

## **PTI govt urged to offer incentive package for attracting FDI**

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REPORT

LAHORE: SAARC CCI Senior Vice President Iftikhar Ali Malik on Friday said that it is high time for the upcoming PTI government under dynamic leadership of Imran Khan to offer a package of incentives to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) to support Pakistan's fragile economy.

Malik who is also central chairman of the United Business Group at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, in a statement said that this window of opportunity can be used to channel longer term FDI to bolster the manufacturing and infrastructure sector for sustained business activities, which will cause an increase in employment and economic growth, he suggested. Seeing the country's potential, he expressed confidence that a few bold economic policy initiatives by the new government can dramatically change the economic situation.

He said the government should go an extra mile for bringing foreign investments to Pakistan besides strengthening the national institutions and ensuring good governance by cracking down against the unrestrained corruption in the country. There is a dire need of chalking out a comprehensive plan to court foreign investment in the country and provide them all facilities through one window operation by terminating red-tapism and extra legal constraints which hampers foreign investment procedure.

He is optimistic that the incoming government must set a clear and focused direction to address key issues of governance, security, energy and inconsistent policy implementation, which in the recent past has severely affected inflow of foreign direct investment in the country.

As the country moves towards a smooth transition of power at the centre and in provinces, Malik said the ongoing democratic process is creating a positive international perception, which is partially reflected in the increasing foreign portfolio investment in the country's stock market.

He said being SAARC CCI SVP and representing Pakistan abroad he interacted with successful entrepreneurs and investors which often said Pakistani government as well as its media channels broadcast programs helpful dissimulating good image of the country. "The investors believe that Pakistan is a story which needs reaching to the world community. Given the current security arrangements and economic outlook Pakistan is tipped to be a next big thing in Asia," he added.

Iftikhar Malik said the role of the finance minister-in-waiting Asad Umar would be crucial to transform this agenda into reality in five years. Whether a large enough economy worth \$313 billion facing significant challenges and needing deep-rooted economic reforms gets a helping hand from a man with a degree in business administration and who ran a \$1bn company is going to be interesting to watch.

It would also be interesting to see if the new government is able to make adjustments to fiscal federalism to satisfy increasing demands of the security quarters and yet be able to create job and business opportunities while others resist a reversal of hard-gained fiscal autonomy to the federating units.

"More positively, there are no signs of an upfront economic crisis, although problems have been heating up and the new government has a reasonable time to take stock of the ground realities and start acting

immediately,” he added. He also suggested the coming government to constitute a high-powered economic and investment committee with representation from key trade bodies, like FPCCI, to get periodical feedback on policies and performance and, more importantly, agree on the way forward to achieve rapid economic growth.