

# NATIONAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY PAKISTAN

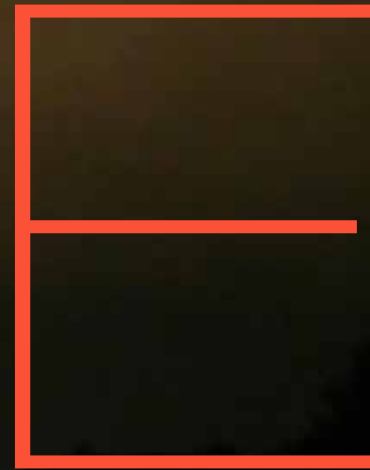
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CORPORATE BROCHURE



# Take | the highway

Improvements to Pakistan's major highways are critical to the future expansion of the country's economy and relations with its neighbours. Jayne Alverca looks at how the National Highway Authority is responding to the challenge



conomic growth in any form can only be sustained if it is underpinned by a solid infrastructure and road transport is always a key element, especially in countries such as Pakistan with a relatively short coastline.

Pakistan has almost a hundred thousand kilometres of secondary provincial roads, but the 11,000 kilometres of established national highways and motorways are the country's literal lifeline. Although they represent only about three per cent of all roads in the country, their importance is immense. These are the main arteries that hold the key to the national economy because they carry almost 80 per cent of the total commercial traffic in Pakistan.

The most important of all is the 1760-km long N-5 highway, which alone carries over 55 per cent of the country's intra-city traffic. Other important national highways include the N-55 (Indus Highway), N-25, N-65, N-45, N-50, N-70 and the famous N-35 Karakoram Highway. The Karakoram Highway is by far the highest paved international road in the world, connecting China's Xinjiang region with Pakistan's Northern Areas through the Khunjerab Pass, at a breath-taking altitude of 4,693 metres.

This critical road network is controlled by the National Highway Authority (NHA) under the oversight of Dr Arbab Alamgir Khan of the Federal Ministry of Communications. The NHA was created in 1991 by an Act of Parliament to control all areas of the network from maintenance to construction and planning with a focus on providing a safe, modern and efficient transportation system for the future.



Despite a total budget during the last fiscal year of Rs44.6 billion, NHA has a daunting task ahead. Almost two-thirds of the network is in poor condition and in urgent need of maintenance and repair. Moreover, the growing trend to overload vehicles and the shift from rail to road transport has led to a further rapid and premature deterioration of the road network. In short, the infrastructure cannot sustain present levels of traffic, much less those envisaged for the future.

In Pakistan, the Government has acknowledged that improvements to the network of roads and highways are fundamental to the future growth of the economy. Ambitious targets are in place, but in a time of global privation, where is the funding to come from for an aggressive road development portfolio?

The Government of Pakistan and NHA have come up with an innovative solution. The improvements are deemed to be an absolute priority and so the Government has pledged fiscal budget allocations that will meet the cost of almost 50 per cent of target demands. The balance is to come from off-budget financing through Public Private Partnerships (PPP).

One of the most important tasks for NHA is making this happen on the ground. The organization has been empowered to initiate, operate and award projects through private sector financing and as PPP is an integral component of the overall development strategy, many facilitation initiatives have been carried out.

NHA has created a dedicated Private Sector Cell to give a single focal point for all private sector partnerships and to identify potential partners. It has also been instrumental in the development of the policy and legal frameworks that are required to give private investors the safeguards they need. Processes have been developed to monitor project development and implementation at all stages, in particular the standardization of all documentation and evaluation criteria.



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make the highway more pleasant for road users.

To facilitate the movement of goods along the highway, Iran has just announced it would make efforts to push through its ratification of the International Road Transport Agreement with Pakistan – a process which should be completed by the end of summer 2011. Pakistan, meanwhile, has already ratified the document. Both sides have also agreed to coordinate efforts to curb human trafficking and travel on fake passports.

Security in such a sensitive area will be a big consideration, especially after the damage to the Kalpani Bridge on the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway (M-1) in June in a terrorist bomb blast. NHA, which is coordinating the clean-up, expects

repair work to the bridge to cost in the region of Rs12 million and has ordered engineers to work round the clock so as to minimize public inconvenience. In response, Pakistan's Motorway Police are also collaborating with NHA on a series of new check points on the M-1 and other motorways.

Pakistan's Motorway Police now have 1492 kilometres of motorway under their jurisdiction and it is one of the fastest growing police departments in Asia. Travellers can rest assured they will be in safe hands because Transparency International rated the force last year among just a handful of corruption-free departments in the world. [www.nha.gov.pk](http://www.nha.gov.pk) ■



A number of projects have already been completed and many more are in the implementation, development or planning phases. In particular, NHA is in close talks with Iranian counterparts to open several additional international crossing points with Iran, at Pishin and Reemdan on the Iranian side and Mand and Gabd on the Pakistani side, in order to promote trade and commerce between the two countries. At present, there is just one international crossing point between them.

Both Governments believe road infrastructure improvements would have a dramatic effect on boosting their trade relations which at present are minimal despite excellent political relations between the two countries. Pakistan would also benefit from closer trade ties with Turkey and also access to Central Asian markets.

Completion of upgrades to the Quetta to Taftan road is now a priority to both governments. NHA has already spent Rs2 billion on the 605km project with the strong support of the Iranian Government. NHA is also investing in rest areas and other facilities to



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#### Frontier Works Organization

509, Kashmir Road, R. A. Bazar, Rawalpindi - Pakistan

Telephone: +92 - 51 - 927 1301 - 6 Fax: +92 - 51 - 927 1330

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