

RECORDER REPORT

Qatar to open visa centres at Lahore and Peshawar: CG

KARACHI: Consul General of Qatar, Mishal Muhammad Ali Al Ansari Friday said that two Qatari visa centers were already operational in Karachi and Islamabad while two more such centers will also be established in Peshawar and Lahore for processing visas of mostly the skilled and semi-skilled labor.

Speaking at a meeting of Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Mishal said, “Around 150,000 Pakistanis are living in Qatar as compared to around 40,000 Pakistani expats just four years ago.”

Qatari envoy added that Qatar and Pakistan have been enjoying very old and strong relations for decades. “We have initiated visa on arrival service for all Pakistanis while Qataris were also benefiting from a similar visa on arrival facility during their visit to Pakistan. Pakistan is exporting fruits, vegetables, fishes, rice, minerals, steel and cement to Qatar and is one of the fastest growing partners of Qatar in the region.”

He said, “We’ve opened up the country and are looking for partners from all over the world. We’ve also eased the restrictions and regulations for anyone who wants to do business in Qatar. There are numerous sectors where no local Qatari partner is required anymore while Qatari banks are also fully assisting such foreign investors.”

Qatari CG pointed out that 90 percent of Qatari imports from Saudi Arabia and Emirates were suspended because of the blockade imposed around two years ago subsequently, they partnered with other countries including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India, besides focusing on becoming self-sufficient in numerous sectors. “A lot of changes happened in Qatar during the last two years. We are now self-sufficient and not relying on anyone in the dairy, poultry, farming sectors. Our farms have increased production by almost a thousand percent and all the major vegetables are also being grown in Qatar now. Even our fish farms have now tripled as compared to what they were before the blockade,” he added.

Keeping in view the recent developments, he was fairly optimistic that the blockade would ease up which would create a much better situation for Qatar. “There was an effect, which I cannot deny but now we are doing well without them and with them (Saudi Arabia & Emirates), we will do great”, he said, adding that all the projects were going on smoothly in Qatar as the new expansion of the airport has started while Qatar Airways was also doing very well since the blockade as the airline added 26 new destinations, raising the total number of destination to 160.

Highlighting the activities underway for the FIFA 2020 World Cup and the Vision 2030, Qatari Consul General stated that preparations for the FIFA world cup were in full swing as a lot of projects are going on in Qatar, of which half of the development work on the subway system has been completed while the construction of two out of six stadiums has also been completed while work on the remaining four football stadiums will also be completed next

year. Moreover, 80 hotels were also being constructed in Doha while some huge cruise ships will also be arriving in Qatar just for the World Cup which is likely to be attended by millions of people from all over the world. “FIFA World Cup’s spending is almost US\$200 billion while under the Vision 2030, around 150 large scale projects worth billions of dollars are to be offered after FIFA world cup in 2020.”

He further mentioned that although one or may be two projects, which are not even 10 percent of the total construction projects, suffered some delay because of the blockade but the construction industry continues to grow as many new buildings and hospitals are being constructed. “We are also focusing on promoting tourism, particularly the Cultural Tourism as many new museums are being established and the Museum of Islamic Art and Cultural Centers in Qatar are already open whereas the Hamad Port, which is the largest port of Gulf region, also became fully operational a year ago”, he added.

Earlier, KCCI President Agha Shahab Ahmed Khan, while welcoming the Qatari Consul General, underscored the need for making collective efforts to enhance trade ties between Pakistan and Qatar. Both countries have been enjoying good bilateral relations particularly in the energy sector but efforts have to be made from both side to enhance trade and investment cooperation in other sectors as well.

Referring to FIFA 2020 being organized in Qatar, he stated that this particular event has opened up a host of opportunities for the business communities of both the countries to collaborate in numerous sectors of the economy.

He was of the opinion that Pakistan, being an agricultural economy, can offer many commodities to Qatar and there was also good potential for enhancing trade in fresh fruits, vegetables, rice, meat, livestock, gems & jewelry, Information Technology and Engineering sectors. “As Pakistan produces some of the finest gems & jewelry whereas Qatar has been importing these products mostly from India, therefore the Qatari business community must look into the possibility of importing good quality gems and jewelry products from Pakistan as well”, he added.