

'Progressive collaboration' via PPP scheme key to SME development

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

“Progressive collaboration” between government agencies and various business institutions through stronger public-private partnerships (PPPs) will play a key role in the development of Qatar’s small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector, an official has said.

Since the 1930s, SMEs have been used as a tool “to reorganise the economy,” according to Doha Bank CEO Dr R Seetharaman, who was among the panel of experts speaking at the recently held “3rd Entrepreneurship in Economic Development Forum.”

He said in the last 10 years, the Qatar economy “has come a long way as a practitioner of SME financing,” and has been “a pioneer in this process,” giving “over QR1.2bn in funding.”

Seetharaman described the role of the SME sector in realising



Seetharaman emphasising the urgency for building a PPP model.

the Qatar National Vision 2030 as “a strategic one.” He said: “This is possible through progressive collaboration among institutions

committed to the development of SME sector, through stronger public-private partnerships.”

Citing the need for training

and development programmes for SMEs, Seetharaman emphasised the urgency for building a PPP model.

He said agencies like the Qatar Business and Incubation Centre (QBIC) and the support provided by Qatar Foundation and Qatar Development Bank (QDB) to SMEs “is the right policy framework to start with.”

“Government initiatives should be designed to encourage startups to boost the growth of SMEs and must emphasise the importance of management development. Increasing the managerial qualities of the SMEs’ human resources will lead to building trust between SMEs and their stakeholders,” he said.

Seetharaman also underscored the importance of special economic zones, which he said would open “bigger opportunities” for SMEs and young, innovative entrepreneurs.

“SMEs are aspirations of young entrepreneurs with big ideas but do not have the ability



Al-Yaqoobi underlines the role of e-government programmes in developing SMEs and diversifying economy. PICTURES: Thajudheen

to articulate them. That is where a public-private partnership model plays a significant role. You cannot leave entrepreneur-

ship to suffer so the government has to come in to rescue it,” he said. He added: “Qatar has a very strong industrial base and it is

important to simplify the rules through business liberalisations like freezones. More and more opportunities will mushroom from the three freezones that the government has announced.”

Another panel expert, Kaleem Mohamed al-Yaqoobi, founder and CEO of Oman-based integrated security solutions provider Golden Eagle Eye (GEE), said the availability of funding and stringent legislations are some of the major challenges for many SMEs.

He also stressed that “bureaucracy in the government” is another obstacle for Oman’s SME sector. To address this, al-Yaqoobi underlined the role of e-government programmes in developing SMEs and diversifying the economy.

He also said “active participation” of business chambers and making them as “partners in decision making” will help support local businesses by opening SMEs and their products to new markets.