

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Gilgit-Baltistan POK
tourism development
CPEC infrastructure
provisional provincial status



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
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Political Developments

'Consensus on Kashmir dispute imperative to safeguard supreme National Interest:' Pakistan NSA

Pakistan Observer, November 22, 2021

Pakistan National Security Adviser (NSA), Moeed Yusuf has said that "consensus on Kashmir dispute and national security" is imperative to safeguard supreme national interest. In an interview, he said that the ruling government believes in consensus and dialogue to address all internal and external threats being faced by the country. Moeed Yusuf also expressed serious concern over "massive human rights violations, and atrocities being committed by Indian troops against innocent Kashmiris in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir."

<https://pakobserver.net/consensus-on-kashmir-dispute-imperative-to-safe-guard-supreme-national-interest-moeed/>

'The Kashmir issue'

The Express Tribune, November 23, 2021

India and Pakistan have fought two major wars (1947 and 1965) on the issue of Kashmir. The bilateral relations between the two countries improved for some time but later grew sour following the "alleged terrorist attacks carried out on both soils." Such volatile relations continue even today because of immature political leaders who continue to create an "external enemy" for their selfish interests.

On August 5, 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government in India scrapped Articles 370 and 35-A of the

Indian constitution. The amendments not only abrogated "Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir" (IIOJK) special status but also brought changes to "land and ownership rights." At first, Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan, Imran Khan warned India about a bloodbath that could ensue and asked for the intervention of the international community. But none except for China and Turkey acknowledged the severity of the issue.

Moreover, Imran Khan Government had downgraded the diplomatic relations and suspended bilateral trade with India. The Government also took the matter to the United Nations (UN) and observed August 14 in solidarity with the Kashmiris, Pakistan has tried every possible diplomatic way to support 'IIOJK.' Unfortunately, nothing substantial has been achieved. Now, the government has issued a new political map that includes Jammu and Kashmir and Junagadh as part of Pakistan and has ordered news channels to air it every day before the 9 pm news bulletin for 2 seconds. This seems to be a rather absurd move that will have no significance on the overall cause. The government must first strengthen its economy in order to garner support and fight at the international forum. Pakistan has to prove that it can look after the people of Kashmir. Unless the country is economically strong, no one will pay any heed to the hue and cry of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

<https://tribune.com.pk/letter/2253226/the-kashmir-issue-4>

'Over a million overseas AJK residents to get voting rights'

The Express Tribune, November 24, 2021

The "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) government decided to give over one million overseas AJK residents the right to vote in general elections. The decision has been taken in a cabinet meeting chaired by 'AJK' Prime Minister (PM) Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi. The cabinet also approved an amendment act to provide financial assistance to widows and orphans under which a special fund will be set up in the region. Moreover, the cabinet also decided to collect the data of Ehsaas programme beneficiaries to ensure a transparent financial assistance system for widows and orphans. While addressing the cabinet, the 'AJK' PM said that all resources will be utilized for the welfare of the people of the region, according to PM of Pakistan Imran Khan's vision. He stressed that PM Imran Khan was taking effective steps for the prosperity and wellbeing of the common people, adding that it was his government's mission to serve the people regardless of their political affiliations. The AJK PM also expressed serious concern over the arrest of human rights activist Khurram Parvez in "Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir" (IOJK). He urged international human rights organizations to play their role in Parvez's release.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330881/over-a-million-overseas-ajk-residents-to-get-voting-rights>

'GB: a dream unfulfilled'

Dawn, November 24, 2021

On November 01, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) celebrate their independence day. The latter marks the day on which the Gilgit scouts led by their local officers ousted the Dogra rulers in 1947. With the fall of the Kashmir raj there was a vacuum in governance, the leaders of the uprising established an independent state of GB and unconditionally acceded to Pakistan. These trusting people acceded in good faith, firmly believing that their dark night of oppression had ended. Little did they know that it was the beginning of another dark era. The Pakistan government treated their accession as a trivial development. The area was not even accorded the status of a regular district. Instead, it was treated as a political agency akin to the unruly tribal areas. The status of the region was further degraded when Sardar Muhammad Alam Khan, a tehsildar was posted as a political agent and tasked with administering an area of 73,000 square kilometres and a million-strong population.

After two years of this flawed governance, without consulting the locals, the government signed the infamous Karachi Agreement 1949 with the Kashmiri leadership surrendering its control of GB to the federation. To exacerbate the situation, the redundant Amritsar Treaty of 1940 between the British Raj and Hari Singh was used to define the region as disputed territory. This form of

unaccountable governance continued till 1973. Between, 1994-2018, the government resorted to presidential decrees to implement the so-called political reform by issuing eight administrative orders for quelling the residents' demand for the integration of GB into Pakistan. The linchpin of these rationalisations was the dubious linkage of GB to the Kashmir issue, and the palliatives were cosmetic decrees of self-rule reminiscent of the imperial 'constitutional reforms' envisaged for India by the British Raj.

Dismayed by the broken promises of various governments, civil society petitioned the Supreme Court of Pakistan, leading to the 1999 verdict which asserted that the locals were "citizens of Pakistan for all intents and purposes" and could "invoke constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights". The Supreme Court has re-endorsed this judgement. After two years of deliberation, the committee submitted a comprehensive report in 2017, proposing a provisional provincial status for GB based on its assessment of the implications for the Kashmir issue. Time is running out for the region as great changes are taking place and GB now which has captured international attention. According to media reports, the government has finalized draft constitutional amendments to confer on GB provisional provincial status along with all the privileges and obligations of a federating unit. Sources have revealed that the Pakistan Foreign Office, only to assert their position, is objecting to an amendment in Article 1 of the Constitution for defining the

status of GB and insisting that the proposed change be incorporated in Article 258. Practically this may serve the purpose, but it does cast into doubt about the sincerity of the federation. Given the growing demand for constitutional rights by the locals, urgent action by the government of Pakistan is imperative due to the following factors:

1. Strategic location of GB in the 'great game'.
2. Importance of GB as a direct gateway to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with potential for another route. Any political unrest can imperil this fortune-transforming project for Pakistan.
3. Vast mineral resources and hydropower potential that can help the region generate energy for the country.
4. In the last elections to the local assembly, all political parties promised provisional provincial status to GB.
5. The inordinate delay in according provisional provincial status is leading to frustration amongst the residents, thus providing leverage to hostile elements that want to breed dissent by exploiting GB's undefined status.

It is time to forge ahead with the integration of GB as a provisional province before these vested interests once more derail this positive development and imperil the outcome for GB and Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1659943/gb-a-dream-unfulfilled>

Pakistan Army holds a three-day lunar festival in the Astore district

The Express Tribune, November 28, 2021

A three-day lunar festival organised by the Pakistan Army for the local people and youth of the mountainous Astore district of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) came to an end on Sunday. The festival aimed to promote healthy activities among the populace of the region and to strengthen the goodwill between the locals and the army. The festival featured cricket, volleyball, tug-of-war, weightlifting, athletics, horse racing, sheep racing, sack racing, and other sports as well as speech competitions. A free medical camp for the needy was also organized during the festival, where 103 patients were examined, and free medicines were distributed.

The residents of the area and the district administration were also briefed on the equipment and weapons used in the snow-capped mountains. The district administration of Astore had cooperated with the Pakistan army in organizing the fair and provided assistance to people from remote areas in reaching the fair.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2331476/arm-y-holds-three-day-lunar-festival-in-astore-district>

Hurriyat delegation meet AJK PM

The Nation, November 27, 2021

A delegation of Hurriyat leaders led by the chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM) Altaf Ahmed Bhat meet “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) Prime Minister (PM) Abdul Qayyum Niazi at Kashmir

House. The delegation briefed the PM on the current situation in “Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK).

During the meeting, the PM of AJK “strongly condemned the targeted killing of three innocent youths in a fake counter in Indian occupied Kashmir a day ago by the Indian occupying forces”. He further noted lamented the silence of the world powers and institutions and said that international bodies should play their role in stopping the “genocide of Kashmiris” and impose economic sanctions against India for “incarcerated killings, crackdowns and enforced disappearances.”

Hurriyat leader Altaf Ahmed Bhat, while referring to the recent incident in Haider Pura, said that India has been trying to “suppress the voice of the oppressed Kashmiri people” from the very first day its “occupation forces” entered Kashmir. He stressed that the Kashmiri people have “strong dedication, enthusiasm and love for Pakistan”, and that is the reason “Indian occupation forces” are punishing them to break their will of freedom. JKSM Chairman Altaf Ahmed Bhat urged AJK PM to bring all the parties together for the Kashmir issue on a single platform so that the Kashmir issue can be presented more effectively. Many Hurriyat Conference leaders were also present in the meeting.

<https://nation.com.pk/27-Nov-2021/hurriyat-delegation-calls-on-ajk-premier>

'Efforts on Occupied Kashmir Freedom on high-level Peak:' AJK President

Daily Parliament Times, November 28, 2021

This President of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry while addressing a large public meeting in Rawalpindi district said that, "the role of the zealous Mujahideen of Poonch district in the independence movement" of Kashmir is recorded in history. He further noted that "India stands by its traditional stubbornness" and we have fulfilled our responsibility by trying every possible constitutional and legal route. He said that Kashmiris around the world and Pakistan are fulfilling their responsibilities for the "independence of occupied Kashmir." He noted that it is due to the efforts of Pakistan that the international community is now beginning to understand the Kashmir issue. The meeting was presided over by retired Colonel Sardar Waheed Khan.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/11/28/efforts-on-occupied-kashmir-freedom-on-high-level-peak-president/>

Economic Developments

PM of 'AJK' meets Senate Chairman: Discussion related to Tourism and Economic Development

Daily Parliament Times, November 22, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi meet with the chairman of the Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjarani at the parliament

house. The Senate chairman expressed concern over the "recent inhumane acts of Indian Army in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir" (IOJK). He said that "Kashmiri youths were being martyred through fake police encounters" and their corpses are not handed over to their families is a serious violation of basic human rights. He asserted that the Pakistani nation and government need to stand in solidarity with our Kashmiri brothers.

Both the leaders also discussed issues related to the promotion of tourism and industrial development in 'AJK' during the meeting. The chairman of the Senate assured full cooperation to the government of 'AJK' for the promotion of tourism and various hydropower projects in "Azad Kashmir." He stressed the need to ensure the provision of basic necessities of life to the people living on the Line of Control (LoC). The PM of 'AJK' said that the Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) led government in "Azad Kashmir" has started a new era of development and progress in the state as per the vision of PM of Pakistan, Imran Khan.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/11/22/prime-minister-of-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-sardar-abdul-qayyum-niazi-called-on-chairman-senate-muhammad-sadiq-sanjarani/>

Executive Chairman of the MTBC meet with the President of AJK

Daily Pakistan, November 22, 2021

The president of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry meet with the executive chairman of Medical Transcription and Billing Company

(MTBC), Mehmood ul Haq. During the meeting, the executive chairman of MTBC briefed the president on the services of MTBC and ongoing projects in “Azad Kashmir” under public-private partnership. He said that MTBC is working on various projects in ‘AJK’ in the fields of tourism, education, communications and Information Technology (IT) under a public-private partnership. He also noted that the rest houses in different areas have been leased from the government of “Azad Kashmir” and they have been activated to provide international standard facilities to the tourists. He also stressed that there is also a plan to launch Kashmir Airlines for the promotion of tourism, under which tourists will be provided transport facility by helicopter to the tourist destinations in different parts of “Azad Kashmir.” During the meeting, Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry appreciated the services of MTBC and said that the participation of the private sector is essential for the development and prosperity of “Azad Kashmir” and assured that the ruling party in ‘AJK’ will provide a conducive environment for investors in “Azad Kashmir.”

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/22-Nov-2021/1368695>

PTI led Government in ‘AJK’ working on Economic Development and highlighting the Kashmir Issue: AJK President

Daily Parliament Times, November 28, 2021

This President of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry while addressing

a public meeting in Rawalpindi district said that under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government in “Azad Kashmir” We are not only raising the “issue of Kashmir” before the international community but also efforts are being made to make “Azad Kashmir” economically self-sufficient. So that the condition of the common man can be improved. During his address, the ‘AJK’ president also announced the repair of various roads keeping in view the difficulties of the people and promoting and facilitating tourism in the region. He said that the road work on Azad Pattan Hydro Project would be completed by December 10.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/11/28/efforts-on-occupied-kashmir-freedom-on-high-level-peak-president/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Stories of martyrs in every parts of LoC due to continuous violations by India: AJK President

Urdu Point, November 23, 2021

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has said that due to the “continuous violations by India's in and around the Line of Control (LoC), there are stories of martyrs in every village of Neelum Valley.” While addressing civilians at Neelum Valley on the occasion of Martyrs' Day, he stressed that on November 23, 2016, 12 people were martyred and 14 others were injured in Nagdar Kanari due to firing by India on a passenger bus. There are hundreds of such stories of “Indian violence” in each part of LoC.

He stressed that the people of 'AJK' salute the sacrifices of these martyrs and today "we all have to renew our commitment that the sacrifices of the martyrs of Neelum will not be in vain." The president further said that 3,000 per month will be paid for each member of the family of martyrs of Neelum Valley. On the occasion, other speakers including the secretary of liberation cell, Ejaz Lone among others, also addressed the civilians gathering and appreciated the role of AJK president in highlighting the "suffering of Kashmiri in occupied Kashmir" globally.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/national-news/live-news-2968977.html>

'India is using violence against mothers and sisters of Kashmir as a weapon:' Chairman Kashmir Committee

Jasarat, November 25, 2021

The chairman of the parliamentary Kashmir Committee, Shehryar Afridi has said that "India is using violence against mothers and sisters of Kashmir as a weapon." While addressing a conference on the occasion of International Day for the "Elimination of Violence against Women" at Fatima Jinnah Women's University, he said that during the Nazi era in Germany, Jews were tortured in concentration camps and the same thinking is being practised in India today. He further said that India also wants to change the mindset of Kashmiris. He said that "India is not only using violence against mothers and sisters but its

forces also torture Kashmiri women in jails to silence the voice of freedom." He further said that the arrest of Khurram Parvez, a globally recognised face on human rights, is evidence that "India is using war tactics to suppress Kashmiris. He stressed that the "work and documentation done under Khurram Parvez has exposed India globally and his arrest by the terror-inflicting National Investigation Agency (NIA) shows how India is blocking all means to tell Kashmir story." Afridi further noted that Asiya Andrabi, Fehmeeda Sofi and Naheeda Nasreen are a symbol of resistance for Kashmir and constant imprisonments could not break their resolve. He said that Kashmiri women are writing a "new chapter of resistance" in human history and "worst India oppression" couldn't break their commitment towards the "freedom movement."

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/11/25/sheh-aryar-afridi/>

Independence of Kashmir and solution of base camp Issues

Jasarat, November 25, 2021

The former chairman of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Abdul Rashid Turabi meet with the president of Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) "Azad Kashmir" Sardar Tanveer Ilyas. During the meeting, Abdul Rashid Turabi has said that we have to work on both fronts for the "independence of Kashmir and solution of base camp issues." Abdul Rashid Turabi further said that the deplorable conditions in "Occupied Kashmir after the illegal actions" of the Indian government and

the demise of Syed Ali Gilani people are demanding an effective role from the base camp. He noted that the ruling government of India under Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi is "committing genocide of Kashmiris." In this context, we have to work on both fronts, Kashmir independence and solution of base camp issues. He stressed that powerful and resourceful base camps are essential for the independence of Kashmir and the security of Pakistan itself.

During the meeting, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas said that a package of 500 billion would change the destiny of the "independent region of Azad Kashmir." He further noted that the "Azad Kashmir" government is working hard to promote tourism, construction and infrastructure development. He emphasized that his government had suggested that Abdul

Rashid Turabi should be included in the cabinet as an advisor or a member of the Kashmir Council. He emphasized that, "we propose to set up a Kashmir Committee headed by Abdul Rashid Turabi comprising all the leadership of "Azad Kashmir," Hurriyat Conference of Pakistan and those working for Kashmir at the international level so that practical steps can be taken for the independence of Kashmir." Tanvir Alias further said that Abdul Rashid Turabi is playing a historic role in the movement for the "independence of Kashmir" and his inclusion in the cabinet will further strengthen the independence movement and the development of the base camp.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/11/25/abdu-l-rasheed-turabi-has-to-work-on-both-fronts-of-kashmir-independence-and-solution-of-base-camp-issues/>

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Disclaimer

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