

Qatar News Update

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I thought you might be interested in the latest developments regarding the State of Qatar.

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Qatar Fights Back with COVID-19 Vaccine

- Qatar is one of the first countries that will provide free COVID-19 vaccinations for all its people. Last week the first round of vaccinations began for political dignitaries, those who are over 70

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years old, people with chronic illness, and healthcare professionals working with COVID-19 patients.

- Earlier this month, Qatar's Ministry of Public Health signed purchasing agreements with Pfizer and BioNTech for their COVID-19 vaccine, as well as Moderna, Inc. to purchase its COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is ready.
- Chair of the National Health Strategic Group on COVID-19 and Head of Infectious Diseases at Hamad Medical Corporation, Dr. Al Khal, stated, "The signing of the agreement with Moderna is a significant step forward in our country's efforts to procure a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine for the people of Qatar and comes following the announcement of our first agreement with a leading pharmaceutical company earlier this month... We continue to work with several leading pharmaceutical companies around the world who are in the process of developing potential vaccines for COVID-19. Our aim is to ensure that we have early access to the vaccines as soon as they demonstrate safety and efficacy and after they are approved by the appropriate international regulatory authorities."
- Qatari PM and Interior Minister Khalid Bin Khalifa, said, "This is an important step on the way of containing the pandemic and bringing life back to normal gradually."

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Qatar Builds Global Partnerships & Battles Against Terrorism

- U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo congratulated Qatar on its National Day, stating, "On behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people, I extend best wishes for a joyous National Day to His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani and the people of the State of Qatar."
- Pompeo continued, "The United States greatly values the deep ties our two nations share and remains committed to expanding our strong partnership. We appreciate Qatar's cooperation on a broad range of issues important to maintaining peace and stability in the region, as well as Qatar's continued contributions to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and our defense partnership. We look forward to expanding bilateral education, scientific, and cultural initiatives and enhancing trade and investment between our countries."
- Earlier this month, Pompeo went to Qatar to discuss further cooperation in defense and counterterrorism, bilateral trade and investment, increasing cultural exchanges, and the continued U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue.
- The U.S. State Department applauded Qatar as a partner in combating the financing of terrorism (evidenced by its Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism legislation), its work in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and countering extremists, and its financial support of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.
- Qatar is arguably the U.S.'s closest military ally in the region, housing Al-Udeid Air Base, which hosts 18 nations and runs all Global Coalition air operations in the Middle East and Central Asia.
- The U.S. is Qatar's largest trade partner with combined bilateral trade reaching more than \$8.1M in 2019, a 25% increase from 2018.
- The U.S. is also Qatar's largest investor of FDI, with exports into Qatar reaching \$6.5B in 2019, an increase of 50% from 2018.
- The Qatar Investment Authority has invested more than \$30B in the U.S. with large investments in both real estate and infrastructure.

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- With the help of the U.S. and Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have made some progress in their discussions to end the Qatar blockade. Qatari FM Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, stated, “We are hopeful that things will move in the right direction right now... We cannot predict whether it’s going to be imminent and it’s going to resolve the whole issue in one day.” While Saudi Arabia’s FM Faisal bin Farhan said that he was hopeful for a successful outcome for the reconciliation.
- Al Thani also said, “We see and we believe actually that Gulf unity is very important for the security of the region, for the stability of that region and for the sake of our people this needless crisis needs to end.”
- One of Saudi Arabia’s top diplomats claims that the end to the blockade of Qatar “looks in reach”.
- UAE Ambassador to the U.S. Yousef al-Otaiba, stated, “I think there’s definitely progress or at least there are seeds of progress... There are a lot of commitments ... to kind of tone things down, to stand down. If that holds, I think it is promising. I think there is a chance that you can at least begin a process of deconflicting”, when discussing the UAE’s position on ending its blockade of Qatar.
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of the Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights Alena Douhan, called for the end to the Qatar blockade. She addressed the four blockading countries, stating, “immediately withdraw all sanctions/measures aimed at establishing restrictions on freedom of expression, movement, access to property, trade barriers, and ban tariffs, quotas, non-tariff measures ... for people living in Qatar in violation of international legal standards... Measures directly affecting fundamental human rights shall not be used as the means of influencing the government”.
- UN Special Rapporteur Douhan said that the blockade and continued discrimination against Qataris shows “persistent and systematic human rights violations”.
- UN Special Rapporteur Douhan applauded Qatar on “improving its domestic legislation and practice in countering terrorism” and states that there’s a “lack of evidence for legitimizing the imposition of unilateral sanctions.”
- The UN and Qatar are establishing a UN counterterrorism program, headquartered in Doha.
- “Qatar is making every effort to assist parliamentarians worldwide in their noble task to save humanity from the scourge of terrorism,” stated Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud, speaker of Qatar’s Shura Council.
- Qatar and the UN Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT) held the third strategic dialogue meeting where they discussed continued cooperation and strategy in preventing terrorist travel, continued support for the victims of terrorist acts, increasing sports facility security, increasing tools to prevent extremism, and other initiatives to combat terrorism.

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<https://www.state.gov/qatar-national-day/>

Qatar Provides Humanitarian Aid

- Qatar Charity and Qatar’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs have provided QR 34 million in Covid-19 medical assistance, including medical supplies and devices for doctors and hospitals to 39 countries, benefiting 320,000 people.

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- Qatar Charity launched its QR 66 million winter 2020-2021 campaign, "Warmth and Peace", which will provide winter essentials (food, shelter, warm clothes, blankets, medical care, and education) to orphans, refugees, and displaced persons throughout 19 countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe.
- Last years, 2019-2020 winter campaign provided QR 67 million in aid to over 1.2 million refugees and displaced persons in 13 countries.
- Qatar Fund for Development will donate \$9.8M to Lebanon to rebuild 55 schools, 20 technical schools and artistic training centers, and three universities damaged in the Beirut explosions.
- Qatar Charity and Qatar Fund for Development provided more than 9 million textbooks (covering all areas of study) to nearly half a million primary, preparatory, and secondary school students in northern Syria, increasing student enrollment and teacher academic performance.
- The Qatar Fund for Development provided a \$3.89M grant to Qatar Charity to support educational projects in Syria and Turkey.
- Qatar Charity and Qatar Fund for Development will provide nearly \$7M to provide urgent healthcare relief in northern Syria in its campaign "Quest Health", which will improve access to primary healthcare, provide medical equipment to outpatient clinics, support three large hospitals, provide obstetric and newborn care services at a specialized hospital for women and children's services, maintain six healthcare facilities in northern Syria, handle operations for medical supply warehouses, open a clinic in Afrin, and operate an ambulance and referral system in NW Syria.

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<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/qfd-qatar-charity-provide-textbooks-syrian-children>

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Qatar Sets Sustainability & Energy Goals

- Sustainability & Environment Senior Manager Al Meer explained Qatar's 2022 Sustainability Strategy, stating, "Our five strategic environmental focus areas are green building, carbon neutrality, air pollution, water management and waste minimization... Two highlights of these are that all our stadiums are certified using the Global Sustainability Assessment System green building scheme. We will also deliver a fully carbon neutral event."
- Qatar's National Vision 2030 focuses on creating harmony between economic growth, social development, and environmental protections, making the Qatar 2022 Sustainability Strategy a perfect addition to its national goals.
- The country's World Cup projects have incorporated many sustainability measures, including a public transportation system to reduce air, noise, and vehicle pollution, and a carbon-offsetting program to make the 2022 World Cup a carbon-neutral event.
- Qatar Petroleum will provide Singapore's Pavilion Energy up to 1.8 million tons of LNG per year for 10 years, beginning in 2023. This is the second long-term LNG deal it's made in the last couple of months. Each LNG delivery will come with a statement of greenhouse gas emissions, with the intent of reducing emissions.
- Qatar, the world's largest LNG producer, currently produces 77 million tons of LNG annually and hopes to produce 126 million tons a year by 2027.

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Qatar's Economy & Labor Market have a Positive Future

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- Oxford Economics announced that Qatar's 2020 GDP projection has been raised by 1.5 percentage points thanks to the country's economic recovery after shutdowns caused by COVID-19 earlier this year.
- Qatar's economy was more resilient through the pandemic than its neighboring countries due to its vast liquid assets, giving it a strong buffer during economic and financial upset.
- S&P Global Ratings rates Qatar's sovereign credit at AA-/Stable/A-1+ with a stable outlook. S&P credits Qatar's resilience through the pandemic to its "wealthy economy and strong government and external net asset positions" providing the country with a strong buffer during economic and financial upset.
- Qatar's non-energy private sector economy is continuing to recover, according to the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey data, which shows the country's PMI reaching 52.5 in November, compared to 51.5 in October, with manufacturing production, construction, new businesses, and job creation attributing to that growth.
- Qatar's 2020 Q3 PMI data show a 2.7% year-on-year increase in GDP, from its 2019 Q3 PMI data.
- The IMF predicts Qatar's GDP will grow 2.7% in 2021 thanks to its growing natural gas production and increased domestic demand following the shutdown caused by COVID-19.

<https://menafn.com/1101091167/Qatars-2020-GDP-projection-raised-on-increasing-confidence-domestic-activity-Oxford-Economics>

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Qatar's Government Makes Positive Steps Forward

- International Labor Organization (ILO) praised Qatar's new labor legislation that has made the labor market more competitive and created better rights for workers.
- Qatar will hold an election for its Shura Council in October 2021, where the people will vote to elect 30 members of the 45-member council. The other 15 members will be appointed by the emir. This election is a positive step toward a democratic process, as previously all members have been appointed by the emir.
- Qatar recently held the 'Labor Rights in Qatari, Regional and International Legislation' symposium, which highlighted its ongoing legislative and judicial efforts for workers' rights and new public policies, as well as legislation to preserve societal values.
- The State of Qatar celebrated its National Day, which fell on December 18th. The country limited the celebrations and televised the events to limit the spread of COVID-19. The Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, discussed the important balance between economic and environmental developmental goals, and highlighted the upcoming elections next October.

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All the best,

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