

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 5 | Issue 2

06 January - 12 January 2025

POK
power crisis
load shedding
Mangla Dam
Gilgit-Baltistan
Climate
change
hydropower
Blockade



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

No end in sight to blockade of KKH over excessive load shedding

Dawn, 5 January 2025

People of Hunza continued their sit-in at Aliabad for the second consecutive day on Saturday, blocking Karakoram Highway in protest against 22-hour load shedding and demanding uninterrupted power supply to the area where temperatures have plunged to 20 degrees below freezing point.

The protesters spent Friday night in a camp set up on the road. They said they would call off the protest only after an uninterrupted power supply is ensured to people of the area.

The sit-in call was given by the Hunza Awami Action Committee and the All Parties Traders Association. On Friday, demonstrations were held in Sost, near Khunjerab Pass, Galmit Gojal and Aliabad.

The Karakoram Highway remained blocked for many hours and a strike was observed in many areas of Hunza. Protesters say the 22-hour power cut, amid freezing cold temperature, has disrupted their lives

Activists from different political parties and social organisations, including a member of the GB Assembly from Hunza, Ubaidullah Baig, also participated in the sit-in.

The protesters said the people of Hunza had been living in agony for the past few months as load shedding had upended their lives.

They said that because of 22-hour load shedding in the midst of bone-crunching temperatures, all business activities in the area have come to a standstill. They alleged the GB government was not serious in alleviating their suffering.

“The federal government earns billions of rupees in taxes and duties through trade between Pakistan and China via Khunjerab Pass, but it is not interested in providing basic amenities to locals.”

Ubaidullah Baig, the GB Assembly member from Hunza, said his region was being discriminated against by the GB government.

Rehan Shah, a PML-N leader, and PPP leader Zahoor Ahmed also addressed the demonstrators, saying the people of Hunza had now decided to fight for their rights. They blamed top officials of the power department for the unusual load shedding. The officials concerned are not providing fuel to operate thermal generators, they alleged.

They called upon the federal government to launch more power projects in the area to address the load shedding problem on a long-term basis.

They declared that they would continue the protest till the acceptance of their demands.

On Friday night, the district administration held talks with the protesters to persuade them to end their sit-in, but the agitators refused to do so.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1883164>

Hunza Protesters Endure Chilly Nights to Demand Action on Power Crisis

Pamir Times, 6 January 2025

Hunza residents braved freezing winter nights for the second day in a row, taking to the streets to demand urgent action to address the region's crippling power crisis.

In Aliabad, demonstrators gathered to spotlight the chronic power outages and the government's apparent indifference toward much-needed power projects. The electricity shortage has severely disrupted daily life, stalling economic activities in this key Pak-China border region, renowned as a vital tourism and trade hub.

Frustration among the protesters ran high over years of government neglect in meeting the region's growing energy needs. Despite Hunza's vast potential for hydroelectric power generation, outdated infrastructure and insufficient investment have left residents grappling with prolonged load shedding during the harsh winter months. Adding to their grievances are bureaucratic delays in implementing the KfW-supported power project, which has remained in limbo for years.

Political activist and lawyer Zahoor Advocate, addressing the crowd, emphasized the unity of the movement: "People from all walks of life—political parties, traders, and the general public—stand together in demanding sustainable solutions. This crisis has dragged on far too long without any substantial action."

Rehan Shah of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) criticized the government for neglecting Hunza, a district that generates billions of rupees in state revenue. Similarly, Zahoor Elahi of the Awami Workers Party highlighted the severe repercussions of the power crisis, which has not only disrupted household routines but also devastated local businesses and Hunza's thriving tourism industry.

Protesters vowed to continue their demonstrations until concrete measures are taken to resolve the crisis. Their demands include the immediate implementation of stalled power projects and the establishment of sustainable solutions to ensure a reliable electricity supply for the people of Hunza.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/01/05/81706/>

Skardu Faces Unprecedented January Rainfall: A Stark Sign of Climate Change

Friday Times, 6 January 2025

For the first time in recorded history, Skardu, a region in Gilgit-Baltistan known for its heavy snowfall, experienced rainfall in January instead of snow. Climate experts attribute this unusual weather pattern to global warming, which poses a significant threat to the region's climate resilience.

Dr. Salar Ali, Head of the Department of Environmental Sciences at Baltistan University, stated that the occurrence of rain in Skardu during January, a time typically associated with snowfall, raises serious concerns and is likely

linked to climate change, specifically global warming.

Rising global temperatures are leading to shifts in weather patterns. A warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture, which may increase rainfall even in regions traditionally dominated by snowfall during winter.

Experts warn that the changing climate in this glacier-rich region has far-reaching consequences for both the environment and livelihoods. They emphasize the urgent need for effective climate adaptation and mitigation strategies to protect the region's fragile ecosystem and its people.

This unexpected rainfall in Skardu serves as a stark reminder of the need for immediate global action against climate change, as its impacts are becoming increasingly visible in regions like Gilgit-Baltistan.

According to climate journalist Muhammad Ali Anjum, the shift in weather patterns in Skardu is alarming. It reflects the broader impact of climate change in Gilgit-Baltistan, a region heavily reliant on its glaciers. The warming temperatures are accelerating glacier melting, creating conditions for glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs), which can result in devastating floods downstream.

In 2023 alone, more than a dozen casualties were reported in GB due to climate-related disasters. Several households were displaced as floods caused by GLOFs wreaked havoc in the region. The melting glaciers, coupled

with reduced snowfall, also threaten water resources in the area, potentially leading to water scarcity in the future.

<https://thefridaytimes.com/06-Jan-2025/skardu-faces-unprecedented-january-rainfall-a-stark-sign-of-climate-change>

GB protesters press govt to resolve power crisis

Dawn, 7 January 2025

As the ongoing sit-in in Hunza blocked the Karakoram Highway (KKH) for the fourth consecutive day, protest organisers announced plans to intensify the protest over the Gilgit-Baltistan government's failure to supply electricity for even two hours a day.

The decision to intensify the protest, which was launched on the call of Hunza Awami Action Committee and the All-Parties Traders' Association, came despite the GB government's claim that 90 per cent of their demands have already been met.

The sit-in in the Aliabad area — the district headquarters of Hunza — has caused difficulties for locals and travellers, with heavy traffic remaining suspended and an alternative route open only for light traffic. Vehicles loaded with goods imported from China via Khunjerab Pass also remained stranded at the protest venue.

Despite freezing temperatures, protesters spent the night at their camps. They chanted slogans against the GB government and demanded electricity to Hunza.

Organisers call for wheel-jam, shutter-down strike today; CM's aide claims '90pc of demands already met'. People from various political groups and civil society organisations have been participating in the protest.

Protesters said the daily lives of locals have been paralysed, and students cannot study, putting their futures at stake. They said trade activities, online businesses, and other pursuits have come to a halt, affecting their livelihoods.

After mutual consultation on Monday evening, the protest organising committee, which includes Ubaidullah Baig, a GB Assembly member from Hunza, Awami Workers Party leader Baba Jan, PPP office-bearer Zahoor Karim and PML-N leader Rehan Shah, announced that the protest would continue.

Addressing the protesters, they announced their joint decision to intensify the protest from Tuesday, as the GB government had failed to fulfil their genuine demands. They said no vehicle, except in emergency cases, would be allowed to pass through any route in the area.

Women and children would also join the protest, as there would be complete wheel-jam and shutter-down strike to press the authorities to meet their demands.

Zahoor Elahi, one of the organisers, said the GB government's offer had already been rejected by protesters. He said fuel should immediately be

supplied to thermal generators for their operation to increase power supply. He said work on the power projects in Hunza must also be expedited. The organisers said people in other areas of GB were also braving 22-hour-long loadshedding.

On the other hand, Adviser to GB Chief Minister on Information Eman Shah told a press conference that 90pc demands of the protesters had already been met by the government. He accused the PML-N, PPP and other political parties of exploiting locals for their political interest.

The adviser questioned GB assembly lawmaker Ubaidullah Baig's performance when he was senior minister to solve power crisis. He said the elected member from Hunza had failed to initiate a single power project.

Instead of thermal generators, he added, the GB government was working on a long-term solution. He claimed that work on several under-construction power projects would be completed next year.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1883551/gb-protesters-press-govt-to-resolve-power-crisis>

A delegation of All Parties Hurriyat Conference 'AJK' and Pakistan chapter meets PM 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 6 January 2025

A delegation of All Parties Hurriyat Conference 'AJK' and Pakistan chapter led by its convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi called on Prime Minister 'Azad Kashmir' Ch. Anwarul Haq.

During the meeting future strategy regarding the ongoing freedom movement in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' and a plan of action to promote Kashmir cause internationally was discussed in detail.

Speaking on the occasion the 'AJK' premier assured the visiting delegation of his government's all out support to promote Kashmir cause at global level.

He, however, stressed the need for devising a comprehensive strategy to counter India's conspiracy and exposing its imperialistic designs before the world. The Hurriyat leadership, he said, must prepare a plan of action, the 'AJK' government was ready to provide all possible resources to make it a success.

The PM said that India's unilateral actions were detrimental for peace and stability in the region. He was of the view that the international community should take notice of India's illegal actions, which pose a serious threat to peace in South Asia. The United Nations, he said, should also hold India accountable for human rights violations committed by its forces in the held territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Regarding the peace overtures made by Pakistan, the 'AJK' premier said, "Our desire for peace should not be misconstrued our weakness as rather it should be reciprocated positively for the sake of peace and greater interests of people of the entire south Asia". "We are giving peace a chance, India should not misconstrue it as weakness", he added.

Lauding the sacrifices rendered by the Kashmiri people, the Prime Minister Haq said, "We salute to the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people and Hurriyat leadership who have rendered matchless sacrifices for the noble cause of freedom". "We will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the completion of Pakistan", he remarked." We have defeated the Hindutva agenda in 'Azad Kashmir'", he said, adding that the people of liberated territory were ready to foil the enemy's nefarious designs.

Lauding the Pakistan Army's significant contribution in protecting the liberated territory, he said Pakistan forces were fully prepared to give a befitting reply to the enemy on the LoC. The delegation was comprised of Advocate Pervez Shah, Mushtaq Butt, Abdul Hameed Lone, Sheikh Abdul Majid, Mushtaq-ul-Islam and Abdul Majid Mir and others. Whereas, government minister Sardar Javed Ayub was also present on the occasion.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/01/06/a-delegation-of-all-parties-hurriyat-conference-ajk-and-pakistan-chapter-meets-pm-ajk/>

'AJK' PM pledges to fight for 'occupied Kashmir's liberation'

Dawn, 6 January 2025

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq announced that his government would "redirect all available resources towards ousting Indian forces from 'occupied Kashmir'. The 'AJK' prime minister said this while speaking at a rally held at Burhan Wani Chowk in

Muzaffarabad to commemorate the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) resolution of January 5, 1949, envisaging “a free and impartial plebiscite to decide the question of accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan”.

“We must steadfastly adhere to the position we adopted 76 years ago, as reflected in the January 5 resolution. However, while we have stood firm for over seven decades, during which many of our generations have passed away, it is no longer the time to merely stand firm — it is time to move forward with determination,” Mr Haq said.

He added that Pakistan was the “elder brother of Kashmiris”, but it had its own international responsibilities and was not supposed to do the Kashmiris’ share of the work.

“If we have to trample the bloody Line [of Control], then this jihad (holy war) is binding first of all on the youth of Kashmir,” he said. Asserting that development and progress could not substitute for freedom, he asked Kashmiris to overcome divisions and polarisation to achieve this right. “We must put an end to our fragmented, self-serving agendas. This political exploitation is leading us toward destruction,” he cautioned.

The ‘AJK’ premier declared that no formula for the division of Kashmir would be acceptable to any Kashmiri. “On the basis of Kashmir’s entirety — not its parts — we will achieve the right to self-determination and fulfill the mission of Pakistan’s completion,” he

said. Anwarul Haq asserted that he had no issue if people disagreed with his words or if some advocated for an independent state.

“However, before that, all Kashmiris, regardless of their race, colour, religion, or politics, should unite on one fact: We must expel the one million oppressive Indian troops from occupied Jammu and Kashmir and achieve our right to self-determination,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1883317/ajk-pm-pledges-to-fight-for-occupied-kashmiris-liberation>

‘Azad Kashmir’ intensifies hydropower development to tap 8,000 MW potential

Dawn, 8 January 2025

‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) has intensified efforts to harness its vast hydropower potential of approximately 8,000 megawatts (MW), with key projects progressing to address energy needs and bolster local development.

This was stated by Khawaja Masood Qadir, Managing Director of the ‘AJK’ Power Development Organisation (PDO), during an interaction with media persons on Tuesday, hours before the commissioning of the 3.22 MW Chham Fall Hydel Project in the Jhelum Valley district.

Located about 62 kilometres southeast of Muzaffarabad near the Line of Control, the Chham Waterfall is both a scenic tourist attraction and the site of a transformative energy initiative.

Mr Qadir said the feasibility study and PC-1 for the Chham Fall Hydel Project

were prepared in 2019 and 2020, respectively, but work on the project commenced only in August 2022 due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project, he added, was expected to generate an average of 15.7 million units of electricity annually, benefiting the local population and 56 surrounding villages.

He also revealed that another 3.22 MW project downstream from Chham Fall, named after Nardajjian village, was nearing completion. Civil works were almost finished, and machinery had already been delivered to the site.

“If Rs200 million in funds are provided during the third and fourth quarters of this fiscal year, the Nardajjian project will be commissioned by June,” he said.

Mr Qadir further said that the 2 MW Kappa Bannamolah Powerhouse in Leepa Valley had been extended to 4 MW, with machinery installation expected to be completed by June.

“The Jhelum Valley district currently generates 13.1 MW of hydropower against a demand of 15 MW, making it self-sufficient in electricity during summer. However, reduced water flow in winter necessitates reliance on Wapda’s electricity, which we aim to address through strategic planning,” he said.

Highlighting the revival of delayed projects, Mr Qadir said the 48 MW Jagran-II Hydropower Project in Neelum Valley, which had been stalled for seven years with contractors

demobilised, had been revived due to the efforts of Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq.

Contractors were remobilised, and the project was expected to be completed within six months.

“This means we will add 57 megawatts of power to the system in the next six months,” he said, claiming this was more than what had been achieved in the past two decades.

About future projects, Mr Qadir said the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) had pledged nearly Rs22 billion for two major hydropower projects in Neelum Valley: the 22 MW Jagran-IV Project, costing Rs6.7 billion, and the 48 MW Shonthar Hydropower Project, costing Rs 15 billion.

He informed that the PC-1 for both projects had been approved by the Central Working Party, and preliminary loan agreements had been signed between the Economic Affairs Division and SFD.

The ‘AJK’ government had already acquired land for the Jagran-IV project using its own resources. “Funds have also been allocated for constructing transmission lines to connect these projects to the Muzaffarabad grid. Once operational, these projects will locally power the Muzaffarabad Division, eliminating load-shedding issues and creating job opportunities,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1883722/azad-kashmir-intensifies-hydropower-development-to-tap-8000-mw-potential>

Powering Hunza

The Nation, 7 January 2025

The protests in Hunza's Aliabad district against the ongoing power crisis entered their fourth consecutive day on Monday, with the Karakoram Highway—linking China and Pakistan—remaining blocked throughout. This standoff, if not resolved promptly, threatens not only to disrupt trade with China but also to deepen the frustration of the Gilgit-Baltistani people, who feel neglected in the distribution of electricity. The government must act swiftly to address these grievances, ensuring a peaceful resolution while prioritising the region's development.

Residents of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan have repeatedly taken to the streets, protesting what they see as an inequitable and unjust allocation of electricity. The situation becomes dire in the winter months, when power outages are most debilitating. In Hunza, where temperatures plummet during winter, electricity is essential for heating, snow removal, and maintaining basic living standards. Without it, life becomes a daily struggle, and the economic repercussions are significant.

Hunza's economy, which heavily depends on the export of niche goods and a flourishing tourism industry, suffers greatly when electricity is

scarce. Pakistan has been striving to position Hunza as an international tourist destination, attracting visitors from beyond its borders. However, a consistent power supply is critical to supporting the infrastructure required for tourism, as well as for enabling locals to sustain economically viable livelihoods. The current practice of providing electricity during the summer tourism season but withdrawing it in the winter—when it is most needed—reflects a short-sighted policy that exacerbates the region's hardships. The protests, which have disrupted transit along the Karakoram Highway, are a direct result of this neglect. While such disruptions are regrettable, they are perhaps the only way to draw the government's attention to these long-standing issues. The government cannot afford to let this crisis linger. Immediate steps must be taken to provide the people of Gilgit-Baltistan with their rightful share of electricity.

In the long term, Pakistan must prioritise increasing its electricity generation capacity to ensure that such crises do not arise again. Strategic investments in renewable energy and regional power infrastructure are crucial, particularly for remote areas like Gilgit-Baltistan, which face unique challenges due to their geography and climate.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Jan-2025/powering-hunza>

JAAC likely to be shaped into an indigenous political party of 'AJK' before coming 'AJK' LA polls

Daily Parliament Times, 8 January 2025

'Azad Jammu Kashmir' Civil Society's forum – Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee is very much likely to be shaped as a formal registered indigenous political party of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir', highly informed sources said

The recent reported decision to make the J & K Joint Awami Action Committee a political party in 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' has reportedly created a rush in interaction / liaison among stakeholders causing alleged internal upheaval in the political parties of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir', according to the sources.

After reported detailed consideration, the leaders of Joint Awami Action Committee of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' have principally decided to turn the Joint Awami Action Committee into a formal political party and in this regard authors of the idea have started establishing liaison with the members of the Action Committee across 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' besides the workers of other political parties of the state.

Official sources close to the JAAC revealed that various seasoned political and non-political personalities of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir', have allegedly assured to sponsor them besides to categorically support the idea to make Joint Awami Action Committee a

formal registered political party of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir'.

A local leader of Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee told this Correspondent that the homework has been completed in this regard. " The JAAC has also reportedly decided in principle to field its candidates in the upcoming 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' Legislative Assembly election, due for next year – 2026.

The Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee leader said in response to a question that the leaders and candidates of various political parties have contacted the Joint Awami Action Committee Supreme leadership to materialise the proposal of shapping JAAC, a formal political party of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir'.

Accordingly, the JAAC is proposed to field its candidates in all electoral constituencies by securing required support from the political parties for its nominated candidates in the State Legislative Assembly elections, the sources added.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/01/08/jaac-likely-to-be-shaped-into-an-indegenous-political-party-of-ajk-before-coming-ajk-la-polls/>

Hunza's Six-Day Protest Ends as Government Commits to Resolving Energy Crisis and Development Demands

Pamir Times, 9 January 2025

The six-day-long protest and sit-in (Dharna) in Aliabad, Hunza, over the

region's severe electricity crisis has concluded following the government's agreement, in principle, to address all 14 demands outlined by the protesters. The resolution, presented during the protest, called on the Government of Pakistan, the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and relevant authorities to take swift action on key energy and development issues.

During the final phase of the Dharna, government representatives assured the public of their commitment to fulfilling the demands. The major points of the agreement include:

1. 54 MW Attabad Power Project

Immediate commencement of work on the 54 MW Attabad Power Project.

Any surplus electricity generated will be allocated to other districts of GB.

Employment opportunities from Grade 1-9 in the project will prioritize Hunza domicile holders.

Affected landowners will be compensated on a priority basis.

Victims of the Attabad landslide disaster who have yet to receive compensation will be addressed promptly.

2. Solar Power Project

In the short term, 20 MW of electricity from the planned 100 MW solar project will be allocated to Hunza to mitigate the acute power crisis.

3. Revenue from Pak-China Trade

The 13 billion PKR revenue generated from Pak-China border trade will be allocated to the development of Hunza.

A power transmission line will be extended from Khunjerab to Hunza.

4. Implementation and Oversight

Timely and transparent implementation of energy projects will be ensured.

Qualified and capable officials will be appointed in the Power Department to ensure effective project execution and uninterrupted power supply.

5. National Finance Commission (NFC) Inclusion

The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan will be formally included in the National Finance Commission framework to secure its share in federal financial allocations.

Completion of projects in Chipusan, Passu and Hassanabad in an expedited manner was also demanded by the protesters.

The resolution of the protest marks the end of a historic six-day sit-in, which saw massive participation from Hunza residents demanding immediate and sustainable solutions to the region's prolonged energy crisis.

Community leaders, while expressing cautious optimism, emphasized the need for the government to fulfill its commitments promptly to avoid future unrest. They urged authorities to

demonstrate accountability and efficiency in addressing Hunza's pressing developmental challenges.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/01/08/hunzas-six-day-protest-ends-as-government-commits-to-resolving-energy-crisis-and-development-demands/>

Economic Developments

MoC begins work on new trade framework, tariff policy

Business Recorder, 9 January 2025

The Ministry of Commerce has initiated internal work on the Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) 2025-30 and the National Tariff Policy. The goal is to make exports more competitive and boost the country's export performance, with proposals for private sector incentives.

The new trade policy and national tariff policy is being developed at a time when Pakistan is under an IMF program. Additionally, over 50% of the approved proposals from the 2020-25 Trade Policy have not been implemented.

National trade policy ineffective in simplifying tariff structure: report

The Commerce Ministry, which has been vocal about the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) blocking fiscal incentives for the private sector, continues to push for these measures during budget discussions.

Sources confirmed that the Commerce Ministry has notified all relevant federal ministries, provincial chief

secretaries, and officials from 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir' (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan that the current STPF (2020-25) will expire in June 2025, and work on the new framework for 2025-30 is now underway.

The STPF is a five-year policy that sets the overall direction for Pakistan's trade strategy. It identifies priority products, key sectors, and specific interventions for trade development, guiding the activities of the Ministry of Commerce and other government agencies on trade-related matters.

The Commerce Ministry has requested that relevant ministries and provincial governments share their input on the new STPF by January 10, 2025.

Sources also mentioned that the National Tariff Commission (NTC) and the Tariff Policy Centre (TPC) had reviewed 2,850 requests from over 150 public stakeholders in line with the objectives outlined in the National Tariff Policy (2019-24).

After review, the Sub-Committee on the Tariff Policy Board (TPB) reassessed the TPC's recommendations. Out of 381 tariff lines/items proposed, 116 were fully implemented, 2 were partially implemented, and 263 were not implemented due to revenue constraints. The Ministry of Commerce believes that the non-implementation of these recommendations has negatively impacted Pakistan's export performance.

The implementation of the National Tariff Policy (NTP) 2019-24 faced

several unexpected challenges, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and financial constraints, which hindered trade flows and limited export growth. Another factor contributing to the slow implementation of the trade policy is the delay in the release of duty drawback claims.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a committee focused on tariff rationalization, aiming to achieve an export target of \$60 billion by 2027-28.

Pakistan's export competitiveness has been undermined by several factors, including higher business costs, low product sophistication, expensive energy compared to competitors, low enterprise productivity, a cumbersome taxation system, higher tariffs on intermediate and capital goods, a lack of quality control, and an unattractive investment environment for the export-oriented sector.

The Strategic Trade Policy Framework 2020-25 was based on the following pillars: (i) rendering exports, a national priority and the primary driver of economic growth, that is both inclusive and sustainable, and is the main viable source of foreign exchange earnings; (ii) enhancement of exports via a collaborative and cohesive national effort engaging all relevant ministries, departments, government agencies and private sectors so as to ensure policy coherence; (iii) introduction of strategic interventions in priority sectors under 'Make in Pakistan' initiative.

These interventions have been identified in the Action Matrices; and

(iv) alignment of Trade Policy in tandem with macro-economic framework and other national policies such as Taxation, Revenue, Textiles & Industrial Policy, etc. However, none of the proposals were implemented letter or spirit.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40341848/moc-begins-work-on-new-trade-framework-tariff-policy>

Rs. 5 billion construction work of 'AJK's' longest Mirpur-Islamgarh bridge on scenic Mangla Dam lake begins

Daily Parliament Times, 12 January 2025

Construction work to Rs. 5 billion gigantic project of completion of over 3 km long Mirpur-Islamgarh project over picturesque Mangla Dam lake was started, official sources said. The much-awaited gigantic project is being completed with the full liberal financial assistance of the government of Pakistan, an 'AJK' Govt spokesperson told our Special Jammu and Kashmir state Correspondent Altaf Hamid Rao on Sunday.

The 'AJK' government under the dynamic leadership of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq started the completion of the Rathoa Hariyam Bridge, the gateway to the socio-economic progress and prosperity of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir', 'AJK' government' local spokesperson told the this scribe here on Sunday.

'AJK's' longest bridge over the huge reservoir of Country's second largest Mangla dam, is considered to be the

state's mega project, which has brought a wave of happiness among the local population of Mirpur and adjoining city of Islamgarh including lakhs of the overseas Kashmiris hailing from this part of Kashmir settled in United Kingdom

The work on the Rathoa- Hariyam bridge, which was stalled for several decades following the alleged mismanagement on the part of the local state functionaries, has been resumed with full pace.

Pakistan's national construction firm Frontiers Works Organization (FWO), has started delivering the latest automatic heavy missionary to dig for installation of the pillars to the site, the spokesperson said and added that this German-made heavy duty missionary is considered to be unrivalled for digging pillars in swampy and muddy areas. In such way, the latest missionary will simultaneously dig deep foundations for pillars in marshy and watery areas, as well as fill and mature them, he added.

The Spokesperson continued that Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq is personally supervising the work for the early completion of Rathoa Hariyam Bridge. For this purpose, the project is being regularly monitored in the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' has ordered that the prevailing opportunity created by the low water level in Mangla Lake in winter should be taken full advantage of and the

construction work on the most difficult part of the bridge, which he directed authorities, should be completed before the snow melts that leads to rising of the water level in Mangla Lake and due to this, the construction works of the bridge should not be hindered, thr PM advised.

Resident Engineers of the construction firm, meanwhile, have expressed hope that with the full cooperation of the 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' government, the pillars will be constructed before the coming summer and the rest of the construction work will be completed by the end of the stipulated period by March next year by the trained team of engineers and through the use of latest equipment.

This Correspondent understands that with the completion of this great and masterpiece project of the state, where the people of Mirpur division will get easy and short distance travel facilities for adjoining thickly populated town of Islamgarh.

The longest bridge on Mangala Lake will promote national and international tourism in Mirpur division comprising three districts of Mirpur Kotli and Bhimber.

The bridge will open new vistas of socioeconomic development in the region providing more opportunities for prosperity of the area.

Overseas Kashmiris and various people's rights organizations have, at the same time, expressed great pleasure over resumption of construction of the mega project.

While paying tributes to the governments of Pakistan and 'AJK', locals in general and the Kashmiri expatriates in particular expressed the hope the project will prove to be a major mile stone for the uplift of Mirpur division turning 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' into an ideal state in true perspective.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/01/12/rs-5-billion-construction-work-of-ajks-longest-mirpur-islamgarh-bridge-on-scenic-mangla-dam-lake-begins/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Awami Action Committee Gilgit-Baltistan's Important Meeting

Urdu Point, 9 January 2025

Awami Action Committee Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) important meeting under the supervision of Chairman Ahsan Advocate was held in Gilgit. In the meeting, people of Gilgit-Baltistan including all mothers, sisters, young men, as well as old men who took part in the protest by standing in the chilling cold were thanked and it was said that the unity of the Hunza people forced the government to listen to their demands. At the same time, we have to understand that, like the past, the current government and their handlers will try to show us green pastures, but essentially will be keep us in the dark. The Awami Action Committee, will stand by the people of Hunza and will ensure that all promises and agreements will be kept. It will guard them, and won't allow these promises to be ignored. For 15 days, the

solidarity call remains suspended and it will be seen whether the government in Hunza along with all Gilgit-Baltistan power supply will be ensured by starting thermal generators, and its failure to do so, will prompt the Awami Action to give a protest call.

Awami Action Committee doesn't view thermal generators as the permanent solution to the deficient electricity supply in the region but a temporary one. Government officers 7000 vehicles and the lakhs of rupees that goes into their funding could be cut and diverted to start thermal generators. As a tangible solution to fix loads shedding, the government should expedite the process of completing all those power projects. This message is reiterated to the people that the protest call by the Awami Action Committee for Friday is pulled off for next 15 days.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4293720.html>

India has committed highest degree of atrocities in 'Occupied Kashmir': Barrister Sultan

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 8 January 2025

President 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Barrister Sultan Muhammad Chaudhary had a brief meeting with Muslim League Noon 'Azad Kashmir' Secretary General and former senior minister, Chaudhary Farooq Tariq in Presidential Kashmir house Islamabad. In the meeting both President Chaudhary and Secretary General

Farooq agreed upon amplifying the Kashmir issue on the international platform.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE.jpg>

There is no replacement for freedom: Prime Minister

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 6 January 2025

Prime Minister 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Chaudhary Anwar ul Haq said that the freedom movement of Kashmir, is priority of the common people. The utmost priority is to reach this movement to the logical conclusion. We won't shy away from sacrificing anything for this and we should not let individual interests to come in the way of pursuing this. We have a natural bond with Pakistan. To reach freedom movement to its logical conclusion, we need support. Now is the time to act. Passing resolutions is fine but now we need to take practical steps.

Such thoughts were shared by Prime Minister in his addressal on the day of right to self-determination in the Assembly of 'Azad Kashmir'. While addressing the session, he said that Islam clearly says that Jews and Hindus can't be your friends. We have a natural bond with Pakistan. I support all events and resolutions passed with regarding to 'occupied Kashmir'. The Prime Minister further said that we have to take action so that we set things in order. Apart from talking and action,

we also have to correct our conduct and character as well.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-06.jpg>

From Social Media

Aasim Sajjad Akhter @AasimSajjadA

8 January 2025

Pakistan's colonial policy towards Gilgit-Baltistan continues unabated. After eighty years without political rights & ecocide in the name of 'development' & tourism, Hunza is subject to 22 hours of daily loadshedding.

All power to the struggle of sons & daughters of GB's soil.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/AasimSajjadA/status/1876976753802977422>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

8 January 2025

Men and women's sit-in continues for six days in Hunza

#Hunza #protest #strike #kkh #cpec #loadshedding

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1876988856626556998>

PAMIR Times @pamirtimes

30 December 2024

Hunza's Six-Day Protest Ends as Government Commits to Resolving

Energy Crisis and Development
Demands

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/187701611289957039>

Roshan Din Diameri [@Roshan Din](#)

8 January 2024

The protest movement in Hunza has intensified.

Shutter down starts today.

#Hunza #GilgitBaltistan

Link to the tweet:

https://x.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1876897747590169021

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 5 | Issue 2

06 January - 12 January 2025

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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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