

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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POK
CPEC projects
agricultural transformation
Gilgit-Baltistan
Interim Constitution Protest
Land Reforms Bill
solar greenhouses



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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Contents

Political Developments

- **No Ban On freedom of expression, speech in the District: Organisers must get prior permission for hosting any meeting at public place: DC Yasir Riaz Ch.**
- **HRCP calls for consensus on 'civilian autonomy'**
- **Regional PCR Lab in Skardu: A Lifeline for Hepatitis B Patients in Baltistan**
- **Kashmir in Quandary**
- **'AJK' HC turns down writ petitions challenging Peaceful Assembly, Public Order Ordinance-2024**
- **Greenhouses of hope: Resilient farmers from Pakistan's North and COP29**
- **Presidential Ordinance imposes imperialist and authoritarian restrictions on civil and democratic freedoms: Liaqat Shabir**

Economic Developments

- **Sindh's varsities: Students from G-B: Sindh CM vows to increase number of seats**
- **CPEC: 38 projects worth \$25bn already completed**

Vernacular Urdu Media

- **To Protest is a constitutional right: Colonel Waqar Noor**
- **National Youth Assembly Gilgit-Baltistan Chapter's first Parliamentary session**
- **In Kashmir, India has oppressed to the extreme: Barrister Sultan**
- **Protests against the Presidential ordinance**

Political Developments

No Ban On freedom of expression, speech in the District: Organisers must get prior permission for hosting any meeting at public place: DC Yasir Riaz Ch.

Daily Parliament Times, 19 November 2024

District Magistrate Mirpur has warned the organisers of any proposed public meeting or gathering at any public place, to always take prior permission for holding such public congregation at any site of public utilisation by strictly adhering to the recently promulgated Presidential Ordinance-2024 in 'Azad Jammu Kashmir'.

In an informal chat with our this 'AJK' Staffer here, Mirpur 'AJK' District Magistrate -Deputy Commissioner Yasir Riaz Chaudhry said that there is no any restriction on freedom of expression or freedom of speech, but ensuring the maintainable of public, peace, law and order and tranquillity was the responsibility of each District Administration to maintain writ of the state, he underlined.

The DC continued that those social, political, religious or any other public representative organization, seeking to host any public meeting at any public place, must take the prior permission from the local district administration for holding any public meeting at any public place in the district under The 'AJK' Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance Presidential Ordinance 2024.

As reported earlier, Mirpur 'AJK' city police had on Sunday booked at least 15 persons including 08 'AJK' PTI leaders and workers including the party's 'AJK' Chapter President and former Prime Minister Sardar Qayyum Niazi for defying the prohibitory orders by attempting to hold the party's workers meeting at Mirpur PWD State Guest House, without securing prior formal permission from the local district administration for holding the meeting.

Police have so far rounded up 11 people including 04 local PTI leaders, who reportedly had courted arrests in the City police station on Sunday, after they were booked for defying the prohibitory orders allegedly deliberately violating the Presidential Order – 2024.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/11/19/no-ban-on-freedom-of-expression-speech-in-the-district-organisers-must-get-prior-permission-for-hosting-any-meeting-at-public-place-dc-yasir-riaz-ch/>

HRCP calls for consensus on 'civilian autonomy'

Business Recorder, 18 November 2024

On concluding its 38th annual general meeting, the general body of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) draws urgent attention to 'deteriorating human rights and weakening democracy'. It strongly opposes the proposed amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 that seeks to authorise the armed forces and civil armed forces to employ 90-day preventive detention.

It said where the state should be focusing on efforts to uphold the rule of law, reduce violence against women, children and transgender persons, protect the rights of workers and peasants, and fulfil people's right to health and education, it has instead prioritised its own authority at the expense of democratic norms and people's fundamental rights. It called on all political parties to reach a consensus on civilian autonomy and guarding federalism.

It said the government must focus on strengthening trade unions and seriously consider instituting a living wage, especially for vulnerable workers. It said that the provision of healthcare and education is the duty of the state. Student unions must be restored and special attention paid to the plight of incarcerated fisher folk, stateless persons and rising suicides triggered by poverty, particularly in Thar. The contentious provincial labour codes must be revisited in consultation with trade unions.

HRCP believes that the climate emergency is now an existential crisis for the country. The most pressing issues are the lethal levels of air pollution in Punjab, posing serious risks to health, and the immediate threat of water scarcity, especially in lower riparian Sindh, where the construction of canals on the Indus under the Green Pakistan Initiative has raised objections from small farmers and peasants.

"We strongly oppose the Gilgit-Baltistan Land Reforms Bill 2024, which seeks to centralise control over private,

communal and ancestral land in the guise of 'reforms' for development. This appropriation of land by powerful vested interests will further marginalize people and stoke unrest. The state must give Gilgit-Baltistan its due constitutional rights as demanded by its residents."

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40332964>

Regional PCR Lab in Skardu: A Lifeline for Hepatitis B Patients in Baltistan

Pamir Times, 18 November 2024

The Regional PCR Lab in Skardu is the only facility in Baltistan offering free quantitative PCR DNA testing, it spares patients the costly and time-consuming journey to cities like Islamabad for essential diagnostics.

This is a hope for thousands in this remote region where access to specialised healthcare is a challenge. Dr. Shujaat, a leading pathologist at the Regional Hospital Skardu (RHQ Skardu), underscores the lab's impact: "This facility is not just a lab; it represents a shift towards equitable healthcare. Thousands of patients have benefited, without any discrimination."

Serving the vast population of Skardu, Shigar, Kharmang, and Ghanche districts, the lab addresses a pressing need in an area with limited medical infrastructure. It offers a critical tool in combating Hepatitis B, empowering patients to take control of their health.

Dr. Akhtar Hussain, a gastroenterologist at RHQ Skardu, highlights the broader implications:

“Hepatitis B is a major public health issue in Pakistan, especially in remote areas like Baltistan. Free testing has raised awareness and enabled early diagnosis and treatment, reducing the burden on families and the healthcare system.”

The lab’s work goes beyond diagnostics; it reflects a commitment to health equity by eliminating financial barriers and ensuring even the most marginalised communities have access to life-saving services.

The success of the Regional PCR Lab showcases the potential of locally-driven healthcare initiatives in underserved regions. By addressing the needs of Baltistan’s population, the lab is not just providing tests—it’s delivering hope.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/11/17/regional-pcr-lab-in-skardu-a-lifeline-for-hepatitis-b-patients-in-baltistan/>

Kashmir in Quandary

The Nation, 18 November 2024

This piece is a sequel to my earlier published op-ed titled “Wall of BRICS”, where I had stated that “the overall economic imperatives and geopolitical developments seem intertwined to shape events in favour of a cooling-off period between India and China.” Although both Chinese and Indian analysts carefully opine that the recent agreement and implementation of the China-India border patrol protocol will indeed help ease tensions along the border and improve bilateral relations, the extent of this improvement may remain

limited, and its duration may not be long-lasting due to various reasons associated with the strategic contest in the Asia-Pacific. For Chinese companies and capital, there may be a window of opportunity in the Indian market. However, for trade and economic projects requiring long-term commitment and significant investment, both sides will need to tread cautiously. Nevertheless, both major regional contestants have found it mutually useful to set disputes aside temporarily and pursue their respective economic and trade interests.

Following the partition of British India in 1947, Jammu and Kashmir, a princely state with a Muslim majority but ruled by a Hindu monarch, became a point of contention between the newly formed India and Pakistan. This led to the first Indo-Pak war. As the conflict escalated, India brought the matter to the United Nations, which, in 1948, called for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of forces from the region. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolutions stipulating that the future of Kashmir would be determined by a plebiscite, allowing the people of the region to choose between joining India or Pakistan. However, this plebiscite has never taken place, leaving the status of Kashmir unresolved.

For the people of Kashmir, it has remained a consistent political and armed struggle against Indian military occupation, atrocities, and human rights abuses. For India and Pakistan, it has been the core issue behind three

wars, numerous border skirmishes, and a constant state of “no war, no peace” hostility, impacting all aspects of their bilateral relations. This underscores the fact that war between the two nuclear-armed countries cannot resolve the Kashmir conundrum. The continued denial of the right to self-determination under UN resolutions and international law has exacerbated the grievances of the Kashmiri population, leading to widespread disillusionment and leaving the people of occupied Kashmir in a quandary.

The strategic importance of Kashmir, due to its location between India, Pakistan, and China, further complicates the issue. Both India and Pakistan view control over Kashmir as vital to their national security and identity. In recent years, the situation in Kashmir has deteriorated further.

The international community has remained oblivious to the complete shutdown and curfews in ‘Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IIOJK) since August 2019. This was when the extremist BJP government in India deprived Kashmir of its special constitutional status and its people of special rights by revoking Articles 35A and 370 of the Indian Constitution.

India, emboldened by its status as a new American strategic ally in the Asia-Pacific (through the QUAD alliance) primarily to contest and contain China, has accelerated its efforts to change the demography of ‘occupied Kashmir’. This includes establishing Sainik (military) colonies, industrial zones for Indian investors,

and, most nefariously, introducing domicile certificates for Hindus from across India. It is assessed that Modi and his team may ultimately stage-manage a plebiscite in ‘occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ to resolve the Kashmir issue on the UN Security Council agenda.

Be that as it may, the forums and charters of organisations such as the SCO and BRICS+ blocs may offer a pathway for India and Pakistan to prioritise mutual economic interests. This could ultimately pave the way for resolving the Kashmir issue, the Indus Water Treaty dispute, and other territorial conflicts.

Following the example of recent India-China cooling-off efforts, Pakistan and India may find it mutually beneficial to revisit the Agra Summit (2021) and the Chenab Formula to explore greater economic dividends. Despite India’s haughty posture, sincere experts on the Kashmir issue from both sides of the border may draw upon Chinese wisdom to explore fresh and visionary approaches to finding an amicable and peaceful resolution to this most significant flashpoint in South Asia.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Nov-2024/kashmir-in-quandary>

‘AJK’ HC turns down writ petitions challenging Peaceful Assembly, Public Order Ordinance-2024

Daily Parliament Times, 18 November 2024

The High Court of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ dismissed two separate identical writ petitions challenging the

recently promulgated “The Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance-2024” by giving the ruling that the impugned Ordinance does not call any interference.

“Accordingly the writ petitions are dismissed in limine as no order as to the costs”, two-member bench of the learned ‘AJK’ HC said in its order issued in Muzaffarabad.

The two-member bench of the High Court of ‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’, comprising Chief Justice Mr. Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja and judge Justice Sardar Liaqat Hussain, dismissed both of the separate writ petitions filed by the ‘AJ&K’ Bar Council and Ehsan-ul-Haq Advocate High Court ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ and others concerned officials of the ‘AJK’ government challenging the aforesaid Ordinance “The Peaceful Assembly And Public Order Ordinance-2024”.

In its detailed judgement the learned High Court of ‘AJK’ said that in the afore-mentioned writ petitions, the legality of “The Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance 2024 dated 29.10.2024 was questioned.

The learned court order continued as saying “It is significant to mention here that despite, the petitions presented and heard separately, the complexities and interconnectedness of issues have resulted in a resolution through this single judgment.

Brief facts as narrated in both the writ petitions are that an Ordinance titled “The Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance, 2024 dated October

29, 2024” was published in the Extraordinary Gazette on October 30, 2024. It is alleged in the writ petitions that the aforesaid Ordinance has been issued in violation of the Constitution, specifically contravening its expressed provisions and undermining both the spirit of the Interim Constitution and Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In both the writ petitions, it is prayed that the said Ordinance is deemed untenable, hence, quashed and set-aside.

Raja Amjad Ali Khan Advocate, the learned counsel appearing on behalf of ‘AJ&K’ Bar Council argued that the impugned Ordinance is promulgated in abrogation of Constitution and is a severe violation of fundamental rights of the State Subjects. He emphasized that the fundamental rights of Assembly, Speech and Association are guaranteed by the Interim Constitution, 1974 and by promulgating the Ordinance, the executive snatched the fundamental rights of the State Subjects. The learned counsel reiterated the facts and grounds mentioned in the writ petition and prayed for acceptance of the writ petition.

Sh. Masood Iqbal, the learned Advocate General voluntarily appeared on behalf of the respondents and opposed the arguments of the learned counsel for the petitioner. In support of his arguments, the learned AG relied upon an unreported judgment of this Court titled as “Mahmood Ahmed Musafir Vs. Deputy Commissioner Muzaffarabad and another” decided on 13.04.2016

and prayed for dismissal of the writ petition in limine.

Mr. Hashaam Anjum Advocate, the learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners in Writ Petition No.2872/24 submitted that the Ordinance is promulgated in violation of the expressed provisions of Interim Constitution, 1974. He further submitted that the impugned Ordinance is not maintainable and reiterated the facts and grounds mentioned in the writ petition.

Ch. Muhammad Manzoor, the learned AAG also voluntarily appeared on behalf of the respondents and opposed the arguments of the learned counsel for the petitioner and prayed for dismissal of the writ petition in limine.

We have heard the learned counsel for the parties, examine the impugned Ordinance and perused the record carefully.

It is pertinent to mention here that the impugned Ordinance consists of 10 Sections and Preamble. In Preamble, the necessity of promulgating the Ordinance is clearly stated, which is basic requirement for promulgation of an Ordinance as outlined in Article 41 of the Interim Constitution, 1974. The aforesaid Article is reproduced as under:-

“41. Power to make Ordinance:-(1)The President may, except when the Assembly is in session, if satisfied that circumstances exists which render it necessary to take immediate action, make and promulgate an Ordinance as the circumstances may require.

An Ordinance promulgated under this Article shall have the same force and effect as an Act of the Assembly and shall be subject to like restrictions as the power of the Assembly to make law, but every such Ordinance,-

Shall be laid before the Assembly and shall stand repealed at the expiration of four months from its promulgation or, if before the expiration of that period a resolution disapproving it is passed by the Assembly, upon the passing of that resolution:

[provided that the Assembly may by a resolution extend the Ordinance for a further period of four months and it shall stand repealed at the expiration of the extended period.] May be withdrawn at any time by the President.

Without prejudice to the provisions of sub- Article (2),an Ordinance laid before the Assembly shall be deemed to be a Bill introduced in the Assembly.” According to Article 41 of the Interim Constitution, 1974, the President’s satisfaction is necessary for issuance of an Ordinance and it is not mandatory to disclose the reasons for issuing the Ordinance in the document for information of public.

We have to examine the legality of the Ordinance in question concerning the fundamental rights clearly outlined in the Interim Constitution, 1974. This involves analyzing the provisions of Ordinance align with or potentially in conflict with these rights and freedom guaranteed in the aforesaid Constitutional framework. The relevant and significant Section of the

Interim Constitution, 1974, particularly in Article 4 enumerates total six distinct rights. These rights are as follows:-

Freedom of movement;

Freedom of Assembly;

Freedom of Association;

Freedom of trade, business or profession;

Freedom of speech;

Freedom of religion.

According to the pleadings and arguments of the learned counsel for the parties, the only question that arises is whether the fundamental rights mentioned in the Article of Interim Constitution, 1974 are absolute? To answer this question, we have to analyse the above mentioned clauses of the Interim Constitution, 1974.

From plain reading of the above-mentioned clauses of Article 4, it is crystal clear that these rights are not absolute. All these rights are subject to the limitations as mentioned in the Constitution. These rights are articulated in broad terms, necessitating the establishment of reasonable restrictions to prevent potential misuse, and specific conditions have been mentioned upon which these rights may be curtailed. All the above-mentioned clauses of Article 4 emphasize that any restriction imposed must be reasonable. The only Section 5 of the impugned Ordinance empowers the District Magistrate to impose ban on the Assemblies. The aforesaid Section is reproduced as under:-

“5. Power to Impose Ban on Assemblies:- (1) The District Magistrate shall have the authority to impose a ban on any assembly within the District if,-

the assembly poses a risk to national security or public safety;

there are credible reports from law enforcement agencies indicating a substantial risk of violence or public disorder;

the assembly disrupt the daily activities of the community, impede the movement of people and goods, or infringe upon paragraph 8 of sub-Article(4) of Article

4 of the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ Interim Constitution, 1974, which ensures the freedom of trade, business and profession; or

another procession or assembly is already ongoing within the District, and the additional assembly would increase disruptions or pose additional security risks.

The order for a ban shall be issued in writing stating the specific reasons for the ban, and shall be communicated to all relevant authorities and persons concerned;

The ban shall remain in force for the duration specified by the District Magistrate, which may be extended if the conditions necessitating the ban persist;

Any person or Organization affected by the ban may file a revision before the Commissioner of the Division within fifteen days of the issuance of the order.”

In the aforesaid Section, no new ground has been mentioned to impose ban on the Assembly. Such ban is provided in Article 4(4) sub-Articles (6), (7) and (9) of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Interim Constitution, 1974, which is as under:-

“4(6). Freedom of Assembly:- Every State Subject shall have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order;

4(7). Freedom of Association:- (1) Every State Subject shall have the right to form association or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, morality or public order.

Every State Subject, not being in the Service of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, shall have the right to form or be a member of a political party, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of the State and such law shall provide that where the Government declares that any political party has been formed or is operating in a manner prejudicial to the sovereignty or integrity of the State, the Government shall, within fifteen days of such declaration, refer the matter to the Supreme Court whose decision on such reference shall be final;

No person or political party in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' shall be permitted to propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to, the ideology of the State's accession to Pakistan;

Every political party shall account for the source of its funds in accordance with law.

4(9). Freedom of Speech:- Every State Subject shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the security of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', friendly relations with Pakistan, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of Court, defamation or incitement to an offence.”

These clauses of the Interim Constitution curtail the fundamental rights subject to the following conditions:-

propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to, the ideology of the State's accession to Pakistan;

Ensuring security of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir';

Maintaining friendly relations with Pakistan;

Preserving public order;

Avoiding contempt of Court;

Or refraining from defamation;

Preventing of an offence.

In summary, while the Interim Constitution uphold fundamental rights, these rights comes with specific limitations designated to protect the integrity, security, ideology and social fabric of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'. These clauses, therefore, result a balance between individual's freedom and collective social responsibilities.

Almost all of these grounds have been mentioned to justify the ban imposed by Section 5 of the Ordinance, hence, theafore said Section does not conflict with the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Interim Constitution, 1974. It is pertinent to mention here that the phrase reasonable restrictions have been mentioned in the Interim Constitution, 1974 but it has not been defined. In our estimation, the impugned Ordinance provides "reasonable restrictions" to implement the fundamental rights i.e. (i) to regulate the Assembly as defined in the Ordinance (ii) to protect public at large for inconvenience (iii) to protect the fundamental rights of Interim Constitution, 1974 (iv) to safeguard the society (v) security of the State Subjects etc.

It should be noted that the term "reasonable restrictions" must be guided by logic rather than arbitrariness. The restrictions should not be excessive and do not harm the public order. These restrictions should be reasonable and it should be in the public interest. It should be for maintaining public order, safeguarding public health, upholding morality and it can be adopted based on the specific prevailing circumstances.

It is also pertinent to note that the impugned Ordinance, consolidates and regularizes the prevailing laws, whereby the restrictions have been imposed. For example, Article 4 of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Interim Constitution, 1974 imposed "reasonable restrictions" as

Mentioned in the above paragraph. Some restrictions areas under:-

For security of the State Subjects;

Maintenance of public order;

contempt of Court (Article 45of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Interim Constitution, 1974) ;

defamation;

Arms Act;

Provisions provided in Chapter IX to XI of Cr.P.C empowers the District Magistrate to issue order in urgent cases, use of civil and military force to disburse the Assembly;

Sections of Penal Code regarding punishments of unlawful Assembly, nuisance and defamation etc.;

Police Act.

From perusal of the impugned Ordinance, it reveals that it is considerably more reasonable in comparison to the existing laws mentioned in the preceding paragraph, which empowers the District Magistrate to control law and order situation. The existing laws are unguided and uncontrolled. In contrast, the impugned Ordinance introduces a significant improvement in this regard as it distinctly allows for an appeal or revision process against such orders. This change ensures that the voices of individuals impacted by these orders can be heard and considered in a fair manner.

In this view of matter, 'The Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Interim Constitution, 1974 rightly defines the relations between the Government and the State Subjects. The Interim Constitution provides fundamental rights which impose restriction on the

Government but these fundamental rights are curbed by some reasonable restrictions to balance the society.

It is also worthwhile to mention here that in a case titled as “Mahmood Ahmed Musafir Vs. Deputy Commissioner Muzaffarabad and another” decided on 13.04.2016, this Court has already directed the District Administration to regulate the processions and rallies to protect the public at large for inconvenience and to mention specific place for procession and rallies.

“The upshot of the aforesaid discussion leads to conclude that the impugned Ordinance does not call any interference. Accordingly the writ petitions are dismissed in limine as no order as to the costs”, the learned Court order concluded.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/11/18/ajk-hc-turns-down-writ-petitions-challenging-peaceful-assembly-public-order-ordinance-2024/>

Greenhouses of hope: Resilient farmers from Pakistan’s North and COP29

The Express Tribune, 20 November 2024

In the remote village of Dasskel, Goharabad, Diamer, the glaciers and harsh winters have long dictated the pace of life. Yet, amid these challenges, Mustaqeem Khan has cultivated a success story that transcends his rugged surroundings. Using a passive solar greenhouse, Mustaqeem has turned the unforgiving winters into a season of plenty.

“This greenhouse is more than just a structure; it’s a lifeline,” Mustaqeem says as he tends to rows of spinach, tomatoes, cucumber and seedlings thriving within the greenhouse’s warm interior. Despite the icy winds outside, the greenery inside speaks of resilience and innovation.

Mustaqeem is not alone in embracing the greenhouse revolution. Across the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, similar initiatives have inspired transformations, including the remarkable journey of Zargar Ali from Silgan in Ghizer valley.

From Diamer’s resilience to Ghizer’s prosperity

While Mustaqeem has achieved financial stability through his greenhouse, Zargar Ali’s story from Ghizer demonstrates how these initiatives can elevate entire families to prosperity. Starting in the early 2009 with a single greenhouse, a transformative innovation introduced by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) under the Central Asia Poverty Programme (CAPP), Zargar worked tirelessly, experimenting with tomatoes, cucumbers, and other vegetables. Over time, he perfected his techniques, expanded his operations, and built a thriving fruit business from the greenhouse revenue that has made him a millionaire in just a decade and a half.

His journey has also inspired many in Silgan Valley in Yasin, where families now follow his model, seeing first-hand how sustainable practices can transform their lives. “The greenhouse is not just a business for us,” Zargar’s wife remarks. “It’s a way of giving back

to our community and showing what's possible with hard work and innovation."

A region transformed by greenhouses

The success of greenhouses in Diامر, Ghizer, and beyond is emblematic of a broader agricultural transformation in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. AKRSP supported over 500 farmers to establish passive solar greenhouses, enabling them to grow fresh produce year-round, enhancing food security, and creating sustainable livelihoods. In places like Ghizer, Skardu and Upper Hunza in Gojal, families displaced by glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) have used the technology to rebuild their lives, proving its resilience against climate impacts.

"The greenhouse is more than an intervention; it's a catalyst for change," says Professor Dr Maisoor Ahmed of Karakoram International University. "From subsistence farming to commercial success stories like Zargar Ali's, this initiative shows the power of local solutions in addressing global challenges."

As world leaders convene at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, stories like those of Mustaqeem Khan and Zargar Ali underscore the urgent need for climate action and financial support for vulnerable regions. Pakistan, contributing less than 1% of global carbon emissions, faces some of the worst consequences of climate change. Initiatives like greenhouses highlight the potential of innovative solutions when supported by international climate finance and collaboration.

"These greenhouses are a testament to what's possible, and that's should be told in the COP29," stated professor Dr Ahmed. "They show how climate-resilient practices can not only safeguard livelihoods but also create new opportunities for economic growth."

The passive designs of these greenhouses are helping farmers build resilience to climate change by enabling year-round farming, reducing energy use, conserving water, and enhancing food security, while mitigating the effects of extreme weather patterns and temperature fluctuations.

Growing together

For Mustaqeem, his greenhouse symbolizes resilience, allowing him to fund his children's education and dream of a better future. For Zargar Ali, it's a testament to what determination and innovation can achieve, transforming a small idea into a multimillion-rupee enterprise that supports his entire family and inspires a community.

As the sun sets over the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, the warm glow of greenhouses in Diامر and Ghizer shines as a beacon of hope. Together, they tell a story of resilience, innovation, and the power of local solutions to combat global challenges — a story that resonates from the peaks of Pakistan's north to the global stage at COP29.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2510856/greenhouses-of-hope-resilient-farmers-from-pakistans-north-and-cop29>

Presidential Ordinance imposes imperialist and authoritarian restrictions on civil and democratic freedoms: Liaqat Shabir

The Presidential Ordinance is a black law that imposes imperialist and authoritarian restrictions on civil and democratic freedoms. This ordinance must be immediately suspended. All freedom-loving, democracy-supporting, and revolutionary forces, along with journalists, lawyers, and social organizations in the region, must join the protest against this ordinance and reject this authoritarian move by the rulers. These views were expressed by Liaqat Shabir, a candidate for the Legislative Assembly from Constituency LA-29, Muzaffarabad city, in a statement following the dismissal of a petition regarding the Presidential Ordinance. He said that attempts are being made to replicate the suppression of freedom of expression seen under 'Indian occupation' in Kashmir, which is highly condemnable. Liaqat Shabir clarified that the biggest difference between 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Occupied Kashmir' was the freedom of expression and the right to protest enjoyed by citizens in 'Azad Kashmir', which is now being undermined through this so-called ordinance. He described the controversial ordinance issued by the President of the State as a direct attack on the fundamental rights of the people of 'Azad Kashmir'. He further stated that the ordinance reflects the undemocratic and authoritarian mindset of the illegitimate government formed by the

PML-N, PPP, and defectors, calling it another disgraceful blot on their dark record. Liaqat Shabir questioned which registered political party the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Anwar-ul-Haq, is a member of. He pointed out that not only the Prime Minister but also the majority of the current government's defecting ministers fall under the scope of this ordinance, as they are neither members of any political party nor recognized by any party. He added that the "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance 2024" is a blatant violation of the civil liberties and fundamental rights granted by the Constitution of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'. Calling the ordinance "authoritarian legislation" and "reckless undemocratic governance," Liaqat Shabir labeled such laws as disgraceful and unacceptable. He reiterated that attempts to replicate the oppression of freedom of expression under 'Indian occupation' in Kashmir within 'Azad Kashmir' are highly condemnable. He clarified that the stark difference between 'Azad' and 'Occupied Kashmir' is the citizens' right to freedom of expression and protest, which is now being suppressed under this so-called ordinance. Such actions strengthen the Indian agenda, and for the past two years, the government of 'Azad Kashmir' has been systematically advancing this agenda.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/11/19/presidential-ordinance-imposes-imperialist-and-authoritarian-restrictions-on-civil-and-democratic-freedoms-liaqat-shabir/>

Economic Developments

Sindh's varsities: Students from G-B: Sindh CM vows to increase number of seats

Business Recorder, 21 November 2024

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah met with Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan at the Chief Minister's House.

The meeting was attended by Gilgit-Baltistan's Minister for Excise Haji Rehmat Khaliq and CM's Special Assistant Hussain Shah.

During the meeting, CM Gulbar Khan requested an increase in the number of seats allocated for students from Gilgit-Baltistan in Sindh's medical and engineering colleges, highlighting that over 10,000 students from Gilgit-Baltistan are currently studying in Karachi.

At this, CM Murad Shah assured that he would personally review the matter of increasing seats for Gilgit-Baltistan students in Sindh's universities, particularly the medical ones.

CM GB Gulbar Khan said that the students of his province were facing accommodation issues in the hostels of the universities of the province. At this, CM Murad Shah promised that the PPP government would identify land and ensure the completion of the hostel project.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40333668/sindhs-varsities-students-from-g-b-sindh-cm-vows-to-increase-number-of-seats>

CPEC: 38 projects worth \$25bn already completed

Business Recorder, 21 November 2024

A total of 38 projects worth over \$25 billion have been completed and 23 development projects at cost of \$2.1 billion are currently under implementation in various sectors under the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

According to documents available with this correspondent which were presented in a meeting of National Assembly Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Special Initiative that met with Syed Abdul Kadir Gilani in the chair at the Parliament House on Wednesday, completed projects include 17 projects in energy sectors at the cost of \$18 billion, seven projects in infrastructure sectors, five projects pertaining to Gwadar, and nine projects are related to socio-economic development.

The Minister for Planning held fortnightly meetings with concerned stakeholders to review the progress of CPEC projects and took decision to resolve any impediments.

About the energy sector, all 17 development projects (mode of financing) are related to independent power producers (IPPs). The energy projects are Sahiwal Coal Power (1320 MW) of \$1.912 billion, Port Qasim Coal Power (1320 MW) of \$1.912 billion, China-HUB Coal Power (1320 MW) of \$1.912 billion, Energy Thar Power and Mine (660 MW) of \$995.4 million, Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park (400MW) of

\$520 million, UEP Wind Farm (100MW) of \$250 million, Three Gorges Wind Power (100MW) of \$150 million, Sachal Wind Farm (50 MW) of \$134 million, Hydro China Dawood Wind (50 MW) of \$113 million, HVDC + 660kv Matiari-Lahore T Line of \$1,698 million, 7.8 MTPA TCB-II Mine of \$850 million, 720 MW Karot HPP (720 MW) of \$1.698 billion, Thar Energy Limited (330 MW) of \$497.7 million, Thal Nova Thar Power (330 MW) of \$497.7 million, Shanghai Electric (1320 MW) of \$1.912 billion, Thar Block-I (7.8 MW) of \$990 million and Suki Kinari HPP (884 MW) of \$1,991 million.

Many projects of other sectors are Orange Line Metro Train Project (27 KM) of \$1.6 billion, Havelian-Thakot Section Phase-II (120km) of \$1.3 billion, Eastbay Expressway of \$683.22 million, Gwadar Port and Free Zone of \$300 million, etc.

Currently, 23 development projects are under construction are Awaran-Naal Road of \$107.46 million in Balochistan, New Gwadar International Airport at cost of \$230 million in Balochistan, Zhob-Quetta Road (298 km) \$391 million, Rashakai Special Economic Zone of \$146 million in KPK, Dhabeji Special Economic Zone of \$27 million in Sindh and Smart Classrooms for Higher education of \$14.34 million etc.

Earlier, the committee also reviewed development projects under the Public Works Department (PWD), seeking clarity on fund flow, disbursement, and project execution.

Members voiced dissatisfaction with the information provided, highlighting concerns over transparency and effectiveness.

The committee members protested for not providing details of funds of on-going development projects of PWD.

Committee member Dawar Khan Kundi said that the Planning Commission did not provide details of on-going development projects of PWD.

Major Tahir Iqbal (retired) said that the committee in its last meeting had asked to give the details of the funds of the development projects of PWD.

The committee chairman directed the planning secretary to submit detail of funds of the development projects of PWD in the next meeting.

The committee received a presentation on Emerson College, Multan, highlighting the urgent need for a new academic block to address emerging trends in artificial intelligence (AI) and information technology (IT).

The members discussed potential funding avenues to ensure the timely execution of this critical educational initiative.

Key questions were raised regarding illegal recruitments and encroachments in the capital city. The absence of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) chairman drew strong disapproval from the committee, resulting in the deferment of related agenda items until his attendance is ensured.

During a briefing on the CPEC projects, members emphasised the strategic importance of prioritising the western route.

Tahir Iqbal said that the government should sign agreements with China on latest technology for the benefit of the

country. He said that Pakistan's local industries could be affected due the products of Chinese industries in our local market. He said that China should establish industries in Pakistan only for export to other countries not for the local markets of Pakistan.

To review the status of a project aimed at providing essential medicines to cancer patients, supported by Roche International. The committee emphasised the need for expediting such critical public welfare initiatives without delay.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Planning and Development, the CDA, and the vice chancellor of Emerson College were also present.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/amp/40333662>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

To Protest is a constitutional right: Colonel Waqar Noor

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 21 November 2024

Most senior minister related to interior ministry colonel (retired) Waqar Ahmad Noor said that to protest is a democratic right, and doing it constitutionally and in a peaceful and ordered manner won't face any restriction. Indian media should not tell us how we should safeguard and protect our citizens. Those who protest are also our citizens. The region of 'Azad Kashmir' has been peaceful and will remain so. To safeguard common citizens life and their rights is our duty. 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' peaceful assembly and public order ordinance's

purpose is not to target anyone. Our doors for talks remain always open. In 'Azad Kashmir' law abiding is for the benefit of common people, however in 'occupied Kashmir', unconstitutional, unlawful, and immoral 'occupation' are being advanced. Such thoughts were shared in P-I-D complex Muzaffarabad in a press conference, where also Sardar Mir Akbar Khan and Saradar Mir Altaf were present.

Waqar Ahmad Noor said that the movement of action committee sought availability of electricity and flour, and its demands were fulfilled, too. However, its demands have begun to widen. He said that in peaceful assembly and public ordinance, there is no restriction for protest. However, for protest there is mention of time and place, so that school going children, patients visiting hospitals, government employees and public transport is not affected. Any through any protest, ordinary people's lives are not affected. He said that even after this ordinance, protests have taken place and anyone who sought permission from the district magistrate was granted. In any circumstances, the situation in 'occupied Kashmir' cannot be compared with Azad 'Kashmir'. In 'Azad Kashmir', people have every right with them, however in 'occupied Kashmir', there exists no right of people. He said that yesterday in a protest in Rawalkot, Indian media exaggerated and also propaganda tactics was employed. No nation can dictate us of how we can protect our people.

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

National Youth Assembly Gilgit-Baltistan Chapter's first Parliamentary session

Urdu point, 20 November 2024

National Youth Assembly Pakistan (Gilgit-Baltistan Chapter) first parliamentary session was organised on Wednesday in Gilgit, in which deputy speaker Gilgit-Baltistan assembly, Sadia Danish, took oath of national assembly youth members. On this occasion as special guest, deputy speaker in her speech said that through the platform of youth assembly, and being its part, today's youth can play an important role in the country's politics, society and economy. You are the future of Gilgit-Baltistan. If you continue to work with such devotion and hard-work and take the issues of GB in a parliamentary way, I am sure this is bound to have its effects on the entire region. The deputy speaker further said that apart from education, grooming youth in political sphere, the responsible people of youth assembly are worth of applause. Especially the girls who have joined the youth assembly, I appreciate them, who in a better manner can also safeguard the traditions. The deputy speaker further added that very soon, the members of the national youth assembly will specially be invited to a session in GB assembly so that they learn and benefit from such political experiences.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4236257.html>

In Kashmir, India has oppressed to the extreme: Barrister Sultan

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 19 November 2024

President 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', Barrister Sultan Mohammad Chaudhary said that expatriate community, especially those Kashmiri living in South Africa should raise Kashmir issue on the international level, and they should equally be brought to the world what kind of barbaric tactics India is employing in 'occupied Kashmir'. They should fasten their belts toward this end; as India has started performing worst human rights acts in 'occupied Kashmir'. From August 5, 2019 till now, India has done extreme oppression in 'occupied Kashmir'. In 'occupied Kashmir', residents have been turned into prisoners in their own homes, and at times Kashmiris can't even step out from their homes on their will. Each day, India is continuing its oppression on Kashmiris. Kashmiri youth are killed in fake encounters and on occasions a worst torture is inflicted on them, and also put into prisons. Under these circumstances, expatriate Kashmiri community must underscore the plight of Kashmiri's and also reveal the face of India's actions in Kashmir. Such thoughts were shared during a meeting with Kashmir society South Africa's President, Haq Nawaz in Islamabad. Barrister Sultan further said that India has found involved in acts of terrorism on the international level too,

for which evidences were found. As such, those Kashmiri's stationed in South Africa must reveal to the world what India performs in Kashmir. Barrister Sultan praised the work that the Kashmir society in South Africa performs, and especially applauded Haq Nawaz for his role. On this occasion, the president of the society invited Barrister Sultan to come to South Africa, which he readily accepted, and told that he will soon be going on a foreign visit to South Africa, through which he will highlight India's action in 'occupied Kashmir'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-19.jpg>

Protests against the Presidential ordinance

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 22 November 2024

Against the Presidential ordinance and arrests, on the call given by the joint action committee, protests took place in Kotli, where the protestors burnt the Presidential Ordinance. Also, the fight broke between the protestors and the police. Given the large number of the protestors, they managed to push the police back. Against the Presidential ordinance, the protestors chanted slogans of freedom, and entire Kotli witnessed such forms of protests, and also the police used shelling and lathi-charge to disperse the protestors. In the aftermath of the arrest of former President Jammu and Kashmir

National Awami Party, Liaqat Hayat and his other partners, situation turned grim. According to the details, Liaqat Hayat and his partners were arrested for burning the Presidential ordinance. Given this, the Kotli town turned into a war zone, as clashes broke between police and the protestors that also resulted in several injuries.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-22.jpg>

Social Media

Usman Khan @Usmanshah004

22 November 2024

There is only one rule that there is no rule. This can only happens in freestyle polo of GB

#freestylepolo #chitral #Gilgit #explore @IDGB_Official @wajahatgilgiti

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/Usmanshah004>

Roshan Din Diameri @Roshan_Din

21 November 2024

On Friday, the victims of Shatial Harbin will hold a protest dharna at Diamer Bhasha Dam on the Karakoram Highway.

#kkh #GilgitBaltistan

Link to the tweet:

https://x.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1859636117202702505

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

21 November 2024

Clashes between police and polo fans at the polo ground during the final polo match

#free #style #clash #police #audience

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1859642977171407069>

PAMIR Times @pamirtimes

22 November 2024

AKAH Pakistan and NCEG University of Peshawar Host Symposium to Empower Youth for a Climate-Resilient Future

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes>

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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