Three years after an unjust blockade was imposed on Qatar by some neighbouring countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, the country has emerged as a symbol of resilience and strong and sustained growth. Qatar's private sector has played a key role in circumventing the embargo imposed by the neighbouring countries. As a crucial partner in the country's growth and economic development, Qatar's private sector has been working in tandem with the government to help the country attain self-sustainability in various sectors of the economy.
The siege has contributed to accelerating economic development and boosting foreign trade, especially with the opening of the Hamad Port and the inauguration of direct sea shipping routes with a number of brotherly and friendly countries. Qatar has managed to achieve self-sufficiency in many goods and products by developing food, agriculture, and industrial sectors.

Sheikh Khalifa, the Qatari Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Qcc) Chairman, has said that the siege imposed on Qatar three years ago failed to slow down the rapid growth of Qatar’s economy as the country managed to convert its negative impacts into benefits.

In a statement issued by Qatar Chamber on the third anniversary of the siege, Sheikh Khalifa revealed that about 47,000 new companies have been established in Qatar during the three years of the siege.

About 1,464 industrial establishments, operating and licensed, were registered by the end of 2019 in all industrial sectors, compared to 1,171 by the end of 2016. This means the establishment of some 293 new factories during the siege years, including 182 factories in the first year of siege in 2017, 72 factories in 2018, and 99 factories in the third year.

Sheikh Khalifa said the siege has contributed to accelerating economic development and boosting foreign trade, especially with the opening of the Hamad Port and the inauguration of direct sea shipping routes with a number of brotherly and friendly countries.

Qatar’s economy has proved that it is robust and resilient against crises, he said, adding that the country continued to maintain an accelerated pace of growth despite the ongoing siege. Qatar has managed to achieve self-sufficiency in many goods and products by developing food, agriculture, and industrial sectors.

Underlying the role of the Qcc, Sheikh Khalifa said last year that the siege has contributed to accelerating economic development and boosting foreign trade, especially with the opening of the Hamad Port and the inauguration of direct sea shipping routes with a number of brotherly and friendly countries.

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Greenfields chips in to boost Qatar’s food sustainability agenda

The Greenfields brand of companies provides a wide range of agricultural solutions with modern and scientific methods for farmers in Qatar.

Dr. Benoy Berry, CEO Sandeep Jayaswal informed.

We are collaborating with different stakeholders in Qatar, including government entities like Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZA) to set up state-of-the-art facility plant tissue culture and biops to improve the quality of harvest and produce in Qatar, which is very important. We are carrying out scientific methods as well. We want to help Qatari farmers become more prosperous by using the pure and simple natural farming methods.

Q: What is the idea behind choosing Qatar for your group’s agricultural operations? A: There are reasons why we are here in Qatar and it’s not by chance. Qatar has been seeing a big push towards food security. We wanted to set up a base at a location where the government is looking for global relevance and using technology to achieve excellence. We want to create a holistic agricultural belt in Qatar which remains sustainable even in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: How important is Qatar for your operations in this region? A: We are working to make Qatar a hub for our concentrating plant where we concentrate will be sent out to various hand planting across the globe. Given its strategic location, we are focusing on class technologies and infrastructure by Hassad Port and Hamad International Airport. Qatar is emerging as an epicentre of global trends, including for agricultural products. This coming together is an opportunity for both sides. For Qatar, it is an opportunity to bring in different technologies and solutions that reduce harmful emissions, “The pilot projects are achieving the desired results. We have demonstrated that our bio inputs boost the fertility of soil, shorten the gestation period and reduce harmful emissions,” Jayaswal said.

Sandeep Jayaswal
The Doha Metro is one of the largest public infrastructure projects in the world. The State of Qatar set itself the most ambitious goal – to complete the project from concept design to passenger service in just 7 short years. This enormous task was entrusted to Qatar Rail and its strategic partners.

Qatar Rail’s world-class delivery team overcame every challenge to complete the project on time and under budget, setting new benchmarks for performance and delivery, whilst maintaining the highest standards of safety, quality and governance.

Local business participation was a core objective and 84% of all contracts were awarded to the local private sector. In addition, an entire generation of young Qatari engineers and project managers have benefited from working on the project.

The project was closely coordinated with the massive construction drive across the country in preparation for the FIFA 2022 World Cup. These projects, and the Doha Metro in particular, have transformed Doha for future generations.

The project required over 750 million man-hours to complete and achieved an industry-beating accident frequency rate of just 0.012 – a truly world-class achievement not matched anywhere else in the world.

The Doha Metro has been a huge hit with the people of Doha. There have been more than 17 million passenger trips since the start of operations, exceeding all ridership expectations. By January 2020, daily ridership had exceeded 145,000. While we are waiting to welcome our customers back on board when the Doha Metro resumes service, we have updated our service offer to ensure the highest levels of cleanliness and sanitisation.

The opening of the station at award winning Hamad International Airport enables a seamless “plane to train” experience for those arriving into Qatar, offering fast and frequent services from the airport to the major cultural, tourist and business districts of Doha, meaning it’s now easier than ever for visitors to explore everything the city has to offer.

Metro customers can view available metrolink routes and plan their journey by downloading the Qatar Rail mobile app or by visiting the website. Ridership has grown steadily since the launch of the Metro, exceeding all expectations. By January 2020, daily ridership had exceeded 240,000. While we are waiting to welcome our customers back on board when the Doha Metro resumes service, we have updated our service offer to ensure the highest levels of cleanliness and sanitisation.

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From dream to reality

It all started with an ambitious vision.

World-class excellence and unswerving resilience, has set new benchmarks for performance and delivery, whilst maintaining the highest standards of safety, quality and governance.

One of the largest public infrastructure projects in the world is no longer a dream, but a reality that projects Qatar for the future.

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Accomplishing a Vision
BALADNA: BRAND THAT REACHED DIZZY HEIGHTS AFTER SIEGE

SAYYENDRA PATHAK

BALADNA, a key pillar of the Qatar National Food Security programme, has emerged as one of Qatar’s greatest commercial success stories in the post-blockade period. Established in 2014, Baladna Food Industry Company has grown to become Qatar’s largest locally-owned fresh dairy and long-life products supplier and has helped the country achieve almost 100 percent self-sufficiency in fresh milk.

The company has spent QR2.7 billion (US$0.7 billion) over the last three years to expand its capacity and production capabilities.

The company has ample capacity for growth through ongoing new and value-added products as well as exports. Baladna is expected to increase its capacity by nearly 170,000 litres per day. Baladna can also utilise its existing facility Plant 3 that processes raw milk to cover the entire dairy products demand of Qatar. Currently, Baladna’s infrastructure has the flexibility of processing multiple products like fresh milk, juice and UHT long-life milk at the same time. This creates an edge for the company in responding to the rapid changes in demand dynamics.

Multiple products

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Productivity per cow at Baladna has surpassed the US average of 33 litres per day, reaching 37.2 litres in the first quarter of 2020. The output improved by approximately 12 percent in 2019, with the average milking cow producing approximately 32 litres per day in December last year.

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Highlighting the government’s protectionist policies, the report said. “Qatar’s dairy industry, namely beef and compost sales should support the company’s marketing efforts in Oman,” the report said.

Importing by-products of the dairy industry, namely beef and compost sales should support the company’s marketing efforts in Oman.”

For export bottom-line growth of Baladna is the promise of exports in addition to the dairy industry, namely beef and compost sales should support the company’s marketing efforts in Oman.”

The report said that the government’s support has generated momentum for Baladna, which could also provide some edge to local dairy producers in comparison to imports. Compared to the rest of the region, Qatar had a higher per capita milk consumption of approximately 50-60 litres per annum in 2019.

Having said that, the average per capita milk consumption in the Western countries is higher at approximately 70-80 litres per annum, indicating a potential opportunity for milk consumption. Qatar’s highest GDP per capita in the world coupled with a growing economy should provide sufficient consumption power to residents. The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 is likely to be a major driver for Baladna. Qatar is expected to welcome 1.7 million visitors during this event as per the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, the report said.

Baladna has made a strong start in 2020, strengthening our expectations for 9.5 percent and 20.7 percent growth in revenue and earnings in 2020.

Considering its already launched products and diversification initiatives, “We believe Baladna’s revenue and earnings performance is likely to be even better in the remaining part of the year,” the report said. For 2021, we expect the company’s growth rate of 16.8 percent in revenue and 12 percent in earnings.
Q: How do you view the impact of the blockade on the freight market?

The blockade has been an unexpected bludgeoning, truth be told. There is no doubt that it raised a huge disruption in what had been up to then the status quo of operations. However, the way the nation rose together to ensure self-sufficiency and new global partnerships and supply chain routes that were made, the rise in new industries to meet the sudden need left in the market, the benefits are truly evident. Additionally, our response to the blockade developed the skills and processes needed to deal with any upcoming crisis, and therefore when the COVID-19 outbreak occurred, Qatar was ready.

Q: What are your thoughts on SMEs who are importing critical medical supplies intended for the nation’s economic sectors? In addition, we contribute towards the diversification of the country and relief programs to protect their employees. Park, helping them through various distributions, and we were overall generally more prepared for disruption than many others.

Q: During this time, what would you consider the most important, or challenges, for logistics firms? It is important to note that the majority of these issues have already been addressed and we still are in a challenging time, adjustments have been made to meet these challenges. While the impact of the air and sea freight routes and their dedication primarily towards addressing the fight against COVID-19, the blockade has been an unexpected bludgeoning, truth be told. There is no doubt that it raised a huge disruption in what had been up to then the status quo of operations. However, the way the nation rose together to ensure self-sufficiency and new global partnerships and supply chain routes that were made, the rise in new industries to meet the sudden need left in the market, the benefits are truly evident. Additionally, our response to the blockade developed the skills and processes needed to deal with any upcoming crisis, and therefore when the COVID-19 outbreak occurred, Qatar was ready.

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The young men and women behind, the Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP) incubator, are on a mission to turn their initiative into one of the leading mechanical tech startups in the region. The initiative was launched as a concept idea (prototype) at the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) in 2014, and the new product - Meddy - is now in the spotlight.

To date, Meddy is the largest online network of physicians in Qatar with over 200,000 monthly users.

Early days: A product to kickstart the cloud

Meddy was launched in 2017 as one of the 50 Startups to Watch in the Middle East, earning various recognitions including the Arab360 Awards. Year at the 2018 Qatar IT Business Awards, the idea of Meddy was shortlisted at CMUQ, the faculty and staff were instrumental in helping Meddy get off the ground. We were very involved at CMUQ, and QSTP to improve and refine the idea further. We are also funded by QSTP. Qatar is doing a great job in setting up incubators, free zones, and co-working spaces, making it easier to get startups off the ground, the Meddy CEO explained.

On the impact of the blockade

“Initially when the blockade started, there were a lot of graduates and young people in the country. Before Meddy started, there were no direct links to these countries in the GCC. Given its slight disadvantage, it was a blessing in disguise as they were no longer able to get spare parts and finance and spare parts etc. The patients would then have an option to get a free call back from one of the doctors in their network who can answer any of their questions. We said several things to the doctors that Meddy is also launching a toll-free service in Qatar to make sure that patients can have a video call with doctors in Qatar to allow patients to have calls with doctors in the country. We are launching this quite soon.”

For local entrepreneurs aspiring to start a new company, Meddy, he remarked, “The world is facing a health pandemic, economic crisis, racial injustice, and a geopolitical crisis. Under such circumstances, entrepreneurship is one of the strongest pillars for modern companies and products we use now were born in the last two decades in the time. Seize the moment. Start something!”

Small and big businesses thrive despite the blockade

The real estate and contract- ing company that was established in 2012 engages in leasing of quality furnished residential houses as well as commercial premises and offices. According to Abdelgadir, the business has been good. “We have a large construction project which we started in 2015, and that one is not affected by the blockade. The work is going on well. Hopefully, it will be completed next year. Abdelgadir said that 80 percent of their activities that comprise leasing and rental services, have been doing very well. “The blockade affected us positively. Now, many people have started building long-term business relationships such as signing a longer leasing contract because they know there would be no free movements between countries. Earlier, there were opportunities for movements between countries.”

For business partner Spedale Healthcom, the blockade has been a blessing in disguise as he was able to partner with a company that deals with vehicle maintenance.

He said the blockade did not affect him negatively because that was the best opportunity to expand, invest, and grow his business. Abdelgadir said, “Meddy was the first startup from Qatar that was accepted into Silicon Valley’s 50 Startups Accelerator. It is also the only startup that raised a $500,000 Venture round from local, regional, and international investors.”

We believe that the current situation will help a lot of companies to change their business models to generate new opportunities. There will be no barriers for small businesses to begin raising money to grow their business, and we believe that businesses will start to think about the contributions of technology in inspiring the culture of entrepreneurship in Qatar as well as improving the healthcare sector in the country.”

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TRANSPORT, LOGISTICS FIRMS DEFY BLOCKADE TO ENSURE UNINTERRUPTED SUPPLIES TO QATAR

Qatar has strong marine trade network and highly equipped ports with great facilities

KETHEL CHICKEN: A NOVEL OUTCOME OF THE BLOCKADE
Serving fresh chicken recipe with an indigenous flavour

It is a chicken recipe with an indigenous flavour where farm-fresh chicken is brought straight from the poultry farm to oven and from oven to the dining table.

Three years of resilience

Transport and logistics companies across the world have played vital roles in opening new supply chains to ensure uninterrupted supply of goods during the blockade of Qatar. Major players in the sector came up with various solutions to support Qatar and benefit from the situation. They went for expansion while new investors came up with new projects. Speaking to Qatar Tribune, Country Manager of BDP International Logistics Services in Qatar, Ram Krishnan said, “In the beginning of the blockade, logistics firms were faced with a big challenge as the entire region was cut off from Qatar.” Krishnan added: “It was a challenging situation. Our two offices in Oman rose to the occasion and acted as saviour. We continued all the vessels through Sohar Port.”

One of the major transhipment terminals of the region took a stand one fine morning that cargo/containers bound to Qatar were already discharged from its destination ports and were waiting for the schedule from the country that imposed blockade on Qatar.”

With the unjustified declaration was made, over 5,000 containers connected to Qatar were already discharged from its location and waiting for the schedule from the country that imposed blockade on Qatar.

Transport and Logistics firms in Qatar worked around the clock to establish a stable supply chain to meet all requirements in Qatar. BDP International Logistics Services, an organisation having 136 offices all over the world, was one of the leading logistics companies in Qatar involved in major projects including FIFA 2022, Kahramma, Metro Rail, Qatar Petroleum and its subsidiaries. “Government entities opened many doors and relaxed norms with utmost care in order to avoid interruption of supply of products required for the infrastructure projects. During this challenging situation, we shipped a mammoth cargo/containers, which included an electric transformer from Korea weighing 260 tonnes,” he said.

“For the support of Qatari authorities, we established a stable supply chain to meet all requirements in Qatar.”

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It is a chicken recipe with an indigenous flavour where farm-fresh chicken is brought straight from the poultry farm to oven and from oven to the dining table.

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Online platforms for retail businesses on the rise

SANJIVI CHANDRAN

If there is one area that saw unprecedented growth during the blockade, it is the proliferation of online platforms to sell goods and small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to local traders. Lately, amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the platforms are witnessing further growth.

In the last couple of weeks, a number of new digital platforms or e-shops have come up to support many businesses, particularly in retail marketing, trading and hospitality sectors.

“Digital platforms will be an integral part of most of the businesses in the future. People from all walks of life are attracted to online selling and buying because of its easy operation mechanism and transparency. "Alby Joy, a senior official of Q-Discounts, said. Q-Discounts is an online portal that offers free service for both sellers and buyers.

"In view of the existing market situation, many of the leading retailers and entrepreneurs are planning to launch their e-shops or other digital platforms to boost their businesses. An IT professional, Kaha Minmani, at Qatar University said, ‘Information technology plays a key role in everyone’s life today, ranging from their affairs to their children’s education to checking the availability of pet birds. So, future is a world ruled by information technology.’ The Co-Founder of Spot Online Trading Network Leon Joy said, ‘Even before, we made a small launch about a year back, the number of vendors who registered with us, or customers who visited the site has registered considerable growth during COVID-19. Our site is free from any kind of advertisement or misleading information. Nominal money is charged from vendors and the Key Word is the only source of our income.”

The number of sellers and buyers who visit popular social media sites such as Facebook for business and shopping has also increased during the pandemic.

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Three years since the blockade was imposed on Qatar by some neighbouring countries, Elsana Medical Distributors, one of the largest distributors of pharmaceuticals in Qatar, has been blooming. Despite the siege, the pharmaceutical distributor has witnessed a marked growth in sales.

“Ever since the blockade started, the people of Qatar have become more self-sufficient. We have been able to produce and distribute medicines that were previously imported,” said Shohaa Zayed, the General Manager of Elsana Medical Distributors.

The blockade, he noted, helped them to learn a good lesson that they need not rely on neighbours and that they had to work independently and act immediately.

He thanked the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) for being supportive, for its guidance and reassurance from HH the Amir to take the country on the path of further progress and development while soldiers stood steadfastly to protect citizens and residents.”

He said, “The blockade, he noted, helped them to learn a good lesson that they need not rely on neighbours and that they had to work independently and act immediately. We want to be a 110% self-sufficient nation.”
We are now capable of coping with alternatives at times of such crises. It taught us how to depend on our systems and resources, introduced new services, and found new places to get its supplies from, during the besiege period.

We have bounced back strongly from the blockade: Deputy CEO of Al Ahli Hospital

Dr Munir Ali Ibrahim said, "Apart from the initial difficulties due to disruption of supplies, the blockade hardly impacted us, thank you to the government. We had a problem in sourcing some materials like medicines and medical supplies in the beginning. But as time went on, the government supplied every necessity and within two months we were back on track. Our business picked up in due course with items coming from different countries at competitive prices because of increased availability."

Speaking to Qatar Tribune, Naseem Healthcare General Manager Dr Salah El-Din El-Hamalawy said that the facility at Al Wakrah, which is a polyclinic, is about 3,500 square metres with around 32 beds on C-Ring Road. We expanded the existing hospital with around 22 beds on D-Ring Road. We expanded the existing one.

The premier hospital boasts of new branch in Al Wakrah, expanded capacity, new services and new suppliers

Catherine W Gichuki

PRIVATE healthcare facilities have continued to grow despite the blockade imposed on Qatar by some of its neighbouring countries on June 5, 2017.

At the end of 2018, Al Ahli Hospital’s Deputy Chief Executive Officer Jamal Hammad has said that since the blockade started, medications and other medical supplies and services were stopped suddenly despite the contract between the supplier and the hospital.

"The disruption of supply included very last-minute items whose consumption is very high and the situation became very difficult to handle. We were left with hardly an option, but to urgently look for alternatives," he said.

He added: "Thankfully, we have a very good Supply-Chain Department, which among its contingencies, has an alternative supply chain with different countries, which is opened only during such crises. The management agreed on this exigency plan in the beginning of every year. The blockade and the current coronavirus pandemic are examples of such crises. So, we immediately reverted to our alternative sources after the blockade."

Hammad said that the deep drop in supply did not last even 14 days and things got back to normal with the alternative supply chain soon. He said that they started sourcing different medications and supplies from countries such as Turkey, China, Jordan, UK, France, besides others. "We are so grateful to the government and authorities for the support extended to the private sector in solving the cost of such items. Initially, there was kind of a spike on the prices due to the blockade but that was dealt with immediately by the relevant government authorities. This helped us recover from the shock quickly and within a month's time everything was normal," said Hammad.

According to him, 50 percent of their medications came from neighbouring countries, mostly from Egypt. "So, it was a great achievement to recover within a month of the disruptions of 50 percent of our supply chain. It certainly wouldn’t have been possible without the support of the government."

Hammad added that the blockade did not deter them from implementing any of their plans. "We proceeded as planned to open the Al Wakrah branch of our hospital. All new preparations and recruitment regarding the new branch went on schedule despite the blockade and we managed to open the facility to the public in the first quarter of 2019".

He added that since the blockade began, Al-Ahli Hospital has expanded in terms of capacity and specialties. "We added neurosurgery and cosmetic surgery. We have also introduced the fastest MRI and CT imaging system in Qatar. It does cardiac imaging in less than a second. It can give a picture of the blocked artery of the heart within a second without the patient having to be transported anywhere. This achievement is a point of pride for us."

Other services offered by the hospital include: Obstetrics and Gynaecology, General Surgery, Cardiology, Thoracic Medicine, Dermatology, Plastic Surgery, Endocrinology, Endocrine Diseases, Nutrition, Diabetes Treatment, Endocrine Diseases, Internal Medicine, Ophthalmology, and Dermatology. The hospital has more than 18 faculties. All patients die that they had better treatment opportunities here in Qatar as well. They realized that they did not need to go abroad to seek treatment. We saved more on cosmetics."

Besides, he said that they set up two more branches at Al Wakrah and on D-Ring Road. "We also expanded our main facility and made it a day-care hospital. All this happened after the blockade."

He said that the facility at Al Wakrah, which is a polyclinic, is about 3,500 square metres with more than 18 facilities. "We also came up with a hospital with around 22 beds on D-Ring Road. We expanded the existing one."

Currently, Naseem Healthcare has seven facilities in Qatar. It also has branches at Al Rayyan, Abu Hamour, Muntazah and Aziziya localities. The group of hospitals has more than 600 staff, including more than 150 doctors.