

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Gilgit-Baltistan
provincial status
load shedding **CPEC**
POK tourism
cloud policy **hydropower**
interim province



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Political Developments

'Kashmiri Leadership and the Quality of Advice'

Op-ed, Daily Times, February 21, 2022

The question of the “four components” of the Kashmir cause, namely, “rights, dignity, security and self-determination” of the people of “Jammu and Kashmir” has a well-recognised United Nations (UN) template. The government of Pakistan has agreed to strengthen these efforts and accelerate compliance with the UN template by “providing political, moral and a diplomatic support” to the people in “occupied Kashmir.” To achieve this, the government of Pakistan has inked a written agreement called the Karachi Agreement of April 1949 with the government of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK). In addition, the former has retained a share of powers in the affairs of ‘AJK’ in the “Azad Jammu and Kashmir Act 1974.” The relationship of the “entire state” with Pakistan has to be discussed as a consequence of article 257 of the constitution of Pakistan. The relationship of the state with Pakistan could take the form of a province, or a relationship agreed in the Stand Still Agreement in August 1947 or any other form, as desired by the people. The ‘AJK’ leaders currently appointed in “Azad Kashmir” politics by the leaders of the political parties in Pakistan, would not qualify to set the terms of negotiations for a future relationship, required under article 257 of the constitution of Pakistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/889149/kashmiri-leadership-and-the-quality-of-advice/>

'Action demanded against land encroachers and demolition of 'AJK' graveyard'

The Express Tribune, February 21, 2022

The relatives of those killed in the October 2005 earthquake decry the government’s “inaction” over construction activities on the cemetery. They have urged the “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) government to take notice of the demolition of Muzaffarabad's graveyard. While addressing a presser in Rawalakot with the relatives of the affected, Rashid Rashim, Babar Khalil and Shahid Iqbal accused the district administration of failing to protect the cemetery situated near the lower plate. More than 100 people, including students of the University of ‘AJK’ who lost their lives in the calamity, were laid to rest in the graveyard. They accused the administration of backing the “encroachers” who had first demolished the graveyard and then began the construction despite a stay for the same by the AJK High Court. The protestors noted that the desecration of a graveyard is not only inhuman but also an Un-Islamic act and warned that protesters will take to the streets if the government failed to act against those who demolished and desecrated the graveyard.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2344583/action-demanded-against-demolition-of-ajk-graveyard>

'GB for premature termination of government term'

The Express Tribune, February 21, 2022

Following the plan to align Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) with other provinces through a “constitutional affirmation of

its provinciality”, the opposition leader and GB assembly speaker noted that the assembly must end prematurely and next elections should be held alongside the general elections in other provinces and maintained that the government was ready to sacrifice its term for the interim provincial status. The GB government information minister Fatehullah Khan said that Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan has made history by giving constitutional rights to GB. The opposition leader said that all stakeholders have agreed on the provincial status, and it would be formally announced soon as the locals have demanded constitutional rights for the territory for a long time. Now, there will be four seats for GB in the National Assembly (NA) and seven in the Senate. Moreover, until the region becomes economically stable, tax exemptions and subsidies on wheat will remain. It will give a four per cent share to the National Finance Commission (NFC). The opposition leader said that over the past 70 years, the people have developed a sense of deprivation and noted that “Pakistan's position and the United Nations (UN) resolutions on the Kashmir dispute should remain intact” as the people get their “due rights under the constitution of Pakistan.” He further said that the ball is in the federal government’s court as it has to table the draft in parliament. The speaker said that GB has been struggling for 75 years, and only PM Imran had the courage and fortitude to grant it a provincial status.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2344517/g-b-for-premature-termination-of-govt-term>

‘Afridi briefs premier on Kashmir committee’s efforts’

The Express Tribune, February 23, 2022

The chairman of the Kashmir committee Shehryar Afridi called on the Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and briefed him about the committee’s “efforts to further highlight the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK) issue at different global fora. The chairman mentioned the efforts made at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), European Union (EU), United States (US) Congress and other international bodies in cooperation with other stakeholders. He also apprised the PM about the ongoing uplift projects in Kohat Division. The PM lauded the efforts of the committee to highlight the “Kashmir issue” at the international level. He directed the Kashmir committee chairman to ensure timely completion of all development schemes in Kohat Division to provide residents of the region with maximum relief and facilities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2344892/afridi-briefs-premier-on-kashmir-committees-efforts>

‘APHC-AJK expresses concern over Human Rights abuses in IIOJK’

Pakistan Observer, February 24, 2022

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter has expressed concern over the “worst human rights violations perpetrated by Indian troops in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK). Muhammad Farooq Rehmani during a seminar organized by the APHC-AJK alleged that the “Indian government and judiciary

played their role in protecting the troops involved in the tragic incident of Kunan Poshpora mass rape.” During the seminar, speakers alleged that the “victims of the incident” have not been provided “justice for years and the guilty Indian soldiers are roaming free.” While paying homage to the “martyrs of Kashmir”, the speakers said that the “great sacrifices of the martyrs would bring positive results soon.” They urged the international community to take cognizance of the “Indian state terrorism” and play role in resolving the “Kashmir dispute” following the Kashmiris' aspirations.

<https://pakobserver.net/aphc-ajk-expresses-concern-over-hr-abuses-by-indian-troops-in-iiojk/>

‘PM of ‘AJK’ seeks world intervention to end Human Rights violations in IoK’

Daily Parliament Times, February 24, 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi, while addressing a rally at Islamabad said that the “Indian government’s hostile policies pose a serious threat” to the entire South Asian region. He said that the massive participation of people in the Kashmir rally and presence of the entire leadership across the political spectrum speak volumes about their allegiance and commitment to “Kashmir’s just cause.” He said that today’s successful rally sends across a strong and clear-cut message to the Indian government that the government of Pakistan and the ‘AJK’ were on one page on the issue of Kashmir. He said I live near the Line of Control (LoC), my home is just 500

yards away from the Indian post, and therefore I can better understand the “pain and plight of Kashmiris.” He stressed that the purpose of today’s Kashmir rally was to draw the attention of the world towards “occupied Kashmir”, where the “Indian occupation forces” have broken all records of “human rights.” He said that the world needs to know that “India has caged the entire Hurriyat leadership of occupied Kashmir in prisons where they have been subjected inhuman treatment” and noted that “sooner or later India will have to leave occupied Kashmir.” He said that “let the world especially the Indians know that we have not made the atomic bomb to be placed in a showcase.” He stressed the need for holding an in-camera session on the issue of Kashmir and noted that “if close-door briefing can be arranged on the 40-year-old Afghan issue, why not on the 74-year old Kashmir issue.”

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/24/pm-ajk-seeks-world-intervention-to-end-hr-violations-in-iok/>

‘Forces of Pakistan safeguards national security and defence:’ Sardar Tanveer Ilyas

Daily Parliament Times, February 27, 2022

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, president of Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI), ‘Azad’ Kashmir has said that for the defence, security and safety of Pakistan, Pakistan Air Force made history on February 27, 2019, by “repulsing and fully responding to Indian intervention.” He said that the federal government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan proved to the international

community that Pakistan wanted “peace in the region” by handing over Indian pilots to the Indian government in compliance with international norms and the Geneva conventions. Pakistan wants a resolution of Kashmir and Pakistan's efforts for peace is in line with the expectations of the international community. However, the desire for peace should not be considered a weakness of Pakistan. He said that the Indian Air Force had “violated Pakistan’s borders as well as international norms”, to which it was inevitable for Pakistan to respond, and the nation was proud of the professional courage, bravery and capability shown by the Pakistan Air Force. He added that “this is why the Indian government, despite being the world's largest democracy and having one of the largest defence forces, cannot dare to look down on Pakistan.”

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/27/forces-of-pakistan-safeguards-national-security-and-defense-sardar-tanveer-ilyas/>

Economic Developments

‘WAPDA for Increasing Carry Over Water Storage Capacity to 120 Days’

The Nation February 22, 2022

The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) chairman, retired general, Muzammil Hussain, while briefing a delegation of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) at Air War College, Karachi, has said that water security is an integral part of national security. He noted that WAPDA is constructing as many as 10 mega projects to help ensure the water, food and energy security of Pakistan. These 10 mega projects are Diamer Basha Dam,

Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project, Kurram Tangi Dam and Nai Gaj Dam among others. While highlighting the water and hydropower scenario in Pakistan, the WAPDA chairman said that per capita water availability in the country has come down from 5650 cubic meters in 1951 to an alarming level of 908 cubic meters per annum, pushing us to the stage of “water-scarce country.”

He further said that Pakistan can store only 10 per cent of its annual river flows against the world average of 40 per cent and noted that we have merely 30 days carry overcapacity of water in comparison to India with 170 days, Egypt with 700 days and United State (US) with 900 days. The carryover water storage capacity will have to be increased from 30 days to 120 days and likewise, the low-cost hydel electricity which stands at 9406 Mega Watt (MW) at present also requires to be drastically improved from the existing 30% to at least 50% in the national grid. While briefing the PAF delegation about the development plans, the chairman said that WAPDA is implementing a multi-pronged strategy for unprecedented hydropower and water storage development in Pakistan under the vision of "Decade of Dams." On completion of these projects, the water storage capacity in Pakistan will increase from the existing 13.6 Million Acre Feet (MAF) to 25.3 MAF with the addition of 11.7 MAF irrigating another 3.5 million acres of land.

<https://nation.com.pk/2022/02/22/wapda-for-increasing-carry-over-water-storage-capacity-to-120-days/>

‘AJK Government doing comprehensive planning to develop Muzaffarabad:’ Tanveer Ilyas

Pakistan Observer, February 22, 2022

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) president, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas has said that the ‘AJK’ capital Muzaffarabad was extensively neglected during the past but we are doing comprehensive planning for its development. He said that rivers and streams of ‘AJK’ are a precious asset and added that parks, water sports, walkways and international-level food-street will be established along the rivers. He said that soon the ‘AJK’ tourism spot will be an example and stressed that Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley, Bagh, Rawalakot, Koti, Mirpur and snow-covered mountains of Ganga have great tourism potential which would be availed.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-govt-doing-comprehensive-planning-to-develop-muzaffarabad-ilyas/>

‘IT Minister urges provinces including ‘AJK’ and GB to implement Cloud Policy’

Pakistan Observer, February 24, 2022

The federal minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication (ITT), Syed Amin-Ul-Haque urged provinces including “Azad Jammu Kashmir” (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to implement the cloud policy. The minister stressed that the implementation of cloud policy by all the provinces including ‘AJK’ and GB was vital as an investment in the country would increase and data would not only be secured by the

implementation of cloud policy but would also be helpful for transparency. The authorities of ‘AJK’ and GB agreed to implement the cloud policy and the IT minister ensured them that the issues of connectivity in ‘AJK’ and GB would be resolved on priority.

<https://pakobserver.net/it-minister-urges-provinces-to-implement-cloud-policy/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The historical status of GB will be lost if given the interim province: Jamaat-e-Islami

Dailyk2, February 21, 2022

A meeting of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was held under the chairmanship of Maulana Abdul Sami and a resolution was unanimously passed in the meeting. The meeting demanded that the people of GB be given an ‘Azad’ Kashmir style system “without harming the Kashmir issue.” The JI leader said that JI seeks real solutions for GB people beyond personal interests and sectarian thinking. He said that the “government of Pakistan wants to bury the Kashmir issue” completely by removing the “historical status” of GB under “external pressure.” He said that the “interim province will end our historic status”, so the government should reconsider its foreign policy. The meeting expressed concern over the rising inflation in the country and the concern was also expressed over increasing load shedding. He urged the government to transfer the projects included in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to GB to end load shedding. The meeting also demanded that the government immediately start

work on Astor Road, Shuntar Tunnel, Gilgit-Chitral road, the road from Raikot Bridge to Dasu.

The meeting also expressed concern that GB lands are being “forcibly taken” over by the government and institutions in the name of “Khalsa Sarkar”, and demanded that property rights and compensation be provided to the people of GB. The meeting urged the government to establish a medical college, engineering college and a women's university, a long-standing demand and need of the people of GB. The meeting welcomed the announcement of local body elections and demanded that local body elections be ensured by demarcating constituencies and wards before the elections. While addressing the gathering, Maulana Abdul Sami said that where are the major projects of the government? The people are waiting for the implementation of the announcements.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/5487>

‘Shut down, sit-in protest against load shedding and land grabbing in Skardu’

Dailyk2, February 22, 2022

A shut down strike and protest in Skardu was held by thousands of people against the occupation of lands and for the resolutions of other issues confronting common people. While addressing the protestors, advocate Sheikh Sarwar and others said that the government and administration personnel in the area have been paralyzed as lands in the area are being seized and the power supply has been suspended. But the authorities are

watching as a 'silent spectacle'. The speakers noted that our lands are being occupied under a systematic plan and we will protect every inch of our lands. We will not allow the lands to be seized by force and the residents are currently suffering from nerve-wracking load shedding due to the unavailability of electricity. Apart from not getting electricity, the people of the area are fed with poor and substandard wheat while the resources of the area are being looted. The speakers said that the people of Skardu have united for their rights and we will not allow the administration to plunder public resources by force. If peaceful protests do not solve the problems then other methods of protest will also be considered. He said that the provision of basic facilities to the people is the responsibility of the state but the state institutions are failing to fulfil their responsibilities. We have made great sacrifices for the establishment of Pakistan. But our sacrifices are being forgotten, our rights are being violated, our resources are being usurped.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/5492>

‘We stand with Kashmiri brothers side by side in their struggle for self-determination:’ Pakistan Foreign Minister

UrduPoint, February 22, 2022

The foreign minister of Pakistan Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that the government and the people of Pakistan stand by their Kashmiri brothers and are determined to support them in their “struggle for their right to self-determination.” He said that the only way to move forward is a “just and peaceful solution” to the Jammu and

Kashmir dispute as per the wishes of the Kashmiri people. He alleged that India has turned the “occupied Jammu and Kashmir” into an open prison and more than nine lakh “Indian occupying forces” continue to “terrorize unarmed Kashmiris through illegal demographic changes.” He made these statements while talking with the secretary of All Parties Kashmir Parliamentary Group (APPKG) in the British Parliament, Lord Kurban Hussain and chairman Jammu and Kashmir Self Determination Movement International, Raja Najabat Hussain at the foreign office. The foreign minister commended the role of the APPKG in raising an effective voice against the “ongoing human rights violations in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir” after August 5, 2019.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3054012.html>

‘Rally in favour of the independence of Kashmir demands UN implement its promises’

Daily Pakistan, February 24, 2022

In the light of the decision of the All Parties Conference (APC), a rally was held in the federal capital under the leadership of president Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (PTI-AJK), Sardar Tanveer Ilyas. While addressing the rally in favour of “Tehreek-e-Azadi Kashmir”, the president of PTI urged the five permanent members of the Security Council, including the United Nations (UN), and the United Kingdom (UK), to fulfil their responsibilities and stressed that Britain was part of “every conspiracy in the world.” He further said that the spark of the

“independence movement” is burning and if it’s not addressed, can destroy the peace of the whole world.

He said that for seventy years, a history of sacrifices has been made for the “accession of Kashmir to Pakistan” and noted that this is our destination and this journey of sacrifices will continue till the destination is achieved. He said that the “Kashmir independence movement” challenged the “Indian tyranny” and the third generation Kashmiris are making sacrifices as their forefathers did. He noted that “India is not aware of our forefathers as we are Husseini and no oppression of the world can oppress us.” He thanked the workers of all parties, the federal government, members of the national assembly and the senate. The chairman of the Kashmir committee Shehryar Afridi welcomed the rallies in “favour of Kashmir issue” and assured them of full cooperation and participation in these rallies. He said that the voice of the Kashmiri people needs to be raised abroad once again to resolve the Kashmir issue.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/24-Feb-2022/1407460>

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Disclaimer

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