

# Weekly POK News Digest

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

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**POK**  
**CPEC**  
**Gilgit-Baltistan**  
**conservation**  
**hunting auction**  
**Climate Change**  
**tourism**  
**Wildlife**



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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES  
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## Political Developments

### **Large rallies, seminars mark Kashmir Black Day**

*Dawn, 28 October 2024*

Minister for Kashmir Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam led a rally in the federal capital on the occasion of Kashmir Black Day to express solidarity with the people of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK).

Addressing the rally participants at D-Chowk, Mr Muqam reminded people about October 27, 1947, when Indian forces 'illegally' entered Jammu and Kashmir, saying "no Pakistani can forget this day".

He also expressed his disappointment with international human rights organisations, calling on the United Nations to address what he termed genocide in Kashmir. The minister urged the UN to fulfil its commitment to resolve the Kashmir issue.

He said the recent elections in 'occupied Kashmir' revealed the reality of India's narrative and urged New Delhi to consider this election as a referendum against its rule.

Commending Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for raising the Kashmir and Palestine issues at the UN General Assembly in September, Engineer Amir Muqam said Pakistan would continue to support Kashmir's political, diplomatic and moral cause until Kashmiris achieved their right to self-determination.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Kashmir Committee (KC) Rana Qasim Noon urged the global institutions to uphold UN resolutions and initiate dialogue with Kashmiris.

Former MNA and head of Pakistan Sweet Home Zamrud Khan emphasised Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kashmiri people. "This is a message of solidarity from the people of Pakistan," he declared.

Deputy Convener of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Farooq Rehmani condemned the longstanding violence and human rights abuses in Kashmir.

Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik, called upon the youth to play a vital role in keeping the Kashmir cause alive. The rally was also attended by a large number of people including students of various schools.

In Rawalpindi, seminars and a photo exhibition were held to mark the day. Metro Bus Authority displayed banners and steamers along the routes while the metro bus stations relayed Kashmiri songs on LEDs. Black flags were also hoisted on all educational institutions and health centres.

A minute's silence was observed in the ceremonies followed by sirens to highlight the national cause. The Rawalpindi Arts Council hosted a photo exhibition depicting Indian atrocities in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir'. The exhibition was inaugurated by Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Culture

Shazia Rizwan and the ceremony was attended by Punjab Arts Council Director Sajjad Hussain, Assistant Director Mohammad Suleman, Assistant Director Sarfaraz Khan and others.

A documentary showcasing the plight of unarmed Kashmiris under 'Indian occupation' was also screened. Meanwhile, Commissioner Aamir Khattak said observance of Black day was aimed at paying tributes to the brave martyrs of Kashmir who gave their lives to this struggle for freedom.

He said Kashmir dispute needed to be resolved through dialogues in accordance with the UN resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. District Education Authority and Directorate of Colleges arranged special programmes, walks, debates, convention and events in all educational institutions. Administrator Auqaf also arranged special prayers for Kashmiri martyrs.

### **Muzaffarabad**

People from various walks of life and age groups took to the streets across major towns of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) on Sunday to condemn the unlawful landing of Indian troops in Srinagar on this day in 1947, reiterating calls to the international community, especially the United Nations, to acknowledge the serious repercussions of the unresolved Kashmir issue and to act toward its prompt resolution for the sake of peace

and prosperity in the South Asian region.

In Muzaffarabad, two demonstrations were held, organised by the 'AJK' chapter of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Cell (JKLC) at Burhan Wani Chowk and Chattar Chowk, respectively.

'AJK' Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, along with leaders representing political, religious, and business organisations, addressed the demonstrators.

A similar demonstration organised by the JKLC saw a large turnout, with prominent figures such as 'AJK' Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Deevan Ali Chughtai and APHC leader Yousuf Nasim in attendance.

At a separate event organised by his Sawera Foundation, Tanveerul Islam, a renowned former militant turned political activist, reminded India that despite the horrors inflicted on them, the Kashmiri people's resolve remained unwavering.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1868078/large-rallies-seminars-mark-kashmir-black-day>

### **New generation will have to wake up to ignite the freedom movement: Prof Dr. Shabnam Gul**

*Daily Parliament Times, 29 October 2024*

Professor Dr. Shabnam Gul said that this homeland was not founded easily, millions of lives were sacrificed in it. It

is the fruit of the sacrifices of millions of innocents, the bodies of young children are being carried by mothers and are still being carried. The purpose of establishing the Kashmir Liberation Movement base camp was to struggle for these oppressed people and not to forget them and keep the new generation away from this cause to do. The new generation will have to wake up to ignite the freedom movement.

Make your identity known to the world. If the new generation wraps their heads in order to present it, there will be no need to tie their hands or look at anyone. There are examples of hundreds of martyrs including Captain Hussain Khan Shaheed. Three women of Gujra Muzaffarabad took part in the freedom movement of Kashmir. HOD Department of Kashmiriology Professor Dr. Samira Shafiq said that the establishment of 'Azad Kashmir' is not just a coincidence but it was started by Shaheed Millat Malhi Khan and others. The completion is Pakistan. The armed forces of Pakistan have been supporting the Kashmiris. The role of Dr. Kaleem Abbasi to save the young generation from ideological chaos will last for centuries. Kashmiriyat Professor Dr. Raja Nazakat said that the economic situation of the refugees in 'Azad Kashmir' is better than that of the local people except for housing and accommodation.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/29/new-generation-will-have-to-wake-up-to-ignite-the-freedom-movement-prof-dr-shabnam-gull/>

## **Pakistani, Kashmiri Diaspora community abroad stages black day against continual 'Indian Illegal occupation of Kashmir'**

*Daily Parliament Times, 28 October 2024*

Kashmir Council (European Union) on Sunday staged protest in front of Indian Embassy in Brussels against 'occupation of Kashmir'.

"A protest demonstration was arranged in front of Indian Embassy in Brussels by Kashmir Council Europe (KC-EU) on Sunday, the day of 'Indian Occupation of Jammu and Kashmir'", says a message reaching and released to the media here late Sunday night.

Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control and based in other parts of the world observe Black Day on 27th October every year to mark protest against the 'illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir' by India.

A number of the Kashmiris based in Europe including Belgium and their sympathisers and representatives of the various non-governmental organizations participated in the demonstration holding placards and banners having slogans against the 'Indian occupation of Kashmir' and in favour of freedom struggle of Kashmiris.

On occasion of the protest in Brussels, Chairman Kashmir Council Europe (KC-EU) Ali Raza Syed made it clear that we demand New Delhi to free people of Kashmir by ending the

‘occupation of Kashmir’ and give them right of self-determination.

Chairman KC-EU further said, by staging this protest, we intend to send a message to the Indian government that Kashmiris do not accept ‘India’s illegal occupation’.

People in the ‘Occupied Kashmir’ are victims of Indian persecution for above seven and half decades. On a daily basis, Indian authorities are attempting to crush the Kashmiris. Indian police and security forces commit violence and create fear among the people of Kashmir.

Chairman Kashmir Council EU Ali Raza Syed asserted that Kashmiri nation is not ready to compromise on their right to self-determination.

He also urged the world’s major powers to help the people of Jammu and Kashmir, struggling for their right to self-determination. A peaceful resolution of issue of Kashmir, which is long lasting desire of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, should be achieved.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/28/pakistani-kashmiri-diaspora-community-abroad-stages-black-day-against-continual-indian-illegal-occupation-of-kashmir/>

### **Preserving Gilgit-Baltistan’s Wildlife Heritage**

*Pamir Times, 31 October 2024*

Nestled at the confluence of the mighty Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Himalayan mountain ranges, Gilgit-

Baltistan is one of the world’s most stunning and ecologically rich landscapes. The region’s rugged terrain, vast river valleys, and diverse flora and fauna make it a unique ecological and cultural hotspot. This confluence is a testament to nature’s raw power and beauty, supporting various endangered species, including the Markhor, Blue Sheep, and Himalayan Ibex. Given the environmental and cultural significance of this region, conservation is paramount—not only for preserving biodiversity but also for supporting local communities who rely on these ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods.

For five decades, the Hunza Valley, located within this majestic region, has spearheaded community-led conservation initiatives. Local populations have invested tremendous efforts into protecting wildlife, motivated by a deep-rooted sense of responsibility toward their natural surroundings. With the help of Community Conservation Hunting Areas (CCHAs), these initiatives empower communities to promote biodiversity protection, educate their people on conservation principles, and reduce human impact on wildlife habitats. Working alongside the wildlife and forest departments of Gilgit-Baltistan, communities are leading the way in wildlife preservation, directly engaging in safeguarding their lands.

However, challenges have emerged that threaten to undermine these



positive strides in conservation. The trophy hunting industry, intended as a regulated means to generate revenue for local communities, has fallen prey to systemic manipulation and exploitation. A small group of outfitters and tour operators, who organize hunting safaris, have monopolised the hunting auction system, undermining fair revenue generation and treating community representatives with disregard. Their deceptive practices, including undervaluing trophy animals, not only reduce community income but also jeopardize the credibility of the entire trophy hunting system.

The auctioning of trophy animals serves as a prime illustration of this exploitation. In Chitral, a single Markhor can command as much as \$270,000, while in Gilgit-Baltistan, the same animal was recently auctioned for only \$107,000—a substantial undervaluation compared to last year's \$181,000. Similar devaluation can be seen in the auction of Blue Sheep, which dropped from \$35,000 last year to \$11,000 this year. These discrepancies reveal a manipulation of prices that disproportionately impacts the conservation communities, whose efforts have made trophy hunting possible in the first place. The same trend affects Himalayan Ibex rates across Community Conservation Hunting Areas, highlighting a pattern of undercutting community income potential.

Today's auction was a glaring example of this inequity, becoming a hollow process dominated by outfitters who have little regard for community welfare or sustainable hunting. Although community representatives protested before the Conservator of Wildlife, the outcome remained inconclusive, leaving community stakeholders frustrated and voiceless. To address these issues and create a fairer system, the following measures are recommended:

**Declare a Conservation Rest Year:** Communities may consider pausing trophy hunting activities for a year, allowing wildlife populations to replenish. This break would send a strong message to outfitters that community interests are non-negotiable, encouraging them to reconsider their exploitative practices.

**Set Base Prices Collaboratively:** Communities, in collaboration with the wildlife department, should establish high minimum auction prices for each trophy. This would prevent undervaluation and ensure that communities receive fair compensation for their conservation efforts.

**Empower Youth and New Entrants in the Hunting Market:** The hunting market should be opened to new companies, especially those led by local youth. The long-standing monopoly held by a few outfitters has deprived conservation communities of their rightful income for over three decades. Allowing new participants would

enhance competition and ensure fairer practices.

**Reform Licensing and Documentation:** The Wildlife Department and Gilgit-Baltistan government must streamline the licensing process to enable local conservation communities to participate as licensed outfitters. This would decentralize control, placing power in the hands of those who are directly responsible for conservation efforts.

**Create a Marketing Platform for Trophies:** A centralized, year-round online portal for promoting wildlife trophies should be established, allowing each Community Conservation Hunting Area (CCHA) to present their offerings transparently to international hunters. This portal would give equal exposure to all areas, making the auction process more accessible and competitive.

**Reduce Non-Exportable Trophy Quotas:** The quota of non-exportable trophies should be reduced for local and national hunters. Limiting these quotas would help preserve trophy populations for the future and maintain balance within ecosystems.

**Form a Community Conservation Council:** Establishing a Community Conservation Council, with representatives from each community, would provide a forum to address conservation and hunting issues. This council, modelled after a traditional “Jirga,” would allow communities to

discuss and resolve conflicts, ensuring fair representation in decisions affecting conservation and hunting practices.

The convergence of the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Himalaya ranges makes Gilgit-Baltistan a precious repository of ecological diversity. Community-led conservation initiatives in areas like Gojal Upper Hunza exemplify the region’s commitment to preserving this heritage. However, the exploitation within the trophy hunting industry threatens to destabilize these efforts, undermining the financial sustainability that communities depend on. By implementing these recommendations, the Gilgit-Baltistan region can restore integrity to the hunting auction process, empower local communities, and safeguard its rich biodiversity.

These proposed reforms seek to strike a balance between the economic needs of local populations and the imperatives of wildlife conservation. They encourage a model of sustainability, transparency, and accountability, where communities are genuinely valued as stakeholders in the trophy hunting system. Through concerted action, Gilgit-Baltistan can continue to thrive as a global example of successful, community-driven conservation.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/10/31/preserving-gilgit-baltistans-wildlife-heritage/>



## **Kashmir conflict needs to be resolve through peaceful dialogue: Sardar Tamur Aziz**

*Daily Parliament Times, 28 October 2024*

Kashmir Council Sweden organized an important event to observe the October 27th as the 'day of occupation', a day of grief and sorrow. The event took place at Stockholm Waterfront Congress Center. What a coincidence that it was held in Room 27.

Describing the objective of the Council, Sardar Tamur Aziz, President of the Council and Emcee of the event said that our objective is to advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir conflict, ensuring the rights and freedoms of the people of Kashmir and promoting their right to self-determination. Council emphasizes an end to human rights abuses in the region and aims to provide Kashmiri voices a platform in international forums.

Ambassador Bilal Hayee, Ambassador of Pakistan to Sweden said that the original sin of the tragedy of Kashmir began when 'India occupied the State of Jammu and Kashmir' by sending its army without the consent of the people of Kashmir. He said that the claim of India that Maharaja signed the 'Instrument of Accession' (IOA) is 'fraudulent assertion' as the original copy has never been found.

"I would like to make it clear that the international agreements, like the UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir can never become obsolete. It

remains active on the agenda of the UNSC as long as they are not implemented. The passage of time can never invalidate the solemn pledges given by the United Nations to the people of Kashmir," said Ambassador Hayee.

Speaking via zoom, Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman, World Forum for Peace & Justice said that October 27th is being observed as a 'day of occupation' because it is on that fateful day in 1947 that 'India occupied the state of Jammu and Kashmir'. More than 350,000 Kashmiris were massacred by the army of Maharaja (The ruler) in Jammu area alone because they wanted to go to Pakistan. What a strange coincidence that exactly the same time more than 700,000 Palestinian were expelled from their homeland in May of 1948 and the state of Israel was established. The United Nations discussed and debated both the issues of Palestine and Kashmir in April of 1948 and agreed upon that there will be a separate homeland for the people of Palestine and the people of Kashmir will be given the right to self-determination to decide their future. Unfortunately, until today, no referendum took place in Kashmir and no homeland was established for the people of Palestine.

Dr. Fai added that we should tell the Swedish parliamentarians that Ambassador Gunnar Jarring, the Swedish Ambassador to the United Nations proved to be prophetic when he said on October 29, 1957, that "the use of force aimed at changing the

status quo must be excluded. It also implies that the parties should desist from taking internal legislative measures by which the State of Jammu and Kashmir would be considered definitely incorporated in the territory of one of the two parties and which would prejudice the Security Council's continued deliberations on this matter."

Sardar Ishtiaq Khan, the Secretary general of the Council said that lot of sacrifices have been given by the people of Kashmir. Now the time has come that the Kashmir conflict has to be resolved through peaceful negotiations between all parties concerned: India, Pakistan and the genuine leadership of people of Kashmir.

Raja Bilal Mustafa, Vice President of the Council said that the peace in the region of South Asia would benefit not only those who are directly impacted by this conflict – Kashmiris – but India as well. Sounder minds must prevail. More rational methods of dealing with differences must be sought.

Choudhary Zafar Iqbal, the President of the Council thanked the attendees for their participation. He added that the current situation in Kashmir remains tense with heightened security, restricted movement and increased communication blackouts, especially after political changes like the revocation of Article 370 & 35A.

A well-known Swedish politician, Mr. Anders Tiger expressed his solidarity with the people of Kashmir.

At the end of the event, it was unanimously agreed that a campaign must be initiated in Sweden for the release of all political prisoners in Kashmir.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/28/kashmir-conflict-needs-to-be-resolve-through-peaceful-dialogue-sardar-tamur-aziz/>

### **KP Governor condemns Indian brutalities in 'IIOJK'**

*The Nation, 28 October 2024*

Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday condemned the brutalities of Indian forces in 'Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) and paid tribute to the Kashmiri people's struggle for their freedom. The Governor expressed these views on the eve of Kashmir Black Day.

He lauded the ongoing struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination. Governor Kundi highlighted, "India's actions have deprived Kashmiris of their fundamental democratic rights, violating United Nations resolutions."

He further condemned India's oppressive measures, particularly since August 5, 2019, describing them as attempts to strip Kashmiris of their rights.

Despite these harsh actions, he asserted that the desire for freedom and self-determination among the Kashmiri people remains strong and is growing stronger with each passing day. The Governor remarked, "The Pakistan

Peoples Party has consistently advocated for the rights and freedom of the Kashmiri people, praising Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for effectively representing their cause on the international stage as Foreign Minister.”

<https://www.nation.com.pk/28-Oct-2024/kp-governor-condemns-indian-brutalities-in-iiojk>

### **Poonch is the land of independent and zealous people: Information Minister ‘AJK’**

*Daily Parliament Times, October 29 2024*

The Information Minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah, has said that Allah has given great respect and sanctity to the pen. Poonch is the land of independent and zealous people. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Unfortunately, in our society, research is lacking and accusations are more common. Which in any case was not the tradition and culture of our ideal peaceful society. Actions that lead to discord in the society should be discouraged. These views were expressed by ‘Azad Kashmir’ Information Minister Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah while addressing a dinner given in honor of journalists in Rawalkot.

Minister said that the identity of a nation cannot be destroyed. Our identity is five thousand years old, being a Kashmiri is my identity, while being the ummah of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is our honor.

He added that right guidance of the young generation is the responsibility of all of us. He said that the foundation of the Department of Information was laid by the Prophet after the Battle of Khandaq and four Companions were appointed for this work. The Holy Quran has ordered to investigate any news before spreading it. The Information Minister said that the people of Poonch made sacrifices to liberate this region and established the first capital in Jangal Hill.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/29/poonch-is-the-land-of-independent-and-zealous-people-information-minister-ajk/>

### **Upholding Kashmir**

*The Nation, 28 October 2024*

The President and Prime Minister’s recent remarks resonate with Pakistan’s long-standing commitment to the Kashmiri cause, a stance rooted in historical and moral responsibility. The issue of Kashmir has remained a lingering wound in the heart of South Asia, largely due to the prolonged denial of Kashmiri voices seeking self-determination. Today, as atrocities persist, it is critical to remember and support their struggle, ensuring the world does not turn a blind eye.

The Kashmir issue has festered since 1947, a consequence of partition that left this region in limbo, its people trapped between political agendas. Resolutions from the United Nations called for a plebiscite, allowing Kashmiris the right to choose their future. Yet, decades later, this promise

remains unfulfilled, and Kashmiris endure life under an ‘oppressive regime’, their cries muffled by an international community reluctant to intervene.

Pakistan government’s renewed emphasis on this matter underscores the need for active international engagement and solidarity with Kashmiris. Their plight is not just a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan but a humanitarian crisis that should concern the entire world.

This issue must remain at the forefront of global dialogue. The pursuit of peace and justice in Kashmir is as relevant now as it was decades ago. It is high time the demands of the Kashmiri people—justice, freedom, and self-determination—are met with genuine commitment, not just from Pakistan but from every nation that upholds the principles of human rights and dignity.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/28-Oct-2024/upholding-kashmir>

## **Economic Developments**

### **Five-year CPEC development plan: Ahsan calls for involving all provinces**

*Business Recorder, 1 November 2024*

A high-level meeting was chaired by Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal to review the progress of ongoing projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The meeting was attended by Secretary of Planning Awais Manzoor Sumra,

Joint Chief Economist Operations Zafarul Hassan, and other senior officials from the ministry.

During the meeting, Federal Minister Iqbal emphasised the need to ensure the success of the five-year CPEC development plan by involving all provinces of Pakistan and promoting equal development opportunities.

He directed that all five corridors be interconnected, including essential components such as CPEC Phase-I, CPEC Phase-II, and to achieve the project’s set objectives.

The federal minister placed special emphasis on the timely completion of mega projects, such as the ML-1 and the Karakoram Highway (KKH), and directed that regular monitoring of these projects be conducted to ensure they are completed within the specified timeline.

Highlighting the significance of CPEC, Iqbal stated that these projects are fundamental to Pakistan’s economic stability and will play a vital role in the country’s progress and prosperity.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40330160/five-year-cpec-development-plan-ahsan-calls-for-involving-all-provinces>

### **Archaeological Discoveries in GB**

*The Nation, October 30 2024*

The architectural heritage of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) is not merely central to world’s highest home to mountains and Glaciers but it has also the greatness of civilizations that have shaped its history. The structures in

this region, whether grand forts or simple wooden mosques reflect the diverse influences of Tibetan, Central Asian, and Islamic traditions. These buildings serve not only as historical monuments but as cultural markers that embody the resilience and identity of the people who have lived in this region for centuries. The architecture here stands as a form of archaeology in its own right, offering insights into the socio-cultural and religious exchanges that have taken place in these remote highlands.

There are hundreds and thousands of mosques and Khankas in Gilgit Baltistan, which have changed the course of discussions about the history of GB, it means that Architectural Heritage shapes the entire history, and preserving it means acknowledging the past. GB is rich in its heritages but due to lower literacy rate in past generations, most history has been written by outsiders who visited for explorations. Somehow, these Cultural Heritages is also an open book for this generation

The indigenous youth organization, CHAAP, recently held a symposium aimed at raising awareness among emerging media influencers about the importance of promoting the cultural heritage and archaeology of Baltistan. This initiative is crucial at a time when the rapid pace of development and the influx of tourism threatens to overshadow the region's architectural treasures. Digital media, with its vast outreach, has the potential to shed light

on the intricate historical narratives embedded in these structures, encouraging both locals and visitors to appreciate and preserve them.

The architecture of Baltistan, especially its forts, mosques, and homes, is steeped in historical significance. Influenced by Tibetan design, particularly in its monasteries and forts, Baltistan has long embraced a hybrid architectural style that combines the structural resilience of stone with the decorative and functional use of timber. One of the most iconic structures in the region is Shigar Fort, which reflects a blend of indigenous and foreign influences. This type of architecture not only addresses the harsh mountain climate but also encapsulates the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the region's past.

Baltistan's architectural heritage is not limited to functional considerations; it is deeply symbolic. Forts such as Shigar and Khaplu Palace are not merely defensive structures but also served as political and cultural hubs where the region's elite exercised their power and influence. The mosques, particularly the wooden structures like the Chaqchan Mosque, dating back to the 14th century, are architectural manifestations of the synthesis between Buddhist, Tibetan, and Islamic traditions. These monuments also reflect the importance of religious and cultural exchanges that have defined the region's identity.

The importance of this built heritage lies not only in its aesthetic or



functional aspects but also in the way it helps reconstruct the region's historical and cultural identity. During the symposium, Ashiq Faraz emphasized that built heritage and archaeological structures are essential for understanding the historical roots of local communities. The preservation of these buildings serves as a way of reclaiming the narrative of Baltistan's past, which has often been written by outsiders. The architecture of the region stands as an archive of its history, providing clues to the various cultural layers that have influenced its development over the centuries.

UNESCO defines cultural heritage as encompassing both tangible assets, such as buildings and monuments, and intangible aspects, including traditions, knowledge, and languages. In Gilgit Baltistan, the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage are closely intertwined. The architecture, with its unique blend of Tibetan and Islamic elements, is complemented by the region's rich oral traditions, handicrafts, and festivals. The preservation of this architectural heritage is crucial not only for maintaining the physical structures themselves but also for safeguarding the intangible cultural practices that have developed in conjunction with these buildings.

As tourism in Gilgit Baltistan continues to grow, the region faces a dual challenge. On the one hand, the influx of visitors brings economic opportunities that can benefit local

communities. On the other hand, the rapid development of modern infrastructure, including hotels and tourist facilities, threatens to erode the very cultural and architectural assets that draw visitors in the first place. This makes heritage conservation efforts all the more urgent.

Fortunately, there are encouraging trends in the region's approach to preserving its architectural heritage. The Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan (AKCSP) has played a pioneering role in restoring iconic landmarks such as Shigar Fort and Khaplu Palace. These projects demonstrate how heritage conservation can be integrated with sustainable tourism development. Both forts have been transformed into heritage hotels, providing visitors with an immersive experience of Baltistan's cultural past while also contributing to the local economy. This model of conservation-driven tourism ensures that the architectural heritage is not only preserved but also revitalized for future generations.

The restoration of these buildings is not merely a matter of aesthetic appreciation. It is a crucial step in preserving the identity of the region's people. As Dr. Zakir from the University of Baltistan highlighted during the CHAAP symposium, the university is actively working to document the region's heritage sites and offer master's level courses in archaeology and cultural studies. These efforts aim to create a new generation



of local experts who can take on the responsibility of conserving Baltistan's architectural and archaeological heritage. This is particularly important in a region where the narrative of history has often been dominated by external scholars and orientalists.

In addition to the work of academic and cultural institutions, local builders and developers are also beginning to embrace the region's architectural traditions. As new hotels and tourist facilities are constructed, some developers are incorporating traditional wooden cribbage techniques, which have been used in the construction of Baltistan's homes and forts for centuries. This trend toward sustainable architecture not only reduces the environmental impact of new buildings but also helps preserve the region's distinctive architectural identity.

As Baqir Hajee emphasized during the symposium, the key to promoting Baltistan's heritage lies in the quality of content and research produced about it. Digital media platforms offer an unprecedented opportunity to reach a global audience, raising awareness about the unique architectural and cultural heritage of the region. By empowering local youth to document and share the stories behind these structures, Baltistan can ensure that its architectural legacy continues to thrive in an increasingly globalized world.

The architecture of Gilgit Baltistan is not just a collection of old buildings; it is a living testament to the region's

history, culture, and identity. The forts, mosques, and homes of Baltistan tell the story of a people who have navigated the complex intersections of different cultures, religions, and civilizations. As modernity and tourism continue to shape the region, it is vital to strike a balance between embracing economic development and preserving the cultural and architectural treasures that define Baltistan's unique heritage.

The United Nations underscores the importance of protecting cultural heritage as a way of fostering a sense of belonging and continuity, particularly in a world that is changing at an unprecedented pace. For Gilgit Baltistan, this means not only preserving the physical structures that have stood for centuries but also maintaining the cultural practices and traditions that are inextricably linked to those buildings. By doing so, the region can ensure that its architectural heritage remains a source of pride and inspiration for generations to come.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Oct-2024/archeological-discoveries-in-gb>

### **Citizens would have to fulfill their duties towards state and pay their bills: PM 'AJK'**

*Daily Parliament Times, 30 October 2024*

Prime Minister 'Azad Kashmir' Chaudhry Anwar Haq has said that reforms in public sector was one of the key reform agendas being introduced by his government to ensure development and prosperity of people

living in remote areas of 'Azad Kashmir'.

Addressing a press conference along with government ministers here today the 'AJK' premier said that the government was working on a comprehensive plan to reform different sectors including health, education, road infrastructure, electricity, tourism, hydel power, technical education, IT, etc.

"Reforms are being introduced in all sectors so that basic amenities of life can be provided to the people at their doorsteps", the PM said, adding that the region would progress by leaps and bounds if state resources were spent without any prejudice or regional bias. He said that full implementation of the rule of law in the state would be ensured at all costs.

Reiterating his commitment to serve the people of the state, the PM said that welfare of the economically less-privileged sections of the society was his government's top priority.

"People will feel the change in the health sector owing to the reforms brought in the public health department", he added.

He said that the government was committed to provide all the basic amenities of life to the people but when it comes to improving quality of life, citizens would have to fulfil their duties towards the state and pay their bills. He said that the government has decided to file cases against electricity theft.

The Prime Minister said that the scrutinizing process under the Social Protection Endowment Fund has been started. "People will start receiving financial assistance once the verification process is completed", he maintained. The Prime Minister said that it was time for retrospection for those who were drawing parallels between 'Azad Kashmir' and 'occupied Kashmir' where our brothers and sisters' lives, even their dignity, were not safe.

The Prime Minister said that the government won't allow anyone to weaken the relationship between Pakistan and Kashmiris. He said that since the demand for cheap electricity and cheap flour has been met, the government won't allow any person or a group to hold the state hostages under any circumstances.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/30/citizens-would-have-to-fulfill-their-duties-towards-state-and-pay-their-bills-pm-ajk/>

## **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

### **Experts reject Indian Government's claims of normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 1 November 2024*

Political analysts and experts have rejected Narendra Modi led-government's claims of normalcy in 'Indian occupied Kashmir'. Calling such claims as baseless and a mere propaganda, it cannot conceal the real

ground situation in the 'occupied land'. According to Kashmir Media Services, experts are of the opinion that through this narrative of normalcy, India wants to misled the international community. India has stationed more than ten-lakh troopers in the 'occupied Kashmir'. It is recognised as the highest militarized zone in the world. Given this huge number of military forces in the region, people live in fear and such forces have also without any restrictions engaged in arresting, torturing, and killing people. This has become a norm. Kashmiris are only demanding their birth rights, justice, and self-independence. Despite facing repression, they stand committed to their movement and will continue to fight until their goals are not achieved.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-01.jpg>

### **Mushal Mullick criticizes Human rights violations in Kashmir and Palestine**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 1 November 2024*

Chairperson of the peace and cultural organisation, Mushaal Hussain Mullick strongly criticised human rights violations in 'Indian occupied Kashmir' and Palestine. In her visit to Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, where in her speech she mentioned that India's Hindutva government and Israel are committing grave human rights violations in Kashmir and Palestine. She praised the Kashmiri's

struggle for self-determination. She also criticised the mighty powers and tall institutions of the world for their silence against the atrocities happening in both 'occupied Kashmir' and Palestine. She expressed regret over Indian government's forces who inflict worst atrocities on the common people and claimed that these forces are protected under various Indian laws which gives them legal impunity to what they want to.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Resize-of-PAGE-03-1.jpg>

### **Pakistan Muslim League will form government in 'Azad Kashmir' too: Fomia Naz**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 31 October 2024*

Political worker of Pakistan Muslim League, Fomia Naz said that Pakistan Muslim will form the government in 'Azad Kashmir' as well. President Pakistan Muslim League (N) 'Azad Kashmir' women wing Madam Maryam Kashmiri has led the party like an abled leader. Such thoughts were shared by the Muslim League political worker, Fomia Naz in a conversation with media personnel's. She said that the way Madam Maryam reach people and maintained contacts deserves huge appreciation. She further said that like the mainland Pakistan, Pakistan Muslim League will also form the government in 'Azad Kashmir'. Madam Maryam is ably playing her role and her leadership skills and

reaching to the people will pay rich dividends in forming the next government of the PML-N.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/3-4.jpg>

### **Uneven rainfall induced by climatic changes proving challenge for 'Azad Kashmir': Tanvir Ilyas**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2 November 2024*

The climate change-induced alterations in rainfall patterns pose a significant challenge for 'Azad Kashmir'. The winters in Neelum Valley are typically cold, leading inhabitants to utilize firewood sourced from nearby forests to stay warm. The rate of deforestation in Neelum Valley has experienced a significant increase due to the practice of using wood from the area as firewood to combat the severe cold temperatures.

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, the former Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', asserted that the world is presently experiencing catastrophic effects of climate change, leading to a typical rainfall patterns. 'Azad Kashmir' is encountering comparable challenges as a result. During my tenure, we initiated a project with a budget of 26 crore rupees, aimed at supplying free oil and LPG to the citizens. The Neelum valley experiences frigid winters, leading the inhabitants to indiscriminately fell trees in the surrounding forests for firewood to stay warm. Our intention was to offer kerosene and LPG as a

viable alternative to the public in order to reduce the necessity of cutting down forests. If this proposal had been put into action, it would have resulted in a substantial decrease in deforestation. During his visit, former Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan emphasized the need for taking appropriate measures to prevent the alarming rate of deforestation in other districts. He conducted a comprehensive tour of the Neelum Valley and observed the ongoing, disastrous deforestation practices.

It is imperative that we implement measures to mitigate the relentless deforestation. It is emphasized that a significant portion of the local population resides in poverty and, therefore, it is essential to offer them viable alternatives to keep them warm during harsh weather conditions, thus discouraging the ruthless cutting of trees. Neelum holds a special place in our affection. During my time in authority, I made regular visits to Neelum, and even now, in my absence from power, I have toured the Neelum Valley numerous times. The beauty and resources of Neelum are a clear testament to the blessings bestowed upon it by Allah. In addition to its scenic beauty, Neelum Valley also yields valuable minerals. Its lush forests further enhance its natural allure.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-02.jpg>

## From Social Media

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

31 October 2024

Uncontrollable traffic in Gilgit city.  
Police failed to ensure smooth traffic.

#Gilgit #traffic #issues #traffic police

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1851995531662246212>

**Roshan Din Diameri @Roshan\_Din**

30 October 2024

Research institutes or think tanks are playing an important role in policy making and creating awareness. These institutions provide information to the government and private sector that contributes to social and economic development. But are these policies reaching the common people?

#gilgitbaltistan #Thinktanks #Issi #

Link to the video:

[https://x.com/Rohshan\\_Din/status/1851678798011371774](https://x.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1851678798011371774)

**PAMIR Times @pamirtimes**

29 October 2024

Snowfall at Babusar Top has temporarily closed the Babusar-Naran Highway. Police advises travellers to use the Karokaram highway #Kkh #babusar #Gilgit

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1851110170958442970>

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

31 October 2024

The first buckwheat mills in the country's history were inaugurated in Skardu.

#gilgitbaltistan #skardu #opening ceremony

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1851948396501672230>

**PAMIR Times @pamirtimes**

31 October 2024

Preserving Gilgit-Balitistan's Wildlife Heritage:

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1852023527676772756>

# Weekly POK News Digest

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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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