

**T**he current political situation notwithstanding, Pakistan offers tremendous opportunities for Canadian exporters. That's the message being put out by the Canada-Pakistan Business Council (CPBC),

According to Merchant, the Pakistani government's first priority for joint ventures is in oil and gas exploration. Other opportunities lie in housing, information technology, infrastructure, agri-food and fisheries.

the Canadian Consulates in Karachi and Lahore.

Typically consisting of 8-10 participants, the missions have brought solid results. The latest mission, in January 2000, facilitated a joint venture between the Markham-based information technology firm CM Inc. and OPSTeC (the Institute run by Overseas Pakistanis) in Lahore. It also led to the appointment of agents in Pakistan by Fuelling Technologies Inc., a Toronto-based company in the business of converting cars to run on natural gas.

While previous missions have highlighted telecommunications, education, agri-food, information technologies, and financial and health sectors, the Council plans to feature the automotive and environmental sectors in the Council's next mission (to be announced).

The Council also hosts incoming missions and visiting dignitaries from Pakistan, whose visits are usually coordinated in conjunction with DFAIT. A delegation of executives of the boards of investment in Pakistan, along with the Pakistani Minister for Commerce and Industry, is expected to arrive at the end of May.

**Leadership role**

Merchant believes that the move to bring economic prosperity to Pakistan will come from abroad, rather than from within the country. "I feel as Canadians we can play a leadership role in putting Pakistan on the road to economic prosperity."

This road begins with improvements in basic areas such as health, education and infrastructure. "The know-how is there; what is needed is to help the people set up the right priorities."

To finance Canadian ventures, Merchant is promoting, on behalf of the council, an investment role for Canada's private pension funds and financial institutions. "These institutions can play a significant role by financing the Canadian companies wanting to do business. Pakistan is a safe market; the country has never  
*Continued on page 11 - Canada-Pakistan*

*Keeping trade momentum going*

# Canada-Pakistan Business Council

*which is helping to keep the bilateral-trade momentum going through its many export- and investment-oriented services and programs.*

For nearly 20 years, the CPBC — founded in Montreal but headquartered in Toronto since 1996 — has been fulfilling its mandate to promote bilateral trade between Canada and Pakistan. It has a membership of more than 50 business entrepreneurs and companies, with a contact list of 450 more.

Canadian exports to and investment in Pakistan have been down in the last few years, partly as a result of the military take-over of the government in October 1999 and Pakistan's test of nuclear weapons in 1998. Nevertheless CPBC President Andy Merchant sees good opportunities for Canadian exporters, who can compete well with U.S. and European countries in just about any sector of activity and who have an edge through the lower Canadian dollar.

**Gateway market**

The military has until the end of 2002 to hand over the power to an elected government. Once this is done, Pakistan, with its 140 million residents, growing middle class, and strategic location, will be, Merchant believes, "one of the most lucrative markets in the world. And the country is a gateway to the Russian and Middle East markets."

The CPBC facilitates these kinds of opportunities through its many activities. It regularly offers business seminars focusing on investment opportunities in various sectors. A recent seminar focusing on the envi-



*MOU signing ceremony in Lahore between Hasan Naqvi (right), President of CM Inc. of Markham, Ont. and Ahmad Bilal Mehboob, CEO of OPSTeC, during a trade mission organized in January 2000 by the CPBC, in collaboration with DFAIT. Standing in the back is CPBC President Andy Merchant (right) and officials of OPSTeC.*

ronment sector was held in conjunction with Ontario Exports Inc. An open house in February, open to non-member business people and potential investors, featured speakers representing various sectors in both Canada and Pakistan.

**Trade missions bring results**

In the past few years, the Council has organized two trade missions to Pakistan, in close co-operation with commercial officers at the Canadian High Commission in Islamabad and