‘Education plays indispensable role in nation’s progress’

By our correspondent

Karachi

Education plays a vital role in the progress of a country and it must never be overlooked. Unfortunately, today our spending on education is the lowest anywhere in the world which is a great injustice to the people of the nation.

These views were expressed by Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Chairman S.M. Muneer while presiding over the inauguration ceremony of the fifth two-day conference titled ‘Role of academics, government and industry for sustainable business opportunities in emerging markets’ at the Institute of Business Management (IoBM) College of Business Management on Wednesday.

In a lighter vein, quoting his wife Muneer said she once said, “Please educate the children of the nation,” because that was the only way a nation could progress both intellectually and materially.

He lauded President IoBM Shahzad Karim’s most selfless efforts to give impetus to education in the country through his organization.

“We are all aware that Pakistan is at the crossroads today and we have to be very circumspect in the way we plan for the future. We shall have to put all our trials, tribulations and restrictions behind us and stand united as a rock and work anew for the progress and prosperity of the people of the motherland.”

Expressing disappointment he said that many portents had not been encouraging; for one, he said the foreign direct investment (FDI) of late had gone down on account of the horrific political and security developments, terrorism in particular.

“Fifty SM Muneers can change the destiny of Pakistan,” he said.

On the positive front, he said 77 countries had participated in the Expo held in Islamabad on February 25 and export orders worth tens of millions were booked.

As for trade ties with India, he favored bilateral trade and said that it would be to the benefit of both the countries as 420 million people on both sides of the divide lived below the poverty line. He said the Indian public was highly receptive to the idea of bilateral trade.

University of Management Technology (UMT) Rector Dr. Hasan Sohaib Murad while addressing the audience opined the leading economies of Asia had been able to leapfrog because of cooperation with the academia.

“Nowadays all three have to make a joint effort to effect the advancement of the country and have to draft a joint agenda.” He said the efficiency could be acquired with the collaboration of the academy and the business world but lamented that despite untold success stories of such collaborations the world over, the idea had not quite caught on here.

“The business schools mission should be to connect with businesses, if this factor is missing then there is going to be a disconnect. It should be about growth success and expansion of business, he added.

Taking business schools to task, Murad said that our business schools had become management schools to produce a cadre of administrators. “The aim of schools should be to create business cadres so that they may be able to deal with field problems without much ado,” he added.

Today, he said, there were 120 business schools but still a graduate could not do much when put in the practical field. Business schools, he said, were meant to effect innovation and new ideas.

“Business school graduates today must be global,” he said.

Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Sudder Director Nasir Siddiqui said, “The research-oriented environment brightens up our hopes of progress.”

He added that what mattered most was i) knowledge transfer ii) knowledge generation iii) knowledge application and iv) knowledge integration.

Citing the apt-business course introduced in IBA as well as video-conferencing he encouraged institutes to take innovative steps.

Conference convenor AQ Mobi said this year’s conference coincided with the 20th birthday of the institute.

Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) Vice Chancellor Dr. Javed Ashraf said the 21st century would be ‘Asia’s Century’. In this context, he cited the cases of China and India and said that in the US, six universities had Indian dean whereas the multinational giant Pepsi had an Indian woman as head; two state governors in the US were also Indians.

Pakistan, he said were following closely at the heels of the Indians but China had swept the development scenario.

Highlighting China’s progress, he said the country had the second largest retailer of Bikes-Royce after the US while just ten years ago it was known as the bicycle nation.

He also cited the “four tigers” of South-East Asia” South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan.

He said that we had been outsourcing the US and had suffered, like the US here too the tax-GDP ratio was very low. He said that the US budgetary crisis began in the 1980s when Reagan took over he announced the US had a budgetary deficit of $1 trillion. During the eight years that he was in office the deficit ballooned to $3 trillion.

ATCO Managing Director Saeed Aliwala said, “The linkage between education and business should be reviewed.”

In the post-lunch session, Prem Shankar Jha from India said India got 96 percent of the sub-continent’s industry at the time of the partition; they were distributed among 17 groups. “After the Korean War we got into self reliant growth. With 17 years of state planning, we landed with one of the lowest growth rates. Consequently after the first Gulf War in 1991, we had to open up our economy. We had a very well developed heavy engineering sector but this stunted our consumer industry.”

Pakistan Red Crescent representative Kamvar Waseem said we needed to change our concept of disaster management and focus on constant disaster preparedness. He said that we had suffered a loss of $30billion on floods and $15billion on earthquake disaster.

George Mason University distinguished senior faculty member Mehtab Karim spoke on human development and marketing issues in a capacity keeping Karachi as his case study.

Commissioner Karachi Shoaib Ahmed Siddiqui said that if we did not provide jobs civic unrest would flourish.

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