

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 2 | Issue 9

28 February - 06 March 2022

POK investment
Saudi Fund
non-state actors
citizenship
Dubai Expo
Gilgit-Baltistan
Phaldar Kashmir Project
hydropower
interim province
autonomy



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Political Developments

‘GB province bill submitted in Senate secretariat’

The Express Tribune, March 01, 2022

The Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), a key ally of the federal government, submitted a bill in the senate secretariat for the elevation of the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region into an interim province of the country, with representation in the national assembly and the senate. The bill submitted by senators Kauda Babar, Ahmad Khan, Naseebullah Bazai and Prince Omar, proposed an amendment to Article 1 of the constitution to create a new interim province. It said that the people of GB had long demanded “equal citizenship rights” in the country. The GB region formerly known as the Northern Areas was administered by the federal government and in 2009, the region was renamed as “Gilgit-Baltistan” and granted limited autonomy through “the self-governance order” signed by then-president Asif Ali Zardari. The BAP’s constitutional bill proposed three seats in the national assembly for GB and four in the Senate, followed by two general seats and one each for technocrats and women. It also proposed a GB high court, based in Gilgit with a bench in Skardu. It also seeks the region’s representation in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2345816/g-b-province-bill-submitted-in-senate-secretariat>

‘India wailing on the appointment of Sardar Masood Khan is bid to defame Pakistan:’ Foreign office spokesman

Daily Parliament Times, February 01, 2022

The Pakistan Foreign Office (PFO) spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmed has said that “Indian media’s negative reports” on the appointment of Sardar Masood Khan as Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States (US) is a bid to “malign Pakistan and its representatives.” The spokesperson in a statement said that such issues are a special part of the “Indian media disinformation campaign” and therefore such defamatory claims and baseless allegations are made by using fake news. He further said that ambassador Masood Khan is a highly skilled diplomat, with over 40 years of experience in multilateral and bilateral diplomacy and the work is underway on his appointment as a Pakistan ambassador to the United States (US).

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/01/indian-wailing-on-appointment-of-sardar-masood-khan-is-bid-to-defame-pakistan-says-foreign-office-spokesman/>

‘AJK President urges overseas Kashmiris to rise above party politics to promote Kashmir cause’

Daily Parliament Times, March 02, 2022

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has said that the “overseas Kashmiris must rise above party politics” and play their much-needed role to “promote Kashmir cause” at the

international level effectively. While addressing a reception hosted in his honour by Sajid Abbasi, the 'AJK' president said that he was happy to see that Kashmiris regardless of the political affiliations were one and united on the issue of Kashmir. He further said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was committed to making "Azad' Kashmir a true base camp of the freedom movement." He said that given the "precarious situation" in the "Indian held territory" of Jammu and Kashmir, it was high time that Kashmiris at home and abroad must unite and play their role in highlighting Kashmir cause besides "exposing crimes being committed by the Indian occupation forces against Kashmiris in the occupied Kashmir."

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/03/02/ajk-president-urges-overseas-kashmiris-to-rise-above-party-politics-to-promote-kashmir-cause/>

'Turning LoC into permanent border would be treason with Kashmiris:' AJK President

Daily Parliament Times, March 04, 2022

While refuting the news being attributed to the "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) president, Sultan Mehmood Chaudhary, a spokesman for the president said that "president's remarks" were quoted out of context. He noted that the news circulating on electronic and social media, is baseless and there is no truth, adding that no "Kashmiri can think about converting Line of Control" (LoC) into a permanent border. He stressed that "Kashmir issue is a matter of life and

death for the millions of Kashmiris, no conscious Kashmiri can accept any such solution that would lead to further fragmentation of the state." He noted that "what he (president) wanted to convey was that a proposal regarding the crossing of the LoC collectively has been under consideration to develop pressure on India and divert world attention towards the simmering situation in the Indian occupied Kashmir." The spokesman said that "division of Kashmir would be treason with Kashmiris."

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/03/04/ajk-presidents-remarks-quoted-out-of-the-context-spokesman/>

'Imran Khan's Russian visit to yield promising results:' AJK PM

Pakistan Observer, March 04, 2022

The Prime Minister (PM) of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Abdul Qayyum Niazi said that the independent and successful foreign policy of the government had raised Pakistan's stature at the international level. While referring to PM Imran Khan's recent visit to Russia, he expressed hope that the premier's visit would "yield promising results soon." While hailing Imran Khan, 'AJK' PM said that under his "dynamic leadership the country was heading in the right direction", and following his successful foreign policy, Pakistan's image in the world has "significantly improved." While referring to the opposition parties' long march, the AJK PM said that despite conspiracies being hatched against Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf

(PTI), the government would complete its term of five-year and stressed that PM Imran Khan enjoys full support and confidence of 220 million people of Pakistan, people of “Azad Kashmir” and Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://pakobserver.net/imran-khans-russian-visit-to-visit-promising-results-qayyum/>

‘Refugees reiterate for strong resistance against Indian Illegal occupation in Kashmir’

Daily Parliament Times, March 05, 2022

A meeting of refugee representatives on the “deteriorating situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK) was organized under the aegis of Pasban-e-Hurriyat leadership. The representatives in the meeting vowed to continue the “struggle for the independence of the IIOJK.” While addressing the meeting, refugee representatives said that all the measures enacted in the ‘IIOJK’ from “October 27, 1947, to August 5, 2019 were against the will and consent of the people.” The speakers “rejected the conversion of Muslim identity into a minority”, the removal of articles 370 and 35A by the “Indian government.” The speakers said that the “Kashmiri people must have the right to wage all kinds of the political, diplomatic and military struggle for the freedom and sovereignty of their homeland from India”, and reiterated their commitment to play an effective role in “liberating Kashmir from Indian illegal military occupation.” They said that the government of Pakistan, “Azad Jammu and Kashmir”, political and religious

parties should launch a statewide “resistance movement for the independence of IIOJK.” The 1989 leadership of the Muhajirs demanded the government to provide land to the “Kashmiri Muhajirs” temporarily residing in rented houses, in addition to ensuring implementation of a 6% quota in government jobs and an increase in the monthly living allowance. The meeting was attended by the chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat, Uzair Ahmad Ghazali, among others.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/03/05/refugees-reiterate-for-strong-resistance-against-indian-illegal-occupation-in-kashmir/>

‘Second Kashmir Solidarity Rally to be held in AJK’s capital town on March 17: AJK’ President

Daily Parliament Times, March 06, 2022

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry said that the second Kashmir solidarity rally would be held on March 17 in the State’s capital city Muzaffarabad. The AJK president announced after holding consultations with leaders and representatives of different political parties of AJK. He said that the prime objective of staging the rally was to convey a message of solidarity on the other side of the “ceasefire line” and reaffirm our commitment to their just “cause of freedom from the Indian occupation.” He stressed that “Kashmiris regardless of their political affiliations are one and united on the issue of Kashmir”, adding that the government of the Base camp would continue to “highlight the

Kashmir issue at home and abroad.” He also urged the Kashmiri masses to fully participate in the rally to express “solidarity with Kashmiri brethren” who he said have been living under the” oppression in the occupied territory.”

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/03/06/2nd-kashmir-solidarity-rally-to-be-held-in-ajks-capital-town-on-march-17-president-barrister-sultan/>

Economic Developments

‘MoU signed between Sardar Tanveer Ilyas and Phaldar Kashmir Project’

Daily Parliament Times, February 28, 2022

The “Phaldar Kashmir Project” has been launched for the first time in “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), and in the first phase, hundred fruit gardens will be planted in Rawalakot, Poonch and Bagh areas of AJK. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the organizers of the project and minister of AJK government Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan. The project aims to make AJK self-sufficient in fruit production. Under the scheme, apple, olive, walnut, malt, peach and apricot orchards will be planted for which sites will be selected in Rawalakot, Poonch and Bagh. The AJK minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas assured organisers that he would ensure public participation in planting fruit trees and would take responsibility for their protection and growth. He said climatic conditions of Rawalakot, Poonch and Bagh areas of

AJK could provide a favourable growth environment for varieties of fruits production like peaches, apricots, walnuts and malt and stressed that all these areas in AJK are highly suitable due to the availability of fertile soil and water.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/02/28/mou-signed-between-sardar-tanveer-ilyas-and-phaldar-kashmir-project/>

‘Saudi Arabia announces funding for hydropower projects in Gilgit-Baltistan’

Dailyk2, March 03, 2022

Saudi Arabia announces funding for hydropower projects in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The representatives of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) and the government of Pakistan held a joint meeting. The meeting reviewed the progress and construction of the ongoing projects in Pakistan. The SFD is financing various development projects in the areas of renewable energy, health, education, infrastructure and housing. During the portfolio review, construction of tunnels on Chella Bandi road in “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), construction of infrastructure in Malakand region, Golen Gol hydropower project, restoration of livelihood in Balochistan, Home Economics College and Shah Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Hospital Islamabad. It was further informed in the meeting that SDF will provide financial help in the construction of Mohmand Dam Project, Shunter Hydro Power Project (HPP), Jagran IV HPP (22 MW), Shugarthang Skardu HPP (26 MW),

Attaabad, Hunza HPP (32.5 MW) and the Muzaffarabad road project.

The ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Maliki and DG of SDF meet with the federal minister for economic affairs Umar Ayub Khan. During the meeting, Umar Ayub Khan said that Pakistan will import petroleum products from Saudi Arabia up to 100 million dollars per month for one year. The minister for economic affairs appreciated the technical and financial support of the SDF for Pakistan's socio-economic development and said that all obstacles in the projects would be removed and the development projects would be implemented expeditiously. Umar Ayub thanked Saudi Arabia for the timely operation of the 1.2 billion oil facility for the import of petroleum products based on a one-year deferred payment. The Saudi Ambassador assured to continue cooperation at all levels to further strengthen the bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries. The Saudi ambassador said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to playing a stronger role in the socio-economic development of Pakistan.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/5591>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Protests and sit-ins across AJK against 'Afghan nationals being granted Azad Kashmir citizenship', among other Issues

Urdupoint, March 01, 2022

A big sit-in protest led by students among other organizations in "Azad

Kashmir" demanded to restore taxes on wheat, subsidy on electricity bills among other issues. The sit-ins crowd which entered its seventh day also protested against "Afghan nationals" being granted "Azad' Kashmir citizenship." The protests were led by the Jammu and Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF) and workers of the National Awami Party (NAP). The Liberation Front (LF) chairman Saghir Khan also joined the sit-in protests to show solidarity. While addressing the protestors, former president of JKNSF Samad Shakeel and NAP chief Liaquat Hayat among others urged the leaders and workers of other political parties to thwart the "conspiracy to change demographics in Azad Kashmir." They noted that after Dadyal (tehsil in Mirpur district), the names of "Afghan nationals are included in the voter lists" and also the lands had been allotted to them in Rawalpindi. They stressed that Afghan nationals have also voted in the recently concluded general elections of "Azad Kashmir." The speakers noted that while demographic changes in "occupied Kashmir are being made through the settlement" while in the case of AJK, "demographic changed are introduced by giving citizenship to Afghans", and everyone has become a silent spectator. They demanded to remove Afghan nationals' names from voter lists or we will take drastic action. They further noted that during their discussion, the Poonch administration had not only agreed to cancel the land allotment to Afghan nationals in a few days but also ensured us to remove

their names from the voter lists in addition to the cancelling of their local citizen's identity card. They maintained that the government and district officials asked for a week's respite and we gave a month in honour of Barrister Sultan, but three months had passed and no decision had been taken. Now we refused to end the sit-in protests because when the administration did not comply with the orders of the president of AJK Barrister Sultan, how are they going to address our demands.

They noted that the administration wants to destabilize the peaceful situation and maintained that it is within the jurisdiction of the administration to immediately cancel the land allotment, to remove the names of Afghans from the voter lists and cancel their identity card and inform the court regarding all the developments. They stressed that if their demands were not being addressed, there will be sit-ins in every city of AJK, letters will be written to United Nations (UN), human rights organizations and hunger strikes and protests will take place in front of Pakistani embassies abroad. They said that politicians of the region will have to come forward and ask the Poonch administration on what grounds "non-state actors" are being granted citizenship in "Azad Kashmir." The speakers observed why it is wrong if "India is trying to change the demographics by bringing Indian citizens to Jammu and Kashmir" and how is it right and "legal to give citizenship to Afghans" by settling

them here? The political leaders of "Azad Kashmir", who are protesting against the "Indian illegal move", are not protesting against this "conspiracy." They stressed that we are the followers of Maqbool Butt and the current sit-in will not end without achieving the objectives. The NAP chief Liaquat Hayat also demanded the proper supply and cost of wheat and demanded to declare "Azad Kashmir" as a power freeload shedding zone and reduction in electricity tariffs. To prevent load shedding, installation of new faulty meters should be stopped and electricity connection fees should be deposited in the bank instead of cash. They further noted that "Azad Kashmir" generates 4,000 Mega Watts (MW) of electricity, of which only 400 MW is being supplied to us.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/rawalakot/kashmir/live-news-3060751.html>

'AJK' President inaugurates Kashmir Pavilion at Dubai Expo'

Mahasib, March 01, 2022

The president of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry inaugurated the Kashmir pavilion at Expo 2021-22 in Dubai. While addressing the inaugural ceremony, the 'AJK' president expressed the hope that the establishment of the Kashmir pavilion at Dubai Expo would be instrumental in highlighting the history and culture of Kashmir besides opening up numerous "investment opportunities for foreign investors" who want to invest in "Azad Kashmir." The

president said that he had met with several local investors and businessmen who showed their willingness to invest in "Azad Kashmir."

The 'AJK' president while talking to the media said that the AJK government was doing its best to highlight the "Kashmir issue at the international level." He further said that 'AJK' offers huge investment opportunities, especially in the field of hydropower generation and the tourism sector. He noted that the 'AJK' government would provide investors with all possible help and facilities. Pakistan ambassador Afzal Mehmood told the media that this expo will open up "huge investment opportunities" in Pakistan and "Azad Kashmir."

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/muzaffarabad.php>

'Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Kashmir rejected GB constitutional province bill'

Jasarat, March 02, 2022

The leader of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK), Dr Khalid Mehmood Khan has said that giving Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) the status of a constitutional province is against the "unity of the state of Jammu and Kashmir" and "Kashmiris will reject it." He said that the people of GB should be provided with a dignified system of government in the style of "Azad Kashmir." He stressed that the decision to declare GB as a separate constitutional province is a "conspiracy to partition Kashmir" and therefore JI

rejected it completely. While addressing a meeting, he said that "Azad' Kashmir, GB and occupied Jammu and Kashmir" are units of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and any such decision which is against the will of Kashmiris will be considered treason to the blood of martyrs. He said that such an act will also justify India's move on August 5, 2019, and if any similar attempt is made here to impose any solution on Kashmiris, JI will strongly oppose it.

He said that the government of Pakistan should avoid such a move keeping in view the sensitivity of the issue as Kashmiris are fighting for the "survival and security of Pakistan." He stressed that the "partition of Kashmir" is a conspiracy against the "ideological basis" of the state of Pakistan and instead of freeing the "Pakistan jugular vein" (referring to the Indian part of the Jammu and Kashmir) from the "control of the enemy", the leaders of Pakistan are weakening the "Kashmiris love for Pakistan." He said that Kashmiris have offered millions of martyrs for independence and they would not accept any solution other than "unity of Kashmir and right to self-determination."

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/03/02/220302-08-19/>

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Disclaimer

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