

**Canada asked to move visa centre back to Islamabad**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's High Commissioner to Canada Raza Bashir Tarar has urged the Canadian government to move the visa processing centre back to its high commission in Islamabad as done by other Western countries in view of the improved security situation.

During his meeting with the Canada-Pakistan Friendship Group at the Canadian House of Commons, the high commissioner said this step would allow the Canadian immigration officials to ascertain the credentials of visa applications within Pakistan.

According to a press release received here on Thursday, the high commissioner briefed the Friendship Group on host of issues, including advisory against travel to Pakistan and high rate of visa refusal to Pakistani students and traders.

The Canadian government has moved its visa processing centre from Islamabad to Abu Dhabi and the United Kingdom due to the worsening security situation in Pakistan. However, as the situation has now improved, several Western countries are moving back their visa centres to their high commissions and embassies in Islamabad.

Mr Tarar briefed the Friendship Group on improved security situation in the country and the priority areas of the new government to introduce structural reforms in the key sectors and institution-building. He also highlighted friendly policies about foreign direct investment available in the automobile, energy, telecom, manufacturing and tourism industries in Pakistan, from which Canadian companies can benefit.

The high commissioner said that as Canada pursued a path to diversifying its partnerships, Pakistan was one of the emerging economies in Asia offering tremendous opportunities.

"Pakistan seeks to revive the full spectrum relations in political, trade, investment and development fields with Canada," he added.

He also informed the parliamentarians that the existing trade relations between the two countries needed to be given boost and allowing genuine traders to visit Canada to meet their counterparts could provide required impetus to bilateral trade relations. Similarly, removal of travel advisory for Pakistan will also enable Canadian traders to travel and avail the existing profit-making opportunities.

Co-chair of Canada-Pakistan Friendship Group Rob Oliphant briefed the high commissioner on their endeavours to promote friendship between the parliamentarians of the two countries.

Amin Ahmed