**BOOSTING TRADE** | Page 4

‘Amir’s visit to Sweden paves way for new horizons of co-operation’



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**M-CAP ADDS QR5.31BN : Page 4**

US rate cut hopes instil confidence as QSE index surges 114 points



# Deluxe hotel apartments and four-star hotels in Qatar see improved room yield in July: NPC

**By Santhosh V Perumal**
Business Reporter

**Doha saw as many as 317,459 visitor arrivals in July 2024, registering 10.2% and 0.4% growth on yearly and monthly basis respectively, according to the official data**

Qatar’s hospitality sector saw improved (year-on-year) room yield in July 2024, particularly in the deluxe hotel apartments and four-star hotels; amidst jump in visitors, especially from Europe, the Americas and the Gulf region, according to the official data.

The country’s hospitality sector saw a 7.35% year-on-year surge in room yield to QR219 in July 2024 as occupancy by 6% to 58%; but average room rate fell 4.09% to QR375, according to the figures released by National Planning Council (NPC).

The four-star hotels room yield improved by 7.21% on a yearly basis to QR119 as the occupancy increased by 10% to 60%, even as the average room rate shrank 10.81% to QR198 in July 2024.

However, the five-star hotels’ room yield tanked 3.25% year-on-year to QR277 as average room rate were lower by 6.51% to QR546, even as occupancy grew 5% to 51% in the review period.

The three-star hotels’ room yield fell 2.52% on an annualised basis to QR116 this July as average room rate decreased by 7.78% to QR154 amidst 4% jump in occupancy to 75%.

The two-star and one-star hotels reported 12.4% year-on-year contraction in room yield to QR113 as the average room rate shrank 4.2% to QR137 and the occupancy by 7% to 83% in July this year.

The deluxe hotel apartments registered a 23.78% year-on-year surge in room yield to QR229 as occupancy improved 12% to 69% and average room rate by 2.45% to QR334 in July 2024.

In the case of standard hotel apartments, room yield plummeted 33.33% on an annualised basis to QR108 in July 2024 with occupancy plunging 28% to 49% even as average room rate shot up 4.27% to QR220.

Doha saw as many as 317,459 visitor arrivals in July 2024, growing 10.2% and 0.4% on yearly and monthly basis respectively in the review period.

Visitors are those non-residents travelling to Qatar on a short-term basis for all purposes, including arrivals at borders under 15 different visit visa classes and also include business and leisure visa types while excluding work visas.

The visitor arrivals from the Gulf Co-operation Council or GCC were 146,600 or 46% of the total; followed by other Asia (including Oceania) 66,340 (21%), Europe 54,417 (17%), the Americas 22,884 (7%), other Arab countries 20,383 (6%) and other African countries 6,835 (2%) in July 2024.

On an annualised basis, the visitor arrivals from European countries were seen soaring 28.6%, the Americas by 18.1%, the GCC by 8.7%, other Asia (including Oceania) by 3.2% and other Arab countries by 1.6%; while those from other African countries were down 2.5% and other Arab countries by 1.6% in July 2024.

On a month-on-month basis, the visitor arrivals from Europe shot up 18% and the Americas by 8.4%; even as those from other Asia (including Oceania) declined 7.1%, other African countries by 6%, other Arab countries by 5.2% and the GCC by 1.6% in the review period.

# Qatar among top 15 leading fertiliser exporters in 2023: GPCA

**By Pratap John**
Business Editor

Qatar was ranked among the top 15 leading fertiliser exporters in 2023, according to the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA).

The other two GCC fertiliser exporters among the top 15 in 2023 were Saudi Arabia and Oman, noted Noora Mukhtar, research specialist at the GPCA.

The GCC’s fertiliser production capacity has grown significantly over the past decade, with a 4.68% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) between 2013 and 2023, securing an additional 13.2mn tonnes.

The nitrogenous fertiliser segment occupies the larger bulk of the market, where the GCC nitrogen-based fertilisers (mainly urea and ammonia) account for 82.3% of the regions’ fertiliser portfolio in 2023.

The GCC fertiliser industry remains heavily export-oriented, shipping its products to some 63 countries from across the globe, Mukhtar said.

India, the USA and Singapore ranked the top three GCC nitrogen export destinations, accounting for 62% of the total nitrogen export value in 2022.

Although capacity additions in agri-nutrients have been limited in the past couple of years, they played a pivotal role in boosting revenue within the regional petrochemical industry.

Record-high prices for agri-nutrients were driven by a complex combination of various factors such as rising energy costs, supply and demand dynamics, and geopolitical factors. With a global focus on ensuring food security for a rapidly growing population, the demand for fertilisers is expected to rise substantially.

The global urea and ammonia demand are projected to reach 300mn tonnes per year (mtpy) and 290mtpy respectively by 2030, GPCA’s Mukhtar said.

The surge in demand underscores the urgent need for reliable fertiliser suppliers, enabling GCC producers to meet increasing global demands, particularly in major agricultural markets.

Simultaneously, the debate over the use of nitrogen-based products for food security versus fuel is intensifying.

The IMO targets net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, spurring interest in ammonia as an alternative maritime fuel.

Ammonia’s potential as a zero-carbon fuel is compelling, but it competes directly with its role in agriculture.

Qatar announces fertiliser output boost: Doubling Qatar’s annual urea production capacity to 12.4mn tonnes, QatarEnergy on Sunday announced a world-scale urea fertiliser complex at Mesaieed Industrial City, which will make Qatar the world’s largest urea exporter by 2030.

The new mega project entails building three ammonia production lines that will supply feedstock to four new world-scale urea production trains in Mesaieed Industrial City. The new facilities, which are planned to be built, will more than double the State of Qatar’s urea production from about 6mn tonnes per year currently to 12.4mn tonnes per year. Production from the project’s first new urea train is expected before the end of this decade.

# Gulf Warehousing Company joins UN Global Compact

Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC) has joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the world’s largest voluntary corporate sustainability initiative.

By joining the UNGC, GWC aligns itself with over 23,000 companies from some 166 countries worldwide committed to promoting responsible business practices and sustainable development goals (SDGs).

GWC managing director Sheikh Abdullah bin Fahad bin Jassim bin Jaber al-Thani said: “Joining the UNGC represents GWC’s commitment to aligning its operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and contribute to implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals creating positive social and environmental impact through our core business activities.”

He added: “This step plays a significant role in solidifying our position as a leader in sustainable business practices within the State of Qatar, further enhancing our long-term vision which aims to contribute to achieving the goals of Qatar National

GWC managing director Sheikh Abdullah bin Fahad bin Jassim bin Jaber al-Thani.

GWC Group CEO Ranjeev Menon.

Vision 2030. “At GWC, we are dedicated to upholding the highest ethical standards and prioritising environmental stewardship in all our operations.

We are confident that this collaboration will empower us to further integrate these principles into our operations and contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.”

GWC Group CEO Ranjeev Menon said: “GWC is committed to collaborative projects aimed at achieving the UN’s SDGs, while simultaneously providing significant support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) and launching social responsibility initiatives throughout the year. “GWC’s influence is not limited to its commercial activities but extends to include the whole community, as the company implements a comprehensive strategy for environmental, social, and governance (ESG).”

In 2023, GWC achieved a remarkable milestone by securing a top 10 position in Forbes ‘Top 100 Middle East’s Sustainability Leaders’ in the logistics and transport category, underlining its unwavering dedication to sustainability.

GWC invests in several active measures to ensure more sustainable operations, such as paperless processes, vehicle route optimisation, reduce-reuse-recycle initiatives, energy conservation (including natural and energy-saving lighting initiatives), and resource consumption optimisation.

Notably, GWC’s Regional Logistics Hub in Ras Bufontas Free Zone was developed in accordance with the GSAS standard.

GWC said it is committed to promoting economic development in Qatar by boosting MSMEs growth. The first and second phases of Al Wukair Logistics Park have successfully attracted a significant number of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Spreading across 1.5mn square metres, GWC Al Wukair Logistics Park is dedicated to light industry infrastructure required for the operational success of MSMEs.

With various light industrial workshops, warehousing units, and open yards, the park has been designed to meet all types of warehousing and distribution requirements for sector-wide enterprises.

Al Wukair Logistics Park offers a one-stop-shop for leasing a warehouse or workshop, company formation formalities, including applications for necessary permits, and logistics operations.

“Startups working with GWC benefit from years of local, regional and international experience, along with a global, integrated network.

“GWC’s deep, hard-earned knowledge of the local market makes Al Wukair Logistics Park the ideal destination for businesses to avail of and enjoy the best logistics infrastructure.”

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# QSTP concludes 1st 'Summer Internship Bootcamp' programme

The Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP), a member of Qatar Foundation, has successfully concluded its 'Summer Internship Bootcamp' programme.

Designed to foster technological innovation and entrepreneurship among university students in Qatar, the programme provided participants with valuable hands-on experience and opportunities to engage with various companies and startups within QSTP.

From June-August, the programme attracted more than 800 applicants. Of these, 40 students representing six universities and 13 nationalities were selected to join the programme. Hayfa al-Abdulla, Innovation Director at QSTP, stated: "Developing essential technical and entrepreneurial skills that enable young talents to drive impact in society has always been at the top of our priorities at QSTP.

From June-August, the programme attracted more than 800 applicants. Of these, 40 students representing six universities and 13 nationalities were selected to join the programme.

"Our new Summer Internship Bootcamp programme furthers this ambition allowing students to gain real-world experience, connect with industry leaders and experts, and gain a deeper understanding of technology trends and practices." The programme also featured a series of workshops that engaged over 600 participants, including the Summer Internship Bootcamp participants, startups under QSTP's umbrella, and the general public.

Nine workshops covered a range of topics, such as quantum computing, business models, and design thinking.

Some of the experts that led the workshops included Dr Saif al-Kuwari, director of Qatar Centre for Quantum Computing, Hamad Bin Khalifa University – a member of Qatar Foundation; Nayef al-Ibrahim, CEO, Ibtechar; and Ramzan al-Naimi, founder, Innovation Café.

The summer workshops enhanced participants' knowledge and skills in innovation and technology, strengthened connections and relationships, and improved collaborative efforts and collective problem-solving abilities.

One of the participants, Fatima Ahmad al-Kuwari, a year 12 student at Al Jazeera Academy, stated: "Joining the summer workshops was an insightful and enriching experience for me.

"The sessions allowed me to strengthen my project management skills, boosted my confidence in leading teams, and expanded my knowledge around essential concepts such as personal branding. I'm thankful to QSTP for the excellent organisation of these workshops and I look forward to attending similar workshops in future."

QSTP remains committed to nurturing local talent and driving technological advancement and innovation through initiatives like the Summer Bootcamp Internship programme.


## Amir's visit to Sweden paves way for new horizons of joint co-operation: Sheikh Khalifa

**QNA**
Doha

The Chairman of Qatar Chamber Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim bin Mohamed al-Thani affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Kingdom of Sweden is part of the distinguished relations between the two countries, adding that it will pave the way for new horizons of joint co-operation, especially in trade and economic fields.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he noted that the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Sweden enjoy close co-operation at all levels, particularly in trade and economics, pointing out the mutual visits of officials and business delegations, as well as the number of agreements and memorandums of understanding signed between both countries in various fields.

He noted that there has been significant development in trade and economic relations between the two countries in recent years, with trade exchange reaching approximately QR1.55bn in 2023, compared to QR866mn in 2022, reflecting a growth rate of 79%. He emphasised the two countries' commitment to increasing trade exchange through mutual investments.

The chairman of Qatar Chamber invited Swedish companies to invest in Qatar, which has become a leading global centre for business and investment, thanks to its world-class infrastructure, favourable business environment, and a range of economic regulations that encourage investment, including allowing foreign ownership of up to 100% in many sectors.

Sheikh Khalifa concluded by highlighting the presence of dozens of Swedish companies operating in the Qatari market, either with 100% ownership or through partnerships with Qatari institutions, reiterating the Qatari private sector's desire to enhance co-operation with its Swedish counterpart and explore the potential for establishing trade alliances and joint industrial projects.

# US rate cut hopes instil confidence as QSE key index surges 114 points; M-cap adds QR5.31bn

**By Santhosh V Perumal**
Business Reporter

Rising investors' confidence on an imminent expected rate cut by the US Federal Reserve had its reflection on the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE), which yesterday saw its key index surge 114 points and capitalisation add QR5.31bn.

An across the board buying, especially in the banks and telecom counters, lifted the 20-stock Qatar Index 1.11% to 10,344.42 points, recovering from an intraday low of 10,232 points.

More than 65% of the traded constituents extended gains to investors in the main market, whose year-to-date losses truncated to 4.49%.

The foreign funds were seen increasingly net buyers in the main bourse, whose capitalisation added 0.9% to QR598.37bn on the back of mid and small cap segments.

The foreign individuals turned bullish in the main market, which saw 0.01mn exchange traded funds (sponsored by Masraf Al Rayan and Doha Bank) valued at QR0.12mn trade across 10 deals.

However, the local retail investors were seen increasingly net sellers in the main bourse, which saw no trading of treasury bills. The domestic institutions were net profit takers in the main market, which saw no trading of sovereign bonds.

The Islamic index was seen gaining slower than the main barometer in the main bourse, whose trade turnover and volumes were on the increase.

The Total Return Index rose 1.11%, the All Share Index by 1% and the All Islamic Index by 1.02% in the main market.

The banks and financial services sector index shot up 1.32%, telecom (1.16%), industrials (1.01%), real estate (0.76%), transport (0.24%), insurance (0.06%) and consumer goods and services (0.05%).

Major gainers in the main market included Qatar Oman Investment, Qatar Islamic Bank, Gulf International Services, Qatar Electricity and Water, Commercial Bank, QIIB, Widam Food, Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding, Barwa and Ooredoo. In the junior bourse, Al Mahhar Holding saw its shares appreciate in value.


An across the board buying, especially in the banks and telecom counters, lifted the 20-stock Qatar Index 1.11% to 10,344.42 points yesterday, recovering from an intraday low of 10,232 points

Nevertheless, Ahlibank Qatar, Doha Insurance, Qatar Islamic Insurance, Qatar German Medical Devices and Mazaya Qatar were among the shakers in the main market.

The foreign institutions' net buying increased substantially to QR53.04mn compared to QR9.8mn on August 29.

The foreign retail investors were net buyers to the tune of QR4.84mn against net sellers of QR6.76mn the previous day.

However, the Qatari individuals' net selling strengthened significantly to QR43.79mn compared to QR10.33mn on Sunday. The domestic institutions turned net sellers to the extent of QR8.92mn against net buyers of QR4.55mn on August 29.

The Gulf institutions' net selling expanded noticeably to QR3.02mn compared to QR0.61mn the previous day.

The Gulf individual investors' net profit booking grew perceptibly to QR1.33mn against QR0.06mn on Sunday.

The Arab individuals turned net sellers to the tune of QR0.83mn compared with net buyers of QR3.4mn on August 29.

The Arab institutions had no major net exposure for the second straight session.

Trade volumes in the main market soared 78% to 155.74mn shares, value by 69% to QR395.84mn and transactions by 89% to 15,073.

The venture market however saw 40% shrinkage in trade volumes to 0.71mn equities, 40% in value to QR1.64mn and 11% in deals to 67.

# Volkswagen considers historic German plant closures in cost-cutting drive

**Reuters**
Berlin

Volkswagen is considering closing factories in Germany for the first time, in a move that shows the pressure Europe's top carmaker is facing from cheap Asian competition.

The move marks the first major clash between Chief Executive Oliver Blume, who analysts have described as more of a consensus builder compared to his more combative predecessor Herbert Diess, and unions that command substantial influence at VW.

VW considers one large vehicle plant and one component factory in Germany to be obsolete, its works council said as it vowed "fierce resistance" to the executive board's plans.

Analysts have in the past named VW sites in Osnabrueck, in Lower Saxony and Dresden, in Saxony, as potential targets for closure.

The state of Lower Saxony is Volkswagen's second-largest shareholder and on Monday supported its review. Volkswagen said that it also felt forced to end its job security programme, which has been in place since 1994 and prevents job cuts until 2029, adding all measures would be discussed with its works council.

"The situation is extremely tense and cannot be overcome by simple cost-cutting measures," VW brand chief Thomas Schaefer said in a statement.

VW, which drives most of Volkswagen's unit sales, is the first of its brands to undergo a cost-cutting drive targeting 10bn euros ($11bn) in savings by 2026 as it attempts to streamline spending to survive the transition to electric cars. A difficult economic environment, new competitors in Europe, and the falling competitiveness of the German economy meant Volkswagen needed to do more, Blume told its management.

Volkswagen shares were up 2.57% yesterday, after jumping about 1.5% directly after its announcement.

VW has lost almost a third of its stock market value over the past five years, making it the worst performing stock among the major European carmakers.

The IG Metall union called the announcement an irresponsible decision that "shakes the foundation" of Volkswagen, which is Germany's largest industrial employer and Europe's top carmaker by revenue.

Works council chief Daniella Cavallo said in an interview on Volkswagen's intranet that its management had made "many wrong decisions" in recent years, including not investing in hybrids or being faster at developing affordable battery-electric cars.

Instead of plant closures, the board should be reducing complexity and taking advantage of synergies across the Volkswagen group's plans, Cavallo argued, criticising the company's "documentation madness" and "salami-slicing tactics".

Cavallo was referring to VW not only weighing plant closures, but also dissolving wage agreements and dropping its commitment to both job security and efficiency. Chief Financial Officer Arno Antlitz will speak to staff alongside VW brand chief Thomas Schaefer at a works council meeting on Wednesday.

# China factory activity extends slide as headwinds mount

**Bloomberg**
Beijing

China's factory activity contracted for a fourth straight month in August, the latest sign the world's No 2 economy may struggle to meet this year's economic growth target.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index declined to 49.1 from 49.4 in July, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Saturday. The median forecast of economists surveyed by Bloomberg News was 49.5. The reading has been below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction for all but three months since April 2023.

China's $17tn economy has been struggling as a prolonged property downturn weighs on consumers and businesses. Recent government efforts — including interest-rate cuts — to boost sentiment have yet to turn things around, meaning the economy continues to lean on manufacturing and exports to keep its growth target in sight. But as trade tensions with the US and Europe increase, headwinds for the manufacturing sector are growing. President Xi Jinping's government is targeting gross domestic product growth of about 5% this year, a goal economists say will need accelerated spending on infrastructure and other programmes if it is to be realised.

"The fiscal policy stance remains quite restrictive, which may have contributed to the weak economic momentum," said Zhiwei Zhang, president and chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. "To achieve a economic stabilisation the fiscal policy stance needs to be become much more supportive. With the US economy slowing, exports may not be as reliable a source for growth as it was in the first half of the year."

In a statement accompanying the data, NBS analyst Zhao Qinghe attributed the latest contraction to high temperatures, heavy rainfall and a seasonal slackening of production in some industries.

The non-manufacturing measure of activity in construction and services rose to 50.3, boosted by consumption during the summer holiday season, the statistics office said. That compares with a forecast of 50.1, and a July reading of 50.2. The composite index stood at 50.1.

Economists at banks including UBS Group AG and JPMorgan Chase & Co expect China to fall short of delivering on its growth target of around 5% this year.