QNB FINANCIAL SERVICES

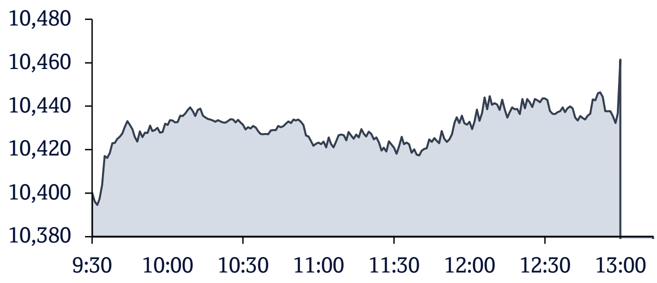
Daily Market Report

Wednesday, 19 March 2025

الخدمات المالية

Financial Services

QSE Intra-Day Movement



Market Indicators	18 Mar 25	17 Mar 25	%Chg.
Value Traded (QR mn)	474.4	439.5	7.9
Exch. Market Cap. (QR mn)	612,566.3	610,163.4	0.4
Volume (mn)	225.2	206.3	9.2
Number of Transactions	38,947	26,734	45.7
Companies Traded	51	52	(1.9)
Market Breadth	35:11	33:17	–

Market Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	YTD%	TTM P/E
Total Return	24,495.44	0.6	0.4	1.6	11.5
All Share Index	3,815.88	0.5	0.4	1.1	11.5
Banks	4,658.49	0.1	(0.2)	(1.6)	9.9
Industrials	4,353.18	0.3	1.0	2.5	16.2
Transportation	5,702.76	3.8	2.2	10.4	13.5
Real Estate	1,610.95	0.4	2.0	(0.3)	17.5
Insurance	2,301.11	0.4	(0.5)	(2.0)	12
Telecoms	1,988.93	0.1	(0.2)	10.6	12.8
Consumer Goods and Services	7,843.27	0.5	1.2	2.3	18.4
Al Rayan Islamic Index	4,945.66	0.4	0.6	1.5	13.6

Qatar Commentary

The QE Index rose 0.6% to close at 10,461.5. Gains were led by the Transportation and Consumer Goods & Services indices, gaining 3.8% and 0.5%, respectively. Top gainers were Qatari German Co for Med. Devices and Medicare Group, rising 6.8% and 5.3%, respectively. Among the top losers, Al Khaleej Takaful Insurance Co. fell 5.5%, while Qatar International Islamic Bank was down 1.1%.

GCC Commentary

Saudi Arabia: The TASI Index fell 0.8% to close at 11,792.4. Losses were led by the Media and Entertainment and Health Care Equipment & Svc indices, falling 2.2% and 2.1%, respectively. Fawaz Abdulaziz Alhokair Co. declined 7.2%, while Banan Real Estate Co. was down 6.0%.

Dubai The DFM Index fell 0.4% to close at 5,149.1. The Materials index declined 8.9%, while the Real Estate index was down 0.9%. Dubai Refreshment Company declined 10.0%, while National Cement Company was down 8.9%.

Abu Dhabi: The ADX General Index gained 0.1% to close at 9,463.5. The Health Care index rose 3.7%, while the Telecommunication index gained 0.2%. Gulf Cement Co. rose 14.8%, while Abu Dhabi National Co. for Building Materials was up 8.6%.

Kuwait: The Kuwait All Share Index gained 0.4% to close at 7,905.9. The Basic Materials index rose 0.9%, while the Technology index gained 0.7%. Energy House Holding Co rose 11.1%, while Alargan International Real Estate Co. was up 10.9%.

Oman: The MSM 30 Index fell 0.4% to close at 4,362.0. Losses were led by the Services and Financial indices, falling 1.2% and 0.1%, respectively. The Financial Corporation Company declined 8.3%, while Muscat Gases Company was down 6.3%.

Bahrain: The BHB Index gained 0.1% to close at 1970.0. Zain Bahrain rose 2.6%, while Seef Properties was up 2.5%.

GCC Top Gainers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Pure Health	Abu Dhabi	3.03	5.2	9,572.4	(9.0)
Qatar Gas Transport Co.	Qatar	4.82	4.2	10,292.6	16.2
Multiply Group	Abu Dhabi	1.84	2.2	24,233.1	(11.1)
Boubyan Bank	Kuwait	664.00	2.0	2,354.8	18.4
Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank	Abu Dhabi	17.38	2.0	2,377.0	25.8

GCC Top Losers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Savola Group	Saudi Arabia	29.90	(5.4)	2,154.2	(18.5)
Dallah Healthcare Co.	Saudi Arabia	126.80	(4.5)	187.8	(15.5)
Dr. Soliman Abdel	Saudi Arabia	180.00	(3.3)	301.8	(21.3)
Saudi Research & Media Gr	Saudi Arabia	180.40	(3.2)	44.2	(34.4)
Mouwasat Medical Services	Saudi Arabia	74.80	(3.1)	938.7	(12.1)

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%
Qatari German Co for Med. Devices	1.455	6.8	21,038.5	6.2
Medicare Group	4.660	5.3	2,230.5	2.4
Qatar Gas Transport Company Ltd.	4.820	4.2	10,292.6	16.2
Qatar Navigation	10.82	3.4	1,239.0	(1.5)
Lesha Bank	1.267	1.9	3,675.5	(6.4)

QSE Top Losers	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Al Khaleej Takaful Insurance Co.	2.369	(5.5)	2,446.6	(0.8)
Qatar International Islamic Bank	10.70	(1.1)	780.3	(1.8)
Ezdan Holding Group	1.005	(1.1)	29,952.0	(4.8)
Mannai Corporation	3.619	(0.8)	1,043.4	(0.5)
Aamal Company	0.907	(0.3)	1,069.4	6.2

QSE Top Volume Trades	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Ezdan Holding Group	1.005	(1.1)	29,952.0	(4.8)
Baladna	1.190	1.5	29,380.9	(4.9)
Qatar Aluminium Manufacturing Co.	1.306	1.5	25,395.0	7.8
Qatari German Co for Med. Devices	1.455	6.8	21,038.5	6.2
United Development Company	1.060	1.9	14,065.5	(5.6)

QSE Top Value Trades	Close*	1D%	Val. '000	YTD%
Qatar Gas Transport Company Ltd.	4.820	4.2	49,049.6	16.2
QNB Group	16.37	0.3	40,730.6	(5.3)
Baladna	1.190	1.5	35,283.1	(4.9)
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.306	1.5	32,945.3	7.8
Ezdan Holding Group	1.005	(1.1)	30,479.6	(4.8)

Regional Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	MTD%	YTD%	Exch. Val. Traded ($ mn)	Exchange Mkt. Cap. ($ mn)	P/E**	P/B**	Dividend Yield
Qatar*	10,461.48	0.6	0.4	0.2	(1.0)	130.20	167,965.7	11.5	1.3	4.7
Dubai	5,149.13	(0.4)	(0.7)	(3.2)	(0.2)	102.88	245,632.6	9.1	1.4	4.8
Abu Dhabi	9,463.46	0.1	0.6	(1.1)	0.5	371.68	725,534.7	21.0	2.5	2.2
Saudi Arabia	11,792.40	(0.8)	0.6	(2.6)	(2.0)	1,587.82	2,547,356.5	17.8	2.3	3.7
Kuwait	7,905.91	0.4	(0.0)	(2.4)	7.4	191.57	165,491.0	20.5	1.9	3.0
Oman	4,362.04	(0.4)	(0.6)	(1.7)	(4.7)	17.96	32,271.1	9.4	0.9	6.3
Bahrain	1,969.96	0.1	(0.1)	0.5	(0.8)	4.64	20,313.9	14.6	1.3	8.8

*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 rose 0.6% to close at 10,461.5. The Transportation and Consumer Goods & Services indices led the gains. The index rose on the back of buying support from Arab and Qatari shareholders despite selling pressure from Foreign and GCC shareholders.
- Qatari German Co for Med. Devices and Medicare Group were the top gainers, rising 6.8% and 5.3%, respectively. Among the top losers, Al Khaleej Takaful Insurance Co. fell 5.5%, while Qatar International Islamic Bank was down 1.1%.
- Volume of shares traded on Tuesday rose by 9.2% to 225.2mn from 206.3mn on Monday. Further, as compared to the 30-day moving average of 154.0mn, volume for the day was 46.3% higher. Ezdan Holding Group and Baladna were the most active stocks, contributing 13.3% and 13.0% to the total volume, respectively.

Overall Activity	Buy%*	Sell%*	Net (QR)
Qatari Individuals	28.80%	29.64%	(3,979,113.21)
Qatari Institutions	35.61%	26.93%	41,189,517.41
Qatari	**64.40%**	**56.56%**	**37,210,404.20**
GCC Individuals	0.58%	0.69%	(482,434.62)
GCC Institutions	0.61%	1.68%	(5,067,650.25)
GCC	**1.19%**	**2.36%**	**(5,550,084.87)**
Arab Individuals	13.16%	13.14%	64,899.48
Arab Institutions	0.00%	0.00%	-
Arab	**13.16%**	**13.14%**	**64,899.48**
Foreigners Individuals	2.83%	2.93%	(500,850.47)
Foreigners Institutions	18.42%	25.00%	(31,224,368.35)
Foreigners	**21.25%**	**27.94%**	**(31,725,218.82)**

*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
03-18	US	Federal Reserve	Industrial Production MoM	Feb	0.70%	0.20%	0.30%

Earnings Calendar

Tickers	Company Name	Date of reporting 4Q2024 results	No. of days remaining	Status
QOIS	Qatar Oman Investment Company	20-Mar-25	1	Due
QGMD	Qatari German Company for Medical Devices	25-Mar-25	6	Due

Qatar

- **Qatar's GDP expected to expand by 2.1% in 2025 with more than doubling in 2026 -** The GCC economy is expected to show resilience in the face of rising global protectionism and geopolitical tensions, according to the latest ICAEW Economic Insight report prepared by Oxford Economics. Despite the uncertain global outlook, the report forecasts Middle East GDP growth of 3.3% in 2025, with GCC economies set to grow by 4%, up from an estimated 1.8% in 2024. While President Trump's tariff policies have created uncertainty over external demand, the GCC remains largely sheltered from direct tariff impacts. The region's non-energy sectors are projected to grow by 4.4% this year, up from an estimated 3.9% in 2024, with regional PMI data firmly in expansionary territory. Qatar's GDP is forecast to expand by 2.1% this year, with growth expected to more than double in 2026 as additional LNG capacity comes online. The non-energy economy is projected to grow by 2.9% this year, remaining the primary growth engine. Tourism has provided significant support to Qatar's non-energy growth, with overnight arrivals reaching 5mn by end-2024, a 23% increase on 2023. The launch of the pan-GCC visa is expected to push visitor numbers to 5.3mn in 2025. The fiscal surplus is forecast at QR27.3bn (3.3% of GDP) in 2025, significantly better than the deficit of QR13.2bn penciled into this year's budget. Following recent OPEC+ policy shifts, oil production will gradually increase from April, boosting oil-sector growth to 3.2% after two years of contraction. Saudi Arabia's, oil output is expected to reach 9.3mn barrels per day, driving oil sector growth of 1.9%, while the UAE's higher quota of 3.5mn barrels per day will support 4.8% growth. Oil prices have fallen sharply in recent weeks due to tariff threats and increased OPEC+ supply, with prices forecast to average $70.5 per barrel this year, down from $80.5 in 2024. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are expected to lead non-oil sector growth with 5.8% and 4.8% respectively. Tourism - the fastest-growing sector across the region in 2024 - will remain a vital engine for growth, with Saudi Arabia expecting continued expansion supported by the GCC-wide visa. Bahrain's economy is set to double its growth rate to 2.8% this year, with the non-oil economy expanding by 3.1%. The oil sector, after contracting by an estimated 2.4% in 2024, is expected to see a modest 0.9% recovery. Hanadi Khalife. Head of Middle East, ICAEW, said: "The business landscape across the GCC continues to demonstrate resilience and adaptability in the face of global economic uncertainty. We're seeing strong investment in key sectors like tourism and infrastructure, which are creating new opportunities for growth." Scott Livermore, ICAEW Economic Advisor, and Chief Economist and Managing Director, Oxford Economics Middle East, said: "The GCC's projected 4% growth in 2025 highlights the region's ability to withstand external pressures while advancing its diversification efforts. Despite softer oil prices, the gradual easing of OPEC+ production cuts will support energy sector growth after two years of contraction." (Peninsula Qatar)
- **PRICED: Ahli Bank $500m 5Y Reg S T+105 -** Deal priced. $500m 5Y Reg S Fixed (March 25, 2030) at +105. IPT +135-140. Reoffer price 99.206 to yield 5.132%. Benchmark: T 4% 02/28/30. Books above $2b (excluding JLM interest): Leads. Coupon: 4.95%, semi-annual, 30/360. Issuer: ABQ Finance Ltd (ABQKQD). Guarantor: Ahli Bank QPSC. Exp. Ratings: A2 (Moody's). Format: Reg S, registered, senior unsecured. Settlement: March 25, 2025. Denoms: 200k x 1k. ISIN: XS3032949458. Bookrunners: Barclays (GC/B&D), QNBCAP (GC), DB, JPM, Mizuho, StanChart. Marketing: https://www.netroadshow.com/nrs/home/?show=7452f9d4 (Code: ABQ2025). FTT: 8am London (March 19). Target Market: Eligible. (Bloomberg)
- **Qatar International Islamic Bank: The AGM and EGM Endorses items on its agenda -** Qatar International Islamic Bank announces the results of the AGM and EGM. The meeting was held on 18/03/2025 and the following resolutions were approved. Results of the Ordinary General Assembly for the Fiscal Year 2024 1. The AGM approved the Board of Directors' report on the bank's activities and financial position for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024, along with the bank's future plans. 2. The AGM approved the Shariah Supervisory Board for the fiscal year 2024. 3. The AGM approved the external auditor's report for the fiscal year 2024. 4. The AGM approved the Corporate Governance Report for the fiscal year 2024. 5. The AGM approved the bank's financial statements, including the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024. 6. The AGM approved the Board of Directors' proposal for the annual dividend distribution at a rate of 50% of the share capital for the full fiscal year 2024, amounting to 50 dirhams per share, from which the interim dividends already paid will be deducted, leaving a final

dividend of 27 dirhams per share to be distributed to shareholders. 7. The AGM absolved the Board of Directors from liability for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024. 8. The AGM approved the remuneration of the Board of Directors for the fiscal year 2024, in accordance with the presented policy on rewards, allowances, and incentives. 9. The AGM approved the renewal of the existing $2bn Sukuk Issuance Program, previously approved by the Ordinary General Assembly on March 31, 2024, and authorizing the Board of Directors to determine the size, terms, and currency of each issuance based on the bank's needs and after obtaining necessary approvals, provided that the total issued Sukuk does not exceed the bank's capital base and reserves. 10. The AGM approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to issue new Sukuk in Qatari Riyals, subject to regulatory approval, with a ceiling not exceeding 1bn Qatari Riyals, and authorizing the Board to determine the size and terms of each issuance. 11. The AGM approved the nomination of the external auditors KPMG for the fiscal year 2025 and approved their fees. Results of the Extraordinary General Assembly 1. The EGM approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to amend Article (2) of the Articles of Association to include provisions allowing the bank to offer insurance services on behalf of insurance companies and to amend the commercial registration to include insurance product marketing activities. 2. The EGM approved to authorizing the Chairman of the Board to make any necessary amendments to the Articles of Association in accordance with the Extraordinary General Assembly's resolution and to sign the amended Articles before the relevant authorities. (QSE)

- **Qatari Investors Group: The AGM Endorses items on its agenda -** Qatari Investors Group announces the results of the AGM. The meeting was held on 18/03/2025 and the following resolutions were approved 1. The Board of Directors' report on the Company's activities and its financial position during the year ended on 31 December 2024 and the Company's business plan for 2025. 2. The report of the External Auditor on the Company's budget, financial position and final accounts submitted by the Board of Directors. 3. Approved the company's budget and statement of profits and losses for the year ended on 31 December 2024. 4. The Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute a cash dividend of 13% of the share nominal value (i.e. 13 Dirhams per share). 5. The Corporate Governance Report of 2024. 6. The basis and policy for granting remuneration for the Board of Members, in addition to incentives and rewards of Senior Executive Management and the Company's employees in accordance with the principles of the Governance Code. 7. Absolving the members of the Board of Directors from any liability for the financial year ended on 31 December 2024 and determine their remuneration. 8. Appointing Deloitte as the External Auditor for the financial year 2025 and determining their fees. (QSE)
- **Announcement Qatari Investors Group (Q.P.S.C) Dividend Distribution -** Pursuant to the resolution of the Qatari Investors Group (Q.P.S.C) (" Qatari Investors Group or the Company) Annual General Assembly meeting held on 18/03/2025,approving the distribution of cash dividends to the company's shareholders of 13% of the nominal share value, equal to Dirham 13 per share for the financial year ended 31 December 2024 ("Dividends") and in line with the Qatar Financial Markets Authority ("QFMA") Board decision No.(7) of 2023 concerning rules of dividend distribution in shareholding companies listed on the financial markets, Qatari Investors Group is pleased to inform its shareholders that Edaa will manage the distribution of their dividends for the year ended 31 December 2024 on behalf of Qatari Investors Group , through Qatar National Bank. Shareholders who registered their bank accounts with Edaa before 18/03/2025, will have their dividends transferred directly to their relevant bank accounts within the times specified in the aforementioned QFMA board decision. Shareholders, who have not yet registered their bank accounts, are kindly requested to provide Edaa with their bank account through the Edaa Website, the Edaa Mobile application or through the banks collaborating with Edaa. (QSE)
- **Qatar Electronic Systems Company (Techno Q) to hold its investors relation conference call on 27/03/2025 to discuss the financial results -** Qatar Electronic Systems Company (Techno Q) Q.P.S.C. announces that the conference call with the Investors to discuss the financial results for the Annual 2024 will be held on 27/03/2025 at 01:30pm, Doha Time. (QSE)
- **Fitch Affirms Commercial Bank International at 'BBB+'; Outlook Stable –** Fitch Ratings has affirmed Commercial Bank International P.J.S.C.'s (CBI) Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB+' with a Stable Outlook and Viability Rating (VR) at 'b'. CBI's IDRs reflect potential support from the UAE government, as reflected in its 'bbb+' Government Support Rating (GSR). CBI's GSR reflects the authorities' strong ability to support the banking system and record of support, but also the bank's lower systemic importance due to its small market share and franchise. Consequently, CBI's GSR is two notches below Fitch's GSR of 'a' for domestic systemically important banks in the UAE. CBI's VR reflects its small franchise and improved capital ratios, but still high capital encumbrance, weak asset quality and profitability, high loan and deposit concentrations. It also considers CBI's adequate liquidity, benefiting from ordinary support from Qatar National Bank (Q.P.S.C.) (QNB; A+/Stable/bbb+), which owns a 40% stake in CBI. However, the probability of ordinary capital support is limited, as a 40% foreign shareholding level is the maximum level allowed in the UAE. Improved Operating Conditions: Operating conditions have been solid for UAE banks in recent years, and Fitch expects them to remain strong in the medium term. High interest rates and healthy liquidity conditions, due to population growth and money transfers into the UAE, both support the improved operating environment. Small Domestic Franchise: CBI has a small domestic market share of 0.5% of banking sector assets. The bank's business model is concentrated on higher-risk sectors (including real estate and construction). Fitch expects the benefits from QNB's shareholding to increase gradually but to remain limited. (Fitch and Bloomberg)
- **National Development Forum provides platform to execute NDS3 projects -** Qatar hosted the National Development Forum yesterday, providing opportunities for the local and international private sector to become an effective partner in delivering the Third National Development Strategy. The event witnessed the participation of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, along with the Minister of Finance, H E Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari, Minister of State for Energy Affairs, H E Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi, Minister of Municipality, H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiya, Minister of Commerce and Industry, H E Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al Thani and the Governor of the Qatar Central Bank, H E Sheikh Bander bin Mohammed bin Saud Al Thani along with other delegates, Qatar government entities, and local and international private sector executives and CEOs of the top level. During a press meeting prior to the event, Nasser Mohammed Kazem Al Ansari, Director of Public Relations and Communications Dept. highlighted that the one-day forum is an "open discussion" collecting questions from the private sector and compiled through the application as a panelist discussion will follow with top ministers on the economic front. Noting the opportunities and challenges facing the private sector across access to financing, talent, and regulations, he explained that the role and participation of the private sector is to execute the NDS3 initiatives and projects. Speaking to The Peninsula, Al Ansari stressed that "It's an open discussion to understand the aspirations, ambitions for the private sector from stakeholders." The Director underlined that the main goal of the forum is to ensure strong engagement and strengthen partnerships between the private sector and the government. The focus will also be on identifying actionable initiatives that align with NDS3 and promote a collective commitment to sustainable economic growth. "The event aims to create a joint action plan for collaboration that will benefit both sectors and it will be endorsed by His Excellency the Prime Minister at the event itself," Al Ansari said. (Peninsula Qatar)
- **ICAEW: Qatar's proposed bankruptcy and PPP law revamp to 'unlock' FDI inflows -** Doha's recent transformative strategies – including the revamp of bankruptcy laws and public private partnership (PPP) – will help "unlock" stronger inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), according to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of the England and Wales (ICAEW). "The planned revamp of key laws governing bankruptcy and PPP will likely help unlock stronger FDI inflows in support of non-energy expansion," the ICAEW said in its latest report. Highlighting that authorities continue to take steps to attract investment and broaden diversification; it said in the last month, the government unveiled a 50%

discount on business rates in industrial, logistics and commercial zones, slashed start-up fees within the Qatar Financial Centre, and launched a Digital Skills Framework, all aligned with the National Development Strategy. The country plans to introduce three new laws as part of a sweeping review of legislation designed to make Qatar more attractive to foreign investors, the Minister of Commerce and Industry HE Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani had said in an interview to Reuters news agency. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in collaboration with the Qatari Economic Zones Company (Manateq), has reduced leasing rates up to 50% for five years in industrial, logistics, and commercial zones. More than 4,000 investors will benefit from the reduced rental prices. The decision applies to Jery Al Samur Logistics Park, Small and Medium Industries Zone, Al Wakra Logistics Park, Aba Saleel Logistics Park, Mesaieed Industrial Zone, and Birkat Al Awamer Logistics Park. The QFC has implemented a substantial reduction in the application fee for licensing an entity on its platform, dropping it from $5,000 to $500. The new fee structure applies to all applicants seeking a license to conduct non-regulated activities in the QFC, except for the activities of single-family offices. The digital skills framework, developed by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, is designed to empower individuals and organizations with essential skills to support Qatar's digital transformation. (Gulf Times)

- **EY: Qatar banks exhibit sufficient profitability, robust capital strength -** Banks in Qatar exhibit sufficient profitability and robust capital strength, with both Tier 1 and capital adequacy ratio (CAR) surpassing the mandated regulatory thresholds, a report by EY has shown. Domestic funding avenues are predicted to adequately finance credit expansion in Qatar this year with the completion of major infrastructure projects and increased liquefied natural gas (LNG) production, 'EY GCC Banking Sector Outlook 2024 report' said. "The expansion of gas production in Qatar will underpin the resilience of local banks this year," it said. According to the report, GCC banks will continue to benefit from strong capital levels, supporting their overall performance in 2025. Credit growth in most GCC countries is broadly based on a strong project pipeline, with aggregate contract awards driven by infrastructure development, especially in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The positive trajectory is expected to continue in the near future. This outlook is supported by rising lending volumes, increased fee income, stable margins and effective cost management. As the cost of lending turns more favorable, GCC countries might expand their investments globally. EY MENA Financial Services leader Mayur Pau noted, "As we go into the first quarter of 2025, the GCC banking industry should remain strong due to considerable capital cushions, healthy asset quality indicators and adequate profitability. Furthermore, resilient economies, the region's economic diversification efforts and enabling policies will support higher consumption and investment, further boosting the sector's performance. "The upcoming financial year looks to be a transformative period, with advancements in technology, shifts in consumer behavior and regulatory changes shaping the future of banking." Non-oil growth remains a bright spot: GDP growth in the GCC is projected at 3.5% in 2025. Interest rate cuts, together with further investment and structural reform initiatives, will mean non-oil growth of over 3.4% in the region's two largest economies – Saudi Arabia and the UAE. As per the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the current account surplus is expected to be 8.2% of the GDP in 2025. On the fiscal front, a surplus of 3.9% of the GDP is forecast for 2025. Global oil demand is forecasted to increase by 1.6mn bpd to 104.5mn bpd in 2025, reflecting the end of the post-Covid-19 pandemic release of pent-up demand, challenging global economic conditions and clean energy technology deployment. Non-OPEC+ producers are likely to account for the bulk of the increase if OPEC+ voluntary cuts remain in place. High oil prices – with the average for 2024 estimated at $81 per barrel – and favorable economic growth have supported the GCC banks' healthy finances. GDP growth in the GCC is forecast to rebound to 3.5% in 2024, up from 1.4%, as oil production gradually increases, providing a boost to the region's economies, EY said. Hydrocarbon growth is likely to be 3.3%, while non-hydrocarbon sectors are forecast to grow at 3.4%, supported by strong domestic investment momentum. GCC banks have shown sustained growth in credit facilities during 2024, supported by economic transformation plans, robust project pipeline, healthy demand and resilient economic conditions. The banks are well-capitalized with strong asset quality indicator and are likely to uphold this strong performance trajectory throughout 2025. "To fortify their profitability and improve cost optimization in the current landscape, GCC banks should consider how to best to navigate a new normal that not only addresses regulatory fragmentation and national interests, but fully harnesses the power of technology and its multiple scopes such as digitization, generative AI (GenAI), open banking and APIs, and the digital currency revolution – all while committing to a sustainable future. This will ensure they remain competitive and agile to better counteract the pressure of contracting margins," Pau said. (Gulf Times)

- **Just Real Estate and Al Jazeera Finance 'Tamweel' partner to make property ownership more accessible in Qatar -** Just Real Estate (JRE) has signed a strategic agreement with Al Jazeera Finance 'Tamweel' to introduce flexible and Shariah-compliant residential real estate financing solutions. The signing ceremony, held at JRE's main office in Al Shoumoukh Towers, was attended by Engineer Nasser al-Ansari, JRE chairman and CEO, and Amer Aljaberi, CEO of Al Jazeera Finance 'Tamweel', marking a significant step towards increasing accessibility to property investment and ownership for the people of Qatar. Through the collaboration, individuals seeking to purchase villas and apartments will benefit from inclusive financial solutions designed to meet a wide range of needs. The new financing option is available to all resident nationalities in Qatar, offering flexibility without being limited to any particular bank. Customers will have access to a grace period of up to three months and a maximum financing tenor of 15 years. The facility will also include life insurance coverage for death and disability, further ensuring financial security for property owners. By extending this financing option to employees in private, government, and semi-government sectors, the partnership aims to make homeownership a reality for a wider range of buyers. Al-Ansari emphasized the significance of the agreement in driving growth within Qatar's property market: "Our partnership with Al Jazeera Finance 'Tamweel' is a major step toward making property ownership more accessible in Qatar. "By providing flexible and Shariah-compliant financing solutions, we are empowering individuals to invest in their future with confidence while contributing to the continued development of Qatar's thriving real estate sector." Aljaberi said the agreement with JRE aligns with the company's strategy to support Qatar's vital and growing real estate sector, emphasizing Al Jazeera Finance's commitment to enhancing ownership opportunities for clients while offering exclusive benefits tailored for its partners at Just Real Estate. He said, "Our collaboration with Just Real Estate strengthens the expertise of both companies in providing flexible, high-quality financial solutions that meet our customers' needs and align with market demands." Aljaberi further noted that the agreement represents a significant step in Al Jazeera Finance's continued expansion strategy, contributing to the development of a more advanced financial environment that supports the real estate sector and promotes continued growth in the industry. The new partnership further strengthens JRE's position as a trusted leader in the real estate industry — committed to delivering tailored property solutions that meet the ever-evolving needs of buyers and investors. (Gulf Times)

- **New e-commerce platform set to transform Qatar's digital economy -** A game-changing shopping experience is coming to Qatar as My Q Trading & Advertising, in partnership with Al Jisr for Commercial Representation, a subsidiary of Al Khalaf Group, will launch a new e-commerce platform in April 2025. Designed to seamlessly integrate online and in-store shopping experiences, the platform will offer exclusive products, immersive experiences, and world-class e-commerce solutions, transforming how consumers shop while contributing to the growth of Qatar's digital economy. According to Statista, Qatar's e-commerce market is on the rise, projected to reach $3.72bn by 2025, with an annual growth rate of 8.07% from 2025 to 2029, reflecting increasing consumer demand for fast, seamless, and tailored shopping experiences. In response, the platform will introduce cutting-edge digital solutions, backed by experts in e-commerce, logistics, and technology, ensuring a world-class retail experience. The partnership was officially announced in the presence of Ahmed Hussein al-Khalaf, chairman of Al Khalaf Companies and chairman & CEO of Sadara Holding Group; and Tareq Hussein al-Khalaf, managing partner of My Q Trading & Advertising, CEO of Business Development at Sadara Holding Group and its subsidiaries, and CEO of Cloud Technology. With over 50 years of leadership, Ahmed Hussein al-Khalaf has been instrumental in shaping Qatar's business landscape, driving growth across food security, construction, oil and gas, real estate, education, and global partnerships. His strategic vision continues to drive economic diversification and progress. Meanwhile, Tareq Hussein al-Khalaf leads innovation in e-commerce and digital transformation, focusing on strategic business development and partnerships. As CEO of Cloud Technology, he brings extensive expertise in digital solutions and cloud infrastructure, ensuring the platform is powered by the latest advancements in e-commerce technology. The partnership aligns with Qatar's digital transformation strategy and introduces a hybrid e-commerce model that enhances customer engagement by blending the convenience of online shopping with the accessibility of traditional retail, offering a more personalized and dynamic shopping experience than ever before. The initiative is expected to boost e-commerce culture in Qatar, encourage local and international businesses to invest, and enhance digital infrastructure to support this rapid growth. My Q Trading & Advertising is a Qatar-based company driven by a passion for advertising, public relations, and media production. Its mission is to infuse innovation and creativity into every project. Whether through traditional or digital platforms, the company offers tailored services, including film and television production, PR campaigns, and e-commerce solutions. With specialized expertise in media marketing and content creation, it is the go-to partner for businesses aiming to captivate their target audience and fuel sustainable growth. Sadara is dedicated to industry excellence through innovation and expertise. Operating across multiple sectors, Sadara delivers impactful projects through its subsidiaries and strategic alliances. Its diverse expertise includes engineering, fabrication, design, dredging, pipeline installation, water transmission, sewage systems, telecommunications, maintenance, and infrastructure development, all contributing to Qatar's industrial growth. Sadara is also a trusted supplier of essential equipment, materials, and technical services for the oil and gas, water and power, and petrochemical sectors, supporting both onshore and offshore operations. A subsidiary of Al Khalaf Group, Al Jisr for Commercial Representation drives strategic global partnerships, with a focus on the oil and gas sector. Al Jisr for Commercial Representation serves as a bridge, connecting Al Khalaf Group in Qatar with global enterprises, while facilitating investment opportunities and business expansion across diverse sectors. (Gulf Times)

- **Global thought leaders praise Web Summit Qatar 2025 -** The second edition of Web Summit Qatar 2025 held last month with a resounding success, has drawn praise from global industry leaders who gathered in Doha to discuss the future of technology, media and entrepreneurship. Among these influential speakers was Hollywood icon and entrepreneur Will Smith, who offered profound insights into navigating the future of business. Smith emphasized the importance of adopting a "beginner's mind" when embarking on new ventures. "Be a child, asking all the questions. The worst thing you can do is pretend like you know when you don't know. It is much better to accept not knowing and lean into not knowing." Making his first-ever visit to Qatar, Smith described the country as "beautiful and peaceful" with a distinct "energy of the future." "I love it here, this is fantastic," Smith said. "As an artist, that is extremely exciting to me, to be in a place that's bubbling with anticipation of creating a future. I salute all of you here in that energy and in that space of creating not just the tomorrow for Qatar and the Middle East, but the future of our planet." Bestselling author and award-winning host of the podcast On Purpose, Jay Shetty, expressed his admiration for Qatar, particularly for its support of local talent and cultural heritage. Also making his first visit to the country, Shetty shared his long-standing desire to experience Qatar firsthand following its growing global presence through major events like the FIFA World Cup 2022. Shetty expressed enthusiasm about Qatar's trajectory: "What truly impresses me about Qatar is the investment in your own people and community. The thoughtfulness shown by leaders here in supporting young creators is both special and remarkable. You've also invited so many of us for our insight and advice, which shows that the leadership here is providing tremendous support, which is beautiful to see." New York Times bestselling author Malcolm Gladwell discussed Qatar's compact nature as an advantage in its developmental journey. "Small nations have incredible advantages when it comes to trying new things and being innovative," Gladwell observed. "There's a flexibility and ability to move quickly and experiment that's just not present in larger countries. With bigness comes enormous burdens—many different constituencies, long institutional histories. The fact that Qatar is a small nation should be conceived of as your biggest advantage." The author praised Web Summit Qatar for fostering the cross-pollination of ideas by bringing together diverse perspectives—something he considers essential for innovation in the digital age. "As we get better at the rational organization of information, we have to take care to continue to build and focus on these kinds of serendipitous interactions where a different kind of creativity emerges." He added: "The overwhelming impression I have on my second visit to Doha is that it's a new society. With that comes the feeling that anything is possible. Here, I feel like everything is up for grabs." Conal Byrne, CEO of the iHeartMedia Digital Audio Group, discussed a landmark agreement signed with the Government Communications Office to establish a cutting-edge podcast studio in the country, benefiting both podcast listeners and content creators throughout Qatar and the broader region. "When you think of the archive of content that we have—a million plus hours of humans on microphones having good conversation—all of that is now going to be unleashed on countries around the world, in language," Byrne explained, adding that creators like Malcolm Gladwell and Jay Shetty could see their audiences grow exponentially in the region once language barriers are removed. On AI, Byrne highlighted its transformative potential specifically for marketing professionals. He emphasized that AI will transform personalized marketing by enabling highly tailored creative messages—whether audio or video—that can be micro-targeted across geography, demographics and time slots. The second edition of Web Summit Qatar, the largest technology event in the Middle East and North Africa region, brought together an impressive 25,700 attendees from 124 countries,723 investors, 168 partners, 381 speakers, 710 media entities and 1,520 startups. Held as part of a partnership with Web Summit, the landmark gathering aligns with Qatar's National Vision 2030, reinforcing its position as a premier platform for tech, innovation and global networking. (Qatar Tribune)

- **PM stresses role of private sector in development -** The private sector should take the lead in national development in the coming period, as the government seeks to enhance the business environment and foster strategic public-private partnerships, the National Development Forum has emphasized. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the National Planning Council Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, participated in the National Development Forum Tuesday, along with Their Excellencies the board members of the council and other ministers. HE Sheikh Mohammed highlighted Qatar's significant achievements over the past years, which have positively impacted the lives of its people. He attributed these successes to the clear and dedicated vision of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who has continued this progress with a comprehensive vision that has positioned Qatar as a leader in various fields. He noted that the first National Development Plan began in 2008 with the launch of Qatar National Vision 2030, focusing on the country's improvement and the well-being of its people. He emphasized the continuous effort to involve the community in discussions about development needs. While Qatar has made great strides, particularly in infrastructure and public services, especially during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the key question now is: What lies beyond the World Cup? HE Sheikh Mohammed acknowledged the ongoing challenges and the government's efforts to address them. However, he stressed the need for greater private sector involvement in operating services, businesses, and the economy, while the government focuses on supervision and regulation. To this end, the government is implementing effective measures and launching initiatives to strengthen the role of the private sector in Qatar's economy and to enhance public-private partnerships across various sectors. He also noted the challenges in the short, medium, and long term and the necessity of reprioritizing goals to achieve these targets. Reflecting on Qatar's history, he pointed out that the 1990s were a challenging period, but the country's leadership made decisive decisions based on a strong belief in Qatar's potential. This led to significant expansions in the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry, positioning Qatar as the world's largest LNG producer—a key driver of development in all other economic sectors. Meanwhile, local production and manufacturing remain priorities for the government, with Qatari companies encouraged to produce and export goods to boost national income. Additionally, the tourism sector has seen substantial growth despite challenges, contributing around 10% to the GDP in 2024, almost double the 2022 figures. HE the Prime Minister further emphasized the need for greater community involvement to implement ambitious plans in education, housing, technology, health, energy, and other sectors, while the government continues to open more opportunities for private sector participation. The forum featured a panel discussion with HE the Governor of the Central Bank Sheikh Bandar bin Mohamed bin Saoud al-Thani, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Attiya, and HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani. Their Excellencies reviewed steps and plans to further enhance the private sector's efficiency within the national economy and discussed incentives and support provided to local and international investors to encourage business enterprises in the country. The event was attended by representatives of major public and private business organizations, senior government officials, media personnel, and prominent business leaders. (Gulf Times)

International

- **White House: Trump still intends for reciprocal tariffs to kick in on April 2 -** US President Donald Trump still intends for new reciprocal tariff rates to take effect on April 2, the White House said on Tuesday, despite earlier comments from Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent that indicated a possible delay in their activation. "The intent is to enact tariffs on April 2," the official said when asked to clarify Bessent's comments that countries would get an opportunity to avoid higher tariffs by reducing their own trade barriers. "Unless the tariff and non-tariff barriers are equalized, or the U.S. has higher tariffs, the tariffs will go into effect," the White House official said. Bessent told Fox Business Network's "Mornings with Maria" program that Trump on April 2 would give trading partner countries a reciprocal tariff number that reflects their own rates, non-tariff trade barriers, currency practice and other factors, but could negotiate to avoid a "tariff wall." "On April 2, each country will receive a number that we believe represents their tariffs," Bessent said. "For some countries, it could be quite low, for some countries, it could be quite high." "We are going to go to them and say, 'Look, here's where we think the tariff levels are, non-tariff barriers, currency manipulation, unfair funding, labor suppression, and if you will stop this, we will not put up the tariff wall,'" Bessent said of trading partners. "I'm optimistic that (on) April 2, some of the tariffs may not have to go on because a deal is pre-negotiated, or that once countries receive their reciprocal tariff number, that right after that they will come to us and want to negotiate it down," Bessent said. Countries that fail to reduce their trade barriers will face steeper tariffs aimed at protecting the U.S. economy, its workers and industries, Bessent added. His remarks were taken to mean that while the proposed duties would be announced on April 2, their implementation could be delayed to allow time for negotiations. But the White House official said any such deals would need to be negotiated in advance to avoid the new tariffs. (Reuters)
- **US manufacturing output accelerates in February -** US manufacturing production increased more than expected in February, boosted by a surge in motor vehicle output, but tariffs are casting a shadow on the nascent factory recovery. Factory output jumped 0.9% last month after an upwardly revised 0.1% gain in January, the Federal Reserve said on Tuesday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast production rebounding 0.3% after a previously reported 0.1% dip. Production at factories increased 0.7% on a year-on-year basis in February. Manufacturing, which accounts for 10.3% of the economy, has been recovering as the U.S. central bank started cutting interest rates in September. President Donald Trump's often chaotic tariffs campaign, which has triggered a trade war, is seen undermining the sector. Reflecting back to Trump's first term, J.P. Morgan economists noted that "no long-term improvement in manufacturing was observed as a result of the 2018 tariffs." The U.S. central bank is expected to leave its benchmark overnight interest rate in the 4.25%-4.50% range on Wednesday, having reduced it by 100 basis points since September, and continue to assess the economic impact of the Trump administration's policies. Motor vehicle and parts output accelerated 8.5% after declining for two straight months. Durable manufacturing production increased 1.6%, also boosted by rises in the output of other long-lasting goods. Nondurable manufacturing production rose 0.2% as gains in chemicals output offset a decline in food, beverage and tobacco products. Mining output rebounded 2.8% after decreasing 3.2% in January. Utilities production fell 2.5% as a rise in temperatures lowered demand for heating. Utilities production had shot up 6.1% in January amid frigid weather. Industrial production increased 0.7% after climbing 0.3% in January. It surged 1.4% year-on-year in February. Capacity utilization for the industrial sector, a measure of how fully firms are using their resources, increased to 78.2% from 77.7% in January. It is 1.4 percentage points below its 1972–2024 average. The operating rate for the manufacturing sector rose 0.6 percentage point to 77.0%. It is 1.2 percentage points below its long-run average. (Reuters)

Regional

- **Saudi Arabia awards mining exploration licenses to local, international firms -** The Saudi industry and mineral resources ministry awarded on Tuesday mining exploration licenses to several local and international firms, state news agency SPA reported. The licenses were awarded to Indian miner Vedanta and a consortium comprising local Ajlan & Bros and China's Zijin Mining (601899.SS), among others. The exploration licenses cover the kingdom's first mineralized belts located at Jabal Sayid in Madinah and Al Hajar in Aseer. They are both rich in base and precious metals, including copper, zinc, gold and silver. The licenses cover a total area of 4,788 square kilometers (1,849 square miles), according to SPA. The ministry said the miners would spend approximately 366mn riyals ($97.6mn) on exploration over the next three years. The kingdom's growing mining industry is part of the Vision 2030 plan to diversify the economy and cut reliance on fossil fuels. The government hopes to attract $100bn a year in foreign investment under the plan by 2030. Riyadh started awarding licenses to international miners in 2022. Last year, Saudi Arabia revised upward estimates for its untapped mineral resources, including phosphate, gold and rare earths to $2.5tn, from a 2016 forecast of $1.3tn. (Reuters)
- **Saudi fund broadens cash quest to meet its spending goals -** Saudi Arabia's wealth fund is set to tap a broader array of investors and pursue debt sales through its subsidiaries, as it grapples with the scale of the kingdom's spending ambitions. The Public Investment Fund is weighing a debut euro-denominated bond this year and plans to tap onshore US investors for the first time, according to people familiar with the matter. It's also encouraging subsidiaries to borrow independently, with Neom Co and AviLease among firms potentially issuing debt, some of the people said, declining to be identified discussing confidential information. These plans represent a step toward the $925bn entity's new long term financing strategy, which seeks to limit the need for additional funding from the Saudi government, one of the people said. PIF, the main entity tasked with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 program, has already raised $4bn from debt markets in January. Its mining unit followed with a $1.25bn Islamic bond last month. Any new sales would add to the $14.3bn raised by the sovereign so far this year and extend the borrowing spree that's made the kingdom a top issuer in emerging markets in the past two years. Representatives for the PIF declined to comment. The kingdom's spending over the next few years will also include outlays for events like the FIFA World Cup in 2034. Those commitments, against the backdrop of sluggish foreign direct investment, low oil prices and persistent budget deficits, have already prompted the government to start re-prioritizing projects. Saudi Arabia needs the price of oil to be around $108 per barrel to fund its spending once domestic investments by the PIF are taken into account, according to estimates from Bloomberg Economics. That's significantly higher than current prices of about $70 a barrel. Further adding to the picture is a pledge by the crown prince, who also chairs the fund, to engage in $600bn worth of trade and investment with the US over the next four years. President Donald Trump has asked the kingdom to plough in even more, heightening pressure to secure additional sources of cash — if these deals are to

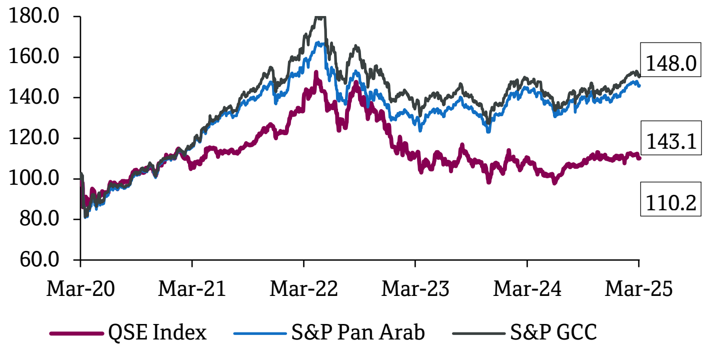
materialize. The PIF, meanwhile, plans to increase annual deployment to up to $70bn. It's funded through a mixture of retained earnings from its investments, borrowing and cash or asset transfers from the government. However, dividends from Saudi Aramco, in which the fund owns a 16% stake, are set to fall after the oil giant cut its annual payout. The fund will likely explore additional options, including selling down a small part of its $461bn portfolio of listed stocks, people familiar with the matter said. It could also list companies on the local bourse — deals in the pipeline include medical procurement fi rm Nupco, Saudi Tabreed District Cooling Co and Saudi Global Ports Co, Bloomberg News has reported. The PIF has established about 100 companies, responsible for projects spanning everything from tourism to artificial intelligence. They include Diriyah Co, a $63bn initiative to transform a historical district into a tourism hub. The firm has begun exploring plans to raise external funding, Diriyah Chief Executive Officer Jerry Inzerillo said in an interview. It's seen "great interest from foreign equity partners that will in future replace the PIF equity," he said. It's expected to issue its first debt later this year. Portfolio companies will be encouraged to borrow on the strength of their own balance sheets and business plans, with the fund reluctant to lend explicit credit support, people familiar with the matter said. The financing department will coordinate these debt sales. "We believe that some subsidiaries should have relatively easy access to capital markets and will likely be able to issue debt independently," said Afiya Zaveri, Middle East and North Africa fixed income strategies portfolio manager at Azimut. While borrowing will increase at the level of the PIF and its subsidiaries, the focus will be on maintaining credit ratings. Ali Dhaloomal, a credit research analyst at BofA Global Research, expects debt issuance by Saudi corporates including banks, the PIF and its subsidiary companies, to climb to $40bn this year, from $31bn in 2024. "The PIF aims to push its entities that can raise money internationally to do it as that helps create space in the local market for companies that are not yet ready to raise international funding," he said. A key question is whether investors will want to buy into these bond sales. Demand for PIF debt has been strong so far, though some projects that achieve the broader goals of the Saudi authorities "do not necessarily translate into financial returns for investors," according to Farouk Soussa, Mena economist at Goldman Sachs Inc "Private investors are not going to invest in a project because it creates value for other sectors of the economy." (Gulf Times)

- **Ninety One's top fund buys UAE stocks to dodge trade war -** Ninety One Plc says it's buying stocks from the United Arab Emirates as demand surges for investments that are less exposed to Donald Trump's trade war. The firm's emerging-markets equity team, which manages $11bn in assets, is favoring the UAE as it seeks out "uncorrelated markets" to US tariff s, according to Varun Laijawalla, co-portfolio manager for EM equities. It's been adding UAE-listed shares including real estate developer Emaar Properties PJSC and lender Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank PJSC, he said. "UAE is doing the opposite of what the US is doing, signing agreements with trading partners and opening its borders to immigration," Laijawalla said in an interview in London last week. "Is it sort of an escape trade, somewhere to hide? Yes, definitely. It has its own idiosyncratic drivers that will not be necessarily influenced by US policy." Ninety-One says the fund co-managed by Laijawalla and Archie Hart, called Ninety One Emerging Markets Equity Fund, has returned 13% over the past year, better than 95% of peers with performance data compiled by Bloomberg. Laijawalla said that it has been increasing exposure to the UAE since November, the month Trump was elected. Besides the focus on the UAE's property and banking sectors, another addition to the portfolio earlier this year was food delivery company Talabat Holdings Plc, whose $2bn initial public offering late last year was the largest in the Middle East and the biggest technology listing globally in 2024. Talabat shares have had a rocky start since the company's December debut in Dubai, with the stock still trading at about 10% below off er price. The EM fund's biggest holdings are still stocks from China and India, combined representing roughly 40% of the total portfolio. Xiaomi Corp was the largest contributor to returns in 2024, with food delivery company Meituan and online travel agency Trip.com Group Ltd among other Chinese stocks Ninety One holds. Meituan is preparing for a potential entry into the Middle East, its first expansion beyond China. Laijawalla said that three months ago he also added shares of Turkish defense contractor Aselsan to the portfolio, because the company "is benefiting from a theme that the rest of Europe is benefiting from, which is defense. Its ex-Turkiye revenues are growing faster than the Turkish revenues." Aselsan shares are up 64% so far this year. The firm is 3% overweight the UAE compared with the benchmark MSCI Emerging Markets index, Laijawalla said, making it "one of our larger overweight exposures". UAE stocks have the fifth largest weight in the MSCI benchmark index outside Asia. The UAE's immigrant-led growth, government-backed companies and a pegged currency are proving attractive to global money managers at a time when emerging markets are witnessing uncertainty over external factors. UK alternative investment manager Cheyne Capital has positioned the country as its top holding in its EMEA hedge fund. Also favoring the country is its distance from Trump's accusations that the US is being treated unfairly in many of its trade arrangements. The US had a $20bn trade surplus with the UAE in 2023, according to data compiled by Bloomberg, ranking it among the three biggest surpluses the US had with any other country. (Gulf Times)
- **Sources: UAE's Masdar in talks on $200mn solar power deal with Endesa -** Abu Dhabi renewable energy company Masdar and Spanish power utility Endesa (ELE.MC), are closing in on a deal that would see Masdar pay around $200mn for a 49.9% stake in a solar portfolio controlled by Endesa, according to two sources familiar with the deal and a document seen by Reuters. The deal for the roughly 450-megawatt portfolio builds on the existing partnership between the companies and would further expand Masdar's operations in Spain, a country it sees as key for its European growth. "While we do not comment on market speculation, we continue to explore opportunities in the region as we expand towards our global target of 100 gigawatts by 2030," a spokesperson for state-owned Masdar said. Endesa declined to comment. The deal would also fit with the strategy of Italy's Enel (ENEI.MI), Endesa's owner, of selling minority stakes in some projects to keep debt at bay while maintaining control of the assets. In July last year Masdar took a minority stake in a 2-gigawatt (GW) solar portfolio controlled by Endesa. In September it bought green energy company Saeta Yield from Canada's Brookfield (BAM.TO), in a $1.4bn deal. Masdar is controlled by UAE's power and water firm TAQA, its National oil company ADNOC and sovereign wealth fund Mubadala Investment Company. The Masdar spokesperson referred to the previous deal with Enel, the acquisition of Saeta and that of a majority stake in Greek renewable energy company Terna as operations "further expanding our European footprint". (Reuters)
- **Sharjah's Ruwad approves funding for 4 new projects -** The Project Funding Committee of the Sharjah Foundation to Support Pioneering Entrepreneurs (Ruwad) has approved funding for four new small businesses with a total value of AED720,000. These approvals were based on the 32nd and 33rd meetings of the committee, held in January and March 2025, respectively. The meetings were chaired by Hamad Ali Abdullah Al Mahmoud, Chairman of the Sharjah Economic Development Department, with the participation of committee members Saeed Ghanem Al Suwaidi, Faisal Jassim Al Madfa, Fahad Al Khameri, Dr. Mudathir Abdullah, and Nora Al Zarooni. Also present were members of the technical project funding committee, including Nasser Abdullah Al Owais, Deputy Head of Project Study and Analysis; Rashid Sawaked, Project Development Consultant; and Hamda Khater, Head of the Financing Division at Ruwad. During these meetings, the committee reviewed new funding requests and approved financing for four entrepreneurial projects through the direct financing system. These projects span various sectors, including food businesses, beauty centers, cryotherapy, and entertainment services. Of the approved projects, two are owned by female entrepreneurs, while the other two are jointly owned by both men and women. Additionally, in its January meeting, the committee reviewed a report on funded projects in 2024, which totaled 13 projects that received financial approval. All approvals were granted through direct financing by the foundation, with total funding reaching AED2.86mn. Sharjah city accounted for 64% of the funded projects, with nine projects, while four projects (29%) were funded in the Eastern Region, and one project was supported in the Central Region. The distribution by gender showed that 10 projects were owned by male entrepreneurs, while 4 projects were led by female entrepreneurs. As part of its agenda, the committee also reviewed the foundation's accounts and financial budget, in addition to discussing several development proposals

and making the necessary decisions regarding their implementation. (Zawya)

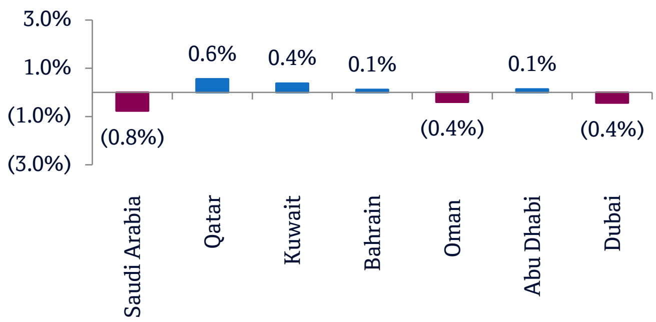
- **Bahrain's money supply swells to $43.24bn -** Bahrain's money supply witnessed a significant surge, reaching BD16.3bn by the end of December 2024, an increase of BD0.3bn compared to the previous year, as revealed during the Central Bank of Bahrain's (CBB) first board meeting of 2025. Chaired by Hassan Al Jalahma yesterday, the meeting highlighted the Kingdom's robust financial sector performance. The CBB board, in its review of key monetary and banking indicators, approved the CBB's annual report and audited financial statements for 2024, alongside discussions on the CBB's investment policy for 2025 and ongoing activities. The data presented a picture of steady growth across various financial segments. Retail banks saw total private deposits rise to approximately BD14.2bn, a 0.4% increase from December 2023. Loan and credit facilities extended to resident economic sectors reached BD12.3bn, marking a 4.6% increase, with the business and personal sectors accounting for 42.3% and 48.3% respectively. The banking system's balance sheet, encompassing both retail and wholesale banks, expanded to $247.8bn, a 3.9% increase. Digital transactions continued their upward trajectory, with point of sales (POS) data for January 2025 showing 21.2mn transactions, a 25.4% increase year-on-year. Contactless payments dominated, accounting for 77.4% of all transactions. The total value of POS transactions reached BD433m, a 14.6% increase, with contactless payments comprising 51.9%. The banking sector's resilience was underscored by its strong capital adequacy and liquidity. The capital adequacy ratio reached 21.2% in Q4 2024, up from 19.7% in Q4 2023. Conventional retail banks led with a 32% ratio, followed by Islamic retail banks at 24.6%, conventional wholesale banks at 16.9%, and Islamic wholesale banks at 19.6%. The Collective Investment Undertakings (CIUs) sector also showed positive growth. The number of registered CIUs increased to 1741 by January 2025, from 1678 in January 2024. The net asset value (NAV) of CIUs rose to $11.170bn in Q4 2024, a 0.3% increase. Sharia-compliant CIUs experienced a notable 6% increase in NAV, reaching $1.715bn. While Bahrain-domiciled CIUs saw a slight decrease in NAV, overseas-domiciled CIUs posted a 1.1% increase, contributing to the overall positive performance of the sector. The CBB's report paints a picture of a dynamic and expanding financial landscape in Bahrain, supported by robust growth in money supply, digital transactions, and overall banking sector stability. (Zawya)
- **Bahrain non-oil exports up in January -** The total value of Bahrain's non-oil exports (national origin) increased slightly by 0.3% to reach BD351mn ($931.6mn) during January 2025, compared to BD350mn for same month in 2024. The top 10 countries in exports accounted for 74% of the exports value, according to Information & eGovernment Authority's (iGA) January 2025 Foreign Trade report, which encompasses data on trade balance, Imports, national origin exports and re-exports. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranked first among countries for non-oil exports (national origin) with BD79mn (23%). The United Arab Emirate was second with BD42mn (12%) and Qatar was third with BD40mn (11%). Agglomerated iron ores and concentrates alloyed recorded as the top products exported in January 2025 with BD92mn (26%), followed by unwrought aluminum alloys with a value of BD56mn (16%) and processed cheese not grated or powdered with BD22mn (6%). Imports down: The value of Bahrain's non-oil imports decreased 7% reaching to BD496mn in January 2025 in comparison with BD535mn for same month in 2024. The top 10 countries for imports recorded 72% of the total value of imports. Australia ranked first for imports to Bahrain, with a total of BD92mn (19%), followed by China with BD74mn (15%) and the United Arab Emirate with 37mn (7%). Other aluminum oxide recorded as the top product imported to Bahrain with a total value of BD86mn (17%), followed by non-agglomerated iron ores and concentrates with BD28mn (6%) and private cars being the third with BD21mn (4%). Re-exports up 6%: The total value of non-oil re-exports increased by 6% to reach BD71mn during January 2025, compared to BD67mn for same month in 2024. The top 10 countries in re-exports accounted for 84% of the re-exported value. The UAE ranked first with BD26mn (37%), followed by Saudi Arabia with BD16mn (23%) and Qatar with BD4mn (6%). As per the report, gold ingots was the top product re-exported from Bahrain with a value of BD5.9mn (8.3%), followed by Smartphones worth BD5.6mn (7.9%), and four-wheel drive vehicles came third with BD5.5mn (7.7%). As for the Trade Balance, which represents the difference between exports and imports, the deficit was BD74mn compared to a deficit of BD118mn in January 2024. (Zawya)
- **Kuwait central bank issues bonds worth $792mn -** The Central Bank of Kuwait announced Monday issuance of bonds and tawarruq worth KD 240mn ($792mn). The central bank said in a statement to KUNA the issuance is valid for three months, at an income rate of 4.125%. (Zawya)
- **Oman: MSX to launch Promising Companies Market in 2025 -** The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is planning to launch a submarket, the 'Promising Companies Market,' this year to attract private and family-owned companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and startups with a market capitalization of no less than RO500,000 to list on the exchange. The establishment of the Promising Companies Market was decreed by Royal Decree No. 18/2025, issued in February. This reflects the royal vision to support the private sector and SMEs, enhance the business environment, and ensure the growth and sustainability of entrepreneurial companies, contributing to the diversification of the national economy. In a statement to Oman News Agency, Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, said the Promising Companies Market is expected to launch this year following the issuance of the executive regulations by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). "The Muscat Stock Exchange has recently held meetings with more than 10 companies, and it is hoped that a number of them will be listed in conjunction with the market's launch," Salmi said. He explained that the new submarket aims to attract private companies and franchisees that meet the requirements for direct listing. Salmi added that the market will enable companies to benefit from the services available on the Muscat Stock Exchange, whether through subscriptions to finance their projects or exits, in addition to being listed directly on the stock exchange. The Muscat Stock Exchange CEO pointed out that this market will be available to qualified investors and will feature several flexible incentives and requirements compared to the main market of the stock exchange. This will allow private companies and SMEs to list securities, raise capital, or issue debt instruments such as bonds and sukuks. (Zawya)
- **45,000 job opportunities for Omanis this year -** The operational plan for 2025 targets to provide 45,000 job opportunities, including 11,000 for training and qualification, 10,000 in government establishments and 24,000 in the private sector. This was revealed by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labor, at the ministry's annual press conference held on Monday. He also noted that the ministry is focused on supporting work-related training and wage subsidies for small and medium enterprises. The ministry reviewed its achievements for 2024 and its objectives for 2025, stressing that it is carrying on its efforts to upgrade the labor market and provide employment opportunities for Omanis. Plan to provide 24,000 jobs in the private sector. The ministry also reviewed three projects that employ artificial intelligence to improve smart management and provide funding for the pilot phases of these projects. The conference addressed the National Employment Program which seeks to integrate education outcomes with labor market needs with a focus on developing new technologies to improve the system such as the Tawteen (nationalization) and Khuta (steps) platforms. Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labor, at the ministry's annual press conference held on Monday. The ministry underscored the role of technology in expediting the provision of job opportunities through digital tools that enhance the effectiveness of program implementation. The minister said that reinforced qualitative job nationalization initiatives will be carried out by employing talented Omanis in senior and middle-level positions and establishing specialized companies to support employment in vital sectors. (Zawya)

Rebased Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Daily Index Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Asset/Currency Performance	Close ($)	1D%	WTD%	YTD%
Gold/Ounce	3,034.73	1.1	1.7	15.6
Silver/Ounce	34.01	0.4	0.6	17.7
Crude Oil (Brent)/Barrel (FM Future)	70.56	(0.7)	(0.0)	(5.5)
Crude Oil (WTI)/Barrel (FM Future)	66.90	(1.0)	(0.4)	(6.7)
Natural Gas (Henry Hub)/MMBtu	4.17	0.5	7.2	22.6
LPG Propane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	85.00	(0.8)	(0.6)	4.3
LPG Butane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	89.40	10.5	10.5	(25.1)
Euro	1.09	0.2	0.6	5.7
Yen	149.27	0.0	0.4	(5.0)
GBP	1.30	0.1	0.5	3.9
CHF	1.14	0.5	1.0	3.5
AUD	0.64	(0.4)	0.6	2.8
USD Index	103.24	(0.1)	(0.5)	(4.8)
RUB	110.69	0.0	0.0	58.9
BRL	0.17	(1.0)	0.5	(1.4)

Source: Bloomberg

Global Indices Performance	Close	1D%*	WTD%*	YTD%*
MSCI World Index	3,672.57	(0.7)	0.2	(1.0)
DJ Industrial	41,581.31	(0.6)	0.2	(2.3)
S&P 500	5,614.66	(1.1)	(0.4)	(4.5)
NASDAQ 100	17,504.12	(1.7)	(1.4)	(9.4)
STOXX 600	554.30	0.9	2.0	15.5
DAX	23,380.70	1.3	2.3	23.7
FTSE 100	8,705.23	0.4	1.4	10.6
CAC 40	8,114.57	0.8	1.7	16.3
Nikkei	37,845.42	1.0	1.6	(0.1)
MSCI EM	1,145.17	1.2	2.3	6.5
SHANGHAI SE Composite	3,429.76	0.1	0.5	3.4
HANG SENG	24,740.57	2.5	3.3	23.3
BSE SENSEX	75,301.26	1.7	2.5	(4.7)
Bovespa	131,474.73	1.0	3.1	19.2
RTS	1,151.93	(0.0)	0.0	6.3

Source: Bloomberg ($ adjusted returns if any)*

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