

## Nepal's second int'l airport begins operations

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Dhaka: The Gautam Buddha International Airport, Nepal's second international airport located in the Lumbini province, formally started operations on April 22, marking a new milestone in the country's aviation history.

On the occasion, Pradip Adhikari, Director General, Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, said, "We would like to give our special thanks to all who are directly and indirectly linked with the project. The Bhairahawa airport [historical name] was operated on July 4, 1958 as a domestic airport. Now, we have declared that it has been brought into operation as an international airport from today."

While the airport is officially designated as being capable of operating international flights, none would take place just yet. Nepalese authorities are planning on commencing international operations on May 16 to mark the birth anniversary of Lord Buddha. Until then, only domestic flights will operate out of BWA.

GBIA is not an entirely new airport. Rather, the existing infrastructure has been upgraded to accommodate international flights and passengers. The most prominent of changes is the addition of a brand-new runway that is 3,500 meters (11,483 feet) in length. This runway is even longer than the one at Kathmandu International Airport by nearly 500 meters (1,640 feet).

The new runway replaces the old one that sits adjacent, but only spans 1,500 meters (4,921 feet) in length. The longer runway will allow the airport to accommodate wide-body aircraft, thereby paving the way for long-haul flights to and from Nepal.

With the new airport complete and ready for use, the Nepalese authorities can focus on other ongoing airport upgradation projects around the country. Authorities are completing the construction of the third international airport, located in the Gandaki province.

The Pokhara International Airport is set to open later in 2022 and is aimed at regional international flights to neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Myanmar, Pakistan, etc.

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