

Study Visit Report
of the
Youth Parliament Pakistan 2008-09
Delegation to United Kingdom

July 19-25, 2009



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We anticipate further corporation between British High Commission and PILDAT for strengthening of the democratic institutions in Pakistan.

Members of Youth Parliament Pakistan

Preface

The Study tour of the Youth Parliament to the British Parliament and British political system in general was about the Pakistani Youth understanding the dynamics of the Parliaments and gaining a proper understanding of the whole political system of Britain. It was about equipping the Youth with the useful acumen and information about how things work in the British political system and using that insight back home. It was also about finding out how the British society has developed into what it is today. It's about communicating with people and understanding what the British population in general and the British Muslims think of their Political system. It was also about understanding the Pakistani Diaspora in Britain and the social balance of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society like Britain. During the visit the delegates met influential personalities in Britain and engaged with them in a two way learning dialogue that was conducive to a better understanding of both Britain and Pakistan

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Youth Parliament of Pakistan, 1st day of the Study Tour to the Britain (July 20, 2009)



Listening to Helen Haywood, Assistant Secretary Commonwealth Association

Tour of the UK Parliament

On July 20, 2009, The Delegation was given a detailed tour of the UK Parliament and was taken to both chambers, House of Lords and House of Commons to formally set off the program of the study tour to United Kingdom. The delegation was told that the building historically also served as a home for some of the former monarchs of England. The last king to live in the building was King Henry VIII. Much part of the building was destroyed in the Second World War and was later designed and built by architect Charles Barry in the gothic style. The Victoria Tower of the Parliament building is a rectangular tower which has 16 floors with fire proof rooms. It contains the oldest acts of the Parliament.

Meeting with Helen Haywood, Assistant Secretary, Commonwealth Association UK)

The delegation was given a detailed briefing regarding the work and activities of the Commonwealth Parliamentary association. The delegates were told that The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, previously known as the Empire Parliamentary Association, is an organization of British origin, which works to support good governance, democracy and human rights. It was founded as the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1911 but was renamed as Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 1949 following the Second World War. As of 1989, the organization acknowledges a Patron - the Head of the Commonwealth; Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II - and a Vice Patron, the head of state or of the government of the branch holding the upcoming Commonwealth conference. The branches of CPA are grouped into nine Commonwealth regions – Africa, Asia, Australia, British Islands and Mediterranean, Canada, Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic, India, Pacific, and South-East Asia. Its work is categorized mainly in five areas, Professional development, technical assistance programs, poverty reduction, human rights and promotion of Common wealth. Members of the Youth Parliament delegation were briefed that CPA holds periodic youth parliaments and encourages parliaments and legislatures to support youth parliaments to enable young people to experience making laws, debating issues and conducting committee work.

How Parliament Works? (Mr. Rhiannon Hollis):

Youth Parliament delegation learned the functioning of the British Parliament in a comprehensive briefing by Mr. Rhiannon Hollis, Second Clerk to the Administration Committee. He told us that the UK Parliament is bicameral; consists of House of Lords (Upper chamber), House of Commons (Lower Chamber) and the Queen. The House of Commons consists of 646 elected members from different constituencies known as members of the Parliament. Each elected member represents about 70, 000 electors. House of Lords has members who are appointed either by the Queen herself or by recommendation of the Prime Minister. Currently House of Lords has 100 hereditary peers and 35 arch bishop. It also serves as the highest court of appeal in the UK but will be replaced by the Supreme Court in October this year. The term for the Parliament is 5 years but generally for the last 20 years, political parties prefer four year periods. The British Constitution is largely unwritten but it has some written parts in the forms of acts of Parliament. The process of amending the constitution is not rigid and can be done by simple majority. Parliament in UK has important roles to perform. It makes laws and holds government to account on all issues. The delegation was also briefed about the Committee system in the House of Commons.

Meeting with Baroness Verma, MP (Conservative)

Baroness Verma is a member of the House of Lords and currently Opposition whip and opposition spokesperson for Education and Skills and for Health. In 2006 Lady Verma was made a Patron to England in 1960. She made a Conservative life peer as Baroness Verma, of Leicester in the County of Leicestershire in May 2006, having been an unsuccessful Parliamentary candidate in two general elections (2001 and 2005). She briefed the delegation about the working of the House of Lords and about her being a representative of the Conservative Party. Members of the House of Lords are not paid ant salary but are only given work stipends. Members of the House lords ensure that every bill is fully analyzed and there is no unchecked and hurried legislation.



Group Photo with Lord Nazir of Rotherham

Meeting with Lord Nazir Ahmed of Rotherham:

The members met with Lord Nazir Ahmed of Rotherham and discussed the relationship and opportunities British-Pakistanis had in the UK. Matters regarding the approach of different political parties and an overview of British political system were also highlighted. Lord Nazir Ahmed discussed about lives of Pakistanis in UK giving his own example. He said that security; economic development and strategic planning were major challenges faced by Pakistan and politicians have to be optimistic. There are 14 Muslim parliamentarians, 10 in the House of Lords and 4 in the House of Commons. He was of the opinion that Pakistanis have done very well as a community. The delegates also viewed the proceedings of House of Lords on Lord Nazir Ahmed's invitation.

Parliamentary Standards and Privileges, Ms. Alda Barry:

The delegates met Ms Alda Barry, Registrar of Member's Interests regarding parliamentary standards and privileges to learn about the purpose of the Registrar of Member's interests and ethics that a parliamentarian should follow. All changes/reforms were a result of anomalies. For instance bribery was not taken to be a bribe; instead its acceptance was in the 20th century. A need was felt was a written code of conduct and both the houses were not working together and a code of conduct was thought of with a commissioner to look for allegations that are not financial. Code of conduct has two parts; principles and rules, which guide members and reassure them, hold them accountable, register assets, etc. She also said that one should have the courage of their conviction when asked about the voting process followed in the House of Lords and House of Commons.

Youth Parliament of Pakistan, 2nd day of Study Tour to Britain (July 21st, 2009):



Group photo with the Stock well green Community Service

1st Meeting: Stock well Green Community Service:

The Dignities included Mayor of London, Toaha Qureshi the Chief Executive of Stock well Green Community Service, Saad Quershi member Young Muslin Advisory Group. We discussed the prospects of British Youth in England; there was a great deal of optimism in the speakers. Toaha Qureshi highlighted the fact that rehabilitation in the society is a long and tough process after

conviction; once you are convicted the prospects of you assimilating back into the society are bleak. The general impression was that the Government was very supportive of community work. Two Case studies were presented: A bright Muslim youngster with a potentially bright future and a Convict under Terrorism Law acquitted later. Youth Muslim Advisory Group (YMAG) holds Seminars, Department of Children schools and families, sports and recreational programs. The pace of Social mobility in the Muslim community was discussed, bearing in mind the ghettoization of certain parts of Britain and there is an element of fear within the British Society these ghettos being formed at the heart of Britain.



Presenting the City Circle with a Token of appreciation

2nd Meeting: the City Circle:

Ms. Andleen Razzaq, Founder Member and Ms. Rabia Malik, Chair and Trustee received us, City Circle is a forum for debate and some substantial community work as well; Friday debates and Saturday Programs are for people to learn from volunteering teachers. Inter-faith Dialogue is encouraged by the City Circle. Some of the Community work includes Funds from Gaza, Housing for the poor. According to the City Circle the British Muslim youth is very apathetic to the cultures they have back in their countries of origin. They do not take funds from the Government because they can then be judged as partisan.

3rd Meeting: the Green Party:

Mr. Michael Coffey, International coordinator, National Executive, Green Party and two other Youth office holders of the Green Party addressed the delegation. They are working in the

whole Europe together; they have no MPs but 100 councilors and two members in European Parliament. The Green Party is not a strong political party but it does get a lot votes throughout the country, their vote percentage has increased more than any other mainstream party in the recent years. The Green Party believes in improving the quality of life through ecological development, prevention of global warming and bio-thermal energy in the simplest forms rather than spend on things deemed a threat to the environment by the green party. Green Party thinks the recent privatization of Railways has lead to corruption and deterioration of the Railways, Green Party also thinks that this system is not what can be used on and we need an alternative. The Green party is the only party that has not supported the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, it advocated withdrawal from NATO, it's opposed to nuclear proliferation and is of the opinion that new innovative ways should be found to use technology.

4th Meeting: the Local Government Association (LGA):

Councilor Richard Kemp, LGA Vice-Chairman, European and International Portfolio Holder and Mr. Ivor Wells, International Development Programs Officer greeted us into the building. The LGA actually engages with the governments to convey to them what they want. Over the years the Governments have been taking away the powers of the councilors but now all three major parties are thinking of more localization. Place Shaping is the Phenomena of considering your community and taking it to future, thinking of the challenges it will face in the future. The Local Governments in Britain have to fight very hard with the MPs for power devolution.

Youth Parliament of Pakistan, Third day of the Study Tour to Britain July 22, 2009



Youth Parliament delegates listening to one of the Officers in the India room

1st Meeting: Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO):

We met in the officials in a beautiful room called the India Room. Among them were Mr. Arthur Snell, Assistant Director, Counter Terrorism Department and Mr. Toby Relf, Desk Officer for Ministerial engagements and Stakeholder Manager for British Muslim communities. First of all we talked about the Relationships between the UK and Pakistan. The officials reiterated that Pakistan and Britain enjoyed strong relations as the Secretaries and the Prime Ministers visit these countries regularly. They said that Education, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Counter Terrorism are the main interests of Britain in Pakistan. Both Countries have strong ties through the Cabinet Office, Ministry of Education and Home office. On the issue of Counter Terrorism they said they were of the opinion that Britain is trying to contribute towards a safer world. “Better world means a better Britain” is our motto they told us. UK runs these programs overseas to promote Democracy, Rule of Law, Good Governance and Counter Terrorism Programs. When one of the fellow Parliamentarians asked about the arrests of Pakistani students in Britain they replied in a very complacent manner in a passive manner that the media had blown the issue out of proportions and that a manipulated picture of the British authorities was portrayed. About the American and British relationship they conceded that they and the U.S.A had a special relationship but also maintained that both have clearly distinct policies. On Iraq the Foreign Office admitted that nobody had anticipated the insurgency in Iraq and that now Britain’s role is to cater the damage and rebuild Iraq. In the context of Pakistan they said that Britain wanted to strengthen Pakistani institutions and it has provided Pakistan with 605 million pounds for its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Britain is also pushing the European Nations to spend 0.9% of their GDP in Developing Countries. As far as Pakistani access to the European markets is concerned the officials assured us that Britain is pushing for greater free market access to the European markets. There was however some confusion between the delegates and the FCO people regarding the War on Terror.

2nd Meeting: Article 19

Ms. Sejal Parmar, Senior Legal Officer at the Article 19 welcomed us into the building. She began by outlining the 9 approaches towards their work. They had 3 underlying principles, they were also independence from Government and they work internationally. Media is the fourth state said the Lady. The Lady said that Article 19 does stand by the blasphemy laws and endorses the Government. The Youth Parliamentarians were skeptic of the anti-social laws because they thought that these laws were made to privilege some communities over the other. Organizations like Article 19 do support the very partisan and controversial anti-social laws. The delegates were perturbed by the fact that organizations like Article 19 use a same yardstick to gauge actions that may incite anger of certain communities, because ridiculing a Prophet may fall under the ambit of Freedom of Speech but doubting the Holocaust is subject to anti-social laws



Presenting the people from Amnesty International a token of appreciation

3rd Meeting: Amnesty International:

We were briefed about the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, 1948. Briefed about the History of Amnesty and why Candle and barb-wire was the symbol of Amnesty. Told about the atrocities committed in Abu-Gharib Jail, Disappearances in Indian Punjab in 1992 and Afghan Refugees and how the Amnesty played its part. Amnesty International also showed us a video about its work. In Q/A session the delegates asked about Amnesty's stance on the atrocities committed by Israel and India and Palestine and Kashmir but the answer was that the amnesty did raise these issues but it couldn't find any support worldwide. When asked to identify the people or the forces that were impeding Amnesty's work they told us that different corporate organizations and Governments normally hamper their work.

4th Meeting: Conservative Future:

Ms. Philippa Broom, International Director of Conservative Party briefed us at Conservative Campaign Headquarter. She told us about their party Symbol which is a ‘Tree’. Aasiya Riaz, Assistant Director of PILDAT briefed Philippa and the youth representatives of the Conservative Party about the Student Politics in Pakistan. Members were introduced. The chairman of youth council of the Conservative party said that the youth wing is not independent of the party. They had a national chamber of six members and then they had regional chambers. The youth wing was responsible for distributing leaflets and was the foot soldier of the party. In Q/A session, when asked about deciding chairpersonship we were told that all the Office bearers are elected, as they have a electorate of 15,000 within the Conservatives Future. We were also told that every University has its own student union. One of the delegates asked if they had any influence in party decisions and the answer was “Partially”. In another question, Waqar asked if the differences between the two major parties diminishing due to presence of hardliners like BNP they answered that they are still very distinguishable from the Labour party and that the people from the British Nationalist Party (BNP) are preposterous. They are optimists and believe in freedom with responsibility and to them all parties should fight the extremists like BNP. They also explained that their demise in the 80s was due to some differences within their party and the fact that they had raised the Europe question. They were however very optimistic about the upcoming elections. She also hinted U.K.’s subservience to the American Foreign policy and highlighted that the Conservative Prime Minister Ms. Thatcher was never perceived subservient in the manner Tony Blair was.

Youth Parliament of Pakistan, 4th day of the Study Tour to Britain (July 23, 2009):



Listening to Mr. Shahid Malik, minister for transport

Meeting the Young Muslim Advisory Group (YMAG):

After the initial introductions, Mr. Shahid Malik gave his opening remarks. He started by proclaiming his pride at being a British and a Muslim, also highlighting the fact that due to his parents hailing from Pakistan originally, he has an attachment with the country. He told the delegation that the UK population comprises of 2 million Muslims half of them being Pakistanis. He stressed upon the fact that Britain is an ideal place to live for the Muslims and all fractions of the community have complete freedom that is why Britain possesses such a great attraction for foreign settlers. He also said that the people of Pakistan are now coming to understand the war on terror better and are determined for the extermination of terrorism, but for long lasting peace in the world the ultimate solution is dialogue.

Delegates raised the issue of the disparity of huge aids given to Afghanistan as compared to Pakistan and also the nature of the aid provided to Pakistan being only developmental. In response Mr. Malik confirmed that the nature of the aid is indeed developmental and the reason that Afghanistan is given more aid is the deployment of British troops there. Furthermore, he added that Swat operation in particular is not conventional military operation with the main emphasis being on intelligence rather than arms and ammunition. He also mentioned that separate departments are in place to ensure the aid is used up properly.



Group photo with Professor Stuart Weir, The Democratic Audit

Meeting the Democratic Audit:

We were welcomed by the Professor himself. Holding a cup of tea he asked if we would like to have some. There was an encouraging ambiance in the room due to the round seating arrangement without a table. Mr. Stuart Weir, Associate Director Cambridge Democratic Audit started explaining us why the government of UK has anomalies in its democratic setup. He emphasized that the government lacks proper oversight and accountability. Furthermore he explained the reasons for the current discontent in the British citizens. The professor explained that the democratic audit monitors on how well human rights are protected and to what extent democratic norms are adhered to? It also suggests measures that should be taken to cater the issues involving Democracy. The Democratic Audit is a self-funded institution that generates its own funds.

The ending remarks were on a question asked by the delegation to define democracy.

“Country in which view and interests of everyone is equally taken into full account, all citizens are equally educated, proportionate resources are provided, freedom to all citizens to speak up their views without any fear.”- Professor Stuart Weir

Youth Parliament of Pakistan, 5th day of the Study Tour to Britain (July 24, 2009):



Group Photo the British Youth Council

Meeting the British Youth Council (BYC):

The briefing given to the delegation was brief yet comprehensive in nature. Basic essentials were laid down of the organization which included it to be a UK organization which was youth led and only under age 26 were allowed to participate in the membership process. Furthermore it was a membership organization with connection to the youth council as well. Then there was a concise presentation which also included BYC values

- a) Equality
- b) Diversity- debate
- c) Recognition
- d) Participation

These core values were highlighted which gave a fair idea of the organization. Plus a certain number of programs were highlighted along with policy and campaigns both domestically and internationally basically to give youth a chance to get know how of the system. The organization also had honorary presidents which were a part of the structural setup. The elections were also held which would then make a candidate qualify. The organization was also involved in a interfaith dialogue of which the two kingdom summit is an example. There are 126 members in the council. The delegation is also formed which indulges in interfaith dialogue comprises of at least 2 members and maximum 10 members. There is one year term but reelection is also possible. Political affiliation also exists.

Meeting the Chatham House:

The visit to the Chatham house was aimed to

- a) find out how the Chatham house works
- b) what role does it play in the British political system
- c) the funding origin
- d) the south Asia policy

The meeting with Dr. Niblett provided a fair insight of how the Chatham house works, what are its areas of dimension and how is it structured. The organization which acts a think tank was found in 1920 and named as Royal institute of International Affairs. There were a number of issues discussed with Dr. Niblett which encompassed the British policy and other works in general. Some sectors were highlighted in which the Chatham house gives special attention with regard to formal policy

- a) Oil and Gas
- b) Illegal fishery
- c) Forestry
- d) International Economics
- e) Investment
- f) Regional Security including that of Middle East, South Asia, Russia and Europe

There are around 100 associate firms specialists within the Chatham house and 40 other full time researchers which make the combined number of 140 people directly involve in the research process. Furthermore there is a membership criteria defined as well apart from which corporate nominees are also present within the system. Funding of the organization basically comes from

- a) British Government to a certain extent
- b) UK foreign office (FCO)
- c) Members – Individual and Corporate (discretionary funding)
- d) 3.5 million are designated towards research oriented projects
- e) Sponsors
- f) Companies
- g) Government Departments

Then there was a question and answer session held in which numerous questions were accounted for in a way which can be defined as comprehensive. The explanations included of how the capitalist formation of the western economies today is not a complete failure and cannot be discarded completely and the Chatham house research on it. It also varied so as to give an insight of the Iraq war studies and the long term solution of the terrorism issue with special regard to South Asia and Pakistan



The Mayor of Corydon, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Speaker

MP and the Constituency (Malcolm Wicks MP, labour)

The purpose of the meeting was to elicit a know-how of how an MP works in his/her constituency according to the British political system. The delegation was briefed in a comprehensive manner about how the Member of Parliament engages with the people at the grass root level and how do people respond to the political process which is in place to look out to their satisfaction. Corydon is basically divided into three zones

- a) North Corydon
- b) South Corydon
- c) Central Corydon

In the North Corydon the elected representative is from the Labor party. Whereas in the south the majority belongs to the conservative party and the central is still undecided. Malcolm Wicks has the highest no of people in his constituency. He was recently the minister for energy and hence is involved with the energy sector projects from a long time. The office is located in North Corydon which is the constituency of Malcolm Wicks from the origin. Currently he is serving as the special envoy of the energy development. The office is a three member staff in which two are related to case works which have already dealt with 800-900 cases. The problems facing the constituency which are discussed are

- a) Housing
- b) Overpopulation
- c) Health
- d) Education
- e) Youth Gangs and Tamil gangs

Furthermore some challenges were also discussed out of which mainly comprised on the issue of parking fees. The staff is also indulged in keeping alive the awareness campaign of the work done in the constituency which involves maintenance of the website on regular basis publishing newsletters and other issues as well. Some of the issues which are related to Pakistanis mainly revolve around visa related inquiry and immigration. There is a certain allowance which is given to the staff which is a part of the funds provided to the MP through the parliament.