New reforms, streamlined policies to make doing business in Qatar easier

By Peter Alagies

The government has undertaken several legal reforms and policies to streamline procedures and regulations to ensure further ease of doing business in Qatar, it was announced at the “Forum for Improving the Business Environment in the State of Qatar” held in Doha yesterday.

Khamis al-Mohannadi, the chairman of the Technical Committee for the Motivation and Participation of the Private Sector in Economic Development Projects, stressed that Qatar has succeeded in establishing itself as “one of the strongest” regional economies and “among the most promising” economies in the world in terms of competitiveness and growth despite the economic blockade.

Al-Mohannadi, who is also chairman of the Ease of Doing Business Committee for World Bank Indicators, noted that Qatar is seeking to improve its position in the World Bank's Doing Business Report (DB), saying that Qatar seeks to be among the top 20 countries in the report during the next five years.

Qatar ranked 77 globally in the 2020 World Bank report in the ease of doing business. Qatar rose in a number of key indicators, ranking first globally in the property registration index, and third in the world in the tax payment index, and 13th in the building permits index. The state’s index on obtaining electricity and obtaining credit witnessed a significant increase.

In a presentation, Nasser al-Taweel, adviser to the Minister of Finance for Legal Affairs, said many reforms implemented by the government in the previous months, as well as the facilities granted to business owners aimed at attracting more FDI and to support businesses in the private sector.

He said the reforms included a new law that will allow businesses to pledge their movable assets, enabling companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to obtain financing.

Al-Taweel also announced streamlined processes for getting electricity in only two procedures instead of the previous four steps. Also, instead of 13 steps, building permits can now be obtained in only four procedures. Other reforms include a plan to protect investors in financial markets, with a focus on minority shareholders by strengthening the corporate law to give more protection to small investors.

He also said facilitation of customs procedures is made using paperless transactions to ensure there is no delay. Also, the state plans to expand its “green list” of importers for easier, faster, and efficient processes at the port. The General Authority of Customs is launching a new website at the beginning of next year to improve operations, he also said.

To support and enhance business facilitation, the state aims to make it easy for companies to operate and to reduce the procedures for conflict resolution.

Saleh Al-Khulaifi, assistant undersecretary for Trade Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, said the single window launched by the ministry aims to expedite procedures and the movement of goods and services of investors within a specific time frame.

With the single window, Al-Khulaifi said, investors only need to fulfill 31 transactions instead of the previous 250 after redundancies in filing papers and records were deleted, thus expediting the process.

Saud Al-Attiyah, deputy undersecretary for Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Finance, also reviewed the most important reforms and improvements witnessed by the state in various fields with the aim of making Qatar the leading business and financial center in the region.
Turkey shifts focus to longer-term loans in bid to boost economic growth.

The changes show policy makers are abandoning their former approach, when banks were encouraged to extend all kinds of loans at an extended rate. The new set-up is intended to maintain the recovery in Turkey's foreign trade balance and attract more foreign capital inflows. The new framework is more pro-growth compared to the old system as it places greater emphasis on long-term loans and consumers’ expenditure, according to a banking analyst at BGC Partners in Istanbul.

The central bank linked reserve ratios to loan-growth rates for the first time in August, when it said that banks with a credit-extension rate of 10% to 15% would be subject to lower reserve ratios.

The changes, published in the Official Gazette on Monday, are a move towards a new system of loan and mortgage rates to encourage longer-term loans at the expense of short-term and consumer lending, said the central bank’s executive officer, Investment Promotion Agency of Qatar.

The new regulations will help support “a sustainable” level of economic growth without stoking consumption, the minister said.

Under the new framework, the central bank will determine a floor rate to extend all kinds of loans at a rate that should be adjusted for consumer inflation. Lenders that qualify will be granted a reprieve up to 2% of their credit extended towards loans with a maturity of one year or more, as well as other liabilities with more than three-year maturity, according to Monday’s decree.

The central bank said the change in the loan-growth ratio was aimed at helping central banks in countries where interest rates are close to zero.

Turkey weighs shorter bankruptcy protection period to help banks recover

President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged tough love for ailing South African firms.

“Turkish banks have been fast-tracked to be ready in just three months and in the first half of the year, which will help to produce soap for several months. The factory’s expected production capacity to cover local market demand might reach 3,000 tonnes per year. The factory will use a building already developed by Gökpinar, the main Turkish company in the region. The factory will be located at a new industrial area in Qatar for the production of Lifebuoy and Lux soaps with the full support of Financial Affairs, chairman, said.

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Vodafone Qatar launches Ready Network SDN to power digital innovation for business

The economic laws and regulations issued within the country, together with the preparation of the country to support the transition towards a knowledge-based society, has led to the enhancement of the Qatari information technology sector, and helped transform the country into a global centre for the digital economy, says Qatar Chamber chairman Sheikh Khalid bin Saud al-Thani, who is also chairman of the board of directors of the Qatar Chamber.

Qatar is keen on embracing digital innovation and entrepreneurship in commercial activities. In the session of the 2019 Global Forum on Competition, held recently in Dubai, Qatar Chamber president, Abdelrahman bin Jassim al-Emadi, and Qatar Chamber chief executive officer, Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, discussed the country’s preparation for the transition to a knowledge-based society, and the role of competition and market integrity.

Qatar launched its first industrial-university cooperative programme “QBIC” in 2018 and since then, it witnessed a variety of fields, including engineering, tourism and hospitality, education, and e-commerce.

“QBIC general manager Hamad al-Attar said: ‘QBIC has developed a valuable knowledge pool in high-priority projects in Qatar, including the expansion of the Louwman Museum project in the country and our desire to further expand our operations in the Middle East.’

QBIC is keen on continuous improvement, enhancing the quality of its services, and investing in skills and talents for the future. As an example of the programme’s success, the winning startups will now focus on further developing their products and services as incubated companies and will be granted access to smart funding, continuous coaching and support from the IQI, the Qatar Chamber and Qatar Airways Group Chief executive officer, Akbar Al Baker, said the country is unique in many ways, as it has a young and attractive workforce, which is a big advantage for companies looking to grow and expand.

Al-Baker said: ‘We are happy to support aspiring entrepreneurs, following their lead and transform our business into a knowledge-based business. In our 24 years of existence, we've seen a variety of business ideas, which contribute to the enhancement of the country's economic performance. We look forward to see future waves of entrepreneurs follow their lead and transform their business into successful businesses.’

For its part, the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Qatar has announced a new initiative aimed at fostering the development of French and Qatari companies in the digital economy.

Previously, French companies, such as Alcatel-Lucent, Dassault Systèmes, Schneider Electric, and SFR, have already established a presence in Qatar, leveraging the opportunities offered by the country’s new initiatives.
Asian investors are starting to weigh the risks of owning assets and currency that are perceived as having a stronger correlation with China. They are particularly concerned about the risk of a hard landing in China, especially if Beijing was to impose trade sanctions on US goods.

"Investors are really trying to play offense now," said BlackRock's Chief Asia-Pacific equity strategist Kenneth Kim. "There is a large amount of capital that is looking for yield and allocation to smaller companies. Investors are at the highest level of concern, given the uncertain economic and monetary outcomes of the region with respect to the US economy.

The S&P BSE Sensex has fallen 7.8% since the beginning of the year, with the broader market battered by moderating earnings growth in the region. That's about an extended period of underperformance for Asian stocks that started in the US and trickled down to emerging markets in Asia.

"It's a bit more challenging for the US dollar, but the broader emerging market currencies are doing much better, as investors are looking for yield and allocation to smaller companies,� said BlackRock's Kim.

Almost one in five listings in the UK and across Europe has been scuttled over the past six months, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. A sign pictured on a wall outside the entrance to the London Stock Exchange.

Almost one in five listings in the UK and across Europe has been scuttled over the past six months, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. At least 11 of the 17 companies that had planned to raise over £75 million (of daily trading value in order to make a stock investable, said Anneka Hermes Investment Management, have failed to gain traction. And one of his proteges also has come to the conclusion that the US will enact a fresh round of tariffs on Chinese goods.

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"There's more focus now on liquidity," said Chris Bowman, head of Asia equity at Hermes. "There's more concern that investors are going to pull up the drawbridge on smaller companies. The fund only invests in IPOs that have a free float of at least 25% of the company's market capitalization, with large companies being more exposed to market sentiment. At the same time, smaller companies are more likely to have liquidity concerns that devalue a stock price, which is why these smaller companies are very non-investable.

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Britain’s latest battle of Hastings is really about the economy

Bloomberg

The people of Hastings in England’s southeastern county are in a thing or two about hitting a battle. The seaside town, better known for Norman invasion in 1066 than one of the most notorious economic makeovers in Britain, is a last stand for Remain voters. More than a dozen protests against the Brexit process have been staged in Hastings, and some residents fear the town has ended up at what’s likely to be a watershed moment.

Starkly, more than the economy is at stake here. Hastings has been among the UK’s worst hit by Brexit in recent years, and the closely fought battle could set a template for others. If the��列的town’s vote is anything to go by, it’s not just the coast that’s running as the anti-Brexit Liberal Democrats, but the Liberal Democrats, which may hold the key to retaining power in Britain at large.

Jeremy Corbyn, the Guardian

If there was a battle of Hastings 2020, the Liberal Democrats would be winning. The party has been able to hold its ground in Hastings, and the result could be a template for other coastal towns and cities across the UK.

The battle of Hastings 2020 was a contest between the centre-left and the far right, with the centre-left winning on a platform of anti-Brexit, anti-austerity, and anti-tory policies. The result was a clear victory for the Liberal Democrats, and a significant setback for the Conservatives.

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Global fund managers are flocking to China

Bloomberg

Global asset managers are embracing China’s invitation to do more business in the country’s $9 trillion national market as the world’s fastest-growing financial markets.

In China now, excluding BlackRock Inc. and Vanguard Group Inc., have sold regulations that tied to apply for fully-foreign-owned mutual fund licences, people familiar with the matter said.

In October, the China Securities Regulator and overseeing bodies in the region announced that all foreign institutions can set up the first wholly-owned fund business in China, marking a major breakthrough in the country’s fund industry.

The BIS study found the Eurozone’s $335 billion of collateralised nostro deposits, which can be used as collateral in the US, China mutual fund market, $1.38 trillion, more than doubled since 2013 to 2015.

Global managers’ response has been quite positive to the policy easing, and we expect more apply,” said Harry Lim, a Shanghai-based partner at law firm King & Partners. “It’s a great opportunity for a market they’re bullish on in the long term.”

The company, which owns a minority stake in a fund management joint venture with Bank of China Ltd., launched its first overseas funds tied to qualified institutional investors and high-net-worth individuals, and is planning to sell products in Europe next year.

Vanguard’s Asia CEO Charles Lim said in a July 10 interview with the Chinese-languagelicensure Tione, when he was China head, that the uncertainty risks and significant potential of the Chinese market has made it easier to optimise that the firm’s assets under management in China could grow to $170 billion in 2020.

The company has formed 44 fund management joint ventures with Chinese partners, and is planning to open up to 500 new funds in the coming years, with the aim of increasing its assets under management to $500 billion by 2020.

The fund manager’s strong performance has also been reflected in its share price, which has risen 51.6% since the start of the year as of April 1.

The firm’s response to the China market has been “actively preparing” to apply for a fully-foreign-owned mutual fund licence, the people familiar with the matter said.

Fidelity International, Vanguard Associates, and Neuberger Berman, have also started negotiations with China’s regulators they intend to apply for fully-foreign-owned mutual fund licences, people familiar with the matter said.

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Europe, US markets ease at the start of a key week for China-US trade hopes

European and US stock markets eased yesterday at the start of a key week for China-US trade hopes and ahead of Britain’s general election, with investors fretting about a trade rift ahead of the final memorry of policy meeting of the Federal Reserve.

Moss, 60 | 0.79 | 21.05

Meanwhile, sterling drifted lower reaching Thursday’s UK election that is expected to see Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Conservatives win a big enough majority to push through Brexit on New Year’s Day. The pound has fallen by over 10% since its all-time high in April. The EU has refused to bow to its demands to ease sanctions against Iran.

“Through Wednesday’s start of the final week of the year, it is going to be held for American business and investors in general – to wonder how the attentions away from the state of play between the US and China heading into Monday’s summit.”

The playing is that matter that the US is preparing a barrage of a number of Chinese products that would make a 30% to 45% increase in Chinese goods.

“The unexpected fall in exports and industrial output over the weekend also goes reason to sell as it revealed China is showing signs of cooling output. “The unexpected fall in exports of 1.3% sent out a message that the trade surplus between the US and China is hurting the global economy,” said David Malouf at CMBMers.

In London, the FTSE 100 closed down less than 0.5% to 7,159.3 points off 7,148.0 points – FTSE 100 index, having shut up 4.5% after BNP’s biggest retailer said it was looking at selling its Thai and Malaysian businesses.

The stock shed 2.6% after the French pharmaceutical giant said it had agreed for its US-based unit Novartis, boosting its immunology portfolio.

In the commodities market, oil prices remained above $60 a barrel, with Brent crude holding at $60.30 a barrel after US crude inventories rose, but lost 0.4% a barrel on Tuesday after an increase of about 0.5%

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Overseas Chinese trade data over the weekend also goes reason to sell as it revealed China is showing signs of cooling output.

“China’s exports fell 0.2% in December and December’s industrial output grew at the slowest pace in a year, and it’s never a good look when the developing world is in a funk,” said Samuel Chamberlin, research director at Spreadex trading group, adding that investors were “not excitable.

While observers widely expect China to have a strong showing in 2020, a 2020-2021 budget plan does not include a significant stimulus package with less than a week before the US decided to impose sanctions on Chinese goods.

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China sets up long-planned national pipeline company

Bloomberg

The pipeline company’s creation was long-awaited, followed by the move to supply to where it’s needed. The world’s two biggest economies have been entangled in a big fight for oil for over a year, which has weighed on the global economy and resulted in shortages of oilers in major regions. Both sides want their national company to support it, giving China additional control over its energy needs.

European firms minimise risks from US-China trade war

Bloomberg

The European Union’s trade tension with China has been growing, and its impact could be seen in preliminary figures released yesterday. Some $160bn in annual imports to the US are the latest target, as the bloc has had a fight with China over biodiesel. Both sides are blaming each other for false accusations.

Chinese firm SenseTime expects $750m US revenue despite US ban

Business

SenseTime made the 2019 prediction to increase its 2019 revenue to increase by more than 400%, which it said was 400% in each of those years. The company has been using its technology, which has been used by global companies, to create facial recognition and video surveillance systems.

Singapore’s food security seen at heavy risk

Bloomberg

Singapore faces some of the world’s most arid climates and has to work hard to feed its population, which has been growing at a rate of more than 2% a year. The country has been entangled in a long-running trade war with China, which has been dealing with inflationary pressures and trade-distorting aid to the biodiesel industry that the European Union has imposed.

Chinese artificial intelligence (AI) start-up SenseTime Inc announced last week that its revenue had more than doubled in the latest quarter. The company, which is headquartered in Beijing, has been using its technology to create facial recognition and video surveillance systems.

The latest results reported for SenseTime, which is headquartered in Beijing, have been used by smartphone makers Xiaomi and Oppo as well as by major tech companies like Apple and Facebook. The company’s shares in Hong Kong sank to their lowest level since the company’s listing in 2018.

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tlpies, some in Singapore have been hoping that the trade war will ease up over time. But when that’s adjusted for the effects of substitution, Singapore’s food security is at heavy risk. The country is highly dependent on food imports, which have been entangled in a long-running trade war with China.

Around a quarter of all rice and a quarter of all animal feed are imported, and the cost of imported food is rising worldwide, with Venezuela and Syria seeing the sharpest increases.

The United States and China have played a role in human rights abuses against minority groups in China. SenseTime said at the time that it strongly opposed the US ban and would work with relevant authorities to resolve the situation.

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Can Pakistan make transition to electric vehicles soon?

Gazprom for Pakistan gas pipeline feasibility study

Yes Bank poised to reject Brach offer

Beijing for removal of foreign technology in more state offices

Interview

Russian company Gazprom is set to initiate the feasibility study at the earliest and then work on laying down pipelines starting from Hub to Indus Delta and for laying a spur pipeline towards Quetta. “The Russian company would also be looking at setting up a 1bcfd gas pipeline to transport Russian investment to Pakistan and will work with considering the various aspects of the project comprehensively,” an official said.

Gazprom has shown interest in building gas storages in Pakistan with investment of $400mn-$500mn. A construction crane towers above steel framework at the under-construction deep oil processing and refining complex at the Naftna Industrija Srbija oil refinery, operated by Gazprom, in Pancevo, Serbia. Gazprom has shown interest in building gas storages in Pakistan with investment of $400mn-$500mn.

Interview

The newspaper said the goal is to make the transition to electric two- and three-wheelers," Aslam said. “Pakistan is thirsting for new business opportunities and is looking forward to an independent mobility,” Haq wrote in his statement.

Beijing is poised to remove foreign technology from more state offices and the Chinese government is taking steps to remove foreign technology from state agencies and companies. A decision to replace the independent software with China-made software is also underway. Beijing will likely replace as many as 100 million relies on foreign technology programs and production activities in Pakistan and to that effect Gazprom is currently engaged with the top management of OGDCL.

The Chinese government is taking steps to remove foreign technology from state agencies and companies. A decision to replace the independent software with China-made software is also underway. The idea behind replacing foreign technology with China-made software is not only to lower costs but also to enhance security. Beijing is interested in purchasing foreign technology for state agencies and companies.

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Tesco considers sale of Asian supermarkets

Bloomberg

Tesco, the UK’s biggest supermarket chain, is considering the sale of its operations in Thailand and Malaysia as it refocuses on the domestic business and mounting challenges in the UK.

The company is carrying out a strategic review of its business, which includes options such as focusing on core assets. Tesco’s shares were up on Tuesday morning, according to a statement.

A Tesco spokesperson, however, said the company was not commenting on market rumors.

The review is being led by CEO Dave Lewis, who has been in the role since 2014, and is expected to announce its findings this year.

A source close to Tesco’s management confirmed that the company is weighing up its options in Asia, but the company would not confirm the details.

Tesco’s Asian operations are reportedly worth around $8 billion, with 74 shops in Thailand and 14 in Malaysia. The company has been looking to sell its Asian operations in recent years to focus on its domestic business in the UK.

The decision comes after the company announced a loss of £1.7 billion in the first half of the year, its worst performance since 2014.

The review is also expected to include the possibility of selling or partnering with other companies to boost its performance.

Tesco has faced tough competition in recent years, with online retailers and discounters such as Aldi and Lidl gaining market share.

The company has been looking to improve its online presence and has invested heavily in its website and mobile app.

However, the review is expected to focus on the company’s core business in the UK, with a potential sale of its Asian operations.

Bloomberg
**Danish faces property-market correction over speculation ban**

The Danish government is set to sit down with the country’s housing minister next month to discuss how to fix the construction sector after it emerged that the minister has negative rates longer than any other realistic interest rate.

A number of Denmark’s pension funds have proposed to allow higher risk in the construction sector, but the government is considering a more cautious approach.

The government has already introduced a number of measures to cool the housing market, including a ban on speculation.

**Prosus raises Just Eat bid to $8.1bn in food delivery war**

Prosus has increased its offer for the UK food delivery company Just Eat to $8.1 billion, or 580 pence a share, in a bid to make a credible bid.

The Netherlands-based investment company, which is owned by Tencent, has been competing with Takeaway.com for control of Just Eat.

Prosus’s offer comes after Takeaway.com announced a preliminary offer of €4.2 billion for Just Eat, or 510 pence a share.

Just Eat’s board has recommended that shareholders accept Prosus’s offer, saying it is a “superior alternative” to Takeaway’s offer.

**Forget self-driving cars: This plan would make us virtual ATMs**

Forget self-driving cars; this plan would make us virtual ATMs.
Amazon faces UK antitrust decision in Deliveroo bid

Bloomberg

Amazon.com Inc’s bid to buy into one of the UK’s most ambitious start-ups may get a shot in the arm amid rising anti-China sentiment, but that they may not materialise in the near future.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) will decide this week on whether to approve Amazon’s $11 billion takeover of Deliveroo, a London-based food-delivery start-up that has become a poster child for Britain’s status as a technology hub.

While the CMA’s decision in principle to ban big deals won’t happen until later this year, the UK regulator’s announcement on Monday that it was launching a full-blown investigation into Amazon’s bid for Deliveroo means the decision cannot be taken for granted.

The CMA has already completed a three-month review into the planned acquisition, and is expected to decide whether to consider a full-blown investigation into the deal this week. The UK government has until Wednesday to intervene, but it is unlikely to do so.

The CMA’s decision is set to be closely watched by regulatory authorities across the globe, as the UK becomes a test case for how to balance the benefits of tech giants’ services with the risks they pose.

Amazon and Deliveroo declined to comment on the matter.

“For the food-delivery business is no

Amazon has been a key player in the global e-commerce market for years, and has been growing rapidly in recent years. It is expected to continue to grow in the coming years.

Amazon is one of the world’s largest retailers, and has a significant presence in the UK. It sells a wide range of products online, including electronics, clothing, and groceries.

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Qatar gas has been certified to ISO 45001 (Occupational Health & Safety) and ISO 22301 (Business Continuity) for the first time.

The achievement, attended by the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Ayman Al-Sulaiti and other senior level employees, is a significant milestone for the organisation and a recognition of the efforts and dedication of all employees towards achieving the goals of health and safety management.

The certification process involved a thorough assessment of the Company’s health and safety management systems, including policies, procedures, training, and incident management, to ensure compliance with the standards.

The achievement demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and a focus on employee well-being and safety. It also highlights Qatar Gas’s commitment to upholding international best practices and standards in the energy sector. This certification will further enhance the company’s reputation and reputation in the global market, and provide a strong foundation for future growth and development.

Qatar Gas’s management team expressed their congratulations and appreciation to all employees for their hard work and dedication in achieving this milestone. They emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards in health and safety management and urged the entire organisation to continue to strive for excellence in all aspects of their operations.

The certification is a testament to Qatar Gas’s commitment to excellence and its ongoing efforts to improve and innovate in the energy sector. It also reflects the company’s dedication to upholding international standards and best practices, and to ensuring the health and safety of its employees.

Qatar Gas is pleased to be among the first organisations in Qatar to obtain these certifications, and looks forward to continuing its efforts to achieve further milestones in the future.