

## M Asghar: 2 Day Trip to (Lahore) Pakistan

### Purpose of Visit:

*After my CPA trip in Bangladesh I made my way to Lahore, Pakistan to embark on a mission to promote Welsh skills and services.*

### DAY 1

#### 9<sup>th</sup> November:

#### *Purpose of meeting*

On my first day in Lahore I met with the Secretary for Education & Skills in the Punjab Government, Mr Sheikh. In our meeting we discussed training issues and the need to develop skills particularly among women, older people and the disabled.

#### *Issues Discussed:*

He spoke about domestic responsibilities and cultural barriers being a huge problem for many women obtaining an education in Pakistan, however he said that many were learning skills such as stitching and handiwork, with the help/co-operation of female focused NGO's. Which meant they were able to work from home and earn a living to provide for their families and this was proving successful, however convincing more traditional minded family members was still a difficult task. Some had even set up their own businesses with the help of NGO's and as a repayment had hired people from within their community to increase their skills and develop their talents too within their chosen line of work. At the end of the meeting Mr Sheikh promised to bring delegation to Wales in near future.

#### *Purpose of Meeting*

Next I was introduced to Mr Aftab Hussain who is the (UCPO) official from the World Health Organisation.

#### *Issues Discussed:*

He spoke about his severest challenge in Pakistan right now being dengue and controlling it was a huge concern. He spoke about the importance of immunisation and said that educating the population was a difficult task and it was tough to get the word out-I mentioned some successful campaigns we ran at the Assembly such as “beat flu/flu vaccines, breast cancer, the stroke campaign” etc and how successful they proved to be. I mentioned that they should get politicians, celebrities and well known figures to get involved and support them, as this would lead to more public awareness and social media was key because in Pakistan producing literature and having them in surgeries alone was not enough to get people aware on the subject matter-In my opinion. I also mentioned the product from Wales that I planned to discuss with the Chief Minister of Punjab that would help clean water and hopefully aid in eliminating disease.

## **Day 2:**

**10<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

### ***Purpose of Meeting:***

On the second day of my visit I Met with Mr Faisal, Chair of the Punjab Tourist Board, who took me on a historical and cultural visit of Lahore. When we sat down for our meeting we discussed the need to improve tourism opportunities between Pakistan and Wales to improve relations.



### ***Issues Discussed:***

He felt that due to Pakistan not being represented very well in the international media, it was not given as much attention and “dazzle” as perhaps India, who boasts a number of celebrities in Bollywood and cultural locations such as the Taj Mahal and Golden Temple. He said that Pakistan also boasted the Red Forte,

Baadshai Mosque, Shalimar Gardens and Minar-E-Pakistan, just to name a few.

We also discussed security issues faced by visitors to Pakistan, many people think because it is on the boarder of Afghanistan that it is not safe and there was a reluctance within people to visit it. This was backed by a claim that the visa process for Pakistan was not very professional and a system with more ease than the current system would have to be set up. For example India has a High Commission arm in Wales, it would be beneficial to have such a regional Office within Wales. Right now the current system is in London is incredibly chaotic and needs to be reassessed. This has been a concern of many constituents and also a feeling shared by those living and working in Pakistan too.

***NOTE\*\***I was due to meet the Chief Minister of Punjab Shabaz Sharif after this meeting, however due to a religious festival taking place over the weekend period, every single mobile line was down and therefore communication was next to impossible. These meetings were only able to go ahead with the help and support of the landlines in the Hotel, sadly we were unable to connect with Mr Sharif's Office at the time and were unable to secure a private location/time to meet. My intention with Mr Sharif was to speak to him about a Welsh product I had seen demonstrated at the Royal Welsh show which purifies water to be drinkable through a new and innovative technique. But sadly this meeting did not take place and my Office will try and arrange for Mr Sharif to visit Wales, or I shall meet with him in the UK to discuss this and hopefully ensure that Wales and Pakistan work together for a better commonwealth.*

**Mohammad Asghar AM 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017**