

Gulf Times - GCC 'to be 5th largest economy'

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The economic outlook for Qatar and GCC is very bright, the finance minister tells a session of the Doha Forum on democracy and development

By Sarmad Qazi
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Qatar could be part of a bloc that aims to be ranked the world's fifth biggest economy by 2018, a senior government minister said yesterday.

Addressing a session on the second day of the annual Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, HE the Minister of Economy and Finance Yousef Hussein Kamal said: "I say that the GCC will be the fifth biggest global economy by 2018 because when you take all the six countries and when you have all these resources and with right planning you can do it."

At the national level, he said Qatar was investing in developing human capital and "leaders of innovation".

"The US is considered the driver of innovation. I think these young minds in Qatar who we are investing in can be the future drivers too."

Regionally, investing in sustainable development and infrastructure, increasing economic integration and unifying currencies, were cited as the main reasons for the 2018 outlook.

"If we do it right, my expectations could actually exceed," the minister said.

Earlier, he outlined the steps taken by Qatar since the financial crisis hit the world in September 2008, during a session which discussed the role of states and markets' limits.

"At the beginning of the crisis we set out some measures, one of which was finding out how far the Qatari banks are exposed," he said.

The "stress test" showed that certain procedures needed to be addressed and they were acted upon.

"Also due to the exaggeration of the effect of global crisis on Qatar by the foreign media, we found that foreign investors – with short-term interests in the country - were liquidating their assets. How we addressed that was to ask companies to declare their profits in October," Kamal said.

"We wanted to prove that these companies were strong and to assure the people and the panic-selling of stocks was avoided."

Former president of Peru Alejandro Toledo said that while he was for a free market, he did not want to give a blank cheque to "bankers in New York and London" so they could go "to the casino and play with that money".