

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Hydropower Youth Development Endowment Fund
Solar Power Plants Indus
Neelum-Jhelum Water
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Climate Change wheat subsidy
mega project
Sehat tourism POK
Sahulat Programme



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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Political Developments

Protest in 'AJK's Muzaffarabad against Modi's Indian election victory

Dawn, 4 June 2024

Scores of people staged a small protest in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) as Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed election victory in India. The protesters criticised the crackdown in recent years by Modi's government in 'Indian-occupied Kashmir' (IoK). Born out of the partition of British-ruled India in 1947, Pakistan and India have fought two wars over mountainous Kashmir. Uzair Ahmad Ghazali, the head of a Kashmiri refugee organisation, told crowds at a rally in Muzaffarabad that Modi's re-election would bring 'more oppression and more restrictions for Kashmiri Muslims.' There is a threat to the peace in the region due to the 'fanaticism of Modi,' Kashmiri lawyer Majid Awan said.

In 2019, Modi revoked the limited autonomy of 'IoK' a move widely celebrated across India but which led Pakistan to suspend bilateral trade and downgrade diplomatic ties with New Delhi. The arch-rivals regularly trade accusations of espionage and of stoking militancy in each other's territory. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has previously hinted at wanting to improve ties with India. But analysts say Pakistan, a sixth of the size of India, has few levers to pull. Pakistan is trying to project itself as a normal country after the war on terror and good relations with India would help its

image and its economy, Qamar Cheema, political analyst and director at the Sanobar Institute think tank in Islamabad, said.

But Modi doesn't want to engage with Pakistan, it's not important to him. There's also a probability he would start a dialogue and then backtrack when it suits him, as he has done before. Though Modi claimed election victory, but his Bharatiya Janata Party failed to clinch an overall parliamentary majority and will need support from alliance partners, results from India's election commission showed. Perhaps a diminished majority will convince Modi that India and Pakistan are neighbours and they cannot afford to avoid talking forever, Husain Haqqani, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington and a former ambassador, said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1837766/protest-in-ajks-muzaffarabad-against-modis-indian-election-victory>

'AJK' court rejects poet Ahmed Farhad's bail petition

Dawn, 5 June 2024

Agreeing with the contentions of the prosecution, an anti-terrorism court in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) rejected the bail plea of detained poet Ahmed Farhad Shah, holding that the legal points advanced by his counsel did not apply to the case in hand. Mr Shah, who had gone missing from his Islamabad residence on 15 May, had surprisingly 're-surfaced' in Gujjar Kohala, a village near the 'AJK' border

with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on 29 May when the Islamabad High Court was hearing a petition seeking his recovery. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, the senior puisne judge of the IHC, had framed 12 questions mostly related to the functions and obligations of spy agencies i.e. Inter-Services Intelligence, Military Intelligence and the Intelligence Bureau.

The court was informed by AGP Mansoor Usman Awan that Mr Shah had been arrested under Section 186 of the Azad Penal Code (APC)- the 'AJK' version of Pakistan Penal Code and was kept at the Dhirkot police station of Bagh district. Later, the same afternoon, Mr Shah was handed over to Saddar police station in Muzaffarabad, where he was booked under nine sections of APC and one each section of Telegraph Act and Anti-Terrorism Act according to a statement given to his family by Dhirkot police. Initially, the Saddar police station's FIR (205/24) of 13 May was kept 'secret' by police, but later it emerged that it was registered against 150-200 unidentified 'miscreants' for inciting violence, blocking roads and attacking the convoy of paramilitary force Rangers at different spots during its journey from Bararkot to Muzaffarabad on 13 May at the behest of Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC).

In his arguments on Mr Shah's bail petition, his counsel Karam Dad Khan had agitated the very point, maintaining that his client was not even a nominated accused in the FIR in

question and that he had been implicated in the case with mala fide intentions. The counsel also questioned how his client could instigate a mob in Muzaffarabad to commit any unlawful act when he was physically present in Islamabad, and there was no internet service in any part of 'AJK' during the protests. In his arguments, additional advocate general Chaudhry Mohammad Manzoor, who was appointed by the government as special prosecutor, maintained that Mr Shah was named in the FIR after he was traced through social media on 14 May during the process of investigations.

The accused had publicised factually wrong, provocative and hate-filled material on his Facebook ID during the days of protests in general and on 13 May in particular, which incited hatred against the law-enforcement institutions, following which two more sections were added to the FIR, the special prosecutor contended, among other things. He opposed the grant of bail, particularly when the prosecution had to make recovery of his mobile phone etc. Reproducing the contents of the FIR in his four-page judgement, special judge Mahmood Farooq held that though the petitioner was not a nominated accused in the FIR, from the screenshots of the content posted on his Facebook ID it became clear that those posts were uploaded during the JAAC agitation movement when violent incidents caused physical and material losses.

A perusal of the advertised material reveals that the content was not only

hateful and inflammatory but also exaggerated the loss of lives during the protests, escalating provocation and hatred between the public and the law-enforcement agencies, the judge said. Prima facie, the petitioner/accused appears to be connected with the offences entered initially and added afterwards in the FIR, he added. The judge also noted that the offences under section 6 of Anti-Terrorism Act and Section 489-O of APC were not only non-bailable, but also fell under the prohibited clause of Section 497 of Criminal Procedure Code.

Since according to the record, the recovery of the devices related to the petitioner/accused (mobile/laptop) through which provocative content was allegedly advertised has not been made, in such a situation in my opinion the petitioner/accused does not appear to be deserving the favour of bail for the time being (sic), he declared. Due to the variation of events the legal points advanced by Mr Shah's counsel do not apply to this case, as each criminal case has its own distinct conditions, therefore the bail application of the petitioner/accused is rejected.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1837846/ajk-court-rejects-poet-ahmed-farhads-bail-petition>

Indian sham polls in 'IIOJK' no substitute to right to self-determination: Ali Raza

Pakistan Observer, 6 June 2024

Chairman of Kashmir Council Europe (KC-EU), Ali Raza Syed, has stated that parliamentary elections under Indian

rule in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) are not a solution to the Kashmir problem and do not substitute the right to self-determination for the Kashmiri nation. Raza emphasized that a plebiscite should be held across the entire Jammu and Kashmir state under the auspices of the United Nations, allowing the Kashmiri people to decide their own future. He added that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are striving for their internationally recognized right to self-determination, and any form of voting or parliamentary elections under the Indian Constitution does not equate to freedom for Kashmir.

Reacting to the recent elections for the seats of the Lower House of the Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha, in 'Occupied Kashmir', he asserted that India maintains an 'illegal occupation' of a significant part of Jammu and Kashmir, which is wholly rejected by the Kashmiri people. He further accused India of attempting to mask its atrocities and brutal killings of Kashmiri people by holding so-called elections in 'IIOJK,' thereby creating a false impression of peace and democratic process in the region. '

He stated that eight lakh Indian forces are imposed on 'IIOJK', holding people hostage through these black laws. Many Kashmiri youths have been subjected to extrajudicial killings, and numerous Kashmiris are imprisoned for their involvement in the freedom movement. Ali Raza condemned the sham elections conducted in 'IIOJK' through intimidation and rigging,

noting that the media is complicit in this charade. He also pointed out that international human rights organizations and observers are not permitted to visit 'IIOJK.' He asserted that the freedom movement of the Kashmiris cannot be suppressed through India's election farce, black laws, and delay tactics, emphasizing that the struggle for the freedom of Jammu and Kashmir will persist. He declared that those elected in the Indian administration can never truly represent the Kashmiri people nor advocate for their rights.

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-sham-polls-in-iiojk-no-substitute-to-right-to-self-determination-ali-raza/>

JKLF (Yasin Malik) calls for urgent International move to prevent impending disaster in Kashmir

Daily Parliament Times, 6 June 2024

The Kashmir issue is a ticking time bomb in a dangerous region caught between two nuclear powers, said Raja Muzaffar, US-based central acting Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (Yasin Malik). As the world marked Environment Day on Wednesday, it is crucial to highlight the pressing threat of a potential nuclear conflict in Kashmir, the seasoned Kashmiri freedom struggle leader urged in a statement. Muzaffar continued that recent reports have sounded the alarm on the implications of a war between India and Pakistan, with Kashmir at the center of the storm.

The volatile situation in 'Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) state, he underlined, poses a grave risk of escalating tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

The strained relations between India and Pakistan, as well as between India and China, create a volatile environment where any small incident could potentially disrupt the fragile ceasefire in place. With elections over in India and a new government appearing weak, the situation in Kashmir is at risk of escalating further, he opined. The Kashmiri leader feared that if the international community fails to intervene and pressure both countries to engage in dialogue with Kashmiri leadership, the situation in Kashmir could spiral out of control. The repercussions of such inaction could include an escalation of violence, human rights abuses, and a further deterioration of the already tense situation in the region especially in strife torn 'IIOJK.' Muzaffar further called upon UNO to exert due pressure on both India and Pakistan to engage in meaningful dialogue with Kashmiri leaders, who should also be released from Indian and 'IIOJK' prisons to facilitate peaceful negotiations for early peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/06/06/jklf-yasin-malik-calls-for-urgent-international-move-to-prevent-impending-disaster-in-kashmir/>

Economic Developments

GB Youth Policy promises jobs, empowerment

Dawn, 3 June 2024

The first-ever Gilgit-Baltistan Youth Policy 2024, recently approved by the cabinet, is aimed at employment generation, youth empowerment and prevention of suicide tendencies in the region. The policy has been prepared according to local dynamics, challenges faced by local youth to ensure equitable access to public resources, addressing disparities related to gender, geography, socio-economic status, and disabilities among youth, according to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) consultant Altaf Hussain. He told Dawn that the UNFPA and GB youth affairs department drafted the policy with the consultation of stakeholders.

Aligned with national priorities and international commitments, GB Youth Policy 2024 has adopted a forward-looking approach by recognising the potential of the region's youth and the evolving opportunities likely to arise. This policy is designed with consideration of the current governance structure, development financing mechanism, and socio-economic context of GB. The policy has been formulated through an extensive data-gathering process that involved various segments of the youth population, sector organisations, experts and authorities. It underlines the need to establish an effective mechanism for collaboration with development partners, research

institutes, and donors for initiating programmes and addressing gaps in youth development.

Endowment Fund

Recognising financial constraints in the federal grant, the GB government, in collaboration with the corporate sector and development partners, will establish a Youth Development Endowment Fund under this policy to support education, entrepreneurship, and youth-led innovations. Additionally, the policy encourages the establishment of a youth-centric healthcare system to address the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of young people. It highlights the need to increase the frequency of sports competitions, cultural festivals, political engagement, and dedicated youth spaces to celebrate diversity and promote a shared identity among GB youth.

In GB, the government serves as the largest formal employer, providing jobs to around 55,000 individuals, yet the large corporations capable of generating jobs are absent. Youth in both the public and private sectors require capacity building, and women face limited employment prospects due to poor transportation facilities and safety concerns. GB faces educational challenges, marked by a low literacy rate of 53 per cent, notably lower at 42pc for females, resulting in a considerable gender gap in education access, particularly in remote areas.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1837447/gb-youth-policy-promises-jobs-empowerment>

Over 1,700 foreigners apply for adventure tourism in GB

Dawn, 4 June 2024

Over 1,700 foreign adventure tourists have applied for permits to climb peaks in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), with 175 eyeing to scale K2 this summer, according to a top government official. Meanwhile, an eight-member team of Pakistani and Italian female climbers will start their expedition to summit the world's second-highest peak, K2, this month. GB Tourism Department Deputy Secretary Sajid Hussain told Dawn that adventure tourism in the region was booming. He added that of the 1,700 foreign climbers who applied, several have been issued permits while the remaining applications were being processed.

The visa clearance process has also been sped up for foreign climbers, and many will apply for a visa on arrival in Pakistan, he said. In the summer of 2023, over 2,050 foreign climbers and trekkers, along with around 9,000 tourists, arrived in the region. The influx of tourists earned the region's government Rs450 million in permit fees for climbing.

Female climbers eye K2 summit

The eight-member all-women K2 expedition team included four mountaineers from GB and as many from Italy. The Pakistani climbers underwent rigorous training in the Alps mountain range in Italy and Rattu ski village in GB. The expedition has been organised by EvK2CNR, an

organisation focusing on research in mountainous areas, with the support of the Italian Alpine Club. EvK2CNR President Agostino Da Polenza will be the expedition leader, while Pakistani mountaineer Samina Baig will be the climbing leader. The expedition was launched in Italy recently at a ceremony attended by Italy's federal minister of tourism, Daniela Sant-anchè, Alpine Club of Italy President Antonio Montani, Mr Polenza, and other guests. An EvK2CNR official told Dawn that a project launch will also take place on 18 June in Islamabad, after which the team will start the expedition.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1837640/over-1700-foreigners-apply-for-adventure-tourism-in-gb>

GB CM, Aurangzeb discuss federal budget

Business Recorder, 4 June 2024

Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Gulbar Khan called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb at the Finance Division. The Federal Finance Secretary was also present at the meeting. The chief minister expressed gratitude to the federal government for its continued support, particularly the wheat subsidy provided to the region. He highlighted several areas where GB required further assistance and appealed for increased support in the upcoming budget to address those issues. In response, the finance minister emphasised the numerous opportunities available in GB, noting

its potential as a prime location for tourism. He pointed out that the region was rich in gems and mineral resources and suggested that the GB government could leverage its resources to generate revenue and unlock its true potential. The finance secretary also recognised the potential areas for investment in GB, reiterating that the federal government has generously supported the region in the budget.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40306741/gb-cm-aurangzeb-discuss-federal-budget>

Hydropower ‘crown jewel’ may remain offline for another two years

Dawn, 6 June 2024

More than two months after a mishap that led to the complete shutdown of the 969-megawatt Neelum-Jhelum Hydro--power Project (NJHPP), the exact cause and veracity of the problem remains unknown. Officials privy to the development told Dawn that the problem appeared to be larger than anticipated and could keep the Rs500bn NJHPP located near Muzaffarabad in ‘Azad Kashmir’ off the grid for at least another 18 to 24 months. They said the scale of the decline in headrace tunnel pressure (HRT) and dewatering of a 17km section of the tunnel indicated, some major crack or a collapse, but the exact situation is still unclear.

Despite its installed capacity of 969MW, the project has on occasion exceeded this level, touching 1,040MW. When operational, it had been providing more than 5bn units of

electricity (in kilowatthours) to the national grid annually at an average tariff of about Rs10 per unit, at no fuel cost. The shutdown of the NJHPP means direct losses of more than Rs55bn per year, while its indirect impact would come in the shape of expensive replacement fuel, which could cost between Rs90 and Rs150bn, depending on the fuel source, an official said. When asked by Dawn for comment, Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Company Ltd CEO Mohammad Arfan declined, while Wapda chose not to comment after initially showing a willingness to respond.

Delayed probe

On 2 May, WAPDA officially confirmed the complete shutdown of the mega project for physical inspection of its HRT to locate the problem. It had announced that a comprehensive plan would be chalked out, in coordination with the project consultants and international experts, to undertake remedial works to rectify the issue once the problem is traced. Later, the prime minister visited the site on 7 May and announced a third party investigation. However, it took more than two weeks after his announcement for a formal committee, led by a former bureaucrat, to be constituted. The major fault is currently being investigated by the two-member body, which is also tasked with fixing responsibility for the mishap.

Led by former federal secretary Shahid Khan and incumbent Water Resources

Secretary Syed Ali Murtaza, the committee was constituted late last month to inquire into the flaws/shortcomings in construction of NJHPP after the incident of 2 April, 2024, according to a notification. The committee has been asked to ascertain the reasons for delay in submission of the findings/report of the Panel of Experts, hired in September 2022, for ascertaining the cause of blockage in the tailrace tunnel of the project and to review the final report to be submitted by the panel. The committee is also required to have an independent assessment of the fault in headrace tunnel (HRT) of the project through the international panel of experts hired earlier to ascertain the cause of tailrace tunnel blockage.

Responding to a question, an official said that while sabotage was a distant possibility, given the tight security arrangements and tens of kilometres of underground structures, it could not be completely ruled out in view of a recent maintenance exercise carried out at the tunnel. The project is now under heightened security surveillance, he said, hoping that nothing would remain hidden for long.

Second shutdown in less than a year

According to WAPDA, a sudden change in the HRT pressure was observed on 2 April 2024. Per the advice of project consultants, the management kept operating the plant at the restricted capacity of 530MW from 6 April onwards to monitor fluctuations in the HRT pressure and

continued generating electricity until around the end of the month, without any issue. But on 29 April, further changes in the HRT pressure were observed. Subsequently, generation was gradually reduced, but the HRT pressure did not remain within safe limits, causing the plant to be shut down completely on 1 May for physical inspection.

WAPDA said the project had a 51.5km tunnel system, constructed in a weak geological area prone to seismic activity. Its HRT is 48km long, while the tailrace tunnel (TRT) is 3.5km. About 90pc of the project is underground. The project saw also complete closure earlier, in July 2022, due to major cracks in the TRT, which were repaired over 13 months. Power generation then restarted in August-September of 2023, while the plant attaining its maximum 969mw capacity on 28 March. But within a week, on 2 April, the 48-km long HRT dropped pressure and power production fell to about 400MW. Earlier repairs to the 3.5-km TRT cost the exchequer about Rs6bn, in addition to about Rs37bn in energy loss during the course of repairs, maintenance and testing over the following 20 months.

WAPDA has filed Rs43bn in insurance claims for the losses and is reported to have already held a series of high-level meetings on the subject. Since its commissioning in 2018, the project has so far generated 19.83 billion units of electricity, while 1.54 billion units were generated since the resumption of

generation following the rehabilitation of the TRT in August last year.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1838092/hydropower-crown-jewel-may-remain-offline-for-another-two-years>

Indus Water Treaty violations by India: Land degradation serious risk to Pakistan's food, water security

Daily Times, 6 June 2024

Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam said that land degradation due to rising impacts of climate change is a serious risk to Pakistan's food and water security amid Indian violations of Indus Water Treaty (IWT). She was addressing the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS)'s High-Level Panel Discussion on UN World Environment Day under the theme Land Restoration, Desertification and Drought Resilience. She said that Land degradation is damaging millions of hectares land annually and forcing millions of masses to displace around the world. The PM's Coordinator mentioned that Indian construction of dams on rivers providing water to Pakistan was also a concern for the latter as a low riparian country. She added that declining soil quantity and salinization directly caused reduced crop yields that was driving poverty, and rural to urban migration.

She urged partners to provide platform in tandem with Ministry of Climate Change to scientists for knowledge

sharing. She highlighted the Ministry's various projects intended to enhance climate resilience, mitigate land degradation and forest degradation addressing community and biodiversity resilience collectively. She said the local communities and indigenous people have tremendous knowledge that could be used to devise strategies to address land degradation. She demanded all to pledge to empower local communities, foster greener collaborations for supporting each other to counter land degradation, deforestation and drought mitigation.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1198468/indus-water-treaty-violations-by-india-land-degradation-serious-risk-to-pakistans-food-water-security/>

Investment in Gilgit-Baltistan, vital to bring economic prosperity: President

Daily Times, 7 June 2024

President Asif Ali Zardari, while talking to members of the Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Council, stressed that investment would bring economic prosperity and social upliftment in GB. Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and GB, Engineer Amir Muqam, GB Chief Minister Gulbar Khan, members of the GB Council, and senior government officials attended the meeting. The delegation apprised the president about the developmental and financial requirements of GB. The president assured the delegation that steps would be taken to develop health, education and road infrastructure to provide basic facilities to the people of GB at their doorsteps. He highlighted

the need to expand the airport in Gilgit, besides finding new ways and means for the GB's development.

He said that GB was the gateway to China, having immense vast economic potential that needed to be fully capitalized upon for the peoples benefit. Zardari assured the delegation that the issue of compensation to the affectees of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam would be taken up at the appropriate forum. The delegation members informed the president that the discontinuation of the Sehat Sahulat Programme was causing problems as the people of GB were unable to avail health insurance services. The president suggested that the Sehat Sahulat Programme could be included in the Benazir Income Support Programme so that the people of GB could avail of medical treatment.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1198690/investment-in-gilgit-baltistan-vital-to-bring-economic-prosperity-president/>

Tourism boom worsens Gilgit-Baltistan's power crisis

Dawn, 8 June 2024

In the mountainous valleys of Pakistan, 18-hour daily power cuts have meant local teacher Aniq Bano uses her fridge as a cupboard for storing books and kitchen utensils. Load shedding is typical across much of fuel-short Pakistan, but few areas consistently suffer the same prolonged outages as Skardu city. A surge in mountain tourism, driven by climbers and Pakistanis looking to escape

heatwaves, is rapidly depleting the limited energy supply at the gateway to ascend K2, the world's second-highest peak. While higher-end hotels can supplement their supply with solar panels or fuel generators, many locals cannot afford such luxuries. We have to reinvent everything that once used electricity, said Bano. We no longer have an oven, we use a coal-heated iron for clothes, the 41-year-old teacher added. When we come home tired from work, we cannot run a heater.

Tourism boom

Skardu is the largest city in the region of GB, where almost impossibly high peaks tower over the Old Silk Road, still visible from a highway transporting tourists between cherry orchards, glaciers and ice-blue lakes. Normally home to around 200,000 people, Skardu becomes heavily bloated in summer when people from across the country seek the relief of its cooler climate at 2,228 metres (7,310 feet) above sea level. The region hosted 880,000 domestic visitors in 2023, up from 50,000 in 2014. As the country grapples with energy shortages — owing to dwindling forex reserves, mismanagement, rapid population growth and climate change the tourism boom has proved too much for local power.

Due to the increase in population and tourism activities, load shedding hours have increased, Mohammad Yunus, a senior engineer for the regional government's water and power department, said. There are up to 22

hours of load shedding in winter and between 18 and 20 hours in summer — an increase of around 10pc each year for the past six years, according to the department. Siddiqa, a tailor and handicraft maker who goes by one name, has seen her earnings fall alongside the number of hours of electricity. When we started this business in 2014, there was no issue of power, she said, adding that she had to replace all the electric machines and brought hand sewing machines later.

In the presence of light, we could prepare 10 to 12 suits every three days. Now, to prepare a single suit, it can take 10 to 15 days. The tourism flow does not appear to be letting up any time soon. There are up to 15 domestic flights a week to the region and, since March, international flights began landing from Dubai. In Skardu alone, the number of hotels has increased more than fourfold since 2014, according to the tourism department.

Hydropower projects

Owing to its remoteness, GB is not connected to the national grid, so it relies on its own power generation from dozens of hydro and thermal plants. But Pakistan's 7,000 glaciers more than anywhere outside the poles are rapidly melting. This can temporarily increase the availability of water for energy production, but the glaciers' long-term ability to store and release water gradually decreases, affecting energy production. The availability of water for hydroelectric plants is becoming unpredictable, said

Salaar Ali, head of the Department of Environmental Science, the University of Baltistan.

Damage to energy infrastructure is also a regular setback.

Record heatwaves in 2022 caused dozens of glacial lakes to burst their banks, washing away more than 20 power plants, 50 bridges and countless homes. Inadequate planning and mismanagement of the power sector can also play a role, engineers have said. The Satpara dam on the edge of Skardu city, completed in 2008 for \$26 million of aid funding, was supposed to supply 40,000 homes with power. But it generates just a fraction of its potential after plans to divert a river were halted, government engineers admit. It has been full only once since its formation, said Yunus, the engineer in Skardu.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1838539/tourism-boom-worsens-gilgit-baltistans-power-crisis>

Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Power Plants Project Launched in Hunza

Pamir Times, 9 June 2024

Prince Rahim Aga Khan launched the development of Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Power Plants with a total capacity of 3.6 MWp. Phase I of Duiker Solar Power Plant, which has a generation capacity of 1MWp and 0.6MWh battery storage, commenced operations in November 2023, increasing the daily power availability for more than 11,000 people, from 10 to 17 hours in summer and from four to

nine hours in winter. When commissioned in November 2024, Duiker Phase II will expand generation capacity from 1MWp to 1.6MWp, and battery storage from 0.6MWh to 1MWh, providing increased electricity to an additional 8,760 people. Crucially, Duiker replaces diesel power generation, leading to an annual reduction of 1,100 metric tons of CO2 equivalent. A 2MWp Solar Power Plant with 1MWh battery storage will also be constructed in Nasirabad in lower Hunza. This will supply power to an additional 23,400 people. The Nasirabad Solar Power Plant is expected to be commissioned in June 2025.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/06/09/duiker-phase-ii-and-nasirabad-solar-power-plants-project-launched-in-hunza/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

GB's regular budget for the 2024–25 fiscal year has been raised by 38%

Urdu point, 4 June 2024

In an indication of the effectiveness of Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Haji Gulbar Khan's efforts, GB has raised its regular budget by 38% for the 2024–2025 fiscal year. The Federal Ministry of Finance has stated that GB will receive a regular budget of 83 billion 87 crore 2 lakh in the forthcoming fiscal year. Comparing the current fiscal year 2024–25 to the previous fiscal year, the normal budget has grown by over 23 billion.

<https://www.urdu point.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4041446.html>

Aggressive campaign against Pakistan and Kashmir are likely to be strengthened after the voting of Modi as prime minister for a third time: Chaudhry Latif Akbar

Urdu point, 6 June 2024

Senior Parliamentarian and speaker of the 'Azad Kashmir' Legislative Assembly (AKLA), Chaudhry Latif Akbar stated that the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and powerful nations should make serious and impartial decisions for a dignified and long-lasting solution to the Kashmir issue. He said that in light of the likelihood that aggression against Pakistan and Kashmir will be strengthened and that a clash of civilizations will break out following the election of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a third term. Eliminating the barriers to the 1.5 million Kashmiris' right to self-determination in line with the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions is one of the duties of both the elected governments of Pakistan and India.

Since Kashmiris have been battling for their independence for the past 75 years, the responsible world countries ought to get India ready for serious negotiations on the Kashmir issue. He said that the Kashmiris have established timeless examples for self-determination by making thousands of sacrifices spanning three generations. Akbar suggested that in order to lower

tensions between the two nations and demonstrate the value of the composite dialogue, an intra-Kashmir conference highlighting Kashmir issue became necessary. While referring to the waning influence of Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah in recently concluded elections as the retribution of history, he stated that the new entrant engineer Abdul Rasheed Sheikh has put a stop to the pro-Indian political families' sense of invincibility.

Akbar remarked that although Pakistan has shown itself to be a practical, civilized neighbor that can bring about peace in any situation, the political and military leadership of India has been unable to break free from the intransigence of Hinduism. He claimed that India had ignited the spark of provocation by targeting the religious beliefs of Muslims worldwide by demolishing the Babri Masjid and erecting the Ram temple. He further said that the sacrifices made by peaceful, freedom-loving people in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK) and Palestine against the occupational powers; India and Israel have become a bright spot in history.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4043432.html>

After successful government efforts, China received the first shipment of cherries from GB

Dailyk2, 7 June 2024

A rush of joy swept through the local farmers when the first shipment of

cherry fruit from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was shipped to China. This also marked the beginning of the regular cherry container export process to China. It will provide millions of rupees to the local farmers. This year, China is set to receive 500 tons of cherries, which will generate significant foreign exchange revenue for the nation. The export of cherries to other countries has long been a goal of the province government. In an interview with Nazir Ali, assistant director of the Trade Development Authority GB, stated that the region will gain millions of rupees from the export of cherries and that this will demonstrate the fruit's significance to the area. China received five hundred tons of cherries this year. Our goal was to open up the cherry market to international markets and include the locals in the cherry industry. We were successful in our endeavor today as the GB cherry is renowned worldwide. It will open up access to the global market, which will make the locals wealthy. The market is also going to expand.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/22893>

From Social Media

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din

3 June 2024

Gilgit-Baltistan is currently dominated by a group of incompetents. They do not have anything called a plan. In the coming days, there is a serious risk of severe floods and forest fires in Gilgit-

Baltistan. Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan who is directly running the government requested to take notice and need to initiate full preparation.

@csgbpk #Gilgitbaltistan.

https://twitter.com/il/bookmarks?post_id=1797648329339208166

Safiullah Baig @SafiullahBaig14

6 June 2024

The ruling elite of Pakistan are sharing the important natural environmental assets and resources of the controversial Gilgit-Baltistan with private companies. In the name of green tourism and power, thousand square kilometres of land is being occupied and leased out to outsiders.

<https://twitter.com/SafiullahBaig14/status/1798638879274361085>

Hamid Mir @HamidMirPAK

10 June 2024

This judgement of Islamabad High Court in Ahmad Farhad case is a new evidence about the involvement of state institutions in enforced disappearances. All those who claim that missing persons issue is actually created by enemies of Pakistan are now proved wrong by this judgement.

<https://twitter.com/HamidMirPAK/status/1800066153189892225>

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Disclaimer

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