

# **Weekly POK News Digest**

*(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)*

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**transport land changes  
strike Gilgit-Baltistan  
POK load shedding  
Khalsa land climate change  
cross-border interaction**



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
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## Political Developments

### **'AJK' president leaves for three-nation visit to Turkey, UK, and Belgium**

*Daily Parliament Times, 15 January 2023*

Sultan Mehmoor Chaudhry, the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), departed for Istanbul on a two-week trip to Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. The president is set to brief lawmakers on the recent developments in 'Indian-occupied Kashmir' (IoK) during his visit to the European Union and the British Parliament. In addition to meetings with senior Turkish political and government authorities, he would also speak to think tanks and the media. In the meantime, Sultan Mehmoor Chaudhry met with the Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Mehmet Pacaci at Jammu Kashmir House in the federal city to discuss issues of mutual concern, including the president's trip to Istanbul.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/01/15/ajk-president-leaves-for-03nation-visit-to-turkey-united-kingdom-and-belgium/>

### **Khalsa Land issue in GB**

*The Nation, 16 January 2023*

The region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is in the news again and this time regarding the Khalsa land issue. The Sikh Empire, officially known as Sarkar-i-Khalsa, was formed under Ranjit Singh and lasted for 50 years. The Sikh invasion of Gilgit and its subsequent attacks and

occupation of the occupied lands were referred to as the Khalsa Sarkar lands. Sikhs struggled to maintain their control for four years before Dogras established their foothold in 1861. Since then the terms 'Khalsa Sarkar' and 'Nautore' have been in use. The Khalsa land is unoccupied barren land, which is the property of the government, and under the concept introduced by the Sikhs government claims the ownership of land. In the case of Nautore (waste reclaimed), locals were allowed to use wasteland for cultivation. During the Dogra regime, all the cultivatable and barren land was recorded by the settlement department, and taxes were collected. First, the settlement was done in Skardu in 1887 and the settlement in Gilgit started in 1906. Proper records were maintained for tax purposes and all the pastures, deserts, and barren lands were declared Khalsa land. At the time of the settlement, the district Gilgit comprised Gilgit, Astor, and Bunnji.

A comprehensive assessment report (1914 to 1916) was compiled by Thakur Singh, the settlement officer of Gilgit. The report was endorsed and commented on by Wazir Wazarat, a political agent and a resident of Kashmir. Details of lands, cultivation, and income discussed including Khalsa land, nautore, and trees on roads declared state property. Professor Usman Ali in his book 'Gilgit Ki Roug Kahani' described the atrocities and cruelties of Rajas and later Sikhs and Dogras on the people of Gilgit. Dogras

levied extensive taxes and introduced different concepts like 'kar-begar' (forced labor), 'begar-doodh' (tax on milk), and 'Hukmi Kharid' forced purchase of grain from farmers. According to Wazir Wazarat, Mian Jawhir Singh declared in 1861 that every hamlet was required to pay income on land, fruit trees, goats, butter, water mills, and goat grazing to support the needs of the army at Gilgit. Shops on Khalsa land were also liable to pay tax. The people protested and resentment was shown against these inhuman taxes but to no avail. Nautore rules were introduced by the Dogra regime in 1936 to bring under cultivation the barren/Khalsa lands. The Gilgit Nautore Rules were introduced in 1942 and land was allotted to locals based on their services to the regime. Rules included property and occupancy rights and revenue was assessed. In 1978, the Northern Areas Nautore Rules were introduced by the government which covered the entire region. All the fresh allotments under these rules were banned in 1986. The people complain that the Khalsa land has been occupied by influential people or allotted to individuals by courts or distributed among communities.

For quite some time the people of GB have been raising their voices for the Khalsa land and its ownership. In 1974, the then government of Pakistan introduced judicial and administrative reforms in the region and these changes allowed non-state subjects to own property in GB. A segment of society

demands the revival of state-subject rule. However, confusion still prevails and which the GB government has to clear. There was a recent protest at Minawar, 8 miles short of Gilgit city by the locals where they prevented government officials from constructing a building. The protesters accused the administration that they are depriving them of their ancestral properties. The government claims that the land in question in Khalsa is under its ownership. Before 2018, all the barren land was considered federal land under the Ministry of Kashmir affairs and GB. Back in 2018, all the lands in the region were made provincial subjects. There are major land issues at Chilmis Das, Maqpun Das, Dong Das, and Konou Das between different groups claiming ownership.

The people of GB demand to do away with the concept of Khalsa land and Nautore rules. A resolution has already been tabled by the opposition in the GB Legislative Assembly demanding a revocation of the colonial concept and to accept of the rights of locals over the ownership of lands. The opposition parties termed these rules as unconstitutional and against Islamic principles. The GB government has already constituted a committee to revise the existing rules. The Indian media took full advantage of the incident and reported exaggerated claims by embellishing stories. The people of GB love Pakistan and consider Pakistan their identity. All the misconceptions and misunderstandings

need to be addressed while taking all stakeholders on board as this is a sensitive matter. The government needs to take substantial steps to address the issue, and the sub-nationalists and Indian media should not be given any opportunity to exploit the issue.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Jan-2023/khalsa-land-issue-in-gb>

### **India plans housing colony for army personnel in Jammu city**

*Pakistan Observer, 17 January 2023*

India in continuous violation of international laws and conventions has planned a housing colony for serving and retired army officers, soldiers and their families in the heart of Jammu city of 'India illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). The plan for creating the housing colony in the winter capital has been devised by the Indian Army Welfare Housing Organisation (AWHO). The dwellers would be issued the IIOJK's domicile as per new domicile laws introduced by the Modi regime after the abrogation of special status Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019. The organization started a demand survey for Jammu city for group housing to ascertain the demand from serving /retired Army personnel, widows, and parents of deceased army personnel who receive family pensions. The housing colony will have hundreds of flats. The survey will conclude on April, 30 this year. According to the notification uploaded on the official

website of the organization, the desirous soldiers, serving or retired, besides their families, have been asked to submit their applications.

<https://pakobserver.net/india-plans-housing-colony-for-army-personnel-in-jammu-city/>

### **Listening to GB**

*Dawn, 17 January 2023*

Local protesters have been peacefully demonstrating in Skardu for two weeks, under the shadow of the fluttering green-and-white Pakistani flag. All profess to be Pakistanis and have Pakistani passports and ID cards. Their elders liberated this region after an armed struggle with the regular army of the Kashmir state. Today, the protesters lobby for GB as a federating unit of Pakistan. Their major demands include integration of the region as a province thus resolving its status as disputed territory; land ownership rights in the liberated area; exemption from taxes without defined status; opening the border with Kargil to facilitate cross-border interaction of divided families; and restoring the wheat subsidy granted by the PPP government in 1973. Provincial status is key to settling all other demands. After acceding to Pakistan in 1947, the trusting GB residents presumed that the deputation of a semi-literate junior officer as a political agent by the Pakistani government signified acceptance of their request for integration. However, the region's fate was sealed by the Karachi Agreement

with Kashmiri leaders who consented to indefinite bureaucratic control of GB without consulting the local leadership. And yet, GB residents remained loyal.

For almost 25 years, the area was ruled under the black colonial Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). In the hope of creating support for a plebiscite, our foreign affairs czars defined GB as a disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. This twisted narrative was used to legitimize the repressive GB administration in the name of national interest. Education and awareness via social media have fueled the demand for resolving GB's contested status. Civil society took its case to the Supreme Court. After years of hearings, a landmark judgment in 2019 rescinded the Government of GB order, 2018, in favor of a newly agreed draft GB Governance Reforms Order, 2019. On the pretext of converting it into an act of parliament, the PML-N continued to administer the area through the 2018 order, thus diluting the powers delegated by the PPP under the 2009 law. The subsequent PTI government also continued with the 2018 order, reneging on its pledge to accord GB full provincial status and rights.

Impelled by public pressure and the verdict, the PTI government finally launched a process to grant provisional provincial status to GB via a constitutional amendment, ensuring its representation in parliament and all constitutional institutions. However,

ignoring the two earlier, unanimous resolutions of the GB Provincial Legislative Assembly, the center referred it to the local government for endorsement, a ruse to stall the process. Unexpectedly, the highly educated GB chief minister played along, referring the reference to a committee of the local assembly, which delayed the endorsement to protect their tenure for two more years in the local assembly. Sadly, the CM chose opportunism over the chance to right a historical wrong. In a rare concert, the PML-N federal government and the PTI GB government proved to be complicit in trampling on GB residents' constitutional rights. Despite a positive earlier record in supporting the locals' demand, the PPP has remained silent out of political expediency. Such decisions by national parties compel a blind subservience from the local leadership, causing the latter to be a party to GB's continuing subjugation. Locked in squabbling, political parties are too distracted to deliver on local electoral promises to resolve the issue of GB's fundamental rights. Thus, two million GB residents, who are proud to call themselves Pakistanis, feel let down.

As the current local government is too impotent to address the issues of constitutional and land ownership rights, taxation, wheat subsidy, and border management, the discontent engendered by an authoritarian legal framework has ignited unprecedented protests. GB's residents cannot be

denied the right to be integrated into Pakistan. Nor can their status remain in limbo. They are justified in demanding ownership rights to the land they liberated and in refusing to accept the laws/practices of the former Dogra occupiers. Concerning the Kargil border management policy, the policies adopted in 'AJK', Punjab, and Sindh can easily be replicated in GB. While the Indian media projects these peaceful protests as anti-Pakistan, the high-flying Pakistani flag at the venue of the protest and the desperate demand for integration remain unacknowledged. A word to the powers that be: these protests must be shown on our national media to dispel misgivings about the intentions of the protesters who not only the state but also truly believe that they are more 'Pakistani than Pakistanis', a fact borne out by their record of loyalty to Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1732071>

### Should we put Kashmir on the back burner?

*The Express Tribune, 17 January 2023*

After General Qamar Javed Bajwa's retirement, several stories about key developments that took place during his 6-year term have surfaced. One fascinating revelation was how Bajwa pushed for rapprochement with India during his second term as an Army Chief. Senior journalist Javed Chaudhry, who recently met Bajwa, disclosed that Indian Prime Minister

Narendra Modi was scheduled to travel to Pakistan in April 2021 as part of efforts to open a new chapter of a friendly relationship between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. The visit was planned after a series of backchannel talks between then DG ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. Those efforts led to the renewal of a ceasefire agreement between the two countries along the LoC in the disputed Kashmir region in February 2021. The announcement was surprising since both countries were not having any formal talks. After many years, both sides issued simultaneous statements in Islamabad and New Delhi. The development was contrary to the state of the relationship between the two countries especially after India unilaterally revoked the special status of the disputed Kashmir region in August 2019. Pakistan, in reaction, downgraded diplomatic ties and suspended bilateral trade with India. But as part of confidence-building measures following the renewal of the ceasefire, the two countries were to resume trade ties in March. The next move was to be a surprise visit to Modi.

However, neither the trade resumed nor did Modi's visit materialize. The reason was that Prime Minister Imran Khan was warned of serious public backlash since the plan purportedly suggested freezing the Kashmir dispute for 20 years. His Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi

warned Imran that any such move would be seen as a Kashmir sellout. Hence, the plan remained a pipedream. But let's examine whether the proposal was in the interest of Pakistan. It has to be said without any doubt that Pakistan's position on Kashmir has considerably weakened over the years because of our follies. There was a time when India officially acknowledged that Kashmir is a disputed territory and needs a final settlement. Now, India does not even acknowledge that in public. Pakistan could have struck a far better deal on Kashmir when Indian Prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee traveled by bus to Lahore on a historic visit in 1998 after the two countries became nuclear. Vajpayee agreed to find a solution to the lingering dispute. The two countries had agreed on a composite dialogue but then Kargil happened. Even after the military coup, there were prospects of a rapprochement. Musharraf resumed peace talks with the Vajpayee government and later continued the same with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The peace process from 2004 to 2007 was considered as most promising for resolving the Kashmir dispute. The two countries even shared non-papers envisaging a roadmap for settling the lingering conflict. Manmohan Singh was to travel to Pakistan in 2007 to sign agreements on Siachen and Sir Creek. But Musharraf's move to sack then Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry

triggered a lawyers' movement that eventually saw the ouster of the military ruler. The November 2008 Mumbai attacks dealt a fatal blow to any chances of a thaw between the two countries. After that, the two countries did try to resume the peace process but India by that time entered into a strategic relationship with the US and its growing economic clout meant the hardening of its stance on Kashmir. Let's not forget when India was growing economically, Pakistan was reeling from one crisis after another. It was because of this reason that Bajwa thought that a thaw with India was necessary to focus on resurrecting the economy. It may sound highly unpopular, even unpatriotic, to some, but Pakistan will have to freeze discussions on Kashmir for the time being and first put its own house in order.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2396060/should-we-put-kashmir-on-the-backburner>

**Genocide threat is real as massive killings already underway in 'IIOJK', Dr. Fai warns**

*Pakistan Observer, 17 January 2023*

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, chairman of, the World Forum for Peace and Justice, has said the United Nations (UN) has utterly failed in resolving international conflicts, especially the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. He said this during an All-Parties Jirga, organized by Shamsuz Zaman, a young community leader and president of

Pak-American Society, USA in New York. He said that Kashmir cannot be ignored. The conflict there has lasted for 76 years and is set to continue as long as the Indian armed forces continue to 'occupy' the region. He claimed that the potential for 'genocide' is very real and 'massive killings' have already occurred in the past in Kashmir. The tens of thousands who have been killed along with vast human rights abuses seem to go on without an end. Dr. Gregory Stanton, the chairman, of Genocide Watch, is on record to have said during a Congressional hearing at Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. in January 2022 that Kashmir was on the 'brink of genocide.'

The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights who spoke on September 13, 2016, during the opening of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, said in response, 'we had previously received reports, and continue to do so, claiming the Indian authorities had used force excessively against the civilian population under its administration...I believe an independent, impartial and international mission is now needed crucially and that it should be given free and complete access to establish an objective assessment of the claims made by the two sides.' Fai claimed that the Indian government continues to ignore such calls for investigation because it believes that such ruthless tactics are the only way to deal with opposition to its policies.

He asserted that India's reputation suffers considerably more as a result of its 'blatant deceit' and unrelenting refusal to face its misguided policies in Kashmir head-on than it would if it simply laid its cards on the table. For those hoping for U.S. backing for human rights causes, particularly in Kashmir, he said, it does not look good. Since 1948, the United States Administration has supported the Kashmir problem on a bipartisan basis in the UN, but that support is now waning.

Shamsuz Zaman, President, Pak-American Society, USA said that we cannot afford to ignore strategizing in the United States to help the 'oppressed' people of Kashmir. Sirajul Haq, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan in his keynote address added that we as a nation have failed our brethren in 'occupied Kashmir.' The people of occupied Kashmir are giving sacrifices beyond imagination, and they need our full diplomatic support which unfortunately is missing. Sardar Sawar Khan, former advisor to the prime minister of 'Azad Kashmir' said that the unresolved conflict over Kashmir threatens the international peace and security of the world. It is high time for the UN to take forceful action to restore peace to Kashmir, he added. Perhaps Resolution 2098 ought to be reviewed as an option to consider in dealing with this problem because nothing else to date has worked. Numerous community members of diasporic

Pakistani descent attended the occasion and spoke.

<https://pakobserver.net/genocide-threat-is-real-as-massive-killings-already-underway-in-iiojk-dr-fai-warns/>

### **'IIOJK's' status: Talks with India only after revocation: PM's Office**

*Business Recorder, 18 January 2023*

A spokesperson of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said that PM Shehzad Sharif has consistently maintained that Pakistan and India must resolve their bilateral issues, especially the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), through dialogue and peaceful means. The statement came about PM Shehzad Sharif's interview with Al Arabiya channel, where he spoke in length about India's violation of the Article 370 of its constitution that granted autonomy to J&K. The spokesperson mentioned that PM Shehzad Sharif has repeatedly stated on record that talks can only take place after India 'reversed' its 'illegal action' of August 5, 2019. The statement read that 'without India's revocation of this step, negotiations are not possible,' and that the 'settlement of the Kashmir dispute must be following the UN resolutions and the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.' The spokesman further said that the prime minister made this position very clear in his interview with the Al Arabiya news channel during his recent visit to the United Arab Emirates. The autonomy was revoked on August 5, 2019. He pointed out that minorities in India

were being 'persecuted', adding that 'this must stop so that message can go around the globe that India is ready to have talks.'

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40220862/iiojks-status-talks-with-india-only-after-revocation-pms-office>

### **JKSM pays rich tributes to Martyrs of Gawkadal: Altaf Bhat**

*Daily Parliament Times, 19 January 2023*

The chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM) Altaf Ahmed Bhat while paying tributes to the Martyrs of the Gawkadal 'massacre' said that the Kashmiri nation has paid with blood for the freedom of our motherland, but never surrendered or bent before the military might of India. He claimed that on 21st January 1990 'Indian troops' had 'killed' more than 50 innocent people by resorting to indiscriminate firing on peaceful demonstrators in the Gawkadal area of Srinagar. The demonstrators were protesting against the 'molestation' of several women by troops and added that since 1989 Indian 'occupation forces' have committed 'worst' Human Rights violations in Kashmir. He claimed that since then, more than 96,163 innocents are killed; 7,282 are killed in custody, 165,428 civilians have been arrested, 11049 structures were destroyed/arson, 22,954 women are widowed, 11,256 'molested' and 'gang raped.'

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/01/19/jksm-pays-rich-tributes-to-martyrs-of-gaw-kadal-altaf-bhat/>

## Kashmiri leadership passes resolution to demand reversal of Indian unilateral actions

*Pakistan Observer, 20 January 2023*

The members of the Legislative Assembly of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) and senior political leadership of 'AJK' from 'across the aisle' have unanimously passed a five-point resolution calling on India to reverse its 'illegal, unlawful, and unjust' annulment of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution on 5th August 2019 and re-endorsed the principled stand taken by Pakistan to link any negotiation or dialogue with India with the reversal of these actions. The statement was issued during a luncheon hosted by the president, Dr. Arif Alvi for the acting president of 'AJK', Anwar ul Haq, prime minister of 'AJK,' Tanvir Ilyas, former PM of 'AJK', Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, members of the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly, and senior political leadership of 'AJK.' The 5-point resolution called upon India:

(i) to retract its illegal move to change the demography of 'IIOJK' by 'illegally' issuing domiciles to over 4,200,000 non-Kashmiris and empowering them to buy land in Kashmir and conduct businesses; and (ii) to put an end to 'atrocities', intimidation, harassment and humiliation inflicted upon the innocent Kashmiris perpetually by the 'Indian Occupation Forces' of over 1 million. (iii) to take meaningful steps towards the holding of an impartial plebiscite to allow the Kashmiris to

exercise their right to self-determination; (iv) to take meaningful steps for allowing the journalists to perform their role of providing impartial information on the prevailing 'grave' human rights situation in 'IIOJK.' (v) The resolution called upon the leadership of both Pakistan and India to allow cross-border hassle-free movement to allow the Kashmiris of 'IIOJK' and 'AJK' to meet their relatives and do business.

Alvi said that the government of Pakistan and the entire Pakistani leadership, irrespective of their political affiliations, were fully committed to the Kashmir cause and would continue giving their moral, political, and diplomatic support for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris. He observed that there was a clear distinction between the freedom fighters and terrorists, and the Kashmiri brothers and sisters were waging a just freedom struggle by all means and angles and were sacrificing their lives for the attainment of their rights.

He regretted that the Muslim freedom movements around the world were deliberately, wrongly, and unjustifiably equated with the terrorist movement, whereas other such movements were termed as just and lawful. The president proposed that the media, being the most effective tool, must also be used effectively to raise the voice of the Kashmiris and to highlight the 'illegal', 'unlawful,' and

unjust Indian actions of 5th August 2019 which had unilaterally deprived the Kashmiris of their special status and protection provided to them under Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution. He said that the international media should also be engaged to compare the political, economic, social, cultural, and religious freedoms enjoyed by the Kashmiris in 'AJK' and contrast it with the 'oppression, cruelty, humiliation and suppression' of Kashmiris in 'IJOK.'

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmiri-leadership-passes-resolution-to-demand-reversal-of-indian-unilateral-actions/>

### **Strong and stable Pakistan guarantees Kashmir's freedom from Indian 'subjugation': 'AJK' president**

*Daily Parliament Times, 22 January 2023*

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, while addressing a press conference at Bradford, United Kingdom, has said that a strong and stable Pakistan was a guarantee to 'Kashmir's freedom' from India's 'forced and unlawful occupation.' He said that since 1947 Indian rulers used different tactics to crush the Kashmiris' spirit and their 'urge for freedom' but they have 'miserably failed' in their designs. He claimed that the current Indian government was actively working toward achieving its 'ulterior aims' by settling non-state subjects in 'occupied Kashmir.' He claimed that the BJP's strategy of marginalizing the

indigenous population included 'demographic change', but asserted that the Kashmiri people would not permit such a thing to occur. While referring to his engagements in the UK the president said that he was scheduled to brief the European and British Parliamentarians on January 24, and January 25 on the latest situation in the 'occupied Kashmir.' He said that on February 5, he would lead a protest demonstration in front of the Indian High Commission in London and urged the Pakistanis and Kashmiris settled in the UK to attend the protest demonstration and raise their voice in support of their Kashmiri brethren.

While terming his Turkey visit as successful, Mahmood said that it was indeed a huge achievement that the Turkish government and the opposition have announced the establishment of an 'All Parties Kashmir group' in the Turkish parliament. The establishment of the Kashmir group in the Turkish parliament, he said would have a far-reaching impact on Kashmir. While responding to a query, the president said that 'no minority was safe' in India, claiming that under PM Modi, India was fast turning into a 'fascist regime' where there was no place for Minority communities including the Muslims. He said that it was very important to expose the Indian government's tactics before the world.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/01/22/strong-and-stable-pakistan-guarantee-to->

[kashmirs-freedom-from-indian-subjugation-ajk-president/](#)

## Economic Developments

### NLC develops three CSR projects in GB

The Nation, 16 January 2023

As part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, National Logistics Cell (NLC) has developed three projects in the health and education sectors in far-flung areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). These projects have been handed over to the local administration after the completion of work. The CSR projects include the rehabilitation of the middle school at Naltar Paine, the upgradation of the Basic Health Unit (BHU) at Normal, and the boy's school at Sost. Similarly, the rehabilitation of the Basic Health Unit at Normal was also carried out by NLC engineers. All these projects have been developed by NLC free of cost and are part of CSR initiatives being undertaken by NLC across Pakistan.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Jan-2023/nlc-develops-three-csr-projects-in-gb>

### 'AJK' to release 14 billion to PASSCO for buying wheat

*Business Recorder*, 17 January 2023

The government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) has decided to release 14 billion to the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) for purchasing wheat to supply subsidized wheat flour to the

people of the region. The 'AJK' government has called an emergency meeting of the cabinet in a bid to take effective measures to deal with the skyrocketing prices of wheat flour in all of 'AJK', especially in the hilly and remote areas. As per the 'AJK' government's data, the problem is not the shortage of flour but the existing price difference. The price of government-sponsored wheat flour in the market is 2,500 per 40kg, while the commodity in the open market is being sold at 6,200 per 40kg. The consumers used to purchase wheat flour from the open market, but after the massive increase in the prices, they started buying government-subsidized flour, and as a result, the demand has gone up manifold.

The 'AJK' region annually was consuming around 520,000 tons of wheat, of which, the government of 'AJK' was purchasing 300,000 tons of wheat which is 60 percent of the annual requirement, 30 percent of wheat was being provided by the private sector and 10 percent is locally produced in 'AJK.' During the past couple of months, the 'AJK' has witnessed a significant increase in the number of buyers of subsidized flour, and people who used to buy one bag of flour are buying five extra bags due to the rising inflation and fear of shortage of food commodities. On the one hand, recommendations related to setting up a mechanism to limit the subsidy of flour to deserving people are under consideration. Prime Minister Sardar

Tanvir Ilyas Khan has requested the federal government for a supplementary grant for the payment of the bill to the PASSCO and releasing of the share of the money the federal government had slashed by imposing budgetary cuts. According to the officials of the 'AJK' government, so far no response has been received from the federal government as a result the 'AJK' government is trying to continue the supply of wheat by paying PASSCO on one hand and making a policy of providing targeted subsidized flour on the other hand given the hardships of the public.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40220565/ajk-to-release-rs14bn-to-passco-for-buying-wheat>

### **GB sidelined in Geneva donors' conference: CM GB**

*Pakistan today, 19 January 2023*

Though the delegation of Pakistan at the recently held Geneva donors' conference included representatives of all provinces but no one from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) had attended the event, what Chief Minister (CM) of GB Muhammad Khalid Khurshid claimed, was a deliberate attempt of the center to sidelining the regional government. While addressing a press conference in Islamabad, he revealed that Federal Minister of Planning Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, during an earlier briefing, had asked officials from GB to remain silent in Geneva. Khurshid said that my secretary was instructed that he will neither give any

briefing nor take the name of GB in the Geneva conference, adding that no reason was given regarding keeping GB absent from the entire tour and presentation at the conference. He revealed that this is why, I instructed the secretaries to avoid becoming part of the Geneva delegation, stressing that despite being the most affected mountainous region in the country by climate change, and not a single project of GB was included in the flood rehabilitation plan for which the international lenders have pledged around \$ 10 billion soft loan.

Khalid Khurshid, who was also accompanied by former provincial minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taimur Saleem Jhagra and PTI leader Muzamil Aslam, said that the federal government has not released even one rupee extra for GB. The regional government, he said, should have received 22 to 23 billion in the form of the Annual Development Program (ADP), but the federal government has kept the ADP to just 18 billion. He said that the government of 13 political parties has cut not only development but also the non-development budget of GB. It has also cut the wheat subsidy despite increasing demand as per the growth of the population in the area. He also claimed that various cities and villages of GB were braving 22 hours of electricity load shedding despite the temperature falling below 14 degrees. He said that unfortunately when people come on the street in such large

numbers, the ‘enemies of Pakistan’ portray the protest gatherings as against the state and added that the main task of the political leadership is to control the chaos, but the PDM led federal government is selectively discriminating against GB, ‘Azad Kashmir’ and KP.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/01/19/gb-sidelined-in-geneva-donors-conference-cm-gb/>

### **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

**Willing to discuss all disputes, including the Kashmir issue with India: PM Shehbaz Sharif**

*Jasarat, 17 January 2023*

Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif encouraged Indian PM Narendra Modi to engage in earnest dialogue to resolve urgent issues, particularly the Kashmir issue. In an interview with the news outlet Al Arabiya, he said, ‘my message to the Indian leadership and PM Narendra Modi is that let us get down at the table and have serious and sincere conversations to tackle our burning concerns, including the Kashmir issue.’ He continued, claiming that India had ‘illegally seized’ all of the autonomy provided to Kashmiris by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and that ‘grave human rights abuses’ are ongoing in Kashmir. He stated that Kashmir’s autonomy was revoked in August 2019. He claimed that ‘harassment of minorities’ was occurring in India and added that it needed to stop so that the world would know that India is open to dialogue.

Shehbaz asserted that because Pakistan and India are neighbors, they must live in peace. He further said that it is up to us whether we live in peace and make progress or fight and waste time and resources.

In response to a query, he stated that Pakistan had learned from its past errors as a result of the three wars it had fought with India, all of which had exacerbated suffering, poverty, and unemployment among the public. We have learned our lesson, and we want to live in peace as long as we can resolve our actual problems. He said that I want to let PM Modi know that instead of wasting money on bombs and ammunition, we would rather eradicate poverty, develop prosperity, and provide our people with access to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities. God forbid a fight breaks out, he remarked; we are nuclear powers, well-armed, and who will survive to tell what happened. He said the leadership of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) might play a big role in bringing India and Pakistan together.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/01/17/shehbaz-sharif-15/>

**We were surprised by Shehbaz Sharif's stance on India and we cannot permit him to sell Kashmir: Fawad Choudhary**

*Urdupoint, 17 January 2023*

Fawad Chaudhary, a central figure in Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and a former federal minister has expressed

surprise at PM Shehbaz Sharif's stance on maintaining relations with India. He claimed that begging for discussions with India was not part of Pakistan's strategy and urged PM Modi's government to reinstate 'occupied Kashmir's constitutional status. Shehbaz Sharif cannot be permitted to sell Kashmir, and the PTI leader vehemently disagrees with Shehbaz Sharif's viewpoint on forging ties with India. He stressed that Pakistan will negotiate with India on the restoration of 'occupied Kashmir's former status. He stated that Pakistan wants to live as a peaceful neighbor by resolving the fundamental issues with India, and added that there were already three wars between the two nations and that only increased unemployment and poverty.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/lahore/national-news/live-news-3435739.html>

#### **Fact check: Indian media's false propaganda on protests in GB exposed**

*Daily Pakistan, 17 January 2023*

Indian media attempted to change the perception of the protests in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) by spreading 'fake information', which has since flopped. According to reports, protests against land changes, tax implementation, a scarcity of wheat, and extended blackouts have been taking place in GB for the past few days. Markets, businesses, and retail establishments are all closed, and traffic is also halted.

Similarly, tourists are also reportedly experiencing significant challenges as a result of the transport strike. The majority of the religious and political parties, as well as other communities, are taking part in these protests despite the bitter weather and interpersonal conflicts. The Awami Action Committee, a confederation of many political, religious, and trade organizations, is in charge of the protests. Indian media worked hard to spread 'misleading information', but their 'falsehood' has been exposed.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/17-Jan-2023/1533685>

#### **The international community should take the initiative to address the Kashmir, Palestine, and Cyprus issues: 'AJK' president**

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 19 January 2023

While reiterating Pakistan's unequivocal position on the Kashmir, Palestine, and Cyprus issues, the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry stated that it was high time for the international community to take a proactive role in assisting with the resolution of these prolonged conflicts. He discussed these ideas with Cyprus's Prime Minister, Unal Ustel. While speaking at the event, Mahmood stated that Pakistan has consistently backed Turkiye's principled stance on the Cyprus issue and that Turkiye's government and people also back Pakistan's position on the Kashmir

issue. About the friendly ties between Pakistan and Turkiye, he stated that these ties were founded on respect, friendship, and brotherhood.

Unal Ustel, the prime minister of Cyprus, expressed sympathy with the Kashmiris and reaffirmed his support for Kashmiri's 'rightful quest for self-determination.' Both Unal Ustel and Mahmood Chaudhry stated during the meeting that the international community must play a role in resolving the Kashmir and Cyprus issues. The 'AJK' president accepted Prime Minister Unal Ustel's invitation to travel to Cyprus. Meantime, Fatih Erbakan, the leader of the Welfare Party, Turkiye, also meet Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry and held detailed discussions. Mahmood Chaudhry stated that it was encouraging to see that all of Turkiye's political groups shared a common stance on the Kashmir problem and supported the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Resize-of-front-1.jpg>

### **The Kashmiri people will prevail in their cause: APHC- 'AJK' Convener**

*Urdupoint, 20 January 2023*

All-Party Hurriyat Conference-'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK) branch convener Mahmood Ahmad Sagar, general secretary Sheikh Abdul Mateen, and information secretary Imtiaz Wani paid respects to the victims of the Gawkadal 'massacre' and declared that

the Kashmiri people would continue to fight for their cause and would undoubtedly succeed. In a statement, they claimed that on January 21, 1990, the 'occupying Indian soldiers' shot indiscriminately at 'peaceful demonstrators' in Jammu and Kashmir, killing more than 50 innocent Kashmiris and injuring hundreds of others who were protesting against the 'rape of Kashmiri women' by the 'Indian soldiers.' Ever since, the Hurriyat leaders claimed, India is 'forcibly occupying' Jammu and Kashmir and enabling the 'occupying army' to commit 'mass murder' of the Kashmiri by using 'black laws.' They claimed that the 'Indian army' was responsible for numerous tragedies in Jammu and Kashmir, including Gawkadal, Aali Kadal, the Bijbehara massacre, the Sopore massacre, the Handwara massacre, and many others. These incidents, they claimed, are a shame to India's purported democracy. He claimed that the lack of concern from the world community is the reason why India has not yet been held accountable for the tragic 'human rights abuses' it is committing in Jammu and Kashmir. They made a plea to the UN Human Rights Organization and other international human rights organizations to launch an impartial investigation into the 'slaughter' of Kashmiris in Jammu and Kashmir and to take decisive action against any Indian soldiers who committed 'war crimes.'

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3439944.html>

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## Disclaimer

*PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.*



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