

Khunjerab National Park (Pakistan)

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Preamble

- Prof M Subhan Qureshi participated in the “2024 International Congress on an Eco-Security System for All People along the Belt and Road” at Shennongjia National Park of Hubei Province on May 27 to 30.
- He presented a Country Report on Pakistan and a paper titled, “Exotic High-Yielding Animals Threaten Indigenous Species”. Report is available at [NESS-2024](#).
- During the Congress, information on ecotourism in and around protected areas (PAs) were collected by the [International Alliance of Protected Areas](#) (IAPA/ISZS) on around 60 Protected Areas from 32 countries.
- Prof Qureshi shared information on Khunjerab National Park which was included in the agenda for this Workshop to discuss this topic during the current Changbaishan Conference.
- Mr Mahmood Ghaznavi, Chief Conservator of Forest, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan agreed on supporting the initiative to welcome Chinese and other international tourists to Khunjerab National Park.

Overview of the protected area and the current ecotourism status

- [Khunjerab National Park](#) or KNP (34*44'N-75*17'E) is located in Hunza district.
- The place where Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Hindu Kush Meet
- It was established in 1975 with an area of 226,913 hectares, at an elevation of 17,000 ft.
- The primary purpose of setting up of this park was to provide protection to the endangered Marco polo sheep, which is only found in this area in Pakistan.
- The park is also famous for its Snow Leopards.
- The KNP lies at Karakorum-West Tibetan biodiversity region, on Pakistan-China border in Upper Hunza. It is home to alpine flora along with many endangered and threatened species.
- **Species in danger:** Wildlife includes, Snow leopard (Threatened), Marco polo Sheep (Endangered), Himalayan Ibex, Blue Sheep, Siberian Ibex, Brown Bear (Threatened), Blue Sheep (Vulnerable).66 Species of birds found: Golden Eagle, Himalayan Snowcock, Himalayan Griffon vulture (Near Threatened).

Dominant Flora and Fauna

- **Mammals include:** Tibetan wolf; [Himalayan ibex](#); Tibetan red fox; Golden marmots; Himalayan Brown Bear; Snow Leopard; Stone Martin; Marco Polo Sheep and Cape Hare.
- **Birds include:** Lammergeier vulture; Golden Eagle; Himalayan griffon vulture; Eurasian black vulture; Marsh harrier; Eurasian sparrow hawk; Eurasian kestrel; Lesser kestrel; Saker falcon; Peregrine falcon; Himalayan Snow cock; *Artemisia* spp
- **Plants include:** *Juniperus excelsa*; *Rosa webbiana*; *Myricaria germanica*; *Hippophae rhamnoides*; *Populus nepalensis*; *Salix* spp; *Betula utilis*
- **Vegetation Zones include:** Dry Alpine Scrub; Moist Alpine Pastures; Dry Alpine Plateau Pastures; Sub Alpine Scrub; Birch Forests

Tourists Attractions

Major Landmarks

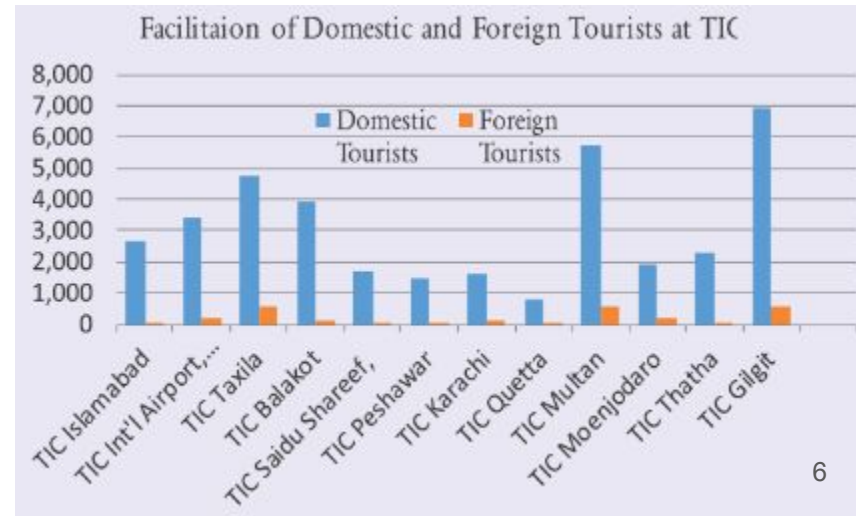
- Jaisam lake
- Khunjerab top
- Chafchingol peak
- Koksil peak

Tourist Activities

- Hiking and Trekking
- Wildlife Sighting
- Cycling
- Camping
- Landscape Photography
- Mountaineering

Accomplishments in ecotourism progress

- The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) is developing Tourism as a national priority in a sustainable manner, taking full advantage of regional and international trends and developments.
- As per joint statement during the visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan to China (S No.24), China was committed to continuing its support for Pakistan in organizing and participating in cultural and tourism exchanges in China. Both sides affirmed their determination to enhance practical cooperation in the field of culture and tourism.
- Tourist Visas are issued for Single Entry for short duration less than 3 months (First Time entry); duration up to and greater than 6 months (Extension).
- A Tourist Visa can be extended for up to 6 Months or more, subject to approval.
- Highest number of tourists were facilitated at Tourism Information Center Gilgit.



Annual Development Program 2023-24

Ongoing projects at Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

- Development and Improvement of Historical Monument and Trekking Trails in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).
- Promotion of GB as Four Seasons Tourist Destination.
- Establishment and Construction of Tourist Facilitation Centre on Karakoram Highway (KKH; connecting Kashgar (Kaxgar) in western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China, with Islamabad, Pakistan).
- Improvement of Tourist Huts at Sadpara Top, Skardu & Chilim, Astore and Polo Ground at Roundu.
- Strengthening of Protected Areas Management System in GB.
- Strengthening Community-Managed Protected Areas for Conserving Biodiversity and Improving Local Livelihoods through Eco Tourism Promotion in GB.
- Climate Change Mitigation through Establishment of Energy Plantation at Riverbeds & Marginal Lands in Baltistan Revenue Division.
- Feasibility for Environmental Protection, sustainable Management and Development of Khunjerab, Attabad Lake and Babusar

Experiences and Suggestions

Essential experiences and lessons acquired

- Pakistan's government has significantly promoted sustainable tourism in response to environmental degradation and climate change ([Imarat IPS 2022](#)).
- The initiatives include anti-encroachment drives to halt the use of single-use plastics in the Hunza district.
- Activities like hunting are a sport, enjoyed by the locals and international tourists. Efforts are underway for a comprehensive system to protect the population of animals and regulate the hunting activities.
- Pakistan has formed an E-portal through which Chinese tourists can also now apply for tourist visas online.

Suggestions for promoting visits of Chinese tourists

- There is a need for strong comprehensive policies and long-term goals to achieve eco-tourism in the region.
- Pakistan's northern areas are considered the best option for tourism.
- Pakistan is keen to attract Chinese outbound tourists to the scenic and historic sites of the country by adopting new plans to welcome them, Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah said ([B&R Portal 2023](#)).
- The ongoing year is celebrated as the year of tourism exchange between the two countries.
- Academic research studies may be launched for improving the reproductive efficiency and biorisk management in wild animals, pasture status and biological diversity in the region.