

Ethics taking centrestage of business strategy, says Doha Bank's Group CEO

Dr R Seetharaman virtually addresses global conference organised by ICAI



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AS corporates move away from profit-first mentality, ethical reasoning is taking centrestage of business strategy, Doha Bank CEO Dr R Seetharaman said while virtually addressing an international conference organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) recently.

The conference was attended by India's ministers, parliamentarians, World Bank professionals, and senior business executives and management professionals of Indian Blue-chip companies.

"Business does not enjoy any special status and morality is as much applicable to it as to anything else; and rules of ethics and morality are as much intrinsic to business as the rules of economy and free markets," Seetharaman added. He was talking about accountancy profession and its role in accelerating global economic growth.

Ethics and good governance play a key role in accountancy profession, he noted.

"Profit is no longer considered as the sole objective of business. Instead of maximiz-

ing shareholders' wealth, the focus of business organizations now is on socially-responsible activities. Environmental issues are now openly discussed by the business world. Framework of Corporate Governance has improved considerably. Business ethics is no more considered as an undesirable transgression into the functioning of business organizations. Instead organizations themselves are taking it seriously and now consider it as good for business," Seetharaman said.

According to UNCTAD, The coronavirus crisis is pushing critical economic, social and environmental development targets beyond reach, he said.

The organisation's online annual update tracking progress on a range of indicators of the UN's sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shows that poverty, inequality, the climate crisis, unsustainable production and other pressing challenges require even more urgent action due to COVID-19, he added.

Sharing insights on regional economies, Seetharaman said, "Qatar economy is expected to contract by 4.5 percent in 2020 and recover by 2.5 percent in

2021. Qatar and other regional economies had witnessed economic reforms to recover from the COVID-19 as oil fell this year.

"Qatar central bank came up with various measures to combat the risk of the coronavirus pandemic, including the National Response Guarantee Programme to help private firms meet their immediate payroll and rental fee payment requirements."

In May 2020, the public-private partnership law was introduced, he said, adding that the Private sector is expected to leverage from this new law.

Sharing insights on global economies, he said according to IMF's October 2020 data, global growth is projected at 5.2 percent in 2021. The advanced economies growth is projected to strengthen to 3.9 percent and emerging and developing economies are expected to recover by 6 percent in 2021.

"The US economy is projected to contract by 4.3 percent in 2020, before growing at 3.1 percent in 2021. A deeper contraction of 8.3 percent is projected for the euro area in 2020, reflecting a sharper

downturn than in the United States in the first half of the year. Inflation in the advanced economy group is projected at 0.8 percent in 2020, rising to 1.6 percent in 2021 as the recovery gains hold. In the emerging market and developing economy group, inflation is projected at 5 percent this year, declining to 4.7 percent next year."

Prospects for China are much stronger than for most other countries in this group, he said, adding that Oil extended gains toward \$50 a barrel after OPEC+ reached a compromise deal to gradually taper production cuts this month. 2020 has been a historic year for gold and silver as unprecedented stimulus measures around the world were unleashed on financial markets.

The dollar index is at 90.46 levels and is expected to fall further as fed continues its monetary easing, he said. "Crucial negotiations to secure a post-Brexit trade deal between the UK and the EU expected to happen. Global markets have surged in recent times after fall in April 2020 due to hopes of vaccine, cheering Joe Biden's win in US election."