

C'wealth looking for business ties with Pakistan: Hugo Swire

LONDON: Deputy Chairman of Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council UK (CWEIC) Sir Hugo Swire says a hub office in Karachi will be set up to promote trade and investment between the Commonwealth and Pakistan.

He made the announcement after meeting Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad. The visit to Pakistan was arranged by the Chief Executive of Bestway Group and the Chairman of Conservative Friends of Pakistan (CFOP) Lord Zameer Choudrey. Sir Swire was accompanied by Sir Anwar Pervez and Lord Zameer during his meeting with the PM.

Prime Minister's advisor on Commerce Abdul Razzaq Dawood and the Chairman Board of Investment Syed Zubair Haider Gilani were also present on the occasion.

A spokesman for Bestway here told this reporter that Sir Hugo Swire apprised the prime minister of the activities and significance of CWEIC and how it could play an important role in promoting trade and investment between Pakistan and the Commonwealth countries, in particular the United Kingdom in post-Brexit scenario where various new opportunities should arise for Pakistan. Sir Swire invited PM Imran Khan to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the Commonwealth Business Forum 2020 which is going to be held in Kigali, Rwanda this year.

He also held separate meetings with Abdul Razak Dawood and Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance, to discuss how Pakistan could benefit from its Commonwealth links. Lord Zameer Choudrey informed that the Government of Pakistan expressed its commitment and enthusiasm for future engagement with the Commonwealth and showed keen interest to join CWEIC as a member and play a leading role as a private sector delegation at the upcoming Commonwealth Business Forum. Separately, Lord Zameer Choudrey hosted a private dinner in honour of the Deputy Chairman CWEIC which was attended by business leaders from across the country and key government ministers. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Choudrey thanked Sir Hugo Swire for taking time out to visit Pakistan. He underscored the importance of Pakistan's relationship with the United Kingdom and reiterated his commitment towards further strengthening those ties and particularly promoting trade and investment between Pakistan, the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

Sir Swire also held various meetings with prominent business leaders from across Pakistan. While CWEIC already has Bestway Group, the Employers' Federation of Pakistan, Ijara Group, and Hussain Mills as its members from Pakistan, a number of Pakistan's leading businesses showed keen interest in joining CWEIC as Strategic Partners.

Given the growth in membership in the Pakistani business community, CWEIC is now looking at setting up a hub office in Karachi to promote trade and investment between the Commonwealth and Pakistan. Lord Choudrey added that CWEIC is trying to create an environment of networking and prosperity by putting different businesses with each other that may be able to explore the opportunities amongst each other for best investments.

He said that post Brexit UK is looking for new avenues for investment and trade, and Commonwealth is one area where UK government would like to focus on and for this CWIEC is an ideal platform to begin with. Commenting on his visit, Sir Swire said, "I am delighted to have had such a successful visit to Pakistan, who are an integral part of Commonwealth trade. We've held fruitful discussions with the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Trade and Minister of Finance as well as senior business leaders. Through Strategic Partnerships with the Government of Pakistan as well as private sector businesses we aim to support Pakistan's efforts of expanding its trade with fellow Commonwealth countries. We also have plans of setting up a hub in Karachi which will further support local businesses in their efforts to connect with partners across the Commonwealth. We look forward to receiving a strong business delegation from Pakistan at the next Commonwealth Business Forum."