ECONOMIC PROFILE:

PAKISTAN

• World’s sixth largest consumer market with a 220 million population
• World’s fifth largest deposit of gold and copper
• One of the largest deposits of oil and gas onshore and offshore
• World’s second largest reserves of shale gas
• World’s second largest pink salt deposits (Khewra Salt Mine) with valuable health benefits
• World’s largest hand-sewn football maker and best leather products (FIFA World Cup 2014 and 2018 official footballs were from Sialkot, Pakistan)
• World’s finest quality surgical instruments, cutlery, gems and jewellery
• Gwadar, the largest deep seaport in the world
• Fourth largest milk producing country
• Cradle of ancient civilisations: Mehr Garh, Indus Valley, Gandhara (Buddhism)

Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal has been called the ‘Spiritual Father of Pakistan’ for his contributions to the nation

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Founder of Pakistan

High Commissioner:
His Excellency Mr Mohammad Nafees Zakaria

Pakistan High Commission
36 Lowndes Square
London SW1X 9JN
T: +44 (0)20 7664 9200
www.phclondon.org
As global economic gravity shifts to the Pakistan region, immense opportunities are emerging for investors & business entrepreneurs

**PAKISTAN’S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS**

Pakistan High Commissioner Mohammad Nafees Zakaria provides a snapshot assessment including facts from economic institutions around the globe

"THIS IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN PAKISTAN, DON’T MISS THE BOAT."

Prime Minister Imran Khan

Prime Minister Imran Khan’s government has placed strengthening Pakistan’s economy as the highest priority. To that end, the government has undertaken transformational economic and infrastructural reforms to facilitate investors and ensure ease of doing business. The prime minister is leading these reforms.

Certain measures are in place that have started to pay dividends. These include the following: guidance for potential investors and business entrepreneurs; clear identification of prospective sectors for investment and businesses; transforming the Board of Investment (BoI) into a virtual ‘one window’ operation to facilitate investors; establishing a Project Management Unit for Industrial Cooperation under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and an attractive and incentivised investment policy.

In its annual report, The World Bank ranked Pakistan among the ‘most improved economies’ in ‘Ease of Doing Business,’ elevating its position by 28 places from the year before.

Moody’s Investors Service (Moody’s) affirmed Pakistan’s local and foreign currency long-term issuer and senior unsecured debt ratings at B3, and changed the outlook to ‘stable,’ an improvement from the previous rating of ‘negative.’

According to Bloomberg, the Pakistan Stock Exchange outperformed stock markets in Germany, Sweden, Russia and Ireland by a considerable margin over the last three months in 2019.

In January 2020, JP Morgan, in its ‘Emerging Market Research on Pakistan’ report, strongly recommended investors buy Pakistan’s treasury bonds, being the most lucrative in terms of returns.

In its first review of Pakistan’s economic performance, the IMF declared Pakistan’s reforms on track for sustainable growth, stabilising inflation, significant expansion in social safety nets, poverty reduction and narrowing the gender gap.

According to HSBC Global Research’s ‘World in 2030 Report,’ Pakistan is ranked among the top countries that will be the driving force behind global economic growth in the years leading up to 2030.

Many regional and international ventures like CPEC (with an outlay of US$62 billion), TAPI Gas pipeline project, CASA 1000 Power project and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), reflect Pakistan’s encouraging economic prospects. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Malaysia, Qatar, Bahrain, Germany, Japan and Republic of Korea are investing in Pakistan. Furthermore, FDI in Pakistan increased by 200 per cent during 2019.
Pakistan’s unique geo-strategic and geographic location at the confluence of South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia and Northwest China makes it a natural regional economic hub and energy corridor.

The country offers the shortest land routes between the sea and China’s Xinjiang Province, the landlocked Central Asian States and Afghanistan, and connects the region to the world at large. By road, the distance from Dushanbe to Karachi port is around 2,700km, much shorter than Dushanbe’s distance to other ports in the region. The port of Bandar Abbas is 3,400km, Vladivostok 9,300km and Rostov on the Don 4,200km away. These facts make Pakistan the most economical trade route to and from the Central Asian Republics (CARs).

In its drive to realise the goal of playing an effective role as a regional trade corridor, Pakistan became a member of Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), a partnership of ten countries. For the British and other foreign businessmen, Pakistan could be a springboard to explore and exploit the Central Asian markets and its untapped and unexploited natural resources.

CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

CPEC is a Flagship Project of China’s Belt & Road transcontinental connectivity initiative www.cpec.gov.pk/

China’s Foreign Minister, Mr. Wang Yi said: ‘If ‘One Belt, One Road’ is like a symphony involving and benefiting every country, then construction of CPEC is the sweet melody of the symphony’s first movement.’

CPEC is a milestone and affords immense economic opportunities, not just for China and Pakistan, but also for the region and beyond. Dubbed a ‘game changer,’ CPEC involves three routes (western, central and eastern) each over 2,400km. A comprehensive development framework and regional connectivity initiative, it spans over 15 years, involving Chinese investments from initially US$46 billion to, now, over US$62 billion in energy projects, infrastructure, the Gwadar Deep-Sea Port, and the industrial sector. It will serve as a platform for regional cooperation and stability. The Early Harvest Projects phase was successfully completed on schedule in December 2018. Through its development phases, CPEC will produce innumerable economic opportunities for a wide variety of sectors that contribute to economy and employment.
The Pakistan government has approved the establishment of 16 SEZs across the country, with the objective of expanding the industrial base for export-oriented manufacturing. Nine of these SEZs are part of CPEC. SEZs are open to investors from other countries, including our traditional friend, the UK. The sectors in which industries in SEZs are likely to be established are auto and allied industries, motorbike assembly, engineering, light engineering, Halal food, cooking oil, ceramics, ice and cold storage, electric appliances, textiles, plastics, agriculture implements, food processing, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, printing and packaging, garments, marble / granite, iron ore processing, fruit processing, steel, mineral processing unit, leather industry and chromite.

Further details of SEZs can be seen in links below: www.cpec.gov.pk/special-economic-zones-projects
www.invest.gov.pk

Pakistan is a market of 220 million consumers with a middle income class of over 80 million people. The country is bestowed with some of the world’s largest reserves of gold, copper, gas, coal and numerous mineral resources ready to be explored and exploited. Pakistan’s government has identified numerous projects in the oil and gas sectors: on-shore and off-shore exploration, establishing oil refineries, acquisition of oil tankers, plus constructing oil storage facilities and pipelines.

Pakistan is a land of opportunities for investors in the above identified sectors, plus many other areas. In addition to the areas listed as SEZs for investment, there is enormous potential for investment and business opportunities in telecommunication infrastructure, fisheries, gems and stones, dairy products, livestock for breeding and exporting halal meat, solid waste management, surgical goods and sports goods production and exports, higher education in emerging technologies (AI; block chain; Internet of Things; and Big Data), public health, developing tourism projects, plus the Prime Minister’s Affordable Housing Scheme (of five million houses with one of the most liberal investment policies.)

MARKET ACCESS FOR PAKISTAN
Market access gained under FTAs with:
- Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka
- South Asian region-SAFTA
Concessions for Pakistan under
- EU-GSP+ Scheme - 66% TLs covered & 90% Pakistan exports under GSP+
- US GSP Scheme – 50% TLs covered – 81% increase in exports since 2013
Prospective FTAs with
- Thailand, Turkey, Mercosur

AGRICULTURE
Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan’s economy, contributing 25 per cent to national GDP. Cotton, sugar and rice are the main cash crops. While livestock and poultry have a major share of the agriculture sector,
forestry and fisheries have huge potential. Prime Minister Imran Khan’s government is cognizant of the need for increasing national productivity to ensure food security for the growing population as well as to meet existing demand. Envisaging that growth in agri-produce will also benefit the country from agro-based exports, the government welcomes modern technologies in the agriculture sector to increase national productivity. Those interested in investing in the agriculture sector and latest technologies and modern farming systems are welcome.

Breeding animals, fish farming, vertical farming, horticulture and dairy processing, are some of many areas holding immense potential with lucrative returns.

No permission is required from any government agency for investment in Corporate Agricultural Farming in Pakistan. Customs duty on the import of plant, machinery and equipment is zero per cent. 100 per cent equity is allowed with no restriction on remittances of capital, profits and dividends.

**READYMADE GARMENTS / TEXTILES**

The textile and clothing sector account for more than 55 per cent of national exports, and utilises 40 per cent of the industrial labour force. Pakistan’s textile industry is unique as it is vertically and horizontally integrated, and produces a range of products such as readymade garments, bed sheets, towels, fabric and yarn. Major buyers include Adidas Sourcing Ltd (Germany), Inditex (Spain), C & A Sourcing International, Ltd. (Netherlands), Li and Fung (Hong Kong), H&M (Sweden), GAP International Sourcing (California) Inc. (US), JC Penny (US), Levis Strauss (US), Kirens International (UK), Wal Mart Global Procurement (US), and Target Wünsche (Hong Kong) Ltd. Market access to Pakistan comes under the Free Trade Agreements with China, Malaysia, GSP+ in EU and GSP facilities in the US, Australia and Japan.

**SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS**

Across the globe, Pakistan is considered a reliable manufacturer of surgical instruments, due to their good quality and reasonable price. Around 300 medium-to large-size companies manufacture a wide variety of medical instruments covering all the kinds of surgery and basic medical services. More than 90 per cent of this is exported across the world. Major export destinations are the US, Germany, UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands and China. The majority of Pakistani surgical companies are ISO-9002 certified and have secured good manufacturing certification. Adoption of best practices and safety standards has enabled Pakistani manufacturing companies to integrate with the global supply chains.

**SPORTING GOODS**

Sporting goods is one of Pakistan’s main export sectors fetching more than US$400 million of foreign exchange for Pakistan. Pakistan produces a wide variety of sporting goods and supply to Nike, Puma, Adidas, Decathlon, Select, Lotto, Umbro, Mitre, Mikasa, Wilson and Diadora. Major export destinations of Pakistani sports goods are western countries with the US having a 33 per cent share followed by the UK with 17 per cent, Germany 11 per cent and Spain 7 per cent.

Pakistan caters to around 70 per cent of the total world demand of hand stitched inflatable balls, which translates into around 40 million balls annually worth US$ 210 million. Made in Pakistan ‘FIFA Approved’ and ‘FIFA Inspected Soccer balls’ are used in FIFA competitions and other international tournaments. Pakistan produced and supplied ‘Brazuca’ and ‘Telstar 18’ soccer balls in the Brazil 2014 and Russia 2018 FIFA World Cups. Adidas, a FIFA partner since 1970, exported approximately 42 million Brazuca balls from Pakistan. Bat manufacturing companies like CA Sports, Malik Sports and Ihsan Sports have been sourcing their own branded cricketing equipment to the global market, and are being used by renowned international cricket players. Corporate social responsibility and ethical business practices are keenly observed by entrepreneurs in the Pakistani sports industry. Many Pakistani companies have secured ISO 9000, Social Accountability (SA 8000) and Fair-Trade Labeling Organisation Certifications.
Pakistan’s IT Industry has registered exponential growth of late, says Pakistan High Commissioner Mohammad Naees Zakaria

Other leaders in Pakistan’s IT industry with global market outreach include NESTOL, Systems Limited, TRG Pakistan, i2c Pakistan and LMKR among others.

There are around 3,000 IT and allied companies currently registered. Pakistan was ranked the third most popular country for freelancing in the Online Labour Index published in July 2018 by the Oxford Internet Institute.

According to the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), freelancers and independent consultants are estimated to be generating US$500 million in export earnings of US$3.5 billion.

Pakistan is a preferred source of software developers, programmers, designers and Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) specialists, and currently ranks as the third most financially attractive location in the world for offshore services. With 64 per cent of the 220 million population under the age of 29, there is an enormous human and knowledge capital potential.

Global enterprises like Bentley, Ciklum, IBM, Mentor Graphics, S&P Global, Symantec, Teradata, and VMware have established consulting service centres, research and development facilities, and BPO support services in Pakistan.

Information Technology

Pakistan’s IT Industry has registered exponential growth of late, and its positive trajectory does not show any signs of slowing down. The sector has a promising future, brimming with talent, and the potential to become the country’s largest export industry.

With global attention shifting to Pakistan and the surrounding region, trends give confidence to the calculations that the IT sector’s revenues may rapidly rise from the current figure of US$3.5 billion to reach a figure of US$20 billion and beyond in the not too distant future.

Pakistan’s IT Industry has registered exponential growth of late, says Pakistan High Commissioner Mohammad Naees Zakaria
Pakistan’s areas of expertise in IT and IT Enabled Services (ITeS) include:

- mobile app design and development, product design, development and testing, ERP (General, Specialised-Verticals), information security, IT governance and strategy, data warehousing and business analytics, BPO, virtualisation and computing, web businesses and e-commerce, office productivity and document management, exploration and production software (oil and gas), health related software, and much more.

Investment opportunities in Pakistan’s IT & ITeS Sector include:

- company acquisitions and mergers; high growth IT startups; venture capital funds; IT parks; software development centres; software testing centres; technology incubators; gaming and animation studios; IT global consulting centres and data centres.

Pakistan’s government incentives for investors in the IT industry include:

1. A tax holiday for venture capital funds until 2024
2. Zero income tax on IT exports until June 2025
3. Income tax exemption to PSEB registered IT start-ups for three years, with no minimum or withholding tax, incentivising entrepreneurship and innovation in the country
4. 100 per cent equity ownership allowed to foreign investors
5. 100 per cent repatriation of capital and dividends

Recognising the potential of e-commerce in Pakistan, Ali Baba, China’s largest e-commerce company, invested US$200 million in the country, and has also acquired Pakistan’s ecommerce site Daraz.pk.

Private equity firms and venture capital firms are invited to explore similar lucrative opportunities in Pakistani startups, and to enjoy the tax holidays offered by the Pakistan government for venture capital funds in IT. Investment opportunities exist across various areas including: custom software, mobile apps, gaming and animation, e-commerce, payment systems and next generation technologies.

**FINTECH PAKISTAN**

With over 70 million broadband users and a GSM penetration percentage in the region at circa 74 per cent (172 million), Fintech in Pakistan is all set to become the largest feeding sector for aiding financial inclusivity.

According to Rehan Akbar, Digital Financial Services Head at Karandaz, Pakistan’s Fintech startups can nudge a 7 per cent increase in Pakistan’s GDP in the next five years, roughly translating into US$16 billion. Pakistan’s e-tail is expected to grow from US$900 million in 2019 to US$2.5 billion by 2024. Meanwhile, the mobile payment industry in Pakistan is expected to record a Cumulative (Compounded) Average Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.7 per cent to reach US$4 billion by 2024.

As Pakistan strides towards digital banks and cardless payment systems, our highly skilled IT resources industry is well placed to augment growing global demand in the hi-tech space. With more than 320,000 English-speaking IT professionals and with the addition of over 20,000 IT graduates to the existing pool annually, Pakistan has prioritised nurturing new tech skills such as AI and data engineers, data scientists, computer vision and machine learning experts, etc. to cater to domestic as well as global market skills and resources requirements.

**TELECOMMUNICATION:**

The telecommunication sector in Pakistan is open and deregulated. The environment offers a level playing field to telecom operators, and a firm foundation in terms of infrastructure. Fibre optics-based telecommunication were introduced in Pakistan in the mid-1980s on a mass scale, and a high-speed efficient infrastructure has since been introduced. The telecom networks in Pakistan use 3G and 4G services and will now be upgraded for 5G service. The telecom sector has received FDI to the tune of US$ 4.5 billion from telecom companies in Pakistan over the past four years, which is indicative of the investment prospects and quick returns in the sector. More than 75 per cent of Pakistan’s population (165 million) are mobile phone subscribers, and tele density has been constantly increasing, with an ongoing appetite for the latest telecom devices.

National Incubation Centres have been established across Pakistan to provide support, impetus and direction for start-ups and to create an enabling environment for young IT professionals and entrepreneurs.
Pakistan is a kaleidoscope of some of the most diverse natural beauty in the world; it’s a cradle of ancient civilizations and a ‘melting pot’ of religions and cultures. The World Economic Forum placed Pakistan among the top 25 per cent of global destinations for its UNESCO ‘World Heritage Sites.’

From the stretches of great mountain ranges in the north, to the vast alluvial delta of the Indus River in the south, Pakistan remains a land blessed with nature’s beauty and majestic mountains. With shining deserts and some of the world’s highest peaks, the country has myriad attractions for sightseers, skiers, trekkers and mountaineers. For those interested in white water rafting, trout fishing, jeep, camel and yak safaris and out of this world flora and fauna, Pakistan is the place to be.

It’s a land that holds a reservoir of knowledge for archaeologists, historians, artists, teachers and anthropologists, and it contains deep religious heritage for pilgrims of various faiths and beliefs.

These attributes mean that the tourism sector in Pakistan has started to register exponential and speedy growth. From less than half a million foreign tourist arrivals in 2015, the world tourism monitoring agencies recorded over two million tourist arrivals during 2019. Domestic tourism crossed the 40 million mark last year.

WORLD VIEW OF TOURISM POTENTIAL IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is ranked No. 1 on Condé Nast Traveller’s list of 20 best holiday destinations for 2020.

Lonely Planet called Pakistan ‘tourism’s next big thing.’ Forbes ranked Pakistan as one of the ‘10 Coolest Places to go in 2019.’

The British Backpacker Society (BBS) declared Pakistan as the world’s third best potential adventure destination for 2020. The year before, the BBS declared that ‘Pakistan tops the list of world’s best travel destinations’, describing it as ‘one of the friendliest countries on earth.’ A land of splendour, the landscape stretches remarkably from the high mountain ranges in the north to the plains and deserts of central Pakistan, and the Arabian Sea in the south. In addition to the natural beauty in the four provinces of Pakistan, the people are very hospitable and generous toward foreign tourists.
FIVE OF THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN PEAKS

Pakistan's mountain ranges include the famous Himalayas, Karakoram and the Hindukush. There are several high peaks in Pakistan, with the tallest being K2 (at 8,611 metres), the second highest in the world. The country is blessed with five out of the 14 highest mountain peaks of the world. From April to September, domestic and international mountaineers throng the area.

HIGHEST TRADE ROUTE IN THE WORLD

The 806km Karakoram Highway constructed along the ancient Silk Road linking Pakistan to China is the highest trade route in the world. Additionally, the nearby Mintaka Pass lies along the fabulous ancient Silk Road that linked Europe to Asia and over which history’s most famous tourists once travelled. These include the Venetian trader Marco Polo in the thirteenth century (the wild Marco Polo sheep was named after him), the Chinese Monk Fe Hien in the fourth century, and Arab historian Al-Beruni in the eleventh century.

PUNJAB (MUGHAL ERA MONUMENTS AND GANDHARA BUDDHIST CIVILISATION)

The Punjab province comprises rich agricultural lands, an extensive network of rivers and channels, shrines, ancient forts and gardens from the Mughal era. Over 2,000 years ago, the world famous Gandhara Buddhist civilisation flourished in northern Pakistan, with Taxila as the principal seat of Buddhist learning.

BALOCHISTAN (MOUNTAIN RANGES AND CAVES)

The Balochistan province is the largest in the country in terms of area. Besides being blessed with nature’s bounty of mineral resources, it also has immense natural beauty comprising mountain ranges, mines and a very long coastal belt, including the newly developed Gwadar Port. In Balochistan there are many caves for tourists to visit, including the Juniper Shafi Cave, Shahr-e-Roghan, the Murghagull Gharra cave, Mughall saa cave, and Pakistan’s naturally decorated cave, the Mangocher Cave.

SINDH (MOENJODARO, KARACHI, ARABIAN SEA)

In the south, the province of Sindh also abounds in natural beauty. It is most famous as home to the ancient city Moenjo-daro (Indus Valley Civilisation), the commercial hub city of Karachi, plus its seaports and beautiful beaches, spread over hundreds of miles of coastline.

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWAL (KAGHAN AND SWAT VALLEYS)

Again, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is well known for its varying natural beauty, comprising some awe-inspiring valleys and mountains in the north, including the Kaghan and Swat valleys, and the famous Khyber Pass.
NORTHERN AREAS (GILGIT, HUNZA, SKARDOU)

Spread over 72,496 square km, the northern areas of Pakistan are as captivating and mesmerising in beauty as the other regions. Amid towering snow-clad peaks, several over 8,000 metres, the beautiful serene valleys of Gilgit, Hunza and Skardu are magnificent.

Forty skiers from 13 countries including Greece, Turkey, Ukraine, Hong Kong, the UK and Belgium participated in the International Skiing Cup in Pakistan in February 2019 at Naltar, Gilgit Baltistan. The cultural patterns in this region are as varied and interesting as its topography.

VEGETATION AND FAUNA

Pakistan is also rich in vegetation and fauna. With their alpine meadows and permanent snow line, coniferous forests down the sub-mountain scrub, the vast Indus plain merging into the great desert, the coastline and wetlands, the Himalayas, Karakoram and the Hindukush ranges all offer a remarkably rich variety of vegetation and wildlife including avifauna, both endemic and migratory. 10 of 18 mammalian orders are represented in Pakistan with species ranging from the world’s smallest surviving mammal, the Mediterranean Pygmy Shrew, to the largest mammal ever known, the blue whale.

INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

Through the centuries, waves of invaders and migrants settled down in the land that is now Pakistan, influencing the locals and slowly being absorbed among them. Modern Pakistanis are a blend of Harappan, Indo-Aryan, Indo-Iranian, Saka, Parthian, Kushan, White Hun, Afghan, Arab, Turkic and Mughal heritages. Thus, the region encompassing modern-day Pakistan is home to the oldest Asian civilisation (and one of the oldest in the world after Mesopotamia and Egypt), the Indus Valley Civilisation (2,500-1,500 BC).

RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Pakistan is a land of love and hospitality. A land of spiritual endowment, it is also the resting place of many spiritual saints from all religions, be it the sufi mystics of Islam; the Hindu Tiraths dating back to 3,000BC; the disciples of Buddha attaining 'nirvana' buried under the remains of Gandhara civilisation; or Baba Guru Nanak Ji, the founder of the Sikh religion who was born in 1,469AD at Nankana Sahib, about 72km north of Lahore. Pakistan has always whole-heartedly worked to preserve its historical sites — whether it’s a church, Gurdwara, temple, mosque, museum, tomb, fort or shrine.
PAKISTAN'S BUDDHIST HERITAGE

Born in the foothills of the Himalayas, Buddhism found avid followers, supporters and patrons in Gandhara, the Land of Fragrance. Pakistan became the custodian of rich collections of sacred relics and superb specimens of art and architecture from Buddhist civilisation. For example, the Buddhist ruins of Taxila are priceless treasures of immense interest to Buddhists and researchers around the world. Taxila became a centre of excellence when the first ever university was founded there in the 10th century BC.

PAKISTAN'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

Thomas the Apostle came to present day Taxila in the first century AD. Pakistan has historical churches in various locations, and these religious buildings symbolise the spirit of a community and the cultural context of centuries. Our Lady of Fatima Church, Islamabad, Christ Church, Kotri, St Paul’s Church, Rawalpindi, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Lahore, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Karachi, Holy Rosary Church, Quetta, St Mary’s Cathedral Church, Multan, and St Luke’s Church, Abbottabad are just a of the few churches in Pakistan well worth visiting.

PAKISTAN'S SIKH HERITAGE

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak, who was born in Nankana Sahib, Pakistan. Since Punjab was the centre of activities for Sikh Gurus, and later the political power base of the Sikhs, there are numerous sites in Pakistan that are sacred to the Sikh community. Thousands of pilgrims visit these places from all over the globe.

Among the sacred shrines is Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Kartarpur, near Lahore. Pakistan’s government opened the Kartarpur Corridor to allow visa-free access to Sikh pilgrims from India. In 2019, the government renovated and expanded Kartarpur Corridor to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, and it has thus emerged as a centre of interfaith harmony and a symbol of goodwill of the people of Pakistan for the Sikh community.

Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hasan Abdal, Gurdwara Choa Sahib, Rohtas, Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh, Peshawar, Gurdwara Sadhu Bela, Sukkur, and Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore are just a few of the many Gurdwaras that are visited by thousands of Sikhs from around the world each year.

The Gurdwara has become the centre of the annual pilgrimage by Sikh communities the world over. All Gurdwaras and Sikh shrines in Pakistan have been declared sacred places and are meticulously maintained by our government. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) offers special pilgrimage tours, and Pakistani embassies and consulates abroad issue expeditious pilgrimage visas for that purpose.

SAINTS, SUFIS, AND SHRINES

Pakistan is a land of saints and sufis who preached amity, peace and universal love. Their teachings promoted religious co-existence, communal harmony and tolerance in society, which is why there has always been communal harmony in Pakistan. This provides further opportunities for religious tourism in the country.

History reveals that various Sufi saints have bestowed Pakistan with messages of adoration and peace to promote Islamic virtues. Pakistanis consider the country to be blessed as the resting place of Saints in the Shrines of Data Ganj Bakhsh Hajveri, Lahore, Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Karachi, Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Sehwan Sharif, Sachal Sarmast, Khairpur, and Hazrat Bahauddin Zakaria, Multan.

ROYAL COUPLE’S VISIT TO PAKISTAN

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge’s visit to Pakistan was an important milestone in bilateral relations. After all, HRH Prince William had accompanied HRH Princess Diana to Pakistan at a very young age. Attracting international attention with huge media coverage, the visit was a boost of confidence for Pakistan’s tourism and cherished by Pakistan and its people.