

TO ADVERTISE HERE

Call: 444 11 300



Foreign and Gulf funds steer QSE to negative trajectory



QATAR ISLAMIC INSURANCE GROUP

15% to 17% Insurance Surplus

Distributed during

The past ten years

“Don’t Miss Your Chance to Gain”

Insurance Surplus is the amount refunded to the customer from the insurance premium (terms and conditions apply)

Tel: 4465 8888, C Ring Road

P.O.Box: 22076-Doha, Qatar

Mobile App: QIIC Islamia

www.qiic.com.qa

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Ramadan 24, 1445 AH

GULF TIMES

BUSINESS



12% DROP: Page 2

Apple investors seek signs worst is over after quarterly slump

البنك التجاري

COMMERCIAL BANK





CB Mortgage Loan

Zero interest for the first two years

Zero payments for the first year

Offer is valid from 14 March 2024 until 14 June 2024. Terms and conditions apply.

Scan the QR code, for more information



# Qatar’s hotels record improved room yield in February: PSA

By Santhosh V Perumal  
Business Reporter

The AFC Asian Cup continued to have its positive contribution to Qatar’s hospitality sector, which saw considerable improvement in room yield this February, as the country recorded double-digit growth in visitor arrivals, according to the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA).

The hotels’ overall revenue-per-available-room surged on an annualised basis on increasing average room rate and occupancy. Four-star hotels as well as deluxe and standard hotel apartments saw higher than average room yield growth in the review period, according to PSA data.

The robust yearly occupancy comes amidst visitor arrivals of 595,934 in February 2024. On a yearly basis, the total visitor arrivals shot up 53.1% in the review period.

Visitors arriving by flight reported a 64.43% year-on-year jump to 284,771 (48% of total arrivals) in February 2024 and through land by 75.37% to 231,660 (39%); while those arriving

through sea were down 5.29% to 79,503 (13%).

The visitor arrivals from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) were 252,760 or 42% of the total; followed by Europe 161,223 (27%), other Asia (including Oceania) 96,036 (16%), other Arab countries 49,250 (8%), the Americas 28,971 (5%), and other African countries 7,694 (1%) in February 2024.

On an annualised basis, the visitor arrivals from other Arab countries soared 113.1%, the GCC by 72.9%, other African countries by 68.8%, other Asia (including Oceania) by 34.4%, Europe by 33.4% and the Americas by 26.2% in February 2024.

On a month-on-month basis, the visitor arrivals to Qatar fell 15.2% with those coming from the GCC declining 31.7%, other African countries by 14.2%, other Asia (including Oceania) by 7.4%, the Americas by 7.4% and other Arab countries by 4.5%; while those from Europe shot up 17.5% in the review period.

Qatar’s hospitality sector saw an 83.4% year-on-year surge in rooms yield to QR453 in February 2024 as average room rate increased by 23.2% to QR531 and occupancy by 28% to 85%.

The five-star hotels’ room yield soared 73.81% year-on-year to QR584 as average room rate grew 18.91% to QR698 and occupancy by 27% in the review period.

The four-star hotels room yield zoomed 106.02% on a yearly basis to QR274 as the average room rate shot up 32.92% to QR323 and occupancy by 30% to 85% in February 2024.

The three-star hotels’ room yield expanded by 78.62% on an annualised basis to QR259 this February as average room rate grew 47.87% to QR278 and occupancy by 16% to 93%.

The two-star and one-star hotels’ room yield increased by 60.14% year-on-year to QR221 as the average room rate rose 28.99% to QR218 and occupancy by 20% to 102% in February this year.

The deluxe hotel apartments registered a 96.63% surge in room yield to QR409 with the average room rate escalating 20.93% to QR468 and occupancy by 34% to 88% in the review period.

In the case of standard hotel apartments, room yield shot up 110.53% year-on-year to QR240 in February 2024 as the average room rate increased by 42.34% to QR316 and occupancy by 25% to 76%.



The AFC Asian Cup continued to have its positive contribution to Qatar’s hospitality sector, which saw considerable improvement in room yield this February, as the country recorded double-digit growth in visitor arrivals, according to the PSA. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

## Fitch upgrades Commercial Bank’s rating to ‘A’ with stable outlook

Fitch Ratings has upgraded Commercial Bank’s rating to ‘A’ with a stable outlook.

The rating is driven by a “strong propensity” of support from the Qatari authorities and reflects Qatar’s strong ability to support domestic banks.

As per the report released by Fitch, Commercial Bank’s strong commercial banking franchise is underpinned by the substantial net foreign assets and revenue.

Commercial Bank Group CEO Joseph Abraham said: “Commercial Bank’s stable outlook reflects Qatar’s sovereign upgrade in March and the continued successful execution of our strategic plan”.

With Fitch’s rating in place, Commercial Bank currently enjoys strong credit ratings from all the major agencies.

Commercial Bank’s long-term outlook is rated ‘A2’ by Moody’s, and A- by Standard & Poor’s. Both ratings are with a stable outlook.



The rating is driven by a “strong propensity” of support from the Qatari authorities and reflects Qatar’s strong ability to support domestic banks

## Qatar’s fiscal spending to be ‘moderately supportive’ of growth in 2024: Oxford Economics

By Pratap John  
Business Editor

Qatar’s fiscal spending will be moderately supportive of growth this year, Oxford Economics said and noted the country’s budget surplus will remain above 5% of GDP.

The researcher has also maintained its 2024 GDP growth forecast for Qatar at 2.3%.

In its latest country report, Oxford Economics said incoming data paint an encouraging picture for both the energy and non-energy sectors of Qatar’s economy.

Industrial output rebounded strongly in January, while an uptick in activity and employment pushed the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) to the highest level in three months.

“We continue to believe the economy expanded by 1.1% last year, pending the release of Q3 and Q4 GDP statistics,” Oxford Economics said.

The PMI inched up to 51 in February, bolstered by higher output and employment.

Meanwhile, businesses confidence reached a six-month high. Higher tourist traffic is likely among the drivers of optimism, as visitor numbers hit a monthly record high of over 700,000 in January, with over half the arrivals coming from the GCC region.

On the energy side, mining production rose strongly in January, and Oxford Economics believes it will continue to support energy sector growth this year.

Fiscal spending will be moderately supportive of growth this year, while the budget surplus remains above 5% of GDP, according to Oxford Economics.

Full fiscal data for 2023 showed the quarterly surplus narrowed to QR1.4bn in fourth quarter (Q4) from QR12bn in the third quarter (Q3).

Revenues fell by 14.6% year-on-year (y-o-y), while spending rose by 1.3%, lifted by a 9.7% y-o-y increase in the wage bill. Overall, Qatar posted a surplus of QR43bn last year, equivalent to 5.5% of GDP.

Qatar’s fiscal rectitude and

expectations of steady surpluses have been recognised in successive credit rating upgrades, with Fitch the latest to lift its rating to AA from AA-.

“Qatar’s credit ratings are now back to the highs reached before the country’s dispute with its Gulf neighbours in 2017. We have cut our 2024 inflation forecast by 0.2ppts to 2.4%, following a greater-than-expected slowdown in February,” Oxford Economics said.

Prices edged up 0.2% month-on-month in February, the same as in January, but annual inflation eased to 2.7%. Inflation ticked up across most spending categories, in particular food and beverages, where price growth accelerated to 6.6% from 5.2%, the fastest pace since 2022.

“However, this was offset by lower recreation and culture prices. We expect the Federal Reserve and the Qatar Central Bank to deliver the first rate cut in Q2, likely in June, and think interest rates will be gradually lowered further thereafter,” Oxford Economics noted.

## USQBC welcomes Fusion Group as ‘new esteemed member’

The US-Qatar Business Council (USQBC) has announced the addition of Fusion Group Holding to its esteemed membership. This collaboration represents a substantial step in advancing economic co-operation and cultivating business prospects between the US and Qatar.

The USQBC, a prominent advocate for fostering mutual economic growth, works diligently to develop and support business ties between the two nations with a vision of creating a seamless and lasting partnership, based on shared interests and robust connections in bilateral relations including business and culture.

USQBC is dedicated to nurturing and enhancing the relationship between the US and Qatar.

Fusion Group Holding is a leading

**USQBC, a prominent advocate for fostering mutual economic growth, works diligently to develop and support business ties between the two nations with a vision of creating a seamless and lasting partnership, based on shared interests and robust connections in bilateral relations including business and culture**

Qatari company that works with businesses and government leaders to overcome their most pressing challenges and maximise their potential, across a diverse range of industry sectors. Since its inception over 14 years ago, the group has grown to include some of the most pioneering companies in several industries including corporate

services, aviation, defence and security, oil and gas services, and data and AI, amongst others.

Sheikha Mayes Hamad al-Thani, managing director of the USQBC in Qatar, said: “I am delighted to welcome Fusion Group Holding as our newest member. USQBC is committed to fostering mutual economic growth and cultivating strong business prospects. Our vision is to build a seamless and lasting partnership based on shared interests and robust connections in bilateral relations.”

Joining the USQBC demonstrates Fusion Group Holding’s commitment to expanding its global reach and actively participating in the economic growth of the region. This affiliation will enable Fusion Group Holding to leverage the council’s extensive

network, expertise, and resources to establish and enhance business connections with Qatari and American partners.

Sheikh Abdulrahman Hassan al-Thani, chairman of Fusion Group Holding, said: “As Fusion Group Holding continues to grow its partnerships with US companies in various sectors, we are excited to join USQBC as its newest member and continue supporting the important bilateral trade and investment relationship between the State of Qatar and the United States of America. Fusion continuously strives to be one of the leading Qatari holding companies whose diversity of businesses and operations provides a seamless gateway for companies to grow and invest, both in Qatar and the US.”







## Eurozone factory downturn deepens in March amid some recovery signs

Reuters  
London

Overall manufacturing activity in the eurozone took a further turn for the worse in March, contracting at a steeper pace than in February, but there were signs of recovery in Italy and Spain, surveys showed yesterday.

Demand continued to fall, according to the surveys which nevertheless demonstrated

an uptick in optimism, suggesting the region may soon stage a wider recovery.

HCOB's final eurozone manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), compiled by S&P Global, dipped to 46.1 in March from February's 46.5, beating a preliminary estimate of 45.7 but staying below the 50 mark denoting growth in activity for a 21st month.

An index measuring output, which feeds into a composite PMI due on Thursday and is seen as a good gauge of economic health, rose from February's 46.6 to 47.1, improving

on the flash estimate of 46.8. "Today's PMI results are an indicator of the massive challenges European manufacturers are facing. Materials shortages have abated somewhat, but the outlook remains uncertain," said Goetz Erhardt at Accenture.

French manufacturing weakened at a steeper pace last month — although the contraction was not as severe as a preliminary estimate suggested — while in Germany, Europe's largest economy, the downturn in the sector which accounts for about a fifth

of the country's GDP continued. Defying the wider eurozone dip, Spanish factory activity expanded in March for a second month and Italy showed signs of recovery after 11 straight months of contraction, earlier figures showed.

Irish manufacturing contracted in March after briefly returning to growth a month earlier. Its PMI has sat below 50 for most of the last 17 months. In Britain, outside the European Union, manufacturers reported their first overall growth in activity in 20 months thanks to recovering demand in their home

market, according to its PMI that added to signs last year's shallow recession has ended.

New orders in the eurozone fell for a 23rd month despite factories cutting their prices at the fastest pace since November. Any sign of easing inflationary pressures will likely be welcome news to the European Central Bank as it attempts to bring inflation back to target.

Inflation fell in six economically important German states last month, preliminary data showed, suggesting national inflation will continue its downward trajectory.

## Apple investors seek signs worst is over after quarterly slump

Bloomberg  
New York

With Apple Inc's stock coming off its poorest quarterly performance relative to the S&P 500 Index in over a decade, traders are looking for signs that the worst may be over.

The 12% drop since the start of the year paid off for short sellers, giving them an incentive to unwind their bets. Technical analysts say the stock is flirting with levels where dip-buyers are likely to swoop in. And the lagging run may make Apple look cheap compared with the other big tech companies.

"Nobody wants to sell any more of their Apple positions because there's a dividend, big share buybacks and no one wants to pay capital-gains taxes on it," said Craig Johnson, chief market technician at Piper Sandler & Co. "I don't see the stock falling much further from here. The bigger risk is that Apple's stock may be stuck in a range between \$165-200 until it can decisively break above its longer-term moving averages."

The slide has erased more than \$300bn in market value this year, ceding Apple's status as the most-valuable US company to Microsoft Corp. The drop was spurred by declining sales in China, regulatory scrutiny of its App store,



An Apple store in New York. With Apple's stock coming off its poorest quarterly performance relative to the S&P 500 Index in over a decade, traders are looking for signs that the worst may be over.

and mounting concern among investors about its growth outlook.

As the S&P 500 gained, Apple's return lagged it by 21 percentage points in the first quarter, the worst showing by that measure since 2013, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

But the loss has been steep enough that it's nearing a key support level at \$165, the low it hit in October, when the broader market also bottomed out.

Apple shares briefly traded for less

than \$170 at various points in recent sessions. Breaking below that level and holding there could presage a pullback to its October low of \$165.67. It ended Monday at \$170.03.

Short sellers pounced on Apple as peers like Nvidia Corp, Meta Platforms Inc and Amazon.com Inc kept rallying. Apple is the second-most profitable short position this year at \$2.4bn in paper profits, according to data-analytics firm S3 Partners.

## Hedge funds bet on Europe in hunt for next leg of stock rally

Bloomberg  
London

Investors are betting that Europe will drive the next leg of the global equity rally, broadening their playbooks as a more expensive US market evokes memories of the dot-com bubble.

Hedge funds are now the most exposed they have ever been to European stocks relative to a global benchmark, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc data. Mutual funds have also amped up allocations to the region's equities by the most since June 2020, a recent survey by Bank of America Corp showed.

The prospect of "Europe's outperformance against US stocks certainly has legs," Paul Brain, deputy chief investment officer of multi-asset at Newton Investment Management, said in an interview in London. "US big tech seems fully priced and may run into headwinds from competition and regulation after the recent rally."

Euro area shares have risen by around 4% in March, outpacing their US peers, and investors expect them to keep climbing if a rebound in economic growth revitalises corporate profits. That's as the artificial intelligence fervour gripping the US market makes the fortunes of the S&P 500 Index increasingly reliant on a group of relatively expensive tech stocks.

Hedge funds' allocation to Europe versus the MSCI All-Country World Index reached 5.8% overweight last week, the highest level on record, according to the Goldman Sachs data.

Despite Europe's gains this month, its benchmark Stoxx 600 Index still looks cheap. Its forward 12-month price-to-earnings ratio of about 14 is only slightly higher than its long-term average, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Even excluding richly valued tech stocks, the S&P 500 is in expensive territory. Europe's heavier

weighting in more cyclical sectors could work in its favour as economies such as Germany and the UK look set to dodge a prolonged recession and global growth picks up. Any easing in interest rates could also help.

"As interest rates come down and we get this soft landing, the opportunity for broadening out into some more cyclical parts of the market is improving," Goldman Sachs' Peter Oppenheimer said on Bloomberg TV. Tech stocks will perform well, but the strategist sees "better relative valuation opportunities outside the US."

A drastic reduction in short positioning also shows sentiment toward European stocks is improving, according to S&P Global. Estimated short positions on the region were cut to less than 0.2% of total market capitalization at the end of last year, the lowest level in at least a decade, and have remained near that level since.

BlackRock Inc's EMEA iShares team including Karim Chedid and Laura Cooper are seeing signs that funds from clients are making their way back to Europe. "We've leaned into Europe from a tactical momentum perspective," they said in an interview. "We're seeing some flows coming back, including from US investors, so we've been warming up."

The BlackRock team remains overweight US stocks on a longer-term outlook, betting on more gains related to artificial intelligence. Other market participants are convinced of a sustained rally in US stocks as they expect large-cap names to continue to deliver on earnings growth.

Going by track record, European equities have been underperforming their US peers relentlessly since the aftermath of the global financial crisis, with brief periods of relative recovery. The last significant episode of outperformance lasted about four months, between October 2022 and March 2023, and saw the Stoxx 600 beating the S&P 500 by more than 12 percentage points over that period.

## GCC economies offer 'compelling' investment opportunities, says HSBC official

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) economies continue to offer compelling investment opportunities, according to a top official of HSBC Global Private Banking.

The investment opportunities have been "driven by long-term growth drivers including structural reforms, favourable demographics, and ambitious infrastructure programmes supporting non-oil sectors," said Georgios Leontaris, chief investment officer, Switzerland and EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa), HSBC Global Private Banking and Wealth. HSBC Global Private Banking is advising high net worth and ultra-high net worth clients to consider taking on more risk and put their cash to work as the investment environment has become more attractive.

HSBC Global Private Banking's Q2-2024 investment outlook 'A Fertile Ground for Investment Returns' shows many opportunities to put cash to work, although it remains "selective" and continue to focus on quality stocks and bonds over cheap valuations.

"As we approach the first (US) Fed rate cut, which we expect to happen in June, we recommend locking in attractive bond yields and extend duration," the report said.

On the need for broadening the US equity exposure; it said the US economy has been beating expectations for 15 months and continues to surprise on the upside, and "we expect the US equity rally to broaden beyond technology stocks to companies in additional sectors."

With volatility bound to remain in complex world, the report recommends alternatives and multi-asset strategies to broaden the opportunity set while achieving appropriate diversification and hedging tail risks.

"In Asia, we continue to actively diversify as we await stimulus measures in China to translate into stronger growth, so we look towards India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan for better returns," it added.

الميرة

Al Meera

إعلان طرح مناقصة

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

تعلن شركة الميرة للمواد الاستهلاكية(ش.م.ع.ق) عن طرح المناقصة التالية:

Al Meera Consumer Goods Company (Q.P.S.C) announces the following tender:

| رقم المناقصة | الموضوع  | فئات التخصص /Classification    | نظام تقديم العطاءات   | قيمة الوثائق   | تاريخ استلام الوثائق             | الضمان البنكي     | الاقفال      |
|--------------|--|--------------------------------|---|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Tender No.   | Title  | Specialization /Classification | Bidding System  | Document Fees  | Date of Collection documents     | Tender Bond       | Closing Date |
| ٢٠٢٤/١٠      | خدمات جمع النفايات الصلبة من فروع شركة الميرة لمدة ثلاث سنوات                | الشركات ذات الاختصاص           | ثلاثة مظاريك ( مظروف فني + مظروف مالي + الضمان البنكي                                   | ١٥٠٠ ريال فطري | ٢٠٢٤/٤ إلى ٢٠٢٤/٩                | ٥٠٠,٠٠٠ ريال فطري | ٢٠٢٤/٢٨      |
| 10/2024      | Solid Waste Collection & Disposal Services for Al Meera Branches for 3 Years | Competent Companies            | Three separate sealed envelopes Technical Proposals + Financial Proposals + Tender Bond | QAR 1,500      | From 4th April to 9th April 2024 | QAR 50,000        | 28/04/2024   |

يمكن الحصول على وثائق المناقصة من مقر شركة الميرة للمواد الاستهلاكية (برج قطر، بجوار برج القصر مقابل أبراج ازدان) - الطابق الرابع والعشرون، شارع مجلس التعاون، الدفنة.

للحصول على وثائق المناقصة يجب إبراز كتاب تفويض من الشركة، صورة قيد المنشأة وصورة من الرخصة التجارية والسجل التجاري سارية المفعول.

يرفق ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك المعتمدة في دولة قطر حسب ما هو مبين أعلاه كضامن مؤقت لمدة (١٢٠) يوماً باسم شركة الميرة للمواد الاستهلاكية.

مدة سريان العطاء هي تسعين يوماً من تاريخ إقفال المناقصة.

على من ترسو عليه المناقصة تقديم ضمان مصرفي نهائي بما نسبته ١٠ ٪ من قيمة العقد لمدة (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ انتهاء الاعمال.

سيكون آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات هو الساعة الثانية عشر من مساء يوم الاقفال (الأحد)، ولن يلتفت إلى أي عطاء يرد بعد هذا الموعد المحدد.

تقدم العطاءات داخل مظاريك مغلقة ومختومة بخاتم الشركة، ومعنونة باسم السادة / لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات، وتسلم لمانة سر اللجنة بمقرها المذكور أعلاه.

هذا الإعلان متواجد أيضاً على موقع شركة الميرة للمواد الاستهلاكية

www.almeera.com.qa

سكرتير لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات

هاتف ٤٠١١٩١٩٦ • m.alaa@almeera.com.qa

شركة الميرة للمواد الاستهلاكية (ش.م.ع.ق)

برج قطر (بجوار برج القصر مقابل أبراج ازدان)

– الطابق الرابع والعشرون شارع مجلس التعاون، الدفنة، الدوحة - قطر

Secretary of Tenders & Auctions Committee

Tel. 40119196 • email: m.alaa@almeera.com.qa

Al Meera Consumer Goods Company (Q.P.S.C)

Qatar Tower (next to Al Qassar Tower opposite to Ezdan Towers) - Floor 24 Majlis Al Taawon Street, Al Dafna, Doha - Qatar





Qatar Chamber Chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani.

## Qatar Chamber to hold first general assembly meeting on April 25

Qatar Chamber Chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani will preside over the first General Assembly Meeting (GAM) scheduled on April 25, 2024, at the chamber's headquarters. Eligible to attend the GAM are members who have paid their membership fees for the year 2023. If the required quorum is not reached in the first meeting, the second meeting will be held at 11am on Sunday, May 19, 2024, regardless of the number of attendees, the chamber said in a statement. The meeting's agenda includes the

review of the board of directors' report on the chamber's activities and financial status for the year ending December 31, 2023. It also includes discussing and approving the auditor's report on the chamber's budget, final accounts, and the statement of revenues and expenses for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023. Also included in the agenda is discharging the members of the board and approval of the estimated budget for the 2024 fiscal year, and the appointment of a new auditor and determination of his fees.

## SLB agrees to acquire rival oilfield service provider ChampionX for \$7.8bn

**Bloomberg**  
Houston

SLB agreed to acquire rival oilfield service provider ChampionX Corp for \$7.8bn in an all-stock deal, a move that will bulk up SLB's technology portfolio as ageing shale wells prompt US drillers to spend more to keep output flowing longer.

The deal values each ChampionX share at \$40.59, a premium of nearly 15% to the April 1 closing price, according to a presentation posted on SLB's website.

The US is pumping more crude than ever, keeping Opec and its allies on the defensive. But as the shale industry matures, explorers are focusing more on maintaining and boosting production long after wells have been drilled. And as consolidation among the biggest shale producers continues, service providers will have to follow suit.

SLB, the world's biggest oilfield service provider, said in a statement that the deal will expand its presence in oil and gas production and re-

covery, which is less cyclical than the initial drilling phase. There's also growing demand to scale up emerging technologies such as AI in the industry, the company said. The tie-up will boost SLB's global reach and strengthen its position in North America, according to the presentation.

"Our customers are seeking to maximize their assets while improving efficiency in the production and reservoir recovery phase of their operations," SLB Chief Executive Officer Olivier Le Peuch said in the statement. "This presents a significant opportunity for service providers who can partner with customers throughout the entire production lifecycle."

Shares of SLB fell as much as 3.7% and have since pared some of those losses, while ChampionX rose more than 10% to its highest level in almost five years.

Oil producers are shifting their budget strategy, spending more on operating and maintaining wells and less on drilling and fracking, according to Rystad Energy data cited by SLB in its presentation.



SLB CEO Olivier Le Peuch.

The acquisition will help SLB in two main service areas: production chemicals to keep the wells flowing, and artificial lift technology, which helps boost output after the initial surge of production has dissipated. SLB has the biggest market share in artificial lift with 21%, and ChampionX will add to that with its 5%, according to Evercore ISI, citing data from industry consultant Spears & Associates.

Investors are likely to be concerned about the regulatory scrutiny this deal will

attract, Scott Gruber, an analyst at Citigroup Inc, wrote yesterday in a note to clients. In the production chemicals market, this would combine the world's fourth- and fifth-biggest players, Gruber said, citing Spears data.

The acquisition would be SLB's biggest since it bought Smith International Inc for \$9.6bn in 2010.

SLB, which was formerly known as Schlumberger, sold its US and Canadian fracking business in 2020 as explorers heeded investor calls to rein in spending, sparking concern that activity in the US shale patch would never revisit previous highs.

ChampionX investors will receive 0.735 SLB share for each share of ChampionX. The companies expect the deal to close before the end of 2024, according to the statement. When the deal closes, ChampionX shareholders will own approximately 9% of SLB's outstanding common stock.

SLB also announced it will return \$7bn to shareholders over the next two years, including a target of \$3bn for this year and \$4bn for 2025.

# Foreign and Gulf funds steer QSE to negative trajectory; M-cap melts QR2.91bn

**By Santhosh V Perumal**  
Business Reporter

The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) yesterday lost about 70 points on profit booking pressure, especially in the banks and financial services sector.

The foreign funds were seen increasingly into net selling as the 20-stock Qatar Index shed 0.71% to 9,794.48 points, although it touched an intraday high of 9,882 points.

The Gulf institutions were also increasingly bearish in the main market, whose year-to-date losses widened to 9.57%.

The domestic institutions' weakened net buying had its influence in the main bourse, whose capitalisation melted QR2.91bn or 0.51% to QR569.32bn with small and micro-cap segments leading the pack of gainers.

The Arab retail investors were increasingly into net selling in the main bourse, which saw as many as 459 exchange traded funds (sponsored by Masraf Al Rayan and Doha Bank) valued at QR1,217 trade across five deals.

However, the local retail investors were seen bullish in the main bourse, which saw no trading of sovereign bonds and treasury bills.

The Total Return Index declined 0.38% and the All Share Index by 0.36%, while the All Islamic Index was up 0.04% in the main bourse, whose trade turnover and volumes were on the decline.

The banks and financial services



The foreign funds were seen increasingly into net selling as the 20-stock Qatar Index shed 0.71% to 9,794.48 points yesterday, although it touched an intraday high of 9,882 points

sector index shrank 1.02%, transport (0.11%) and telecom (0.07%); while real estate gained 0.93%, consumer goods and services (0.45%), industrials (0.4%) and insurance (0.32%).

Major losers in the main bourse included Commercial Bank, Medicaire Group, QIIB, Nakilat, Dukhan

Bank, Qatar Electricity and Water and Ezdan. In the venture market, Al Mahhar Holding saw its shares depreciate in value.

Nevertheless, more than 53% of the traded constituents extended gains with major movers being Qatari German Medical Devices, Qamco, Milaha, Barwa, QLM, Le-

sha Bank, Industries Qatar, Al Faleh Educational Holding, Gulf International Services, Mazaya Qatar and Gulf Warehousing were among the gainers in the main bourse.

The Gulf institutions' net profit booking increased noticeably to QR18.14mn compared to QR14.85mn on April 1.

The foreign institutions' net selling strengthened considerably to QR17.12mn against QR0.61mn the previous day.

The Arab individual investors' net selling grew marginally to QR0.36mn compared to QR0.02mn on Monday.

The domestic institutions' net buying declined substantially to QR0.63mn against QR121.93mn April 1.

The Gulf individual investors' net buying eased perceptibly to QR0.36mn compared to QR2.06mn the previous day.

However, the Qatari individuals were net buyers to the tune of QR27.32mn against net sellers of QR105.7mn on Monday.

The foreign retail investors turned net buyers to the extent of QR7.86mn compared with net sellers of QR2.81mn on April 1.

The Arab institutions had no major net exposure for the eighth straight session.

Trade volumes in the main market fell 8% to 134.29mn shares and value by 23% to QR417.67mn, while deals were up 2% to 14,986.

The venture market saw flat trade volumes at 0.03mn equities but on 20% plunge in value to QR0.04mn and 50% in transactions to 3.

## Bond market sees fewer rate cuts than Fed, deepening losses

**Bloomberg**  
New York

For a brief moment last week, the market and the Federal Reserve were on the same page about the pace of monetary easing. It didn't last long, and Treasuries investors are paying the price.

After spending much of this year making bets that were much more dovish than those of Fed officials, investors have now flipped in the opposite direction.

They're forecasting about 65 basis points of rate reductions in 2024, compared to the 75 basis points signalled by the median estimate of projections released following the Fed's March 19-20 meeting. The reassessment is driving investors to demand higher rates of return on US government bonds. Yields on Treasury debt maturing in five to 30 years climbed to the highest levels this year yesterday.

The 30-year yield topped 4.5%, and the benchmark 10-year note is higher by nearly 20 basis points over the past two days, on pace for its biggest jump since early February.

"I thought it would be hard for the market to challenge the Fed on the hawkish side, but apparently it is willing to do so, in the face of some evidence," said Benoit Gerard, a rates strategist at Natixis in Paris.

Traders are reacting to a couple of economic data points from the past few days that point to strength in the

US economy, potentially reducing the need for rate cuts. Reports yesterday on job openings and factory orders, though also stronger than anticipated, had little impact on already elevated yield levels. Key employment data for March are ahead on Friday.

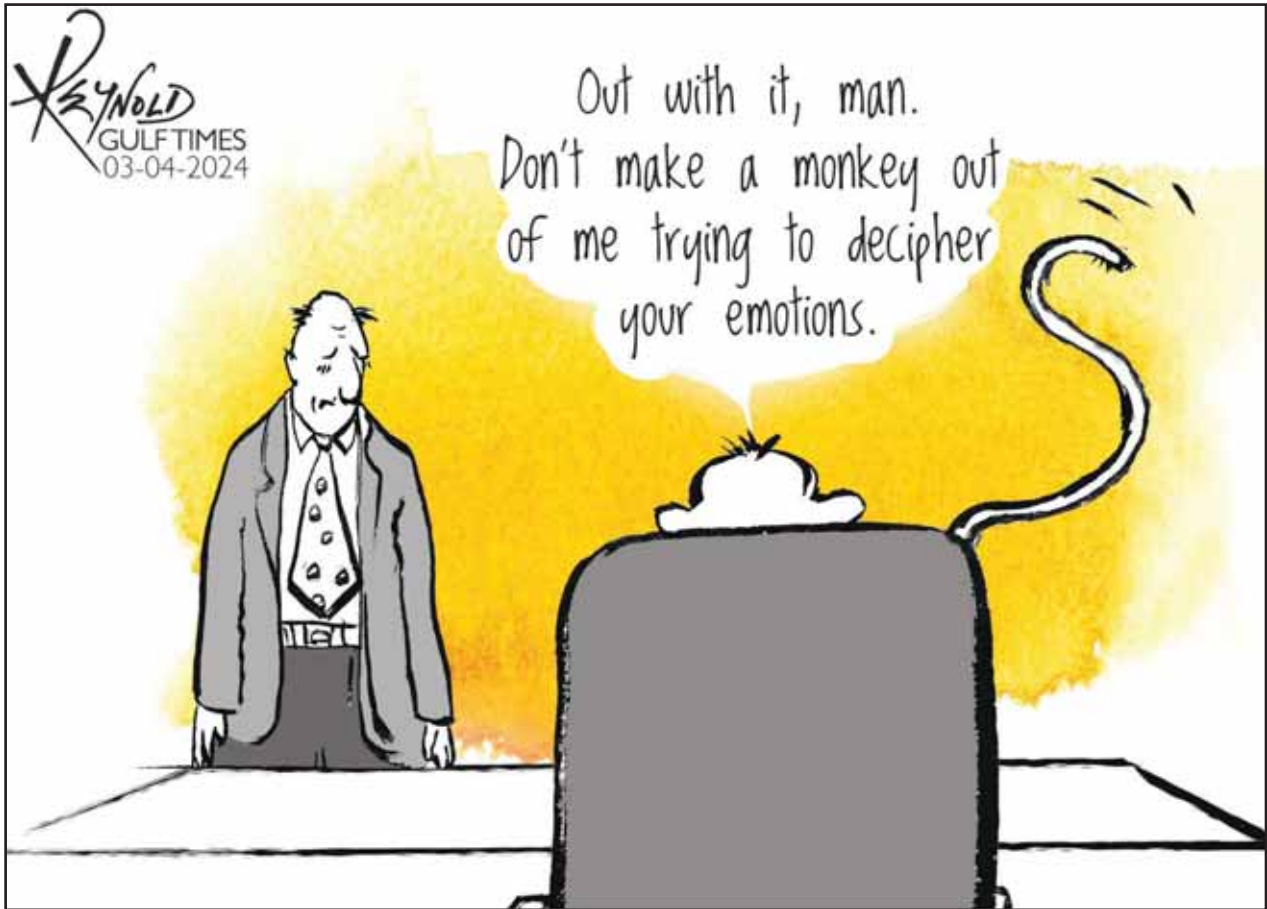
The impetus to higher yields began on Friday, when US markets were closed. Income and spending data for February that showed consumption remains strong. Then, on Monday, a gauge of US manufacturing activity expanded for the first time since 2022, exceeding all estimates in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said after the consumption data that the figures were "pretty much in line with our expectations" and repeated that the US central bank isn't in any rush to cut interest rates.

No Fed ratesetter has spoken publicly on monetary policy since Monday's news, though there are several on the slate for later, including New York Fed President John Williams, Cleveland Fed President Loretta Mester and San Francisco Fed President Mary Daly.

It's not the first time in recent weeks traders have challenged the Fed's outlook. They were also betting on fewer than 75 basis points of easing in the days leading up the March rates decision, though this time round the pricing is even more hawkish.

The shift is also casting doubt on bets that the first rate cut will land in June.



## US job openings holding steady shows labour market resilience

**Bloomberg**  
Washington

US job openings were little changed in February from the prior month, suggesting labour demand is stabilising at an elevated level. The number of available positions edged up to 8.76mn, mainly reflecting a pickup in finance and state and local government, from a downwardly revised 8.75mn in January. The report yesterday from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey also showed an increase in hiring. The Federal Reserve has been looking for softer labour-market conditions ideally through fewer job openings rather than outright job losses. As long as vacancies stay elevated, wages will likely continue to grow, which could risk stubborn inflation as well. Fed Chair Jerome Powell reiterated last week that the central bank is in no rush to cut interest rates, and that policymakers would like to see more evidence that inflation is sustainably retreating before doing so.

At the same time, there are some signs

that the labour market is softening. Openings fell in information, health care and retail trade. Also, layoffs rose to an almost one-year high on a pickup in dismissals within leisure and hospitality, the JOLTS report showed.

The so-called quits rate, which measures voluntary job-leavers as a share of total employment, held at 2.2% – the lowest since 2020. The moderation in quits suggests Americans are feeling less confident in their ability to find other positions in the current market or reflects a smaller wage premium for people looking to switch jobs.

The ratio of openings to unemployed people eased to a four-month low of 1.36. While still somewhat indicative of a tight labour market, the figure has eased substantially over the past year. At its peak in 2022, the ratio was two-to-one. "With the ratio of vacancies to unemployed workers falling amid rising unemployment, we expect wage pressures to abate further ahead. As the labour market comes into better alignment and wage pressures subside, the Fed should grow more comfortable about cutting rates this summer," says Stuart Paul, analyst at Bloomberg.