

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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POK **Biodiversity** **CPEC**
economic growth
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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

‘AJK president calls for protests’

The Express Tribune, February 14, 2022

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has said that all the political parties and leaders of the state are on one page to “aggressively highlight the Kashmir issue” at the international level to draw the attention of the “international community to the “plight of Kashmiris.” He noted that conferences, protests rallies and other events will be organised within the state and in different countries of the world to “project the Kashmir issue aggressively” in the light of the decisions of the all parties Kashmir conference. The ‘AJK’ president further said that “time has come for India to be isolated in the world by exposing its ugly face and ugly character.” He said that the “Indian government” is bent upon “changing the demography” of the state to fulfil its “nefarious designs settling non-state actors in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IOJK). He alleged that “thousands of innocent Kashmiris” are being held in the jails after August 5, 2019, and a “new era of oppression” has started. He added that a Kashmir rally will be held on February 24 in Islamabad with the participation of a large number of people from all political parties and schools of thought will participate.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2343386/ajk-president-calls-for-protests>

‘Kashmir Premier League aims at highlighting the issue of Kashmir on the international level:’ PM of ‘AJK’

Daily Parliament Times, February 15, 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi has said that the second phase of Kashmir Premier League (KPL) will be held with full enthusiasm and local talent will also get a chance to emerge. He said that “India has intensified its repressions in occupied Kashmir” and the fundamental rights of the people have been “denied to crush the indigenous freedom movement” led by the “Kashmiri people” for attaining their “fundamental right to self-determination.” The PM expressed these views while talking to the chairman of the Kashmir Committee, Shehryar Khan Afridi and the KPL delegation. The delegation included KPL president Arif Malik, secretary tourism, sports and youth affairs minister, Mansoor Qadir Dar among other officials.

The PM said that “Azad Kashmir” is a peaceful region whose people love sports. The event has provided opportunities for the youth of “Azad Kashmir” to demonstrate their talents in association with national and international athletes. He noted that the “aim of KPL” is to promote sports and also help to “highlight the issue of Kashmir.” He further said that “India has imposed restrictions on all kinds of sports activities” and has also imposed

“restrictions on media” while on the other hand all activities are going on freely in “Azad Kashmir”, including the media and the people have freedom of movement here. He said that the world should take “notice of Indian aggressions and illegal occupation of Kashmir” against the “wishes of Kashmiri people.”

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/15/kpl-aims-at-highlighting-issue-of-kashmir-on-international-level-pm-ajkl>

‘Time to take a fresh look at Kashmir strategy:’ Experts at a Webinar

Pakistan Today, February 15, 2022

The speakers at a webinar on the Kashmir conflict called for taking a “fresh look at the strategy” for highlighting the Kashmir dispute and the “atrocities being perpetrated by the Indian troops in occupied Kashmir.” The webinar on ‘Historical, Humanitarian and Political Perspectives of Kashmir Issue’ was hosted by the think tank Strategic Vision Institute (SVI). The participants deliberated on the various “aspects of the conflict” and proposed ideas for advocating the “cause more effectively.” There was a consensus among the speakers that the “strategy for promoting the Kashmir cause” needed to be rebooted given the recent Kashmir related developments and emerging challenges instead of hiding behind the excuse of “India’s strong economic clout.” The Lieutenant General (LG) retired, Masood Aslam, in his opening remarks, regretted that the world appeared indifferent to the “aggravating plight of Kashmiris” as

no action had been taken to compel India to stop the “atrocities it has been perpetrating in occupied Kashmir.” He lamented that “we need to review our efforts” and have a plan, a “blueprint with timelines” about what we want to achieve. The question is who would coordinate these efforts to bring in the government, civil society, academia, and the diaspora. In his view, Pakistan’s current strategy was not delivering the expected results, because “Indian atrocities” were continuing unabated and the “Indian narrative was getting more traction.” He questioned if “China’s support” had even been adequately utilized. The LG, therefore, proposed the use of civil society and social media for “exposing Indian war crimes in Kashmir, human rights abuses, and subjugation of the Muslims.”

The former caretaker defence minister and LG, Naeem Khalid Lodhi noted that Pakistan’s strategy on Kashmir was “reactive” and he cited the example of Delhi’s unilateral actions of August 05, 2019, about which “little was done” until they had been implemented though there were signs all along that it was about to happen. He blamed the “weak media” and inability of the government to connect with civil societies in other countries. While emphasizing the “importance of civil society,” he said that, though foreign governments tend to overlook issues that do not align with their interests, rights activists do take note of such things. He stressed the need for maintaining national consensus and suggested that Pakistan should lobby

with the international community for a census in “both parts of Kashmir” because of the “demographic changes that Bharatiya Janata Party” (BJP) is bringing about in the “occupied Kashmir.” Dr Salma Malik of Quaid-e-Azam University said that “India amplifies its narrative by employing political economy as well as diplomacy.”

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/02/15/time-of-take-a-fresh-look-at-kashmir-strategy-say-experts/>

‘It is the responsibility of the lawyers to project the Kashmir issue effectively:’ President of ‘AJK’

Daily Parliament Times, February 16, 2022

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has said that lawyers are playing a key role in the delivery of justice and they played important role in the restoration of democracy and the stability of Pakistan. He expressed these views while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of newly-elected office-bearers of the additional district bar association, Sahansa. He said that he has made the Kashmir issue a “flashpoint” at the diplomatic and media fronts and claimed that the international community has started giving attention to the grave situation in “occupied Kashmir.” He further stressed that it is time to move collectively for achieving the “cherished goal of liberation of occupied Kashmir from Indian clutches.” He emphasized that it is also the responsibility of the lawyers to

“project the Kashmir issue effectively” and shake the international conscience in every forum to highlight the Kashmir issue.

He further maintained that he has brought the leaders of all political and religious parties on one page and has adopted a unanimous decision for “aggressively projecting the Kashmir issue abroad.” The additional advocate general Sardar Sajid Nawaz said that the “Kashmir issue” is now in the sharp focus of the world’s attention and its “liberation is the writing on the wall.” He said that in the light of the decisions taken at the All Parties Kashmir Conference (APKC), conferences, protests and other events will be held at the international level to “expose the Indian government ugly face” in front of the world.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/16/lawyers-sacrifices-for-cause-of-peace-and-supremacy-of-law-always-remembered-president-ajk/>

‘Pakistan has unequivocally highlighted the destitute of innocent Kashmiris in front of the international community:’ Pakistan Federal Minister

Radio Pakistan, February 17, 2022

The Pakistan federal minister, Syed Fakhar Imam said that the Kashmir issue was taken to the United Nations (UN) by the leaders of India, Nehru and his companions which imply that it is an international issue. The UN resolutions on the Kashmir issue have long ago decided to conduct an objective and fair plebiscite in the

disputed region. He said that “India is doing mere lip service” when it comes to the implementation of UN Security Council (SC) resolutions as they have apprehensions of “losing Kashmir.” He further said that the “Modi’s government has crossed all the thresholds” by revoking the special status of “occupied Jammu and Kashmir” and stressed that the “fanatic Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government” is planning to change the “demography of the region by use of force.” He noted that Pakistan has unequivocally “highlighted the destitute of innocent Kashmiris” in front of the international community and now the international community needs to step ahead and expedite the conflict resolution process before it is too late.

<https://www.radio.gov.pk/expertview/4925>

‘AJK PM seeks world intervention to help-restore religious rights of Kashmiris in IOK’

Daily Parliament Times, February 19, 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan Niazi “while voicing his deep concern over the persisting ban on Friday prayers” at the historic Jamia Masjid in Srinagar has urged the global community to play its “much-needed role in restoring Kashmiris’ fundamental political and religious rights.” The ‘AJK’ PM said that persisting ban on Friday prayers was the obvious manifestation of a “crooked Hindutva mindset that seeks to impose its communal agenda in

Kashmir”, and noted that it was an “atrocious assault on the religious rights of the Kashmir masses.”

While describing Srinagar's grand mosque as a religious and spiritual epicentre, he said that the grand mosque has been a “monument of resistance for Kashmiris” from where they have been advocating their religious and political rights for centuries. He said that “Kashmiris Muslims were being deprived of their basic right to worship in their own homeland” and noted, “how Hindus will feel if they are not allowed to visit temples.” He further said that “Indian Occupied Kashmir” (IOK) has been turned into a “military garrison” where all basic “rights of Kashmiris” have been taken away. He urged the international community to take effective cognizance of the fast-deteriorating situation in the “IOK and force India to restore fundamental rights of Kashmiris, including their right to worship in an environment free from coercion and intimidation.”

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/19/ajk-pm-seeks-world-intervention-to-help-restore-religious-rights-of-kashmiris-in-iok/>

Economic Developments

‘Biodiversity and Karot Hydropower Project’

Editorial, Pakistan Observer, February 16, 2022

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a 3,000-kilometre-long route of infrastructure projects which connects the Xinjiang region and the Gwadar Port. The 720 Mega Watt (MW)

Karot Hydro Power (KHP) project is a milestone achieved after six years of construction and the project will add more power to the energy sector in the country. The leadership of Pakistan and China are “committed to a green, clean and sustainable future for their countries.” The Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan has termed the present decade as the “Decade of Dams”, where ten major dams are under construction. The dams include Diamer-Bhasha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project, Kyal Khwar Dam and so on. These projects are just complementing other Hydro Power Projects (HPP) under the CPEC framework. These HPP have a relationship to local biodiversity, the freshwater bodies on which they are built and are home to significant species in the ecosystem. The first HPP under CPEC, 720 MW KHP is being developed by one of the world’s largest renewable energy companies “China Three Gorges”, on the Jhelum River, straddling “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) and the province of Punjab, falling in Kahuta sub-division in Punjab and District Kotli in ‘AJK.’

To mitigate and protect the biodiversity of the project area, a comprehensive Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) was developed for the construction and operation stages of the project in line with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standard-06 (PS-6) and approved by the governments of Punjab and ‘AJK’ for implementation. Keeping the value of the biodiversity in focus, Karot

Project is also striving to protect nearby two national parks namely Azad Pattan National Park (APNP) notified by the government of ‘AJK’, and the second is the Murree-Kahuta-Kotli Sattian (MKKS) national park notified by the government of Punjab. These national parks encircle the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi and are also a “source of ecological tourism and clean air for its residents.” These two national parks are included in the catchment area of the reservoir of the KHP. The Karot Project is pursuing its best endeavors to promote “environmental and biodiversity protection at the project.”

<https://pakobserver.net/biodiversity-karot-hydropower-project-by-dr-nowsharwan/>

‘NEPRA sign MoU with the ‘AJK’ Government’

Daily Parliament Times, February 17, 2022

The government of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) will get additional revenue of 12 billion per annum after the cost of electricity per unit generated from hydel power generations plants in ‘AJK’ has been fixed at rupees 1.10. The decision was taken after the signing of a fresh Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the representatives of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) and the government of ‘AJK’. An additional agreement to amend the Mangla Dam Raising Project Agreement 2003 was also signed by the chief secretary, government of ‘AJK’, and chairman of Pakistan Water and

Power Development Authority (WAPDA). It has been observed that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab were getting a net hydel profit of Rs 1.10 per unit for electricity generated from hydropower plants in KP and Punjab, while the government of 'AJK' has so far received only 15 paise per unit for power generation from Mangla powerhouse in "Azad Kashmir." The government of 'AJK' has since long been demanding uniformity in the tariff but the demand was put on hold for a long time and in 2018 it was decided that the government of 'AJK' will be paid 1.10 per unit against the electricity generated from Mangla and Neelum Jhelum hydropower projects. Since the NEPRA has no jurisdiction to undertake any project in "Azad Kashmir" directly and therefore a formal signing of the MoU, NEPRA and 'AJK' government will now jointly ensure the construction of community investment projects and hydropower projects in "Azad Kashmir", whereas billions of rupees will be spent in the "liberated territory."

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/17/nepra-ajk-sign-mou-cost-of-electricity-put-at-rs-1-10/>

'Qayyum Niazi resolves to promote foreign investment in 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, February 18, 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan Niazi while reiterating his government's

commitment to promote foreign investment in the region has said that all possible measures would be taken to ensure an investment-friendly atmosphere to boost up economic growth in the region. The 'AJK' PM while talking to the chairman of Board of Investment Sardar Amjad Jaleel said that the "Azad Kashmir" offers huge opportunities for investment in different sectors with an investment-friendly atmosphere in the region. The PM said that the government would extend its full cooperation to the investors and the obstacles whatsoever in the way of industrial development in the region would be removed. The chairman Board of Investment and Business Sardar Amjad Jaleel briefed the PM about easing of investment procedure in the state.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/18/qayyum-niazi-resolves-to-promote-foreign-investment-in-ajk/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

'The right of Kashmiris to resist must be restored:' JI Leader

Jasarat, February 15, 2022

The former leader of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Abdul Rashid Turabi has said that "India has violated human rights and international law" and therefore international community should intervene before a major "human tragedy occurs." He stressed that the "Independence of Kashmir" will pave the way for the independence of a dozen of states from the clutches of "Brahmanical imperialism within India." He noted that "Kashmiris have

defeated 1.5 million Indian troops” and to cover up this defeat, India has issued domiciles to 3.6 million non-Kashmiris.

He said that the “holy blood of millions of Kashmiri martyrs” would not go in vain. He further stressed that at this stage of the “independence movement of Kashmir”, the whole nation has to send a message with one voice and one language that the brothers of “occupied Kashmir” are not alone in the struggle for independence and the 220 million people of Pakistan are siding with them. He emphasized that let the independent regions of “Azad Kashmir” and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) be made the base camps of independence and play a real role. He noted that the “Kashmir independence movement” is the only movement in the world that has a base camp. He said that given the Quaid-e-Azam's vision, the base camp has a big role to play and its real role should be restored and the “right of Kashmiris to resist” should also be restored. He added that the government of Pakistan should go beyond political, diplomatic and moral support and give practical help as this is the time of “Kashmir's independence.”

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/02/15/abdul-rashid-turabi-2/>

The Prime Minister of ‘AJK’ meet with WHO Delegation

UrduPoint, February 16, 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi meet with a

delegation of the World Health Organization (WHO) led by Dr Palitha. The meeting which was attended by the secretary of health and other senior officials discussed the role of the WHO in improving the health facilities in “Azad Kashmir.” The PM of ‘AJK’ appreciated Dr Palitha Mahipala services for the development of the health sector in Pakistan. The PM of ‘AJK’ said that in a recent meeting with the WHO country director, he had talked about the provision of medical facilities to the people of Line of Control (LoC), including the modern medical equipment and ambulances. He noted that the launch of the mask-wearing campaign organized by the WHO is also an excellent initiative and stressed that his government would continue its full cooperation with WHO-led programs in “Azad Kashmir.”

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3050051.html>

‘The dream of peace in South Asia cannot be realized without the resolutions of the Kashmir Issue:’ Former PM of AJK

UrduPoint, February 17, 2022

The leader of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) and former Prime Minister(PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan has said that the dream of peace in South Asia cannot be realized without “resolving Kashmir issue” under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and “aspirations of Kashmiris.” He said

that since August 05, 2019, eight million Kashmiris have been facing the “worst sieges, arbitrary arrests and extraordinary restrictions.” He said that the “Indian occupying forces are carrying out unspeakable atrocities by resorting to black laws” to suppress the voice of the “oppressed Kashmiris,” while the “Hindutva and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) minded Bharatiya Janata Party” (BJP) government is trying to “destroy the special status of the occupied Kashmir”, and seeks to “change the demographic ratio” in Kashmir. He stressed that UN resolutions for the resolution of the Kashmir issue were passed 73 years ago but “India did not allow its implementation” of these resolutions and even today, 900,000 Indian soldiers are working to “suppress the Kashmiri people.” He alleged that on the one hand, the lives of Kashmiris have been made difficult “through lockdown”, and on the other hand, thousands of people are “martyred and missing in fake police encounters.” He claimed that the Kashmir issue has become a threat to peace in the region and therefore the UN must play its role in resolving the Kashmir issue with personal interest.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/rawalpindi/kashmir/live-news-3051138.html>

‘Imran Khan summoned the PM of AJK to Islamabad on the complaints of members of PTI Azad Kashmir’

Daily Pakistan, February 17, 2022

The poor performance of the “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK)

government and bad governance has led to animosity and frustration among the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers. In this connection, the Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan Imran Khan summoned ‘AJK’ PM, Abdul Qayyum Niazi, to Islamabad over the grievances of the workers. It has been observed that Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi is not ready to change his behaviour even after the “alleged coup” of the cabinet and it has also been noted that Abdul Qayyum Niazi may tender his resignation after meeting PM Imran Khan. Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi has also started a series of consultations with his close associates and some members of the opposition are advising Abdul Qayyum Niazi to dissolve the assembly.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/17-Feb-2022/1404557>

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Disclaimer

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