

**Investors to come if they can make money: Imran**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has termed creation of wealth imperative for alleviating poverty from the country, saying businesses must prosper to achieve this objective. He said investors will come to Pakistan only if they are able to make money. He said the government is making policy to curb smuggling and money laundering.

He vowed that Pakistan would be made economically self-reliant since it's financially viable and strong by getting rid of dependency syndrome. Addressing the Pakistan Economic Forum here on Thursday, Khan said that the government is taking measures to ensure a conducive atmosphere for the business community.

"If businesses prosper, poverty will be alleviated," he said. The prime minister said that wealth creation is necessary to take the country forward. He said that a business friendly culture will be introduced and businessmen will be encouraged to invest their capital in various sectors.

"No country can progress if it presents its industrialists as criminals. Making money is no sin, but using unfair means to make it or avoiding tax is," he added. Counting China as an example, Imran Khan said that the East Asian country lifted 700 million people out of poverty in three decades. "We will learn from China's experience to alleviate poverty in the country." He said, "Focus is being put on improving competitiveness of our products to grab major share of exports in world markets." The incumbent government has introduced policies to facilitate export industry. The prime minister said money laundering and smuggling harm the country hard and steps are being taken to discourage these practices. He said the tax policy and collection have been separated in order to create a favourable environment for businesses.

He said Pakistan is an attractive destination for investment and in recent months many foreign firms have expressed keen interest to invest in various sectors of Pakistan. The prime minister assured the business community that he will keep in touch with it on regular basis. He said that it is needed to dispel the notion that creation of wealth is inappropriate; it can, in fact, help eliminate the scourge of poverty. "The days ahead will bring more convenience and opportunities for investors," he assured. "We must provide a secure environment to businessmen."

The premier termed self-reliance absolutely imperative in order to free the country from dependence on others. He said, "The examples of China and other countries can be followed in this regard." He said that Pakistan has a shocking level of poverty. "We are going to introduce 'poverty alleviation programme', the first of its kind," he said. He announced that the government will make all-out efforts to seize smuggling of dollars.

Earlier, he chaired a high echelon meeting to review the progress on improving ease to doing business and creating an enabling environment to facilitate conversion of interest of local as well foreign investors into actual investment in the country. The PM directed chairman BOI to present a comprehensive plan, listing all the issues in various sectors and their sub-sectors and how the processes could be streamlined to simplify procedures related to government approvals, addressing taxation issues, dispute resolution and facilitating investors/businesses.

The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Asad Umar, Law Minister Dr Farogh Naseem, Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood, Chairman BOI Haroon Sharif, federal secretaries and senior officials.

The chairman BOI briefing the meeting about the steps taken so far said that the BOI would be serving as agent of change for facilitating business transactions, removing impediments in way to materialisation of investors' interest into actual investments and smooth functioning of businesses in the country.

Chairman BOI briefed the prime minister about Naya Pakistan Diaspora Fund which is being set-up to promote SMEs and rural development in key areas of education, health and infrastructure development. He also apprised the prime minister of the Investment Framework which has been structured for attracting and materialising investment from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan and Malaysia. It was decided during the meeting that prime minister would chair a review meeting every month on Ease of Doing Business in the country.

In another high echelon huddle for political brainstorming under Prime Minister Imran Khan, the ruling PTI has devised strategy to deal with the upcoming developments in the two houses of the Parliament as National Assembly (NA) is already in session while the Senate session is commencing today (Friday). The meeting sorted out the issue regarding appointment of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman and offered its chairmanship to leader of opposition Shahbaz Sharif. It will help smooth functioning of the Parliament.

The process has already been delayed for about two months. The meeting took place at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and it was also attended by NA Speaker Assad Qaisar and others.

The prime minister has asked members of the Upper House to ensure their presence during the session in maximum number. He asked Shibli Faraz to brief the Upper House about the steps being taken by the federal government for the welfare of the masses. He impressed upon the government's senators to keep the house aware of the efforts made by the incumbent government made in various sectors including reforms, development projects and planning being carried out by the federal government.

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