

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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tax Islamic banking
holiday Gilgit-Baltistan
Neelum-Jhelum local
elections governments
Jamaat-e-Islami POK
hydroelectric project



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Political Developments

The polling was held peacefully in the first phase of 'AJK' LG elections

Pakistan Observer, 28 November 2022

The first phase of local governments (LG) elections in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) peacefully concluded in three districts of Muzaffarabad division for electing a total of 595 councilors of district and union councils, municipal corporations, municipal committees, and town committees. A total of 2716 candidates including 900 independent candidates were in the contest for 595 seats in Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley, and Hattian Bala district while in the second phase, polling will be conducted in four districts of Poonch Division on 03 December. According to the election commission, a total of 695,049 voters including 320,747 female voters exercised their right to vote in the first phase of elections in three districts of the Muzaffarabad division. According to Deputy Inspector General (DIG) police Muzaffarabad, Irfan Masood Kashfi, 4500 police personnel were deployed at polling stations while a quick response force was in place at every sector. The army was also put on standby to control during the polling to control the untoward situation but the process was peacefully concluded and no incident was reported from anywhere till the closure of polling.

<https://pakobserver.net/polling-held-peacefully-in-first-phase-of-ajk-lg-elections/>

Muzaffarabad falls to rivals amid PTI wins in Neelum, Jhelum valleys

Dawn, 29 November 2022

The Election Commission of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) announced the results of the 669 wards of urban and rural councils in three districts of Muzaffarabad division. The results suggested that while the PTI emerged in a position to elect its men as heads of the district councils of Neelum and Jhelum valleys, the combined opposition PPP and PML-N were set to elect theirs as heads of the Muzaffarabad district council as well as its municipal corporation. In the 41-member District Council of Muzaffarabad, the PPP had bagged 16 seats followed by 15 from the PTI, three each by the Muslim Conference (MC) and PML-N, two independents, and one by Jammu Kashmir People's Party (JKPP).

The result of one seat has been withheld. The PML-N claimed that both independent winners were its workers and it had left their wards open, instead of granting party tickets to anyone. In the 36 wards of the Municipal Corporation Muzaffarabad (MCM), the PML-N had bagged 12 seats, followed by eight by the PTI and seven each by the PPP and independents. Two seats were won by the MC with the support of the ruling PTI. Similarly, Of the 18 seats of Jhelum valley's district council, the PTI had clinched 10 seats followed by five by the PML-N and three by the PPP. Similarly, in the district council of

Neelum valley, the PTI had secured seven out of 15 seats, followed by three each by the PPP and PML-N and two by the independents.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1723712/muzaffarabad-falls-to-rivals-amid-pti-wins-in-neelum-jhelum-valleys>

Modi, Amit Shah planning to seal 100 more JI properties in 'IIOJK'

Pakistan Observer, 29 November 2022

Amid ongoing raids on political and social activists by India's 'Hindutva regime' led by Bharatiya Janata Party and its leaders Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, New Delhi is planning to seal around 100 more educational institutions and properties belonging to Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and other welfare organizations in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). Indian Home Ministry and its State Investigation Agency (SIA) headed by RSS-BJP stalwart RR Swain continued raids on pro-freedom parties including JI, Jammu, and Kashmir. After freezing JI bank accounts, the SIA has started the seizure of its properties including lands, schools, houses, and offices. It has already sealed the JI assets worth over a hundred crore in Islamabad, Shopian, Pulwama, and several other South Kashmir districts. Now 100 more properties belonging to the Jamaat across Jammu and Kashmir have been included in the list of the Indian Home Ministry for seizure.

<https://pakobserver.net/modi-amit-shah-planning-to-seal-100-more-ji-properties-in-iiojk/>

India's onslaught on Kashmir will ignite atmosphere of war: JI Leader

Pakistan Observer, 30 November 2022

Muhammad Farooq Rehmani, former convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference-'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK) chapter has said that after having 'invaded' and militarily annexing Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, dismembering it in 2019 and implementing its demographic 'racist' theory to create a Hindutva state on 'dead bodies of the Kashmiris, the Modi regime has accomplished its brutal plan in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). Rehmani claimed that New Delhi is giving Jammu and Kashmir a 'Hindu cultural touch' to transform the Muslim society, while the Muslim majority territory is already trampled and squeezed under the army jackboots. He condemn the crackdowns and seizure of the properties and schools of Jamaat-e-Islami in 'IIOJK', claiming that the Modi regime was on a war path against Islam and Islamic education institutions to erase every sign of Muslim identity and history, while simultaneously demolishing its constitutional clauses and rights of people. He said that the Indian regime was using its laws to change the social, moral, and religious fabric of the society and economy and education was a tool in its hands to make the people dependent on India, alleging that nothing was left in Kashmiri hands; schools and their curriculum, Mosques and their Auqaf, language, dialect and accent everything was

being 'overhauled' like British colonial rulers of the 19th century in India. He stated that people challenging it would have to remain in jail for life or die instantly in fake encounters but the Hindutva state is not going to give up her ruthlessness.

<https://pakobserver.net/indias-onslaught-on-kashmir-will-ignite-atmosphere-of-war-warns-rehmani/>

Pasban-e-Hurriyat demands public resistance to highlight the Kashmir issue

Daily Parliament Times, 1 December 2022

The chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmad Ghazali has demanded the government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) declare public resistance to the Kashmir freedom movement. He said the government's carelessness and short-sightedness towards this important issue could lead to the worst consequences in the region. Ghazali condemned the role of the base camp government regarding the Kashmir issue, saying that the silence of the incumbent government is devastating when India is engaged in open threats and military preparations for an attack on 'AJK'. While calling the Indian government's conspiracy to remove the Kashmir issue from the office of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as an 'outdated agenda' is the worst attack on the future of the Kashmiri people, he said that the government of India has been continuing this conspiracy for the past two years. He claimed that India is repeating its demand to withdraw the

UN military observers on both sides of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. Ghazali said that the United Nations has passed sixteen resolutions for a free and fair plebiscite in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and that the people of the state have been promised an impartial referendum. He said that the international community has always considered the issue of the state of Jammu and Kashmir controversial, yet India not only destroyed the identity of the state through constitutional amendments on 05 August 2019 but also trampled the rights of innocent people by military force.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/12/01/pasban-e-hurriyat-demands-public-resistance-to-highlight-kashmir-issue/>

PM 'AJK' to deliver a keynote speech at the Human Rights conference at the UN

Daily Parliament Times, 3 December 2022

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Tanveer Ilyas Khan has been invited as a keynote speaker to the fifth annual Human Rights Conference being held at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York. The conference, to be organized by the International Human Rights Commission, a subsidiary of the UN, is scheduled to be held at the UN headquarters in New York in the third week of December 2022, in which human rights activists from all over the world will participate. Tanveer will be the first Prime Minister of 'AJK' to represent the people of Kashmir at the

International Human Rights Conference. The International Human Rights Commission has been raising its voice at the UN and other international forums against the human rights violations committed by the 'Indian troops' in the 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK).

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/12/03/pm-ajk-to-deliver-keynote-speech-in-hr-conference-at-un/>

The dire need to counter India's disinformation campaign aimed at misleading the world: President of 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 3 December 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, while addressing a press conference in Khoi Ratta in Kotli has claimed that India was doing negative 'propaganda' and 'peddling lies' to hoodwink the international community on Kashmir. He stressed that there was a dire need to counter India's 'disinformation campaign' aimed at creating cobwebs of confusion around Kashmir. He claimed that to hide the 'crimes' its 'forces' have been committing in Kashmir, the Indian government has been forcing the United Nations Military Observer Group to leave the country so that the world does not get to know the real situation in and around Kashmir, especially on the Line of Control. He said that soon after the Indian government stripped Kashmir of its special status in 2019 a comprehensive

campaign aimed at exposing India's 'nefarious' game plan was launched by him under which protest demonstrations were held in different European capitals, adding that he had a series of important meetings with top officials of the OIC, the UN, and the US state department and sought their urgent attention towards the fast deteriorating situation in the Indian 'occupied Kashmir.' While referring to his recent visit to the USA, the UK and other European countries said that during these visits he had been able to present and plead the case of Kashmir effectively and sensitize the global community about the early solution to the Kashmir dispute. He said the day was not far when 'occupied Kashmir' will be freed from India's 'illegal occupation.'

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/12/03/di-re-need-to-counter-indias-disinformation-campaign-aimed-at-misleading-the-world-president-ajk/>

Economic Developments

'AJK' government announces 100 percent tax holiday for industrial units

Pakistan Observer, 27 November 2022

While declaring the region as a special economic zone, the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) government has announced a 100 percent tax holiday and free-of-cost land for new industrial units to attract investment. The 'AJK' minister for finance Abdul Majid Khan along with the chairman Central Board of Revenue (CBR), Raja Amjad Pervez said that the decision had been taken after a successful investment

conference, a day earlier at the capital. He said that 16 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed with different investors belonging to the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding investment in the region and he would visit other chambers of the country to invite businessmen to avail the opportunity. He said that the incentives had been given more than that offered in erstwhile federally administrated tribal areas (FATA) by the federal government and other advantages like scenic beauty, environment and peace would be added attraction for businessmen to invest here. He said seven industrial estates in 'AJK' were abandoned for a long and government was going to revive sick industrial units besides establishing newer ones and activating the dry port at Mirpur to boost the economy and create job opportunities.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-govt-announces-100-percent-tax-holiday-for-industrial-units/>

The Neelum-Jhelum crisis

Business Recorder, 29 November 2022

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's (NEPRA) chief didn't inspire much confidence when he explained to the Senate's standing committee on power that rehabilitation work on the Neelum-Jhelum hydroelectric plant was in process but there is no guarantee that the tunnel will not collapse at a later stage. The country's key hydroelectric project has been closed since June this year when blockage suddenly appeared in the

3.5km tail race tunnel (TRT), running into a 10 billion cost every month for the government. With all this money being put into the project, it begs the obvious question of contingency planning if the tunnel still collapses suddenly. Also, what is the guarantee that this deadline will be met when just last week the government claimed that the powerhouse would be fixed in six months? If, as an adviser to prime minister Qamar Zaman Kaira informed the National Assembly a few days ago, the breakdown owed to cracks in the mountain from frequent rock sliding, then can this be expected to be a one-time problem? This a rather unique project, after all, with 90 percent of it under the mountains of Kashmir where the geology is unpredictable and barely even readable, and it is now becoming apparent that the risk premium might not have been properly calculated. It is taxpayer's money that is burnt to make up for these inefficiencies, and when successive administrations treat the energy sector paralysis as business as usual, suffering consumers have little to choose from at election time when it comes to issues that matter for them.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40211393/the-neelum-jhelum-crisis>

BAJK Board made important decisions to start Islamic banking

Daily Parliament Times, 29 November 2022

The Bank of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (BAJK) board decided to start Islamic banking and to establish a microfinance bank in 'AJK' as a

subsidiary financial institution of the bank. These decisions were taken in the 60th meeting of the Board held at the head office of the bank. The Minister of Finance, Cooperatives and Inland Revenue of 'Azad Kashmir' and the chairman of the Bank chaired the meeting. A detailed agenda paper, which includes all the operational, Shariah, and other relevant frameworks related to Islamic banking was discussed and the Board gave in-principal approval to start Islamic banking. After the approval from the Board, the Islamic banking division has started working to ensure that Islamic banking is by Sharia. Work is also underway to open Islamic banking branches across the state and establish banking windows in the existing branch network.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/11/29/bajk-board-made-important-decisions-to-start-islamic-banking-in-bank/>

Construction of agricultural farms by the 'Azad Kashmir' government in neighboring provinces to address food needs

Daily Pakistan, 1 December 2022

The government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) has set to construct sizable agricultural farms in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan to meet 'Azad Kashmir's food needs. In this regard, PM of 'AJK' Tanvir Ilyas has written letters to the chief ministers of the provincial governments, requesting the allocation of 25,000 acres in Sindh, 100,000 acres in Balochistan,

50,000 acres in Punjab, 30,000 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 2,000 acres in Gilgit-Baltistan. Ilyas Khan is sad that the development of agricultural farms and other costs will be covered by the government of 'Azad Kashmir', and added that the construction of agricultural farms will also strengthen ties between 'Azad Kashmir' and the provinces and advance Pakistan's economic development.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/01-Dec-2022/1515332>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

PM of 'AJK' hails the peaceful end of the LG elections as a triumph for democracy

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 29 November 2022

While praising the orderly conduct of the Local Government (LG) elections in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), prime minister, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, referred to it as a success for democracy. The PM praised political leadership for their maturity and noted that despite fewer security personnel from the federal government, the voting process was peaceful. While referring to the PTI's victory in the polls, he said, it has been proved now that the PTI has become stronger due to its performance in different divisions of 'AJK' and added that PML-N president Shah Ghulam Qadir, former Prime Minister Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider, opposition Leader Chaudhry Latif Akbar among others faced defeat in their respective constituencies. Key opposition leader's defeat in the LG elections, he said, was a sign of the

PTI's growing popularity and people's trust in the party's leadership. The PM said that he would live up to the expectations of the people of 'Azad Kashmir' and that for 31 years, the people of 'AJK' were deprived of their basic rights by previous rulers and added that they also tried to blackmail PTI leaders on the municipal elections. He said that the PTI's biggest victory is that despite facing many challenges it fulfilled the promise it had made to the people during the pre-electioneering campaign. He noted that according to the vision of Imran Khan, PTI has ended political monopolies by empowering youth and bringing them to the mainstream, adding that youth was the biggest asset of the nation. He also appreciated the efforts of the Election Commission and the role of the Pakistan Army in the conduct of local elections.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Resize-of-front-page.....29.jpg>

The right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination needs to be supported: 'AJK' President

Mahasib, 29 November 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry said that the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination guaranteed by United National should be completely supported by the international community, especially OIC members. He discussed these opinions with Dr. Mehmet Pikachi, the Turkish ambassador to Pakistan, who visited him at the Jammu Kashmir

home in the federal city. The President expressed his gratitude to the Turkish people and the government for their continuing support of the cause of Kashmir. The Turkish ambassador assures his country's support for Kashmiri's right to self-determination. While referring to the Cyprus issue, the 'AJK' president suggested that the creation of two independent entities is the key to solving the Cyprus issue. He asserted that Pakistan has consistently backed Turkey's moral stance on the Cyprus problem. The Turkish Ambassador was further informed by the president that he would shortly be traveling to Turkey on an invitation from the Turkish Parliament and that during his visit, he will request support for the Kashmiri people from the Turkish government and people.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/news.php?id=1124>

The violent actions of the Modi government in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir should be brought to the attention of the world: Mushaal

UrduPoint, 30 November 2022

Mushaal Hussein Mullick, the chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organization, claimed that the 'genocidal' Modi government is violently utilizing military force in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir, treating Kashmiris inhumanely, changing the population ratio, and remaining silent about other atrocities. She claimed in a statement that since 27 October 1947, when India 'illegally' landed its troops in Srinagar, the valley has been under a brutal military siege, adding that around 10 million Indian

soldiers are stationed in the area to quell any dissident voices. She claimed that Indian soldiers had tortured the locals with a variety of inhumane methods, and added that since the Modi government eliminated the special status of 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, it has stepped up its campaign of 'repression' against Kashmiris, which has resulted in daily 'massacres', 'extrajudicial killings', raids, torture, and 'sacrilege.'

How long would the world remain silent about the atrocities committed by India, she questioned? Mullick claimed that the Modi government's most recent effort to alter the demographics of the Kashmir Valley has resulted in the addition of approximately eight lakh new votes to the electoral rolls, the majority of whom are non-local Hindus. She said that the 188 additional Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) properties in the 'occupied' territory will be seized by the Modi government. She said that the 'occupying' forces recently seized 11 properties belonging to JI valued at more than 90 crore rupees for their support of the independence movement. She further claimed that Kashmiris' homes are being destroyed by the Indian army during staged operations because the Modi government intends to render Kashmiris homeless as well as rob them of their identity. Mullick pleaded with the international community, particularly human rights groups, to pay attention to the 'barbaric' activities of the Modi government in the 'occupied' region, which have transformed the valley into a

'slaughterhouse' and the biggest open prison in the world.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3375218.html>

Norway could play a part in resolving the Kashmir conflict: 'AJK' President

Nawaiwaqt, 2 December 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry said that Norway should use its influence in international politics and diplomacy to assist in resolving the protracted Kashmir issue following the desires of the Kashmiri people. He shared these opinions with the Norwegian ambassador to Pakistan, Per Albert Ilsaas in Islamabad. While referring to Norway's great record on human rights, the president stressed that the country can play a positive role to put an end to human rights crimes in the 'occupied Kashmir.' He added that Norway could also play a mediating role between India and Pakistan because it had excellent relations with both nations. He further claimed that instability and ongoing violence in 'occupied Kashmir' could serve as a prelude to a major nuclear conflict that would harm world peace. He also informed the Norwegian Ambassador about the ongoing human rights abuses, torture, and killings in the 'occupied region', and added that the international community must recognize its moral duties toward the sufferings of the Kashmiri people and take action to resolve the conflict amicably.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2022-12-02/page-1>

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Disclaimer

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