Turkey to modernise Pakistan’s F-16s

Turkey has agreed to modernise the Pakistan Air Force’s fleet of F-16s at a cost of $75 million amid the controversy surrounding the purchase of new jets from the United States.

A senior official of the Istanbul-based Foreign Economic Relations Board (DIEK) on Saturday told reporters both countries have struck a deal in an aviation project under which some Pakistani fighter planes have already been flown to Turkey.

Volkan Yuzer, Asia-Pacific regional coordinator at DIEK, said Pak-Turkish multi-faceted relations were growing in the defence sector. He added Turkey was already manufacturing engines for F-16 jets in addition to making some of their spare parts.

Talking about business opportunities in Pakistan, Yuzer said at least 100 Turkish companies were already operating successfully in the country and had invested $2.7 billion in various projects by 2014.

More investment, he added, is expected in the energy, infrastructure and beverages projects. Replying to a question on signing the Free-Trade Agreement between the two countries expected by September this year, Yuzer said both sides were working out the details of the agreement.

According to the website of Turkish Aerospace industries (TAI), the Pakistan Air Force had awarded the tender of modernisation of its 41 F-16 aircraft to TAI in June 2009. The upgrade of jets started in the last quarter of 2010 when the first three aircraft were flown to Turkey.