

Senior British official Matthew Rycroft visits Pakistan



Permanent Secretary Matthew Rycroft visited Bahria University in Islamabad on Wednesday to speak to students about UK's revised new immigration system which will provide an opportunity for Pakistani students to enter into skilled roles in the UK job market.

UK and Pakistan have a long and shared history that is bolstered by the 1.6 million Pakistani diaspora in the UK that is at the heart of the relationship between the two countries. It is these people to people ties that makes Pakistan a particularly important partner for the UK Home Office.

"These ties are reliant on an effective and well-functioning migration relationship and the UK is committed to strengthening our visa routes and facilitating those wishing to travel between the two countries," said Matthew Rycroft, adding that the Home Office is delivering an immigration system that offers clear opportunities to the brightest and best from Pakistan to come to the UK to study, work and live.

During his visit, he talked about the UK Home Office's new immigration system that will level the global playing field to those wishing to come to the UK. Pakistani students will benefit from new graduate routes, providing an excellent opportunity for Pakistani students to enter into skilled roles in the UK job market.

The Permanent Secretary took part in a range of engagements and meetings at the Ministry of Interior and associated agencies to discuss challenges affecting operational cooperation and identify areas of mutual interest to expand collaboration. Highlighting the ground-breaking collaboration between Metropolitan Police and Pakistani authorities last year, which resulted in getting justice for the murder of Dr Imran Farooq, Matthew Rycroft set out his desire to work much closer with the Government of Pakistan to tackle shared threats and bring criminals to justice.

On recent developments in Afghanistan. Rycroft discussed a host of security issues including narcotics smuggling, human trafficking and illicit finance. This is the second visit of a senior British representative to Pakistan in

the last three months. Former Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab visited Islamabad early September and met with senior Pakistani leaders including Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

Notes to editors:

1. Applications for study visas have been increasing year on year. In the year ending June 2021, UKVI granted over 53,000 visas to Pakistani nationals. These included 9,700 student visas, representing a 78% increase, and 4,600 working visas. This increase is even more impressive considering the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Visa granting rates are also steadily increasing. At the end of June 2021, the UK granted 93% of work visas and 91% of student visas to Pakistani nationals. This represents a 6% increase in applications granted in the financial year ending June 2019.
3. Applications for student visas have increased 68% than the year ending June 2019. This represents a clear example of how the points-based system can benefit Pakistani nationals.
4. Pakistan was taken off UK's red-list last month while NADRA vaccination certificates are also now recognised for UK approved vaccines, which from November 22 will include Sinovac, Sinopharm and Covaxin vaccines.

Ends

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