

Qatar eyes 90,000 hotel rooms by 2022

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Qatar is planning to have more than 90,000 hotel rooms in place for the World Cup 2022 tournament, it was reported on Sunday.

Quoting industry sources, local media in Qatar claim authorities plan to focus on the three to four-star hotel sector and are planning to increase the total number of rooms available to 90,000 hotel rooms by 2022.

“We already have a lot of five-star luxury hotels here so we want to develop more and more three and four-star hotels to cater to spectators from different income groups visiting the country for the 2022 event,” An Arabic daily newspaper reported, quoting industry sources.

“Not everyone can afford a five-star hotel,” the industry official added.

In 2010, 42 new hotels were scheduled to open by the end of 2010. However, Ahmed Al Nuaimi, chairman of the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) told Hotelier Middle East magazine in October that just 28 are likely to open by the end of the year.

“For the first half of 2010, there were eight hotels that opened. There are about 20 that are scheduled to open for the second half of 2010. The remaining hotels originally scheduled to open

by year end 2010 will open in 2011. All in all, we expect about 40 hotels to open in the next 12 months.

“The delays in hotel openings were primarily related to renegotiations with contractors as the result of price adjustments coming out of the global economic crisis. Such negotiations take time. We are pleased to say that all of the projects are going ahead — that nothing has been cancelled,” Al Nuaimi said.

Amongst the hotel companies forced to delay their openings was Hilton Worldwide, which has two hotels due to open in Qatar. The first — the Hilton Doha — was due to open in 2010, but was postponed to Q1 2011, and the second —the Hilton Doha Residence — is currently due to open in 2012.

An offshoot of Qatar’s landing the 2022 World Cup will be a boon for tourism in the UAE and other GCC countries.

“This will have a huge impact on tourism in the region,” said Mike Scully, managing director at Seven Tides. “This will be the World Cup of the Middle East as opposed to the World Cup of just Qatar.”

Scully pointed to Bahrain’s hosting of the 2010 Grand Prix and the massive number of spectators who commuted from Dubai to watch the event as an indicator of how FIFA’s much-larger Cup – arguably the biggest sporting event in the world behind the Olympics – could spur local tourism.

“This is such an enormous event,” Scully said.