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Wednesday, 26 December 2012 09:30 -

LAHORE: Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Standing Committee on Halal Meat Convener Nasib Ahmad Saifi has urged the government to exempt the meat processing industry from electricity outages to help it play its role in making Pakistan an outstanding name in the ever increasing international halal food market.

Pakistan, being a Muslim and an agriculture country, has the potential to assume leadership role in global halal food market by following proper strategies, policies and practices, he said in a statement issued here on Tuesday. Saifi who is the chief executive of Anis Associates (Pvt) Limited and a major exporter of Halal food products, said that the Halal products were moving into mainstream business and their demand was steadily increasing. Halal products are now seen as a potential engine of economic growth with an annual turnover of hundreds of billions of dollars globally, he added. He said that Pakistan was blessed with all seasons, fertile land and 48 percent dedicated agricultural work force. Saifi said Pakistan could easily increase Halal meat products exports up to \$5 billion. One of the major problems faced by Halal meat processors and exporters is gas and electricity outage. He said that Industry was facing a power break of 12 to 14 hours per day and as a result of non-availability of gas, it is forced to keep the wheel moving on diesel generators. However, this adds to their cost consequently rendering them uncompetitive in the international market. He regretted that India, China and other such countries were continuously capturing the international halal market despite being non-Muslim countries and Pakistani industry was not able to compete with them due to different issues including outages, high sea and air freights, high transport cost etc. If gas and electricity are provided to them without any hindrance they can bring much more precious foreign exchange for the country, he added. However, experts say that the local food manufacturers lack awareness about the magnitude of global Halal market. They think Halal in terms of chicken and meat only and not beyond. They need to catch up with missed opportunities inherent in growing global Halal market of \$3,000 billion.

Courtesy: The News