

Weekly POK News Digest

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India-Pakistan
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CPEC Kohala Hydel inclusive tourism policy
Three Gorges Company
local government



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Political Developments

No hope of breakthrough in India-Pakistan relations expected: Sardar Masood

The Nation, 19 April 2021

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Masood Khan said that a bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan is infuriating and insulting to the people of Jammu and Kashmir who are left out of talks that deal primarily with their future. In interaction with media, he said, "Kashmir is not a bilateral dispute - rather it is an international issue, which can only be resolved through peaceful and diplomatic means." Sardar Masood said that India continues to use the guise of bilateral dialogue to maintain the status quo, exclude the people of Kashmir and the UN from diplomatic processes in the past.

He also ruled out the possibility of a workable détente between the two countries without properly addressing the core political issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Pointing out that the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir has greatly reduced the representation of the people of the valley, Jammu and Laddakh; it is a ploy to reduce the disputed territory into a non-political entity. He also accused the Indian state of misusing the new domicile laws to change the demographic status of the territory.

<https://nation.com.pk/19-Apr-2021/no-hope-of-breakthrough-in-india-pakistan-relations-expected-sardar-masood>

GB top court orders LG polls in Gilgit-Baltistan without delay

Suchtv.pk, 20 April 2021

The Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court recently directed the election commission and all concerned authorities to hold local government (LG) polls in the area without any further delay. A two-member bench of the court, headed by the Chief Justice, ordered the authorities concerned to hold the local government elections in Gilgit-Baltistan as early as possible. Earlier, local residents had filed a petition in the court against prolonged delay in local body elections in the area. Earlier on March 18, Prime Minister Imran Khan had directed holding early local bodies' polls in both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) rules as he met his affiliates in the government. His directives were resisted mildly by the Defence Minister Pervez Khattak who had been KP's chief minister in the previous term, as he cited the situation is not conducive for polls at this time. These apprehensions were however rejected by the PM who insisted on the holding of LG polls as soon as possible

<https://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan/item/105871-chief-court-orders-local-government-polls-in-gilgit-baltistan.html>

Dialogue with India possible only if situation in IIOJK improves: FM Qureshi*Express Tribune*, 20 April 2021

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Tuesday said that possibility of dialogue between Pakistan and India depended on whether the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) improves or not.

"Kashmir is not bilateral; rather an internationally recognized issue as there are numerous UN Security Council resolutions on it," FM Qureshi said in an interview with Khaleej Times. The foreign minister added that if India and Pakistan want lasting peace in South Asia, they would have to discuss the IIOJK issue to find a resolution according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, as the issue cannot be put on the back burner.

Qureshi also maintained that he was not opposed to the idea of a third party negotiator and UAE would be welcomed by Pakistan to try and mediate between India and Pakistan. The Foreign Minister also pointed accusatory finger at India calling them out on double standards on Afghanistan and Kashmir as India promotes a peaceful solution in Afghanistan but sheds blood in Kashmir.

[https://tribune.com.pk/story/2295761/dialogue-with-india-possible-only-if-situation-in-iiojk-improves-fm-
qureshi](https://tribune.com.pk/story/2295761/dialogue-with-india-possible-only-if-situation-in-iiojk-improves-fm-qureshi)

AJK remembers Iqbal on his 83rd death anniversary*Parliament Times*, 21 April 2021

Azad Jammu & Kashmir observed 83rd death anniversary of Kashmir-origin poet of the East Alama Dr Muhammad Iqbal with the renewed pledge to continue their just and principled struggle for liberation of occupied Jammu & Kashmir from the unlawful manacles of the forced Indian rule and to make Pakistan a true forward-looking Muslim state in line with thoughts of the great poet philosopher. Various cultural, political and social organizations hosted simple but impressive gatherings comprising seminars in various AJK cities within the parameters of the set SOPs in view of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic spell, to highlight the services rendered by the great visionary of 20th century and to pay homage to Poet of the East. Several poets and scholars on this occasion shed light on the importance of learning Iqbal and propagating his ideas and work to the coming generations. They also prayed for the early success of the people of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir who have been fighting for their right to self-determination for decades now. A special ceremony hosted in Mirpur jointly by UK-based Global Pakistan Kashmir Supreme Council (GPKSC) and the Jammu Kashmir Writers Forum marked the death anniversary of the poet of the east and to pay due. It was attended by many prominent members of the society.

[https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/04/21/ajk-remembers-iqbal-on-his-83rd-death-anniversary-with-
due-solemnity-and-reverence/#.YIFNg6FX7IU](https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/04/21/ajk-remembers-iqbal-on-his-83rd-death-anniversary-with-due-solemnity-and-reverence/#.YIFNg6FX7IU)

Parties gearing up for AJK polls*Dawn*, 25 April 2021

The Parliamentary Board of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) set up for the elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) continued its meeting for the second consecutive day at the Zardari House on Saturday and interviewed the applicants for the party ticket from Poonch Division of the Valley. The parliamentary board had been constituted under Mr. Bhutto Zardari last month to finalise candidates for the general election expected to be held in July in the AJK.

At the meeting, many important discussions regarding the upcoming elections, party leadership and the central government's failure to address the problems of Kashmir and India were held. Presently, the PPP has only five legislators in the 50-member AJK Assembly. The five-year term of the assembly and the government headed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz will end in June this year.

Meanwhile, PPP parliamentary board continued interviews of ticket applicants. They became the second party to do so after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf who also had formed a parliamentary board and conducted interview for the candidates. After winning elections in strategically-located Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), the PTI had also started preparations for the polls in AJK and like the PPP, it had also announced to contest upcoming elections without making electoral alliance with any political party.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1620166/parties-gearing-up-for-ajk-polls>

Economic Developments**PIA to start direct flights between Karachi, Skardu***PT Profit*, 19 April 2021

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is planning to operate direct flights from Karachi to Skardu and a safari flight from Islamabad to Skardu on the second day of Eid-ul-Fitr. This is another major development after the first direct flight from Karachi landed in Skardu to a grand welcome on the 7th day of this month.

A spokesman for the PIA said an Airbus A320 flight from Karachi-Skardu-Karachi would be operated to facilitate the residents of northern areas. He said the PIA was also planning to start flights between Lahore and Gilgit. Another flight from Lahore to Chitral may also be started in the next phase. The spokesman said PIA was also planning to start flight operations from Karachi to Chitral and Karachi to Gilgit. He said it will be for the first time that flights for northern areas will be operated from Karachi and Lahore, instead of only from Islamabad. The aim to expand the flight operations to northern areas was to promote tourism in the country in the light of Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision.

<https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/04/19/pia-to-start-direct-flights-between-karachi-skardu/>

Chinese company to invest \$2.4b in CPEC Kohala Hydrel Project

The Nation, 24 April 2021

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Chinese Three Gorges Company on Friday signed agreements related to 1,124 megawatt Kohala Hydrel Power Project-Implementation and Water Usage under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The project is expected to attract a foreign investment of \$2.4 billion under the umbrella of CPEC. CPEC Authority Chairman Lieutenant General (R) Asim Saleem Bajwa on made this announcement on his twitter handle.

Federal Minister of Energy Hammad Azhar, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider and other officials were present on the occasion. The Kohala Hydropower Project, a proposed run-of-the-river high-head project, will be located near Kohala in Azad Kashmir. The agreement for the project had already been finalized last year and later it was formally signed in a ceremony attended by the Pakistani prime minister and Chinese ambassador. China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC), the state-owned hydropower developer, had won the right to develop a hydroelectric dam in Pakistan on January 7, 2015. This project will be the Chinese company's largest investment in Pakistan till now.

<https://nation.com.pk/24-Apr-2021/chinese-company-to-invest-dollar-2-4b-in-cpec-kohala-hydel-project>

AJK enriched with huge tourism potential to attract tourists: CPDR

Pakistan Observer, 24 April 2021

Seasoned experts belonging to various nation-building institutions emphasized on inclusive tourism policy, developing it as industry and promote on the lines of broader framework of trade, travel and sustainable tourism in the picturesque Azad Jammu Kashmir, enriched with huge natural potential to attract millions of domestic and foreign tourists. At a webinar conducted by Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR) – a Kashmiri think tank, on the recently published report “Building Sustainable Tourism in Azad Jammu & Kashmir”, the experts put forward these recommendations.

The report, which is the outcome of several discussions and focus group meetings with officials of AJK, gives the reader a vivid snapshot of the diverse and multi-faceted yet largely under-developed and untapped Tourism industry in AJ&K. The first ever Tourism Policy Framework which was launched in 2019 also finds a mention in the report which showcases its various significant aspects. One among the proposed ideas was a 190 km long tourism corridor which connected all important tourist sites across Muzaffarad, Mirpur, Bagh and Rawalkot.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-enriched-with-huge-tourism-potential-to-attract-tourists-cpdr/>

[From Vernacular Urdu Media](#)

No Pak-India dialogue is possible without Kashmir

Editorial, Roznama92news, 20 April 2021

It has been BJP's policy to intensify tension with Pakistan in the last two decades. BJP and its allies encourage elements that radicalize the Hindus and teach them hatred against Islam and Pakistan. In order to establish its supremacy, India is selling itself as a huge market for the world. With some advancement in computer technology and medicine, it wants to show itself off as a developed country. It has strengthened itself by purchasing arms and defense technologies worth billions of dollars from France, the UK, Israel, and the USA. To safeguard their trade and commercial interests, these countries ignore Indian involvement in Balochistan and atrocities committed by it inside Kashmir. Nevertheless, Pakistan has shown readiness for dialogue with friendly countries. It is quite justified to demand that dialogue can only take place if India restores pre-05 August condition in Kashmir.

<https://www.roznama92news.com/backend/web/uploads/epaper/0/2021/04/20042021/p8-mux001.jpg>

No solution to Kashmir other than Plebiscite is acceptable: AJK PM

Muhaasib, 21 April 2021

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir Sardar Farooq Haider has said that no other proposed solution to the dispute of Kashmir other than a plebiscite in accordance with the United Nation Resolutions is acceptable to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He further said it is the duty of the Pakistan government of the time to stand for the people of Occupied Kashmir and be their spokesperson to the world. He demanded that no talks be held with the Indian State unless there is a complete withdrawal of the August 5, 2019 move which took away the special status of the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

AJK PM said that it was ridiculous to commence talks on the matters of trade when India had been consistently conducting genocide of the Kashmiri Population for seven decades. He also accused the Pakistan government of dealing with the Kashmir issue with non-seriousness claiming that if the Pakistan Government deals with the Kashmir issue with sincerity, a lot of bloodshed can be prevented.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=21-04-2021>

Democratic Party announces participation in all constituencies in the upcoming AJK elections

Daily Ausaaf, 22 April 2021

The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Party held an important meeting under the leadership of AJK's first ever woman party founder and Chairperson Nabila Irshad Advocate in which they

announced a full-fledged participation in the upcoming elections. The Party also announced that they will nominate candidates for all constituencies and contest the elections with the highest possible intensity.

A parliamentary board for decisions on handing out of tickets was also constituted. The Board would be chaired by Dr. Waleed Rasool and will be staffed by many important leaders of the party. Any member of the party can apply for nomination to the parliamentary board before the 18th of May. No fees would be charged.

Speaking on the occasion, the Party chairperson said that the aim of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Party was to take the freedom movement of Kashmir to its logical conclusion and to strengthen institutions.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-04-22/133947/p2_31.gif

Are Police Reforms required in Azad Jammu Kashmir?

Editorial, Jammu Kashmir Times, 23 April 2021

It is an obvious fact that maintenance of law and order in the Azad portion of Jammu and Kashmir i.e. AJK is a security priority for Pakistan and the only institution that be burdened with this immense duty is the local police. But for the local police to be able achieve this momentous target of maintaining peace and order in a tricky region, they need to be well equipped and need to work in a well-oiled system. The present system under which the AJK Police functions is conspicuously faulty and problematic and there are many issues that need to be worked out with the help of urgent reform.

AJK presently has a population of close to 40 lakh with only 7000 are employed in the police department. A cursory look at the average of police officials required to serve a certain population tells us that this force should actually be close to 10,000. Another problem is the non-application of 'Police Order 2002' in the state. Due to the lack of a proper Police order, work timings of the police officers are not specified. Also, despite being understaffed, AJK police officials are sometimes used for purposes which is far below their skill set and the pay package is extremely less. The number of Police stations also needs to be increased desperately.

All politicians and senior officials should look into this matter seriously and like reforms in other departments, there is an urgent need for Police reforms in AJK and that should be taken up on a priority basis.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Resize-of-P2-23.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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