





# Al-Kuwari meets several ministers, senior officials at QEF



HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari met separately on Tuesday with a number of ministers and senior officials of financial and government institutions, on the sidelines of the third edition of Qatar Economic Forum 2023, reports QNA. Al-Kuwari met with the founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies Michael Bloomberg; Minister of Finance of Saudi Arabia Mohamed Abdullah al-Jadaan; Minister of Economy and Planning of Saudi Arabia Faisal Alibrahim; Minister of Finance of the Republic of Poland Magdalena Rzeczkowska. Al-Kuwari also met with Minister of State for Financial Affairs in the United Arab Emirates Mohamed Hadi al-Husseini; CEO of Standard Chartered Bill Winters; Global chairman of PwC Robert Moritz, Minister of Economy of Malaysia Rafizi Ramli. The meetings discussed several topics of mutual interest as well as the most relevant economic, investment, and trade developments.

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## Al-Kuwari meets senior officials on sidelines of Qatar Economic Forum

HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari met with senior officials on the sideline of the 3rd annual Qatar Economic Forum yesterday. Al-Kuwari met with Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, president, AGFUND; Abdulrahman bin Abdullah al-Humaidi, chairman and director general, Arab Monetary Fund; and Michael Miebach, chief executive officer, Mastercard. "During the meetings, several subjects of mutual interest, as well as the most relevant economic, investment, and trade developments, were discussed," the Ministry of Finance said last night.





## QCB Governor meets IMF managing director



HE the Governor of Qatar Central Bank Sheikh Bandar bin Mohamed bin Saoud al-Thani met yesterday with Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva on the sidelines of Qatar Economic Forum, reports QNA. During the meeting, they discussed the most prominent monetary and economic developments.

## QCB Governor meets vice-president of SAS



HE the Governor of the Qatar Central Bank Sheikh Bandar bin Mohamed bin Saoud al-Thani met yesterday with Senior Vice-President, Middle East, Turkiye & Africa at SAS, Shukri Dabaghi, on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum 2023, reports QNA. During the meeting, they discussed the most prominent financial and economic developments.



HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai and Serbian Minister of Information and Telecommunications Mihailo Jovanovic exchanging the signed agreements on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg.

# Qatar, Serbia sign MoU for co-operation in ICT sector

The State of Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) yesterday with the Republic of Serbia within the framework of the joint strategic co-operation aimed at enhancing co-operation in the field of Information and communication technologies (ICT).

The MoU was signed by HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai and Serbian Minister of Information and Telecommunications Mihailo Jovanovic on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg.

It also aims to promote areas of co-operation between the two countries and exchange experiences and best practices in digital transformation, e-government, research and development (R&D), investment in small and medium-sized companies, innovation, activating electronic transactions, and other areas related to the communications and information technology sectors.

Al-Mannai said the MoU supports the relations between the two countries and demonstrates their commitment to the advancement of the communications and information technology sectors and will pave the way for innovation, co-operation, and



progress, and contribute to a brighter and interconnected future.  
He said, "The government of the State of Qatar

and the government of the Republic of Serbia are working to establish a new era of co-operation and this MoU represents a decisive step forward in our joint commitment to use the full potential of the communications and information technology sectors to advance technological development and build a technologically advanced society."

Jovanovic, on the other hand, stressed the importance of the MoU in consolidating bilateral relations in the communications and information technology sectors, pointing to the need to strengthen partnerships with other countries in this vital field, citing international co-operation and co-ordination as a decisive factor in achieving sustainability and growth.

He pointed to the distinguished organisation of the Qatar Economic Forum in its third edition, stressing that Qatar is now playing a key role as an important economic centre in the Middle East and the world.

QEF 2023 is an opportunity to exchange views between senior officials in the region and the world and executive directors of major international companies and institutions, on the most important economic challenges and possible investment opportunities.



### Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) CEO

QIA Committed To Investing  
**GBP 10 Billion In UK**



**Qatar Investment Authority**

**Mansoor Bin Ebrahim Al Mahmoud**  
HE Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) CEO

**Signing of the Qatar-UK Strategic Investment Partnership enabled QIA to pump many investments into the United Kingdom**

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“The recent investments were made in financial technology, technology, e-commerce spaces and other domains”

“Qatar is committed to investing up to **GBP 10 billion** in key sectors of the UK economy during the period **2022-2027**”

“The investments reflect QIA’s strategic focus on driving innovation and future-focused sectors in the United Kingdom and the world”

“QIA is a long-term investor in the United Kingdom and is committed to supporting the country’s vision to become a global center for science and technology”

“QIA carries on exploring new investment in and partnership opportunities with the United Kingdom, financing cutting-edge platforms and ambitious startups”

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## QIA committed to investing £10bn in UK economy: CEO

QNA  
Doha

Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) CEO Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud stressed that the signing of the Qatar-UK Strategic Investment Partnership enabled QIA to pump many investments into the United Kingdom in line with the mandate of the Authority to build value for future generations in Qatar, indicating that the recent investments were made in financial technology, technology, e-commerce spaces and other domains. During his meeting with the UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Kemi Badenoch on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Qatar-UK Strategic Investment Partnership, al-Mahmoud said that Qatar is committed to investing up to £10bn in key sectors of the UK economy during 2022-2027 as part of the strategic investment partnership, adding that the investments reflect QIA's strategic focus on driving innovation and future-focused sectors in the UK and the

world, which helps to create high-skilled jobs and forge new paths for sustainable growth. Al-Mahmoud continued by saying that QIA is a long-term investor in the UK and is committed to supporting the country's vision to become a global centre for science and technology, and that QIA carries on exploring new investment in and partnership opportunities with the UK, financing cutting-edge platforms and ambitious startups that will transform industries from finance and energy to life sciences. For her part, Badenoch said that this significant achievement demonstrates the joint commitment of the UK and Qatar to driving growth in key industries of the future, ranging from green technology and life sciences to cyber security and beyond. She said that as one of the best investment destinations in Europe, the UK aspires to work with QIA to build on the ambitions of a bilateral partnership over the coming years to create more job opportunities, support business, and develop both countries' economies for mutual benefit and interest.

# IPA Qatar signs major agreements with Siemens, Emerson at QEF

The Investment Promotion Agency Qatar (IPA Qatar) signed new Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with international companies, Siemens and Emerson, on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg yesterday. The agreements were signed by Sheikh Ali Alwaleed al-Thani, CEO of IPA Qatar, Matthias Rebellus, Member of the Managing Board of Siemens AG and the CEO Smart Infrastructure, and Walid Samara, Vice-President of Emerson for the Northern Region-MEA. Other notable attendees included Helmut von Struve, CEO of Siemens in the Middle East and UAE; Hakan Ozdemir, CEO of Siemens in Qatar; and Mazen Ghannam, Emerson's QatarEnergy Global Strategic Account Director.

The new partnerships will play a role in facilitating the establishment of a centre of excellence in Lusail City, adding significant value to Qatar's talent ecosystem and leadership in technological and software design. Cementing Qatar's global profile as a thriving and supportive global



Sheikh Ali Alwaleed al-Thani, CEO of IPA Qatar, signs the agreements with Matthias Rebellus, member of the Managing Board of Siemens AG and the CEO Smart Infrastructure, and Walid Samara, Vice-President of Emerson for the Northern Region-MEA.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

business hub, IPA Qatar remains committed to expanding its strategic collaborations with international companies, further enabling them to deepen their footprint in Qatar, access lucrative opportunities across diverse sectors, and drive economic diversification. IPA Qatar's partnership with Sie-

mens establishes the foundation for collaboration in the development of sustainable infrastructure projects in Qatar, leveraging Siemens' expertise in infrastructure, industry, and mobility. The collaboration aims to strengthen co-operation in key sectors, such as vertical farming, smart cities, and

transportation. According to the agreement, Siemens is committed to fostering local talent and plans to increase its workforce to exceed 300 full-time employees. This will facilitate knowledge transfer and create new opportunities, contributing to the growth and development of Qatar's workforce.

The MoU with Emerson will accelerate the expansion of automation technology and industrial software excellence in Qatar. IPA Qatar will support Emerson in its development of a Centre of Excellence in Lusail City, which will serve as a central hub for fostering innovation, sharing technology best practices, and

nurturing local talent in key industry sectors, such as energy utilisation. Sheikh Ali said, "The new strategic partnerships with Siemens and Emerson are a significant step forward for IPA Qatar in achieving our mission to attract foreign direct investment and promote economic growth in Qatar. "By collaborating with global leaders in technology, finance and innovation, we can create new opportunities for our local businesses and help them compete on a global scale. We are confident that these partnerships will lead to mutually beneficial outcomes and look forward to working closely with our new partners to drive sustainable economic development in Qatar." Ozdemir said, "We are happy to collaborate with IPA Qatar and embark on this partnership, as it signifies our strong commitment to collaboration and contributing to the digital transformation in Qatar. Together, we will contribute to Qatar's position as a leading business location for the technology sector in the region, by leveraging our expertise and

working closely with local partners. "Our aim is to make significant advancements in digitalisation, sustainability, and alternative energy solutions, creating a brighter and more sustainable future for Qatar through this collaboration." Samara said, "We are excited to partner with IPA Qatar in supporting the development of a vibrant Qatar economy. Over the years, Emerson, as a leading automation technology and industrial software provider, has supported Qatar's hydrocarbon industry and its position as a leading LNG producer and exporter in the world market. The development of our Centre of Excellence will unlock opportunities for industry collaboration in innovation, local talent development and the sharing of technology best practices." This year, QEF 2023 brought together global leaders, policymakers, and investors to discuss key issues related to economic growth and sustainable development. Sheikh Ali participated in a breakout session on 'Emerging Markets: An Uneven Recovery and Future Growth Story'.



## QFC, Golden Gate Ventures to strengthen Southeast-Southwest Asia trade corridor

The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) yesterday hosted a contingent of 12 top Southeast Asian (SEA) startups at an exclusive roundtable aimed at strengthening the Southeast-Southwest Asia golden corridor for technology innovation. The move comes in the backdrop of investments from the Gulf Co-operation Council or GCC into Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) hitting \$85.2bn in 2021, paving the way for long-term co-operation. Organised in partnership with Golden Gate Ventures, a venture capital fund in Southeast Asia founded by Silicon Valley natives, the roundtable brought together founders in the digital economy, B2B SaaS, gaming, EduTech and climate tech sectors. The GCC and Asean have steadily built ties as far back as a decade ago and in recent years; co-operation has expanded far beyond non-oil sectors to include fintech, climate tech, LNG, B2B

SaaS and digital assets. These high-growth sectors are common across both regions, providing opportunities for businesses in these sectors to expand into each region. This helps to drive innovation in these sectors at a faster pace, helping startups to level up for global expansion. “We want to provide investors and businesses in our region insights not only to the current opportunities in Southeast Asia, but also help them to see into the future to enable strategic investment and business expansion decisions. This roundtable QFC is jointly hosting with Golden Gate Ventures provides investors and businesses that competitive edge,” QFC Authority chief executive officer Yousuf Mohamed al-Jaida said. Both regions, for example, still have a sizeable part of their population that remains unbanked, so there are many opportunities for startups in both regions to learn from one another and



QFC hosts 12 top Southeast Asian (SEA) startups as part of strengthening Southeast-Southwest Asia golden corridor for technology innovation.

develop fintech ecosystems to serve this group. With a greater emphasis on alternative

energy sources, the LNG (liquefied natural gas) sector offers another bright spark in both regions as well.

Vietnam recently approved a power plan to boost the use of LNG by 2030, paving the way to develop this sector

in both Vietnam and Qatar. Vinnie Lauria, Founding Partner at Golden Gate Ventures, said the GCC countries look to Asean for investment opportunities; Asean startups look for ways to expand into the Gulf region; and the startup ecosystems in both regions can learn so much from one another. As the nation drives ahead with the Qatar National Vision 2030 to reduce its reliance on oil and gas, and instead invest more in entrepreneurship and business development, startups are becoming an increasingly important economic pillar. Financial capital aside, the roundtable delegates discussed the importance of bringing together the right human and social capital. This is an area that venture capital firms can contribute by supporting founders with the right industry connections, helping them open the right doors and enabling talent development in the startups.

# Ooredoo is Premier Sponsor of Google Cloud Doha region launch event

Ooredoo has further cemented its longstanding partnership with global tech giant Google Cloud as Premier Sponsor of the Google Cloud Doha region launch event held recently at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC). Senior representatives of Ooredoo showcased the many facets of the solid partnership at the event, where attendees could visit the Ooredoo booth and learn more about the techco's many Google Cloud services, including Google Workspace, Contact Centre AI, managed services for the platform, and key connectivity solutions like Multi-Cloud Local Connect.

Ooredoo experts were on hand to discuss the many options available to business customers and explain the myriad benefits enabled by the company's ongoing partnership with such a world-leading technology provider. Ooredoo Senior Director ICT Product Development Mariam al-Khal took part in a panel discussion to share her thoughts on the collaboration landscape and highlight Ooredoo's considerable contribution to digital transformation in Qatar. Thani al-Malki, Chief Business Officer, Ooredoo Qatar, said: “We greatly value our strong partnership with global technology leader Google Cloud. This valuable collabora-

tion brought unparalleled possibilities and solutions that enabled our customers to upgrade their world. “It was our pleasure to support Google Cloud as they hosted this momentous event, and we are excited to witness the transformative impact the new cloud region will have on our customers and the industry as a whole.” The new Google Cloud Doha region will offer the latest in cloud technology from artificial intelligence and machine learning to serverless infrastructure. The launch of the new region aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, of which Ooredoo is a staunch supporter and its aim of complete digitalisation.



Ooredoo Senior Director ICT Product Development Mariam al-Khal during the panel discussion.



Senior representatives of Ooredoo showcased the many facets of the solid partnership at the event.

## Doha Bank wins ‘Best ESG Integration Award’ at Arab Federation of Capital Markets

Doha Bank has been awarded the ‘Best ESG Integration in Qatar’ award by Global Economics during an event hosted recently by the Arab Federation of Capital Markets in Oman. The award recognises Doha Bank's excellence in integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into its strategy, operations, and reporting. Doha Bank has been a pioneer in adopting the best practices and standards of ESG in the region, demonstrating its commitment to creating a positive impact for its stakeholders and the society at large. Some of the Doha Bank's ESG initiatives include implementing a comprehensive ESG policy and framework aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Qatar National Vision 2030; launching innovative products and services that support green financing, social inclusion, and responsible investing. Enhancing its corporate governance structure and practices to ensure transpar-



Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Fahad al-Thani, Deputy CEO, Doha Bank.

ency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement; and supporting various community and environmental programmes that

promote education, health, culture, and conservation. Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Fahad al-Thani, Deputy CEO of Doha Bank, said: “We are honoured to receive this prestigious award from Global Economics, which reflects our continuous efforts to embed ESG into our core business values and activities. “We believe that ESG is not only a moral duty but also a strategic imperative that enhances our competitiveness, resilience, and reputation in the market. We are committed to advancing the ESG agenda in the banking sector and contributing to the sustainable development of Qatar and throughout the region.” The ‘Best ESG Integration Award’ is part of the Global Economics Awards 2023, which celebrates the achievements of the most outstanding banks and financial institutions across various categories and regions. The winners are selected by a panel of independent experts based on rigorous criteria and analysis.



The collaboration was announced as part of Google Cloud's Doha cloud region launch, in the presence of Israel Esteban, Chief Technology Officer, beIN Media Group, and Anthony Cirot, Vice-President EMEA South, Google Cloud.

## beIN Media Group and Google Cloud collaborate to drive digital transformation of Qatar's media and broadcast industry

beIN Media Group (beIN) and Google Cloud have announced a collaboration to drive the digital transformation of Qatar's media and broadcast industry in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. The affiliate agreement is an extension of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and Google Cloud framework agreement for cloud computing services, which enables all government entities to leverage Google Cloud's computing services and digital transformation solutions, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), to enhance their ability to better serve citizens of Qatar. The collaboration was announced as part of Google Cloud's Doha cloud region launch, in the presence of Israel Esteban, Chief Technology Officer, beIN Media Group, and Anthony Cirot, Vice-President EMEA South, Google Cloud. The collaboration between Google Cloud and beIN involves exploring opportunities to accelerate the group's digital transformation using Google Cloud's suite of data analytics and machine learning services. This will enable a deeper understanding of its customers' needs and interests, and to deliver more personalised and relevant experiences across its many services and plat-

forms. Esteban said, “beIN has been an early adopter of advanced technologies that have enabled us to deepen fan and audience engagement with personalised, connected, and immersive experiences. “Our alliance with Google Cloud is an exciting new milestone in beIN's digital transformation journey that will enhance our business processes and guide our strategies, in parallel to ensuring beIN's audiences around the world are provided with the latest in innovative experiences.” Ghassan Kosta, Qatar Country Manager, Google Cloud, added: “beIN has become a household name in Qatar and one of the go-to trusted sources for sports news coverage. We are thrilled to help beIN understand its customers on a much deeper and profound level, which will empower the business to make smarter, data-driven decisions.” Google and beIN started collaborating in 2022 when the group's flagship sports channel, beIN Sports, announced that it would share highlights from more than 50 matches from major global sports leagues, end-of-season games and sports content on YouTube. Highlights are available for popular leagues such as the Champions League, Premier League, Bundesliga, and La Liga, among others.

## Fed official cautions against all-clear on banking woes

**Reuters**  
New York

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis President Neel Kashkari cautioned that while it may appear like the worst of the banking sector's stresses are over, history showed more trouble can't be ruled out. “It's far too soon to declare all-clear” and say that actions by the Fed, Treasury and other regulators have arrested the surge of bank problems that erupted in March, Kashkari said in an interview with Reuters. That sense of caution is driven by his experience as a top government official involved in helping resolve the financial crisis over a decade ago. Kashkari, who became leader of the Minneapolis Fed in 2016, served

at the US Treasury Department between 2006 and 2009, and in 2008 helmed the Troubled Assets Relief Program, which used government money to help stabilise the banking system. The year he took charge of that programme was the most acute phase of the crisis, culminating in the failure of investment bank Lehman Brothers in September 2008. On the way to that crisis moment there were false dawns that had led observers to believe the worst was over. “2008 is just imprinted on me,” Kashkari said. He noted investment bank Bear Stearns collapsed in March of that year, noting, “A couple months went by and we thought, okay, that was the worst. And then obviously, things got much worse from there.” The global financial system was rattled in March by the

failure of two banks in California that raised questions over how banks, especially regional ones, were navigating the central bank's very aggressive course of rate rises that kicked off in March 2022. The banking troubles drove the Fed to extend substantial amounts of liquidity to the financial system, and while that lending has backed off from March, the central bank was still extending just over \$300bn in loans to banks as of last Thursday, a number that dwarfs what it lent directly to banks in 2008 during the worst phase of the financial crisis. Fed officials have contended, on balance, that lending as well as the launch of a new programme called the Bank Term Funding Program, has put banks on solid footing, allowing policymakers to focus monetary policy decisions on mainly economic factors.



# Apple’s relentless stock rally puts \$3tn in view

**Bloomberg**  
New York

Apple Inc's rally in 2023 has brought it back to the brink of a historic threshold: A \$3tn market valuation.

The stock has soared 35% this year, adding nearly \$690bn in market value, as investors have flocked to the iPhone maker's steady revenue and massive cash flows. The advance has put Apple within striking distance of its January 2022 record.

"In my career, I never envisioned a company of this size, but then I never envisioned a company capable of generating more than \$100bn in free cash flow in a year," said Patrick Burton, a portfolio manager of the MainStay Winslow Large Cap Growth Fund, which owns nearly 4.5mn shares of the Cupertino, California-based firm, as of the latest data. "When you look at the underlying metrics, it's understandable why Apple has done so well."

Apple and other technology behemoths have been market standouts this year as investors have gravitated to companies with the biggest scale while staring down risks from a potential recession, bank failures and now a US debt-ceiling standoff. It's a favourite stock for institutional investors, hedge funds, retail investors, and Warren Buffett. The stellar performance has, however, led



A person walks past the Apple store on Fifth Avenue in New York City. Apple stock has soared 35% this year, adding nearly \$690bn in market value, as investors have flocked to the iPhone maker's steady revenue and massive cash flows.

to an increased debate around Apple's valuation.

At 28 times projected earnings, the stock is in rarefied air for a technology firm whose revenue is expected to shrink this year, trading at a premium to its own history, as well as the market, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

While Apple briefly rose above \$3tn in early 2022, it failed to close above that level, and the peak marked the start

of a downtrend that resulted in a 27% drop that year as investors fled tech stocks amid soaring interest rates. Should Apple achieve the milestone, it would be the first to do so. Currently, at \$2.76tn, it is bigger than the entire Russell 2000 index.

Apple's results this month underlined the bull case. Both earnings and revenue were better than expected, thanks to a rebound in the iPhone and growth in its Services business.

The company also raised its dividend and announced plans for \$90bn in stock repurchases.

That commitment to shareholder returns, coupled with the firm's durable revenue streams, made Apple and other megacap tech stocks a favourite safety play earlier this year, when the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank led to turmoil in the banking sector. But now, amid expectations the Federal Reserve will start cutting inter-

est rates as soon as July to stoke economic growth, investors are looking to it for its offensive, rather than defensive, characteristics.

"Apple is just as likely to perform well in a risk-on environment as a risk-off one," said Sylvia Jablonski, chief executive officer of Defiance ETFs. "You can't expect 20-30% returns from here, but I'd rather park my money here than in a Treasury. There is a lot of opportunity for growth even in a tough market, and it pays a dividend, buys back a ton of stock, and has this incredibly strong balance sheet, all of which is attractive to investors."

To be sure, Apple's ever-increasing influence in major stock indexes means any reversal in the rally would pose a broader risk to markets. The shares represent nearly 7.5% of the S&P 500 Index, a level that has marked a peak in recent years.

"When a company executes as well as Apple has, people may feel it is immune to risks," said Sal Bruno, chief investment officer at IndexIQ. "Right now we're seeing the positive side of it being the biggest weight, since it has delivered fantastic results and shown terrific strength, but whenever we've seen market concentration spike in the past, it hasn't ended well. If it trips or there's a sense it has gotten overvalued, there's more risk for the market overall."

## Debt-limit talks stall as time runs short to avert US default

**Bloomberg**  
Washington

Debt limit talks in Washington have hit a fresh impasse with negotiators far apart on key issues, especially the spending cuts demanded by Republicans, as time runs short to avert a historic US default.

Negotiators were tentatively planning to return to the table yesterday amid the stalemate. There's no sign that President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy have talked since their meeting at the White House on Monday.

House Republicans escalated their accusations that Biden lacked urgency in negotiations, while a Democratic aide called McCarthy unwilling to compromise across a wide spectrum of disputed points, threatening the legislative prospects of a deal.

After weeks of showing little sign of concern, equities are now becoming more volatile. Futures on the S&P 500 were down 0.4% in New York, after the index slid 1.1% on Tuesday. Treasuries dipped.

If a default did occur, economists project it could send the US into a recession, with widespread job losses and higher consumer borrowing costs spilling into the coming election year.

"The current standoff over the US debt ceiling has the potential to wreak more havoc on the economy than any previous go-around," wrote Bloomberg Economics chief economist Anna Wong. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Monday called it "highly likely" that her department would run out of cash in early June without an extension of the debt ceiling, and repeated her warning that the moment could come as soon as June 1.

Republican Representative Garret Graves of Louisiana, one of McCarthy's chief negotiators, suggested just hours after a two-hour meeting in the Capitol with his White House counterparts that the two sides were at a standoff.

"Bottom line is that we're going to have to see some movement or some fundamental change in what they're doing," Graves said of the White House negotiating team. "Right now, we don't have additional meetings set up."

McCarthy has told Biden that he did not intend to retreat from public refusals to accept additional taxes as part of an agreement, and has held that defence spending

should increase while non-defence discretionary spending should be cut, according to a Democratic aide. He has also declined White House requests to scale back his proposed work requirements for food stamp programs, the person said.

The speaker isn't alone in drawing red lines. The White House has said Biden would flatly reject a proposal that imposes work requirements on federal health care programs, or any effort to repeal the president's signature Inflation Reduction Act legislation.

It is not unusual for Congress to strike budget deals at the last minute when the pressure becomes great enough to force negotiators to make painful choices. McCarthy likely has little room to give, as he looks to hold together a fragile GOP coalition. Republicans want to slash domestic spending over as many years as possible, while Democrats have offered slimmer cuts over a couple of years.

Democrats argue that while Biden has offered concessions – including a two-year spending cap and rescinding significant unspent coronavirus funds – McCarthy has refused sweeteners that could win over Democratic lawmakers.

Hakeem Jeffries, the House Democratic leader, told reporters that a freeze at 2023 spending levels would be a "reasonable" compromise. Jeffries, who has opposed work requirements, said any accord that requires Democratic votes must reflect Democratic priorities.

Yet Republicans believe McCarthy has leverage in the talks, assisted by Biden's initial refusal to negotiate over the debt ceiling. Polls show that Americans generally favour pairing spending cuts with raising the debt ceiling, though that approval drops when the programs that face cuts are detailed. At the same time, group of moderate House Democrats is preparing to help rescue McCarthy should he forge a bipartisan deal to avert a US default that touches off sparks a revolt by ultra-conservatives. The offer is purely hypothetical at the moment, but at least 10 Democrats stand ready to cross party lines to help him retain his post as speaker if Republican hard-liners try to oust him in the aftermath of a debt-limit deal, according Representative Dean Phillips of Minnesota, who is involved in the effort.

## Most markets sink as US debt talks stutter, fuelling default fears

**AFP**  
Hong Kong

Stock markets tracked losses in Wall Street yesterday as investors grow increasingly concerned about stalled US debt ceiling talks aimed at averting a painful default.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 closed down 0.9% to 30,682.68 points; Hong Kong – Hang Seng Index ended down 1.6% to 19,115.93 points and Shanghai – Composite closed down 1.3% to 3,204.75 points yesterday.

The optimism that flowed through trading floors at the start of the week has given way to trepidation, with several Republicans questioning an early June deadline, and some even saying the country is nowhere near running out of cash anyway.

All eyes are now on Washington, where President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy have had a number of meetings to find a path to lifting the borrowing limit from the current \$31.8tn.

The two men said Monday that talks had been "productive" and they were

confident a deal would be coming. Republicans have set cutting spending next year to 2022 levels as a "red line", but Democrats have so far refused to commit to that.

On Tuesday, Republican Representative Ralph Norman warned that McCarthy had said the two sides were "not anywhere near close" to an agreement.


The Speaker also tweeted: "With just 9 days left to go, Republicans remain the only ones in Washington who have actually done anything to lift the debt limit and avoid default." However, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-

Pierre struck a more upbeat tone, saying: "We are seeing movement."

"Both sides have to understand that they're not going to get everything that they want." Some Republicans have said they do not believe warnings from the Treasury and Congressional Budget Office (CBO) that the coffers are about to run dry.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said an agreement must be reached by June 1 otherwise the US risks defaulting on its debt repayments, which most economists warn could spark turmoil in the global economy and markets.

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## QFC, Labuan IBFC in pact to boost economic, financial sector ties



The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC), a leading onshore financial and business centre in the region, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Labuan IBFC, Asia's premier international financial hub. Labuan IBFC

is the official promotional and marketing arm for the Labuan jurisdiction in Malaysia and a wholly-owned subsidiary of Labuan Financial Services Authority. The MoU - signed on the sidelines of the Qatar Economic Forum (QEF), powered by Bloomberg - outlines a framework of co-operation between the two financial centres in several key areas, including the sharing of expertise, joint marketing and promotional initiatives, and exploration of potential new business opportunities. As per the MoU, the two organisations will work together to facilitate the establishment of relevant financial institutions and financial service providers in both the QFC and Labuan IBFC platforms and explore the possibility of establishing pass-porting services for relevant financial institutions between each jurisdiction. "At the QFC, collaboration has been an essential factor in achieving success, particularly in stimulating activities and



QFC and Labuan IBFC ink pact at Qatar Economic Forum 2023 in Doha.

promoting growth in our focus sectors. This MoU with Labuan IBFC will not only strengthen the relationship between

the two financial centres but also help promote innovation, refine expertise and stimulate progress in the financial

services sector," said Yousuf Mohamed al-Jaida, chief executive officer of the QFC Authority.

Datuk Iskandar Mohd Nuli, executive chairman and chief executive officer of Labuan IBFC, said, this strategic partnership would further generate greater exposure and awareness of Labuan IBFC in the Middle East and North Africa region. "Labuan IBFC Inc is confident that both financial centres' shared commonality comprising a sound legal framework and adherence to global financial standards will serve as an ideal platform for intermediaries looking to establish their presence in both the Asian and Mena regions. We look forward to working closely with QFCA to further deepen our collaboration in a meaningful manner," he said. The MoU builds on the existing agreement between the QFCA and Labuan IBFC to cooperate on a long-term basis to boost their economic and financial sector ties through joint projects to market and develop both financial centres.



HE Sheikh Bandar bin Mohamed bin Saud al-Thani, QIA chairman and governor of the Qatar central bank, speaks during a panel session on day two of the Qatar Economic Forum (QEF) in Doha, yesterday.

# QIA investments will not stop despite challenging global scenario, says Sheikh Bandar

By Santhosh V Perumal  
Business Reporter

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) yesterday said its global investments will not stop as it finds opportunities even amidst the present challenging scenario, according to its top official. Addressing the second day of third Qatar Economic Forum 2023, powered by Bloomberg, QIA chairman HE Sheikh Bandar bin Mohamed bin Saud al-Thani said the investments would continue unabated and the sovereign fund, which has a large portfolio, has diversified it across sectors and geographies. "Investments will not stop but we have to do right due diligence and diversification as well as make right assessment of risk and returns," said Sheikh Bandar, who is also the Qatar

Central Bank governor. On May 16, His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, issued Amiri Decision No 34 of 2023, reorganising QIA. It replaces the Amiri Decision No 22 of 2005 that established QIA. Its direct investment teams are focused on equity and equity-like investments in the private markets and negotiated deals in public markets, globally. This includes direct investments in real estate in major cities, private companies (including pre-IPO or initial public offer funding rounds and subsequent IPOs) and co-investments alongside external partners. Existing investors QIA along with Turkish firm Esas Private Equity on Wednesday invested \$105mn in Turkish AI-based marketing firm Insider. QIA also led \$250mn Series D funding round in Builder.ai, the AI powered composable software platform.

It also participated in Ariel Alternatives \$1.5bn inaugural private equity fund to create minority-owned businesses of scale. The Qatar's sovereign wealth fund also said it was committing up to QR1bn for a permanent market-making programme that would enhance liquidity on the local bourse. Germany's leading energy providers, RWE, is being supported by QIA, which agreed to invest €2.42mn for its accelerated 'Growing Green' strategy." QIA had already made it clear that it is looking for opportunities in Europe, Asia and the US in sectors such as venture capital, fintech and sustainability. Asked whether QIA was perturbed by reports of over-valuation of certain assets; he said it was not a concern for it as the wealth fund followed and has been following right due diligence and diversification strategies.

## Middle Eastern sovereign funds reshape private equity, says Blackstone CEO

By Pratap John  
Business Editor

Middle East sovereign funds have revolutionised capital and providing capital for all kinds of different projects, investments, funds and co-investments, noted Stephen A Schwarzman, chairman, CEO, and co-founder of Blackstone. He was speaking at a panel session on 'A new global growth story' at the Qatar Economic Forum, powered by Bloomberg and joined by Francine Lacqua, anchor, Bloomberg Television. On Middle Eastern sovereign funds reshaping private equity: "I started coming to the Middle East in 1991 and a lot of the countries have just started funds, and now the Middle East sovereign funds have revolutionised capital and providing capital for all kinds of different projects, investments, funds and co-investments. "It is one of the most vital parts of the world because the amount of money that needs to go into the individual countries is less than the amount of income that keeps increasing the scale of the funds. There is an enormous professionalisation of the investment process over the last 30 years." Schwarzman said: "Capital is still flowing, trade has been affected, and



Stephen Schwarzman, chief executive officer of Blackstone Group, appears via video link on day two of the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha, yesterday.

there is the start of capital flows being affected. I think that is a negative for the global economy, and I think everyone is concerned about that and even geopolitically, muscular politics can only go so far before it starts creating very adversarial types of relationships, which are not good for any country." On the world economy, inflation, fragmentation, and its relationship with deal-making Schwarzman

said: "We are already seeing activity in Europe in real estate for example, because people become sellers, given the dramatic increase in interest rates and financial institutions wanting to provide less leverage. The owners of assets have become structural sellers to reduce their leverage, so we are already seeing terrific opportunities there, and it's just a matter of time before that happens in other places in the world."

## Experts affirm Qatar has proved its capability of managing sports investment

QNA  
Doha

Experts in sports investment affirmed that the State of Qatar has achieved huge success in that sector and proved its capability of managing sports investment and using them to provide an inspiring experience to the world in that field. During a discussion session entitled "The Business of Sports," within the activities of the third edition of Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg, currently held in Doha, the experts pointed out that Qatar's success in that field was clearly demonstrated by its hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. In this regard, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of ONE Championship Chatri Sityodtong said that the aim is to unite everyone as Qatar did in its hosting of the World Cup, as Qatar's edition was the best among all World Cup editions as Qatar brought the peoples together and united the world.

Chatri added that the capital invested in the field of sports is increasing day by day, pointing out that it is necessary to study the risks of capital, as the sports market is growing from day to day and capital is pumped in an astonishing way in that field because of the large fan base that is united by the passion for sports. In the same context, Managing General Partner and Co-Owner of Boston Celtics Stephen Pagliuca stressed that the more countries invest in sports, the greater the fan base; and the more people immerse themselves in sports, the more television coverage increases, thus the more revenue from television coverage. This was also confirmed by Co-Founder and CEO of Dynasty Equity Don Cornwell when he said that the talk about investing in the sports field extends back more than ten years, but that was related to modern technology, noting that there are now more than 20 technological institutions that help immerse fans in sports and create an environment

in which there is a lot of harmony between players, owners, and fans. Don Cornwell added that investment in that field is the best and safest among other investments and that the revenues from these investments have increased a lot in the past ten years, and that during the past five years, they have seen many investors turning to this type of investment. He added that the sports field is the only place in the world where a large number of people and fans can meet at the same time, and this helps increase revenues in the field of sports. In the same context, Chatri said that it is the fans who motivate investors to invest in that field, pointing out that if we look at the hierarchy of sports investment, we will find that it is the safest investment. This was confirmed by Stephen when he said that sport is a very easy game and it is natural that we find a billion people talking about it and mastering its laws, and this broad fan base is what helps investors to put their money in that type of investment.

## 'Qatari gas industry role is pivotal in transition to cleaner energy'

QNA  
Doha

Professor of Finance and Economics at Qatar University, Dr Khalid Shams al-Abdulqader, affirmed the role played by the State of Qatar in the global gas industry as one of the largest exporters of natural gas in the world, pointing out to its support for global economic growth in light of the transformations taking place in the sector. Dr Khalid al-Abdulqader said in remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry is of paramount importance, especially in the process of energy transition in the world and the fight against global warming, as LNG is considered a cleaner burning fuel compared to coal and oil. The finance and economics professor pointed out that the gas industry in Qatar

has always played an important role in the global energy transition, as many countries are looking to shift from fossil fuels to cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. He noted that Qatar has taken steps to promote the use of natural gas as a transitional fuel towards renewable energy, and has invested heavily in developing new technologies to reduce carbon emissions from natural gas production. In recent years, Qatar has continued to invest in its gas industry, with plans to increase its LNG production capacity and expand its global market share, he added. Qatar is expected to increase the volume of its gas production to 126mn tonnes in 2026, compared to 77mn tonnes currently, which is equivalent to doubling production by an estimated 66%, which will enable Qatar to produce 13mn barrels per day instead of the current 12mn barrels, while QatarEnergy has signed a number of



Dr Khalid Shams al-Abdulqader, Professor of finance and economics at Qatar University.

contracts to expand the northeastern and southern gas fields. In the same context, Dr Khalid Shams al-Abdulqader added that the state's investment in the gas industry is expected

to support economic growth, create job opportunities, and contribute to global energy security. Looking to the future, Qatar's gas industry is well positioned to continue to play an important role in the global energy transition. He added that as more countries look to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and shift to cleaner energy sources, it is likely that the demand for natural gas will increase, and the gas industry in Qatar is likely to benefit from this trend, especially the importance of transporting liquefied gas, in which the State of Qatar specialises and can transport it to any part of the world under all circumstances, including the current circumstance that has placed some countries, especially European ones, in dire need of Qatari gas. He stated that Qatar's focus on developing new technologies to reduce carbon emissions from natural gas production could help putting the country in a leading

position in the transition to a low-carbon economy, which enhances its role in preserving the environment and achieving sustainability in the future. Commenting on the role of the energy sector in driving economic growth at the international level, the professor of finance and economics at Qatar University considered that oil and energy prices generally have a significant impact on global economic growth, because oil is an important component of many services and industries, especially transportation and manufacturing. He said that in general, the oil market is an important factor that must be taken into account when studying global economic growth. It can have both positive and negative impacts on various industries and economies around the world, adding that when the price of oil rises, the cost of producing and transporting goods also increases, which may lead to higher

prices for consumers and to economic inflation and then raise interest rates, as is happening today. The opposite effect of higher oil prices is that it may in turn lead to lower demand for goods and services, which may slow economic growth. Dr Khalid indicated that oil-exporting countries often rely heavily on oil revenues to finance their economies. Oil price fluctuations can have a significant impact on their budgets, adding that if oil prices fall, these countries may have less money to invest in infrastructure, social programs and other initiatives that support economic growth. On the other hand, when oil prices are low, it can be beneficial for oil-importing countries, as they can obtain oil at a lower cost, which can reduce production costs and increase the purchasing power of consumers, the matter that can stimulate economic growth, especially in industries that depend heavily on oil.



# Qatar's investment in Kigali airline, airport sectors on track

By Alex Macheras

Rwanda's President, Paul Kagame, announced that approximately 70% of the new Kigali airport is expected to be completed by the end of this year, with the aim of having the facility fully operational by the fourth quarter of 2024.

During the opening day of the third Qatar Economic Forum in Doha, the East African leader expressed gratitude for the strategic partnership between Rwanda and Qatar, describing Qatar as one of Africa and Rwanda's strongest allies. Kagame emphasised their collaboration in the airline and airport sectors, highlighting the progress being made to ensure readiness and efficiency.

Kagame stated: "RwandAir, our airline, is already thriving and expanding rapidly. As for the airport, we anticipate achieving around 70% completion by the end of this year. By the third or fourth quarter of the following year, we expect to witness substantial growth and operational functionality."



In February 2020, Qatar Airways acquired a 49% stake in RwandAir, followed by the signing of a codeshare agreement between the two airlines in 2021. Furthermore, Qatar Airways holds a significant 60% ownership in the new airport, demonstrating their commitment to the partnership.

Qatar's national carrier also recently established its first cargo hub outside Doha in Kigali. Kagame emphasised the importance of visionary leadership, especially for small countries, in the face of global circumstances. He highlighted the need to cultivate strategic partnerships, with Qatar being a prime example. Kagame expressed appreciation for Qatar Airways' expertise in the aviation sector and expressed a desire to explore other collaborative areas. In addition, Kagame revealed that Rwanda, in collaboration with BioNTech, plans to commence vaccine manufacturing in August of this year. This initiative aims to enhance Rwanda's self-reliance in healthcare. The Rwandan president also addressed efforts to achieve lasting stability in the crisis between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Noting ongoing discussions led by the East African bloc and Angola, with the involvement of the African Union, Kagame expressed hope for a resolution. He did not rule out the

possibility of future meetings with DRC President Felix Tshisekedi. Just over a week ago, Rwanda launched a major new African cargo hub in partnership with Qatar Airways Cargo. The new Kigali Cargo Hub is part of a long-term strategic plan for the cargo division of RwandAir, which has seen cargo carried rise by nearly 26% in the last five years. The initiative will help RwandAir develop Kigali into a regional cargo powerhouse, boosting exports and imports around Africa and strengthening links with key overseas markets. The partnership saw Qatar Aviation Services (QAS) provide consultancy support to RwandAir Cargo to help improve its already highly successful cargo handling performance. Air cargo plays a critical role in the economic development of Africa by connecting African businesses to global markets and facilitating trade and commerce. Last year, Rwanda's national carrier RwandAir took delivery of a Boeing

737-800 SF, the airline's first cargo-dedicated aircraft. Delivered on November 24, 2022, the freighter now operates from the airline's hub in Kigali and has expanded its cargo operation to destinations in Africa and the Middle East. At the time of delivery, Yvonne Makolo, CEO of RwandAir, said the new freighter would go on to play a significant role in RwandAir's operations. "The delivery of our dedicated cargo aircraft is a huge milestone in RwandAir's fleet expansion plans," Makolo explained. "Cargo is of ever-increasing importance for the aviation industry, and as a landlocked country, we recognise the importance and value of good cargo connections," Makolo added. RwandAir aims "to ensure that Africa is seamlessly connected to the world, driving economic growth and valuable trade deals," Makolo said. Qatar is seen as a strategic partner to Rwanda and the relations between the two countries have witnessed steady growth since establishing the diplomatic relations in 2017. Since

then, the leaders of the two countries have met on a regular basis, and the exchanged high-level visits between the two sides have contributed to boosting joint co-operation in various vital fields and enhancing the partnership between the two countries. Qatar's Amir His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited Rwanda in April 2019 and made another visit in June 2022 to participate in the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali. Meanwhile, the Rwanda president has paid multiple visits to Doha. The Qatar Investment Authority anchor \$250mn investment into the Virunga Africa Fund is further evidence of Qatar's growing interest in Africa. In 2021, Qatar also acquired a 50% stake in 800 MWs of renewable projects in South Africa and Zambia and made a \$200mn investment in fintech platform Airtel Mobile Commerce.

■ The author is an aviation analyst. Twitter handle: @AlexInAir

# Supply chain issues gripping aviation industry on spotlight

By Pratap John

Supply chain problems have hampered the aviation industry that relies heavily on a complex and interconnected global system to operate efficiently.

Problems encountered by the aviation industry due to supply chain issues include component and parts shortages, increased costs, delays in aircraft production, maintenance and repair challenges, reduced service quality, risk of counterfeit or sub-standard parts and impact on global operations.

Two leaders of the global aviation industry highlighted the impact of global supply chain issues at the ongoing Qatar Economic Forum.

Supply constraints in the airline industry could drag on for more than half a decade, delaying deliveries to airlines and hampering the industry's rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic, Boeing Company president and CEO David L. Calhoun said.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive HE Akbar al-Baker said that along with delays of new jet deliveries, supply constraints are also a hurdle for existing fleets, forcing airlines to ground some planes that need spare parts for everything from engines to avionics. "This is all the consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic," al-Baker noted. Calhoun said: "I can see supply constraints for a very long time. We have backlogs that go out five to six years so if the backlogs would suggest supply constraints that far, that means it's even further."

Calhoun noted it could take until the end of 2024 to iron out sector-wide supply chain problems that have hampered global jetliner production.

"Priority one for the two airplane manufacturers is stability," Calhoun said and noted: "We have to resolve the supply chain issues and the surprise associated with it; and we have to resolve it sort of once and for all."



Boeing Company president and CEO David L. Calhoun (centre) and Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive HE Akbar al-Baker (right), during a panel session at the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha. The two leaders of the global aviation industry highlighted the impact of global supply chain issues at the ongoing QEF.

## Beyond the Tarmac

"That is not a short-term job. It sounds like it might be, but I think it could take all of this year and probably all of next year."

Calhoun's latest projection on the speed of recovery in the supply chain echoes comments by Airbus chief executive officer Guillaume Faury, who recently said that production would regain pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2024 or even in 2025.

Despite the overall pattern of disruption, Calhoun said he did not think recent manufacturing problems with the best-selling 737 narrow-body jet would defer those production schedules for more than "maybe a month or a month and a half".

Obviously, the aviation industry requires a wide range of components and parts to maintain and repair aircraft. Supply chain disruptions, such as delays or shortages in the production or delivery of these items, lead

to grounded aircraft and extended maintenance periods, affecting flight schedules and overall operational efficiency. Supply chain disruptions result in increased costs for airlines. These disruptions cause price fluctuations in raw materials, components, and fuel.

Additionally, airlines incur additional expenses to expedite shipments, find alternative suppliers, or manage inventory disruptions. Such cost increases put financial strain on airlines, potentially leading to higher ticket prices for passengers.

Industry analysts say the manufacturing of aircraft involves a complex supply chain network spanning multiple countries and suppliers. Any disruption within this network, such as delays in the delivery of critical components, cause delays in aircraft production. This impact airlines' fleet expansion plans, their ability to retire older aircraft, and overall fleet opti-

misation. Timely maintenance and repair are crucial for aircraft safety and operational reliability. Supply chain issues lead to difficulties in sourcing the required spare parts, equipment, and qualified technicians.

Extended downtime for maintenance or limited access to essential resources obviously reduce the availability of aircraft, impacting airlines' ability to meet their flight schedules.

Supply chain disruptions also affect the overall service quality provided by airlines. For example, delays in catering services or the availability of in-flight amenities result in a diminished customer experience. In turn, this impacts customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the airline's reputation in the industry.

When supply chain disruptions occur, analysts say there is a higher risk of airlines resorting to alternative or unfamiliar suppliers to fulfil their needs. This increases the possibility of acquiring counterfeit or substandard parts, which can compromise the safety and reliability of aircraft systems. Ensuring the authenticity

and quality of components becomes challenging during such disruptions.

The aviation industry operates on a global scale, with airlines relying on international suppliers and logistics networks. Supply chain issues, such as trade disputes, customs regulations, or geopolitical tensions, disrupt the flow of goods and services across borders. These disruptions then lead to operational inefficiencies and difficulties in coordinating international operations.

Addressing these supply chain challenges requires collaboration and proactive measures from airlines, manufacturers, suppliers, and regulatory bodies. Improved contingency planning, diversified sourcing strategies, robust inventory management, and enhanced communication and co-ordination among stakeholders are essential to mitigate the impact of supply chain issues on the aviation industry

■ Pratap John is Business Editor at Gulf Times. Twitter handle: @PratapJohn

## Qatar Airways Cargo, QDB partner to support Qatari perfume exports

Qatar Airways Cargo and Qatar Development Bank (QDB) have made significant progress on a joint initiative to support local perfume manufacturers in Qatar.

In 2020, the cargo carrier and QDB introduced discounted rates for local Qatari perfume manufacturers to export to international markets. The initiative aimed to boost exports and sales of locally manufactured perfumes to international markets and provide opportunities for Qatari exporters to expand their activities through business to consumer channels.

The programme has now been broadened to provide local manufacturers with better access, through the airline's approved network of courier companies, to Qatar Airways' extensive global network and modern fleet to transport their products.

Qatar Airways Cargo will also continue to provide local manufacturers with required certification by offering the Dangerous Goods Training programme in compliance with the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations, which have been adopted by QCAA; the aim is to equip companies with specialised knowledge for shippers to comply with the requirements for correct classification, declaration, documentation, packaging, labelling and marking of dangerous goods in line with international standards.

This certification is a prerequisite imposed on all local manufacturers to ensure they are prepared for the safe

carriage of perfumes which are classified as dangerous goods shipped by air.

Qatar Airways Chief Officer Cargo Guillaume Halleux said: "We are happy to support local perfume exporters who can benefit from our state-of-the-art fleet and extensive network. Qatar perfume manufacturers offer high-quality and unique fragrances, and this partnership will help them expand their business into new markets." "The initiative to support local manufacturers has so far helped several perfume companies to grow their business, thus boosting their exports. With the latest development in the programme, we are hoping that even more businesses will benefit from this partnership between Qatar Airways Cargo and QDB."

Hala Ali al-Misnad, manager, QDB's Export Development, stressed the importance of this initiative, particularly in terms of streamlining the classification of perfumes and the ensuing reduction in total shipping costs.

"QDB is pleased to expand the scope of this significant initiative in partnership with Qatar Airways Cargo. As part of QDB's commitment to supporting Qatari exporters, the initiative will offer perfume manufacturers an additional way to tap new markets and compete globally, offering them access to training courses in line with international standards and reduced shipping costs, thus raising their efficiency and export capabilities."



Qatar Airways Cargo and Qatar Development Bank (QDB) have made significant progress on a joint initiative to support local perfume manufacturers in Qatar

# Ultra-low airfare pioneer bids farewell to ultra-low fares

Bloomberg  
London

Over the past three decades, Ryanair Holdings Plc built its model around cut-throat fares that ferried people across Europe for as little as the equivalent of a bus ticket. As travellers crowd back onto its planes following the pandemic, the Irish carrier has a word of caution for its customers: The days of ultra-low fares may well be over. Speaking after the company reported near record-high profit, Chief Financial Officer Neil Sorahan said customers are willing to pay more for fares as bookings surge into the crucial summer period. That means that what was previously your typical €9.99 ticket may now cost twice as much, he said. "The days of the 9.99s are possibly behind us for some time," Sorahan said in an interview with Bloomberg Television.

Ticket prices across the industry have been edging higher, partly because of robust demand for summer getaways, and partly because of a scarcity of aircraft as airlines clamour to get hold of new models. Ryanair rival EasyJet Plc has upgraded its earnings forecast, saying people are prioritising travel, and carriers from Deutsche Lufthansa AG to Air France-KLM have seen leisure customers crowd into the business-class section of the cabin, offering a respite as corporate travel still lags after the pandemic. Ryanair on Monday reported profit after tax of €1.43bn (\$1.5bn) for the fiscal year ended March 31, compared with a loss of €355 million a year earlier. The Dublin-based carrier expects its full bill to be €1bn higher in the current fiscal year, saying that higher revenue will make up for the jump. This month, the Irish discount carrier ordered as many as 300 Boeing 737 Max jets as it targets 30% of the



A Boeing 737-8200 MAX passenger aircraft, operated by Ryanair Holdings, at Palma de Mallorca Airport in Spain. Over the past three decades, Ryanair built its model around cut-throat fares that ferried people across Europe for as little as the equivalent of a bus ticket. As travellers crowd back onto its planes following the pandemic, the Irish carrier has a word of caution for its customers: The days of ultra-low fares may well be over.

European air-travel market by 2034. Ryanair rose as much as 50 cents, or 3.2% to €16.14. The stock has gained 31% this year, compared with a 55%

advance at EasyJet. The carrier's outlook for the current financial year displays a sense of confidence, Bernstein analyst Alex Irving said

in a note to clients. "With a net cash balance sheet and cash from operations in our view likely to cover capex on an ongoing basis, we expect cash returns to follow next - though no news on that yet," Irving said. Ryanair's cash position stood at €4.7bn at the end of its fiscal year, and the company said it plans to retain "a broadly flat" net cash-to-debt position. The CFO said he's confident the company will hit its goal of transporting 185mn passengers this year, even after Ryanair cautioned in its statement that the number might be slightly lower because of delays at Boeing Co, the sole supplier of its aircraft. The airline ferried 168.6mn passengers in the fiscal year that just ended, a 74% jump. "As things are trending, we'll hit the passenger numbers but as always, we'll be load active, yield passive to achieve that," Sorahan said. Ryanair said ticket prices for the summer are trending higher than last

year, with fares 10% above pre-Covid levels. Sorahan said ancillary revenue for services like priority boarding and in-flight food were "very strong", rising to €23 a passenger from €19 pre-Covid. Ryanair is Boeing's biggest buyer in Europe, having built its entire fleet of short-haul aircraft around the workhorse 737 model. Chief Executive Officer Michael O'Leary has been critical of the delays in deliveries of aircraft as Boeing grapples with manufacturing glitches on the jet. The Covid-era shutdown of some European carriers and scaling back at others has created openings for Ryanair. Sorahan cited growth in domestic flying in Italy — where Alitalia was succeeded by the smaller ITA — in Greece and other sun spots in Europe driving demand this summer. Longer term, Sorahan expects the carrier to grow in Germany, Morocco and Scandinavia.