

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 2 | Issue 37

12 - 18 September 2022

Revenue local
Authority tourism
Gilgit-Baltistan
POK infrastructure
climate change
elections



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

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Political Developments

GB's vulnerability

Dawn, 12 September 2022

Pakistan's floods have caused extensive destruction across the nation. It has been debated whether or not bad leadership and a lack of disaster planning contributed to the devastation even though the rains were significantly more than anticipated. For both ecological and political causes, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is particularly susceptible to the effects of climate change. The majority of small and large glaciers outside of the Polar Regions are in GB. The serious hazard of glacial lake outburst floods is currently threatening this ecologically vulnerable region of the planet. In a report released by the GB government, it was stated that 110 flash floods were registered in GB between June 30 and August 26 of this year. Six people were hurt, and seventeen people died. The region's infrastructure losses are also significant because it is already undeveloped and depends on the center for funding. The report states that 22 powerhouses were demolished, 418 homes were fully destroyed, 257 homes were partially destroyed, and 78 drinking water supply schemes and 500 irrigation water channels were all affected. In addition, 56 bridges and 49 roads were washed away, which harmed both the movement of people and the delivery of food supplies from Rawalpindi.

The rains and floods have highlighted the area's shoddy infrastructure. Without adequate planning, the

promotion of mass tourism in this ecologically vulnerable area has resulted in an inflow of visitors and an increase in land and air traffic. This issue has been made worse by the lack of eco-friendly tourism infrastructure and laws. What political factors contribute to GB's vulnerability? The region acceded to Pakistan in November 1947 and was associated with the Kashmir dispute. The arrangement was made to gain more votes in the plebiscite that was supposed to decide the fate of Kashmir and its people. Since that time, several Pakistani federal governments have periodically overseen and controlled GB. The region is not represented in the national legislature and does not have full local authority granted to its assembly. Compared to elected officials, federally appointed bureaucrats have more influence on the administration.

The opportunity that seemed to arise after the 2009 presidential order was approved, gave their assembly some degree of empowerment to some extent. It is seen to be challenging for elected members of GB to depart from the policies of their parties because the majority of them are affiliated with mainstream national parties. The Revenue Authority Bill was just approved by the GB Assembly with a majority. The notorious act will subject the populace to several levies in a territory that is otherwise tax-free. Massive protests and strikes prevented the center from enforcing taxes in any of its previous attempts. When it comes to the political and economic

advancement of the region, the federal government's track record is uninspiring. The GB government's ambition, according to GB Chief Secretary Mohiyuddin Ahmed Wani, was to give a freelancing workforce from the region to the world in the IT sector, which he termed as the future of Pakistan, during the recent Jutial Sports Complex in Gilgit opening. Mr. Wani may have forgotten two essential conditions for the growth of the IT industry: the first is the availability of constant, high-speed internet, and the second is energy. Both in GB are uncommon. This ambition appears to be little more than a pipe dream given that the area has been experiencing frequent power outages for years.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1709694/gbs-vulnerability>

India is committing 'genocide' of the oppressed Kashmiris: 'AJK' PM Spokesperson

Daily Parliament Times, 13 September 2022

Touseef Abbasi, the spokesperson of the prime minister of 'Azad Kashmir' claimed that India is committing 'genocide' of the 'oppressed' Kashmiris, and adding that giving Indian nationals the ability to vote in 'occupied Kashmir' is completely cruel and also against the law, but, he emphasized that the Kashmiris will fight it. He said that this is the Israeli model, which the people of Kashmir will never allow to succeed. He claimed that the recent 'brutal' actions of India, including the ruthless death of

Kashmiris in 'occupied Kashmir', would be made public on a worldwide scale and added that by 'massacring' defenseless Kashmiris, India is also attempting to change the region's demographics by relocating its nationals there permanently and granting them the right to vote.

According to him, the Indian government is implementing a strategy to alter the region's identity in line with Israeli government policies that have allowed Jewish settlement in the Palestinian territories. He claimed that to defeat the 'occupied' forces, the Muslim Ummah should take action, adding that the 'Azad Kashmir' government and people will participate in every effort to counter India's 'malign intents.' He further said that India has transformed the most beautiful valley into the largest prison in the entire globe, adding that the leaders of the Hurriyat are being tied up and killed in 'fictitious' police encounters.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/09/13/india-is-committing-genocide-of-the-oppressed-kashmiris-touseef-abbasi/>

President seeks IPU's role in resolving Kashmir issue

Radio Pakistan, 14 September 2022

The president of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi has urged the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) delegation to play a significant role in resolving the Kashmir dispute. In a conversation with Duarte Pacheco, the president of the IPU, in Islamabad, he expressed the

hope that the IPU would pay attention to the ongoing Islamophobia and the growing intimidation and ‘persecution’ of Muslims in India and Indian ‘illegally occupied’ Jammu and Kashmir. The President underlined Pakistan's dedication to supporting the IPU in its efforts to promote peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, and youth empowerment via political discourse, cooperation, and parliamentary action. While speaking on the recent catastrophic floods in Pakistan, he stated that they should serve as a wake-up call for the world to adopt aggressive, effective measures to decrease carbon emissions and avert the destruction brought on by climate change in many regions of the world, particularly Pakistan.

<https://www.radio.gov.pk/13-09-2022/president-reaffirms-pakistans-commitment-to-ipus-mission>

India systematically wants to deprive Kashmiris of economic, social, cultural, and political development: Kashmiri Delegation

Daily Parliament Times, 14 September 2022

On the eve of the 51st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, a delegation from Kashmir met with Saad Alfarargi, the Special Rapporteur on the right to development. The group, which consists of human rights activists from various backgrounds, raised a variety of concerns, including violations of numerous United Nations-declared rights to development. The panel discussed how Kashmiris have become marginalized

and isolated as a result of the lack of meaningful political engagement in the region, which has also given rise to numerous cases of human rights ‘abuse.’ About Article 1 of the Charter of the Right to Development, the group criticized the Indian government for systematically ‘depriving’ Kashmiris of the economic, social, cultural, and political development that are fundamental elements of Article 1 of the Charter. During the conversation, some members of the delegation said that due to the violent plans of the Indian ‘occupation’ forces, Kashmir is witnessing a skewed and imbalanced development where residents are subject to ‘oppression’, and their basic human rights have been violated and suppressed.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/09/14/india-systematically-wants-to-deprive-kashmiris-of-economic-social-cultural-and-political-development-kashmiri-delegation/>

Pakistan urges UNHRC to stop India’s ‘crimes’ in Kashmir

Pakistan Observer, 15 September 2022

Pakistan has asked the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to take action rather than watch helplessly as India continues to ‘repress’ the basic freedoms and rights of the people of ‘illegitimately occupied Jammu and Kashmir.’ Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN office in Geneva in his statement during the general discussion of the 47-member Council in Geneva said that in the face of ‘eerie silence’ by members of the Human

Rights Council, the 'crimes of self-professed largest democracy are getting entrenched, and its sense of impunity is being rewarded.' He reiterated Pakistan's request to the Council members to compel India to cease its 'illegal actions,' stop the unconstitutional 'demographic shifts,' stop the violation of 'human rights,' grant access to independent observers, and press the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to release an updated assessment on Kashmir.

The Pakistan envoy said that to 'lend credence' to the notion of 'accountability', the Council members should act on the recommendations of the two OHCHR reports for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir.' He claimed that to remain a passive bystander in the face of independent evidence of India's 'grave violations' is undermining the universal cause of human rights and further eroding the 'credibility' of this Council. In addition, he claimed that by using the excuse of 'terrorism,' India continues to 'kill, maim, torture, arbitrarily detain and forcibly disappear the Kashmiri youth, women and elderly.' He also claimed that India has banned independent observers from entering the 'occupied region' and that it has suppressed local media and civil society to cover up its 'atrocities.'

<https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-urges-unhrc-to-stop-indias-crimes-in-kashmir/>

World's attention toward deteriorating Human Rights sought

Pakistan Observer, 16 September 2022

A delegation led by Altaf Hussain Wani, the leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference-'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK), has pleaded with the international community to pay urgent attention to the rapidly 'deteriorating' political and 'human rights' situation in 'Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK). The delegation stated that the world needs to take notice of India's 'settler colonialism' policies and its nefarious attempts to 'Palestinize Kashmir' through demographic and political engineering during a meeting with OIC Permanent Representative Ambassador Naseema Baghli and Counselor Salima. The delegates, while referring to rising tides of 'communalism' and 'xenophobia' within the Indian society and its devastating impacts on Kashmir.

The delegates claimed that the 'RSS-influenced regime' was hell-bent on altering Kashmir's name as well as its historical, political, and ethnic makeup, cultural ethos, and, most importantly, its unique identity. The delegates gave a detailed briefing on how the Indian government has been engaging in a slow-motion 'genocide' of Kashmiri Muslims at the hands of Indian forces, as well as how the BJP government has been disempowerment and marginalizing the majority community. These are just a few of the egregiously

abhorrent and illegal actions that the government has been engaging in. While demanding the Muslim body's immediate attention on the Indian government's decision to grant voting rights to non-Kashmiris temporarily residing in 'IOJK,' the delegation claimed that the 'apartheid regime' was now plotting to install a Hindu Chief Minister in the territory to provide a legal justification for its illegal action on August 5, 2019.

<https://pakobserver.net/worlds-attention-towards-deteriorating-hrs-sought>

Economic Developments

PM 'AJK' urges overseas Kashmiris to invest in 'Azad Kashmir'

Daily Parliament Times, 12 September 2022

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Tanveer Ilyas Khan urged Kashmiris living abroad to benefit from the business-friendly environment in 'Azad Kashmir' and said the government was prepared to provide all the assistance it could to investors. The PM explained that a thorough business-friendly system was being implemented for the development of foreign investment in the state during his meeting with well-known businessman Raja Sakhawat so that investors can advance with ease without going through a time-consuming and burdensome procedure. He said that 'Azad Kashmir' offers plenty of opportunities for businessmen to invest in tourism and other important sectors including hydel power generation, agriculture,

and livestock. Appreciating the measures taken by the government to attract foreign investors Raja Sakhawat on behalf of his business group announced to invest in 'Azad Kashmir.'

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/09/12/pm-urges-overseas-kashmiris-to-invest-in-azad-kashmir/>

KADO and Hunza Chamber of Commerce review the progress of the project aimed at promoting e-commerce in GB

Pamir Times, 13 September 2022

The Pakistan Export Development Funded (EDF) project, 'Empowerment of SMEs/Artisans through E-Commerce; Business Development and Managing Value Chain in Gilgit-Baltistan' was reviewed by the Karakorum Area Development Organization (KADO), Hunza Chamber of Commerce and Industries (HCCI), and Trade Development Authority Pakistan, Gilgit region. During the event, the experts said that to increase exports of promising local products, the collaborative project will teach up to 500 SMEs/Artisans from five districts in business growth, product development, and managing value chains through e-commerce platforms. It was emphasized that this networking of various partners is necessary over time to address the tremendous problems of rural economic growth in a world that is shifting toward globalization. The speakers also highlighted the significance of skill development programs for SMEs/Artisans and capacity building to tap the export

opportunities and added that our natural, human, physical, and financial resources will be valued more as a result of these actions, and there will be tremendous potential for regional economic growth.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2022/09/13/kado-and-hunza-chamber-of-commerce-review-progress-of-project-aimed-at-promoting-e-commerce-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Food shortage looms in GB as KKH remains closed for heavy traffic

Dawn, 15 September 2022

As significant traffic on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) is still blocked following nationwide flooding, officials from Gilgit-Baltistan have issued a warning about a rising food crisis in the area. The bridge on KKH had been damaged by flash floods that had about 1,500 fatalities and more than 33 million refugees in Pakistan. This prevented huge vehicles from passing, and it also contributed to a shortage of wheat and petroleum products in GB. Ali Taj, a spokesman for the GB government, claimed that the federal government was to blame for the impending problem since it had cut back on the supply of wheat in July, August, and September. According to Taj, the previous government would supply 133,000 tons of wheat to Gilgit. But the new coalition government slashed the supply by 30,000 tons and now the region was receiving 103,000 tons of wheat, he said. While the opposition leader in the GB Assembly, Advocate Amjad Hussain, held the GB government responsible for the crisis,

alleging that officials had illegally sold hundreds of sacks of wheat.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1710233/food-shortage-looms-in-gilgit-baltistan-as-kkh-remains-closed-for-heavy-traffic>

Pakistan rejects Indian ‘propaganda’ on the Neelum-Jhelum project

Dawn, 16 September 2022

In a weekly press briefing, Asim Iftikhar, a spokesperson for the Pakistan Foreign Office, rejected Indian propaganda which claims that Chinese engineers and staff had given up on repairing the 969-megawatt Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project, adding that India was once again fabricating untrue and unfounded reports about the hydropower project. According to him, a flaw in the project was discovered, and the Gezhouba Group of China, the relevant organization, has been approached to arrange for remedial work. According to him, the team has already completed full mobilization at the project site, and right now, work is moving forward without any setbacks. The project's completion is anticipated for 2023. The FO spokesperson said there was no truth in any report of work stoppage or so-called abandonment. He said these reports were aimed at misleading the public as well as part of ‘malicious propaganda’ meant to fuel controversy around Pakistan-China relations. He said such efforts will not succeed, as all-weather strategic cooperative partners were fully committed to strengthening bilateral cooperation for the benefit of both countries and people.

He claimed that the ongoing ‘state terrorism’ by Indian ‘occupation troops’ was the cause of the ‘martyrdom’ of three more young Kashmiris in ‘fictitious encounters’ in the ‘occupied valley’, adding to the dire human rights and humanitarian conditions in ‘India-held Kashmir.’ As a result, there have been 150 ‘extrajudicial executions’ this year and 670 since August 5, 2019 overall. He urged the world to put pressure on India to stop its flagrant and persistent breaches of human rights in ‘occupied Kashmir’, terminate its illegal and unilateral activities since August 5, 2019, and release all political detainees, including the real leaders of Kashmir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1710365/pakistan-rejects-indian-propaganda-on-neelum-jhelum-project>

GB CM discussed the status of the Shunter Tunnel project with ‘AJK’ PM

Dailyk2, 16 September 2022

Tanveer Ilyas Khan, the prime minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), and Khalid Khurshid, the chief minister of Gilgit Baltistan (GB), both expressed regret that the federal government had been pushing the governments of GB and ‘Azad Kashmir’ against the wall purely for political reasons. They also noted that after cutting our budget and portion of federal taxes, the central government had now withheld our funds. The budgets of other provinces have increased by 20 to 25 percent, but cuts have been imposed on the funds of ‘AJK’ and GB, they claimed. ‘AJK’ and

GB are the fundamental units of Pakistan. Budgetary restrictions, they noted, had not only affected the development process but also hurt the sentiments of the people.

On this occasion, the CM of GB and the PM of the ‘AJK’ reaffirmed their commitment to closing the 75-year gap between the two areas. They said that the Shunter Tunnel would not only shorten the land gap between the two locations but would also aid in reviving the spiritual ties between them. The measures to establish a working relationship between the governments of GB and ‘Azad Kashmir’ would prove an important milestone in the strengthening of Pakistan. The ‘AJK’ PM further said that Kashmiris have rendered immense sacrifices for Pakistan and that it is the responsibility of the Federal government to solve our problems, adding that the package of 500 billion rupees announced by the former PM of Pakistan Imran Khan for ‘Azad Kashmir’ has also been stopped by the incumbent government.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/8507>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Inter-Parliamentary Union chief meets with Shahbaz Sharief

UrduPoint, 12 September 2022

When speaking with the head of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), PM Shahbaz Sharif claimed that violations and abuse of basic human rights in ‘occupied’ Jammu and Kashmir had exposed India's claim of democratic credentials. He further said that IPU

should play a part in promoting climate change awareness and fostering greater international cooperation for developing nations dealing with a climatic crisis brought on by global warming. He requested assistance from the international community to help Pakistan deal with the aftermath of this calamity.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/important-news/live-news-3277594.html>

APHC applauded the UN Secretary General's comments on mediation on the Kashmir dispute

Urdupoint, 12 September 2022

Mehmood Ahmed Sagar, the convener of the 'Azad Kashmir' branch of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), has praised the recent comments made by the UN Secretary-General in which he stated that he always wants to serve as a mediator in the Kashmir dispute. Sagar claimed in a statement released in Islamabad that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated in response to a query regarding serving as a mediator in the settlement of the Kashmir dispute during a news conference in Islamabad. India has repeatedly rejected their offers of mediation, stating that they will address the matter bilaterally because it is an internal Indian matter. According to Mehmood Ahmed Sagar, India's behavior has amply demonstrated that it does not desire a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir problem and that it is also deceiving international organizations. Mehmood Ahmed Sagar claimed that in the region of Jammu

and Kashmir that it has illegally seized, India is seriously violating human rights. He urged the United Nations to end India's illegitimate occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and to free the region, as well as to put an end to the country's abuse of human rights there. He pleaded with global human rights organizations to put more pressure on India to free all Hurriyat leaders and activists who have been wrongfully jailed in several jails.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3277607.html>

Quaid e Azam's 74th Death Anniversary is observed in 'AJK'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 12 September 2022

Rich tributes were paid to the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on the eve of his 74th death anniversary, which was observed in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK). On the anniversary of the founding father of the country, the 'AJK' state and its people reaffirmed their commitment to fighting for Pakistan's completion by 'liberating' the 'occupied' region of Jammu and Kashmir from Indian rule and gaining full accession to Pakistan. The event was coordinated by local journalist organizations, including the Jammu Kashmir Union of Journalists, the Jammu Kashmir Free Media Association, and other civil society and governmental organizations, and was sponsored by the Jinnah Foundation. The local elites, including representatives of the business

community, Ulema, scholars, senior Kashmiri journalists, and social and political workers were present at the event. During the event, speakers reaffirmed an unwavering position and commitment, saying that the people of Jammu and Kashmir will continue their battle for independence to free the 'occupied' region from Indian 'unlawful and coercive rule' and to realize their legal right to self-determination. They (speakers) also reiterated Kashmiris' 'unflinching' dedication to maintaining the Quaid-e-Azam position on Jammu and Kashmir as the founder of Pakistan described Kashmir as Pakistan's 'jugular vein.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-12.jpg>

Kashmiris' 'massacre' has exposed India's alleged democracy, according to a report

UrduPoint, 15 September 2022

The world will celebrate the International Day of Democracy (15th September), but India, which prides itself on being the most democratic nation on earth, is using 'violent' methods to repress the 'legitimate' fight of Kashmiris in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir. According to a report from the Kashmir Media Service, India has demonstrated that it is a 'sham democracy' and a terrible nation as it not only represses Kashmiri's right to self-determination but it also kills Kashmiris and violates their fundamental rights. The report alleged that, Indian soldiers are 'killing' innocent Kashmiri youths in 'staged

encounters', and that these 'atrocities' represent the true face of Indian democracy. The report further claimed that since the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019, crimes against innocent Kashmiri Muslims have increased. The time has come, claims the report, for the world community to recognize the actual nature of Modi's India, hold it accountable for the 'heinous crimes' against humanity done in Jammu and Kashmir, and support the achievement of Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3280533.html>

'AJK' PM gave the order to hold local body elections in Azad Kashmir before November 30

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 16 September 2022

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Tanveer Ilyas Khan, while presiding over a high-level meeting, directed the concerned authorities to conduct local elections before November 30. During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held regarding the fulfillment of logistical requirements of the elections, the required financial resources, and security staff. It was decided that after due consultations on these issues, the government will fix the date and would inform the Election Commission, about when local body polls would be conducted, in the next few days.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-16.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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