn units instead of the previously reported 1.129mn units. Single-family home building increased 21.2% on a year-on-year basis in March. Wet weather could have impacted groundbreaking activity last month. Homebuilding fell in the Northeast, Midwest and the densely populated South, but rose in the West. The latest government data showed there were 757,000 housing units on the market in the fourth quarter, well below the 1.145mn units before the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) on Monday showed confidence among single-family home builders was unchanged at an eight-month high in April. The NAHB said "buyers are hesitating until they can better gauge where interest rates are headed." The average rate on the popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage has drifted up towards 7%, data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac showed, as strong reports on the labor market and inflation suggested the Federal Reserve could delay an anticipated rate cut this year. A few economists doubt that the US central bank will lower borrowing costs in 2024. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on Tuesday the central bank might need to keep rates higher for longer than previously thought as inflation remains elevated. The Fed has kept its policy rate in the 5.25%-5.50% range since July. It has raised the benchmark overnight interest rate by 525 basis points since March of 2022. (Reuters)
- **UK jobs market cools again but worries remain for Bank of England -** Britain's labor market lost a bit more of its inflationary heat, data showed on Tuesday, offering some relief to the Bank of England, but stubborn underlying problems continued with wage growth still high and more people dropping out of the workforce. Core wages rose by the least since mid-2022 in the three months to February but remained strong by historical standards, according to the Office for National Statistics figures. Regular wages excluding bonuses - which BoE is watching as it considers when to start cutting interest rates - grew by 6.0% compared with the same period a year earlier, only slightly weaker than a 6.1% rise in the November-to-January period. A Reuters poll of economists had forecast a sharper slowdown to 5.8%. The unemployment rate rose by more than expected to 4.2% from 3.9%, also suggesting a loss of momentum in the jobs market, but the ONS said it was still overhauling its survey which produces that figure and it was subject to volatility. Yael Selfin, chief economist at KPMG UK, said the rise in the unemployment rate and the latest slowing of pay pressure suggested the labor market was generating less inflation. "The slight easing in regular pay growth will bring some comfort for the Bank of England which has relied on the pay data as a key gauge of domestic inflationary pressure," Selfin said. Sterling briefly fell against the US dollar and euro immediately after the data was published, and investors trimmed their bets on BoE rate cuts this year with a first reduction in Bank Rate fully priced in for September. Growth in total pay, which includes more volatile bonus payments, was unchanged at 5.6%. The Reuters poll had pointed to a slight slowdown to 5.5%. Strong pay increases have eased the squeeze on household finances which were hit by the surge in inflation in 2022, offering some hope to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak who is battling weak opinion poll ratings before an election expected this year. Tuesday's figures showed regular

pay adjusted for the consumer price index rose by 2.1% in the three months to February, the biggest annual increase since mid-2021. The rate of inactivity in the jobs market - which measures people who are not in employment or seeking work and which the BoE hopes to see fall to ease pressure on wages and inflation - rose to 22.2%, the highest since mid-2015. The number of people registered as long-term sick hit its highest since records began in 1993 at 2.83mn. "The UK's labor market looks increasingly two-speed. Unemployment is rising and inactivity persists," Matthew Percival, the Confederation of British Industry's future of work & skills director, said. "Meanwhile there remain a heightened number of jobs that employers can't fill, causing pay to rise faster than compatible with significantly cutting interest rates." Vacancies fell for the 21st time in a row in the three months to March, dropping by 13,000 from the October-to-December period and down by 204,000 on a year earlier at 916,000. But they remained 120,000 above their pre-COVID level. "The labor market continues to gradually cool but continued high wage growth underlines concerns over inflation persistence," Jack Kennedy, senior economist at jobs platform Indeed, said. "With stubborn US inflation having dimmed hopes of an imminent Fed rate cut, prospects for UK rate cuts being cut before autumn also look questionable." Britain's minimum wage for workers aged 21 and above rose by almost 10% to 11.44 pounds ($14.23) an hour earlier this month. Some employers have said big increases in recent years - which reflect in large part the jump in inflation - have put pressure on them to increase their prices or reduce hiring. The Recruitment and Employment Confederation said last week that demand for staff fell for the fifth month in a row in March. (Reuters)

- **ECB policymakers stick with June rate cut plan -** European Central Bank policymakers continued to make the case for an interest rate cut in June on Tuesday as inflation remains on course to ease back to 2% by next year, even if the path for prices still proves bumpy. The ECB held rates at a record high last week but opened the door wide open to a June rate cut, batting back doubts about its resolve after market expectations retreated on unexpectedly high US inflation figures. "Barring major shocks and surprises, we should decide a first rate cut in early June, followed by others in a pragmatic and agile gradualism," French central bank chief Francois Villeroy de Galhau said in New York. ECB President Christine Lagarde echoed that message, arguing that inflation is easing much as the ECB had expected and fresh turbulence in the Middle East has so far had little impact on commodity prices. "Subject to no development of additional shock, it will be time to moderate the restrictive monetary policy in reasonably short order," Lagarde told CNBC. "We are observing a disinflationary process that is moving according to our expectations." Markets now see 77 basis points of rate cuts this year, or three moves - a big change compared to six weeks ago when over a 100 basis points were priced in. Although the ECB has not officially said it will cut in June, policymakers have repeated the reference to the month so often that the ECB has essentially pre-committed, and walking back would damage credibility, economists say. "This assumes there will be no further setbacks, for instance in the geopolitical situation and therefore in energy prices," Finnish central bank chief Olli Rehn said in Helsinki. (Reuters)
- **China's economy grew faster than expected in the March quarter -** China's economy grew faster than expected in the first quarter, data showed on Tuesday, offering some relief to officials as they try to shore up growth in the face of protracted weakness in the property sector and mounting local government debt. However, several March indicators released alongside the gross domestic product data - including property investment, retail sales and industrial output - showed that demand at home remains frail, weighing on overall momentum. The world's second-largest economy grew 5.3% in January-March from the year earlier, official data showed, comfortably above a 4.6% analysts' forecast in a Reuters poll and up from the 5.2% expansion in the previous quarter. On a quarterly basis growth picked up to 1.6% from 1.4% in the previous three months. "The strong first-quarter growth figure goes a long way in achieving China's 'around 5%' target for the year," said Harry Murphy Cruise, economist at Moody's Analytics. Analysts have described as ambitious the growth target Beijing aims to accomplish with help of fiscal and monetary stimulus measures, noting last year's growth rate of 5.2% was likely flattered by a rebound from a COVID-hit 2022. That bounce, however, fizzled away under the weight of the property downturn, rising local debt and weak consumer spending. Beijing turned to the tried and tested spending on infrastructure and high-tech manufacturing to lift the economy. That however, raised concerns about public finances, prompting Fitch to cut its outlook on China's sovereign credit rating to negative last week. While the quarterly GDP data showed the economy was off to a solid start this year, data on exports, consumer inflation, producer prices and bank lending for March showed that momentum could falter again, spurring calls for more economic stimulus. Disappointing factory output and retail sales, released alongside the GDP report, also underlined the persistent weakness in domestic demand. Industrial output in March grew 4.5% from a year earlier, below the 6.0% forecast and a gain of 7.0% for the January-February period. Retail sales rose 3.1% year-on-year in March, missing the 4.6% growth forecast and slowing from a 5.5% gain in the January-February period. Fixed asset investment grew an annual 4.5% over the first three months of 2024, versus expectations for a 4.1% rise. It expanded 4.2% in the January-February period. (Reuters)

Regional

- **World Bank: GCC economic growth to improve to 2.8% in 2024, 4.7% in 2025 on higher oil output -** The collective growth of GCC countries will improve to 2.8% in 2024 and 4.7% in 2025, the World Bank said in its latest regional outlook. "The pickup in growth is mainly driven by higher oil output due to the phasing out of oil production cuts and robust growth in the non-oil sector linked to diversification efforts and reforms," the World Bank said. Developing oil exporters (Mena region) will grow 2.8% in 2024, down from 3.1% in 2023 while growth in developing oil importers is forecasted to decrease to 2.5% in 2024, down from 3.1% in 2023. Real GDP per capita growth arguably better reflects changes in living standards than real GDP growth, the World bank said. In the Mena region, GDP per capita is expected to grow a modest 1.3% in 2024, which is an improvement from the 0.5% rate in 2023. This increase is driven almost entirely by the Gulf Co-operation Council economies (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), whose GDP per capita growth in 2024 is projected to be 1%, a significant improvement from the 0.9% decline in GDP per capita in 2023. Oil production cuts and a moderate price of oil in 2024, relative to 2022, are expected to keep surpluses in current accounts and fiscal balances in most Mena oil-exporting countries well below the high levels of 2022. For economies in the GCC, the World Bank noted the average current account balance—the sum of net income from abroad, net transfers, and the balance of trade—is forecast to be in surplus by 7.5% of GDP in 2024 down from 8.4% of GDP in 2023. The smaller average surplus reflects a decline in Kuwait's current account surplus to 22.7% of GDP in 2024 from 29.3% of GDP in 2023, which reflects increased payments to international contractors engaged in the country's Vision 2035 development plan—outlays that were partially offset by gains from a recovering tourism sector. Current accounts in most other GCC economies are expected to change little in 2024, it said. Among GCC economies, fiscal balances (the net of a government's revenues and spending) are projected to barely be in a surplus of 0.1% of GDP in 2024, down from a surplus of 0.5% of GDP in 2023— despite improvements in the fiscal deficit in Bahrain and Kuwait. Forecasts for Saudi Arabia's fiscal balance indicate a worsening deficit of 2.4% of GDP in 2024 from a 2.1% deficit in 2023. The worsening of the Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit reflects an expected drop in oil receipts due to lower prices and production levels and increased government spending. Surpluses in other GCC countries are projected to shrink slightly, the World Bank noted. (Gulf Times)
- **IMF chief economist: Mideast-related oil price spike threatens 'relatively good' economic outlook -** The recent oil price spike fueled by rising Middle East tensions has the potential to derail the IMF's "relatively good" outlook for the world economy, its chief economist told AFP. "We are projecting a global economy that is quite resilient for 2024," Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said in an interview ahead of the publication of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook (WEO) report on Tuesday. The IMF now expects the world economy to grow by 3.2% this year and next, and inflation to continue to ease from its post-pandemic high, hitting 5.9% this year, and 4.5% next year amid elevated interest rates in many countries. "The news is relatively good," Gourinchas said. "One of the things that could derail that path towards disinflation would be some disruption in oil prices or energy prices or commodity prices," he

continued. "So far, we've seen some pressure in oil prices, but it's way too early to figure out whether that will be sustained," he added. - US driving growth - "A lot of the news have been very good on the United States economy over the last six months," Gourinchas said, pointing to robust US productivity growth, an immigration-driven boost in the labor supply, and "quite a bit of public spending." The rise in foreign-born workers in the US "increases the capacity of the economy to produce more and it also moderates the pressures on the labor market," he said. "We're still expecting inflation to come down in the course of 2024, and to leave the Federal Reserve in a position where it will be able to start cutting rates later in the year," he said. In contrast to the resilient US economy, the IMF expects European growth to continue at a more lackluster pace in the short term, predicting 0.8% growth for the euro area this year, picking up slightly to 1.5% in 2025. "The consequences of the energy shock are still there to some extent, although this has moderated quite a bit," Gourinchas said. "But let's not forget that we have tight monetary policy, and that monetary policy is increasing the cost for borrowing and for households and businesses," he added. Unlike the US, European consumers and businesses are also feeling much less confident in the health of the overall economy, according to Gourinchas. "That means less consumption, less aggregate demand, less investment," he said. "There is no sign of overheating." Because of the rapid pace of disinflation in Europe in recent months, the IMF sees the European Central Bank's projection of a June interest rate cut as a "reasonable forecast," Gourinchas said. - China operating 'below potential' - In Asia, the IMF expects China's growth rate to continue to ease over the next few years due to the easing of a "post pandemic boost to consumption and fiscal stimulus," and the ongoing weakness in the property sector, according to the WEO report. "China is another example where you see an economy that is operating below potential," Gourinchas told AFP. "Growth is lower than what the economy can sustain." "This is an economy that would benefit from tackling some of its supply side problems -- the property sector chiefly -- but can also afford to have a little bit more expansionary policies -- in particular monetary policy," he added. The IMF's WEO report also found that "the pace of convergence toward higher living standards for middle- and lower-income countries has slowed," adding that income inequality could persist if something was not done to remedy the worrying situation. "If you're trying to catch up with advanced economies, and you start going a little bit slower, it's going to take you longer to get there," Gourinchas said. "Countries should think about ways they can boost medium term growth, either through changes in policies, attracting foreign capital and investment or educating the population," he continued. Higher growth would allow governments "to invest in the multiple challenges that these countries are facing, whether it's building safety nets, it's increasing education, capital, its financing the climate transition or adaptation for many of these countries," he added. (Zawya)

- **Value of MENA debt issuances jumps 52% to $41.6bln in Q1 -** MENA debt issuances totaled $41.6bn during Q1 2024, marking a 52% year-on-year (yoy) jump, according to Refinitiv. This is the highest first quarter total since Refinitiv's records began. The number of issues increased 62% over the same period. Saudi Arabia was the most active issuer during Q1 2024. The kingdom issued bonds and sukuk worth $22.78bn. Of this, the Saudi government accounted for bonds worth $11.83bn. GACI First Investment Co. accounted for issuances worth $4.75. Saudi Electricity Sukuk Program Co. issued debt worth $2.20 while Suci Second Investment Co. issued $2bn. The UAE followed with $2.8bn. The issuances were DIB Sukuk ($1bn), Mamoura Diversified Global Holding ($1bn) and FAB Sukuk ($0.80bn). Financial issuers accounted for 61% of proceeds raised during the period while Government & Agencies accounted for 31%, according to Refinitiv. Islamic bonds in the region raised $16.5bn during Q1 2024, a first quarter record. Sukuk account for 40% of total bond proceeds raised in the region, compared to 23% last year. HSBC took the top spot in the MENA bond bookrunner ranking during the first quarter of 2024 with $4.7bn of related proceeds, or an 11% market share. HSBC also took first place in the MENA Islamic bonds league table. (Zawya)

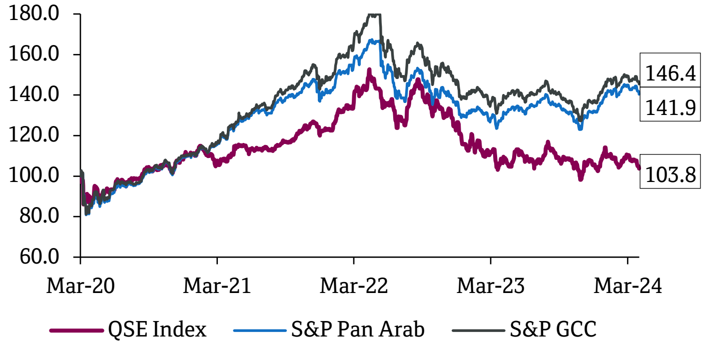
- **Saudization of all insurance product sales jobs takes effect on April 15 -** The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development announced that the government decision to Saudize all jobs related to sales of insurance products takes into effect on Monday, April 15. The ministry's move to implement this decision, in partnership with the Insurance Authority, is aimed at creating jobs for Saudi citizens as well as to enhance the economic activity of the insurance sector. The Insurance Authority will follow up on the implementation of the Saudization decision from the date of issuance of the decision until the target Saudization percentage is reached. This is within the jurisdiction of the authority's supervisory and oversight roles over the insurance sector. In December 2023, the Insurance Authority issued its decision to Saudize all jobs related to sales of insurance products from the middle of April. The decision stipulates that insurance workers in the non-sales sector are not entitled to accept any commissions related to sales. The decision to localize the sales sector is expected to have a significant impact not only on the sector but also on the total rates of Saudization in the Kingdom. This would also contribute to developing specialized national competencies interested in the insurance sector, as well as to improve overall performance and raising the quality of the provided services. (Zawya)

- **Riyadh eyes significant investment in Pakistan -** Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said on Tuesday that Riyadh will be "moving ahead significantly" to invest in projects in Pakistan, days after Islamabad announced that the Kingdom had pledged to expedite $5bn in investment. Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah arrived in Islamabad on Monday to lead a delegation on a two-day visit as part of efforts to boost economic cooperation. His Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar told a joint news conference that Pakistan gave extensive briefings to the delegation on potential investment projects. Dar outlined areas of interest for Saudi investors such as agriculture, mining, information technology and aviation. The prince said he was very impressed with the briefings on the investment opportunities. "This gave us some very, very significant confidence that we will be able to move forward on those projects which we decide to identify as a worthy of investment," he said, adding, "I am sure we will be moving ahead significantly." The delegation came to follow-up on the understanding reached between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during their recent meeting in Makkah Al Mukarramah to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries. Sharif met with the crown prince last week and discussed expediting a planned $5bn investment package, which cash-strapped Pakistan desperately needs to shore up its dwindling foreign reserves and fight a chronic balance of payment crisis. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a body consisting of Pakistani civilian and military leaders set up to promote investment in Pakistan, briefed the delegates to showcase various sectors for investment, Dar said. The visit came ahead of Pakistan seeking a 24th bailout from the International Monetary Fund. Pakistan Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is in Washington to attend the IMF, World Bank spring meetings where he will open formal talks for the new loan program. (Reuters)

- **Microsoft to invest $1.5bn in Emirati AI firm G42 for minority stake -** Microsoft is investing $1.5bn in United Arab Emirates based artificial intelligence (AI) firm G42, giving the US giant a minority stake and a board seat, allowing the two to deepen ties amid the global battle for tech dominance. As part of the deal, which the two companies said was backed by assurances to the US and UAE governments over security, G42 would use Microsoft cloud services to run its AI applications. The partnership comes amid Washington's eff orts to hobble Beijing's technological advances, with the US adding four Chinese companies to an export blacklist for seeking to acquire AI chips for China's military. Amid US concerns over its relationship with Chinese businesses, G42 had divested its investments in China and began the lengthy task of pulling out Chinese hardware, accepting constraints imposed on it by the US to work with US companies, it said in February. Microsoft and G42, in separate statements on Tuesday, described their assurances to the US and UAE governments as a first of its kind agreement to ensure the secure, trusted and responsible development and deployment of AI. Microsoft said it was binding. The size of the stake Microsoft was taking was not disclosed. Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund Mubadala and American private equity firm Silver Lake hold stakes in G42, whose chairman, Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al-Nahyan, is the UAE National Security Adviser and a brother to the president. Microsoft President Brad Smith, who will take a seat on G42's board, said: "We will combine world-class technology with world-leading standards for safe, trusted, and responsible AI, in close coordination with the governments of both the UAE and the US." The New York Times said the deal places a series of protections on the AI products shared with G42, including an agreement to strip Chinese gear out of the Emirati firm's operations. G42 will cease using Huawei telecom equipment, which the US fears could provide a backdoor for Chinese intelligence agencies, the paper said. G42 and Microsoft said they would jointly bring advanced AI and digital infrastructure to countries in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. The two companies have collaborated multiple times over the last year, and G42 said it would use Microsoft's Azure data centers as part of its AI infrastructure to boost regional adoption. G42's Chief Executive Peng Xiao previously worked for company owned by Emirati cybersecurity firm DarkMatter. "Microsoft's investment in G42 marks a pivotal moment in our company's journey of growth and innovation, signifying a strategic alignment of vision and execution between the two organizations," Sheikh Tahnoon said in the G42 statement. (Gulf Times)

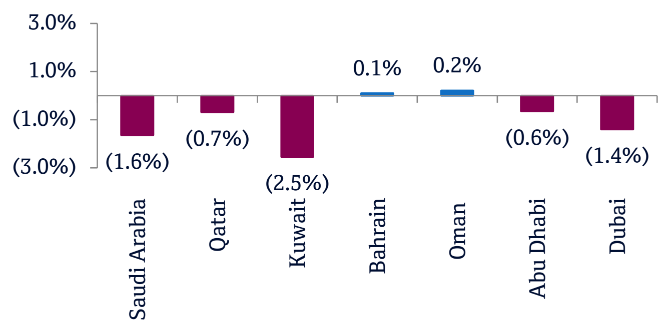
- **Dubai's high-end property sales rise on overseas demand -** Sales of homes in Dubai worth $10mn or more rose 6% in the first quarter versus last year, an industry report showed on Tuesday, as demand from the international ultra-rich for homes in the emirate showed little sign of abating. A total of 105 homes worth an overall $1.73bn were sold from January to March, up from around $1.6bn a year earlier, according to property consultancy Knight Frank. Activity was dominated by cash buyers, with palm tree-shaped artificial island Palm Jumeirah the most sought-after area, accounting for 36.3% of sales by total value, followed by Jumeirah Bay Island and Dubai Hills Estate. Home to the world's tallest tower, the United Arab Emirates' Dubai is seeking to grow its economy through tourism, building a local financial center and by attracting foreign capital, including into property. Last year, Dubai ranked first globally for number of home sales above $10mn, selling nearly 80% more such properties than second-placed London, according to Knight Frank. The city also bucked the trend of falling luxury prices seen in cities like London and New York last year, posting double-digit gains, Knight Frank said in February. "The level of deal activity in Dubai continues to strengthen, particularly at the top end of the market, where the near constant stream of international high-net-worth-individuals vying for the city's most expensive homes persists," said Faisal Durrani, Knight Frank's head of research for Middle East and Africa. Durrani told Reuters Dubai was aided by the relative affordability of its luxury homes, where well-heeled buyers can purchase about 980 square feet of residential space for $1mn, "about three or four times more than you would get in most major global gateway cities". The strong demand suggests many international investors are acquiring Dubai property for second homes rather than "constant buying to flip", he said. (Zawya)
- **DXB leads the world's top busiest airports for 10th consecutive year -** Dubai International (DXB) has topped the 2023 list of top 10 busiest airports worldwide. The latest achievement marks DXB's tenth year of leading the list, which is put by the Airports Council International (ACI), according to a press release. Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said: "While this milestone was greatly anticipated, its official confirmation instils us with great pride. DXB is proud to uphold its status as the world's foremost international airport for an unparalleled ten years.'' "Throughout this decade, DXB has surpassed many records and attained numerous milestones, from welcoming our billionth passenger to introducing new terminals and facilities, collaborating with numerous airlines to broaden connectivity to diverse global destinations, all the while enhancing every aspect of the airport experience for our guests,'' Griffiths added. Luis Felipe de Oliveira, World Director General of ACI, commented: "Global air travel in 2023 was chiefly fueled by the international segment, propelled by several factors. Among these were the anticipated benefits from China's reopening and a growing inclination towards travel despite macroeconomic conditions." "The rankings highlight the crucial role these transportation hubs play in global connectivity, commerce, and economic development. Airports continue to demonstrate their resilience and adaptability amidst the challenges posed by the ever-evolving landscape of global travel," he noted. ACI World's airport rankings are based on data from over 2,600 airports across more than 180 countries and territories globally, ensuring accuracy and reliability. (Zawya)

Rebased Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Daily Index Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Asset/Currency Performance	Close ($)	1D%	WTD%	YTD%
Gold/Ounce	2,382.89	(0.0)	1.6	15.5
Silver/Ounce	28.11	(2.6)	0.8	18.1
Crude Oil (Brent)/Barrel (FM Future)	90.02	(0.1)	(0.5)	16.8
Crude Oil (WTI)/Barrel (FM Future)	85.36	(0.1)	(0.4)	19.1
Natural Gas (Henry Hub)/MMBtu	1.39	(1.4)	5.3	(46.1)
LPG Propane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	81.00	0.7	0.2	15.7
LPG Butane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	80.00	(0.4)	(1.6)	(20.4)
Euro	1.06	(0.0)	(0.2)	(3.8)
Yen	154.72	0.3	1.0	9.7
GBP	1.24	(0.2)	(0.2)	(2.4)
CHF	1.10	(0.2)	0.1	(7.8)
AUD	0.64	(0.6)	(1.0)	(6.0)
USD Index	106.26	0.0	0.2	4.9
RUB	110.69	0.0	0.0	58.9
BRL	0.19	(1.9)	(3.1)	(8.2)

Source: Bloomberg

Global Indices Performance	Close	1D%*	WTD%*	YTD%*
MSCI World Index	3,297.14	(0.6)	(1.6)	4.0
DJ Industrial	37,798.97	0.2	(0.5)	0.3
S&P 500	5,051.41	(0.2)	(1.4)	5.9
NASDAQ 100	15,865.25	(0.1)	(1.9)	5.7
STOXX 600	498.21	(1.6)	(1.6)	(0.1)
DAX	17,766.23	(1.5)	(1.1)	1.8
FTSE 100	7,820.36	(2.0)	(2.3)	(1.5)
CAC 40	7,932.61	(1.5)	(1.1)	1.0
Nikkei	38,471.20	(2.1)	(3.6)	4.7
MSCI EM	1,009.84	(2.0)	(3.1)	(1.4)
SHANGHAI SE Composite	3,007.07	(1.6)	(0.4)	(0.8)
HANG SENG	16,248.97	(2.2)	(2.8)	(4.9)
BSE SENSEX	72,943.68	(0.8)	(1.9)	0.4
Bovespa	124,388.62	(2.2)	(3.6)	(14.4)
RTS	1,155.46	(1.0)	(0.9)	6.6

Source: Bloomberg ($ adjusted returns if any)*

Contacts

QNB Financial Services Co. W.L.L.
Contact Center: (+974) 4476 6666
info@qnbfs.com.qa
Doha, Qatar

Saugata Sarkar, CFA, CAIA
Head of Research
saugata.sarkar@qnbfs.com.qa

Shahan Keushgerian
Senior Research Analyst
shahan.keushgerian@qnbfs.com.qa

Phibion Makuwerere, CFA
Senior Research Analyst
phibion.makuwerere@qnbfs.com.qa

Roy Thomas
Senior Research Analyst
roy.thomas@qnbfs.com.qa

Dana Saif Al Sowaidi
Research Analyst
dana.alsowaidi@qnbfs.com.qa