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# GULF TIMES BUSINESS



**AI MILESTONE: Page 3**

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## Qatar's export unit value index rises 4.44% in Q1

**QNA**  
Doha

The State of Qatar's Export Unit Value Index (EXUVI) reached 120.99 points in the first quarter of 2026, rising by 10.19% compared with the fourth quarter of 2025 and by 4.44% year-on-year compared with the corresponding quarter of 2025, according to the index issued by the National Planning Council (NPC).

The index consists of 10 major groups encompassing around 56 commodities. It monitors changes in the unit values of prices of commodities exported by the State to foreign markets from one period to another, thereby providing a clear picture of the State's economy using export data classified according to the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev. 4).

Three commodity groups accounted for approximately 99.5% of the index's relative weight. The mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials group held the largest relative weight at 88.77%.

The chemicals and related products group ranked next with a relative weight of 8.04%, while the manufactured goods classified chiefly by material group came in third place, accounting for 2.63% of the index weight.

A comparison between the first quarter of 2026 and the fourth quarter of 2025 showed increases in three groups. The mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials group rose by 11.33%, the manufactured goods classified chiefly by material group increased by 7.63%, and the food and live animals group edged up by 0.10%.

Meanwhile, declines were recorded in six groups. Beverages and tobacco fell by 2.67%, commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere in the SITC declined by 1.70%, miscellaneous manufactured articles decreased by 1.47%, machinery and transport equipment dropped by 1.34%, chemicals and related products fell



by 0.78%, and crude materials, inedible, except fuels declined by 0.66%.

No change was recorded in the animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes group.

In the same context, a comparison between the first quarter of 2026 and the corresponding quarter of the previous year (the first quarter of 2025) showed, according to NPC data, increases in five groups.

Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material rose by 6.71%, food and live animals increased by 5.43%, mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials advanced

by 4.69%, chemicals and related products grew by 1.27%, and beverages and tobacco increased by 1.08%.

The groups that recorded declines were miscellaneous manufactured articles, down by 4.76%; machinery and transport equipment, down by 4.21%; animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes, down by 1.98%; and crude materials, inedible, except fuels, down by 1.07%.

Meanwhile, no change was recorded in the commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere in the SITC group.

### Sheikh Faisal meets Apollo Global CEO



HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani met on Monday with Chief Executive Officer of Apollo Global Management Marc Rowan during his visit to the State of Qatar, reports QNA. Discussions during the meeting focused on means of cooperation in the investment area, available opportunities to promote the business climate and attract investment, as well as a variety of matters of mutual interest.

### Al-Kaabi meets head of China's National Energy Administration



The Minister of State for Energy Affairs HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi held a meeting yesterday with Wang Hongzhi, the administrator of the National Energy Administration of the People's Republic of China. Discussions during the meeting, which was held virtually, dealt with energy relations and cooperation between Qatar and China and means to enhance them.

### MoCI launches commercial activity classification update for registered companies

**QNA**  
Doha

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) on Monday launched an update of commercial activities registered under the Unified Economic Guide for the Classification of Economic Activities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

In a statement, the Ministry said the update aims to unify classifications, improve data quality, and enhance transparency in the business environment, without affecting the nature of activities or commercial registrations. The Ministry noted that the initiative seeks to align registered activities with the GCC Unified Economic Classification and develop a more accurate classification system that reflects regulatory requirements and economic developments. It also aims to streamline procedures, establish a unified reference framework for activities, and reduce overlap and duplication.

According to the Ministry, the update targets business owners, existing companies, and relevant government entities, and will be implemented in three phases.

The first phase, which begins on Monday, covers companies whose registered activities correspond directly to a specific activity within the Unified Economic Classification. The second phase will begin on June 15 and will include activities that correspond to more than one classification category.

The third phase will start on June 30 and will cover mixed activities, including both commercial and industrial activities.

The Ministry confirmed that the update process will be carried out automatically in accordance with the approved classification and will not require any action by business owners. It added that the update will not affect the nature of activities or commercial registrations.

## Qatar maritime trade activity accelerates in May

**By Ayman Adly**  
Staff Reporter

Qatar's maritime sector continued its upward course in May, with significant increases in container handling, cargo throughput, livestock imports, and vessel arrivals across the country's main ports operated by Mwani Qatar.

The latest figures underscore the growing role of Qatar's ports in supporting national trade, food security, logistics efficiency, and regional supply chains.

According to data released by Mwani Qatar, the country's ports handled more than 73,173 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) during last month, representing a remarkable 44% month-on-month (m-o-m) increase. The strong rise in container traffic reflects growing import and export activity, increased transshipment operations, and the continued expansion of maritime trade through Qatar's strategic gateways.

The operational performance was supported by the activities of Qatar's three main ports: Hamad Port, Doha Port, and Al-Ruwais Port. These facilities continue to serve as critical hubs connecting Qatar with major international shipping routes and more than 100 global destinations. Bulk cargo volumes also recorded substantial growth during the month, exceeding 48,077 tonnes, highlighting increased demand for raw materials and industrial commodities required to support economic and infrastructure activities across the country. General cargo handling reached 2,488 tonnes, reflecting the steady movement of diverse com-



mercial goods through Qatar's maritime gateways. Qatar's ports processed around 20,070

heads of livestock during the same period. Such constant flow of livestock imports has been playing a vital role in strengthen-

ing the nation's food security strategy and ensuring stable supplies to the local market, particularly amid growing consumer demand especially during the recent Eid holidays.

In the meantime, vessel traffic demonstrated positive momentum, as a total of 100 ships called at Qatar's ports during the month, marking an 8% increase compared with April in the same year, which indicates a growing confidence among international shipping lines in Qatar's port infrastructure, operational efficiency, and logistics capabilities.

May's results represent a significant improvement over the previous month's performance, when Qatar's ports handled 50,738 TEUs, 8,600 tonnes of bulk cargo, 9,379 heads of livestock, and 93 vessels. The month-on-month gains clearly show accelerating trade activity and stronger cargo flows across multiple sectors.

Qatar's maritime sector has benefited from sustained investments in advanced port infrastructure, digital logistics solutions, and expanded shipping connectivity. Hamad Port, in particular, has strengthened its position as one of the region's leading maritime hubs, handling approximately 1.44mn TEUs during 2025 and serving as a key transshipment centre for regional and international trade. Besides, the latest figures align with broader growth trends recorded during Q1 2026, when Qatar's ports handled more than 291,000 TEUs, over 237,000 tonnes of general cargo, and around 200,000 tonnes of bulk cargo, demonstrating the sector's sustained expansion throughout the year.



## Turkey's economy cools more than expected in first quarter

**Bloomberg**  
Istanbul

Turkey's economy cooled in the first quarter of this year as the central bank moved to tighten monetary policy to deter risks related to the Iran war. Gross domestic product only expanded 0.1% in the first quarter from the previous three months on a seasonally-adjusted basis, data on Monday showed. That's down from 0.4% in the prior three months and worse than every estimate in a Bloomberg survey of economists, whose median was for

0.3% expansion. On an annual basis, GDP growth reached 2.5% in the first quarter, compared with 3.4% in the preceding period. The data come as Turkey faces renewed risks from the conflict in Iran, a shock that has pushed up energy-market volatility and complicated the Turkish central bank's efforts to curb inflation. Turkey imports most of its oil and natural gas, making the economy particularly vulnerable to higher global energy prices. The central bank reversed its easing cycle earlier this year and raised a key interest rate to contain market volatility stemming from a broader

selloff in emerging markets assets. ■ Household consumption, which accounts for about three-quarters of the economy, grew 4.8% on an annual basis versus 5.2% in the previous period. ■ Government final consumption expenditure increased 2.1% in the first quarter, up from 0.9% decrease in the last quarter. ■ Exports of goods and services contracted 12.7% versus 2.3% contraction in the previous period. Last month, the monetary authority sharply revised its year-end inflation target to 24% from 16%, citing elevated energy and food prices. Prior to Monday's GDP reading, some

global banks suggested that the policymakers may consider raising rates in June. The next rate-setting meeting is scheduled for June 11. "We had thought that pressure on the lira from a higher energy import bill, as well as the political turmoil a few weeks ago, would prompt the central bank to raise policy rates at next week's MPC meeting. We haven't dropped that forecast, but the decline in oil prices since late last week and this GDP release make such a move somewhat less likely," William Jackson, chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, wrote in a note.

# Factories face soaring costs as Iran war causes supply shocks

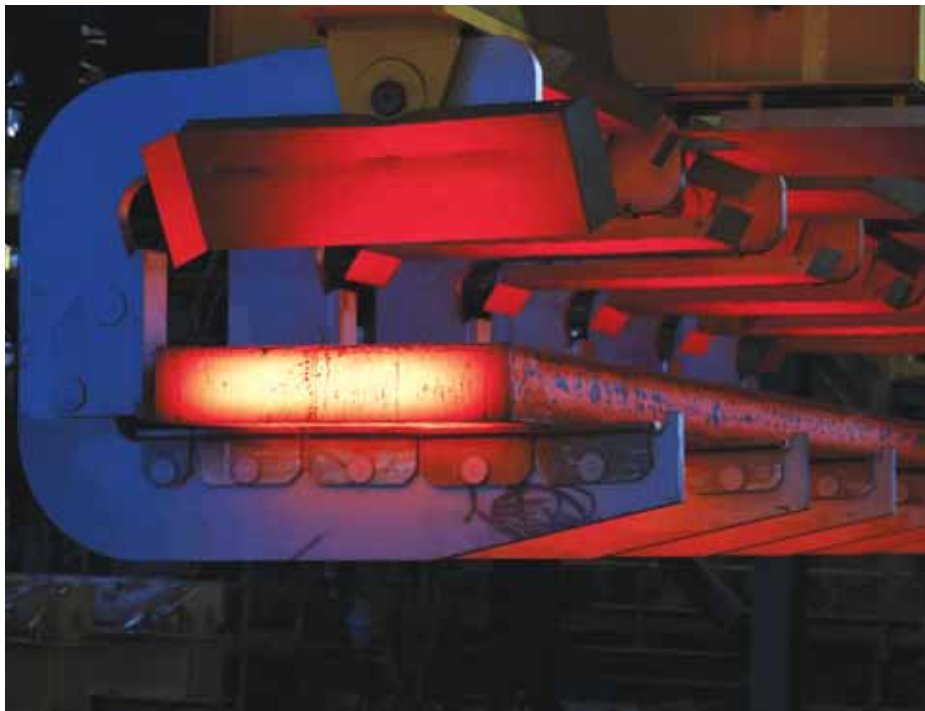
■ Demand for European goods stagnated in May  
■ Britain's factories raised their prices at fastest rate since June 2022  
■ Private survey shows China's factory activity expanded in May

**Reuters**  
London/Tokyo

The economic shock from the Iran war hit European factories last month, suppressing demand for their goods and pushing up raw material costs at the fastest rate in four years, although their Asian peers saw activity expand due to stockpiling, surveys showed on Monday.

The US-Israeli conflict with Iran, which began in late February, has upended trade, rattled financial markets and raised concerns over global energy supplies, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, a key route for oil and gas shipments. Monday's surveys came after the heads of the International Energy Agency, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization warned the war was straining global energy supplies.

S&P Global's Eurozone Manufacturing PMI fell to 51.6 in May from April's near four-year high of 52.2, but



A glowing steel slab is carried in a new continuous caster during its commissioning at the steel plant of ThyssenKrupp Steel in Duisburg, Germany (file). In Germany, Europe's largest economy, the manufacturing sector stalled while French factories saw a contraction for the first time since November.

ahead of a preliminary estimate of 51.4. A reading above 50.0 indicates growth.

"Although euro area manufacturers reported an expansion for a fourth successive month in May, the sector is showing signs of struggling under the weight of rising prices and supply disruptions emanating from the

war in the Middle East," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

In Germany, Europe's largest economy, the manufacturing sector stalled while French factories saw a contraction for the first time since November.

The European Central Bank

will hike its deposit rate this month and at least once more this year to try to stop higher energy prices feeding into core inflation, according to a majority of economists polled by Reuters in May.

Official data due on Tuesday is expected to show inflation rose further above the ECB's 2% target last month.

British factories raised their prices at the fastest rate since June 2022 last month in response to a big increase in costs.

Still, factory activity expanded in most Asian economies.

China's private sector gauge grew for a sixth straight month and South Korea's hit the fastest pace in five years, highlighting a region-wide push to build buffers against potential conflict-led disruptions.

The RatingDog China General Manufacturing PMI, compiled by S&P Global, fell to 51.8 in May from 52.2 in April, but was slightly better than analysts' forecast of 51.6. That outcome contrasted with an official survey showing factory activity in the world's second-largest economy stalled last month as new orders contracted and input costs kept rising.

Japan's factory activity also expanded with the PMI at 54.5 in May, slowing from April's more than four-year high of 55.1, though firms there reported the sharpest rise in input costs since September 2022 due to higher raw material prices.

In Vietnam, the factory PMI gauge rose to 52.8 from 50.5, while Taiwan's rose to 56.1 from 55.3, surveys showed. The index for the Philippines jumped to 50.8 from 48.3.

## Macron announces €93bn in 'Choose France' investments

**AFP**  
Versailles, France

President Emmanuel Macron said he was expecting "record" foreign investment amounting to €93bn (\$108bn) at an international conference Monday, including for artificial intelligence and data centres.

Around 200 executives from around the world are expected at the Versailles palace west of Paris for Macron's annual "Choose France" event.

Last year's conference set a record of €20bn (\$23.3bn) in announced projects.

But money already pledged for this year is set to surpass the combined €87bn raised over the past eight years, according to Macron's office.

"This edition of Choose France alone will make it possible to crystallise a record amount of €93bn in confirmed investments, for more than 15,000 jobs. It is obviously by far a record edition, and it is historic," Macron said.

The pledges include €45bn from Japanese tech investor SoftBank, Macron said.

Its founder, Masayoshi Son, said over the weekend that it would spend €75bn on artificial intelligence infrastructure, including €45bn by 2031 on data centres in northern France.

Macron said the other investments would be directed toward artificial intelligence, data centres, semiconductors, critical minerals, tractors and trucks, steel and healthcare.

Macron said the projects would help "make France by far the leading country hosting data centres" and "computing capacity in Europe", as well as a "forward base for the production of AI robots, and for industrialisation through AI".

"We are clearly bridging the gap we had in computing capacities in Europe," compared with the US and China, he added.

SoftBank's Son said the country's nuclear-powered electricity was a key factor in choosing France.

Now we can "convert electricity as a raw material into more high-value intelligence", he added, including for export.

Among other investors, Canadian asset manager Brookfield is to invest \$10bn in a data centre in northern France.

The Emirati fund MGX and French public investment bank Bpifrance said they would be investing around €7.5bn in AI-related infrastructure at a second site, after a first already under construction.

Retail giant Amazon — which said this month that it would invest more than €15bn in France over the next three years, creating 7,000 jobs — said it would create an additional 1,000 jobs at three logistics centres.

Since the first "Choose France" in 2018, a year after Macron came to power, more than 230 projects have been announced, representing several thousand jobs, according to the Elysee.

France has attracted the most foreign investment in Europe for seven straight years, according to the consultancy EY.

## Bloomberg QuickTake Q&A

# A rare 'Super El Nino' looking more likely: Here's what to expect

By **Brian K Sullivan**

A cyclical weather phenomenon that can drive flooding in one continent and drought in another looks increasingly likely to emerge this year.

El Nino occurs when the atmosphere reacts to a sustained warming of Pacific Ocean surface temperatures above normal levels. The water has been rapidly heating up in recent months, and the odds of El Nino forming by the end of July have climbed to 82%, according to the US Climate Prediction Center. The looming El Nino could be particularly powerful. There's a 67% chance it may evolve into a strong or very strong event — what's informally known as a "Super El Nino" — heading into 2027.

While El Nino originates in the Pacific, its impact stretches across continents, rippling through crop and energy markets. Its return would come at a tricky time for the global economy, which is already contending with an energy crunch, fertilizer shortages and inflationary pressures due to the war in the Middle East.

### What is El Nino?

El Nino was first observed in the 1600s by Peruvian fishermen, who noticed that Pacific waters were unusually warm around Christmas time in some years. They named this naturally occurring phenomenon "El Nino de Navidad."

During El Nino, trade winds that normally blow east-to-west and push warm Pacific water toward Asia begin to weaken or even reverse direction. It's unclear what triggers this shift, but it results in warm water drifting toward the Americas, heating large parts of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. The extra warmth changes the atmosphere above the sea. Storm tracks shift and rainfall patterns move.

### How often does El Nino occur?

There's no fixed timetable for when El Nino emerges. It typically appears every two to seven years and varies in strength and duration. The last event was in 2023-2024.

El Nino is part of a larger Pacific climate cycle known as the El Nino-Southern Oscillation,

or ENSO. The cycle swings between El Nino, its cooler counterpart La Nina and a neutral phase in between. During La Nina, the east-to-west trade winds become stronger, pushing warm water further west and resulting in a cooler-than-usual eastern Pacific.

The immense size of the Pacific Ocean, which covers around a third of the planet's surface, gives ENSO an outsized influence on global weather. While similar climate patterns exist in the Atlantic and Indian oceans, they don't have the same reach. El Nino and La Nina events usually peak between December and January, although their effects can linger for months.

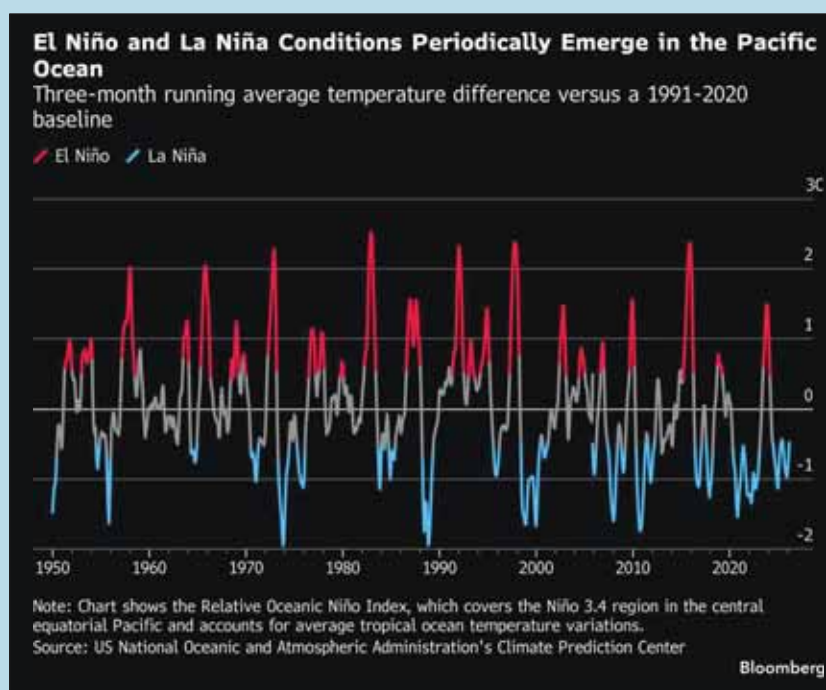
### What is a "Super El Nino"?

El Nino is identified by monitoring the temperature levels in the Pacific Ocean, most commonly in a region known as Nino 3.4. The threshold for El Nino used by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is when the sea surface temperature exceeds the long-term average by at least 0.5C (0.9F) for five consecutive overlapping three-month periods. For a strong El Nino, the temperature difference must be at least 1.5C; for a very strong El Nino it must reach at least 2C.

"Super El Nino" isn't an official term used by forecasters such as NOAA and the World Meteorological Organization. It's been popularized this year as a very strong El Nino looks to be on the cards. Very strong El Ninos are rare. There have only been around a handful since 1950 and the last one was in 2015-2016. Severe weather events are more likely to occur when there's a stronger El Nino, but they're not guaranteed.

### How is the weather affected by El Nino?

The heat that El Nino slowly releases from the Pacific Ocean into the atmosphere often pushes global temperatures to new highs. Scientists expect 2027 to be one of the hottest years on record, potentially dethroning 2024, which came in 1.5C above the pre-industrial average, according to NOAA. El Nino doesn't hit every region in the same way. The effects typically materialize in the tropics first, before spreading across Australia, Asia, the Americas and Africa.



Australia, Southeast Asia, the northern US and Canada usually become hotter and drier, making them more prone to drought and wildfires. India can experience disruptions to monsoon rainfall. The southern US, Chile, Argentina and parts of East Africa frequently experience wetter conditions and a greater risk of flooding. The Atlantic hurricane season often becomes quieter during El Nino years because increased wind shear — a sudden change in wind speed or direction — tears apart developing storms. The hurricanes that do form could still be highly destructive, but a lower frequency could reduce the harm to communities and infrastructure and limit disruption to oil and gas assets in the Gulf of Mexico. There are usually around 14 named Atlantic storms from June through November — storms are given names when their wind speeds reach 39 miles (63 kilometers) per hour. NOAA expects there to be only eight to 14 this time around, in part due to El Nino. By contrast, typhoon activity across the Pacific tends to increase during El Nino years. The warmer water provides more fuel for

these tropical storms, meaning Asia could face increased risk of typhoon damage.

### Why do the changes from El Nino matter?

El Nino is one of the world's most closely watched climate signals because it offers clues about storms, drought risk, crop yields and energy demand months in advance. Utilities use ENSO forecasts to gauge demand for heating and cooling. Higher temperatures boost electricity consumption for air conditioning. This can strain power grids and trigger blackouts. Less rainfall reduces output from hydroelectric dams. Commodity traders watch for threats to crops, mining operations, oil and gas production and shipping routes. Drought can lower water levels in the Panama Canal, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, slowing cargo traffic through one of the world's busiest shipping bottlenecks. El Nino can have both positive and negative effects but the global economic losses have historically outweighed the regional benefits.

Scientists at Dartmouth College looked at the lingering five-year fallout from El Ninos and estimated that the 1997-1998 event led to \$5.7tn in lost gross domestic product globally.

### How does El Nino affect food production?

Some crops benefit from El Nino. Higher rainfall in California, for example, is good for avocado and almond yields. However, many staples, including rice, wheat, palm oil, coffee and sugar, are produced in areas likely to face drier and hotter conditions. Beyond the impact on land, El Nino can disrupt ocean fisheries. The warm Pacific water flowing eastward keeps a lid on cooler, nutrient-rich water ascending to the sea surface, resulting in fewer phytoplankton for fish to eat. Some fish, such as anchovies off the coast of Peru, may seek cooler, deeper water, making them harder to catch, while tropical species may venture to areas that are normally too cold.

Lower crop harvests, smaller fishing hauls and livestock casualties from extreme weather can threaten global food security and push up prices. Dead corn plants at a drought-affected farm in Pasaquina, La Union department, El Salvador in 2023.

### Is climate change affecting El Nino?

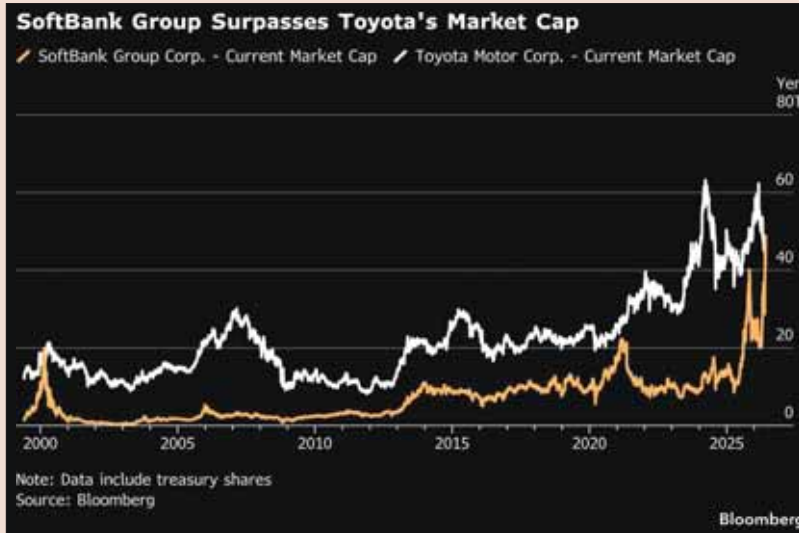
Scientists are still debating how climate change may influence the frequency and intensity of El Nino. Earlier models predicted that the natural phenomenon might become more common as the planet warmed. Yet much of the 21st century has instead been dominated by La Niña conditions, underscoring how much scientists still don't understand about the ENSO cycle. There are also concerns about overestimating El Ninos and underestimating La Ninas as the oceans get hotter, given that they're typically determined by measuring anomalous warmth compared with preceding decades. There is growing agreement that a hotter world can intensify many of El Nino's impacts. Higher temperatures can worsen drought in already dry regions, while warmer air holds more moisture, which can make downpours heavier during storms.

# SoftBank Group overtakes Toyota as Japan's most valuable company

**Bloomberg**  
Tokyo

SoftBank Group Corp overtook Toyota Motor Corp as Japan's most valuable company on Monday, marking a milestone for the global artificial intelligence boom and a dramatic reshuffling of the country's corporate hierarchy. Shares of the Masayoshi Son-led technology group climbed 14% in Tokyo trading, pushing its market capitalization past Toyota's for the first time in more than two decades. The feat was last achieved only briefly during the peak of Japan's internet bubble in 2000, based on market value including treasury shares. The rally has propelled SoftBank shares up more than 90% this year, pushing the company's market value above ¥48tn, higher than Toyota's around ¥46tn. Toyota shares, by contrast, have fallen more than 10% this year. The changing of the guard underscores how

rapidly investor tastes have shifted toward companies that are benefiting from the AI buildout. It also reflects how the fortunes of two Japanese corporate titans have diverged, as macroeconomic headwinds and geopolitical tensions weigh on the auto sector while AI euphoria takes hold. "This epoch-making event symbolizes the AI boom," said Kazuhiro Sasaki, head of research at Phillip Securities Japan Ltd. "Extraordinary conditions are emerging around expectations for massive IPOs in the US," triggering a reshuffle of capital, he said. Japan's memory-chip maker Kioxia Holdings Corp's market cap is also hovering around ¥40tn, making it Japan's third-most valuable company, surpassing Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc. The supplier of NAND flash chips expects to earn more in the current quarter than it did in the 12 months ended March due to AI data centers' voracious appetite for data storage.



The rally has propelled SoftBank shares up more than 90% this year, pushing the company's market value above ¥48tn, higher than Toyota's around ¥46tn. Toyota shares, by contrast, have fallen more than 10% this year.

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## QIB named 'Best Bank in Qatar' by *Global Finance*; wins 3 Islamic finance awards

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has won four titles at the *Global Finance Awards 2026*, reaffirming its leadership across banking, investment, and wealth management services locally and globally.

The awards are 'Best Bank in Qatar', 'Best Islamic Financial Institution in Qatar', 'Best Islamic Investment Bank', and 'Best Islamic Asset Manager in the World'.

QIB's continued recognition is underpinned by its strong financial performance and disciplined execution across all business segments. In 2025, the bank reported a net profit of QR4.83bn, representing a 5% year-on-year (y-o-y) growth, with total assets reaching QR221.1bn and customer deposits of QR142.7bn. Building on this momentum, QIB delivered strong results in the first quarter of 2026, with net profit reaching QR986mn in Q1 2026. Total assets increased to QR224bn, while financing assets and customer deposits continued to grow, reflecting the resilience and strength of the bank's operating model. The bank maintained a cost-to-income ratio of 17%, the best in the Qatari banking sector. The bank continues to strengthen its position through a diversified portfolio of Shariah-compliant products and services designed to meet the evolving needs of individual, corporate, and institutional customers. QIB offers a wide range of investment and financing solutions, including sukuk, Islamic mutual funds, deposits, treasury and capital market solutions, supported by strong advisory and execution capabilities across various sectors and markets.

QIB's recognition also reflects its continued leadership in digital banking and innovation, supported by strong customer adoption across its digital channels. Mobile banking penetration among active customers reached around 90%, with the number of logins exceeding 5mn per month, and total financial and non-financial transactions through mobile banking increased by 32%, highlighting the growing reliance on QIB's digital ecosystem for everyday banking needs.

The bank continues to enhance its award-winning QIB Mobile App, which now offers more than 320 features and services, enabling customers to seamlessly manage accounts, access financing and investment services, conduct local and international transfers, and monitor their financial activities securely and efficiently. QIB also recorded strong growth across its digital sales

### QIB wins four awards from *Global Finance*:

- Best Bank in Qatar
- Best Islamic Financial Institution in Qatar
- Best Islamic Investment Bank in the World
- Best Islamic Asset Manager in the World



**QIB's continued recognition is underpinned by its strong financial performance and disciplined execution across all business segments. In 2025, the bank reported a net profit of QR4.83bn, representing a 5% year-on-year growth, with total assets reaching QR221.1bn and customer deposits of QR142.7bn**

and onboarding, with more than 50% of retail sales and new customers onboarding generated digitally. QIB also continues to strengthen its corporate and SME banking proposition through a comprehensive suite of Shariah-compliant financing, transaction banking, and digital solutions tailored to the evolving needs of businesses in Qatar.

Through its Corporate Internet Banking platform and Corporate Mobile App, businesses can seamlessly manage accounts, liquidity, payroll and WPS services, execute local and international transfers, and access a wide range of banking services securely and efficiently. Complementing its digital capabilities, QIB offers integrated payment acceptance solutions, dedicated relationship management, and sector-focused advisory services, supporting businesses across various sectors

and contributing to Qatar's economic growth. Bassel Gamal, QIB Group CEO, said: "We are pleased to receive these distinguished recognitions from *Global Finance*, which reflect the strength of QIB's strategy, strong financial performance, and continued commitment to delivering innovative Shariah-compliant banking solutions supported by advanced digital capabilities and a customer-centric approach. "These awards reinforce our position as one of the leading Islamic banks regionally and globally and motivate us to continue contributing to the development of Qatar's financial sector in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment from our team and the support of our Board of Directors as well as our customers' trust and loyalty."

## 'Discipline over visibility' seen key for Qatar MSME success

By Peter Alagos  
Business Editor

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Qatar's construction sector must move beyond visibility and adopt disciplined practices if they are to convert opportunities into lasting business, according to a business networking expert.

Mohammed Shabeeb, national director of BNI Qatar, told *Gulf Times* that "visibility is the cheapest part of the equation," while conversion requires structured effort before, during, and after industry events.

Shabeeb was specifically referring to the 22nd edition of Project Qatar, which is slated from June 9 to 11 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC). He explained how structured networking and targeted pre-event preparation, and not passive floor presence, will determine which MSMEs will secure high-value commercial deals during these events.

He explained that before an exhibition, MSMEs need clarity on who they want to meet and why. "Pre-event outreach to 20 target contacts, inviting them to the stand will outperform passively waiting for foot traffic by a wide margin," Shabeeb pointed out.

The team manning the stand must also be trained, not just in product knowledge but in asking qualifying questions, "because not every visitor is worth a 30 minute conversation," he emphasised.



Mohammed Shabeeb, national director of BNI Qatar.

During the event, discipline means capturing the right information rather than the most information, Shabeeb further explained, adding that taking notes about a visitor's actual project, problem, and decision timeline are

"worth more than a stack of business cards."

He stated that MSMEs can strengthen their reputation by introducing visitors to each other, positioning themselves as connectors

rather than passive exhibitors. "And the often missed move is to introduce visitors to each other; when an MSME becomes a connector on the floor, they earn a reputation that lasts beyond the show," he said.

Shabeeb warned that the post-event is where most opportunities are lost. "A follow up sent within 72 hours, referencing the specific conversation, is the difference between being remembered and being forgotten," he further said.

He emphasised the importance of balancing persistence with patience in nurturing leads over time. "Patience without persistence loses. Persistence without patience offends. The deals are built through both," Shabeeb said.

Shabeeb also cautioned that exhibitions "are platforms, not solutions." He noted, "They open doors, but it is the responsibility of the business owner to walk through them with strategy and discipline."

He also said these dynamics are visible at industry exhibitions, such as Project Qatar, where MSMEs can meet procurement officers, consultants, and contractors in one venue, but only those who arrive with a plan and follow through after the event stand to benefit.

"Project Qatar is one of the few environments in the country where those three roles are physically in the same building at the same time. That makes it useful, but only if the MSME treats it as a vertical integration exercise by meeting the consultant who specifies, the contractor who installs, and the developer who pays, all in the same week," he added.

## China tightens outbound investment rules in US tech rivalry

Bloomberg  
Hong Kong

China strengthened oversight of outbound investment through a new directive, tightening cross-border capital flows as its technology rivalry with the US intensifies.

The rule, published Monday by China's cabinet, seeks to "improve" reviews for overseas investments that could affect national security. It strengthens requirements for domestic organizations and individuals to assist with such reviews and comply with decisions, in what appears to be efforts to unify and harden previously fragmented regulations.

Under the regulation, effective July 1, investors are prohibited from transferring restricted goods, technology, services and data overseas without prior authorization. Companies are also banned from providing technical training in order to export those things, according to the document.

The comprehensive document builds on existing rules scattered among various ministries already regulating outbound investments, including the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Commerce and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

"I'd frame the new regulation as an attempt to kill two birds with one stone: deterring further capital flight while also co-opting Chinese firms and investors as instruments in Beijing's broader strategic competition with the US," said Henry Gao, a law professor at Singapore Management University.

The move comes as Beijing and Washington are racing to dominate AI and other key technologies. The new rules were adopted at a meeting of the State Council on April 17, days before China ordered the cancellation of Meta Platforms Inc's \$2bn acquisition of agentic AI startup Manus.

The latest decree introduces explicit financial penalties for offenders. Investors that undertake prohibited overseas investments may be ordered to halt transactions, dispose of assets and pay fines of up to 1% of the investment amount.

In another statement released Monday, an unnamed government spokesperson said the measures were made to better protect Chinese outbound investment, citing "rising unilateralism, protectionism and isolation" and "discriminatory measures" against Chinese investors.

The directive also empowers Beijing to retaliate against foreign curbs on Chinese capital. Individuals and organizations involved in drafting or enforcing discriminatory policies face blacklisting, visa revocations, and trade or investment bans.

The measures expand a legal toolkit Beijing has spent recent years building to neutralize Western economic pressure, including an Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law in 2021 and a list of "unreliable entities" in 2019 that seeks to punish companies that threaten China's national security or interests.

### Anthropic confidentially files for IPO

AI giant Anthropic, the maker of the Claude chatbot, announced on Monday that it had filed confidentially for an initial public offering (IPO), as Silicon Valley AI companies look to raise the enormous sums needed to fuel the sector's rapid expansion, reports AFP.

A confidential filing lets a company submit its IPO paperwork to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for review without making its financials and business details public until much later in the process.

"This gives us the option to go public after the Securities and Exchange Commission completes its review," the company said in a statement. "The proposed initial public offering will depend on market conditions and other factors."

"The number of shares to be offered and the price have not yet been set," the company added.

The filing came just days after the company said it raised \$65bn in a new funding round that valued the OpenAI rival at \$965bn, putting it on the cusp of a trillion-dollar valuation.

The latest fundraising round confirmed Anthropic's place as one of the most significant players in AI, having built its reputation by focusing on delivering generative AI to enterprise clients. Anthropic's valuation puts it ahead of OpenAI, which was valued at \$852bn in March and is also aiming to go public, with a filing expected imminently. Founded in 2021 by siblings Dario and Daniela Amodei and other former executives at OpenAI, Anthropic has positioned itself as a safety-focused alternative in the AI race.

## Qatar, Uzbekistan chambers eye Joint Business Council activation

The chambers of commerce of Qatar and Uzbekistan recently held discussions on enhancing bilateral cooperation, activating the Qatari-Uzbek Joint Business Council, and identifying its members and the sectors it will represent.

Qatar Chamber board member Mohamed bin Ahmed al-Obaidli met with Jamil Maksudi, advisor to the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, during the meeting held in Tashkent. Also in attendance was Ahmed Abu Nahya, the director of Qatar Chamber's Public Relations Department. During the meeting, both officials discussed economic and trade relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen them, as well as key areas of cooperation and partnership between the private sectors of both countries across several industries. They also reviewed the investment climate and incentives available in Qatar and Uzbekistan, in addition to exploring opportunities for cooperation in the halal industry. In his remarks, al-Obaidli stressed that Qatar and Uzbekistan enjoy

strong and steadily growing relations. He noted, however, that the current volume of bilateral trade "remains below the aspirations of both sides."

Al-Obaidli emphasised the important role of the private sector in enhancing trade and economic cooperation through the establishment of joint ventures and investment projects, particularly in light of the attractive investment climate and wide range of opportunities available in both markets.

He also highlighted the importance of holding bilateral meetings between business leaders from both countries to explore opportunities for cooperation and partnership in sectors, such as healthcare, education, agriculture, technology, and innovation. He noted that Qatar is well positioned to serve as a regional hub for technology, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and other advanced technology sectors. In turn, Maksudi stated that Uzbekistan intends to establish an international financial centre, with Islamic finance among its key

priorities, which would open new opportunities for Qatari investors. He also highlighted the wide range of investment opportunities available to Qatari investors across various sectors, noting that his country is planning to develop the "New Tashkent" project, aimed at attracting leading global companies specialising in smart city development. He said Qatari companies could contribute to this project, particularly given Qatar's strong expertise in smart city development.

Maksudi further noted that innovation, the halal industry, tourism, and logistics represent key pillars for cooperation and partnership between the business communities of both countries. He also lauded the significant progress achieved by Qatar in these fields.

The Uzbek side also delivered a presentation outlining the key features of the national economy and investment incentives. It further highlighted key opportunities in the textiles, leather, construction materials, and chemical and pharmaceutical industries.



During the meeting, Qatar Chamber board member Mohamed bin Ahmed al-Obaidli and Jamil Maksudi, advisor to the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, discussed economic and trade relations between the two countries