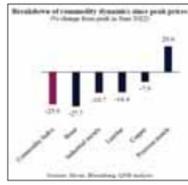


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# GULF TIMES BUSINESS



**ENDURING HEADACHE: Page 2**

Japan frets over relentless yen slide as BoJ keeps ultra-low rates

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## USQBC underscores its role in promoting investments and attracting FDI

By Peter Alagos  
 Business Reporter

An official of the US-Qatar Business Council (USQBC) has underscored its commitment to promoting investment opportunities and attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

"Promoting trade and business opportunities beyond traditional sectors can help companies explore new avenues and sectors aligned with the vision's goals, such as technology, innovation, renewable energy, and tourism," according to Sheikha Mayes al-Thani, managing director of USQBC in Qatar.

USQBC aims to foster investment flows that contribute to the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030 by providing information, market insight, and networking platforms to facilitate the exchange of information between businesses from the US and Qatar, Sheikha Mayes stated in the latest edition of *The Business Year: Qatar 2024*.

On Qatar's business climate and potential for growth and investment, Sheikha Mayes told *TBY* that the government has been active in diversifying the economy and reducing its dependence on hydrocarbon revenues.

"The Qatari business environment is favourable, with several factors that contribute to its potential for growth and investment. First, its substantial oil and gas reserves have contributed significantly to Qatar's economic stability and robustness. Several policies were also implemented by the government to foster economic stability and encourage foreign investment.

"Second, Qatar made substantial investment into infrastructure projects in preparation to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, resulting in a wide range of services now being available to both domestic and foreign businesses, including transportation networks, stadiums, hotels, and more. For businesses engaged in trade and transportation, Qatar's advantageous location offers logistical advantages," Sheikha Mayes said.

She also lauded the Qatari government for introducing several incentives and initiatives to attract foreign investment, such as tax exemptions, simplified business registration procedures, and sector-specific incentives, among others.

"Moreover, there has been an active effort by Qatar to diversify its economy beyond the energy sector. Growth and investment opportunities have been targeted in areas, such as finance, real estate, tourism, infrastructure, and technology," she pointed out.

According to Sheikha Mayes, the USQBC plays a vital role in fostering trade, investment, and collaboration between Qatar and the US by organising net-



Sheikha Mayes al-Thani, managing director of USQBC in Qatar.

working events, conferences, seminars, webinars, and business forums that bring together business representatives from both countries.

"Additionally, USQBC assists in the identification of potential business partners or clients between companies in the US and Qatar, including organising B2B meetings, arranging trade missions, or facilitating introductions based on specific interests in an industry or sector.

USQBC contributes to the development of trade between the US and Qatar by showcasing business opportunities, facilitating market entry, and providing market intelligence to its members," she said.

Sheikha Mayes added: "To help companies navigate the business landscape, USQBC provides information on regulations, trade policies, market trends, and investment incentives.

"As a member-led organisation, USQBC advocates policies and initiatives that enhance bilateral trade and investment in Qatar and the US. The council works closely with government entities and stakeholders to address any barriers or challenges faced by companies and to promote a favourable business environment."

## BNPL: QCB approves five companies as first cohort

The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has approved five companies "as a first cohort" from submitted applications under the 'Buy Now Pay Later' (BNPL) scheme.

The companies are Spendwisor Inc, Quiver FinTech LLC, HSAB for Payment Solutions, Mihuru LLC and Pay Later Website Services.

The QCB in a statement yesterday said: "It is important to note that entry into the regulatory sandbox does not constitute a full-scale licensing approval. However, the applicant is considered an authorised FinTech Sandbox participant for regulatory activities by the fintech entity."



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The 47th Executive Board meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum in Doha was presided over by Sheikh Mishal bin Jabor al-Thani, representative of the State of Qatar and chairperson of the GECF Executive Board

## GECF's 47th executive board meeting takes place in Doha

The 47th Executive Board (EB) meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) was held in Doha recently.

The meeting was presided over by Sheikh Mishal bin Jabor al-Thani, representative of the State of Qatar and chairperson of the GECF Executive Board.

The inaugural EB meeting welcomed the distinguished representatives from GECF member countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela, along with observer countries Iraq, Malaysia, Mozambique and Senegal, participated in the meeting.

Mohamed Hamel, secretary-general, GECF, congratulated Sheikh Mishal

bin Jabor al-Thani, on his appointment as the chairperson of the GECF Executive Board for 2024 and complimented his extensive knowledge of natural gas matters and adept diplomatic skills. He also welcomed Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Republic of Senegal as the newest members of the GECF.

Hamel and the EB expressed profound gratitude to the leadership and people of Algeria for their exceptional hospitality, meticulous organisation, and strong support in the lead-up to the 7th GECF Summit and the associated events.

The EB addressed various key topics during the meeting, resulting in a series of decisions aimed at advancing co-operation and enhancing the forum's effectiveness, budget execu-

tion, along with presentations on internal matters which outlines the way forward for the organisation. Additional topics addressed were the GECF's active participation in COP28 in UAE, and the preparations for the upcoming COP29, in Azerbaijan, the member of the GECF.

The EB is a governing body of the GECF, second only to the supreme authority vested in the ministerial meeting. It directs the operational affairs of the forum, implements the decisions of the ministerial meetings, and considers the yearly Programme of Work of the Secretariat for further approval by the ministerial meeting, in accordance with the GECF statute, long-term strategy, and the 5-Year Working Plan.

## Mekdam Holding records QR10.4mn net profit in Q1

Mekdam Holding Group recorded a net profit of QR10.4mn in the first quarter of 2024, a 76% year-on-year (y-o-y) growth from QR9.7mn. Earnings per share (EPS) amounted to QR0.078 for the same period compared to QR0.100 for 2023, said Mekdam Holding Group chairman Sheikh Mohamed bin Nawaf bin Nasser bin Khalid al-Thani. Sheik Mohamed said Mekdam's revenue stood at QR144.9mn in Q1 2024, reflecting a 13.7% y-o-y growth from QR127.5mn. Providing comprehensive maintenance services for gas recycling plants enhanced the earning level, he noted. Chief executive officer Ehab Naser said Mekdam was able to sign new contracts this year with a total value of QR119.3mn. The board was also briefed on the total value of the contracts being implemented, which amounted to about QR1.86bn, while the value of the remaining works amounted to about QR120bn.

With respect to sales proposals, the total offers submitted and being negotiated with customers amounted to about QR2.52bn. The expected success rate, according to historical indicators, ranges from 20-30%. The customer retention rate was around 90%. The board emphasised the importance of these indicators to the executive management, as these indicators are the key factor in building revenue expectations, net future profits and enhancing the value of shareholders' equity. Mekdam has maintained its liquidity levels of 80.4% of its assets, which are current assets. The current ratio (current assets to current liabilities) is 1.79 times.

The group also reduced bank financing from QR63.9mn as of December 31, 2023, to QR57.9mn as of March 31, 2024, reflecting a decrease of 9.4%. Bank financing is granted to the company in the form of projects financing that ends with the implementation

of these projects and their delivery to customers. The board reviewed the results of the credit rating, where Standard & Poor's confirmed the rating of Mekdam Holding Group at (gcBB). The board reviewed the implementation of the general assembly's resolutions, as the extraordinary general assembly approved an increase in the capital on March 31, 2024, where the capital was increased by QR30mn, bringing the company's capital to QR135mn. The board emphasised that the timing of the capital increase was appropriate to support the company's ongoing growth operations, especially in light of the sharp rise in bank financing interest rates.

The board also reviewed the performance of the stock on the Qatar Stock Exchange, where the Mekdam was able to increase the shareholder base to approximately 670 shareholders. The founders, through the listing, offered about 34.0% of the group's capital.



Sheikh Mohamed bin Nawaf bin Nasser bin Khalid al-Thani, Mekdam Holding Group chairman.



## Egypt to address central bank overdrafts, off-budget activity: IMF

Reuters  
Cairo

Egypt has committed to addressing its recourse to central bank overdraft facilities and off-budget public sector activity, practices that have contributed to pressure on the currency and the exchange rate, the IMF said in a staff report released on Friday.

The report, released four weeks after the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s board approved an \$8bn financial support programme, said Egypt had also committed to addressing vulnerabilities such as central bank lending to public agencies.

Egypt had already taken steps to tighten monetary policy, to shift to a flexible exchange rate regime and a liberalised exchange system and to increase gasoline and fuel prices to catch up for missed adjustments since December 2022, the report said.

An initial \$3bn support programme was put into abeyance last year following a series of policy slippages.

"The return to a fixed exchange rate in February 2023 undermined the initial credibility boost from the announcement of a shift to a flexible regime and hampered the execution of other programme pillars such as divestment of state-owned assets," the staff report said.

"It also led to foreign exchange shortages, a large



**Egypt has committed to addressing its recourse to central bank overdraft facilities and off-budget public sector activity, practices that have contributed to pressure on the currency and the exchange rate, the IMF said in a staff report**

spread in the parallel market, and constrained imports, all of which fuelled inflation and weighed on growth." Delays in raising the policy interest rate in response to higher-than-expected inflation resulted in continued negative real rates and financial repression, the report said.

"Continued investment in national projects at a pace inconsistent with macroeconomic stability contributed

significantly to foreign exchange and inflation pressures," it added. The central bank rapidly expanded its net domestic assets from mid-2022 to early 2024 to lend to public agencies without going through the Ministry of Finance, the report said. More recently it had sharply increased the Ministry of Finance's use of the overdraft facility.

These contributed to the inflation and exchange rate pressures of the past two years, it said.

The currency has slid to 47.85 Egyptian pounds to the dollar from 15.74 pounds in March 2022. Inflation climbed to a record annual 38% in September before slipping to 33.3% in March.

Reuters obtained portions of the report through an unofficial channel earlier this week.

Egyptian authorities had committed to limiting the government's overdraft account at the central bank and to prevent further central bank lending to public agencies outside the finance ministry, the report said.

Egypt's central bank as of February 2023 had lent as much as 765bn Egyptian pounds (\$15.9bn) to state agencies other than the finance ministry, an apparent breach of a 2020 central bank law, it said.

The March 29 IMF board meeting that approved the expansion of the loan programme cited damage to the economy from the crisis in Gaza. Weeks earlier, Egypt struck a record \$35bn investment deal with the United Arab Emirates that eased a foreign currency shortage.

## Lending and consumer data cements case for ECB rate cuts

Reuters  
Frankfurt

**E**urozone lending continued to stagnate in March and consumers trimmed their inflation expectations as record-high borrowing costs kept putting the brakes on the eurozone's economy, European Central Bank (ECB) reports showed on Friday.

The data was likely to cement the ECB's plan to start cutting interest rates in June after seeing inflation fall to just above its 2% goal and economic growth come to a standstill.

"Today's data is in line with a start to cautious rate cuts," Bert Colijn, senior economist for the eurozone at ING, said.

Bank credit figures illustrated how high rates were likely discouraging borrowers as well as lenders – part of the price to pay for the ECB's fight against high inflation.

Bank loans to companies increased by just 0.4% in March, compared with 0.3% a month earlier. Growth in lending to households, which had been more resilient until last summer, set a new decade-low at 0.2%, from 0.3% in February.

In a sign that the ECB's bitter medicine was working, an ECB survey showed consumers in March cut their inflation expectations for the following 12 months to their lowest since December 2021 at 3.0%.

Inflation expectations for three years ahead held steady for a fourth consecutive month at 2.5%, the ECB said in its monthly poll of around 19,000 consumers.

"From now on, we must weigh the risk of monetary policy becoming too tight," ECB policymaker Fabio Panetta said late on Thursday. "A tight monetary stance could...increase the risk of a protracted period of economic weakness." On the upside, the amount of money circulating in the eurozone – a measure that often works as a leading indicator – continued to rebound and grew by 0.9%, the fastest pace since last May.

This chimed with some recent data pointing to tentative signs of recovery, or at least a stabilisation, in the economy.

Inflation has fallen quickly over the past year but the outlook remains clouded by rising energy costs, stubbornly high services inflation and continued geopolitical tensions that threaten to disrupt trade.

### Glencore eyes investment opportunities in Nigerian mining sector

Mining and trading house Glencore will invest in Nigeria's mining sector if the government ensures a stable business climate, the company's CEO said on Thursday during a visit to Nigeria's minister in charge of solid minerals, reports Reuters.

The visit came as Nigeria is seeking to woo foreign investors to its undeveloped mining sector.

"We are looking at opportunities to invest in the mining sector with emphasis on nickel, cobalt, zinc amongst others," Glencore group CEO Gary Nagle said.

Dele Alake, minister of solid minerals development said Nigeria is ready to welcome international big players into its mining sector, citing reforms and ongoing efforts to clean up the sector.

"We want you to come here and invest because we have a preponderance of critical minerals like Lithium, gold, zinc and nickel amongst others that are in high demand globally," Alake said.

Nigeria is offering incentives such as tax waivers, full repatriation of profits to investors and improved governance structure.

In the past, Nigeria has struggled to extract value from its vast mineral resources due to neglect and lack of investments. The government is seeking to change this narrative through reforms.

The government recently revoked dormant licences and said it would only grant new mining licences to companies that process minerals locally and created a security force to curb illegal mining.

## Japan frets over relentless yen slide as BoJ keeps ultra-low rates

Reuters  
Tokyo

**J**apan is concerned about negative effects of the weak yen, Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said on Friday, in a fresh warning to speculators as the currency fell further after the central bank's widely expected decision to hold rates steady.

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) kept policy settings unchanged earlier in the session following a two-day meeting, triggering a bout of volatility in the yen as it slid to below 156 levels on the dollar, its weakest since 1990.

The latest wobbles in the currency came as Suzuki, who spoke hours ahead of the BoJ decision, repeated his recent warnings against speculative moves in the yen, keeping traders on edge as to when Tokyo may intervene in the markets.

"The weak yen has both positive and negative impacts (on the economy)," Suzuki told a press conference, adding that he is "more concerned about the negative effects right now." Suzuki said he could not comment on specific policy measures on foreign exchange, but that authorities were closely watching currency moves and stood ready to take action.

While a weak yen boosts exports, it has become a headache for Japanese policymakers as it inflates the cost of living for households by pushing up import prices. The finance minister said that measures to combat surging prices are key policy priorities for the government.

The yen's slide to 34-year lows against a broadly firmer dollar has been driven by wide US-Japan interest rate differentials. The yield-induced downturn in the yen has gained renewed momentum on signs the BoJ will go slow on raising its near-zero rates and expectations the US Federal



Banknotes of Japanese yen and US dollar are seen in the illustration picture. The Bank of Japan has kept policy settings unchanged, triggering a bout of volatility in the yen as it slid to below 156 levels on the dollar, its weakest since 1990.

Reserve will likely delay the start of its rate-cutting cycle.

At a post-policy press conference, BoJ Governor Kazuo Ueda gave little away on when the next rate hike would come.

Ueda said while the impact of yen moves was usually temporary, its effects on underlying inflation could not be dismissed.

The yen briefly jumped against the dollar after Ueda's briefing ended, but it was not immediately clear whether authorities actually stepped in. The Japanese currency was last down around 0.7% at 156.69, after temporarily spiking to 154.97, having min-

utes earlier slumping to fresh 34-year lows of 156.82.

"The currency takeaway is certainly disappointment from the lack of guidance from the bank," said Rodrigo Catril, senior Sydney-based forex strategist at National Australia Bank. "To me, the currency market is telling us it believes that the BoJ policy is too loose and hence why the currency is so weak."

The yen's continued weakness has taken it firmly past 152 and 155 levels to the dollar, which traders had previously seen as a line in the sand that would prompt Tokyo to intervene in the markets. It is down around 10% on the dollar this year and has lost more

than 34% of its value in three years.

Suzuki declined to comment on remarks made by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen that the US dollar has been strong and interventions by other governments in currency markets is acceptable only in rare and extraordinary circumstances.

At the parliament later in the day, Suzuki said while foreign exchange levels reflect various factors including economic indicators and price trends, interest rate differentials remain the crucial determinant.

Japan last intervened in the currency market in 2022, spending roughly \$60bn to defend the yen.

### Bloomberg QuickTake

## Why the world needs more copper; a lot more copper

By James Attwood

Avoiding a climate catastrophe is often portrayed as a question of political will. Yet the push to reduce carbon emissions is also a daunting technical and societal challenge. Re-tooling power and transportation systems to run on renewable energy will require far more copper than the companies that produce it are currently committed to deliver.

The question is whether a traditionally cautious mining industry – grappling with increasingly rigorous regulations – will embrace the scale of investment needed to rewire the world. In an indication of how difficult it is to develop new copper projects, BHP Group Ltd has proposed a \$39bn takeover of Anglo American Plc, part of a larger trend of mergers and acquisitions as metal producers look to buy rather than build production growth. Failure by the industry to deliver sufficient copper supplies could throw the transition to cleaner power sources off course.

### Copper's role in the energy transition

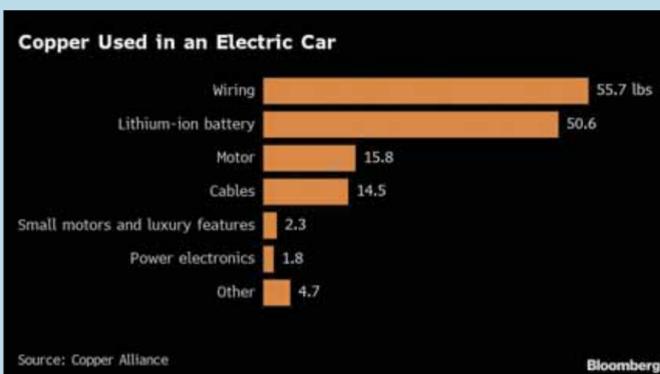
Copper is the most conductive metal after silver. While it's expensive, using cheaper alternatives like aluminium means compromising on efficiency. You can find copper in products as varied as toasters, air conditioners and microchips. There are about 65 pounds (29 kilograms) of it in the average car and more than 400 pounds in the typical home. Millions of feet of copper wiring are needed to build the more complex

grids that can handle electricity produced by decentralized renewable sources and balance out their intermittent supplies. Solar and wind farms, often spread out over large areas, require more copper per unit of power produced than do centralized coal- and gas-fired power stations. Electric vehicles use more than twice as much copper as gasoline-powered cars do, according to the Copper Alliance.

Achieving net-zero carbon emission targets would likely entail a doubling of annual copper demand by 2035 to 50mn metric tonnes, according to an industry-funded study by S&P Global. Even the more conservative forecasters see demand growing by a third over the next decade, as governments and businesses step up investments in decarbonisation. It's far from certain that this much of the red metal will become available.

### Why supplies could fall short

Although more copper is being recycled, it won't be enough to cover demand, so the only alternative is to dig more out of the ground. There's plenty down there, and the industry has responded to demand surges in the past. But there are also numerous obstacles to meaningfully boosting output. Copper is a classic bellwether of the global economy – rising and falling in tandem with industrial production – and miners are cautious about ramping up capacity for fear of getting caught out by a drop in demand. Added to this is a deeper, more structural problem: New deposits are getting harder, and costlier, to extract as ore grades fall, meaning more rock needs to be mined to



secure the same amount of metal. Growing scrutiny of the environmental costs of copper mining is also discouraging more investment. A recent rally in prices has traders and executives wondering if copper is starting to react to a looming supply squeeze. Goldman Sachs Group Inc estimates that the industry needs to spend \$150bn over the next decade to address a projected annual supply shortfall of 8mn tonnes. To trigger that kind of outlay, mining companies would need prices to rise to record levels, according to Trafigura Group and BlackRock Inc.

### How countries are jostling to secure supplies

Much as oil dictated the geopolitics of the

last century, access to copper is becoming an economic imperative in this one, with governments jostling to secure those limited future supplies. Most copper ore is mined in Latin America and Africa and processed locally to create a more concentrated product, which is then exported to other nations where it's smelted to create pure copper. China has compensated for its poor domestic reserves by snapping up mines overseas and building out massive smelting capacity domestically. Though excess capacity in China has helped reduce smelting fees to unprecedented levels, the US and its allies are uneasy with Beijing's sway over such a strategic industry and are looking to source and refine more of the metals needed for the energy transition at home or in friendly nations.

With so many eager buyers, major producers such as Chile, Peru and the Democratic Republic of Congo have more opportunity to dictate the terms of trade. Communities in mining regions are pushing for more social benefits from mine projects and calling on miners to do more to mitigate the environmental damage.

Copper is extracted from ore using chemicals that can enter groundwater, contaminate farmland, kill wildlife and pollute drinking water. The amount of waste rock that's left over after copper ore is processed is set to grow from an annual rate of 4.3bn tonnes in 2020 to 16bn tonnes in 2050, according to researchers at the University of Queensland in Australia. Safely storing this byproduct, which needs to be managed carefully to avoid slumps and landslides, could cost the industry an additional \$1.6tn, the researchers estimated.

### What if copper falls short

Severe copper shortages would cause a surge in prices that risks damaging the economics of EVs, smart grids and renewables and slowing their adoption. Manufacturers of clean-energy technologies could help themselves by finding ways to use less copper in their products. And higher prices would give miners more incentive to ramp up production. But it takes several years to develop a new mine, so even if a burst of new demand gave miners the confidence to embark on massive new investments, it would take about a decade to move the needle on output projections.

The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) index dropped by 191.68 points or 2.0% during the week to close at 9,637.59. Market capitalisation declined 1.7% to QR560.8bn from QR570.6bn at the end of the previous trading week. Of the 52 traded companies, 42 ended the week lower, eight ended higher and two were unchanged. Al Faleh Educational Holding Company (FALH) was the worst performing stock for the week, going down 7.3%, whereas, Baladna (BLDN) was the best performing stock for the week, going up 9.3%.

Industries Qatar (IQCD), Qatar Islamic Bank (QIBK) and QNB Group (QNBK) were the main contributors to the weekly index drop. IQCD and QIBK removed 33.10 and 28.33 points from the index, respectively. Further, QNBK subtracted another 26.26 points.

Traded value during the week went down 2.8% to QR2,280.9mn from QR2,346.8mn in the prior trading week. QNB Group (QNBK) was the top value traded

stock during the week with total traded value of QR414.2mn.

Traded volume decreased 5.9% to 730.8mn shares compared with 776.7mn shares in the prior trading week. The number of transactions dipped 7.1% to 75,131 vs 80,908 in the prior week. Dukhan Bank (DUBK) was the top volume traded stock during the week with total traded volume of 93.3mn shares.

Foreign institutions remained bearish, ending the week with net selling of QR151.5mn vs net selling of QR5.6mn in the prior week. Qatari institutions remained bearish with net selling of QR74.5mn vs net selling of QR68.0mn in the week before. Foreign retail investors ended the week with net buying of QR17.1mn vs net buying of QR15.6mn in the prior week. Qatari retail investors recorded net buying of QR208.9mn vs net buying of QR58.0mn the week before.

YTD (as of Thursday's closing), global foreign institutions were net buyers by \$116.9mn, while GCC institutions were net sellers of Qatari stocks by \$145.2mn.



## Weekly Market Report

| Market Indicators         | Week ended. April 25, 2024 | Week ended. April 18, 2024 | Chg. % |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| Value Traded (QR mn)      | 2,280.9                    | 2,346.8                    | (2.8)  |
| Exch. Market Cap. (QR mn) | 560,825.4                  | 570,636.8                  | (1.7)  |
| Volume (mn)               | 730.8                      | 776.7                      | (5.9)  |
| Number of Transactions    | 75,131                     | 80,908                     | (7.1)  |
| Companies Traded          | 52                         | 51                         | 2.0    |
| Market Breadth            | 8:42                       | 25:23                      | -      |

Source: Qatar Exchange (QE)

| Market Indices               | Close     | WTD%  | MTD%  | YTD%   |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|--------|
| Total Return                 | 21,676.89 | (2.0) | (1.5) | (6.7)  |
| ALL Share Index              | 3,377.98  | (1.8) | (1.3) | (6.9)  |
| Banks and Financial Services | 4,023.00  | (1.7) | (1.8) | (12.2) |
| Industrials                  | 4,034.12  | (2.3) | (0.6) | (2.0)  |
| Transportation               | 4,837.77  | (1.8) | (1.4) | 12.9   |
| Real Estate                  | 1,566.81  | (2.4) | 2.8   | 4.3    |
| Insurance                    | 2,352.07  | (1.4) | (0.8) | (10.6) |
| Telecoms                     | 1,578.86  | (1.8) | (5.3) | (7.4)  |
| Consumer Goods & Services    | 7,215.58  | (0.8) | 0.4   | (4.8)  |
| Al Rayan Islamic Index       | 4,623.57  | (1.6) | 0.1   | (2.9)  |

Source: Qatar Exchange (QE)

| Regional Indices | Close     | WTD%  | MTD%  | YTD%   | Weekly Exchange Traded Value (\$ mn) | Exchange Mkt. Cap. (\$ mn) | TTM P/E** | P/B** | Dividend Yield |
|------------------|-----------|-------|-------|--------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Qatar*           | 9,637.59  | (2.0) | (2.1) | (11.0) | 625.66                               | 153,834.4                  | 11.1      | 1.3   | 4.9            |
| Dubai            | 4,169.87  | (0.9) | (1.8) | 2.7    | 504.06                               | 193,829.0                  | 8.2       | 1.3   | 5.3            |
| Abu Dhabi        | 9,041.51  | (1.5) | (2.0) | (5.6)  | 1,076.55                             | 694,642.0                  | 19.7      | 2.7   | 2.2            |
| Saudi Arabia*    | 12,355.69 | (1.2) | (0.4) | 3.2    | 10,760.99                            | 2,873,322.9                | 22.4      | 2.6   | 3.1            |
| Kuwait           | 7,026.05  | 0.4   | (4.1) | 3.1    | 851.38                               | 148,655.0                  | 15.9      | 1.5   | 3.3            |
| Oman             | 4,713.63  | (0.1) | 1.7   | 4.4    | 37.79                                | 24,050.2                   | 12.5      | 0.9   | 5.6            |
| Bahrain          | 2,016.89  | (0.2) | (1.3) | 2.3    | 26.33                                | 21,147.3                   | 7.9       | 0.7   | 8.3            |

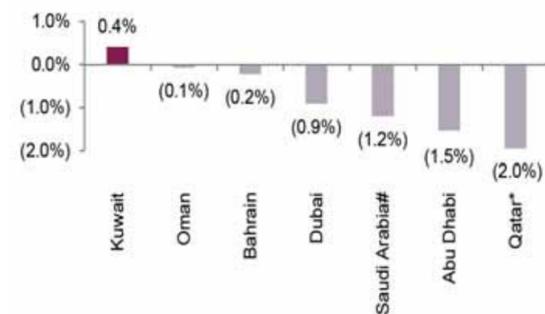
Source: Bloomberg

### QSE Index and Volume



Source: Qatar Exchange (QE)

### Weekly Index Performance



Source: Bloomberg

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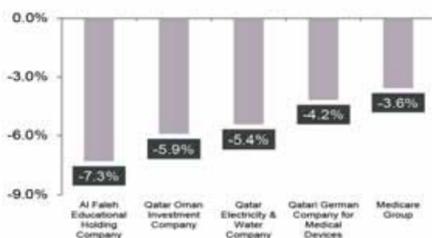
### Qatar Stock Exchange

#### Top Five Gainers



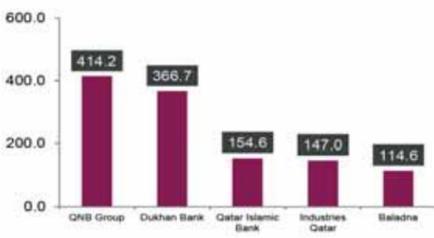
Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE)

#### Top Five Decliners



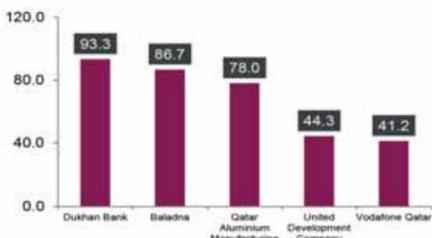
Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE)

#### Most Active Shares by Value (QR Million)



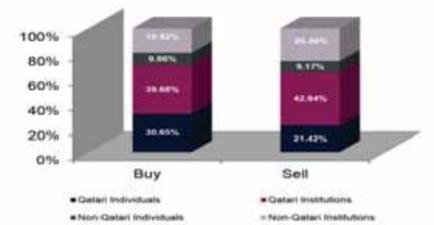
Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE)

#### Most Active Shares by Volume (Million)



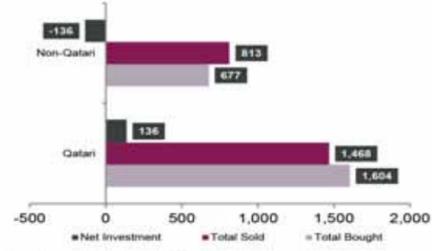
Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE)

#### Investor Trading Percentage to Total Value Traded



Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE)

#### Net Traded Value by Nationality (QR Million)



Source: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE)

| Company Name                                  | Price April 25 | % Change Weekly | % Change YTD | Market Cap. QR Million | TTM P/E | P/B | Div. Yield |
|---|----------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|---------|-----|------------|
| Qatar National Bank                           | 13.85          | (1.77)          | (16.21)      | 127,925                | 8.8     | 1.5 | 4.7        |
| Qatar Islamic Bank                            | 17.84          | (2.09)          | (17.02)      | 42,155                 | 10.2    | 1.7 | 4.1        |
| Commercial Bank of Qatar                      | 4.21           | (0.94)          | (32.10)      | 17,039                 | 6.0     | 0.9 | 5.9        |
| Doha Bank                                     | 1.50           | (0.46)          | (18.09)      | 4,648                  | 5.9     | 0.4 | 5.0        |
| Al Ahli Bank                                  | 3.71           | 0.14            | 2.29         | 9,452                  | 11.7    | 1.3 | 6.7        |
| Qatar International Islamic Bank              | 10.20          | (2.39)          | (4.58)       | 15,440                 | 14.4    | 2.1 | 4.4        |
| Masraf Al Rayan                               | 2.48           | (2.17)          | (6.78)       | 23,018                 | 16.4    | 1.0 | 4.0        |
| Lusha Bank                                    | 1.29           | 0.16            | (2.49)       | 1,445                  | 13.3    | 1.2 | N/A        |
| National Leasing                              | 0.69           | (1.01)          | (5.62)       | 340                    | 21.1    | 0.5 | 4.4        |
| Diala Holding                                 | 1.28           | 2.81            | (3.03)       | 244                    | 47.4    | 1.3 | N/A        |
| Qatar & Oman Investment Islamic Holding Group | 0.87           | (5.92)          | (8.10)       | 275                    | N/A     | 1.1 | N/A        |
| Dukhan Bank                                   | 3.90           | 1.17            | (1.89)       | 20,413                 | 16.5    | 1.6 | 4.1        |
| <b>Banking and Financial Services</b>         |                |                 |              | <b>262,609</b>         |         |     |            |
| Zad Holding                                   | 13.61          | (0.44)          | 0.81         | 3,912                  | 20.3    | 2.9 | 4.3        |
| Qatar German Co. for Medical Devices          | 1.33           | (4.18)          | (8.41)       | 153                    | 173.3   | 4.2 | N/A        |
| Salam International Investment                | 0.64           | 0.00            | (6.73)       | 728                    | 15.8    | 0.5 | 4.7        |
| Baladna                                       | 1.35           | 9.31            | 10.29        | 2,566                  | 18.6    | 1.1 | 5.1        |
| Medicare Group                                | 4.04           | (3.58)          | (26.40)      | 1,137                  | 17.1    | 1.1 | 5.4        |
| Qatar Cinema & Film Distribution              | 2.91           | 0.00            | 0.34         | 183                    | 42.2    | 1.4 | 2.4        |
| Qatar Fuel                                    | 14.31          | (2.25)          | (13.69)      | 14,228                 | 14.5    | 1.5 | 6.3        |
| Widam Food                                    | 2.09           | (1.46)          | (11.36)      | 377                    | N/A     | 2.5 | N/A        |
| Mannal Corp.                                  | 3.80           | (2.59)          | (9.52)       | 1,734                  | 10.2    | 1.7 | 6.6        |
| Al Meera Consumer Goods                       | 13.81          | (1.22)          | 0.15         | 2,845                  | 15.7    | 1.7 | 3.2        |
| Mekdam Holding Group                          | 3.84           | (3.10)          | (4.32)       | 485                    | 12.1    | 2.7 | 5.4        |
| Meeza QSTP                                    | 3.63           | 2.05            | 26.63        | 2,358                  | 39.2    | 3.3 | 2.2        |
| Al Faleh Education Holding                    | 0.70           | (7.28)          | (17.36)      | 168                    | 14.0    | 0.7 | 4.5        |
| <b>Consumer Goods and Services</b>            |                |                 |              | <b>30,874</b>          |         |     |            |
| Qatar Industrial Manufacturing                | 2.66           | (1.48)          | (11.30)      | 1,265                  | 7.5     | 0.7 | 4.9        |
| Qatar National Cement                         | 3.57           | (0.39)          | (9.53)       | 2,334                  | 12.1    | 0.8 | 8.4        |
| Industries Qatar                              | 12.00          | (2.44)          | (8.26)       | 72,600                 | 15.4    | 1.8 | 6.5        |
| Qatari Investors Group                        | 1.59           | (0.50)          | (3.23)       | 1,977                  | 11.3    | 0.7 | 9.4        |
| Qatar Electricity and Water                   | 15.30          | (5.44)          | (18.62)      | 16,830                 | 11.3    | 1.2 | 5.6        |
| Aamal   | 0.77           | (1.15)          | (8.40)       | 4,876                  | 13.2    | 0.6 | N/A        |
| Gulf International Services                   | 2.75           | (0.94)          | (0.33)       | 5,111                  | 12.3    | 1.3 | 5.5        |
| Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding                | 1.89           | (0.53)          | 5.70         | 23,744                 | 22.0    | 1.4 | 4.6        |
| Estithmar Holding                             | 1.99           | (0.15)          | (5.01)       | 6,774                  | 19.4    | 1.4 | N/A        |
| Qatar Aluminium Manufacturing                 | 1.42           | (1.87)          | 1.14         | 7,901                  | 17.6    | 1.2 | 4.9        |
| <b>Industrials</b>                            |                |                 |              | <b>143,412</b>         |         |     |            |
| Qatar Insurance                               | 2.20           | (1.48)          | (15.06)      | 7,185                  | 12.9    | 1.2 | 4.5        |
| QLM Life & Medical Insurance                  | 2.05           | (2.38)          | (17.97)      | 718                    | 9.4     | 1.1 | 6.1        |
| Doha Insurance                                | 2.26           | (1.61)          | (5.31)       | 1,132                  | 7.6     | 0.9 | 7.7        |
| Qatar General Insurance & Reinsurance         | 1.10           | (0.45)          | (25.17)      | 963                    | N/A     | 0.3 | N/A        |
| Al Khaleej Takaful Insurance                  | 2.54           | (2.42)          | (14.58)      | 648                    | 10.0    | 1.1 | 4.7        |
| Qatar Islamic Insurance                       | 7.99           | (0.06)          | (10.17)      | 1,199                  | 8.4     | 2.3 | 6.3        |
| Damaan Islamic Insurance Company              | 3.75           | (0.48)          | (5.99)       | 750                    | 10.7    | 1.5 | 4.8        |
| <b>Insurance</b>                              |                |                 |              | <b>12,594</b>          |         |     |            |
| United Development                            | 1.11           | (3.05)          | 4.51         | 3,941                  | 10.2    | 0.4 | 4.9        |
| Barwa Real Estate                             | 2.84           | (2.31)          | (2.04)       | 11,032                 | 9.0     | 0.5 | 6.3        |
| Edan Real Estate                              | 0.80           | (0.99)          | (6.41)       | 21,300                 | 215.6   | 0.6 | N/A        |
| Mazaya Qatar Real Estate Development          | 0.65           | (1.82)          | (10.24)      | 649                    | 21.4    | 0.6 | 3.9        |
| <b>Real Estate</b>                            |                |                 |              | <b>36,921</b>          |         |     |            |
| Ooredoo                                       | 9.96           | (2.79)          | (12.60)      | 31,917                 | 10.6    | 1.2 | 5.5        |
| Vodafone Qatar                                | 1.70           | 1.25            | (10.85)      | 7,186                  | 12.9    | 1.6 | 6.5        |
| <b>Telecoms</b>                               |                |                 |              | <b>39,103</b>          |         |     |            |
| Qatar Navigation (Milaha)                     | 10.61          | (0.38)          | 9.38         | 12,055                 | 11.7    | 0.7 | 3.5        |
| Gulf Warehousing                              | 3.33           | (2.77)          | 6.32         | 195                    | 9.5     | 0.8 | 3.3        |
| Qatar Gas Transport (Nakilat)                 | 3.84           | (2.78)          | 9.09         | 21,275                 | 13.7    | 1.8 | 3.6        |
| <b>Transportation</b>                         |                |                 |              | <b>33,524</b>          |         |     |            |
| <b>Qatar Exchange</b>                         |                |                 |              | <b>560,825</b>         |         |     |            |

Source: Bloomberg

## Technical analysis of the QSE index



Source: Bloomberg

The QSE index closed down (-1.95%) for the week at 9,637.6 points. The index remains flat over the longer term. The index dropped below a soft support level (9,800), which is important to bounce off. If it does not bounce off the current levels, then a breach towards the hard support level at the 9,500 would be expected. Our major resistance level is at 11,000 points.

## Definitions of key terms used in technical analysis

**RSI (Relative Strength Index) indicator** - RSI is a momentum oscillator that measures the speed and change of price movements. The RSI oscillates between 0 to 100. The index is deemed to be overbought once the RSI approaches the 70 level, indicating that a correction is likely. On the other hand, if the RSI approaches 30, it is an indication that the index may be getting oversold and therefore likely to bounce back.

**MACD (Moving Average Convergence Divergence) indicator** - The indicator consists of the MACD line and a signal line. The divergence or the convergence of the MACD line with the signal line indicates the strength in

the momentum during the uptrend or downtrend, as the case may be. When the MACD crosses the signal line from below and trades above it, it gives a positive indication. The reverse is the situation for a bearish trend.

**Candlestick chart** - A candlestick chart is a price chart that displays the high, low, open, and close for a security. The 'body' of the chart is portion between the open and close price, while the high and low intraday movements form the 'shadow'. The candlestick may represent any time frame. We use a one-day candlestick chart (every candlestick represents one trading day) in our analysis.

**WEEKLY ENERGY MARKET REVIEW**

# Oil prices settle higher on supply concerns in Middle East

[www.abhafoundation.org](http://www.abhafoundation.org)

**Oil**  
Oil prices settled higher on Friday, garnering support from tensions in the Middle East, but a strong dollar and US inflation data quashed hopes that the Federal Reserve would cut interest rates soon, giving prices a ceiling. Brent crude futures rose 49 cents to \$89.50 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures closed 28 cents higher at \$83.85 a barrel. Supply concerns supported prices as tensions continue in the Middle East. An Israeli strike in Lebanon's Beqaa region killed two members of a Lebanese militant group, Israel's military said in a statement on Friday. Israel also stepped up air strikes on Rafah on Thursday, after saying it would evacuate civilians from the city in southern Gaza and launch an all-out assault, despite allies' warnings that doing so could cause mass casualties. Meanwhile, macroeconomic pressures capped gains after data released on Friday showed growing inflation. In the twelve months through March, US inflation rose 2.7% after an advance of 2.5% in February. The Federal Reserve has a 2% inflation target. Last month's increase was broadly in line with



A strong dollar and US inflation data quashed hopes that the Federal Reserve would cut interest rates soon. Picture supplied by the Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attayah International Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development.

economists' expectations. The US central bank is expected to leave rates unchanged at its meeting next week.

**Gas**  
Asian spot liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices dropped slightly for the first time in more than two months last week over expectations of weak demand, amid easing concerns around supply due to tensions in the Middle East. The average LNG price for June delivery into north-east Asia settled at \$10.20

per million British thermal units (mmBtu), falling off the over three month-highs it hit last week, industry sources estimated. Asia LNG prices, which scaled a 15-week high this month, have either been largely flat or increased week-over-week since March. The rally in LNG prices has curbed Asian buyers' demand for spot cargoes, industry officials say. The delay in restarting Japan's 1.1 gigawatts (GW) Higashidori nuclear reactor could drive demand for replacement fuels including natural gas. Despite



China's factory activity in March growing for the first time since September, overall downstream gas demand remained weak, the analysts said. Meanwhile, subdued feedgas volumes in the

US coupled with maintenance in Norway and cooler temperatures in Europe have kept prices elevated in the region, with EU natural gas storages witnessing net withdrawals for two

consecutive days, analysts said.

■ This article was supplied by the Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attayah International Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development.

# QNB: No reason to 'read too much' into movement of singular commodities

**I**diosyncratic moves in certain commodities do not reflect the overall macro message of the segment as an asset class, according to QNB.

Commodities are one of the cornerstones of the global economy, vital for powering construction projects, fuelling vehicles, and providing essential resources and sustenance to households.

Hence, it is not a surprise that fluctuations in commodity prices reflect the ongoing dynamics of key industries, providing critical insights into the overall health of the global economy, QNB said in an economic commentary.

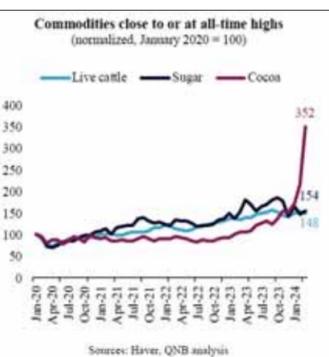
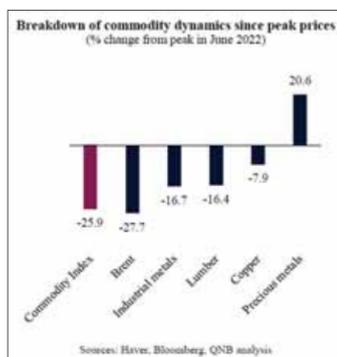
This includes relevant information for trends on sentiment and inflation, often leading or confirming cyclical turning points.

This is why the recent surge in prices for certain commodities, such as cocoa, sugar and live cattle, caught the attention of economists and investors alike. Are these price surges a sign of things to come? Are those commodities foretelling a re-acceleration of economic activity and inflation over the coming months?

In QNB's view, there is no reason to read too much into the movement of singular commodities. They often reflect idiosyncratic factors associated with those particular markets, including weather patterns or disruptions in major producers, rather than major macro movements.

If anything, prices within the overall commodity complex seem to sustain the benign macro view of a "soft landing" with a further moderation of inflation. Three factors support this position.

First, broader commodity prices are still significantly below their recent peak in May 2022, seemingly challenging the narrative of a global economic re-acceleration or inflation pick-up. This is also expressed in the more pronounced correc-



tion of highly cyclical commodities, such as energy, base metals and construction related materials.

Within energy, Brent crude oil prices, while still above pre-pandemic levels, are down 27.7% from their recent peak. Within base metals and construction related materials, copper and lumber prices, important proxies for activity in China and the US, have also declined significantly from their recent peaks.

Such price performance suggests that the global growth outlook is still dominated by headwinds, and that inflationary pressures are unlikely to mount again, QNB said.

Second, precious metals are also pointing to a weak global economy. Gold prices are at all-time highs, up 25% since June 2022 to close to \$2,300/troy oz. However, silver prices, key as an input for the new economy (technology and clean energy industries), are significantly below its recent highs.

A rising gold-to-silver ratio amid a strong gold performance is a sign that de-

flationary pressures are taking hold with no pressure from overall demand or economic activity.

Third, the combination of robust gold prices with flat to lower 10-year US Treasury yields in recent quarters suggests that investors are now more inclined to think that uncertainty is heightened and the upside for global growth is limited.

While gold seems to have decoupled from inflation trends since the pandemic, it is still a traditional safe-haven asset to hold in times of uncertainty and negative macro developments. Higher safe-haven demand in macro-driven asset classes tend to be correlated to periods of slowing growth and inflation.

"All in all, idiosyncratic moves in certain commodities do not reflect the overall macro message of the segment as an asset class. The more macro sensitive components of the commodity complex are conveying a signal of slowing growth and moderating inflation, consistent with the dominant narrative of a soft landing," QNB noted.



Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Thani al-Thani, chairman, Pakistani-Qatari Takaful Group, has presided over the meeting of the board of directors of the group, which includes the Pakistani-Qatari General Takaful Company and the Pakistani-Qatari Family Takaful Company.

# Pakistani-Qatari Takaful Group holds meeting of board of directors in Doha

**S**heikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Thani al-Thani, chairman, Pakistani-Qatari Takaful Group, presided over the meeting of the board of directors of the group, which includes the Pakistani-Qatari General Takaful Company and the Pakistani-Qatari Family Takaful Company.

The meeting was devoted to discussing and approving the financial statements of both companies for the year ending on December 31, 2023 and the group's future plans.

The meeting held in Doha was attended by board members including Dr Abdulbasit Ahmad al-Shaibei, Ali Ibrahim al-Abdul Ghani, Said Gul, Dr Manfred and Zahid Hussein Awan.

The meeting was also attended by Sakib Zeeshan, executive vice-president, Pakistani-Qatari General Takaful Company, and Sohaib Akhtar, head (Strategy) at Pakistani-Qatari Takaful Group.

Sheikh Ali expressed satisfaction with the group's performance during 2023, hoping that 2024 will be another distinguished year for the company to achieve new heights in terms of revenues and profitability and be able to continue improving its services to keep pace with the best international standards.

He said: "The Pakistani-Qatari Taka-

ful Group achieved total sales worth 17.5bn Pakistani rupees, while the group's net profit after deducting tax amounted to 257.5mn rupees during the year that ended on December 31, 2023. The participating Takaful Fund also achieved a consolidated net surplus of 78mn rupees."

**The meeting was devoted to discussing and approving the financial statements of the companies for the year ending on December 31, 2023 and the group's future plans**

Sheikh Ali added: "Pakistani-Qatari Family Takaful Company (PQFTL) will distribute cash dividends to its shareholders at a rate of 5%, while Pakistani-Qatari General Takaful Company (PQGTL) will distribute cash dividends at a rate of 10% to its shareholders."

While Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah expressed thanks for the efforts made by the group's management and employees, he stressed the need to work hard for improving performance, respond to competition, increase innovation, and gain the confidence of the widest possible segment of customers in the large Pakistani market.

# Battle for 'tech luxury' in China as EVs get smarter and cheaper

Reuters  
Beijing

The battle for consumer attention in China's electric car market is being fought over touches of "tech luxury" that car buyers in other markets have never seen.

China's upstart electric brands, and even its state-owned, legacy automakers, are racing to pack technology and features once considered premium into EVs as cheap as \$20,000 – less than half the cost of an average new car in the US, now more than \$48,000.

That represents a deepening challenge to foreign brands in China, including Tesla and Volkswagen, which both have top-selling EVs in the world's largest market, and others, analysts say. Last year, BYD shocked the automotive industry with the release of its Seagull EV, now priced under \$10,000, at the Shanghai auto show. The Seagull is now China's fourth-best selling EV.

But other Chinese automakers, including state-run companies that were later entrants to the EV race, have closed the gap on sub-\$10,000 EVs at the Beijing auto show that began Thursday. The market is also crowded with electric and plug-in vehicles starting near \$20,000 that still splash on once-expensive interior features and technology.

Chinese consumers, especially younger ones, rank "technology luxury" as an important consideration, and Chinese automakers are taking the lead on such features, said Raymond Tsang, a Shanghai-based Bain & Company partner.

"This is quite different from many other Western markets where traditionally car buyers are still weighting quite heavily on build quality, reliability, ride and handling," he said. In a race to stand out, some Chinese brands are offering features intended to be fun, if not frivolous. The Baojun Yep, a mini-EV by the SAIC-GM-Wuling joint-venture that



Visitors walk past a BYD logo at the Beijing International Automotive Exhibition on Thursday. The battle for consumer attention in China's electric car market is being fought over touches of "tech luxury" that car buyers in other markets have never seen.

starts around \$11,000, has a screen on the tailgate where drivers can flash messages such as "thank you", or a heart emoji, to acknowledge the kindness of another road user. The Zeekr 001 electric sedan, a premium offering in China that starts around \$37,000, has a front grille that

can play music at a stop while giving pedestrians a bouncing string of thumbs-up emojis. SAIC Motor brand Roewe's just-released D5X DMH plug-in hybrid SUV, which starts around \$16,500, allows drivers to enter up to 10 different commands into a navigation system,

such as a series of different destinations, all at once.

XPeng and Nio, EV-focused companies that launched as startups, are rolling out mass-market brands for China where competition on price has become cut-throat. Xpeng expects its upcoming Mona-branded EV will be the first in China priced below \$21,000 to have high-level self-driving features. "Even one or two years ago, I didn't think we could achieve that," Xpeng co-president Brian Gu told reporters on the sidelines of the Beijing auto show.

In China, the price of specialized components – including sensors needed for self-driving features and screens for on-board entertainment – has tumbled and competition has intensified in the world's largest auto market, analysts say. Dongfeng, a state-owned automaker, is showing off the Nammi in Beijing. The EV with a 300km (186-mile) range sells for \$9,600. It features flush door handles that pop out on command, an aerodynamic feature

popularized by Tesla. Owners can start the car and open the doors remotely with a smartphone.

Historically, US and European brands have been considered more luxurious and higher quality than Chinese brands. That's changing fast, analysts say.

"The halo of foreign brands has almost disappeared," McKinsey analysts said in an outlook for China's auto market released in March. "Foreign, high-end traditional car owners are being transformed into Chinese high-end, new energy brand owners in an almost one-way flow."

The German automakers are not standing still. Volkswagen, China's leading foreign brand, plans to deliver the "Chinese wow effects" tech-savvy consumers there expect, China chief Ralf Brandstatter told reporters on Tuesday. Mercedes-Benz CEO Ola Kaelenius told Reuters that his Chinese digital tech team was dedicated to catering to the tastes of younger and more tech-oriented consumers in China.