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Turkish stocks eye best January since 1997 as investors pile in

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Qatar’s venture funding surges 81% year-on-year in 2025: QDB-MAGNiTT report

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Doha's venture funding touched a record QR214mn in 2025, an 81% year-on-year jump, reflecting the country's increasing attractiveness as an investment destination, according to a joint report by Qatar Development Bank (QDB) and MAGNiTT.

The growth in funding, which is broadly in line with the expansion observed across the wider Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region, elevated Qatar to the fourth most active Mena market by capital deployed, up one position compared with 2024, signalling improved funding momentum relative to regional peers.

The increase reflects both improved capital availability and growing investor confidence in the market, alongside Qatar's broader efforts to expand its role in the global venture capital landscape, with Invest Qatar and QDB-backed Startup Qatar Programme and the Qatar Investment Authority-backed Fund of Funds as key contributors.

In 2025, Qatar ranked fourth in Mena by deal count and funding, accounting for 5% of total regional deal volume, supported by multiple QDB programmes and ecosystem-building efforts.

The growth in funding, which is broadly in line with the expansion observed across the wider Middle East and North Africa region, elevated Qatar to the fourth most active Mena market by capital deployed, up one position compared with 2024, signalling improved funding momentum relative to regional peers

Deal flow remained heavily skewed toward the early stages, with pre-seed and seed rounds comprising 93% of total transactions, consistent with the country's ongoing ecosystem formation phase, the report said, adding ecosystem growth continued to be supported by government-led initiatives and market development programmes, such as Startup Qatar.

Highlighting that the top five industries accounted for 76% of total deal activity in 2025, with fintech the most active amid continued government support; it said fintech retained its position as the most active industry, with 11 deals, up 22% year-on-year (YoY), and accounting for 33% of total deal activity versus 24% in 2024, supported by the Qatar Central Bank.

At the level of funding, transport and logistics emerged as the most funded sector, raising QR80mn, reflecting a 716% YoY increase, driven by a small number of larger transactions, including Snoonu's series C round. The sector captured 37% of the total funding in the review period.



Abdulrahman Hesham al-Sowaidi, QDB chief executive officer.

As the ecosystem continues to grow, a major M&A (merger and acquisition) transaction was concluded in Qatar in 2025, with Saudi Arabia-based Jahez Group acquiring Qatar's delivery platform Snoonu in July at a valuation of QR1.1bn.

The transaction, backed by QDB and other key institutional and private investors highlights the gradual emergence of acquisition-led exits and underscores the importance of regional buyers in providing liquidity pathways for Qatari startups.

On Qatar funding evolution, the report said Qatar's VC funding rose from QR79mn in 2021 to a record QR214mn in 2025, rebounding strongly after the 2023 trough. Capital deployed expanded at a 28% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the period; even as deals declined 11% YoY in 2025.

"The divergence between funding and deal trends suggests that growth has been driven by larger ticket sizes rather than an expansion in the number of startups funded," the report said, adding as the ecosystem has evolved, Qatar has been able to target and attract VC investments at later stages with bigger tickets, similar to the Snoonu Series C deal.

In 2025, the five largest deals made up 61% of Qatar's total funding, compared to 48% the previous year, showing an increasing focus on larger investment rounds.

For the second year in a row, QDB continued to be the largest contributor to the investor base, participating in 11 of the 33 total deals in 2025.

"In 2025, QDB continued to serve as a key catalyst for early-stage venture activity, bringing our cumulative capital invested directly and indirectly to around QR390mn since inception, reflecting our long-term commitment to venture development in the country," said Abdulrahman Hesham al-Sowaidi, QDB chief executive officer.

Qamco posts 25% jump in net profit to QR768mn in 2025; suggests 10% total dividend

Qamco, a 50% joint venture partner in Qatar Aluminium Company, has reported 25% year-on-year increase in net profit to QR768mn, translating as earnings-per-share of QR0.138 in 2025. Factoring the prevailing short-and medium-term macroeconomic outlook, as well as the liquidity requirements for ongoing and future capital projects, alongside short-and long-term debt obligations, the board proposed dividend of QR318mn (QR0.057 per share) in the second half, bringing the total 10% to QR558mn (QR0.10) for the full year, subject to approval in the annual general assembly meeting. "Qamco's JV delivered a strong and well-executed performance in 2025, surpassing last year's results and highlighting the resilience of the business. Throughout the year, we continued to focus on operational excellence, cost optimisation, operational flexibility, safety, and sustainability," said Abdulrahman

Ahmad al-Shaibi, Qamco chairman. Qamco's share of revenue from the joint venture was up 8% to QR3.51bn in 2025, supported by improved selling prices (+8%) and a modest increase in sales volumes. "This stronger revenue performance contributed to a year-on-year rise in net profit, further aided by lower finance costs during the year," Qamco said, adding its share of Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) also improved, with margins improving, reflecting the strength and consistency of the JV's operational performance supported by conducive market and pricing environment. Operationally, the joint venture maintained stable production levels (+1%), supported by efficiency improvements and enhanced amperage performance across the smelting lines. The production mix remained well aligned with market demand, ensuring an optimal balance among foundry alloys, ex-

trusion ingots, and standard ingots throughout the year. Qamco maintained a robust financial position, supported by substantial cash and bank balances of QR1.94bn, including its proportionate share from the JV (QR1.24bn). "These balances were higher compared to prior year and continue to remain robust, reflecting prudent financial stewardship across both Qamco and the joint venture," it said. In 2025, the JV generated strong operating cash flows, with Qamco's share amounting to QR1.01bn, while share of free cash flows reached QR860mn, demonstrating the JV's solid cash generation capacity. Qamco's JV incurred capital expenditure of QR154mn, mainly directed toward major overhauls, operational improvements, enhancing asset reliability, ESG (environment, social and governance)-related investments, and other routine capital projects.

QFC, ADGM and DIFC enhance cross-border data flow through reciprocal data protection adequacy recognition

The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) has reached reciprocal data protection adequacy recognition with the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) and the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC). This regulatory milestone reinforces the three financial centres' commitment to establishing a robust data protection regime and regional regulatory co-operation. The reciprocal inclusions in their respective data protection adequacy lists follow a comprehensive assessment process, undertaken with the support of specialist legal firms, to

evaluate each jurisdiction's data protection framework, regulatory enforcement, and alignment with international best practices. Inclusion is granted only to jurisdictions that demonstrate best-in-class data protection standards and a consistently high level of protection for personal and sensitive data. "By mutually recognising our data protection frameworks as adequate, the QFC, DIFC and ADGM have made international data transfers simpler across the region. This reduces compliance burden and cost while maintaining strong rights,

accountability and enforcement. It strengthens trust, supports digital trade and reinforces the Gulf as a secure, innovation-driven platform for growth and investment," said Daniel Patterson, the QFC's Data Protection Commissioner. The initiative advances regional harmonisation, and underscores how co-operation between leading financial centres can translate into practical outcomes for the market. It also reinforces the platforms' shared commitment to supporting the evolving needs of international businesses.

Weekly real estate trading tops QR716mn

The volume of real estate trading in sales contracts at the Department of Real Estate Registration at the Ministry of Justice during the period from January 18-22 reached QR641,952,066, reports QNA. Meanwhile the total sales contracts for residential units in the Real Estate Bulletin for the same period is QR74,899,796, bringing the total trading value for the week to approximately QR716.851mn. The weekly bulletin issued by the Department

shows that the list of real estate properties traded for sale has included vacant lands, residences, residential buildings, commercial building, shops, and residential units. Sales were concentrated in the municipalities of Al Rayyan, Doha, Al Wakrah, Umm Salal, Al Daayen, Al Khor, Al Dhakhira, Al Shamal, Al-Shahaniya, as well as in the areas of The Pearl, Al Wukair, Ghar Thuailib, Al Khuraij, Lusail, and Al Gharrafa.

Kuwait readies \$7bn pipeline deal as Gulf turns to foreign capital

- Kuwait 'planning \$7bn pipeline stake sale' in February
- KPC has added HSBC to list of advisers on deal
- Saudi Aramco 'plans \$4bn power plant sale' within weeks
- Up to \$15bn in infrastructure deals ahead: Standard Chartered
- Regional pipeline deals seen to offer annual returns of 12%-14%

Reuters
Dubai

Gulf governments are stepping up infrastructure deals with foreign investors, with Kuwait set to launch an oil pipeline network stake sale as soon as February in a deal that could raise up to \$7bn, three sources with knowledge of the matter said. The shift comes as oil prices, down more than

25% in two years, sit below levels needed to fund the Gulf's diversification plans. Governments are now offering investors access to assets once off limits — from pipelines to power plants — to bring in pension funds, private equity firms and infrastructure specialists. "The national transformation plans underway in the Gulf are bold and ambitious. It can't be all funded from within," said Bader Mousa al-Saif, assistant professor of history at Kuwait University and associate fellow at UK policy institute Chatham House. "Luring international markets in has been multi-directional and multi-sourced — coming from all parts of the Gulf and using all levers at hand to finance their way through." For the Kuwait deal, Kuwait Petroleum Corp has hired HSBC alongside JPMorgan and Centerview Partners as advisers, the sources said. HSBC is also arranging so-called "staple financing" which the buyers can use to back their purchase, four sources said, while advisers

have begun sounding out investors, three sources said. Saudi Aramco is also preparing to sell some gas-fired power plants in the coming weeks in a deal expected to raise around \$4bn, according to two sources. Centerview Partners, JPMorgan and Aramco declined to comment. KPC and HSBC did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The region could see several more billion dollars worth of infrastructure deals over the next 12 months, said Rajesh Singhi, Standard Chartered's global co-head of M&A advisory. "We could be looking at a fresh wave of transactions — as additional assets are prepared for market," said Singhi. The bank advised on Abu Dhabi's 3.8bn dirhams (\$1.03bn) sale of PAL Cooling Holding last year and is preparing more district cooling assets for sale, Singhi said. The entry of specialised investors has brought more sophisticated deal structures and new

capital sources like pension funds and insurance companies not traditionally seen in the region, Singhi said. Quebec's Caisse de depot, Canada's second-largest pension fund with \$290bn in assets, is seeking new Gulf infrastructure investments beyond its Dubai ports operator DP World stake, said its infrastructure head Rana Karadsheh-Haddad. "Our current focus is on identifying the right partners who share our long-term outlook and asset-management approach," Karadsheh-Haddad told Reuters. Investors are increasingly setting up shop locally. Australia's Macquarie Group is scouting for a Saudi base, while US BlackRock opened a Kuwaiti office last year. BlackRock's Global Infrastructure Partners led an \$11bn deal last year for Aramco's midstream assets tied to its Jafurah gas project, potentially the largest shale development outside the US. Besides the gas-fired plants sale, Aramco could divest other assets such as housing, pipelines

and port infrastructure, sources have said. For Gulf state firms, the stake sales allow them to free up capital for expansion and higher-growth projects while retaining operational control. State oil companies are pursuing these deals despite having access to cheaper debt, partly to diversify funding sources and draw in long-term institutional investors, sources and analysts have said. A typical Gulf pipeline transaction gives investors a minority stake in a ring-fenced entity with long-term lease payments. Such deals have delivered returns of about 12% to 14% and offer exposure to investment-grade issuers and stable dollar-linked cashflows, two sources said. Kuwait's deal is expected to follow the model used across the region, three sources said, with the government retaining majority ownership and day-to-day control. The deals are typically structured as US Treasury yield plus the issuer's credit spread plus a premium for the transaction, the sources said.

Turkish stocks eye best January since 1997 as investors pile in

Bloomberg
Istanbul

Turkish stocks are poised for their best January in 29 years as the wave of optimism around emerging markets and cheap valuations lure foreign investors back into the market. The Borsa Istanbul 100 Index has climbed 19% so far in January in dollar terms, its best performance since 1997. Even after the rally, the shares trade at a steep valuation discount to other emerging-market stocks on a price-to-estimated earnings basis.

Last year, Turkish assets were kept on the sidelines of a long-awaited rebound in emerging markets. The country's stock market is now closing the gap, buoyed by a weaker dollar and a push by investors to diversify away from US assets.

"Amid strong appetite for emerging markets, Turkish stocks are playing catch-up," said Baturhan Ozsahin, chief executive officer at Ata Portfoy Yonetimi. "The dollar debasement trade is still continuing, and with force."

The country's shares attracted \$1.36bn of inflows from foreign investors since the start of December through January 16, according to the central bank data. The BlackRock Frontiers Investment Trust Plc counts Turkish stocks among its biggest holdings, moving to almost 10% from near-zero exposure a year ago.

One of the biggest contributor's to the index's advance was state-run defence contractor Aselsan Elektronik Sanayi Ve Ticaret AS, which rose 34%. Other top gainers included Kiler Holding AS and oil refiner Tupras which climbed 67% and 32%, respectively.

Burak Demircioglu, a director at Istanbul-based Yatirim Finansman, expects the rally to broaden in the months ahead.

"There are still many laggards that could extend the gains on the gauge," he said.

Lower interest rates are another factor that supports the demand for Turkish shares. The country's central bank cut its policy rate for the fifth straight month last week.

"We're in an easing cycle overall, and nearing critical levels for interest rates, where further rate cuts could at least start denting the appeal of alternative investments," Demircioglu said.

In the days ahead, traders will be keeping a close eye on company earnings reports for clues on whether the rally can extend.

"Fourth-quarter earnings and 2026 outlooks will play an important role in setting the tone," said Tunc Yildirim, managing director of Unlu Securities.



The Borsa Istanbul 100 Index has climbed 19% so far in January in dollar terms, its best performance since 1997. Even after the rally, the shares trade at a steep valuation discount to other emerging-market stocks on a price-to-estimated earnings basis

BlackRock fund wades into Turkish stocks on turnaround signs

Turkish stocks are among the biggest holdings in a top-performing BlackRock Inc fund that had near-zero exposure a year ago, but now sees the market on the cusp of a possible turnaround, reports Bloomberg. Slowing inflation and steady interest-rate cuts are setting the stage for better equity performance in Turkiye after years of poor returns, according to Samuel Vecht and Emily Fletcher, co-managers of BlackRock's Frontiers Investment Trust Plc, which has outperformed 98% of its peers over the past five years. Turkiye now makes up almost 10% of the fund's holdings, whereas a year ago it held little domestically listed stock and Canadian miner Eldorado Gold Corp was its main Turkiye-exposed investment. The Turkiye allocation is the third-biggest, after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

"We feel there is opportunity, and hence you can see in our portfolio, we have a large allocation there," Fletcher said in an interview. The size of the allocation "is not something we're totally in love with, but while the dynamics look good, we'll continue with that exposure." Foreign investors have steered clear of Turkish stocks for years, wary of relentless lira weakening and high interest rates that crimped consumer spending. But this month, the Borsa Istanbul 100 Index has outperformed most emerging-market peers, rallying 15.2% in dollar terms, as inflation and growth readings indicate the economy is getting back on track after years of unpredictable policymaking and volatile politics. Last week, Fitch Ratings raised the country's credit outlook to positive, citing increased foreign exchange reserves and tight monetary policy. The fund's Turkish holdings include

Akbank TAS, which has surged 43% since mid-October, and hospitals chain MLP Saglik Hizmetleri AS, up 38% in the same period. "The quality of the companies that one can buy find in Turkiye is often fairly high," Vecht said. "The good management has been tested in many of these companies through very difficult economic, and occasionally, political challenges in the country over various years." Valuations are another plus, according to Vecht, who noted Turkish banks look "very attractive on a global basis" in terms of price-earnings ratios. Fletcher said the biggest question for investors looking at Turkish markets is whether the disinflation process will continue. The central bank targets inflation at 16% by end-2026, after missing its end-2025 target of 24%, and lowered rates less than expected at its most recent meeting.

Abu Dhabi's Lunate appoints UAE investment minister as executive chairman and managing partner to spearhead global growth strategy

Reuters
Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi-headquartered Lunate said it had appointed Mohammed Hassan Alsuwaidi, the investment minister of the United Arab Emirates, as executive chairman and managing partner, to lead the investment firm's global growth strategy. Lunate, which manages \$115bn in assets and bills itself as an independent, commercial, partner-led alternative investment company, said Alsuwaidi will help expand the firm's international presence and deepen institutional capital relationships, according to a statement. It wants to more than double assets under management over the next five years. Alsuwaidi was the founding CEO of ADQ, Abu Dhabi's third largest sovereign wealth fund, with total assets of more than \$263bn across sectors like energy, infrastructure, healthcare, and food and agriculture. His tenure at the fund has concluded, the statement said. "His (Mohammed's) ability to build at scale, attract global capital, and drive sustained growth will be critical as Lunate continues to accelerate its development as a global investment firm," Lunate's managing partners Khalifa al-Suwaidi, Murtaza Hussain and Seif Fikry said. Lunate is a subsidiary of Chimera Investment, part of a vast business empire overseen by Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed al-Nahyan, chairman of ADQ, as well as the UAE's National Security Adviser and brother of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed. Its co-managing partners also own stakes. Sheikh Tahnoun also chairs Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, the emirate's largest wealth fund. Abu Dhabi contains the vast majority of the UAE's oil reserves and is home to several sovereign wealth funds that collectively manage more than \$1.5tn in estimated assets. In October, BlackRock-owned HPS Investment Partners and Lunate announced plans to launch a new platform to invest in large North American and European corporates, to which Lunate would commit at least \$1bn.

Bloomberg QuickTake Q&A

Why does the US government keep shutting down?

By Erik Wasson and Gregory Korte

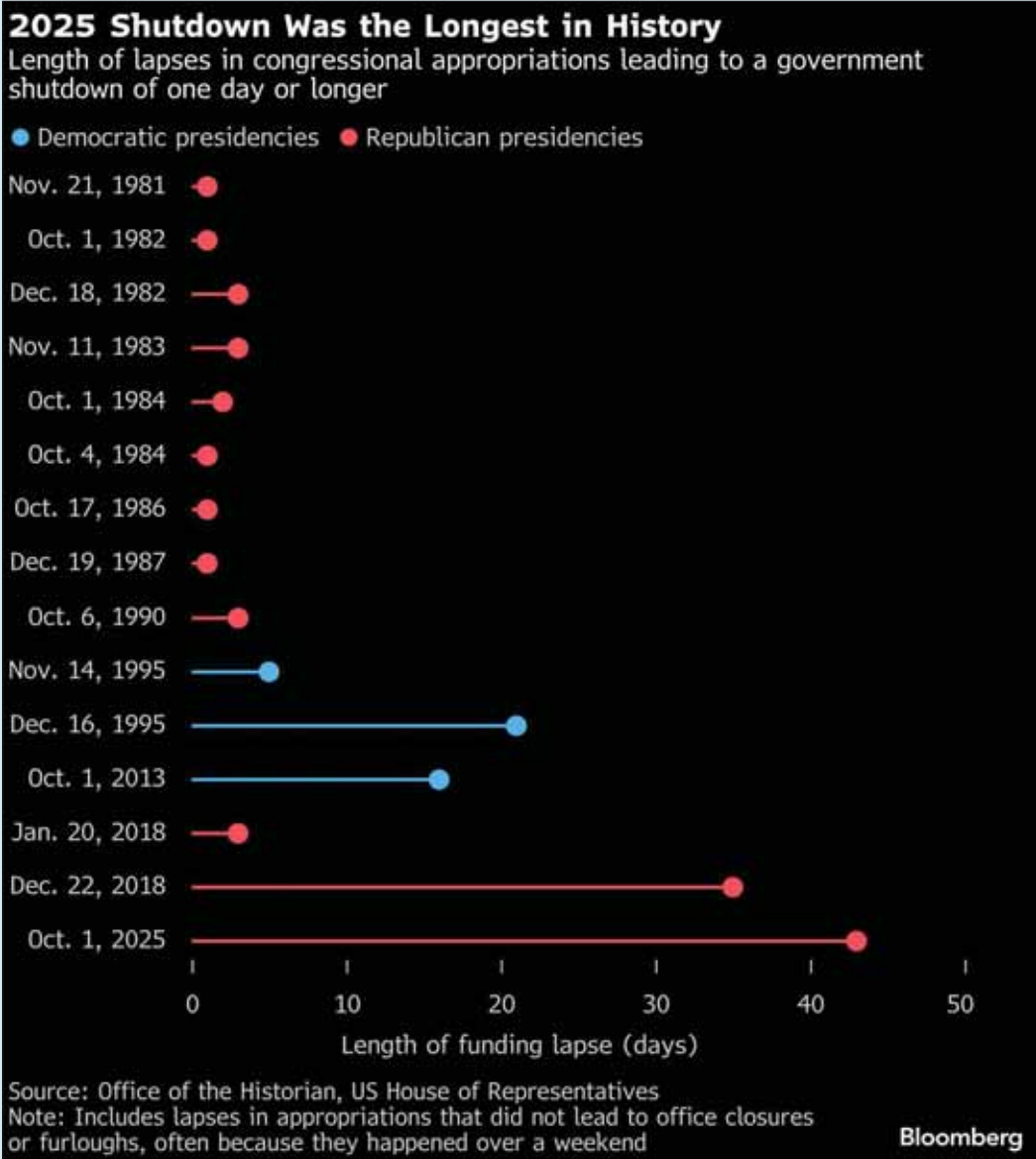
Government shutdowns have become a recurring feature of US politics, the product of partisan standoffs over spending that force federal agencies to halt a wide range of services. The last shutdown — the longest in history — ended in November. A dispute over President Donald Trump's immigration enforcement activities could cause a new, partial shutdown beginning at midnight on Jan. 31. Senate minority Democrats have said they would not vote to advance a six-part funding bill unless the portion that funds the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is stripped out or the bill is amended to include limits on immigration enforcement. Senate Republicans are opposed to breaking up the bill, but because Democrats can block a final vote in the Senate, Republicans need the support of at least seven Democratic senators to move the legislation forward. The standoff is expected to lead to a shutdown of some agencies.

Why does the government shut down?

The US government runs on 12 appropriations bills passed each year by Congress and signed by the president. When all of those bills aren't enacted by the October 1 start of the fiscal year, lawmakers typically rely on temporary funding measures — known as continuing resolutions, or CRs — to keep federal agencies operating while negotiations continue. If they can't agree to a CR, the US government has what's called a funding gap and federal agencies may need to take steps to shut down. Trump has signed six of the bills for fiscal 2025, which means a portion of the government is funded through the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year. The remaining agencies are only funded via a CR through January 30. The funding package passed by the House that's before the Senate would fund them for the rest of the fiscal year. These agencies include the departments of Defense, Homeland Security, State, Treasury, Transportation, Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development. Funding for smaller agencies such as the Small Business Administration and Securities and Exchange Commission as well as the White House itself is also included in the package.

How many times has this happened?

The last shutdown, which began in October 2025, was the third under Trump across his two terms. At the time, Congress had failed to pass any of the 12 annual appropriations bills, leaving most of the government without full-year funding when temporary financing expired. It lasted for a record 43 days, ending only after enough Senate Democrats agreed to allow a vote on a short-term funding measure that temporarily reopened the government through January 30. The 2025 shutdown was the 15th funding gap since the modern budget era began in 1981. Before 1981, operations did not automatically cease when Congress failed to act by a funding deadline, and their expenses were covered retroactively once a deal was reached. The second longest shutdown in US history — over Trump's insistence on adding \$5.7bn to the budget for a



wall on the border with Mexico — spanned 35 days in late 2018 and early 2019.

What does a shutdown mean?

It means many, though not all, federal government functions are suspended, and many, though not all, federal employees are furloughed. Services that the government deems "essential," such as those related to law enforcement and public safety, continue. These essential employees typically work without pay until the shutdown ends. In 2019, Congress passed a law guaranteeing that federal workers who are furloughed will receive back pay once the government is funded again. During a partial shutdown, agencies funded by appropriations bills that have already passed are unaffected.

During the last shutdown, the White House budget office moved to lay off thousands of federal workers, but those efforts were blocked by a court order and later suspended by a provision in the stopgap spending law that runs through Jan. 30. That protection would lapse if funding runs out again.

Which workers are 'essential'?

Individual government departments — and the political appointees who run them — have a say over who comes to work and who stays home. In theory at least, a federal employee who works during a shutdown, but isn't supposed to, could face fines or a prison term under what's called the Anti-deficiency Act. Military operations, air traffic control, medical care of

veterans and federal criminal investigations are among the essential activities that go on.

What government services cease in a shutdown?

The 2025 shutdown affected the entire federal government, making its impact broader than the looming partial shutdown. For instance, if the shutdown commences, unlike last time, economic data collection by the Commerce Department will not be interrupted and the Food and Drug Administration will be able to continue accepting new drug applications. However, if Congress fails to reach a deal by midnight on January 30, non-essential staff at the Pentagon will be furloughed and the State Department will likely curtail routine passport and visa issuance. DHS will shut down, forcing federal disaster workers and Transportation Security Administration officers to do their jobs without pay. The Internal Revenue Service, which is beginning tax season, will go without funding, potentially delaying the processing of tax returns and responses to customer service questions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics will shutter, likely delaying the next unemployment report, which is watched closely by markets. Small Business Administration loan activity will cease. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will likely halt casework. The Internal Revenue Service, which is beginning tax season, would go without funding during a shutdown, potentially delaying the processing of tax returns and responses to customer service questions. The US Postal Service and the Federal Reserve have their own funding streams and are largely unaffected by government shutdowns.

What happens to federal contracts?

Private companies that rely on federal contract work — ranging from defence contractors such as Lockheed Martin to janitorial service providers for local federal buildings — typically face lost revenue. Service contract employees historically have been furloughed during shutdowns and haven't received back pay when the government resumes operations.

What happens to government checks?

Entitlement programmes such as Social Security and Medicare are considered mandatory spending, meaning they don't need annual appropriations to continue distributing money. That doesn't mean such programmes are unaffected. During a 1996 shutdown, even as Social Security checks continued to go out, "staff who handled new enrolments and other services, such as changing addresses or handling requests for new Social Security cards, were initially furloughed," according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. And during the 2018-2019 shutdown, the Department of Agriculture had to rely on a special authority included in the previous continuing resolution to continue issuing food stamps. The Trump administration attempted to pause food stamp payments to states during the shutdown, a step that drew legal challenges from state officials, who argued the administration lacked legal authority to withhold benefits. A US appeals court intervened to keep benefits flowing, but the cases ended with the shutdown, leaving the underlying legal questions unresolved.

CORPORATE RESULTS

Samsung logs best-ever profit on AI chip demand



South Korean tech giant Samsung Electronics posted record quarterly profits Thursday, riding massive market demand for the memory chips that power artificial intelligence. A global frenzy to build AI data centres and develop the fast-evolving technology has sent orders for advanced high-bandwidth memory microchips soaring. That is also pushing up prices for less flashy chips used in consumer electronics – threatening higher prices for phones, laptops and other devices worldwide. In the quarter to December 2025, Samsung said it saw “its highest-ever quarterly consolidated revenue at KRW93.8tn (\$65.5bn)”, a quarter-on-quarter increase of 9%. “Operating profit was also an all-time high, at KRW20.1tn,” the company said. The dazzling earnings came a day after a key competitor, South Korean chip giant SK hynix, said operating profit had doubled last year to a record high, also buoyed by the AI boom. The South Korean government has pledged to become one of the top three AI powers, behind the US and China, with Samsung and SK hynix among the leading producers of high-performance memory. Samsung said Thursday it expects “AI and server demand to continue increasing, leading to more opportunities for structural growth”. Annual revenue stood at 333.6tn won, while operating profit came in at 43.6tn won. Sales for the division that oversees its semiconductor business rose 33% quarter-on-quarter. The company pointed to a \$33.2bn investment in chip production facilities – pledging to continue spending in “transitioning to advanced manufacturing processes and upgrading existing production lines to meet rising demand”. Major electronics manufacturers and industry analysts have warned that chipmakers focusing on AI sales will cause higher retail prices for consumer products across the board. This week US chip firm Micron said it was building a \$24bn plant in Singapore in response to AI-driven demand that has caused a global shortage of memory components. SK hynix announced Wednesday that its operating profit had doubled last year to a record 47.2tn won. The company’s shares have surged some 220% over the past six months, while Samsung Electronics has risen about 130%, part of a huge global tech rally fuelled by optimism over AI. Both companies are on the cusp of producing next-generation high-bandwidth “HBM4” chips for AI data centres, with Samsung reportedly due to start making them in February.

Nokia

Finland’s Nokia said on Thursday that long-time chair Sari Baldauf planned to step down and the telecom gear maker would propose Timo Ihamuotila as her successor, after a push into artificial intelligence helped it meet quarterly earnings expectations. Shares of Nokia fell 6% in early Helsinki trading, among the worst performers on Europe’s benchmark Stoxx 600 index. Baldauf, one

of Nokia’s longest-serving executives, has chaired the board since 2020 after returning to the company in 2018. Her earlier tenure from 1994 to 2005 coincided with Nokia’s rise as a global leader in the mobile phone market. Ihamuotila, who already serves as vice chair, was Nokia’s chief financial officer between 2009 and 2016. He is set to leave Swiss group ABB by the end of 2026. Nokia’s comparable operating profit fell 3% to €1.05bn (\$1.26bn) in the fourth quarter, broadly in line with the average estimate of €1.01bn from analysts polled by LSEG. Nokia is carrying out one of its biggest restructuring drives since it sold its iconic mobile phone business more than a decade ago, banking on AI and data centre demand to offset weak spending and contract losses in the 5G field. Last year, it appointed former Intel executive Justin Hotard as its CEO to speed up the transition. Still, a profit warning tied to US import tariffs and a weaker dollar have hit the margins, mounting pressure for deeper cost cuts. Fourth-quarter net sales reached €6.12bn, also meeting analysts’ forecast.

Lloyds

Lloyds Banking Group said on Thursday that its net profit rose six % last year as higher income offset compensation for consumers caught up in a UK car loans scandal. Profit after tax grew to £4.76bn (\$6.58bn) in 2025 from £4.48bn a year earlier, the company said in a statement. Britain’s financial regulator in October proposed that lenders pay consumers a combined £8.2bn in compensation after some car loans were deemed unlawful. Lloyds has set aside £1.95bn for its own compensation, with the most recent provision of £800mn booked in the third quarter of last year. The lender is the first of Britain’s major retail banks to report annual earnings, with Barclays, HSBC and NatWest to follow. Lloyds “demonstrated sustained strength in financial performance in 2025, including in the final quarter, with continued balance sheet and income growth, as well as strong cost discipline and credit performance”, chief executive Charlie Nunn said in the statement. “The sustained strength in performance means we are well positioned for 2026 and beyond,” he added. The bank said revenue climbed 8% last year to £19.42bn.

Tesla

Tesla reported a 61% drop in fourth-quarter profits on Wednesday due to lower auto sales and increased expenses as CEO Elon Musk ramps up technology investments. The results conclude a turbulent year for the electric vehicle maker that included a controversial Musk stint in Donald Trump’s White House and a shareholder vote in November to award the outspoken CEO a pay package worth as much as \$1tn in anticipation of massive technology breakthroughs at Tesla. Profits came in at \$840mn in the quarter

ending December 31, down from \$2.1bn a year earlier. Revenues were \$24.9bn, down 3.1%. Lower profits had been expected after Tesla reported a drop in fourth-quarter and full-year auto deliveries early in January. A company presentation cited a litany of other factors. These included higher restructuring costs, increased research and development funding for AI pursuits, the drag from higher tariffs and a decline in revenues tied to emission tax credits following Trump’s reversals on US environmental policies. Musk opened a conference call by saying he was committed to “very, very big investments” to realise the mission of working to ensure “the best future,” an “era of abundance” where the “environment is great, nature is great, and people can have whatever they want.” Chief Financial officer Vaibhav Taneja said the 2026 capital spending budget would be “in excess of \$20bn,” more than that double the \$8.5bn last year. Musk said Tesla plans to wind down production of the Models S and X luxury EVs and will convert plant capacity in Fremont, California to build humanoid robots. Tesla’s outlook did not include a projection for its expected 2026 auto sales, saying it would depend partly on “aggregate demand for our products.” In its January 2025 earnings release, Tesla projected a return to growth in vehicle sales. But Tesla’s 2025 auto sales fell nine %, reflecting increased competition from rivals and blowback to Musk’s embrace of Trump and far-right political figures.

Meta

Meta on Wednesday reported quarterly earnings that topped market expectations, as revenue grew along with investments in artificial intelligence. The parent of Facebook and Instagram said it made a profit of \$22.8bn on revenue of nearly \$60bn in the recently ended quarter, adding it could take in as much as \$56.5bn in the current quarter. “We had strong business performance in 2025,” Meta co-founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said in an earnings release. Some 3.58bn people used apps owned by Meta daily in the quarter, which are being enhanced with the help of AI, according to the social networking giant. Meanwhile costs tallied \$35.15bn, an increase of 40% from the same period a year earlier, the earnings reported noted. “Zuckerberg is clearly going all in on AI, and it wouldn’t be surprising to see the share reaction cool as investors absorb those aggressive investment plans,” said Hargreaves Lansdown senior equity analyst Matt Britzman. “Even so, Meta is assembling one of the largest AI compute clusters outside the cloud giants, all aimed at strengthening its family of apps.” Capital expenses, including infrastructure such as data centres to power AI, were \$22.14bn in the quarter, according to the company. Meta expects to spend more than \$100bn this

fiscal year, driven by increased investment in Meta Superintelligence Labs and its core business. “I’m looking forward to advancing personal superintelligence for people around the world in 2026,” Zuckerberg said. Zuckerberg has predicted that AI-infused smart glasses will be the “next major computing platform,” eventually replacing the smartphone. But Reality Labs – Meta’s virtual and augmented reality unit – has consistently posted big losses. Meta is locked in a bitter rivalry with other tech behemoths racing to invest heavily in AI, aiming to ensure the technology benefits society and generates profits in the not-so-distant future.

Microsoft

Microsoft on Wednesday reported a 60% jump in net income for the last quarter of 2025, as spending on artificial intelligence surged. Shares in the cloud and software giant sank about 4% in after-hours trading, with investors keeping a close eye on capital expenditures as the company spends heavily in the AI race against rivals Google, Amazon and Meta. The company posted net income of \$38.5bn on revenue of \$81.3bn for the three months ending December 31. This was up from \$24.1bn in profit on \$69.6bn in revenue a year earlier. Analysts said that the net income figure was boosted by gains from Microsoft’s investment in OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT. With this earnings result, “Microsoft didn’t declare victory on AI-but it made a credible case that the spending has a path to payback,” said Emarketer principal analyst Jeremy Goldman. The company said that capital expenditures, which largely consist of the massive buildout for AI and cloud infrastructure, grew by 66% to \$37.5bn. Microsoft has continued to invest heavily in AI, including its big investments in data centres and its partnership with OpenAI. Microsoft now holds a 27% stake in OpenAI, which has quickly grown to become the world’s most valuable private company with a \$500bn valuation. Azure and other cloud services saw revenue surge 39%, while Microsoft 365 commercial cloud revenue rose 17%, both roughly in line with analyst expectations. The LinkedIn professional network saw revenue grow 11% while revenue from Xbox

ASML

Dutch tech giant ASML, which sells cutting-edge machines to make semiconductor chips, reported a significant gain in annual net profit Wednesday but said it would cut hundreds of management jobs to improve internal organisation. ASML is a critical cog in the global economy, as the semiconductors crafted with its tools power everything from smartphones to missiles. The company, Europe’s biggest tech firm by market value, posted after-tax profit of €9.6bn (\$11.5bn) for last year, up from €7.6bn in 2024. CEO Christophe Fouquet said ASML customers were bullish on the medium-term outlook “primarily based on more robust expectations of the sustainability of AI-related demand”. Fourth-quarter net bookings, the figure traders track most closely, came in at €13.2bn, a

sharp rise from the €5.4bn in orders booked in the previous quarter. Total 2025 net sales were a record €32.7bn. The firm had previously said it did not expect sales to be below the €28.3bn banked last year. “ASML just delivered a thumping set of numbers, with new orders blowing past expectations and pointing to a market gearing up for the next leg of growth,” said Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. The company expects net sales this year to reach €34bn to €39bn, it announced in new forecasts, with first-quarter sales hitting €8.2bn to €8.9bn. “We expect 2026 to be another growth year for ASML’s business,” Fouquet said.

Deutsche Bank

Deutsche Bank said Thursday it aimed to become a “European champion” after reporting record profits in 2025, even as the results were overshadowed by a money-laundering probe reportedly linked to Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich. Germany’s biggest lender reported pre-tax profits of €9.7bn (\$11.6bn) for last year, an 84% jump on 2024, extending a run of good performance in part due to higher long-term interest rates. But the shine was taken off the results by the money-laundering investigation, which saw prosecutors and police raid the bank’s headquarters in Frankfurt and its office in Berlin on Wednesday. Media reports said it was linked to Abramovich, who has been sanctioned by the European Union. The investigation is a blow for a bank that had worked hard in recent years to shed its reputation as a magnet for scandals, and CEO Christian Sewing sounded disappointed. “We had actually hoped that your full attention this week would be focused on our annual results,” he told reporters. “Since yesterday, we know that this is not entirely the case,” he added, while refusing to answer questions when asked about the bank’s past business with Abramovich. Sewing nevertheless struck an upbeat note about Deutsche Bank’s results and future prospects, saying it had hit all its 2025 goals. “This gives us the strongest possible foundation for the next phase of our strategy,” he said, adding that the bank aimed to become “the European champion”. Earnings rose last year across all main divisions, including investment and corporate banking as well as asset management, and revenues were up 7% to €32.1bn. Net profit attributable to shareholders was €6.1bn, more than double that of 2024, when it was weighed down by legal costs related to a troubled takeover. The *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper reported details of the money-laundering probe, which it said involved the bank’s dealings with companies linked to Abramovich. Abramovich, who had ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin and is the former owner of English football club Chelsea, was sanctioned by the EU following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Prosecutors have not confirmed who was being targeted. Sewing said the probe involved allegations that a report related to suspected money-laundering was filed late, and concerned transactions between 2013 and 2018.



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QSE sees 76% of stocks end in red; M-cap erodes QR4.67bn

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Amid rising global fears over potential US military action against Iran, the Qatar Stock Exchange yesterday saw its key index dip 63 points and capitalisation melt about QR5bn.

The real estate, banking and consumer goods counters witnessed higher than average selling pressure as the 20-stock Qatar Index shed 0.55% to 11,310.38 points, although it touched an intraday high of 11,373 points.

The Arab individuals were seen increasingly net profit takers in the main market, whose year-to-date gains truncated to 5.09%.

About 76% of the traded constituents were in the red in the main bourse, whose capitalisation eroded QR4.67bn or 0.69% to QR675.66bn mainly on small cap segments.

The Gulf funds turned net sellers in the main market, whose trade turnover and volumes were on the increase.

The foreign retail investors were seen increasingly bearish in the main market, which saw as many as 0.04mn exchange traded funds (sponsored by Al-Rayan Bank and Doha Bank) valued at QR0.24mn trade across 26 deals.

The foreign funds' weakened net buying had its influence on the main bourse, which saw no trading of sovereign bonds.

The local individuals continued to bet net sellers but with lesser intensity in the main market, which saw no trading of treasury bills.

The Total Return Index shed 0.55%, the All Share Index by 0.63% and the All Islamic Index by 0.42% in the main bourse.

The realty sector index shrank 0.95%, banks and financial services (0.93%), consumer goods and services (0.92%) and industrials (0.33%); while transport, telecom and insurance gained 0.26%, 0.13% and 0.05% respectively.

As many as 11 gained, while 40 declined and two were unchanged.



The real estate, banking and consumer goods counters witnessed higher than average selling pressure as the 20-stock Qatar Index shed 0.55% to 11,310.38 points, although it touched an intraday high of 11,373 points.

Major shakers in the main market included Gulf Warehousing, Estithmar Holding, Leshia Bank, Medicare Group, Nebras Energy, QNB, Qatar Islamic Bank, AlRayan Bank, Baladna, Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding, United Development Company, Ezdan and Mazaya Qatar.

Nevertheless, Mekdam Holding, Qamco, Milaha, Qatar General Insurance and Reinsurance, Gulf International Services, Industries Qatar and Ooredoo were among the movers in the main bourse.

The Arab individual investors' net selling increased perceptibly to QR12.37mn compared to QR9.61mn on January 28.

The Gulf institutions turned net sellers to the tune of QR10.44mn against net buyers of QR19.81mn on Wednesday.

The foreign individuals' net profit booking expanded noticeably to QR2.41mn compared to QR0.34mn the previous day.

The foreign institutions' net buying decreased

substantially to QR50.44mn against QR74.99mn on January 28.

However, the domestic funds were net buyers to the extent of QR1.19mn compared with net sellers of QR24.8mn on Wednesday.

The Gulf retail investors turned net buyers to the tune of QR0.38mn against net profit takers of QR0.92mn the previous day.

The Arab funds were net buyers to the extent of QR0.05mn compared with no major net exposure on January 28.

The Qatari retail investors' net profit booking shrank significantly to QR26.85mn against QR59.12mn on Wednesday.

The main market saw a 42% jump in trade volumes to 201.65mn shares, 49% in value to QR689.65mn and less than 1% in deals to 36,474.

In the venture market, a total of 401 equities valued at QR833 changed hands across two transactions.

US Carlyle Group to buy Lukoil's global assets after sanctions pressure

Reuters
Moscow

US private equity firm Carlyle Group has agreed to buy most of Lukoil's foreign assets, initially valued at \$22bn by analysts, which Russia's second-largest oil company is being forced to sell because of US sanctions.

The planned sale, announced by both companies on Thursday, comes just as Russian, Ukrainian and US negotiators try to reach a deal to end the war in Ukraine, and would mark the end, for now, of Lukoil's attempt to become a global player.

"Carlyle's approach to Lukoil International would be on ensuring operational continuity, preserving jobs, stabilising the asset base and supporting safe, reliable performance across the portfolio by bringing to bear dedicated oversight and international operating capabilities," Carlyle said in a statement.

Lukoil, which also announced the planned sale in a statement, said it was continuing negotiations with other potential buyers.

Neither Lukoil nor Carlyle gave a price for the sale, which still requires approval from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the US agency which administers sanctions. The US Treasury had given Lukoil until February 28 to sell its global portfolio.

A person familiar with the situation said the two groups had not yet agreed on a valuation, which could take some time. Private equity firms in the energy sector typically hold assets for about five years before trying to sell them on at a profit. Lukoil did not reply to a request for further comment on the possible transaction.



The Lukoil logo is seen in West Qurna oilfield in Iraq's southern province of Basra (file). The company's foreign assets include operations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Mexico, and range from a controlling stake in Iraq's sprawling West Qurna 2 oilfield to refineries in Bulgaria and Romania.

OFAC has said that any sale proceeds should be blocked and placed in an account subject to US jurisdiction until sanctions on Lukoil are lifted. It has also said that it would want to review any future onward sale of Lukoil's international assets.

Russia, which accounts for about 10% of global oil production, has faced a myriad of sanctions on its major companies since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. In October, those sanctions were extended to Lukoil and Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft as part of US President Donald Trump's attempt to force Moscow towards negotiating an end to the war.

Negotiations have intensified in recent weeks and Trump envoys have repeat-

edly underscored that Washington could help remove Western sanctions and re-integrate Russia into the global economy, if a deal was reached. The Kremlin declined direct comment on the deal, saying it was a corporate matter, and reiterated that it considers Western sanctions on Russia illegal. "For us, the main priority is that the interests of the Russian company are ensured and upheld," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about the possible sale. Lukoil said in a statement it had agreed with Carlyle to sell its unit Lukoil International GmbH, which oversees the company's foreign assets. These include operations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Mexico, and range from a controlling

stake in Iraq's sprawling West Qurna 2 oilfield to refineries in Bulgaria and Romania.

"The agreement signed is not exclusive for the Company and is subject to some conditions," Lukoil said, noting pending US approvals.

Carlyle also said in a statement that the deal was conditional upon its due diligence and regulatory approvals. Various sources have said that at least a dozen potential suitors had expressed interest in Lukoil assets, including Carlyle, US oil majors Exxon Mobil and Chevron, Abu Dhabi conglomerate IHC, and Saudi Arabia's Midad Energy.

Chevron has also been in talks with Iraq on the acquisition of the West Qurna 2 oilfield, in which Lukoil has a 75% stake. Founded in Washington, DC, Carlyle is a global investment firm with \$474bn in assets, including \$20bn in oil and gas, renewable energy and infrastructure, and decades of experience investing in and operating international energy assets. Lukoil said the deal did not include its assets in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan said on Wednesday it had submitted a formal bid to the US authorities for Lukoil's stakes in the country's energy projects, which include Caspian Pipeline Consortium, the main gateway for Kazakh oil exports, and the country's largest oilfield, Tengiz.

The US Treasury had already excluded the CPC, Tengiz and gas condensate field Karachaganak from the list of Lukoil's assets subject to a mandatory sale. Washington has so far blocked two proposed deals, the first between Lukoil and Swiss trading group Gunvor in October, and then a proposed share swap engineered by Xtellus Partners, the former US arm of Russian bank VTB, in December.

US weekly jobless claims fall amid stable labour market conditions

Reuters
Washington

The number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits fell last week from an upwardly revised level in the prior week, suggesting layoffs remained low, but tepid hiring is stoking households' anxiety about the labour market.

While difficulties adjusting the weekly unemployment claims data for seasonal fluctuations around the year-end holiday season and turn of the year have injected volatility into the numbers, economists said there has been no material change in labour market conditions.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell told reporters on Wednesday that "labour market indicators suggest that conditions may be stabilising after a period of gradual softening."

The US central bank left its benchmark overnight interest rate in the 3.50%-3.75% range.

"There is no evidence that layoffs are picking up. There are firms that are trying to reduce their headcount, but this is being done almost exclusively through attrition rather than outright job cuts," said Stephen Stanley, chief US economist at Santander US Capital Markets. "Layoffs on an underlying basis are roughly steady."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 1,000 to a seasonally adjusted 209,000 for the week ended January 24, the Labor Department said on Thursday. The prior week's level of claims was revised up by 10,000 to 210,000.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 205,000 claims for the latest week. The claims data included last Monday's Martin Luther King Jr holiday. Claims tend to be volatile around public holidays. More volatility is likely in the weeks ahead after a winter storm brought snow and freezing temperatures to a large part of the country over the weekend.

Economists say companies are reluctant to lay off workers while assessing what they have called an ever-shifting economic landscape, mostly related to tariffs on imports.

United Parcel Service and Amazon.com announced job cuts this week, but those layoffs will probably not have a significant impact on claims. High-profile layoffs last year, including from those two companies, did not result in a notable surge in jobless claims.

The number of people receiving unemployment benefits after an initial week of aid, a proxy for hiring, decreased 38,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.827mn during the week ended January 17, the claims report showed.

The so-called continuing claims figures also have been impacted by the seasonal adjustment challenges. Some people probably have exhausted their eligibility for benefits, limited to 26 weeks in most states, which could be pushing continuing claims down. Economists argued continuing claims were also consistent with the low level of layoffs.

Air India orders 30 Boeing MAX jets

Air India said on Thursday it would purchase 30 more Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, as part of an ambitious overhaul of its fleet, reports AFP.

The former national carrier has carried out an aggressive modernisation since Tata Group took over in 2022 — ordering hundreds of new planes and also upgrading its ageing aircraft to revive its global presence.

The latest additions bring the total number of Boeing aircraft orders to 250, the airline said in a statement.

Air India's chief executive Campbell Wilson said the new planes will help "position Air India... as a world-class global carrier".

The announcement comes seven months after an Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed in the western state of Gujarat, killing all 260 people on board.

Air India's international network spans 31 countries across five continents, linking India with major destinations in North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

The order is a shot in the arm for US manufacturer Boeing, which on Tuesday reported its first annual profit since 2018 following gains from an asset sale.

The company said improved quality controls had enabled it to increase aircraft production.

African governments look to Islamic finance after Benin sukuk success

Reuters
Johannesburg

Benin's Islamic bond sale is encouraging other African states to consider Shariah-compliant financing, after robust demand highlighted the potential to diversify funding and attract a broader investor base, advisers and analysts said.

Rothschild's Gatien Bon, who advised the West African country on its international bond sale, described the sukuk issuance as a "turning point" for African sovereign borrowers.

"This creates more diversification in terms of format and therefore in terms of the investor base in Africa," Bon said.

Benin, which offered a seven-year sukuk alongside a reopening of its 2038 dollar bond, saw combined orders of more than \$7bn, far exceeding the proposed issuance size.

"We've seen a lot of countries coming to us asking for strategies ... trying to understand better how these work and who the players are in the market," said Nicole Kears, head of sovereign finance at the African Legal Support Facility.

Sukuk had become a "big area of interest", Kears — whose organisation is hosted by the African Development Bank which advises governments on topics such as capital markets — said during a webcast panel discussion earlier this week.

Bashar al-Natoor, global head of Islamic finance at Fitch Ratings, said African sukuk issuance rose to \$3bn in 2025, from \$112mn the previous year, driven largely by Egypt's \$2.8bn return after a year-long hiatus.

By comparison, international bond sales in Africa exceeded \$13bn with deals from Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.

Sukuk issuance so far in 2026 has exceeded \$580mn, largely through Benin's \$500mn debut, al-Natoor said.

Nigeria, which has issued a local-currency sukuk, is among the countries exploring dollar-denominated Islamic finance solutions, with President Bola Tinubu seeking legislative approval for an inaugural international sukuk last year.

Senegal has also said its exploring both local and international sukuk markets.

Admassu Tadesse, president of Trade and Development Bank, said there will be plenty of advantages for governments getting access to liquidity from Gulf investors.

"There is a lot more (Gulf) appetite to provide funding to emerging markets, in particular Africa," Tadesse said during a panel discussion. But structural barriers remain.

Many low-income countries lack legal and regulatory frameworks to facilitate sukuk issuance, Kears said, adding that ALSF assists governments in addressing these gaps.

