



Economic boom in Pakistan soon, says Tariq Fatemi

Ex-ambassador Shahid Amin's book 'A concise history of Pakistan' launched

By Anil Datta

Karachi

Pakistan will witness an economic boom very soon and as one of the steps to that end, the Lahore-Karachi motorway will be built.

This optimistic prognosis was echoed by Tariq Fatemi, special assistant to the prime minister on foreign affairs, while speaking as the chief guest at the launch of a book, "A concise history of Pakistan", by former ambassador Shahid Amin, at the Institute of Business Management, Karachi, on Saturday.

"With the economy experiencing a boom, we shall be able to pump more money into the social sector to give the maximum number of citizens an optimum quality of life," he maintained.

"We shall soon have access to Tajikistan and other Central Asian states which will boost our trade and usher in prosperity. The Peshawar-Kabul highway is also on the cards.

Fatemi said Pakistan was not a gift of the British. "It was the outcome of the people's sacrifices and Shahid Amin has done a wonderful job by bringing

home to us the fruits of these sacrifices," he added.

He exhorted young people to be proud of Pakistan and cherish their identity.

Fatemi said Pakistan's ties with China were simply remarkable and we would have to sustain the tempo. He added that the country's relationship with Russia too was cordial.

He said Amin was witness to many history-making events. He mentioned Pakistan's alienation from the former Soviet Union and said our relations had really soured on account of the East Pakistan imbroglio.

However, a visit to the former USSR by the Pakistani president just weeks after the breakup of Pakistan changed the situation. "It was Amin who was the envoy in that country at that juncture when they assumed a positive turn."

Tracing the infancy phase of the country, he said Pakistan had no resources worth the name at the time of its inception and more than that, it faced a neighbour which was extremely antagonistic to its existence and had constantly entertained the hope that Pakistan would just be a passing phenomenon.



Tariq Fatemi

"But our elders persevered. Hats off to those leaders for their keen resolve. Our elders felt that by serving Pakistan they were not just serving a country but a cause," he said.

"This book is a labour of love," said author Shahid Amin. "Pakistan has given us an identity," he added. Lately, he noted, a sinister campaign had been launched against Pakistan to prove that it was a failed state.

He said by writing the book, he had endeavoured to remove misconceptions about our past and said that he wanted to tell the readers that Pakistan may be a new country but was an old land, the cradle of so many civil-

isations and had a rich historical and cultural heritage.

He said both in India and Pakistan, rewriting of history was under way. There were biased accounts of history under various governments. "I endeavoured to write a book based on facts."

He said one of the reasons for this was that the young people of the Pakistani diaspora around the world wanted to have an authentic version of the history of their land of origin. "Hence, I felt the need for the venture," he added.

Huma Baga, the head of the social sciences department at the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, in her characteristically erudite manner and her genteel bearing, lauded the author for having come out about very passionate issues in such a balanced tone.

Pakistan, she said, was a new nation and an old land. "This land was not only the cradle of Islamic culture but prior to that, even Buddhism and other religions and hence was the cradle of Sufism," she noted. "He also talks about the pragmatism of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan."

The Hindu-Muslim divide,

the rise of the Hindu nationalism, and the political and constitutional developments, she said, were subjects that had been discussed so lucidly and dispassionately.

"He's treated the issues in a very 'diplomatic' way," she said.

She remarked rather sardonically, "If we ignore history, we become like the Americans. Anything that they don't find of interest, they just brush it off by saying, 'Oh this is history', and just flip over it."

Talat Wizarat, former chairperson of the department of international affairs at the University of Karachi, said we needed good quality material from our own resources and tackling historical issues had many problems. As for analysing and interpreting events, we all interpret them in the light of our own experiences. Sometimes, she said, we tended to overplay or downplay certain facets of history. The author, she said, had tried to fill the gaps. He has treated the pre-Islamic period, then the Islamic period, all up to the emergence of Pakistan.

"I found the book very informative and would recommend it to every one as a must-read."