AVIATION SPECIAL | Page 4

Designated coastal corridors seen to host initial Qatar air taxi flight paths, says expert

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GULF TIMES
BUSINESS

DIVERSIFIED GROWTH : Page 2

Qatar Insurance, ASR strengthen ties to expand in Africa, developing markets

QFZ, Honeywell partner to set up manufacturing, service hub

QNA
Doha

The Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) and Honeywell Technologies have signed a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on establishing an integrated manufacturing and service hub in Qatar's free zones, with the aim of advancing local capabilities across mission-critical industries.

The MoU was signed by Chief Executive Officer of QFZ Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Faisal Al-Thani, and Matt Spalding, Vice-President, Process Technology at Honeywell Technologies, on the sidelines of Qatar Economic Forum: UNGA Special Edition 2026 in New York. The signing was attended by senior executives from QFZ and Honeywell Technologies.

QFZ said in a statement on Wednesday that the hub will focus on the machining and servicing of Honeywell Sundyne pumps used across energy and process industries, supporting customers in Qatar, the wider Middle East and Africa.

The MoU also creates opportunities for wider cooperation across Honeywell portfolio, including process technology, automation, cybersecurity and building automation solutions.

The collaboration will further support ecosystem development by encouraging relevant partners and suppliers to explore opportunities to establish their presence in QFZ, while also engaging with research and academic institutions to launch new initiatives that help strengthen local capabilities and develop Qatari talent.

Sheikh Mohammed said the partnership would deepen Qatar's industrial ecosystem by expanding localised manufacturing, servicing and automation capabilities.

He highlighted QFZ's integrated platform, strategic connectivity and investor ecosystem as a strong foundation for scaling these capabilities in support of the Third National Development Strategy and the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Spalding said Honeywell is committed to advancing initiatives that localise innovative technologies across mission-critical industries and support Qatar's industrial growth and national development objectives. He added that the partnership would help customers across the Middle East and Africa improve efficiency, resilience and operational intelligence through advanced process solutions, while strengthening service delivery and developing manufacturing capabilities in Qatar.

Through strategic partnerships, QFZ continues to create pathways for advanced manufacturing, technology and industrial innovation across its free zones. These efforts reinforce QFZ's value proposition for investors while supporting localization, sustainable growth and the continued development of Qatar's competitive industrial ecosystem.

The Qatar Financial Center has signed two memoranda of understanding in Beijing and Hong Kong aimed at strengthening financial and trade cooperation between Qatar and Asian markets.

QFC delegation concludes China visit with MoUs to expand Asia ties

QNA
Beijing

The Qatar Financial Center (QFC) has signed two memoranda of understanding in Beijing and Hong Kong aimed at strengthening financial and trade cooperation between Qatar and Asian markets.

The agreements were signed during a visit by a QFC delegation led by its chief executive, Mansoor al-Khater. The delegation also held meetings with business leaders and investors and took part in the 2026 Belt and Road Summit in Hong Kong.

Speaking at a summit session on emerging markets and the Belt and Road Initiative, al-Khater said future economic cooperation would extend beyond traditional infrastructure to areas including green energy, artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure.

He identified four priorities for turning these links into long-term economic opportunities: ensuring the financial and commercial viability of projects, developing integrated ecosystems to support implementation, diversifying sources of capital, and building the skills and expertise needed to support sustainable growth.

He also highlighted the growing importance of digital infrastructure, including data infrastructure, digital financial systems, smart cities and government platforms.

Al-Khater said these developments could create opportunities for Qatar to attract companies seeking access to Middle Eastern markets. The QFC, he said, could support cross-border investment through its legal and regulatory framework and institutional structures, including funds, holding companies and treasury centers.

In Beijing, the QFC signed a memorandum with the Beijing Financial Street Service Bureau. The agreement is intended to promote cooperation between the two financial centers through the exchange of knowledge, expertise and talent, as well as the development of joint initiatives.

In Hong Kong, the QFC signed a second memorandum with the Belt and Road General Chamber of Commerce. The agreement aims to strengthen links between the two business communities through joint networking events, business-to-business meetings and the exchange of information on market opportunities and sector developments.

The QFC said the agreements were part of efforts to deepen economic relations with China and expand institutional partnerships and investment opportunities across Asia.

Invest Qatar, Aurion Capital, LG NOVA to advance technology investments, venture building

Engagement aims to strengthen Qatar's position as a regional hub for entrepreneurship and high-growth ventures

QNA
Doha

Invest Qatar has announced a strategic engagement with Aurion Capital, a global investment group, and LG NOVA, the Silicon Valley-based North America Innovation Centre for LG Electronics.

In a statement on Wednesday, Invest Qatar said that this engagement aims to explore opportunities to scale regional investments and support the commercialisation of emerging technologies and business ventures to strengthen Qatar's position as a regional hub for entrepreneurship and high-growth ventures.

Announced during the special edition of the Qatar Economic Forum Powered by Bloomberg, held on the sidelines of the 2026 UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, a new memorandum of understanding among the parties establishes a framework to explore collaboration across shared priorities, including targeted innovation programmes and scale-up support in high-growth sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI), digital health, financial technologies (FinTech), digital infrastructure, sports, media and entertainment.

Additionally, a new hub in Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP), serving as a regional platform for LG NOVA-affiliated technologies and ventures, is anticipated to support the expansion of advanced technology solutions, foster collaboration between innovators, investors and industry partners and enable high-potential companies to scale across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Sheikh Ali bin Alwaleed Al-Thani, CEO, Invest Qatar, said: "This strategic collaboration reflects the multilateral strength of Qatar's value proposition. Our world-class research and development (R&D) ecosystem, robust talent pipeline and pro-business regulatory environment position Qatar as an ideal platform to test, deploy and commercialise advanced technologies. Coupled with our strategic location and future-ready digital infrastructure, Qatar offers international investors a gateway to the MENA region and a natural pathway for sustainable regional expansion."

"At Aurion Capital, we believe the future of innovation will be built through stronger connections between global markets and ecosystems," stated Ali Diallo, Founding CEO of Aurion Capital. "Our mission is to mobilize capital and strategic resources across America, Asia, the Gulf and emerging markets to create enduring economic value and accelerate the growth of transformative technologies. Qatar's ambition, investment ecosystem, and strategic position between East and West make it one of the world's most compelling destinations for innovation-led growth. Together with Invest Qatar and LG NOVA, we look forward to building a platform that helps scale world-class companies, unlock new investment opportunities, and strengthen the flow of innovation across regions."

Sokwoo Rhee, EVP of Corporate Innovation for LG Electronics and Head of LG NOVA, said: "The next technology evolution, driven by AI, is creating extensive opportunities for new business and industry growth, across all sectors. By exploring these new opportunities with Invest Qatar and Aurion Capital we're strengthening our capabilities to build meaningful businesses that will shape our future.

"Our innovation process brings collaborators together to create impactful change, and by working with Invest Qatar, spearheaded by Aurion Capital, we'll be able to connect our ecosystems across the world."

Through this engagement, Invest Qatar will work closely with Aurion Capital and LG NOVA to plan and design innovation-led programmes in collaboration with key national stakeholders. It will also provide tailored facilitation and advisory support to Aurion Capital and LG NOVA-affiliated companies seeking to establish or expand operations in Qatar.

Aurion Capital and LG NOVA may explore potential deployment of their global innovation capabilities and investment platforms to strengthen technology testing, localisation and commercialisation capabilities within Qatar.

This objectives of this collaboration further cement Qatar's position as a regional hub for research, development and innovation in advanced technologies, attracting high-quality private-sector investment in priority sectors identified under NDS3 and contributing to long-term economic diversification.

Commercial Bank wins The Digital Banker awards for cards, payments innovation

Commercial Bank has been recognised with three awards at The Digital Banker's Global Cards & Payments Innovation Awards 2026.

The awards recognise leading organisations that are shaping the future of the global payment ecosystem through technology and innovation.

The 2026 programme highlights advancements across areas including POS and in-store payments, SME payments, artificial intelligence, data analytics and cloud-powered infrastructure.

The Best Business Card (SMEs)-Qatar award recognised Commercial Bank for its Visa Signature Business SME credit card, curated to address the specific needs of small and medium-sized businesses.

The card combines cashback and premium travel benefits with advanced security, rapid issuance and expense management features, giving SMEs greater control over business spending while supporting more efficient cash flow management.

Additionally, the bank's Pay by Plate solution earned the award for Best Real-Time Payments Service Initiative–Qatar for modernising the fuel payment experience. The solution uses Automatic Number Plate Recognition to identify registered vehicles and trigger instant card authorisation, allowing customers to refuel and drive away without a traditional checkout step.

For Best AI/ML Initiative–Credit Limit Optimisation, Commercial Bank was recognised for its Smart Credit Limit Increase Engine, which applies AI and machine learning to personalise credit limit recommendations. The solution analyses a range of customers and transaction data to identify more appropriate credit limits for individual customers.

Stephen Moss, Group CEO of Commercial Bank, said: "Receiving three awards at The Digital Banker's Global Cards & Payments Innovation Awards is a strong endorsement of our commitment to delivering smarter, faster and more relevant financial solutions.

"From providing SMEs in Qatar with a best-in-class business card proposition, to enabling real-time payments and applying AI and machine learning to optimise credit limits, each initiative responds to a distinct customer need."

Moss added: "Together, these recognitions demonstrate how we are combining technology, data and customer insight to simplify banking, support business growth and deliver secure, seamless experiences. They also reflect the continued momentum of our digital transformation and the dedication of our teams to turning innovation into meaningful value for our customers."

Stephen Moss, Group CEO of Commercial Bank, said: "Receiving three awards at The Digital Banker's Global Cards & Payments Innovation Awards is a strong endorsement of our commitment to delivering smarter, faster and more relevant financial solutions."

BUSINESS

QFZ chief discusses ties with Hillwood and The Perot Group in New York talks

Qatar's Free Zones Authority (QFZ) chief has discussed potential co-operation with Hillwood and The Perot Group on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum Special Edition at UNGA 2026, reports QNA. HE the CEO of QFZ Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Faisal al-Thani met with Ross Perot Jr, the chairman of Hillwood and The Perot Companies in New York to explore opportunities for collaboration. The talks covered ways to leverage Hillwood's experience and the AllianceTexas inland-port model in Qatar across key strategic sectors, including real estate, logistics, aviation and technology.

Qatar Chamber chairman meets CIArb global president

Qatar Chamber chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani, who is also chairman of the Qatar International Arbitration and Conciliation Centre (QICCA), held a meeting with Cesar Pereira, Global president of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb), to discuss ways to enhance cooperation in arbitration and dispute resolution, among other topics.

The meeting was held in the presence of Sheikh Dr Thani bin Ali al-Thani, QICCA vice chairman, and Ibrahim Shahbek, QICCA secretary general. Also attending the meeting was Saad Hijazi, a member of the institute's board of trustees representing the Middle East region.

The meeting also focused on exchange expertise and knowledge, and strengthen coordination between CIArb and QICCA. The two sides also reviewed the cooperation agreement signed in 2024 and discussed the possibility of organising specialised training programmes and workshops in arbitration in cooperation between the two institutions.

The meeting also addressed opportunities to further develop cooperation and knowledge-sharing between the two institutions, contributing to the development of Qatar's arbitration and commercial dispute resolution framework.

Expanding halal economy opens new avenues for Qatar-Malaysia trade

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Bilateral trade between Qatar and Malaysia reached QR402.6mn in the first two months of 2026, signalling continued economic confidence as local commercial interest expands into non-traditional halal sectors.

The early momentum follows a robust QR3.10bn in total bilateral trade throughout 2025 and a peak of QR5.76bn in 2024, according to trade figures the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) shared with Gulf Times.

Highlighting this strategic focus during his participation at the '22nd Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS 2026)' in Kuala Lumpur, Qatar Chamber board member Dr Mohamed bin Jawhar al-Mohammed explained that local business engagement in halal markets is rapidly diversifying.

"The chamber's participation in the expo reflects the growing interest of the Qatari business community in the global halal economy, which now extends beyond food and beverages to sectors, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, tourism, logistics, technology, and packaging," noted al-Mohammed in a Qatar Chamber statement.

Qatar Chamber board member Dr Mohamed bin Jawhar al-Mohammed (left) and Badrul Hisham Hilal, trade commissioner of MATRADE, on the sidelines of yesterday's opening of the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS 2026). The 22nd edition of the event will run until September 26 at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC) in Kuala Lumpur.

Al-Mohammed lauded the strong economic and trade relations between Qatar and Malaysia, emphasising that significant potential exists for further private-sector cooperation to connect Qatari companies with global suppliers, investors, and business partners.

Following yesterday's opening, al-Mohammed toured the MIHAS exhibition halls accompanied by MATRADE officials and held meetings with local and international entities to discuss private-sector partnerships.

Al-Mohammed pointed out that MIHAS provides a platform for connecting global producers, exporters, and investors, noting that Qatar Chamber aims to facilitate joint investment opportunities across halal value chains.

He met with Norshahrin bin Hamidon, president of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia, and Dato' Dr Sirajuddin bin Suhaimee, director general of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation.

Trade composition between the two nations shows a balanced exchange, with Malaysia serving as a reliable supplier of machinery, electrical products, processed food, and palm oil products, according to MATRADE.

Qatar remains a pivotal energy and chemical partner, supplying petroleum products, chemicals, and petrochemical derivatives that serve as essential inputs for Malaysia's manufacturing, industrial, and energy sectors, MATRADE also reported.

Qatar Insurance and ASR strengthen ties to expand Africa, developing markets footprint

Qatar Insurance (QIC) has announced the strengthening of its partnership by investing in Africa Specialty Risks (ASR), an Africa and developing markets-focused specialist (re)insurance group.

The investment builds upon a successful partnership between QIC and ASR, during which QIC has been a reinsurance capacity provider across ASR's portfolio, providing Funds at Lloyd's (FAL) to ASR Syndicate 2454 and binder capacity through Antares. The partnership has allowed QIC to diversify its geographic exposure, accessing ASR's unique Africa- and developing markets-focused underwriting.

Founded in 2020 and led by Mikir Shah, ASR has established itself as one of the leading specialty (re)insurance groups focused on Africa and developing markets. The group's unique platform provides local underwriting expertise and access to A-rated global capacity from ASR's own syndicate and reinsurer alongside its partners.

Salem al-Mannai, Group CEO of QIC, said: "This investment takes QIC into markets where few insurers from our region have a presence, and it adds a further source of diversified growth to a group that continues to expand its international reach.

"Our decision to invest and deepen our relationship with Africa Specialty Risks reflects our confidence in both the long-term growth prospects of African and developing insurance markets and the exceptional quality of the ASR platform."

He added: "Over the past two years, we have worked closely with the ASR team and have been consistently impressed by their underwriting expertise, market knowledge, and execution capabilities. "This partnership provides QIC with a highly effective platform to participate in the growth journey of Africa and other developing markets alongside a proven management team and a world-class insurance partner."

Mikir Shah, CEO, Africa Specialty Risks, said: "Working with QIC over the last few years, we've built a strong partnership as they've looked to access our African and developing market focused specialty underwriting while supporting us with capacity.

QIC Group CEO Salem al-Mannai.

"ASR was built to enable sustainable economic development in growth economies by fulfilling unmet insurance needs, and I look forward to continuing to realise this mission while working closely with our key partners."

The investment advances QIC's international growth strategy of partnering with specialist underwriting businesses and proven management teams in markets with strong long-term growth.

It extends QIC's reach beyond its established platforms in Qatar and the GCC, at Lloyd's and in international reinsurance and Asia, into Africa and developing markets, where insurance penetration remains low and demand for specialty cover is rising with the real economy. Few insurers headquartered in the region have built a position in these markets.

Through ASR's regional network, specialist underwriting expertise and local market knowledge, QIC gains a further source of diversified premium and earnings growth alongside a management team it has already worked with as a capacity partner. The investment is consistent with the QIC's continued expansion of its international portfolio and its objective of building a more diversified, higher-return business for shareholders.

TotalEnergies appoints Sameh Kokash to key VP posts

TotalEnergies has announced the appointment of Sameh Kokash as vice president Refining and Chemicals Qatar and vice president Business Development & AOBO Gas (Assets Operated by Others – Gas), effective September 2026, succeeding Amir Kabbej, who is moving to a new assignment in France.

In this capacity, Kokash will oversee TotalEnergies' downstream interests in Qatar, particularly its stakes in Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO), Qatofin, Ras Laffan Olefins Company (RLOC), and Laffan Refineries, as well as partnerships with QatarEnergy, QatarEnergy LNG, and Dolphin Energy.

Kokash brings almost two decades of TotalEnergies experience to his new role, having joined the company in 2007 in Field Operations. Over the course of his career, he has built a broad track record across the Exploration and Production (E&P) value chain, taking on leadership roles spanning Well Performance, Process Engineering, and Design Engineering.

Sameh Kokash is now TotalEnergies' vice-president Refining and Chemicals Qatar and vice-president Business Development & AOBO Gas (Assets Operated by Others - Gas).

He most recently served as Senior Business Development manager in Refining & Petrochemicals Orient, where he helped drive strategic opportunities across the MENA region.

Kokash studied Chemical Engineering at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and more recently completed an Executive MBA at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France. "It is a privilege to join the TotalEnergies Qatar team at such a defining time, and to build on the longstanding partnerships we share with QatarEnergy LNG, Dolphin Energy, QAPCO, Qatofin, RLOC, and Laffan Refineries.

"Beyond ensuring safe and reliable operations, I am inspired by the opportunity to help shape a future of shared growth and innovation, in line with the ambitions of Qatar National Vision 2030. I look forward to further deepening the trust and collaboration that have long defined our relationship with QatarEnergy," Kokash said.

TotalEnergies has maintained a strong presence in Qatar for more than 90 years, with activities spanning exploration and production, LNG, petrochemicals, and renewable energy, including participation in major offshore assets – the Al-Khalij and Al-Shaheen offshore fields, the Al Kharsaah solar power plant, as well as founding partnerships in QatarEnergy LNG and Dolphin Energy.

Qatar participates in GCC meetings of investment undersecretaries

Qatar participated in several online meetings, represented by Saleh bin Majed al-Khulaifi, Assistant Undersecretary for Industry Affairs and Business Development at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Al-Khulaifi was present during the '64th preparatory meeting of the GCC Committee of Undersecretaries of Commerce', the '49th preparatory meeting of the GCC Committee of Undersecretaries of Industry', the '6th meeting of the GCC Investment Undersecretaries Committee', and the '2nd meeting of the Executive Office of the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (GOIC).

The meetings were attended by undersecretaries from GCC commerce and industry ministries and representatives of the relevant investment authorities, along with the assistant secretary general for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC General Secretariat and the CEO of GOIC.

Participants discussed the items on the meetings' agendas and adopted the relevant decisions and recommendations.

Qatar also participated in the '3rd meeting of the GCC Permanent Committee for Patent Affairs', represented by Saleh bin Abdullah al-Mana, Assistant Undersecretary for Commerce Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Members of the committee and the director general of the Patent Office at the GCC General Secretariat also attended the meeting.

What is a good net profit? And why your business needs a daily ticker

By Mohammed Shabeeb

One of the most common questions I am asked by business owners is deceptively simple. What is a good net profit percentage for a business?

Most owners are hoping for a comforting number. Ten percent. Fifteen. Twenty. My answer disappoints them, because it does not start with a target. It starts with a benchmark. Inflation.

The IMF's 2026 World Economic Outlook puts global headline inflation at 4.7%, up from 4.1% last year. Every serious business today is operating inside that reality. Your suppliers price against it. Your costs rise with it. Your competitors abroad are pricing to beat it. Ignoring it does not make it go away.

It just means you will feel it later, in margin you thought you had.

The rule of multiples: Your net profit target, adjusted for your industry, should be at least two times inflation to survive and three times inflation to build wealth. At two times inflation, roughly 9%, you cover the erosion of your existing capital and produce a modest real return. You survive. You do not scale. There is no cushion for the unexpected. No reserve for reinvestment. No compensation for the risk you are carrying as a business owner rather than a fixed-deposit holder. At three times inflation, the economics change. The first portion covers inflation itself. The second creates real reinvestment capacity. The third produces genuine wealth. This is where a business becomes an asset, not a job.

Industry matters. A supermarket operating on 2 to 3% net margin is not failing. It is running a high-volume model where return on capital, not net percentage, is the correct measure. A software business hitting 20% net margin should be asking whether it is under-investing. Read the benchmark against the reality of your sector, then push above it.

What this actually means in numbers: Take a business turning over 10mn riyals a year. At 9% net profit, you produce 900,000 riyals. After tax, reinvestment, and personal drawings, there is almost nothing left to build with. At 15%, you produce 1.5mn riyals. That difference of 600,000 riyals is not incremental. It is transformational. It is the capital that funds the next hire, the next product line, the next market.

Now translate this to a daily number. To produce 10mn riyals across roughly 250 working days, you need to average 40,000 riyals of sales per day. That is your ticker. Back-calculate the daily gross profit required to hit your net target, and manage the business to that number every morning.

Run it like a stock market: The businesses that hit these targets do not wait for month-end reports. They watch a daily sales ticker like traders watch a stock price. Yesterday's number is known before lunch. The weekly running total is compared against target. The variance is discussed openly. Nobody guesses where the business stands.

Miss a day, and you know before lunch. Miss three, and the team is already adjusting. That is what discipline looks like when profit targets are treated as commitments, not aspirations.

What is your daily sales target, and did you hit it yesterday? If you cannot answer both, your net profit is a wish, not a plan.

■ *Mohammed Shabeeb is the National Director of BNI Qatar and Director-GCC for ActionCOACH Business Coaching. He can be reached on shabeeb@bni.qa*

Qatar Chamber organises dialogue session for women entrepreneurs

QNA
Doha

Qatar Chamber hosted a dialogue session organised by the Women Entrepreneurs Community (WEC), an initiative of the Youth Initiatives Incubator under the Ministry of Sports and Youth, in co-operation with the Young Entrepreneurs Club, women entrepreneurs to exchange experiences.

The Chamber's hosting of the session underscores its commitment to supporting entrepreneurship, empowering women entrepreneurs, and fostering knowledge exchange, networking, and sustainable business growth.

The session is part of WEC's efforts to create a platform for women entrepreneurs and aspiring businesswomen to exchange knowledge, share experiences, build professional networks, and explore new opportunities for collaboration and business growth.

Head of the initiative, Hamda Al Kaabi, highlighted the initiative's goal of fostering a supportive community where women entrepreneurs can share experiences and learn from real-life success stories and challenges.

The session also explored topics including brand identity, understanding customer needs, product and service development, resilience, consistency, and flexibility in responding to changing market demands.

The discussion emphasized the value of practical experience in helping entrepreneurs make informed decisions and navigate the challenges of business development.

The event featured an engaging exchange with attendees, who participated in an interactive session and shared their own experiences and challenges related to launching and managing businesses.

The session is part of a broader series of programs and activities organized by the Youth Initiatives Incubator in cooperation with the Young Entrepreneurs Club to support youth initiatives, empower young people and women in entrepreneurship and innovation, and foster communities that promote learning, networking, and collaboration.

Qatar Chamber, Sri Lanka discuss enhancing ties

QNA
Doha

Qatar Chamber discussed enhancing economic co-operation with Sri Lanka, as well as investment opportunities available to the private sectors of both countries and ways to enhance communication between business communities.

This came in a meeting held by First Vice Chairman of Qatar Chamber, Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Twar al-Kuwari, with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Employment of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Arun Hemachandra.

The two sides reviewed investment opportunities in Sri Lanka, particularly in the agricultural sector, as well as potential co-operation in other sectors of mutual interest. In this context, al-Kuwari stressed the importance of strengthening economic and trade relations between Qatar and Sri Lanka, noting Qatar Chamber's commitment to promoting communication between the private sectors of both countries and familiarising Qatari businesspeople with available investment opportunities.

In turn, Hemachandra invited Qatar Chamber and Qatari businesspeople to visit Sri Lanka to explore investment opportunities, learn more about the business environment and the advantages offered by the Sri Lankan economy to investors.

Ooredoo honoured with Telecom AI Visionary Award

Ooredoo has received the 'Telecom AI Visionary Award' during the Google Cloud Doha Summit 2026, where the company also served as a Premier Sponsor.

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology HE Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed al-Mannai presented the award to Thani Ali al-Malki, Chief Strategy and Digital Transformation officer at Ooredoo Qatar, in recognition of Ooredoo's leadership in advancing Qatar's AI landscape and sovereign cloud infrastructure. Further cementing its summit presence, Ooredoo was also named GWS Partner of the Year. Accepted by Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Fahad al-Thani, senior director business accounts at Ooredoo Qatar, during the Partner Connect session, the award follows Ooredoo's successful cloud transformation engagement with Qatar Airways on Google Cloud.

Al-Malki said, "These recognitions reflect our momentum in building the secure, intelligent infrastructure required for Qatar's digital future. As AI and cloud become foundational to modern enterprise operations, Ooredoo remains focused on delivering the sovereign capabilities and connectivity that allow our partners to innovate responsibly and achieve measurable business value."

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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WALK-IN INTERVIEW
(For a Leading MEP Company)

location

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Requirements	Number
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Plumbing Chargehand	4
Plumber	40

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Booked late, flown full: Travellers wait longer before buying

By Alex Macheras

Three in four Qatar Airways passengers now book within 60 days of departure. Hamad al-Khater, the airline's Group Chief Executive, gave the figure in a Bloomberg Television interview in New York on 20 September, on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum's UNGA edition.
The pattern extends across the industry. Since the regional conflict began at the end of February, travellers have waited longer before buying. Airspace closures, fuel prices and schedule changes have made people cautious about committing months ahead. They book once they are confident the trip will go ahead.
European airlines reported the same pattern in the spring. easyJet chief executive Kenton Jarvis said "the booking window has shortened" and pointed to strong demand in the month of travel. Turkish Airlines chair Murat Seker told investors that long-term visibility resembled the pandemic period. Barclays analyst Andrew Lobbenberg said European holidaymakers were booking late and airlines were cutting fares to prompt them. Demand has held, especially in premium cabins. IATA recorded a global passenger load factor of 85.2% in July, and international demand outside the Middle East rose 1.5% year on year. Middle East carriers filled 80.9% of seats, and IATA said the region's decline had eased after double-digit falls earlier in the year. Those are sound numbers for a peak month. The bookings arrived later in the cycle.
Premium cabins have performed best. Delta's premium revenue rose 17% in the June quarter, and in each of the first two quarters of 2026 its premium revenue equalled its economy revenue. American plans to increase premium seating by 50% by the end of the decade. United is refitting aircraft with fewer seats and more premium cabins.
Business travellers have always booked close to departure. Meetings, deals and board dates are set a few weeks out, and the ticket follows. Airlines with large premium cabins and strong corporate accounts were already selling a high share of their most valuable seats late. The wider market has moved towards their pattern, which leaves them best placed.
Revenue management tends to feel this

most directly. Airline pricing systems typically use historical booking curves to forecast how many seats a flight should have sold at 180, 90 and 30 days before departure. When most bookings arrive in the last eight weeks, the early readings carry less information. A flight that looks weak three months out can be full a fortnight before departure.
Airlines have responded by releasing fewer seats at the lowest fares far in advance and holding more inventory for late, higher-paying passengers.
Forecasters are leaning on live data such as search activity, competitor fares and corporate bookings. Market analysis reported by Business Insider in June noted that the traditional booking window was becoming a less reliable planning tool.
Network planning is harder. Schedules are fixed many months ahead, and new aircraft are in short supply, with manufacturer backlogs running for years. At eight weeks' notice, the practical option is to move the aircraft already in the fleet.
Lufthansa Group has cancelled about 20,000 flights through October, mostly on its least profitable European routes. Qatar Airways has concentrated capacity on its most profitable routes. In both cases, aircraft are going where late demand and yields are strongest.
Large hub carriers are well suited to this. A 777 or A350 can be moved between markets within days. A hub collects late bookings from dozens of cities and feeds them onto a single long-haul departure. The bigger the widebody fleet and network, the more options an airline has.
Late booking also affects pricing. Jet fuel is about $182 a barrel, roughly 90% above its level on 28 February, and Qatar Airways has so far held off passing the increase on to customers. Some airlines have tried to pull bookings forward. easyJet pledged in May not to add fuel surcharges to packages already booked, and British Airways promised holiday customers that prices would not rise after payment.
Passengers who buy in the last few weeks face fuller aircraft and fewer discounted fares. Part of the higher fuel cost will be recovered through those late fares, with no surcharge involved.
How long the shorter booking window lasts depends partly on the conflict. The pandemic offers a guide. Airlines introduced flexible fares in 2020, and many kept them because passengers continued to buy them. This year has given travellers another reason to wait before committing.
If they keep waiting, airlines will need forecasting, network and fleet plans designed around a shorter horizon. Carriers with strong premium products, flexible widebody fleets and large connecting hubs start from the strongest position.

■ *The author is an aviation analyst.*
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Coastal corridors seen to host initial Doha air taxi flight paths

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Initial air taxi flight paths in Doha will likely follow designated coastal corridors to avoid flying over urban areas and reduce ground risks, according to an aviation technical expert.
The operational strategy addresses airspace constraints around primary transport hubs while maintaining strict separation from conventional commercial aviation flight paths, Aeronex DJI Enterprise technical solution designer Walid Meskine said during a panel discussion at the Autonomous e-Mobility Forum 2026 in Doha, explaining that Qatar's geography dictates specific airspace engineering.
Meskine further pointed out that air mobility operations will operate within a fixed altitude structure between high-altitude manned aircraft and low-altitude small drones.
He said, "Regarding the altitude structure, we call it the 'global sandwich': manned aircraft operate at altitudes of up to 1,500 feet, while small UAS operate at lower altitudes of approximately 400 to 500 feet," he said.
Meskine also reiterated that the corridor operating below 1,500 feet requires digital traffic management infrastructure to ensure automated separation and active communication with manned airspace.
He noted that regional operators routinely test unmanned aircraft under extreme summer heat and dust conditions to establish baseline

Aeronex DJI Enterprise technical solution designer Walid Meskine.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam.

reliability metrics. Addressing airspace oversight, the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority air safety department director Nayif Nasser al-Jaber emphasised that operating within shared airspace requires comprehensive pilot licensing and vertiport approvals.
Al-Jaber stated that unmanned and piloted eVTOL operations alter main operational objectives, necessitating clear coordination between civil aviation authorities and ground traffic regulators.
"Not all advanced air mobility and eVTOLs are unmanned aircraft; some of them are being operated by the pilot being on board…so this is a very important aspect to take into consideration because it changes the main objectives of the operation," al-Jaber noted.
FlyNow Aviation Saudi Arabia representative Paul Kaman noted that coastal and urban vertiports function as vital transport hubs that must be integrated into master urban plans.
Kaman explained that establishing permanent vertiport infrastructure along designated flight corridors creates bankable assets that support long-term commercial air transit.

Hybrid engines are seen key to air mobility in desert environments

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Hybrid propulsion designs remain essential for regional air mobility aircraft to achieve practical range and payload requirements in extreme desert environments, according to an aircraft manufacturer.
Fahad al-Riyami, founder and chief executive of AeroVecto, said: "With current battery technology, opting for a fully electric aircraft would require unacceptable compromises—whether in range, payload, or the reserve capacity needed to complete the flight in accordance with regulations."
During a panel discussion at the Autonomous e-Mobility Forum 2026 in Doha, al-Riyami explained that current battery limitations under high ambient temperatures necessitate combined power systems for heavy payload operations and emergency services.
"Until battery technology advances, our only realistic option is to pursue a hybrid approach—whether that means combining jet fuel with electric motors today or transitioning to hydrogen in the future," emphasised al-Riyami, who added that AeroVecto is developing an 18-passenger vertical takeoff aircraft utilising conventional jet fuel to power electric lift motors.
Al-Riyami pointed out that hybrid aircraft reduce initial infrastructure requirements by using existing airport and helipad fuel distribution networks.
He said utilising existing aviation refueling infrastructure significantly lowers initial capital costs for regional operators. Al-Riyami added: "We can leverage existing infrastructure used for helicopters and conventional air traffic to power the aircraft, helping reduce costs as well."
Aeronex DJI Enterprise technical solution designer Walid Meskine noted that testing across the region has shown battery capacity reduction during peak summer temperatures.
Meskine explained that passenger transport demands higher reliability thresholds than cargo operations under severe climate conditions.
He said, "When transporting cargo, the process is

Fahad al-Riyami, founder and chief executive of AeroVecto.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam.

relatively straightforward. Carrying passengers, however, requires progressively more extensive dry runs, or, in other words, passenger-free testing, until the system has demonstrated full reliability in a range of weather conditions."
Qatar Civil Aviation Authority Air Safety Department director Nayif Nasser al-Jaber emphasised that all aircraft, regardless of propulsion type, must fulfill strict airworthiness requirements under ICAO Annex 8.
Al-Jaber emphasised, "We will need to understand and do a gap analysis between the type of certificates and the documentation that was approved by [foreign civil aviation authorities] in accordance with the Qatar Civil Aviation regulations, and as well as the relevant annexes issued by the ICAO Annex 8."
He stated that technical evaluations cover pilot qualifications, maintenance engineering standards, and operational compatibility. Al-Jaber added that early consultation with civil aviation authorities helps manufacturers resolve technical compliance gaps before entering local markets.

Iran airlines forced to cancel flights as US sanctions hit

AFP
Tehran

Iranian airlines were forced to cancel some international flights on Wednesday after the US tightened sanctions on Iran's aviation industry in a new effort to cripple its economy.
A travel agent in Tehran told AFP that flights to Baghdad, Muscat, Georgia and Azerbaijan had all been suspended, but routes to multiple other destinations remained available, including China.
US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the new measures on Monday as part of an earlier threat to impose "economic D-Day" on Iran, an attempt to force it into submission following nearly seven months of war.
But Iran's aviation sector has already been a target of sanctions for years, and it remains unclear what the full impact will be and which other countries will comply.
Even after the new sanctions took effect on Wednesday, a flight from Tehran operated by Mahan Air, one of Iran's biggest carriers, landed in Guangzhou in China, according to tracking data from FlightRadar24.
China said on Tuesday that it opposed the US sanctions, calling them illegal. A flight to Shanghai was also due to depart on Wednesday, according to Tehran's international airport. Some flights to Istanbul were also scheduled, though others had been cancelled, the travel agent in Tehran told AFP. "The situation is unstable and we are no longer selling tickets for the time being for fear of cancellations," the agent said, requesting anonymity.
A Mahan flight from Kabul was also expected to arrive in Tehran. According to the website for Tehran's international airport, other connections to Turkey and Armenia remained possible using smaller Iranian airlines, including Varesh.
Flights to Najaf in Iraq and Dubai were also scheduled.
Bessent had vowed on Monday to "shut down" Iranian carriers and punish anyone doing business with them.
"If they land, you cannot provide them with fuel, you

Employees work at the office of Iran's Mahan Air in Erbil, Iraq, on Tuesday. Iranian airlines were forced to cancel some international flights on Wednesday after the US tightened sanctions on Iran's aviation industry in a new effort to cripple its economy.

cannot provide them with landing services, you cannot sell them tickets or you will be knocked out of the dollar system," he warned other countries.
The restrictions will further complicate the ability of Iranians to travel abroad or return to their country.
Iranian media also reported cancellations, with the Tasnim news agency on Tuesday citing a civil aviation spokesman as saying that Baghdad and Muscat airports "will no longer accept" Iranian flights.
The agency added that "other international flights, including Istanbul, will operate as scheduled".
According to Tasnim, Iran's aviation authorities were in talks to reroute Baghdad flights to Najaf, a major destination for Iranian pilgrims.
On Wednesday, the agency said its correspondent in Najaf had reported Iranian flights to the city were running as normal.
It quoted a source at the airport as saying no order had been received from Iraqi authorities to halt flights.
While the Iraqi government has not publicly announced plans to enforce the ban, several sources including a senior government official told AFP that Baghdad would comply with the US measures.

Global airport passenger traffic reaches record 9.8bn in 2025: ACI

Airports worldwide carried a record 9.8bn passengers in 2025, according to Airports Council International (ACI) World, with air cargo volumes also hitting an all time high.
But momentum has cooled in 2026, with passenger growth slowing amid geopolitical and economic headwinds, even as cargo continues to expand, noted ACI.
The figures come from ACI World's 2026 Annual World Airport Traffic Report, based on data from 2,817 commercial airports worldwide. The dataset covers an estimated 97% of scheduled global passenger traffic, offering the most comprehensive picture yet of how the world moves through its airports.
"The 2025 results confirm what this industry has shown year after year: long term demand for air travel remains strong, and more capacity will be needed," said Justin Erbacci, ACI World's director general.
He added that meeting demand requires expanding capacity, maximising existing infrastructure, and advocating for regulation that enables investment rather than blocks it, while recognising airports as strategic assets for their communities.
Air cargo reached a record 131.2mn tonnes over the year, while aircraft movements climbed to 103.1mn.
Yet the headline numbers mask a

People look at aircraft at a viewing gallery of the Changi Airport in Singapore. Airports worldwide carried a record 9.8bn passengers in 2025, according to Airports Council International World, with air cargo volumes also hitting an all time high.

more unsettled picture emerging in 2026. Geopolitical tensions, airspace disruption and rising costs have begun to reshape the industry's near term outlook, the report warns.
International travel drove 2025's growth, with passenger traffic up 6.1%, comfortably outpacing domestic growth of 1.7%. Global air cargo rose 3.3%, while aircraft movements increased 2.0%. Africa led with a 9.0% rise in traffic, followed by the Middle East at 6.5%, Asia Pacific at 5.1%, and Latin America and the Caribbean at 4.5%. Europe posted 4.2%. North America was the exception, with traffic dipping 0.7% amid softer domestic demand.
The opening months of 2026 have told a more complicated story. Global passenger traffic reached approximately 4.7bn in the first half, up just 0.6% on the same period last year, a marked slowdown from 2025's pace.
Growth persisted across Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia Pacific, while North America remained largely flat. The Middle East saw the sharpest decline, with traffic down 21% as the region bore the impact of escalating crisis and airspace disruption.
For all the near term volatility, the report's underlying message is one of confidence. Long run drivers of aviation demand – rising populations, growing incomes, expanding connectivity and an enduring appetite for mobility – remain firmly intact.