

On 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 UN Chief Antonio Guterres visited the Lahore and he met with students, religious leaders from different faith, and Government officials of Punjab, representative of Media and social organizations and peace promoters.

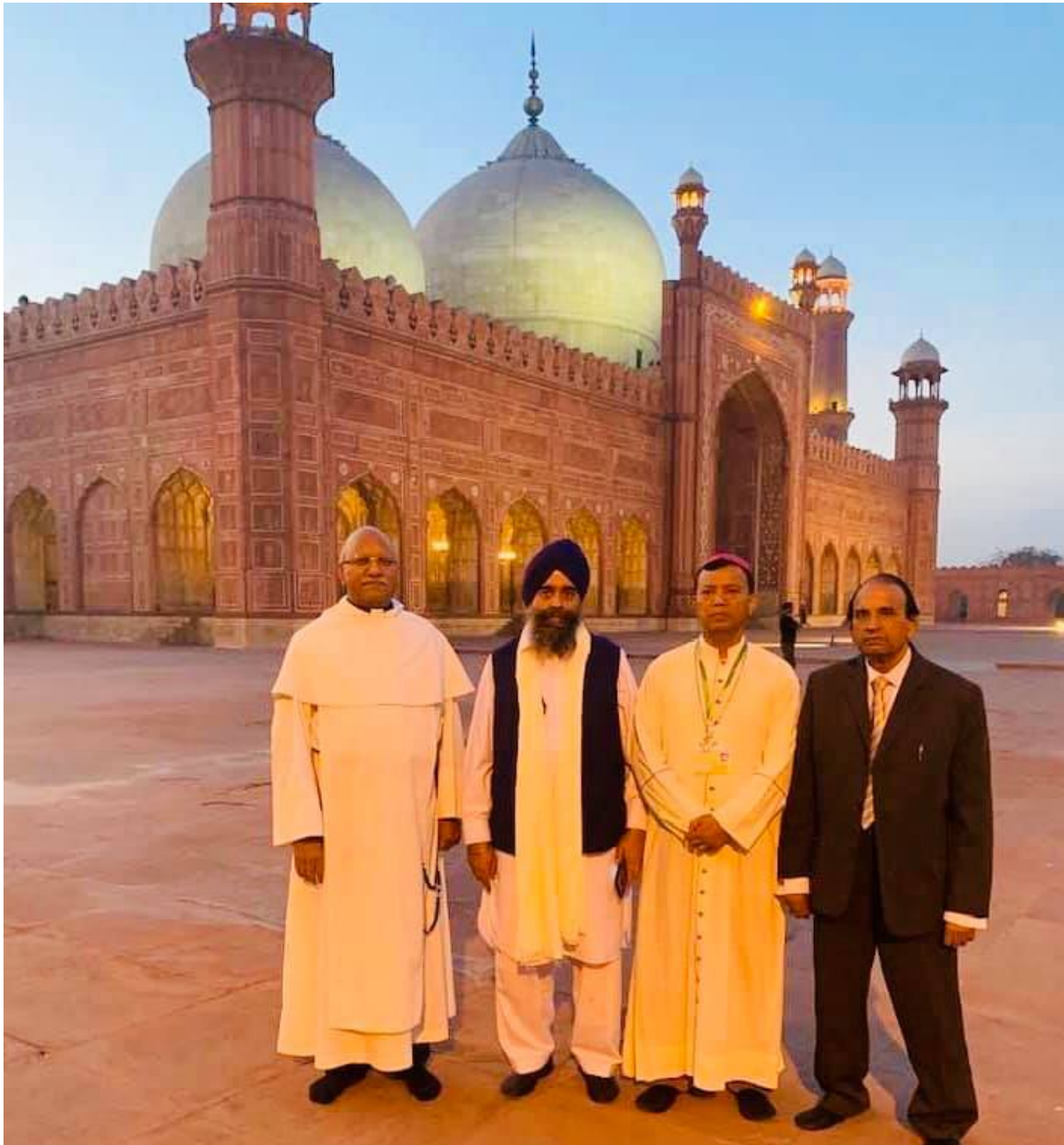


Guterres also visited the Lahore fort and Badshahi Mosque on his last day in Pakistan.

## **Historical visit of Mr. Antonio Guterres Secretary General United Nation in Lahore, Pakistan**

Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar Governor of Punjab, Mr. Usman Buzdar Chief Minister Punjab and Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad Grand Imam Royal Mosque Lahore welcomed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres at Royal Fort Lahore. First he visited the Badshahi Mosque and after visiting the mosque, he participated in an interfaith dialogue with religious scholars and leaders as like Muslims, Christian, Hindus and Sikh. More than seven hundred people were present including religious leaders from different faith, Government officials, and representative from Media and social organizations. Fr. James Channan OP Regional Coordinator URI Pakistan and Director Peace Center Lahore, Archbishop Lahore Sebastian Francis Shah were invited by the Government of Punjab. In this interfaith dialogue meeting Dr. Maunawar Chand (Hindu leader) Chairman Pakistan Hindu Council and URI Cooperation Circle Coordinator Anglo Asian Friendship Society Pakistan and Sardar Bishan Singh (Sikh Leader) were also invited by Government of Punjab. Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw and Fr. James Channan OP shared in his views that we feel

much honored to be invited by the Government of Pakistan for this interfaith dialogue program at Royal Fort Lahore. Pakistan is a country of believers of different religions. Religious minorities reflect the beauty of our country. Such interfaith encounters offer opportunities to build bridges of respect, tolerance, compassion and acceptance among religions. Together we can break the walls of violence, discrimination and non-acceptance by creating love tolerance, peace and interfaith harmony. They shared that all minorities in Pakistan are fully protected through legal and constitutional rights. The role of religious scholars is important for harmony, promoting peace and brotherhood in the society. Through their character they can make a balanced and moderate society.



Religious leaders Fr. James Channan OP, Bishop Sebastian Francis Shah, Dr. Maunawar Chand and Sardar Bishan Singh met with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

Pakistan is the land of equal opportunities for the followers of all religions where the people of all religions have the same rights and opportunities. The present

government is also committed to protect the rights to religious minorities as equal citizens of Pakistan. They said Prime Minister Imran Khan wanted to make Pakistan a social welfare state on the pattern of State of Madina.

Mr Guterres, who arrived here from Islamabad on Monday night, spent a busy day in Punjab where he administered polio drops to children at a kindergarten in Lahore's DHA, interacted with students' representatives at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), visited the Sikh sacred place Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in the Kartarpur area of Narowal district.



"I was honoured to visit Pakistan's newly opened Kartarpur Corridor - a corridor of hope, connecting two key Sikh pilgrimage sites. This is a welcome symbol of interfaith harmony," Guterres said about his visit to the Kartarpur corridor.

He will then move to the picture wall on the Rangeela Rickshaw and get a briefing about it by the WCLA and Aga Khan Trust for Culture. He would later depart for the summer palace via Barood Khana (British Arsenal Depot), and then visit the Sheesh Mehal, Hazoori Bagh and other sites besides attending a classical performance by Nighat Chaudhry.

Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar and Governor Punjab Ch. Muhammad Sarwar hosted a dinner in the honour of United Nations Secretary General António Guterres at Hazoori Bagh. UN Secretary General was welcomed by both the leaders on his arrival to Hazoori Bagh. Balochi, Cholistani, Punjabi music and cultural show was presented in the dinner ceremony.





Guterres in a decked out rickshaw at the Lahore Fort.

The Chief Minister Punjab said that the arrival of Antonino Guterres in Lahore is a matter of pride and pleasure for us. He informed him about the cultural heritage of Lahore including Punjab. UN Secretary General António Guterres said that Punjab is a land rich with cultural heritage and he will not forget the traditional hospitality. On this occasion, the Chief Minister presented portrait album to António Guterres of his visit to Lahore. António Guterres expressed his pleasure while seeing the album. Usman Buzdar also presented a painting of Shahi Fort to António Guterres. Secretary General thanked the Chief Minister Punjab for his splendid hospitality in Lahore. British Parliamentarian Afzal Khan, Provincial Ministers, Chief Secretary, Inspector General Police, government officers, famous political, religious and social personalities were also present on this occasion.





UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres sharing with Religious leaders at Royal Mosque Lahore, Pakistan

Mr Guterres called for more youth participation within political systems and international organizations saying “the presence of youth is absolutely essential in power corridors where decisions are made, policies are defined and actions are implemented.” He admitted that his generation failed to achieve the desired goals of

reversing emergency in climate change, fair distribution of resources among all segments of societies, regulating new technologies and avoiding conflicts.

He said that though globalization brought “enormous benefits” to the world, it was also responsible for leading to higher poverty levels posing a threat to social cohesion. Expressing the hope that women’s presence in world bodies would introduce compassion required to control the permanent cycles of conflict, he disclosed that the UN was evolving a strategy for equal roles of men and women in all world bodies by 2028.



"Important gains have been made, but we need a concerted push to eradicate Polio," Guterres said while taking part in Pakistan's first nationwide polio eradication campaign of the year

Earlier, while administering polio drops to children in Lahore, Mr Guterres offered full support to the government in its fight against polio.

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