

# **Qatar signs first contracts on 'cities' for 180,000 workers**

DOHA - Qatar signed the first contracts on a mega-accommodation project on Thursday which will eventually see almost 180,000 migrant workers housed in seven specially built "cities".



© sophiejames – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

All seven sites could be in operation within two years, said officials at a ceremony in Doha attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani and labour minister Abdullah bin Saleh al-Khulaifi.

"The whole project will be completed by the end of 2017," said Jamal Shareeda Al-Kaabi, a director of the Central Planning Office, which oversees major infrastructure projects.

The sites are being built in addition to the \$825 million Labour City, a vast housing complex on the fringes of the capital with space for almost 70,000 workers, which opened earlier this year.

Many of the labourers who will be housed on the sites will be working on infrastructure projects directly or indirectly related to the 2022 World Cup.

Earlier in the year, Khulaifi described the huge-scale new housing complexes as "cities" and told AFP they were the "future" for worker accommodation in Qatar.

The contracts signed Thursday are between government officials and members of the private sector for the first accommodation centre, which will be located in Umm Slal, north of Doha.

Umm Slal will house around 24,000 workers. All seven "cities" will be built through "public-private partnerships". The final cost of building all the accommodation centres is not known but the government has put in 1.6 billion Qatari riyals (\$440 million, 410 million euros) "for the provision of infrastructure", according to a government factsheet.

The cities will be built across Qatar, from the fringes of the capital Doha to one in the north.

They incorporate facilities such as cafeterias, television rooms, gyms, mosques and other religious centres. Many of the workers who will end up living in the new centres will be transferred from other accommodation complexes in Qatar. The aim, said Kaabi, is to place labourers closer to their place of work as well as to improve accommodation standards.

"We have developed a strategy depending on demand forecast," added Kaabi. "Basically we're trying to facilitate a proper housing accommodation that meets the standards and requirements of the state with the best practice."

Qatar has been criticised by rights groups and unions for providing sub-standard and squalid accommodation to labourers helping build World Cup infrastructure.

There are around 1.8 million migrant workers in Qatar but that will reach almost 2.5 million two years before the World Cup, officials have said. Qatar this week celebrated the fifth anniversary of being chosen to host football's biggest tournament.

**Source:** AFP

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>