

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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POK
State
Subject
Certificate
Gilgit-Baltistan
Chinese investment
sustainable development
Skardu Winter Festival
Kohala Project delay
trekking fee hike
New Border Pass
hate speech
Provisional
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Status



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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

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Political Developments

GB's status

Dawn, 21 January 2025

The demand raised by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan for constitutional clarity and provisional provincial status is not new. The region's political parties and civil society groups often remind the Pakistani state that they want constitutional reform — as they did at an event in Islamabad last week. At the meeting, representatives of political and religious parties as well as activists pledged to launch a movement to secure constitutional status for the northern region. They called upon the state to implement the recommendations of the Sartaj Aziz committee and other official bodies regarding GB. The GB Legislative Assembly in 2021 had also passed a resolution demanding that the centre grant the region provisional provincial status. The people of GB want greater self-government, representation in Pakistan's constitutional bodies and key institutions, and a working local government system. Because their demands have not been met, and the regional administration has failed to deliver on promises of good governance, the people have often taken to the streets to press their demands.

Since independence, reforms have been incremental in GB. Major milestones include changes in the Bhutto era, during Gen Musharraf's regime, and under the post-2008 PPP government, as well as in 2018 under the PML-N's

watch. Yet all these measures, though significant, have failed to meet the people's demands. One key issue is the fact that if Pakistan were to accept GB as a province, it would negatively affect the Kashmir question. One way to grant GB its demands, and not compromise Pakistan's principled stand on the Kashmir dispute, is to give GB an AJK-like set-up, or full autonomy short of provincial status. The Sartaj Aziz-led body had recommended de facto integration of GB, giving the region representation in the NFC, Irsa, etc, ensuring the GB Assembly has full devolved powers, and 'special representation' in Pakistan's parliament. It is not known when the Kashmir question will be resolved, and chances of a plebiscite in the occupied territory are slim. Therefore, till the day that dispute is resolved, Pakistan should consider giving GB greater representation under a provisional framework. Meanwhile, it is crucial for the elected local leadership to do a much better job of delivering services to the people while GB waits to secure greater political and economic rights.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1886684/gbs-status>

Gilgit Baltistan: A Region at the Crossroads of Geopolitics

Pamir Times, 21 January 2025

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), tucked away in Pakistan's northernmost area, is at a pivotal point in geopolitics where regional dynamics and the interests of powerful nations come together. In addition to being crucial to South

Asia's political environment, this gorgeous yet strategically significant area is also crucial to larger global economic and security frameworks.

With its location at the intersection of China, India, and Central Asia, Gilgit-Baltistan is becoming a more central location for regional and global geopolitical changes. The location of Gilgit-Baltistan is a major factor in its strategic importance. The region is located at the intersection of a number of significant geopolitical corridors, including Karakoram Highway, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and trade routes that may one day connect South and Central Asia. This area, which shares borders with China and India, is crucial for achieving both military and economic goals. The area is the northern entry point for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multibillion-dollar infrastructure project that will link Pakistan's Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea with China's western Xinjiang province. This overland corridor gives China a more effective and safe way to reach global markets by avoiding the more time-consuming maritime route over the South China Sea. CPEC plans to significantly increase Pakistan's economy, particularly in its less developed regions like Gilgit-Baltistan. As a result, the region will become an essential link in the global supply chain improving trade flows, energy generation and regional connectivity. Despite Gilgit-Baltistan's geopolitical importance, its status is still controversial.

Pakistan and India, both fully claim the area, are involved in the broader Kashmir dispute. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was split following the 1947–1948 war between India and Pakistan, included Gilgit-Baltistan after British India was separated in 1947. Although Pakistan took over the northern regions including Gilgit-Baltistan, it has never established a formal system of government and has instead operated it as a distinct area under the larger 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) umbrella.

At the intersection of environmental, economic, and geopolitical pressures is Gilgit-Baltistan. Its significance as a gateway for energy, trade, and security cannot be emphasized enough. But only if region can successfully negotiate the intricate relationships between territorial conflicts, regional collaboration and sustainable development will its potential be fulfilled.

The future of the area will still be shaped by Pakistan and China's tight collaboration, but complexity will increase with the participation of India and other foreign players. Ensuring local political autonomy, environmental sustainability and economic inclusion will be crucial as the region grows under the CPEC framework. The way these conflicting interests are balanced will determine Gilgit-Baltistan's place in South Asia, Central Asia, and beyond geopolitical future. For the time being, the area continues to be a crucial, if disputed meeting point for regional, global

powers and its outcome will probably continue to affect the region's larger dynamics for years to come.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/01/20/gilgit-baltistan-a-region-at-the-crossroads-of-geopolitics/>

GB govt urged to reverse hike in royalty, mountaineering fees

Dawn, 20 January 2025

Tour operators have expressed concerns over the steep hike in royalty and mountaineering fees, alleging that the Gilgit-Baltistan government's decision is detrimental to the region's growing adventure tourism sector.

They claimed that the move has already rendered many people jobless due to a significant drop in tourist footfall.

Expressing serious concerns over the move, representatives from Pakistan Association of Tour Operators (Pato), Gilgit-Baltistan Tour Operators Association (GBATO) and other tour operating associations have written to GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, federal government officials and other stakeholders, urging them to withdraw the decision.

They were of the opinion that the mountainous region was home to the world's highest peaks including five eight-thousanders and over 100 seven-thousanders. Foreign and national adventure-seekers, including climbers and trekkers, visit Gilgit-Baltistan in large numbers every year.

However, they said the Gilgit-Baltistan government significantly jacked up the royalty and mountaineering fees,

including trekking permits fee, making them the "most expensive" in the region. They explained that one foreign expedition on K-2 fetched about \$60,000 to GB, benefiting the government, tour operators, the hospitality sector, transporters, the aviation sector, high-altitude porters and rescue service providers.

"However, the recent increase in the royalty and permit fees has made it hard for the tour operators to sell mountain expeditions and treks to foreign and domestic clients," they pointed out.

Stakeholders

Tour operators expressed reservations that they were not considered a stakeholder while formulating the policy.

Speaking to Dawn, Naiknaam Karim, former general secretary of Pato, said the Pakistan destination image was weak yet with joint efforts it was improved in recent years. Subsequently, a large number of international tourists had started coming to Pakistan for trekking and tourism. He said a large number of locals depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

Mr Karim made it clear that the economic benefits from foreign tourism didn't come from government fees, but rather from the money spent on adventure activities. "When foreigners come to Pakistan, they bring foreign exchange, which is a great source of earnings for the country," he said. He

cited the example of trekking fees, which foreigners have to pay \$500 for in Pakistan, whereas in Nepal, the trekking fee is only \$30. The trekking fees in Pakistan varies by location and altitude, with an average fee of \$500.

However, according to him, now after the recent hike one foreigner had to pay more than \$4,000 royalty fee to climb one of the eight thousanders in GB, while in Nepal royalty fee for climbing eight thousanders was \$1,800 per client. He said the local tour operators were finding it hard to attract foreign clients. They were worried that foreign mountaineers and trekkers would prefer Nepal and other countries that charge less than what Pakistan is charging for trekking and climbing peaks.

The move had not only affected tourism industry but also impacted the hospitality and transport sectors, while rendering thousands of shopkeepers, porters and other people in Gilgit-Baltistan jobless.

No single expedition

Another tour operator, Asghar Ali Porik, told Dawn that there was no single expedition or trekking group plan to visit Gilgit-Baltistan this winter and the increase in fee was one of the main factors.

He said if the decision not withdrawn, adventure tourism would be badly hit and foreign clients might also cancel their summer plans.

The matter was also discussed at length in a meeting, chaired by the Force

Commander of Gilgit-Baltistan Imtiaz Hussain Gillani and attended among others by GB tourism secretary, Pato and GBATO heads.

The Pato chairman presented a briefing on the proposed fee structure, drawing comparisons with Nepal's mountain royalties. He strongly advocated for reversing the recent fee increase, highlighting its detrimental impact on Pakistan's adventure tourism sector and the livelihoods of mountain communities that rely on seasonal tourism jobs.

Following extensive discussions, the GB tourism secretary agreed to review the increased fees based on proposals submitted by Pato and GBATO, promising a decision within a week. However, it is yet to be seen if the authorities withdraw the increase in fees to allow the tourism sector to thrive once again.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1886518/gb-govt-urged-to-reverse-hike-in-royalty-mountaineering-fees>

NADRA clarifies entry of 'Resident of AJK State' on CNIC

The Nation, 20 January 2025

As per the regulations and policies in force, NADRA imprints the phrase "Resident of AJK State" in black on Smart Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) and in red on regular CNICs. To include this designation on a CNIC, applicants are required to submit a valid State Subject Certificate (Class 1, 2, or 3) issued by the Government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK).

Without this certificate, the residency status cannot be imprinted.

Recently, rumors of changes in this policy have surfaced on social media. These rumors are baseless and are being spread with ulterior motives. Between December 2024 and January 2025 alone, NADRA has issued over 50,000 CNICs with the “Resident of AJK State” imprint.

In a few specific cases, the absence of this imprint may be attributed to either: The applicant’s failure to submit the required State Subject Certificate at the time of application, or errors by the data entry operator during the CNIC processing. For applicants who submitted the required certificate but whose CNICs were affected by errors made by the data entry operator, NADRA has proactively contacted them and arranged for the free reissuance of their CNICs with the correct imprint.

Applicants who did not initially submit the State Subject Certificate are requested to reapply, pay the relevant fees, and provide the necessary documentation to obtain a corrected CNIC.

NADRA remains fully committed to fulfilling its legal responsibilities and ensures that identity documents are issued in compliance with prescribed regulations and policies. We are dedicated to serving citizens with efficiency, transparency, and the highest standards of professionalism.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2025/nadra-clarifies-entry-of-resident-of-ajk-state-on-cnic>

‘AJK’ President invites Chinese entrepreneurs to make investments in the State

Daily Parliament Times, 21 January 2025

‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’ President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, while highlighting massive investment opportunities in the State (‘AJK’), has invited Chinese businessmen and companies to make investments in different sectors in ‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’.

While talking to Director China’s Yunnan Sunny Company, Mr. Li Ping, who called on him at the Presidency in Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis on Tuesday, Barrister Chaudhry said, “ ‘Azad Kashmir’ has an abundance of natural resources in addition to its beautiful landscape” the ‘AJK’ President office said Tuesday evening.

Referring to the region’s peaceful and investment friendly environment, the president said there were countless opportunities for tourism in the liberated territory.

Seeking Chinese companies investment in different economic sectors of the State including mining and tourism, he said that the ‘AJK’ government was ready to offer all kinds of facilities and support to investors.” ‘Azad Kashmir’ has vast reserves of precious stones, especially rubies and other minerals”, he said.

On this occasion, Mr. Li Ping gave a detailed briefing to the President about the aims and objectives and business

activities of his company. Mr. Ping told the President that his company specializes in tunnels, highways and other construction sectors within and outside the country. He also expressed his company's desire to start its projects in 'Azad Kashmir'.

On this occasion, the President expressed satisfaction and happiness over Yunnan Sunny Company's desire and said that the government would welcome foreign investment in the State. Mr. Ping also extended an invitation to the President 'AJK' to visit China, which he accepted.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/01/21/ajk-president-invites-chinese-entrepreneurs-to-make-investments-in-the-state/>

Balti, sword dances mark culmination of winter festival in Skardu

Dawn, 22 January 2025

A glitzy two-day winter festival concluded in Skardu on Tuesday with mesmerising performances by local artists on the Hussainabad ice rink.

Currently, winter sports festivals are underway in various areas of Gilgit-Baltistan to promote the region's winter tourism potential and provide an opportunity for local athletes to practice in national competitions.

The events are being organised by the GB tourism department in collaboration with local communities and NGOs in various areas of the region.

The Seven days Frozen Fairytale Winter Feast 2025 included nail-biting

games of ice hockey, ice skating, ice curling and other traditional games. The spectators also enjoyed the traditional food stalls and were mesmerised by local artists who performed the traditional sword dance on folk music wearing local attire,

The closing ceremony on Tuesday was attended by GB Health Minister Raja Azam Khan, Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza, Tourism Secretary Zameer Abbas, and a large number of locals and tourists.

The ice skating event saw the participation of a high number of local athletes, both male and female, from Shigar, Ghanche, Kharmang and Skardu.

Young skaters glided on the ice, waving the national flag on the tunes of national songs.

In the final ice hockey competition, Skardu B defeated Skardu to win the trophy.

Chief Secretary Mirza, the chief guest, presented the trophy to the winning team. He praised the players and highlighted the importance of such events in promoting local talent, tourism and culture.

Mr Abbas, the GB tourism secretary, said the festival will play a significant role in promoting winter sports and boosting tourist activities in the region.

He added that such events not only provide a platform for local athletes to showcase their talent in winter sports but also attract tourists to experience the unique culture of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Other winter sports festivals in Yasin Valley of Ghizer and Winterlude festival also concluded recently.

A new festival, the three-day Seven days Frozen Fairytale Winter Feast 2025, is also set to start in Murtazabad, Hunza, from Thursday.

Teams from Ghizer, Astore, Hunza and Gilgit districts will participate in the event.

On Tuesday, a meeting, chaired by Hunza Acting Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Talha Khan was held to discuss the arrangements for the event.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1886816/balti-sword-dances-mark-culmination-of-winter-festival-in-skardu>

PM Shehbaz condemns atrocities by Indian army in ‘held Kashmir’

Dawn, 23 January 2025

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday strongly condemned the Indian army for its continued cruelty and oppression in ‘occupied Jammu and Kashmir’, reaffirming Pakistan’s unwavering political, moral, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris until their right to self-determination as enshrined in relevant UN resolutions is realised.

Addressing the foundation-laying ceremony of the first Daanish School Science and Technology Centre of Excellence in Bhimber, the southernmost district of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), PM Shehbaz praised Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for his unparalleled

steadfast commitment to the Kashmir cause.

He expressed confidence that the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people would not be in vain and that freedom would ultimately dawn in the ‘occupied territory’. Highlighting the challenges faced by the people in ‘occupied Kashmir’, the prime minister focused on the importance of education as a tool of empowerment.

Lays foundation stone of Daanish School technology centre in Bhimber “The people of ‘occupied Kashmir’ are fighting for their freedom and will also feel joy knowing that their Kashmiri brothers are receiving high-quality education here [in AJK],” he remarked. On domestic issues, the premier said his government had collectively addressed significant challenges, averting the threat of bankruptcy.

He asserted that measures taken by the government had led to a decline in inflation and interest rates, while exports and remittances had shown an upward trend. He added the World Bank allocated \$20 billion for various development projects in Pakistan.

He underscored that Pakistan’s progress and prosperity were contingent on eradicating terrorism and eliminating political instability, which caused Rs190 billion losses daily to the nation. He lauded the sacrifices of the security forces in combating terrorism and vowed that conspirators against Pakistan would not succeed.

He described the establishment of Daanish Schools in ‘AJK’ as a

significant milestone, originally conceived for talented and intelligent students from less privileged families in remote areas of Punjab.

He announced plans to expand the network of these schools to other areas of 'AJK', such as Neelum and Poonch, ensuring separate, high-standard facilities for boys and girls.

The federal government would fully fund these institutions, he declared, directing the authorities to operationalise the schools within one year.

PM Shehbaz acknowledged the efforts of the chief ministers of Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan in improving education and healthcare. He also hinted at establishing Daanish Schools in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Earlier, 'AJK' Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq expressed gratitude to Shehbaz Sharif for what he called a transformative initiative in Bhimber.

He affirmed the enduring relationship between the people of Pakistan and 'AJK', rooted in shared faith and mutual support, and reiterated the commitment of Kashmiris to resist Indian state terrorism.

He accused India of using propaganda to distract from its human rights violations in the 'occupied valley'.

Federal ministers Amir Muqam and Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui also addressed the gathering. On the occasion, PM Shehbaz warmly greeted the leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat

Conference, shaking hands with each of them.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1887113/pm-shehbaz-condemns-atrocities-by-indian-army-in-held-kashmir>

Several GB leaders of PTI, PML-N join PPP

Dawn, 25 January 2025

Several local leaders of PTI and PML-N joined PPP on Thursday ahead of the Gilgit-Baltistan general elections expected later this year.

Former GB Assembly speaker and PTI leader Fida Muhammad Nashad, former GB Assembly member and PTI GB women wing president Amina Ansari, former assembly member and PTI leader Wazir Hasan, former PML-N leader and GB minister Haider Khan, former PML-N leader and assembly member Iqbal Hasan and some other PML-N leaders met PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in Islamabad and announced their decision to join the PPP.

Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Syed Mehdi Shah, PPP GB chapter president and assembly member Advocate Amjad Hussain, GB Finance Minister and general secretary PPP Muhammad Ismail and other PPP leaders were present on the occasion. Mr Bhutto-Zardari welcomed the political leaders who joined the PPP GB Assembly tenure will end in November and 2025 is being termed the election year in GB.

In the general elections in 2020, PTI had formed the government in GB and

Khalid Khurshid Khan was elected the GB chief minister.

In July 2023, Mr Khan, who also served as PTI's president in the region, was disqualified by the GB Chief Court for obtaining a licence from the GB Bar Council allegedly on the basis of a fake education degree.

Mr Khan's disqualification led several PTI lawmakers to switch sides and ultimately a coalition government, comprising PTI disgruntled members and PML-N and PPP lawmakers, was formed in the region.

One of PTI's disgruntled member, Haji Gulbar Khan, replaced Mr Khan as the new chief minister.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1887542/several-gb-leaders-of-pti-pml-n-join-ppp>

Cleric booked for hate speech in Astore district of Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 25 January 2025

Astore: Several complaints have been registered in different parts of Gilgit-Baltistan against Maulvi Abdul Razaq, a resident of Astore district, for delivering a provocative hate speech during a public gathering.

Anger is mounting in the region after a clip of the speech went viral on social media. In the video, the cleric can be seen addressing a small gathering of people holding flags of a banned militant organization. Targeting the Shia community, the cleric uses highly provocative and vulgar language against one of the sect's most important religious figures.

Complainant have filed applications with the Police in Astore, Nagar and Gilgit districts, demanding arrest of the cleric and punitive action.

Various Shia political and religious leaders, including Agha Ashiq Hussain of Astore, Agha Syed Baqir Alhussaini (Baltistan) and Ilyas Siddiquie of Gilgit city, have also condemned the speech, demanding immediate and strict legal action.

Meanwhile, Asotre Police have registered a First Information Report (FIR), against the cleric, under articles 295-A and 298-A of the Pakistan Penal Code.

In the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), "298-A" refers to the offense of using derogatory remarks against the wives, family, and companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), while "295-A" refers to the broader act of deliberately and maliciously insulting the religion or religious beliefs of any class, with the intent to outrage their religious feelings.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/01/25/81737/>

New border pass rules spark backlash in GB

Dawn, 26 January 2025

Traders in Gilgit-Baltistan have strongly opposed the newly introduced Border Pass policy governing local residents' travel to Xinjiang province in China.

They have described the policy as "anti-poor" and urged the federal government intervene to address the

situation. Small traders, in particular, have threatened to protest and block trade activities if their grievances are not addressed.

The GB residents have relied on the border pass for both trade and tourism, which was previously granted under border pass regulations.

In response to the updated border protocol, the GB home department issued a notice outlining revised standard operating procedures (SOPs) for issuing border passes.

Among the new requirements, applicants are now asked to submit documentation such as a bank statement showing Rs5 million in transactions, membership letters from chambers of commerce, and business registration certificates.

These new SOPs have sparked strong opposition, particularly from small traders. Muhammad Ali, senior vice president of the Nagar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, expressed his opposition to the revised conditions, calling them unjustified and harmful to the socio-economic fabric of Gilgit-Baltistan.

He emphasised that the primary purpose of the border pass system is to help small traders and business owners by facilitating trade and promoting regional economic development. He argued that the new conditions, including the high financial requirements, are impractical for small business owners who rely on cross-border trade to support their

livelihoods. He warned that these measures would disproportionately affect small traders and push the region into poverty.

He urged the authorities to revoke the notification, calling for measures that would promote economic activity and alleviate poverty.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1887756/new-border-pass-rules-spark-backlash-in-gb>

‘AJK’ President calls for accelerated efforts towards sustainable progress

The Nation, 26 January 2025

‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’ (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has emphasized the need to gear up efforts to ensure sustainable development in the region, providing relief to ordinary citizens. This call to action came during a meeting with ‘AJK’ Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Chaudhry at the Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis on Saturday. On this occasion, President Chaudhry stressed that accelerating efforts at all levels is crucial for the region’s sustainable progress. This includes addressing the needs of ordinary citizens and promoting development that benefits all segments of society. In a separate meeting with Kashmiri diaspora leaders from the UK and Italy, President Chaudhry also urged the global Kashmiri community to observe India’s Republic Day on January 26 as a Black Day.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jan-2025/ajk-president-calls-for-accelerated-efforts-towards-sustainable-progress>

Economic Developments

LoS extension stays pending: Chinese firm agrees to delay Kohala project

Business Recorder, 22 January 2025

Chinese company China Three Gorges South Asia Investment (SCAIL), has reportedly agreed to delay its 1,124 MW Kohala Hydropower Project because Letter of Support (LoS) extension remains pending due to concerns raised by the Power Division regarding electricity costs and the review of IGCEP framework, well-informed sources told Business Recorder.

The Power Division maintains that it will not accept new project in the IGCEP, even if it is a strategic project, whose cost is to be passed on to consumers.

The project had achieved the Commercial Operation Date (COD) of Pakistan's first 720 MW Karot Hydropower Project on June 29, 2022.

Kohala hydropower project: PPIB board approves extension of financial close date

In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SCIAL, Zhou Qiang stated that as a pioneer investor in Pakistan's renewable energy landscape, China Three Gorges began its journey with establishment of a 50 MW wind farm in 2014.

Through its subsidiary, SCAIL, the company is committed to developing sustainable energy solutions, including

the advancement of the 1,124 MW Kohala and 640 MW Mahl Hydropower projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). These initiatives align with both countries shared vision of providing clean and affordable electricity to the nation.

According to the Chinese firm, the 1,124 MW Kohala hydropower project, a strategic initiative, has achieved significant milestones, including signing of the Implementation Agreement (IA), Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and Water Use Agreement (WUA). Both the EPC contractor and owner's engineer have also been appointed. However, financial closure has been delayed due to issues related to Sinasure insurance.

The Letter of Support (LoS) issued by PPIB was initially valid until September 30, 2024. Following the request on May 31, 2024, the PPIB Board approved an extension of the financial closing date to September 2027 during its 144th meeting.

While the performance guarantee, of \$ 5.62 million has been extended to December 2027, the LoS extension remains pending due to concerns raised by the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) regarding electricity costs and the IGCEP framework under NEPRA's review. "We fully understand challenges confronting Pakistan's power sector, including surplus capacity, high tariffs, and significant capacity payments to IPPs.

However, hydropower projects like the Kohala HPP, with a useful life

exceeding 100 years, offer unmatched long-term benefits compared to other renewable energy technologies. Their development is critical for Pakistan's sustainable energy future," said CEO SCAIL.

The Chinese Company argued that in the light of challenges and opportunities, it suggests measured adjustment to the Kohala Hydropower project's development timeline, aligning its commissioning with future demand growth. During this period, the company will also reassess the project's design, cost and financing structure to ensure a competitive and affordable tariff.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40343937>

Ground-breaking of first Daanish School performed in 'AJK': PM explains how default averted

Business Recorder, 23 January 2025

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday performed ground breaking of the first Daanish School Science and Technology Centre of Excellence in Bhimber, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), marking a significant milestone in the area's educational development.

The prime minister expressed his commitment to establishing more Daanish Schools in AJK and other underdeveloped areas of the country, aiming to provide quality education to talented and intelligent children who lack access to educational facilities.

Addressing the ground breaking ceremony of the AJK's first Daanish School Center of Science and Technology Center of Excellence in Bhimber, the prime minister termed the establishment of Daanish School in AJK as a welcoming sign.

Danish Schools to be established across Sindh, Balochistan: PM

He said that the project of Daanish Schools was the brainchild of his leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif which were initially aimed at providing quality education to the talented and intelligent children of the less developed areas of Punjab whose parents were unable to bear their education expenses.

"Thousands of students are now serving different key departments after completing their studies from Daanish Schools," he added.

He said the talented orphans and poor children were enrolled in Daanish Schools which would bring educational revolution in the country.

He informed that the children in the schools get free books, meals and boarding facilities. Similarly, he said the school's buildings would be totally separate for girls and boys.

He announced that more Daanish Schools will be opened soon in Neelum and other areas of AJK. Similarly, he said more Daanish Schools will also be opened soon in Gilgit Baltistan, Balochistan and merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister said all funds for the schools will be paid by the federal government.

He directed the relevant authorities to construct and operationize the school within one year.

The prime minister said due to the incumbent government's prudent steps, the inflation rate and subsequently the policy rate had come down significantly, besides the country's exports and foreign remittances also witnessed notable increase.

He said the World Bank, in its 10-years plan, had also allocated US\$20 billion for various projects in Pakistan.

"We have saved the country from falling into default by resolving key economic challenges," he said adding that the government was committed to successfully complete the programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

PM Shehbaz Sharif noted that the country could not see development and prosperity until complete eradication of the menace of terrorism from the country.

"Pakistan armed forces and the security forces are rendering great sacrifices in war against terrorism which must be acknowledged," he said adding that unrest in the country was incurring a huge loss of around Rs 190 billion every day.

He expressed the confidence that those conspiring against the country will fail.

The prime minister pointed out that the people of Occupied Kashmir who were fighting for their independence will be happy to see their brothers getting such high standard education facilities.

He said that the chief ministers of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan were taking steps to provide the best possible facilities in education and health sectors.

The prime minister added that "as long as the people of Kashmir do not get their right to self-determination according to the United Nations resolutions, we will continue our political, moral, and diplomatic support".

"The Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, is firmly committed to supporting our Kashmiri brothers. The sacrifices of the Kashmiris will not go in vain, they will attain freedom", he added.

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Anwar-ul-Haq said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had illuminated the path of knowledge by establishing a Daanish School in Bhimber, an underdeveloped district.

"This is his credit, and we are grateful for the launch of this great project. This is a game-changer initiative," he added.

He said the Kashmiris will unite and confront Indian state terrorism. "India is engaging in propaganda to divert attention from its atrocities and human rights violations in occupied Kashmir."

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Amir Muqam, expressed gratitude for the establishment of the Daanish School project in Azad Kashmir.

He said four Daanish Schools will be established in Azad Kashmir.

Federal Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that the Daanish Schools initiative had now been launched in Kashmir.

“Nations develop through educational progress. We are striving to promote modern education in line with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif’s vision,” he added.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40344139>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Day of 26 January be celebrated as day of protest and black day: Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat

Urdu Point, 23 January 2025

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi before coming to Srinagar’s Lal Chowk on 26 January and ahead of challenging the Kashmiri people should release Masrat Alam Bhat, Mohammad Yaseen Malik, and Sayeeda Asiya Andrabi from jails. The day of 26 January should be celebrated as black day and a day of protest.

Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir takes note of one of the statement of India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi in which he has mentioned that he will reach historic Lal Chowk on 26 January without any

security and bullet proof protectives. Terming this statement of him as a political one, Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat has said that the Prime Minister of an ‘occupied nation’ after stationing lakhs of soldiers in Kashmir are threatening the people of the Kashmiri nation.

They said now Narendra Modi should show some bravery by releasing Masrat Alam Bhat, Mohammad Yaseen Malik, and Sayeeda Asiya Andrabi from jails and democratically allow them to do people’s protest, and then Narendra Modi, the central government of Delhi, and lakhs of stationed soldiers will get to know fury of Kashmiri people. Aziz Ahmad Gazali said that India has forcibly ‘occupied Kashmir’, and Kashmiri people never accepted the sovereignty of Indian forces and will never tolerate India army’s control of the territory.

The people of Kashmir have suffered at the hands of Indian army and to fight this, they have led an intense struggle. Gazali said that on both the sides of the cease-fire line and Kashmiris living in different parts of the world should celebrate 26 January as both black day and day of protest.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4307136.html>

No compromise over resources and basic rights

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 20 January 2025

Rights over the resources of the state and no compromises can be made over

the basic rights, and until the charter of demands are accepted struggle will continue. The state assembly has not only failed to protect people's rights but also failed in facilitating basic convenience to the people. Such thoughts were shared by the leaders of the PNP, Muneeb Ashfaq Ahmad Abdullah and Raja Arsalan Aabid in their joint statement mentioned. The leaders raised concerns that resources are being exploited and even the major employment opportunities are controlled by the federal government. They raised the concerns that forged domiciles are being provided to change the demography of the region. Strict and quick measures be taken so that the efforts of providing these forged domicile certificates are arrested at the earliest.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Resize-of-PAGE-03-1-15.jpg>

Chinese foreign investment in 'Azad Kashmir' pleasing: Barrister Sultan

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 22 January 2025

President 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', Barrister Sultan Mohammad Chaudhary said that 'Azad Kashmir' is blessed with vast mineral and natural resources, and at the same time it is a beautiful scenic place with promising dividends in tourism sector. Furthermore, this place is peaceful and there is hardly turmoil in this region. As such, foreign investments for 'Azad Kashmir' is pleasing and we should

continue to provide such facilities and discounts. 'Azad Kashmir' has abundant precious stones, especially Robi.

Such thoughts were shared by Sultan Chaudhary in Presidential house Islamabad while meeting a Chinese company's director, Li Ping. Li Ping briefed President Chaudhary that his company works in China, Pakistan and other foreign nations, and possesses expertise in constructing tunnels, building towns, and other construction works. This company now intends to start its project work in 'Azad Kashmir' too. On this occasion, President Chaudhary expressed happiness and complete trust with Chinese foreign investment and underscored that on government front and also on every other platform, it will support and cooperate for the endeavour. On this occasion director Li Ping forwarded an invitation of China's visit to President Chaudhary, which he readily accepted and told that on appropriate time he will make a visit to China, where he will invite the Chinese companies to make foreign investment in 'Azad Kashmir'.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Resize-of-PAGE-03-1-16.jpg>

From Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

26 January 2025

#GilgitBaltistan, which has been included in a list of the top 25

destinations worth visiting in 2025, by CNN, is without electricity for 22 hours daily.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1883273606945476817>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

22 January 2025

Dr. Bahadur Shah will hold a nationwide strike against pension cuts and cruel measures against employees.

#government #employees #protest #pension #deductions #pakistan

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1882108511473332519>

PAMIR Times @pamirtimes

20 January 2025

Gilgit Baltistan: A Region at the Crossroads of Geopolitics

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1881369636383666289>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

20 January 2025

Tour operators' concerns over the steep hike in royalty & mountaineering fees, termed the decision is detrimental to the region's growing adventure tourism sector.

No single expedition or trekking group plan to visit #GilgitBaltistan this winter.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1881265746803904720>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

23 January 2025

National Winter Games winner Gilgit-Baltistan Girls Hockey Team receives grand welcome in their native area of Gojal, Hunza

#Girls #hockey #Team #gilgitbaltistan #Hunza #gojal #reception

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1882157400649781488>

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Compiled by

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

Edited By

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

Disclaimer

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: pokdigest@gmail.com