

Our World

# QATAR

Leading figures in Qatari politics and business say the country is destined to maintain solid relations with its international partners while seeking new revenue-generating ventures at home and abroad.

Many have characterized Qatar's relationship with foreign partners, particularly with the United States, as a source of pride.

In an opinion piece written for *The New York Times*, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani said that Qatar is forging new ways to solve problems both inside and outside its borders.

"We must work together to pull the Middle East back from the brink of collapse. This will require a bold commitment based on a long-term vision of justice, security and peace for all the people of the region. And we in Qatar are ready to do whatever it takes to help achieve this vision. To that end, our strong bilateral relationship will provide a solid foundation for cooperation between the United States and Qatar, both in the region and beyond. Indeed, our strategic partnership has deepened in recent years, in spite of the regional unrest," the Emir wrote.

The largest U.S. base in the Middle East, accommodating approximately 10,000 troops, is located at the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, close to the Qatari capital of Doha. Qatar has also been a participant in a coalition to fight the so-called Islamic State.

Al-Jazeera reported that President Barack Obama recently lauded Qatar as a "strong partner" in the fight against ISIS.

"We are both committed to making sure that ISIL is defeated, to making sure that in Iraq there is an opportunity for all people to live together in peace," Al-Jazeera quoted Obama as saying.

American officials in Qatar also say the nation is an example of steady leadership in a complex area of the world.

"If you look at the map where Qatar is, it is in the middle of a stormy region. There is conflict in almost every direction, as well as powerful neighbors. In the midst of this, Qatar is a country looking to the future. People here are thinking about education, the future, innovation and empowering youth," says Dana Smith, the U.S. Ambassador to Qatar.



President Barack Obama with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar

## Qatari leaders and U.S. partners working to secure the Middle East

A strong U.S. partner in the fight against ISIS, Qatar is "a bedrock of stability in a sea of turmoil," according to Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and an important mediator in the Middle East. A leader in humanitarian aid, the tiny emirate is investing heavily in education initiatives to help curb the spread of extremism

"[Within this context, Qatar has acted as] a mediator of conflict, maintaining relationships with everyone and using those relationships to try to solve conflicts."

Ms. Smith credited Qatari officials for finding new ways to combat terrorism in the region.

"I would argue that what Qatar is doing is countering violent extremism. Not by overt messaging, but by offering and investing in education. Qatar is trying to build, first and foremost, a better country with more opportunities for its own people, and then a better region and a better world. You cannot do any of that without education," Ms. Smith says.

Robert Hager, Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce Qatar, echoed Ms. Smith's opinion. He calls Qatar "a strong ally of the US."

"[Qatar] as a country [has been] able to keep relations with countries where we need to have dialogue. This has been part of Qatar's diplomacy for many years, and it is playing a key role in how the world community is dealing with the issues of terrorism. It is also playing an important role in helping resolve conflicts, which is a role Qatar has traditionally had, and continues to have," says Mr. Hager.

In Qatar, the government's long-term growth plan aims to diversify its economy and encourage more human development. Officials say the Qatar National Vision 2030, as the program is called, relies on cooperation between the public and private sectors.

"We believe that Qatar is now at a pivotal moment in its history, as it must move beyond the oil and gas industry to ensure that its economy is diversified and sustainable, guaranteeing a more prosperous tomorrow for its citizens," says Dr. Saleh bin Mohammed Al-Nabit, Qatar Minister of Development Planning and Statistics.

That sentiment is also shared by business leaders in Qatar.

"The 2030 vision rests on four solid pillars that range from economic, human, social and environmental development. That gives our country's growth a comprehensive nature, creating a strong framework with good structures in place to induce and encourage all-round growth. But these structures alone won't deliver the level of development Qatar aspires to. This is where I see the private sector coming in. I believe there must be a united effort between the state and private sector to boost holistic development in the country," says Adel Ali bin Ali Al Muslimani, Chairman of Ali Bin Ali Group, a Qatar-based retail and distribution company.

Ooredoo, an international telecommunications company headquartered in Doha, is also backing the effort.

"Our main capacity to help achieve the 2030 Vision lies in supporting the growth of a

knowledge-based economy. There is no denying that the future of Qatar's knowledge-based economy will depend on technology, and we believe that the technology we provide to our people, be it state-of-the-art products or high speed connectivity, can ensure access to the best educational tools available," says Waleed Al Sayed, Group Deputy CEO and CEO of Ooredoo Qatar.

### Humanitarian aid

Meanwhile, Qatar has positioned itself among the world's largest providers of humanitarian aid. Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani recently announced at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit that Qatar has committed \$10 billion to humanitarian causes worldwide.

According to Qatar News Agency, Minister Al-Thani said almost half the funds would be earmarked for education initiatives to help curb the spread of extremism,

violence and "loss of hope." He also reportedly said all countries need to respond to international crises not just through aid relief but also common political action, which will help bring stability.

At the same time, other institutions are raising funds to help people around the world. One such organization is the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). Founded by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and spearheaded by former Qatari first lady and mother of the current Emir, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned, WISE describes itself as a promoter of "innovation and building the future of education through collaboration."

Education Above All, another charitable organization led by Sheikha Al Missned, has also pledged to bring primary schooling to 1.1 million Syrian refugees.

"We have already enrolled half a million children in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon into quality primary education. By 2017, we hope to have more than doubled that number to 1.1 million," she said in a statement.

Qatar Charity has also been supporting victims of the Syrian crisis and other conflicts in the region.

"When there is a crisis, such as the one taking place in Syria, we make sure to be the first NGO to respond," says CEO Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Kuwari.

"The UN OCHA's Financial Tracking System shows that Qatar Charity has been ranked number one among NGOs in terms of level of support for the victims of the Syrian conflict, as well as in Yemen, Somalia and Palestine."

Such efforts seemingly support a statement made by the Emir in his piece for *The New York Times*. In it, he wrote that he felt Qatar played a crucial role in promoting harmony in the Middle East.

"Although Qatar has been a bedrock of stability in a sea of turmoil, we are part and parcel of the region, and we care deeply about its wellbeing," he wrote.

"We have joined the United States-led international coalition against terrorism, and we are united with our partners in the Gulf to combat violent extremism in all its forms. In keeping with our role as mediators between regional adversaries, we have also been active in diplomatic efforts to solve protracted conflicts in conflict-ridden places such as Sudan, Lebanon and Yemen."





# Qatar to invest \$35bn in U.S. over 5 years

Moving its focus beyond Europe, the Qatar Investment Authority has already made multi-billion dollar investments in prime New York City and D.C. real estate, and last year opened an office in NYC, signaling its intent for greater investment in the U.S.

While Qatari officials work toward a stronger international geopolitical presence, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) has been diversifying its portfolio by seeking big-ticket ventures around the world. An important building block of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and a respected professional global investor, the QIA since 2005 has built a major global portfolio that now spans a broad range of asset classes and regions. It has done so by investing and managing the funds in a professional, strategic and prudent manner; and by simultaneously developing QIA into a dynamic, multinational, world-class organization.

The QIA has \$256 billion worth of assets under management globally, according to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute (SWFI). In recent years it has been moving its focus away from Europe—in particular London, where it has stakes in supermarket giant Sainsbury's and Royal Dutch Shell, and \$7 billion directly invested in the London Stock Exchange—towards more investments in the U.S. and Asia.

In June, it made a record \$3.4 billion purchase of a large office complex in Singapore's Marina Bay district. It is reportedly the largest single-tower purchase ever in Asia Pacific. According to *The Straits Times*, the 43-storey Asia Square Tower 1 has more than "1.2 million square feet of Grade A office space."

In July, Qatar's sovereign wealth fund also finalized the purchase of a large-scale apartment and hotel development in Melbourne, Australia. The purchase, which was split between QIA and Singapore-based serviced residence owner-operator The Ascott, was worth more than \$50 million.

Qatar already enjoys a sizeable stake in the London real estate market, with the QIA being a major investor in iconic buildings and areas like The Shard and Canary Wharf.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, Qatari officials have made promises to bring formidable investments into the U.S., with plans to invest \$35 billion from 2015 to 2020.

As a signal of its intent, the QIA opened an office in New York City last year and acquired a 44% stake in a Manhattan development that will be valued at an estimated \$8.6 billion upon completion.

"It is the perfect location to help strengthen our existing relationships and promote new partnerships as we continue to expand geographically, diversify our assets and seek long-term growth," QIA Chief Executive Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohamed bin Saud Al-Thani said in a statement announcing the opening of the NYC office.

Recently the QIA has finalized the joint-venture purchase of another high-dollar commercial development in Los Angeles. The price tag for the office building, located in the upscale Brentwood neighborhood of the city, came to a total of \$225 million.

Qatar's wealth fund has put into motion other retail projects in the U.S., including the construction of a \$700 million office tower in Long Island City, New York and the \$250 million Conrad Washington D.C., a luxury hotel in the U.S. capital. In August QIA also bought a 9.9% stake in Empire State Realty Trust, which translates to a \$622 million investment.

QIA is not the only Qatari investment group with interests in the U.S. The First Investor (TFI), the investment arm of the Doha-based sharia-compliant financial institution Barwa Bank, recently completed leasing space in a



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U.S. Ambassador to Qatar

Washington D.C. office complex. (QIA's real estate investment branch was, in fact, the anchor investor behind the fund that developed the complex).

"The First Investor is the boutique investment bank and it manufactures funds and products for us to distribute to our client base at the bank," says Barwa Bank Acting CEO Khalid Al Subeai.

"We do have exposure outside of Qatar. Historically, we have had the First Investor-U.S. fund, which was a \$800 million fund. The assets in the fund were [the] huge development in Washington D.C., and we managed to develop that property up until completion. It was a mixed-use development, and upon completion it was handed over to the ultimate investor."

Dana Smith, the U.S. Ambassador to Qatar, says that the U.S. and Qatar have established a strong trade partnership that will provide "opportunities" in both nations.

"Last fall we inaugurated an Economic and Investment Dialogue between the United States and Qatar to establish a platform for enhanced economic cooperation. We are looking forward to holding the second dialogue here in Doha," she says.

"Qatar is a growing export destination for U.S. products. From 2004 to 2014, U.S. exports to Qatar grew nearly tenfold, eclipsing, for the first time, \$5 billion on an annual basis. And the opening of the Qatar Investment Authority office in New York City last fall was another important milestone. I am proud that Qatar is investing in the United States because I think it is a reflection that our economy is still growing, and despite the difficult years that the global economy has had, Qatar has recognized that the U.S. economy has incredible potential for continued growth."

Qatar's investments in the U.S. are reflected in the interest many American companies have taken in the small nation on the Arabian Peninsula.

"We have the big companies that people hear about—such as Boeing, ExxonMobil—and there are large companies here that are helping the country develop or market a resource; there are companies that provide a service or equipment and there are support businesses as well. For example, Boeing is supporting Qatar Airways, but is also providing support for the defense and security of the country," says Robert Hager, Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce Qatar.

He adds that Qatar is now facing a renewed push to guide its economy away from a perceived dependence on oil and natural gas resources.

"The oil shock really is a call to speed up diversification. You cannot depend on being a commodity-based economy in the long term; you need to be able to diversify."

"It is not a question of the resources going away; the issue is that as the value of the resources decreases, new sources of value need to be found. You will continue to have to maximize the value of this important resource. But, that said, diversification helps for the future and it helps you survive shocks in prices. You want to allow the next generation to have a full complement of choices, and that is really what part of diversification is as well: giving the next generation more opportunities. That is what we can do for our children, and what Qatar wants to do for its children."

"I think we are seeing this accelerate, and I think the U.S. can help in several ways. We can help with the expertise. We have a very strong history of incubating and supporting knowledge-based companies. This is a small population, and knowledge-based does not mean you need 1,000 people to do something; it means you need a lot of good smart people. With a small population, a knowledge-based economy is a good way to look at the future. You can leverage knowledge much more than having to leverage people."





# How to ensure economic resiliency in times of dynamic changes?

By strengthening macro oversight, implementing risk aversion strategies and ensuring that international standards are met, Qatar has acquired sufficient financial reserves to ensure market liquidity and sustain growth as its economy continues to diversify and international agencies keep their ratings positive

Wealth comes like a turtle but goes away like a gazelle, so the Arab proverb goes, and it is true that the times ahead are likely to be challenging ones for Qatar’s finance and banking sector. Regional instability, changes occurring outside the country that have a negative impact on the local economy, and a slump in international commodity prices are only some of the factors authorities have had to compensate for by intervening in key sectors of the economy and fine tuning its components to ensure maximum effectiveness and transparency.

You could hardly hope for a better stimulus package than one that comes with a steady supply of high-demand petroleum products for export and plenty of major infrastructure projects under construction for the FIFA World Cup soccer championship that Qatar is set to host in 2022. At the same time, structural and regulatory changes have been implemented to guarantee the smooth functioning and transparency of its capital markets, including a law (still in the pipeline) regulating PPPs, the public-private partnerships that the government would like to encourage.

The private sector has been assuming a more prominent role in the economy as Qatar gradually ratchets down its historic dependency on crude oil in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030 Plan, which aims to make the economy’s ground-work fundamentals more diversified and resilient, particularly by encouraging and assisting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

“One of the four pillars of the plan is economic development, and that means the consolidation of a competitive and diversified economy capable of meeting the needs of all the people and securing a high standard of living for them,” says the Central Bank Governor, Sheikh Abdullah bin Saoud Al-Thani.

The QNV also outlines strategies for encouraging Qataris to join the workforce and commits to environment-friendly technological upgrades in the downstream hydrocarbon sector. With 25,244 million barrels of proved petroleum reserves, Qatar is by far the richest country on the planet, with an average per capita income of \$132,000. Diversification of the economy remains the number-one priority. A few years ago, it would have been a joke to argue that by 2016, oil and its derivatives would account for less than half of total economic output. Next year that is likely to fall to 30%, if industry forecasters have got it right. Nobody’s laughing now.

## Buffers and benefits

Consequences and blowback are only to be expected when you pump liquidity into a complex financial system. For the first time in 15 years, Qatar is running a budget deficit. Finance Minister Ali Shareef Al Emadi estimates that it will remain “moderate” through the end of the year and promised government spending caps that will keep it that way, but \$12.8 billion is a significant shortfall by any reckoning. Perks and entitlements may need to be

reduced and efficiency metrics introduced for government employees. Some individuals were annoyed when the government earlier this year withdrew its hitherto succulent gasoline and fuel subsidies. It remains to be seen what will happen in 2018 or 2019, when a uniform sales tax is introduced in Qatar and the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

“Qatar has been one of the fastest growing countries in the region and the near-term macroeconomic outlook remains strong (...) The banking system in Qatar is well-placed to weather lower oil prices, weaker non-hydrocarbon growth and higher U.S. interest rates”

CHRISTINE LAGARDE  
Managing Director, IMF

The country’s trade surplus ended 2016 in a steep decline. Growth remained positive, only there wasn’t nearly enough of it as there had been before. Accordingly, the year-on-year figure for January was down more than half, by 54%. Petroleum derivatives such as fertilizers and especially liquefied natural gas (LNG) went a long way towards making up the shortfall, but not quite far enough. Qatar is the world’s second-largest producer of LNG and dominates a third of the global market, but it will face fierce competition when fields under development in the U.S. and Australia get up to speed.

The good news is that while revenues skew to the downside, there is a fall back commodity available – Qatar’s sterling reputation in the international bond markets. When Standard & Poor’s downgraded Qatar’s Gulf neighbors Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman earlier this year, it affirmed the AA long-term and A-1+ short-term ratings for Qatar and added that the outlook in the country remains stable.

Meanwhile, Moody’s confirmed its Aa2 rating, but deemed the outlook negative after taking into account probable trending vectors in global oil prices. Morgan Stanley Capital International upgraded Qatar from frontier market to emerging market status.

Given that the government holds strong financial reserves in the Central Bank and made sizable investments through the Qatar Investment Authority during the period of high oil and gas revenues, most analysts would go along with the official view that so long as commodity prices remain relatively stable, annual GDP growth between now and 2018 should average 4% yearly or possibly a bit higher.

## Banking’s response

How have the country’s banks been responding to the new economic fundamentals? Central Bank Governor Mr. Al-Thani points to the cross-sector implementation of “important regulations, based on Basel III,” with particular attention to measures relating to capital standards, maintenance of the liquidity coverage ratio, net stable funding ratio and loan-to-deposit ratios, as well

as capital charges for domestic systemically important banks.

“To maintain a competitive economy, monetary policy is kept accommodative, and financial stability ensured through improved regulations and macro prudential policies,” explains the governor. “Favorable tax regimes and ease of doing business, coupled with a fundamentally strong financial environment, are expected to continue to make Qatar a preferred investment destination.”

Largely as a result of this determination to weather out the downturn steady as she goes, during the third quarter of 2015, total assets held by Qatar-based

of this year, they represent 27% of total banking assets, while their share of deposits stood at 30% in December 2015, he says. (Four of Qatar’s 18 licensed banks are Sharia compliant, seven are local players, and seven more are big-ticket foreign banks.)

Besides pitching to a Sharia-sensitive customer base, QIB’s team of financial professionals are keen to connect with value-seeking clients looking for products and yields comparable to those available through conventional banks, says Mr. Gamal, who credits the Central Bank for providing solid legislation and a proper regulatory platform for Islamic banks to grow and succeed.

in dollars or borrowing in yen, why not look into borrowing inside the framework of Islamic banking?” asks CEO Tamin Hamad Al-Kawari.

QInvest’s 2015 balance sheet shows consistent performance

“We strive to be a destination of choice for both international and local investors, providing access to listed companies of undoubted quality, which are both financially sound and poised for further growth”

RASHID BIN ALI AL-MANSOORI  
CEO, Qatar Stock Exchange



Sheikh Abdullah bin Saoud Al-Thani, Governor of the Qatar Central Bank

banks grew by an annualized 11.3%, finishing ahead of their counterparts in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Many see this as a result of the steep capital adequacy ratios required by the Doha authorities.

Even in a country with only 18 banks licensed to do business, the competitive environment in which they operate has encouraged lenders to seek new revenue streams in previously untapped market segments. The result can be perceived in the range of new products and services being offered. The recent establishment in Doha of an official clearing and settlement center for China’s renmibi.

## New products and services

One of those new product niches is occupied by a thriving Islamic banking sector that, according to Bassel Gamal, CEO of Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB), has shown such strong growth momentum that Sharia-compliant assets have become the fastest growing of Qatar’s financial products. As

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SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN SAOUD AL-THANI,  
Governor, Qatar Central Bank

“Sharia-compliant banking, as part of our values, requires complete transparency and commitment,” he emphasizes. “Customers come to us with trust in the values we represent, and we ensure that those values are maintained and strengthened in all our dealings.”

QIB is also the principal stakeholder in QInvest which, like its retail sector parent, conducts its business strictly in accordance with Islamic best practices. “The same way that you would consider borrowing

throughout the year, despite challenging global economic conditions and regional volatility. It culminated in an increase in both revenue and net profit of 32% and 76% respectively, leading the directors to recommend doubling the dividend to shareholders.

“QInvest is unique in the region, in that investment banks here either have the capital but not the right culture, or have the right culture but lack the capital. Our uniqueness comes from the fact that we have the right culture and the right expertise, a blend of local knowledge and world-class experience,” says Mr. Al-Kawari.

Another close observer of Islamic banking trends is Adel Mustafawi, Group CEO at Masraf Al Rayan bank. “Islamic assets are based on real assets supported by risk and profit-sharing fundamentals,” he says. “Connecting those to the real economy creates a natural hedge and better control over the financial system, compared to conventional bank-

ing assets that could outstrip real assets by many multiples, especially when derivatives are taken into account.”

Under the principles of Islamic finance, selling short is not permitted, notes Mr. Mustafawi, who emphasizes that “fair treatment and dealings with customers at all times – especially during times of financial difficulties – underpin the unique partnership we share with our customers.”

The Qatar Development Bank (QDB) is government-owned and operated, and focuses on providing access to capital for SMEs through a range of innovative formulas. “All core activities that contribute to people’s wellbeing are considered,” says Abdulaziz Bin Nasser Al-Khalifa, the bank’s CEO. He points out that as a private sector support arm of the government, the focus is on market gap rather than market share.

QDB’s services include help to support and advise, as well as finance, local SMEs if they strive to qualify for listing on the Qatar Exchange Venture Market (QEVN).

At various stages of its QEVN program, QDB works closely with the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE), whose CEO Rashid bin Ali Al-Mansoori considers the share market’s key function is to serve as the intermediary that brings issuers and investors together for their mutual benefit. “We strive to be a destination of choice for both international and local investors, providing access to listed companies of undoubted quality, which are both financially sound and poised for further growth,” says Mr. Al-Mansoori.

## Highest yields

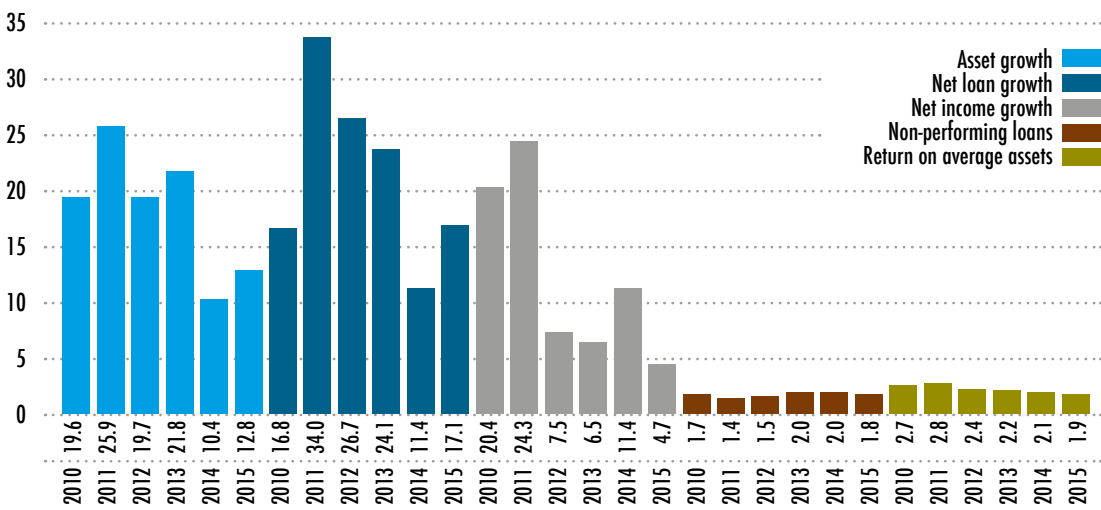
It is no small source of pride for the CEO that even in troubled times like these, the Doha bourse has been able to offer investors consistent and attractive dividend yields that are among the highest in the region.

“We are also intent on attracting new issuers, particularly family-owned companies,” says Mr. Al-Mansoori. “We know there are many successful companies in the non-hydrocarbon sector owned by families and we need to demonstrate to them the advantages of being listed.”

In Mr. Al-Mansoori’s view, an invitation can be extended to all those looking for promising business opportunities and a welcoming, fascinating venue in which to carry them out. “Qatar is an open and inclusive society, one that is investing heavily in modern technology, transportation and basic infrastructure,” he points out. “The government has established the Qatar Financial Center, with its own internationally recognized legal framework, through which international investors can establish a regional presence and partner with local companies.”

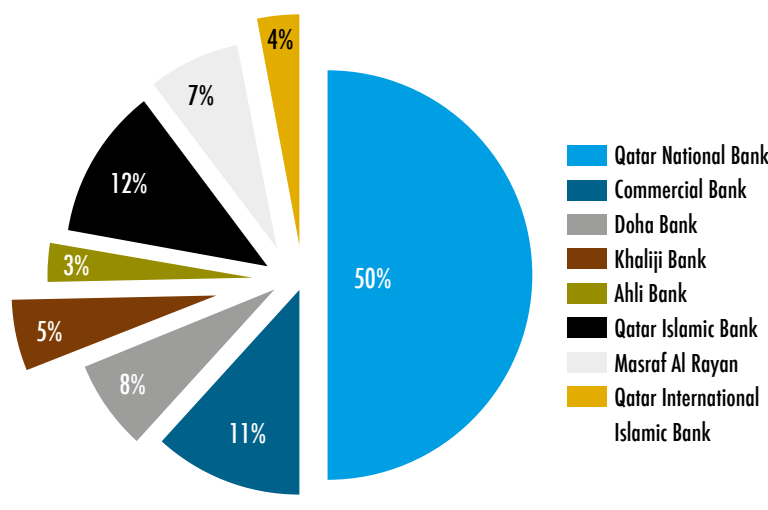
It was that same confidence that must have been at the back of IMF chief Christine Lagarde’s mind when she remarked not long ago that “Qatar has been one of the fastest growing countries in the region and the near-term macroeconomic outlook remains strong (...) The banking system in Qatar is well-placed to weather lower oil prices, weaker non-hydrocarbon growth and higher U.S. interest rates.” And that is saying a lot.

## PERFORMANCE METRICS OF BANKS IN QATAR



Source: S&P rated banks’ financial statements (%)

## MARKET SHARE AS AT DECEMBER 2015



Source: qatartodayonline.com



# High standards transform Qatari champions into international references with best practices

Some of Qatar’s top companies lead their sectors internationally in innovation and technology, while fostering economic and community development, as well as connectivity

As Group CEO of the Qatar National Bank (QNB) since 2014, Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari is at the helm of the largest bank in Africa and the Middle East. QNB holds roughly half the assets in the local banking market, leaving it ideally positioned to offer a full range of conventional bank products and services, as well as targeted activities aimed at producing a high return on equity such as transaction banking, asset management, brokerage, custody and investment banking services.

Net profits for the group were up 7.1% in the first quarter of 2016, much to the satisfaction of international ratings agencies like Standard & Poor’s (A+), Moody’s (Aa3) and Fitch (AA-). Five decades after QNB became Qatar’s first locally owned bank, ownership is currently divided equally between the government, through the Qatar Investment Authority, and the private sector.

With 615 QNB branch offices operating in 27 countries, Mr. Al Kuwari and his colleagues are understandably optimistic on the subject of developing new overseas markets. By the time numbers are in for 2017, 40% of the group’s net profits could be coming from its foreign affiliates, so it is not to be wondered that the group has identified a set of markets in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia for further expansion.

“International expansion is one of the cornerstones of the QNB Group’s strategy for achieving its vision of becoming a leading bank in the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia by 2020, and a truly global bank by 2030,” the CEO says. Already QNB has some 30 banks operating on three continents, where they provide a comprehensive range of advanced products and services.

Meanwhile, the home market continues to be of primary importance. Mr. Al-Kuwari adds, but given Qatar’s small population (2.5 million), growth has to be powered by the group’s foreign assets. To that end, this year the the QNB Group has acquired existing banks such as Turkey’s Finansbank, as well as preparing to operate under its own brand in India. The banking giant has likewise taken the first steps towards establishing a presence in Cuba.

Domestically, Qatari banks are preparing to operate in a high volume environment in which the government serves as an incubator for private enterprise. The investment drive coincides with a population surge and together they are driving an economic transformation with double-digit growth in the non-oil sector.

“As the largest bank in Qatar, QNB is fully dedicated to contributing to that initiative,” says Mr. Al-Kuwari. “Our mission is to nurture the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by acting as a one-stop shop for this segment.”

## The communicators

A city as spectacularly modern as the Qatar capital Doha depends totally on its telecommunications network. A good many billion-dollar buildings would be standing empty if the quality of telecom services were anything less than world class, with guarantees of absolute reliability. In Qatar, the go-to place for connectivity solutions is Ooredoo Qatar, a partly state-



Acquiring new routes and new aircraft, Qatar Airways is the world’s fastest growing airline

owned telecom whose CEO, Waleed Al Sayed, has plenty of good reasons for thinking, as he does, that Internet-connected mobile devices are probably the most important tools any of us possess.

“One of Ooredoo Group’s main strategies is to stay on top of the demands of today’s rapidly changing customer and business environment by recognizing when our competition and our key offerings have changed,” says Mr. Al Sayed, “such as when over the past few years we have witnessed growing demand for smart services, integrated features and an unquenchable thirst for data extending across our footprint.”

As of September 2015, Ooredoo’s results were sustained by a worldwide customer base numbering 114 million individuals located chiefly in countries in the Middle East, Europe and Asia. According to Mr. Al Sayed, the aim is to have Ooredoo transform its brand identity from that of a regional service provider to become universally recognized as a beacon of technological innovation.

In terms of revenue, Ooredoo has been universally acknowledged as the world’s fastest-growing telecom every year since 2006, while its enterprise value has more than tripled since 2005. Since first venturing beyond its home market, the company has achieved significant results in countries such as Myanmar, Indonesia, Algeria and Tunisia.

Mr. Al Sayed is convinced that the future of Qatar’s knowledge-based economy will depend on the technological expertise that fuels it. “We believe that the technology we provide to our people, be it state-of-the-art products or high speed connectivity, can ensure access to the best educational tools available,” he says.

Thanks to Ooredoo’s skills in satisfying institutional and private customers’ boundless appetite for state-of-the-art broadband access, Qatar was ranked first worldwide in 2014 on an indicator measuring percentage of individual Internet usage in developing countries, with a score of 91.5%. At the same time, it placed first on the list of the most Internet-friendly Arab countries. Since the company rolled out its global brand in February 2013, Ooredoo’s estimated brand value grew 169% to surpass \$2.1 billion in 2016.

Ooredoo’s Supernet package offers unparalleled coverage extending from the inland deserts of the Arabian Peninsula to the exclusive resorts of its offshore islands. Its 4G+ data network guarantees users the speed and capacity needed to handle



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ALI AHMED AL-KUWARI, Group CEO, QNB

video calls, ultra-fast downloads or high-volume Internet transmissions. The crisp quality of its high-definition voice service has attracted praise from numerous users. Ooredoo’s engineers are already working on the next phase, developing and perfecting what will someday be sustainable 5G technology.

To be sure, profitability and technology are far from being the whole story of what Ooredoo—formerly known as Qtel—is all about. Officers and employees at all levels are deeply committed to corporate responsibility initiatives, especially those promoting sport and quality education for youth, as set out in the Qatar National Vision 2030 development plan.

Soccer star Leo Messi was signed as a global brand ambassador, and since 2013 Ooredoo has maintained a high-profile sponsorship of France’s Ligue 1 club Paris Saint-Germain. Working in tandem, the French team and Qatari telecom sponsor a highly regarded community coaching program aimed at training and motivating the soccer stars of the future. It may not be entirely a coincidence that Mr. Al Ayed, who has been with the firm since 1987, is a former captain of the Qatar national handball team and also played with the company soccer selection. All he wishes to comment in that respect is, “We believe the technology we provide to our people, be it state-of-the-art products or high-speed connectivity, can ensure access to the best educational tools available.”



“We stay on top of the demands of today’s rapidly changing customer and business environment by recognizing when our competition and our key offerings have changed. The technology we provide, be it state-of-the-art products or high-speed connectivity, can ensure access to the best educational tools available”

WALEED AL SAYED, CEO, Ooredoo Qatar

## A taste for the iconic

After developing and managing world-class hotels for nearly half a century and acquiring a reputation for their superior quality, it must be pleasant for Hamad Abdulla Al-Mulla and his colleagues in the Katara Hospitality group to reflect that, in addition to their high standing within the sector, their vision and efforts will long be remembered for endowing Qatar with what is sure to be its defining landmark.

If the word iconic has any meaning at all, surely it applies to the Katara Towers, a 40-story architectural showpiece whose designers opted for ambitiously blending tradition with modernity by having its twin futuristic towers curl into a shape that mimics the crossed swords on the Qatari flag as they soar upwards 700 feet above the shorefront.

Located right on the water’s edge in the fast-evolving, ultra-modern Lusail City district, the development covers 38 square kilometers, on which skyscrapers and tower blocks extend from the mainland to four man-made islands. The Katara’s pincher-shaped towers will house a 614-room complex that serves variously as dazzling five and six-star luxury hotel-style suites, as well as branded apartments for long-term residents.

On the water side, a man-made, beach-front island is planned as a venue for a water park, leisure and sports facilities, and lavish locales for refreshment, dining and entertainment.

Katara Hospitality’s CEO, Mr. Al Mulla, is pleased to be associated with so challenging a project. He is aware, though, that showy and spectacular is far from the only way to attract a high-end international clientele. “We are industry pioneers in developing high-quality environments characterized by true Arabic hospitality with a global appeal,” he says. “Our ongoing contributions are synonymous with our passion for the industry, and bear witness to our strategic intent as we pursue growth in key travel destinations.”

## Oil & gas still the mainstays

Oil brought prosperity to Qatar, but even prosperity is subject to the irrevocable law of consequences that begins “too much of a good thing.” Luckily for Qatar, government-mandated diversification away from oil dependency has succeeded in creating a new kind of oil-enhanced economy, one that is driven by a non-oil sector in which services and construction provide the forward momentum.

Trained as an engineer at Penn State University, President and CPO of Qatar Petroleum (QP) Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi has plenty of hands-on experience in the sector to draw on. He is committed to his company’s role in furthering the expansion and growth of the economy and the sustainable management of his country’s resources for the benefit of future generations. Optimization of procedures, safety and asset integrity are among his primary concerns.

“The petroleum sector has always been, and always will be, an international industry that affects and is affected by all kinds of economic and political unrest,” he says. “It requires huge and continuous investment and ongoing technological progress. Our initiatives invariably require a greater start-up time and take longer to show a real return on investment.”

Since taking the helm at QP, Mr. Al-Kaabi has undertaken a series of divestitures aimed at allowing the company to focus more closely on its core activities: extracting, processing and transporting hydrocarbons. Unfortunately, the mandate that saw him assume executive duties in September 2104 also required Mr. Al-Kaabi to lay off many veteran workers, “right sizing” for the sake of greater dynamism and efficiency. “This will be a stable organization going forward,” he assures.

One prominent item on the to-do list is the start of development of the recently discovered and potentially enormous Al Shaheed offshore natural gas

field, beginning in 2017, in partnership with the French firm Total. Qatar is already the world’s number one exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), and earlier this year loaded its custom-designed cargo carrier with the 10,000th LNG shipment to depart from the port of Ras Laffan.

On that occasion, the president remarked that the milestone event “demonstrates QP’s commitment, as developer and operator of the world’s largest LNG port facility, to giving the utmost priority to safety, security and efficiency” and added that he was confident it would cement Ras Laffan’s position as the premier port for cleaner energy.”

## Comfort with commitment

“Complacency” is not a word you will find in Akbar Al Baker’s dictionary. “We are constantly moving the goalposts,” Qatar Airways’ (QA) dynamic CEO affirms. “As long as I am in charge, there will be constant innovation.” That is the fundamental policy that has made QA the world’s fastest growing airline as it acquires new routes and new aircraft. At the latest count, 177 different planes display the QA logo on their flights to some 150 destinations worldwide. In 1997 the QA fleet consisted of four just aircraft. QA also operates the world’s third largest air cargo fleet.

“Qatar Airways has the youngest international fleet in the world, averaging just five years old, and our experience is second to none,” Mr. Al Baker says. The same superlatives apply to its attentive service and luxurious in-flight amenities aimed at maximizing passengers’ comfort.

QA also operates Doha’s Hamad International Airport, which is set to double in size and handling capacity after undergoing the physical and smart technology upgrades needed to accommodate visitors for the 2022 FIFA World Cup soccer championship. The state-owned airline bought a 10% stake in British Airways’ parent company IAG SA this past year and added Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles to the list of destinations in the United States operating direct flights linking the airline’s Doha hub to the ten largest U.S. metro areas. (The others are Chicago, Dallas/Ft. Worth, New York JFK, Philadelphia, Houston and Miami).

Mr. Al Baker is no stranger to the applause and approval QA receives for its five-star customer service. The carrier was acclaimed as “Airline of the Year” by Skytrax in 2011, 2012 and 2015. Less well known outside the industry is its commitment to supporting a global response to climate change by helping to develop – and naturally adhere to – international policy initiatives for managing aviation-related greenhouse gas emissions.

“Aviation will make a significant contribution to the global response to climate change, and Qatar Airways is contributing towards the development of local and international solutions,” says Mr. Al Baker. Our investment in flying fuel efficient aircraft and focus on optimizing environmental performance across our modern fleet demonstrates our leadership in the continued pursuit for lower carbon air travel.”





# An empowered private sector thriving on innovation sustains growth

As the economy diversifies and becomes more sophisticated, businesses such as Ali Bin Ali Group are prime examples of the strategic planning that has been done in Qatar to ensure long-lasting success



“This isn’t a country that is depending solely on oil and gas. With an eye on the future, the nation has branched into multiple fields of investment and expansion, education and innovation”

ADEL ALI BIN ALI AL MUSLIMANI,  
Chairman, Ali Bin Ali Group

the accumulated success of the past, to not permit the creation of a vacuum, especially during transition – Qatar is a country that has shown the world how it can be done,” he says.

“It is a magnificent example of wisdom and true leadership. That capacity to plan ahead for the future, to transition from one phase to another seamlessly and without interruption, is a very special attribute. ‘Succession planning’ is what it is called in the business world, and it is the key to continued success, be it a country, a family, a company or a conglomerate like Ali Bin Ali Group.”

With the expansion that is occurring, such an approach seems to be helping in the expedition of rapid transformation and growth. Mr. Al-Muslimani expects to see “state-of-the-art infrastructure, smart buildings and green solutions, educational, cultural and social growth, cutting-edge innovation in healthcare, technology-driven solutions in every industry, flourishing entrepreneurship, a robust business landscape and an even greater preservation of our heritage.”

The Ali Bin Ali Group, which is spread across Saudi Arabia and is now expanding into Kuwait and the UAE, will contribute to these aims and if Qatar persists in its already accelerated advancement, the cooperation between private and public sectors will continue to propel the country forward, making room for long-standing success in a promising region.

**N**amed the Middle East’s most attractive retail market in June of last year, Qatar continues to grow and expand in multiple arenas in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup and beyond.

Though the massive sporting event seems far away, Qatar is already working towards a future that will enhance the economy and culture long after FIFA and football fans from around the world have piled into the host country for one of the most anticipated sports events in the world.

It may come as a surprise that this market has been named one of the top zones to watch in the region. With competitors like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia nearby, the estimated figure of over \$12 billion in retail sales in Qatar is attractive to high-end merchants both domestically and abroad.

The introduction of luxury department store names like Galeries Lafayette and Harvey Nichols to the capital city of Doha paves the way for luxury goods providers to take advantage of their opportunity to acquire a position within the one million square meters of new retail space currently being developed and encourages more international investment in a market that is poised for success.

The diversification of Qatar’s economy presents an opportunity for both private and public sectors to benefit and create progress that secures long-term stability. By 2017, 70% of the GDP is expected to come from the non-hydrocarbon sector, according to the Minister of Finance, Ali Shareef Al Emadi. Local businesses with diverse revenue streams such as those involved with the Ali Bin Ali Group are prime examples of the strategic planning that has been done in Qatar to ensure long-lasting success. ABA is a well-known leader in FMCG & Distribution businesses like: P&G, Philip Morris, BAT, Reckitt Benckiser, Mars and Kraft Foods. They’re also recognized for several luxury and fashion retail brands such as Cartier, Mont Blanc, Van Cleef & Arpels, Audemars Piguet, Philipp Plein and Ermano Scervino.

Chairman Adel Ali bin Ali Al Muslimani has an almost all-encompassing view of the progress in Qatar and in private sector companies as he builds upon the business his father started over seven decades ago. As he says, “This isn’t a country that is depending solely on oil and gas. With an eye on the future, the nation has branched into multiple fields of investment and expansion, education and innovation.

“Taking that approach is not only wise but it creates an ex-

temremely resilient business environment leading to dynamism in the market. Finally, Qatar has pursued visibility, on a global scale. Through many initiatives, including the hosting of the World Cup in 2022, which is fully on course to positively impact the entire region, Qatar has placed itself in the forefront of global awareness. These factors all work together, galvanize the market, uplift and position Qatar as one of the most attractive business destinations.”

Mr. Al Muslimani’s outlook on the cooperative efforts of both sides has already created leaders in the private sector such as Ali Bin Ali Beverages, which distributes global brands like Pepsi, Tropicana, Aquafina and Gatorade.

Looking to the future and the National Vision 2030, a governmental plan that strives to continue development in the coming decades, Mr. Al Muslimani says, “I see the role of the private sector as one of partnership. It is incumbent upon us private sector organizations, like the Ali Bin Ali Group, to work in synchronization with our national ambitions and plans. We must take the initiative to calibrate our own growth plans with those of the country. That will create an unbeatable synergy.”

Within the Ali Bin Ali Group alone there are companies that range from contracting and

property management to medical supplies, printing, travel and supermarkets. The ABA portfolio holds around 400 international brands across 14 diversified lines of businesses. The conglomerate has a special focus now on their hospitality division, which currently manages restaurant concepts ranging from casual to fine dining and already supports brands like Fauchon, Nestle Toll House Café, Wagamama, Ciocolati Italiani, Crepaway and Umm Sherif. And, with two new luxury hotels set to open before 2022, the hospitality branch is well on the way to preparing for the 7 million tourists expected by 2030 and the needs of a growing population. ABA has also recently partnered in working with Italian fitness and wellness provider, Technogym, and is inspiring active lifestyles of more than 35 million people in over 100 countries.

The many business streams supported by the Ali Bin Ali Group may perhaps be the reason this conglomerate is one of the top choices in partnering with government improvements for the future development of the country. They are one of the four companies that have been selected to work on The Warehousing Project in conjunction with Manateq, the leading provider of special economic zones in Qatar.

Mr. Al Muslimani and the Ali Bin Ali Group have been chosen

to operate the Katara Plaza in the Katara Cultural Village, which promises to be a large task, and an even greater responsibility to the country, as it is one of the most important brands in Qatar. The popular tourist destination features exhibition galleries, concert halls and theatres that host multi-cultural activities from around the world. On display at Katara are the heritage and traditions of Qatar, but many have hope that this haven for history will continue to become increasingly important as it hosts international workshops, festivals and performances. The plaza will also feature innovative technology that will allow tourists to enjoy dining year round with an outdoor environment that is climate controlled. The cold air breeze is designed to flow up from the floor, keeping the temperature in the seating area at a cool 22-25 degrees centigrade. The Katara project is an opportunity to blend a place of luxury with culture and provides a connection for visitors to experience a unique human interaction with the exchange between culture and art, building on the efforts of those who have come before. This seems to be a technique the many Qataris have mastered, including Mr. Al Muslimani.

“That ability to build on what has already been achieved, to not lose momentum nor discard

## Most competitive economy in the region

The government continues to improve the business climate, facilitating the private sector in order to build a diversified and sustainable economy

**Q**atar has overtaken the UAE as having the most competitive economy in the Middle East, according to Swiss business school IMD’s World Competitiveness Index, released in May. Qatar ranked 13th out of 61 countries, while the UAE fell from 12th place to 15th.

Qatar’s main strengths are shown by indicators such as economic performance (second) and government efficiency (fifth). Both are backed by Qatar’s budget surpluses and sound macroeconomic fundamentals. But the authorities cannot rest on their laurels in a country that, despite its small size, aspires to become a prominent global player. This is why they are focusing on those indicators where there is still scope for improvement.

Dr. Saleh bin Mohammed Al-Nabit, Minister of Development Planning & Statistics, welcomed the results of the IMD report but also emphasized the need to work on the elements that are preventing the country from further moving up the ladder.

“These results confirm that our overall performance is solid and they will certainly help us to identify those areas where we need to consolidate gains and make further improvements,” the Minister said, referring specifically to upcoming challenges like strengthening direct inward investment flows, boosting high-tech exports or increasing the share of renewables in total energy consumption.

The IMD report has not been the only international recognition of Qatar’s efforts. In the latest edition of the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Competitiveness Index, released in September last year, the country ranked 14th and regained its position as the most competitive economy in the MENA region.

However, the WEF has warned that the recent decline in the price of oil and gas may

undermine the country’s performance in the future. That begs the question: can a country like Qatar, which has built its international preeminence on hydrocarbons, thrive in a global economy where low energy prices become the norm?

The WEF has a clear answer: yes, as long as Qatar invests its exceptional wealth in innovation, technology and know-how that can translate into future economic growth. That would help the country absorb the likely shocks looming over the international energy market.

Qatar is already hands-on in this undertaking. According to the WEF, it is an innovation-driven nation whose economy is in stage three of development. This means that it ranks alongside the world’s most economically advanced countries. Only three other MENA states (the UAE, Israel and Bahrain) can count themselves in the same league.

Efforts must be made, nonetheless, to further diversify the Qatar economy. Diversification has become the mantra of the country’s authorities, and lies at the core of National Vision 2030, which intends to gradually reduce the country’s dependence on energy while maintaining its competitiveness and increasing the role of the private sector.

Aysa Al Mudahka, CEO of the Qatar Business Incubation Centre, recently said in a *Qatar Times* report that the country “must support a strong and diversified private sector, with small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs providing the engine room for growth.”

Qatar hopes to increase the role of foreign direct investment (FDI) as “one of the main drivers of economic development” over the medium and long term, the Minister of Economy, Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohamed Al-Thani, told *The Gulf Times*.

FDI and government investment will have to go hand-in-

hand if Qatar is to revamp its infrastructure in a way that matches the country’s aspirations (one of the few competitiveness indicators in which Qatar is lagging behind is precisely that of infrastructures). And one secure way to fund these projects is by bringing in private capital, specifically through public-private partnerships (PPPs).

A draft law aimed at unlocking the PPP potential in the country is currently being discussed, and is likely to be implemented by the end of the year. The new legislation would enable Qatar to resort to PPP funding mechanisms to continue investing heavily in key areas such as infrastructure, education, healthcare and tourism. Therefore, PPP could be instrumental in ensuring the execution and completion of projects that may have otherwise been delayed or cancelled.

Private involvement would enable Qatar to maintain its ambition without straining public finances and compromising the country’s strong macroeconomic foundations. Meeting investment commitments would also help non-hydrocarbons industries take off, which will mitigate the country’s overreliance on gas.

Indeed, the private sector is already playing an important role, as it has pumped an estimated \$8.2bn into various public projects over a period of one year.

The idea of complicity between the public and the private sector becomes clearer in the thoughts of Adel Ali bin Ali al Muslimani, Chairman of the Ali Bin Ali Group, who refers to globally renowned national brands like Qatar Airways or Al Jazeera as examples “that highlight what can be achieved when national strategies are aligned with the power of markets and led by a private sector mindset.”





# World’s leading gas exporter wants to become champion of renewable energy

Big investments such as the \$10 billion Barzan Gas Project will help Qatar to secure its leading position in LNG production in the face of growing competition. But the country is also investing heavily in renewable energies in line with its Vision 2030 plan for sustainable development

Since ancient times, the sea has been the main economic lifeline for the people of what is today Qatar, with the waters of the Arabian Gulf providing fish for sustenance and pearls for trading from China to the coast of East Africa.

These days the sea continues to play the major role in the fortunes of the tiny emirate, as deep beneath the blue waters off the northeastern coast of Qatar lies one of the largest deposits in the world of natural gas, the North Field; making the country the biggest exporter of this increasingly important energy source.

Extracted and processed to become liquefied natural gas, or LNG, the mixture of mainly methane and a bit of ethane is seen as cleaner, safer and more easily transported than other hydrocarbons, important in a world which is seeking out more environmentally-friendly fuels.

Producing around 77 million metric tons of LNG each year, Qatar accounts for around a third of annual global exports and sector analysts note that thanks to wise investment in natural gas infrastructure over the past several decades, the country can produce, process and ship the gas cheaper than any of its neighbors.

Qatar is also one of the few countries that can handle the full LNG production chain: upstream, downstream and transport, for which the country has the largest LNG tanker fleet in the world.

Located halfway between Europe and Asia, Qatar is also perfectly positioned to supply its gas customers quickly and at a lower price than most of its competitors.

But as LNG’s popularity as a clean and efficient fuel increases, rival producers are taking aim at Qatar’s dominance of the world market which is expected to rise to 330 million metric tons by 2018.

With an eye to its near, and energy-hungry, neighbors like China, Japan and South Korea, Australia is planning on going head-to-head with Qatar in the LNG market, while the United States is also setting its sights on boosting exports of LNG from shale.

Other producers expected to help meet future demand are Egypt, Israel, Tanzania, Mozambique and Cyprus.

Despite the current low prices for petroleum products and the volatility of the market, Qatari officials say now is the time to invest in new projects to ensure the country can maintain its output, be ready to roll when prices bounce back and use the earnings for its ambitious economic development plans.

“We expect that we will go through one more downturn cycle of oil prices, but we will recover,” predicts Qatari Minister of Energy & Industry Dr Mohammed bin Saleh Al-Sada, and analysts concur.

“Qatar can live well with low oil prices,” says Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, former energy minister and current chairman of the Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah International Foundation for Energy & Sustainable Development.

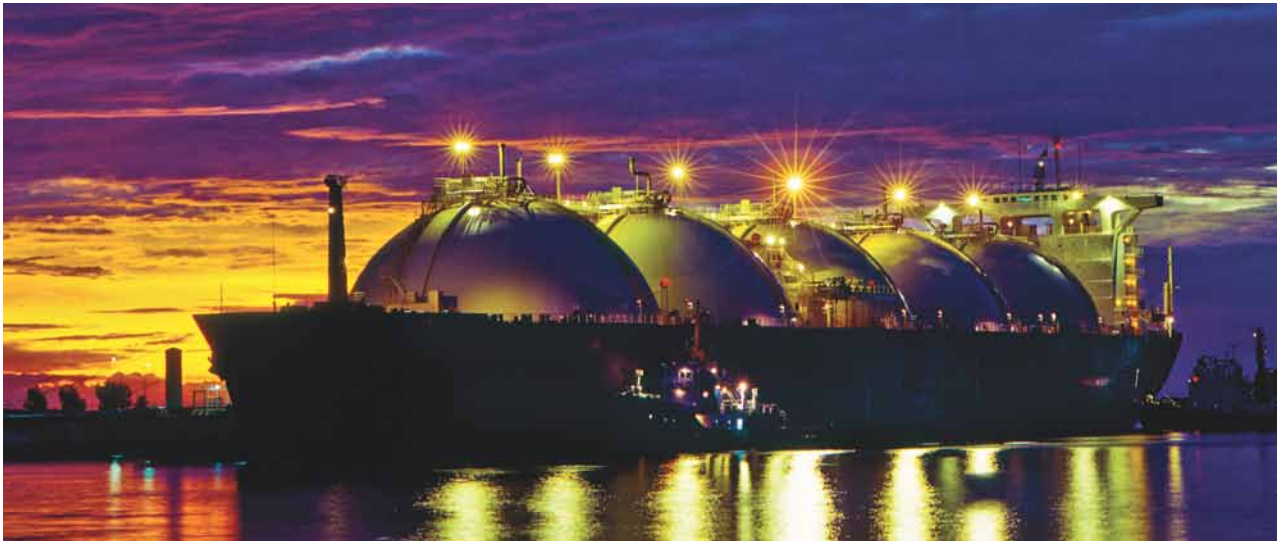
“This is a circle, it is not something new. My expectation today is that it will take years for oil to go back to normal again. Back in the 1990s we had this oil problem and managed it by cutting the fat and restructuring the budget.

“We always ask ourselves this question: What happens after oil and gas? We do not want to go back to where we were before and that is why we have economic diversification, a sovereign wealth fund, investment in education and high tech and alternative revenues.”

“Qatar is a small country and small countries always move faster than the big ones.”

One of the new endeavors is the Barzan Gas Project, a \$10 billion joint venture between Qatar Gas and ExxonMobil, which will eventually produce 1.4 billion standard cubic feet a day of gas for the domestic market.

In addition to gas, Barzan will produce about 22,000 barrels per day (bpd) of field



Qatar is one of the few countries that can handle the full LNG production chain: upstream, downstream and transport, for which the country has the largest LNG tanker fleet in the world



By 2030, Qatari officials want to increase solar capacity to a staggering 10 GW

condensate, 6,000 bpd of plant condensate, 34,000 bpd of ethane, 10,500 bpd of propane and 7,500 bpd of butane.

Construction of the project, incorporating offshore and onshore facilities, started in 2011. The offshore facilities include three offshore wellhead platforms, subsea pipelines and cables.

The onshore facilities are comprised of a gas processing unit, a sulphur recovery unit to remove impurities from the natural gas, and a natural gas liquids (NGL) recovery unit. Ethane produced from the plant will be used as a feedstock for Qatar’s growing petrochemical industry.

Expected to be fully operational by next year, the facility will be managed by RasGas and make a major contribution to Qatar’s economic development, executives at participating companies say.

“Barzan is a significant project that will help take the country through its phase of growth to support the 2022 World Cup and Vision 2030,” says Exxon-Mobil Qatar President and General Manager Alistair G. Routledge.

“The challenge is to foster a sustainable economy with capabilities beyond oil and gas to meet energy demand and that includes renewable energy.

“And while Barzan is clearly the strategic project to support growth in the near future, looking ahead the challenge for the country’s leaders will be to determine how best to incorporate other energy sources to maintain this growth over the long term.”

But economic growth requires much more than just financial support, with human capital vital to any development, and ExxonMobil is also playing its part, the executive says.

“We put a lot of focus on developing the national workforce through the people we hire and the students we support both directly and indirectly,” he explains.

“And we also provide training opportunities, not only for our own employees but for employees of joint venture partners RasGas, Qatargas and Qatar Petroleum as part of a program called ‘Tamayoz,’ which means ‘excellence’ in Arabic.”

In the city of Mesaieed, 30 miles south of Doha, Qatar Fuel (also known as Woqod), is building a new plant to manufacture bitumen, a hydrocarbon product used for road surfacing

and roofing, which is now much in demand for the country’s extensive infrastructure projects.

“As you can see, in Qatar most of the growth is coming from the infrastructure sector, because all of this infrastructure has to be completed before the World Cup in 2022,” says Woqod Chairman Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

“The Public Works Authority has a huge demand for bitumen and though Woqod is not the sole supplier of bitumen, we want the company to be a leader of this in Qatar, and provide a high-quality product.”



“Kahramaa has managed to complete vital electricity and water projects, while investing in infrastructure to cope with the comprehensive development and the increasing demand. It comes within our national responsibility as a leading corporation”

ESSA BIN HILAL AL-KUWARI  
President, Kahramaa

Along with bitumen manufacturing, the company is involved in almost every aspect of downstream petroleum products including diesel and gasoline for vehicles, boats, aircraft and industry, and also trades in bunker fuels, ship-to-ship bunkering and LPG.

Being heavily reliant on the country’s hydrocarbon sector gives the executive an unparalleled insight into the state of the nation’s economy, both present and future.

“The steps that the government has taken in terms of maintaining the sustainable growth rate have been successful with diversification of the economy accelerating in recent years where the contribution of the non-oil sector to the gross domestic product approached 60%, which makes Qatar less dependent on the oil sector,” he says.

“On the other hand, the drop in oil prices taking place in the last two years has had a minor impact on Qatar and on the region to a certain extent. However, the conservative and precautionary steps, and the strategies adopted by the government has resulted in utilizing our available resources more efficiently and productively which ensures our sustainable growth during the coming years.”

Qatari companies in the power generation and other sectors are also operating abroad such as Nebras Power which was established two



“The drop in oil prices taking place in the last two years has had a minor impact on Qatar and on the region to certain extent”

SHEIKH SAOUD BIN ABDULRAHMAN  
AL-THANI, Chairman, WOQOD

years ago as a joint partnership among Qatar Electricity & Water Company (QEWCo), Qatar Petroleum International and Qatar Holding.

“Before then these three companies were investing in the power generation sector in the international market and we asked ourselves: ‘Why should we have three different entities competing against one another for the same business?’ So we created Nebras,” explains CEO Khalid Jolo.

Currently, Nebras provides services and solutions for LNG handling facilities, water treatment plants, fuel sourcing and supply ventures, making it a significant player in the Middle East, Europe and Southeast Asia.

“We have the right mix as each of the three partners are experts in their fields—QEWCo in developing, operating and maintaining power projects; Qatar Petroleum International with their experience in LNG, gas-receiving, processing and transportation; and

Qatar Holding in finance and finance structuring,” he says. **Championing sustainable development**

Qatar may be synonymous with oil and gas but the emirate is also championing the development of a thriving renewable energy sector as part of its drive to build sustainable development and meet future energy demands.

It has, of course, abundant solar energy potential, and the government plans to have 1,800 MW solar power capacity by 2020, which should make up around 16% of total power generation. By 2030, Qatari officials



“The challenge is to foster a sustainable economy with capabilities beyond oil and gas to meet energy demand, and that includes renewable energy”

ALISTAIR G. ROUTLEDGE,  
President and General Manager,  
ExxonMobil Qatar

want to increase solar capacity to a staggering 10 GW.

Two of the country’s largest energy companies, QEWCo and Qatar Petroleum, signed a joint venture agreement in June that will see an investment of \$500 million in renewable energy projects.

With this large focus on solar, the joint venture will go a long way in helping the nation reach its renewable energy goals.

Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) is also investing heavily in renewable energy. With electricity generation capacity of more than 5,400 MW, it is the second largest utility in North Africa and the Middle East, and was the first private company in the region engaged in the generation of electricity and water desalination when it was established in 2000.

Kahramaa plans to generate 200 MW from solar energy facilities by 2022 and is currently

building the country’s first solar plant in Duhail which will generate 10 to 15 MW when it goes operational later this year.

The company is also training local engineers and technicians in renewable energy technology which is in line with the government’s “Qatarization” program, one of the pillars of Vision 2030 that aims to boost the portion of Qatari citizens employed in the industry and energy sectors to 50%.

Renewable energy generation is a main feature at one of the company’s most impressive projects, the Kahramaa Awareness Park (KAP).

Located near Doha and Hamad International Airport, KAP gives Qataris a real taste of what the future of energy generation and water distribution in their country could be like, and stands to become one of the country’s sustainability landmarks.

It has been designed to function as a science museum for disseminating information and raising awareness on ways to conserve water and electricity, which is particularly pertinent as Qatar is one of the world’s largest per-capita consumers of electricity and water.

This is partly due to the fact that electricity and water are free of charge for the local population which means there is no financial incentive to use these resources conservatively.

Educating the young population about conserving their use of energy and water forms part of Kahramaa’s multifaceted sustainability strategy, and is integral to the goal of building the sustainable economy envisioned by the government and Vision 2030.

Through this innovative educational project, Kahramaa is helping the nation to reach that goal.

Three renewable energy systems have been installed at the park to power the museum complex: three wind turbines generating 30 kW; 42 square meters of solar panels for water heating; and another photovoltaic installation that can provide up to 63.3 KWph. Together they will offset 37 tons of carbon dioxide.

Aside from the science museum of water and energy conservation, the park, which has been built using a variety of recyclable materials, has a theater and ‘eco’ café.

In recognition of the sustainability awareness efforts initiated by Kahramaa, KAP won the Every Globe Award in 2015.

The resources awareness campaign comes at an opportune time as Qatar’s demand for energy and water is set to skyrocket over the coming years. Electricity demand is forecasted to grow 6 to 8% annually, while water demand will increase 50% by 2022. In a bid to cope with this rising demand, Kahramaa is investing in a series of mega projects to increase its power and water capacity.

One of the main projects is Rawdat Rashid, a \$600 million scheme for five reservoirs with a capacity of 100 million gallons of water each, making them the largest reinforced concrete reservoirs in the world.

In guaranteeing there will be enough electrical power over the coming decades, Kahramaa is building a major transmission and distribution center in Duhail at a cost of \$70 million, and a new \$3 billion independent water and power project that will have an installed electric generation capacity of 2400 MW and 130 MIGD (million Imperial gallons per day).

“Kahramaa has managed to complete vital electricity and water projects, while investing in infrastructure to cope with the comprehensive development and the increasing demand. It comes within our national responsibility as a leading corporation,” says President Essa Bin Hilal Al-Kuwari.

By making these vital investments and promoting the idea that is in everyone’s best interests to conserve these precious resources, Kahramaa is supporting the government in reaching its ambitious Vision 2030 goals.



# Infrastructure spending spree ahead of FIFA World Cup in 2022

Lower oil prices will not curtail the the planned \$200 billion spending bonanza on stadiums, ports, airports, a new rail network, hotels and roads ahead of soccer's biggest tournament

It's going to be quite a party and Qatar is spending \$200 billion on getting ready to receive the tens of thousands of fans, players and officials coming for the FIFA World Cup in 2022, as well as showcasing the country to the tens of millions more tuning in via television and mobile devices.

As the world's premier sporting event, the soccer extravaganza is fueling a development drive which will not only herald the tiny emirate's arrival on the world stage but is also part of the grander Vision 2030, Qatar's ambitious scheme to advance the country's sustainable economic, human, social and environmental progress well into the 21st century.

Along with the nine new stadia to be built and the refurbishing of three existing venues for the World Cup, much of the money is being spent on such transport infrastructure as the spanking new Hamad International Airport, which is expanding yet again just two years after opening.

And with sea trade important to Qatar for channeling its petroleum exports to the world and for handling the billions of dollars worth of imports shipped into the country each year, the new Hamad Port will eventually cover 20 square kilometers with an annual capacity of six million containers to become the world's largest green field port development.

Other big-ticket projects include the four-line Doha Metro connecting the capital city with its suburbs and the coastal city of Al-Khor, a long-distance passenger and freight

Cranes over Doha city



rail service linking much of the country, and a state-of-the-art tram system within the new, planned "smart" metropolis of Lusail City on Qatar's north-eastern coast.

Fans attending the opening and closing matches of the World Cup in Lusail City will marvel at the urban design of residential and shopping districts, marinas, parks, leisure facilities and even island resorts, with essential services in every neighborhood within a five-minute walk for the "smart" city's 260,000 inhabitants.

Qatar's Vision 2030 also calls for overhauling the country's electricity supply and water generation infrastructure, along with housing, health and education all paid for by the government as well as local and international lenders.

With the fall in the price of oil around the world and subsequent effect on Qatar's government coffers, many were concerned that some of the projects would be curtailed or perhaps even cancelled.

But those worries were firmly put to rest by Qatari officials.

"We reiterate our commitment to investment in infrastructure, health, and education in accordance with the directions of his highness the Emir and in line with our national vision and the commitment to hold the World Cup finals in 2022," Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani told a news conference.

And private companies, both Qatari and foreign, will have a chance to take part in the country's ongoing bonanza thanks to a new law on public-private partnerships (PPPs) that is expected to be passed by the end of this year.

Under the legislation, 30 per cent of tenders on government projects will be earmarked for small and medium enterprises, thereby ensuring wider opportunities for the country's small private sector.

At the same time, the partnerships will lessen the financial role of the government which is under pressure from the continuing low prices for its main revenue earner, oil and gas.

"We hope to have the framework completed and start im-

plementing the law by the end of the year," an Saud al-Attiah, an official at the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, recently told a financial conference.

Private companies are already involved in Qatar's infrastructure development on several levels. Woqod, a leading petroleum products company, is building 100 branded gasoline stations around the emirate before 2020 and testing mobile gasoline stations which will "pop up" when and where they are needed.

"This is state-of-the-art technology, dynamic and flexible," says company chairman Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. "A mobile station can be fixed in place one day and later removed in a safe and secure manner and we are getting excellent feedback from our customers."

Any country eagerly embracing the future like Qatar needs to acquire the most modern telecommunications infrastructure and this effort is being spearheaded by Ooredoo, an international Doha-based company which works in tan-

dem with leading telecom operators from around the world.

"Ooredoo has developed and launched a host of next generation technology from smart infrastructure of 4G and fiber, to smart entertainment, connected cars, next generation education, health and workplace solutions, and intelligent transport and smart stadiums," says Waleed Al Sayed, the Group Deputy CEO and CEO of Ooredoo Qatar.

"We are indeed becoming a leader in the provision of the network infrastructure required to build the smart cities of the future, and we've been leading the efforts for the first-ever smart city in Qatar – Lusail City – which will be supported by Ooredoo's Supernet network," he adds.

Industrial and logistical infrastructure is also to play a key role in transforming Qatar into a regional industrial hub and building a competitive and diversified economy driven by the private sector.

Among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, Qatar has been a pioneer in taking the lead in such moves

as these countries try to move away from their heavy economic dependence on oil which is a finite resource and a dangerously volatile industry.

In an effort to help reach that goal, the Qatari government decided to develop three strategically located special economic zones (SEZs): Ras Bufontas situated next to Hamad International Airport; Um Alhoul, near Hamad Port; and Al Karana, situated around halfway between Doha and the Abu Samra border with Saudi Arabia.

Ras Bufontas was the first of the three zones to be launched back in 2014. Construction is ongoing with the third phase to be completed in 2019. Covering four square kilometers, it is the smallest of the SEZs and will serve as a hub for businesses in the medical, aerospace, automotive, high tech, logistics and business services sectors.

Launched last year, Um Alhoul is a 34 square kilometer development for investors in the petrochemicals, building materials, maritime, metals, logistics, food processing, tools and machinery sectors.

Al Karana will be the largest of the trio, targeting businesses operating in the building materials, machinery, specialized spillover industries, safety, maintenance and specialized warehouse/logistics activities. The zone will be the overland gateway to GCC markets and offer facilities such as business incubator spaces and conference centers.

These zones are to be operated and managed by Manateq which aims to support the Qatari government in the facilitation of growth of the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises and the promotion of a thriving manufacturing industry in line with Vision 2030.

# Industry veteran establishes first energy think tank in the Middle East

Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiah, one of the architects behind Qatar's transformation into the leading exporter of liquefied natural gas, has established a unique platform to build towards sustainable development and diversification within the energy sector

For more than three decades, Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiah has been one of the most renowned figures in the Qatari energy business, and has previously served as Chairman and Managing Director of Qatar Petroleum, Minister of Energy and Industry, and second Deputy Prime Minister.

Now, after a long career of service, when many would be thinking about retirement, Mr. Al-Attiah is focused on supporting Qatar's move towards a more sustainable future. In November 2015, he established The Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiah International Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development – the first energy think-tank to operate in the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Attiah's vision is for the Foundation to become one of the world's leading institutions on energy and sustainable development policy.

"The foundation will aim to give advice and share knowledge, while specializing in research and analysis. We will create workshops, write papers, seminars and studies about energy like, how to deal with the market, with oversupply, demand and prices," he says.

"We will advise governments and companies on how to build their own projects, how to cut the fat in their expenses, how to avoid market shocks, how to be prepared, how to make the right calculations and how to plan ahead both in the short term and the long term. We want people to knock on our door with questions which we will aim to answer based on our vast experience. The Foundation will have leading experts from around the world."

Aside from presiding over the Foundation, Mr. Al-Attiah is the current President of the Ad-

ministrative Control and Transparency Authority in Qatar. In 2012 he presided the Oversight Committee for the COP 18 Climate Change Conference in Doha and during his long career has received numerous accolades for his work, such as the Grand Cross in the Order of the Orange Nassau, conferred by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands; the Grand Cordón Order of the Rising Sun in recognition of his contribution in promoting bilateral relations between Qatar and Japan; and the Necklace of Independence, awarded by the Emir of Qatar, for his efforts on promoting transparency in government and industry in Qatar.

In fact his contributions have been so important that an award recognizing efforts to improve and modernize the energy sector bears his name: The Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiah International Energy Awards are in now their fourth year, with the 2016 winners announced in May.

Several other important figures in the Qatari energy industry and politics make up the Foundation's board, including Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, President & CEO of Qatar Petroleum (QP); Dr. Ibrahim Ibrahim, economic advisor to the Emir; Qatar's Ambassador to Italy Abdulaziz Ahmed al-Malkim; and two QP board members, Hamad Rashid al-Mohannadi and Nasser Khalil al-Jaidah.

Since its establishment less than a year ago, the Foundation has kept busy. In November it will host the Clean Energy & Sustainability Summit, in conjunction with The Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting. The Summit will bring together international and regional professionals to debate the latest developments

in clean energy supply and ways to achieve energy sustainability.

"The summit will be a platform to discuss further the energy issues that relate to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate change. Technical advantages in clean energy, mitigation of GHG emissions and the energy efficiency improvement will be demonstrated and presented during this summit to further improve the cooperation in fighting climate change," said Mr. Al-Attiah in May when announcing the event.

He added that the Summit is an opportunity for Qatar and other GCC states to showcase to the international community their efforts on working towards the establishment of a more environmentally friendly energy supply. "We, at the Foundation, are basically concerned with energy and will be extending our hand to the region and international community."

With citizens in oil-rich states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) paying very little or even nothing for electricity, there is of course very little incentive for energy saving, resulting in high per-capita energy consumption (In fact Qatar has the highest per-capita energy consumption in the world according to the International Monetary Fund). Therefore one of the greatest challenges the oil-rich Gulf States face today is significantly reducing the citizen's wasteful consumption of heavily subsidized energy.

"As the rest of the world is gradually turning towards greater energy efficiency in economic terms, much of the GCC is going the other way, using ever more energy to produce a unit of economic growth and becoming less competitive in the process," said board member Dr. Ibra-

him at the inauguration of the Foundation in November 2015. "If these long-term consumption trends continue, the Gulf States are forecast to be just a few decades away from relinquishing their long-held position as global energy suppliers."

Mr. Al-Attiah explains that this issue is one that worries the Foundation, but he has hope. "I strongly believe in empowering our citizens. Educating our citizens is vital for the future of the Gulf region, which faces many challenges, including that of

heavy energy consumption."

The Foundation wants to lead the charge in educating citizens on resourceful energy use, and plans to establish educational programs in association with institutions based in Qatar to raise awareness of this issue.







# World Cup makes Qatar a catalyst for change to bridge the gap between Western world and Middle East

In 2022, Qatar will be the first Middle Eastern nation to host the FIFA World Cup—a highly anticipated month-long event that has been known to provide economic expansion for host nations; but the difference between Qatar and some previous host countries is that long-term planning has been at the forefront of the process from the start

The institution in charge of delivering infrastructure as well as supervising preparations for the tournament is the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, led by Secretary General Hassan Abdullah Al Thawadi. “We are confident that the early progress we have made leaves us in an excellent position to deliver on the promises we made to the international football community during our successful bid,” says Mr. Al Thawadi.

the Middle East. This will also be the first year that the event will be held from mid-November to mid-December instead of the traditional summer dates, with the final taking place on December 18, 2022, which is Qatar’s National Day.

**Workers’ protection** Qatar is the smallest nation by area and by population to ever be awarded the World Cup, and it is tasked with hosting 32 teams for 28 days in eight new stadiums under development. Private sector

Qatar for several decades, but the region has not previously been a tourist destination. U.S. Ambassador to Qatar Dana Shell Smith says, “We have governments around the world thinking 24 hours a day, seven days a week, about how to counter violent extremism, how to bring East and West together, how to achieve mutual understanding between people. This is a region of hundreds and millions of young people, and World Cup is going to be a source of pride for them.”

top universities in order to assist in transforming their concepts to reality,” according to the Committee. Fostering creativity and original ideas are what both the government and private sector believe will lead to a lasting economy in Qatar. The Committee says, “Challenge 22 symbolizes a window into the young talent that we have in our region, and the hunger and desire that exists to develop that talent. The first pilot edition was aimed at the Gulf nations, and this year we

sports. “Sport can make a major contribution to developing people by providing new skills, educating through the values of sport, and promoting active and healthy lifestyles,” he says. Part of the vision for developing Qatar also involves building the image of the country so that it will be recognized and respected on a global scale. Dr. Al Kuwari explains, “Whilst a focus on hosting international sport helps to raise the profile of a country globally, the QOC’s focus is on using sport to support the development

Athletics Federations World Championships in Athletics to Qatar in 2019.

**Private sector is key** The private sector is crucial in joining the efforts of the government to help the growth of events in the region. The Ali Bin Ali Group is a one of the largest retail and distribution companies in Qatar and has business streams ranging from contracting and property management to luxury and fashion and medical supplies. Chairman Adel Ali bin Ali Al



“We want to use our resources, knowledge and experience to be a trailblazer for sports development. We are now seeing countries from across the region developing their own models based on Qatar’s success”

DR. THANI ABDULRAHMAN AL KUWARI, Secretary General, Qatar Olympic Committee

The Committee is made up of a team from across the globe and has more than 40 nationalities represented. The group is working not only to deliver infrastructure on time, but also to work towards the National Vision 2030, which is focused on building an international reputation of excellence and promoting sport throughout the world. Among the arenas being built are “a couple of stadiums that will be fully dismantled after 2022.” The large 40,000-plus capacities are ideal for the World Cup, but not for general usage after all of the fans have gone back to their respective countries. But, on top of maintaining feasible stadium space, Qatar is going one step further and repurposing stadium seats in a unique way as well. “We pledged to donate approximately 170,000 modular seats to countries in need of sporting infrastructure at the conclusion of the event,” says Mr. Al Thawadi. The improvements and preparations for 2022 will stretch well beyond the soccer matches and will benefit the nation of Qatar and the region. For many, going to Qatar for a soccer match could potentially be their first time in

entities and government bodies are currently building the infrastructure, and all parties involved are stressing the importance of the conditions of the workers on the projects. Mr. Al Thawadi explains that the Kafala system will be abolished in November and will be replaced “with a contractual agreement between employer and employee.” Previously employers sponsored workers, and the region has been subject to criticism from human rights organizations for this system. Mr. Al Thawadi comments, “A wage protection system was enacted into law in November 2015 compelling private companies to open bank accounts for all employees and to transfer wages electronically and on time. Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are being strengthened on a continuous basis—labor inspector numbers have been increased, site inspections have been increased, and scrutiny of recruitment agents has been increased.” The workers also had a unique opportunity to participate in their own soccer tournament called The Workers’ Cup, which was held in Doha between March and May this year. Both FIFA and the Supreme Committee are dedicated to generating sustainable conditions for the workers who are helping make the 2022 event possible.

**A uniting force** Qatar is committed to making their nation hospitable and welcoming for people from around the world. During the last two World Cup events, fans from the U.S. purchased more tickets than those from any other nation. U.S. companies have had a presence in

“Arab countries want Qatar to host a successful World Cup,” adds Chairman of Woqod (Qatar Fuel), Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. “This will convey the right message that Arabs have the capability to compete with other developed countries like Germany, the U.S. and Argentina. Arabs are able to compete with other regions like Europe and America in hosting such a reputable championship.” **Corporate social responsibility** Woqod is one of the key companies working to ensure the success of the World Cup in Qatar. The company also advocates for the growth of the knowledge-based economy that the National Vision 2030 seeks to create. Mr. Al-Thani explains, “We continually endeavor to make positive contributions to our society and environment. As part of our corporate responsibility initiatives, we sponsor many students and programs within Qatar University and Qatar Foundation. Working with research institutions within Qatar Foundation helps us to integrate and absorb the new ideas. We support the institutions financially and provide internship programs.” Woqod is not alone in supporting the development of youth in the region. The Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy has launched an initiative called Challenge 22, a program that hopes to inspire bright minds to contribute to the 2022 FIFA World Cup. “Young innovators and entrepreneurs present their ideas, and those with the best ideas are connected with research and development teams from

are expanding it to the wider Middle East and we aim to continue that expansion.” The Committee is also responsible for founding the Josoor Institute, an academic center of excellence for the sporting industry. ‘Josoor’ is the Arabic word for ‘bridges’ and signifies the link the founders see between the importance of education and creating a foundation for those in the sporting industry that have not yet begun their endeavors. “Josoor provides these young professionals with a network, and serves as a vehicle for these individuals to benefit from the job creation and economic boost that we believe the 2022 World Cup can inspire,” says Mr. Al Thawadi. The institute collaborates with Georgetown University, Liverpool University, Leeds Beckett University, and Wasserman Media Group, among others. **Widespread development** The development of a knowledge-based economy in Qatar is proving to be a strong point of the nation, creating stability in an area that is traditionally challenged by political unrest. Ambassador Smith comments, “If you look at the map where Qatar is, it is in the middle of a stormy region. There is conflict in almost every direction, as well as powerful neighbors. In the midst of this, Qatar is a country looking to the future. People here are thinking about education, the future, innovation and empowering youth.” Dr. Thani Abdulrahman Al Kuwari, the Secretary General of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), has been focusing on building a future society based on the National Vision 2030 by incorporating

not only of our nation, but also the wider region and the world. We want to use our resources, knowledge and experience to be a trailblazer for sports development.” The QOC has constructed several programs and facilities like the Qatar Olympic Academy, Aspetar Sports Medicine Hospital, and the Anti-Doping Lab Qatar to increase the reach of sport throughout the region. Organizations like these are the first of their kind in the Middle East and are helping to spread awareness and increase participation in sport. The Schools Olympic Program was developed 10 years ago and more than 29,000 students participated over the last school year. Not only does it help identify young talented athletes, the program has also served as a model for other countries from across the region. Dr. Al Kuwari says, “We are now seeing countries from across the region developing their own models based on Qatar’s success.” The QOC also founded the Aspire Academy for Sporting Excellence in 2004. In fact, Qatar can boast its first Olympic silver medalist, high jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim, as a graduate. Cultivating the culture of sport was well under way before Qatar won the bid to host the World Cup in 2022 but now that the opportunity has been won, Dr. Al Kuwari says it is “just one of many global sporting events that Qatar will be hosting over the next few years.” The World Cup is a catalyst for the promotion of other sports and will bring other competitions like the International Association of

“A wage protection system was enacted into law. Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are being strengthened on a continuous basis – labor inspector numbers have been increased, site inspections have been increased, and scrutiny of recruitment agents has been increased” **HASSAN ABDULLAH AL THAWADI, Secretary General, Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy** Muslimani is excited for the opportunity for the country. He recalls, “You know how during pivotal moments in history people always remember where they were and what they did. The night where we heard that Qatar would be hosting the World Cup 2022 was a moment like that. It was a moment I will not forget. There were tears and there was joy. Everyone recognized that the bidding committee had done a great job. Hosting the World Cup in a small country like Qatar was a dream, but it became true. I have no doubt that we are up to the challenge and as promised we can deliver an amazing World Cup.” Mr. Al Muslimani shares the outlook of many in his country, saying, “With the World Cup we will not only see Qatar’s people, locals and expatriates, but the people of the whole region uniting and coming together in a spirit of friendship and sportsmanship. I believe we are perfectly prepared to meet all of FIFA’s expectations.” Plans are well under way for Qatar to break onto the global stage of sport.





# Emirate looks to build an economy driven by knowledge and SMEs, not by oil and gas

For more than two decades, Qatar has been moving its economy away from hydrocarbons towards information technology and learning. This shift to a knowledge-based economy is a critical part of Qatar’s National Vision 2030

To make that vision a reality, Qatar has been promoting three key areas: education, innovation and entrepreneurship. It is harnessing educational institutions and private companies, and setting up incubators to help new companies and start-ups to get off the ground.

The Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC) is one of the leaders in the transformation effort. One of the largest mixed-use business incubators in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, QBIC was founded by the Qatar Development Bank and the Social Development Center, a government entity that provides training courses to develop capacity in many career sectors.

QBIC’s CEO, Aysha Al Mudahka, says positive change is already evident in many areas, and QBIC is working to make sure those changes are sustained and built upon.

“Our mission is to create the next 100 million Qatari Riyal companies in Qatar and to make sure they survive the initial stages of joining the private sector and eventually grow into an SME.”

QBIC welcomes budding entrepreneurs, and “startups with potential to grow, and equips them with the tools and facilities they need to reach new levels and scale up,” Ms. Mudahka says.

All a future business owner requires to seek incubation assistance from QBIC is a good idea –no business plan or university degree required. QBIC will take that idea and “transform it into a tangible product or service, while being as cost-efficient as we can, test it in the market and find out if this is needed and wanted by the target customers.”

QBIC has incubated more than 50 companies spanning a range of industries. Several successes have been spawned, including the launch in January 2016 of the first specialized incubator for tourism start-ups. QBIC Tourism works to help aspiring tourism professionals to get new businesses off the ground by giving them privileged access to tourism-specific business development tools, and guidance from decision-makers in the industry. With Qatar set to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022, tourism is an area ripe for development.

Another incubator, helmed by QBIC and the Ooredoo telecom company, aims to encourage the creation of technology-focused startups to drive knowledge-based development.

“There is no denying that the future of Qatar’s knowledge-based economy will depend on technology, and we believe that the technology we provide to our people, be it state-of-the-art products or high-speed connectivity, can ensure access to the best educational tools available,” says Waleed Al Sayed, Group Deputy CEO and CEO of Ooredoo Qatar

Ooredoo is not only working on “cutting-edge projects for some of the biggest organizations and initiatives in Qatar, such as Qatar Airways, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Smart Cities,” according to Mr. Al Sayed, but also has several programs that are intended to improve the lives of women in Qatar and around the world. These include a project called Mobile Health Clinics in Myanmar, Algeria and Tunisia, and a project to increase mobile penetration among Iraqi women.

In Qatar, Ooredoo has partnered with ‘How Women Work,’ a national community of practitioners that aims to provide information and networking opportunities to empower women, Mr. Al Sayed says.



At QBIC’s demo day, startups have an opportunity to present their product, market research and financial projections to an auditorium full of judges and fellow entrepreneurs

**Women lead the way**  
Qatari women like QBIC’s Ms. Mudahka are helping to drive the transformation of their country from a resource-dependent economy to a knowledge-based one. Ms. Mudahka says she was driven to focus on the development of women in the workforce—alongside entrepreneurship and innovation—after joining a program at the Doha branch of Pittsburgh-based Carnegie Mellon University.

“I think there is more of an opportunity for women to start their own business than to join the workforce,” she explains.

“A recent report by QDB and SDC showed that there are a significant number of Qatari women working from home. Their contribution to society if they were to register their companies would affect the current market considerably.”

She cites several examples of successful women entrepreneurs, including the two partners behind S.Ishira, Qatar’s first deluxe perfume maker. QBIC provided S.Ishira co-founder Shiekha Al Misnad with training, contacts and other assistance, and encouraged her to take what began as a hobby and turn it into a job and successful business. S.Ishira formally launched a line of six perfumes early this year, and recently landed several international sales deals for its line of luxury scents.

Qatar not only encourages women to contribute to the local business scene, but also to get a university education, which is seen as a key step toward building a knowledge-based economy. Women make up half the staff and administration at Qatar University, and according to data gathered in 2012 by U.K. newspaper *The Independent*, six Qatari women attend university for every man.

“Education City has been a valuable addition to the higher education landscape. International branch campuses have contributed, not only to expanding choices in higher education, but also to high-quality research, community development, and national capacity building”

DR. HASSAN RASHID AL-DERHAM, President, Qatar University

**The vital role of education**  
One female graduate of Qatar University—and a holder of honorary degrees from several U.S. and British universities—is Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned, the mother of Qatar’s Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. Sheikha Al Missned has for nearly two decades been a driving force behind efforts to encourage more Qataris to pursue higher education, and for social reforms in Qatar. She chairs the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, a non-profit organization whose flagship project, Education City, has brought

some of the most respected international universities and educational institutions to the Gulf emirate.

Ms. Mudahka says the presence in Qatar of “top schools—both American and European—is playing a pivotal role in driving [the country] towards becoming a knowledge-based economy.”

Qatar University (QU) President Dr. Hassan Rashid Al-Derham agrees: “Education City has been a valuable addition to the higher education landscape. International branch campuses have contributed, not only to expanding choices in higher education, but also to high-quality research, community development, and national capacity building.

“We are constantly seeking ways to further our partnership with Education City universities, and I believe we strengthen each other through complementary and healthy competition.”

QU is another key player in realizing the vision of a knowledge-based economy, entering into numerous collaborative degree and certificate programs with international institutions. In February, QU and The Hague Institute for Global Justice signed a memorandum of understanding to promote knowledge exchange, executive programs, student opportunities and shared research projects. The previous month, QU and Durham University in the U.K. began offering a dual Ph.D. program in Gulf Studies. QU was ranked number one on the list of the world’s 200 most international institutions—a fact evinced by the presence on campus of students from around the MENA region and the world. Dr. Al-Derham is recognized for the role he played in establishing a strong research agenda at the university.

QU has also sought to instill a sense of civic responsibility in students, and in June signed a collaboration agreement to that end with Qatar Charity.

“This agreement highlights QU’s commitment to developing partnerships with private and government organizations with the aim to drive social and economic growth in Qatar,” Mr. Al-Derham said at the signing ceremony.

“It also underlines... ongoing efforts to provide students with various opportunities through which they can strengthen their teamwork, organizational and communication skills which will serve them in their future roles as Qatar’s leaders,” he said.

Signing on behalf of Qatar Charity, CEO Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Kuwari, said the new partnership will help develop students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which will, in turn, help them as they learn to become the leaders, both in Qatar and worldwide.

Speaking to United World, Mr. Al-Kuwari says education is one of the “areas of expertise that QC has developed over the years. In collaboration with (local and international) partners, QC capitalizes on this area of expertise to increase

the impact of its educational projects locally and internationally; it is worth mentioning that Qatar Charity has built 621 schools worldwide.”

**Building a vibrant SME sector**  
Since 1998, The Qatar Development Bank (QDB) has granted QAR 4.85 billion (\$1.33 billion) in loans and advances to Qatari small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to promote the nascent entrepreneurial and startup culture in the emirate. In a move in May, aimed at encouraging SME growth, QDB signed a memorandum of understanding with the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), to allow Qatari SMEs to take part in national infrastructure projects. The bank has also set up a loan guarantee program aimed at overcoming “financing barriers faced by economically viable Qatari SMEs,” says Abdulaziz Bin Nasser Al-Khalifa, CEO of QDB.

The Al-Dhameen Partial Loan Guarantee Program “is designed as a partnership with Qatari banks to improve SME access to financing by covering a significant part of the credit risk,” Mr. Al-Khalifa explains. “Al-Dhameen has unlocked capital for SMEs and is helping to change the culture of SME lending.”

Adel Ali bin Ali Al Muslimani, the chairman of one of Qatar’s largest private retail and distribution companies, the Ali Bin Ali Group, says Qatar is already beginning to reap the benefits of a meticulously planned transformation away from oil and gas and toward knowledge as the central driver of the economy.

“A simple comparison of Qatar’s skyline from 1995 to 2016 will tell you an amazing story of growth and prosperity, of vision and future-focused thinking,” Mr. Muslimani says. Qatar is diversifying its economy in a “very decisive way,” while maintaining steady growth and economic and political stability, he adds.

“Through many initiatives, including the hosting of the World Cup in 2022 – which is fully on course to positively impact the entire region—Qatar has placed itself in at the forefront of global awareness.

“The country not only has the right leadership, but also stability, vision, versatility and resilience—all factors that are in short supply, not only in this turbulent region but across the world. These are the winning factors that make Qatar shine and stand tall, carving out a position for itself as a hugely attractive market.”

Looking closely at the interwoven layers of Qatar’s transformation, it becomes clear that the move toward a knowledge-based economy is about more than improving companies’ bottom lines. As Qatar recasts itself, it is seeking to build a diversified, international business community with a vibrant private sector, and is convinced that the base of that pyramid is made up of ease of launching a business, diversity, and a sound education for all. The benefits of Qatar’s transformation are also intended to benefit not just Qataris, but the entire region and the world.

“We have seen many initiatives in Qatar that positively link local, regional and international views and expertise, and create a platform for people to connect and share their ideas with the right audiences,” says Emad Al Khaja, CEO of Injaz Qatar, a nonprofit that seeks to give youths the tools and mindset needed to succeed in business.

“As a result, we have seen international initiatives establishing a local presence, and local initiatives solidifying their presence and exposure abroad,” he adds, concluding that the “strengthening of the SME sector and the entrepreneurial environment” are essential steps on the path to a knowledge-based economy.



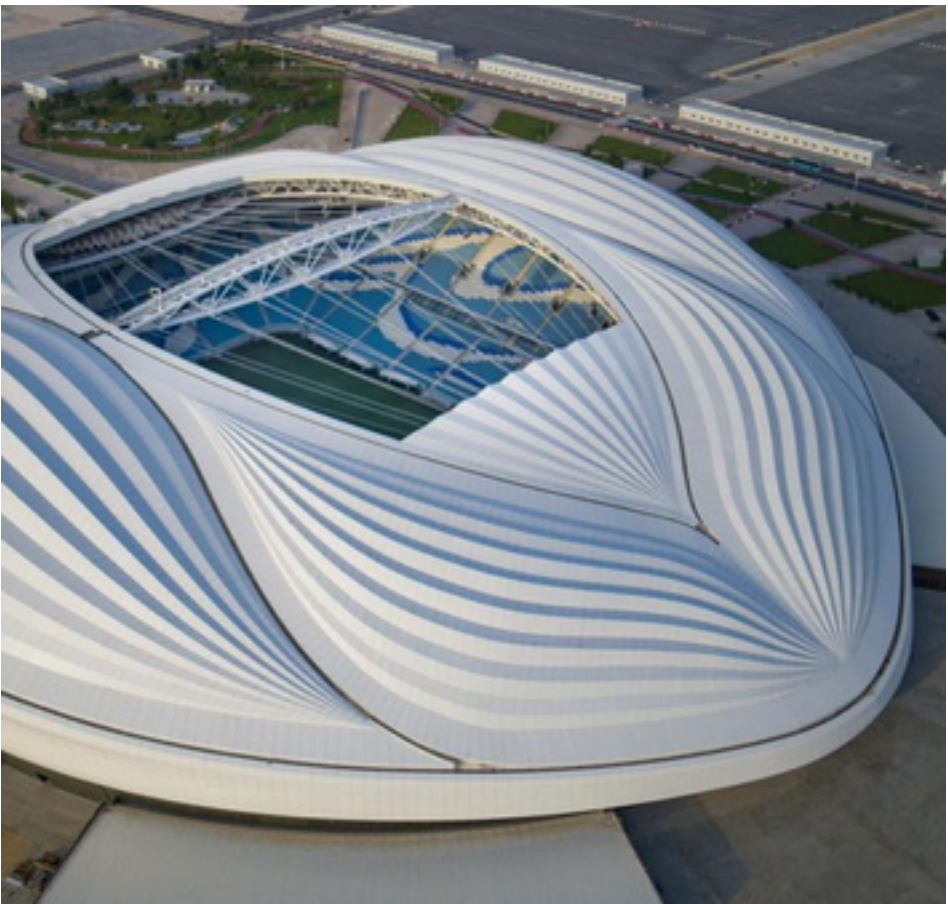
“Our mission is to create the next 100 million Qatari Riyal companies in Qatar and to make sure they survive the initial stages of joining the private sector and eventually grow into an SME.”

AYSHA AL MUDAHKA  
CEO, Qatar Business Incubation Center



“QC capitalizes on this area of expertise to increase the impact of its educational projects locally and internationally; it is worth mentioning that Qatar Charity has built 621 schools worldwide”

YUSEF BIN AHMED AL-KUWARI,  
CEO, Qatar Charity





# Qatari hospitality company benefits from sector growth

Qatar’s hospitality industry, bolstered by bright economic forecasts, is enjoying a renewed period of growth and investment

The amount of room keys in Qatari hotels and apartments is expected to increase 27% by the end of the year—in total, the supply of keys numbers as much as 23,000.

“The Qatari government continues its commitment towards massive capital expenditure and infrastructural development. The private sector plays a pivotal role in the growth of the economy as it leverages from the governmental support through economic policies in favor of trade and commerce,” says Hamad Abdulla Al-Mulla, Chief Executive Officer of Katara Hospitality.

“Qatar is currently embarking on several infrastructural improvements across all sectors, in support of the national development agenda, Vision 2030.”

As Qatar’s hospitality industry thrives through this increased government support, Mr. Al-Mulla says he is seeing the benefits for his own business, Katara Hospitality.

First established in 1970 by the Qatari government

under the name Qatar National Hotels Limited, Katara Hospitality currently manages the country’s only five-star lodging establishment, the Doha Marriott. Katara is now a highly-profitable, multi-national owner, developer and operator of hospitality developments.

Since his tenure as chief executive officer started in 2011, Mr. Al-Mulla has attempted to bring increased development to Katara Hospitality. When he first started, Katara’s only international hotel was in Egypt—now the company has projects around the globe. He has also tried to introduce the hospitality industry to young Qatari workers. He hopes that Qataris will one day make up 50% of the hospitality industry workforce in Qatar.

“Our combined achievements to date illustrate Katara Hospitality’s strategy of investing in iconic hotels while growing a rich collection of peerless hotels in the markets in which we operate. Katara Hospitality’s success in becoming one of the world’s

“While the extraction of hydrocarbons has been the cornerstone of rapid growth for Qatar, organisations such as ours have contributed immeasurably to the nation’s economic growth. Katara Hospitality has emerged as a pioneer in steering the diversification”

HAMAD ABDULLA AL-MULLA, CEO, Katara Hospitality

largest and most profitable hospitality organizations hinges greatly on pursuing a growth strategy that bears strong alignment with not only our corporate vision, but the core tenets of such national initiatives as the Qatar National Vision 2030,” Mr. Al-Mulla says.

“Coupled with continued investment in technology, ongoing property renovations and upgrades to our existing portfolio of hotels, investment in our human resources pool has contributed greatly to our success.”

Mr. Al-Mulla adds that much of Katara Hospitality’s growth can be traced back to its relationship with government officials in Qatar.

“Working closely with key industry stakeholders such as Qatar Tourism Authority provides valuable insights into the tourist profile visiting the country and the combined leisure and business experiences they are seeking. We conduct in depth research on our target markets as well as global trends that impact the sector, evolving guest preferences and international markets in which we operate,” he says.

**Growing globally**

Those global markets are swiftly becoming a focal point for future growth at Katara Hospitality. The organization reportedly has 34 properties in operation or under development within its portfolio and is now focused on adding another 26 properties by 2026.

Katara Hospitality’s properties are in three different continents and several countries, including Qatar, Egypt, Morocco, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Singapore and Thailand. The company now owns more than 7,000 four- and five-star hotel rooms in Europe, Asia and Africa.

“We are industry pioneers in developing high quality hospitality environments that are characterized by true Arabic Hospitality with global appeal. Our continued contributions to the Qatari and global hospitality landscape are synonymous with our passion for the industry, and testament to our strategic intent as we pursue growth in key travel destinations,” Mr. Al-Mulla says.



According to Mr. Al-Mulla, Katara Hospitality success has “aligned” with the growth projections Qatari officials have designated for the nation as a whole, under the The Qatar National Vision 2030, which aims to create a “roadmap” for further diversification of the economy in Qatar.

“While the extraction of hydrocarbons has been the cornerstone of rapid growth for Qatar, organisations such as ours have contributed immeasurably to the nation’s economic growth. Katara Hospitality has emerged as a pioneer in steering the diversification of Qatar’s industrial revenue source in a non-energy sector, bringing to light the much needed thrust for diversification of Qatar’s revenue sources,” Mr. Al-Mulla said.

“Investment has been significant in Qatar, with major global players across multiple sectors looking at Qatar as a potential destination for future investment and organizational expansion.”

“We are industry pioneers in developing high quality hospitality environments that are characterized by true Arabic Hospitality with global appeal. Our continued contributions to the Qatari and global hospitality landscape are synonymous with our passion for the industry”

HAMAD ABDULLA AL-MULLA, CEO, Katara Hospitality

“Katara Towers development boasts a five-star luxury hotel, a five-star ultra-luxury hotel and branded apartments, a remarkable man-made satellite beach front island complete with an unrivalled mix of leisure and water sports facilities, food and beverage outlets as well as world-class water parks with sun-protected gardens to match,” Mr. Al-Mulla says.

He adds that the Katara Towers development is “one of our many projects that is testament to our commitment to Qatar’s economic and tourism landscape.”

“Mega projects such as the development of Lusail District and Katara Hospitality’s Katara Towers illustrate the changing tide, with more non-energy industries particularly hospitality and tourism, contributing positively towards Qatar’s economy.”

# Racing and Equestrian Club’s revamp of the cultural heritage of Qatar builds international prestige

Nasser Sherida al Al Kaabi leads the historic Qatari Racing and Equestrian Club into a new phase of expansion, as sports are placed at the core of a community development strategy

Investment in sport in Qatar is helping to execute change across the nation, creating an image for the country that will soon be known even more globally than it is now.

But how does major cultural change stem from something like sport? It focuses on the development of new skills, builds an environment for the empowerment of individuals and is also a platform for education about healthy living. While it may seem that sport is defined as leisure activity in some countries, Qatar is utilizing the many aspects of athletics to foster a multi-faceted transformation that will positively drive development in the years to come.

Qatar boasts several athletic achievements in recent years, including two Olympic bronze medalists in shooting and a handball team that are the current world silver medalists. The country is also set to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022, making it the first Arab nation to do so and earning more international attention with one of the most popular sports on the planet. Qatar will host more future sporting events including the 2016 UCI Road Cycling World Championships, the 2018 FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships and the 2019 IAAF World Championships in Athletics, which is recognized as the third largest sporting event in the world.

The increase in efforts to identify Qatar as an important host of international sporting events coincides with the National Vision 2030 that strives to improve the country economically, socially and environmentally,



QREC recently won the 2015 Longines Award for the World’s Best Horse Race

**Building a global equestrian legacy**

After football, horseracing is one of the most popular sports in Qatar, and the emirate has long been known for the prowess of its equestrian athletes and as an authority on the racing and breeding of horses.

But unlike football, horseracing has been deeply ingrained in Qatari culture for centuries, and therefore is intrinsic to the nation’s plans for cultural revival.

“Horseracing has been a historical event here for more than 200 years, and being associated with this sport is something that cannot be compared to anything else. Our strategy now is to make Qatar a major destination for horseracing events around the world,” says Nasser Sherida Al Kaabi, the General Manager of the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC).

“Internationally, we were honored by the announcement that one of our flagship races, the Qatar Prix de L’Arc de Triomphe, in

partnership with France Galop, was crowned the 2015 Longines World’s Best Horse Race.” The QREC facilities are amongst the best in the world for training and racing. Races are held every Wednesday and Thursday from October to May. Established in 1975, it has developed thoroughbred and purebred Arabian horse racing events and shows for decades, making it one of the oldest equestrian institutions in Qatar to have an international presence.

QREC hopes to continue to broaden that presence as events in Qatar compete with other world-renowned horse races. For example, this year the Emir’s Sword show jumping event, which lasted three days, touted a purse of QR2.5 million (\$686,000) for the winner. This was the first year that the Emir’s Sword was categorized as a five-star event and full of internationally recognized competitors.

Growing its influence on racing events abroad, Qatar

the title of being the richest race, but it follows the historical Kentucky Derby held every May in the United States. That race generated over \$133 million in 2015 in wagers and though its prize package of \$2 million doesn’t even begin to compare to that of the Dubai World Cup, its history and prestige still rank it the most famous of all horse races. But, by elevating the prize packages and increasing the participation of well-known riders along with quality horses, QREC hopes to eventually gain status and position itself with some of the top races in the world.

Recently, QREC made Qatar the first Arab country to issue Racing Rules. They’ve also begun partnering with major sponsors like Exxon Mobil and Longines, which provides an economic opportunity for recognition from global brands and invites a bigger audience to the racing stage in Qatar. The nation has the heritage and culture to support the development of these aspirations in the equestrian arena and as it continues to make itself a center for sports, this following will grow.

Qatar is affiliated with several international equestrian organizations including the World Arabian Horse Organization, the International Federation of Horse Racing Authorities and the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations. Since 2008, Qatar has also held the office of Chairman of the International Federation of Arabian Horse Racing. With Arabian bloodlines being found on almost every continent and over 660,000 registered in the United States, this Middle Eastern breed has become one of the most recognized

“We want to get more Qataris involved in racing, whether that is in Doha or in Europe, and we will do everything we can to help them achieve that”

NASSER SHERIDA AL KAABI, General Manager, QREC

also sponsors the five-day Goodwood racing festival in England, which takes place every July. The rebranded Qatar Goodwood Festival boasts prize money of \$6 million and is the sporting and social highlight of the flat-racing season in the U.K.

Horse racing in Qatar has stiff competition when it comes to reaching the top race of the year. The Dubai World Cup is the second largest in the world with

able horses in the world and QREC is continuing in preserving the legacy of equestrian heritage for which this region is known.

“Racing is one of the biggest sports, after soccer,” says Mr. Al Kaabi. “It has been in our strategy for many years to be part of this, as it puts the Qatari flag everywhere.” Qatar’s most successful rider, Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani is ranked 93rd worldwide and the country has many other talented equestrian athletes that qualified for the 2016 Olympics in Rio. This year there have been several

“Sport is an incredibly powerful tool for building a healthy society. It can touch every area of a nation’s development”

NASSER SHERIDA AL KAABI, General Manager, QREC

events at the Qatar Equestrian Federation in preparation for the high level of competition at the Olympics.

According to Mr. Al Kaabi, “We want to get more Qataris involved in racing, whether that is in Doha or in Europe, and we will do everything we can to help them achieve that.” Leadership in Qatar has provided a great beginning to the development of equestrian activities in the country and other nations in the Arab region are following the example.

The global presence continues to expand as events like the Olympics give Qatari teams a chance to shine. The spotlight will fuel further progress for the advocacy of a sports-filled society and institutions like QREC will persist in their efforts to thrill audiences with more competitions on the world stage.



# Katara Cultural Village forges a bridge of multiculturalism between east and west

Opened in 2010, Katara Cultural Village in Doha is one of Qatar’s most popular attractions for tourist and locals alike, boasting an open amphitheater, an opera house, a cinema, museums, a multi-purpose conference hall, a beach and a souq

Katara Cultural Village is the largest and most multidimensional cultural project ever carried out in Qatar. Designed to be a space where people from all over the world gather to experience other cultures, it is comprised of theaters, concert halls, exhibition galleries and cutting-edge facilities all intended to turn Qatar into a sought-after destination for cultural tourism and a vibrant bridge between east and west.

In line with the pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030, which were meant to serve as a roadmap for Qatar’s future, Katara Cultural Village also serves as a guardian to the heritage and traditions of Qatar while spreading awareness about the importance of every culture and civilization. Through international, regional and local festivals, workshops, performances and exhibitions, it showcases a wide variety of different cultures and offers endless forms of entertainment. In parallel, books and periodicals are published in collaboration with other cultural institutions and local, regional and international partners of the Village, which doubles as a research center. The ultimate aim is for Katara to support and host innovators and talented intellectuals.

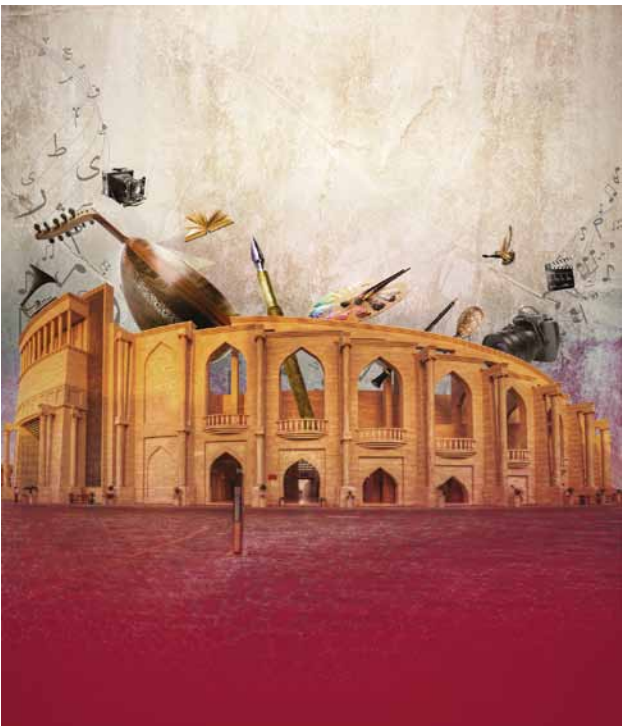
To this end, the leaders of Katara Village are working with many local and international bodies to create frameworks for knowledge exchange and partnership. These include the Arab-Spanish House Organiza-



Recently, the world famous Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, opened the Dar Al Bahi auction house at Katara Cultural Village, featuring several priceless paintings and art works on Islamic and oriental art

tion and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). As a result of its international renown, the Village has already attracted visiting heads of states, ambassadors, VIP’s and celebrities, which has helped to reinforce the image of Qatar as a cultural powerhouse.

The Qatar Tourism Authority aims to multiply the number of visitors to the country to reach more than 7 million by 2030. And given the popularity of the Village, several additions



to the complex are already in the works. They include a fitness center, an exclusive commercial complex called Katara Plaza, a sport village with paintball, football, basketball and tennis

amenities, and an entertainment city built on an area of over sixty thousand square meters. A unique shopping center for children will open in 2017, while the Katara Hills – comprised of

“This village shall be a glimpse of the future of a world where people of different cultural backgrounds overcome their national boundaries and embrace common causes to promote a united humanity. It will bring down the walls of ignorance between the east and the west”

DR. KHALID BIN IBRAHIM AL SULAITI, General Manager, Katara Cultural Village

383 elegantly designed residential units on the hills of Katara – will be among the most sophisticated projects of the village.

Recently, the world famous Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, opened the Dar Al Bahi auction house at Katara Cultural Village, featuring several priceless paintings and art works on

Katara Village is working with many local and international bodies to create frameworks for knowledge exchange and partnership. These include the Arab-Spanish House Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Islamic and oriental art. Further expansion plans include a planetarium, library and several new restaurants by early 2017. Together these different offerings are expected to provide visitors with the best in luxury and culture; giving Qatar a cultural edge over its more consumerist-centric neighbor, Dubai.

“This village shall be a glimpse of the future of a world where people of different cultural backgrounds overcome their national boundaries and embrace common causes to promote a united humanity,” says Dr. Khalid Bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti, General Manager of the Village, who pioneered the concept of turning Katara into an interantional cultural hub.

His hope is that the project will create a new cultural language that will localize the global and globalize the local. “Katara is where the grace of the past meets the splendor of the future,” he says.

Dr. Al Sulaiti also hopes to leverage the popularity of the Village to introduce the Arabic literary tradition to visitors, through the annual Katara prize for the Prophet’s Poet, an Arabic poetry awards festival launched in April 2015 that showcases the work of hundreds of poets from around the Arabic world.

