



ME CONFERENCE **RECOMMENDS TO FOSTER** **SME SPECIFIC RESEARCH** **CULTURE**

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Lahore Speakers at the 1st National SME Conference have recommended to organize involvement of Industry and academic institutions to foster evidence based SME specific research culture aiming to accelerate SME Led Economic growth. The conference was arranged by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) here at a local hotel on Wednesday in collaboration with University of the Management and Technology (UMT). The inaugural session of the Conference was addressed by Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairperson, Higher Education Commission of Pakistan as Chief Guest.

Whereas, the welcome speeches were delivered by Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry, GM-Out Reach Division of SMEDA, Prof. Dr. Hassan Sohaib Murad, Rector UMT and Dr. Shahid Amjad Chaudhry, Chairman, Association of Management Development Institutions Pakistan (AMDIP). Mr. Faheemul Islam, Member Planning Commission addressed the closing session as Chief Guest. The HEC Chairman Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, while speaking as Chief Guest of the opening ceremony, urged upon the stakeholders of SME sector to work in close cohesion, as no goal can be achieved while working in isolation. However, the productive collaboration should be based upon solid research, which is rare so far in the

country, he added. He disclosed that to create a research culture in the country, HEC had allocated Rs.3 billion, which would be utilized to fund the research projects in the universities. He told that the global think tanks were playing a critical role in highlighting issues and proposing recommendations to develop hassle free business environment through research. But, in Pakistan, a culture of research has yet to gain the significance it merits, he said and appreciated SMEDA and UMT to hold 1st National SME Conference to encourage SME led research. Highlighting efforts of HEC in this direction, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed said that the Commission started with 59 Universities to promote higher studies and research in the country, the number has now gone up to 179 universities, which are bringing out 800 research publications and 12000 journals in the country. However, he emphasized to conduct research projects able to leave development impact on the society. Regarding SME sector, Chairman HEC observed that the SMEs in Pakistan were about 40 years behind the world. Research should also be made on technological up-gradation of SMEs in Pakistan. He told that to fill in this gap, NUST was going to set up two Technology Parks in Pakistan with the support of China. Similarly three research centers were being set up to conduct research on Energy, Water and Food Security, he added.

Earlier, Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry, GM-Outreach Division of SMEDA, in his address of welcome, said that the Conference is a milestone in SME development as it has brought together SME stakeholders on a common forum. The objective of the Conference is to strengthen SME led sustainable economic growth through SME



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focused research, in order to secure the attention of policy makers and to develop an environment where new enterprises flourish, he added and expressed deep gratitude to UMT, AMDIP and other partners to support the conference. He assured to make the National SME Conference an annual event and announced to hold the next Conference in March 2017. Prof. Dr. Hasan Sohaib Murad, Rector UMT, in his address, said that the economic development in Pakistan needed a research culture integrated with the business and industry. He assured to link up the research to be conducted by his students with potential sector of economy like SME. He was confident that partnership of UMT with SMEDA would pave way for developing a need-based research culture and hoped that SMEDA-UMT collaboration would set an example of industry academia and private-public partnership for economic development of the country.

Dr. Shahid Amjad Chaudhry, Chairman AMDIP, in his address, acknowledged pivotal role of SME sector in the economy and assured of his fullest support to encourage all of the management development Institutions to join SMEDA as active partners to make the SME development dream true in Pakistan. Faheemul Islam, Member Planning Commission of Pakistan, while speaking as Chief Guest of the Closing Ceremony, said that it was encouraging for the government to see the private sector, academia and international development organizations participating at a single platform-here at the 1st NSME conference.

This collaboration has helped resolve several problems faced by SMEs and given valuable

insight for both the policy makers and the stakeholders, he said and hoped that the papers that had been shared in the conference would assist the government in designing policies that support the creation of a robust and best practiced SME ecosystem. The four parallel sessions each for research paper presentations and experts presentations sessions were held between opening and closing ceremonies.

The first, second, third and fourth Research Paper Presentations sessions were chaired by Dr. Mohammad Nishat, Associate Dean, IBA Karachi, Dr. Ehsan ul Haque Professor LUMS, Dr. Muhammad Mohsin, Director IMS, Peshawar and Prof. Talib Karim, Rector, Institute of Business Management, Karachi Respectively, Similarly, the first, second, third and fourth sessions held parallel for Experts Presentations were chaired by Abid Sherwani, President South Asian Triple Hilex Association (*having Marvi Memon, Chairperson BISP and Rehmatullah Javed as guests of honor*), Engr. M.A. Jabbar, CEO, Qaim Automotive Manufacturing Pvt Limited, Mr. Esam Alqararah, Country Representative UNIDO and Yousaf Naseem Khokhar, Secretary, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform respectively. This is noticeable that over 50 research papers from across 27 Universities were received, which had to undergo double-blind review to ensure transparency of the whole process and only selected papers were presented in the conference. The Conference that brought together corporate professionals, government officials and highly acclaimed academics from all over Pakistan was supported by University of Lahore and AMDIP.