



## LAHORE LITERARY FESTIVAL 2015

The third annual edition of the Lahore Literary Festival, LLF 2015, took place at the Alhambra Arts Centre, February 20, 21 and 22, 2015. With over 75 sessions, almost two dozen book launches, three exhibitions, four evening performances, five halls, and 130-plus speakers, the free and open-to-public event was attended by an estimated 75,000 people. (Last year's festival was attended by 50,000.) LLF 2015 featured thought-provoking panel discussions with some of the most insightful voices in the arts and literature. With tantalizing thinkers from home and abroad—from 12 countries, including Bangladesh,

India, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Palestine, the U.S., the U.K., Colombia, Australia—LLF, which celebrates the best of Lahore's rich and storied cultural traditions, provided audiences with a stunning and stimulating array of ideas and intellectual inquiry. The keynote address by historian Romila Thapar and sessions on Empress of Song Noor Jehan, the Jazz Age in Bombay and Karachi, Cosmopolitan Quetta, Naseeruddin Shah's autobiography, cricket with Peter Osborne and Osman Samiuddin, Mohsin Hamid's Discontents and Its Civilizations, artist-educator Salima Hashmi's The



Eye Still Seeks were among the most popular. While the majority of sessions were conducted in English, audiences also had the choice of attending discussions in Urdu and Punjabi. The session with writers and poets from

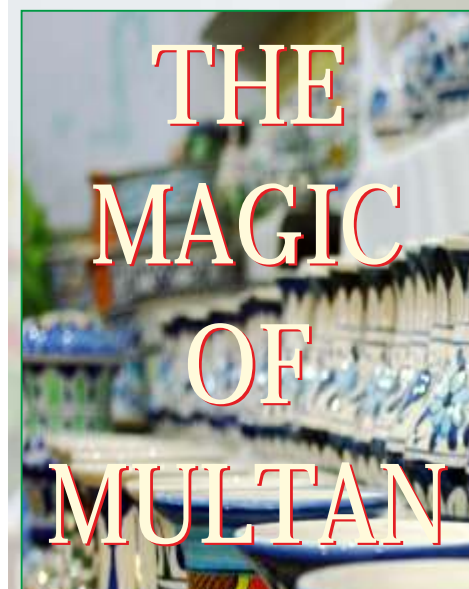
Bahawalpur and neighbouring cities was conducted in Seraiki. The LLF ended with great success and celebration of diversity and beauty of Pakistani art, culture, language, history and much more.

## “WORLD CYCLE CHALLENGE FOR ORPHANS” LAUNCHED AT PAKISTAN HIGH COMMISSION

A British Pakistani charity worker has embarked on an epic cycle ride to raise funds for orphans in Pakistan. On behalf of Mercy Worldwide Trust, Amer Nazir and three support cyclists have commenced the first leg of the 12,000 mile charity ride from Luton, planning to cross 33

borders, covering over 12,000 miles in about 10 months. In this regard “World Cycle Challenge for Orphans” was launched at Pakistan High Commission London on 28 February 2015. During the reception at the High Commission over the weekend, friends, volunteers and well-

wishers came together to send off the cyclists and vowed to support them in their cause.

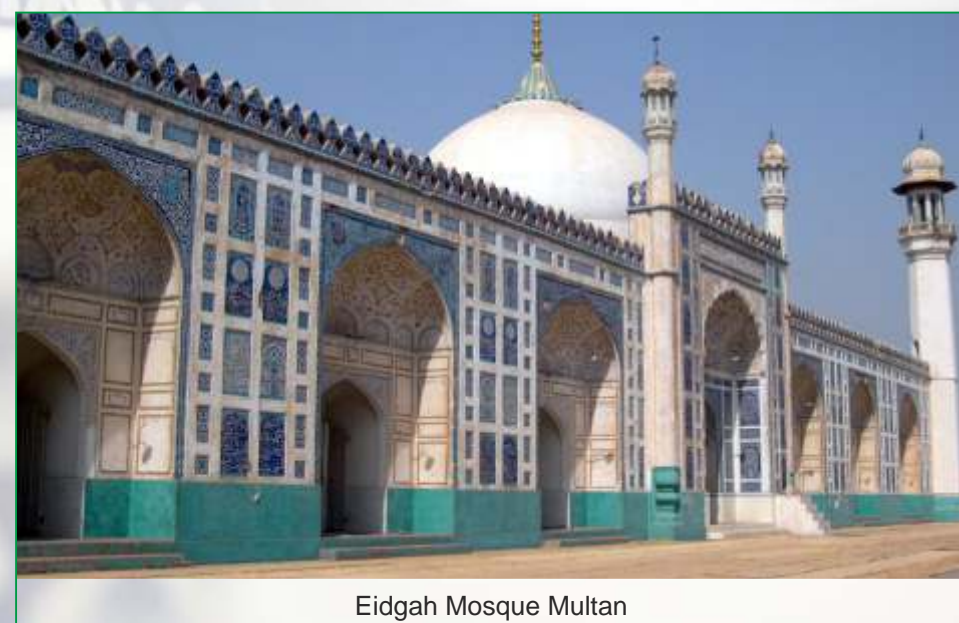


The pleasant winter and spring months are a great time to explore regions and cities of Pakistan that can be difficult to enjoy during the summer due to the fierce heat. One such region that is often left off the tourist trail is Multan, also known as City of Sufis or City of Saints and Madinat-ul-Auliya because of the large number of shrines and Sufi saints from the city. The city is blanketed with bazaars, mosques, shrines, and ornate tombs. It is located on the banks of the famous Chenab River which finds its mention in many a folk tale. Over time Multan has grown to

become an influential political and economic centre for the country, with a dry port and excellent transport links. Renowned for their aroma, taste and sweetness, mangoes of Multan are unparalleled in the world. The region is also the country's main cotton growing area and famous for its ceramics and handicrafts. History of Multan stretches back over 4000 years and is one of the oldest cities in the world. Great conquerors like Alexander the Great, Muhammad Bin Qasim, Mahmud of Ghazni, Timur, Babar and others passed through Multan. Alexander the Great was injured here. Multan has attracted pilgrims of all faiths over the centuries and it is said that the Sanskrit Rig-Veda was written there. Today, it is best known for the mausoleums of the Sufi saints that spread the word of Islam. The most significant of these is that of Sheikh Rukn-ud-Din Abul Fath (1251–1335) commonly known by the title Rukn-e-Alam (pillar of the world). These tiered,

octagonal structures, topped with domes and finished with stunning blue tile and Islamic motifs, dwarf the neighbouring buildings both in terms of scale and beauty. During the Mughal period, the city flourished as a centre of arts and in particular, ceramics. Today, visitors should definitely book a tour with the Institute of Blue Pottery Development where one can view close up of the production phases of blue pottery - a traditional Multan specialty. The finished items are shipped all over the country but can also be bought

onsite. Examples of this beautiful pottery and tile-work can be seen all over the city but some of the finest blue tile-work in Multan can be found at the Eidgah Mosque, which was built in 1735. As a testament to the draw that Mutan still has for holy men and mystics is that there is a recently completed shrine right next door. It is about a six hour drive from Lahore but there are regular flights to Multan from all major cities so the next time you are at a loose end, immerse yourself in the magic of Multan!



Eidgah Mosque Multan

## HIGH COMMISSIONER PRESENTS HIS CREDENTIALS TO THE QUEEN

H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, High Commissioner for Pakistan to the United Kingdom, presented his Credentials to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, at a formal ceremony held at Buckingham Palace on 25 February 2015. The High Commissioner and his spouse were escorted in a state carriage by the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps from Pakistan High Commission, London. During the 20-minute audience, the High Commissioner presented his Letters of Credence to The Queen accrediting him as the High Commissioner for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The High Commissioner, on behalf of the President, the Prime Minister and the people of Pakistan, conveyed best wishes to the Queen, the Royal family, the government and the people of

the United Kingdom. He mentioned that Her Majesty's message of goodwill given during her visit to Pakistan in 1997 still resonates with the people of Pakistan who hold her in very high esteem. The High Commissioner also expressed his desire to work for further strengthening the relations between the two countries. Her Majesty warmly welcomed the High Commissioner and his spouse to the Buckingham Palace. Appreciating friendly relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, Her Majesty the Queen extended warm wishes to the Government and the people of Pakistan, and especially, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The Queen very fondly remembered the sweetness and aroma of Pakistani mangoes. Condemning the horrific attack



on Army Public School in Peshawar, The Queen expressed her sympathies and condolences to the families of the victims. The High Commissioner presented Her Majesty a coffee table book on Pakistan, a hand-embroidered Pashmina Shawl from Kashmir and hand made souvenirs, which The Queen greatly appreciated.



Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Minister for Interior met British Home Secretary Theresa May at the Home Office, London on 23 February 2015. The two leaders agreed that warm and cordial relations

between Pakistan and UK have attained a new level during the recent years. The Interior Minister underscored the important role West could play in countering the narrative of Islamophobia created by certain groups spreading religious intolerance. The Minister said that rights of democracy and freedom of speech should be used with responsibility, without humiliating any faith or religious beliefs. He further emphasized that fight against terrorism and extremism could only be won through global unity and international cooperation. Home Secretary May expressed satisfaction on close and friendly relations between the two countries. Appreciating Pakistan's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism, she assured



Interior Minister of Pakistan with British Home Secretary

of her government's Pakistan's comprehensive commitment to support Pakistan in all areas of cooperation. In his meeting with British National Security Adviser (NSA) Sir Kim Darroch, at the Cabinet Office, 10 Downing Street, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan exchanged views on matters of mutual interest in both bilateral and regional context. Expressing satisfaction on the upward trajectory of Pakistan-UK relations, both sides agreed to continue the momentum of cooperation in a wide range of areas with particular focus on security cooperation. The Minister underscored UK's important role in bringing East and West together in fight against extremism. Sharing



Interior Minister of Pakistan with British National Security Adviser



## “YOUTH CONVENTION 2015” ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING THE YOUTH REMAINED THE CENTRAL THEME

In order to engage and empower the British Pakistani youth, Pakistan High Commission London, organized its first ever “Youth Convention 2015” on 14 February 2015. More than 150 British Pakistani students and young professionals were in attendance during the day-long Convention.

The event was divided into four sessions along the following themes: Pakistan beyond headlines and 'Homeland'; Engaging and empowering the youth; Setting the Pakistani Context in Social Enterprise; and Culture of Pakistan. The Convention provided a unique opportunity for the youth to interact and debate with



Representatives of the youth and student unions were also among the panellists. The speakers dwelt upon themes like 'positivity about Pakistan' that often submerges in headlines of poorly-informed Western media; issues of

art and culture of Pakistan could transcend various ethnic and linguistic barriers and build bridges between the Pakistani and the British communities. A session with the British Council Pakistan was dedicated to the opportunities in the social

Convention. This Convention has been organized because, from the very outset, I wanted to connect and interact with young Pakistani diaspora. I want you to become a productive part of the British society. The idea of the Convention was to introduce the youth to the opportunities available in Pakistan.”

The panellists included Rehman Chishti MP, Peter Osborne, Kristiane Backer, Zia ud Din Sardar, George Fulton, Dr Amina Yaqeen, Fida Hussain, Imran Ali, Tommy Hutchinson, Mashalle Asim and Kubair Shirazee. Comedian Beo Zafar presented stand-up comedy and discussed various aspects of Pakistani culture with comedian Atif Nawaz. Huma Yusuf, Sanam Kubra Siddiqui, Suniya Qureshi and Jawiria Naseem moderated the sessions.

The youth showed great interest in the Convention and appreciated High Commission's initiative to provide them with a platform to get together and exchange ideas.

entrepreneurship in Pakistan. In his brief welcome remarks, High Commissioner Syed Ibne Abbas said: “I am delighted to see our youth in such a large number at the



Youth Convention Volunteers with the High Commissioner

renowned experts and scholars from diverse fields including politics, media, academia, social enterprise, government, business, culture and performing arts.

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## HIGH COMMISSIONER'S TALK AT SOAS

H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK delivered a talk at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), on Pakistan covering its challenges and opportunities as well as its foreign policy dynamics, on 17 February 2015. In his talk, the High Commissioner highlighted geopolitical and geo-strategic position of Pakistan and the role it can play for peace and stability of the region. He also mentioned Pakistan's potential for becoming a destination for investment and business from across the world due to its skilled and cheap labour force highlighting the fact that 50% population of the country was under the age of 25 years. He specifically highlighted the opportunities to arise from the planned Pakistan-China

Economic Corridor. The High Commissioner said that Pakistan's foreign policy remained security driven due to external factors from the very outset. However, he clarified that Pakistan continues to follow an independent foreign policy and does not believe in developing relations with one country at the cost of its relations with other. Speaking about the challenges, the High Commissioner termed terrorism and extremism the biggest challenge but said that the government was taking on the problem with full commitment and that the political as well as military leadership were in sync. He also mentioned the successes achieved during the ongoing military operation Zarb e Azb and expressed confidence that the operation would continue till the elimination of terrorism and

extremism from Pakistan. Responding to a question regarding Pakistan's relations with India, the High



Commissioner said Pakistan wanted good neighbourly relations with India but the issue of Kashmir could not be wished away in this process. Referring to energy shortage, the High Commissioner said that it would be overcome gradually as setting up new power plants and hydel power projects does take time.

The High Commissioner termed Pakistan-UK relations friendly and rooted in history; and said that now the cordiality in political

relations has started to translate into trade and economic relations. The talk was followed by a lively Q&A session in which inquisitive participants raised their concerns and interest in various prevailing issues in the country. About 100 students attended the talk.

## HIGH COMMISSIONER MEETS PAKISTANI COMMUNITY IN BRADFORD



H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK visited Consulate of Pakistan in Bradford on 06 February 2015, and met Pakistani community, youth, Parliamentarians, civil society organizations, Lord Mayors, Councillors, leading professionals, notable business people and the representatives of media.

Addressing the community, the High Commissioner apprised them about his recent initiatives to facilitate the community in consular services. He

appreciated the good work being carried out by the Bradford Consulate but said that our community deserved better than what it was receiving currently. While the standard of the services being provided for the community is satisfactory, we still want to improve it in line with the instructions of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, said the High Commissioner. He responded to the questions by the community and media persons on that occasion. The High Commissioner also attended the “Kashmir Solidarity

Day” at the Consulate, which was attended by a large number of Pakistani diaspora and the British MPs and MEPs, including David Ward MP, George Galloway MP, Richard Corbett MEP, Amjad Bashir MEP and Kashmiri leaders. Besides, the High Commissioner inaugurated the Automated Appointment System at the Consulate. Earlier, the High Commissioner attended a luncheon meeting attended by Amjad Bashir MEP, former Lord Mayors and community notables, and

discussed with them issues of the community. Bradford Gymkhana hosted a dinner in honour of the High Commissioner, which was attended by about 300 members of the Pakistani diaspora. The High Commissioner lauded the role of Gymkhana and its management for engaging the youth productively. The purpose of the visit was to reach out and connect with the community in order to get acquainted with their issues and address them on priority.

## PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION FROM PAKISTAN VISITS THE HIGH COMMISSION

A nine-member multi-party delegation comprising members of the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies of Pakistan visited Pakistan High Commission London on 26 February 2015. H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK welcomed the delegation over a



reception and gave them a detailed briefing on the functions and responsibilities of the Mission. The discussion covered a range of topics including Pakistan-UK bilateral

relations, issues of the diaspora, Parliamentary exchanges and High Commission's outreach programme to connect with the British Pakistanis.

During their stay in London, the delegation studied the development and usage of constituent outreach mechanisms by British MPs as part of the project by the FCO. The International Republican Institute (IRI) is implementing the programme. The delegation included Sardar Kamal Banguzai MNA; Dawar Khan Kundi, MNA; Anisa Zeb Tahir Kheli MPA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Sardar Hussain MPA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Eng. Pesu Mal MPA, Sindh; Rana Ansar MPA, Sindh; Abdul Rahim MPA, Balochistan; Muhammad Shaharyar Khan Mahar MPA, Sindh and Tamkeen Khan Niazi MPA, Punjab.

## “PAKISTAN CAPITAL MARKETS DAY 2015” HELD AT LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE

Karachi Stock Exchange in collaboration with Pakistan High Commission London and London Stock Exchange (LSE) organized the 4th Pakistan Capital Markets Day 2015 sponsored with Citi Bank. The event was held at London Stock Exchange and featured participation from 14 of Pakistan's top performing listed companies. During the two days, around 140 meetings took place between Pakistani companies and London based/international investors where 68 financial institutions were represented. To mark the occasion, Muhammad Zubair, Minister of State for Privatisation and H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, High Commissioner for Pakistan to the UK took part in Market

Opening Ceremony together with Nikhil Rathi, London Stock Exchange Group's Head of International Business Development, and Nadeem Lodhi, Citi Country Officer & MD Citibank, Pakistan. Speaking at the event Nikhil Rathi, Head of International Business Development, London Stock Exchange Group said: “This event plays host to leading Pakistani companies which are helping to support and drive growth in the country's economy. Since 2006, we have seen listings in excess of £10bn from Pakistan, underlining exceptional London investor interest in building exposure to the country's fast-growing economy. Today's event gives us the opportunity to reflect on

the strong partnership between our two markets and to explore how we can further strengthen our collaboration.” Minister Muhammad Zubair said: “This is an important event where we can apprise potential investors of the business and investment potential of Pakistan. Pakistani capital market is among the most productive and profitable in the

world having ranked among the top 10 stock markets in the world for the last three years. I invite investors to avail themselves of the investment opportunities on offer in Pakistan.” Currently, five Pakistani companies are listed on London Stock Exchange across the Main Market and AIM, with a combined market capitalisation of £10.5bn.

