British Prime Minister Theresa May walked into a meeting of Minister for Interior Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan with National Security Adviser (NSA), Sir Mark Lyall Grant at the 10 Downing Street, on 15 November, 2016.

Speaking to the Interior Minister, Prime Minister May conveyed her good wishes to the Prime Minister and the people of Pakistan, and said that she was looking forward to visiting Pakistan, in the first half of 2017.

In his meeting with NSA, the Interior Minister said that menace of terrorism was a threat to the region and the international peace and tranquillity. He said that people of Pakistan and its national security institutions were determined to completely wipe out terrorism from their soil. The Minister said that overall security situation in Pakistan has improved significantly during the last three years.

On regional situation, the Interior Minister informed the British NSA that, “a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan”.

British NSA appreciated sacrifices of the people of Pakistan in fight against terrorism and assured to work together with Pakistan for further strengthening the bilateral relations.

Interior Minister meets Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary and former British Prime Minister

British Prime Minister Theresa May met Rt Hon’ble Boris Johnson, British Foreign Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and discussed issues of common interest. The two sides reiterated their commitment to working together for regional peace and consolidating Pakistan, UK relations and taking them to a higher level.

The Minister also held a meeting with British Home Secretary Ms. Amber Rudd. The two leaders discussed a host of issues ranging from cooperation in counter-terrorism, illegal immigration, organized crimes, narcotics control, money laundering, and other issues of mutual interest.

Later, Minister Ch. Nisar Ali Khan met former Prime Minister of United Kingdom David Cameron, and exchanged views on Pakistan-UK bilateral relations, the regional situation and other issues of mutual interest.

Besides, the Minister visited the NA-DRA and MRP offices at the Pakistan High Commission and met the applicants. The Minister appreciated the improvements in public dealing and consular services, which came about since his last visit to the High Commission a few months ago.
Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, said that political stability and continuity of policies are essential for economic take-off and development. He was speaking as the Chief Guest at the Future of Pakistan Conference held at the London School of Economics (LSE), on 19 November 2016. The event was organized by the LSE Pakistan Development Society in collaboration with the Pakistan Society and the High Commissioner for Pakistan in London.

The Minister outlined the salient features of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and its economic impact on Pakistan as well as the region. He said that out of $46 billion CPEC portfolio, $35 billion was being invested in energy sector which would end the power shortage in the country.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal briefed the parliamentarians on the government reforms agenda. He updated them on the significant progress made by the government in key areas of economy. The Minister also apprised the parliamentarians of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and highlighted its importance in economic integration of the region and socio economic uplift of the people not only in Pakistan but in the entire region.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal also raised with the parliamentarians the issue of the worst human rights violations by the Indian security forces in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK), and sought the attention of the international community in that regard.

The parliamentarians who attended the lunch included Mr. Khalid Mahmood MP, Lord Nazir Ahmed, Lord Qurban Hussain, Mr Rehman Chisti MP, Ms Yasmeen Qureshi MP, Shadow Minister for Justice, Ms Naz Shah MP, Nusrat Ghani MP, Ms Julie Cooper MP, Ms Liz McClures MP, Shadow Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Graham Jones MP, Mr Andrew Stephenson MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, Mr. John Spellar MP, Mr Gavin Shuker MP and Mr Mark Pritchard MP.

The Minister thanked the students for putting together such a wonderful event and giving him an opportunity to put across government’s vision for the development of the country.

The Conference was inaugurated by Syed Ibn Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK. In his remarks, he said the Conference was being held at a very opportune time when the narrative about Pakistan in the world is changing fast as the economy of Pakistan is growing and security situation has improved significantly.

The day-long Conference provided a useful opportunity to discuss all what matters to the future of Pakistan and helped connect the young and bright students to the experts and scholars in various fields.
Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reform delivered talks at Cambridge and Oxford Universities of the UK on 21 and 22 November 2016. The talks were attended by students, scholars and academia as well as media representatives.

In his talks, Minister Ahsan Iqbal explained in detail the concept and salient features of the CPEC project. He said that CPEC has four components which include: a) Development and Upgradation of Gwadar Port; b) Energy; c) Transport infrastructure including road and rail network; and d) Setting up of industrial zones along the corridor.

Speaking at a seminar, organized by the World Congress of Overseas Pakistanis (WCOP), Mr Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan has assumed new identity due to economic turnaround during the last three years. Dwelling upon the concept of CPEC, the Minister said that it is the fusion of Chinese One Belt One Road and Pakistan’s Vision 2025.

Besides, the Minister gave a talk at Chatham House, a leading think tank of the UK.

Dr. Sania Nishtar outlines her vision for WHO at Chatham House

Dr. Sania Nishtar, Pakistan’s candidate for the Director General World Health Organization (WHO), presented her vision and plan for the WHO at a forum hosted by the Chatham House in London on 03 November 2016.

In her remarks, Dr. Nishtar called for bringing reforms to rapid fruition, embracing meaningful and timely transparency, institutionalizing true accountability, ensuring value for money, and driving a culture based on results and delivery, to transform the organization. Dr Nishtar placed universal attainment of the highest possible level of health at the centre of her vision.

Dr. Nishtar also called on Lord Prior, UK’s Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health and apprised him about her candidature. Lord Prior appreciated her credentials, her professional experience and diverse background in the field of health.

Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly visits the High Commission

Mr Asad Qaiser, Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly visited the Pakistan High Commission London on 24 November 2016.

The High Commissioner welcomed the Speaker and briefed him on the working and responsibilities of the Mission. He also briefed the Speaker on diaspora matters and the improvement in Consular Services for the Pakistani community in the UK. The Speaker was also updated on the friendly Pakistan-UK relations and ongoing cooperation between the two countries. The subject of foreign investment in KP’s tourism, mineral and infrastructure sector also came under discussion. The High commissioner assured the Speaker of Mission’s cooperation in that regard.
High Commissioner calls on Commonwealth Secretary General

H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK called on Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary General at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London on 14 November 2016.

The two sides discussed matters pertaining to cooperation between Pakistan and the Commonwealth, and the post-Brexit opportunities for the Commonwealth countries.

The Secretary General outlined her vision to enhance intra-Commonwealth trade in the post-Brexit scenario. Upon this, the High Commissioner highlighted Pakistan’s potential role in enhancing mutually beneficial intra-Commonwealth trade and economic activities in the wake of Brexit. The ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and the Commonwealth in diverse fields such as science, education, trade and agriculture was also reviewed.

The High Commissioner reiterated invitation for the Secretary General to visit Pakistan, which the latter accepted with thanks.

Suleman Arshad wins the Commonwealth Youth Worker Award

Mr. Suleman Arshad, a youth worker from Pakistan, has won the Commonwealth Youth Worker Award 2016 from the Asia Region. The award was announced in a ceremony held at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London on 10 November 2016.

The award has been given to Mr. Arshad in recognition of his services for the empowerment of youth in Pakistan through sports. He is the founder and the president of the Pakistan Para Climbing Club, the first club of its kind in Pakistan. Despite his visual impairment, Mr. Arshad has been working to promote inclusive sports empowerment programmes in Pakistan.

In his message, Mr. Arshad, thanked the Commonwealth Secretariat for recognizing his work and efforts aimed at empowering youth in Pakistan. He said that the club provides opportunities to the young people to create a positive impact on the society. Mr Arshad added that the award was a great encouragement for him and would help him serve the youth with more vigour.

Cultural Evening at the High Commission

Cultural Outreach

A cultural evening full of poetry, satire, humour and music enthralled the audience at the Pakistan High Commission in London on 29th November 2016. The evening featured renowned Pakistani poets, Amjad Islam Amjad and Anwar Masood, and famous singer Rajab Ali.

Amjad Islam Amjad read out some of his popular poems and won a thunderous applause from the audience. His recital comprised romantic poetry, poems for Pakistan and some serious poetry reflecting his outlook on life.

Similarly Anwar Masood, known for his humorous and satirical poetry, amused the audience amid cheers and laughter. Listening to him was quite a treat for the audience in a chilly evening of London. Famous Pakistani singer, Rajab Ali of Gawaliar Gharana made the evening memorable with his melodious voice. His famous songs, ghazals and qawwali created a beautiful atmosphere.

Welcoming the guests, H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK appreciated the great poetry of Amjad Islam Amjad and Anwer Masood. He also commended Rajab Ali for introducing Pakistani music abroad.

People from all walks of life were in attendance. The world famous Kathak dancer Nahid Siddiqui and a delegation of women entrepreneurs from Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (WCCI), also attended the event.
With its traditional handicrafts, clothes and exotic cuisine, the spectacular Pakistani Stall turned out to be a huge attraction for the visitors at the Commonwealth Fair 2016.

The Annual Commonwealth Fair was organized by Commonwealth Countries League (CCL), to raise funds for the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund (CGEF), and was held at Kensington Town Hall, London on 12 November 2016.

Begum High Commissioner, Mrs. Sadaf Abbas, along with the ladies of Pakistan High Commission showcased the beautiful handicrafts made by Pakistani women. She also presented a traditional shawl to Mrs Elizabeth Rutherford, Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, who visited the Pakistani Stall. The Mayor appreciated the beauty and diversity of the Stall.

The proceeds of the Pakistani Stall were donated to the CGEF.
Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi’s 100th Birthday commemorated at the High Commission

The 100th birth anniversary of renowned poet, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi was commemorated at Pakistan High Commission London on 17 November, 2016.

In this regard, a Literary Evening was jointly organized by the High Commission and Urdu Markaz London. The Evening featured screening of a documentary on the life and work of Qasmi Sahib, talk on his poetry and short story and singing of his famous ghazals.

Welcoming the guests, H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK termed Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi a great figure in the contemporary Urdu literature. He said: “Art and culture is the best medium to communicate with the world. That’s why the High Commission always strives to hold literary and cultural events so that the true image of Pakistan could be showed to the world.”

Renowned broadcaster and writer Raza Ali Abidi and a local poet Faizan Arif read out brief papers on the work of Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi. Ms Durdana Ansari OBE sang some beautiful poetry of Qasmi Sahib.

Similar commemorative events were held at all the four Consulates of Pakistan at Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow and Manchester.

Unity in Variety Art Exhibition

Unity in Variety VI Art Exhibition was held at Gabriel Fine Arts gallery in London on 18 November 2016. The exhibition was put together by Barikee--Islamic and Pakistani Fine Art Gallery--in collaboration with Gabriel Fine Arts and World Congress of Overseas Pakistanis (WCOP). In his inaugural remarks, H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, the High Commissioner said that exhibition of the work of contemporary artists from Pakistan in London is a great effort to promote the rich cultural heritage and vibrant art of Pakistan. He also appreciated the efforts of the organizers of exhibition for promoting artistic side of Pakistan. The exhibition featured eight contemporary Islamic and Pakistani artists including Bin Qulander, Sadaf Farasat and Siddiqa Juma alongside artists from several other countries.
The Pakistani fashion designers showcase their work at Pakistan Fashion Week (PFW), in London on 27 November 2016. A large number of fashion enthusiasts attended the exhibition as well as catwalk and appreciated the creativity of the designers. H.E. Syed Ibne Abbas, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK appreciated the hard work and passion of both the experienced and the budding designers. He said Pakistan is full of talented people and it is encouraging to see that they are making their mark in the world.

Pakistan Consulate, Birmingham organized a youth event entitled “Our Youth Our Hope” on 19 November 2016. A large number of British-Pakistani youth participated in the event.

Seven British-Pakistani self-made, high achievers from different walks of life shared their success stories with the wider audiences. Consul Maroof underlined the important role of British-Pakistani community in the UK and emphasized the need for it to further augment its contribution to the British society in all fields. All seven role models empathised that the key to success is hard work, integrity and continuous endeavour in pursuit of higher social, economic and political status in the UK.

Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Geneva, also spoke on the occasion. She praised the talent of Pakistan in various fields and urged the diaspora to project the positive side of Pakistan abroad. PFW10 London presented the latest collections from 36 of Pakistan’s leading and emerging fashion designers. It was a fusion of design that presented Pakistani fashion’s stunning heritage and flair in a western context.

Activities at Pakistan Consulates

“Our Youth Our Hope”

Literary activities at Consulate General of Pakistan Manchester

A series of literary events was organised by the Consulate General of Pakistan, Manchester throughout the month of November. The first event of the literary series ‘Iqtebas’ was presented at the Manchester University and was attended by eminent enthusiasts of the Urdu language.

Commenting on the huge success of the event, Sheraz Ali, Urdu lecturer at the University of Manchester and Urdu teacher at Levenshulme High School said “it is our hope that we will be able to rekindle the love for good contemporary and classic literature in Urdu. This, in turn, will help provide a healthy activity for British Pakistani youth.”

Similarly, the Consulate General of Pakistan Manchester commemorated the centenary of the great Urdu poet and writer Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi. Guests praised and presented the excerpts from the poetry and literary work of the poet.

The Consul General of Pakistan, Manchester Mr. Zahoor Ahmed highlighted the fact that poets such as Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi are our national assets who have spread the message of peace, love and brotherhood.
As the winter holiday season is upon us, many will be heading to Pakistan and the two cities most likely to feature as a destination are Karachi and Lahore. Like other great cities of the world such as Barcelona and Madrid, and Sydney and Melbourne, these two cities enjoy a friendly rivalry in competing to be the better place to live and visit. Ultimately the winner is the visitor who is more than happy to sample each city’s offerings.

Lahoris will tease Karachites about the lack of history and monuments, they will be countered by the lack of decent shopping malls, cinema multiplexes and not being as cosmopolitan. Karachi has the sea and a bustling international business and fashion scene but Lahore has lush fertile land and regards itself as the country’s cultural heart. Lahoris will also proudly claim to be the gastronomic heart of the country but Karachi will claim the better top end restaurants as well as the Port Grand complex that is often referred to as the largest food street of Asia. As of this year they now also have their own T20 rivals in the Lahore Qalandars and the Karachi Kings.

In truth they are both unique and it’s these differences that should be enjoyed and celebrated. Karachi has a rich colonial history with fine examples like The Karachi Port Trust, Frere Hall, Hindu Gymkhana and Empress Market. For history going back further, UNESCO sites are also within easy reach of the city. And yet also within easy reach are miles of stunning coastline so one can escape the hustle and bustle. Lahore’s Mughal history is in a class of its own; a walk around the old city is an experience never to forget as you encounter majestic forts, exquisite mosques and mystical mausoleums to be awed by. In fact, the city boasts one UNESCO site and four on the tentative list so even a few days is not enough.

And yet both cities also have a thriving modern arts, music and theatre scene with the Mohatta Palace Museum and National Academy of Performing Arts in Karachi and the Alhamra Arts Centre and Cultural Complex in Lahore. Not only are there regular performances and exhibitions throughout the year, but there is also an ongoing commitment to support artist welfare and be part of the community.

The rivalry between these two great cities will continue so the only way to decide which one you prefer is to visit both.