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Development of skilled HR base is critical for sustainable growth of Islamic Banking in Pakistan: Ishaq Dar

'The development of skilled human resource base is critical for sustainable growth of Islamic finance industry in Pakistan,' says the Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar. He was speaking as chief guest at the launching ceremony of the 3rd Challenge Round of Financial Innovation Challenge Fund (FICF) on 'Promoting Excellence in Islamic Finance' in Islamabad today. The program is being funded by UKAid and implemented by the State Bank of Pakistan as part of Pakistan Financial Inclusion Program.

He said that the partnership between Department for International Development (DFID), UK and SBP for promotion of financial inclusion has further strengthened the bond between the two countries. Congratulating the State Bank and the UK Government, he hoped that the initiative will go a long way in promoting inclusive economic growth through provision of demand-driven innovative financial services for unbanked population particularly the low income households and rural entrepreneurs.

In his welcome address, Mr. Ashraf Mahmood Wathra, Governor State Bank of Pakistan said that the establishment of Centre of Excellence for Islamic Finance would contribute significantly towards developing a more inclusive Islamic financial system leading to financial products with a closer link between finance and real economic activity. He also believed that the Centre would serve to provide Shariah based solutions for financing needs of all segments including the government and monetary policy instruments for the central bank.

He said that since financial exclusion was quite pronounced in Pakistan, both the Government and the State Bank of Pakistan were making efforts to address the challenge using innovative approaches and actions. Emphasizing the full commitment of the government to provide sustainable financial access to the under-served economic and geographic segments including youth, women, and SMEs, Mr Wathra said that the role of multilateral institutions and bilateral donors particularly the UK Aid has been critical.

Mr. Saeed Ahmad, Deputy Governor SBP, emphasized the importance of knowledge and education in light of teachings of Quran & Sunnah. While speaking at the event, Mr. Ahmad affirmed SBP's vision to flourish RIBA free economy in Pakistan. He assured that Govt and SBP were committed for promotion and development of Islamic financial industry through innovative solutions that are not only Shariah compliant in the form but also in line with the Maqasid e Shariah.

'The eventual aim of this FICF Round is to establish Islamic finance education and research infrastructure in partnership with leading higher education institutions in Pakistan to serve the Islamic finance industry in meeting its growing human resource and knowledge requirements through quality and value added services and knowledge products' said the Deputy Governor.

He shared that an independent FICF Advisory Committee, drawing representation from DFID, HEC, private sector, and the SBP, will review and approve the challenge round winners. Detailed guidelines, in print, were distributed and are also placed on SBP website for further guidance.



External Relations Department

Mr. Jan Wimaladharna, Team Leader of the UK Department for International Development, Pakistan, and Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman Higher Education Commission also spoke on the occasion.
