

QATAR: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PAVES WAY FOR ICT EXPANSION

2012 report to chart sectors earmarked for take up of innovative applications

Qatar, XX March: Qatar's bid to step up the pace of its infrastructure projects will be pivotal in helping the country's information and communications technology (ICT) industry to expand, according to Rashid Al Naimi, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of IT service and solutions company MEEZA.

Al Naimi told the global publishing, research and consultancy firm Oxford Business Group (OBG) that key projects, such as the laying of submarine cables and setting up of fibre optic solutions, had enabled industry players to prime the telecoms sector for development.

"We have been focusing on building the infrastructure for the ICT sector, analysing what is missing and looking at where we can fill the gaps, based on the latest technologies and end-to-end solutions and bringing in the right expertise," he said.

Al Naimi was talking to OBG as part of the compilation of research for *The Report: Qatar 2012*, the Group's forthcoming guide on the country's economic activity and investment opportunities. The report will include a detailed, sector-by-sector guide for foreign investors, alongside a wide range of interviews with the most prominent political, economic and business leaders.

Al Naimi believes the health, education and finance sectors offer the greatest potential for innovative applications. "These three sectors are the most attractive for innovative IT solutions. There are also huge opportunities in research," he said.

He was optimistic that the growth of the local cloud computing services market, which recently became available in Qatar, would rise quickly once key issues such as security are addressed.

Cloud services provide access to applications, resources and services on demand through the internet from a cloud computing provider's servers rather than from a company's own on-premises servers.

"The main challenge when it comes to the adoption of cloud services is the maturity of the market. Europe and North America have a far more mature business environment so they are ahead in terms of adoption of cloud services," he said. "Once security and regulation are fully addressed, people will feel comfortable and the market will mature."

Al Naimi said the introduction of cloud computing services in Qatar should help businesses to reduce their operating costs and become more efficient through a user-friendly IT set-up. "Now that cloud services locally will be available locally, companies don't have to worry about storing their data across



the Atlantic, they can have a local service which encompasses the expertise and knowledge for cloud computing,” he said.

He added that cloud-packaged solutions should prove particularly useful to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who stand to gain from using services, including pay-per-use models, that were built and hosted in Qatar with local IT support.

The Report: Qatar 2012 will mark the culmination of more than six months of on-the-ground research by a team of analysts from the Group. It will provide information on opportunities for foreign direct investment into the country’s economy and will act as a guide to the many facets of the country including its macroeconomics, infrastructure, banking and sectoral developments. *The Report: Qatar 2012* will be available in print form or online.

About Oxford Business Group

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