(Rates are against Dh1)	Buy	Sell
Indian rupee	22.82	22.12
Pakistani rupee	78.67	76.56
Sri Lankan rupee	89.20	86.88
Philippine peso	15.13	14.74
Bangladeshi taka	29.35	28.35

STOCK MARKET

Dubai	DFM
3,410.51	-4.09
Abu Dhabi	**ADX**
9,461.69	-9.08

OIL PRICES ($)

BRENT	DME OMAN	WTI
84.73	83.90	80.47
-0.05	0.00	+0.19

GOLD PRICES

London	$/oz	
2,07.70		-4.29
Mumbai	**₹/10gm**	
60,519		-23.00
Dubai	**Dh/gm**	
243.25		+0.50

1 oz
UAE gold bullion coin

BUY FOR	SELL FOR
Dh8,049.66*	Dh7,918.66

* Indicative retail price provided by DMCC at 7pm as of Thursday

"There has been a slowdown in customer purchases, but this is expected to be short-lived as Eid and the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya are around the corner."
Shamlal Ahamed, managing director for international operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds

BUSINESS

/khaleejtimes /khaleejtimes — reporters@khaleejtimes.com

IN BRIEF

ADCB denies it is in talks to sell $3.7b of bad loans

Bank issues clarification

Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) is not in talks with funds to sell Dh13.5 billion of bad loans, it said late on Thursday in response to a *Bloomberg* report. "ADCB denies in the strongest terms that it is in ongoing deliberations with the company named in the report related to the sale of non-performing loans," the bank said in a stock exchange filing. *Bloomberg* reported that an entity called Lexolent was looking to put together a group of buyers to buy ADCB's non-performing loan book. — REUTERS

Samsung expects first quarter profit to plunge 95%

Chip sales plummet

Samsung Electronics said on Friday it expected first-quarter operating profits to plunge more than 95 per cent on-year, as memory chip sales were hammered by a global downturn. Weak demand and steep profit fall also led the tech titan to announce it will scale back memory chip output. The firm said in a regulatory filing that January-March operating profits were expected to drop 95.7 per cent to 600 billion won ($455 million), their lowest since Q1 2009. — AFP

Solid US jobs data keeps Fed on track for rate hike in May

An historically low US unemployment rate and rising wages will likely keep the Federal Reserve on track to raise interest rates by another quarter of a percentage point next month, as risks of a financial crisis ease while concern about inflation remains high.

US job growth is slowing, something Fed policymakers have anticipated as they raised borrowing costs. But the economy still added 236,000 jobs in March, and has averaged gains of 345,000 per month during the first quarter, well above the level the central bank sees as consistent with its 2 per cent inflation goal.

The unemployment rate fell to 3.5 per cent last month, from 3.6 per cent in February, even as the labour force grew by about half a million people and the participation rate rose slightly. Average hourly wages rose 0.3 per cent, slightly faster than the month before.

The latest jobs report offered the last broad glimpse of the labour market that Fed officials will receive before their May 2-3 policy meeting, and marks another step towards refocusing debate from a potential crisis spurred by the collapse of two regional banks back to their effort to curb high inflation.

Investors in contracts tied to the Fed's benchmark overnight interest rate added to bets that rates will keep rising, with a quarter-of-a-percentage-point increase next month now given a nearly two-thirds probability.

Key number
3.5%
US unemployment rate last month, down from 3.6% in February

"Despite weakening in employment readings in the run-up to the non-farm employment report, employment growth has not yet collapsed though there are visible signs of continued moderation," Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide, wrote shortly after the report was released.

Bostjancic said the Fed overall would be pleased by the data, though she added that it "still is supportive of another rate hike in May — which we think could be the last for the tightening cycle. Followed by a long pause."

In a possible further sign of easing inflationary pressures, the pace of wage growth on a year-over-year basis declined to 4.2 per cent in March, from 4.6 per cent in the prior month, continuing a recent downward trend.

Economists had expected a gain of 239,000 jobs in March, with hourly wages seen rising at a 4.3 per cent annual rate and the unemployment rate remaining at 3.6 per cent. — REUTERS

A gold store at the Dubai Gold Souq. *UAE residents are mostly holding onto their gold assets and not selling even after the yellow metal hit a record high. — KT FILE*

Will gold prices give up gains?

Issac John
issacjohn@khaleejtimes.com

Gold price edged lower in its battle with the wall of resistance around $2,010 amid warning by precious metal analysts that the yellow metal would give up gains if the bank turmoil eases.

While recession woes and geopolitical concerns propelled gold near multi-month high, its price slipped off for a while as markets consolidated amid the Good Friday holiday, despite being set for the weekly gain to around $2,007.

Economists at ANZ bank expect the yellow metal to give up gains if the bank turmoil eases. "While the ongoing banking sector issues remain an upside risk, we see gold prices giving up gains if the crisis eases. We hold our bullish view on gold for the long-term as the Fed pauses its interest rate hikes and the dollar continues to grind lower through the rest of the year," ANZ Bank's analysts said.

However, bullion experts said that the recently downbeat US employment clues and easing hawkish concerns about the Fed's next move will keep the price firm, backed by a weaker dollar.

The World Gold Council said in its quarterly report that the yellow metal, which opened the year 2023 with a $20 per ounce jump over the 2022 year-end price at $1835.05 per ounce, gained 9.0 per cent in Q1 2023 amid concerns over a global economic slowdown, but see-sawed on bond market volatility. A surge in March to record the highest monthly inflows since 2019, reversed two weak months for global gold ETFs and futures investment, WGC noted in its report.

"Gold's 'mere' resilience in 2022 may have been a disappointment to some. Despite crosswinds from unprecedented monetary tightening and spiking inflation, no real crisis materialised. But the risk of one is growing now," said the report, adding, "With a US recession still on the cards, growing systemic risk adds to gold's case."

According to bullion analysts, the decline in gold prices was caused by higher-than-expected economic data from the US and the hawkish stance of the Fed governor, who stated that the interest rate hike regime would continue once the banking crisis subsides. They predicted more choppy seas for the entire precious metals basket, but with an upward bias.

They expect gold could scale fresh highs if the present market conditions prevail during the year. Key factors that will determine the future of the gold price in 2023 include the Ukraine war, US Fed's stance on rate hikes, a full-blown banking crisis, the US inflation level, the demand for physical gold, investors' appetite for gold ETFs, and the continued interest in gold purchases by central banks.

UAE shoppers cut back on jewellery purchases as gold stays above $2,000

Waheed Abbas
waheedabbas@khaleejtimes.com

Shoppers in Dubai have cut back temporarily on gold and jewellery purchases after precious metal hit a one-year high and crossed $2,000 an ounce this week.

Gold jewellery retailers in Dubai said UAE residents are mostly holding onto their gold assets and not selling even after the yellow metal hit a record high, as they expect rates to go up further.

In addition, the retailers are betting on Eid Al Fitr and Akshaya Tritiya festivals for improvement in sales.

The precious metal prices crossed $2,020 an ounce on Wednesday, the highest in the past year. In the UAE, the 24K price closed at Dh242.75 per gram on Thursday while 22K, 21K and 18K were trading at Dh224.75, Dh217.5 and Dh186.5 per gram, respectively.

Shamlal Ahamed, managing director for international operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said even though the market has experienced an increase in gold rate over the past few weeks, there hasn't been a subsequent uptick in customers wanting to sell gold jewellery.

"There has been a slowdown in customer purchases, but this is expected to be short-lived as Eid and the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya are around the corner, which will hopefully reignite buying tendency," said Ahamed.

Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers, said though the consistent increase in the gold price has seen a temporary dip in discretionary gold purchases, there is advance booking for the Akshaya Tritiya.

"We are also hopeful about the upcoming festive and wedding season and have lined up fresh collections and started our campaigns around the same."

John Paul Alukkas, managing director for international operations at Joyalukkas Jewellery, said there has been a slight uptick in customers who are coming in to sell or exchange their gold and jewellery. However, there are also many customers who are coming in to buy gold and jewellery anticipating a further spike in prices. "In fact, business has been slightly brisker than usual," he said.

Since gold is considered a safe haven during uncertainty and turmoil, Alukkas advised UAE residents and investors to hold at least 10-20 per cent of total assets in yellow metal to hedge against inflation as well as for diversifying investments.

Ramesh Kalyanaraman said apart from yellow gold jewellery, there has been a notable uptick in consumer preferences towards alternative metals such as platinum, rose gold, white gold as well as luxury products such as diamond jewellery.

"This shift is fuelled by various factors such as minimalism, cultural trends and growing popularity of all-season jewellery."

GLAZE Granite & Marbles partners with XTONE by Porcelanosa

One of the leading marble importers in the region announces new partnership to bring stunning products to customers

Muhammad Ali Bandial
ali@khaleejtimes.com

GLAZE Granite & Marble, one of the UAE's largest marble importer, has recently announced its partnership with XTONE, as their sole distributor in the UAE region. XTONE by Porcelanosa specialises in large format sintered stone slabs with the highest quality and performance. XTONE comes in 6mm, 12mm, and 20mm thicknesses in different finishes and designs and is used for kitchen countertops, bathrooms, furniture, flooring, wall cladding, and exterior and interior surfaces. Porcelanosa is one of the largest and was one of the first Spanish brands to specialise in the design and production of high-end porcelain tiles, bathroom, and kitchen fixtures, as well as other interior design products. Founded in 1973 by the Porcelanosa family, the company has since then grown into a global brand with a presence in over 140 countries around the world.

Javier Guardiola, international sales director of XTONE by Porcelanosa, said: "We are excited to create a presence in the region thanks to such a strong partnership with GLAZE. We feel very well represented by a customer-oriented company in which corporate values are truly aligned. Together we will go a long way."

Porcelanosa launched XTONE, a state-of-the-art stone that is considered the next generation of porcelain slabs. Furthermore, starting the year with the most automated plant in the world, located in Castellon, Spain, and built to produce large format slabs for bespoke projects, focusing on tailored designs for architecture and design professionals. This new production line has been awarded the 'Best Production Plant' by Tecn Awards 2022.

XTONE marks a new path in the ceramic/porcelain sector through a design concept that breaks with architectonical standards, an endless number of feelings materialised in peerless creations, as a result of the continuous bet on the latest technology, the constant search for higher purity fine materials and the highest excellence in graphic development, without leaving aside the compromise for sustainable innovation.

XTONE has several advantages that make the material stand out. XTONE is 100 per cent natural and recyclable with scratch and impact resistance, durable surfaces made from materials that can be completely re-used after their life cycle. It prevents the absorption of liquids and the accumulation of odours thanks to its low porosity. Along with this, it is stable to sudden temperature changes as it withstands extreme cold conditions and is resistant to ice and frost.

KT Engage

Produced by KT Engage, the branded content unit of Khaleej Times

Oil's bull run to continue

Issac John
issacjohn@khaleejtimes.com

Oil prices are on course for a third consecutive weekly gain with WTI trading above the $80 mark while Brent at above $85 on Friday.

However, the initial oil price rally sparked by the Opec+ announcement has been capped by worrying data out of the US and China suggesting weaker post-pandemic growth.

Market analysts pointed out that while the oil market's bullish momentum might have paused, upside potential remains given the tightening supply backdrop.

Amid the bullish prediction of oil above $100 by some analysts after the surprise Opec+ cuts, Morgan Stanley has cut its price forecasts for this year and next, viewing the latest move as a probable admission from the biggest producers in the group that demand may not be doing too well in the coming months.

"Opec probably needs to do this to stand still," Martijn Rats, chief commodity strategist at Morgan Stanley was quoted as saying by Forexlive.

The US bank cut its Brent crude forecast for the second quarter of 2023 to $85 from $90 a barrel previously expected. The third-quarter forecast was also cut by $5 a barrel — to $90 from $95.