

BridgeUS – July 2016

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About USAID to Pakistan – Since 2012



In dedication to Daniel Pearl

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From Editor:

Zeenat Shahzadi – Kidnapped Female Journalist of Pakistan

Zeenat Shahzadi, kidnapped on 19 August 2015 while on her way to work. Armed gunmen grabbed her off Rickshaw and threw her in the waiting car. She was working as a freelance reporter for the local newspaper Daily Nai Khabar and Metro News Lahore.

Brazen day-light kidnapping of a 24-year-old female journalist on a busy street of Lahore metropolis is the first of its kind in perilous Pakistan. She is the victim of two nuclear armed traditionally hostile countries, India and Pakistan’s spy agencies unfounded blame game.

Zeenat’s family suffered another tragedy in March 2016 when her teenaged brother succumbed to the tragedy and hanged himself to death.

Security agencies denying their part in the kidnapping but Zeenat’s family, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the story she was on and the mystery shrouding her kidnapping hold the country’s security agencies responsible of her kidnapping.

Commission on Enforced Disappearances is now investigating Zeenat’s kidnapping is not independent and works under the jurisdictions of the Federal Government. Ridiculously, the Commission has no authority over the rampant security agencies; however, also investigating 1,300 missing people’s cases out of 3,000.

International Federation of Journalists - IFJ and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists - PFUJ were not aware of Zeenat’s kidnapping until October 2015 and didn’t let the case go public as requested by the family because there are many cases where missing and kidnapped people were found dead with bullet riddled mutilated bodies after media and public attention.

Zeenat was working to find Hamid Ansari, an Indian citizen disappeared in Pakistan in 2012. He was supposedly in love with a Pakistani girl from Kohat, whom he had met on Face Book. He was in a rush to get in to Pakistan after the girl had told him that her parents pushing her to marry with someone else.

The 28-year-old engineer Ansari failed to obtain visa and entered Pakistan illegally via Kabul – Afghanistan. He was picked up from a hotel in Kohat and the authorities refused to register a case of his arrest.

Zeenat had approached the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Peshawar High Court and the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances for Ansari on behalf of Ansari's mother Fauzia, who granted special Power of Attorney to Zeenat from Mumbai, India. The Commission of Inquiry ordered the registration of the First Information Report, known as FIR for missing Ansari in 2014.

In January 2016, ensuing the efforts of Zeenat, the Peshawar High Court was informed by the Deputy Attorney General of Pakistan that Ministry of Defense has confessed the custody of Ansari and his impending trial in the military courts. It was later reported that a military court sentenced Ansari for three years on the charges of espionage and illegally entering Pakistan.

According to Zeenat's brother Latif, Zeenat was repeatedly interrogated and threatened to withdraw from Hamid Ansari's case but remained steadfast to help Ansari on human grounds. Zeenat was due to appear in the court on 24 August, 2015 for testimony in missing people. There is no warrant or FIR filed for her kidnapping.

On the intervention of the court, kidnapping of Zeenat had been officially included in the missing people's case and the Joint Investigation Team – JIT set to probe the case. The JIT is now meeting with Zeenat's family. Such meetings may be the new tactics to intimidate the family as the traditional method of investigation in Pakistan. Still, there is no warrant or FIR filed for her kidnapping.

Pakistani security forces are equipped with enormous and unchecked powers. There are more than five thousand missing people in the country who believed to be picked up largely by the security agencies and remotely by the terrorist groups, local insurgents or armed wings of the political parties.

Law enforcement agencies exercise unrestricted powers under Pakistan Protection Act of 2014. Those powers further strengthen in 2015 by the Pakistan Protection Ordinance (PPO) which offers greater impunity to the police, intelligence, law enforcement authorities and military for heinous acts like forced kidnapping, torture and extrajudicial killings.

The government and the judiciary are aware of forced abductions and disappearances. On number of occasions, The Supreme Court of Pakistan has found security, intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces directly involved in forced abductions. Despite repeated orders from the courts, tainted incumbents and inefficient establishment are impotent to enforce the rule of law. The arrest orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan for an Army Brigadier who was directly involved in disappearances were never executed.

Mother of Zeenat, Kaneez Bibi frequently visits the grave of her son as the only way to find solace and keeps the belongings of Zeenat in order; hoping her return.

Zeenat's family has appealed to the Chief of Army staff, Chief Justice, Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Chief Minister of Punjab for her safe recovery. They haven't heard anything back from

them.

Pakistan ranks 6th in the list of the 20 Deadliest Countries for journalists in the world.

Women Are Key to Development by Jonathan Pratt | June 28, 2016

More than 20 years ago, Zahida Kamri, a single mother of six, became Pakistan's first female taxi driver — a job that took her from Islamabad to the country's remote provinces. As a pioneer among women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, Zahida persevered in the face of criticism and her accomplishments resonate to this day.

Two decades later, female entrepreneurs like Hira Batool Rizvi illustrate just how far the country has continued to progress since Zahida's first taxi run. Hira is a graduate of the WECREATE Centre, Islamabad, a start-up incubator and accelerator that was initially funded by the US State Department. In 2015, she launched She`Kab, Pakistan's first shared taxi service for working women. She employed more than 100 people in the first few months of her company's operations, creating jobs and directly addressing the unmet needs of working women. Hira's success corroborates what data has long shown, that there is a strong business case for supporting the rise of women in the economy — as entrepreneurs, employees and consumers.

Entrepreneurship is a key component of economic growth worldwide, including in Pakistan. Entrepreneurs identify business opportunities in underserved parts of the economy, utilise more of the country's human capital, and contribute to technological, intellectual, and service innovation. Women's entrepreneurship also provides a crucial way for women to enter the workforce and help expand the economy, circumventing many of the barriers they face when seeking traditional employment. Technology further enables this trend by providing more flexible work arrangements and job opportunities.

The World Bank has underscored that the economic inclusion of women is indispensable to Pakistan's growth. Women's participation in the economy is important for the country to make full use of its rich human capital, as well as to provide the needed income to households at all levels of society. But entrenched social norms, barriers to political participation, legal restrictions and gender-based violence prevent women from accessing economic opportunities in Pakistan and around the world. To address these gaps, Pakistan's Vision 2025 development strategy has announced steps the government aims to take to increase women's labour force participation. Improving women and girls' access to education, health care, justice, law enforcement, social services, banking and financial services, and childcare are a few of the pressing priorities outlined under Vision 2025. The ultimate goal is to increase women in the workforce from the current level of 25 per cent to 45 per cent over the next nine years.

That's why President Barack Obama dedicated a full day of last week's 7th Annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) at Stanford University to women and youth entrepreneurs. Hira was

one of 150 entrepreneurs who participated that day in training sessions, meeting with mentors and investors, and connecting with peers who share common ambitions. She was part of a group of 21 delegates, a majority of them women, representing Pakistan at the GES. Pakistan's delegation — the largest from any country outside the US — joined more than 700 entrepreneurs from around the world, along with investors and business leaders to exchange ideas and best practices for how to start and grow their businesses. These Pakistani entrepreneurs are building the networks and acquiring the skills to be competitive in the global marketplace and shape a bright future for their country.

Engines of economic growth, the private sectors in both Pakistan and the US, are critical to expanding economic opportunities for women. The US Pakistan Women's Council is working with Coca Cola, Engro, PepsiCo and Proctor & Gamble to lead ground-breaking hiring-and-supply-chain gender diversification efforts, and USAID has partnered with several multinational corporations on projects that support women's agricultural micro-enterprises in Pakistan, in some cases increasing incomes by as much as 50 per cent.

Pakistan is poised to support its first Women in the Economy Forum, which will bring our governments and private sector partners together to propose solutions to remove barriers to women's economic participation. The US will continue to fund programmes that promote gender equity, and increase women's access to information, economic opportunities, and ability to participate in civic and political institutions. These programmes include the Let Girls Learn initiative, which aims to empower 200,000 adolescent girls through improved access to quality education. Hundreds of young Pakistani women have travelled on educational, entrepreneurship and leadership training opportunities funded by the US because we believe in their immense potential to bring positive change to their country and build bridges between our societies.

These investments in Pakistani women are much more than feel-good acts of corporate social responsibility. They are strategic investments that will help increase Pakistani companies' efficiency and innovation — an acknowledgement that businesses have much to gain when women go to work. But donors and the government cannot meet this challenge alone. By joining forces with the corporate sector through public-private partnerships such as these, we can accelerate Pakistan's progress by harnessing the untapped drive and talents of its women in business.

Twenty-one Delegates to Represent Pakistan at 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit Islamabad | June 20, 2016

Twenty-one delegates will represent Pakistan at the 7th Annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), which will take place June 22-24, 2016 in Palo Alto, California. They will be joining more than 700 entrepreneurs from around the world along with investors and business leaders to exchange ideas and best practices for how to start and grow their businesses.

Two of the entrepreneurs, Saima Hanif and Waqas Muhammad, are finalists in the Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) Tech-I competition, and will compete for seed funding and mentorship opportunities at the Summit. Additionally, three members of the delegation, Hira Batool Rizvi, founder of She’Kab, Shamir Khan, founder of Travly, and Mavra Bari, Director of Islamabad’s WECREATE Center, will attend GES+, a special one-day seminar that will focus on emerging youth and women entrepreneurs. The White House also invited Karachi-based Jehan Ara, P@SHA President and director of the Nest I/O, to share her expertise with entrepreneurs from around the world as a panelist.

These entrepreneurs will be joined by high-level U.S. Government officials, including President Barack Obama, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, Administrator of the Small Business Administration Maria Contreras-Sweet, Administrator of USAID Gayle Smith, Ambassador at-Large for Global Women’s Issues Catherine Russell, and Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel.

“I have been impressed and inspired by the entrepreneurship spirit here,” said American Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale, who met with many of the members of the delegation before they left for the United States. “Pakistan will send the largest international delegation in the world to GES, which is indicative not only of the talent that exists here, but also of the strong ties that exist between America and Pakistan.”

First held in Washington, D.C. in 2010, the Summit has since been hosted by Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Morocco, and Kenya. GES showcases inspiring entrepreneurs and investors from around the world and creates new opportunities for investment, partnership, and collaboration. For more information on GES 2016, please visit <http://www.ges2016.org/>

New Shazly Khan Mural at American Embassy Welcomes Visitors, Highlights Equality, Unity, and Tolerance Islamabad | June 17, 2016



American Ambassador David Hale opens a new art display in the U.S. Embassy’s Consular Section.

Karachi-based artist Shazly Khan created the piece using the themes of equality, unity, and tolerance. American Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale inaugurated two new murals by famed Karachi-based artist Shazly Khan at the American Embassy on June 17. Khan's vibrant paintings promote the empowerment of women and their role in fostering strong communities.

"The art we unveil today reflects the shared Pakistani and American principles of free expression, community, and equality," Ambassador Hale said. "During the Holy Month of Ramazan, we honor the principles of tolerance and respect which unite people of all religious faiths. Given this, it's all the more fitting that we celebrate these universal values through Shazly's artwork here today." The art is intended to evoke a sense of celebration, hope, and unity, according to the artist. "We celebrate life by standing together in solidarity, peace, and love, making our dreams come true," Shazly Khan said about her art.

In 2015, the Embassy held a competition for Pakistani artists to design murals for the visitors' area of its consular section. Of the dozens of entries, the Embassy selected Khan's submissions. Tom Rogan, Consul General at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, said, "The new installation highlights the shared cooperation between Pakistanis and Americans. We are very gratified by Shazly's contribution of these beautiful and uplifting works of art, which will be viewed by hundreds of Pakistanis and Americans each day as they pass through the Consular Section," Consul General Rogan said.

More than 80,000 people will see Khan's paintings each year as they come for consular services at the embassy.

U.S. Government Announces \$21 Million in Food Assistance for Pakistan

Islamabad, June 2, 2016



The United Nations World Food Programme uses financial contributions from the United States to

distribute food to Pakistani families.

U.S. Agency for International Development Mission Director John Groarke announced today a new U.S. contribution of \$21 million in food assistance to feed malnourished individuals in Pakistan. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) will use the U.S. financial contribution to turn approximately 26,000 metric tons of Pakistani government-provided wheat into fortified flour, which will be distributed to those who need it most. WFP will also use USAID funds to purchase and distribute more than 6,500 tons of food to families, especially in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

“The United States is committed to combating hunger in Pakistan, but we know we can’t do it alone,” Groarke said. “By working alongside the United Nations World Food Programme and the Government of Pakistan, we’ve been able to feed more people, save more lives, and support more communities than any one of us could have achieved alone.”

Mission Director Groarke announced the new funding at the WFP office in Islamabad, where he inaugurated a photo exhibition with WFP Country Director Lola Castro.

“The strong and strategic partnership among the United States government, the government of Pakistan, and WFP has made the lives of millions of vulnerable Pakistanis better, especially in areas affected by natural and man-made disasters,” Castro said. “The generous funding from USAID over the years has improved food security and nutrition as well as the livelihoods and resilience of those in need.”

Since 2010, USAID has given nearly \$850 million in food assistance to the people of Pakistan. For more information about USAID programs in Pakistan, please visit www.usaid.gov/pakistan. For more information about the World Food Programme, please visit <http://www.wfp.org/countries/pakistan>.

4th Annual U.S.-Pakistan Business Opportunity Conference June 2-3 in New York City June 1, 2016

The U.S. Government and the Government of Pakistan will hold the fourth annual U.S.-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference on June 2-3 in New York City. The 2016 conference, the first to be held in the United States, aims to build business-to-business linkages and to generate networking opportunities for U.S. and Pakistani businesses, with a particular focus on fashion apparel, health care, information communication technology, and agriculture. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif affirmed their commitment in October 2015 to expand bilateral trade and investment, including by holding annual business opportunities conferences.

Pakistan’s delegation will be led by His Excellency Khurram Dastgir Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, and will also include Ambassador to the United States Jalil Jilani. The U.S. delegation will

be led by Bruce Andrews, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and will include Fred Hochberg, Chairman of the Export-Import Bank of the United States; Ambassador Richard Olson, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; Larry Sampler, USAID Assistant to the Administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan; and Ziad Haider, U.S. Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs. Vice Chairman of General Electric John Rice will also deliver a keynote speech. Hundreds of U.S. and Pakistani business executives have registered to attend the event. For a full schedule and conference details, please visit <https://uspakboc.com/>.

Media interested in covering the event should contact SCA-Press@state.gov, and follow @State_SCA for event updates and information.

"Pakistan's Government Has Done a Lot to Stabilise Economy" by Ambassador David Hale June 1, 2016

This week in New York City, America and Pakistan are partnering together to host the fourth annual US-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference. The Conference on June 2-3 will bring together over 250 industry representatives, investors, and government leaders from our two nations and will feature emerging professionals and entrepreneurs, as well as established firms like Proctor and Gamble, Motorola, General Electric, Pepsi, and Coca Cola, to name a few. This year's Conference will focus on opportunities in agriculture, information and communications technology, health care, and fashion apparel. It will also highlight the innovative ways our cooperation can catalyse action by the private sector. For example, we recently launched the Pakistan Private Investment Initiative, which is a bilateral partnership, making over \$150 million in investments to grow small- and medium-sized businesses in Pakistan.

In the six months I have been in Pakistan, I have seen start-ups, small businesses, and large corporations all striving for expansion into new markets with a palpable sense of energy and forward thinking. Pakistan's government has done a lot to stabilise Pakistan's economy, and we are seeing signs of steady economic expansion in Pakistan. An important part of my job as Ambassador is expanding the business links between Pakistan and the United States, and ensuring that we are doing all we can to contribute to Pakistan's economic growth. Both of our countries benefit from expanded economic ties. They make up a critical component of the US-Pakistan relationship, which over time will increasingly be about our business links.

The Business Opportunities Conference is another sign of the growing cooperation between our two economies. GE, for example, has tripled its business in Pakistan in recent years and GE Vice Chairman John Rice, the corporate keynote at this week's conference, will also attest to GE's expanding business in Pakistan. But businesses cannot succeed without adequate infrastructure and an educated workforce with opportunities for all citizens, men and women alike. Businesses looking to work in Pakistan need predictability and fairness in policies and taxation, streamlined bureaucratic

processes, and timely and reliable ways of resolving disputes. These are points we hear consistently from the US businesses interested in investing in Pakistan. We hope Pakistan will redouble its efforts to demonstrate that it welcomes international business.

Another crucial ingredient to lasting economic growth is incorporating women into the workforce, which is an issue we at the American Embassy care deeply about, and work on in partnership with Pakistani leaders. Ensuring women have access to education and employment opportunities and the ability to acquire skills to start and run their businesses will increase overall economic development. That is why in 2014 we joined with The Indus Entrepreneurs in Islamabad to launch the WECREATE Center in Islamabad, the first of its kind in the world, to cultivate women entrepreneurs. The Center has been a tremendous success and is now operated by a local partner. At this week's conference, our governments will jointly launch an Action Plan to build cooperation on women's economic ennoblement, building on the excellent work of the U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council. The Council advances women's education, employment, and entrepreneurship by working with the Pakistani-American community, forward-thinking universities like the Lahore University of Management Sciences and American University, and businesses like PepsiCo, The Coca-Cola Company, Proctor & Gamble, and Engro.

In another area of economic cooperation, Pakistan and America are working together to ensure that businesses have the reliable energy that they need to reach their potential. Through the U.S.-Pakistan Clean Energy Partnership and joint efforts that have added 2300 megawatts of power to Pakistan's supply to date, America is supporting Pakistani efforts to realise Pakistan's energy needs by diversifying power generation and supporting more efficient distribution. Our cooperation through more than 20 partnerships between American and Pakistani universities is building a "knowledge corridor" that can benefit all of us. We are working hard to make it easier and more profitable for Pakistani and American companies to do business together. A relationship built on a firm foundation of business ties and economic cooperation will be an enduring one.

The U.S.-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference is another strong dimension of our multifaceted relationship, and we look forward to a successful conference and to the closer economic relationship that will surely follow.

This op-ed was published in English in the Business Recorder on June 1, 2016.

Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network Celebrates "Colors of Pakistan" Program

Islamabad | May 27, 2016



American Embassy Cultural Specialist Azfer Iqbal, Sufi musician and Music Mela Creative Director Arie Azhar, PUAN Executive Board member Talat Khurshid, and PUAN Islamabad Chapter Country President Haseeb Kiyani welcome legendary poet Anwar Masood.

The Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN), with support from the American Embassy, celebrated Pakistan's cultural wealth in a series of projects led by PUAN chapters across the country from May 16 to May 22. The weeklong celebration concluded at the Islamabad Club on May 22 with a panel discussion featuring prominent Pakistani authors, musicians, film makers, and arts and cultural promoters. The event also featured a poetry recitation by legendary Pakistani poet Anwar Masood. "From the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan to the plains of Sindh, Pakistani cultural traditions are vibrant and varied," said PUAN Country President Faisal Malik, who led the project. "Congratulations to PUAN for their efforts across the country to promote local and national poetry, music, dance, and artistic traditions. Celebrating and sharing cultural traditions helps Pakistan preserve and promote its heritage, and unites us all as people," Malik added.

Over 3,000 participants attended "Colors of Pakistan" events across the country. Highlights included a poetry competition in Baltistan, a cultural dress party and truck art display in Karachi, a musical show in Gwadar, a celebration of Afghan-Pakistani culture in KPK, and an educational program in Lahore that highlighted Pakistan cultural traditions from Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, KPK, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Pakistan.

PUAN is an alumni network of students and professionals who have participated in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. With more than 19,000 alumni across Pakistan, PUAN is one of the largest alumni networks in the world. PUAN regularly organizes events across Pakistan, including service projects, leadership training, roundtable discussions, and community engagement activities. To find out more about PUAN and the conference, visit www.pakusalumninetwork.com, <http://www.facebook.com/pakalumni>, or follow PUAN on twitter @PakUSAlumni.

American Embassy Provides Over \$48 Million in New Funding to Pakistan's Police, Counternarcotics, and Rule of Law Programs

Islamabad | May 25, 2016



American Ambassador David Hale and Pakistan Economic Affairs Division Secretary Tariq Bajwa signed a one-year \$48.6 million bilateral assistance agreement at a ceremony in Islamabad on May 25.

American Ambassador David Hale and Pakistan Economic Affairs Division Secretary Tariq Bajwa signed a one-year \$48.6 million bilateral assistance agreement at a ceremony in Islamabad on May 25. Under the agreement, the U.S. Department of State's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau will provide support to the Government of Pakistan in building Pakistan's law enforcement capability, fighting illicit narcotics, and strengthening its criminal justice system. The United States signed the first such bilateral assistance agreement in 1982. Subsequent yearly agreements have supported the training of tens of thousands of police officers and prosecutors, construction of police stations, and provision of vehicles, equipment, and life-saving personal protective gear for law enforcement agents.

The new agreement will fund several programs throughout Pakistan including initiatives to improve the capability and reach of provincial police and other law enforcement institutions through training, equipment, and infrastructure support. Programs will also support women's access to the justice system, as well as support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women as police officers, prosecutors, and judges. In addition, programs will help Pakistan interdict illegal narcotics, arrest and prosecute drug traffickers, fund crop substitution and agricultural training programs for poppy farmers, and provide small-scale irrigation, hydro-electric systems and farm-to-market roads in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Lastly, it will promote rule of law by providing training to provincial and federal prosecutors and judges in effective trial advocacy, and to corrections officials in modern prison administration.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) works in more than 90 countries to help countries combat crime and corruption, counter drug-related crime, improve police institutions, and promote laws and court systems that are fair and accountable. Find out more about

INL at: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/>.

American Embassy and National Library Host Discussion on Sustainable Development Goals in Pakistan



USAID officials Dr. Edward Gonzalez and Natasha de Marcken discuss sustainable development goals at the National Library of Pakistan.

Islamabad, May 19, 2016 – The American Embassy’s Lincoln Reading Lounge and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) hosted the discussion, “The Role of the Development Sector in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals,” at the National Library of Pakistan on May 16. More than 100 senior professionals from Pakistan’s development sector and professors and students from Quaid-e-Azam University participated.

American Embassy Counselor for Public Affairs Christina Tomlinson opened the session by highlighting the United States and Pakistan’s shared commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined by the United Nations in 2015. “The United States and Pakistan are partners in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and advancing Pakistan’s development, because we believe in Pakistan’s future, and believe that a prosperous Pakistan is in the interests of the United States, the region, and especially the people of Pakistan,” Tomlinson said.

Dr. Edward Gonzalez, Deputy-Director of USAID’s Office of Stabilization and Governance, gave an overview of development in Pakistan and stressed the need for participation across all sectors of society. "A prosperous Pakistan will be achieved when we are all a part of development efforts. Men, women, youth, and vulnerable populations must be a part of building a secure and flourishing Pakistan," Gonzalez said. Natasha de Marcken, Director of USAID Pakistan’s Education Office, discussed the importance of education in development. "Education and human capacity are the foundations for each sustainable development goal. It is essential to support early learning and literacy in order to give everyone the opportunity to succeed in school and to meaningfully contribute to their communities," she said. Suhail Awan, Executive Director, Human Resource Development Network, also spoke at the event.

The event was one of several quarterly discussions hosted by the Lincoln Reading Lounge. The reading lounge is one of 17 Lincoln Corners across Pakistan which are supported by the American Embassy and hosted by Pakistani institutions such as public libraries, universities, and cultural

centers. To learn more about Lincoln Corners, visit http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/lincoln_corners.html.

Joint Press Release: The Fifth Meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China – May 18

The fifth meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China on the Afghan peace and reconciliation process was held in Islamabad on 18 May 2016. Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Mr. Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry hosted the meeting. Other delegations were led by Afghan President's Special Envoy and Ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan Dr. Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal, the Special Representative of the United States for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard G. Olson, and China's Special Envoy for Afghan Affairs Ambassador Deng Xijun.

The QCG reiterated that violence serves no purpose and that peace negotiations remain the only option for a political settlement. In this respect, QCG countries reaffirmed to use their respective leverages and influences.

The QCG strongly condemned the April 19 terrorist attack in Kabul and underscored that those who perpetrate such acts of terrorism should be ready to face consequences of their actions.

The QCG expressed their continued determination with shared commitment to advance the goal of an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process.

The next QCG meeting will be convened as mutually agreed.

CADD Librarians Explore 3D Printing and other Innovations at U.S. Embassy



U.S. Embassy Islamabad's Information Resource Center Director Marcy Carrel introduces 3D printing and other Makerspaces technologies to CADD Librarians.

Librarians from Islamabad's Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD) were introduced to "makerspaces" and other new American library innovations and trends during a visit to the U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC) on April 29. About 30 CADD librarians participated and had the opportunity to turn fruit into electronic touchpads with the "MaKey MaKey" invention kit and build electronic circuits with "LittleBits."

The CADD librarians were also the first people to use the IRC's new 3D printer and printed a small keychain as to test the new technology. The librarians were enthusiastic about the activities and their potential uses for creating 3D models in math, science, and geology classes. Commenting on the program, Counselor for Public Affairs Christina Tomlinson said, "The technologies we've seen today have the power to revolutionize the way we make almost everything. The Embassy is thrilled to share these technologies with CADD librarians to foster creativity and encourage informal learning." Information Resource Officer Marcy Carrel added, "Libraries are a natural fit for these activities because they allow for creative learning in an inclusive space."

The U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center is a venue for building people-to-people connections between Americans and Pakistanis and provides books, magazines, and other materials about American culture and society. The IRC staff also oversees and guides the Lincoln Corners Pakistan program with 17 locations throughout Pakistan. For more information about the IRC and the Lincoln Corners Pakistan locations, please visit: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/irc.html>

Improvements on IPR in Pakistan Recognized in Special 301 Intellectual

Property Rights Protection Report Islamabad | April 27, 2016

The United States recognized Pakistan's positive progress on IPR today in the annual Special 301 Report on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). In this year's Report, Pakistan has moved from the Special 301 "Priority Watch List" to "Watch List with an Out-of-Cycle Review".

This movement is largely due to Pakistan's efforts to improve intellectual property protection and enforcement including implementing key provisions of the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan Act of 2012. These efforts include establishing intellectual property tribunals, establishing a timeline for the amendment of major IPR laws, imminent implementation of the Federal Board of Revenue's IP Enforcement Rules, undertaking public awareness programs on IPR protection, and committing to continue regular, action-oriented engagement with the U.S. government and stakeholders.

The United States will continue to work with Pakistan to implement these and consider other reforms that will help protect and enforce IPR in Pakistan.

In the Special 301 Report the United States expresses deep concern over reports of high rates of counterfeiting and piracy in Pakistan, particularly in the areas of pharmaceuticals, printed materials, optical media, digital content, and software. Pakistan has the opportunity to address many of these concerns through forthcoming legislative amendments on patents, trademarks, and copyrights. The Out-of-Cycle Review will look at Pakistan's progress through the end of 2016. It will evaluate whether Pakistan meets the timelines it announced for the IPR reforms described in the report, as well as Pakistan's progress on addressing long-standing IPR concerns, providing effective enforcement against IPR infringement, and ensuring IPR tribunals successfully provide efficient and effective results for rights holders.

Intellectual property protection is critical to fostering innovation. Without protection of ideas, businesses and individuals would not reap the full benefits of their inventions and would focus less on research and development. Similarly, artists would not be fully compensated for their creations and cultural vitality would suffer as a result.

The United States remains a committed partner of Pakistan as it addresses outstanding concerns on counterfeiting and piracy.

For press inquiries, please contact U.S. Trade Representative Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates at Andrew.J.Bates@ustr.eop.gov

To read the full report, please visit: <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/USTR-2016-Special-301-Report.pdf> (PDF 2MB)

Music Mela 2016 Electrifies Audiences, Unites Cultures Islamabad, April 24,

2016



American sitarist Amie Maciszewski perform at Music Mela 2016.



Wahid Allen Faqir and American sitarist Amie Maciszewski perform at Music Mela 2016.

This weekend, Music Mela returned to Islamabad and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) once again became the center of Pakistan's music world. Jointly organized by the U.S. Embassy and the Foundation for Arts and Culture, and Education (FACE), Music Mela 2016 boasted more than 15,000 fans over the past three days, excited to hear 30 famed Pakistani, American, and global acts.

American band Grupo Fantasma stole the show on Friday night, wowing the packed crowd with their Latin funk sound. Fusing American and Latin sounds with international influences, the nine-member band performed hits from their Grammy Award-winning album, El Existencial. On Saturday night, bright lights shined upon American sitarist Amie Maciszewski as she performed a sitar, tabla, and Indo-jazz fusion ensemble at sunset.

Other headlining acts at Music Mela this year included Noori, Rizwan Muazzam Qawwal, Javed Bashir, Arieb Azhar, Zoe Viccaji, Qawalistan with Imran Aziz Mian, and Ali Sethi. Commenting on this year's artist line-up, FACE Creative Director Arieb Azhar said, "This was Music Mela's third year, and it couldn't have been better. We've been so lucky to have such an amazing group of talented Pakistani and international musicians this year, with genres ranging from folk, to rock, to pop."

The artists led workshops on the sidelines of Music Mela throughout the event for established and up-and-coming music professionals. Grupo Fantasma, Amie Maciszewski, and other musicians joined a panel discussion on music and globalization. Other sessions included a songwriting workshop by Ali Noor and Ali Hamza and a discussion of online music promotion by American music publicist Tristra Yeager.

The U.S. Embassy gives over 100 million rupees annually to support arts programming in Pakistan, including Music Mela. Each year, with U.S. government support, dozens of Pakistani musicians participate in programs like the Pakistani Showcase at South-by-Southwest Music Festival, the Dosti Music Project, and Daniel Pearl World Music Days.

For more information on Music Mela, please visit: www.musicmela.org

American band “Grupo Fantasma” performs for thousands at Music Mela

Islamabad | April 23, 2016



Grupo Fantasma performs at Music Mela

American band Grupo Fantasma introduced their signature sound of Latin funk music to more than 3,000 people last night at Music Mela. Their performance, organized by the Foundation for Arts and Culture (FACE) and hosted by the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), was part of the band’s three-city tour to Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore. The Grammy-award winning group played a 30-minute set featuring original songs in English and Spanish.

Commenting on their performance, Grupo Fantasma’s guitar player and founding member Beto Martinez said, “This is our first time in Pakistan. We were thrilled to perform at Music Mela and share our music with such an amazing crowd. Their energy was unbelievable! I’m proud that we helped bring Americans and Pakistanis together through this show.”

Prior to their Music Mela performance, the band performed at Lok Virsa for more than 100 students from SOS village, Sweet Homes, Mashal School, and Sir Syed College on Thursday, April 21.

Grupo Fantasma is a nine-piece musical collective formed in 2000 in Austin, Texas. The band has performed at major festivals and venues internationally, including: Bonnaroo, The Kennedy Center, London’s O2 Arena, The Montreal Jazz Festival, and South by Southwest (SXSW). They have been praised as one of music’s most important and unique independent Latin genre acts to come out of the United States in the last decade.

The U.S. Embassy gives over 100 million rupees annually to support arts programming in Pakistan. Each year, with U.S. government support, dozens of Pakistani musicians participate in programs like the Pakistani Showcase at South-by-Southwest Music Festival, the Dosti Music Project, and Daniel Pearl World Music Days.

For more information on Music Mela, please visit: www.musicmela.org.

U.S. Embassy Showcases Latin Funk Band “Grupo Fantasma”

Islamabad | April 21, 2016



Grupo Fantasma performs at Lok Virsa.

American band Grupo Fantasma introduced Latin funk music to 125 high school and university students from across Islamabad during their live performance at Lok Virsa on Thursday. The concert, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in partnership with the Foundation for Arts and Culture (FACE), was part of the band’s three-city tour to Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore. The Grammy-award winning group played a 75-minute set featuring original songs in English and Spanish.

“Music is an essential tool to connect people across cultures and between countries. In Grupo Fantasma’s music, we hear influences from across the world, including South Asia. Their music is a great example of how music adapts and absorbs influences from other cultures. It’s a perfect reflection of American culture, which also blends traditions from all over the world,” U.S. Embassy Islamabad’s Cultural Attaché Dr. Daniel Mattern told the students.

Grupo Fantasma is a nine-piece musical collective formed in 2000 in Austin, Texas. The band has performed at major festivals and venues internationally, including: Bonnaroo, The Kennedy Center, London’s O2 Arena, The Montreal Jazz Festival, and South by Southwest (SXSW). They have been

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American Deputy Chief of Mission Visits Information Technology University Lahore

Lahore | April 20, 2016



DCM Jonathan Pratt & Information Technology University Vice Chancellor Dr. Umar Saif meet to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a partnership between the University & the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore to build a Lincoln Corner on campus.



Deputy Chief of Mission Jonathan Pratt tours the Plan9 incubator and Plan X accelerator facilities at Information Technology University.

Deputy Chief of Mission for the American Embassy in Pakistan Jonathan Pratt and Information Technology University (ITU) Vice Chancellor Dr. Umar Saif signed a Memorandum of Understanding April 19 that establishes a partnership between the University and the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore to build a Lincoln Corner on the University's campus.

“Lincoln Corner Lahore will host academic programs, speakers from the United States, and English language activities and cultural events like the Ari Roland Jazz Quartet’s that recently performed at the University,” said Mr. Pratt. Lincoln Corners are partnerships between the Embassy and Consulates of the United States of America and selected institutions in Pakistan.

Located within universities, public libraries, and other institutions, Lincoln Corners are platforms for providing information about the United States, English language learning, Education USA, cultural programs, and alumni activities. These spaces promote open dialogue, counter negative preconceptions, and build bridges of understanding. Visitors gain free access to Wi-Fi, reliable information about the United States through books, magazines, videos, internet, databases, and programs for the general public.

In addition to the signing ceremony, Dr. Saif gave Mr. Pratt a tour of the Plan9 incubator and PlanX accelerator facilities, which are projects of the Punjab Information Technology Board and are housed at ITU. DCM Pratt visited with Plan9 entrepreneurs selected to travel to Austin, TX as part of ATX+PAK, a project that connects Plan9/PlanX with the City of Austin to develop partnerships in support of entrepreneurial activities.

This project, which is funded by the U.S. Consulate General Lahore through a \$500,000 grant, will help connect the vibrant community of entrepreneurs, investors, and the creative community in Austin’s startup scene to those in emerging startup communities in Pakistan.

Twenty-eight entrepreneurs will travel to Austin for the ATX+PAK: Launch sessions which will occur at least twice per year in concert with incubation cycles at Plan 9/ Plan X. Participants will receive one-on-one coaching as well as group training and development from leading entrepreneurship experts and mentor investors tailored to their specific business needs.

United States Funds Renovation of Ministry of Health Office

Islamabad | April 20, 2016



U.S. and Pakistani officials inaugurate refurbished office space for the Health Planning, Systems Strengthening and Information Analysis Unit at the Ministry of Health.

As part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen Pakistan's health systems, the U.S. Agency for International Development refurbished the office space of the Health Planning, Systems Strengthening and Information Analysis Unit at the Ministry of Health. USAID Mission Director John Groarke, Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination Saira Afzal Tarar, and Minister of Planning, Development, and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the renovated facility today.

The Ministry's Health Planning, Systems Strengthening, and Information Analysis Unit, established in 2015, helps to formulate Pakistan's health policies, set regulatory standards, and facilitate countrywide coordination of health systems. The United States has spent an average of \$10 million per year since 2009 to strengthen Pakistan's health systems.

"For citizens to be healthy, the health system itself must be strong. The government of Pakistan recognizes this," USAID Mission Director Groarke said. "The United States and Pakistan worked together to renovate this office so employees have the tools they need to do their vital work." To learn more about USAID's health programs, go to www.usaid.gov/pakistan/health

The Indus Entrepreneurs and U.S. Embassy Launch StartUp Cup 2016 Business Mentoring Program Islamabad | April 17, 2016



U.S. Embassy Islamabad's Minister Counselor for Public Affairs Jeff Sexton joins the top 25 teams from StartUp Cup's "Build-a-Business" Workshop

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) Islamabad Chapter launched the 2016 Pakistan StartUp Cup, a nationwide business model competition on April 16. Nearly 300 prospective business owners from across the capital region were selected through a competitive process to take part in the April 16-17 "Build-a-Business Workshop" and 2016 StartUp Cup launch in Islamabad. This was the first of several workshops to be held in Lahore, Karachi, and Faisalabad in the coming weeks.

At the closing ceremony announcing the workshop's top 25 Islamabad and Rawalpindi-based teams, U.S. Embassy Islamabad's Minister Counselor for Public Affairs Jeff Sexton said, "Competitions like StartUp Cup help ensure that you, the entrepreneurs, are pushed and supported to create the best solutions possible to some of the world's toughest problems. You are the cornerstone of Pakistan's growing economy. By launching your own businesses, you are expanding the job market and creating new opportunities for job seekers."

Over the course of the six-month program, over 500 startups from across Pakistan will receive coaching through multi-day "Build-a-Business" workshops and regular mentoring to help turn their ideas into viable business plans. Prize money of 1 million, 750,000, and 500,000 rupees will be awarded to the top three teams with the best startup plan in September 2016.

The 2016 StartUp Cup in Pakistan builds on the success of the 2014 and 2015 competitions and continues to strengthen partnerships with entrepreneurship centers across Pakistan, including the Women's Entrepreneurial Center of Resources, Education, Access, and Training for Economic Empowerment (WECREATE) in Islamabad, the Lahore University for Management Science (LUMS) Center for Entrepreneurship, Lahore-based government-supported incubator Plan 9, and Karachi-based technology incubator "The Nest I/O."

The partnerships between StartUp Cup and these centers will ensure that newly established businesses receive sustained support, mentoring, and essential tools for long-term success. Various U.S. Embassy programs assist Pakistani entrepreneurs by increasing their access to financial resources, supporting opportunities for entrepreneurship education, and nurturing an entrepreneurial culture.

For more information on StartUp Cup Pakistan, please visit <http://pakistan.startupcup.com/>

American Ambassador Praises Work of Advocates for the Disabled

Islamabad | April 15, 2016



Ambassador Hale encouraged community activists to continue their work in supporting and empowering women with disabilities.

American Ambassador David Hale encouraged community activists to continue their work in supporting and empowering women with disabilities during a conference yesterday in Islamabad organized by the Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP).

“Our partnership with STEP focuses on raising awareness about resources for women with disabilities, providing training to increase these women’s participation in the workforce, and educating the general public about the rights of people with disabilities,” Ambassador Hale said. Regarding disability rights, Ambassador Hale acknowledged “ensuring equal participation by women with disabilities is a work in progress everywhere, and it is a challenge we can and must tackle.” The conference, funded by the American Embassy, brought together activists from across Pakistan to discuss additional measures that can be taken to empower disabled women. The event featured panel discussions on sustainable development goals and the roles of gender and disability in development.

American Ambassador Announces Availability of Over \$100 Million for Pakistan’s Private Sector



Amb. David Hale announces the U.S. government in partnership with the Abraaj Group, Indus Basin Holding, and JS Private Equity Management, has made available over \$100 million to invest in Pakistan's private sector.

Islamabad | April 14, 2016 –American Ambassador David Hale announced today that the U.S. government, in partnership with the Abraaj Group, Indus Basin Holding, and JS Private Equity Management, has made available over \$100 million to invest in Pakistan's private sector, through the Pakistan Private Investment Initiative.

The Pakistan Private Investment Initiative consists of three professionally managed investment funds that provide equity capital for Pakistan's dynamic and fast-growing small- and medium-sized businesses. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided \$24 million for each fund, and the Abraaj Group, Indus Basin Holding, and JS Private Equity Management will each match or exceed USAID's contribution.

"Our hope is that, by improving access to credit for first-time borrowers, we will break down barriers for creators and the innovators who will find solutions to the development challenges facing Pakistan and the world," Ambassador Hale said. "I have no doubt that investing in Pakistan's entrepreneurs will pay dividends for decades to come."

The Pakistan Private Investment Initiative is an innovative approach to identifying and investing in promising businesses, thereby helping them to expand their market share, introduce new product and service lines, and ultimately create jobs and increase incomes.

By working with the Abraaj Group, Indus Basin Holding, and JS Private Equity Management, the U.S. government is capitalizing on these companies' expertise to make smart investment decisions that will create jobs, spur economic growth, and generate profits for investors.

For more information about USAID and its programs in Pakistan, please visit www.usaid.gov/pakistan.

EXIM Chairman Announces Long-Term Financing Opportunities in Pakistan

Islamabad | April 12, 2016

Chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) Fred P. Hochberg announced that EXIM will now offer long-term financing in Pakistan for public sector projects. Chairman Hochberg and American Ambassador David Hale met with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and other high level officials to discuss trade and investment opportunities in Pakistan.

“The Export-Import Bank of the United States is here to compete for Pakistani business, and is ready to partner with Pakistan to reach its development goals,” Chairman Hochberg said. “The country’s growing economy, expanding middle class, and access to South and Central Asia all create tremendous opportunities for investment—and we want to be part of that.”

Chairman Hochberg emphasized EXIM’s strong history in Pakistan, particularly its partnership in the energy, railway, and aviation sectors. He underscored the strong economic ties that exist between Pakistan and the United States, and expressed hope that new EXIM financing opportunities will lead to increased cooperation.

“The United States is one of Pakistan’s largest trading partners as well as one of its largest sources of investment,” the Chairman said. “I look forward to building on this already strong and productive relationship.”

During his three day visit to Pakistan, Chairman Hochberg also met with a variety of government leaders and engaged with a range of private sector executives.

The Export-Import Bank of the United States is the official export credit agency of the United States. It is an independent, self-sustaining agency with more than 80 years in global markets. EXIM Bank lends to foreign public and private sector entities to help them purchase U.S. goods and services. In 2015, EXIM Bank approved \$12.4 billion in total authorizations worldwide. For more information about EXIM, please see www.exim.gov.

Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network Youth Activism Conference Inspires Young Leaders

Islamabad | April 10, 2016



The Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN) wrapped up a three-day interactive youth activism conference with community service activities across Islamabad. The outreach activities followed two days of interactive workshops, panel sessions, and keynote speeches designed to give young adults the skills they need to better serve their communities. Over 200 alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs from across Pakistan and South Asia gathered in Islamabad for the event, which was jointly sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and PUAN. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Evan Ryan kicked off the conference on April 8.

“As youth leaders from Pakistan and from the region, you all play a crucial role in inspiring people across the region to give back to their communities,” Assistant Secretary Ryan told participants. “Through your service and dedication to your countries, you will keep each of your countries on the

road to becoming economic leaders and the keys to a prosperous, secure, South Asia.”

During the three-day conference, U.S. government exchange alumni participated in workshops on topics such as combating climate change, countering violent extremism, and advancing human rights, inspiring them to make a difference in their communities. They learned valuable digital skills relating to fundraising, communication, and campaign design to turn ideas into action. Fulbright alumnus and award-winning nuclear physicist Pervez Hoodhoy, mountain climber Samina Baig, and filmmaker Haya Fatima Iqbal also addressed the group.

“The conference provided a great opportunity to interact with a diverse group of youth as well as leaders of the community,” said Saamia Rahman, an alumna of the 2014 Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (UGRAD). “The connections I have made here will be the start of something powerful and meaningful for our communities.”

The United States invests approximately \$40 million annually in exchange programs for Pakistani citizens and sends more than 1,300 Pakistanis to the United States each year to participate in academic and professional exchange programs. PUAN is an alumni network of students and professionals who have participated in U.S. government-sponsored programs. With more than 15,000 alumni across Pakistan, PUAN is one of the largest alumni networks in the world.

PUAN regularly organizes events across Pakistan, including service projects, leadership training, roundtable discussions, and community engagement activities. To learn more about PUAN and the conference, visit:<http://www.facebook.com/pakalumni>.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Promotes Educational and Cultural Exchanges

Islamabad | April 9, 2016



Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Evan Ryan highlighted the longstanding partnership in education and cultural exchange between the United States and Pakistan

during an April 7-8 visit to Islamabad. In meetings with government officials, U.S. exchange program alumni, and university students, Assistant Secretary Ryan underscored the U.S. commitment to continued cooperation with Pakistan through the U.S.-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor and expanded educational exchanges. She also interacted with alumni of U.S. exchange programs, who have used their knowledge and experiences to support their communities across Pakistan.

Speaking at the opening of the 2016 Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network's International Youth Activism Conference, Ryan noted that the United States invests more money in its Fulbright program in Pakistan than in any other country. She also highlighted the success of the University Partnership program that increased academic collaboration between U.S. and Pakistani institutions.

"With nearly 65 percent of the population of Pakistan under the age of 30, investing in young people is critical to Pakistan's future," Assistant Secretary Ryan said. "Over the last decade, we have put an incredible investment into Pakistan's youth."

During her visit, the Assistant Secretary also met with Minister of Planning Ahsan Iqbal, students and faculty at the National University of Sciences and Technology, and representatives from the U.S. Educational Foundation in Pakistan. She participated in a live Facebook chat with U.S. Embassy Pakistan's Facebook fans and also attended a screening of the Oscar-winning film *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* along with filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy.

For more information about U.S. educational and cultural exchanges, please visit <http://www.usefpakistan.org/> and <http://www.eca.state.gov>.

U.S. Embassy Connects Pakistani and American Artists at the South-by-Southwest Music Festival Islamabad | April 6, 2016



Wahid Allen Faqir and Overload perform at the 2016 South-by-Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas.



Wahid Allen Faqir and Overload perform at the 2016 South-by-Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas.

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad congratulates four Pakistani bands on their successful performances in the 2016 South-by-Southwest (SXSW) Music Festival which concluded last week in Austin, Texas. For the second year in a row, the U.S. Embassy, in collaboration with the Foundation for Arts, Culture,

and Education (FACE), sponsored Pakistani musical groups' participation in the festival in order to strengthen ties between American and Pakistani music communities.

“Music plays a unique role in connecting communities and individuals through a shared language,” Embassy Public Affairs Officer Jeffrey Sexton said. “We were thrilled to sponsor some of Pakistan’s best musicians to attend one of the world’s largest music festivals in the United States, and we are looking forward to supporting the lasting relationships between the arts communities in Pakistan and the United States that develop out of this program.”

Female Sindhi musician Mai Nimani, folk musician Wahid Allen Faqir, qawali group Imran Aziz Mian Qawall, and Lahore-based rock band Overload participated in this year’s festival. While in Austin, the bands presented a diverse range of folk and rock music during the second Pakistan Music Showcase at The Driskill on March 16. The bands also networked with music managers, participated in a music tech meetup, and performed at other venues across Austin. Austin Mayor Steve Adler was so impressed with Pakistan's musical representation at SXSW, he declared March 14, 2016 "Music of Pakistan Day."

Reflecting on his experience, Faqir said, “This trip has been a gift from God. Now I feel the responsibility to spread happiness and love through my performances. The people I met in America have such big hearts. Wherever I went, people took photos with me, gave me hugs, and were curious to know more about me and my country. I have such great memories of love and happiness from Austin.”

The South-by-Southwest Showcase provided an unparalleled opportunity for Pakistani musicians to share Pakistan’s rich cultural heritage with American audiences. The SXSW Music Conference and Festival, held in Austin, Texas every year since 1987, is now the largest music festival of its kind globally and attracts over 51,000 people to Austin every March. The goal of SXSW is to create an event that acts as a tool for creative people and the companies they work with to develop their careers, and to share ideas in music, film, and interactive technologies.

To learn more about the SXSW Pakistan Showcase, visit: <http://face2016.rockpaperscissors.biz/>

American Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale Visits Lahore Lahore, April 5, 2016



American Ambassador David Hale meets with members of the Christian community in Lahore
American Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale visited Lahore today, where he met with Punjab Governor Malik Muhammad Rafique Rajwana to express his condolences regarding the terrible attack at Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park in Lahore on Sunday, March 27. Ambassador Hale reaffirmed that the United States stands with the Pakistani people in their fight to end terrorism. The Ambassador also met with students and opinion leaders, called on leaders of Lahore's Christian community, and visited the historic Sacred Heart Cathedral.

BridgeUS is nonpartisan and an effort to share and publish news of diversity, harmony and mutual understanding to bridge between nations and inform people directly about how humanitarian aid is positively changing lives in Pakistan.

Dedicated to



Daniel Pearl

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