# Qatar Stock Exchange drives innovation with securities lending and ETF fee waiver amid rising IPO momentum



Over 300 global institutional investors recently gathered at HSBC’s GCC Exchanges Conference in London, engaging with all bourses from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and over 100 GCC corporates. This event, now in its fourth year, highlighted the region’s reform-driven growth and the maturation of its capital markets. Discussions centered on the GCC’s robust initial public offering (IPO) pipeline, deep sovereign and corporate bond markets, and expanding private credit platforms—all underpinned by strong fiscal buffers and multi-year economic transformation agendas. The ongoing liberalisation of GCC financial markets, combined with privatisation programmes by GCC governments, is aligning with investors’ increasing desire for diversification amid global market volatility.

The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) stands out as a particularly active player in this evolving landscape. Despite a global slowdown in issuances, GCC capital markets demonstrated resilience in the first quarter of 2025, with IPO proceeds climbing 33% compared to the same period last year. Qatar Stock Exchange-listed companies reported net profits of QR13.22 billion in Q1, continuing a year-on-year growth trend. Abdul Hakeem Mostafawi, CEO of HSBC Qatar, remarked on the region’s appeal, stating that “Global investors are recalibrating for resilience, and the GCC’s balance sheet strength and robust financial markets ecosystem has positioned the region as an increasingly credible alternative.” The QSE is reportedly investing in sophisticated platforms and investment tools to reinforce competitiveness and build investor confidence. Abdullah Mohammed al-Ansari, CEO of QSE, emphasized the exchange’s focus on enhancing market infrastructure and broadening access to sustainable investment opportunities, supporting both regional growth and investor diversification.

One significant development in Qatar’s capital market infrastructure is the introduction of securities lending and borrowing (SLB) on the QSE. The first domestic SLB transaction took place in May, marking a milestone towards increasing market liquidity and depth. HSBC acted as custodian and agent-lender, while QNB Financial Services was the borrower, with support from Edaa, the licensed service provider regulated by Qatar Financial Market Authority (QFMA). Industry insiders view this transaction as a crucial step toward enabling more sophisticated investment strategies and unlocking a substantial liquidity pool. Maha Al Sulaiti, Acting CEO at QNBFS, noted plans to offer this innovative service to qualified investor clients, allowing trading strategies on the QSE that were previously unavailable.

In addition to infrastructure enhancements, the QSE implemented a full waiver of trading fees on Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) starting March 2025 to stimulate ETF trading and improve overall market liquidity. This initiative aligns with the exchange’s Strategic Vision (2024-2030) and Qatar’s broader national development and financial sector strategies. Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Emadi, Acting CEO of QSE, described the move as fostering portfolio diversification and increasing the investor base for ETFs, positioning the QSE as a more competitive regional and global market.

Qatar’s financial ecosystem is also expanding through strategic partnerships and incentive programmes aimed at broadening investment and economic diversification. The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), the sovereign wealth fund managing around $500 billion, has partnered with Canadian asset manager Fiera Capital to launch a $200 million fund focused on Qatari equities. This initiative is designed to attract global asset managers and deepen Qatar’s financial sector, with Fiera Capital opening a local office to reinforce its regional commitment. This fund follows a similar investment collaboration between QIA and the Ashmore Group and ties into larger efforts to diversify away from fossil fuel dependency by encouraging international financial firms to establish local operations.

Moreover, Invest Qatar recently announced a $1 billion incentive programme to accelerate investment and diversify the economy further. The scheme offers financial support covering up to 40% of relevant expenses over five years, targeting new investments, expansion, digitization, job creation, and knowledge transfer. Four specialised packages address key sectors: Advanced Industries, Logistics, Technology, and Lusail Financial Services. Notably, the Lusail package aims to enhance fintech, insurance, and wealth management services, underpinning Lusail's role as Qatar's premier financial district.

Fallout from geopolitical tensions, such as the Iran-led missile attack on a U.S. base in Qatar, has not hampered these financial initiatives. Instead, Qatar remains focused on positioning itself as a resilient financial hub within the Gulf. A growing emphasis on digital transformation is also evident, with the digital economy projected to exceed $20.8 trillion globally by 2025 and representing over 24% of global GDP. This trend significantly influences investment and trading sectors, which benefit from advancements in artificial intelligence, blockchain, and other technologies. Events like the Qatar Financial Expo & Awards underscore the country’s role in pioneering digitized investment solutions. Recognition, such as the “BEST CFD BROKER” award granted to Evest for its innovative digital trading platforms, illustrates the growing integration of fintech in Qatar’s financial landscape.

To bolster transparency and investor confidence, the Qatar Stock Exchange has also formalized partnerships to enhance research coverage on listed companies. A notable example is the recent memorandum of understanding with Arqaam Capital, which supports the QSE’s Sponsored Research Project. This initiative aims to provide independent equity analyses, further attracting both institutional and retail investment.

Taken together, these developments reinforce Qatar’s ambition to fortify its capital markets through enhanced infrastructure, innovative investment tools, and strategic collaborations. The country’s comprehensive approach—from incentivizing foreign investors and digitizing financial services to fostering liquidity and transparency—positions it as a formidable player in the GCC’s evolving economic and financial landscape.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.gulf-times.com/article/706687/business/qse-invests-in-sophisticated-platforms-investment-tools-to-reinforce-competitiveness-hsbc-qatar-ceo)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.gulf-times.com/article/706687/business/qse-invests-in-sophisticated-platforms-investment-tools-to-reinforce-competitiveness-hsbc-qatar-ceo)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://gfmag.com/economics-policy-regulation/qatar-stock-market-securities-lending-borrowing-boosts-product-range-liquidity/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.mondovisione.com/media-and-resources/news/qatar-stock-exchange-announces-full-waiver-of-its-trading-fees-on-etfs-to-enhance-liquidity-and-market-attractiveness/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/75de30b1-2f50-4ac2-ab61-49649df4f8c8)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/invest-qatar-launches-1-billion-incentive-programme-accelerate-investment-2025-05-21/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.gulf-times.com/article/706687/business/qse-invests-in-sophisticated-platforms-investment-tools-to-reinforce-competitiveness-hsbc-qatar-ceo), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/75de30b1-2f50-4ac2-ab61-49649df4f8c8), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/invest-qatar-launches-1-billion-incentive-programme-accelerate-investment-2025-05-21/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[5]](https://www.financemagnates.com/thought-leadership/fintech-future-in-qatar-what-a-20-trillion-digital-economy-means-for-investors/)
* Paragraph 9 – [[7]](https://www.qatarstalk.com/2025/02/04/qatar-stock-exchange-signs-mou-with-arqaam-capital-to-boost-market-transparency/)
* Paragraph 10 – [[1]](https://www.gulf-times.com/article/706687/business/qse-invests-in-sophisticated-platforms-investment-tools-to-reinforce-competitiveness-hsbc-qatar-ceo), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/75de30b1-2f50-4ac2-ab61-49649df4f8c8), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/invest-qatar-launches-1-billion-incentive-programme-accelerate-investment-2025-05-21/), [[4]](https://gfmag.com/economics-policy-regulation/qatar-stock-market-securities-lending-borrowing-boosts-product-range-liquidity/), [[5]](https://www.financemagnates.com/thought-leadership/fintech-future-in-qatar-what-a-20-trillion-digital-economy-means-for-investors/), [[6]](https://www.mondovisione.com/media-and-resources/news/qatar-stock-exchange-announces-full-waiver-of-its-trading-fees-on-etfs-to-enhance-liquidity-and-market-attractiveness/), [[7]](https://www.qatarstalk.com/2025/02/04/qatar-stock-exchange-signs-mou-with-arqaam-capital-to-boost-market-transparency/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.gulf-times.com/article/706687/business/qse-invests-in-sophisticated-platforms-investment-tools-to-reinforce-competitiveness-hsbc-qatar-ceo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/75de30b1-2f50-4ac2-ab61-49649df4f8c8> - The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), managing approximately $500 billion, has partnered with Canadian asset manager Fiera Capital to launch a $200 million fund aimed at investing in Qatari equities. This initiative is part of QIA's broader strategy to position Doha as a key financial hub in the region and attract global asset managers. Fiera Capital will manage the fund and open a Doha office, reinforcing its commitment to the Middle Eastern market. This move mirrors similar strategies by Gulf sovereign wealth funds to deepen economic diversification and reduce fossil fuel reliance by encouraging international firms to establish local presences. The Fiera fund marks the second such initiative by the QIA, following a similar investment with Ashmore Group. In parallel, QIA is also promoting a $1 billion fund of funds to foster Qatar’s start-up ecosystem. Despite recent geopolitical tensions involving an Iran-led missile attack on a U.S. base in Qatar, the country's financial initiatives continue to progress. This collaboration is expected to diversify Qatar’s capital markets and increase investor participation, with Fiera emphasizing its role in wealth creation and regional market development.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/invest-qatar-launches-1-billion-incentive-programme-accelerate-investment-2025-05-21/> - Invest Qatar has unveiled a $1 billion incentive programme to stimulate investment and diversify the Qatari economy, as announced at the 5th Qatar Economic Forum. The initiative provides financial support covering up to 40% of expenses—including setup, construction, leasing, and staffing—over a five-year period. The programme’s first phase features four tailored packages to attract new investments, expand and digitize current operations, generate high-skilled jobs, and encourage knowledge transfer. The Advanced Industries Package targets technology-driven sectors like pharmaceuticals, chemicals, automotive, and electronics. The Logistics Package supports infrastructure, automation, and advanced logistics development. The Technology Package aims to bolster Qatar’s digital economy by promoting cybersecurity, cloud computing, AI, and data innovation. Lastly, the Lusail Financial Services Package seeks to enhance fintech, insurance, and wealth management services while encouraging firms to establish a presence in Lusail, Qatar’s primary financial district.
4. <https://gfmag.com/economics-policy-regulation/qatar-stock-market-securities-lending-borrowing-boosts-product-range-liquidity/> - The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) carried out its first domestic securities lending and borrowing (SLB) transaction in May as part of its strategy to raise market liquidity. The move marked an important development for the QSE, as it looks to increase market and product sophistication, depth, and securities lending. HSBC acted as custodian and agent-lender while QNB Financial Services (QNBFS) acted as the borrower. The QSE worked with Edaa, the licensed service provider under the Qatar Financial Market Authority that provides a range of essential services related to securities and financial instruments. Hussein Fakhreddine, CEO at Qatari investment bank QInvest, said, “The transaction marks a milestone under the Financial Strategic Plan, which is part of the Qatar National Vision 2030, allowing more sophisticated investment strategies and unlocking a significant liquidity pool.” QNBFS plans to offer this service to qualified investor clients that can benefit from new trading strategies on the QSE that were not possible before, according to Maha Al Sulaiti, Acting CEO at QNBFS.
5. <https://www.financemagnates.com/thought-leadership/fintech-future-in-qatar-what-a-20-trillion-digital-economy-means-for-investors/> - The digital economy has become a fundamental pillar of global growth. Projections indicate that it will exceed $20.8 trillion by 2025, accounting for over 24% of the global GDP. Investment and trading stand among the sectors most profoundly impacted by digitization. In 2024 alone, the value of digitally traded assets surged past $13.6 trillion, with further expansion expected as cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain continue to reshape the financial landscape. The Qatar Financial Expo & Awards 2025, held on February 4–5 in Doha, emerged as one of the leading financial events, bringing together pioneers in investment, fintech, and digital trading from across the globe. As part of this Exhibition, Evest was honored with the Award “BEST CFD BROKER“ recognizing its role in developing advanced digital investment solutions that facilitate access to financial markets and promote transparency. This award underscores the company's commitment to providing cutting-edge trading services tailored to the needs of investors in the digital age.
6. <https://www.mondovisione.com/media-and-resources/news/qatar-stock-exchange-announces-full-waiver-of-its-trading-fees-on-etfs-to-enhance-liquidity-and-market-attractiveness/> - Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) is pleased to announce the full waiver of its trading fees on Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs), effective from March 16, 2025. This strategic initiative aims to enhance the attractiveness of ETFs for both investors and brokers, while significantly improving liquidity in the market. This decision reflects QSE's commitment to stimulating ETF trading by reducing financial burdens on investors, increasing market liquidity, and enhancing investment competitiveness. By providing a low-cost trading environment, QSE aims to encourage portfolio diversification and expand the investor base for ETFs. The elimination of trading fees is expected to stimulate trading activity in ETFs and boost assets under management, contributing to the development of a competitive investment environment in line with global best practices. Mr. Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Emadi, Acting CEO of Qatar Stock Exchange, commented on the initiative: "This initiative is part of QSE’s Strategic Vision (2024-2030) to enhance market efficiency and boost investment attractiveness. By waiving our ETF trading fees, we aim to attract more investors, enhance ETF liquidity, and position Qatar Stock Exchange as a more competitive market regionally and globally, and this comes in line with Qatar’s 3rd National Development Strategy (2024-2030) and 3rd Financial Sector Strategy"
7. <https://www.qatarstalk.com/2025/02/04/qatar-stock-exchange-signs-mou-with-arqaam-capital-to-boost-market-transparency/> - Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) signed an MoU with Arqaam Capital to enhance research coverage and market transparency. The partnership aligns with QSE’s Sponsored Research Project, providing independent equity research on listed companies. The initiative aims to boost investor confidence and attract institutional and retail investments to Qatar’s capital markets.