

3 April 2026

## Global Markets Research

### Daily Market Highlights

## 3 Apr: All eyes on March's non-farm payroll from the US

**Renewed escalation in the Middle East spurred gains in USD and oil prices**

**Global bond & equity markets closed mixed; US stocks pared early losses**

**AI drove job losses in the US; trade deficit widened less than forecast**

- Focus shifted back to escalation on the geopolitical front and in the financial markets, President Trump's latest address to the nation unnerved investors again, who had earlier hoped for a clear timeline to exit the conflict and that oil flow through the Straits of Hormuz will resume. Trump's pledge to hit Iran "extremely hard" in the coming weeks saw crude oil prices jumping 7.8% d/d to \$111.54/barrel for the WTI, surpassing Brent for the first time since 2010 even as Brent posted an even bigger spike of 11.4% on the day to \$109.03/barrel.
- In the equity space, major bourses from Europe (Stoxx 600: -0.2% d/d) to Asia (Nikkei 225: -2.4% d/d, CSI 300: -1.0% d/d, Hang Seng: -0.7% d/d) tumbled following President Trump's speech. The 3 major stock indices in the US traded sharply lower in early trading hours, but rebounded following reports that Iran and Oman are drafting a protocol to monitor traffic through the Straits of Hormuz. The 3 benchmark stock indices closed mixed, with the Dow slipping 0.1% d/d, while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq gained between 0.1-0.2% d/d.
- Trading in the bond markets were calmer. Treasury yields were 1-2bps lower across the curve and the benchmark 2Y and 10Y yields closed the day at 3.80% and 4.31%. Save the Norwegian bonds, 10Y European bond yields rose 0-5bps.
- The DXY advanced 0.4% d/d to 100.03 on fears of a prolonged war and energy prices. All G10 currencies weakened against the greenback. NZD, CHF and GBP (1.3227) were laggards, weakening 0.6% d/d each, while NOK and SEK outperformed most peers, depreciation -0.2% d/d each against USD.
- Most regional currencies also depreciated against the USD, with THB underperforming all peers at -0.6% d/d, JPY were 0.5% d/d weaker at 159.60, MYR weakened 0.3% d/d to 4.0398, while SGD and CNH closed 0.2% d/d softer at 1.2859 and 6.8901 respectively.
- At the point of writing, news that the Trump Administration will impose tariffs as much as 100% on some pharmaceutical

#### Key Market Metrics

	Level	d/d (%)
<b>Equities</b>		
Dow Jones	46,504.67	-0.13
S&P 500	6,582.69	0.11
NASDAQ	21,879.18	0.18
Stoxx Eur 600	596.63	-0.18
FTSE 100	10,436.29	0.69
Nikkei 225	52,463.27	-2.38
CSI 300	4,478.91	-1.04
Hang Seng	25,116.53	-0.70
Straits Times	4,947.50	-0.57
KLCI 30	1,698.30	-0.62
<b>FX</b>		
Dollar Index	100.03	0.38
EUR/USD	1.1539	-0.43
GBP/USD	1.3227	-0.59
USD/JPY	159.60	0.49
AUD/USD	0.6910	-0.26
USD/CNH	6.8901	0.18
USD/MYR	4.0398	0.33
USD/SGD	1.2859	0.22
USD/KHR	4,005.00	-0.03
USD/THB	32.76	0.57
<b>Commodities</b>		
WTI (\$/bbl)	111.54	11.41
Brent (\$/bbl)	109.03	7.78
Gold (\$/oz)	4,651.50	-2.75
Copper (\$/MT)	12,359.50	-0.60
Aluminum(\$/MT)	3,469.50	-1.76
CPO (RM/tonne)	4,735.50	0.76

Source: Bloomberg, HLBB Global Markets Research  
\* Closing as of 1 Apr for CPO

products could nonetheless see a knee-jerk reaction for SGD today. At the same time, the 50% tariff on many imported steel, aluminium and copper products will be maintained, albeit with some exemptions like products that are made abroad but composed entirely of US metals will face lower tariffs of 10%.

### **Job cuts increased lesser than expected on a monthly basis; AI led reasons led the layoffs**

- According to Challenger, US-based employers announced less job cuts than expected at 60.6k in March. This marks a 25.5% m/m jump but was 78.0% lower than the same month a year ago (prior: -55.5% m/m and -71.9% y/y). Stripping the wave of federal layoffs announced in Feb-March of last year, job cuts largely echoed the low firing stance, and was led by job cuts in the technology, transportation and healthcare sectors. Layoffs were largely driven by AI reasons (10%), followed by closing and restructuring,
- Initially jobless claims were also better than expected and similarly, continued to paint a “low hiring, low firing” scenario. At 202k for the week ended March 28 (-9k vs +6k), this marks one of its lowest levels in 2 years. Continuing claims, nonetheless, rose 25k to 1841k for the week ended March 21, rebounding from a 35k decline the prior week.
- Trade deficit widened less than forecast to \$57.3bn in February (prior: -\$54.7bn) as both exports (4.2% m/m vs 5.6% m/m) and imports (4.3% m/m vs -0.6% m/m) increased during the months, the former due to gold and natural gas shipments, while imports on inbound shipments of computers, semiconductors and automobiles. Trade deficit with China and Canada, meanwhile, have narrowed sharply for the first two months of the year, but widened against Mexico. With this, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s GDPNow forecast suggests that net exports subtracted 0.23-0.76ppts from 1Q GDP.

### **Jump in Australia’s job vacancies and wider trade surplus bode well for the Aussie economy**

- Job vacancies jumped 2.7% q/q for the quarter ended February, picking up from 0.5% q/q previously. At 338k, this marks its highest level since November 2024 amid gains in 12 of the 18 industries, led by construction and customer-facing jobs like in retail and accommodation & food services.
- On the external front, trade balance unexpectedly widened sharply to A\$5.7bn in February from A\$2.3bn previously with export growth rebounding 4.9% m/m (prior: -1.6% m/m), while imports turned contractionary at -3.2% m/m (prior: 1.1% m/m). Amongst its largest trading partners, exports to

the US, Hong Kong and South Korea rose, but fell for China and Japan, and could likely see the impact from the Middle East conflict notably for commodities in the next month.

### Singapore's PMI inched down with limited signs of a war disruption

- PMI inched down 0.1ppts to 50.5 in March, with any signs of a disruption from the Middle East limited thus far. Demand indicators remained expansionary while the linchpin electronics grew at a stronger pace of +0.1ppts to 51.4. We are maintaining our positive outlook for the sector given the AI boom, but also acknowledge downside risks from the uncertain external sector stemming from the Middle East conflict and tariffs.

### House View and Forecasts

FX	This Week	2Q-26	3Q-26	4Q-26	1Q-27
DXY	98-102	100.63	99.80	97.96	96.48
EUR/USD	1.13-1.17	1.14	1.15	1.17	1.19
GBP/USD	1.31-1.35	1.31	1.32	1.34	1.35
USD/CHF	0.77-0.82	0.79	0.78	0.76	0.75
USD/JPY	157-162	159	155	152	152
AUD/USD	0.67-0.70	0.68	0.69	0.70	0.71
NZD/USD	0.56-0.60	0.57	0.58	0.58	0.59
USD/CNY	6.88-6.93	6.93	6.88	6.84	6.77
USD/MYR	3.97-4.03	3.98	3.96	3.93	3.90
USD/SGD	1.27-1.30	1.29	1.28	1.27	1.25
USD/THB	32.00-34.00	31.60	31.80	31.80	31.40

  

FX	Last close	2Q-26	3Q-26	4Q-26	1Q-27
EUR/MYR	4.6562	4.55	4.55	4.60	4.66
GBP/MYR	5.3332	5.23	5.23	5.26	5.28
AUD/MYR	2.7778	2.72	2.72	2.75	2.77
CNY/MYR	0.5859	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58
SGD/MYR	3.1389	3.09	3.10	3.11	3.12

  

Rates, %	Current	2Q26	3Q26	4Q26	1Q27
Fed	3.50-3.75	3.50-3.75	3.50-3.75	3.25-3.50	3.25-3.50
ECB	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
BOE	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
SNB	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
BOJ	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00
RBA	4.10	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35
RBNZ	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25
BNM	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75

Source: HLBB Global Markets Research

### Up Next

Date	Events	Prior
3-Apr	JN S&P Global Japan PMI Services (Mar F)	52.8
	CH RatingDog China PMI Services (Mar)	56.7
	US Change in Nonfarm Payrolls (Mar)	-92k

	US Average Hourly Earnings MoM (Mar)	0.40%
	US Average Weekly Hours All Employees (Mar)	34.3
	US Unemployment Rate (Mar)	4.40%
	US S&P Global US Services PMI (Mar F)	51.1
6-Apr	SI S&P Global Singapore PMI (Mar)	59.2
	VN CPI YoY (Mar)	3.35%
	VN GDP YoY (1Q)	8.46%
	VN Exports YoY (Mar)	5.70%
	VN Industrial Production YoY (Mar)	1.00%
	VN Retail Sales YoY (Mar)	8.50%
	SI Retail Sales YoY (Feb)	-0.40%
	US ISM Services Index (Mar)	56.1
	SI Singapore MAS April 2026 Monetary Policy	

6-14 Apr Statement

Source: Bloomberg

**Hong Leong Bank Berhad**

Fixed Income & Economic Research,  
Global Markets  
Level 8, Hong Leong Tower  
6, Jalan Damanela  
Bukit Damansara  
50490 Kuala Lumpur  
Tel: 603-2081 1221  
Fax: 603-2081 8936

[HLMarkets@hlbb.hongleong.com.my](mailto:HLMarkets@hlbb.hongleong.com.my)

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