

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Tourism Gilgit-Baltistan Indus Waters
Diamer Basha hydel Treaty protests
ROCK carvings profit
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Contents

Political Developments

- India's colonial project in 'IIOJK' breach of UNSC resolutions, International law: Foreign Secretary
- Mushaal urges the world to take notice of rising incidents of custodial rape in 'IIOJK'
- Scourge of sexual violence in conflicts: A Kashmiri dilemma
- India cannot dare to cast an evil eye on Pakistan, PM 'AJK'
- Pakistan Army shoots down Indian spy drone along LoC
- Saghar draws the OIC chief's attention toward the plight of Kashmiri detainees in jails
- Article 370 unveiled

Economic Developments

- The finance division and PAC fail to provide relief to the people
- 'Water terrorism' intensifies as India stops Ravi River water to Pakistan
- Wapda to digitise prehistoric rock carvings at Diamer Basha Dam site
- The high-altitude guides training programme starts in Gilgit
- GB seeks water user charges and hydel profit from Centre
- Progress on acquiring land for dams reviewed

Vernacular Urdu Media

- To commemorate Surprise Day on February 27, a lavish event was held at Burhan Shaheed College Ambore
- The Indian government began building a network of highways and railway tunnels to bolster its military control over 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir'
- Kashmir is a recognized conflict by the UN and other international organizations: Former 'AJK' PM

Political Developments

India's colonial project in 'IIOJK' breach of UNSC resolutions, International law: Foreign Secretary

The Nation, 27 February 2024

Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi has said India's colonial project continues in full swing in 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) in breach of the UN Charter, Security Council resolutions, and international law. Addressing the High-Level Segment of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, he said political and demographic engineering of the occupied territory is being carried out by the world's self-professed largest democracy through an outsized military presence and draconian laws. He said Kashmiri women and children suffer several layers of institutionalized discrimination, abuse, and violence. The Ambassador demanded the High Commissioner's Office continue monitoring the situation in 'IIOJK' and produce a third Kashmir report in the exercise of its prevention mandate.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/india-s-colonial-project-in-iiojk-breach-of-unsc-resolutions-int-l-law-foreign-secretary>

Mushaal urges the world to take notice of rising incidents of custodial rape in 'IIOJK'

The Nation, 27 February 2024

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein

Mullick urged the international community and human rights organizations to take notice of the rising tendency of custodial rape and using rape as a weapon of war by in-human and brutal Indian forces. Mushaal, who is also the wife of un-lawfully incarcerated senior Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, said that the brutal occupation forces had been using sexual abuse of women in 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) as a weapon of war for over last seven decades but the international community and world powers observed criminal silence in this regard.

Mushaal pointed out that the dirty and ugly face of India was exposed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which revealed that India had recorded 275 cases of custodial rape between 2017 and 2022, adding that these incidents, documented across various states, involve perpetrators from law enforcement, armed forces, and other custodial facilities, reflecting a misuse of power under the guise of state protection. The SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment recalled that incidents such as the gang rape in Kunan Posh-pora in 1991, the double murder and rape in Shopian, and the gang rape of young Asifa Bano are among the most harrowing examples of the nightmare faced by women in Kashmir.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/mushaal-urges-world-to-take-notice-of-rising-incidents-of-custodial-rape-in-iiojk>

Scourge of sexual violence in conflicts: A Kashmiri dilemma

Pakistan Observer, 27 February 2024

The women in Kashmir who have suffered untold hardships due to 'sexual violence' are still waiting for justice, a prospect that seems a long way off as long as the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) remains in force and hampers the conviction of perpetrators. The unrest and the events that unfolded in Jammu and Kashmir over the past 35 years have left indelible scars on the population, with Kashmiri women in particular suffering disproportionately. Violence, displacement, and constant grief have severely affected their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Among the multiple forms of abuse they face, sexual violence stands out as a particularly egregious assault, leaving a legacy of suffering embodied by rape survivors. The weaponisation of sexual violence in the Kashmir conflict is an egregious reality that has largely escaped the attention of local and international observers. An incredible 36% of women in this long-suffering region suffer from anxiety disorders. Many have been widowed or displaced, harassed, gang-raped, and subjected to cruel treatment during interrogations and military operations.

The official death toll from the conflict is over 50,000; however, independent sources believe the figure could be twice as high. It is estimated that around 50,000 women have been widowed. Human rights groups have

documented that over 10,000 people have disappeared since 1989, a figure that stands in stark contrast to the official figures. Incidents such as the gang rape in Kunan Poshpora in 1991, the double murder and rape in Shopian, and the gang rape of young Asifa Bano are among the most harrowing examples of the nightmare faced by women in Kashmir. A report based on testimonies of women from the valley confirms that the security forces deliberately targeted these women. According to a 1996 Human Rights Watch report, rape was used as a counter-insurgency tactic.

Norwegian researcher Inger Skjelsbæk notes that a typical pattern in Kashmir is for the soldiers to drive out or kill the men before raping the women who remain behind. The prevalence of psychiatric disorders has risen sharply due to the ongoing conflict, while young women and girls live in constant fear of abduction and assault by the Indian Army, which is omnipresent throughout the state. After 5 August 2019, when Article 370 was revoked, the plight of women in Kashmir has further worsened. Studies show a worrying rise in untreated mental illness in the Valley, with one study indicating that the prevalence of mental disorders is significantly higher than the national average in India.

A report by Médecins Sans Frontières indicates that a significant proportion of the valley's population suffers from mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. A team of

women who visited Kashmir after 5 August 2019 described a distressing situation in which women are suffering premature births due to overwhelming stress and anxiety. Health experts in the region have observed an increase in mental disorders and heart attacks due to the relentless conflict. One particularly distressing result of this conflict is the phenomenon of 'half-widows', women whose spouses have disappeared, leaving them in an agonising limbo. Depression and PTSD are widespread, and in recent years tens of thousands of Kashmiris have attempted suicide.

Crucially, over 11,000 cases of sexual violence have been reported since 1989, leaving nearly 23,000 women widowed and over 107,805 children orphaned. Sexual violence, which is often used by uniformed men as collective punishment, goes largely unreported due to social stigmatization. The 'security forces' involved in these heinous acts have so far enjoyed immunity from prosecution, protected by the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), which politicians, intellectuals, and civil society in Kashmir vehemently oppose. The AFSPA has been criticised for granting excessive powers to the military and preventing civilian courts from intervening in cases of human rights violations.

The women of Kashmir who have suffered untold hardships due to sexual violence are still waiting for justice, a prospect that seems a long way off as long as the AFSPA remains

in force and hinders the conviction of perpetrators. The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir must recognise the gravity of these crimes and launch a thorough investigation into these incidents that constitute crimes against women. The perpetrators must be brought to justice, not only for the sake of the victims but also to restore confidence in the legal system.

<https://pakobserver.net/scourge-of-sexual-violence-in-conflicts-a-kashmiri-dilemma/>

India cannot dare to cast an evil eye on Pakistan, PM 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 27 February 2024

Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Ch. Anwarul Haq, while terming 27 February as a Victory Day for Pakistan, has said that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) amply demonstrated its conventional and technological supremacy through its successful counterattack against the Indian Air Force (IAF). In his special message issued on the fifth anniversary of Operation Swift Retort, the 'AJK' premier said that on this day in 2019, PAF exhibited its professional capabilities and fighting prowess by responding to Indian aggression. Referring to the Pakistan Army's excellent track record and ability to defend the geographical frontiers of the country, Haq claimed that the Pakistan Army has always proved its metal.

He said that the downing of the Indian warplane and arrest of its pilot was not only a big surprise for India but the befitting response by the Pakistani

Shaheens had destroyed the myth of India's military power. The operation's swift retort, he said, dashed to the ground India's ambitions and false pride, now, 'India cannot even dare to cast an evil eye on Pakistan.' We are proud of the Pakistan Army, which has always fulfilled the nation's expectations, he said, adding that the Pakistan Army was the guarantor of peace in the region.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/02/27/india-cannot-dare-to-cast-an-evil-eye-on-pakistan-pm-ajkl/>

Pakistan Army shoots down Indian spy drone along LoC

The Nation, 27 February 2024

The Pakistan Army shot down another Indian spying quadcopter that intruded into the country's airspace along the Line of Control (LoC), the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday: On 25 February, Pakistan army downed an Indian spy drone which was violating the Line of Control,' the statement read. According to the ISPR, the incident took place at 12:55 pm, however, after hitting down the quadcopter of the Indian Army, the Pakistan Army started searching for its remains. On '26 February, the remains of a quadcopter were found in Pakistani territory in LOC', it added.

The quadcopter also bears the insignia of an Indian Army unit which confirms that the quadcopter belongs to the Indian Army, the statement added. It is pertinent to note that earlier on 27 February 2019, the Pakistan Air Force

also shot down Indian warplanes that violated Pakistani airspace in Operation Swift Retort.

Operation Swift Retort

Today, Pakistan is marking the 5th anniversary of Operation Swift Retort, popularly known as Surprise Day in the country when the country's armed forces gave a befitting response to Indian misadventures. On the commemoration of the fifth anniversary of 'Operation Swift Retort', Inter Services Public Relations in a statement said that 27 February 2019, marked a significant event in our history, demonstrating the resolve of the people of Pakistan and the professionalism of the Armed Forces in response to unwarranted aggression from India, motivated by political considerations and electoral concerns.

The statement said despite desperate Indian attempts to favorably shape the information space, the events of that fateful day showcased the absolute operational ascendancy of Pakistan's Armed Forces over the Indian side. 27 February 2019, was a memorable day for Pakistan as the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) 'shattered the Indian dream of invincibility and military supremacy' by shooting down two Indian aircraft and above all capturing an IAF pilot.

Indian fighter jets crossed the Line of Control in the last week of February and the country's military claimed to have conducted a 'surgical strike' in the Balakot area in Pakistan. New Delhi also claimed to have destroyed a terrorist camp with 300-350 casualties in the

attack. Pakistan denied the claim, saying neither was there any camp nor any casualty. Independent reports, including high-resolution satellite images reviewed by Reuters, also contradicted the Indian claims. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) jets on the other day crossed the LoC in a tit-for-tat move to Indian territory, and in a dogfight, an Indian MiG-21 was shot down on the Pakistani side of the border. After striking down the Indian fighter jet, Pakistan arrested the pilot, who ejected himself after being hit in the airspace of Pakistan in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' — something that came as an unexpected setback for India exposing the country's claims of invincibility and supremacy in the military power.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/pakistan-army-shoots-down-indian-spy-drone-along-loc>

Saghar draws the OIC chief's attention toward the plight of Kashmiri detainees in jails

Pakistan Observer, 28 February 2024

All Parties Hurriyat Conference-'Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) chapter has issued an urgent appeal to the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hissein Brahim Taha, inviting his attention towards the unjust treatment faced by Kashmiri detainees in Indian jails. Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, Convener of the APHC-'AJK' chapter, penned a letter to the OIC, expressing grave concerns over the deteriorating conditions endured by Kashmiri detainees. The letter emphasized the wrongful imprisonment of individuals who have

been implicated in politically motivated cases, suffering under India's oppressive regime. Saghar highlighted the challenges faced by Kashmiri prisoners, including political activists, journalists, and civil society members, who have been arrested and detained under draconian laws such as the Public Safety Act (PSA) and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

He seeks OIC's urgent attention toward the plight of Kashmiri prisoners who have been falsely implicated in politically motivated cases and left to rot in far-off prisons. He wrote that Life for the Kashmiri prisoners, lodged in different jails in and outside Kashmir, is getting tougher and tougher with each passing day. These prisoners, who spent their entire lives advocating peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute by the UNSC resolutions, are being branded as traitors and treated like criminals because of their political beliefs. They are being penalized and punished merely for their work and raising their voice for the voiceless Kashmiris who continue to reel under India's belligerent military occupation. The appeal underscored the misuse of so-called anti-terrorism laws and the manipulation of the judiciary to suppress Kashmiri voices advocating for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir dispute. The APHC stressed the urgent need for international intervention to address what it termed as 'judicial terrorism' against Kashmiri detainees.

<https://pakobserver.net/saghar-draws-oic-chiefs-attention-towards-plight-of-kashmiri-detainees-in-jails/>

Article 370 unveiled

The Express Tribune, 1 March 2024

With the decision taken by the Indian Supreme Court, India has verily demonstrated its true spirit. The abrogation of Article 370 is seen as a dehumanizing practice led by them. It is an effective attempt to turn the Kashmiris into a minority in their ancestral land. Though Kashmir is recognized as a disputed territory between Pakistan and India on the global front, unethical decisions like this one persist in BJP-Modi's government. Pakistan has not accepted this decision and will diplomatically seek justice for the Kashmiris at the UN. All in all, the Indian top Court's decision is nothing more than a 'political agenda,' which has intense repercussions on the lives of the Kashmiris and on Kashmir itself.

What is Article 370? Article 370 of the Constitution of India was inserted in 1949 as a 'temporary provision'. Implementing this article at that time was an amicable decision. However, its status as a temporary provision made Pakistanis and Kashmiris unhappy. It had key provisions as follows: **Autonomy:** With Article 370, Kashmir had autonomy. It could maintain its constitution, flag, and even its parliament. The special autonomy was applicable except in matters of defense, communication, and internal affairs—a win-win situation for Kashmir.

Special Status: The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was governed by a separate set of laws. However, no

Indian was allowed to buy land there or be a permanent resident.

Abrogation of Article 370 and its Repercussions: In 2019, with the decision of the apex court of India, India revoked Article 370 from its constitution. However, it was sort of a 'secret mission' to abrogate the article. None of the Kashmiris or Kashmiri political leaders were asked their views on that decision. At the time of revoking Article 370, the internet was shut down, and almost 10,000 troops were sent to Kashmir just to instill terror and fear among locals. This is how Article 370 was revoked in 2019. Moreover, India was well aware of its repercussions, and that is why they revoked the article. It was, no doubt, a political agenda led by the BJP government. The repercussions are as follows: One of the true motives of India behind its revocation was turning the Kashmiris into a minority in their ancestral land. As of now, Indians are allowed to buy land in Kashmir and settle there permanently.

Apart from this, after the abrogation of Article 370, India has bifurcated Kashmir. Now, Ladakh is no longer part of Kashmir. For a nation, its land, language, and culture are everything. This decision of India's apex court is nothing but violent. These repercussions and, majorly, the change in Kashmir's map, is like pouring salt on the wounds of the Kashmiris who are already bearing the brunt of the brutal forces of India. The decision of the Indian Supreme Court regarding the abrogation of Article 370 is not

approved by the Kashmiris or Pakistan. Un-equivocally, Pakistan has always advocated for the rights of the Kashmiris (illegally occupied by India) in the charter of the UN.

Additionally, this historic decision taken by the Indian apex court has further marginalized the Kashmiris and produced a sense of insecurity by allowing Indians the right to purchase land in Kashmir. Therefore, this decision, despite the ground realities, was put forth to oppress the Kashmiris. In this sense, there is not much difference between Kashmir and Palestine. Thus, Pakistan, as always, must seek justice for them, and international organizations must show keen interest in solving this everlasting dispute.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/01-Mar-2024/article-370-unveiled>

Economic Developments

The finance division and PAC fail to provide relief to the people

Daily Parliament Times, 26 February 2024

The flour crisis in 'Azad Kashmir' including the Poonch district has created new problems. Even the targeted subsidy expected by the government members did not benefit the people. The department is in debt of eighteen billion. The Public Action Committees (PAC) have been protesting and striking for 9 months for cheap flour, but they are unable to provide relief to the people. 'Azad Kashmir', including Poonch is in the grip of a severe food shortage. The food

department has become a headache for the people in the process of controlling flour mills. The total annual requirement of flour in 'Azad Kashmir' is 5 lakh tons, out of which only 3 lakh tons are barely supplied, while 1.5 lakh tons are provided by the private sector.

The current Anwarul Haq government is completely unable to provide flour, but the PAC seems ready to take advantage of the public response. Since, the prices of flour were not fixed and when attempts were made to fix new prices, a series of violent protests started at the public level, which is now a form of state-wide protest. Every citizen is trying to get in touch with the dealers appointed by the food department to get flour, but due to the low quota, the people are facing difficulties in the availability of flour.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/02/26/fd-and-pac-fail-to-provide-relief-to-the-people/>

'Water terrorism' intensifies as India stops Ravi River water to Pakistan

Pakistan Today, 26 February 2024

India has stopped the flow of the Ravi River to Pakistan after the completion of the Shahpur Kandi barrage, situated on the borders of Indian Punjab and the state of 'Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK), as per Indian media reports. According to a report in India Today, the allotted 1,150 cusecs water of Pakistani share will now benefit the region of 'IOJK'. However, the water will benefit 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts. India since long has been committing the

water terrorism agenda against Pakistan and now executing the latest project of the Shah Kandi barrage that would supposedly be used for 'irrigation and hydropower generation' but at the cost of blocking the water flow towards Pakistan.

India already has constructed many dams like Bhakra Dam on Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh Dam on the Beas, and Thein (Ranjitsagar) on the Ravi. The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan, arranged by the World Bank, and signed on 19 September 1960. The treaty divides the rivers into two categories: Eastern Rivers (Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi) which are allocated to India, and Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) which are allocated to Pakistan. According to reports, India has marked the completion of the Shahpur Kandi Barrage on the Ravi River, stopping the water flow to Pakistan, and signifying a strategic shift in water management on February 25, 2024, according to various media reports.

This long-awaited project, overcoming delays spanning over three decades, now redirects 1,150 cusecs of water towards irrigation purposes in the Kathua and Samba districts of Jammu and Kashmir. This development is reportedly going to bolster agricultural opportunities in the region while also marking a significant change in water allocation in India. This will translate into the Jammu and Kashmir region now benefitting from the 1150 cusecs of

water that was previously allocated to Pakistan.

The water is expected to be utilised for irrigation purposes, benefiting over 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts. The Shahpur Kandi Barrage is a dam on the Ravi River in Pathankot district, Punjab, India. Previously, under the 1960 Indus Water Treaty, a portion of the Ravi River's water flowed into Pakistan via the Lakhanpur dam. However, the Shahpur Kandi Barrage effectively ceases this flow, allowing India to fully utilize its allocated share of the river's resources. This move aligns with the treaty, which grants India exclusive control over the Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas rivers, while Pakistan manages the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab.

In December 2018, the Central government approved the Shahpur Kandi Dam project on the River Ravi in Punjab. The Shahpur Kandi Barrage project was incepted in the 1950s, but construction did not begin until 1992. The project was originally supposed to be completed in 2002, but it was delayed due to many factors, including funding issues, land acquisition problems, and environmental concerns. The project was finally completed in 2022. Indian media reported that Shahpur Kandi dam completion allows India to make maximum use of the River Ravi water previously flowing towards Pakistan from the Lakhanpur dam.

It is pertinence to note that former Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao

laid the foundation stone for the Shahpur Kandi in 1995 and remained disputed for almost four and a half years. Earlier, addressing the UN Security Council, Pakistan Permanent Representative in the United Nations Ambassador Munir Akram said Pakistan aims to reinvigorate the Indus River basin which provides food security to over 225 million people. Pakistan has called for strict implementation of the 1960 IWT to address the looming water crisis. He said that to this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Living Indus projects.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/02/25/india-fully-stops-water-flow-to-pakistan-with-shahpur-kandi-barrage-on-ravi-river/>

Wapda to digitise prehistoric rock carvings at Diامر Basha Dam site

Dawn, 29 February 2024

The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) has signed a Rs 46.5 million cultural preservation agreement for the digitisation and 3D modeling of significant rock carvings within the impact zone of the upcoming Diامر Basha Dam (DBD). The eight-month contract, inked in Lahore, encompasses extensive site documentation using terrestrial scanners, alongside the consolidation, archiving, and modeling of scanned data for diverse applications, including 3D printing. Wapda has signed an agreement with firm Quality Solutions Technologies (Pvt) Ltd, which will provide consultancy services for the project.

General Manager DBD Project (Wapda) Nazakat Hussain and Director of Business Development Quality Solutions Technologies Saad Ahmed Khan signed the agreement on behalf of their organizations. Members from the Water department, Wapda Jawaid Akhtar Latif, CEO of DBD Company Amir Bashir Chaudhry, Adviser Wapda Cultural Heritage Management Feryal Ali Gauhar, and Chief Engineer (Contracts) among others were also present on the occasion. DBD is being constructed in northern Pakistan, which serves as a repository of rich cultural heritage comprising an immense number of rock carvings. Wapda is implementing its Cultural Heritage Management Plan in the DBD Project area to fulfill its national and international obligations. The plan aims to preserve prehistoric rock carvings and inscriptions to be submerged in the water reservoir of DBD, set up a museum, and promote cultural tourism in GB, particularly in Chilas and its suburban areas. Experts say the construction of the DBD threatens tens of thousands of rock engravings in the Diامر area of GB. Some of the carvings date back to 8,000 BCE.

The Diامر district has one of the largest known numbers of rock engravings. Many are located on the banks of the Indus River. According to Feryal Ali Gauhar, the lead consultant for cultural heritage management at DBD, over 50,000 rock carvings and 5,000 inscriptions serve as a timeline from the Epipaleolithic period to the

era of Buddhism. The earliest petroglyphs depict ibex and sheep.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1817891/wapda-to-digitise-prehistoric-rock-carvings-at-diamer-bashad-dam-site>

The high-altitude guides training programme starts in Gilgit

Dawn, 29 February 2024

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government with the support of an Italian organisation has started a professional high-altitude guides training programme to build the trust of mountaineers from around the world to take on peaks in Pakistan. The first session of the programme was held in Gilgit on Wednesday and was conducted by Italian trainers from EvK2-CNR (Italy) as well as trainers from other international institutions. A total of 35 local mountaineers from across GB, among them, experienced as well as new climbers, would be imparted training- both physically and theoretically. The training will last for two years and in the end, international certificates will be awarded to the participants.

According to a statement, the High-Altitude Guides Training Programme- a comprehensive initiative by EvK2CNR and Department of Tourism GB - aims to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge required to excel in guiding on mountains. The curriculum covers a wide array of subjects, including safety protocols, climbing, high-altitude sickness, first aid, topography,

emergency response, and environmental conservation practices. Speaking on the occasion, Regional Manager EvK2CNR GB Arif Hussain expressed gratitude for the support and participation of the guests.

President International Federation of Mountain Guides Association Urs Valleuer lauded the initiative. He said mountaineering had great potential in Pakistan, and it could be further promoted through professional guides who were internationally certified. He assured the participants of IFMGA's support during training and certification. Director Tourism GB Iqbal Hussain emphasised the importance of such training programs in fostering responsible and skilled high-altitude guides who contribute to the safety and well-being of those exploring mountainous regions. Maurizio Gallo gave a brief orientation about the training, its objectives, duration, and key thematic areas to be covered in two years.

He said at the end of the training, participants would be awarded multiple international certificates after a thorough evaluation of trainees. GB Additional Chief Secretary retired Capt Mushtaq Ahmed acknowledged the vital role of high-altitude guides in promoting tourism and adventure sports while emphasising the need for a sustainable and eco-friendly approach. He highlighted the potential of adventure tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan that could be enhanced with improved mountaineering services. Alpine Club of Pakistan President Abu Zafar and

Baltistan Association of Tour Operators President Ayaz Shigri appreciated the initiative and expressed their willingness to extend all support in making the training a successful event.

GB Tourism Department Director Iqbal Hussain told Dawn that it was the first program to train local mountaineers for high altitude guides as per international standards. The 35 mountaineers have been selected from across GB and will be trained by international experts in various areas for two years. The under-training local mountaineers will be trained as high-altitude guides as well as for search and rescue operations on peaks in case of accidents. The availability of such professional high-altitude guides in GB would boost the trust of international climbers to visit Pakistan to climb peaks, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1817953/high-altitude-guides-training-programme-starts-in-gilgit>

GB seeks water user charges and hydel profit from Centre

Dawn, 1 March 2024

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government has decided to demand its share of water user charges and net hydel profit of the Diamer Bhasha Dam (DBD) from the federal government. While chairing a high-level meeting in Islamabad, GB Chief Minister Haji Gulber Khan constituted a committee to prepare recommendations that will be submitted to the federal government. It has been decided in light of these

recommendations that the government of GB will submit its recommendations regarding the determination of net hydel profit and water user charges of DBD share between GB and the federal government. The meeting was attended by GB Law Minister Sohail Abbas, Interior Minister Shams Lone, Agriculture Minister Engineer Anwar, GB Investment Board Chairman and Assembly Member Fathullah Khan, and Special Assistant to Chief Minister Maulana Sarwar Shah.

The special committee comprises GB's ministers for power, law, and agriculture and power secretary. It will visit 'Azad Kashmir' and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 10 days to study their sharing formula with the federation and prepare recommendations. CM Khan said the DBD project will result in development and prosperity and that the people of GB, especially Diamer, have made great sacrifices for its construction. He added that a committee was formed at the federal level in 2017 to resolve the boundary dispute between the Kohistan area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Diamer and to determine the net hydel profit share. However, the committee only focused on the boundary dispute, the CM added

The GB government wants the share of net hydel profit to be decided so that the project is not affected due to the reservations of locals, said CM Khan. The net hydel profit is paid by the center to provinces where dams and reservoirs are located, as per Article 161(2) of the Constitution, which states,

The net profits earned by the federal government, or any undertaking established or administered by the federal government from the bulk generation of power at a hydro-electric station shall be paid to the province in which the hydro-electric station is situated.

Committee reviews projects

Separately, the Implementation Committee (IC) on DBD and Mohmand Dams (MD), constituted by the Supreme Court, to review the status of land acquisition and resettlement of displaced people. The meeting was convened at the request of the IC- on the DBMD sub-committee on land acquisition and resettlement. Wapda Chairman Retired Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani chaired the meeting, which was also attended by the GB chief secretary, senior member Board of Revenue Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Finance Division joint secretary, KP additional chief secretary (Development), Hazara Division commissioner, Diamer deputy commissioner and other officials. The Wapda chairman acknowledged the progress made by the sub-committee and expressed hope that the GB government will soon finalize a strategy to proceed on the issue.

The Diamer-Astore Division commissioner briefed the meeting about the status of household and missing chulha (household) cases as well as terms of reference for the grievances and redressal committee formed to solve the issue. Later, Wapda member finance, DBD, and MD CEO,

deputy commissioner, and Wapda and director legal updated the participants about the compliance of decisions made by IC-DBMD in its meeting held in December 2023. The committee was formed by former Supreme Court Chief Justice Saqib Nisar while hearing a case on the construction of DB and MD.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1818193/gb-seeks-water-user-charges-and-hydel-profit-from-centre>

Progress on acquiring land for dams reviewed

The Express Tribune, 1 March 2024

An implementation committee on Diamer Bhasha and Mohmand Dams (DB-MD), constituted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, met on Thursday to review progress on land acquisition and resettlement of locals from project sites. The committee met at the request of the sub-committee on land acquisition and resettlement relating to DB Dam. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Engineer Lt Gen (Retd) Sajjad Ghani, who is also chairman of the implementation committee, presided over the meeting. The WAPDA chief acknowledged the progress made by the sub-committee on tasks assigned to it by the implementation body in its previous meeting. He expressed hope that the administration of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) would soon finalise a strategy to proceed further to resolve the remaining cases of households.

WAPDA highly values the sacrifices made by those affected by the projects,

therefore, we are very compassionate to address their legitimate cases, he remarked. The Diamer-Astore Division commissioner also spoke about the status of cases as well as terms of reference of the grievances redressing committee. It is important to note that construction work on all key sites of DB Dam and MD is progressing at a good pace. WAPDA is constructing the DB Dam across the Indus River to store 8.1 million acre-feet (MAF) of water and generate 4,500 megawatts of clean, green, and low-cost hydel electricity. The dam is scheduled for completion in 2028.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2458029/progress-on-acquiring-land-for-dams-reviewed>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

To commemorate Surprise Day on February 27, a lavish event was held at Burhan Shaheed College Ambore

UrduPoint, 27 February 2024

Burhan Shaheed College Ambore Muzaffarabad hosted a celebration in honor of Pakistani Shaheens on 27 February, the day known as 'Surprise Day,' where anthems and cultural acts were showcased. The 'tea' that Indian Air Force Officer Abhinandan was offered following his capture in 'Azad Kashmir' was alluded to in the people's performances. During the performance and presentations, students lauded the skills of the Pakistan Army. On this occasion, Syed Ameer Shah, the principal of MD Burhan Shaheed College Ambore, while referring to 27

February, declared, that we are proud of our army and that after demonstrating its strength by eliminating the 'enemy straight away', I am confident that our army can match any force in the world and that India would reconsider before committing any such act in the future. We have now shown the outside world that, despite our value for peace, we would not compromise when it comes to defending our borders, especially after returning Abinandan to India.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3930054.html>

The Indian government began building a network of highways and railway tunnels to bolster its military control over 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir'

UrduPoint, 27 February 2024

Pasban-e-Hurriyat Chairman Uzair Ahmed Ghazali said that the Indian government is constructing a network of highways and railway tunnels to bolster its military control over 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK). By denying Kashmiris access to their state, homes, and institutions, the Narendra Modi administration has demonstrated its hostility against the region. He claimed that the people of Kashmir will keep fighting for their independence and sense of national honor. Ghazali expressed concerns about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu and his planned visit to the Kashmir valley in the

upcoming days, stating that India, an 'occupying nation', is sending its prime minister to an internationally recognized disputed territory while millions of soldiers guard it. He is continuously attempting to mislead the world about the situation in the 'occupied region', adding that the people's most pressing issue—for which they have been fighting for the past 76 years is their right to self-determination.

He claimed that India is utilizing highways and railway tunnels to expedite the flow of military equipment toward the Line of Control and to enable military operations within the disputed state. He claimed that plots and strategies are being set up to influence the Kashmiri people under the pretext of development, prosperity, and the so-called peace established at gunpoint. He said that although the same Narendra Modi had pledged 80,000 crores of Indian rupees for the state's construction and development in November 2015, however, in practice, the BJP had even seized the fundamental rights of innocent residents in terms of their political, social, and human rights since taking office. He claimed that the Kashmiri people had not abandoned their aspiration for independence nor had they accepted Indian military rule despite Indian coercion.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3930053.html>

Kashmir is a recognized conflict by the UN and other international organizations: Former 'AJK' PM

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 1 March 2024

Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, Muslim Conference president and former PM of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), denounced the Indian government's ban on the Muslim Conference in 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK). He called for an urgent Security Council meeting on the latest Indian violation of the human and political rights of the Kashmiri people, characterizing it as the savage political extremism by India, the 'illegal occupant' of Kashmir, against the dictates of UN resolutions on the region. Attique cautioned that such right-wing actions demonstrated India's intentional attempt to undermine regional peace. He said that China and Pakistan share borders with Kashmir and that the entire region would be engulfed in a terrible blaze should India make any further warlike moves in Jammu and Kashmir.

He emphasized that we implore the international community to observe India's bullish stance. India's plans for regional hegemony are exposed by New Delhi's ban on Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the UN has listed the conflict in Kashmir as disputed and that India also endorsed the resolutions on Kashmir adopted by the UN Security Council. He claimed that India was

bound by the UN Charter to refrain from changing the political and geographic boundaries of the 'occupied area' of Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Resize-of-p4.jpg>

From Social Media

PAMIR TIMES ® @pamirtimes

27 February 2024

The Federal Ministry of Commerce, referring to a letter shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has said that the "Chinese side has conveyed its willingness to open the Khunjerab-Sost border from 1st March, 2024.

The border remains closed during the winter due to heavy snowfall. Efforts are underway for the last few years to keep the border open for 'year-round operations'.

#CPEC #Pakistan #China
#GilgitBaltistan

https://twitter.com/i/bookmarks?post_id=1762517016949240182

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din

2 March 2024

Situation (video in the link) of Diamer Bhasha Dam, Wapda Colony. Corruption of billions of rupees was committed on the name of this project and it continues.

#GilgitBaltistan

Video link:

https://twitter.com/i/bookmarks?post_id=1763858728627961916

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

2 March 2024

Landslidings blocked Karakoram Highway in Kohistan area of KP, land connection of #GilgitBaltistan with rest of country disconnected once again, thousands passengers strand.

Image link:

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1763688626666287514>

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

3 March 2024

The continued rain and snowfall have brought life to a standstill in #GilgitBaltistan once again. This ecologically sensitive region is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure makes the lives of inhabitants miserable.

Images link:

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1764061942254026990>

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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.



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