

### **Thailand proposes virtual talks for FTA with Pakistan**

KARACHI: Thai envoy on Thursday proposed to virtually restart long-stalled talks on Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between two countries, pending since 2015.

The 10th round of Pakistan-Thailand FTA negotiations, to be hosted by Pakistan, hit snags due to coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, which rendered the finalisation of the agreement in limbo. Thatree Chauvachata, Consul General of Thailand, requested trade bodies to push the trade ministry so that the FTA could become effective.

"In this regard, a list carrying 200 items for the FTA has also been forwarded to Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce and we await response," the envoy told members of Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI).

Chauvachata said Thailand's economy was recovering slowly from the destruction caused by 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 conditional tourist visas, while the business visas were already being issued with a 14-day quarantine condition on arrival in Thailand and some other necessary documentation. "However, a proposal is currently being discussed to reduce quarantine time from 14 to 10 days in order to facilitate the business community", he added.

Earlier, President KCCI Shariq Vohra, said, "Pakistan and Thailand have been enjoying great relations and same is the case with Karachi Chamber and Thai Consulate in Karachi that have also been enjoying excellent and cordial relations with each other, resulting in improved trade ties between the two countries".

Vohra assured the Thai CG to take up the delay in finalisation of Pakistan-Thailand FTA with the Ministry of Commerce so that this important FTA, which was being demanded by the business communities of both countries, could immediately become a reality. "The neglected areas of trade and investment cooperation must also be taken into consideration by both sides and we should not remain confined to trading the traditional items only," Vohra added.

President KCCI further stressed the need to diversify trade between two countries, besides promoting and marketing the abundant tourism opportunities in both the countries.