Qatar Investments in Sudan Reach US$2 Billion

Sudan has become in recent years the attraction of many countries as an investment attraction and in the various fields.

The Qatari-Sudanese relations, particularly in the area of investments, have been developing fast in recent years with large Qatari investment flowing into the country, especially in the field of agriculture, animal resources, industry and real estate.

Qatar is now on the top of six countries that have the largest investments in Sudan.

For his part, the director of investments services in Sudan, Adel Abdel Aziz, has described Qatari investments as substantial.

He added Qatar has entered into a number of development projects in the various states of Sudan.

"The directing of Qatari investments to the agricultural, industrial and service sectors will make Sudan an investment hub in the region and will open up tremendous opportunities for external investments since Sudan enjoys tremendous resources in all fields," he said.

Abdel Aziz gave account of the many business opportunities available for investors in Sudan in the manufacturing and animal resources fields.

In a statement to Al Jazeera, Abdel Aziz said the volume of Qatari investments have reached about $2 billion so far. He expected that these investments will go up following the signing of many agreements by a number of Qatari companies and institutions during 2011.

For his part, the former head of the economic committee at Parliament, Babikir Mohammed Toum, has said the Qatari investments contribute substantially to developing Sudan's economic infrastructure that will be followed by a boom in the country's economic and social development.

"The Qatari investments are characterized by diversity, solid experience and would greatly contribute to creating jobs, being a strategic investment vision of the government," he said.

According to Tijani El Tayeb, a World Bank advisor, the approved Qatari investment projects stand now at 24 projects in the various sectors, with a total capital of $ 2 billion.

El Tayeb told Al Jazeera that about 2,500 Sudanese are now employed in Qatari projects.

He did not exclude a rise in the volume of Qatari investments in Sudan to more than $ 4 billion.

"The Qatari investments in Sudan will have a central role in the Sudanese economy, particularly, in agriculture and industry.

However, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Al-Jack, an economic expert, has warned from depending on Qatari investments alone and said the country should seek to attract investments from other Arab and foreign countries.

"When it comes to investments, depending on a single country is risky and could be devastating to the economy of the country receiving such investment and therefore the government should work to attract other countries willing to invest in Sudan. The results of such investments would contribute to development of the country economically and socially," he said.

According to a study released by the Arab Research Center on Qatari investments in Sudan, these investments have been directed to agriculture, animal resources, all of them being located in the Republic of Sudan with no Qatari investments in the State of South Sudan.

Further, the study reports that Qatari investments include Qatari National Bank investment in Sudan with the establishment in 2008 of the National Islamic Bank with a capital of $ 100 million.

Other Qatari investments in Sudan include a $400 million Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company projects in Sudan. The project is expected to be one of the top development projects in Khartoum.

Another Qatari company, Mawashi, started its investment in Sudan in 2007 and operates in the field of livestock husbandry, meat processing and fodder production.

The project, which will contribute to the development of South Kordofan State, aims at processing and exporting meat to the State of Qatar. A branch of the project has been launched in Sennar State. Other Qatari investments include real estate and agricultural projects.

The most recent Qatari investments-related enterprises in Sudan have been the conduction of a number of studies at South Darfur State in the areas of education, health and social care.

For his part, the director of investments at the state, Siddik Khalil, has said there is coordination
between the Qatari and Sudanese governments for executing a number of development projects at the state, with agricultural, animal resources and mining investments being on top of these projects. He added work on these projects is expected to be started within the next two weeks.

Further Qatari investments in Sudan are expected during the coming years since the volume of present Qatari investments in the country do not match the close relations between the two countries.

Qatar is one of the richest countries in the world and its economy is one of the fastest-growing economies and Sudan has fertile land and abundant water. If the Qatari financial resources and the Sudanese potentials are properly exploited, the country will be the food basket of the world as often being described.

 Needless to say that the government should remove all obstacles that stand in the way of investment, such as poor infrastructure, absence of an investment map that show the various economic opportunities available for investors and poor promotion of the country's potentials. Many experts believe that if Sudan manages to remove such obstacles, the country will be an attractive investment hub.

The countries abundant wealth could open up tremendous business opportunities that are unavailable elsewhere.

By Hana Abdel Hai, 11/01/2012