

DAWN

Hotel bookings rise amid economic, political stability

By Aamir Shafaat Khan

KARACHI: The number of guests checking into the country's top hotels is rising, especially in Punjab, courtesy launch of CPEC, improved law and order, and relative economic stability.

Fouzia Azhar, secretary general of the Pakistan Hotels Association (PHA), counted factors, including foreign investments, especially related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, wind power and energy sector, rising activities in the construction and auto industry, and more exhibitions and business events.

"Islamabad, Lahore and Multan may have recorded a higher increase as work on CPEC has started and related industries have become active," she told *Dawn* on Saturday. In contrast, Karachi has yet to experience the progressive growth as the city's hotels have witnessed a tiny three to four per cent rise in occupancy.

She believed CPEC was playing a big role in attracting foreigners, especially Chinese, and its contribution is expected to increase over time.

She recalled that there were very few foreigners visiting Pakistan during the past few years. The situation is changing and more foreign dignitaries, businessmen and industrialists are visiting and the trend is expected to deepen over near future as security situation improves and CPEC makes progress.

She contested reports that hoteliers were charging higher rates for rooms on the back of rising demand.

All major hotels, she said, agreed on certain rates with clients for a specific tenure, which was acceptable to both the parties. Moreover, hotels honoured their regular and loyal customers, she said.

She said shortage of rooms in the major hotels did occur, but only occasionally, especially during high-profile events like EXPO or IDEAS.