

# Stock markets diverge, oil in slight rebound

London, United Kingdom

Global stock markets diverged yesterday, on the eve of key US jobs data, as oil prices rebounded slightly from five-month lows.

Tokyo's stocks index was by far the biggest faller among major indices, closing down nearly two% as the yen surged against the dollar, which makes Japanese exports more expensive.

Most other Asian markets ended lower and Europe's main exchanges were also down in afternoon trading.

Wall Street's main indices rose at the opening bell after having ended Wednesday lower.

"There isn't a lot of conviction on the part of buyers and there isn't a lot of conviction on the part of sellers," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

"Accordingly, the market is churning, waiting it seems for a new catalyst to give it some new direction for either a breakout or a breakdown," he added.

All eyes were on Friday's US jobs report to confirm a gentle slowdown in the economy that would allow the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates early next year.

After global equities rallied in November on optimism that the Fed will begin to pare back interest rates early next year, markets have pulled back on concerns the buying was overdone.

Data released this week on US job openings and from the pri-

## Key figures around 1430 GMT

New York - Dow:	▲ 0.2% at 36 points
London - FTSE 100:	▼ 0.2% at 7,501.55
Paris - CAC 40:	▼ 0.2% at 7,420.84
Frankfurt - DAX:	▼ 0.1% at 16,634.61
EURO STOXX 50:	▼ 0.3% at 4,469.15
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▼ 1.8% at 32,858.31 (close)
Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index:	▼ 0.7% at 16,345.89 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▼ 0.1% at 2,966.21 (close)
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 144.76 yen from 147.35 yen on Wednesday
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.0782 from \$1.0768
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.2575 from \$1.2559
Euro/pound:	▲ at 85.74 pence from 85.71 pence
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 1.2% at \$70.23 per barrel
Brent North Sea crude:	▲ 1.1% at \$75.14 per barrel



Traders work in front of a chart of Germany's share index DAX that is displayed (in background) at the stock exchange in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany

vate payroll firm ADP reinforced the view that the labour market and economy were slowing as inflation comes down. Jobless

benefits claims data held steady. "The slowdown in hiring continues and is becoming more obvious," said Peter Boockvar,

author of the Boock Report.

"What I'm mostly focused on right now is the trajectory of activity -- and all I see is slowing in multiple places, including now the labour market."

Traders on Thursday were unimpressed with a better-than-forecast rise in Chinese exports, as data also showed imports fell unexpectedly, highlighting the continued weakness in the struggling economy.

The yen strengthened more than 1.5% against the dollar on speculation the Bank of Japan (BoJ) could announce a shift away from its ultra-loose monetary policy at a meeting this month.

The Japanese currency has tumbled for much of the year owing to the BoJ's refusal to budge but officials are shifting their positions as inflation rises.

Oil prices climbed, but they made little headway into the near four% losses seen on Wednesday that put US benchmark West Texas Intermediate below \$70 for the first time since July.

Data pointing to a jump in US petrol stockpiles compounded demand worries as economies slow, while traders remain sceptical that Saudi Arabia and its allies will stick to deep output cuts.

Analysts have begun to consider the possibility that Riyadh could abruptly reopen the taps to maintain market share, similar to a move in 2014 to counter rising US production.

## Bahrain All Share Index marks 1,942.35 points



TDT | Manama

Bahrain All Share Index closed at 1,942.35 points marking a decrease of 0.50 points below the previous closing.

This decrease was due to the fall in the material sector.

Bahrain Islamic Index

closed at 733.58 points marking a decrease of 0.11 points below the previous closing.

Results indicated that 29 equity transactions took place with a volume of 853,187 worth BD 291,372.

Investors traded mainly in the material sector representing 54.75% of the total value of securities traded.

## KPMG explores merger of UK, Swiss ops

London, United Kingdom

Accountancy giant KPMG on Thursday said it was looking into a merger of its UK and Swiss divisions to grow profits.

"We have started conversations with our Swiss firm to explore how working more closely together would bring greater benefits to our clients, people and partners," chief executive of KPMG UK, Jon Holt, said in a statement.

"Together, we would grow

faster, be more profitable and do so in a sustainable way."

The UK unit employs about 17,000 staff and the Swiss arm more than 2,600.

KPMG rival EY recently failed in a bid to split its audit and consulting units, causing its boss Carmine Di Sibio to retire a year early.

EY last month said Janet Truncale would take over as chief executive from July, becoming the first woman to head the group.

## GFH exits its first US student housing portfolio

TDT | Manama

GFH Partners Ltd., a fully Gowned subsidiary of GFH Financial Group yesterday, announced the sale and exit from its first Diversified US Student Housing Portfolio (the "Portfolio"), delivering total proceeds of 122% to investors in the fund following a two-year investment period.

Acquired in September 2021, the Portfolio was comprised of over 1,200 beds across two assets adjacent to the University of Arkansas and Florida State University. During the hold, SQ Asset Management, GFH's US-based specialised student



Nael Mustafa

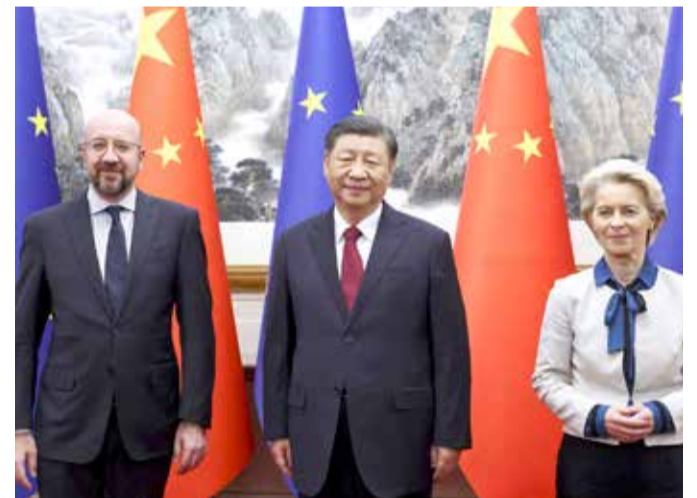
housing asset management subsidiary, was able to reposition the assets through a number of value-add initiatives that resulted in increased Net Operating Income (NOI). These initiatives enabled the properties to each perform in-line with

and above the original business plan, with both having occupancies at 100% and an NOI growth over the two-year hold period of ~40%. Initiatives included the signing of the master lease with the University of Arkansas to take up 40% of the total

bed spaces for three academic years, along with other operational improvements, and the rebranding of the properties to improve exposure within the market. All such initiatives resulted in an improved operating income of approximately 14% compared to the original projections.

Nael Mustafa, CEO at GFH Partners, said, "In addition to the US student housing sector, other key areas of focus for the Group today include the medical offices sector in the US, regional education and healthcare opportunities, and investments in the global and GCC logistics industry."

## EU's von der Leyen tells Xi differences must be addressed



China's President Xi Jinping (C) receiving European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (R) and European Council President Charles Michel ahead of the 24th EU-China Summit in Beijing.

AFP | Beijing, China

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday told Chinese leader Xi Jinping they must address the "imbalances and differences" between the bloc and China.

"China is the EU's most important trading partner," von der Leyen said in opening remarks at a high-level summit in Beijing, "but there are clear imbalances and differences that we must address".

The EU says it hopes the two-day summit in the Chinese capital between the bloc's leaders and Beijing's top brass -- their first in person in more than four years -- will provide a chance to discuss areas of common interest such as climate change and health.

President of the European Council Charles Michel said the bloc was seeking a "stable and mutually beneficial" relationship with China in his comments to kick off the meeting at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse.

"We are united in being committed to the pursuit of a stable and mutually beneficial relationship with China," Michel told Xi and other Chinese officials, adding the bloc wanted ties based on "principles of transparency, predictability and reciprocity".

President Xi told von der Leyen and Michel that China and the bloc must work together to meet global challenges in his opening remarks.

"We must jointly respond to global challenges and work together to promote world stability and prosperity," Xi said.



Tamkeen's executive management met with Foulath Holding, an industrial holding company with major steel investments, as part of ongoing visits to introduce the new enhanced programs to private sector enterprises. Tamkeen's executive management showcased the programs, highlighting ways to benefit from them to employ and upskill Bahraini talent.