

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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10 - 16 October 2022

Gilgit-Baltistan
new taxation law
Revenue tourism
Authority Chilas
Hydropower Bill 2022 POK
Neelum Jhelum Surcharge



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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Contents

Political Developments

- Terror in GB
- Death of Altaf Shah a great human tragedy: President of INSPAD
- Diaspora asked to highlight the Kashmir issue
- All political parties united on 'IIOJK' issue: Kaira
- Our rulers have made Kashmir a football, this will not work in Kashmir: MQM leader

Economic Developments

- Strike in GB against the new tax law
- GBRSP and Pakistan Aid signed a Memorandum of Understanding
- AGP terms charging of Neelum Jhelum Surcharge after Dec 2018 unjustified
- The Bank of 'AJK' has introduced new loan schemes for business activities

Vernacular Urdu Media

- In Modi's India, murders in prison have become a normal routine: PM of Pakistan
- 'AJK' PM expressed profound sadness on the 'custodial death' of Hurriyat leader Altaf Ahmad Shah
- Indian PM statement regarding the resolution of the Kashmir issue is a lie: Pakistan FO
- 'AJK' president saddened over the custodial death of Hurriyat leader Altaf Ahmed Shah
- No bargain on the Kashmir issue is acceptable: JI Leader
- Legal Forum Kashmir dossier reveals Indian forces' staged encounter deaths in 'IIOJK'
- PM of 'AJK' appeals to the UN and the world community to pay attention to the murder of a Kashmiri leader while he was in Indian custody

Political Developments

Terror in GB

Editorial, Dawn, 11 October 2022

The terrible absence of security in the region was exposed by the unsettling recent incident in Chilas, where militants were able to keep a sitting Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) minister and several others practically hostage by closing Babusar Road. While GB Minister Abaidullah Baig was traveling from Gilgit to Islamabad, a little-known group going by the name of Mujahideen Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan brazenly stopped him, took him away, and caused hours of traffic delays on the high-altitude road. The minister was eventually set free, but only after Diامر's political and religious leaders, as well as local officials, engaged in negotiations with the militants. In addition to ending women's sporting activities in GB, it appears that the militants want to free their colleagues, some of whom were part of the deadly 2013 terrorist attack on the Nanga Parbat base camp, which targeted international climbers. According to them, the state's failure to uphold a 2019 deal with them caused the road to be closed, and they gave the government a 10-day deadline to comply with their demands.

Such terrorist violence has previously been experienced in this region of northern Pakistan. Aside from the Nanga Parbat event, several horrific attacks occurred in 2012 in which victims were slain after being taken from buses. These included occurrences in Mansehra and Kohistan.

Shia was the majority of the victims. The TTP or its offshoots were responsible for all of the aforementioned terrorist assaults, thus it is safe to conclude that those responsible for last week's Chilas ambush are affiliated with the same organizations. The state, particularly the security establishment, needs to explain how this massive security lapse occurred. It is astounding that militants were able to block a major artery with such ease. Moreover, the policy of negotiation and caving into the demands of violent actors is a flawed one and has always failed. The state should by no means release men involved in heinous acts of terrorism, while the militants' other demands, such as ensuring women disappear from the public sphere in GB, must also be dismissed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1714414/terror-in-gb>

Death of Altaf Shah a great human tragedy: President of INSPAD

Daily Parliament Times, 11 October 2022

The president of the Institute of Peace and Development (INSPAD), Dr. Sardar Muhammad Tahir Tabassum termed the death of Altaf Shah, who was imprisoned in Tihar Jail for five years on 'false charges', a great human tragedy. He has demanded to file a case against PM Narendra Modi and Ajit Singh (might be referring to Ajit Doval) for his death, and added that India is 'plotting to kill Kashmiri leaders in jails.' He claimed that Altaf Shah's murder is part of this conspiracy, alleging that the lives of the Kashmiri leaders imprisoned in the jails in 'false

cases' are also in danger and therefore the United Nations (UN) and the International Court of Justice should provide immediate protection to them and India should be stopped from such 'nefarious, illegal and inhumane' actions. He has said that Kashmiri leaders are being treated inhumanely in jails, and they are not getting medical treatment facilities which are very sad. He said that to save the Kashmiri people from India's 'atrocities' and 'massacres', the government of Pakistan should immediately take up this important issue through diplomacy in the UN and the Security Council.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/10/11/institute-of-peace-and-development-inspad-president-dr-sardar-muhammad-tahir-tabassum-called-the-death-of-altaf-shah/>

Diaspora asked to highlight the Kashmir issue

Pakistan Observer, 11 October 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhary has stressed upon the Kashmir diaspora in the United States (US) to play their effective role in highlighting the plights of their brethren in 'Illegally Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) through different activities at their host country. In his speech to a meeting of the Kashmiri and Pakistani diaspora in Houston, he reaffirmed the commitment made on behalf of Jammu and Kashmiris living abroad that they would keep fighting until they were granted the right to self-determination outlined in UN resolutions. He also

claimed that he presented the opinions of Kashmiris during meetings with US officials, UN representatives, and OIC members and raised the Kashmir dispute on different forums during his stay in the US. He further claimed that his presentations had helped these leaders to understand different aspects of the lingering Kashmir dispute and now the Indians have gone on the defensive. He said human rights 'abuses' in 'IIOJK' were at their peak nowadays and life of innocent people in the valley had been shortened but Indians must remember that it can't suppress the people's commitment to the right to self-determination.

<https://pakobserver.net/diaspora-asked-to-highlight-kashmir-issue/>

All political parties united on 'IIOJK' issue: Kaira

Business Recorder, 13 October 2022

The adviser to the Pakistan Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Qamar Zaman Kaira said that all the political parties in the country were united on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir regardless of their political differences. He was speaking at a news conference along with leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), 'AJK' chapter, and Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK) after the launch of a report, 'Colonial Diary', that highlights the 'grave situation' in the 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) in the wake of 'Indian atrocities' there. Kaira reiterated Pakistan's firm resolve of moral, political, and diplomatic support to the people of 'IIOJK' in their just struggle

for freedom. The report has been compiled by the team of LFK which includes around 220 legislations, administrative changes, orders, notifications, and press releases by the Indian State in the last three years, from August 2019 to August 2022) after the abrogation of Article 370.

The report includes various laws, articles, and bills on different issues and with diverse themes including land acquirement for military purposes, the Roshni Act, Termination of government employees under 311 (2) (c), Waqf properties, Pandit Migration, Jammu Kashmir Reorganization Act (2019), Domicile Certificate, Delimitation Commission, etc. The Reorganization Act consists of 103 clauses, extends 106 central laws to the UTs, repeals 153 state laws, and abolishes the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council. During the event, Kashmiri lawmakers believe that it is a pathway paved for replicating the 'Israeli model of occupation' and 'colonization' of the West Bank in Kashmir towards dis-empowerment and dispossession of the locals, particularly Kashmiri Muslims, to exercise hegemonic control through new settlers.

It further stated that the long-term objectives include abolishing the Muslim identity of the state; manipulating the results of the plebiscite in favor of India. Short-term objectives include inflicting damages to the local economy to deprive the Kashmiris of all basic human rights and crush the indigenous voice for freedom from Indian occupation. It added that

the new laws also allow the lands acquired by the government for industrial or commercial purposes to be disposed of or sold to any Indian, claiming that these laws also authorize the Indian 'occupying forces' to declare any area as 'strategic' for operational and training purposes. This is a form of 'land-grabbing' as the Indian 'occupying forces' are already 'occupying' thousands of hectares of land in the 'occupied region.' Those who were present on the occasion included Mehmood Ahmad Saghar, convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, general secretary APHC and Advocate Nasir Qadri, executive director LFK, besides Qamar Zaman Kaira.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40202810/all-political-parties-united-on-iiobjk-issue-kaira>

Our rulers have made Kashmir a football, this will not work in Kashmir: MQM leader

Daily Parliament Times, 16 October 2022

The former parliamentary leader of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), 'Azad Kashmir' and former minister of tourism and transportation, Khil Muhammad Tahir Khokhar, claimed that the situation in 'Occupied Kashmir' is entirely changing and that the rulers of Pakistan have neglected Kashmir in their hunger for power and greed of the chair. He claimed that the 'murders' who are enemies of mankind and Muslims, like 'Modi in Kashmir', are 'destroying' the 'identity' of Kashmiris. He alleged that the PM Modi administration and the entire BJP are currently exerting all of their power

to alter the demography of Kashmir. He said that because they were obsessed with usurping power, our rulers have turned Kashmir into a football on which they are kicking each other while relieving themselves of responsibility. It is up to the president of Pakistan and the administration in 'Azad Kashmir' to formulate a strategy for resolving the Kashmir conflict and implement it.

To avoid being cursed and labeled a traitor forever by future generations, he urged Pakistan's ruler to act following their genuine authority in finding a solution to the Kashmir issue, added that the Indian government had made it impossible for Kashmiris to breathe in 'occupied Kashmir.' He claimed that it is unlawful to exercise freedom of expression. He stressed that the moment is now for Kashmiris living abroad and Kashmiris on both sides to raise their united voice, adding that a global wave of demonstrations should be launched by people and political parties, and a referendum should be held. If the UN truly want peace in the globe, then they should help in granting Kashmiris the right to self-determination.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/10/16/our-rulers-have-made-kashmir-a-football-this-will-not-work-in-kashmirtahir-khokhar/>

Economic Developments

Strike in GB against the new tax law

Dawn, 8 October 2022

A shutter-down strike was observed in various parts of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)

against a new taxation law passed by the legislative assembly. The protesters have claimed that the 'Gilgit-Baltistan Revenue Authority Bill 2022' has imposed new taxes on 135 items. The bill was passed by the assembly for the first time in August 2022. However, GB Governor Syed Mehdi Shah in September refused to sign the bill and returned it to the assembly for review. The bill was again tabled in the assembly and was recently passed for the second time, effectively turning it into law. On the call of the GB trader's body and hotel association, shops in Hunza, Nagar, Ghizer, Diamer, Astore, Shigar, Ghanche, and Kharmang districts remained closed while the traffic on roads was also minimal including on Karakoram Highway. The protesters were holding placards and chanting slogans against the new taxes. While talking to reporters, GB's central traders' body president Masoodur Rehman said the imposition of taxes on 135 items will affect the poor people, adding that the traders were already suffering losses due to prolonged electricity shortage in the region. He stressed that the federal government was trying to impose taxes under various names without granting constitutional rights to the people of GB, noting that without adequate representation of GB people in the parliament, no taxes will be accepted. He also said without representation in the parliament and constitutional rights, the imposition of taxes was illegal.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1714040/strike-in-gb-against-new-tax-law>

GBRSP and Pakistan Aid signed a Memorandum of Understanding

Mahasib, 10 October 2022

Gilgit-Baltistan Rural Support Program (GBRSP) and Pakistan Aid inked a memorandum of mutual interest about providing the people of GB with basic amenities, education, and jobs. According to the memorandum signed, Pakistan Aid has given the GBRSP financial support to carry out numerous initiatives for Gilgit-education, Baltistan's health, drinking water, and self-employment. The CEO of the Pakistan aid program, Najam Al Huda, stated at the event that the Pakistan aid program is working on numerous projects with the government and the populace to address the fundamental issues that Pakistani citizens confront, including health and education, added that along with funding for education, health, and self-employment initiatives in GB, Pakistan aid will now give financial assistance to GBRSP.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/news.php?id=482>

AGP terms charging of Neelum Jhelum Surcharge after Dec 2018 unjustified

The Nation, 13 October 2022

While terming the charging of Neelum Jhelum Surcharge (NJS) to consumers after December 2018 as unjustified, the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) has recommended a return/adjustment of 5.816 billion in consumers' forthcoming electricity bills. The AGP in its report said that the NJS collected after December 28, 2018, by Pakistan Water and Development Authority

(WPADA), in violation of the decision of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet and may be returned to the eligible consumers/adjusted in their forthcoming electricity bills. The cost of a 969-megawatt run of the river Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) had increased from the initial estimates of 130b in 2007 to 500b in 2018. The surcharge was imposed in 2007 for the financing of NJHP with a sunset clause of Dec 31, 2015. However due to delay and cost overrun of the project the Re 0.10/unit surcharge was twice extended for a total of 30 months until July 1, 2018. In its decision No.ECC-53/6/2021, dated February 19, 2021, the ECC of the Cabinet removed the NJS that had previously been imposed on electricity customers for the development of NJP from the date WAPDA took over all units of the project. According to the audit report, non-adherence to the ECC decision resulted in unjustified charging of NJS amounting to 5,816.39 million to the consumers up to the Financial Year 202-21.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Oct-2022/agp-terms-charging-of-neelum-jhelum-surcharge-after-dec-2018-unjustified>

The Bank of 'AJK' has introduced new loan schemes for business activities

Daily Parliament Times, 13 October 2022

To boost commercial activity in the State, the Bank of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) has distributed loans totaling 3.5 billion and created new credit programs. This information was provided in a briefing during the launch of the loan campaign push by

Mr. Khawar Saeed, president and Chief Executive Officer of the Bank. Abdul Majid Khan, the Chairman of the Muzaffarabad Bank and the Minister of Finance, Cooperatives, and Inland Revenue for 'Azad Kashmir', officially launched the special loan campaign. In keeping with the goals of the Government of 'Azad Kashmir', the bank has introduced more than a dozen loan packages with very low margins and simple payments for the comfort of its customers. The programs cover commercial and consumer financing, such as advance salaries, tourism development, public health, gold loans, household requirements, and the acquisition of a home, a car, a motorcycle, and the promotion of small and large businesses. According to the state's finance minister, the credit programs will aid in boosting trade within the state, adding that the government is making all necessary preparations for the growth of the Bank of 'AJK' and to satisfy the monetary and commercial requirements of the populace.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/10/13/bank-of-ajk-has-introduced-new-loan-schemes-for-business-activities/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

In Modi's India, murders in prison have become a normal routine: PM of Pakistan

Jasarat, 11 October 2022

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif grieved the death of Kashmiri leader Altaf Ahmad Shah in an Indian prison. Sharif accused that PM Modi's administration refused to provide basic health facilities to the deceased even

though he was a cancer patient. He claimed that 'custodial killings' have become a 'normal routine' in Modi's India.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/10/11/custody-massacres-have-become-routine/>

'AJK' PM expressed profound sadness on the 'custodial death' of Hurriyat leader Altaf Ahmad Shah

Urdupoint, 11 October 2022

According to Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Tanveer Ilyas Khan, the famed Hurriyat leader Altaf Ahmad Shah died while being imprisoned by Indian authorities, stressing that Altaf Shah was a resolute fighter who devoted his entire life to the glorious cause of freedom. He claimed that Shah would live on for a very long period in Kashmiri history because of his tenacity and dedication to the ongoing 'freedom movement.' The entire Kashmiri nation is proud of his bravery, he said, adding that India could not break his resolve by subjecting him to 'unjust' and 'inhuman treatment' in jail. He further said that Shah's years-long incarceration resulted in his death in custody and jail authorities' denial to provide him the right to medical treatment speak volumes as to how India's 'apartheid regime' was treating Kashmiri prisoners. He claimed that the sacrifices of the 'Kashmiri martyrs' will never go in vain and that the day is not far when Kashmiris' sacrifices would reach fruition and the dawn of freedom will appear on the horizon of the Kashmir Valley.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3313052.html>

Indian PM Statement regarding the resolution of the Kashmir issue is a lie: Pakistan FO

Jasarat, 11 October 2022

The comments made by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the resolution of the 'Indian-illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) dispute have been categorically rejected by Pakistan, according to a spokeswoman for the Pakistan Foreign Office (FO). The FO in a statement claimed that PM Narendra Modi's 'absurd claim' that he has somehow has 'settled the Kashmir issue' is not only 'inaccurate' and 'misleading' but also shows how unaware the Indian leadership has grown of the reality of the ground. It stated that Jammu and Kashmir is a recognized international conflict whose resolution has been on the United Nations (UN) agenda since 1948. He claimed that over 900,000 ruthless 'occupation forces' are being used by India, which he said has 'illegally invaded' the region and is guilty of 'appalling human rights violations,' in defiance of clear UN resolutions that demand a free and fair vote to resolve the issue.

The FO went on to say that despite India's 'reprehensible occupation,' which it wants to maintain through deceptive demographic shifts and coercive measures, there is resistance from the people of 'IIOJK'. The statement read that the cleverly 'staged visits' of the Indian leadership to the 'occupied territory' and the choreographed launches of so-called development projects in a bid to create

a 'façade of normalcy' will neither dampen the spirit of the Kashmiris nor would it lead the world to believe India's 'deception.' He further stated that the Indian government must fulfill its obligations to Kashmiris and the rest of the world by ensuring that the people of Kashmir are granted their fundamental right to self-determination. The FO added that Pakistan has again urged the international community to take responsibility for 'IIOJK' and stop the continued 'atrocities' committed by India in the 'occupied region.'

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/10/11/indian-pm-statement-about-kashmir/>

'AJK' president saddened over the custodial death of Hurriyat leader Altaf Ahmed Shah

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 12 October 2022

Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), has expressed his sorrow over the death of Altaf Ahmad Shah, the late Syed Ali Shah Geelani's son-in-law, who passed away while being imprisoned by Indian authorities. The president described Altaf Ahmad Shah's passing as a significant loss for the 'Freedom Movement' and said that the late leader's lifetime of dedication to the Kashmir cause, sacrifices, and contributions would be remembered for a very long time in the annals of Kashmir history. He said that Altaf Ahmad Shah has been imprisoned for the past five years in Tihar prison and recently he had to be rushed to the

hospital in a critical state due to several acute illnesses he was experiencing. Sultan Mahmood claimed that the Indian government disregarded his family's requests for his release on medical grounds.

He said that Kashmiri leaders were being mistreated by the Indian government while they were imprisoned and that they were being denied fundamental rights, such as the right to hygienic food, medicine, and other necessities. He asserted that human rights organizations have expressed their grave worry about the 'appalling situation' of Kashmiri inmates who have been imprisoned on 'false charges' and allowed to fester in facilities far from their communities. The president demanded the immediate release of Hurriyat leaders and activists and urged that international human rights organizations should play a role in securing the immediate release of Kashmiris who were wrongfully detained and arrested before and after August 5, 2019.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-12.jpg>

No bargain on the Kashmir issue is acceptable: JI Leader

Jasarat, 12 October 2022

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Lahore's head, Zikrullah Mujahid, has declared that JI will not give consent to any sort of bargain on Kashmir, and added that the notion of compromise/bargain on Kashmir needs to be banished from the

hearts of both rulers and journalists in Pakistan. He said that Kashmir is still 'enslaved' because of the Pakistan rulers' incapacity and ignorance. He claimed that Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the subcontinent, stressing that the people of Kashmir who are currently under 'Indian occupation' have made significant 'sacrifices', and therefore any further mistreatment of Kashmiris will endanger the peace in the area. He said that it is regrettable and condemnable that Syed Altaf Hussain Shah, Syed Ali Geelani's son-in-law, lost his life while in the Indian Army's custody. The death of Syed Altaf Hussain Shah, he claimed, is evidence of India's 'historical animosity' towards Kashmir and severe human rights abuses. He said that rather than giving up on its support for 'Kashmir's freedom', Pakistan should take an active part in it, emphasizing that abandoning Kashmir out of fear of war would be extreme cowardice. He added that over the past 80 years, Kashmir's people have made sacrifices to achieve their freedom and that no force in the world will be able to enslave the Kashmiri people as long as they continue to struggle for their freedom.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/10/12/mia-zakrullah-mujahid-2/>

Legal Forum Kashmir dossier reveals Indian forces' staged encounter deaths in 'IIOJK'

UrduPoint, 14 October 2022

In a dossier put together by the Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK), several 'fabricated encounters' were referred to

show the 'violent side' of Indian forces' operations in the 'Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). According to the dossier, by using 'excessive force' against the civilian population, the Indian government and its 'occupying forces' in 'IIOJK' are flagrantly breaking both international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It claims that to defame Pakistan and the Kashmir independence struggle, Indian 'occupation troops' routinely carry out 'state-sponsored false flag operations.' According to the report, these false flag operations take the shape of fake encounters in which innocent Kashmiris are killed extra-judicially while being painted as foreign terrorists through an information campaign that uses the Indian media and propaganda as a tool. According to the LFK dossier, there have been 146 significant 'fake encounters' documented in 'IIOJK' between 2000 and 10 October 2022, in which 269 'innocent individuals' have died. Along with the information about the date and location of the encounters, it also includes information about the Indian Army, paramilitaries, police, and other agencies that were involved.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3315962.html>

PM of 'AJK' appeals to the UN and the world community to pay attention to the murder of a Kashmiri leader while he was in Indian custody

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 14 October 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Tanvir

Ilyas Khan has pleaded to the world community and the United Nations (UN) to take prompt notice of the 'custodial death' of Kashmiri leader, Altaf Ahmed Shah which is a strategy to 'punish and persecute' Kashmiris. He said that the 'cold-blooded murder' of Syed Altaf Shah in 'custody' raises serious questions about the safety of Kashmiri political prisoners whose only crime has been to demand the right to self-determination promised to Kashmiris by the UN. While referring to the 'plight' of Kashmiri detainees, he said that it is sad to learn that the Indian authorities did not provide the deceased leader with pen and paper to draught his last will, added that international human rights organizations pay attention to the inhumane treatment of Kashmiris by the Indian army and declare that India is 'committing genocide.' India, he claimed, was adamant about 'erasing Kashmir's identity' and turning the Muslims into a minority. He called on the developed nations to abandon their complacency and help the people of Kashmir, who have been suffering under India's 'cruel repression' for many years. He also criticized the recent remarks made by the Indian prime minister, stating that 'the only thing Kashmiris desire is liberation from India's illegitimate occupation.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-14.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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