

ZAHEER ABBASI

Hafeez highlights importance of private sector

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance, Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh has stated that bringing back money from abroad is almost impossible and the only way to do so is to introduce a policy regime in such a way that it becomes attractive to bring back money from abroad.

Speaking at the second day of Margalla Dialogue on 'Peace and Development in South Asia, Middle East,' organized by Central Asia (SAMECA), Shaikh said that no country in the history has ever progressed alone without the interaction or human contacts with people and businesses of other countries.

Shaikh said, "We spend a lot of time running around multilateral banks for \$2 billion whereas \$100 billion is with the private sector for making investment." However, he regretted, "We don't attract \$100 billion rather create a lot of obstacles in the way of their return to our country."

The adviser said, "We have always been talking of overseas Pakistanis but overseas Pakistanis are very smart and they would bring money here, just as everyone else thinks, when it is attractive to bring their money to Pakistan. So do not think in terms of nationality, money has no nationality."

Shaikh said that decades back when he was working in Saudi Arabia with the World Bank (WB), there was a lot of discussion going on how to bring back Saudi money from abroad but it never happened.

The advisor on finance said that the "rich people do not make decisions themselves but their bankers make decisions for them and bankers are the same." He added: "The only way Saudi rich will bring Saudi money back to Saudi Arabia or Brazilian rich would bring money to Brazil if you make it easy and attractive for them to bring their money back."

He said that Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIDB), World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank are very tiny compared to \$100 billion that private sector has.

He said, "Fifteen years back when I was trying to attract investment, I asked myself as to who were great friends of Pakistan and the response was the same as people think here that China, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are friendly countries." However, he added, soon he realized that people of Pakistan hardly interact with anybody from these countries and all was done was that leaders meet, make speeches and sign memoranda of understanding.