

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

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This issue of the monthly PoK Digest contains statements by the Pakistan Army Chief and Prime Minister Imran Khan on Kashmir. The forthcoming election in ‘AJK’ dominated the news as all the major political parties are in the fray. The PPP and PML-N have decided to field joint candidates. The Tehrik-e-Labaik has also announced its participation. There is also a growing demand to hold municipal elections in AJK. There are accusations that the Muslim Conference is resisting AJK becoming a separate province. An agreement between the Department of Tourism and private companies in AJK was reached for leasing of land and rest houses to promote tourism. The National Bank of Pakistan has also joined the effort. The president of AJK expects the state’s economy to grow from \$5 billion to \$20 billion in the next ten years. The people displaced by the construction of the Mangala Dam protested in Mirpur demanding rehabilitation. Mirpur also saw a spurt in the Coronavirus infection.

Coordinator, PoK Project

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Political Developments

Must resolve Kashmir in a dignified and peaceful manner, says Pak Army Chief.

Dawn, 03 February 2021

Speaking at a graduation ceremony at PAF academy, Risalpur, Gen Army Chief Qamar Bajwa said that it is time for Pakistan to extend a ‘hand of peace in all directions’. However, he went on to warn that Pakistan’s desire for peace should not be mistaken as a weakness. Giving reference to both Pakistan’s peace credentials as well as its ability to defend itself from any sort of aggression from the neighbors, Bajwa placed the blame of deterioration of relations with India on the BJP government. Bajwa however emphasized that peace with India cannot come at the cost of Kashmir. “Pakistan and India must also resolve the longstanding issue of Jammu and Kashmir in a dignified and peaceful manner as per the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and bring this human tragedy to its logical conclusion,” he went on to say.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1605208/its-time-to-extend-hand-of-peace-in-all-directions-bajwa>

Kashmiris can opt for independence after accession: PM

Dawn, 06 February 2021

Addressing a Kashmir Solidarity Day meeting in Kotli, Prime Minister Imran Khan made a path breaking announcement. He said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir will have the freedom to form a separate nation if they choose to accede with Pakistan in a UN sponsored plebiscite. Imran Khan also reiterated his stance that Kashmir dispute can only be solved by the plebiscite guaranteed by the United Nations Security Council. Giving assurance to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, he said, “Please be content. When I had declared that I am your ambassador, I will do my job as long as Kashmir

gains freedom from Indian subjugation”. PM also assured the people of IIOJK that not only Pakistan but the whole Muslim world is standing behind them in support.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1605743/kashmiris-can-opt-for-independence-after-accession-pm>

US Clarifies Kashmir stand after controversial tweet

Express Tribune, 12 February 2021

The United States clarified its stand on Kashmir as Biden administration explained that it still considers the territory as disputed. The clarification came after Pakistan raised concerns over the language used in a tweet by the US State department regarding Jammu and Kashmir. The tweet had failed to mention the disputed status of J and K.

US State Department spokesperson, Ned Price on being asked about the tweet that welcomed the restoration 4g in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir said, “I want to be very clear there has been no changes in US Policy in the region.”

The tweet suggested a change in US Policy on Kashmir and triggered an immediate response from Pakistan condemning the language used and seeking a clarification on the issue. The statement from the Pakistan Foreign office reiterated the need to recognize the dispute while referring to the UNSC resolutions and the UN’s commitment to Pakistan, people of Jammu and Kashmir and the international community.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2283700/us-insists-no-change-in-kashmir-policy-after-pakistan-protest>

Hunza Youth killed in Karachi encounter declared innocent

Pamir Times, 16 February 2021

The encounter reported of a youth from Hunza on January 3 from Karachi has been declared as ‘fake’ by the police after investigations. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Malir, Irfan Bahadur has concluded that the youngster was innocent. The SSP’s report which will be submitted to additional IG in two days has recommended stern action against the policemen involved in the fake encounter.

The fateful incident occurred when Sultan Nazir was present at a petrol pump on the 3rd of January. Two policemen had opened fire on the two youth present on the motorcycle. In an attempt to save themselves, the youth had tried to flee but Irfan was gunned down at the spot.

The two policemen involved have fled the province after registration of murder and terror cases against them.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2021/02/16/hunza-youth-killed-by-police-karachi-declared-innocent/>

AJK President calls upon international community to stop demographic change in Occupied Kashmir

Express Tribune, 14 February 2021

The President of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan asked for support from the international community to put a halt to the demographic change being attempted in Occupied Kashmir. He called for support to stop the illicit transfer millions of Indian Hindus into the disputed territory.

Speaking at the inaugural session at the ninth International Maritime Conference on the ‘Development of the Blue Economy’, he said that, “Upholding the rule of the law and exploring regional peace and stability need to be made the obvious moral choice”.

He also expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Maritime Security agency for naming and inducting PMSS Kashmir

in its fleet. He also felicitated the Pak Navy for successfully hosting the multilateral naval exercise ‘Aman’.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-02-14/YzKxMDZkMmZkZWI4MGFiNGE1MWI3ZDQ4N2I3NmViODcuanBlZw%3D%3D>

Parliamentary committee on Kashmir grills twitter officials over Kashmir gag

Express Tribune, 17 February 2021

The representative of the social media platform twitter was grilled by the Parliamentary panel of Kashmir over the silencing of thousands of Kashmiri and Pakistani activists who are using social media to portray the conditions of people in Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

A special meeting was held in the Parliament house where Shehryar Afridi who heads the committee led the charge on George Salama who heads the twitter regional offices. Matters related to rights and freedom of speech were raised in the meeting. Salama also said that Kashmiris are free to raise their voice using the platform from genuine accounts. He also offered to organize workshops on twitter regulations in Pakistan along with the PTA for the awareness of Kashmiri and Pakistani activists.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-02-17/NGJmMDc5MzBmNGUzM2YwNmFiMWQ3ZjhiMmMyMDEyN2QuanBlZw%3D%3D>

Kashmir and the bigger game

Op-Ed, the Nation, 19th February 2021

The Kashmir dispute needs to be viewed not only in terms of its geopolitical significance but mostly from the view of the local human beings who continue to suffer. The complexity of the contest for Kashmir precedes the granting of nation-state status to both India and Pakistan and has resulted in the complicated and bitter contest which has caused two wars and a longstanding insurgency.

The children of the contested land are the biggest victims in this conflict. The children in Kashmir face mistreatment

on a daily basis along with the many problems of malnutrition and illnesses. The society of both the states are supposed to protect these children rather than use them for their own interests.

Inability to solve this issue has a direct effect on the Psychology of our children. No one should be the party not wanting to negotiate Kashmir.

The children in Kashmir are experiencing violence both directly and indirectly as their lives are shaped by a sense of injustice, and the susceptibility to accept violence increases with time. All these things have a negative impact on their mental health. The responsibility for standing up for future generations of Kashmir lies on all of us, when we think, write or speak, we do it to raise awareness for suffering souls. In the hopes that those higher authorities who have the power to make amends may take the right actions.

<https://nation.com.pk/19-Feb-2021/kashmir-and-the-bigger-game>

All possible help will be given to victims of Indian firing at the LOC

Parliament Times, 20 February 2021

Speaking to a delegation from Naikal, Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Khan said that the sacrifices of people living near the LOC will never be forgotten. The Naikal delegation led by Sardar Munir Hussain had invited the PM to visit the area heavily affected by Indian firing from across the LOC. AJK PM assured the delegation of all possible help from his administration and also announced a three thousand rupee compensation to every underage child of a civilian martyred near the line of controlled.

The PM also announced the observance of the anniversary of Langjot martyrs on the 25th of February. On 25th February 2000, the Indian army had crossed the LOC and massacred 14 civilians in Langjot AJK.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/02/20/haider-assures-all-possible-assistance-to-indian-firing-hit-ajk-population-inhibiting-areas-close-to-loc/#.YDTNJ-gzbIU>

National charter of demands for AJK Elections 2021

Opinion, Parliament Times, 22 February 2021

The 2021 elections is an opportunity to realign AJK politics along Kashmiri nationalist lines. This election should be about Kashmir, its autonomy while the status quo remains and a designed avenue for freedom in the future. In this election, people of AJK should demand protection of their language and culture. They should demand rooting out corruption and inefficiency. They should demand Kashmiri representation in the UN and all international platforms. It is shame that the people cannot even choose Chairman of Kashmir Committee or the Minister of Kashmir affairs from Kashmir itself. They should demand freedom from these crutches. They should demand efficiency from their lawmakers. They should demand regular visits from the elected members even after the election. They should demand preservation of Kashmir's history and the history of its independence movement. They should demand opportunity and rights and equality and freedom.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/02/22/national-charter-of-demands-for-ajk-elections-2021/#.YDTNsegzBIU>

Kashmir: A Symbol of multiculturalism

The Nation, 23 February 2021

Kashmir, an internationally recognized dispute even after 73 years of war and violence is nowhere close to a solution primarily because of Indian unwillingness. India has for long been trying to dissolve the issue rather than resolve it. One method they choose to do it through is constant communalization and painting of Kashmiris as fundamentalists. Thousands of years of Kashmiri history stands in contrast to this lie. The Kashmiri Muslims along with their Pundit, Sikh and Christian brethren have maintained an atmosphere of inclusiveness which continues to defeat the communal narrative. The need of the hour for the Kashmiri community is to facilitate the return of the migrant Pundits. And the international community especially the United States with its new administration to take initiative. A quadrilateral dialogue between India, Pakistan, Kashmir and the US should be

considered and the Trump policy of ignoring Kashmir needs to be shunned by the US.

<https://nation.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-02-23/page-7/detail-0>

“Kashmir is not about ‘autonomy’ or ‘minority rights. It is about Self-determination”

Express Tribune, 23 February 2021

Both welcoming and criticizing the UN special rapporteur’s concerns over Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, AJK President Sardar Masood Khan said that Kashmir issue has nothing to do with autonomy or minority rights as mentioned in the UN rapporteur’s statement.

“Kashmir is not about ‘Autonomy’ or ‘rights of minorities’. IIOJK is a disputed state whose people are yet to decide their future. It is a Muslim majority state, but not a part of India. We, however, welcome the statement of the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Kashmir situation.”

He also made a reference to the UN Security Council Resolutions where the Right to Self-determination has been recognized and a promise of free and fair plebiscite has been made.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-02-23/MmMzNTYwNzFmYjI0DU3MzM3ZDM0NDdmMmI1NTQ3OWQuanBIZw%3D%3D>

Imran Khan’s Kashmir Strategy ‘yielding results’

Express Tribune, 24 February 2021

Member of Azad Jammu Kashmir Council Sardar Mukhtar Abbasi in a press meet heaped praises on Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan for the manner in which he has managed the Kashmir problem since the abrupt Abrogation of IIOJK’s autonomy by the Indian government. He lauded the PM’s “constant efforts” to expose the unlawful and unilateral actions of New Delhi and said that the strategy had started to yield results.

“Fortunately, his consistent efforts have started to bear fruit which is evident from the recently expressed concerns by the UN rights experts.” Abbasi said that

the Pm and his government were equally concerned of the welfare of the people AJK as can be seen from the provision of health cards in AJK without any kind of discrimination.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-02-24/MjAxYTQ3ZDdkYWZlNmYwYTU4NmVjZjQ0ZDhjYmJiMGQuanBIZw%3D%3D>

PTI continues to grow in AJK

Parliament Times, 24 February 2021

PTI membership is increasing at an exponential rate in Azad Jammu and Kashmir ahead of elections. Recently, hundreds of people joined the PTI in the LA-1 Dadyal constituency. The announcement was made at a function organized at PTI Azad Jammu and Kashmir Central Secretary Gulberg Islamabad. In presence of PTI AJK President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry. Barrister Sultan in his address said that this huge inflow of members into the PTI shows how the coming elections are going to turn out. People are showing faith in Imran Khan’s vision and PTI

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/02/24/constant-pti-victory-politicians-join-party-in-ajk/#.YDdRAugzbIU>

For Peace to prevail along the LOC, the buck stops with India

Friday Times, 26 February 2021

A discussion and the subsequent issuance of a joint statement by the DGMOs of India and Pakistan has come a surprise to many. But if we really analyze the situation which India finds itself in, there is nothing to be surprised about. The Indian army is stretched out given that it has to ‘hard-man’ LAC round the year after the border clashes in with China in the Galwan valley of Laddakh. There also has been a consistent international pressure on the Indian government due to the backlash it has been facing due to many unconstitutional moves it has made ranging from abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir’s autonomy to anti-Muslim citizen laws and recently the farm bills.

The Indian government thus needs to calm the situation on all the fronts that it has thoughtlessly opened. The joint statement and agreement to maintain ceasefire, while being a start can fulfill its potential only if India is willing fulfill the minimum criteria that Pakistan has set for dialogue i.e. to return the special status of Jammu and Kashmir by

reversing the August 5 move. This now can only be done through the judiciary but it is the bare minimum for any kind of peace talks between the two neighbors. The Choice is India's

<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/the-choice-is-indias/>

Economic Developments

Government seeks 3G, 4G spectrum sale in Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily Ausaaf, 12 February 2021

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan has said that in times of the internet, quality 3G, 4G services are essential and its use is the right of all residents of Gilgit-Baltistan. Thus, the Pakistan Telecommunication Agency (PTA) should facilitate the sale of 3G, 4G spectrum as soon as possible so that all cellular companies get an opportunity to work in GB. Chief Minister GB, Khalid Khursheed proposed this to the PTA Chairman in a meeting held between the two.

On the occasion, the CM Khalid Khursheed said that the limited 3G, 4G service in the area has had an adverse effect on all walks of life including governance. Students and Traders are especially facing problems because of slow internet connections. He also said that all cellular companies entering the GB arena will be strongly suggested to maintain high quality service.

The two parties in the meeting also agreed upon the use of Universal Service Fund (USF) to help install mobile towers in areas where they are currently unavailable.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-12/128998/p1_14

Agreement between Tourism department and Private companies for leasing land and rest houses in AJK

Muhaasib, 26 February 2021

Tourism and Archaeology department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir and the Pak Gulf construction, Aifroz Hospitality, Valley trackers have reached an agreement according to which land and rest houses will be leased to private companies. This agreement is the first of its kind in the history of Azad Jammu and Kashmir where private

sector is being used for promotion of tourism. As per the agreement, Gulf Construction Company will be given a 150 kanals of land in Muzaffarabad's 'Pir Chinaasi' while 62 kanal land and Dheerkot rest house will be leased to Aifroz hospitality and Valley Trackers respectively. The agreements were signed at the prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Khan's residence in his presence. This move is the latest in the list that includes the Tourism Act (2019) and tourism policy that were brought in place to promote tourism, create jobs and increase the income of the local people.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/muzaffarabad.php>

AJK economy can grow from \$5 billion to \$20-30 billion within 10 years: President AJK

Express Tribune, 09 February 2021

Highlighting the great potential for investment in industrial, agricultural and hospitality sectors, President of Azad Jammu Kashmir said that AJK can become the engine for growth in Pakistan.

Speaking at a meeting with the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he added that three tourism corridors as a part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor had already been identified to improve the tourism infrastructure in the region. Sardar Masood along with the ICCI President Sardar Yasir Ali Khan urged Pakistani investors to tap into huge investment opportunities which can also help bring growth and prosperity to not only the region but to the whole of Pakistan

Many suggestions like 90 year land lease, 10 year tax holidays and abolition of duties on imported machinery were given and discussed in the meeting. The speakers also gave examples of UAE and Britain's tourism sectors as examples wealth and job creating sectors

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2283172/pakistani-investors-urged-to-inject-capital-into-ajk>

GB govt plans to construct cricket stadium in Nagar

The Nation, 10 February 2021

While people were still in awe of the beauty of the Gwadar cricket stadium whose pictures went viral recently, the PTI government of Gilgit-Baltistan has planned to build a cricket stadium in Pisan, Nagar this year.

In a meeting held between GB CM, Khalid Khursheed Khan and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ehsan Mani, it was decided that the PTI government of GB would plan a cricket stadium at Pisan in Nagar this year.

On the occasion, GB Chief Minister, Khalid Khursheed Khan said that the Pisan Cricket Ground will provide an option for hosting cricket matches in favorable weather when the temperatures in the rest of the country are very high.

Pakistan fast bowler, Umar Gul also shared pictures of the Pisan Cricket Ground with a caption praising its beauty and seeking help for local players.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/334301-gilgit-baltistan-government-to-construct-pissan-cricket-stadium-this-year>

National Bank of Pakistan signs memorandum with GB government to promote tourism.

Dawn, 19th February 2021

The Memorandum of understanding (MoU) caters to the development of infrastructure for accommodation facilities more than a million tourists that visit the region annually through a home stay financing programme called ‘NBP Maizban.’

A similar programme has also been started in the Neelam valley of Azad Jammu Kashmir. It provides loans ranging from Rs 3,75,000 to Rs 1.30 million to locals living near tourist spots to construct spaces for hosting tourists. In the ten year loan programme, loans will be offered at an interest rate of 8% with 2% service charge.

While making the proposal, the GB government cited examples of popularity and success of such programmes in countries like Nepal and Tajikistan.

https://paper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=19_02_2021_003_004

Hunza resident appointed as ‘Chief Global Information Officer’ at Aga Khan University

Pamir Times, 20 February 2021

The Aga Khan University (AKU) has announced the appointment of Shaukat Ali Khan a resident of Hunza (Gilgit-Baltistan), as Aga Khan University’s Global Chief Information Officer. Shaukat will be in charge of programmes whose core aim is delivering technology and data services for improvement of patient care and academic offerings in the affiliated centres across Asia, Africa and the UK. The Aga Khan University (AKU) is a pioneering institution of higher education that works to improve quality of life in the developing world and beyond. The University delivers programs on campuses in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United Kingdom, and treats more than two million patients per year through seven hospitals and more than 350 medical centers.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2021/02/19/shaukat-ali-khan-appointed-as-global-chief-information-officer-of-the-agha-khan-university/>

Extracts From Urdu Media

Foreign Affairs minister vows for continued support to Kashmir's Right to Self-Determination

Daily Ausaaf, 03 February 2020

Criticizing the India government's aggressive measures in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that Pakistan will forever continue to support Kashmir's Right to Self-determination. Addressing the Kashmir conference in Islamabad, Qureshi expressed concern over the continued human rights violations by the Indian security forces in the IIOK.

He said that there has been a blackout in Kashmir for 18 months, all Hurriyat leaders are under detention and Indian media is supporting all moves of the government. In these circumstances, Pakistan has exposed India at the international level. The Kashmir issue has already been discussed in the UN thrice after the unconstitutional measures of the Indian government on 5th August 2019.

<https://dailyausaf.com/pakistan/news-202102-86853.html>

Gilgit youth admits to receiving funds from India to spread anti-Pak propaganda

News, Nawa-e-Waqt, 03 February 2021

A youth from Gilgit named Mehdi Shah Rizvi has admitted that he, along with many others were funded by Indian agencies for spreading anti-Pakistan propaganda. He confessed to have received written scripts for the speeches he delivered in various international fora. He named various other characters placed in different parts of the world as members of the same nexus group. The Group was administered by members of Indian Intelligence Agency, RAW.

"Aquam-e-mutahida main human rights session ke doraan Pakistan foj k khilaaf bolne ka script diya gaya," ("Was given a script to speak against the

Pakistan army at the UN Human rights session") Mehdi confessed.

Mehdi confessed to holding anti-Pakistan programs in Pakistan and many places in Europe as well. His handlers assured that India was on their side.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-02-03/page-1/detail-22>

American President should be asked to mediate the Kashmir Issue: President Masood

Daily Ausaaf, 07 February 2021

Sardar Masood Khan, the President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has said that the hope of resolution of the Kashmir issue amongst the people of Jammu and Kashmir has increased now that President Joe Biden and VP Kamala Harris have taken over charge at the White House. These two in their respective campaigns had openly expressed their opinions about Indian atrocities and Human Rights violations in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing the various webinars organized at Pakistan's embassy at Washington, Pakistan High commission London, Tehreek-e-Kashmir Denmark, Pakistan High Commission Ottawa, Kashmir Council Sweden and US-Pakistan welfare association, the Sardar Masood Khan said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are willing to welcome mediation by a third party provided that people of Jammu and Kashmir are part of the deliberations as stakeholders.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/e-paper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-07/128612/p1_09.gif

New York assembly accepts resolution to declare 5th February as Kashmir Day

Daily Ausaaf, 08 February 2021

The New York State Assembly has accepted resolution to declare 5th February 2021 as Kashmir American Day. This resolution supports the resistance of Kashmiri people against the excesses carried out by the Indian army and also recognizes their fundamental rights. The Pakistan-US group also expressed hope that such resolutions will be passed in other state assemblies of the United States as well. Due to the Corona Pandemic, a very small number of people were invited to the event but still a decent turnout proved that people wanted to take part in this day. Also, in the Manhattan region of New York, Kashmiri and Pakistani communities took out a rally and hundreds of vehicles and trucks carried demonstrators raising pro-freedom slogans for Kashmir.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-07/128612/p1_17.gif

Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat holds rally, pays homage to Afzal, Maqbool and other martyrs

Muhaasib, 10 February 2021

To pay homage to the great freedom fighter leaders of Kashmir, Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat organized a rally in Muzaffarabad. Rich tributes were paid to the martyrs on this occasion. The rally started at Shaheed Afzal Guru Chowk and moved towards the grave of Liaqat Awan. The tyrant Indian forces and the judicial system have always given ruthless and baseless judgments against the Kashmiri people.

Indian judges while awarding death penalty to Shaheed Afzal Guru had admitted that they don't have enough evidence to sentence him to death but still condemned him to the gallows admittedly to satisfy the "collective conscience" of the nation.

Speaking on the occasion Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat Chairman, Uzair Ahmad Ghazzali said Afzal Guru and Maqbool Bhatt were hanged by India's biased judiciary. The protestors chanted slogans against India and in favor of Kashmir's freedom from India. They were also holding banners of pro-freedom slogans

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=3&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=10-02-2021>

Neelam Valley's popular social and spiritual figure, Mian Shafiq joins PTI

Muhaasib, 11 February 2021

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the trend of important political, social and religious personalities joining the PTI continues. A famous social and spiritual figure from Neelam valley, Mian Mohammad Shafiq has become a part of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. In a special meeting with Chief Organizer, Saifullah Khan Niazi, he expressed full confidence in Prime Minister Imran Khan's leadership as well as PTI's manifesto. Mian Muhammad Shafiq is associated with Jhag Sharif, a large spiritual monastery in the Neelam Valley. Addressing the function, Former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir and President of PTI Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry gladly said the participation of Mian Muhammad Shafiq proves that every segment of the people in Azad Kashmir has now shifted towards Azad Jammu and Kashmir and conscientious personalities of other political parties are now gathering on the single platform of PTI.

On the occasion, Saifullah Niazi reiterated that all sections of AJK politics were united in their support for right to self-determination in Kashmir.

"Haqq-e-Khud Iradiat ke hussol tak Ahle Kashmir ki bharpoor siyaasi, sifaarati aur ikhlaaqi himaayat mai koi kami nahi aane denge" (No Letup in any kind of support to the people of Kashmir, be it political, diplomatic or moral will be allowed till the realization of the demand for Right to Self Determination.)

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=11-02-2021>

Kashmiri Refugees at Mang Bajri camp face acute shortage of supplies

Muhaasib, 11 February 2021

Both the govt and institutions have miserably failed to solve the problems of Kashmiri refugees. The Rehabilitation department is only grabbing concessions

and funding in the name of refugees. The talk of concessions in education, healthcare and electricity were mere rhetoric. Even to get their children into govt schools, refugees have to pay heavy sums of money as fees.

These complaints were made by a delegation of refugees in their interaction with journalists. This delegation told the journalists that Rehabilitation department's work is limited to photo sessions at the refugee camps. In the Mang Bajri refugee camp, 450 people have no facilities for maintenance of general health and that is causing the refugees a huge number of problems

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-11/128918/p1_16.gif

Occupied Kashmir observes a shutdown commemorating the 37th death anniversary of Shaheed Maqbool Bhatt

Muhaasib, 12 February 2021

A complete shutdown was observed in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on the martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Maqbool Bhatt on the 11th of February. Shops and business establishments remained closed while traffic movement was very limited. Hundreds of government forces were patrolling the streets and many checkpoints were created to frisk the pedestrians.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir, on the other hand celebrated 'Youm-e-Azam-e-Nov' (New Commitment day.)

Kashmir Students National Party and United Jammu Kashmir National Party organized a prayer meeting on the occasion.

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir Raja Mohammad Farooq also gave a statement paying rich tribute to Maqbool Bhatt and other martyrs of the Kashmir struggle. He said that Maqbool Bhatt is a role model for the present generation of Kashmiris as he didn't give in to occupying forces and remained steadfast in his resolve.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=12-02-2021>

AJK Political stalwart, Sikandar Hayat rejoins Muslim Conference after 12 years

Ausaaf, 13 February 2021

In a big setback for the ruling PML-N, the former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan and rejoined Muslim Conference as the 'Supreme Head', ending his decade long association with PML-N.

With less than 60 days to go for the AJK election, this is considered a great boost for the Muslim Conference and a big blow to the PML-N. Meanwhile, Muslim Conference workers were jubilated at the news of the veteran's return and sweets were distributed throughout AJK.

On this occasion, former AJK Prime Minister and current President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, Sardar Ateeq Ahmad Khan praised Sikandar Khan for his contribution to the Muslim Conference and expressed gratitude for his return to the party. He also said that Muslim league will fight the upcoming election under the leadership of Sardar Sikandar Khan.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-13/129056/p1_03.gif

PML-N and PPP agree on fighting the AJK election together

Muhaasib, 16 February 2021

In an important meeting between PM AJK Raja Farooq Haider and former AJK President Yaqoob Khan, the PML-N ("Noon League) and the Pakistan People's Party have decided to come together to contest the upcoming AJK election. This comes in the backdrop of growing PTI and resurgence in the Muslim Conference due to return of Sikandar Hayat. After consultations with Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto, the agreement was made between Yaqoob Khan and Farooq Haider. The final form of the coalition will be decided during the election by Nawaz Sharif and Zardari. Till then, agreements have been made about the candidates to be nominated for the

election so that the required numbers in the assembly are achieved.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=gilgit&dt=16-02-2021>

Tehreek-e-Labbaik announces participation in the upcoming elections

Ausaaf, 15 February 2021

Tehreek-e-Labbaik Charhoi has officially announced that it will participate in the upcoming election with Alama Hafiz Arshad Sultani as their candidate. They announced their entry into the AJK Politics with their objective being the end of corrupt and hereditary politics. Hafiz Arshad, on the inauguration of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik office said that the sorry state of affairs in the constituency forced him to decide on contesting the elections and that he would change the fate of the constituency after entering the assembly. He further said that Tehreek-e-Labbaik has the discipline and the team to not only solve the everyday issues of the locals but also help in taking the struggle for freedom of Kashmir to its logical conclusion. “Humare Paas aisa Nizaam aur aisi team hai jo na sirf awaami masail hal karsakti hai balki Tehreek-e-Azaadi-e-Kashmir ko Mantaqi anjaam takk puhanchteinge”

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-16/129274/p5_07.gif

The coming election would be fought on the issue of whether partitioning of Kashmir is acceptable or not: PM AJK

Muhaasib, 17 February 2021

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan has said that the upcoming AJK election would be contested with the question whether partitioning of Kashmir is acceptable or not. Drawing a comparison between Indian Occupied Jammu Kashmir and Azad Jammu Kashmir, Farooq said that under Indian control, a genocide is being carried out in IIOJK while the developments that have occurred under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif in constitutional, administrative and economic spheres of Azad Kashmir have made it almost completely self-sufficient. He further

went on to highlight some local issues in the upcoming elections, the most important of which according to him was educational infrastructure. He said that development of educational infrastructure would be another step in the direction of a self-sufficient Azad Jammu Kashmir.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=3&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=17-02-2021>

Demands to immediately hold municipal elections arise in Azad Jammu Kashmir

Ausaaf, 15 February 2021

A demand to immediately hold municipal elections in Azad Jammu Kashmir has come up. In a seminar jointly organized by ‘Jammu Kashmir United Movement’ and ‘Wake up Kashmir’, the participants demanded relocation of all the municipal funds that are being allotted to assembly institutions. Youngsters of all political inclinations joined the seminar in good numbers. The seminar was chaired by the President of newly formed Jammu Kashmir United Movement Sardar Babar while ‘Wakeup Kashmir’ chairman was the guest of honor on the occasion. The speakers made the point that local issues can only be resolved by competent municipalities that functioned under elected office holders while assembly members should stick to their task of framing laws.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=17-02-2021>

“PTI in search of turncoats in the AJK election”

Muhaasib, 19 February 2021

The PPP Muzaffarabad President, Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi while announcing Bilawal Bhutto’s participation in the upcoming workers association march accused the ruling party of fraud and the PTI for using turncoats in the electoral process. He said that the followers of Bhutto Shaheed will never allow the division of Kashmir. Also election rigging of the kind that was seen in Gilgit-Baltistan will not be allowed.

He said that the PPP has the ability to use funds to help develop the region which the ruling party PML-N has failed to do. The PML-N has failed to produce any

positive changes on the ground while the PTI is dependent on leeching out opportunists to fight in this election.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=19-02-2021>

All DHQ Hospitals to be made functional in June: GB Chief Minister

Urdu Point, 17th February 2021

While addressing a meeting with the Steering Committee on Health Reforms, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khursheed said that all district hospital would be made functional by June this year come what may. All the required machinery is being purchased and accommodation for doctors serving in these hospitals will also be provided for.

As per the CM, the health sector reforms are being carried out on war footing and Gilgit-Baltistan government is working in close coordination with other provincial governments as well as the central government to make these improvements. An improvement in health infrastructure will naturally lead to job creation in the sector. The CM also said that starting a full-fledged medical and nursing colleges was one of the top priorities of the government.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/all-dhqs-hospitals-made-functional-in-june-c-1171066.html>

Rally held is Muzaffarabad against the EU delegation visit to Kashmir

Muhaasib, 18 February 2021

A rally was organized by Paasbaan-e-Hurriyat in Muzaffarabad in view of the EU delegation's visit to Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The rally which was joined by a large number of people was held on Central highway from the Bank road. The demonstrators also staged a sit-in at the highway. The rally was in protest of the gross human rights violations and gagging of freedom of expression in Occupied Kashmir and the attempt to mislead the world with a highly controlled and choreographed delegation visit from the EU. The protestors demanded that the EU delegates

report the real situation of the valley to the world and put pressure on the Indian government to honor their commitments to the United Nations. The demonstrators also raised anti-India and pro freedom slogans.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=17-02-2021>

After two year of Pulwama attack, Indian conspiracy exposed

Muhaasib, 15 February 2021

The Indian drama that unfolded in Pulwama is two years old today. And the whatsapp messages of journalist Arnab Goswami are enough to prove that it was a political conspiracy in which the Indian army was used. General Bipin Rawat was bribed with political career. Modi first got his own soldiers killed and then used them for electoral gains Bipin was given the newly constituted office of Chief of defense staff for his cooperation in the Pulwama drama. Even the Indian Air force continuously kept lying for days to help garner support for Narendra Modi and his party in the 2019 elections. The government controlled 'Godi Media' is their biggest tool in spreading their fake propaganda but over the years each and every lie of the present Indian government is getting exposed.

"Sahafi Arnab Goswami k Whatsapp leak se Pulwama Hamla Siyaasi Chaal saabit hogaya" (Journalist Arnab Goswami's Whatsapp gate has proved that the Pulwama attack was a political conspiracy)

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=15-02-2021>

Victims of Mangla Dam displacement protest in Mirpur

Daily Ausaaf, 21 February 2021

The Mangla Dam affected people staged a massive protests at the New City Gate in Mirpur. Demanding a fulfillment of the promises made to them, the protestors blocked the Kotli road with burning tyres. The protestors also raised slogans presenting their demands of rehabilitation. They questioned the Pakistan government,

local AJK government and WAPDA in their sincerity towards rehabilitative measures. They demanded that the allotment of plots to the residents of villages now submerged due to the Mangla project. The protestors gave a two week deadline to the authorities after which they threatened to permanently block the Kotli main road.

It should be noted that the Mangla Project affected people have been protesting at the new city for more than 10 days. Jamaat-e-Islami leader Zulkernain Bhatt, Muslim Conference leader Shakur Mughal and other political figure like Raja Naheeb Thakur and Tahir Khoker have already expressed their solidarity with the protestors.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-21/129633/p3_02.gif

Protection of mother tongue is our collective responsibility

Muhaasib, 22 February 2021

Minister of Information, Planning and Development Gilgit-Baltistan Fatehullah Khan in his World Mother Tongue day address said that Gilgit-Baltistan is that province of Pakistan where multiple languages are spoken. These Mother Tongues in addition of being an identity marker of nations are also provide means for the expression of their culture and tradition. He said that the importance of the mother tongue cannot be overlooked in the digital era. Language is still the biggest source of collective identity and to be educated in one's mother tongue is a fundamental right of all citizens.

Fatehullah Khan went on to say that protection of the mother tongue is a collective responsibility and the provincial government will take all step needed. He also paid rich tributes to all the 'legends' who had dedicated their lives for the protection and propagation of mother tongues.

<https://mahaasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=gilgit&dt=22-02-2021>

The Pandemic gathers pace in Mirpur

Daily Ausaaf, 22 February 2021

The Corona virus pandemic has intensified in mini London- Mirpur of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. A trend of daily 4-5 deaths with dozens of new cases has started to set in. Both deaths were recorded in Islamgarh region of Mirpur along with 6 new infections. Experts have warned of a spurt in the number of cases in this second wave of the corona virus with Islamgarh being a potential hotspot. After confirming the new cases, a team set off for Islamgarh and traced the contacts of the infected people which were then asked to self-quarantine. Biometric attendance is being pointed out as a potential carrier of the virus and activists and doctors are demanding a reversal of order which made biometric attendance in offices mandatory. Immediate steps need to be taken to control this spurt in its initial stage otherwise things can fall out of control very soon.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-22/129717/p1_49.gif

Azad Kashmir has become the hub of problems

Ausaaf, 23 February 2021

Prominent political and social figure of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Javed Kayani has said that AJK politics is filled with parachuters who purchase tickets to contest in elections. Everyone who talked about the rights of people have been removed while the corrupt politicians are securing their place in AJK politics. History is a witness to the fact that the politician who uses the most money to come to power spends the tenure recovering that money and filling his pockets through corruption. Azad Kashmir has become a hub of problems where the common people have been deprived of basic facilities. Every five years, the simple people of AJK are conned.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-23/129781/p3_17.gif

“Won’t let AJK to become a province”: Muslim Conference

Daily Ausaaf, 25 February 2021

Vice President of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference for Sharqi Bagh constituency Abdul Qadeer Khan has said that under the leadership of Sardar Sikandar and other national leaders, Muslim Conference will emerge victorious in the upcoming elections. He claimed that at a time when the debate of making AJK a province is going on, Muslim Conference is the only political party which is against such a move. Sardar Ateeq Ahmad Khan will never allow making a province of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He also said that some prominent members of PPP and PML-N who are against the provincializing move are due to join the Muslim Conference soon which will further strengthen the party.

“Muslim Conference ka iqtaa main aana waqt aur haalaat ki zarurat hai” (Muslim Conference coming to power is the need of this time and circumstance)

https://www.dailyausaf.com/e-paper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-02-25/129915/p2_22.gif

“Kashmir Banega Pakistan” posters sprout up in Indian Occupied Kashmir ahead of Modi Visit

Nawai Waqt, 26 February 2021

In South Kashmir’s ‘Srigufwara’ area, the Indian army used Gunship Helicopters for a major search operation. The Mujahedeen however managed to get away. The local police claimed to have killed four extremists in a tweet but that tweet was soon deleted. Crackdowns have intensified in several parts of the valley. Drones are being used to spy on people along with Gunship helicopters. In this atmosphere, the Indian Prime Minister is planning a visit to the erstwhile state. A complete shutdown has been called for the day of his visit. Pro-freedom posters are appearing in various parts of the valley. Ahead of the visit, ‘Kashmir Banega Pakistan’ (Kashmir will become Pakistan) posters have also come up.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-02-26/page-3/detail-33>

Social Media (Tweets)

Associated Press of Pakistan @appcsocialmedia

03 February 2021

Gilgit-Baltistan, like the rest of the country begins the vaccination program. Governor GB along with other provincial leaders attends the event. During the event, the process of vaccination of the frontline health workers was commenced.

<https://twitter.com/appcsocialmedia/status/1356874133737517057>

Senator Shibli Faraz @shiblifaraz

07 February 2021

Pakistan's position vindicated and its efforts acknowledged in the @UN report to UN Security council. Welcome this report. India's fascist designs in IIOJK continue to get exposed

<https://twitter.com/shiblifaraz/status/1358398337091850241>

Masood Khan @Masood_Khan

09 February 2021

An International tribunal should be set up to try Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for committing war crimes in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir

#Kashmir #IIOJK #KashmiriLivesMatter

https://twitter.com/Masood_Khan/status/1359036094852067328

Farhatullah Babar @FarhatullahB

09 February 2021

Army not politicking? What were Ayub, Yahya, Zia & Musharraf doing? Who used public funds to make IJI? Who distributed cash in Faizabad dharna? What courts

have said? What foreign observers said about 2018 polls? It's better to admit mistakes made in past and vow not to repeat

<https://twitter.com/FarhatullahB/status/1359015122870665217>

Mushaal Hussein Mullick @MushaalMullick

18 February 2021

India has never allowed foreign fact finding missions including rights groups to IIOJK, yet they plan an EU envoy visit to Kashmir to show a fake image of the valley to the world

#PlantedVisitOfIIOJK

<https://twitter.com/MushaalMullick/status/1362095918263250944>

Muhammad Ali Randhawa @RandhawaAli

20 February 2021

0.00% Covid!!! Alhamdolillah! No Covid case reported today at Gilgit-Baltistan

@HealthDeptGB @HomeDeptGB @AbdulKhalidPTI
@iAliTajGB @information_gb @Asad_Umar
@nhrscofficial @WHOPakistan @who

<https://twitter.com/RandhawaAli/status/1363151321046552579>

Fact Sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14,010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2017 Census: 4,045,367 (Male: 1,980,794; Female: 2,064,421)

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Divisions: 3

Districts: 10

Sub Divisions (Tehsils): 32

Constituencies in AJK: 29

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Sardar Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 41

Ethnic Groups: Gujjars, Jats, Mughal, Rajputs, Sudhan, Awan, Qureshi, Pashtuns, Shins, Ladakhi, Baltis etc.

Religious Groups: Sunni, Ahlehadith, Shia, Nurbakhshi, Christians, Qadianis, Hindus

Languages: Punjabi, Hindko, Pahari, Kashmiri, Balti, Puriki, Shina

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Source : <https://pndajk.gov.pk/statyearbook.php?page=AJK%20at%20a%20Glance> accessed November 2020)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 1.4 million (2017 census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Fourteen

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Shigar, Kharmang, Rondu

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Ghizer, Diamer, Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Darel, Tangir, Yaseen

Ethnic Groups: Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Tatar, Mon, Pashtun, Khowar, Dom, Gujar, Rajput and Kashmiri

Religious Groups: Shia (Twelvers), Nurbakhshi (Twelvers), Ismaili, Sunni, and Ahlehadith

Languages: Shina, Balti, Wakhi, Khowar, Gujjari, Burushaski, Puriki, Kashmiri, Pashto

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly: 33 (3 reserved for technocrats and 6 for woman)

Governor of G-B: Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon

Chief Minister G-B: Khalid Khurshid Khan

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan

National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Sources: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/06/17/gb-notifies-four-more-districts-total-number-of-districts-now-14/>)

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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Disclaimer

PoK 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.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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