

## **Plan to unify GCC immigration laws**

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The GCC states are working to facilitate easy movement of nationals and expatriates within the region by simplifying procedures.

A two-day meeting of the directors-general of immigration departments of the Gulf countries began here yesterday to discuss the above and several other related issues.

Member countries are keen to have an integrated database so that when a citizen or resident (expatriate holding a valid residence permit) of one GCC state travels to another, the immigration authorities there are able to instantly access personal details about him.

The accent is on providing quality services to both citizens and expatriates travelling within the region, said Brigadier Abdullah Salem Al Ali, Director-General of Qatar's Passports and Expatriate Affairs, in his opening address at the meet which is being held at the Doha Sheraton.

The directors-general are studying mechanisms to unify the immigration systems and procedures at the regional level. This is their 22nd meeting, which will also follow up on some other key decisions taken at the previous meetings.

Exchanging experiences in the field of immigration is yet another most important aspect of their agenda, a press statement issued by Qatar's Ministry of Interior said yesterday.

The opening session of the meet was addressed by, aside from Brigadier Al Ali, his Saudi counterpart Colonel Salem bin Mohamed Al Balhaid, and Mohamed Samaan Al Dosri, Director-General of Security at the GCC General-Secretariat.

The directors-general expressed their gratitude to the interior ministers of the GCC states and said the overall objective of their meeting is to integrate and upgrade immigration procedures and services in the entire region.

Brigadier Abdulla Salem Al Ali conveyed the greetings and wishes of H E Sheikh Abdulla bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Minister of State for Internal Affairs, to the heads and members of the delegations for the success of the activities of the annual meeting and for a pleasant stay in their second home, Qatar.