QNB FINANCIAL SERVICES

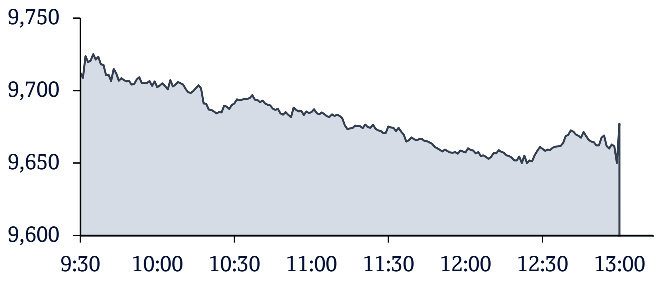
الخدمات المالية

Financial Services

Daily Market Report

Tuesday, 21 May 2024

QSE Intra-Day Movement



Qatar Commentary

The QE Index declined 0.3% to close at 9,677.2. Losses were led by the Telecoms and Transportation indices, falling 1.4% and 0.8%, respectively. Top losers were Inma Holding and Meeza QSTP, falling 1.9% each. Among the top gainers, Qatari German Co for Med. Devices gained 6.6%, while QLM Life & Medical Insurance Co. was up 2.4%.

GCC Commentary

Saudi Arabia: The TASI Index fell 0.6% to close at 12,125.4. Losses were led by the Media and Entertainment and Software & Services indices, falling 2.7% and 1.9%, respectively. Fawaz Abdulaziz Alhokair Co. declined 8.0%, while Al-Babtain Power and Telecommunication Co. was down 7.4%.

Dubai: The DFM Index fell marginally to close at 4,067.2. The Utilities index declined 1.2%, while the Consumer Discretionary index fell 0.5%. National Central Cooling Co. declined 5.4%, while Agility Public Warehousing Company was down 4.5%.

Abu Dhabi: The ADX General Index fell marginally to close at 9,037.8. The Health Care index declined 1.0%, while the Financials Index fell 0.4%. Ooredoo declined 9.3%, while National Cooperation for Tourism was down 5.2%.

Kuwait: The Kuwait All Share Index fell 0.4% to close at 7,152.2. The Industrials and Health Care indices declined 1.1% each. Palms Agro declined 21.4%, while Wethaq Takaful Insurance Company was down 8.6%.

Oman: The MSM 30 Index gained marginally to close at 4,781.8. The Services index rose 0.1%, while the other indices ended flat or in the red. OQ Gas Networks rose 1.4%, while Abraj Energy Services was up 0.6%.

Bahrain: The BHB Index gained 0.1% to close at 2,018.0. The Financials index rose 0.5% while the other indices ended flat or in the red. Khaleeji Bank rose 5.7%, while Bahrain Islamic Bank was up 2.9%.

Market Indicators	20 May 24	19 May 24	%Chg.
Value Traded (QR mn)	520.3	359.4	44.7
Exch. Market Cap. (QR mn)	559,648.8	561,884.5	(0.4)
Volume (mn)	205.1	145.4	41.0
Number of Transactions	17,928	12,355	45.1
Companies Traded	51	52	(1.9)
Market Breadth	17:29	24:25	–

Market Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	YTD%	TTM P/E
Total Return	21,765.91	(0.3)	(0.3)	(6.4)	10.9
All Share Index	3,386.47	(0.4)	(0.3)	(6.7)	11.6
Banks	3,987.06	(0.4)	(0.5)	(13.0)	9.6
Industrials	4,000.14	0.1	0.0	(2.8)	2.7
Transportation	5,183.30	(0.8)	0.8	21.0	24.9
Real Estate	1,704.95	(0.3)	(0.6)	13.5	14.0
Insurance	2,319.64	0.4	1.3	(11.9)	167.0
Telecoms	1,540.62	(1.4)	(1.4)	(9.7)	8.5
Consumer Goods and Services	7,345.05	(0.7)	(1.3)	(3.0)	229.0
Al Rayan Islamic Index	4,631.57	(0.1)	0.0	(2.8)	14.1

GCC Top Gainers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
ADNOC Logistics	Abu Dhabi	4.15	3.8	8,022.6	8.4
Aldar Properties	Abu Dhabi	5.90	3.5	20,624.0	10.3
Americana Restaurants Int	Abu Dhabi	3.31	3.1	4,099.3	6.5
Mouwasat Medical Services	Saudi Arabia	122.20	2.9	216.5	9.3
Q Holdings	Abu Dhabi	2.95	2.8	6,041.9	(5.8)

GCC Top Losers##	Exchange	Close#	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Arab National Bank	Saudi Arabia	28.25	(3.1)	1,190.2	11.7
Riyad Bank	Saudi Arabia	25.65	(2.7)	7,911.8	(10.0)
Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Services Group Co	Saudi Arabia	289.80	(2.4)	183.2	2.0
Saudi Research & Media Gr.	Saudi Arabia	221.80	(2.3)	38.7	29.4
Makkah Const. & Dev. Co.	Saudi Arabia	91.00	(2.3)	219.8	22.5

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	1.940	6.6	47,004.2	33.7
QLM Life & Medical Insurance Co.	1.997	2.4	28.8	(20.1)
Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding	1.736	2.0	10,568.8	(2.9)
Doha Insurance Group	2.422	1.8	105.4	1.3
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.440	1.4	28,924.4	2.9

QSE Top Losers	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Inma Holding	4.380	(1.9)	472.0	5.6
Meeza QSTP	3.624	(1.9)	803.7	26.3
Salam International Inv. Ltd.	0.680	(1.9)	12,020.6	(0.4)
Mekdam Holding Group	3.695	(1.8)	385.4	(7.9)
Ooredoo	9.700	(1.7)	1,528.0	(14.9)

QSE Top Volume Trades	Close*	1D%	Vol. '000	YTD%
Qatari German Co for Med. Devices	1.940	6.6	47,004.2	33.7
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.440	1.4	28,924.4	2.9
Masraf Al Rayan	2.470	0.9	13,624.9	(7.0)
Salam International Inv. Ltd.	0.680	(1.9)	12,020.6	(0.4)
Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding	1.736	2.0	10,568.8	(2.9)

QSE Top Value Trades	Close*	1D%	Val. '000	YTD%
Qatari German Co for Med. Devices	1.940	6.6	90,703.3	33.7
QNB Group	13.70	(1.2)	71,086.7	(17.1)
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co.	1.440	1.4	41,602.5	2.9
Masraf Al Rayan	2.470	0.9	33,525.4	(7.0)
Dukhan Bank	3.790	(0.1)	30,933.1	(4.7)

Regional Indices	Close	1D%	WTD%	MTD%	YTD%	Exch. Val. Traded ($ mn)	Exchange Mkt. Cap. ($ mn)	P/E**	P/B**	Dividend Yield
Qatar*	9,677.17	(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.5)	(10.6)	142.82	153,455.7	10.9	1.3	4.9
Dubai	4,067.20	(0.0)	(0.5)	(2.1)	0.2	110.38	187,549.9	8.0	1.3	5.9
Abu Dhabi	9,037.77	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.3)	(5.6)	274.54	694,529.6	18.1	2.6	2.2
Saudi Arabia	12,125.36	(0.6)	(0.6)	(2.2)	1.3	1,620.84	2,838,322.4	20.4	2.4	3.4
Kuwait	7,152.23	(0.4)	(0.2)	1.4	4.9	188.41	150,907.5	14.2	1.7	3.3
Oman	4,781.81	0.0	(0.2)	(0.1)	5.9	4.4	24,193.6	12.7	1.0	5.5
Bahrain	2,018.00	0.1	0.4	(0.5)	2.4	8.4	21,159.5	7.7	0.8	8.3

*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 0.3% to close at 9,677.2. The Telecoms and Transportation indices led the losses. The index fell on the back of selling pressure from Arab and Foreign shareholders despite buying support from Qatari and GCC shareholders.
- Inma Holding and Meeza QSTP were the top losers, falling 1.9% each. Among the top gainers, Qatari German Co for Med. Devices gained 6.6%, while QLM Life & Medical Insurance Co. was up 2.4%.
- Volume of shares traded on Monday rose by 41% to 205.1mn from 145.4mn on Sunday. Further, as compared to the 30-day moving average of 169.0mn, volume for the day was 21.4% higher. Qatari German Co for Med. Devices and Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing Co. were the most active stocks, contributing 22.9% and 14.1% to the total volume, respectively.

Overall Activity	Buy%*	Sell%*	Net (QR)
Qatari Individuals	39.96%	36.88%	16,009,568.79
Qatari Institutions	29.10%	26.83%	11,784,075.75
Qatari	**69.06%**	**63.72%**	**27,793,644.54**
GCC Individuals	0.50%	0.60%	(550,124.23)
GCC Institutions	1.94%	1.68%	1,320,338.75
GCC	**2.44%**	**2.29%**	**770,214.52**
Arab Individuals	10.65%	11.12%	(2,457,554.63)
Arab Institutions	0.00%	0.00%	-
Arab	**10.65%**	**11.12%**	**(2,457,554.63)**
Foreigners Individuals	3.17%	2.88%	1,529,466.07
Foreigners Institutions	14.69%	20.00%	(27,635,770.49)
Foreigners	**17.86%**	**22.88%**	**(26,106,304.42)**

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

Global Economic Data

Date	Market	Source	Indicator	Period	Actual	Consensus	Previous
05-20	UK	Rightmove	Rightmove House Prices MoM	May	0.80%	NA	1.10%
05-20	UK	Rightmove	Rightmove House Prices YoY	May	0.60%	NA	1.70%

Qatar

- **SEHA ordered to pay Medicare Group QR109.1mn in lawsuit No: 880/2020 and 829/2020 appeals -** Medicare Group discloses the judgment in the lawsuit no 880/2020 appeal filed by the National Health Insurance Company, SEHA (under liquidation), against Medicare Group & others and appeal No. 829/2020 filed by Medicare Group against the National Health Insurance Company & others. The Court of Appeal decided on Monday, May 20, 2024 that the National Health Insurance Company, SEHA, is obliged to pay the appellant, Medicare Group, the amount of QR109.1mn and rejected any other requests, imposing costs on it. (QSE)
- **Qatari German Co. for Medical Devices announces appointment of new Chief Executive Officer** - Qatari German Co. for Medical Devices announced the appointment of Amer Abu Shaikha as Chief Executive Officer with effect from 21/05/2024. (QSE)
- **Qatari German Co. for Medical Devices approves resignation of Board Member** - The Board of Directors of the Qatari German for Medical Devices, announces its approval of the resignation of the Board member Mr. Amer Abu Shaikha. (QSE)
- **Qatari German Co. for Medical Devices opens nominations for its board membership 2024** - Qatari German Co. for Medical Devices announces the opening of nominees for the board memberships, years from 2024 to 2026. Applications will be accepted starting from 23/05/2024 till 04:00 PM of 02/06/2024. (QSE)
- **Monthly industrial production index increases by 4.7% in March 2024 -** The Industrial Production index (IPI), March 2024 reached 100.2 point, increased by 4.7% compared to the previous month (February 2024), and decreased by 3.2%, when compared to the corresponding month in 2023, data released by the National Planning Council shows. The following sectors make up the industrial production index: Mining: The index of this sector showed an increase by 4.8% compared to the previous month (February 2024), due to the increase in the quantities of "crude oil petroleum and natural gas" with the same percentage, while "Other mining and quarrying" increased by 4.5%. When compared to the corresponding month of the previous year (March 2023), the IPI of Mining decreased by 3.3%, due to the decrease in the quantities of "crude oil petroleum and natural gas" with the same percentage, while "Other mining and quarrying" decreased by 1.5%. Graphs (2) shows the trends of monthly IPI in the mining sector during March 2023 until March 2024. Manufacturing: The index of this sector showed an increase by 3.8% compared to the previous month (February 2024). The groups that showed an increase include: "Manufacture of refined petroleum products" by 15.2%, followed by "Manufacture of food products" by 7.6%, "Manufacture of Cement and other non-metallic mineral products" by 5.5%, "Manufacture of basic metals" by 4.8%, "Manufacture of beverages" by 4.6%,"Printing and reproduction of recorded media" by 1.9%,"Manufacture of rubber and plastics products" by 1.1%, and "Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products "by 1.0%. On the other hand, in terms of annual change, comparing to March 2023, a decrease of 3.1% was recorded, due to the decrease in "Manufacture of basic metals" by 16.0%, followed by ''Printing and reproduction of recorded media'' by 9.1%, "Manufacture of refined petroleum products" by 8%, "Manufacture of beverages" by 5.6%, and "Manufacture of rubber and plastics products" by 2.9%. However, an increase was recorded in "Manufacture of Cement & other non-metallic mineral products" by 3.7%, "Manufacture of food products" by 1.6%, and "Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products" by 0.3%, Graph (3) shows the trend of IPI of manufacturing sector during March of 2023 until March of 2024. Electricity, gas: An increase of 13.0% was noticed in the production of "Electricity" between March 2024 and the previous month (February 2024). Compared with the corresponding month (March 2023), a decrease of 3.1% was recorded. The Graph (4) shows IPI of "Electricity Supply" sectors, during March of 2023 until March of 2024. Water: An increase of 5.3% was noticed in the production of ''Water' between March 2024 and the previous month (February 2024). Compared with the corresponding month (March 2023), an increase of 1.3% was recorded. (Qatar Tribune)
- **Qatar's CPI records rise of 0.71% in April -** The Consumer Price Index (CPI) of April 2024 reached 107.12 points showing an increase of 0.42% when compared to CPI of March 2024. Compared to CPI of April 2023, on a Y-o-Y basis, an increase of 0.71% has been recorded in the general index (CPI) of this month. The CPI which measures inflation includes 12 main groups of consumer goods that have a total of 737 commodities and services. It is calculated using the base year 2018 based on the data of the household income and expenditure survey 2017-2018.When comparing the main components of CPI for the month of April 2024, with the previous month March 2024 (Monthly change), it is found that, there were five groups increased, six groups decreased, and one group remained unchanged, the National Planning Council said yesterday. The groups showed increased as a follow: "Recreation and Culture" by 2.75%, "Clothing and Footwear" by 2.06%, "Miscellaneous Goods and Services" by 1.80%, "Furniture and

Household Equipment" by 0.58%, and "Food and Beverages" by 0.32%.A decrease has been recorded in "Restaurants and Hotels" by 1.47%, "Communication" by 1.15%, "Health" by 0.43%, "Housing, Water, Electricity and other Fuel" and "Transport" by 0.17% each, and "Education" by 0.06%. "Tobacco" remained flat at the last month's price level. A comparison of the CPI, April 2024 with the CPI, April 2023 (Annual Change), an increase has been recorded in the general index (CPI) by 0.71%. This Y-o-Y price increase is primary due to the prices rising in five groups namely: "Recreation and Culture" by 10.03% "Education" by 3.42%, "Food and Beverages" by 3.20%, "Miscellaneous Goods and Services" by 2.32%, and "Transport" by 1.21%. (Peninsula Qatar)

- **Standard Chartered: Qatar to see spike in growth when LNG capacity expansion goes online -** Qatar's growth is expected to spike above trend when the planned liquefied natural gas (LNG) capacity expansion begins to go online in a few years, Standard Chartered said and noted the country's investment in the recently upsized gas capacity expansion is likely to support private-sector activity. Standard Chartered bank in its 'Global Focus Economic Outlook Q2-2024', which covers the outlook for some 58 economies, key geopolitical issues and financial market implications this year and beyond, forecasts a "calm before the upsized gas boom" in Qatar and predicts the post-FIFA slowdown to change pace next year. Qatar now aims to increase output at the North Field by 85% versus 64% previously, which would take natural gas output to 126mn tonnes per year (mtpy) by end-2027 and 142mtpy by end-2030, from 77mtpy currently. Qatar's investment in the recently upsized gas capacity expansion is likely to support private-sector activity, the bank said. The research notes Qatar's private-sector credit growth was about 6% year-on-year (y-o-y) in January, exceeding GDP growth, which dipped to 1.0% y-o-y in Q2,2023 from 8.0% in Q4,2022. The planned expansion of LNG output and subsequent boost to GDP is also expected to rein in public debt to around 30% by 2027, Standard Chartered noted. Prior to that, the report estimates that public debt will decline to 37.5% of GDP by end-2024 and 35% by end-2025, from a peak of 73% in 2020 – assuming Qatar continues to use its surpluses to pay down external debt (external debt maturities are $4.8bn in 2024 and $2bn in 2025). Notably, the composition of government debt has shifted with foreign and domestic debt now at almost equal shares, from a 60:40 split in favor of external debt in 2020, it said. Meanwhile, the research shows Qatar's net external asset position is improving. Qatar's fiscal breakeven oil price is the lowest among oil-exporting regional peers, standing at just $50/barrel. Comparatively, reserves stood at $67.6bn in January, rising $10bn since early 2022. Moreover, non-resident deposits in the country have declined and now constitute less than 20% of total deposits – helping to address a historically important systemic vulnerability. "We see the end-2024 policy rate (deposit rate) at 5.25%, in line with our latest Fed forecasts," Standard Chartered said. Overall, the Global Focus Economic Outlook Q2,2024 also indicates Asia is set to remain the primary engine of global growth, with Africa and MENAP expected to grow faster in 2024 than in 2023. It expects global GDP growth of 3.1% this year, unchanged from 2023, and 3.2% in 2025, an improvement from earlier forecasts of 2.9% and 3.1%. Muhannad Mukahall, chief executive officer and head of CCIB at Standard Chartered Bank – Qatar commented, "We expect to see positive growth in Qatar in the coming years as work on the substantial liquefied natural gas (LNG) capacity expansion project begins to pick up pace. "The newly announced expansion at North Field West adds a further 16mn tonnes of LNG per year to existing plans and will no doubt aid Doha on its quest to dominate the top spot for the world's top LNG producers. Our research shows this will boost the private sector, increase GDP and therefore massively stunt public debt." (Gulf Times)

- **KPMG official: Qatar's economy poised for strong growth -** An expert from a leading international financial audit firm has voiced optimism for strong growth in the Qatar economy for several years to come on account of its huge investment in oil and gas as well as the Qatar National Development Strategy 2024-2030. "We are very optimistic about Qatar economy because of the huge investment in oil and gas sector and development of more gas fields. Additionally, the 3rd Qatar National Development Strategy focuses on three key areas of tourism, logistics and manufacturing. This is the focus of Qatar right now and the leadership of the country has focused on the right areas," Ahmed Abu-Sharkh, country leader partner, KPMG Qatar told Gulf Times at a recent event. Abu-Sharkh noted that tourism, logistics and manufacturing are the enablers that will fuel further growth for the country. "In addition, there is massive investment in technology, digital areas, education and human capital development. Qatar's financial sector is very matured and focused. All these will make the country perform very well in the coming years," said the official. According to Abu-Sharkh, the huge investment in hydrocarbon sector will benefit the country primarily in several areas. He said: "Investment in tourism will bring more people into the country. Similarly, investment in the manufacturing and logistics sectors will encourage people to invest in several areas such as retail, technology and many other areas. This will also help the government to allocate more money into these sectors, leading to more diversification of the economy." The KPMG official said tourism has been one of the major focuses of the government particularly in the last few years. "The plans to introduce Schengen type of common visa for GCC countries will be a major boost for tourism. We can create synergies with the UAE and other countries to attract more tourists to Qatar. The museums, beaches, the beauty of the city and other experiences can be great attractions for tourism in Qatar," he remarked. Abu-Sharkh highlighted that banks in Qatar are very strong and are doing well. "Qatar Central Bank is enhancing the banking system and is providing enablers that can help the banks perform better. Further to that, the 3rd Qatar National Development Strategy is a fantastic one with major enablers such as financial service sector, digital advancements, technology and education which can fuel great financial growth in the country in the near future," he pointed out. "Qatar has been making huge investment in several areas especially in oil and gas. More investment in these areas will lead to more collaborations and will help form major partners from around the world. The core success of the country lies in human development and it is taking a great leap these days," added Abu-Sharkh. (Gulf Times)

- **Ooredoo unveils strategic partnership with Qatar Airways and Nutanix -** Ooredoo has unveiled a strategic partnership with Qatar Airways and Nutanix, a leader in hybrid multi-cloud computing. As Qatar Airways' chosen partner, Ooredoo will develop a cutting-edge hybrid multi-cloud environment, paving the way for next-generation applications that will bolster the airline's customer experience and business performance. This partnership with Nutanix will leverage the Nutanix Cloud Platform, which provides a consistent cloud operating model with a single platform for running applications and managing data across data centers, edges, and public clouds. It allows businesses to break down silos and simplify operations across various environments, ensuring greater efficiency. Qatar Airways will benefit from the scalability offered by Nutanix Cloud Platform, enabling the airline to adjust its resources in real-time and on demand. This capability helps ensure optimal performance during peak operational periods and cost savings during slower times, highlighting the agility and responsiveness of the Hybrid Cloud model, facilitated by Ooredoo's infrastructure. Thani Ali al-Malki, chief business officer at Ooredoo, said: "This collaboration with Qatar Airways and Nutanix is a testament to our unwavering commitment to driving technological innovation in our nation. "By joining forces with leading technology partners, we are setting new standards for digital transformation across industries. Our goal is to empower clients with hybrid cloud solutions that blend technological advances with business insights to create strategies that resonate with their broader business objectives." A T Srinivasan, group chief information officer at Qatar Airways, said: "We have selected Nutanix, one of the best software-defined hyper-converged infrastructures, which will be one of the main pillars of our hybrid cloud strategy and transformation. Via this partnership with Nutanix and Ooredoo, we will leverage the benefits of Nutanix's software-defined infrastructure, which includes freedom of choice of hardware, storage data locality, data sovereignty, independence in scaling out compute and storage nodes based on business system needs, end-point micro-segmentation for enhanced security, real time monitoring of services, and rich dashboards for analytics and reporting." The partnership cements Ooredoo's position as the premier provider of cutting-edge hybrid multi-cloud frameworks and highlights its role in empowering businesses to embark on a journey of digital innovation that aligns with their strategic objectives. Ooredoo is continually evolving its service offerings and playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of digital infrastructure in the region by collaborating with global leaders like Qatar Airways and Nutanix. Such strategic alliances promise a competitive edge for businesses ready to embrace the next wave of technological advancements. (Gulf Times)

- **Commercial Bank, Kotak International explore promising investment opportunities in 'rising' India -** Commercial Bank hosted an "exclusive" event with Kotak International to explore investment opportunities in rising India. "India presents itself as a key player in the global financial landscape earning recognition as the fastest growing economy in the world, likely to become the third largest economy in the next five years. "Its pioneering position has opened a myriad of investment avenues across diverse sectors, giving individuals an opportunity to take part in India's success story. After being the pharmaceutical and the digital back-office to the world, India is now gearing up for a manufacturing thrust. "Make in India" – for India, and for the world. "India has a remarkable opportunity to create millions of jobs by focusing on manufacturing and integrating itself into the global supply chain. "As India potentially doubles its GDP over the next few years, rising consumption led by rising per capita income offers immense opportunities for investors," Commercial Bank noted. With a future-forward mindset, Commercial Bank is consistently ahead, providing customers with the necessary tools that empower them to firmly establish their position in today's economic revolution. The bank, through its Wealth Advisory platform, enables customers to tap into the dynamic market of India while leveraging expert insights and tailored investment options. The event held with Kotak International unlocked valuable insights into India's rising economy and discussed in-depth how customers can take advantage of these opportunities to grow their wealth and maximize their growth potential. Shahnawaz Rashid, executive general manager and head (Retail Banking) at Commercial Bank said, "We recognize the importance of providing our customers with access to the latest investment opportunities in India. Through our wealth management and financial services, investors can access real-time market analysis and a range of mutual funds that empower them to make informed investment decisions tailored to their financial goals and risk appetite. "The bank works relentlessly to ensure that our investors have the necessary guidance to navigate the complexities of India's rising financial landscape. As we continuously strategize ways to uplift their future, our customers can rest assured we are dedicated to their success and prosperity." Nitin Jain, principal fund manager, CEO and director of Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Singapore, said: "India is at an inflection point. Over the past decade, pathbreaking policy changes have laid the foundation for secular growth with lower macro-risks. India offers a unique opportunity for growth, different than the world, different than its own past." (Gulf Times)
- **Meeza signs agreement with Oman ITHCA Group to propel ICT collaboration -** Meeza and Oman Information and Communication Technology Group (ITHCA) have signed a co-operation agreement, which focuses on enhancing mutual capabilities and access to innovative technologies in alignment with Qatar and Oman's ongoing efforts in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. The co-operation agreement, signed by representatives from both Meeza and ITHCA, sets the foundation for a co-operative relationship that will benefit both nations. The partnership delineates several key areas of collaboration, including the potential for increased opportunities for knowledge sharing and professional development, enhanced access to cutting-edge technologies and research initiatives, identification of joint projects and initiatives, and much more. Mohsin Nasser al-Marri, acting CEO of Meeza, stated: "This co-operation agreement marks a significant step forward in our commitment to enhancing the ICT landscape across the region. By combining our resources and expertise with OICT, we look forward to unlocking new opportunities and innovations." Engineer Said bin Abdullah al-Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, added: "Partnering with Meeza allows us to expand our strategic investments and initiatives in the ICT domain. Together, we aim to explore and implement solutions that support our strategic goals and respond to the dynamic needs of the market." ITHCA, which has a key role in the development of information technology in Oman and acts as strategic investor within Oman's ICT investment environment, collaborates with various entities to enhance the national ICT infrastructure and capabilities. This collaborative endeavor aligns with Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030 and marks a commitment to a shared vision of co-operation and strategic growth in the ICT sector that benefits both organizations and supports broader economic diversification efforts. (Gulf Times)
- **Second edition of Qatar Real Estate Forum to begin on Oct 13 -** Real Estate Regulatory Authority Chairman Khalid Ahmed Saleh Ahmed Al Obaidli has announced that the 2nd edition of Qatar Real Estate Forum will be held from October 13 to October 14, with the participation of many local and foreign bodies. Al Obaidli highlighted that the forum primarily aims to identify the real estate opportunities offered by the Qatari markets, affirming that Qatar will dazzle all during the coming 15 years by its achievements in the real estate sector. He pointed out that the huge advancement in this sector throughout the past years has been achieved thanks to the diligent directives of the wise leadership, along with the major government legislation and investments in the infrastructure projects and the additional opportunities within the efforts to fulfill the Qatar National Vision 2030 that led to the upswing of real estate market in the country. The forum will tackle the importance of capitalizing on the world-class real estate infrastructure in the country through forging appropriate partnerships, he added, highlighting that the dispute resolution mechanism will help investors and global firms benefit from the real estate system in Qatar. Al Obaidli pointed out that there are standards and regulatory rules that are set to be announced during the forum, hoping that the upcoming events will further explore the best real estate opportunities in Qatar, in addition to launching a range of initiatives that would contribute to attracting foreign investments to this sector in Qatar. Qatar established the Real Estate Regulatory Authority under the Amiri decision No. 28 of 2023, with the objective of regulating and spurring the real estate sector in the country, in addition to exploring issues and reviewing the best regional and global experiences relevant to this sector and improving an environment conducive for it. (Qatar Tribune)
- **Over 250 firms set to take part in 20th edition of Project Qatar -** More than 250 Qatari and international companies are all set to participate in the 20th edition of Project Qatar slated to begin on May 27, IFP Qatar, the organizer of the mega event, announced on Monday. In addition to attracting 120 international companies from 25 different countries, the event enjoys the support of 130 Qatari companies, led by major governmental and semi-governmental agencies and prominent private sector companies, IFP Qatar revealed the details of the exceptional 20th edition of Project Qatar during a press conference. The biggest and most prominent trade exhibition specializing in construction materials, equipment, and technologies in Qatar, the four-day exhibition will be held under the patronage of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani with the support of Ministry of Commerce and Industry and in partnership with the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) from May 27 to May 30 at Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). The press conference was attended by several representatives of the event's sponsors from the public and private sectors along with the organizing company. The list of sponsors and partners for the event this year includes the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), the Strategic Partners, Qatar Tourism, the Destination Partner, Qatari Diar, the Property Development Partner, Qatar Development Bank (QDB), Al Sraiya Holding Group, the Platinum Sponsor, Nask Chemical Solutions, the Industrial Sponsor, Imar Group, Aamal, and Sahand Industrial Group, the Gold Sponsors, QTerminals, the Silver Sponsor, Gulf Organization for Research and Development (GORD), the Official Sustainability Partner, Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIC), the Industrial Consulting Sponsor, Oriental Trading Company (OTC), the Integrity Sponsor, Gulf Crafts, the Innovative Branding Sponsor, as well as a large number of print and digital media partners. Addressing the press conference, IFP Qatar General Manager Haidar Mshaimesh said, "The 20th edition of Project Qatar represents a culmination of achievements and milestones, highlighting the exhibition's pivotal role in driving growth, fostering innovation, and shaping the future of the construction sector. It is a testament to all stakeholders' resilience, adaptability, and forward-thinking approach. As we celebrate this special milestone, we honor the past successes of Project Qatar and look ahead to an exciting

future filled with new opportunities and possibilities." Mshaimesh said, "The 20th edition promises to be a landmark event, offering exhibitors and visitors alike a unique platform to explore the latest trends, network with industry leaders, and contribute to the continued advancement of the construction industry. This year's Project Qatar is poised to address emerging segments and environmental concerns as the global focus shifts towards green and smart manufacturing. "The key areas that the exhibition and the accompanying conference will highlight include sustainable construction materials such as recycled content, low-carbon concrete, sustainable timber, and energy-efficient insulation as well as a range of renewable energy solutions designed to reduce carbon emissions and enhance energy efficiency in construction projects. It will also feature smart building technologies including intelligent building management systems, IoT-enabled sensors, automation solutions, and energy-efficient HVAC systems in addition to green infrastructure such as green roofs, permeable pavements, rainwater harvesting systems, and urban green spaces." He said, "Overall, Project Qatar is expected to showcase a diverse range of innovative solutions and initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability, resilience, and environmental stewardship in the construction industry. By addressing emerging segments and environmental concerns, the exhibition plays a crucial role in driving the transition towards a greener and smarter future for manufacturing and construction." On behalf of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Hamad Mohammed Al Nasr, Assistant Director of Trade Development and Investment Promotion, said: "International trade exhibitions play a pivotal role in promoting trade exchange both locally and internationally. Project Qatar is one of the most prominent exhibitions in Qatar that plays this role, given its enduring legacy and distinguished record of attracting a large number of international companies every year. (Qatar Tribune)

- **Visit Qatar and Huawei sign MoU to enhance Qatar's tourism experience -** Visit Qatar, the marketing and promotional arm of Qatar Tourism, and Huawei, one of the world's global tech giants, announced a partnership to enhance the tourism experience for Chinese visitors and promote Qatar as a premier travel destination in the Chinese market. This collaboration leverages the precise targeting capabilities of Huawei's advertising platform, Petal Ads, to effectively reach and engage with potential travelers, boosting Qatar's visibility and appeal among Chinese tourists. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Eng. Abdulaziz Ali Al-Mawlawi, chief executive officer of Visit Qatar, and Justin Chen, global president of Petal Ads, Huawei Consumer Cloud, representing Huawei at the Visit Qatar stand at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2024. Through this collaboration, Visit Qatar and Huawei will work together to develop a comprehensive travel ecosystem in Qatar, this includes integrating Huawei products like SkyTone for roaming data, Huawei Wallet for payments, Petal Maps for tourist attraction promotion, and AI travel assistants. In addition, it will offer visitors interactive and immersive tourism experiences showcasing Qatar's scenic spots. Leveraging Petal Ads capabilities, the MoU underscores efforts to position Qatar as a leading travel destination for Chinese tourists through joint marketing initiatives and Huawei's extensive media resources. This alliance seeks to capture the imagination of Chinese travelers and solidify Qatar's appeal on their travel itineraries. Engr Abdulaziz Ali Al-Mawlawi said, "Through our strategic partnership with Huawei, we are taking a significant step forward in attracting more Chinese tourists and investors to Qatar. subsequently, we aim to develop a comprehensive travel ecosystem in Qatar and introduce advanced technologies to visitors with interactive and immersive tourism experiences. China is a top priority market for us, and by focusing on key regions and expanding our global presence, we are poised to see a substantial rise in visitors. This partnership is a testament to our commitment to growth and excellence in the tourism sector." Justin Chen echoed the sentiment, saying, "Huawei is committed to leveraging its technological expertise and extensive user base to enhance the travel experience for visitors to Qatar. We are excited to partner with Visit Qatar to promote this beautiful country as a top travel destination for Chinese tourists. Through this collaboration, we will create innovative and engaging experiences that will inspire more Chinese travelers to explore Qatar." This MoU stands as a strong commitment by both Visit Qatar and Huawei to develop a mutually beneficial partnership that will boost Qatar's tourism industry and attract more visitors from China. (Qatar Tribune)
- **QC: Qatar's trade with Oman amounted to QR5.4bn in 2023 -** Qatar Chamber First Vice-Chairman Mohamed bin Twar Al Kuwari praised the close relations between Qatar and Oman, emphasizing their advanced ties across various fields, particularly in economic and commercial aspects. In statements on the sidelines of his participation in the celebrations of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry's 50th anniversary in Muscat, Twar said that the two countries' trade volume grew by 20%, reaching QR 5.4bn in 2023 compared to QR 4.5bn in 2021. As for mutual investments, he noted that many Omani companies are operating in Qatar across various sectors, highlighting the successful Qatari investments in Oman across a variety of sectors. He stressed that the Qatar Chamber's keenness to participate in the ceremony stemmed from its commitment to strengthening communication with Gulf chambers. He affirmed that the Oman Chamber is one of the most important and active chambers among Gulf chambers. Twar also highlighted the close relations between the Qatar and Oman chambers, citing the exchange of business delegations between both sides to explore new opportunities for cooperation across various sectors in both friendly countries. During the ceremony, held under the patronage of Sayyid Dhi Yazan bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth in Oman, OCCI Chairman Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas reviewed the chamber's progress, milestones, and contributions. The ceremony also marked the launch of a new visual identity for the chamber, as well as the establishment of the Social Investment Center and the Center for Economic Studies and Research. (Qatar Tribune)

International

- **Fed policymakers still cautious on inflation and policy -** Federal Reserve officials are not ready to say inflation is heading to the central bank's 2% target after data last week showed a welcome easing in consumer price pressures in April, with several on Monday calling for continued policy caution. "It is too early to tell whether the recent slowdown in the disinflationary process will be long lasting," Fed Vice Chair Philip Jefferson told the Mortgage Bankers Association conference in New York, even as he called the April data "encouraging." Jefferson described current monetary policy as restrictive and declined to say if he expected rate cuts to commence this year, only noting that he will be carefully assessing incoming economic data, the outlook, and balance of risks. Speaking separately at a conference held by the Atlanta Fed, Fed Vice Chair of Supervision Michael Barr, said "disappointing" first-quarter inflation readings were "did not provide me with the increased confidence that I was hoping to find to support easing monetary policy." Like Jefferson, Barr reinforced the Fed's overarching message that rate cuts, highly anticipated by markets, are on hold until it is clear inflation will return to the Fed's 2% target. "We will need to allow our restrictive policy some further time to continue its work," Barr said. Consumer prices cooled in April, and retail spending did not increase at all, two welcome signs that the economy may be losing some steam in the face of a policy rate that the Fed has held in the 5.25%-5.5% range since last July. But Fed policymakers, stung by a string of higher-than-expected inflation readings for the three months prior, remain cautious and want to make sure pricing pressures are fully on track back to the Fed's 2% target rate before starting to cut its benchmark interest rate. Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank President Loretta Mester, speaking to Bloomberg TV on Monday, said she continues to believe that inflation will fall this year, though more slowly than she had expected. But the lack of progress on inflation in the first quarter, along with a stronger-than-expected economy, mean she no longer sees three rate cuts this year as likely, she said. And, she said, if inflation against her expectation does stall out or gain ground, the Fed is well-positioned to respond "either by holding rates at current levels for longer or, if appropriate, raising the rate." San Francisco Fed President Mary Daly, in an interview with Axios published Monday, said she sees no evidence of the need to hike rates, but at the same time is "not confident" that inflation is falling toward 2% and sees no urgency to cut rates. The Fed's next policy meeting is June 11-12 meeting. Traders in contracts tied to the central bank's policy rate currently do not expect an interest rate cut until September. In comments after his formal remarks, Jefferson said, "I am cautiously optimistic that we can continue our battle against inflation" while permitting the economy to continue to grow and create more jobs. He noted growth and job creation have been resilient, which gives him some confidence the Fed can do what it needs to do to get price pressures down. Jefferson also weighed in the state of the Fed's balance sheet drawdown and noted the recently announced plans to slow the pace of the shrinkage comes allows the process to play out with reduced risk of creating financial market stress. He also noted there's little way to know yet how far the Fed needs to contract its holdings. (Reuters)

- **China's fiscal revenue shrank 2.7% in Jan-April amid shaky economic recovery -** China's fiscal revenue slipped 2.7% in the first four months of 2024 from a year earlier, after a 2.3% slide in the January-March period, in a further sign of an uneven economic recovery. Fiscal expenditure rose 3.5% in the first four months, versus a 2.9% gain in the first quarter, according to finance ministry data released on Monday. For April alone, fiscal revenue fell 3.7% against a 2.4% decline in March, while fiscal spending was up 6.1%, compared with March's 2.9% fall, according to Reuters' calculations based on the ministry data. Excluding factors such as last year's high base and tax cut policies, fiscal revenue in the first four months grew 2%, the ministry said in a statement. China has set an ambitious economic growth target of around 5% for this year, which many analysts say will be a challenge to meet as prolonged weakness in the property sector and tepid consumer demand remain a drag on the economy. Factory output topped forecasts in April, helped by improving external demand, but retail sales unexpectedly slowed and the property sector remained a key drag on the economy, piling pressure on Beijing to do more to support growth. The expansion of outstanding total social financing (TSF), a broad measure of credit and liquidity, hit a record low of 8.3% in April, amid lagging government bond issuance. China on Friday unveiled "historic" property easing measures and the finance ministry kicked off the issuance of 1tn yuan in long-dated special treasury bonds to stimulate key sectors of the economy. (Reuters)

Regional

- **Rates cut delay to help GCC banks post strong profits in 2024 -** GCC banks' profitability will remain strong in 2024 as the widely expected rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve had been delayed, banking analysts said. However, in 2025, banks in the region would suffer a slight deterioration as the Fed could start cutting rates in December 2024, and most GCC central banks are likely to follow suit, analysts said. Since GCC currencies are pegged to the dollar, the banks in the region have benefited from the increase in US interest rates over the past couple of years, and they stand to continue benefiting in 2024 albeit borrowers have to wait to get a respite from the prevailing high rates, analysts said. On a positive note, the expected rate cuts are also likely to reduce the amount of unrealized losses that GCC banks have accumulated over the past couple of years. Lower interest rates will reduce borrowing costs for homes, cars and other major purchases and probably fuel higher stock prices, all of which could help accelerate growth in the region. In 2023, listed banks in the GCC saw a notable 23.1% year-on-year surge in their combined net profit to reach $53.2bn, showed a KPMG report. The UAE-listed banks emerged as the top performers with their profit surging the most by 46.1% year-on-year to $19.7bn, according to the report. At year-end 2023, the average return on assets of the top 45 banks in the region reached 1.7%, up from 1.2% at year-end 2021. After the Fed held its policy rate at 5.25%-5.50% at its May 1 meeting, Chair Jerome Powell said that rate cuts won't occur until policymakers are confident that inflation is on a sustainable path toward the central bank's 2.0% target (barring an unexpected weakening in the labor market). "We expect GCC banks' profitability to remain strong in 2024 thanks to the delay in rate cuts," said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Mohamed Damak. "We also expect asset quality to remain resilient despite the higher-for-longer rates thanks to supportive economies, contained leverage, and a high level of precautionary reserves," he added. "We also expect asset quality to remain resilient despite the higher-for-longer rates thanks to supportive economies, contained leverage, and a high level of precautionary reserves." Despite delays relative to expectations, markets still expect one or two interest rate cuts by Fed and GCC central banks in 2024. However, when rates decline, some banks are more at risk than others. Banks with significant corporate lending are likely to see a greater impact than others. Corporate lending in the GCC region is typically at variable rates and banks tend to reprice it relatively quickly. The most vulnerable bank in S&P's sample stands to lose around 30% of its bottom line with every 100 basis point drop in rates. This assumes a static balance sheet and a parallel shift in the yield curve, which may not hold true in reality. Some of the retail banks in the sample display a moderate impact due to the structure of their balance sheets. In S&P's "Your Three Minutes In Banking: When Rates Drop, GCC Banks' Profitability Will Follow", Damak said the following factors are likely to mitigate the overall impact of a decline in GCC banks' profitability: While higher volumes can compensate for lower margins, rate cuts are also likely to reduce the amount of unrealized losses that banks have accumulated on their investments over the past couple of years. S&P estimates these at around $2.8bn for rated GCC banks, or 1.9% on average of their total equity at year-end 2023. Every 100 basis point drop in rates shaves an average of around nine% off rated GCC banks' bottom lines. This is based on the banks' December 2023 disclosures and assumes a static balance sheet and a parallel shift in the yield curve. (Zawya)

- **WTA signs multi-year partnership with Saudi PIF -** The Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) will become the first-ever naming partner of the WTA's rankings, the two organizations announced on Monday, as part of a multi-year partnership. The announcement marks PIF's latest foray into tennis, after the men's ATP tour also signed a multi-year "strategic partnership" earlier this year. "Together, we look forward to sharing the journey of our talented players across the season, as we continue to grow the sport, creating more fans of tennis and inspiring more young people to take up the game," WTA Ventures CEO Marina Storti said in a statement. The announcement marks the latest move in a dramatic shift by the women's tour, which was previously reluctant to embrace Saudi partnership. Outgoing CEO Steve Simon said last year that Saudi Arabia posed "big issues" as a host for women's tennis events. But it was announced in April that the season-ending WTA Finals will be held in the Saudi capital Riyadh from 2024-2026, with the Saudi Tennis Federation offering record prize money of $15.25mn this year. (Reuters)

- **IMF says UAE overall real GDP projected to grow 4% in 2024 -** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Monday the United Arab Emirates was experiencing strong economic growth, with overall real GDP projected to grow by about 4% this year, higher than earlier estimates. The IMF had projected GDP growth for the Gulf oil exporter at 3.5% in 2024 in its most recent Regional Economic Outlook report, published in April. In its latest Article IV end of mission statement, the IMF's delegation noted that economic growth in the UAE was broad based and driven by solid domestic activity in sectors such as tourism, construction and financial services. "Foreign demand for real estate, increased bilateral and multilateral ties, and the UAE's safe haven status continue to drive rapid growth in housing prices and an increase in rents, while adding to ample domestic liquidity," the statement said. Overall economic growth would likely be further supported by higher hydrocarbon GDP growth this year, in part driven by higher crude oil production from the UAE's OPEC+ quota increase, it added. The UAE - one of the world's top oil exporters - has accelerated plans to diversify its economy away from hydrocarbons and draw foreign investment, with non-oil GDP now representing over 70% of the overall GDP contribution. The IMF said that accelerated public and private investment and structural reforms, including in areas such as renewable energy and technology, "could spur growth more than expected." (Zawya)

- **Dubai thrives as the top global hub for greenfield FDI projects -** Dubai was ranked the No.1 global destination for greenfield foreign direct investment (FDI) projects in 2023 for the third successive year as it reinforces itself as a "must destination" for emerging businesses, investment, and talent, in addition to its rank as a key expansion hub for global corporations. According to the Financial Times "fDi Markets" data, the most vibrant business hub of the Middle East was also the world's No.1 within key clusters including consumer goods, energy, e-commerce, and tourism for greenfield FDI projects attraction, Greenfield FDI capital attraction, and jobs created through FDI attraction. The FDI performance of Dubai aligns with the ambitious goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 to double the size of the emirate's economy by 2033 while underscoring the city's robust economic growth and attractiveness to international investors. In 2023, Dubai welcomed 1,070 global Greenfield

FDI projects – 142% more than second-placed Singapore (442) and 148% more than third-placed London (431). In the past five years, Dubai's global share in attracting such projects has more than tripled, increasing from 1.7% in 2019 to 6% in 2023. Dubai's increasing appeal as a business headquarters destination was highlighted by its No.1 ranking for HQ FDI projects for the second year. It attracted 60 projects in 2023. Singapore and London were second and third, with 40 and 31 HQ FDI projects respectively. Overall, Dubai also ranked fourth globally in the number of jobs created through Inward FDI, up from fifth in 2022, and for Greenfield FDI capital attraction it ranked fifth globally, up two spots from seventh position. "Dubai's ability to secure the No. 1 ranking in global greenfield FDI projects in 2023 for the third consecutive year demonstrates the city's ability to continually generate new opportunities for global businesses," said Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai "Dubai's stability, cutting-edge infrastructure, and dynamic business environment have made it a focal point for investment, enterprise, and talent," said Sheikh Hamdan. Helal Saeed Almarri, director-general of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), said Dubai's sustained leadership in global FDI highlights its successful collaborations with stakeholders and international partners. The ranking affirms Dubai's status as a premier global hub for high-quality foreign direct investment. "The enduring confidence of investors, multinational corporations, startups, and global talent in Dubai's robust investment and business climate is a testament to our strategic initiatives," he added Hadi Badri, CEO of Dubai Economic Development Corporation (DEDC), said in addition to strong upswings across greenfield projects, there has been a surge of talent coming to Dubai. According to "Dubai FDI Monitor" data, the emirate recorded 1,650 announced FDI projects in 2023, a strong growth of 39% compared to the 1,188 FDI projects in 2022. Dubai remained the top city destination globally across several key technologies, with artificial intelligence (AI), FinTech, cloud computing, and cybersecurity featuring prominently. The city also placed first for the estimated number of jobs created by e-commerce investments. According to UN Trade & Development, Global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows in 2023, at an estimated $1.37tn, showed an increase of 3% over 2022. Yet, excluding few large European deals, global FDI flows were 18% lower. In line with global FDI flows, Dubai attracted an estimated Dh39.26bn ($10.69bn) in total FDI capital during 2023. Canada featured in the top five source countries by FDI capital due to one large M&A deal – Canada-based Brookfield Business Partners acquiring Network International for $2.76bn. The top five source countries by total estimated FDI capital into Dubai in 2023 were Canada (26.5%), United States (17.5%), Saudi Arabia (8.9%), United Kingdom (8.2%), and India (5.5%), while the top five source countries based on total announced FDI projects were the United States (15.5%), United Kingdom (15.3%), India (14.9%), France (6.3%), and Italy (3.6%). (Zawya)

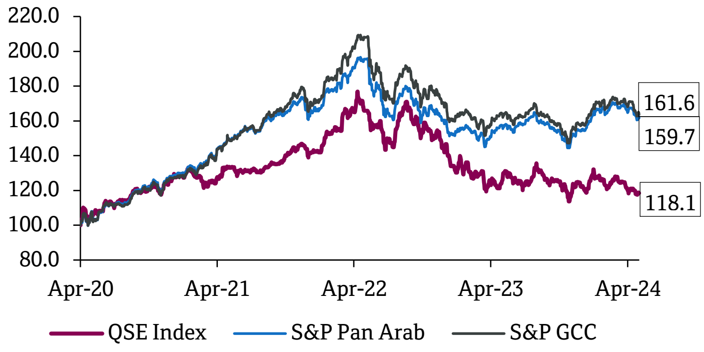
- **UAE's ADNOC buys stake in NextDecade's Rio Grande LNG project -** Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) has acquired an 11.7% stake in NextDecade's (NEXT.O), opens new tab Rio Grande liquefied natural gas export facility in Texas and entered a supply agreement, marking the UAE energy giant's first large investment in the United States. ADNOC said on Monday it had acquired the stake in phase 1 of the project, which includes the first three liquefaction trains, and agreed to a 20-year supply agreement for the fourth train, which is subject to a final investment decision (FID). ADNOC has big ambitions in gas and LNG, which along with renewable energy and petrochemicals, it sees as pillars for its future growth. It plans to grow its 6mn metric tons per annum (mtpa) LNG capacity to 15 mtpa by 2028. With demand for the chilled fuel expected to grow 50% by 2030, ADNOC - and Saudi peer Aramco (2223.SE), opens new tab - are tapping opportunities in the United States, which has become the world's biggest exporter of LNG as it sends record volumes to Europe. Reuters reported in March that ADNOC was in talks with NextDecade while Aramco was in discussions to invest in Sempra Infrastructure's Port Arthur LNG project in Texas. Musabbeh Al Kaabi, ADNOC's executive director for low carbon solutions and international growth, said the deal "marks a significant milestone in ADNOC's international growth strategy and provides us access to one of the world's top LNG export markets". The United States became the world's biggest LNG supplier in 2023, ahead of Australia and Qatar, as supply disruptions and sanctions linked to Russia's war in Ukraine created more demand for exports and boosted prices. NextDecade is planning to start construction of the fourth liquefaction train in the second half of 2024 after the FID. Its Rio Grande LNG export plant has been in development for several years, suffering repeated delays, and its phase 1 is now expected to reach completion by early 2029 at an expected cost of about $18bn. The total proposed project includes five 5.4-mtpa liquefaction trains capable of turning about 3.6bn cubic feet per day of natural gas. ADNOC's offtake agreement from the fourth train is for 1.9 mtpa "on a free on board (FOB) basis at a price indexed to Henry Hub", subject to the FID, ADNOC said. ADNOC bought the stake in the first phase through an investment vehicle of Global Infrastructure Partners, buying a portion of GIP's existing stake. It "also secures the option from GIP for equity participation in the future Trains 4 and 5 of the project", ADNOC added. (Reuters)
- **Private sector to lead Sharjah's GDP growth in coming years -** Sharjah will see a steady GDP growth over the next three years, driven by a strong private sector activity, according to S&P Global Ratings. "Strong private-sector activity will support economic growth averaging 2.8% in Sharjah during 2024 to 2027," the rating agency said, adding that the emirate saw real GDP growth of 4.6% in 2023. Manufacturing, construction, transport, and trade sectors will be lead growth drivers between 2024 and 2027. The agency projected growth in 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 at 2.5%, 2.7%, 3.0% and 3.0%, respectively. In the coming years, the growth will be supported by activity in the manufacturing, construction, transport, and trade sectors. In addition, continued demand for real estate in the emirate will support its macroeconomic growth. "We note that Sharjah's economy is relatively diverse and not directly reliant on hydrocarbon exports. Sharjah's GDP per capita remains moderate in a global context and we forecast it will strengthen to about $22,000 in 2024 from $19,000 in 2020," said S&P analysts. According to the 2022 census, the emirate's population reached 1.8mn that year, an increase of nearly 30% increase from the 1.4mn recorded in the 2015 census. Population between the two censuses could ultimately boost the economy's productive capacity. In line with stronger economic activity, S&P projected Sharjah's GDP per capita income will reach $25,000 by 2027. (Zawya)
- **UAE hospitality sector records strong growth in Q1 -** UAE hospitality market set for continued growth this year with the first quarter demonstrating strong visitor numbers, said a report by CBRE Middle East, the global leader in commercial real estate services and investments. Abu Dhabi witnessed a remarkable surge in the total number of hotel guests, recording an increase of 22% compared to the previous year, with a total of 1.30mn visitors. Similarly, Dubai experienced robust growth with a total of 5.18mn international visitors during the same period, representing a year-on-year increase of 10.9% and a 9.1% rise from the 2019 level. In the year-to-date to March 2024, the UAE witnessed a marginal increase of 0.9 percentage points in the average occupancy rate compared to the year prior. Over the same period, the country's ADR increased by 5.6%, resulting in an overall 6.8% rise in the average Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR), the report said. In the year to date to March 2024, the UAE's ADRs stood at 24.9% above the 2019 comparable figure. This growth has been underpinned by higher ADRs in Sharjah, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah, which have recorded increases of 27.9%, 24.0%, 18.0%, 11.1%, and 1.9%, respectively. As a result, these cities' RevPARs outperform their 2019 pre-pandemic levels by 34.3%, 22.3%, 19.7%, 40.6%, and 3.0%, respectively. In terms of citywide occupancy, the majority of locations have exceeded their 2019 pre-pandemic levels. Strong performance is expected to continue in the UAE's hospitality sector over the remainder of the year, as the elevated visitation levels will likely be maintained given a number of key upcoming local and regional events, the report said. Globally, during the first quarter of 2024, the average number of flights stood at 118,689, surpassing the 2019 pre-pandemic baseline by 11.5%, and registering a year-on-year increase of 11.0%. In March 2024, data from IATA revealed that the global Passenger Load Factor (PLF) reached 82.0%, marking an increase of 1.0% from the comparable 2023 figure. The available seat kilometers (ASKs) registered a year-on-year increase of 12.3%. Taimur Khan, Head of Research MENA in Dubai, commented: "The UAE's key performance indicators continued to showcase resilient performance in the first quarter of the year, largely supported by the elevated visitation levels.

Over the remainder of the year, we expect that visitation will see a marked increase owing to several events, which are expected to continue to drive occupancy and rates to record levels." (Zawya)

- **Oil price surge to help Bahrain cut debt -** The increase in oil revenues arising out of the recent surge in prices will be used to pay off public debts, Finance and National Economy Minister Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa has said. The average price of a barrel of oil reached $84 in 2023 and $82 until March 2024, he pointed out. "The average price is expected to exceed $80 this year according to initial international studies and statistics," he added, responding to a question by MP Khalid Bu Onk on oil prices. The minister stated that the law approving the general budget for the fiscal years 2023-2024 was endorsed with a price cap set for $60 per barrel and a total deficit of BD681mn. "The increase in oil prices during the budget implementation period will contribute to paying the actual deficits during the fiscal years 2023 and 2024," he said. "As a result, the volume of borrowing to cover the financing needs to mend the existing and expected deficit in the state's general budget will decrease." Shaikh Salman pointed out that if savings are achieved in terms of the total balance of the state's general budget, it is necessary to exploit them to reduce and pay off the balance of public debt, which will in return cut the interest levels on government debt in the upcoming years. (Zawya)

- **Tamkeen to promote global expansion of Bahraini firms -** Bahrain's Labor Fund (Tamkeen) has unveiled a new program to support commercial franchising for Bahraini enterprises. The announcement came during an event that hosted key stakeholders from the ecosystem and highlighted the importance of franchising for businesses through a panel of experts and entrepreneurs who have succeeded with this venture. In collaboration with Export Bahrain and iFranchise Facilities Services, a specialist in global franchise rights consulting, the initiative provides comprehensive support for commercial franchising, empowering Bahraini enterprises to venture into new markets worldwide. Promoting exports: By enhancing the competitiveness of Bahraini businesses on the global stage and promoting domestic exports, the initiative aims to catalyze national economic growth and prosperity. Tamkeen's Business Franchising Program supports key economic sectors in the kingdom by offering tailored assistance through two distinct tracks, one tailored for enterprises new to franchising their trademarks and the other for existing chains seeking to explore untapped markets. Through meticulous readiness assessments, market evaluations, and strategic collaborations with Export Bahrain, the program ensures that enterprises are equipped for international expansion. Furthermore, it provides comprehensive business development support, including gap analysis, documentation assistance for franchising initiation, facilitation of client/partner connections, and negotiation guidance, all of which help mitigate risks for enterprises and maximize opportunities for growth. Tamkeen Chief Executive, Maha Abdulhameed Mofeez emphasized the organization's commitment to preparing Bahraini enterprises for both local and international expansion, underscoring the pivotal role SMEs play in driving economic development. Necessary resources: She also highlighted the conduciveness of Bahrain's business environment towards entrepreneurial innovation and global competitiveness. She added: "Tamkeen takes the initiative to support enterprises in Bahrain looking to franchise their businesses by providing them with the necessary resources to license their brands and find the suitable organizations to partner with on their journey in entering new markets. This support highlights the ability of Bahraini enterprises to stand out and compete regionally and globally, helping them achieve their expansion goals." Export Bahrain CEO, Safa Sharif A Khaliq reiterated the significance of collaborative efforts aimed at growing Bahraini exports and expanding their global footprints. She stated: "Export Bahrain plays a lead role in enabling local enterprises, particularly SMEs, to access key regional and global markets, amplifying Bahrain's presence on the international stage. As a result of our innovative approach, Bahraini origin exports exceeded $860mn since inception and until December 2023." She added: "Franchising provides an ideal path for Bahraini products to reach global markets and for that reason we partnered with the Labor Fund (Tamkeen) to support Bahraini enterprises in entering new markets successfully and encourage them to innovate and create products that are competitive on a global scale." (Zawya)

Rebased Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Daily Index Performance

Source: Bloomberg

Asset/Currency Performance	Close ($)	1D%	WTD%	YTD%
Gold/Ounce	2,425.31	0.4	0.4	17.6
Silver/Ounce	31.82	1.1	1.1	33.7
Crude Oil (Brent)/Barrel (FM Future)	83.71	(0.3)	(0.3)	8.7
Crude Oil (WTI)/Barrel (FM Future)	79.80	(0.3)	(0.3)	11.4
Natural Gas (Henry Hub)/MMBtu	2.52	3.3	3.3	(2.3)
LPG Propane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	70.80	1.0	1.0	1.1
LPG Butane (Arab Gulf)/Ton	67.80	0.0	0.0	(32.5)
Euro	1.09	(0.1)	(0.1)	(1.6)
Yen	156.26	0.4	0.4	10.8
GBP	1.27	0.0	0.0	(0.2)
CHF	1.10	(0.2)	(0.2)	(7.6)
AUD	0.67	(0.4)	(0.4)	(2.1)
USD Index	104.57	0.1	0.1	3.2
RUB	110.69	0.0	0.0	58.9
BRL	0.20	0.0	0.0	(4.9)

Source: Bloomberg

Global Indices Performance	Close	1D%*	WTD%*	YTD%*
MSCI World Index	3,477.07	0.1	0.1	9.7
DJ Industrial	39,806.77	(0.5)	(0.5)	5.6
S&P 500	5,308.13	0.1	0.1	11.3
NASDAQ 100	16,794.88	0.7	0.7	11.9
STOXX 600	523.89	0.2	0.2	7.4
DAX	18,768.96	0.3	0.3	10.0
FTSE 100	8,424.20	0.2	0.2	8.6
CAC 40	8,195.97	0.3	0.3	6.7
Nikkei	39,069.68	0.4	0.4	5.3
MSCI EM	1,101.91	0.2	0.2	7.6
SHANGHAI SE Composite	3,171.15	0.4	0.4	4.6
HANG SENG	19,636.22	0.5	0.5	15.4
BSE SENSEX	74,005.94	0.0	0.1	2.4
Bovespa	127,750.92	(0.2)	(0.2)	(9.4)
RTS	1,204.10	(0.6)	(0.6)	11.1

Source: Bloomberg ($ adjusted returns if any)*

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