

Thai consul general seeks virtual talks to finalise FTA

Requests KCCI to discuss matter with commerce ministry

OUR CORRESPONDENT
KARACHI

The 10th round of negotiations between Pakistan and Thailand for finalising a free trade agreement (FTA) has suffered delay due to the coronavirus outbreak, said Thailand Consul General Thatree Chauvachata.

He urged that instead of delaying it further, arrangements should be made to hold talks virtually so that the much-awaited agreement, which had been pending since 2015, could be finalised at the earliest.

Exchanging views during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Thai consul general requested the trade body to push the Ministry of Commerce so that the Thailand-Pakistan FTA could become effective, which would surely result in improved trade ties between the two countries.

“In this regard, a list carrying 200 items for the FTA has been forwarded to Pakistan’s Ministry of Commerce and we await response,” he said.

The Thai official informed businessmen that Thailand’s economy had been recovering slowly from the destruction caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the country was steadily opening up for the rest of the world.

Recently, the Thai Consulate in Karachi has started issuing tourist visas with conditions while business visas were already being issued with a 14-day quarantine condition on arrival in Thailand and some other necessary documentation.

He added that a proposal to reduce the quarantine period was also under discussion to facilitate the business community.

Agreeing with the Thai official’s suggestion, KCCI President M Shariq Vohra assured him that he would take up the delay in finalisation of the FTA with the Ministry of Commerce.

He underscored the need

Thailand has a number of high value-added industries and Pakistan, by forging joint ventures, can develop such industries together

for expediting work on the FTA while more items must be added to the FTA list in consultation with stakeholders.

“Neglected areas of trade and investment cooperation must also be taken into consideration by both sides and we should not remain confined to trading traditional items only.”

He said that Thailand had a number of high value-added industries like agrobusiness, food processing and automotive production, and Pakistan, by forging joint ventures in such fields, could develop the industries together.

Furthermore, there is a potential to collaborate in the field of trade, culture, infrastructure development,

science and technology, defence, education and religious tourism.

The KCCI president stressed the need for diversifying trade between Pakistan and Thailand, besides promoting and marketing the abundant tourism opportunities in both countries.

He also emphasised the need for re-energising Pakistan-Thailand Joint Business Forum in order to pave the way for more strengthened trade relations.

Vohra told the consul general that in order to improve trade and investment, the Karachi Chamber had recently initiated a series of webinars with Pakistani consulates abroad, of which the first webinar was held recently in association with Pakistan’s consulate in Shanghai that proved very fruitful.

The Thai consul general was requested to support the initiative by arranging and facilitating a similar webinar with Pakistan’s consulate in Thailand.