

Doha Bids for the Olympics

An interview with Hassan Ali Bin Ali,
Chairman, Doha 2016 Applicant City



Hassan Ali Bin Ali

EDITORS' NOTE Hassan Ali Bin Ali is a leading Qatari business figure and has interests in construction, pharmaceuticals, the energy sector, retail, and manufacturing. He has worked closely with Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned in building the Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs. He is also actively involved in disabled sports, leading the way in developing purpose-built facilities for disabled athletes. Ali Bin Ali was a competitive tennis and squash player in his youth, was the driving force in establishing national tennis squads in Qatar, and founded the Qatar Tennis Federation. He was one of the first Qataris to be educated abroad, both in the United Kingdom and Lebanon.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF Doha 2016 is an organization and campaign formed to further the goal of Qatar hosting the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which would assist in changing perceptions about the Arab world and culture, as well as showing how the city has maintained its traditional desert culture of generosity and hospitality, while embracing the modern world with first-class business, technology, and sports facilities.

What are Qatar's primary selling points to be the host country for the Olympics in 2016?

Our vision is to promote a peaceful society and to extend the Olympic ideals to millions of new hearts, especially to the world's youth. By doing this, we hope that Arab youth will gain a

better understanding of the world and that the youth of the rest of the world will gain a true picture of Arab culture and hospitality. "Celebrating Change" means overcoming barriers to cultures and people. Awarding Doha the 2016 Games would unleash the power of the Olympic movement and peaceful sporting competition to create understanding, hope, and change that could unite the entire region with the rest of the world.

The last edition of the Asian Games were held in Qatar. How did that help prepare you for the Olympic Games?

Doha has steadily risen to become a prominent host for international sporting events. In particular, Doha has an impressive track record in hosting multi-sport events and is becoming a leader in organizing them. We currently host an array of international sporting events on an annual basis including ATP Men's tennis, FIM Moto GP, WTA Women's tennis, European PGA Qatar Masters Tournament, UCI Tour of Qatar, ITTF Pro Tour, IAAF Super Grand Prix, FEI Show Jumping competition and for the first time this year, we will host the WTA Championships in November. The recent Doha 2006 Asian Games were widely regarded as the best ever. They are the second largest multi-sport event in the world after the Olympic Games. In 2006, Doha hosted 8,000 athletes competing in 39 sports over a 15-day period. The opening Ceremony received international acclaim. This has given us great confidence that we can successfully host the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

What facilities does Qatar already offer for the 2016 Olympic Games?

In Doha, we already have a world-class sporting infrastructure. Two of our stadiums were acknowledged to be among the best in the world in a global contest organized by the International Association for Sports Leisure Facilities and sponsored by the International Olympic Committee. Our plan will develop our sporting infrastructure even further by establishing a new state-of-the-art regional center for elite – and youth – sport. More than 70 percent of the proposed venues in our Games plan already exist and have served as sites for major international competitions.

Doha 2016 proposes to use four new venues for the 2016 Games, all of which are already part of the Qatar Olympic Committee's Master Plan for Venue Development. The QOC plans to create a new swimming center at Al-Gharaffa Club, a new slalom facility for canoe/kayak at Aspire, and the new Qatar Dome at the Qatar Club. Each of these

facilities will meet the long-term needs of the community and further advance sport in Doha. A new multi-purpose sports complex is also being built at the Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs and will be used as the boxing venue for the games.

The new slalom facility will be the focal point for an extreme sports complex and water park being created as part of the Aspire Sports City. The new international swimming center will be an adaptable structure that normally seats 4,000 spectators but is designed to be easily modified with additional temporary seating for the games and then downsized again after the games are finished.

There are also six temporary venues in our 2016 Games plan, including the cycling venues and the beach volleyball venue. In each case, the venue is developed around world-class competition facilities. Doha 2016 also proposes temporary adaptations for many of the permanent facilities to increase spectator capacity for the duration of the games, while the venues themselves will be kept at an appropriate size for legacy use.

You've noted that it was the vision of His Highness The Emir that initiated Qatar's interest in hosting the 2016 Olympics.

Qatar's visionary Emir, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, has set the country on a monumental modernization program to become a role model for economic and social transformation in the region. The peaceful country of Qatar is now an outward-looking country that embraces free speech and debate. It is fast becoming a global meeting place, welcoming major political and religious figures from a variety of different backgrounds and faiths. Doha is building a world-class knowledge economy focusing on education, sports, medicine, science, and technology, all while respecting our rich and vibrant history and culture. The Heir Apparent, His Highness Sheikh Tameem, is Qatar's member of the International Olympic Committee. It was his original vision and initiative, following the highly successful 2006 Asian Games in Doha, which is the inspiration and the impetus behind this bid.

Are there any other projects you would like to highlight?

We have several huge infrastructure projects under way, which will happen irrespective of our bid. These include the Qatar Foundation, Lusail City, and the New Doha International Airport [NDIA]. They will all be completed in the next five to seven years. ●