

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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hydroelectricity representation
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Political Developments

JKLF urges rights watchdogs to urgently intervene to save Yasin Malik's life

Pakistan Observer, 29 January 2024

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leaders have expressed concern over India making 'illegally' detained party Chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik the worst victim of political vendetta for electoral scoring. The concern was expressed during a virtual meeting of the JKLF advisory council, which was presided over by the head of the council, Muhammad Rafiq Dar, and was attended by various party activists. The advisory council condemned the Indian attitude towards JKLF Chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik, who has been languishing in Tihar Jail for the past five years.

They criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party for targeting Yasin Malik to get victory in the upcoming general elections. The JKLF leadership appealed to international human rights organizations to urgently intervene to save Malik's life, expressing concern over the Modi government's decision to convert his life sentence into death through the judiciary. They claimed that Yasin Malik is suffering from deteriorating health due to solitary confinement and ill-treatment by jail authorities.

<https://pakobserver.net/jklf-urges-rights-watchdogs-to-urgently-intervene-to-save-yasin-maliks-life/>

'AJK' begins preparations to commemorate February 5 Kashmir Solidarity Day with renewed resolve

Daily Parliament Times, 29 January 2024

People and Government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) besides all social, political, and human rights organizations across 'AJK' have started brisk preparations to observe the nationwide Kashmir Solidarity Day on 5 February to be commemorated across Pakistan including 'AJK' to reiterate full solidarity with the people of 'Indian Illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir' (IIOJK) in their just and principled struggle for freedom of the motherland from 'unlawful Indian occupation', Kashmiris are committed to achieving their globally-acknowledged right to self-determination as enshrined in the international norms in form of the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir.

In 'AJK', masses from all segments of civil society are actively engaged to chalk out elaborate programs to re-pledge their solidarity with the people of Pakistan in a dignified manner on Kashmir Solidarity Day. This year too, the Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed in a most tragic scenario that was followed by the 05 August 2019 sinister the bleeding-occupied valley has so far been turned into the world's largest prison following the imprisonment of the people protesting against the nefarious Indian action

under the shadow of the Indian occupational forces.

Kashmiri human rights activist and Executive Director of the human rights organization- the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) said that the day is most valuable for the Kashmiri people inhibiting either side of the line of control and the rest of the world. He said that the day was being celebrated by the Pakistani nation and the government as well as in 'AJK' to renew the strong ties and deep-rooted love and affection for their brethren of Jammu and Kashmir by extending all possible moral political and diplomatic support to their indigenous struggle for the liberation of the motherland from Indian clutches.

He said that despite post 05 August 2019 coercive tactics, Kashmir remains the internationally-acknowledged core tripartite issue among India Pakistan, and the people of Jammu Kashmir. He recalled that Kashmir Solidarity Day has been observed on 5 February every year since 1975 when the late Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto gave a country-wide wheel jam protest call against the Indra-Abdullah accord denying all international norms and commitments about the peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue besides against the long Indian unlawful occupation of bulk of Jammu and Kashmir against the aspirations of the people of the state.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/01/29/ljk-begins-preparations-to-commemorate-feb-5-kashmir-solidarity-day-with-renewed-resolve/>

India's so-called census rejected as intrusive interference in personal affairs

Pakistan Observer, 30 January 2024

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders have rejected India's self-styled census of 2024, characterizing it as an unwarranted intrusion into the personal affairs of Kashmiri people in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC leaders Ghulam Muhammad Khan Sopori, Syed Bashir Andrabi, Yasin Attai, Khawaja Firdous, Yasmeen Raja, Hafza Bano, Mohammad Yousuf Naqash, Advocate Arshad Iqbal, Imtiyaz Reshi and Maulana Musaib Nadvi in their separate statements issued in Srinagar firmly asserted that the census constitutes a blatant violation of international laws, emphasizing the inherent right of the Kashmiri people to resist India's unjust occupation of their territory. Highlighting the historical context, the leaders contended that India's actions in Kashmir since 1947, particularly its coercive and unlawful occupation, are unacceptable.

Despite enduring decades of oppression, including arrests, fake encounters, and property confiscation, the APHC leaders emphasized the unwavering commitment of the Kashmiri people to their ultimate goal of complete freedom from India. Furthermore, the statements shed light on the perceived manipulation of population figures in the census, with APHC leaders viewing this as a

deliberate attempt to alter the demographic composition of the territory, potentially diminishing the Kashmiri majority and affecting their political representation.

<https://pakobserver.net/indias-so-called-census-rejected-as-intrusive-interference-in-personal-affairs/>

Human Chains at all Pakistan-'AJK' entry/exit points including Mangla Bridge to be the hallmark of Feb. 05 Kashmir Solidarity Day

Daily Parliament Times, 30 January 2024

Like across Pakistan, brisk preparations have begun in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), including this largest expatriates district of Mirpur to celebrate Kashmir Solidarity Day on 05 February to reiterate complete solidarity with the brethren of turbulent 'Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK) state

The day will dawn with special prayers for the martyrs of Kashmir, the victory of the freedom struggle, and the expression of solidarity with the Kashmiri people. Besides mass rallies, symposia, walk-for-peace, conventions meetings, and speech declamations, a unique ceremony at all the six bridges, linking Pakistan and 'AJK', including Barakot, Kohala, Azad Pattan, Hollar, Dadayal, and Mangla bridges, where human chains comprising gatherings of thousands of Pakistanis and Kashmiris to convey solidarity with each other, will be the hallmark of the day-long events everywhere to observe the Day. It would also be a state holiday throughout 'AJK'.

The Deputy Commissioner Mirpur and Chairman National Events Organizing Committee Ch. Yasir Riaz said that since the Kashmir liberation movement is in full momentum in IIOJK', the celebration of Kashmir Solidarity Day always marked an impact on the liberation struggle, by giving it fresh momentum on this day of 5 February every year. Yasir Riaz after chairing a meeting of the National Events Organizing Committee (NEOC) comprising local civil society further said that the scheduled Day was more important as the solidarity of the people of Pakistan with J & K state people would convey a renewed message of full solidarity, cohesion, dedication and commitment to the freedom of 'IIOJK.'

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/01/30/human-chains-at-all-pakistan-ajk-entry-exit-points-including-mangla-bridge-to-be-hallmark-of-feb-05-kashmir-solidarity-day/>

Pasban-e-Hurriyat to start Kashmir Solidarity Campaign from tomorrow

Pakistan Observer, 31 January 2024

Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir (PH-J&K) has announced to start of the Jammu and Kashmir Solidarity campaign from 01 February 2024. According to Kashmir Media Service, PH-J&K Chairman, Uzair Ahmed Ghazali, and other leaders addressing a press conference in Muzaffarabad, said rallies will be held in Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley, Jhelum Valley, and other areas. They said the campaign will be started on 1 February to express solidarity with the

oppressed people of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). The speakers said the people of 'AJK' and Pakistan will not leave alone their brothers and sisters in 'IIOJK' who are facing Indian atrocities. The leaders also said India cannot change the status of the disputed Kashmir by military force, war crimes, illegal acts, the cruel actions of its Parliament, and the politically-motivated and biased decisions of its judiciary.

<https://pakobserver.net/pasban-e-hurriyat-to-start-kashmir-solidarity-campaign-from-tomorrow/>

Plea for Equity

Pamir Times, 31 January 2024

In the heart of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), where the serene landscapes echo tales of struggle and resilience, a battle for wheat subsidies, alongside challenges of electricity shortage, land reforms, and political reforms, is unfolding, revealing the region's intricate socio-economic challenges. This region was sold by Britain to Gulab Singh for 7.5 million in 1846. With the State Subject Rule (SSR), Maharaja Hari Singh attempted to unify authority in 1927 amid local opposition. Due to the exclusive land ownership and other benefits, this rule gave natives, of the Kashmir Valley a distinct status. However, following judicial and administrative reforms in 1974, its validity in GB became unclear. Local population have since asked for the restoration of the SSR until a settlement is reached, under UN Resolution 47.

Furthermore, the area, rich in hydropower resources capable of producing up to 40,000 MV, is currently experiencing a severe energy crisis. The majority of the region is severely affected by power outages, with frequent load shedding lasting between 15 and 20 hours. Regarding agricultural production, only 2% of the land is suitable for agriculture due to the unforgiving climate. Subsidies are not just a financial lifeline but a fundamental necessity for survival. With an estimated population of 1.8 million, there is a requirement for almost 2 million sacks of 100kg, necessitating approximately 20 billion in funds. On the other hand, the government is currently allocating only 9 billion. With this budgetary constraint, only 1.2 million sacks of 100 kg wheat can be procured, creating a significant shortfall in meeting the pressing needs of the population.

Despite GB potentially receiving at around 15 billion rupees through the National Finance Commission (NFC) award, only a fraction of this is allocated, leaving the region in dire need. The subsidy issue traces back to the early 1970s when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, recognizing the challenges faced by GB, initiated subsidies. The government is settling on a wheat price of 52 rupees/kg instead of 27/kg. Recent adjustments by the government, citing inflation, logistic charges, and IMF pressure, have stirred unrest among the local population, adding complexity to GB's position. Despite being annexed to Pakistan through the Karachi

Agreement in 1949, GB remains in a state of ambiguity, lacking the same rights as Kashmiris or those in the rest of Pakistan. GB's socio-economic disparities are further accentuated by the absence of medical and engineering colleges, a lack of representation in the Senate and National Assembly, along the disproportionate allocation of water and other resource royalties.

A stark contrast emerges when comparing the 15 billion rupees given to Jammu and Kashmir for water royalties against the struggles faced by GB. Protests led by the Awami Action Committee (AAC), a coalition of political parties, both in 2013 and the ongoing one underscore the critical role of subsidies in GB's socio-economic fabric. As of 25 January 2024, people have been in a state of protest for 30 days, but the government has turned a deaf ear. The AAC threatens to shut down the strike and organize a long march towards Gilgit if grievances are not addressed. The 2015 committee, led by Sartaj Aziz, recommended de facto integration with Pakistan and special representation in the national assembly until the issue of the region is resolved under the UN resolution, which promised a plebiscite to be held in entire Kashmir, including GB, to determine the wishes of the people. As GB faces an acute wheat shortage due to insufficient subsidies, the government is presented with choices – targeted subsidy, price increment, or reduction in quota.

However, a sudden increase in wheat prices, as currently proposed, would

exacerbate the already precarious situation. In conclusion, the issues in GB aren't around financial matters; it's a supplication for value, representation, and affirmation of the region's special challenges. The government must lock in important exchanges, address the concerns of the individuals of GB, and discover feasible arrangements that adjust with the region's historical setting and socio-economic substances. Only then will we be able to navigate Gilgit-Balistan's brighter and more equitable future?

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/01/30/plea-for-equity/>

Kashmir Solidarity Day: A Call for Youth Action

Pakistan Observer, 31 January 2024

Kashmir Solidarity Day, observed on 5 February by Pakistan and Kashmiris worldwide, is a national holiday signifying solidarity and support for the people of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK), who have been fighting for their right to self-determination for over 70 years. In addition, the day honours the hundreds of Kashmiris who have been martyred in the war and advocates for a diplomatic settlement that satisfies both the UN resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. It's a day to bring attention to the predicament of the Kashmiris, who are subjected to political persecution, economic marginalisation, military repression, environmental destruction, and breaches of their human rights while living under Indian rule.

It's a day to call for justice for those who have been victims of state brutality, including the numerous extrajudicial executions, mass rapes, forced disappearances, and acts of torture that several local and international human rights organisations have recorded. It's a day to question the narratives of the Indian government and its backers, which reject the legitimacy of the Kashmiri resistance movement and present Kashmir as an essential component of India under its 'fascist RSS Hindutva Ideology' of Akhand Bharat. The youth's contribution is vital in this regard. The bulk of people in Kashmir are young, and they have led the charge in the struggle for self-determination. They endure intense militarization and monitoring, but they have demonstrated incredible bravery, tenacity, and inventiveness in expressing their discontent and goals. They have challenged the established status quo and asserted their identity and agency using a variety of protest tactics, including stone-pelting, graffiti, art, music, poetry, social media, and civil disobedience.

They have experienced social and cultural estrangement, a lack of educational and career options, and physical and psychological damage. Therefore, the youngsters must receive the encouragement and appreciation they deserve. They are both the change makers and the victims of the war. So, we urge on youth of Pakistan and the rest of the globe to show support for the youth of Kashmir on Kashmir Solidarity Day. To cooperate and converse with

the youth of Kashmir and to raise their voices and demands. We all should continue to stand up for the rights and dignity of the Kashmiri people and put pressure on the international community and governments to act decisively in favor of a peaceful, democratic settlement of the crisis.

On Kashmir Solidarity Day, we pledge to remain steadfast in our support of the region and rekindle our optimism for a successful and peaceful future for Kashmir and its people. Pakistan supports them in their fight back against injustice, occupation, and oppression and we support their desire for self-determination, democracy, peace, and their vision of a brighter future in which they can live in peace, safety, and prosperity. Hence, we vow to stand by them in every manner on Kashmir Solidarity Day. We vow to speak up for them in all public spaces and on all media. We vow to work together on all campaigns and projects. We vow to support them through every trial and hard-ship. We vow never to disappoint them, never to make them feel alone, and to give up on their dreams. We are unified, we are one, we are Kashmir.

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmir-solidarity-day-a-call-for-youth-action/>

Rationalizing the 13th constitutional amendment reduces all the powers related to KC

The Parliament Times, 31 January 2024

The efforts, and constant hard work of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK),

Prime Minister Ch. Anwarul Haq proved fruitful as the caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan and chairman Kashmir Council, in the context of rationalizing the 13th constitutional amendment, reduced all the powers related to the Kashmir Council to the Azad Kashmir government. A formal notification was issued by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan. This was announced by the senior Minister Colonel (retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor, Government Minister Mian Abdul Waheed, and Adviser to Prime Minister Colonel (Rtd) Maruf addressed a crowded press conference at Jammu Kashmir House Islamabad.

Colonel (Rtd) Waqar Ahmed Noor said that all the assets, employees, vehicles related to the Kashmir Council, and movable and immovable property have been transferred to the 'Azad Kashmir government. Of the 44 employees of the Kashmir Council, of which 35 are regular and 9 are on deputation, the remaining 140 regular employees, 77 contingent employees, and one contract employee will remain in the Kashmir Council. 36 vehicles have been transferred to the 'Azad Kashmir' Government, including the 'AJK' Lodges Building.

In the context of the 13th Amendment, the Kashmir Council was asked to play its role in resolving the outstanding issues and invited them to visit 'Azad Kashmir.' The Prime Minister of Pakistan formed a committee consisting of federal ministers and officials under the leadership of Federal Minister of Defense Lt. Gen. (retd)

Anwar Ali Haider. Several sessions of negotiations were held between the committee headed by Prime Minister 'Azad Kashmir', Ch. Anwarul Haq and the caretaker Federal Minister of Defense. All the financial and administrative matters of 'Azad Kashmir' and the problems related to the Kashmir Council were paved.

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' was assisted by the most senior minister Colonel (retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor and the ministers of the government. The hard work of Ch. Anwarul Haq and his team paid off and in the form of the 13th Amendment, the long-standing problems between the state and the government of Pakistan were resolved and finally, the issue related to the Kashmir Council, its facilities, and employees was resolved. The role of Chief Secretary of 'Azad Kashmir' and Secretary of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan affairs will always be remembered. An opportunity for propaganda had been missed. Both officers wisely played a key role in solving this long-standing issue. They said that by amicably solving all the issues related to the 13th Amendment, the people of Pakistan and Kashmir would benefit. The enduring relationship between the two has strengthened over the years and this has led to the demise of those elements who were making nefarious attempts to sever the relationship over these issues.

Eight working groups are functioning under the supervision of Defense Minister Lt. Gen. (retd) Anwar Ali Haider and these efforts have resulted

in resolving the long-standing issues of 'Azad Kashmir' including the Neelum Jhelum Hydraulic Project, Rathoa Hariyam Bridge, Tariff issues, and Mangala Dam. Significant progress is also expected on the remaining issues like general sales tax, and water use charges, which will further strengthen the relations between 'Azad Kashmir' and Pakistan and provide the Kashmiri people with all the facilities necessary for their development and prosperity, he said.

Government Minister Mian Waheed said that these assets should have been transferred long ago. In response to a question, he said that Billions of assets have been received by the 'Azad Kashmir' government, only essential staff will remain in the Kashmir Council and their salaries will also be paid by the 'Azad Kashmir', government. In response to another question, he said that whatever decision the committee has made regarding the electricity bill. The implementation will be ensured. In response to another question, he said that the change of government in the federation would not affect this process.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/01/31/rationalizing-the-13th-constitutional-amendment-reduces-all-the-powers-related-to-kc/>

Modi regime continues its attempts to Hinduise occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Observer, 31 January 2024

As part of its attempts to Hinduise the 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) and erase its Muslim identity, the Narendra Modi

government has ordered the renaming of thirty-three educational institutions, including schools and colleges, and roads after the names of Indian forces' personnel and other persons killed in various incidents in the territory. According to Kashmir Media Service, as per an order issued by the 'occupation authorities', infrastructure/assets renamed after the Indian army, paramilitary and police personnel, and prominent personalities are located in Srinagar, Islamabad, Akhnoor, Jammu, Udhampur, Poonch, Kishtwar, Baderwah, and Ramban areas. The order said that the concerned Administrative Secretaries shall take immediate necessary steps, including amending their records, for effecting the changes and the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir/Jammu shall personally monitor the naming of the infrastructure/assets in their respective divisions.

It is to be mentioned here that the Modi regime has renamed hundreds of educational institutions, roads, and other prominent places in occupied Kashmir in the last few years. The move to introduce Ramayana studies reflects a broader trend of the RSS seeking to align educational institutions with its ideologies. The Waqf Board, responsible for managing Islamic religious properties, finds itself under pressure to conform to the RSS's vision of cultural and religious identity, especially in states where the BJP holds political sway.

<https://pakobserver.net/modi-regime-continues-its-attempts-to-hinduise-occupied-kashmir/>

Peace in South Asia to remain elusive till just resolution of Kashmir: Jilani

The Express Tribune, 1 February 2024

Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani said that peace in South Asia would remain elusive till the just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute by the UN Security Council Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. He said this after inaugurating a picture exhibition in Brussels to commemorate Kashmir Solidarity Day, during his official visit. Held at the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels, the exhibition depicted the plight of the oppressed people of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). In his address, the foreign minister said that the brave sons and daughters of Jammu and Kashmir had valiantly resisted all Indian attempts of coercion and control. He said that we pay homage to the martyrs for the Kashmir Cause and victims of the Indian brutalities and that India has failed to subjugate the will of the Kashmiri people and their sacrifices will be remembered in history.

He said the international community must urge India to stop the ongoing human rights violations in IIOJK; reverse the unilateral and illegal actions of 5th August 2019; and implement the UN Security Council Resolutions. He said for its part, Pakistan stood in complete solidarity with the Kashmiri people in their struggle and that it would continue to extend its full political, moral, and diplomatic

support to their just struggle. The exhibition aims to raise awareness about the plight of the Kashmiri people and the importance of recognizing their right to self-determination.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2455101/peace-in-south-asia-to-remain-elusive-till-just-resolution-of-kashmir-jilani>

Pakistan runs through the blood of Kashmiris: 'AJK' political, religious, and social outfits resolve to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day with full unity, enthusiasm

Daily Parliament Times, 1 January 2024

All major and small Kashmiri political, and religious parties and organizations representing all spheres of life resolved to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day on 05 February across the liberated territory of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' (AJK) with the renewal of the pledge to continue fullest moral, political and diplomatic support to the brethren in 'Indian Illegally occupied Kashmir' (IIOJK) in their just and principled struggle for the liberation of the motherland from long Indian subjugation. Pakistan runs through the blood of Kashmiris as the Kashmir runs through the blood of Pakistan.

Addressing the news conference the Jammat-e-Islami (JI), 'AJK' leaders Dr. Riaz Ahmed, Tehreek e Kashmir Britain leader Fareed ud Din Lodhi, Dr. Tahir Mahmood of United Kashmir Movement, Qari Muhammad Azam of Jammat Ahle Hadith Pakistan-'AJK' Chapter, Dr. Bashir Shagoo Convenor of Save Kashmir Movement Jammu

and Kashmir, Moulana Ikhtlaq Jazbi of Jammat Ulema Jammu Kashmir, Sajid Kashmiri and others also addressed the conference. They claimed that only Pakistan is the strong force and support of Kashmiri's freedom from Indian forced and unlawful rule in the 'IIOJK.' They continued that had Pakistan not been behind Kashmiris in their struggle for freedom, Kashmiris would have suffered the Afghanistan-like tragic fate today.

The Kashmiri leaders called for infusing and maintaining full unity and solidarity in their ranks to continue the movement for the liberation of the motherland from the Indian yoke, with full determination till it reaches its logical end. They said Kashmir Solidarity Day has great significance in history since the first call to observe the day was given 34 years ago on 05 February by the Ji Amir Qazi Hussain Ahmed and the people and the government of Pakistan from Khyber to Karachi enthusiastically observed the first Kashmir solidarity day on 05 February in 1990 by assuring their fullest support to Kashmiris just and principled struggle for freedom from Indian clutches, till it reach to its end, they added.

Lambasting the United Nations (UN) for its alleged failure in resolving various international disputes including the Kashmir issue despite the long passage of over 75 years, the Kashmiri leaders alleged that the UN has failed to protect human rights in various parts of the world because of

the hostile, hypocritical and discriminatory role of various international powers, they maintained. They also urged The 'AJK' government and the Kashmiri political parties to ensure their due role in strengthening the struggle for freedom of 'IIOJK' from this base camp of the freedom movement.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/02/01/pakistan-runs-through-blood-of-kashmiris-ajk-political-religious-social-outfits-resolve-to-observe-kashmir-solidarity-day-with-full-unity-enthusiasm/>

Economic Developments

South Korea intends to invest in GB: Korean ambassador meets with the GB Chief Minister

Dailyk2, 27 January 2024

Park Kijun, South Korea's envoy to Pakistan, met with Haji Gulbar Khan, Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), to assess bilateral relations. The South Korean diplomat expressed an interest in capitalising on GB's economic potential. Speaking to South Korea's envoy, the GB Chief Minister remarked that there is significant investment potential in the GB in the fields of tourism, hydroelectricity, and minerals, and that partnership between the GB and Korea is essential for these projects. While GB is a faraway and difficult place with a scarcity of companies and private sectors, there are limited work opportunities in GB, so I recommend that the South Korean government invest in education and technology.

To provide job opportunities for skilled youth, the South Korean ambassador remarked that our relationship with the GB is long-standing, and we have a unique attachment to the region and its people. He mentioned that I would want to pay a detailed visit to GB in the spring and meet the locals. He emphasised that he would also attract investment in GB and would provide all possible cooperation and that he would inform South Korean tourists and people involved in the tourism sector about the details of GB's beautiful tourist places, while also attracting investors to invest in GB.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/19900>

GB protesters' key demand met, protests continue

Dawn, 30 January 2024

The Awami Action Committee (AAC), an alliance of political and religious parties and traders' unions, rejected the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government's decision to withdraw an increase in the subsidised wheat rate in the region and announced continuing the protest till the acceptance of their all 15 demands. A notification issued by the GB Chief Minister's Secretariat earlier in the day stated that after consultations and with unanimous approval of the members of the GB cabinet, the chief minister has been pleased to withdraw the notification issued by the cabinet and S&GAD on 5 December 2023, and subsequent notifications issued by the food secretary regarding the revised sale rates of wheat and flour in GB with immediate effect, taking consideration

the purchasing power of poor consumers in the larger public interest.

Talking to reporters, GB Assembly member Fathullah Khan claimed that the decision to withdraw the subsidised wheat price had been taken after negotiations with the representatives of protesters. He said the government's committee held a meeting with the representatives of protesters from Nagar, Baltistan, and Diamer. The protesters from Nagar district called off their long march following the decision. However, the AAC rejected the decision and announced continuing the protest. AAC chief organiser Ehsan Ali Advocate said the basic struggle of the protesters is to get their 15-point charter of demands implemented by the government, insisting that they would continue the protest till the fulfillment of all of their demands.

Faizan Mir, a representative of the AAC, said negotiations with irrelevant people were not acceptable, claiming the real stakeholders had not been consulted. The AAC demands include the restoration of the subsidised wheat price at the 2022 level, suspension of the Finance Act 2022, withdrawal of various taxes, ensuring GB's share in the NFC award, and the provision of land ownership rights to locals. It also demanded that all leases granted to outsiders for exploration of minerals be canceled, 80 percent royalty of Diamer-Bhasha Dam under net hydel profit be given to GB people, electricity supply to GB residents be ensured, the 22-hour power outage be ended, medical and

engineering colleges in the region be established, and traditional routes in GB be restored. Najaf Ali, a representative of the AAC from Baltistan, said the protest would continue till the acceptance of the 15-point charter of demands.

The 34-day-long protest has been postponed for some days, he said, adding that the AAC's condition to start negotiations with the government was linked with the issuance of the notification regarding the withdrawal of subsidised wheat price hike. He warned that the protest would restart in the Baltistan division if all the demands were not fulfilled. Meanwhile, the protest demonstration continued at Etihad Chowk in Gilgit, with the protesters blocking the main roads. They said that despite many tactics and conspiracies, the GB people would continue their struggle till the acceptance of all their demands. The organisers claimed that more people are joining the protest and announced staging a sit-in at Etihad Chowk and other areas till the acceptance of their demands.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1809701/gb-protesters-key-demand-met-protests-continue>

Wheat to be sold in GB at previous rates says minister

Dawn, 31 January 2024

Wheat will be available in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) at previous rates after the government reversed its move to raise prices, Home Minister Shams Lone announced the decision at a press

conference. The announcement came amid a sustained protest against the government's decision last month to increase rates of the commodity. According to sources, people in Skardu and Nagar called off their month-long protest after the decision was announced. A notification issued by the CM Secretariat later in the day said Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan had set up a six-member committee to consult all stakeholders on the grievances and demands of the people.

The government plans to present a set of demands and proposals to Islamabad in the light of suggestions given by the region's politicians, businessmen, religious figures, and social activists, the notification said. The committee will consist of Senior Minister Ghulam Muhammad, Planning and Development Minister Muhammad Ismail, Excise and Taxation Minister Haji Rehmat Khaliq, Law Minister Sohail Abbas, Home Minister Shams Lone and Education Minister Shehzad Agha. Meanwhile, a large number of people turned up at Gilgit's Etihad Chowk on Monday evening to join the protest against the rise in prices of subsidised wheat. The campaign is being spearheaded by the Awami Action Committee (AAC).

Protesters from the Ghizer district also traveled to Gilgit to take part in the campaign. They were led by Nawaz Khan Naji, a member of the GB Assembly. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Naji assured the protesters that 'we won't compromise on the GB people's interests.' Demonstrations were also

held at Chilas, the district headquarters of Diamer district. The agitators blocked the Karakoram Highway, causing the suspension of traffic for several hours. They called for making the population the sole yardstick for the allocation of the quota of subsidised wheat for different districts of GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1809976/wheat-to-be-sold-in-gb-at-previous-rates-says-minister>

India diverts Chenab waters in blatant violation of Indus Waters Treaty

Daily Times, 31 January 2024

In blatant violation of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), the Indian government, led by Narendra Modi, has diverted the waters of the Chenab River, disrupting its natural flow and adversely affecting downstream regions in Pakistan. According to the Kashmir Media Service, with construction activities gaining momentum at the Ratle Hydro Electric Project in Kishtwar, the diversion was successfully carried out on 27 January 2024. The Chenab River is a vital source of water for agriculture and daily life in the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sindh, and Modi's provocative act can ignite regional tension in South Asia.

The decision to redirect the Chenab's flow has raised alarm in Pakistan, with concerns about water scarcity and potential agricultural implications for its citizens. The IWT is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan that was brokered by the World Bank and signed in 1960. The treaty allocates

the waters of the Indus River system between the two countries. The Chenab River is one of the major rivers covered by this treaty. While the treaty allows India to use the waters of the Chenab River, it also imposes certain restrictions and obligations to ensure equitable sharing and prevent the construction of projects that could negatively impact the water flow to Pakistan.

Any significant changes or diversions of water from the agreed-upon allocations would need to be addressed through bilateral discussions between India and Pakistan or, in extreme cases, through the mediation of the World Bank, which played a crucial role in the negotiation of the treaty. In summary, India is bound to adhere to the provisions outlined in the treaty when it comes to the use of the waters of the Chenab River, while any diversions or alterations require careful consideration. As the diverted flow of the Chenab River continued to make headlines, experts argue that the story has become a metaphorical river of dialogue. The currents of diplomacy and environmental stewardship will likely determine the future relationship between India and Pakistan and could set a precedent for managing shared water resources in the face of competing interests.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1165937/india-diverts-chenab-waters-in-blatant-violation-of-indus-waters-treaty/>

ECC approves GB wheat subsidy, trims ministries' budgets

Dawn, 2 January 2024

Amid continuous unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for almost a month over a wheat price hike, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet agreed to continue providing subsidies to the people of the region by slashing budgets of some major ministries given strict IMF conditions on subsidies. The meeting, presided over by caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar, also approved the transition from the London Inter-Bank Offer Rate (Libor) to the Secured overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) in electricity contracts.

The meeting discussed the issue of a sustainable plan for the price rationalisation of subsidised wheat in GB. The people of the region have been protesting over the price increase for almost a month as the federal government scaled down the wheat subsidy. The GB government had an understanding with the federal government to gradually increase the wheat price to Rs52 per kg to adjust the subsidy impact, but when it increased the rates to Rs36 per kg from about Rs20 per kg, protests erupted in the entire region. The withdrawal of full subsidy would mean an additional burden of more than Rs10bn on the GB government, which, in any case, relies on federal financing to run its affairs.

The Ministry of Finance explained that it could not extend subsidies out of

budget due to strict IMF conditions. The only option was to make technical supplementary grants by diverting funds from other ministries having large part portfolios. The ECC also approved a summary of the Ministry of Power regarding the transition to the SOFR for interest calculation from Libor, which came to an end on 30 June last year in the international financial market. Under a decision of the UK's Financial Conduct Authority, the Libor system of benchmarking financial transactions has already expired on June 30 and was replaced with the SOFR system with the approval of the Federal Reserve's Alternative Reference Rate Committee (ARRC).

The Power Division had contracts with foreign private contractors that required to transition to the new system, but Chinese investors had some reservations. The Power Division had proposed that project lenders of independent power producers and independent transmission companies should be allowed to adopt SOFR as a replacement for USD Libor based on the term SOFR plus applicable CAS and daily SOFR plus applicable CAS. The meeting approved a series of supplementary grants. For example, it approved a supplementary grant of Rs38.856 million for the Institutional Reforms Cell from the Cabinet Division and the import of Sahiwal Bull from Pakistan as semen donors for the National Artificial Insemination Programme from the Ministry of Commerce. The ECC approved a

Rs1.59bn supplementary grant to the Ministry of Finance for the rehabilitation of flood-damaged rural roads in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through counter value fund deposited under Japanese grant aid, and provision of clean drinking water in Model Areas UC 99, 100, and 101 Lahore through counter value fund deposited under Japanese grant aid.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1810538/ecc-approves-gb-wheat-subsidy-trims-ministries-budgets>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The government can play a double game; the all-party alliance must be cautious: Opposition leader

Dailyk2, 29 January 2024

Muhammad Kazim Maisam, the opposition leader in the Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Assembly, stated that government officials who had threatened to prolong the ongoing strike and protests may have become tired and were forced to negotiate. He stated that we had shown our support for the protestors over the wheat price increase, and as a result, the people joined together to fight not only the wheat price increase but also the issues related to health facilities and taxes, raising concern in government circles. However, without resorting to politics, we continue to make constructive recommendations to the chief minister regarding the wheat and power issue. However, the government did not listen to us, and for us, the people are everything, and God is

testimony that we would never let them down. The party alliance's leader, Ghulam Hussain, appreciates the opposition leaders and their comrades' patience and support for the real demands of protestors, adding that we have always resisted political point-scoring.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/19929>

Gilgit: Thousands of people participated in the Awami Action Committee's sit-in

Jang, 30 January 2024

Thousands of people from Ghizar and the neighboring cities of Dinyar Chowk took part in the Awami Action Committee (AAC) sit-in in Gilgit. Today marked the 29th day of the sit-in over the removal of wheat subsidies. Although the wheat subsidy was reinstated yesterday, the protesters have chosen to continue their protest until the remaining 15 demands are met. Protesters demand that the GB Finance Act 2023, as well as all illegitimate taxes, be repealed immediately.

<https://jang.com.pk/news/1315295>

Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami GB chaired a meeting related to the Kashmir Solidarity Campaign

UrduPoint, 31 January 2024

An important meeting was conducted in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity campaign, presided over by Amir Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Baltistan Maulana

Abdul Sami, General Secretary of the JI GB Naveedullah Khan, and other district-level JI officials also attended the meeting. Amir JI GB Maulana Tanveer Hydari addressed the conference, stating that as soon as the name Kashmir is mentioned in the vernacular, the bodies of our dear Kashmiri brothers and sisters who have been subjected to brutality and persecution come to the forefront, causing collective shame. The horrible scene of the day in occupied Kashmir plays out in front of our eyes, as the sobs of young children remind us that Kashmir's Paradise Valley is still on fire. He remarked that displaying sympathy with the oppressed Kashmiri people is an essential part of our Muslim faith. GB will defend Muslims' right to self-determination wherever they are oppressed around the world.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-3900696.html>

America should play its rightful part in settling the Kashmir dispute: 'AJK' PM

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2 January 2024

Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Ch. Anwarul Haq has stated that the United States (US) should play its full part in resolving the Kashmir dispute to ensure peace and stability in South Asia. While emphasising the importance of resolving the long-running Kashmir dispute as soon as possible, Haq stated that the US's

increased involvement was required to resolve the conflict, which has already reached dangerous dimensions.

He described Kashmiris' 'ongoing liberation movement' as a noble and legitimate struggle, claiming that the Kashmiri people have been fighting for their right to self-determination, which has been guaranteed to them by the UN. He praised the US for its assistance in the rescue and relief efforts in 'Azad Kashmir' following the 2005 earthquake. He also praised the scholarship programme granted by the US government to Kashmiri students, stating that it allows them to comprehend American culture. He also praised the US government's assistance in USAID-sponsored development projects in 'Azad Kashmir.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-02.jpg>

From Social Media

PAMIR TIMES ® @pamirtimes

31 January 2024

Awami Coordination Committee Baltistan has said in an announcement that they are ready to join the Ittehad Chowk Dharna after Shahrah-e-Baltistan is cleared. They have also reasserted their support of the 15-points charter of demands of the Awami Action Committee. #GilgitBaltistan #gilgit #baltistan.

https://twitter.com/i/bookmarks?post_id=1752730875945435506

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din*2 February 2024*

Diamer Basha Dam Project:
Construction updates. #Diamer
#GilgitBaltisran

Video link:

https://twitter.com/i/bookmarks?post_id=1753390770634076451

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din*4 February 2024*

Why will there be protests in Kashmir
and Gilgit-Baltistan on February 5?

Why not celebrate Gilgit-Baltistan and
Kashmir's rights rather than Kashmir
Solidarity Day? #gilgitbaltistan
#Kashmir #5February

Video Link:

https://twitter.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1754175379521098100

Basharat Issa@BasharatIssa*05 February 2024*

More than Kashmir Solidarity Day,
Gilgit-Baltistan's people require a day
of their conscience awakening.

#Kashmir solidarity day#GB protests.

<https://twitter.com/BasharatIssa/status/1754409298103267538>

BilawalBhuttoZardari**@BBhuttoZardari***5 February 2024*

On Kashmir Solidarity Day, we stand
firmly with IIOJK's courageous struggle for

self-determination, a right granted by
UNSC resolutions. India's actions on
August 5, 2019, were a blatant violation of
international law, contradicting UNSC
mandates on the disputed territory. We
honour the Kashmiri peoples struggle for
peace, freedom, security, and dignity, and
stand steadfast with them in their cause.
#KashmirSolidarityDay.

<https://twitter.com/BBhuttoZardari/status/1754400654964183411>

Shireen Mazari @ShireenMazari1*5 February 2024*

5 Feb Kashmir Solidarity Day - every
year we mark this day to express our
solidarity with the brave Kashmiri
people struggling under Indian
Occupation. But mere rhetoric on this
day does not help move the Kashmir
issue towards the UN sanctioned
plebiscite. We must move more
proactively on int law & diplomatic
fronts; & we must continue to say
Absolutely Not to India's illegal
alterations of the status of IIOJK.
#KashmirSolidarityDay.

<https://twitter.com/ShireenMazari1/status/1754409206533489037>

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Disclaimer

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