

# Weekly POK News Digest

*(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)*

Volume 4 | Issue 43

21 October - 27 October 2024

Special Economic Zone

**POK** Electricity tariffs  
**CPEC** Election Tribunal  
**Gilgit-Baltistan** Waste  
**Rathoa-Haryam** management  
**Bridge project** Social media



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES  
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
New Delhi-110 010

## Contents

### Political Developments

- GB election tribunal declares victory of PPP candidate on Gilgit seat
- Kashmiris determined to wrench back their homes from 'Indian unlawful occupation': 'AJK' SCBA President
- Toll from attack in 'India-occupied Kashmir' rises to seven: reports
- CISS 'AJK' carries out an impactful academic outreach visit to Neelum Valley
- 'AJK' PM lays foundation stone of Asia's longest bridge
- Nestlé Pakistan's Clean Gilgit-Baltistan Project Installs First Waste Segregation Machine in Gilgit
- Kashmir's vote for statehood
- Kashmiri Resistance
- Modi's defeat in Kashmir

### Economic Developments

- Centre, 'AJK' fail to finalise power tariff, WUC rate
- Good news for GB
- 'AJK' PM launches work on stalled bridge project in Mirpur

### Vernacular Urdu Media

- Government's ban on the employees use of social media not implemented on ground
- Won't stop until Kashmir's self-determination is not attained: Anwar ul Haq
- United Nations must play its role in meting justice to Palestinian's and Kashmiri's: Maryam Nawaz
- 'AJK' govt reduces property tax to move at a faster pace to promote business and investment in region: Minister Information

## Political Developments

### **GB election tribunal declares victory of PPP candidate on Gilgit seat**

*The Dawn, 24 October 2024*

The election tribunal of Gilgit-Baltistan on Wednesday declared the victory of PPP candidate Jamil Ahmed from the Gilgit constituency of the GB Assembly.

Judge Raja Shakeel Ahmad of the election tribunal directed GB Chief Election Commissioner to notify PPP candidate Jamil Ahmed as the winner on the Gilgit-II seat of the assembly since November 2020.

Earlier, the GB election commission had declared PTI candidate Fathullah Khan successful from the constituency. However, the PPP candidate challenged the PTI candidate's victory in January 2021.

He alleged post-election 'rigging', pointing out that fake postal votes had been counted in favour of the PTI candidate.

Later in August 2023, the election tribunal suspended assembly membership of PTI leader Fathullah Khan and declared PPP candidate victorious to represent the constituency during the next half tenure.

Subsequently, Mr Khan who was then GB Minister for Planning, challenged the decision of election tribunal before the supreme appellate court.

The supreme appellate court then revoked the judgment of the GB election tribunal and temporarily restored the seat to the PTI candidate,

while referring back the case to the election tribunal for deciding the matter only after the verification of postal votes from Nadra.

Advocate Islamuddin told Dawn that GB election tribunal heard of the case again on the orders of supreme appellate court.

Postal votes of the constituency were then sent to Nadra for verification and in its report, Nadra declared over 1,700 postal votes "fake".

After hearing arguments from both sides, Judge Raja Shakeel Ahmad of the GB election tribunal pronounced the ruling. The election tribunal judge noted that PPP candidate was wrongfully deprived of his victory through illegal means in favour of the PTI candidate.

While declaring Jamil Ahmad as the legitimate winner of the elections, the tribunal ordered the chief commissioner to notify PPP leader as the winner.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1867259/gb-election-tribunal-declares-victory-of-ppp-candidate-on-gilgit-seat>

### **Kashmiris determined to wrench back their homes from 'Indian unlawful occupation': 'AJK' SCBA President**

*Daily Parliament Times, October 23, 2024*

The newly-elected President of the Supreme Court Bar Association of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir', Javed Najam ul Saqib Advocate said that people of Jammu & Kashmir were fully determined to wrench back their homes and hearths from Indian 'unlawful

occupation'; Kashmiris honor and prosperity shall be retrieved by ousting India from our homeland, Jammu and Kashmir and restoring centuries old heritage to the people of the internationally acknowledged disputed Himalayan state.

Saqib expressed these views while talking to the Special Correspondent here on Tuesday on the eve of 77th 'AJK' govt founding anniversary of 'Azad' Govt of the State of Jammu and Kashmir being celebrated on Wednesday October 24.

The anniversary is celebrated this day every year across J&K and worldwide by 20 million Kashmiris.

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' government founded on October 24, 1947 after immense human sacrifices is launching region to free rest of the Jammu and Kashmir state under military occupation of India.

"Today over one million Indian regular armed forces and half a million informal 'Indian occupation' forces are torturing Kashmiris in homes and torture dungeons, a collective crime that should not be overlooked by civilized world, the illustrious Kashmiri lawyer pleaded.

He reminded that All Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference, under the dynamic leadership of founding leaders Ch. Ghulam Abbas and Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, had chartered a political course to accede Jammu and Kashmir state to Pakistan back in 1932 and it unwaveringly sticks to this manifesto.

Kashmiris work to achieve this goal in days of deprivations and times of fulfillment; our people are charged with the determination to continue their mission, he underlined

India, Javed Najam-ul-Saqib said, abrogated special Kashmir article 370 and 35A to deepen subjugation of Kashmiris to her oppressive clutches and has put pro-rights Kashmiri leaders and workers in prisons as part of her terror occupation.

The 'AJK' SCBA President paid rich tributes to the valour of Kashmiri workers who are failing Indian machination planting BJP and RSS extremists from India into 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir'.

Saqib strongly condemned extortion of Kashmiri lands by Indian forces to allot them to extremists from India. He urged UNO to implement its Kashmir issue resolutions pending since 1948.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/23/kashmiris-determined-to-wrench-back-their-homes-from-indian-unlawful-occupation-ajk-scba-president/>

### **Toll from attack in 'India-occupied Kashmir' rises to seven: reports**

*The Dawn, 21 October 2024*

Gunmen in 'India-occupied Kashmir' raked a construction site work camp with bullets, killing seven people and wounding several others, Indian media reported on Monday, updating an earlier toll. The attack on Sunday is one of the worst this year targeting civilians.

The ‘contested territory’s’ chief minister, Omar Abdullah, called the attack late Sunday “dastardly and cowardly”, while India’s interior minister Amit Shah vowed those responsible would face the “harshest” response.

Attackers targeted workers from outside the Himalayan region, who were reported to be building a tunnel connecting ‘held Kashmir’ with the far northern Ladakh region.

Among the seven killed was a doctor, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported on Monday, adding several others were wounded.

Abdullah, who was sworn in as the region’s chief minister on Wednesday after its first local elections for a decade, said he strongly condemned the attack on “non-local labourers”.

Soon after the attack, Abdullah confirmed two people had been killed but had warned there were also “a number of injured labourers, both local and non-local”.

At least 500,000 Indian troops are deployed in ‘occupied Kashmir’, battling resistance fighters with tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and fighters killed since 1989.

India’s home minister Amit Shah called the killings “a despicable act of cowardice”, in a statement.

“Those involved in this heinous act will not be spared, and will face the harshest response from our security forces,” Shah said.

The attack took place in Gagangir in Sonamarg region, where Nitin Gadkari, India’s minister of roads said the “innocent labourers” had been working on a “vital infrastructure project”.

Gunmen fired automatic weapons at the camp from forested hills around, Indian newspapers reported. India regularly accuses Pakistan of supporting and arming the fighters, a charge Islamabad denies.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government cancelled Kashmir’s limited autonomy in 2019, accompanied by mass arrests and a months-long communications blackout.

His administration says the decision has allowed it to stem resistance fighters, but critics have accused it of suppressing political freedoms. Nine Indian Hindu pilgrims were killed and dozens more wounded in June when a gunman opened fire on a bus carrying them from a shrine in Reasi district.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1866650/toll-from-attack-in-india-occupied-kashmir-rises-to-seven-reports>

### **CISS ‘AJK’ carries out an impactful academic outreach visit to Neelum Valley**

*Daily Parliament Times, 21 October 2024*

From October 14th to 17th, the team from the Center for International Strategic Studies, carried out an impactful academic outreach visit to Neelum Valley, ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’. The initiative was designed

to enhance youth capacity-building and raise awareness of critical strategic issues in the region. The team visited Kel Girls Degree College, Sharda Boys College, and the University of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir's' Athmuqam campus, delivering lectures on topics such as Cybersecurity, Economic Security in 'AJK', Strategic Stability in South Asia, and Arms Control and Disarmament.

The visit generated substantial interest among students and led to the identification of critical regional challenges for informed policy recommendations, while also establishing a network of CISS 'AJK' Ambassadors across local educational institutions. Faculty and administration from the colleges and university appreciated CISS-AJK's strategic outreach effort, noting its role in bringing much-needed awareness to students in rural areas where such topics are often unfamiliar. The positive response has paved the way for potential future collaborations, furthering CISS-AJK's mission of education and strategic development in the region.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/21/ciss-ajk-carries-out-an-impactful-academic-outreach-visit-to-neelum-valley/>

### **'AJK' PM lays foundation stone of Asia's longest bridge**

*The Nation, 22 October 2024*

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister (PM) Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq on 21 October laid foundation stone of Rs 10 billion mega

project of the completion of 7181 meter long Rathoa Haryam Mirpur-Islamgarh bridge over Mangla dam reservoir.

Addressing the ceremony held at the adjoining Islamgarh town, he said that with the liberal financial assistance of the government of Pakistan under the already completed Mangla dam raising project, the construction work of the Rathaua Haryam bridge completion project had been awarded to Pakistan's well reputed Frontier Works Organisation (FWO). He underlined that the project, originally valued of Rs 17 billion, would be completed at a cost of Rs 10 billion.

Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq formally awarded the work order of construction contract to FWO officials on the occasion. Housing and Physical Planning Minister, Chaudhry Yasar Sultan, Project Director, Rathaua Haryana Bridge, Habib Mugha and others also addressed the ceremony. The prime minister asserted that practical actions, rather than false claims, were being taken by his government for the rehabilitation of Mangla Dam affectees under a broad-based program in Mirpur district of 'AJK'. Mirpur-Islamgarh bridge over Mangla dam to bridge Mirpur city with adjoining densely populated Islamgarh town is considered to be the longest bridge over any reservoir in any country in South Asian region. A major portion of the 7181-meter long mostly RCC bridge has already been completed so far under the Mangla dam raising project with the liberal financial support of the government of

Pakistan which had accorded formal approval for completion of the project allocating required funds for completion of the mega project. Unveiling the salient features of the gigantic project, the sources close to Mangla Dam Affairs told APP here that the government had allocated funds for the first phase of the 7181-meter long bridge.

The initial construction work on the project was executed after the National Economic Coordination Committee (ECNEC) of the federal government had formally approved the project. The project was targeted to be completed within three-years of stipulated period, the sources said.

The bridge will not only reduce the already-long uneven road link between Mirpur city and Islamgarh town to an unprecedented extent but would also reduce the traveling time for the commuters traveling between district headquarters of Mirpur and Kotli and between Mirpur and Dadayal sub division to a greater extent coupled with safe and comfortable traveling facilities. The construction of bridge over the picturesque Mangla dam surrounded by the lush-green hills, will open new vistas for the promotion of tourism industry not only in this district but also in other parts of the division, they added.

The process for implementation of the development package for the resettlement of the additional families of the affectees of the already completed Mangla dam raising project has been geared up under an integrated

plan to ensure its completion within the stipulated time-frame by the state government. It may be added that the process of payment of compensation to the old and new Mangla dam affectees has been completed and a total of Rs 56 billion have yet been spent for resettlement and rehabilitation of the affected families of the Mangla dam raising project.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Oct-2024/ajk-pm-lays-foundation-stone-of-asia-s-longest-bridge>

### **Nestlé Pakistan's Clean Gilgit-Baltistan Project Installs First Waste Segregation Machine in Gilgit**

*Pamir Times, 21 October 2024*

Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza inaugurates the machine to facilitate Gilgit-Baltistan Waste Management Company for smart waste management.

Staying true to its vision for a waste-free future, Nestlé Pakistan recently installed the first waste segregation machine in Gilgit, under its Clean Gilgit-Baltistan Project. Inaugurated by Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza, the machine is situated in one of Gilgit-Baltistan Waste Management Company's collection sites and will facilitate the sorting and segregation of different types of plastics and paper waste ushering in smart waste management in the region.

Acknowledging Nestlé's contribution, Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza said, "We are delighted that Nestlé is making great efforts to reduce packaging waste in the region, and the progress of Clean Gilgit

Baltistan Project is a testament in this regard.”

Earlier, as part of the CGBP program, Nestlé installed three compressing and baling machines, one each in Gilgit, Hunza and Skardu. The company also installed 122 benches and waste bins made of recycled plastic at popular tourist spots in the region and donated 15,000 reusable bags for distribution among the communities. In the last five year, these efforts culminated into waste management facilitation of over 6000 tons of plastic packaging in the region, making a positive environmental impact.

Highlighting Nestlé’s global vision, Sheikh Waqar Ahmad, Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainability, Nestlé Pakistan said, “We are accelerating our actions to reduce the environmental impact of various kinds of packaging waste. Our vision is that none of our packaging, including plastics, ends up in landfill nor in oceans, lakes and rivers.”

“Tackling packaging waste requires a collective action of leveraging public private partnerships to find improved solutions to reduce, reuse and recycle,” he added.

Senior Minister Local Government & Rural Development Abdul Hameed, Minister for Planning & Development Raja Nasir Ali Khan, Commissioners of Gilgit & Hunza, and other senior government officials representing Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Gilgit-Baltistan Waste Management Company (GBWMC) were also present on the occasion.

Under the CGBP program, Nestlé Pakistan has committed donation of a Waste Segregation Machine for Skardu, installation of additional 100 benches in Gilgit-Baltistan region and launch of Waste Management trainings for hospitality sector in partnership with GBWMC and EPA among other activities in 2025.

Gilgit-Baltistan is major tourist destination in Pakistan, serving as a hub for trekking and mountaineering expeditions in the Karakoram mountain range.

This initiative marks Nestlé Pakistan’s efforts to reduce the environmental impact of packaging waste by improving its management and recycling, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goals 12 and 17 – Responsible Consumption & Production and Partnership for Goals.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/10/21/nestle-pakistans-clean-gilgit-baltistan-project-installs-first-waste-segregation-machine-in-gilgit/>

### **Kashmir’s vote for statehood**

*The Express Tribune, 21 October 2024*

The recently concluded elections in ‘Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IIOJK) were not just a political exercise but a cry for dignity from the people under siege. Since being stripped of their statehood and autonomy in 2019, Kashmiris have lived through some of the ‘darkest days of occupation’, with their voices stifled and freedoms crushed.

They have endured an unyielding crackdown, while the BJP’s iron-fisted



policies sought to erase their identity and subjugate their will. In this election, the people defied the shadows of oppression, rallying behind candidates who dared to promise the unthinkable—the restoration of their homeland’s statehood. The results echo a deep yearning for justice and self-determination, a bold assertion of identity against the relentless weight of India’s occupation.

Kashmiris have sent a resounding message: they unequivocally reject New Delhi’s manoeuvres since the abrogation of the region’s special status on August 5, 2019, which downgraded it into a federally administered territory. Deep-rooted anti-India sentiment pervades the disputed Himalayan region, which has witnessed decades of armed resistance.

Despite attempts to undermine their political agency—whether through the creation of new political factions, projecting certain figures as reformists, or releasing jailed politicians to destabilize existing power structures—Kashmiris have demonstrated a sharp political acumen that has outwitted these efforts. Their actions show a deeper understanding of the political landscape, demonstrating themselves way better than the BJP has assessed.

Despite a history of boycotts and low voter turnout in Kashmir’s local assembly elections, many saw this as the first chance to voice their dissatisfaction with the Modi government’s removal of Article 370. Kashmiri political parties were confronted with a difficult dilemma:

participating in the polls could lend legitimacy to New Delhi, while abstaining might hand the BJP an advantage in governance.

Ultimately, many chose to engage in the electoral process to counter the BJP’s influence. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) led by Omar Abdullah, and its ally, the Indian National Congress, secured a decisive victory in the disputed region’s first state election since 2014. The National Conference (NC) claimed 42 of the 90 seats, with Congress adding 8 more, bringing the alliance’s total to 50.

This victory comes in the backdrop of the region’s ongoing struggle for statehood, a promise yet to be fulfilled by the Modi government. In their election manifesto, the JKNC and INC expressed their determination to restore Article 370, stating their readiness to pursue legal action in the Supreme Court if required. Thus, when they emerged victorious, people across ‘IIOJK’ celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour.

The BJP’s acquisition of 29 seats in held Kashmir represents the party’s most impressive showing in the region to date. However, Narendra Modi’s scheming efforts to have his party seize power in Kashmir were decisively crushed, as the BJP faced defeat in the first election since the national government revoked the region’s autonomy and statehood.

Both the JKNC and the PDP (People’s Democratic Party), led by Mehbooba Mufti, which secured only three seats in

this election, pledged to the people of Jammu and Kashmir during their campaigns that they would serve as facilitators for constructive dialogue between India and Pakistan in order to bring a permanent and lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir. While acknowledging the challenges of restoring Article 370 under the current government in New Delhi and recognizing the significant limitations placed on the new state assembly's powers, the leadership of JKNC stressed that this issue remains a cornerstone of the party's political agenda.

The Kashmir state assembly has been diminished to the status of a municipality, with most powers, including policing and the appointment of officials, transferred to the Lieutenant Governor, which is appointed by New Delhi. The Lieutenant Governor now also possesses the authority to appoint five additional nominated members, increasing the total strength of the assembly to 95 and raising the majority threshold to 48, which JKNC-Congress alliance successfully surpassed. This structural manipulation underscores the ongoing infringement of Kashmiri rights rather than a genuine reflection of democratic will.

However, as the dust settles on these pivotal elections, the results reveal more than just a political outcome—they reflect the unshakable resolve of the Kashmiri people. By backing candidates who promise the restoration of statehood, the people have made their aspirations clear: they reject

subjugation and yearn for justice. The message to New Delhi is undeniable—Kashmir will not be silenced.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2504280/kashmir-vote-for-statehood?amp=1>

### **Kashmiri Resistance**

*The Nation, 22 October 2024*

Despite India's belief that overwhelming force and the use of brutal tactics, such as collective punishment and terror against civilians, will suppress the resistance movement in Kashmir, the struggle remains active and resilient. The movement continues to resist despite the disproportionate force deployed against it. In many ways, Kashmir's plight mirrors that of Palestine, where an occupying power seeks to integrate an ethnically and religiously distinct population, despite the clear opposition of the local people. As in Palestine, where relying on the occupier's goodwill is futile, those suffering under this harsh regime feel compelled to take up arms in self-defence.

The recent attack in Kashmir, where gunmen targeted labourers brought in from other parts of India to build infrastructure aimed at further integrating the region into the Indian Federation, underscores the ongoing resistance to Indian involvement. The attack, which left seven dead, is one of the deadliest this year. Despite India stationing around 500,000 troops in Kashmir—making it one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world, even compared to the Korean

peninsula or Israel—the success of this attack highlights the level of freedom and agency the insurgents still maintain.

With similar unrest occurring in its eastern regions, India now faces multiple insurgencies. It should not assume that the Kashmir issue is resolved. This recent attack serves as a clear reminder that the people of Kashmir, along with Pakistan, the international community, and the United Nations, do not consider the matter settled.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Oct-2024/kashmiri-resistance>

### **Modi's defeat in Kashmir**

*The Express Tribune, 23 October 2024*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the election results announced in the 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' on 9th October as reflective of "the people's belief in democracy". As regards the "belief in democracy", Mr Modi was right; when given the opportunity, the people exercise their rights even under the shadow of guns. Their verdict, even in a controlled environment, showed a clear defeat for the BJP and its RSS-dictated policies rooted in Islamophobia all over the country, especially the 'IIOJK'. Undoubtedly, it was a defeat for Mr Modi and a victory for the Kashmiri people.

The election results show that the National Conference (NC), led by Farooq Abdullah, won 42 seats in a house of 90; and its ally, Indian National Congress (INC), secured six

seats, thus enabling NC and INC to combine to form a government. Already, Farooq Abdullah has announced that his son, Umar Farooq, will be the chief minister. The BJP secured 29 seats from the Hindu majority region of Jammu, but failed to secure a single seat in the Muslim majority Kashmir valley despite putting up candidates in 19 constituencies, underscoring complete rejection of the BJP. Media reports suggest most of the BJP candidates lost their deposits.

BJP's strategy to divide the Kashmir valley's Muslim vote by propping up people like Engineer Rashid, who emerged as a dark horse in the Lok Sabha elections by defeating Omar Abdullah and Peoples Conference chief Sajad Lone from the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat; he contested his elections from jail and won. Presumably, releasing Engineer Rashid from prison before the state assembly elections would divide the NC-INC alliance's votes. However, his Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) failed to make an impact and won only a single seat in the Valley.

'Occupied Kashmir' assembly elections were held after a gap of ten years. Since 5th August 2019, when the Modi government bulldozed articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian constitution that provided special status to the 'occupied state', the 'occupied state' was not only deprived of statehood status but also both the pro- and anti-India Kashmiri leadership faced worst ever lockdown: complete censorship, internet and social media jamming and thousands of arbitrary arrests, including children's.

After the National Conference's success, its leader, Farooq Abdullah, said, "Its (NC's) mandate was to run the region without 'Police Raj' rule and try freeing the people from jail." His son and prospective Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, said in an interview with the NDTV that his party would endeavour to "restore the statehood status of the State". However, both Abdullahs were visibly cautious of making any sound promises, knowing full well that as a union territory, the 'occupied state's' political dispensation would not be more than a municipality focusing on health and education. All key powers over security, finances, police and the bureaucracy are now vested in the Lt Governor. Therefore, Mr Omar Abdullah will be sitting as a mayor of the 'occupied Kashmir' rather than exercising his powers as a Chief Minister. According to renowned Indian analyst Radha Kumar, Omar Abdullah's most significant challenge would be "restoring civil liberties such as free media, right to dissent and protest, which are presently disallowed".

Some Indian analysts see the Kashmir elections as a sequel to Mr Modi's recent setback in the general elections. Although he could form the government through coalition partners, his position has been drastically undermined to dictate his agenda, which is mainly influenced by a populist streak and directed at minorities, especially Muslims. Therefore, 'occupied Kashmir' would continue to haunt him for finding a "final solution" to the Kashmir dispute.

Mr Modi may have taken the extreme step of changing the basic structure of the 'occupied state' by dividing it into two union territories: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The Indian parliament, where BJP enjoyed a two-thirds majority after the 2019 elections, took the extreme measure on 5th August of the same year by revoking articles 370 and 35-A that allowed special status to the disputed state. Even the special status was not accepted by the United Nations as a way out for the exercise of the right to self-determination. The UNSC also rejected the Indian contention in resolutions 91 (1951) and 122 (1957) that holding elections in the 'disputed state' would be tantamount to ascertaining the wishes of Kashmiri people.

There will be different interpretations of the 'disputed state's' elections. For the BJP, the union territory status of the disputed state would be a lever in the hands of the union government to dictate its agenda through the Lt Governor. The BJP government at the Centre would make sure that the disputed state remains under pressure and continues to take measures towards changing the demography of the state and turn it from a Muslim majority to a Hindu majority state; issuance of domicile certificates to non-resident Kashmiris, mostly Hindus, is vigorously pursued to change the ethno-religious structure of the entire state. How the NC-INC alliance is going to change this basic injustice meted out to the Kashmiris will be the actual test of the pro-Indian coalition.

India has displayed enough intransigence in stonewalling an amicable solution to the seven-decades-old dispute. But it has become obvious ever since that it's the people of the 'occupied state' who have rejected the Indian rule despite carrot and coercive policies pursued by various governments in New Delhi. Mr Modi's actions in the 'occupied state' have been described as the most repressive ever since the Kashmir dispute surfaced, but Kashmiris have defeated him with empty hands. The same is true of Pakistan, which has stood by the Kashmiris throughout. Therefore, a reconciliatory approach with Kashmiris and Pakistan is still an option for Mr Modi.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2504617/modis-defeat-in-kashmir>

## **Economic Developments**

### **Centre, 'AJK' fail to finalise power tariff, WUC rate**

*Business Recorder, 23 October 2024*

The federal government and 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJ&K) government are said to have failed to finalise electricity tariff and rates of Water Usage Charges (WUC) as wide differences were witnessed on this issue between federal government entities and 'AJ&K' government, well informed sources told Business Recorder.

At a recent meeting of Steering Committee presided over by Advisor to Prime Minister on Inter Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah Khan, Secretary, Kashmir Affair & Gilgit-

Baltistan Division Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary recalled the background of the meeting and shared that Ministry of Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan had conducted three meetings of stakeholders on the outstanding issues of Water Use Charges.

He added that since consensus could not be achieved on some of the provisions of the draft bilateral agreement, the Ministry as per request of Government of 'AJ&K', proposed constitution of a High level Committee and finally Prime Minister's Office directed to place the matter before the Steering Committee on Prime Minister's Program on Development-'AJ&K'.

Secretary Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan stated that in case of 'AJ&K', Water Use Charges (WUC) are paid in lieu of Net-Hydel Profits paid to the Provinces. He added that in case of Neelum Jhelum Hydro Power Project, Government of 'AJ&K' claims payment of Water Use Charges retrospectively; i.e., from the date of Commissioning of Project (2018 onwards)

Secretary Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) Syed Ali Murtaza responded that retrospective payment is not allowed under ECC decision and only Federal Cabinet can approve retrospective payments. The Chair queried as to why payments on account of Water Use Charges were not being made despite the fact that water was continuously being used for energy generation since 2018?

Chief Executive Officer Central Power Purchase Agency –Guaranteed (CPPA-

G) Rihan Akhtar replied that payment of Water Use Charges is clubbed with tariff determination by National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra). He clarified that electricity generated from Neelum Jhelum Hydropower project is not part of the tariff mechanism of Nepra. Secretary MoWR clarified that since Nepra's jurisdiction does not extend to 'AJ&K', the government of 'AJ&K' does not accept the tariff determined by it.

CEO CPPA-G informed the meeting that Neelum Jhelum Hydropower project sells electricity at Rs. 9.11 per unit to CPPA-G which is approved by Nepra. After incorporation into the National Grid the electricity is sold back to government of 'AJ&K' through Bulk Tariff (minus NJ production) at Rs. 3.81 and further distributed by Distribution Companies (IESCO, PESCO, and GEPCO).

Chief Secretary 'AJ&K' Dawood Muhammad Bareach apprised the Chair that the issues of Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (like mitigation measures, GST and tariff; etc.) were also deliberated in the Inter-Ministerial Committee during caretaker setup from (November 2023 to February 2024). He proposed that Prime Minister 'AJ&K' and Minister for Energy 'AJ&K' be formally invited or made part of the Committee.

He urged the forum to give an in-principle approval to the retrospective payment of Water Use Charges from 2018 onwards. The Chair remarked that Prime Minister 'AJ&K' and Minister for Energy 'AJ&K' are Integral part of the

Committee and shall be formally invited in the next meeting.

The Chair also agreed to the retrospective payment of Water Use Charges for 'AJ&K' from date of commission of project in-principle.

Secretary KA&GB Division noted that issue of jurisdiction of Nepra can be resolved by extension/adoption to 'AJ&K' through legislative process provided in the 'AJ&K' Constitution Act 1974 as amended from time to time.

He shared that prior to 13th Amendment the subject "electricity" was within the legislative jurisdiction of 'AJ&K' Council vide Third Schedule "Council Legislative List" at Entry no. 35.

However, after 13th Amendment to 'AJ&K' Constitution Act 1974, the subject is reflected in Part-B (Entry 8) of the legislative list of 'AJ&K' Legislative Assembly which requires consent of government of Pakistan. Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) Shah Ghulam Qadir endorsed the view that post-13 Amendment, the subject Electricity was within legislative competence of 'AJ&K' Legislative Assembly.

Secretary Water Resources also proposed for constitution of a Pakistan-'AJ&K' Joint Energy Commission with appropriate membership of both governments to resolve the issue of tariff.

Chief Secretary AJ&K added that in violation of Mangla Dam Raising Project (MDRP) Agreement, Nepra had been unilaterally increasing the

Electricity Tariff for 'AJ&K'. He further added that the draft bi-lateral Agreement was approved by 'AJ&K' Cabinet which inter-alia contained a provision for 150 MW Electricity to Muzaffarabad and Poonch Divisions, mitigation measures, transmission lines, tariff, etc.

Any changes in the draft need to be consulted with the 'AJ&K' Government (Prime Minister and 'AJ&K' Cabinet). Secretary KA&GB noted that it was important to determine as to whether 'AJ&K' Government shall accept any such proposed Pak-'AJ&K' Joint Energy Commission.

Chairman Nepra Waseem Mukhtar while responding to a query of Chair regarding reason of non-payment of WUC since 2018 remarked that there was no legal cover under which WUC could be made.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40328525/centre-ajk-fail-to-finalise-power-tariff-wuc-rate>

### **Good news for GB**

*The Dawn, October 22 2024*

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has decided to establish a special economic zone in the region to facilitate foreign and local investors. It is, indeed, a great step towards ameliorating the economic condition of the region.

The land required for building has been allotted by the government, and further development is likely to start soon. The government will also start one-window operation to facilitate investment in GB. This will be great as the natural resources of the region are still

untapped. People will be able to invest in many other sectors as well, such as tourism, agriculture and businesses. This will be a win-win situation for both the investors and the local population. The youth will get more job opportunities, while the public will enjoy better and improved facilities.

The keen interest shown by the Chinese to invest in GB can further boost the relationship between the two countries. Chinese investment in natural resources and agriculture of the region will surely have a booming effect on the GB economy. The use of Chinese technology will work wonders. This initiative will also bolster people-to-people relations.

To turn these possibilities into reality, the government of GB needs to take some concrete steps, like ensuring the security of investors and workers, especially those of Chinese origin. Only then can the government bring investment to the region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1866788/good-news-for-gb>

### **'AJK' PM launches work on stalled bridge project in Mirpur**

*The Dawn, 21 October 2024*

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq on Sunday laid the foundation stone of the remaining construction work on the Rathoa-Haryam Bridge, a project initiated in 2011 as part of Mangla dam extension package for the residents of Mirpur.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony was held in Islamgarh, where a contract

worth Rs10 billion was handed over to Frontier Works Organisation (FWO).

The bridge, named after two villages located on its opposite sides, was included in a three-party agreement between the federal and AJK governments and the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) to address the concerns of the population displaced by the dam's expansion.

According to officials and residents, the three-kilometre-long bridge will not only reduce travel time between Mirpur and many towns on the other side of the reservoir, including the headquarters of Kotli district but will also become a significant tourist attraction upon completion.

Rathoa-Haryam bridge was initiated in 2011 as part of a package for residents of Mirpur

However, while the approach roads (four kilometres) were fully completed and around 80pc of the bridge's construction had been finished, the project had been stalled due to the non-construction of the 160-metre-long central span.

Addressing the ceremony, Prime Minister Haq said completing the bridge was one of his top priorities since taking office.

"The first briefing I received after assuming the office of prime minister was about this bridge, and I took its completion as my most important challenge," he said.

"I then engaged all stakeholders and systematically removed the legal,

technical, administrative, and financial hurdles that were delaying this project. I convinced the federal government to prioritise it.

"Thanks to my team's tireless efforts, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) gave final approval to the project on September 3, 2024. Following this, our officials secured design approval from Nespak."

He said after clearance from the AJK government, he was pleased to announce that work on completing the longest bridge in Azad Kashmir was starting today.

Mr Haq said the prolonged delay in the Rathoa-Haryam Bridge project had not only damaged the reputation of past governments but also created unease among overseas Kashmiris, many of whom hail from the affected areas.

"The completion of a 160-metre span should not have been a difficult task for any government, but the lack of responsibility caused years of delay. We have now decided to complete this section using concrete, putting aside all other options," he said.

He said he was focused on action rather than making empty promises, with the ground-breaking of this long-delayed project serving as proof.

"I have not confined myself to one constituency; I have worked for the entire state and have put an end to many bad practices, including making false promises and misleading the people," he said.



He expressed optimism that just as the FWO had delivered projects in Pakistan ahead of schedule this project would also be completed swiftly.

“This bridge will be a game-changer for the entire region. It will not only enhance the global recognition of Mini-London (a term for Mirpur) but also provide modern, comfortable travel facilities for the overseas community. This will revolutionise the local economy, social life, and tourism.”

Mr Haq also approved the construction of the Islamgarh Tehsil Headquarters Model School, a Rescue-1122 centre, and the Islamgarh Bypass Road. He said issues faced by sub-families displaced by the Mangla Dam extension would be resolved.

Other speakers at the ceremony included Minister for Housing and Physical Planning Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Director General Mangla Dam Housing Authority Chaudhry Mohammad Mansha Naqshbandi and Project Director for the Rathua-Haryam Bridge Habib Mughal.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1866486/ajk-pm-launches-work-on-stalled-bridge-project-in-mirpur>

### **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

#### **Government’s ban on the employee’s use of social media not implemented on the ground**

*Urdu Point, 24 October 2024*

The Prime Minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ had issued an order banning government employee’s use of social media and given this a notification was issued. However, like

other orders, this too was not implemented on the ground. On social media, pictures of officers from different departments along with police department of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, are being circulated.

Department of education, department of police, and traffic police ‘Azad Kashmir’ took the bet. As per media reports, Prime Minister ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ had clearly notified orders that any person who is a part of government service should desist from using social media.

Like this, unethical use of government vehicles, use of heaters and air conditioners in government offices, and government orders of restrictions over them, have remained to mere words. Government officers have trampled these orders under their feet.

Few days ago, a traffic police person’s dancing video went viral on social media on which users wrote several comments. The Prime Minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ is being requested that instead of putting strict restrictions on independent journalists and freelancers, it should ensure that its orders are strictly followed across different government offices.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4202471.html>

#### **Won’t stop until Kashmir’s self-determination is not attained: Anwar ul Haq**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 25 October, 2024*

Prime Minister, ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, Anwar ul Haq congratulated

people on the 77th day of the 'independence' of 'Azad Kashmir'. Haq asked the people that they should thank Almighty Allah that with innumerable sacrifices and struggle that this region got free from the brutal tyranny of the Dogra regime. Our independence remains incomplete until 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' is freed from the clutches of the Indian rule. In the last 34 years, more than 96000 people have been martyred. In 'occupied Kashmir', people's struggle continues against India's unlawful occupation and for their just self-determination. I salute every martyr associated with the struggle for freedom. By the God's willing, time is not that far, when people from the 'occupied Kashmir', after attaining self-determination will walk towards Pakistan.

On the 77th 'day of independence', Prime Minister, Anwar ul Haq in a speech said that people of Jammu and Kashmir fought against the Dogra family's brutal and tyrannical rule. Twenty-two martyrs who took bullet of the Dogra regime's forces in 1931, Haq saluted them. These tall sacrifices not only set the road set for a movement against the Dogra regimes injustices but also have a role in the fruition of the 'independence' in this region. From 1947-1949, the people of Kashmir not only fought against the Dogra forces but also protested against the Indian forces. Pakistani army and brave brothers of tribal areas, who fought and sacrificed their lives for our independence deserve huge salute.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-25.jpg>

### **United Nations must play its role in meting justice to Palestinian's and Kashmiri's: Maryam Nawaz**

*Urdu Point, 24 October 2024*

The Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz said that the United Nations must play its role in meting justice to Palestinian and Kashmiris. In her message, she said that the United Nations has a duty for peace, human rights and development. It has fought against poverty, ignorance, and injustice all across the world. She said that Pakistan is closely connected to the fundamental values as espoused by the United Nations. Being a member country, Pakistan has always respected the resolutions passed by the international body. Using the platform of the United Nations, Pakistan will continue to play its role for the world peace and development. On the annual commemorative day of the United Nations, she requested that this body will play its role in dispensing justice and rights to the people of Palestinian and Kashmiri Muslims.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/lahore/important-news/live-news-4203107.html>

### **'AJK' govt reduces property tax to move at a faster pace to promote business and investment in region: Minister Information**

*Daily Parliament Times, October 24, 2024*

Information Minister 'Azad Kashmir' Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah and Forest Minister Akmal Hussain Sargala have said that the government has fulfilled another promise by

reducing the property tax by more than half to facilitate the people as well as the wheel of construction and development to move at a faster pace and promote business and investment in the region.

The complete 'independence of Kashmir' is our goal and the construction and development of an independent region is our dream. The goal will be achieved and the dream will also be fulfilled. These views were expressed by the Ministers of the Government of 'Azad Kashmir' Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah and Akmal Hussain Sargala while addressing the press along with Secretary Information and Forests Ansari Yaqub Khan at the PID Complex.

Information Minister said that Kashmiris need to solve the problem of Kashmir according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and the UN agreements. On the occasion of the foundation day, we pay tribute to all martyrs and ghazis. Our security forces also pay tribute to Pakistan.

He said that the journey of development and prosperity in 'Azad Kashmir' is going well. 147 new doctors and about 3 thousand teachers have been appointed in the health sector by NTS. The government came to power and not only paid the arrears of 11 billion of development projects but also provided funds for new development projects, the process of construction and development is full throughout the state.

'Azad Kashmir' has the cheapest electricity and flour available. The government of 'Azad Kashmir' is playing its full role towards the Azadi Kashmir movement. A delegation of British Members of Parliament of Kashmiri origin is on a visit to 'Azad Kashmir'.

In response to a question, the Information Minister said that the tax system is being simplified on the instructions of the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir'. To a question, the Forest Minister said that we are making a policy regarding the auction of fallen timber and such timber will be auctioned soon.

He said that the whole world is affected by global warming. Cutting of green trees is not allowed in 'Azad Kashmir'. We are trying to increase the green area of 'Azad Kashmir'.

He said that the government is going to make an MoU soon with reference to carbon credit. To another question, the Information Minister said that the government has imposed Section 144 on the use of chainsaws. Secretary Information and Forests Ansari Yaqoob Khan said that the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' has set a zero tolerance policy on deforestation. It has been surveyed many times to save the green tree by adopting an alternative method.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/24/lajk-govt-reduces-property-tax-to-move-at-a-faster-pace-to-promote-business-and-investment-in-region-minister-information/>

## From Social Media

**WAJAHAT ALI** @wajahatgilgiti

24 October 2024

Gilgit. The Chief Election Commissioner issued a notification declaring Jameel Ahmed of People's Party as successful from Constituency Two from November 4, 2020.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1849438448547184975>

**WAJAHAT ALI** @wajahatgilgiti

24 October 2024

What steps have the two former chief ministers taken to eliminate load shedding from Gilgit-Baltistan, asked Iman-Shah

#gilgitbaltistan #pti #pmln  
#loadshedding #crises

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1849203501248999768>

**Nur.** @Blabidin

24 October 2024

Gilgit-Baltistan's meme pages are beyond disturbing. And the reply section utterly disgusting. Bar a few, all post content that make sexual innuendos at the expense of those who have their content public.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/Blabidin/status/1849492612316790956>

# Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 4 | Issue 43

21 October - 27 October 2024

**Compiled by**

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

**Edited By**

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

**Disclaimer**

*PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.*



**MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in); Email: [pokdigest@gmail.com](mailto:pokdigest@gmail.com)