Embassy Celebrates Eid and Pakistan’s 66th Independence Day

Pakistan and U.S. Security Officials Exchange Visits and Reaffirm Relationship
High-level military and intelligence officials from Pakistan and the US exchanged productive visits.

Ambassador Works to Strengthen Relations
Ambassador Rehman met with Pakistani-Americans, academics, and government officials during the month of August to maintain and strengthen the bilateral relationship.

Pakistan’s State Bank Acts to Spur Investment and the Economy Continues to Strengthen
Action by the State Bank to lower interest rates is expected to spur foreign investment.

Another Pakistani Film Maker Receives International Recognition
“Seedlings” a film about loss, forgiveness and redemption wins two major awards at the New York City International Film Festival.

Ambassador Rehman’s Message
Eid Mubarak! Though now behind us, I hope the holy month was a blessed time in your lives and the lives of your families, and that it initiated a year of recommitment to advancing interfaith harmony and peace as foundational values for civilized societies.

For the Embassy, Ramazan was an opportunity to reach out to members and leaders of other religious communities, disabusing them of the extreme caricature of Islam they often see in the media, to replace it with a discourse on the Islam that enjoins on its believers the centrality of tolerance, peace, equality and compassion as codes of conduct for public and private behavior. We held a well-attended Interfaith Iftar Dinner where members of many different religions came together to break the fast. The occasion was an opportunity for several faiths to reiterate a message of mutual tolerance that unites us in challenging times.

Because Eid ul Fitr was so early in the calendar year, it happily coincided with the 66th year of Pakistan’s Independence on August 14. In celebration of these events, the Embassy welcomed the community to join in the hoisting of our national flag, together with a reading of the Independence Day Messages of Pakistan’s President and Prime Minister. This was followed by a Chand Raat celebration that marked the end of Ramazan on the eve of Eid.

We used the weeks during which Congress was in recess to reach out to the vibrant Pakistan diaspora in California and Houston where the community and consulates hosted large gatherings, which reflected the rich diversity of the Pakistani-American talent pool in these areas. Given that outreach to the community is a renewed priority at the Embassy, these meetings gave us a unique opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest. The core message from the Embassy was principally one that advanced the twin goals of institutional and individual unity of the diaspora, as well as bridge-building through active participation in the American mainstream.

Speaking of bilateral engagement, as the summer comes to a close, we are happy to report that after weathering a difficult period, both governments have begun taking important steps to stabilize the Pak-US relationship. In the months ahead, we look forward to a series of official interface opportunities in both countries, which should help expand the space for ongoing dialogue at multiple levels.

IN THIS ISSUE...

2-3 A Celebration of Pakistan’s Independence and Eid ul Fitr
3 Trade and Economy
4-5 Pakistani-U.S. Relations
5-7 Embassy Events and Other News
On August 14, the Embassy celebrated the country’s 66th Independence Day with a flag-hoisting ceremony. The proceedings started with recitation from the Holy Qur’an. While the national anthem played, Ambassador Rehman hoisted Pakistan’s national flag. Independence Day messages from President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf reaffirming the ideals of democracy and the egalitarian progress espoused by Pakistan’s founding father — Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah — were read on the occasion. The ceremony concluded with prayers for solidarity, development and security of Pakistan and its citizens.

Video of the event can be seen here: http://embassyofpakistanusa.org/Flaghoisting_14082012_EOP_Washington_DC.php

"OUR FOUNDING FATHERS ENVISIONED PAKISTAN AS A COUNTRY WHERE DEMOCRACY, CONSTITUTIONALISM AND RULE OF LAW WOULD REIGN SUPREME.... A COUNTRY WHERE THE POWER OF THE BALLOT, AND NOT BULLET, WILL DETERMINE THE POLITICAL CHOICES OF THE PEOPLE. ON THIS DAY I WISH TO CALL UPON EVERYONE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRACY, EMPOWERMENT OF THE PEOPLE AND FOR A PROGRESSIVE, TOLERANT, MODERATE AND MODERN PAKISTAN AS ENVISIONED BY OUR GREAT LEADERS."

"I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO THE ADDRESS MADE BY THE FATHER OF NATION TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ON 11TH AUGUST, 1947 WHERE HE SAID “YOU ARE FREE; YOU ARE FREE TO GO TO YOUR TEMPLES, YOU ARE FREE TO GO TO YOUR MOSQUES OR TO ANY OTHER PLACE OF WORSHIP IN THIS STATE OF PAKISTAN. YOU MAY BELONG TO ANY RELIGION OR CASTE OR CREED - THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE BUSINESS OF THE STATE.” LET ME ASSURE MY FELLOW CITIZENS THAT IN CONFORMITY WITH THE GUIDELINES LAID OUT BY THE FATHER OF THE NATION, MY GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO AN EQUAL STATUS FOR MINORITIES, AS CITIZENS OF THE STATE."

EID MUBARAK!

U.S. President Barack Obama conveyed a message of hope and peace from the American people to Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr.

"EIGHTY years have passed since August 14, 1947, when Pakistan was born. Like all nations born of struggle, Pakistan’s quest for freedom was marked by sacrifice and heroism... Today, the Muslim world prepares for Eid ul Fitr. There is no better time to reaffirm the message of shared purpose that unites all Pakistanis."

"A CELEBRATION OF PAKISTAN’S INDEPENDENCE AND EID UL FITR"
EID GALA AT PAKISTAN EMBASSY SHOWCASES NATIONAL CULTURE

A Chand Raat gathering at the Embassy on the eve of Eid offered an opportunity for guests to experience Pakistani culture around Pakistan’s 66th Independence Day. Hosted by Ambassador Rehman, the event attracted Pakistani-American families, senior U.S. officials, Pakistan experts and journalists alike. Welcoming the participants, Ambassador Rehman noted that the festive gathering reflected the Pakistani-American community’s enthusiasm. “Such occasions provide an opportunity to showcase Pakistani culture, which is full of life, fun, art, traditions, customs and color.” The breaking of the last fast (Iftar) of the holy month of Ramazan was coupled with a display of Pakistani traditions, cuisine and customary rites. Guests were treated to a musical performance by famous Pakistani singer Waris Baig and his son, Amaar Baig. Video of the event can be seen here: http://embassyofpakistanusa.org/Chand_Raat_08192012.php

From left to right: At the Chand Raat gathering, the Ambassador spoke to the guests, who enjoyed Pakistani food and received henna drawings and bangles. Waris Baig and his son, Amaar, performed for the guests. Air Attache Haseeb Paracha and Trade Minister Azmat Ranjha enjoyed the festivities.

TRADE AND ECONOMY

August was a resilient month for Pakistan’s economy as local and international investors sought to capitalize on new opportunities. Some of Pakistan’s largest firms broke records. In August, the Karachi Stock Exchange benchmark 100-share index, the KSE100, closed above 15,000.00 - its highest level since April 2008.

MEETING OF DEPUTY USTR WITH AMB. REHMAN

The Deputy United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Demetrios Marantis met Ambassador Sherry Rehman at the Embassy in Washington, DC in August. The discussions focused on ways to deepen and strengthen trade and investment ties between Pakistan and the United States.

The Ambassador informed Ambassador Marantis of the high priority that Pakistan attached to moving to a more trade focused relationship with the US and underscored the importance of enhancing access to the US market for Pakistani exporters. Ambassador Marantis told the Ambassador that the “US-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference” being arranged in London on October 04-05, 2012 will be a positive step in promoting trade and investment ties between the two countries.

STATE BANK OF PAKISTAN CUTS INTEREST RATES, SEEKS INVESTMENT

State Bank Governor Yaseen Anwar announced a two-month period of expansionary monetary policy and cut interest rates by 1.5 percent, beginning August 13, to encourage private sector investment and increase foreign exchange reserves. The recent receipt of $1.12 billion in U.S. Coalition Support Funds and $13.2 billion in overseas remittances contributed in limiting the external current account deficit and cushioning government borrowing.

INDIA FORMALLY ALLOWS FOREIGN INVESTMENT FROM PAKISTAN

On August 1, India lifted its ban on foreign investment from Pakistan. Pakistani citizens and incorporated entities can now make investments in India after notification and receipt of government approval.
AMBASSADOR REHMAN AND U.S. CENTCOM COMMANDER GEN. JAMES MATTIS MEET AT EMBASSY

On August 30, General James Mattis met with Ambassador Rehman at the Embassy. They discussed matters of mutual interest including enhancing cooperation for better coordination between Pakistan and the United States. The Ambassador emphasized the need to build a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. General Mattis acknowledged Pakistan’s contribution in the fight against terrorism and assured continued cooperation to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan.

AMBASSADOR PARTICIPATES IN ASPEN SECURITY FORUM

In July, the Aspen Security Forum hosted an event on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ambassador Rehman called for an end to U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan while at the same time, the Pakistani envoy made it clear that the fight against terrorism is a shared struggle and everyone including Afghanistan, the United States and other international partners have to do their part to counter the menace. While responding to remarks from other participants at the forum, the Ambassador spoke about the positive transformation taking place in Pakistan and remarked “This is a new Pakistan; catch up gentlemen!”

http://www.c-spanarchives.org/program/AspenS

SECURITY LEADERS EXCHANGE VISITS AND REAFFIRM RELATIONSHIP

Lt. Gen. Zahir ul-Islam, the director general of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate engaged in substantive and productive discussions with his CIA counterpart Director Gen. David H. Petraeus and other US officials during his August visit to Washington, DC. Lt. Gen. Islam said he sought to improve the counterterrorism efforts and requested American assistance in halting cross-border incursions by the Taliban from Afghanistan.

Gen. John Allen, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, visited Pakistan’s army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani in Pakistan on August 2nd. Gen. Allen noted that steps to build an enduring, strategic and carefully defined partnership are underway. Gen. Kayani emphasized that the relationship should be based on mutual trust, respect and transparency.

AMBASSADOR REHMAN AND CONGRESSMAN DAN BURTON AGREE TO PROMOTE BETTER TIES

On August 2, Ambassador Rehman met Congressman Dan Burton (R-Indiana), Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Sub-Committee on Eurasia and Central Asia and the Republican co-chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus. The Ambassador thanked Rep. Burton for his longstanding support for Pakistan, apprised him of the recent positive developments, and discussed ways to further strengthen the relationship. Rep. Burton recalled Pakistan’s friendship with the U.S. through the Cold War and offered his assistance in promoting better relations.
MEETING WITH U.S. SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE OIC AND ISNA REPRESENTATIVES

The State Department Coordinator for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Mr. Rashad Husain and the representatives of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) met the Ambassador and discussed their cooperative efforts to promote dialogue between different faiths. The Ambassador said that Pakistan as a leading OIC member advocated dialogue among all cultures. She underlined that tolerance for cultural, racial, religious and linguistic diversities is essential for international peace, understanding and friendship.

AMBASSADOR REHMAN MEETS CIRF CHAIRPERSON KATRINA LANTOS SWETT

On August 8, 2012 Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Freedom called on Ambassador Sherry Rehman, and exchanged views on protection and promotion of religious freedom and minority rights.

DCM KHAN VISITS RNC IN TAMPA

Deputy Chief of Mission Dr. Asad M. Khan visited Tampa, Florida during the Republican National Convention in order to witness the nomination process for the presidential elections firsthand. During the event, he met with various delegates and informally exchanged views on subjects of mutual interest.

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT IFTAR DINNER

The U.S. State Department hosted an Iftar for the officers of the Embassy of Pakistan on Thursday August 16. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador David D. Pearce, Senior Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, welcomed the Ambassador and officers of the Embassy. He spoke about the virtues of patience and tolerance that the month of Ramadan inculcates in the believers and stressed that the same message must resonate across all faiths. This Iftar provided a unique opportunity for informal interaction between officials of the Embassy and the State Department.

IFTAR DINNER BY THE WHITE HOUSE

Ambassador Rehman attended the Iftar dinner hosted by President Obama at the White House. This was the fourth Iftar that President Obama has hosted. During his remarks at the dinner, the President reflected on the importance of religious freedom and the important role Muslims have played throughout US history. He referred to the special display of the Quran, which once belonged to Thomas Jefferson, as a reminder that along with the generations of patriotic Muslims in America, Islam — like so many faiths — is part of the national story of United States.

AMBASSADOR REHMAN ATTENDS WORKING GROUP ON REGIONAL SECURITY

The Ambassador participated in the U.S.-Pakistan Dialogue Regional Security Working Group meeting at the Stanford University in Palo Alto, California on August 23-24, 2012. The meeting was a joint initiative of the former US Secretary of Defence William Perry and the former US Secretary of State George Schultz. The two-day event focused on US-Pakistan relations and the evolving security and political situation in Afghanistan. The other notable participants from Pakistan included the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Ehsan ul Haq, the former Foreign Secretary Mr. Najmuddin Shaikh, the former Governor of the State Bank Mr. Ishaq Hussain, the former Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi, Mr. Rifaat Hussain, and Mr. Moed Yusuf.
EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN HOSTS INTERFAITH IFTAR DINNER

Diplomats, academics, spiritual leaders, and believers from many faiths gathered together to celebrate the breaking the fast on August 13 at an Iftar dinner hosted by Ambassador Rehman. Conveying the message of tolerance that was envisioned by Pakistan’s founder Ambassador Rehman said, “investing in dialogue, promoting pluralism and respect for another’s beliefs are the way nations, communities and people will build bridges of peace and cooperation amongst each other. At the end of the day, our faith teaches tolerance, and tolerance alone is the idiom, the unifying principle in humanity that upholds human rights, pluralism and the rule of law.”

The religious leaders in attendance included Rev. William Aiken, Rev. Dr. Carol Flett, Rev. William Sachs, Dr. Rajwant Singh, Rabbi Bruce Lustig, Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi and Imam Majid. In addition to many leading Pakistani scholars and experts, representatives from interfaith institutions, human rights organizations, various community leaders, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Chairperson Dr. Katrina Lantos Sweet, the President of Rumi Forum Emre Celik and a number of senior diplomats were in attendance, including Nepalese Ambassador to the United States Shankar Prasad Sharma, representatives from the embassies of Italy and Sri Lanka, Ambassadors Wendy Chamberlin, Howard Schaffer, Teresita Schaffer and John McDonald. Video for the event can be viewed here: http://embassyofpakistanusa.org/Ambassador_interfaith_iftar_08132012_V.php

AMBASSADOR REHMAN HIGHLIGHTS DIASPORA’S ROLE IN BUILDING RELATIONS

Not far from San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge, Ambassador Rehman highlighted the role of Pakistani-Americans in building ties with the U.S. at an event organized by the Consul General of Pakistan in collaboration with the Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs (OPEN), Pakistan-American Cultural Council (PACC), Pakistan Chamber of Commerce (Bay Area) and Pakistan Times on August 21st. She outlined the measures taken by the Government of Pakistan to strengthen democratic institutions, the media and judiciary. The Ambassador also elaborated on the Embassy’s outreach programs to the Pakistani community in Washington, DC and invited suggestions on how to improve services.

DCM WELCOMES PAKISTANI STUDENTS TO THE U.S.

Deputy Chief of Mission, Dr. Asad Majeed Khan addressed the participants of Pakistan Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Washington, DC on August 10, 2012. The program is run by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and includes a semester-long visit by Pakistani undergraduate students to various U.S. universities. A total of 200 students will participate in the program in two batches during 2012-13.
LUNCHEON WITH PAKISTANI COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES

On August 27, Ambassador Sherry Rehman met with over 200 prominent members of the Pakistani-American community at a luncheon organized by the Consulate General of Pakistan, Los Angeles in collaboration with leading Pakistani-American organizations including the Council of Pakistan American Affairs (COPAA), Pak-US Chamber of Commerce – California chapter, Pakistan Arts Council, NISWA, Merit Grants for Young Women (MGYW) and Developments in Literacy (DIL) at a local hotel in Long Beach, California. Local officials and community leaders also attended the luncheon and welcomed the Ambassador to Los Angeles. In her address, Ambassador Rehman highlighted the important role that the Pakistani diaspora plays in building strong ties between the American and Pakistani communities. She encouraged the Community to be proactive and engage widely and frequently with American public officials in order to clear misperceptions that exist about Pakistan. She also outlined the measures taken by the Government of Pakistan in strengthening democratic institutions in Pakistan, mentioning in particular safeguarding the rights of minorities and empowering women through legislation passed by Parliament.

AMB. REHMAN ADDRESSES PAKISTANI-AMERICANS VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

On August 18, Ambassador Rehman addressed a group of Pakistani-Americans via a video conference arranged by the Houston Consul General Aqil Nadeem. The Ambassador emphasized to this group of political activists, entrepreneurs, investors, professionals and community leaders that they are critical to helping advance Pakistan-U.S. relations. Pakistan, she said, is seeking expanded trade rather than aid with the U.S. and their input and advocacy role will be vital to that end.

“SEEDLINGS” WINS MAJOR AWARDS AT U.S. FILM FESTIVAL

Directed by Pakistani film maker Mansoor Mujahid, “Seedlings” won two major awards at the New York City International Film Festival’s opening ceremony. Produced by Bodhicitta Works, the film won the People’s Choice Award for Best Film and Best Actress in a Lead Role for actress Aamina Sheikh’s performance. Nominated in seven categories, “Seedlings” is a story of loss, forgiveness and redemption personified through the lives of three individuals bound together by a devastating accident.

AMBASSADOR VISITS THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Ambassador Rehman visited the Los Angeles County Museum of Art where she was received by Jane Burrell, Senior Vice President of Education and Public Programs of LACMA, Julie Romain and Nancy Fox, Assistant curator and Curatorial Administrator of the South and South-east Asia section of the Museum. The Curator and Departmental Head of the South and Southeast Asian Art Council of the Museum, Stephen Markel, conducted the Ambassador around the Museum.
CONSULAR SERVICES IN THE US.

The Pakistan Embassy in Washington and its four Consulate Generals in New York, Houston, Chicago, and Los Angeles provide consular facilities including passports, visa, attestation and the NICOP services to the public. All these offices maintain websites for providing guidance to the public, clearly listing the requirements for various consular services. The Machine Readable passports are a new addition. At present this facility is available at the Consulate Generals in New York and Los Angeles. It will be expanded to the other consulates and the Embassy in due course.

The five offices also issue visas to U.S. passports holders, authenticate legal documents, and process the National Identification Cards for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) etc. The documentation required for these services is clearly listed on the website www.embassyofpakistanusa.org. The forms for these services can be downloaded online and the paperwork can be submitted through mail. The website is regularly updated to reflect any changes in the Government of Pakistan regulations.

The valued community members are advised to visit the website while preparing the paperwork for any service. The website is regularly updated to reflect any changes in the Government of Pakistan regulations.

The Consulate General’s websites can be accessed on the following addresses:

- New York: www.pakconsulateny.org
- Houston: www.pakistanconsulatehouston.org
- Chicago: www.cgpkchicago.org
- Los Angeles: www.pakconsulatela.org