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Qatar real estate transactions reach QR1.29bn in August

Monday, September 21, 2026
Rabia II 10, 1448 AH
GULF TIMES
BUSINESS

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Wall St investors focus on rate path, AI slowdown after Fed rate hike

Qatar Central Bank Governor HE Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saoud al-Thani on Bloomberg TV during the Special Edition of the Qatar Economic Forum 2026, Powered by Bloomberg, convened in New York alongside the UN General Assembly.

Qatar committed to long-term economic expansion, says QCB governor

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Qatar remains committed to advancing its long-term economic expansion plans, including a new energy project that will double liquefied natural gas production capacity to 145mn tonnes per year by 2030 despite the damage sustained by facilities.

The commitment was highlighted yesterday during an interview featuring Qatar Central Bank Governor HE Sheikh Bandar bin Saoud al-Thani with Bloomberg TV on the sidelines of the Special Edition of the Qatar Economic Forum 2026, Powered by Bloomberg, convened in New York alongside the UN General Assembly.

"The non-hydrocarbon sector grew by 3.5% despite regional challenges, while the State of Qatar successfully reduced its debt-to-GDP ratio from 60% to 40%, while maintaining a sovereign credit rating of AA," noted Sheikh Bandar, who is also chairman of the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA).

He said the contribution of the non-hydrocarbon sector to GDP increased from 40% in 2011 to approximately 70% in recent years, supported by the accumulation of fiscal surpluses over the past years, as well as the establishment of reserves and funds that provide the economy with greater resilience in addressing the challenges.

According to Sheikh Bandar, Qatar enjoys a strong external financial position and substantial reserves held by the central bank, alongside operating one of the largest sovereign wealth funds globally.

These financial strengths enhance the country's ability to navigate challenges and capitalise on growth opportunities as regional conditions improve, he pointed out.

"The Qatar Investment Authority is pursuing a long-term investment strategy aimed at creating sustainable value for future generations, with an increasing focus on technology, artificial intelligence, and innovation, particularly in the US, while continuing to invest across a range of sectors in support of its broader diversification strategy," he said.

Meanwhile, the QCB is implementing 18 artificial intelligence projects, four of which have been completed, Sheikh Bandar noted.

"These projects have contributed to reducing costs and accelerating workflows, while the QCB remains committed to continued investment in this technology and to leveraging its potential to further develop and enhance its operations," he said.

Sheikh Bandar added that the central bank remains committed to continued investment in technology to enhance its overall operations.

QCB governor meets Goldman Sachs chairman

Governor of the Qatar Central Bank HE Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saoud al-Thani, who is also chairman of the Qatar Investment Authority, held a meeting yesterday with David Solomon, chairman and CEO of The Goldman Sachs Group, on the sidelines of the Special Edition of the Qatar Economic Forum 2026, Powered by Bloomberg, convened in New York, alongside the UN General Assembly (UNGA). During the meeting, they discussed the latest developments in global finance and investment, along with other related topics.

Commercial Bank recognised with 3 retail innovation awards by The Digital Banker

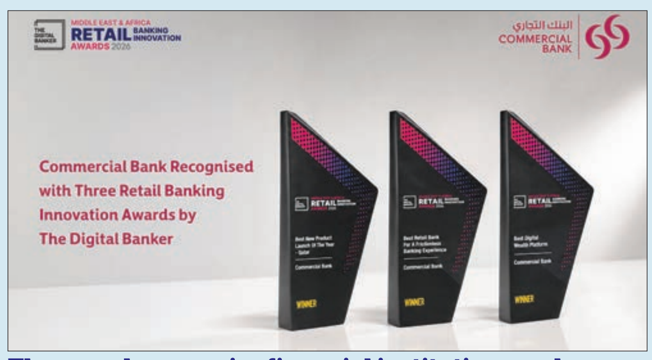
Commercial Bank has won the 'Best Digital Wealth Platform', 'Best Retail Bank for a Frictionless Banking Experience', and 'Best New Product Launch of the Year – Qatar' during the Middle East & Africa Retail Banking Innovation Awards 2026.

Organised by The Digital Banker, the awards recognise financial institutions and individuals demonstrating excellence and innovation in retail banking across the region, with a focus on institutions transforming customer experience through technology and digital innovation.

The Best Digital Wealth Platform award reflects the expansion of Commercial Bank's digital investment offering through a fully integrated wealth management platform that combines digital self-service with expert advisory to broaden access to sophisticated investment solutions.

The Best Retail Bank for a Frictionless Banking Experience award recognises Commercial Bank's Cashierless Checkout solution, which streamlines the in-store payment journey through AI-powered computer vision and automated payments.

The Best New Product Launch of the Year, Qatar award recognises Commercial Bank's 'Power of ONE' initiative, which is a first-of-its-kind, real-time rewards ecosystem. Launched in 2025, this initiative combines an in-house, data-driven rules engine with fully automated fulfillment.



The awards recognise financial institutions and individuals demonstrating excellence and innovation in retail banking across the region, with a focus on institutions transforming customer experience through technology and digital innovation

Commercial Bank Group CEO Stephen Moss said, "These awards reflect our commitment to putting customers at the heart of innovation and making banking simpler, more accessible and more intuitive. Whether enabling mobile investment account opening, streamlining everyday transactions or offering innovative ways to explore banking, we are focused on delivering practical benefits that enhance our customers' experience."

He added: "Our continued investment in digital capabilities supports a clear ambition: to provide greater choice, convenience and seamless service throughout every stage of the customer journey."

Qatari-Saudi Business Council discusses boosting trade, investment ties

The Qatari-Saudi Joint Business Council convened yesterday, co-chaired by Qatar Chamber chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani and Hamad bin Ali al-Shuwaier, chairman of the Saudi side.

Discussions focused on key economic and commercial issues aimed at accelerating economic integration between the two countries. Key areas included increasing bilateral trade, facilitating cross-border business establishment, promoting mutual investments, and reinforcing the private sector's pivotal role in advancing economic integration.

The meeting was also attended by Qatar Chamber first vice-chairman Mohamed bin Towar al-Kuwari, second vice-chairman Rashid bin Hamad al-Athba, who is also vice-chairman of the Joint Business Council's Qatari side, along with council members from both sides.

The council also discussed local government investment initiatives under public-private partnerships (PPP) offered by both governments to the private sector, identifying priority sectors for investment, exploring frameworks for cooperation on international projects, and establishing a fast-track mechanism to address challenges facing Qatari and Saudi investors.

The Qatari-Saudi Joint Business Council convened yesterday to discuss key economic and commercial issues aimed at accelerating economic integration between the two countries.

Both sides affirmed their commitment to developing mechanisms for trade and investment cooperation in a manner that contributes to advancing development and prosperity in the two brotherly countries.

Sheikh Khalifa emphasised that the shared heritage and deep-rooted ties between Qatar and Saudi Arabia provide a strong foundation for strategic and sustainable partnerships that serve the interests of both countries.

He noted that both countries share close historical, geographical and social ties, as well as common aspirations for a secure, stable, and prosperous future. He noted that Qatar National Vision 2030 and Saudi Vision 2030 offer broad opportunities to expand cooperation in economic diversification and investment.

Sheikh Khalifa said the meeting comes at a critical time marked by rapid regional and global developments, highlighting the need for closer coordination, economic readiness and resilience to ensure business continuity, safeguard supply chains, and address emerging challenges.

He said the meeting builds on a series of previous meetings held in Qatar and Saudi Arabia aimed at advancing partnerships between companies, exchanging expertise, addressing challenges facing trade and investment, and facilitating the movement of goods and services.

Furthermore, Sheikh Khalifa highlighted opportunities for Qatari and Saudi companies arising from Saudi Arabia's major projects, including Expo 2030 Riyadh and the 2034 FIFA World Cup, particularly in construction, supply chains, services, tourism, transport, and technology.

He also underscored the private sector's key role in advancing development and economic integration, stressing the importance of greater cooperation and shared responsibility.

Sheikh Khalifa expressed hope that the discussions would lead to practical initiatives that strengthen business partnerships and contribute to a more secure, stable and prosperous future for both countries.

Al-Shuwaier said since its establishment, the Joint Business Council has developed a strategy aligned with the directives of the leaderships of the two countries, implementing innovative initiatives that have yielded tangible economic results.

Highlighting the council's major achievements, he pointed out that bilateral trade has tripled compared to its 2022 level. Qatari investments in Saudi Arabia have reached around SAR12bn, while Saudi investments in Qatar have reached SAR6bn. He also noted the signing of more than 10 joint agreements and efforts that helped resolve 80% of the identified challenges affecting trade and investment growth.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Sheikh Khalifa and al-Shuwaier witnessed the signing of five business agreements between Qatari and Saudi companies spanning diverse economic sectors, including furniture, medical supplies, real estate brokerage, advertising and promotion, exhibitions, and international investment.

BUSINESS

Barclays, UBS back BoE hikes as inflation risks mount

Reuters
London

A general view of the Bank of England (BoE) in the City of London. The BoE kept interest rates on hold at 3.75% on Thursday as anticipated, but also predicted that inflation could top 4% early next year. Its meeting minutes also struck a more hawkish tone, signalling the BoE could join its European and US counterparts in raising borrowing costs.

Barclays and UBS Global Research expect the Bank of England to hike interest rates as soon as November, saying rising inflation risks point to a quicker resumption of policy tightening after the central bank kept rates steady.

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The brokerages join peers including JP Morgan in expecting rate hikes in November 2026 and February 2027 following the meeting.

"We think the BoE will conclude that higher inflation and the potential hit to its credibility would be more costly than tightening now and finding inflation less persistent than expected," UBS economists led by Anna Titareva said in a note.

Following the hikes, UBS also sees the central bank starting to cut rates in the fourth quarter of 2027 and proceeding at a quarterly pace, eventually bringing the bank rate back to 3.25% by the third quarter of 2028. The expectations come as the widening conflict in the Middle East has fueled concerns over renewed inflation pressures, leaving central banks worldwide grappling with the risk of persistent price growth.

The Bank of Japan also raised rates to a 31-year high on Friday and signalled its readiness to keep pushing up borrowing costs.

"The energy outlook has changed dramatically in the last few weeks, especially in the medium term," strategists at Barclays said in their note on Thursday.

Markets are pricing in a 63% chance of a BoE hike in November, with another increase expected in December, according to LSEG data.

However, Goldman Sachs, which also expects a November hike, noted that softer economic data or a decline in energy prices could still keep policymakers on hold.

Morgan Stanley expects the BoE to be on a prolonged hold, provided energy prices ease, while BofA Global Research said any additional rate hike would likely serve as a precaution against inflation risks rather than signal a broader tightening cycle.

China's CXMT says new memory-chip platform enters mass production

Reuters
Beijing

CXMT, China's leading producer of DRAM, said the new platform packs the tiny structures that store data closer together, allowing more memory to fit on each chip and more individual chips to be made from each silicon wafer.

Chinese DRAM chipmaker CXMT said on Sunday its fifth-generation technology platform had entered mass production, a claimed breakthrough that could help China build a stronger competitor to Samsung Electronics, SK Hynix and Micron Technology in the global market for memory chips.

DRAM, or dynamic random-access memory, is the short-term working memory that phones, computers and other devices use to run apps and programs.

The new platform is designed to make more powerful memory chips at lower cost and with less power use. CXMT, which listed on Shanghai's STAR Market this year, said it would give electronics makers an additional source of supply for chips used in smartphones and other devices.

CXMT, China's leading producer of DRAM, said the new platform packs the tiny structures that store data closer together, allowing more memory to fit on each chip and more individual chips to be made from each silicon wafer.

The Hefei-based memory-chip maker said it had reduced the spacing of key features in the part of the chip that stores data to 11.95 nanometres, or about 12 billionths of a metre.

It achieved this using "quadruple patterning," a process that repeats several manufacturing steps to produce finer circuit patterns.

"Our process capability is now on par with the most advanced mass-produced nodes out there in the industry," Luo Xiaodong, CXMT's vice president and head of its marketing centre, said at the 2026 World Manufacturing Convention in Hefei.

CXMT also unveiled two 24-gigabit LPDDR5X products made on the new platform. LPDDR5X is a power-saving type of DRAM used mainly in smartphones and other portable electronics.

The products each hold 50% more data than CXMT's previous equivalent products and are already in mass production, the company said. They are offered in two package formats for different smartphone and portable-device designs.

CXMT said the platform can produce at least 50% more gross chip dies per wafer than its fourth-generation platform, using an 8-gigabit-chip baseline.

That measures the potential number of chips made from a wafer before defective units are excluded, rather than the proportion that pass final testing.

CXMT said it developed the platform using computer simulations and joint work with Chinese chip-equipment makers on critical production steps.

The advance comes as Beijing seeks to reduce reliance on foreign semiconductor technology and US export controls since 2022 have restricted China's access to certain advanced chipmaking equipment and related software.

Investors focus on rate path, AI slowdown after Fed hike

Reuters
New York

Investors this week will monitor an anticipated visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to the US, including a meeting with Trump expected on Thursday

US stock investors will focus this week on the trajectory of interest rates, tensions in the Middle East and fresh calls to slow AI advancement as they weigh whether equity indexes can make new all-time highs.

Markets will continue to digest Wednesday's decision by the Federal Reserve to hike interest rates for the first time in three years, in an effort to tamp down above-target inflation. While the rate increase was widely expected, investors were left uncertain about how many hikes the US central bank might eventually implement and the implications for already-climbing Treasury yields.

Stocks have taken cues in recent weeks from rising Treasury yields and surging oil prices amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

A 5% level on the benchmark 10-year Treasury yield and $100 a barrel for oil posed "psychological lines in the sand," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B Riley Wealth.

Below those levels "lets market participants breathe a brief sigh of relief and get more involved," Hogan said. When they have been rising above those levels, "what's happened over the course of the last four or five weeks, the market just finds those headwinds to be insurmountable," he said.

Indeed, stocks rose on Thursday as oil prices and yields fell, with US crude dropping to $101 a barrel and the 10-year yield falling to 4.93% late in the session.

Thursday's gains left the benchmark S&P 500 stock index up more than 11% for the year and about 2% below its mid-August record high.

Rate hikes, which stand to raise borrowing costs and slow the economy, pose potential challenges for stocks. But Wednesday's move was largely priced in to markets ahead of the meeting. The decision was also seen by investors as a credibility test for new Fed Chair Kevin Warsh, to gauge whether the central bank would raise rates despite President Donald Trump's repeated calls to cut rates. Trump picked Warsh as Fed chief.

"We got through a significant hurdle" with the meeting, said Joe Mazzola, head trading strategist at Charles Schwab.

Investors are now watching for signs of when the Fed might raise rates again. Fed funds futures late on Thursday suggested roughly even odds that the central bank hikes at its next meeting in October, just before the US midterm elections.

In the wake of last Wednesday's meeting, a number of Fed policymakers are expected to speak this week. Any insight into the central bank's plans for this hiking cycle could be especially valuable, given Warsh's own stated desire to avoid forward guidance about the path of rates.

"With lack of guidance, which really is the new normal here with Chair Warsh, I think it becomes more important to pick the brains of the folks that are willing to speak," Hogan said.

Surveys on manufacturing and services activity, as well as on consumer sentiment, also could offer information about inflation trends in a relatively light week of economic data.

Investors this week will monitor an anticipated visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to the US, including a meeting with Trump expected on Thursday.

Among issues between the two countries, investors said the AI development race and restrictions involving semiconductors could impact markets, especially technology shares. The tech sector accounts for 38% of the S&P 500, and although it has gained over 20% in 2026, it has lost ground since the start of June.

"Tech needs to get back in that pole position for us to see those new all-time highs," Mazzola said.

AI is also in focus after industry leaders called for a slowdown in development following dire warnings about the dangers of the emerging technology. Slowdown worries modestly weighed on shares of semiconductor companies at the center of the AI boom.

Investors were looking for more concrete signs before declaring trouble for the AI spending theme that has boosted equities this year, including potential moves to more heavily regulate the industry.

Any stock weakness from such developments could be a buying opportunity, said Jeff Schulze, head investment strategist at the Franklin Templeton Institute. "I doubt that regulation is going to come that really curtails the investment and the pace of the model development going forward," he said.

The S&P 500 has been generally unchanged over the past few months, despite strong overall corporate earnings, which is "ultimately going to provide a good valuation base for the market to melt higher," Schulze said.

"It's a pretty positive setup for risk assets, especially if we can continue to get some drop of long bond yields," he said.

Italy debt burden rising at alarming rate, says economy minister

The cost of servicing Italy's public debt is rising at "an alarming rate" in the wake of geopolitical tensions, Economy Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti said on Friday, as the government prepares to update its budget plans for 2027 onwards, reports Reuters.

Inflation is bound to rise "ineluctably" if the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East continue, Giorgetti told a conference in Portofino.

"I sent a message regarding interest rates, or rather, regarding the debt burden, which has begun to rise at an alarming rate," Giorgetti said, speaking via video link from the sidelines of a meeting of European finance ministers in Dublin.

Italian borrowing costs leapt at an auction last week. The 3-year BTP bond yield hit its highest level since June 2024 at 3.43% and a 7-year BTP bond fetched a 3.98% gross yield, the highest since November 2023.

Under its most recent budget plan, Italy sees its public debt peaking at almost 139% of GDP this year, replacing Greece as the euro zone's most indebted country.

Giorgetti said rate hikes adopted by central banks across Europe and the US were not likely to stem a rise in consumer prices.

"Inflation stems from a supply shock, not from an overheated economy and demand that must be cooled by a restrictive monetary policy," he said.

To safeguard families' purchasing power, the government said last week it would scrap road tax for 14.5mn cars and motorcycles from next year at a cost of €2.4bn ($2.75bn), on top of €2.8bn already set aside this year to fund temporary excise duty cuts.

Italy also plans to make full use of the extra deficit slack granted under Brussels' National Escape Clause from the bloc's budget rules to soften energy costs. The leeway is worth 0.6% of GDP or around €14bn through 2028.

"I believe the European Commission will be open to granting us this budget leeway," Giorgetti said.

Before invoking that clause, Giorgetti reiterated he was still hoping for a downward revision next week of Italy's 2025 deficit to below the EU ceiling of 3% of GDP. This would give Rome some hope of an early exit from a European Union disciplinary procedure.

Trump may not see another Fed interest rate cut as president

By Jamie McGeever
Orlando, Florida

As The Rolling Stones famously said, you can't always get what you want. Apparently, not even if you're the most powerful person on Earth.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday raised its policy rate target range by a quarter of a percentage point to 3.75%-4.00%, the first rise in more than three years. US President Donald Trump responded in a combative social media post, demanding once again that rates be cut: "LOWER THE INTEREST RATES FOR THE US OF AMERICA, AND FAST!"

Unfortunately for Trump, his calls for a fed funds rate of 1% or lower will almost certainly not be met during the remainder of his presidency, barring an unforeseen catastrophe that forces the Fed to slash rates to zero, as it did during the global financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic.

To add insult to injury, the rates futures market is now pricing in a roughly 50% chance that the Fed could raise rates again at its next meeting in October, only days before the US midterm elections.

Trump insisted on Wednesday that he has confidence in Fed Chair Kevin Warsh, but it's safe to say he would not welcome another hike just before voters go to the polls. The president's approval ratings are already near the lowest in his presidency, and polls suggest his Republican Party could lose control of the House of Representatives and possibly the Senate, too. Another notch higher in borrowing costs might help ease voters' concerns over inflation, but Trump is unlikely to see it that way.

Many Fed-watchers had previously dismissed the possibility of an October hike, arguing that the Fed — and Warsh in particular — would want to avoid any appearance of acting with a political motive.

But given Wednesday's unanimous rate hike, the upwardly revised rate projections from Fed policymakers and Warsh's surprisingly hawkish press conference, a move in October is now very much on the table.

Will Trump see another rate cut before he leaves the White House?

In their revised economic projections, Fed officials raised the median fed funds mid-range point outlook for the end of 2027 and 2028 by 50 bps to 4.1% and 3.9%, respectively.

These broad projections still imply a slight easing of policy over the course of 2028, Trump's last full year in the White House before the January 2029 handover to his successor. But it's a close call.

Unfortunately for Trump, his calls for a fed funds rate of 1% or lower will almost certainly not be met during the remainder of his presidency, barring an unforeseen catastrophe that forces the Fed to slash rates to zero, as it did during the global financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic

But markets appear much more convinced that US rates will need to be kept higher for longer. Traders are now pricing in a "terminal rate" — the peak of the hiking cycle — of around 4.60%. That's likely down to a combination of deficit and debt worries, lingering doubts over Fed independence and concerns about the factors keeping inflation hot, namely geopolitical conflict, energy price pressures, and AI-related spending.

Whatever the cause, the message is clear: Markets expect that rates aren't coming down over the next two years. And that's not what Trump wants to hear.

He may also have been slightly irked to hear Warsh say "geopolitics" is a key reason why inflation is sticky and bond yields are so elevated. But it's hard to escape the conclusion that, although there are several forces at play here, a major one is the impact of reduced energy supply stemming from the Iran war. At the very least, the onset of hostilities was a clear turning point in the Fed's expected rate path.

Consider this. On February 27, the day before the US and Israel attacked Iran, SOFR rate futures were pricing in a fed funds rate of 3.13% at the end of 2028. At the close of trade on Wednesday, the same contract implied a policy rate of around 4.60%.

Or put another way: Before the war, traders were pricing in two rate cuts over the rest of Trump's presidency, and now they are pricing in three hikes — on top of the one delivered on Wednesday.

That's an extraordinary, extremely hawkish pivot. Traders are pricing in a significantly higher terminal rate than they were before the war.

"We see upside risk to the length and size of the hiking cycle," economists at BNP Paribas wrote on Wednesday. "With policy starting at a stimulative stance, a strong cyclical impulse, and persistent inflation, we think significant rate increases, perhaps more than the three we expect, may be necessary to stabilize the unemployment rate from below and prevent overheating next year."

In his Truth Social post on Wednesday, Trump said interest rates should be slashed because the US is "the Best Credit in the World — BY FAR."

That may be, but the overwhelming majority of observers and experts — including Warsh, it appears — would disagree. So much so that there's a growing likelihood that the Fed's 25 basis-point rate cut last December, under the chairmanship of "Too Late" Jerome Powell, will be the last one Trump sees as president.

■ *The opinions expressed here are those of the author, a columnist for Reuters.*

US rate rises add pressure on Gulf businesses

The Federal Reserve responded to inflationary pressure and announced a quarter-point increase in interest rates on September 16, defying US President Donald Trump. Will more increases follow?

By Fahad Badar

The Federal Open Market Committee of the Federal Reserve announced a quarter-point increase in interest rates on September 16, responding to inflationary pressure. The new rate is 3.75-4.00%. To a large extent, the rise was forced. It is more than five years since the US inflation rate was below the Fed's 2% target. Annual PCE inflation, its preferred measure, was 3.7% in July. In addition to cost-of-living pressures, bond yields had been rising in part owing to concerns over inflation eroding the value of returns from bond holdings.

The explicit desire of President Donald Trump is to have lower rates, something undermined by his own decisions this year, given that the conflict against Iran that he instigated has led to higher prices, especially fuel prices. Inflation is sticky.

The interest rate rise was backed by all 12 members of the committee. The new Chairman of the Federal Reserve Kevin Warsh, who was nominated by President Trump and began his term in May, has reinforced his commitment to tackling inflation by approving a rate rise, and keeping his promise to make decisions based on economic data.

Since August, he has struck a hawkish note on inflation. This follows a press conference in July, where his comments were interpreted as being more dovish. One consequence was that the yields on long-term Treasuries rose, owing to the perceived impact on inflation.

In mid-August Scott Bessent, the Treasury Secretary, announced plans to expand bond buy-backs, and on September 9 announced a buyback operation of up to $6bn. The policy is intended to reduce long-term yields and improve bond-market liquidity, but has not been well received in Wall Street as it is seen as an acceptance of continuing high debt and deficits, treating the symptom not the cause. US Government debt reached $40tn in August. Bessent has also intervened to support the Japanese yen, with a view to preventing the Japanese central bank selling US Treasuries to shore up its currency.

By contrast Warsh has pursued conventional policy-making. In his speech in late August at the annual Federal Reserve's Economic Symposium in Jackson Hole Wyoming, he said: "We must be confident that underlying inflation is moving to our objective, clearly and at sufficient speed. Otherwise, we have work to do." He cited data showing that investment and consumption are strong and employment levels are high. "Main Street and Wall Street have been remarkably resilient," he noted.

Warsh has a preference to reduce communication and avoid 'forward guidance'. This is sensible but maintaining it requires careful judgement. Arguably his statement of policy intention and the phrase 'we have work to do', is a form of forward guidance. But it is reasonable to be guided by data, remain nimble, and avoid treating dot plots as commitments about future interest rates.

Warsh dislikes the Fed having a large balance sheet, and excessive public spending. The link between money supply and inflation is complex, and debatable, but there was a surge in inflation that followed the policies of ultra-low interest rates and quantitative easing during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was not a conventional recession, and demand rebounded strongly as lockdown measures were eased.

He reiterated a conventional Federal Reserve set of commitments: targeting 2% inflation, attention to accurate economic data, and using short term interest rates. There is some discussion as to whether this policy mix is as effective as in previous eras. The US economy may have become less sensitive to changes in the base rate given the prevalence of long-term fixed-rate mortgages. Also, while higher official interest rates can help contain long-term bond yields by signalling a commitment to lower inflation, they add to short-term financing costs of public sector debt. There is no indication that either political party in the US is committed to curbing the huge deficits and debt.

For the economies of the Gulf, the interest rate rise is problematic. With export disruptions continuing owing to the US-Iran conflict, reductions in tourism, and capital projects put on hold owing to budget constraints, economic growth is hampered. Where domestic inflationary pressures are limited, an interest rate rise may not be needed, but central banks have limited scope to diverge from US rates owing to the currencies of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE being pegged to the US dollar. Higher financing costs combined with lower business cash flow could compound the economic slowdown in the region.

Policy-makers around the world, including the Gulf, will have to adapt to the current policy regime in the US as it is likely to be in place for some time to come. Other central banks, in Japan and the euro area, have also announced interest rate rises.

The Federal Reserve is in the driving seat on US monetary policy, and the President is not. There may be a further quarter-point increase in the coming months, with further increases possible in 2027 if inflation remains persistent.

The author is a Qatari banker, with many years of experience in the banking sector in senior positions.

Qatar's real estate transactions reach QR1.29bn in August

QNA
Doha

The volume of real estate transactions under sales contracts registered with the Real Estate Registration Department at the Ministry of Justice reached QR1,290,916,518 in August, according to data from the Ministry's Real Estate Analytical Bulletin.

A total of 424 real estate transactions were recorded during the month, with Doha, Al Rayyan and Al Daayen municipalities recording the highest transaction values, according to the Real Estate Market Index. They were followed by Al Wakrah, Umm Salal, Al Khor and Al Thakhira, Al Shamal and Al Shahaniya.

Doha accounted for QR435,501,304 in transactions, followed by Al Rayyan with QR335,501,759 and Al Daayen with QR175,170,269. Al Wakrah recorded QR148,559,213, while Umm Salal registered QR123,981,137. Transactions in Al Khor and Al Thakhira amounted to QR60,473,870, while Al Shamal and Al Shahaniya recorded QR8,321,324 and QR3,407,642, respectively.

In terms of traded real estate area, Doha and Al Rayyan each accounted for 28% of the total, followed by Al Wakrah at 16%, Al Daayen at 10%, Umm Salal at 9%, and Al Khor and Al Thakhira at 7%. Al Shamal and Al Shahaniya each accounted for 1%.

Doha also recorded the largest share of properties sold during the month, accounting for 30% of the total, followed by Al Rayyan at 21% and Al Wakrah at 19%. Umm Salal and Al Daayen each accounted for 10%, while Al Khor and Al Thakhira accounted for 8%, and Al Shamal and Al Shahaniya for 1% each.

Average prices per square foot in August ranged from QR517 to QR892 in Doha, QR253 to QR414 in Al Wakrah, QR357 to QR466 in Al Rayyan, QR353 to QR468 in Umm Salal, QR362 to QR723 in Al Daayen, QR254 to QR457 in Al Khor and Al Thakhira, and QR135 to QR244 in Al Shamal. The average price stood at QR206 per square foot in Al Shahaniya.

A total of 424 real estate transactions were recorded during the month, with Doha, Al Rayyan and Al Daayen municipalities recording the highest transaction values, according to the Real Estate Market Index

The data also showed that the 10 highest-value properties sold during the month included four in Doha, three in Al Rayyan and one in Umm Salal.

Mortgage transactions totaled 103 in August, with a combined value of QR4,007,423,360.

Doha recorded the largest number of mortgage transactions at 35, accounting for 34% of the total, followed by Al Rayyan with 30 transactions, or 29.1%, and Al Daayen with 14 transactions, or 13.6%. Umm Salal recorded 13 transactions, or 12.6%, followed by Al Wakrah with eight, or 7.8%, Al Khor and Al Thakhira with two, or 1.9%, and Al Shamal with one transaction, or 1%.

In terms of mortgage value, Doha ranked first with QR3,623,856,638, while Al Khor and Al Thakhira recorded the lowest mortgage value at QR2.3 mn.

An analysis of mortgage activity by comparing the share of mortgaged properties with their share of total mortgage value showed that the share of mortgaged properties exceeded their share of mortgage value in all municipalities where mortgage transactions were recorded, except Doha, where the share of mortgage value was higher than its share of transactions.

Doha accounted for eight of the 10 highest-value mortgaged properties during the month, while Al Rayyan and Al Daayen accounted for one each.

The 10 highest-value mortgage transactions represented 89% of the total value of mortgage transactions recorded during August.

A total of 114 residential unit transactions were registered during August, with a combined value of QR184,461,112.

AlRayan Investment advises Baladna on its landmark rights issue

AlRayan Investment (ARI) has announced the successful completion of the landmark rights issue of Baladna, one of the largest capital increases on the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) in the last few years.

It is also the first rights issue executed under the Qatar Financial Markets Authority's new Offering, Listing, and Mergers and Acquisitions Rules introduced in December 2025.

As the sole offering manager, ARI structured and delivered the transaction end-to-end, reaffirming its position at the forefront of Qatar's equity capital markets. The offering lifted Baladna's share capital by 25% to QR2.68tn and attracted exceptional investor demand. Every new share was placed in full. The entire unsubscribed tranche was absorbed within the opening minutes of the first trading day, achieving 100% coverage.

Baladna's shares closed the session 1.5% higher, a resounding vote of market confidence, with the milestone celebrated at a bell-ringing ceremony at the QSE. The transaction marks a significant step forward in the continued development and deepening of Qatar's capital markets.

"We are proud to have advised Baladna on the successful completion of this rights issue, one of the most significant equity capital markets transactions in the Qatari market in the last few years.

"This transaction underscores ARI's ability to manage and execute a complex capital raise, end-to-end, and we thank Baladna for their trust through the process," said Akber Khan, acting CEO of ARI.

Saifullah Khan, Group Chief Financial officer of Baladna, added: "The completion of our capital increase marks an important step in Baladna's growth journey and reflects the continued confidence of our shareholders in the strength and resilience of our business.

"The proceeds have further strengthened our capital base and support our ability to pursue growth within Qatar and internationally, with discipline and focus. We are grateful to AlRayan Investment for their partnership and professionalism in bringing this transaction to an efficient and successful conclusion."

QIB wins 3 accolades at Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026

QIB was named 'Qatar's Best Bank', 'Qatar's Best Digital Bank for Consumers', and 'Qatar's Best Bank for SMEs' at Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026, reaffirming its leadership, strong performance, and continued commitment to digital innovation and supporting customers across key segments.

QIB Chief Strategy and Digital Officer Constantinos Constantinides received the awards for on behalf of QIB at a ceremony held in Dubai. The recognitions reflect QIB's strong financial performance, operational efficiency, and customer-centric strategy, alongside its continued leadership in digital banking and commitment to supporting Qatar's SME sector.

QIB continues to enhance its digital ecosystem with innovative solutions and a mobile app offering more than 320 features and services, while providing small and medium-sized enterprises with a comprehensive range of Shariah-compliant financial and digital solutions.

Together, the three awards highlight QIB's ability to combine financial strength, innovation, and exceptional customer experiences while contributing to Qatar's economic growth and diversification.

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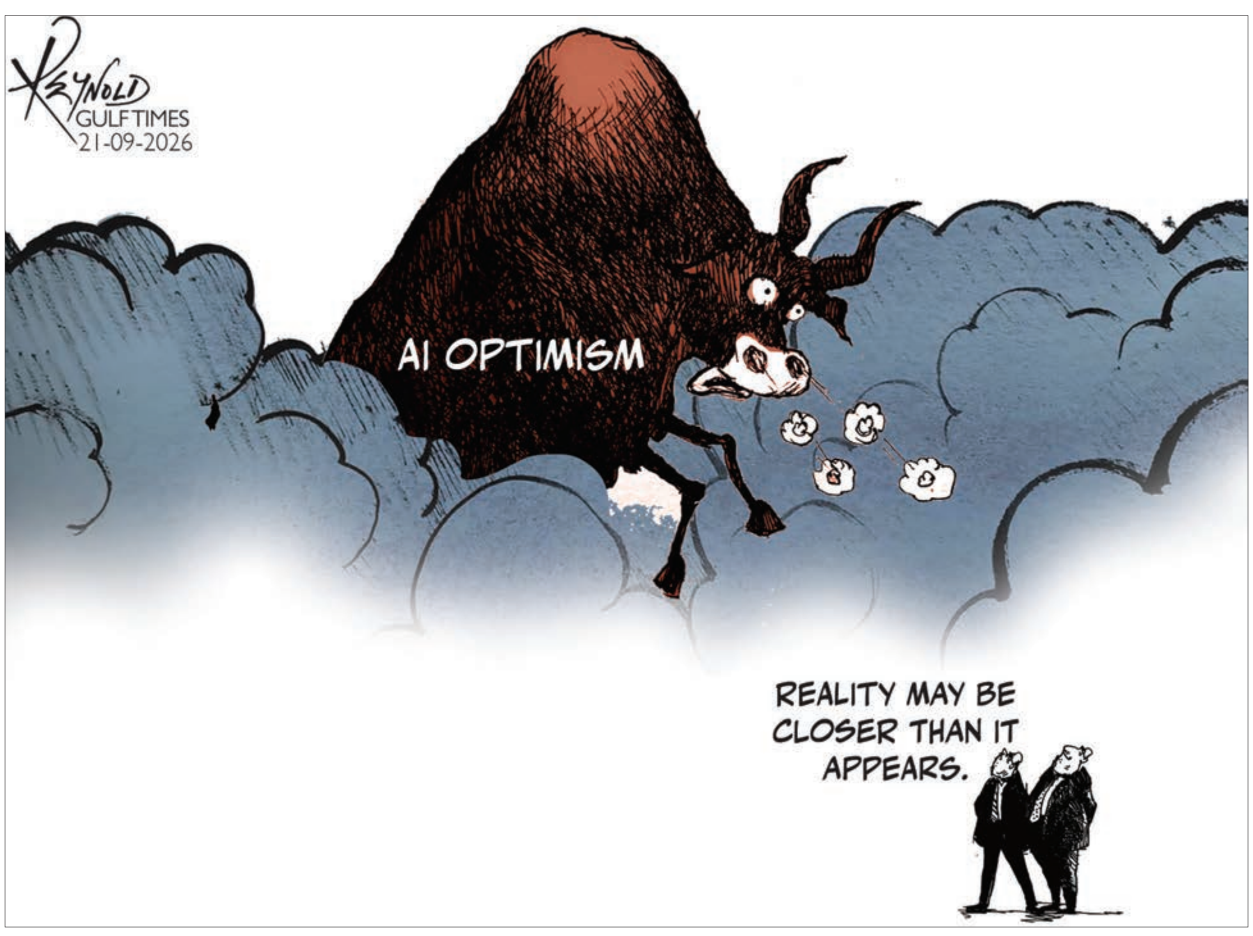

Chinese 'robot brain' startup expects ChatGPT-style breakthrough next year

Reuters
Beijing

Humanoid robots will be able to complete most general-purpose tasks from verbal instructions as soon as next year, although becoming useful around the house will take much longer, said the head of a leading Chinese company developing robot brains.

After impressive hardware advances allowing Chinese humanoids to sprint, dance and do backflips on command, robot firms are increasingly focusing on the software that determines robots' intelligence and enables them to do more economically productive tasks, a field known as "embodied AI".

"The brain is indeed the weakest linkv in the complete robotics stack," Gao Yang, co-founder and chief scientist of Spirit AI, told Reuters at its Beijing offices.

The robotics industry is searching for its "ChatGPT moment": a software breakthrough that could turn frontier technology into products useful to a much wider range of customers. OpenAI's launch of ChatGPT in 2022 brought generative AI to a mass audience and demonstrated its commercial potential.

"We anticipate reaching the GPT-3.0 milestone by mid-2027. You will be able to speak to a robot in natural language, and it will execute a series of reasonable physical actions to attempt the task," said Gao.

The company employs around 1,000 contractors nationwide who wear data-collection equipment at home or in factories, providing data on how humans move about their environments to help train robots.

During a visit to a data training centre in its Beijing office, dozens of young people fitted with sensors were repeating motions such as opening fridges, unlocking safes, and cutting vegetables with knives.

Spirit AI's robots have achieved a 90% success rate for simple tasks in structured living-room environments.

"The next one to two years mark the initial window for industrial applications. Two years from now, we'll see robots deployed in commercial service settings doing simpler tasks. Entering homes is far harder than both," said Gao, who is also an assistant professor of robotics at Tsinghua University.

Spirit AI currently has tens of its own Moz1 wheeled humanoid robots deployed on production lines at battery maker CATL and retailer JD.com, which is also an investor.

The 300-person startup has raised over $670mn since its 2024 founding, making it one of China's most rapidly capitalised embodied intelligence firms. It is currently valued at 20bn yuan ($2.9bn). Gao declined to comment on any plans for an initial public offering.