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Special Report

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ABDULLA MUBARAK AL-KHALIFA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, QNB GROUP

How is the bank supporting Qatar's long-term development goals, particularly in areas like infrastructure, education or entrepreneurship?

QNB's purpose is to promote prosperity and growth in the societies where we operate. Our mandate is to act as a financial intermediary to support the economic and social development of the State of Qatar. Over the decades, QNB has been pivotal in driving progress, supporting national strategic projects through infrastructure and investment financing. This has helped Qatar become one of the richest, most secure and stable countries in the world, with ample financial resources, a business-friendly environment and state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Since its inception, QNB has been a major contributor to the development of the supply chain that enabled Qatar to become one of the largest liquefied natural gas exporters globally. QNB also supported the inception and growth of national champions such as Qatar Energy, Qatar Airways, Ooredoo, Qatar Foundation and others. Furthermore, QNB has financed the country's infrastructure build-up including roads and the railway network, airport and port, utilities, as well as social infrastructure such as healthcare and education.

What role is the bank playing in supporting SMEs and expanding financial inclusion across Qatar?

The banking sector plays a crucial role in supporting this transition. Banks like QNB act as a one-stop shop through their various financing services, transaction banking services — such as trade finance and cash management — payments, merchant banking and e-commerce-related services. QNB is committed to providing the necessary financial resources and expertise to support the development of new industries and innovation. This involves facilitating investments in sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, healthcare and education, logistics, technology, smart cities and renewable energy.

We at QNB believe that financial inclusion is essential to achieve social equality and economic empowerment. Across the Group, we play a key role in bringing affordable and accessible financial services and products to underserved segments. QNB is committed to promote inclusion for all, starting with the unbanked, the youth and other customer focus areas.

What initiatives has the bank launched to develop Qatari talent and strengthen the future leadership of the banking sector?

Aside from financial capital, we consider human capital essential for value creation. Our strategy is to be an employer of choice. Despite our international growth, we remain faithful to our Qatari roots and heritage, serving Qatari society and supporting the growth trajectory of our country.

Today, our Qatarisation ratio is in excess of 60%, the highest within the financial services and private sector of the country. As part of our ongoing training and development, we have introduced several transformative initiatives designed to equip future Qatari talent with essential skills and knowledge. Our succession planning process ensures continuity to develop an in-house leadership bench. Furthermore, we are committed to supporting the next generation of Qatari university graduates as well as talented young professionals through our dedicated national leadership programmes.

What progress has the bank made in offering sustainable finance products or integrating climate-related risks into its operations?

As one of the largest financial institutions in the Middle East and Africa, we recognize the importance of environmental, social and governance issues and have consequently embedded the topic of sustainability in our purpose, strategy, business, operating model and enterprise risk management framework.

Our sustainable financing activities are supported by our market-leading QNB Group Sustainable Finance and Product Framework. The SFPPF allows us to structure financial instruments such as green loans, bonds, deposits, sustainability-linked loans and transition finance opportunities. This will enable us to promote ESG-themed opportunities.

Several years ago, we started to reflect the topic of climate risk as a new emerging risk category, which we integrated into our overall risk appetite and enterprise risk management framework. Since then, we regularly perform climate risk assessments to understand our climate exposure and have modelled climate risk scenarios until 2050. Furthermore, we have just this year concluded our group-wide climate change strategy that addresses the topic of climate risk as well as our commitment to



"Despite [the] drive of technological advancement across our business, we value the personal relationships and the human element of banking"

climate transition. The strategy also captures how we internally integrate the topic of climate risk in our operating model to continuously reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint.

How is the bank enhancing the customer experience, and what technologies or services are you excited about introducing in the near future?

As part of our efforts to leverage innovation as a strategic enabler, we decided to further emphasise our digital transformation to move from physical to digital channels and reduce physical interaction to improve the customer experience across all touchpoints.

To date, 90% of our customer interfacing processes are already digitised. We are investing in our IT capabilities as an enabler for further digitisation through the adoption of new technologies and application modernisation, while also uplifting our IT and system security. We will further leverage digitisation to drive efficiency and automation through robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning and the ongoing streamlining of our processes and systems.

Despite this drive of technological advancement across our business, we value the personal relationships and the human element of banking. Even in an increasingly digital and automated world, we believe that personal touch and technology can co-exist and complement each other. ●

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PRIVATE ENTERPRISE TAKES THE LEAD IN QATAR'S GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

Qatar is using its gas wealth to diversify its economy at remarkable speed. Massive growth in industries like logistics, leisure and tourism is being driven by entrepreneurial private businesses. They are supported by Qatar's banks, as well as an emerging ecosystem of venture capitalists

The history of Qatar's economic growth is inseparable from hydrocarbons. Natural gas deposits have propelled the country to the top of global energy markets and national per capita income rankings.

But the city state has also built a reputation for long-sighted strategy. Its government is pushing hard to transform Qatar into something more than simply a major energy exporter. Crucial to this transformation is building a more dynamic private sector to reduce reliance on state-led, hydrocarbon-fuelled investment.

The effort has already begun to show results. The non-hydrocarbon sector accounted for 61% of GDP in 2024, up from 48% in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund. Tourism, property and services are all major contributors to that growth. Over five million foreign visitors arrived in 2024 — a 25% rise on the year before.

“Major policy reforms under the Third National Development Strategy

[known as ND3] and National Vision 2030, focusing on improving business conditions and fostering public-private partnerships, have contributed considerably to reducing Qatar's reliance on the oil and gas sector,” says MR Raghu, CEO of Marmore MENA Intelligence, a research firm.

Launched in early 2024, the government's ND3 is designed to support economic diversification and the transition to what the IMF calls a “more sustainable and knowledge-based economy”. The state may be the enabler of this transition, but behind the shift are banks and investors working together to create an ecosystem where private businesses can thrive.

Qatari bank lending to the private sector has soared, from less than QR200bn (\$55bn) a decade ago to over QR900bn (\$247bn) as of July 2025, according to QNB Financial Services data.

Local banks are positioning themselves as partners for small and medium-sized enterprises,

entrepreneurs and major corporates. Venture capital investors argue there has never been a better moment for start-ups to take root in Doha.

ENERGISING ENTREPRENEURS

Qatar's diversification drive is in part about redirecting capital from the state-owned to the private sector. But it is also about creating the partnerships and support structures that will transform the country's entrepreneurial businesses into engines of growth.

In this sense, the country's banks are emerging as critical architects of a broader ecosystem. By aligning with state priorities under Vision 2030, they are helping to channel funds into sectors such as healthcare, tourism and technology — industries expected to form the backbone of the new, more resilient economy.

Leading lenders are collaborating with national agencies such as the Qatar Development Bank and the Qatar Financial Centre to better support non-hydrocarbon industries. It

“Major policy reforms under the Third National Development Strategy... have contributed considerably to reducing Qatar's reliance on the oil and gas sector”

—MR Raghu, CEO of Marmore MENA Intelligence

Picture: Financial centre in Doha

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Marmore MENA Intelligence on reforms:

"Qatar's non-hydrocarbon diversification is slightly behind that of GCC peers such as UAE and Saudi Arabia. Both have been more aggressive in their approach to private sector reforms that include lowering foreign ownership restrictions, updating regulations to make them more business-friendly, relaxing visa restrictions for expats, providing support to the SME sector, providing incentives for foreign companies to set up their regional headquarters and widening their capital markets."

it is these partnerships that allow banks to back SMEs and mid-sized firms with a mix of financing, advisory services and export support.

At the same time, they are embedding sustainability and green finance into their strategies, ensuring that emerging businesses can grow in ways that align with Qatar's long term goals.

Diversification is no longer a side project — it is hardwired into the city state's financial sector strategy. The result is an institutional effort to provide clients with more than just credit lines. Qatari banks are helping the private sector digitalise, innovate and compete on the global stage.

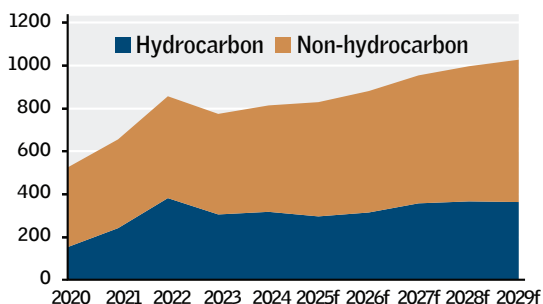
FINANCING SME INNOVATORS

Grand national strategies grab headlines, but for many smaller businesses, survival and growth hinges on affordable working capital, smoothing cash flows and digitising their services.

That is why Qatar's banks are sharpening their focus on SMEs as a policy and financial priority. SMEs account for a growing share of non-hydrocarbon activity. They are vital to job creation, innovation and resilience. For the financial sector, supporting these firms means going beyond conventional corporate lending and creating products that address specific pain points.

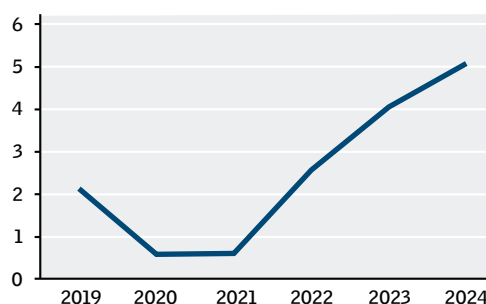
Liquidity support tools such as receivables financing, invoice discounting and credit guarantees are becoming more widespread. Banks are also embracing digital-first service delivery — end-to-end onboarding, e-KYC and dedicated SME platforms are now standard.

Qatar's nominal GDP (QR bn)
actual and forecast



Source: National Accounts

Tourism in Qatar soars
International visitor arrivals (million)



Source: Qatar National Tourism Council

Banking View Continuity and transformation



What role does QNB play in connecting Qatari companies with international capital, expertise and markets?

QNB plays a key role in bridging Qatar's established strengths with its future ambitions.

We remain the trusted partner for energy, infrastructure and trade, while increasingly financing and enabling emerging sectors such as digital infrastructure, fintech, logistics and green industries.

We are also at the forefront of innovation. We became a long term strategic partner of Qatar's first Web Summit, which gathered more than 15,000 global entrepreneurs, founders and investors. During the Summit, QNB signed memorandums of understanding with QDB and the Qatar Financial Centre, and we have onboarded around 10 local fintech companies into our business

model, further strengthening our role in fintech and embedded finance.

At the same time, we embed sustainability across financing. From clean transport and renewable energy to affordable basic infrastructure and sustainable food systems, we ensure traditional industries generate pathways for green and social progress through our Sustainable Finance and Product Framework.

Coupled with spillover opportunities from the North Field Expansion, this dual approach sustains legacy strengths, while accelerating diversification. In this way, QNB delivers both continuity and transformation, safeguarding the foundations that built Qatar, while catalysing its diversification into inclusive, knowledge-driven and future-ready industries, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

At the same time, sustainability is increasingly part of the equation: green loans for solar installations or electric vehicles show how banks are aligning small business finance with environmental priorities.

Partnerships with accelerators and government-backed programmes extend the reach of these efforts, ensuring SMEs are not just borrowers but participants in a wider ecosystem of innovation. Advisory services, networking opportunities, and

technical assistance now sit alongside lending, reflecting a new model in which banks position themselves as long term partners for SME resilience.

RISKS AND RESILIENCE

Any open, trading economy is vulnerable to external shocks, and Qatar is no exception. As with its neighbours in the Gulf Cooperation Council, swings in hydrocarbon prices filter quickly through to national income, government budgets, the private sector and household spending.

Oxford Economics' associate director Azad Zangana says his firm's analysis shows that in the event of a 10% fall in the price of oil and gas, Qatar would feel the second largest hit to consumer spending across the GCC.

But the country fares somewhat better on private investment, facing only the fourth highest impact — a 1.5% decline.

Beyond volatility in energy markets, structural factors could also weigh on the private sector's ability to expand. As the IMF has cautioned, banks' large holdings of public sector assets

— around 30% of total assets — could crowd out credit to the private sector and slow the transition to private sector-led growth.

Much needed reforms could help make private sector momentum more unstoppable.

Capital Economics points to the business environment as an area where progress is still needed. “Across the Gulf — outside the UAE, particularly Dubai — there’s work to be done on transparency and making markets more attractive to foreign investors,” says James Swanston, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics. “Investors want assurance that if they put money in, they can take it out without lengthy court battles.”

Saudi Arabia has already begun reforming its judicial system, offering proceedings in English and drawing on Western legal practices to reassure international investors. While Qatar has not yet moved as far, adopting similar measures could help it attract more foreign direct investment and strengthen its private sector base.

PwC highlights another route to resilience: expanding the role of public-private partnerships. By drawing on private capital and expertise for infrastructure projects, the government can share financial risk, while tailoring investments to business needs.



© Hasan Zaidi/Alamy

Automated cargo handling systems at ports and next generation warehouses are examples of how PPPs can align infrastructure with private sector priorities, creating efficiency gains and encouraging innovation.

At the same time, building a competitive ecosystem is seen as essential for sustaining long term diversification. Entities such as the Qatar Financial Centre and Qatar Free Zone Authority already act as gateways for investors, offering incentives, regulatory guidance and support frameworks.

PwC suggests that further reforms — easing business set-up, expanding tax incentives, strengthening bilateral

trade agreements and improving financial protections — could substantially increase Qatar’s appeal to international capital.

Katara Cultural village
Childrens Mall and
Galleries Lafayette

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND START-UPS

If banks are the anchors of diversification, venture capital is its engine. For entrepreneurs in Qatar, momentum is building, thanks to new investment programmes and the visibility generated by the Qatar Investment Authority Fund of Funds initiative.

Investors argue that entrepreneurship should not be seen as just another sector under Vision 2030. Instead, it is best seen as an enabler for several of the Vision’s pillars, from economic to social development. This broader role has helped create space for start-ups to emerge in areas that cut across industries.

“There has never been a better time to start a company in Qatar,” says Alexander Wiedmer, founder and partner at Rasmal Ventures. “Investment programmes developed over the last two years are attracting fund managers and entrepreneurs — the ecosystem is becoming wider and more international.”

Wiedmer describes GCC venture capital as “generalist and opportunist” — necessary in a relatively young market that lacks the depth of the US or Europe.

That means backing a mix of business-to-business and business-to-consumer companies across sectors, while paying particular attention to strategic areas

Capital Economics on diversification:

“Compared to Saudi Arabia or the UAE, where diversification is about getting away from oil, Qatar sees liquefied natural gas as a transition fuel. It’s setting itself up as a global leader in LNG for decades to come. There’s been strong interest from Europe and Asia to secure access to the North Field. Once that’s online, it will create the fiscal space to further support non-hydrocarbon and private sector growth.”

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Banking View

Flexible financing for SMEs



What role is the bank playing in supporting SMEs and expanding financial inclusion across Qatar?

Doha Bank recognises the important role that small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs play in fostering innovation and generating employment.

To support their growth, the bank offers a comprehensive suite of financing and transaction banking services. These include flexible credit solutions, such as working capital and asset-based lending, tailored to meet the operational needs of SMEs, including invoice financing and equipment loans.

Through partnerships like Qatar Development Bank’s Al Dhameen programme, the bank also provides credit guarantee schemes that offer guaranteed loans, reducing risk for both the bank and the borrower, while enhancing access to finance.

In addition, Doha Bank has streamlined SME services through digital platforms, offering mobile banking, payroll solutions and real time account management tools. These initiatives are designed to help SMEs navigate evolving economic conditions and build resilience in an increasingly competitive market environment.

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AHMED I. HASHEM, ACTING GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DUKHAN BANK

How do you see the Qatari economy evolving in the next few years and what will drive growth?

As Qatar progresses toward Qatar National Vision 2030, the economy is set for substantial growth — primarily driven by the increase in liquefied natural gas production from the North Field expansion. This positions Qatar as a key player in the global energy landscape, and enhances its economic strength and resilience. Qatar’s commitment to diversifying its economy through tourism, advanced infrastructure and full digital transformation initiatives will be crucial in driving growth even further.

Qatar’s financial and capital markets are set to lead the region in innovation, sustainability, efficiency and investor protection. These strategies exemplify Qatar’s unwavering dedication to fostering sustainable prosperity and being a global economic powerhouse.

How is the banking sector handling challenges such as shifting energy prices and geopolitical instability?

The evolving economic landscape presents both challenges and opportunities for Qatar’s banking sector. Well regulated by the Qatar Central Bank, the financial sector has taken a proactive approach to strengthening risk management — through adopting Basel III standards and embracing FinTech innovations. The country’s strategy places strong emphasis on financial services as a critical component of its broader economic diversification goals, with a focus on digitalization and technological innovation.

Qatar’s banking sector is therefore well equipped to navigate the complex challenges posed by global instability. At Dukhan Bank, our customer-first strategy and an emphasis on digital transformation have underpinned our strong financial performance amid fluctuating global conditions. Our commitment to continuous product innovation, designed to enhance the customer experience, ensures resilience and growth. The use of state-of-the-art technology and other initiatives, such as fostering a highly tech-savvy talent pool, have proved successful in maintaining stability and achieving targets.

What are some of the highlights from the bank’s financial performance over the last year?

Dukhan Bank has achieved several exceptional milestones over the last year, exemplified by

a historic net profit of QAR1.34bn (\$368m) for the year of 2024. During the first nine months of 2025, the bank continued to build on this success, with a net profit of QAR19bn.

We continue to push our drive for digital banking innovation, while consistently launching new services that cater to the dynamic needs of customers. This includes CEMEA’s first-of-its-kind cash bonus program, launched by Dukhan Bank and Visa, which uses advanced spending analytics to provide cardholders with personalized offers. These innovations were complemented by the declaration of Dukhan Bank’s interim dividend of 8% — equivalent to QAR0.08 per share.

How is the bank addressing sustainability and ESG, and what role do these play in your strategy?

Dukhan Bank’s ESG strategy is closely aligned with Qatar’s National Vision 2030 and promotes the integration of sustainable practices across every facet of our operations. We have established a dedicated ESG Committee to oversee the implementation of our sustainability efforts, focusing on three core pillars: sustainable finance, sustainable operations and community. Our strong governance practices ensure transparency and accountability, reinforced by regular ESG reporting.

Notably, we have launched several ‘green’ products, such as electric car financing, which underscore the bank’s commitment to driving sustainable financial solutions. Our digital transformation strategy also plays a pivotal role in reducing our carbon footprint through increased digitalization, minimized waste and environmental exclusion screening.

How is digital transformation shaping the evolution of banking in Qatar, and what technological innovations is the bank prioritizing?

Digital transformation is reshaping Qatar’s banking landscape, enabling institutions to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global environment. Dukhan Bank is at the forefront of this evolution, leveraging cutting edge technology to deliver innovative and Shariah-compliant solutions.

Our artificial intelligence-powered virtual assistant ‘Rashid’, alongside advanced services such as ‘Fawran’, the Smart Kiosk and contactless payment, highlight our commitment to leading the sector by



“We continue to push our drive for digital banking innovation, while consistently launching new services that cater to the dynamic needs of customers”

integrating seamless, secure and innovative banking solutions that enhance the customer experience.

By focusing on FinTech and our award-winning mobile banking app, as well as our best-in-class financial services, Dukhan Bank is ensuring it remains agile and well positioned to continue pioneering the increasingly competitive banking sector, particularly in the digital realm.

What are the bank’s strategic priorities over the next three to five years, and how do you plan to achieve them?

Dukhan Bank’s priorities revolve around our commitments to digital transformation and sustainability, both of which align with Qatar’s National Vision 2030 and aim to enhance the bank’s market position.

We plan to invest heavily in advanced technologies — including AI, digital payment platforms and advanced mobile banking services — to offer seamless, innovative and secure financial solutions to our customers.

Through robust ESG reporting and adherence to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Dukhan Bank is dedicated to responsible business practices that contribute to long term value creation, contribute to Qatar’s wider economic objectives, and ensure that the bank remains a key player in the development of the region’s financial sector. ●

BASSEL GAMAL, GROUP CEO, QIB

How does the bank see its role in bridging the gap between traditional industries and emerging sectors like tech, logistics and green infrastructure?

QIB has been proud to play a central role in supporting Qatar's economic transformation, particularly during the unprecedented phase of growth leading up to the FIFA World Cup 2022.

We have partnered across all major sectors — from energy and infrastructure to logistics, tourism, education and manufacturing — by providing tailored financial solutions that enabled both national projects and private initiatives to scale successfully. This period was a testament to the bank's role as a trusted financial partner in advancing Qatar's development.

Looking ahead, our commitment continues in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. We are focused on bridging traditional industries with emerging growth sectors such as technology, logistics, tourism, education and green infrastructure.

By integrating digital innovation, ESG-aligned finance and sector-specific products, we enable businesses to embrace diversification and long-term sustainability. Initiatives such as the QIB Auto Marketplace, Green Car Finance, Sustainable Corporate Deposits and collaborations with fintechs demonstrate how we are building the ecosystems needed for future growth.

Through these efforts, QIB supports the country's transition towards a diversified, knowledge-based economy, while contributing to national priorities in sustainability and economic resilience.

What initiatives has the bank launched to develop Qatari talent and strengthen the future leadership of the banking sector?

QIB recognises that human capital development is essential for long-term national growth. It has implemented comprehensive leadership development and upskilling programmes designed to prepare employees for the future of banking.

In 2024, QIB delivered over 46,000 hours of training and expanded Qatarisation efforts through internships, student sponsorships and leadership development programmes. The Emerging Banker Programme grew to 32 interns, while student sponsorships increased to 44. These initiatives are designed to build a skilled, agile workforce and prepare Qatari nationals for leadership roles in banking. By investing in local talent, we contribute

to national development and ensure the sustainability of the financial sector.

How is Islamic finance evolving at the bank, and what new opportunities are emerging locally or internationally?

Islamic finance is evolving in alignment with global banking trends, customer expectations and fast technological innovation. At QIB, we are embedding Shari'a-compliant solutions into digital platforms to reimagine Islamic banking through technology, inclusivity and global relevance.

New opportunities are emerging in areas such as digital Islamic wealth platforms for younger, tech-savvy investors; SME financing through fintech models like crowdfunding and embedded finance; and innovative Takaful solutions including micro and digital insurance.

What progress has QIB made in offering sustainable finance products or integrating climate-related risks into its operations?

Sustainability is a core pillar of our strategy and a natural extension of our Islamic values. We are proud to be the only bank headquartered in Qatar to adopt the Equator Principles, which has enabled us to embed a robust ESG Risk Assessment process into our credit review for all new finance requests.

ESG considerations are now fully integrated into all corporate finance decisions, guided by international standards and our proprietary ESG Due Diligence Toolkit.

In 2024, we launched the Sustainable Corporate Deposit, allowing institutional and corporate clients to invest in green and social assets within our portfolio, underpinned by QIB's Sustainable Products Framework.

Meanwhile, we continue to embed climate risk assessments into our enterprise-wide risk management architecture, evaluating the impact of both physical and transition risks on our portfolio.

On the retail side, we've introduced Qatar's first Carbon Emissions Tracker within the QIB Mobile App — developed in collaboration with Visa and Clarity AI — to help customers monitor the carbon footprint of their card transactions and make informed, eco-conscious purchasing decisions. We've complemented this with a range of eco-friendly cards made from recycled plastic, and accelerated our transition to paperless banking through digital onboarding, e-statements and smart printing.

Our Green Auto Finance offering has also



"We are embedding Shari'a-compliant solutions into digital platforms to reimagine Islamic banking"

expanded to include newer electric vehicle models, supporting the shift toward sustainable mobility. Our partnership with DHL under the GoGreen Plus initiative further demonstrates our commitment to reducing logistics-related emissions. These integrated efforts reflect our dedication to building a resilient, responsible and future-ready financial institution.

How is the bank enhancing the customer experience, and what technologies or services are you excited about introducing in the near future?

Customer experience is at the heart of QIB's strategy. Our mobile app, now the primary banking channel, offers over 320 features and sees more than four million logins monthly, with 99% of transactions completed digitally.

We have introduced QIB Lite for low-income earners and the QIB Junior programme for youth engagement.

Artificial intelligence-powered features such as product recommendations and optical character recognition-based document verification enhance personalisation and speed. Looking ahead, QIB plans to expand its AI-driven services and automation to deliver more personalised advice and seamless engagement. At the same time, it will uphold its reputation for secure, Shari'a-compliant banking with excellent service. ●

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SHEIKH ABDULRAHMAN BIN FAHAD BIN FAISAL AL THANI

GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DOHA BANK

How is the bank supporting Qatar's long-term development goals, particularly in areas like infrastructure, education or entrepreneurship?

Economic development is one of the key pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030. Over the years, the State of Qatar has focused on economic diversification, to ensure long-term prosperity and competitiveness. Doha Bank has contributed to this goal by actively lending to priority sectors such as health, tourism and infrastructure development.

In infrastructure, we participate in financing major projects and public-private partnerships, enabling sustainable urban and economic growth. In tourism, we support investments in aviation and real estate developments. For entrepreneurship, we have launched targeted support initiatives for small and medium-sized enterprises that foster innovation and help build a resilient private sector. As part of our transformation, we will continue aligning our actions with the national development agenda.

What role is the bank playing in supporting SMEs and expanding financial inclusion across Qatar?

Doha Bank has been an active supporter of SME growth for many years. We provide tailored lending solutions, trade facilitation and transaction banking services, designed to meet the specific needs of SME clients in Qatar.

While the bank already had a robust online banking channel, the recent introduction of our Corporate Mobile Banking platform offers a state-of-the-art solution to help SME clients manage their banking needs seamlessly.

Doha Bank's payroll proposition is one of the leading solutions in the market, acting as a catalyst for financial inclusion. We have a strong track record of developing customer-focused, inclusive solutions for SME clients, and we will continue to enhance our product suite to serve this segment.

What initiatives has the bank launched to develop Qatari talent and strengthen the future leadership of the banking sector?

Developing Qatari talent is central to our human capital strategy and is treated as a high priority. We have established a dedicated career centre exclusively for Qatari nationals, streamlining access to tailored opportunities and ensuring visibility into leadership tracks.

Our graduate training and leadership programmes are designed to transition high-potential Qatari professionals into key roles, with



"We have launched targeted support initiatives for small and medium-sized enterprises that foster innovation and help build a resilient private sector"

structured mentorship and rotational exposure across critical business areas. Internal mobility is actively encouraged, supported by personalised development plans and career coaching. In addition, we collaborate with leading universities and institutes to align academic learning with industry needs, creating a robust pipeline of future banking leaders.

Is the bank pursuing any international expansion or partnerships that support Qatar's economic diplomacy and regional presence?

Doha Bank's international presence is a key element of our growth journey. We leverage our global network to support funding and grow the balance sheet, while also strengthening our role in Qatar's economic diplomacy.

We maintain robust financial institution relationships and engage in regional banking alliances, offering cross-border trade finance solutions that facilitate economic connectivity. Our involvement in diplomatic and sovereign

partnership financing underscores our role in advancing Qatar's regional and global presence.

What progress has the bank made in offering sustainable finance products or integrating climate-related risks into its operations?

Doha Bank's commitment to sustainable finance is deeply rooted in the progressive vision of the State of Qatar and the strategic guidance of the Qatar Central Bank. Their leadership continues to inspire our efforts to embed robust ESG principles across our operations and align our financial practices with national and global sustainability goals.

Key initiatives include the development of a Sustainable Finance Framework to facilitate the issuance of green bonds, social bonds and sustainability-linked loans, effectively channelling capital into projects with measurable environmental and social benefits. We have also integrated a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management System into our risk management processes, ensuring the systematic identification and management of environmental and social risks within our lending practices.

How is the bank enhancing the customer experience, and what technologies or services are you excited about introducing in the near future?

Enhancing the customer experience is at the heart of our strategic transformation programme. We have a long history of introducing customer-centric products and digital solutions that redefine the bank-customer relationship. Our commitment to this has earned us industry recognition, with our newly launched Corporate Banking App named the Best Corporate Banking App in Qatar by *Global Banking & Finance Review*.

While we are proud of these achievements, we recognise the need to continually develop digital-first solutions to drive customer engagement and stay competitive. We have a clear agenda to improve customer onboarding and deepen engagement through modern, disruptive technologies. We are also focused on enhancing our self-service proposition, empowering customers to bank whenever they need.

In parallel, we are placing special emphasis on strengthening payment solutions to ensure seamless access to finance. Equally important, we are committed to maintaining the highest levels of reliability, information security and data privacy across every solution we offer. These principles are embedded into our design and delivery processes from the outset. ●

Banking View

Broadening banking



What role is QIB playing in supporting SMEs and expanding financial inclusion across Qatar?

Financial inclusion is a core pillar of QIB's strategy to build a more equitable and digitally empowered economy. The bank provides access to Shari'a-compliant financial services that support the needs of all customers in Qatar, across all segments. This commitment is embedded across QIB's operations, product design and digital innovation roadmap.

For SMEs, which are vital to Qatar's private sector diversification, QIB provides tailored finance solutions, streamlined onboarding and digital tools such as SoftPOS, Corporate Internet Banking, the Corporate Mobile App and

the Corporate Credit Card.

These services simplify access to finance, strengthen expense management and improve operational efficiency, helping SMEs scale sustainably.

QIB's financial inclusion strategy also extends to underserved and emerging audiences. The launch of our QIB Lite App, available in eight languages, supports low income earners and domestic workers with simplified banking and international transfer capabilities.

The QIB Junior programme introduces children to financial literacy in a secure, engaging environment, while Bedaya, the university student account, helps young adults begin their banking journey with tailored benefits and easy digital onboarding.

finance or find equity backers.

"There are starting to be non-dilutive funding vehicles for start-ups in the region and this will likely only grow, but they are typically for later stage start-ups," says Wiedmer. "Thankfully there is some help from the Qatar Development Bank, which has products designed to support SMEs, and the Development Bank does work closely with VCs."

Landmark exits are beginning to shift perceptions. The sale of 77% of local shopping delivery platform Snoonu to Saudi Arabia's Jahez Group for \$245m in July marked Qatar's first major venture-backed exit. Wiedmer suggests this will encourage more investors to take Qatari startups seriously.

Still, structural challenges persist, such as slow payments by large corporates and government clients. In other markets, policymakers have introduced quick payment obligations for contracts with start-ups. Similar reforms in Qatar could make a tangible difference.

Ultimately, attracting more international capital and cross-border investment will be critical for Qatar's start-up and SME landscape.

"No innovation ecosystem can exist in a silo," says Wiedmer. "Young Qatari companies have to be able to attract outside investors to be taken seriously. This is why the QIA Fund of Funds programme is so important: it puts Qatar on the map." ●

“There has never been a better time to start a company in Qatar. Investment programmes developed over the last two years are attracting fund managers and entrepreneurs — the ecosystem is becoming wider and more international”

—Alexander Wiedmer, founder and partner at Rasmal Ventures

Continued from page 5

such as logistics, fintech, digital health and agritech. AI and deeptech are beginning to surface, but remain less prevalent than in other regions.

Qatar still has fairly few VCs on the ground, compared with neighbours such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia. That is slowly changing thanks to initiatives like the QIA Fund of Funds, in which the state's \$560bn sovereign

wealth fund QIA is investing in a select group of international venture capital fund managers, specialising in priority sectors, including Deerfield and B Capital.

When start-ups do secure equity backers, traditional bank financing is often off limits without personal guarantees from founders. This makes borrowing money very difficult for founders, who then have to self-

Banking View

Supporting small businesses



What types of financing or advisory support is the bank offering to help entrepreneurs and SMEs adapt to evolving economic conditions?

Our commitment goes beyond banking — we provide integrated solutions covering working capital, savings, liquidity and tailored products.

QNB enables SMEs and entrepreneurs to effectively adapt to evolving economic conditions through its comprehensive suite of

products and services, complemented by strategic initiatives such as partnerships and development programmes. Examples include:

- Liquidity products such as receivables financing and medical claims discounting, improving cash flow
- Innovation platforms and tech ecosystem: In September 2025, QNB partnered with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to support

the TASMU Accelerator initiative, focusing on healthcare, transport, logistics, environment, financial services and smart cities

- SME enablement and sponsorships: We offer dedicated SME accounts and credit facilities, and we regularly sponsor entrepreneurship platforms such as Rowad and the Arab Entrepreneurship Conference with QDB. These provide day-to-day banking, working capital, trade and

merchant acquiring rails for SMEs

- Specialised advisory offered through SME Branches, as well as other services beyond banking, including market insights and networking opportunities, to build resilience and competitiveness
- SME digitisation, with over 90% of services now digital, including end-to-end onboarding, e-KYC and QNB Simplify for e-commerce
- Sustainability in SME banking, including green vehicle loans, mortgages, solar energy and more

INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE: BUILDING AN ECONOMY BEYOND ENERGY

Qatar has an impressive track record in infrastructure development, but it is now turning in new directions, to support the knowledge economy of the future — towards data centres, hospitals and schools. Qatar’s banks are increasingly taking the load of financing the country’s renewal



Qetaifan Island Bridge

Construction has always been central to Qatar’s economic strategy. From cutting edge liquefied natural gas architecture and world class sports stadiums to high tech metros and airports,

infrastructure has defined the city state’s early growth model.

Under Qatar National Vision 2030, the emphasis is shifting: infrastructure is no longer only about hydrocarbons and prestige projects, but about supporting diversification, digital connectivity and sustainability.

Sovereign entities still drive most large scale projects, but banks are starting to take on a more visible role. By participating in project finance, co-financing packages and targeted lending, Qatari institutions are extending the reach of national plans.

Beyond traditional real estate lending, they are now financing projects that tie directly into national diversification goals. One example is Doha Bank’s role in a QR2bn (\$550m) syndicated package for Ooredoo’s data centre expansion. A perfect example of how infrastructure overlaps

with digitalisation and economic competitiveness.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS AND MEGA-PROJECTS

Infrastructure financing also underpins Qatar’s global ‘national champions’. Companies such as Qatar Airways, Ooredoo and Qatar Energy depend on large scale financing to expand both domestically and abroad.

This backing not only sustains critical industries but also strengthens Qatar’s role as a hub for trade, transport and energy. Banks like QNB have been at the forefront of this financing effort, contributing to aviation, telecoms and the energy supply chain, as well as core physical and social infrastructure, from highways to hospitals.

COLLABORATIVE CO-FINANCING

Despite rising bank participation, Qatar’s infrastructure agenda remains

Banking View Building an international hub

How is the bank contributing to Qatar’s long term infrastructure development?

QNB Group plays a pivotal role in driving Qatar’s development by supporting national strategic projects.

From financing the LNG supply chain that established the country as the world’s largest exporter of natural gas, to supporting the growth of national champions like Qatar Energy, our role has been foundational. Recent examples include:

- Leading a QR4.5bn (\$1.2bn)

strategic financing for Qatar Airways in 2025 to strengthen national connectivity

- Partnering with Ooredoo in 2024 on a \$1bn programme to expand digital capacity

We also continue to finance core social and physical infrastructure, including roads, railways, ports, utilities, healthcare and education. This integrated approach ensures a sustainable development aligned with the human, social and economic pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

How is QNB balancing its role in financing national champions with the need to fund emerging non-hydrocarbon sectors and green infrastructure?

Our financing footprint spans critical sectors. Examples include:

- **Energy** — We continue to support the North Field Expansion (NFE), which will increase LNG capacity by 85% to 142m tonnes per year by 2030. Our financing covers the complete value chain.
- **Food Security** — We financed

projects enhancing self-sufficiency, innovative farming and storage, contributing to Qatar’s rise in the Global Food Security Index.

- **Hospitality** — We supported Qatar’s tourism drive through financings such as the \$5.5bn Simaisma resort, reinforcing Qatar as a global destination.
- **Infrastructure** — We participated in large projects including a \$19.2bn government capex package and major works in highway maintenance and metro expansion.

heavily state-driven. MR Raghu, CEO of Marmore MENA Intelligence, notes that large projects are still largely financed by the Qatar Investment Authority, state-owned firms such as QatarEnergy, or direct budgetary spending.

Yet local banks are carving out bigger roles. QNB, Doha Bank and others are increasingly involved in syndications and mid-sized project finance deals.

Analysts at BMI, the country risk and industry research firm, point to the Public Works Authority (Ashghal)'s ambitious new five year programme of works, worth around \$22bn. Launched in May this year, it covers roads, housing, utilities and public services.

"This marks the largest infrastructure investment programme in Ashghal's history by value and scope," according to BMI's latest Qatar Infrastructure Report. "Contract awards in the [infrastructure] sector are expected to increase sharply between 2024 and 2029, reflecting both

population growth and the government's energy transition targets."

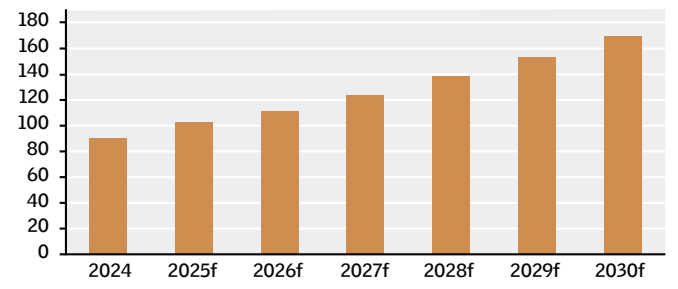
The research firm expects future projects to prioritise transport connectivity, healthcare and education facilities — all seen as enablers of private sector growth under Qatar National Vision 2030.

Foreign investors, meanwhile, remain concentrated in hydrocarbons. International oil majors such as Shell, TotalEnergies, ExxonMobil, Eni and ConocoPhillips hold equity stakes in multi-billion dollar LNG projects. But large scale solar projects are also ramping up as the country looks to diversify its energy mix.

BMI emphasises that outside the energy sector, foreign involvement in Qatar's infrastructure has been more modest than in the UAE or Saudi Arabia, which have embraced wider PPP frameworks.

Its data suggest domestic financiers still account for just over half of all

Construction set to grow in Qatar
Construction industry value forecast (QR bn)



Source: BMI

project funding across large scale infrastructure, leaving much scope for cross-border capital and foreign equity partners.

As Qatar looks ahead, co-financing models that bring together state funding, local banks and foreign capital will be key to delivering infrastructure that is smarter, greener and firmly aligned with Vision 2030's goals of global competitiveness and sustainability. ●

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