

Qatar, Italy trade ties strong: Enjoy

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With just a week to go before the inauguration of Italy's LNG terminal which will make possible direct supply of LNG to the Italian gas market from RasGas, Qatar Tribune's Lucia Guarano caught up with Ambassador of Italy to Qatar HE Andrea Ferrari to find out what this latest development augured for the Qatar-Italy bilateral relationship. Excerpts:

Q. Bilateral trade between Italy and

What is the forecast for the next year?

We see light at the end of the tunnel as the global crisis shows signs of abating. This should provide new impulse to bilateral trade between the two countries. Of course, Italian imports from Qatar are also set to increase with the opening of the LNG terminal, as Rome will start importing high quantities of LNG. This will certainly help to minimise trade imbalance and increase the global exchange.

Will the Rovigo terminal become a conduit for the supply of Qatari gas to eastern and central Europe?

Rovigo's terminal has a huge capacity to receive supply of LNG from Qatar and, I think, it is possible that quantities of gas that will not enter the Italian market, will be redirected from Italy towards the European market.

What impact will the agreement on the terminal have on bilateral relations between Italy and Qatar?

Of course, we are very happy that such an agreement has been reached. However, this does not surprise us because our bilateral relations are already extraordinary. We are very happy that the Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani will take part in the inauguration. It shows the importance that the event holds for our relations.

There is a positive mutual feeling between Qatar and Italy that has helped pull off the agreement on the terminal. And not ready to stop at that, we would like to further strengthen the bilateral ties, not only in the commercial sphere, but in other fields as well.

Can you give us some examples?

In the cultural field, we have already done a lot and are trying to do even more. We are working on a few initiatives to be launched by the end of the year that will see announcement on the Italian industrial design and gastronomy very soon. In 2010, which is

Exclusive

Qatar has decreased during the global financial crisis after many years of constant growth. How do you see the current situation shaping?

A. The level of trade between Italy and Qatar is still very positive. In 2009, trade has decreased as a consequence of the

international crisis, but Italy is still positioned as one of the top exporters to Qatar and is set to maintain a remarkable position in the coming days.

Most importantly, there will be a dramatic increase in the exchange of commodities between Italy and Qatar by the beginning of next year when the new Rovigo LNG terminal, to be inaugurated on October 19, starts working at full speed.



Ambassador of Italy to Qatar HE Andrea Ferrari. (UDAYAN NAG)

an important year for Doha because it has been chosen as the Arabic Capital of Culture, we are thinking of launching a series of performing arts initiatives, strictly connected to the 'path' we would like to tread with Qatar.

Are there commercial projects too you are working on?

In mid-November, a team of Italy's commercial and industrial chambers' union, Unioncamere, will visit Doha on its first official trip to Qatar. About 40 companies will take part in the initiative aimed at seeking new business opportunities and partnerships for Italian firms in Qatar. This mission will be followed by a second, probably in the first part of 2010, and will involve other 40 national companies.

Is there potential for further increase in Italian exports in new sectors such as renewable energy?

Yes, of course. In this regard we have had an important mission from Italy's building and construction industry association (ANCE). Italy can offer excellence in terms of products with a low environmental impact, high-tech devices that can help Qatar in its energy efficiency drive. And Italy's Tourism Minister Michela Brambilla, during her visit to Qatar in February, set the grounds for another impor-

tant agreement that we hope to finalise very soon.

Can Italy be considered one of Qatar's best partners in Europe?

Without any doubt. As exporter to Qatar, we can be counted among the top countries in Europe. Currently, we do not have a very high global exchange level but I foresee that this will radically change with the opening of the Rovigo terminal.

In what way can the Italian community in Doha be instrumental in the further development of the bilateral relations?

The over 750-strong Italian community in Qatar is an asset for this country as it is a community of skilled professionals, technicians and managers who work in projects of vital importance for the country. Italians are also present in other sectors such as the luxury industry and in other professional fields. In the last four years, our community has grown constantly and this trend should continue in the coming years.

Are there any initiatives dedicated to the Italian community in Doha?

To start with, we will celebrate with our community, Italy's armed forces national day on November 4.