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BUSINESS

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Economic entity launched to enhance Qatar-Sudan private sector investments

Natural gas demand projected to increase to 5,317 bcm by 2050

By Pratap John
Business Editor

Natural gas demand has been projected to increase to 5,317 bcm by 2050, representing 32% growth over the forecast period, according to the Gas Exporting Countries Forum.

Gas' share in the global energy will rise from 23% to 26%, GECF noted.

The power sector is expected to drive this expansion, adding 475 bcm (1.1% per year) to reach 1,866 bcm.

Industrial demand, including feedstock applications, is expected to grow by 238 bcm (0.9% per year) to 1,095 bcm, maintaining its position as the second-largest source of natural gas consumption.

Natural gas demand for hydrogen production is also set to rise significantly, with consumption exceeding 480 bcm by 2050, reflecting blue hydrogen's growing role in decarbonisation strategies, GECF said in its latest 'Globas Gas Outlook'.

The share of natural gas in final energy consumption is projected to reach 16% by 2050, slightly increasing from 15% in 2023, despite shifting consumption patterns.

A gradual transition is underway, with natural gas use shifting from direct consumption in end-use sectors toward transformation sectors such as power generation and hydrogen production, reinforcing its role in supporting cleaner energy systems.

With the exception of Europe and North America, natural gas demand is set to continue expanding across all other regions.

Asia Pacific is projected to surpass North America as the largest natural gas-consuming region within this decade, maintaining its lead through midcentury.

The region is expected to witness a 710 bcm increase in demand, accounting for 55% of the total net growth by 2050, outpacing all other regions.

The Middle East will closely follow, contributing nearly 24% of the global demand increase, as its consumption rises from 554 bcm in 2023 to 865 bcm by 2050, reflecting increasing industrialisation and expanding energy intensive sectors.

Africa is poised for the strongest relative growth, with natural gas demand more than doubling (+126%) to reach 385 bcm by 2050, driven by accelerated energy access initiatives, industrial expansion, and economic development.

Latin America will also experience substantial growth, adding 125 bcm to reach 275 bcm by 2050, accounting for nearly 10% of the global net increase, solidifying its role as an emerging natural gas market.

Despite initial growth in natural gas demand in North America through 2030, the region is expected to peak thereafter, followed by a gradual decline by 2050, as mature markets shift toward lower-carbon alternatives and efficiency improvements reduce consumption. Europe's demand is anticipated to continue declining over the coming decades, falling by 154 bcm to 309 bcm by 2050, reflecting its energy policies and deindustrialisation.

These trends underscore natural gas's dual role — acting as a transition fuel in Europe and a destination fuel in developing regions where infrastructure, energy security, and economic priorities drive long-term reliance on natural gas.

The global natural gas supply landscape is undergoing a fundamental shift, with production increasingly concentrated in non-associated conventional gas resources, primarily in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa.

In contrast, North America's unconventional gas production is expected to peak at 1,205 bcm in the 2030s before gradually declining to 1,126 bcm by 2050 due to the maturation of key shale plays and a slowing expansion of new developments.

Meanwhile, new projects, including yet-to-find (YTF) resources, are forecast to account for 81% of total global gas production by 2050, highlighting their critical role in offsetting natural decline from mature fields and sustaining long-term supply growth.

Qatar share of Mideast upstream investment 'substantial': GECF

By Pratap John
Business Editor

Qatar's share of the Middle East region's upstream investment is "substantial", Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) said and noted in 2023, Qatar accounted for 45% of the region's upstream gas investment at $9.6bn.

In 2023, the region's upstream gas investment stood at $21.3bn.

According to GECF, the Qatar Gas LNG T8-T11 project in the North Field, Qatar Gas LNG T12-T13 in the North Field South, the North Field Sustainability project, and the North Field Compression project drive the growth in investment and future production. The key driver of the Middle East's natural gas exports is expected to be the growth in LNG supplies, with Qatar at the forefront, GECF noted in the latest edition of its 'Global Gas Outlook'.

"Qatar's position as a leading global LNG exporter is set to strengthen further, with 2024 marking the continued expansion of its liquefaction capacities," GECF said.

The Middle East is projected to hold an 18% share of global liquefaction investments, with Qatar leading the charge through its North Field Expansion (NFE and NFS).

A view of the Ras Laffan Industrial City, Qatar's principal site for the production of liquefied natural gas and gas-to-liquids. In 2023, Qatar accounted for 45% of the Middle East region's upstream gas investment valued at $9.6bn of a total of $21.3bn, according to GECF.

"These projects will significantly boost Qatar's LNG output, solidifying its position as a cost-competitive, high-volume supplier to Asia and Europe," GECF said.

Qatar aims to nearly double its LNG production capacity, increasing output by approximately 85% from the current 77 mtpy to 142 mtpy by 2030.

This ambitious growth, led by the North Field Expansion project, will be implemented in three phases – through the North Field East (NFE), South (NFS), and West (NFW) expansion projects – and could contribute to a global oversupply later in the decade.

"This significant expansion will underpin Qatar's continued and sustainable economic growth, aligning with the Qatar National Vision 2030," GECF said.

GECF noted Qatar remains the dominant player in the Middle East's midstream gas sector. With the North Field East (NFE) and North Field South (NFS) expansion projects, Qatar is set to significantly increase its LNG export capacity by 65 mtpy, bringing the total to 142 mtpy by the early 2030s.

The NFE project, valued at approximately $29bn is expected to commence operations by 2026, while the NFS project, estimated at over $14bn will follow shortly thereafter.

These projects are supported by partnerships with leading global energy companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell, TotalEnergies, and Eni, ensuring robust financing and access to advanced technology. "Qatar's long-term contracts and reliable export infrastructure further enhance its role as a stable LNG supplier to Asian and European markets," GECF said.

Fitch affirms ratings on Nakilat Inc's $1.15bn debts

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Global credit rating agency Fitch has affirmed ratings on Nakilat Inc's $850mn series A senior secured bonds (senior debt) due 2033 at 'AA-' and the $300mn series A subordinated second-priority secured bonds (junior debt) due 2033 at 'A+' with "stable" outlook.

The ratings reflect two-notch uplift from the senior and junior bonds' Standalone Credit Profiles (SCP) at 'a' and 'a-', respectively, capturing the strong incentives by the government to provide or facilitate extraordinary support to the project directly or via time charters. The SCPs reflect the project's stable cash flow, supported by consistent operating and financial performance.

Nakilat is 100% owned by Qatar Gas Transport Company (QGTC), a joint-stock entity partly owned by state-owned QatarEnergy LNG and government funds. The special shares owned by QatarEnergy enable the government to have extensive decision-making power in QGTC.

Highlighting that LNG exports form a large contribution to Qatar's income (40% of GDP or gross domestic product) and Qatar is progressing toward full LNG value-chain integration; Fitch believes that replacing Nakilat would be possible, but not without a temporary disruption to Qatar's LNG exports.

Nakilat's junior debt's 'a-' SCP reflects the availability-based nature of revenue with limited exposure to cost risk and an average debt service coverage ratio (DSCR) of 1.27x for 2025-33 under Fitch Rating Case (FRC).

The senior debt's higher SCP reflects its senior ranking and a 24-month standstill period in a junior debt default. The one-notch SCP differential also reflects the junior bondholders' enforcement rights over the security after the standstill period elapses, resulting in similar probabilities of default on both the senior and junior debt.

However, the senior debt's higher resilience to temporary stress may result in a junior debt default without triggering a default of the senior debt, if the default is remedied before the end of the standstill period.

Revenues have historically increased after a rise in operating costs. An operations and maintenance reserve of $300,000 per vessel is in place, as well as a dry-docking reserve, which is funded by daily distributions of $1,900 per vessel. Voyage costs, fuel costs and port charges are borne by charterers.

Ship management has so far been outsourced to Shell International Trading and Shipping Company which has historically seen strong operating performance. However, operations are progressively being transferred to Nakilat from Shell. Fitch expects the quality of operations to remain "high".

Nakilat derives its revenue from availability-based charter payments for its 25 vessels. There is no pass-through of availability deductions but historically these have been minimal and are expected to remain at similar levels, according to Fitch.

Finding that the time charters also include a generous time allowance for the assets to be unavailable during dry-docking, without incurring any deductions; it said, "We view the charterers QatarEnergy as a strong counterparty. Nakilat is strategic to QatarEnergy and, consequently, in the Qatari LNG value chain, leading to little incentive for the charterers to terminate the contracts.

Each LNG vessel has a 40-year design life, which is well beyond the tenor of Nakilat's debt. It has a long asset life and Nakilat's fleet is fairly new and modern, reducing the need for major maintenance and repairs in the early life of the assets. Dry-docking exercises that take place every five years address the ongoing maintenance needs of the fleet.

Ooredoo general assembly approves distribution of QR0.65 dividend

Ooredoo shareholders approved the board of directors' recommendation to distribute a cash dividend of QR0.65 per share during its Annual General Meeting yesterday.

Addressing the meeting, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Thani al-Thani, Chairman of Ooredoo, highlighted the significant strides the company has made towards its evolution into a leading digital infrastructure provider through strategic investments and the expansion of our global connectivity footprint.

HE Sheikh Faisal said, "2024 was another solid year for Ooredoo Group, seeing substantial growth across all key financial metrics and delivering value to our stakeholders as we continue to diligently execute our strategy. The group made robust operational progress, and our strong results demonstrate that our strategy is working in delivering strong shareholder returns."

"For the third year in a row, we report strong growth in all key financial metrics, closing 2024 with record-high earnings that surpassed $1bn in normalised net profit for the first time, while maintaining healthy cash reserves and liquidity levels."

Ooredoo Chairman HE Sheikh Faisal bin Thani al-Thani presiding over the Annual General Meeting held in Doha yesterday.

As a result of strategic investments and effective market positioning, revenue increased by 2% year-on-year (y-o-y) to QR23.6bn in 2024, driven by strong performance in Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Tunisia, and the Maldives. This was partially offset by a decline in revenue from Qatar and Oman. Ooredoo's focus on profitability led to an EBITDA of QR10bn, up by 3% y-o-y. EBITDA margin expanded by 1pp to 42.5% thanks to healthy service revenue growth and a disciplined approach to cost control. Group net profit increased by 14% y-o-y to QR3.4bn in 2024. Normalised net profit grew by 12% y-o-y to QR3.7bn. The delivery of these strong net profit figures is a testament to the group's ongoing focus on profitability and efficient operational management.

The best-in-class network and unmatched customer experience are attracting more customers to the network, ending 2024 with a total of 51.5mn customers, reflecting a 5% increase y-o-y (excluding Ooredoo Myanmar). Including IOH, the customer base reached a total of 146.2mn.

Highlights of the period include the establishment of MENA Digital Hub, Ooredoo's new carrier-neutral data centre company. Ooredoo also collaborated with NVIDIA, becoming their cloud partner in the region.

Ooredoo acquired, through Alcatel Submarine Networks, the 'Fibre in Gulf' project – the largest subsea cable ever built in the GCC, connecting all GCC countries and beyond. Ooredoo Fintech continues to expand beyond its market leadership in Qatar and the Maldives, launching walletii in Oman.

BUSINESS

Turkish firms' hard currency borrowing at home hits 5-year high

Bloomberg
Istanbul

Turkish companies are betting on lira stability as they accumulate the highest levels of foreign-currency debt in five years.

Domestic firms are opting for loans in euros and dollars to avoid lofty interest payments at home as Turkiye's central bank keeps its benchmark rate over 40% to control inflation. Foreign-currency loans taken locally reached the equivalent of $170.4bn at the end of January — up almost a third from a year earlier — according to the most recent data from the nation's banking regulator.

A buildup of foreign debt has exacerbated economic difficulties in Turkiye in the past, as companies that receive the bulk of their revenue in lira struggle to repay overseas loans when the local currency drops in value. This time round, comparatively high central-bank rates are expected to keep any lira depreciation steady — unlike the ructions seen in 2018 and 2021, when the government's low interest-rate policy meant the currency had no safety net.

The weighted-average interest rate on euro and dollar loans stood at 6% and 8%, respectively, last month, compared with a 55% weighted-average interest rate on commercial lira loans. At the same time, the central bank is taking steps to control the amount of foreign debt companies can borrow from local banks.

"The costs are more favourable," said Alper Akmaner, who owns an Istanbul-based cosmetics company. "But it's getting more and more difficult to access these loans." The growing debt pile has been on the central bank's radar this year.

Policy makers slashed the pace at which banks are allowed to increase their total foreign-currency lending each month — first from 1.5% to 1% in January, then to 0.5% in March.

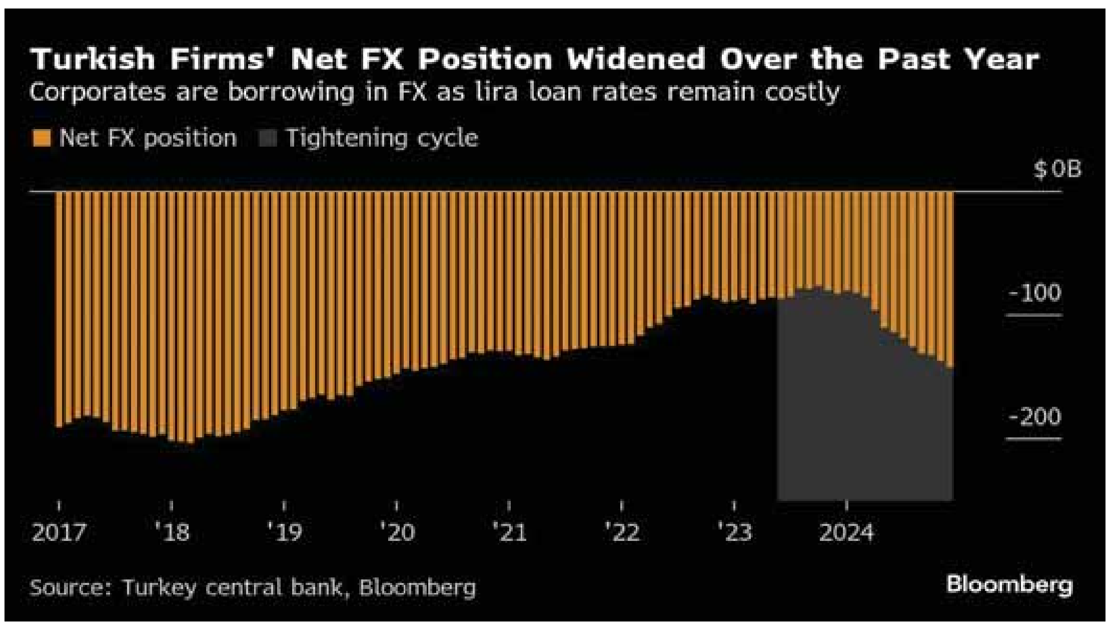
Akmaner says Turkiye's past currency crises taught him to keep the maturities of his foreign borrowing as short as possible. These days he mostly takes loans of five to six months.

Back in 2018, foreign-currency loans were equivalent to 65% of the nation's gross domestic product, according to World Bank data. The lira tumbled around 30% that year.

The central bank's low-interest rate policy fuelled lira selloffs in the past.

Since his reelection in 2023, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has allowed more orthodoxy in monetary policy, and the key rate rose as high as 50% last year. The appreciation of the lira in inflation-adjusted terms can be attributed to those high rates, officials say, and the currency's gains have prompted inflows from abroad.

At its meeting on March 6, the central bank lowered its policy rate by 250 basis points to 42.5%. Annual inflation is currently running at 39%.



Fitch warns on rule that could turn sukuk similar to equity

Bloomberg
Dubai

A proposed change to the regime governing global sukuk risks transforming the asset class into an equity-like instrument that can't be assessed by credit-rating companies, according to Bashar al-Natoor, head of Islamic finance at Fitch Ratings.

The so-called AAOIFI Standard 62, aimed at strengthening compliance with Shariah, or Islamic religious laws, would require sukuk issuers to transfer ownership of the underlying assets to the investors. But sukuk-issuing nations can potentially adopt less disruptive ways to implement the rule that would leave the securities ratable, al-Natoor said in an interview.

The Bahrain-based Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions, whose Shariah directives are followed by 18 sovereign and other issuers including the United Arab Emirates, plans to implement the rule this year, after consultations with stakeholders.

Currently, most sukuk is structured to give lenders access to revenue streams from an underlying asset, without requiring direct ownership of that asset. They are issued and traded like bonds.

The proposed rule could be interpreted in ways that would avoid alienating issuers and investors, al-Natoor said. But a purist approach that gives equity characteristics to sukuk would be disruptive to the market and could spell the end of the asset class as a financing tool for governments and companies, he said.

Governments may balk at turning over state assets to investors for money that could be raised via a traditional bond. Companies may be unwilling to shrink their balance sheets and give up revenue-generating assets. And given that sukuk buyers are typically looking for fixed-income cash flows, there may not be investor appetite for taking on business-related risk. "The likelihood of this being transformed to an equity defeats the purpose," said al-Natoor. "We are a credit-rating agency — we do rate debt, we don't rate equity." An additional disincentive for sukuk issuers would be that removing assets from a balance sheet could affect their issuer default rating. However, AAOIFI's standards typically offer plenty of room for interpretation and national regulators adopting them can implement them in their own ways, al-Natoor said.

"If it comes with innovations that allow the market to continue to operate as a senior unsecured instrument, it is the least disruptive," he said. "It is something that you have an investor base for, an issuer base for, and a regulatory environment for already."

There are asset-backed sukuks, but they mostly offer collateral to investors rather than direct ownership. Al-Natoor said the low uptake for secured sukuk shows there is little demand from investors for ownership, or desire from issuers to give up their assets. The regulatory environment necessary for resolving disputes over asset-backed deals doesn't exist across most of the sukuk world.

"Do we have an investor who has the comfort to go after the assets and enforce their rights in a credit environment and a legal system in these countries, to allow that investor to have the comfort of actually getting their money?" al-Natoor said. "That's untested."

Secured sukuk could be an option to ensure better compliance with Shariah, provided the legal framework for the enforcement of claims is put in place. Fitch has devised a mechanism by which issuers embracing secured paper will be able to get a credit-rating upgrade of up to two levels, depending on the jurisdiction, for the specific issue, al-Natoor said.

Bloomberg's benchmark index the global dollar sukuk market has given investors a return of 1.8% this year, as it extends its rally to a third month.

Egypt inflation rate nearly halves in February

Egypt's annual consumer inflation rate dropped to 12.5% in February, official figures released on Monday showed, as the Arab world's most populous nation emerges from its worst-ever economic crisis.

While inflation has been gradually easing for months in Egypt, experts say the sharp drop from 23.2% in January, according to the state statistics agency, is largely due to a base effect.

"Inflation looks lower because we are comparing it to last year's extreme price jumps," when inflation hit 36%, economist and capital market specialist Wael el-Nahas told AFP.

The government's Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics said that monthly consumer inflation rate inched down to 1.4% in February, slightly lower than 1.6 in January.

Early last year, a crippling shortage of foreign currency created a parallel market crisis in the import-dependent Egyptian economy, with prices for consumer goods rising by the day in major cities.

After its latest currency devaluation in March 2024, Cairo seemed to begin emerging from the crisis with a bailout of over $50bn in loans and investment deals from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the United Arab Emirates.

Since February 2022, the Egyptian pound has lost over 60% of its value, while inflation peaked at nearly 40% in August 2023.

Authorities have issued a slate of reforms, in compliance with an IMF deal that was expanded from $3bn to $8bn, including three fuel price hikes last year.

Media City CEO underscores importance of Qatar Economic Forum

QNA
Doha

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Media City – Qatar (MC-Q), Engineer Jassim Mohammed al-Khouri underscored the significant role of the "Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg" in shaping global and Middle Eastern economies, which are experiencing unprecedented dynamism. He emphasised that the forum has evolved into a crucial platform for fostering economic dialogue and innovation by convening global leaders, strategic visionaries, and industry pioneers in Doha to help shape the future.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Khouri highlighted that the forum is not only a hub for exchanging ideas but also a vital contributor to Qatar's economy. The latest edition of the forum had an estimated impact of approximately QR75mn on the country's GDP and generated hundreds of job opportunities across various sectors, reflecting its far-reaching economic influence.

He noted that the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg transcends its role as an annual event, serving as a key enabler of Qatar National Vision 2030 and establishing itself as one of the most prominent platforms for economic and cultural diplomacy. The forum attracts influential global figures and decision-makers to facilitate idea exchange, drive industry integration, and propel innovation.

At its core, the forum addresses pivotal issues shaping the future, including geopolitics, trade, energy transition, technological innovation, sports and entertainment, and investment in emerging markets, al-Khouri added.

He elaborated that the 2024 edition alone convened over 1,500 global leaders, CEOs, and government officials from 124 countries, with approximately 70% of attendees holding executive-level positions. This high-calibre participation enabled the forum to enhance discussions across 15 different sectors, extending beyond traditional focal areas such as energy, finance, and technology.

Reflecting on past editions, he noted that the 2022 forum featured over 120 distinguished speakers, while the 2023 edition welcomed nine heads of state alongside prominent business figures, further solidifying the forum's impact on shaping global economic discourse. Al-Khouri added that the previous edition facilitated more than 300 bilateral meetings, doubling the number from the previous year, and hosted over 1,000 attendees in panel discussions. Discussions on growth in the GCC and emerging markets


Engineer Jassim Mohammed al-Khouri, chief executive officer of Media City Qatar.

significantly enhanced engagement. Additionally, the forum generated a QR67.6mn marketing impact and boosted Qatar's global perception by 18%.

He underscored that beyond fostering business connections, the Qatar Economic Forum plays a pivotal role in promoting knowledge exchange and international collaboration.

The forum facilitated the signing of 20 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), forging strong partnerships between local and international stakeholders.

In conclusion, al-Khouri stated that the forum has become a premier gathering that underscores Qatar's commitment to global economic leadership and its growing influence across diverse sectors, including technology, sports, and governance.

The fifth edition of the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg, is scheduled to take place in Doha from May 20 to 22, 2025. The event aims to convene global financial and economic thought leaders, policymakers, and business executives to outline a roadmap for the next phase of global economic growth under the theme: Discussions will centre on major shifts in global financial flows and the role of Gulf nations as financial powerhouses, aligning with the impending realisation of national visions for 2030 in Qatar and other countries.

For her part, Chief Executive Officer of Bloomberg Media, Karen Saltser emphasised that the 2025 edition marks a significant milestone in the forum's journey toward becoming a premier global platform for economic dialogue. She noted that it will showcase new avenues of collaboration among business leaders, policymakers, and innovators.

Saltser highlighted, to QNA, that this year's forum will explore transformations in global financial flows, particularly as the Gulf region emerges as a central hub for financial power and foreign direct investment. She attributed this shift to reforms enhancing the business environment and the growing influence of Gulf sovereign wealth funds as key global financiers.

She explained that the forum will focus on five core pillars that address pressing global and regional economic challenges: geopolitics, globalisation and trade, energy security, technological advancements, and business and investment outlooks, alongside sports and entertainment. These discussions aim to ensure that the forum remains aligned with the most pressing economic issues worldwide.

Saltser further noted that hosting the forum at this strategic juncture, five years before the realisation of Qatar National Vision 2030, positions it as an ideal platform to explore future economic drivers, particularly in trade, investment, and technology. The forum's agenda is designed to provide practical insights into global economic challenges and opportunities while fostering local and international partnerships to develop impactful and sustainable solutions.

Saltser underscored that over the past five years, the Qatar Economic Forum has solidified its standing as a pivotal platform for economic engagement in Qatar.

Economic entity launched to boost Qatar-Sudan private sector investments

Qatar Chamber and a high-level trade delegation from Sudan recently announced the launch of a new African economic entity (AWJ Investment and Development) aimed at strengthening economic integration between Africa and GCC countries.

It aims to boost investments between both sides in key sectors such as technology, food security, industry, logistics, minerals, and services trade. The entity will be headquartered in Qatar, with offices in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkiye. It will also establish a digital financial platform to promote investments and international trade.

The announcement was made during a meeting hosted by Qatar Chamber with the Sudanese delegation led by Dr Mohammed Bashar Adam, undersecretary of the Sudanese Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning.

The delegation was received by Qatar Chamber board member Mohamed bin Ahmed al-Obaidli, in the presence of board members Ali bin Abdullatif al-Misnad and Dr Mohamed Jawhar al-Mohamed.

Also attending the meeting were Sudanese ambassador Ahmed Abdel Rahman Swar el-Dahab, along with several government officials and representatives from Sudanese companies.

The meeting focused on strengthening co-operation between the two countries in trade and economic sectors, and the role of the private sector in fostering economic, trade and investment relations. During the meeting, a group of major companies signed an agreement to establish a Qatari Sudanese holding company in Qatari free zones.

Adam emphasised the importance of leveraging available resources on both sides to strengthen co-operation, noting that the Investment Promotion Law was recently amended to benefit foreign investors. Further, he underscored the vital role of economic partnerships in driving infrastructure development in Sudan.

Commenting on the entity, Adam expressed his anticipation of achieving positive results that would benefit investors in both countries. He noted that the agreement signed outlines a roadmap


The new African economic entity, AWJ Investment and Development, aims to boost investments between Qatar and Sudan in key sectors such as technology, food security, industry, logistics, minerals, and services trade.

for businesspeople in both countries, as well as others, to establish an entity that enables them to leverage the resources of both nations – whether financial or natural resources in Sudan – benefiting the economies of both countries.

Al-Obaidli emphasised the chamber's commitment to strengthening co-operation between the Qatari and Sudanese private sectors, fostering mutual investments, and enhancing the private sector's role in boosting trade exchange.

He said Qatar Chamber is keen to enhance co-operation between the business sectors on both sides and encourage Qatari business owners to invest in Sudan, which has an abundance of natural resources and minerals.

Commenting on the new economic entity, al-Obaidli said it is an integrated project aimed at fostering mutual private sector investments between Qatar and Sudan, with opportunities for public sector partnerships.

Al-Obaidli emphasised that establishing a digital bank will simplify the process for investors entering the African continent. He further pointed out that it will focus on developing the industrial, technology, food security, and mining sectors, all of which will operate under a clearing system.

The entity aims to facilitate the flow of foreign direct investments through a digital financial platform compatible with the financial systems of Sudan and Qatar, which enhances transparency and efficiency in trade and investment transactions.

It specialises in supporting SMEs in Africa through innovative financing solutions, guarantees, and technical and financial support to encourage innovation and sustainable growth in vital sectors and will rely on the supply of gold, which enhances financial confidence and provides a stable mechanism for securing investments.

Qatar Chamber appoints Hamad al-Marri as director of Committees and Business Councils Department

Qatar Chamber acting general manager Ali Bu Sherbak al-Mansouri issued an administrative decision yesterday appointing Hamad Ali Muaiql al-Marri as the director of the Committees and Business Councils Department.

Before this new role, al-Marri served as the assistant director of the Legal Affairs Department. He holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Law.


Hamad Ali Muaiql al-Marri

QSE index loses 47 points; M-cap melts QR3.95bn

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Continued apprehensions on US economic downturn over tariff woes and the regional concerns had their dampening effects on the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE), which yesterday closed 47 points lower.

An across the board selling led the 20-stock Qatar Index knock off 0.45% to 10,484.47 points, although it touched an intraday high of 10,531 points.

The domestic institutions' substantially weakened net buying had its influence in the main market, whose year-to-date losses widened to 0.82%.

The real estate, transport and insurance counters witnessed higher than average selling pressure in the main bourse, whose capitalisation melted QR3.95bn or 0.64% to QR613.02bn on the back of small and microcap segments.

The Gulf institutions continued to be bearish but with lesser intensity in the main market, which saw as many as 0.01mn exchange traded funds (sponsored by Masraf Al Rayan and Doha Bank) valued at QR0.04mn change hands across five deals. The local retail investors also continued to be net sellers but with lesser vigour in the main bourse, whose trade turnover and volumes were on the increase.

The Islamic index was seen declining faster than the other indices of the main market, which saw no trading of treasury bills. The foreign funds continued to be net profit takers but with lesser vigour in the main bourse, which saw no trading of sovereign bonds.

The Total Return Index shed 0.31%, the All Share Index by 0.42% and the All Islamic Index by 0.6% in the main market.

The realty sector index declined 1.05%, transport (0.88%), insurance (0.75%), telecom (0.53%), industrials (0.41%), banks and financial services (0.32%) and consumer goods and services (0.06%).

As much as 67% of the traded constituents in the main bourse were in the red with major losers being Barwa, Vodafone Qatar, Ezdan, Meeza, Aamal Company, QNB, Qatar German Medical Devices, Baladna, Gulf International Services, Qamco, Ezdan, Mazaya Qatar and Milaha. In the venture market, Techno Q saw its shares depreciate in value.

Nevertheless, Mekdam Holding, Al Meera, Woqod, Dukhan Bank and Qatar Islamic Bank were among the gainers in the main market.

The domestic institutions' net buying decreased substantially to QR18.58mn compared to QR56.89mn on March 10.

However, the foreign retail investors' net buying increased noticeably to QR3.73mn against QR1.65mn the previous day.

The Arab individuals turned net buyers to the tune of QR1.72mn compared with net sellers of QR3.21mn on Monday.

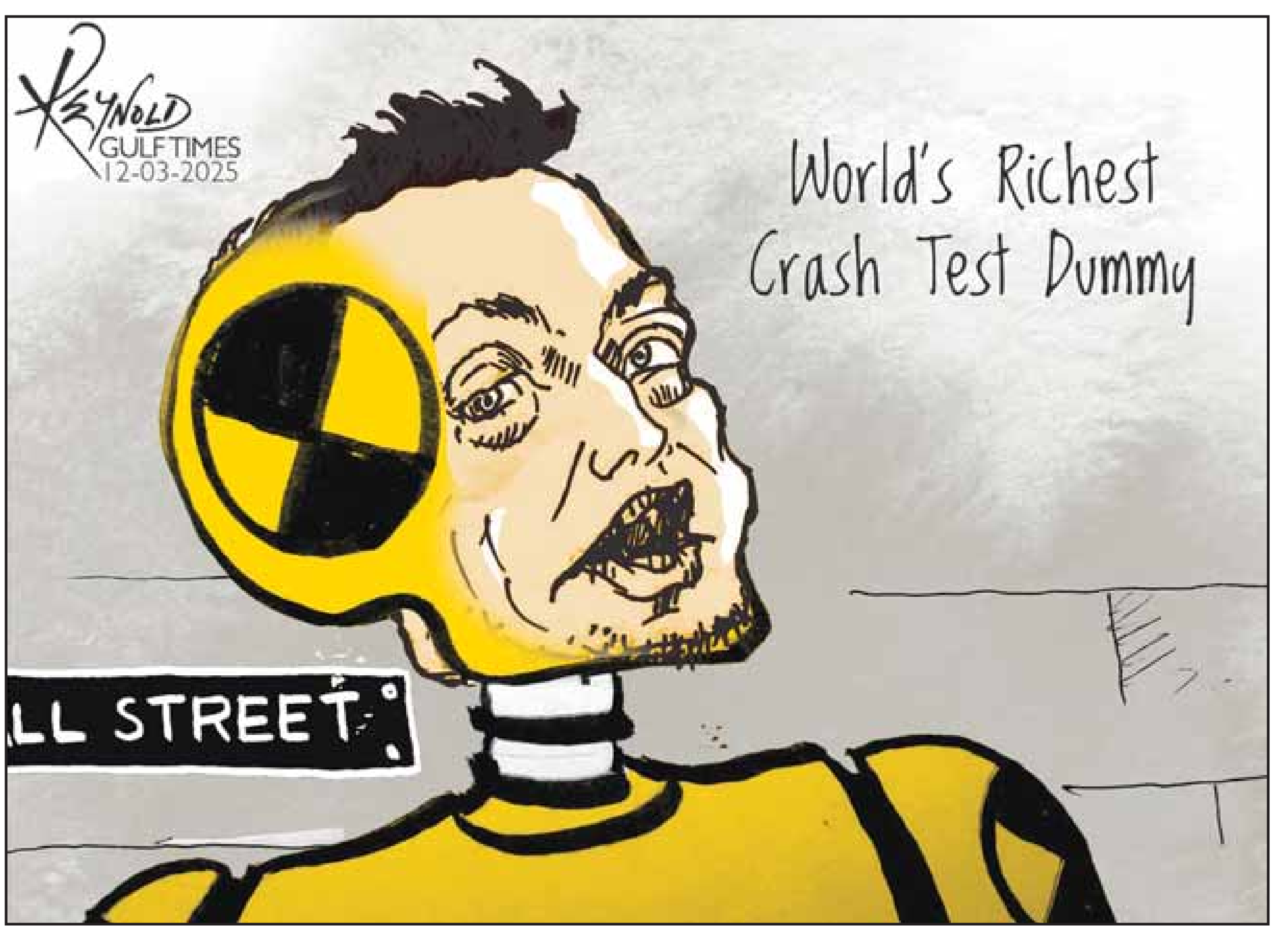
The Gulf retail investors were net buyers to the extent of QR1.51mn against net sellers of QR1.06mn on March 10.

The foreign institutions' net selling weakened substantially to QR6.51mn compared to QR21.39mn the previous day.

The Gulf institutions' net profit booking decreased markedly to QR14.29mn against QR19.3mn on Monday.

The local retail investors' net selling shrank considerably to QR4.75mn compared to QR13.59mn on March 10.

The Arab institutions had no major net exposure. The main market witnessed a 30% jump in trade volumes to 158.79mn shares, 1% in value to QR393.98mn and 5% in deals to 15,965. In the venture market, trade volumes shrank 57% to 0.09mn equities, value by 58% to QR0.26mn and transactions by 33% to 32.



US Treasury official says economy may slow in shift away from public spending

Reuters
Washington

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that the US economy may slow as it transitions away from public spending towards more private spending, calling it a "detox period" needed to reach a more sustainable equilibrium.

"Look, there's going to be a natural adjustment as we move away from public spending to private spending," Bessent said on CNBC. "The market and the economy have just become hooked, and we've become addicted to this government spending, and there's going to be a detox period." Bessent said the transition to a private-sector-driven economy may not have to bring a lot of economic pain, because the Trump administration's deregulation will be aimed at unleashing private-sector growth.

"We are going to have safe and sound regulation to get our banking system going again," Bessent said. "So the banks should be generating loans to private companies. Employment should be from private companies, not from government, and I'm confident, if we have the right policies, it'll be a very smooth transition."

Bessent said he thought that some level of tariffs was going to be needed permanently given the high level of economic imbalances around the world and the need for more secure supply chains.

But due to "crazy" Congressional Budget Office scoring rules, it was unlikely that tariff revenue will be counted as revenue that can offset the cost of extending Trump's 2017 tax cuts for individuals that expire at year-end, Bessent said.

Budget forecasters estimate that extending the cuts would increase US deficits by more than $4tn over 10 years.

President Donald Trump told Fox Business Network in an interview that tariffs could go up over time.