

Publication: Gulf Times
Country: Qatar
Circulation: 33,000
Date: 11 May 2017
Page: 9



The winners of the awards with officials at the event.

Most accessible venues recognised

The Accessible Qatar Conference concluded with an awards ceremony recognising the most accessible venues in Qatar. Supported by Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), the ceremony was attended by key government figures, developers, and representatives from winning venues, which included five-star hotels, shopping malls, tourist attractions, parks and recreational areas.

Held as part of Project Qatar, the 14th International Construction Technology and Building Materials Exhibition, the two-day Accessible Qatar Conference aimed to raise awareness about accessibility, encourage knowledge sharing, and influence project developers to make existing and future venues accessible to the disabled.

Accessible Qatar is an initiative of Sasol, a leading international

integrated chemicals and energy company participating for the first time as the Accessibility Partner to Project Qatar. Sasol, which launched its Definitely Able programme in 2012, has audited close to 100 venues in Qatar so far, with the help of an international accessibility expert. The information is available through the Accessible Qatar free app.

During the award ceremony, Vuyo Kahla, executive vice president, advisory and assurance at Sasol; Phinda Vilakazi, president, GTL Ventures at Sasol in Qatar; together with Saif al-Kuwari, director of PR and communication at QTA, bestowed trophies for accessibility on winners in five categories:

Trophies for the most accessible five-star hotel for the mobility impairment were awarded to Intercontinental Doha The City, Marriot

Marquis, Crowne Plaza, The Torch, The Westin and AlRayyan Hotel Doha. Movenpick Westbay received a certificate in recognition of its specific efforts to address the needs of the visually impaired community.

Trophies for the most accessible shopping venue for mobility impairment were awarded to the Mall of Qatar, The Gate Mall and Gulf Mall.

The trophy for the most accessible tourist attraction for mobility impairment was awarded to The Museum of Islamic Art. Katara Cultural Village received a certificate recognising its dedication toward improving accessibility, in general, at its premises.

The trophy for the most accessible park and recreation venue for mobility impairment was awarded to Al Khor Park. The trophy for the most accessible stand at Project

Qatar Exhibition 2017 was awarded to the Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Early last year, QTA introduced a new hotel grading and classification system which directly links the number of stars a hotel has with how accessible it is. QTA also has a regulatory mandate to ensure that the development of the tourism sector is inclusive of the disabled community's needs.

Sasol has developed the Accessible Qatar initiative in partnership with The Ministry of Municipality and Environment, QTA, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, Mada, and Shafallah Center, and in close collaboration with Qatar Social & Cultural Center for the Blind, and The Qatari Center for Social Cultural for the Deaf, the Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs, and the Unesco Doha Office.