

Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) fleet is set to expand to 200 vessels within the next five years as part of efforts to ensure steady supply to its customers. "We have launched the largest shipbuilding programme in the industry's history, comprising 128 state-of-the-art LNG carriers with outstanding operational and environmental standards. We have already received 38 new vessels and will receive a new one every three weeks. This will give QatarEnergy the largest LNG carrier fleet in the world, reaching about 200 vessels within the next few years," HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, Minister of State for Energy Affairs and president and chief executive officer of QatarEnergy told the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG2026), which will run until February 5. **To Page 8**

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QATAR



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تتقدم اللجنة المنظمة لمعرض ومؤتمر الدوحة الدولي للدفاع البحري (ديمدكس 2026) بخالص الشكر والتقدير إلى جميع المشاركين، الشركاء، الرعاة، الوزارات، المؤسسات والحكومية على مساهماتهم القيّمة في إنجاح النسخة التاسعة من الحدث، حيث أسهم مستوى التعاون والحضور المميز في ترسيخ مكانة ديمدكس كحدث عالمي رائد على أجندة الدفاع والأمن البحري.

The Organising Committee of the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference extends its sincere appreciation to all participants, partners, sponsors, ministries, institutions, and government authorities for their valued contribution to the success of the ninth edition of DIMDEX 2026, with the strong collaboration and high-quality engagement throughout the event reaffirming the event’s position as a leading global platform in the maritime defence and security sector.

نتطلع إلى الترحيب بكم مجدداً في ديمدكس 2028.

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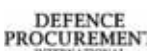
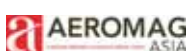


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Official Arab Magazine



الشركاء الإعلاميون

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PM meets Benin FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with visiting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin Olushegun Adjadi Bakari. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to other topics of mutual interest. **(QNA)**

PM meets Saudi ambassador



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Qatar Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Abdulaziz al-Saud at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to several topics of mutual interest. **(QNA)**

PM receives phone call from Algerian PM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Prime Minister of Algeria Sifi Ghrieb. During the call, the two sides discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to strengthen and develop them, in addition to the latest regional developments and issues of mutual concern. They also stressed the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region through dialogue and peaceful means, with the aim of consolidating regional security and stability. **(QNA)**

Qatar expresses solidarity with DRC, offers condolences for victims of mine collapse

The State of Qatar voiced its solidarity with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), following the collapse of a mine in the town of Rubaya, leading to casualties. In a statement on Monday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, and to the government and people of the DRC. **(QNA)**

Qatar, Saudi Arabia discuss enhanced media co-operation

Senior media officials from Qatar and Saudi Arabia have held talks in Riyadh aimed at strengthening co-operation between the countries' media sectors.

HE Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Media Corporation, met Saudi Arabia's Minister of Media, Salman bin Yousef al-Dosari, on the sidelines of the Saudi Media Forum, which opened in the Saudi capital yesterday. The meeting reviewed existing media co-operation between the nations and explored ways to enhance and develop joint work. Discussions also focused on activating provisions of a recently signed memorandum of understanding covering co-operation in radio and television broadcasting, alongside other issues of mutual interest.

Earlier in the day, HE Sheikh Hamad took part in the opening of the fifth edition of the Saudi Media Forum, held under the



theme "Media in an Evolving World", following an invitation from the Saudi media minister.

He praised the forum's programme and the accompanying Future of Media (Fomex) Exhibition, highlighting Saudi Arabia's efforts to expand and enrich the forum's agenda. He said the event had, over the years, established itself as a leading regional and global platform, helping to strengthen partnerships among

media leaders and specialists from the region and beyond.

The three-day forum brings together media professionals, academics and experts from around the world for panel discussions and workshops. It also features the launch of national initiatives, the building of strategic partnerships, support for innovation and the development of modern media technologies. **(QNA)**

QNA takes part in Saudi Media Forum

Qatar News Agency (QNA) is participating in the fifth edition of the Saudi Media Forum 2026, which started in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, yesterday under the theme "Media in a Changing World".

HE Director-General of QNA, Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi, is representing the agency at this forum. The forum highlights the role of media in fostering national awareness, keeping up with artificial intelligence, promoting deep storytelling, as well as exploring prospects of impact in post-digital transformation.

Furthermore, the forum debates a raft of critical topics,



comprising the global challenges facing media and ways to address them, the media's role in energy transformation and sustainable innovation, crisis management and media digital structure,

in addition to the impact of e-sports on the media and entertainment economy, as well as investment opportunities.

The forum broadly addresses media planning amid digital transformations, leveraging artificial intelligence in press and content creation, along with audience experience from receiving to participation, and innovation in storytelling and visual production.

Overall, the forum includes the Future of Media Exhibition (Fomex), bringing together a host of public institutions, as well as local and international firms. **(QNA)**

QFFD provides extra \$21.5mn loan to GCC power project

QNA
Muscat

During the official launch ceremony of the electricity interconnection project in the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) announced the provision of an additional loan of \$21.5mn to the GCC Interconnection Authority to support the implementation of the electricity network works within the Sultanate.

This additional financing builds on QFFD's earlier loan of \$100mn to the project, bringing QFFD's total contribution to \$121.5mn. The announcement reaffirms QFFD's commitment to supporting strategic infrastructure initiatives that enhance regional integration and advance sustainable development objectives across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries.

The ceremony was attended by Director General of QFFD, Fahad bin Hamad al-Sulaiti; Qatar's ambassador in Muscat, Sheikh Mubarak bin Fahad al-Thani; Undersecretary of Oman's Min-

istry of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the GCC Interconnection Authority, Mohsen bin Hamad al-Hadrami; and Chief Executive Officer of the GCC Interconnection Authority, Engineer Ahmed al-Ibrahim.

In his opening remarks during the ceremony, the director-general of QFFD, stated: "This additional financing reflects QFFD's firm commitment to supporting vital energy infrastructure projects, recognising their fundamental role in enhancing regional integration and advancing sustainable development pathways, while contributing to economic and social stability across the region."

Al-Hadrami stated: "The Gulf electricity interconnection has proven over more than two and a half decades to be one of the most successful models of joint Gulf action, as it has contributed to enhancing the reliability of electrical networks and achieving significant economic savings for the GCC countries." He also explained that the direct link project with Sultanate of Oman enhances the depth of the Gulf

network, increases its operational flexibility, and embodies a distinguished model of Gulf partnership in financing vital infrastructure projects, supporting energy transformation and sustainable development in the region. CEO of the GCC Interconnection Authority, al-Ibrahim said: "The project will achieve significant operational and economic benefits, enhance the reliability of the Gulf electricity networks in light of the transition to renewable energy, increase the capacity to exchange electricity between member states, and embody the Authority's ability to transform the strategic vision of the leaders of the GCC countries into executive projects with a tangible impact."

This co-operation reflects the continued role of Qatar in strengthening regional partnerships and supporting infrastructure initiatives that enhance the integration of Gulf energy networks and improve the efficiency, resilience of electricity systems, with positive impacts on economic development and sustainability across the region.

Shura Council discusses farm support, food security measures

The Shura Council convened yesterday as part of its regular session at its headquarters, chaired by HE the Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem.

HE Secretary-General of the Council Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud read out the agenda, with the Council endorsing the minutes of the previous session.

As the session proceeded, the Council weighed in on the animal welfare enforcement improvement bill submitted by the government and decided to refer it to the Health, General Services and the Environment Committee for further perusal and submission of its report to the Council hereon. Thereafter, the Council considered a report of the aforementioned committee outlining its opinion about the Council's non-binding advisory recommendation on the mechanisms of agricultural support afforded to domestic farms and how these mecha-

nisms contribute to bolstering food security. As such, the Council took the appropriate decision accordingly. In addition, the Council approved two requests to extend the works of the Social Affairs, Labour and Housing Committee to further consider the public debate request about parents' instrumental role in child upbringing, alongside the works of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee to consider a bill on Owners' Association.

Apart from its follow-up on its parliamentary activities in regional and global fora abroad, the Council scrutinised a report on its delegation's visit to the Swiss Federal Assembly in Bern, as well as the UN headquarters in Geneva. It also reviewed a report on its participation in the Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue hosted by Rome, Italy, convened in June 2025. **(QNA)**



Saudi minister praises Qatar's success in hosting global events

Assistant Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia, Dr Abdullah al-Dubaikhi, praised the significant success achieved by Qatar in hosting major global events since the successful organisation of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Dr al-Dubaikhi noted that these achievements have enabled Qatari companies to gain extensive expertise in hospitality, tourism, and the organisation of international events, most recently demonstrated by the opening of Web Summit Qatar 2026, which witnessed unprecedented participation from global and startup companies.

His remarks came during a meeting with representatives of the Qatari Businessmen Association, attended by chairman of the Saudi side of the Joint Business Council, Hamad al-Shuwair; deputy ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Doha, Ahmed al-Anazi; as well as participants from government entities and the private sector from both countries.

Dr al-Dubaikhi described the existing bilateral relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia as pioneering across all fields.

He also pointed out that Qatar's real estate development sector has witnessed qualitative growth in recent years, providing companies with substantial expertise. He noted that the investment opportunities currently available in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the housing sector, represent a promising area for co-operation, given

the large-scale projects underway across various regions and governorates of the kingdom.

In this regard, Dr al-Dubaikhi affirmed efforts to benefit from Qatari competencies and expertise in supporting these projects.

Vice-chairman of the Board of the Qatari Businessmen Association, Hussein Ibrahim Alfardan, said that the strong investment climate enjoyed by both Qatar and Saudi Arabia across all sectors opens broad horizons for co-operation and sustainable growth. He explained that the general trend among Qatari companies affiliated with the association is to expand into the Saudi market and invest in tourism, real estate development, industry, jewellery, education, retail, technology, and other open sectors.

Alfardan added that, based on this approach, the association reaffirms its continued commitment to providing full support to businessmen and investors, creating an enabling environment to enhance trade and investment partnerships.

He noted that the association will serve as a point of contact and follow-up between projects proposed by the Saudi ministry and Qatari businessmen seeking to invest or expand their investments in the kingdom.

Meanwhile, board member of the Qatari Businessmen Association, Saud al-Mana, highlighted the significant opportunities to strengthen co-operation between the business sectors in Qatar and

Saudi Arabia, stressing the need to work towards achieving economic integration between the countries.

He underscored the strong bilateral relations linking Qatar and Saudi Arabia, affirming the commitment of both countries to further strengthen ties at all levels, particularly in the economic sphere. The meeting also reviewed opportunities in the fields of communications and information technology, investment, and innovation, and the role of these sectors in supporting both countries' shift toward the digital economy and knowledge economy.

Participants emphasised the importance of integrating the roles of the public, private sectors and enhancing co-ordination among relevant entities to achieve shared objectives and to strengthen the presence of Qatari and Saudi companies at international events with economic and technological impact.

Trade between Qatar and Saudi Arabia recorded a significant increase in 2025, rising to more than \$1.5bn, compared with \$1.34bn in 2024 and less than \$1bn in 2023.

This growth reflects the strength of the expanding economic relations between the two countries and their shared orientation towards enhancing bilateral partnerships in a manner that serves mutual interests and contributes to diversifying income sources in line with national development visions. **(QNA)**

Qatar, UK sign pacts for security co-operation

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met with Secretary of State for the Home Department of the United Kingdom, Shabana Mahmood, as part of His Excellency's official visit to London.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral co-operation in the security fields, in support of efforts to strengthen security and combat crime, and reviewed the existing areas of co-operation between the countries.

The meeting also witnessed the signing of two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Internal Security Force 'Lekhwiya', and the UK Home Office. The agreements were signed on behalf of the Qatari side by HE Sheikh Khalifa bin



Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and on behalf of the British side by Shabana Mahmood.

The two MoUs aim to enhance co-operation in the areas of security, crime prevention and reduction, the maintenance of public or-



der, crisis management, and major events security, through strengthened collaboration between security and policing institutions. This includes the exchange of expertise, information, training, and technical know-how related to main-

taining security, as well as co-operation in combating cybercrime, addressing artificial intelligence-related challenges, and countering organised crime, in a manner that serves the shared interests of both countries.

Qatar welcomes opening of Rafah crossing, backs Palestinian cause

Qatar affirmed that opening the Rafah land border crossing in southern Gaza to Palestinian movement is a step in the right direction towards addressing the tragic situation of civilians, particularly in the humanitarian and health sectors.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the necessity for all parties to fully implement the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip and to open the crossings to ensure the sustainable and unhindered flow of humanitarian aid to the Strip.

The ministry reiterated Qatar's firm and unwavering position in support of the Palestinian cause and the steadfastness of the brotherly Palestinian people, based on international law and the two-state solution, which guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (QNA)

Marza Hypermarket reopens revamped Ain Khaled outlet with grand ceremony

Marza Hypermarket has officially reopened its fully renovated Ain Khaled outlet following a grand inauguration ceremony, marking a significant milestone in the group's retail journey.

The relaunch comes after an extensive renovation aimed at offering a modern, spacious, and customer-centric shopping experience.

The inauguration was held in the presence of Marza Group sponsor Abdul Rahman Mohamed Abdul Azeez Hazavi; managing director Jafar Kandoth; Group general manager Haris Kader; representatives from KBF, along with other officials, dignitaries, well-wishers, and members of the media.

The strong turnout reflected the confidence and support of stakeholders in Marza Hypermarket's continued growth and

vision for excellence. As part of the ceremony, the managing director performed the cake-cutting, symbolising the successful relaunch of the Ain Khaled outlet and reaffirming the brand's renewed commitment to delivering superior value and service to customers.

The newly revamped outlet features contemporary interiors, smarter layouts, wider aisles, and upgraded facilities, all designed to ensure smooth navigation and enhanced shopping convenience. Each section has been thoughtfully planned to meet the evolving expectations of modern shoppers, making everyday shopping more comfortable, efficient, and enjoyable.

Speaking on the occasion, the management emphasised that the renovation reflects Marza Hypermarket's core values of quality products, affordable pricing,

and excellent customer service. The store now incorporates modern retail technologies and enhanced facilities, offering a seamless blend of innovation, efficiency and comfort.

To celebrate the reopening, Marza Hypermarket has launched special inaugural offers and attractive promotions across a wide range of categories, including daily essentials, groceries, household items, and electronics. The offers have drawn strong customer response from the very first day.

With its refreshed look, improved convenience, and customer-focused approach, the renewed Ain Khaled outlet is expected to continue serving as a preferred shopping destination for residents of Ain Khaled and surrounding areas, while setting new benchmarks in the local retail sector.



Kahramaa wins GCC award for customer service excellence



Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation, 'Kahramaa', has announced that its Customer Services Department has won the Outstanding Performance Award for customer service departments across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, specifically for excellence in handling complaints and service requests. This achievement crowns Kahramaa's long record of successes and reinforces its leadership in the electricity and water sectors. It reflects the efficiency of its customer service system and its ability to enhance service quality in line with the best global practices, supporting the corporation's strategic directions and boosting customer satisfaction.

Mohammed Ali Hashem, director of the Customer Services Department at Kahramaa, said: "This award reflects the significant efforts made by our teams to elevate service quality and develop communication channels with customers by implementing smart systems and advanced mechanisms to handle complaints and service requests with high efficiency. This regional

recognition reaffirms Kahramaa's ongoing commitment to providing exceptional, innovation-driven services that achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction, strengthening the corporation's position as a leading reference in customer service across the region."

This achievement is the result of joint efforts between the Customer Services Department, the Planning & Quality Department, the Information Technology Department, and the Public Relations & Communication Department. The integration of these efforts contributed significantly to enhancing Kahramaa's participation and in achieving this success.

This award aims to support and develop customer service operations within GCC countries, highlighting successful business practices and outstanding performance. It also seeks to encourage institutions to adopt comprehensive quality standards and techniques that ensure customer satisfaction, improve service quality, and promote positive competition among customer service departments at the local, regional, and global levels.

Ooredoo Fintech partners with Western Union to expand money transfer options in Qatar

Ooredoo Fintech announced yesterday a strategic partnership with Western Union, integrating its services into the Ooredoo Money app, starting in Qatar with plans to expand across the region.

With Western Union now available, Ooredoo Money customers in Qatar gain even more options for sending and receiving money, empowering them with greater flexibility and choice while leveraging Ooredoo Money's trusted platform.

The initiative aligns with Ooredoo Fintech's ongoing commitment to digital financial inclusion and expanding modern financial access across its operating markets.

Aziz Fakhroo, chairman of Ooredoo Fintech, said: "This partnership reflects our commitment to providing customers with more choice, convenience, and access to essential financial services. By integrating Western Union into



the Ooredoo Money app, we are giving users greater freedom in sending and receiving money in Qatar, with plans to expand to across the region. It's a key step in delivering the flexible, best-in-class digital financial services our customers deserve."

Giovanni Angelini, president, Europe, Middle East, Africa & Asia-Pacific, Western Union, said: "With Ooredoo Fintech we share the same mission of making the financial services our customers need and deserve more accessible. I am delighted then that today's announcement

will enable Ooredoo customers to connect to their families and loved ones across the world seamlessly, through Western Union's reliable and fast financial solutions. As we launch our partnership in Qatar, one of the Middle East's main innovation and fintech hubs, I am looking forward to the expansion of the partnership across the region."

The service is now live in Qatar through Ooredoo Money, with plans to expand to other Ooredoo Fintech markets in the region, giving users broader access to global money transfer options.

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Ooredoo Qatar pioneers AI-powered sales calling with Microsoft Azure OpenAI real-time voice tech



Ooredoo announced the launch of an AI-powered outbound sales calling capability built on Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service, leveraging real-time GPT voice technology to enhance customer engagement, improve telesales productivity, and accelerate revenue growth.

The new solution enables intelligent, natural-language conversations with customers through real-time AI voice agents, supporting outbound sales campaigns with dynamic, personalised interactions that adapt to customer intent, preferences, and responses. This is while operating securely within Ooredoo's enterprise environment.

Ooredoo Qatar CEO Sheikh Ali bin Jabor bin Mohammad al-Thani said: "Leveraging Microsoft's Azure OpenAI capabilities, we are deploying advanced AI voice solutions responsibly to enable smarter, faster, and more personalised engagement with our customers. "By reimagining outbound sales and customer interactions through real-time intelligence, we are enhancing operational performance, empowering our teams, and raising the standard of every customer conversation."



Pakistan embassy, MoECC, PISQ unveil ‘gift to Qatar’

Snapshots from the event with officials from the Pakistan embassy, the MoECC and the PISQ.



In a display of environmental responsibility, international friendship, and shared sustainability goals, the embassy of Pakistan in Qatar, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), launched the “Planting 1,000 Native Seedlings” initiative with the participation of students and staff of the Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ).

The initiative was presented as a symbolic gift from Pakistan to Qatar.

The event was held in the presence of Pakistan’s ambassador to Qatar Muhammad Aamer and deputy head of mission Atiya Iqbal.

Also present were PISQ principal Ch. Muhammad Afzal and members of the PISQ board of governors.

More than 200 students and teachers planted native seedlings with a strong sense of responsibility and pride.

The initiative aimed not only to promote en-

vironmental awareness among young learners but also to contribute meaningfully to Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly its environmental development pillar.

Special appreciation was extended to the MoECC for its support, expert guidance, and close collaboration throughout the initiative.

Addressing the gathering, dignitaries commended the initiative as an example of how educational institutions can serve as active partners in national sustainability goals.

The embassy reaffirmed Pakistan’s solidarity with Qatar and its support for Qatar’s environmental vision, emphasising that such collaborative initiatives strengthen bilateral ties while nurturing globally responsible future generations.

The event concluded with a collective message of hope, unity, and responsibility, affirming that cultivating the earth today is an investment in a sustainable tomorrow.



Tickets now on sale for Old Doha Port’s ‘Move’ sports festival

Old Doha Port has announced that the tickets are now on sale for “Move”, the first-of-its-kind six-day sports festival transforming Old Doha Port into a vibrant hub of fitness, wellness, and sports from February 5-10.

The festival invites athletes, families, and fitness enthusiasts to explore seven immersive zones featuring sportswear, sporting accessories and equipment, as well as bicycles and marine sports, alongside a diverse programme of sporting activities.

Visitors can also take part in daily fitness sessions delivered by Erada Fitness, Matrix Gym, and A13 Academy, ranging from strength training, cycling, and running to Pilates, mobility and flexibility, as well as sports and recreational activities designed for children.

The festival will feature 12 food and beverage vendors, all offering fresh and healthy options, in addition to 18 sports-focused retail brands specialising in sports equipment, apparel, and professional fitness gear.

This integrated setup allows visitors to enjoy a family-friendly wellness experience in one destination.

As part of Move, the Erada Fitness Throwdown 2026 will bring high-energy functional fitness competitions to Old Doha Port.

The event kicks off on February 6 with the Women’s Competition, a private women-only event, followed by the Men’s Competition on February 7.

Teams will compete across four categories, showcasing strength, endurance, and teamwork in an energetic and competitive atmosphere.

A running race along the Mina Corniche will take place on 7 February organised in collaboration with No Limits, while visitors can also unwind in dedicated recovery areas or gain insights from three expert-led panel discussions, all designed to inspire healthier and more active lifestyles ahead of National Sport Day.

“Move represents a unique opportunity to bring the community together around sport, wellness, and active living,” said Old Doha Port chief executive Engineer Mohammed Abdulla al-Mulla. “By offering panel discussions, fitness classes, and family-friendly activities, the festival supports national efforts to promote physical activity, wellbeing, and community participation, while encouraging healthier and more active lifestyles in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.”

The panel discussion series, running from February 5-7, will take place from 6pm-6.30pm at Mina Park, bringing together renowned athletes, sports officials, and wellness experts.

Discussions will address key themes related to health and fitness, athletic performance, wellbeing, and mindset development, enriching the visitor experience and raising awareness of the importance of adopting a balanced and active lifestyle.

Tickets for Move are now available via Virgin Megastore.

Each ticket provides full access to all festival activities on the day of entry, with options including single-day passes and family packages.

The festival will continue through Qatar National Sport Day, encouraging community participation.

The event reflects Old Doha Port’s ongoing commitment to delivering accessible, community-focused programming that supports national efforts to promote physical activity, wellness awareness, and community participation.



QIC’s Web Summit pavilion attracts international tech community

Qatar Insurance (QIC) is participating as a Diamond Sponsor at Web Summit Qatar 2026, which runs until February 4 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

The QIC’s pavilion saw a strong turnout from the global tech community, including innovators, entrepreneurs, investors, and representatives from leading tech companies.

Visitors explored the QIC’s vision to build the region’s first insurance-powered digital ecosystem, its evolution from a leading insurer into a fully integrated



digital ecosystem, and how this shift is redefining digital services in Qatar.

The pavilion also hosted seminars and panel discussions led by QIC executives, along with regional and international experts.

These sessions highlighted the latest trends in launching digital products, developing digital business strategies, and building high-impact ventures across the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region.

Today, the QIC pavilion will feature a lineup of

speakers and experts in panel discussions on artificial intelligence (AI) and the development of digital ecosystems across the health, lifestyle, and travel sectors.

On the summit’s fourth and closing day, the QIC will host a Demo Day, showcasing innovative ideas and solutions from entrepreneurs and startups seeking to join the QIC’s digital ecosystem and scale their operations in regional markets.

For more details on the QIC’s programme at Web Summit Qatar 2026, visit ecosystem.qic.digital. To learn more about QIC, visit qic.online.

Home Centre launches 2026 Ramadan Collection with ‘Your Ramadan Answered’ campaign



Home Centre has launched its 2026 Ramadan Collection under the campaign ‘Your Ramadan Answered,’ celebrating the everyday family moments and personalities that define the holy month.

Rooted in the belief that Ramadan is shaped by people rather than perfection, the campaign shines a light on the real-life dynamics that unfold in homes across the region during this special time. Building on last year’s narrative, the campaign continues to spotlight authentic Ramadan experiences, from bustling iftar preparations and shared household responsibilities to quieter evenings of reflection.

At the heart of the launch are three distinct Ramadan collections - Dahab, Fanous, and Raqiya - complemented by a wide range of new furniture, décor, tabletop items, and home accessories. Designed to support how families live, host, and gather during the holy month, the assortment balances functionality with festive elegance for both everyday living and special occasions.

Dahab draws inspiration from the Gulf’s wadis, featuring molten gold tones and rich walnut silhouettes that add warmth and depth to interiors. Fanous reimagines traditional lantern art with smooth curves and tactile finishes, creating a soft ambient glow, while Raqiya,



inspired by lotus forms and gentle hues, brings calm, understated elegance for moments of reflection and togetherness.

“Ramadan has a special place in our hearts and is part of our identity,” said Arja Taaeniku, CEO of Home Centre. “Our collections are not just about beautiful furniture or décor, but about creating a canvas for cherished memories. Each collection tells its own story, allowing customers to express their unique style while capturing the spirit of the season.”

The campaign is brought to life through three short films - The Iftar Meltdown, The Movie Night Crisis, and The Chaos Before the Crescent - which use warmth and humour to reflect shared Ramadan

realities. Each film concludes by celebrating an unsung family hero, reinforcing the idea that every home has its own extraordinary legends.

Shumalan Naicker, Senior Vice President and Country Head, Qatar, added that families juggle fasting, hosting, work, and daily life throughout Ramadan, and Home Centre’s role is to help homes feel prepared for the season. He noted that the campaign celebrates the relatable, imperfect characters found in every household, transforming everyday Ramadan challenges into moments of recognition, connection, and shared experience at the heart of what makes Ramadan truly memorable.

ZULAL WELLNESS RESORT BY CHIVA-SOM ANNOUCES COMMUNITY ACTIVATION IN CELEBRATION OF QATAR NATIONAL SPORTS DAY



In celebration of Qatar National Sports Day, Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som invites the community to come together for a dynamic, purpose-driven activation designed to inspire unity, movement, and collective achievement. Taking place on Tuesday, 10 February 2026, from 10.00 to 13.00, the activation will be hosted at Zulal Wellness Resort and is open to both guests and the wider community.

Curated to champion the spirit of wellness and community participation, the pre-event activation will bring people of all ages and fitness levels together through engaging physical challenges and guided wellness sessions. At the heart of the event is an ambitious Tug of War challenge, where participants will unite in an effort to achieve a 600-meter pull, with the goal of breaking a new distance of World Record. This collective challenge symbolises teamwork, resilience, and the power of shared determination values that lie at the core of Qatar National Sports Day.

Complementing the Tug of War challenge, guests will have the opportunity to participate in complimentary Yoga and Tabata sessions, thoughtfully designed to energise the body and promote mindful movement. These sessions will be offered in limited slots, ensuring a personalised and high-quality experience for all participants.

Event Details

What: Qatar National Sports Day Community Activation

When: Tuesday, 10 February 2026

Time: 10.00 – 13.00

Where: Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som, Al Ruwais

Activities Include:

10.00-10.50 Yoga Sessions (limited availability)

11.00-11.50 Tabata / Circuit Training / Booth Camp

Fitness Sessions (limited availability)

12.00-12.45 600-meter Tug of War World Record Challenge

Entry: Complimentary

Registration: Mandatory via WhatsApp on +974 7138 5422

This activation has been thoughtfully designed to encourage community members, wellness enthusiasts, families, and fitness groups to take part in a meaningful shared experience—working together to achieve an ambitious goal while embracing the principles of healthy living and collaboration that define both Qatar National Sports Day and Zulal Wellness Resort.

With limited availability across wellness sessions, early registration is strongly encouraged.

For more information or reservations, please email Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som at

reservations@zulal.com,
call/WhatsApp +974 4477 6555
or visit www.zulal.com.

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Sheikha Moza meets international officials on sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, met separately yesterday with Imec Centre executive vice-president and chief Global Development, Partnerships and Venturing officer Max Mirgoli, and Imagine Institute for Genetic Diseases director Dr Bana Jabri, on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026. They discussed avenues of collaboration across research, medicine, technology, and innovation. **PICTURES:** Aisha al-Musallam



Her Highness Sheikha Moza at the Web Summit Qatar 2026.

PICTURE: Aisha al-Musallam

Sheikha Moza urges moral vision in technology and faith in future of Arabic

From Page 1

Her Highness Sheikha Moza noted that this battle is not over tools, but over meaning, identity, and the power to persist.

“Should the Arabic language be defeated in this era, it will not be only a linguistic defeat, but a defeat for all that this language represents in terms of identity, culture, memory, spirit, and civilisation,” she warned. “In this context, it is imperative to contemplate the conditions that will secure the survival and continuity of the Arabic language.”

She highlighted that no nation rises without mobilising its energies, discourse, horizons, determination, and tools, and through everything that makes this rise a reality being nourished by collective will and sustained by self-driven growth.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza highlighted the importance of long-term vision and investment in people and knowledge as the foundation of sustainable economic transformation.

“What you witness in Qatar is a transformation from oil and gas to a knowledge-based economy,” she said. “I am convinced that, today, we are more ready than ever to be pioneers in the field of technology, and I believe that Qatar is the most reliable place for technology investment.”

“Qatar has earned the trust of the world through its investment in education and scientific research, and demonstrated its credibility and neutrality at both regional and international level,” Her Highness Sheikha Moza continued.

“Given its human and material capacities, its transparent legal framework, and its clear ethical standards, Qatar is well positioned to lead,” she added. “It is a call to invest in a web of research built on global partnerships – not to humanise technology, but to humanise its uses.”



Her Highness Sheikha Moza taking a tour of the Web Summit.

PICTURE: Aisha al-Musallam

QF showcases commitment to innovation

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF), has addressed the Web Summit Qatar 2026, as the global technology gathering sees Qatar Foundation's commitment to human-centred innovation placed in the international spotlight.

She told its international audience: “Our conviction in safeguarding the distinct identity of our language, amid the unprecedented transformations the world is witnessing, is in harmony with our commitment to cultural diversity within the field of technology, for technology was never the child of a single civilisation, destined to remain its exclusive inheritance.”

“Rather, solutions that emerge from diverse local needs, and the ‘cultural DNA’ of one community or another, can acquire global significance and influence when empowered by technology,” Her Highness Sheikha Moza said. “They can transform from isolated national or institutional efforts into genuine shared creativity that transcends regions, disciplines, and sectors.”

During Web Summit Qatar 2026, technology ventures developed by alumni of the QF's unique ecosystem of education are being showcased to investors and stakeholders.

Ranging from health and education to



WISH chief executive Dr Slim Slama and QCRI executive director Dr Ahmed Elmagarimid speaking at Digital Health Panel.

sustainability, finance, and cybersecurity, 20 startups created by graduates of the QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and the QF's international partner universities are being exhibited at the summit.

Meanwhile, 54 startups incubated by the QF's Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) are getting the spotlight.

The QSTP is also contributing to the judging of the summit's pitch competition, delivering an artificial intelligence (AI) masterclass, and hosting a side event on the leading role of women in technology

development and investment.

QSTP president Rama Chakaki is among the panelists in a summit session on the region's emergence as a global driver of AI infrastructure, deep tech, and intellectual property development.

The QF's participation in Web Summit Qatar 2026 will see its global education initiative, WISE and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council host sessions on how edtech startups are bridging gaps between learning and economic outcomes, and inclusive edtech, featuring speakers from WISE (World In-



QF chief executive Yousif al-Naama at Web Summit Qatar 2026.

novation Summit for Education's Edtech Accelerator cohort.

WISE will also collaborate with the QSTP for a panel discussion exploring how “precision education” – powered by AI, data, and adaptive technologies – can enable inclusive, scalable learning systems that reach those underserved by traditional education models.

This collaboration will continue after Web Summit Qatar 2026 with a bootcamp at the QSTP.

In the field of health innovation, WISH – the World Innovation Summit for Health,

QF's global health initiative – participated in a Web Summit Qatar 2026 session exploring Qatar's fast-growing health tech ecosystem, from research and innovation to investment, partnerships, and digital, AI, and biotech advances, alongside the QRDI Council, HBKU's Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), the Ministry of Public Health, Doha-based Prorenata Biotech, and Itqan Clinical Simulation and Innovation Centre.

The QF's Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future held a panel discussion that explored the environmental challenges faced by cities in hot and arid climates, and the smart and innovative technical solutions that can address them; and participated in an innovation session highlighting how an air quality pilot scheme supported by the QRDI Council's Innovation Pilot Grant is contributing to the sustainability efforts of both the QF and Qatar.

The HBKU will be hosting talks and showcasing technologies developed within its colleges and research institutes during the event, with QF partner universities Northwestern University in Qatar and HEC Paris, Doha, also participating in the summit.

Meanwhile, reflecting the QF's commitment to cultivating a volunteerism culture in Qatar, a team of 30 volunteers from its community are supporting Web Summit Qatar 2026.

Qatar's LNG fleet set to expand to 200 vessels

From Page 1

Since 2020, QatarEnergy has been pursuing a massive shipbuilding programme which has grown to a total of 128 new LNG tankers to be delivered by around 2030.

Currently, the Qatar Stock Exchange-listed Nakilat owns a fleet of 69 vessels which are chartered to QatarEnergy.

Nakilat has already been assigned 34 of the new-build vessels.

The first seven of the new vessels have now entered service, under an agreement QatarEnergy reached for a joint venture of Japan's Mitsui OSK (MOL) and China's Cosco to own and operate the vessels.

In 2022, QatarEnergy placed an order for 60 vessels in the first phase, followed by 62 vessels in the second phase in 2024, representing the largest single shipbuilding project in history.

Since 2022, QatarEnergy has signed a series of TCPS (time charter party) for the long-term charter and operation of 104 conventional LNG ves-

sels, as part of its historic LNG fleet expansion programme.

This initiative will support QatarEnergy's expanding LNG production capacity from the North Field LNG expansion and Golden Pass LNG export projects, as well as meeting its long-term fleet replacement requirements.

In 2024, QatarEnergy's agreement with China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) enables the construction of 18 QC-Max size LNG vessels, with a capacity of 271,000 cubic metres each, which will be built at China's Hudong-Zhonghua Shipyard, a CSSC wholly-owned subsidiary.

With a total length of 344m, a beam of 53.6m, a depth of 27.2m, and a designed draft of 12m, these vessels will adopt a dual-fuel low-speed engine propulsion system.

The careful ship-owner selection process followed a detailed and rigorous global tender, signifying QatarEnergy's commitment to expanding its fleet of modern LNG carriers in collaboration with world-class ship-owners and in an open and transparent manner.

Qatar: AI surge fuels global gas demand

From Page 1

Other members of the panel were ConocoPhillips chairman and chief executive Ryan Lance, ExxonMobil chairman and chief executive Darren Woods, Shell chief executive Wael Sawan, and Patrick Pouyanné, the chairman and chief executive of TotalEnergies SE.

In discussions with developed Asian countries like Japan and South Korea, data centres came up as a demand because the sector is driving up the (power) requirements, the minister said, because everybody wants to have data centres on their own as sovereign requirement.

Stressing that Qatar had taken a “courageous” decision regarding North Field Expansion when

the market was down, especially during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, HE al-Kaabi said “we have strong balance sheets and we have basically the belief that the market will require this volume in the future”.

Stressing that a small oversupply was anticipated between 2025 and 2030, he said that if growth in Europe and the requirements of AI and data centres pan out, “I think there will be a shortage, instead of an oversupply, by 2030”.

Referring to QatarEnergy's expansion projects, HE al-Kaabi said that the mega-projects that have been launched a few years ago would more than double QatarEnergy's LNG production from 77mn tonnes per annum to 160mn tonnes per annum, includ-

ing 142mn tonnes per annum from Qatar's North Field.

“Our projects will contribute about 40% of the new global LNG supplies over the next decade,” he said.

Highlighting that China and India would be driving the main demand (for gas), HE al-Kaabi said that for a lot of Asian countries, whether Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Vietnam, the requirement “is going to be huge”.

Referring to the Middle East, which has plenty of oil, the minister said that some countries do not have enough gas, adding that there is a requirement for gas in the region, and that there is a growth in population that needs additional power.

DR Congo government, AFC sign peace framework agreement in Doha

The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) and the Alliance Fleuve Congo/ March 23 Movement (AFC/M23) have signed the terms of reference stemming from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

This occurred at the conclusion of the meeting of the Ceasefire Oversight and Verification Mechanism between the two parties, hosted by Qatar yesterday, as part

of its efforts to resolve the conflict in the eastern region of the DR Congo.

The two parties renewed their commitment to the ceasefire and the Doha Framework Agreement for Peace signed between them on November 15 last year, and affirmed their determination to implement all obligations stipulated therein in good faith, in support of the peaceful process.

Members of the mechanism took part in the meeting, which was attended by the

United States and the African Union as observers, Togo in its capacity as the African Union-appointed mediator, the UN Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The meeting addressed the developments on the ground, including perspectives on the existing challenges.

The members emphasised the necessity

of implementing practical measures to enhance monitoring, verification, and information exchange in support of the process.

The members reviewed the plans of the MONUSCO and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for implementing the mechanism, along with reaffirming their commitment to supporting and facilitating their work to ensure the success of field missions.

The members also tasked the MONUS-

CO with dispatching the first field mission to the city of Uvira to monitor the ceasefire in the coming days, while the necessary field communication channels were established to facilitate the mission's work in accordance with the mechanism.

Based on these discussions, the members agreed on subsequent steps to enhance the effectiveness of the mechanism and ensure the continuation of regular meetings within its framework. – QNA



German stand for startups inaugurated

The German stand for startups was inaugurated yesterday at Web Summit Qatar 2026, with the participation of 200-plus German founders, investors, and decision-makers.

The inauguration event was attended by a number of Their Excellencies, ministers, and high-ranking officials from Qatar and Germany, as well as innovation entrepreneurs and investors, with the objective of reinforcing economic and tech co-operation and deepening partnerships with entrepreneurs in the region.

The German delegation participating in this stand includes a host of CEOs and representatives of firms operating in the sectors of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, deep technology, digital platforms, industrial innovation, as well as ad-

vanced applied technologies.

The stand is set to showcase an integrated programme that includes keynote speeches, panel discussions, roundtables, and specialised sessions, offering a strategic platform for communication and collaboration between German innovators and the tech ecosystem in Qatar.

The German State of North Rhine-Westphalia is participating as guest of honour in the summit, represented by senior leadership from the ministry of economic affairs, industry, climate action and energy, alongside other German ministers and officials, high-ranking diplomatic corps representatives, and key figures from the fields of research, innovation, and industry.

The stand is backed by a wide swathe of government agencies in

Germany, most notably the ministry of economic affairs, industry, climate action and energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, a delegation from the State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, in addition to the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, the DAI-Labor at the Technical University of Berlin, and RWE AG, a leading company in renewable energy and industrial innovation.

The German Federal Association of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (BVMW) has so far opened a regional representative office in Doha to serve as a headquarters covering the GCC states and providing support for German firms as they expand in the region, projecting Qatar as a key strategic partner for German innovation on the global stage. (QNA)

MCIT presents Qatar's digital agenda 2030



QNA
Doha

Qatar is steadily progressing towards establishing itself as a regional and global hub for the digital economy and innovation through investment in human capital, the development of innovation ecosystem, and the enhancement of the ICT sector's contribution to the national economy, officials at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) said.

This was highlighted during a panel discussion at the Web Summit Qatar 2026, titled 'Qatar's digital agenda 2030: Building a knowledge-based digital economy'.

Participants reviewed mechanisms for translating the agenda into tangible results in terms of job opportunities, skills development, and economic impact, highlighting the role of the MCIT in leading this transformation through strategic pillars and pioneering programmes.

Director of Digital Society and Digital Competencies at the MCIT Duha al-Buhendi stated that Qatar's vision for technology is based

on a long-term approach aimed at making the country an incubator for ideas and a platform for international technological co-operation, noting that organising technological events is incomplete without genuine investment in the development of human capital and the cultivation of digital skills.

Al-Buhendi explained that the challenge lies not in the number of available jobs, but in the availability of qualified personnel capable of filling them, adding that the MCIT has launched several initiatives to develop local talent and attract international expertise.

The Director of Digital Society and Digital Competencies stated that more than 5,000 government employees were trained last year, with a high satisfaction rate recorded for workforce development programmes.

Director of the Digital Innovation Department at the MCIT Eman al-Kuwari said the ministry focuses on establishing supportive platforms to nurture talent and transform innovative ideas into applicable market solutions, thus bridging the gap between innovation and actual market needs.

She noted that innovation programmes have contributed to generating more than 160 sales op-

portunities, resulting in revenues exceeding QR670mn.

She emphasised that connecting international talent with the local ecosystem is a fundamental element in addressing national challenges and enhancing the efficiency of digital services.

Director of Digital Economy at the MCIT Faraj Jassim Abdullah said the ministry is working to increase the contribution of the ICT sector to the GDP, aiming to reach 10% in the medium term, in addition to creating thousands of new jobs in the technology market.

He pointed to the recent announcement of an additional \$2bn in investments in the digital sector, adding that despite global challenges, technology companies operating in the country have managed to secure significant funding and achieve remarkable revenue growth, reflecting the strength and resilience of the digital ecosystem.

The Director of Digital Economy at the MCIT also noted that these efforts are part of a comprehensive vision to transform the national economy, supported by an attractive business environment, a high quality of life, and streamlined regulatory policies that encourage investment and innovation in the digital economy. (QNA)

'Authenticity is not optional,' stresses Indian actor and creator

By Shaima Sherif
Staff reporter

Indian actor and creator Prajakta Koli told Web Summit audiences yesterday that authenticity, not activism, defines meaningful influence, as she reflected on storytelling, acting, and making complex global issues accessible.

From viral sketches to international stages, Prajakta Koli has built her career by staying grounded, and at Web Summit, she made it clear that she is still very much learning, experimenting and showing up.

Speaking candidly about her journey as an actor, writer and digital creator, Koli said she does not yet feel she is in a position to

"choose" projects, despite her growing profile.

"Honestly, as an actor, I don't think I'm in that position to choose yet. I've just about started," she said, adding that she continues to audition widely while remaining mindful of the stories she becomes part of.

For Koli, alignment comes less from screen time and more from purpose. "I like being a catalyst of some sort in the story," she said. "It's okay if it's not the lead role. Content today is so evolved — people care about every character, no matter how big or small."

She drew a clear line, however, on values. "Anything that's offensive to women or anyone at all, I will never work on," she said.

Addressing how she decides



where stories belong — on screen, online or on the page — Koli challenged assumptions about digital-first generations. While she believes every story should live online in some form, she admitted she was surprised by the response to her debut book.

Qatar, other GCC nations 'best places' for AI development

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

The Gulf is rapidly becoming a global hub for artificial intelligence (AI) development, driven by ambitious governments, low energy costs and long-term investment, venture capitalist Tala al-Jabri said on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026.

In an exclusive interview, al-Jabri, founder and managing partner of Wyld VC, told *Gulf Times* that Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE offer some of the world's most favourable conditions for building AI companies.

She cited visionary leadership, progressive policies, widespread adoption and substantial government-backed capital as key factors.

"I think one of the best places to build in the world is this region, in Qatar, in Saudi Arabia and in the UAE. We have the most ambitious and visionary leaders in the world. We also have some of the most progressive policies and regulations that both promote innovation and protect data privacy and consumers," al-Jabri said.

She pointed out that the Gulf's young population has embraced AI, making the region home to a generation of "AI-native" users. According to al-Jabri, adoption is strong across consumers, prosumers, and businesses while governments are pouring significant investment into the infrastructure needed to drive the next wave of AI development.

"Some of the biggest facilities in the world outside of the US and China are being built here. We promote talent and diversity from all over the world. We welcome people who have a vision and support them strongly," she said.



Tala al-Jabri on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026. **PICTURE:** Joey Aguilar

Al-Jabri highlighted the Gulf's efforts to establish robust research and development (R&D) infrastructure, which she said complements the region's ambition to attract global talent.

"We are still new nations relative to the West, but we are putting in place and attracting some of the best talent in the world," she said.

Al-Jabri, a regional technology investor, emphasised that safety and social stability also contribute to the region's attractiveness for entrepreneurs. "Personally, as a citizen, I feel extremely safe. I leave my door unlocked, and my rights are respected. I feel very confident about living here."

When asked about the Gulf's advantages in adopting advanced technologies, al-Jabri highlighted low energy costs, substantial infrastructure investment, and visionary, long-term thinking by governments.

At the panel discussion, titled "Is the AI bubble about to burst?", moderated by Gregg Carlstrom, Middle East correspondent for *The Economist*, al-Jabri explained the strengths and challenges fac-

ing investors and founders in the region.

She described the regulatory framework as transparent, supportive, and aligned with the goal of transitioning from hydrocarbon-based economies to technology-driven growth.

"This region ranks among the top globally in AI vibrancy," she said, citing Stanford University's index. "We have strong policy and regulation, ambitious governments, low energy costs, and ample capital to build infrastructure and invest in startups."

"The top AI superpowers are still Silicon Valley and China. Other countries have strong talent too, but these two dominate. That's where the Gulf needs to invest, by opening markets for regional founders and attracting top-tier talent from abroad," al-Jabri said.

She added that long-term capital gives the Gulf a unique advantage, saying: "Our strategy and vision extend for decades. We are transparent in how we evaluate our performance, economically and socially. Investors and founders can expect a stable regulatory environment and governments willing to work with them to build technologies locally."

It is learnt that the Gulf region has invested billions in AI infrastructure, government-led AI initiatives, and policies aimed at fostering a conducive environment for technology startups.

While the Gulf may not yet match Silicon Valley or China in raw talent, al-Jabri said it offers a combination of stability, capital, and ambition that few other regions can match.

She described the region's AI efforts as building the "railways of the 21st century," creating an environment designed to help visionaries and founders succeed.

Women empowerment leader trains over 20,000 African women with tech skills

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Ani Akpe, founder of African Women in Technology, has been working hard empowering African women with skills in technology for over 10 years and has been able to assist over 20,000 African women with the necessary resources and access.

"I formed African Women in Technology 10 years ago to meet the gap, I found that women didn't have enough skills building, resources and access. So, within the past 10 years, we formed a partnership with Cisco where women are able to learn at self-paced digital skill building such as AI, cyber security, coding," Akpe said during an interview with *Gulf Times* at the ongoing Web Summit Qatar.

Akpe, attending Web Summit Qatar for the second time, feels that Qatar is a great place to attend the Web Summit and said: "I have attended Web Summits at the other places. But I feel that the Qatar government really cares about startups and they are creating infrastructure and programmes that supports startups. I am planning to attend the next Web Summit in Qatar."

Akpe stated that the organisation is working in Kenya and Ni-



Anie Akpe. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam.

geria, and has held events in Uganda, Mozambique, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria.

"These are the countries we have been to. But the other countries are open to join. Overall, we have trained over 20,000 women in the past 10 years. What that has done for us is that it allowed these women who started with us 10 years ago. They're now pillars in society. They've been featured in Forbes. They're running their own organisations. They are creating other projects that has impacted their communities," she said.

"We also have a partnership with Zoho, where women are able to come in and learn how to run

their businesses efficiently using Zoho system for startups. Part of the reason why we built these systems is that women, whether they're in Africa, USA, wherever they are, have the ability to log in and learn," said Akpe.

According to Akpe, the organisation's main focus is letting women know they are capable of doing it. "It is to let women know that within your sphere and within things that you can control, your lifestyle, your marriage, whatever the case may be. Maybe, it is just helping your children learn because you are learning that you have the ability to learn these things at a pace that is comfortable for you."

Akpe highlighted that these women have become career women and currently own businesses and they still continue to use technology in its many facets.

"Because we launched African Women in Tech, we learned those nuances to see where the skills gap were. And then we started a startup called Lumo Hubs. Lumo Hubs is in partnership with universities because we recognise that everyone needs to build these skill sets because the future is changing so fast. For this, we had to partner with universities to make sure all students had the ability to learn," she added.

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GULF TIMES

How Lego got swept up in US-Mexico trade frictions

Manufacturing a Barbie or a Lego brick requires large quantities of plastic, much of which comes from China, the world's largest producer of the material. So when Mexico hiked tariffs on the Asian giant at the start of 2026, its toy manufacturers, including local factories of Lego and Barbie-maker Mattel, had mixed emotions.

On the one hand, they cheered the clampdown on cheaper Asian imports but on the other were left wincing at the rising costs of their inputs.

The toy sector is one of a raft of industries impacted by a year of simmering trade tensions between US President Donald Trump's administration and Mexico, as well as China. Mexico's car assembly industry, one of the biggest in the world, is also holding its breath, given its reliance on Chinese-produced car parts.

President Claudia Sheinbaum argues that the tariffs on China, India and other countries with which Mexico has no trade deal, aim to protect Mexican industry from cut-price competition. Analysts see the levies, however, as an attempt to appease Trump in the run-up to a high-stakes review of Mexico's three-decade-old trilateral free trade deal with the United States and Canada, USMCA.

Trump accuses China of using Mexico as a tariff-free backdoor into the United States and complains that the USMCA, which his first administration negotiated, is weighted against Washington. Saving the treaty is crucial for Mexico, which sends over 80 percent of its exports north of the border.

Some Mexican manufacturers say they are prepared to accept the pain of higher input costs if it leads to a positive outcome in the USMCA talks. Polyethylene, the plastic used to make toys, is produced locally by the state-owned oil company Pemex.

Some Mexican manufacturers say they are prepared to accept the pain of higher input costs if it leads to a positive outcome in the USMCA talks

fair and benefit to all three countries." China is the elephant in the room in the USMCA negotiations.

Canada has been working to diversify its trade relations after being walloped by Trump's tariffs offensive. In mid-January, it signed a preliminary trade agreement with Beijing. The agreement sparked a furious reaction from Trump, who threatened to impose 100 percent tariffs on Canada if it becomes a "drop off port" for Chinese products destined for the United States.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney downplayed Trump's broadside as part of the hurly burly of the USMCA negotiations. Juan Francisco Torres Landa, a partner at the international law firm Hogan Lovells who focuses on deal making, said Sheinbaum was under pressure to stop "playing both sides" between the United States and China.

At the same time, he said, "given our economic dependence (on the United States and China), there is no other option" to working with both. Some Mexican industries clearly stand to benefit from Sheinbaum's tariffs blitz, such as the textile and footwear sectors. "In recent years, we have been hit hard by... unfair competition in international trade," Juan Carlos Cashat, president of a footwear manufacturers' association in central Guanajuato state, told AFP.

"We hope this can have a positive effect in the medium or long term," he said.

Toy manufacturers, by contrast, are in "survival" mode, according to the toy industry association's Martin. He added that while the USMCA is being renegotiated, the industry will try to absorb most of the costs of its higher inputs. But if the review, due to be completed by July 1, "does not produce a reasonably good outcome for the industry," he said, "then the consumer will be the one to pay the costs." — AFP

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How Qatar laid foundation for LNG's meteoric rise



By Roudi Baroudi
Doha

It feels like the most natural thing in the world for the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas taking place in Qatar this week: even the most casual observer can see how fitting it is for the LNG industry's most important event to be hosted by the LNG industry's most important player.

This is anything but an overstatement. Several countries have larger reserves of natural gas, and some are even challenging Qatar's dominance in the production and export of LNG, but none has done more to make the LNG industry what it is today, and the significance of that achievement is on full display now.

To really appreciate what this country has accomplished, it is useful to recall some history. Until liquefaction was invented, natural gas was still very much a niche commodity because it is difficult to transport over long distances and impractical to store in large quantities. Even when production of LNG began in the middle of the 20th century, several factors slowed the industry's development, including the exorbitant initial cost of liquefaction facilities, the need for customers to have offloading terminals with (also expensive) regasification and/or storage facilities, and the safety hazards (both real and perceived) attached to the temperatures, pressures, and volatilities involved.

It was not liquefaction itself, then, that changed the equation and transformed LNG into a global commodity. Instead, it was Qatar.

It was Qatar, led by the then-Amir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, that selected the right corporate partners, invested in enormous LNG production capacity, assembled the world's largest fleet of LNG carriers, and supported the design and construction of LNG terminals and floating regasification and storage units (FRSUs) that allowed for the recruitment of customers around the world. All told (so far), Qatar has provided direct or indirect support for the development of LNG infrastructure in more than 20 countries. This radically accelerated the adoption of LNG as an everyday energy source, ensuring both steady demand

and reliable supply, which made the market far more dynamic and flexible, bringing in still more buyers and sellers.

It was Qatar that then proceeded to scrupulously honour its delivery contracts through thick and thin, providing the entire global economy with cheaper, cleaner, safer energy supplies – and earning the trust of customers the world over by maintaining deliveries through all manner of possible disruptions.

It was Qatar whose flagship oil and gas company, QatarEnergy, strategically invested in natural gas fields and processing facilities around the world, growing and diversifying its own portfolio while simultaneously making the LNG market even bigger, better, and more dynamic.

It was Qatar that poured resources into research on gas-to-liquids and other adaptations, investigations aimed at reducing emissions by finding new ways to replace oil products with cleaner-burning natural gas.

It was Qatar, too, that stepped in to pick up the slack when Europe and other parts of the free world found their usual supplies halted or curtailed, making the country a trusted partner in the maintenance of global economic stability.

This visionary approach has not only empowered Qatar to improve the lives of its inhabitants: it also has opened the door for others to follow similar paths. Before the advent of liquefaction, countries that discovered deposits of natural gas within their borders were limited in what they could do with it because it couldn't be shipped very far without a pipeline. Even when LNG became a possibility, the billions of dollars required to build the necessary facilities served as a powerful impediment, constituting not just a feasibility hurdle but also a potential avalanche of debt, especially since the high cost of receiving facilities also strictly limited the number of potential customers.

To be sure, these accomplishments were not secured without help. Several energy heavyweights have partnered with Qatar in its endeavours, including ExxonMobil, TotalEnergies, ConocoPhillips, Shell and others, and the industry itself has been working on the technologies required for breakthrough for decades. Crucially, the LNG Conference Series has played a significant role, too, by bringing industry luminaries together for high-level discussions, tirelessly promoting sensible policy approaches, and abetting healthy information exchange and other forms of co-operation. It was Qatari vision and Qatari money, though, that made Qatar the indispensable catalyst for all that has followed.

Other countries have piled into this space in recent years – most conspicuously Australia and the United States – but it was Doha's original bet that created the market in which others now operate. Amazingly, LNG is now becoming even more important because, as most of the world seeks to combat climate change by reducing carbon emissions, LNG's status as the cleanest fossil fuel makes it a crucial bridge to the future. For those who have long understood the broader implications and overall utility of LNG, the here and now is a great place to be. Let's all remember, though, not just WHY we're here, or even HOW we got here, but also – and above all else – WHO got us here.

As though all of the energy achievements were not enough, under both the Father Amir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and his successor, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar has leveraged its growing economic and diplomatic clout, not just to protect its own interests, but also to mediate in disputes involving

other countries. Energy revenues and relationships have allowed Qatar to develop significant international influence, and its foreign policy strives to wield that influence responsibly, stressing dialogue and diplomacy and promoting peace at every turn. It is a foreign policy designed to preserve Qatar's sovereignty and independence by seeking friendly relations with as many countries as possible, maintaining strong alliances, avoiding frictions, and seeking open engagement with other societies without ever interfering in their internal affairs.

All things considered, despite the fact that Qatar was not the first country to produce LNG, and even though other countries may surpass its output, none will ever replicate its role in having brought the entire market to life.

When I attended my first LNG Conference Series event in the 1990s, the audience was very much a specialised industry crowd: lots of smart people having lots of interesting conversations, but few people outside the industry took any notice. By contrast, this week's proceedings have attracted national and international corporate leaders, as well as other senior officials representing virtually every major government and every major gas company on the planet, and dozens of media outlets are covering the event.

LNG has very much arrived, and as we plan for even better times ahead, we should never forget WHO got it here.

It was Qatar.

• Roudi Baroudi has more than four decades of both private- and public-sector experience in the energy industry. The author of several books, articles and research papers, he currently serves as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, an independent consultancy based in Doha.



A man looks at the world's largest liquefied natural gas tanker DUHAIL as she crosses the Suez Canal on April 1, 2008. The Qatari tanker, built to transport LNG from Qatar to Europe and the US, was on its first trip ever from Qatar to Spain. (Reuters/File Photo)

Launch of two new residency visas ‘to support Qatar’s strategic goals’

The Investment Promotion Agency Qatar (Invest Qatar) affirmed that the launch of two new residency visas for high growth entrepreneurs and senior executives contributes to supporting the strategic goals of Qatar aimed at expanding its capabilities in innovation and technology, developing the private sector, and accelerating the pace of economic diversification.

In a press release yesterday, it said that this step is in line with Qatar’s ongoing efforts to strengthen its position as a leading global hub for talent, innovation and investment. The new visas were unveiled on Sunday at the opening night of Web Summit Qatar 2026. The new categories reinforce Qatar’s commitment to attracting exceptional global talent and empowering industry leaders to set up, operate and scale high impact ventures from Qatar.

The Residency Visa for Executives targets

talented senior professionals contributing to Qatar’s private sector growth and development. This category offers a simplified employer nominated pathway for long-term residency, ensuring business continuity and supporting the development of a strong leadership talent base across national priority sectors.

The Residency Visa for Entrepreneurs provides a dedicated pathway for founders, partners and innovators who aim to establish their investment projects or expand their businesses within Qatar’s thriving and fast-growing business environment. Holders of this residency are offered an array of benefits, including long-term residency with renewal options, access to the national ecosystem of business incubators and accelerators, as well as additional benefits that help reduce cost of living through an extensive network of partners.

The new residency visas have been designed to offer streamlined and simplified procedures, preferential services and direct access to facilitation platforms that allow business leaders to focus on scaling their operations and contributing to the country’s long term economic transformation.

Commenting on the announcement, CEO of Invest Qatar Sheikh Ali bin Alwaleed al-Thani said: “Qatar’s growth story is powered by people, by innovators, leaders and builders who recognise the opportunities created by our future focused economy. The launch of these residency visas represents a significant step in attracting global talent and enabling them to thrive in Qatar, contributing to the development of high impact ventures, while strengthening Qatar’s position as a leading, attractive, and highly competitive global destination closely connected to international business hubs, in line with the Third National

Development Strategy.”

CEO of Qatar Development Bank Abdulrahman bin Hesham al-Sowaidi said: “The introduction of the new Residency Visas marks an important milestone in strengthening Qatar’s entrepreneurial and private sector landscape. It paves the way toward achieving the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 to build a knowledge-based economy. This new residency also enables entrepreneurs to establish and expand their businesses in Qatar, which offers high quality of life, world-class infrastructure and a supportive business environment.”

He added: “At Qatar Development Bank, we are committed to supporting the attraction of global talent by providing access to funding, capital, capability development, and market opportunities that enable entrepreneurs and executives to innovate, grow, and contribute to diversifying the national economy and

enhancing its competitiveness.”

The introduction of the new residency visas strengthens Qatar’s strategic ambition to expand its innovation, technology and private sector capabilities. By attracting highly experienced executives and high growth entrepreneurs, the programme accelerates economic diversification and reinforces the country’s position as a global hub for entrepreneurship and high-skilled talent.

Holders of the new residency visas can access a range of professional and lifestyle benefits, including a long term, self-sponsored residency for a five-year period with option to renew and priority access to business support programmes and innovation networks. The benefits also include structured pathways to facilitate onboarding, licensing and work permits, as well as direct engagement with Qatar’s ecosystem of incubators, accelerators and strategic partners. **(QNA)**



Web Summit discusses AI role in accelerating innovation and improving products

QNA
Doha

A session held yesterday as part of the Web Summit Qatar 2026 discussed the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into design and prototyping processes, and its role in accelerating innovation and improving product quality.

The session also addressed the technical, security, and ethical challenges associated with AI adoption. An elite panel of experts in artificial intelligence, software development, cybersecurity, and robotics participated in the session.

The moderator of the session, Deputy Executive Director of the Qatar Scientific Club, Engineer Abdulrahman Khamis, highlighted the rapid transformations driven by AI in marketing, software development, and digital systems protection. He stressed the importance of user awareness regarding the limitations of these technologies, the governance of their use, and the protection of innovation—particularly in sensitive applications.

Dr Youssef Ait Mou, a senior software engineer at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, affirmed that artificial intelligence has significantly improved both time efficiency and quality compared to human performance. He noted

that AI systems are designed to address shortcomings in human workflows, enabling the delivery of more accurate and efficient products.

He explained that one of AI’s most significant contributions is enabling humans to focus on creative and high-value tasks, rather than spending time on routine and repetitive work.

Engineer Saif Hassan al-Hail, senior AI engineer at the Qatar Scientific Club, pointed out that artificial intelligence capabilities extend far beyond those of a conventional support tool. He emphasised that a large segment of users does not fully leverage these technologies to their maximum potential.

He cited the example of “AI agents” used in marketing, where a virtual agent can be designed to simulate a specific customer segment, allowing marketing campaigns to be trained on highly realistic scenarios. This approach accelerates product launch timelines and enhances the efficiency of marketing experiments.

Engineer Mohammed al-Qassabi, Head of the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Department at the Qatar Scientific Club, stressed that artificial intelligence has become a necessity in the field of cybersecurity. He noted that major companies rely on AI technologies to analyse massive volumes of data

and make decisions at extremely high speeds, including detecting unconventional cyber-intrusion attempts that could go unnoticed without intelligent systems.

He added that modern attacks increasingly use AI to conceal malicious commands within files and images, further increasing the need for more advanced tools to protect digital systems.

Dr Mohammed Zaid Shaari, a technology expert at the Qatar Scientific Club, explained that artificial intelligence remains more effective in software and algorithms than in hardware. While AI can assist in writing code or generating initial designs, it cannot replace human expertise in the development of complex hardware systems.

He emphasised that true innovation in this field depends on original ideas and unique prototypes, warning that directly feeding advanced outputs into AI platforms may pose a threat to intellectual property and innovation protection; particularly in military or security-related applications.

The participants concluded by emphasising that while artificial intelligence is capable of accelerating software development and improving efficiency, it cannot replace human expertise in sensitive domains. They affirmed that protecting innovation and intellectual property remains a top priority in an era of rapidly advancing digital

QF, Web Summit sign pact on volunteerism, innovation and expanding knowledge

Qatar Foundation (QF) and Web Summit have unveiled a new partnership with volunteerism, research, education, and the sharing of knowledge at its core.

The opening day of Web Summit Qatar 2026 saw the signing of a three-year collaboration agreement that reflects QF and Web Summit’s collective belief in empowering and inspiring drivers of positive change.

The agreement will provide QF students and alumni with real-world volunteering experience and access to Web Summit’s Volunteer Programme, which connects them to global innovation communities and opens up worldwide networking opportunities with tech founders, investors, and experts.

QF and Web Summit will also collaborate to study the economic, social, and technological impact of Web Summit Qatar, and of QF’s involvement in the event, as it showcases to the world the Middle East’s rising status as a hub of, and destination for, technology development.

Yousif al-Naama, CEO of QF, said: “Volunteerism and human-centric innovation share the purpose of contributing to the growth, strength, and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and through this collaboration agreement, Qatar Foundation and Web Summit are bringing them together with the goal of deepening our nation’s technology talent pool, empowering our youth, and benefiting our society.

“By collaborating with such a dynamic global organisation as Web Summit, we are extending the opportunities for exposure to the world of technology innovation and entrepreneurship that we offer our current students and our ever-growing alumni community. The



Yousif al-Naama, CEO of Qatar Foundation; and Paddy Cosgrave, founder and CEO of Web Summit; at the agreement signing.

access to networks of knowledge and expertise, and the experiences they will gain, through being part of Web Summit’s Volunteer Programme will undoubtedly enrich their skills, expand their horizons, and magnify the impact they can bring to Qatar, the region, and the world.”

Paddy Cosgrave, founder and CEO of Web Summit, said: “This partnership between Web Summit and Qatar Foundation doesn’t just connect talent from the region to global tech ecosystems. It opens pathways in Doha, home to Web Summit Qatar, and in Lisbon, Rio, and Vancouver, bringing together two organisations that believe in fostering talent and ambition, and in connecting some of the brightest minds with opportunities.

“Qatar Foundation has built a world-class platform for educa-

tion, research, and innovation, backing the next generation to push boundaries. We are proud to be undertaking this journey with Qatar Foundation.”

The collaboration will enable Web Summit Qatar’s international attendees to visit and gain insight into QF’s unique ecosystem of knowledge, and how its Education City campus integrates education, research and innovation, and inclusive community development platforms and opportunities. Academic collaborations – potentially including joint initiatives such as the Web Summit Academic Bursary Programme, which attracts leading academics and researchers to Web Summit events – and the expanded participation of experts from the QF community on Web Summit platforms also form part of the agreement.

Visit Qatar participates as travel and hospitality partner

Visit Qatar is participating in Web Summit Qatar 2026 as the travel and hospitality partner, as the global technology conference takes place at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre until February 4.

As part of its participation, Visit Qatar is sponsoring the VIP Lounge, providing an exclusive networking space where attendees can experience Qatar’s renowned hospitality.

The two-storey lounge serves as a premium meeting and gathering environment, reflecting Qatar’s high-end hospitality standards while enabling meaningful engagement among global decision-makers, investors and innovators.

The VIP Lounge features a series of destination-driven and technology-led activations, including an Interactive Travel Journal developed in collaboration with Snapchat, transforming Qatar’s tourism pillars into a personalised digital travel record.

Visitors can also experience Visit Qatar’s next-generation AI Concierge, showcasing how artificial intelligence supports travellers in discovering, planning and navigating experiences across the country, alongside a dedicated



Qatar Calendar activation highlighting year-round events and experiences.

Hospitality within the lounge includes a centralised all-day catering service provided by St Regis Hotel Doha, alongside a speciality coffee service available on the mezzanine level in an exclusive collaboration with Flat White. A dedicated giveaway station, delivered in collaboration with Needle, further enhances visitor engagement.

Visit Qatar’s participation at

Web Summit Qatar 2026 reinforces Qatar’s growing role as a global platform for innovation, business events and technology-driven tourism solutions.

By combining world-class hospitality with advanced digital initiatives and strategic partnerships, Visit Qatar continues to strengthen the link between tourism, innovation and economic diversification, while positioning Qatar as a leading destination for international events and future-focused experiences.

Localisation and AI-powered creativity shaping the future of work, says Canva co-founder

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

From right to left languages to AI-powered design, Canva co-founder Cliff Obrecht says true localisation and human judgment will define creativity, communication, and productivity in the digital age.

As organisations across the Middle East increasingly rely on visual communication, Obrecht believes Canva’s future growth in the region hinges on something deceptively simple: being genuinely local.

Speaking to *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar yesterday, he highlighted how language, culture, and collaboration styles play a central role in designing and evolving the platform – especially in cities like Doha, where international teams work side by side.

“Being truly local in a market is absolutely everything,” Obrecht said. “We want Canva to feel like an experience built for people in Doha and this region, not just a global product that’s been lightly tailored.”

He explained that while Canva launched in English before expanding into 20 languages, entering Arabic-speaking markets posed both technological and creative challenges.

“Arabic is hard to write right-to-left, and it’s also difficult to represent properly as fonts because of the artistic depth in Arabic typography,” he said. “We really need to respect that.”

Beyond language, Obrecht stressed that people, not platforms, drive trust and long-term adoption.

“Business is a game of humans at the end of the day,” he said, highlighting the importance of partnerships with governments, educational institutions, and local



Cliff Obrecht

content creators to reach students, non-profits, and entrepreneurs.

As visual communication becomes central to education, entrepreneurship, and work, Obrecht noted that many underestimate how deeply visual expression is rooted in human history. “From the dawn of civilisation, humans have painted ideas on cave walls,” he said. “Arabic cultures, in particular, have expressed ideas visually for hundreds, even thousands, of years.”

This, he added, explains why video-first platforms thrive and why tools that enable visual storytelling resonate globally. “Visual communication is a means to an end,” he said. “People don’t wake up wanting to make a presentation – they want to raise money, grow a business, or share an idea.”

Artificial intelligence is accelerating that process.

Obrecht revealed that Canva’s AI tools have already been used more than 22bn times, with adoption in the Middle East – especially Doha – running at double the rate seen in the US.

“We’re evolving from a design platform with AI tools to an AI platform with design tools,” he said. “AI helps people create better, faster, and with far greater depth – but always in service of their goals.”

Despite rapid automation, Obrecht emphasised that creativity must remain human-led. “Creativity isn’t tethered to a tool,” he said. “The tools change – from cave walls to paintbrushes to Canva – but creativity is innate.”

In a world flooded with content, he believes human judgment and taste will matter more than ever. “AI will proliferate content,” he said. “That makes curation, taste, and judgment critical, because only the best ideas will cut through.”



Amir tours venue of Art Basel Qatar at M7

Doha's hosting of Art Basel Qatar marks a milestone connecting talent with industry, says Sheikha Al Mayassa

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday visited the 'Art Basel Qatar' exhibition venue at M7, Qatar's epicentre for innovation and entrepreneurship in design, fashion and technology, and the Doha Design District in Msheir-eb. During his tour, His Highness viewed a selection of paintings, artworks and contemporary sculptures by participating local and international artists, in a display that reflects the growth of the country's vibrant cultural scene and Qatar's status as an artistic and cultural hub at both the regional and international levels.

Following the tour, His Highness attended a reception held at Qatar Preparatory School for Boys in honour of the participating artists and guests.

His Highness the Amir was accompanied by HE the Chairperson of Qatar Museums Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, along with a number of Their Excellencies sheikhs, ministers and senior officials, as well as the participating artists and guests.

Doha's hosting of Art Basel Qatar represents an exceptional moment connecting talent with industry, stressed Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. Addressing a press conference at the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ), HE Sheikha Al Mayassa described Art Basel Qatar as a genuine global art platform in the Middle East and the start of a new chapter built upon a broad cultural and artistic ecosystem developed over the past 50 years.

She noted that Art Basel serves not only as a marketplace but also as a catalyst for Qatar's cultural vision, where art intersects with sport. After five decades of investment in culture and human development, the time has come to invite a global partner.

The current period, she noted, is



ideal for launching this partnership, as it coincides with Doha's urban expansion and the city's transformation into the world's first sustainable urban project, blending traditional Qatari architecture with contemporary design, making it a ideal setting for Art Basel Qatar.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa emphasised that culture today builds bridges in a divided world, connecting people across borders, enhancing dialogue, fostering mutual trust, inspiring communities, and bringing people together. "We are not merely presenting another art fair, but a platform that elevates creativity in the region while remaining firmly centred on people and humanity," she said.

She also highlighted Qatar's cul-

tural achievements in recent years, including NMoQ, designed to preserve the country's history and heritage through artistic and heritage works, while offering international artists the opportunity to integrate their work within a unique cultural context. The museum hosts exhibitions and initiatives supporting local and global talent, including filmmakers through the Doha Film Institute.

The museum's design, inspired by the desert rose, reflects the formation of desert sand crystals and symbolises identity forming layer by layer. "This is our approach to building: respecting history, responding to our time, and remaining rooted in the past, because the future always grows from its roots,"



she explained.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa stressed that investing in people and their development is a cornerstone of Qatar's long-term strategy. "Today, after twenty years, we have completed the first chapter of this strategy, embodied in the Museum of Islamic Art, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, and the National Museum of Qatar, all institutions grounded in heritage and identity."

She highlighted other achievements, including the opening of the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum in 2022, the launch of Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar, and the installation of more than 100 public artworks by local, regional, and international artists to welcome visitors during FIFA

World Cup Qatar 2022.

Qatar also established institutions for training, mentoring, and supporting creative talent, linking heritage with social development and the creative economy. Biennials dedicated to design and photography have been launched, alongside the first quadrennial celebrating the legacy of the FIFA World Cup, where art and sport came together in an unprecedented way.

Art Basel Qatar, taking place February 5-7, features 84 diverse art presentations from 31 countries and regions across 87 galleries, including 16 participating for the first time, offering unique experiences at the fifth edition of this global event.

This edition is presented in

partnership with Art Basel, Qatar Sports Investments, and QC+, a cultural commerce company affiliated with Qatar Museums, marking the fifth edition in the global Art Basel series.

Noah Horowitz, CEO of Art Basel, described the opening of Art Basel in Qatar as a historic milestone in the organisation's 75-year history and a pivotal moment in the evolution of the global art market, expressing pride in the partnership.

Nasser al-Khelaifi, chairman of Qatar Sports Investments, described NMoQ as a living expression of Qatar's identity and vision. He noted that technological advancements have made the world more interconnected, and that arts, music, entertainment, and culture have become a shared global language, positioning Qatar as an ideal location for such initiatives.

HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, chairman of Qatar Tourism and chairman of the Board of Visit Qatar, emphasised that Art Basel Qatar reflects a shared ambition to connect culture with creativity and global exchange. He noted that Qatar has established a strong foundation as a global cultural hub through investment in world-class museums, integrated cultural districts, and major international events, with Art Basel Qatar reinforcing Doha's position as a prominent cultural destination.

Vincenzo de Bellis, Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Fairs at Art Basel, explained that Art Basel Qatar is a living project that continues to evolve. It is deliberately open in format, designed to suggest ideas and provoke questions rather than present a complete or final identity. Artist Wael Shawky, artistic director of Art Basel Qatar, outlined his vision for an open format that situates each artist's practice in its proper context, allowing each presentation space to convey a complete idea and deeper narrative, while providing time for meaningful engagement. (With inputs from QNA)

Qatar blends art and technology to build a global creativity ecosystem

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Qatar is redefining the boundaries between art and technology, creating a national ecosystem where creativity drives innovation, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums (QM), said at Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday.

"It's very interesting, because whilst most places in the world, arts and culture and technology may be seen as separate spheres, in Qatar, actually, we brought them together.

"And for arts and culture to thrive, it needs technology. So that becomes two sides of the same coin, which we call creativity. And we've done a lot in the field already in terms of investing in technology within our existing infrastructure," HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said.

The QM chairperson highlighted the country's long-term vision, launched in 2008 and aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030, as a framework for building

cultural and technological infrastructure. From the Museum of Islamic Art to the National Museum of Qatar, the nation has invested heavily in museums, creative hubs, and platforms that cultivate innovation.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa emphasised the importance of nurturing talent. "If you invest in creativity, it doesn't mean somebody will become an artist, it can be the next tech entrepreneur or the next president or the next whatever. So that was very, very important."

In line with this vision, QM announced several initiatives at the summit, including a partnership with Google Cloud to transform the nation's cultural investments into an educational Mario Kart game, and plans for the Dadu Children's Museum, set to open in 2029, which will integrate AI into learning and play.

The National Museum of Qatar already hosts a Microsoft AI lab, reflecting the growing role of technology in education and cultural engagement. HE Sheikha Al Mayassa also highlighted Qatar's Creative Visa programme, which invites curators and artists to reside in the country and



HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums (QM), at the Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday.

contribute to its cultural ecosystem. She noted that holders of the Creative Visa have the flexibility to reside in Qatar either full-time or part-time, attracting numerous artists and creatives drawn by the country's robust infrastructure and abundant opportunities.

According to her, Art Basel Qatar, launching in parallel with Web Summit, exemplifies the country's vision of blending art and tech-

nology. Curated by Wael Shawky, the first recipient of the creative visa, the fair integrates exhibitions within urban museum spaces, making art accessible while fostering global creative exchange.

She underscored the broader purpose of Qatar's cultural strategy, saying: "I believe museums today are the most relevant public spaces that we have, and it brings people of all walks of life together.

"You are able to feel confident and safe to discuss any initiative in any project that you want, because really, frankly, we're not here to judge people's discourse. We're here to encourage people to, you know, to exchange ideas, to see eye to eye with each other, and to respect each other."

Pointing to global collaborations, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa highlighted how technology has expanded cultural exchange. She said video platforms and AI go beyond mere tools, enabling the creation of sustainable, long-term connections and fostering global collaboration in ways previously unimaginable.

Through strategic investments in museums, creative programmes, and technology-driven learning, the QM chairperson said Qatar is positioning itself as a hub for cultural and technological innovation. The country is building an ecosystem where art fuels technological advancement, technology enriches artistic expression, and together they empower people — an approach showcased at Art Basel Qatar, which invites attendees to experience this dynamic exchange of ideas firsthand.

Enterprise adoption easing AI bubble fears, say industry experts

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Industry experts eased fears of a near-term artificial intelligence (AI) crash during a Web Summit panel on February 2, saying that while hype and overpricing exist in parts of the market, businesses are already seeing real benefits from AI, supporting long-term growth.

The session, titled 'Is the AI bubble about to burst?', was moderated by *The Economist's* Middle East correspondent Gregg Carlstrom and brought together industry experts and investors from Silicon Valley and the Middle East to assess whether the surge in AI investment reflects a speculative bubble or a lasting technological shift.

Rajeev Dham, managing director at Sapphire Ventures, said the key test would be whether companies can create real value from AI at scale. Speaking from his perspective as an enterprise-focused investor, he said the industry remains in its early stages but is already delivering measurable returns.

"A lot of people thought last year



The session at Web Summit Qatar 2026 brought together industry experts and investors from Silicon Valley and the Middle East to assess whether the surge in AI investment reflects a speculative bubble or a lasting technological shift. **PICTURE:** Joey Aguilar

was going to be the year of agents," Dham said, referring to autonomous AI systems that can carry out complex tasks. While more advanced systems are beginning to emerge, he noted that most short-term value is still coming from early generative AI tools based on large language models.

Dham said software development, customer support and legal services were among the first sectors to benefit, describing them

as "very powerful" use cases that are already producing real returns for companies. These tools, which focus on generating and summarising language, are helping businesses save time and reduce costs, even as more advanced AI agents remain under development.

Tala al-Jabri, founder and managing partner of Wyld VC, addressed concerns that investment may be unevenly spread across hardware, infrastructure and soft-

ware. While it is too early to identify clear winners and losers, she said large-scale investment in infrastructure is unavoidable.

"We need to build the railways for the 21st century, for the AI age," she said, comparing today's AI spending to the early investments that supported past industrial and digital revolutions. However, she warned that some areas remain underfunded, particularly specialised applications and tools built on

top of fast-evolving AI models.

"The models are moving so quickly that tooling companies can't keep up," al-Jabri said, adding that many promising opportunities exist beyond the most high-profile AI companies. The panel also revisited comparisons with the dot-com boom and bust of the late 1990s. Anand Chandrasekaran, managing partner at Celesta Capital, said the comparison is often overstated. He noted that during the dot-com era, telecom firms built large amounts of unused "dark fibre", creating infrastructure far ahead of demand.

By contrast, he said, today's AI infrastructure is being actively used. While some companies may be valued ahead of their fundamentals, he argued this does not amount to a broader market bubble. The discussion also explored why AI adoption remains uneven, particularly in the United States. Carlstrom cited *The Economist's* estimate that only about 11% of US workers use AI regularly at work.

Dham said the figure likely understates actual usage because of "shadow AI", where employees use tools informally without official approval. More broadly, he said AI has yet to be fully integrated into

everyday work processes. "The question isn't why it's 11%," he said. "It's why it's not 99%."

Chandrasekaran added that concerns around data security and job losses are slowing adoption, especially in large organisations where influence is still linked to team size rather than AI-driven productivity. Al-Jabri said the Middle East stands out globally due to higher adoption rates driven by proactive government policies. She pointed to Qatar and the UAE, where AI strategies have been embedded across the public sector, including mandatory AI or agent development for government employees in the UAE.

Dham also highlighted a major shift in public markets, with US semiconductor stocks outperforming traditional cloud software companies as investment flows into AI infrastructure. Despite recent market volatility, he said there remains "a lot of room to run" given the rapid growth of AI-driven businesses.

Al-Jabri cautioned, however, that some headline AI valuations are inflated and risk overshadowing smaller but strategically important companies building core AI infrastructure and software.