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India can help set up huge food reserve facility in Qatar: Ex-minister

SATYENDRA PATHAK
DOHA

INDIA and Qatar can join hands to set up huge food reserve facility in Doha to meet the growing need for food in the Gulf region, Suresh Prabhu, India's Sherpa to the G20 and former union minister, said on Wednesday.

Addressing global audience during a webinar organised by Doha Bank, Prabhu said, "India is one of the major producers of food items in the world. Gulf countries like Qatar are not self-reliant as far as food products are concerned. They depend on imports to meet the demand. To ensure that there is no scarcity of food products due to untoward supply disruptions, Indian can help set up huge

reserves of food products like meat, grains, poultry, agricultural and horticulture products."

While the food reserve will ensure food security in Qatar, Prabhu said, needs of other Gulf countries can also be met from there.

Prabhu said that energy is another area where there is immense scope for further cooperation.

"India currently has almost two-third of its electricity generation from thermal. Gas can reduce the coal output and will lead to lower emissions. Qatar can increase its supply of gas to India at cost-effective rates," he said.

The former minister said that infrastructure and pharmaceutical are other areas where Qatar and India can



Dignitaries take part in the webinar organised by Doha Bank on Wednesday.

work closely to boost trade between the two countries.

The webinar entitled 'Bi-

lateral and Synergistic Opportunities between Qatar and India' saw the new Indi-

an Ambassador to Qatar HE Deepak Mittal participate in his first event after joining of-

fice in Doha. The Indian ambassador discussed about the opportunities that Qatar can offer to Indian businesses on account of FIFA 2022.

He said there was an immense scope for further enhancing trade and investment between the two countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Doha Bank Group CEO R Seetharaman said, "Qatar has world class seaport, airport, free zones and new laws to promote non-Qatari investments. Qatar is an AA- rated country and Doha Bank is rated A3 with stable outlook. The country has a sovereign fund which is 1.5 times of GDP and has adequate financial reserves reflecting inherent strength of the economy."

CII National Committee on Construction Chairman Atul Punj said that Qatar has become self-sustaining country post- blockade and FIFA 2022 is an opportunity to showcase developed and best-in-class infrastructure.

In infrastructure sector, high-end real estate development and affordable housing are the key areas where Qatar can invest into India, Punj said.

SME Chamber of India Founder and President Chandrakant Salunkhe said that Indian SMEs and Doha Bank work together to establish their presence which makes them competitive.

Ranjan Mathai, India's former foreign secretary, spoke on changing dynamics and foreign policies.