

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 2 | Issue 47

21 - 27 November 2022

local bodies selections project
Nandipur power
plant Kishanganga
POK Gilgit-Baltistan
NEPRA Neelum-Jhelum



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Indian plot against Gilgit-Baltistan

The Nation, 21 November 2022

On November 1, 1947, the governor of Gilgit, Brig Ghansara Singh surrendered to the Gilgit Scouts and signed an instrument of surrender on November 3, 1947. The people of the region proclaimed Gilgit as part of Pakistan and hoisted Pakistan's flag. Skardu was liberated exactly after one year on August 14, 1948, when Lt Col Thapa of the 6th Jammu and Kashmir infantry along with 250 soldiers surrendered to liberation forces. India is obsessed with Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) which is evident from the rhetoric of its political and military leadership. India has consistently been opposed to developments in GB right from 1947. It may be due to the renaming of GB in 2009, recommendations of the Sartaj Aziz committee, and the decision by the PTI government to make GB a full-fledged province with representation in both houses of parliament. Indian defense minister Rajnath recently said that the development of Jammu and Kashmir will only be complete when GB and 'Azad Kashmir' reunite with India. In 1987, India planned an exercise cum operation to attack Skardu and Gilgit to occupy GB.

In 2016, Prime Minister Modi made a reference to Gilgit in a speech that the people of the region thanked him for voicing their rights. The GB Legislative Assembly condemned the remarks and passed a unanimous resolution against

it. In 2015, the Indian national security advisor Ajit Doval said while addressing a gathering of BSF troops that we also have a 106 kilometers long non-contagious border with Afghanistan, he was referring to the GB border with the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan. The former Indian army chief Bipin Rawat referred to GB as a terrorist-controlled part of Pakistan and claimed that the armed forces are ready for an operation to retrieve 'AJK' and GB from the clutches of Pakistan if the government wants so. One of the former Indian army chiefs and now a minister in the BJP-RSS-led government V.K. Singh said that the Indian army's plan to take over GB is ready. Indian external affairs minister Jaishankar has said that the 'AJK' and GB are part of India and we expect one day that we will have physical control over it. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said that the way to conquer 'Azad Kashmir' and GB is not through Muzaffarabad but through Khaplu and Skardu.

On August 5, 2019, India revoked the special status of 'IIOJK' by abrogating article 370 of the Indian constitution and issued a new political map which showed 'AJK' as part of the newly created union of 'IIOJK', while GB in the union territory of Ladakh. The Indians greatly desire to occupy the region of GB to establish a link with Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. The region is important for India because it lies at the confluence of Central Asia, China, and South Asia, and it is important because it is the

entry point of CPEC and also for geo-strategic and economic perspectives. The Indian media too is propagating and feeding fake stories related to GB. Recently, an Indian TV channel aired a story that Pakistan may cede GB to China on lease to pay off its mounting debts. India is supporting some of the so-called sub-nationalist groups mainly abroad to instigate local youth against Pakistan by exploiting its constitutional status. The Indian defense minister, Rajnath Singh, is famous for making rhetoric. He warned Pakistan in 2019 that it will lose territory again as it did in 1971. In his recent speech at Badgam, he referred to the 1994 resolution passed by Lok Sabha which has to be fulfilled. The 1994 resolution was passed while Narasimha Rao was the prime minister which says that 'AJK' and GB are an integral part of India by Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India. In response to Rajnath Singh's statement, the GOC of Indian 15 corps (IIOJK) Lt. Gen A.D.S Aujla said that the 'Indian army is fully prepared for action' and waiting for orders from the government. India is in flames because of a recent visit by the US ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome to 'Azad Kashmir.' The Sikhs/Dogras invasion and occupation cannot be the *raison d'être* of GB to be part of 'IIOJK' and India. The people of the region liberated their areas without outside help and decided to join Pakistan. The people of GB are loyal to Pakistan and want the region to become the 5th province of the country. There are no anti-Pakistan sentiments, no anti-Pakistan slogans, and nobody is

opposing CPEC and China, contrary to the propaganda being pushed by the Indian government and media. The rhetoric of Indian military and political leaders will never be fulfilled. Threats are made for domestic consumption, and they are also an attempt to divert attention from the political environment in India and atrocities in 'IIOJK.'

<https://www.nation.com.pk/21-Nov-2022/indian-plot-against-gilgit-baltistan>

Good relations with India possible but not as long as BJP remains in power: Imran

Dawn, 21 November 2022

Former prime minister Imran Khan has sought need for Pakistan to mend ties with India but made it clear that a good relationship would be impossible while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) remains in power. He contends that economic benefits could be achieved if the two neighbors establish trade with each other, but he stressed that New Delhi's stance on 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) was the main impediment. He said that the BJP government is so 'hardline' and that they have a nationalistic stance on issues, and added that it is frustrating as 'you have no chance for a resolution as they whip up these nationalistic feelings. And, once this genie of nationalism is out of the bottle it is very difficult to put it back in again.' He said that Pakistan had to cool off its relationship with India when the neighboring country took away the statehood of 'IIOJK.' Pakistan officially

downgraded its trade relations with India in August 2019 to the ‘level of Israel’ with which Islamabad has no trade ties at all. The decision had come as a reaction to India’s decision to revoke Article 370 of its constitution that granted ‘occupied’ Kashmir a special status. Khan said that he would seek to establish good relations with all the neighbors of Pakistan including Afghanistan, Iran, China, and the US if he is elected as the premier again.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1722278/good-relations-with-india-possible-but-not-as-long-as-bjp-remains-in-power-imran>

‘AJK’ president asks PM Shehbaz to provide security forces for LG polls

The Express Tribune, 22 November 2022

The president of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has written a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, seeking the deployment of security personnel to conduct local bodies elections in a ‘free and transparent manner.’ The local government elections are scheduled to be held after the gap of 31 years in ‘AJK.’ The letter mentioned that ‘AJK’ Prime Minister Tanveer Ilyas had already written a letter to Interior Minister Rana Sunaullah on November 11 for providing the security forces for holding smooth and transparent local bodies’ elections but the ministry has not yet confirmed. The letter further reads that if security forces were not provided and elections were postponed then it would have serious consequences and international media may exploit it. Ultimately the

postponement of local bodies’ polls will damage the Kashmir cause at the international level. Sultan, therefore, requested PM Shehbaz for sending forces on November 27 without any further delay.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2387431/ajk-president-asks-pm-shehbaz-to-provide-security-forces-for-lg-polls>

Modi-led BJP govt of India is using illicit means to silence Kashmiris: Chairman JKSM

The Daily Parliament, 23 November 2022

The chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM) Altaf Ahmed Bhat while appreciating global bodies and human rights groups who asked for the release of Kashmiri Human Rights defender, Khurram Parvez, claimed that Modi-led BJP govt of India is using all ‘illicit’ means to silence Kashmiris vis a vis arresting and torturing human rights defenders and Media persons. He further claimed that Kashmiris have suffered the worst in the last 75 years, but after revoking articles 370 and 35A in 2019 Modi led BJP govt of India unleashed a reign of terror on Kashmiris, punishing them for their just demand of right to self-determination guaranteed by UN resolutions and suppressing the voices of human rights violations with fake charges and arbitrary detentions. He reiterated that while human rights bodies and other organizations have asked India to release Khurram Parvez, dozens of Hurriyat leaders including, Massart Alam Bhat, Yasin Malik, Shabbir Ahmed Shah, Zaffar Akbar

Bhat Asiya Andrabi, Fehmida Soofi, and others are languishing in different jails of India for raising the voice of freedom and right to self-determination. He urged International organizations, including the UN, OIC, EU, and other human rights bodies to force India to stop its inhumane and grave human rights violations in 'occupied' Kashmir, demilitarize Kashmir and start the process of the plebiscite.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/11/23/modi-led-bjp-govt-of-india-is-using-illicit-means-to-silence-kashmiris-chairman-jksm/>

Kashmir EU Weekends ends with a call for further highlighting Indian 'atrocities'

Pakistan Observer, 24 November 2022

The Kashmir European Union (K-EU) Week celebrations at the European headquarters in Brussels came to an end with stress on the Kashmiri Diaspora to further highlight the Indian 'atrocities' on the people of 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir. During the closing ceremony held at the European Press Club Brussels, the speakers emphasized that the issue of Kashmir should be highlighted more and especially the human rights violations in 'India illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) should be brought before the world. The chairman of Kashmir Council, EU Ali Raza Syed, former Ambassador of the European Union Anthony Crasner, European Human Rights Activist Maryan Lucas, and Senior Kashmiri leader Sardar Sadique were members of the panel

while Mahmood Iqbal and Khalid Joshi were among the other speakers of the closing ceremony moderated by Sheraz Raj, Belgium based Pakistani intellectual. The speakers demanded the international community, especially the EU to put pressure on India to stop 'atrocities' in Kashmir and pave the way for a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue. Raza said that although the Kashmir EU Week celebrations have ended, the ongoing exhibition on Kashmir at the European Press Club will continue till Saturday, November 26, 2022.

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmir-eu-week-ends-with-call-for-further-highlighting-indian-atrocities/>

'Delusional mindset': ISPR hits back at Indian army official for remarks about taking control of parts of 'AJK'

Dawn, 24 November 2022

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) denounced a top Indian military official's statement about taking control of parts of 'Azad Kashmir' as an 'apt manifestation of the Indian army's 'delusional mindset.' The ISPR director general on its tweeter handle wrote that the unwarranted statement of a high-ranking Indian army officer showcases the 'vivid imprint of domestic political showboating on Indian military thought.' The tweet referred to Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi's statement, following Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's remarks about 'retrieving' parts of 'Azad Kashmir' and his claims that citizens were subjected to human rights

violations in the region. According to Hindustan Times, Dwivedi, who is the general officer commanding-in-chief of the Indian army's northern command, responded to the minister's statement by underscoring that a resolution on the matter already existed in parliament. The army official from across the border also alleged that 'there were around 300 terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir at this time, with another 160 waiting for an opportunity to cross the LoC (Line of Control) and sneak into India.' In its 'rebuke', the ISPR said: 'The fallacious remarks and unfounded allegations of so-called 'launch-pads' and 'terrorists' are an attempt to divert attention from the Indian army's repressive use of force and gross human rights violations against innocent, unarmed Kashmiris striving for their right of self-determination, upheld by international law and enshrined in UN (United Nations) Security Council resolutions.'

The military's media affairs wing further said the Indian officials 'lofty claims and surreal ambition is intellectually insulting', and added that the 'Pakistan military is a force for good and a proponent of regional peace and stability.' However, the ISPR 'warned', this desire for peace 'is matched with our capability and preparation to thwart any misadventure or aggression against our territory, an assertion comprehensively validated on numerous occasions, including recently in the Balakot episode.' It further said that in the interest of regional peace, the Indian military

would do well to abstain from 'irresponsible rhetoric and vitriolic communication to shore up electoral support for their political masters' regressive ideology.'

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1722806/delusional-mindset-ispr-hits-back-at-indian-army-official-for-remarks-about-taking-control-of-parts-of-ajk>

Economic Developments

Neelum-Jhelum project's tunnel could collapse, warns NEPRA Chief

Dawn, 23 November 2022

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) chief warned that the tunnel of the Neelum-Jhelum hydroelectricity project might collapse at any time and the consequences could be disastrous. In reply to queries by senators at a meeting of the upper house's Standing Committee on power, Tauseef Farooqui said the biggest worry was what will happen if the rest of the tunnel collapses. Senator Saifullah Abro, who chairs the committee, expressed concern over the state of affairs at the country's key hydroelectric project, asking Mr. Farooqui about the progress of rehabilitation work. The NEPRA chief said that work is in progress to repair the damage, but there is no guarantee that the tunnel will not collapse at a later stage.

Meanwhile, the project's CEO said he was hopeful that restoration work at the tunnel would be completed by June next year. The committee was informed that the project had been completed

without financial closure as it was situated in a disputed area and it was difficult to get international loans for it. The committee was also briefed about the Nandipur power plant. The body's chairman said the issuance of fresh tenders and the bidding process for the project could have been completed in a month. Senator Abro said not only the authorities at the Nandipur power plant but even officials of the power division were unable to give satisfactory answers during the committee's meetings.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1722567/neelum-jhelum-projects-tunnel-could-collapse-warns-nepra-chief>

WB to take up a dispute on two dams in occupied Kashmir

Dawn, 23 November 2022

The World Bank (WB) is prepared to take up the dispute between Pakistan and India over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants. The process has been put in place under the auspices of the WB as the two countries disagree over whether the technical design features of the two plants contravene the Indus Water Treaty. The bank held two separate meetings with the neutral expert and the chairman of the Court of Arbitration in Washington and the representatives from India and Pakistan. The design features of the 330MW Kishenganga and 850MW Ratle hydroelectric power plants have been the point of discord between the neighboring nations. The former was inaugurated in 2018 while the latter is under construction. Pakistan urged WB

in 2016 to look into its concerns over the two hydroelectric power projects. The requests were made after the Permanent Indus Commission failed to settle the matter.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1722520/wb-to-take-up-dispute-on-two-dams-in-occupied-kashmir>

Closure of the Neelum-Jhelum project costing 10 billion extra per month to consumers

The Nation, 23 November 2022

The Senate Standing Committee on Power (SSCP) was informed that the closure of the Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project was costing 10 billion extra per month to power consumers as the restoration work on the project will be completed by June next year. The SSCP recommended the Power Division take necessary action against the irregularities in the award of the Nandipur contract and provide details of officials, who were in charge at that time. The committee also directed the Power Division to provide bidding details for Haveli Bahadur Shah Power Plant, Neelum-Jhelum hydropower plant, and Bhikki combined-cycle power plant in the next meeting. It was informed that there is significant pressure from the mountain on the Neelum-Jhelum underground tunnel. The chairman of NEPRA, Tauseef H. Farooqi said that the Neelum-Jhelum project is closed since July, which is costing 10 billion extra per month to the consumers by providing them electricity generated from expensive sources.

The project officials informed us that the tail race tunnel was fully settled up to 42 meters and the experts have identified eight causes of the tunnel collapse, and the final report has yet to come. The chairman of NEPRA further said that if this tunnel remains closed for a year, consumers will suffer a loss of 120 billion. The Senate body directed WAPDA to submit an independent expert interim report on the project before the committee in the next meeting. The committee also discussed the circular debt of K-electric, which currently stands at 300 billion as of the October 2022 evaluation. The Senate Committee showed displeasure over the absence of the Federal Minister, Secretary of the Power Division, and CEO of K-Electric. The Senate body asked the Power Division how the government is going to run the public sector power plants when the government has failed to appoint CEOs of GENCO I, II, and GENCO holding companies, added that the efficiency of state-owned generation power plants is 31 percent while the efficiency of private power plants is up to 60 percent.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2022/closure-of-neelum-jhelum-project-costing-rs10-billion-extra-per-month-to-consumers>

FCC delegation calls on 'AJK' President

Daily Parliament Times, 24 November 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, while speaking to a

delegation of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce (FCC) and Industries has said that 'AJK' offers huge opportunities for investment in different sectors. While referring to the region's natural resources, climate, and investment-friendly environment, he said that the private sector can invest in various sectors of 'Azad Kashmir'. He said that there was no law and order problem in 'Azad Kashmir' while the literacy rate was higher than in the provinces of Pakistan. He said that Muzaffarabad, Mansehra, and Mirpur motorway and Dry port in lake view city would further increase the scope of investment in the region. He said that some of the key sectors for investment in 'Azad Kashmir' included hydel power generation, tourism, minerals, IT, and small-scale industries. The FCC president Dr. Khurram Tariq informed the president that FCC would sign 14 MoUs to extend cooperation with different departments of the government of 'Azad Kashmir' which would usher in a new era of development in the region.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/11/24/fcc-delegation-calls-on-ajk-president/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Local body elections will be held in three phases: 'AJK' Election Commission

Urdupoint, 21 November 2022

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Justice (retd) Abdul Rasheed Sulehria said that due to a lack of

necessary security personnel, local 'AJK' government elections would be held in three parts. While speaking at a press conference, he said that the federal government had agreed to send 17,000 security guards to keep the peace during voting, and added that limited security forced him to conduct division-by-division voting to ensure a calm and transparent procedure. He further said that though the 'Azad Kashmir' government must supply the necessary number of security officers, however, he said he had also written a letter to the army DGMO for their assistance during the local elections. Sulehria expressed his hope that the electoral exercise at the grass-root level would positively change the social, political, and economic structure of 'AJK', adding that all political parties should come together to formulate long-term policies in the public interest. The opposition parties led by Pakistan People's Party and Muslim League-N hold that the ruling PTI government is influencing the municipal elections by using official resources and in an official capacity and that the conduct of municipal elections in a phased manner may have an impact on public opinion.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3362706.html>

India's recklessness prevented it from joining the Security Council: Pakistan FO

Jasarat, 24 November 2022

Pakistan has expressed grave concern over the 'deteriorating' human rights situation in India's 'illegally occupied'

Jammu and Kashmir, claiming that given India's 'reckless' attitude, it is impossible for India to even join the Security Council. During the weekly news briefing in Islamabad, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch responded to a question by saying that the ongoing 'crimes' committed by India and the continued 'military siege' of Jammu and Kashmir have prevented any improvement in the situation there. She alleged that while carrying on with their spree of 'extrajudicial killings', last week the 'Indian occupation' forces killed two Kashmiri youth in 'fake encounters' in Islamabad and Shopian districts of the 'IIOJK', adding that amid all hopes and claims of the world, Indian 'oppression' continues unabated in 'IIOJK.' She further said that we are also concerned about the welfare of Kashmiri political prisoners including APHC leaders and Human rights defenders. She urged India to must end its gross and systematic violations of human rights in 'IIOJK', revoke its 'illegal' and unilateral actions of 5th August 2019, and free all political prisoners.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/11/24/mumtaz-zahra-baloch-2/>

It won't be too late for us to enter Srinagar if India ever puts its vicious eye's on GB and 'AJK': GB Chief Minister

Dailyk2, 25 November 2022

The Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Khalid Khurshid, while referring to the 'absurd comments' by an Indian

Army office regarding the attack on 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and stated that the statement is an obvious indication of India's 'heinous war aims.' He claimed that India has always taken the lead in 'aggression,' unleashing 'worst oppression' on millions of Kashmiri brothers and sisters in 'occupied Kashmir.' He said India is once again demonstrating its nefarious intentions to disrupt the regional peace and added that the worldwide community should be aware of India's aggressive objectives as its army has displayed its intentions. He declared that the Pakistan Army would support 'Azad Kashmir' and GB if India ever puts its lecherous eye on the region, and added that the inhabitants of GB will not take time to enter Srinagar and relive the history of their ancestors.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/10473>

Newly appointed General Sahir Shamshad has expertise on GB affairs

Dailyk2, 25 November 2022

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, the newly appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), has expertise in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) affairs. It was during the government of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the Sartaj Aziz committee was established to oversee constitutional changes in GB and General Sahir Shamshad was a member of this committee. However, due to the fall of the Sharif government, the proposals for constitutional changes in GB could not be put into action. There is a good

chance that his promotion to the army's highest levels may aid in the quick resolution of the GB constitutional crisis.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/10472>

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Volume 2 | Issue 47

21 - 27 November 2022

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Disclaimer

PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.



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