

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 5 | Issue 8

17 February - 23 February 2025

POK
protest
Gilgit-Baltistan
charter of demands
educational disparities
Diamer Bhasha Dam
Karakoram Highway
financial package
Diamer Basha
royalty



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

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

Contents

Political Developments

- Govt forms committee to resolve demands of Diamer Basha protesters
- Gilgit-Baltistan Cracks Down on Poor Matric Results: 25 Educators Penalized in Major Overhaul!
- NA iterates nation's support to Kashmiris
- "Huqooq Do, Dam Banao" protests Intensify as Affected Communities Demand Rights
- Nefarious attempt by Indian extremists to erase history and culture of Kashmir will not succeed: Information Minister
- PM forms body to address grievances over Bhasha Dam
- Erasing Kashmir
- The Education Crisis in Gilgit-Baltistan: Challenges and the Need for Reform
- Citizens affected by Diamer Dam vow to continue sit-in at Chilas
- Hepatitis C elimination initiative launched in G-B
- Revisiting General Musharraf's Solution to the Kashmir Imbroglio

Economic Developments

- CDS and COMEX sign MoU

Vernacular Urdu Media

- Shah Ghulam Qadir to contest both seats of the Neelum Valley
- Confiscation of Islamic and historical Kashmir literature in 'Occupied Kashmir', Hurriyat Conference Expresses Concern
- Indian security forces measures of erasing Kashmir culture won't be successful: Information Minister

Political Developments

Govt forms committee to resolve demands of Diamer Basha protesters

Dawn, 18 February 2025

The federal government on Monday decided to form a high-level committee to address the grievances of locals protesting against the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) in Gilgit Baltistan's (GB) Diamer for not compensating locals for their land acquired to build the Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

Thousands of people gathered to protest Wapda in the airport area in Chilas over the weekend, accusing Wapda of renegeing on its commitments and giving the authority a week to meet their demands. They said they would stop construction work on the dam if their demands were not fulfilled.

Their demands include the settlement of 18,000 acres of land acquired by Wapda without compensation, the disbursement of the chula package to over 2,500 households, the provision of residential and agricultural land for affected people and the appointment of locals on posts in the dam project.

According to a press release from the GB Chief Minister's House, a high-level meeting was chaired by the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and GB Amir Muqam in Islamabad, where the decision was made to form a high-level committee to address the protesters' grievances.

The press release said the committee would visit the area within the next two days to listen to the protesters' grievances and make decisions to implement their demands.

Speaking at the meeting, GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan — who hails from Diamer — said that “the feeling of deprivation agitated those affected” due to the non-implementation of decisions by Wapda.

“The delay of disbursing the household's package and the unnecessary delay in implementing confidence-building measures aggravated the situation,” he said.

Muqam said that the legitimate demands of the protesters would be implemented “considering their sacrifices”, according to the statement.

“A high-level committee will be formed as per the demands of the Diamer Basha Dam protesters after taking instructions from the prime minister of Pakistan,” Muqam was quoted as saying.

“The committee will visit GB in the next two days and talk with affected people to take comprehensive decisions to resolve their legitimate demands as per their Charter of Demand.”

Meanwhile, protesters refused to call off the demonstration and the 40-member council of the protest movement decided to continue for the next two days.

They said that the prime minister should form an authorised ministerial committee to negotiate with protesters, warning that if their demands were not met by the end of the new deadline, Plan B would be announced, which would be “very dangerous”.

Speaking to the protesters today, GB Agriculture Minister Engineer Muhammad Anwar and Adviser on Forests Shah Baig assured demonstrators of their full support and to hold Wapda officials responsible for the agitation.

The head of the protest movement, Maulana Hazratullah, said that Wapda should stop construction work on the dam until the demands were met.

He said that the people of Diamer had “sacrificed their native homes, land, graveyard, culture, history [and] everything for [the] construction of the Diamer Bhasha Dam project for national interest”.

He said that the affected people had been deprived of their rights and agreements made with them had been violated.

PPP Local President Amjad Hussain, as well as leaders from other parties and social, political and religious organisations in other districts of GB, announced their solidarity with the protesters. They warned that if the protesters’ demands were not met, the demonstration would be widened across the territory.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1892591>

Gilgit-Baltistan Cracks Down on Poor Matric Results: 25 Educators Penalized in Major Overhaul!

Pamir Times, 18 February 2025

The Gilgit-Baltistan government has initiated strict departmental action against 25 headmasters, principals, and teachers over the poor results of the 2024 matriculation exams. According to an official notification, these officers were issued show-cause notices due to their unsatisfactory performance. After reviewing their responses, the Chief Secretary decided to impose various penalties.

The Education Department has imposed major penalties on 12 officers, including demotion in grade for six individuals, forced retirement for five, and a two-grade demotion for one officer.

The Gilgit-Baltistan Education Department has made it clear that these measures have been taken to improve educational standards and address poor performance. Further strict actions are expected in the future.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/02/17/gilgit-baltistan-cracks-down-on-poor-matric-results-25-educators-penalized-in-major-overhaul/>

NA iterates nation’s support to Kashmiris

Business Recorder, 19 February 2025

The National Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution reiterating Pakistan would continue its moral, political and diplomatic support

to the people of Kashmir for their struggle and right to self-determination.

The resolution was moved by Minister for Kashmir Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam in the House. The House, unanimously, passed the resolution.

The resolution urged India to implement the UN Security Council resolutions to allow the Kashmiri people exercise their democratic right and determine their future through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the UN's supervision.

The resolution paid glowing tributes to the sacrifices of Kashmiri people. It called on India to improve the human rights situation in the 'illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir', release detained Kashmiri leaders and revoke all oppressive laws.

Strongly condemning India's blatant human rights violations in the 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) and the illegal actions taken on 5th August 2019, the resolution emphasised that no political process in the occupied territory could substitute the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.

It also strongly condemned provocative statements from Indian civilian and military leadership regarding 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan. The resolution underscored that resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in line with the UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people is vital for

ensuring peace and stability in South Asia.

In his remarks, Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam said the UN must play its role in resolving Jammu and Kashmir dispute. He reiterated that the people of Pakistan stand firmly by their Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

The resolution condemned systematic human rights violations in 'IIOJK' under draconian laws that defy the norms of justice. The resolution stressed that the solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, is essential for lasting peace in South Asia.

The National Commission for Minorities' Rights Bill, 2025, was laid before the House. The chair referred the bill to the standing committee concerned.

Earlier, the National Assembly proceedings resumed after a break called due to the lack of quorum. As the session resumed, Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa called for a headcount. After the counting, he declared the House in order.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40348812/naiterates-nations-support-to-kashmiris>

"Huqooq Do, Dam Banao" protests Intensify as Affected Communities Demand Rights

Pamir Times, 20 February 2025

Protests in Diamer over longstanding grievances related to the Diamer-

Bhasha Dam have intensified, with affected communities demanding fair compensation, access to essential services, and recognition of their rights. Political parties, civil society organizations, traders, and local leaders from different parts of the region have extended full support to the demonstrators, underscoring the legitimacy of their demands and calling for immediate government intervention.

Despite harsh winter conditions, the sit-in led by the “Huqooq Do, Dam Banao” (Give rights, build the Dam) movement has entered its fourth consecutive day at Bab-e-Chilas. Protesters have presented a 31-point charter of demands, urging authorities to fulfill commitments made in agreements dating back to 2010 and 2021. They have issued an ultimatum to the government, warning of escalated action if their demands remain unmet.

Among the protesters’ key demands are:

Immediate implementation of agreements signed with WAPDA in 2010 and the Diamer Graduate Alliance in 2021.

A fair reassessment of land compensation rates to reflect current market values as determined by the Gilgit-Baltistan government.

Issuance of Green Cards and Health Cards to all affectees for essential services and healthcare support.

Allocation of six kanals of agricultural land per affectee, as promised under the 2010 agreement.

Inclusion of every married couple in the Household Resettlement Package (Chulha Package).

Compensation and Chulha Package benefits for newly constructed homes built between 2015 and 2025.

The complete charter of demands can be read below:

In response to mounting pressure, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam, has convened an emergency meeting in Islamabad, bringing together WAPDA officials, the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, and other senior government representatives. The meeting aims to address critical issues, including compensation delays, pending infrastructure projects, and long-overdue confidence-building measures (CBMs) for displaced communities.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan strongly criticized WAPDA’s failure to implement previous agreements, warning that frustration among the affectees had reached a breaking point. He emphasized the urgent need to release “Missing Chulha” compensation and expedite long-delayed development projects to restore public trust.

In a major development, the federal government has announced the formation of a high-level ministerial committee tasked with visiting Chilas within two days to negotiate directly with protesters. However, protest leaders remain steadfast, granting only a two-day deadline for decisive

government action while making preparations for an extended sit-in if their demands remain unmet.

The movement has garnered widespread support from political groups, including the Awami Action Committee, Jamiat Ulama Islam (JUI) Gilgit-Baltistan, and the Awami Workers Party. Prominent leaders such as Amjad Hussain Advocate of PPP, Baba Jan of Awami Workers Party, Maulana Abdul Malik, and Nawaz Naji (BNF) have voiced their solidarity, further amplifying the protesters' call for justice. As participation swells, pressure on the authorities to resolve the grievances of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam affectees continues to intensify.

With the deadline fast approaching, the coming days will be critical. Protesters remain resolute in their demands, warning that failure to address their concerns could trigger an escalated movement, including a long march toward the dam site. The resolution of these longstanding issues will determine the future of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam project and its impact on local communities.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/02/20/protests-over-diamer-bhasha-dam-intensify-as-affected-communities-demand-rights/>

Nefarious attempt by Indian extremists to erase history and culture of Kashmir will not succeed: Information Minister

Daily Parliament Times, 19 February 2025

Information Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Maulana Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah has expressed

serious concern over the confiscation of Islamic and history books and properties of Kashmiris by the 'occupying Indian forces' in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir', saying that the nefarious attempt by Indian extremists to erase the history and culture of Kashmir will not succeed.

He said that after the unconstitutional, illegal and immoral action of 5th August 2019, India is continuously doing such heinous acts. India's target is Kashmiri Muslims. He said that under the agenda of the Indian extremist ruling RSS, India is imposing Hindutva-based curriculum in schools to erase the identity of Muslims, change their history and mislead the new generation of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that he appeals to human rights organizations and institutions to take notice of this brutality and extremism of India. He said that India is the mastermind of terrorism in this region, the peace of the entire region is at stake due to the nefarious tactics of India.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/02/19/nefarious-attempt-by-indian-extremists-to-erase-history-and-culture-of-kashmir-will-not-succeed-information-minister/>

PM forms body to address grievances over Bhasha Dam

Dawn, 21 February 2025

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday formed a seven-member committee to address the grievances of those affected by the Diamer-Bhasha Dam project. The decision came amid the continuation of a protest sit-in by the affected people in Chilas, the

district headquarters of Diamer, which has now lasted for five consecutive days.

According to an official notification, the committee will be chaired by the minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and Safron, with the minister for water resources acting as the co-chair. Other members of the committee include the GB chief minister and chief secretary, Kashmir Affairs, GB and Safron secretary and chairman of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). The notification also mentioned that additional members may be co-opted if required.

The Kashmir Affairs ministry will provide secretariat support to the committee to facilitate its operations and ensure effective coordination among all relevant stakeholders. The protest in Chilas intensified on Wednesday when demonstrators halted construction work on the periphery road of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam. The protest sit-in, which has been ongoing for five days, is part of a movement called “Give Rights and Build Dam,” led by local religious leaders. Protesters had set a two-day deadline for the implementation of their 31-point list of demands, which expired on Thursday.

Upon the expiration of the deadline, GB Home Minister Shams Lone, Minister for Forests Shah Baig and CM’s adviser Molana Sarvar Shah travelled to Chilas to negotiate with the protesters and convince them to end the protest. The GB government representatives expressed solidarity with the

protesters, informing them that the prime minister had formed a ministerial committee to begin talks, which was one of the protesters’ conditions for initiating negotiations with the government. Following the formation of the committee, the movement’s organising body, decided to postpone their Plan B – stop all kinds of construction work at the dam site.

However, they announced that the protest would continue until the newly formed federal committee engaged in negotiations. Earlier, talking to journalists, the GB home minister acknowledged the genuine nature of the dam-affected people’s demands, adding that the protest began after Wapda failed to implement agreements with the affected communities. The sit-in in Chilas was joined by a large number of political, religious and social activists from across the region who came to show their solidarity with the protesters.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1893256/pm-forms-body-to-address-grievances-over-bhasha-dam>

Erasing Kashmir

The Nation, 20 February 2025

The situation in ‘Indian-occupied Kashmir’ continues to deteriorate as India follows in the footsteps of its ideological counterpart, Israel, in its attempt to forcibly annex the Muslim-majority region. The goal is clear: to erase Muslim identity and alter the region’s demographics so completely that Kashmir ceases to exist as a distinct entity. Just as Israel has intensified its

brutality and cultural eradication of Palestinians, India has escalated its oppression in Kashmir.

Recently, Indian police raided dozens of bookshops in ‘occupied Kashmir’, seizing hundreds of copies of books written by Islamic scholar Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami. The party, which has long worked for the welfare of the Kashmiri people, was declared a banned organisation by the Hindu nationalist BJP government in 2019. Now, books authored by Maududi—regardless of their subject matter—are being confiscated, and Islamic literature is being outlawed. Books on Islamic history, culture, and morality are being purged from bookstores in an alarming effort to erase Islamic identity. This mirrors the situation in Israel, where bookshops in Jerusalem were recently raided, and any material deemed “offensive” by the Zionist regime was removed.

History teaches us that those who burn books and suppress free expression are never on the right side. Just as the Nazis burned books in the 1930s, today Israel and the Indian government are engaged in the same practice. This crackdown on literature is just one aspect of the ongoing settler-colonial project in Kashmir. Under the guise of infrastructure development, India is constructing new railways and roads that fragment Muslim communities, cutting them off from their own land and preventing their return. Such tactics constitute crimes under international law. The systematic oppression of Kashmir’s Muslim

identity is not just a legal violation—it is an affront to moral principles upheld by humanity for centuries.

Pakistan must continue to stand with the people of Kashmir with the same unwavering determination that Palestinians demonstrate in their struggle for liberation. This is our fight, and we must not falter.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Feb-2025/erasing-kashmir>

Indian security forces measures of erasing Kashmir culture won’t be successful: Information Minister

Pamir Times, 21 February 2025

The uniqueness of human beings among all creatures lies in their knowledge and intellectual evolution. A well-educated person and an uneducated one cannot be placed at the same level. That’s why, like other religions, Islam urges the education of both men and women. Quality education can bring a rapid change in society; it shapes the minds of the young generation and spreads awareness about the aims of human lives. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, quality education is the fundamental right of every citizen. Unfortunately, our public institutions have failed to offer two-thirds of that quality.

Despite the fact that well-educated scholars are being hired through merit-based evaluation by testing services, the poor performance in Gilgit-Baltistan erupted when the results of the elementary board came out last month. The majority of the educational

institutions failed to achieve even a 50% overall result, and the students who couldn't gain 40 marks in all subjects started protesting on Karakoram Highway to revise the passing marks to 33 out of 100. It is a mockery of the education department of Gilgit-Baltistan that decreased the passing marks to 33 after a handful of protesters blocked the KKH, rather than bringing effective reforms. The performance of the education department of GB became a burning topic on social media platforms.

Most public analysts are of the opinion that this is totally the fault and a sign of the unqualified teachers. Some blame the higher authorities of the department, while people serving in the institutions argue that the students in government schools are non-serious about their studies and their guardians have no concerns about the results. These might be valid reasons, but there are more grave issues; for instance, the insufficiency of teaching staff, lack of teacher training, the unapproved status of schools, technical gaps between curriculum and teachers, and flaws in administrative domains.

There are numerous schools across GB where the student-teacher ratio is 200:5. How can this limited staff manage the students who have just begun their careers? The insufficiency of staff means the insufficiency of class timing, which cannot fulfil the needs of students. Similarly, most of the teachers are unaware of modern teaching techniques. They haven't had the opportunity to attend training and workshops, while the curriculum is

designed according to the higher standards of modern education. The curriculum is a piece of paper until one knows how to deliver it; it depends upon a well-trained teacher who knows how to deliver.

Further, there are schools in our district Ghanche, like other districts of GB, which do not have approval to teach secondary levels. On an emergency basis, the local educational committee, after negotiating with the community, decides to offer secondary levels in a middle school with the collaboration of that particular community. They hire teachers on low wages to teach the lower stages, while the qualified permanent teachers teach secondary classes. Surely, this may be a huge compulsion of the society that education is one of the necessities of youngsters, but there is no opportunity for them, so they make it themselves.

For instance, there are two government schools in our village Yugo; the girls' school has the approval for primary level schooling, yet it is offering secondary education, while the boys' school is approved to teach only till middle level, yet it is also offering secondary education. This means the public demand is far higher than what the government is facilitating. These statuses were approved almost thirty years ago, and until now, they have not been upgraded despite huge demands. This technical flaw shows how our education department is working to uplift or upgrade its institutions.

Last but not least, another factor is flaws in education administration

domain. Our administrative setup comes from promotions rather than test-based selections, and the promotions have no relation to performance. That's why there is no way for changes in our educational institutions.

To conclude, there is a high demand for an educational emergency in Gilgit-Baltistan. The authorities must sit together and discuss effective solutions. The issues of insufficient staff, lack of teacher training, unapproved school statuses, technical gaps between curriculum and teachers, and flaws in administrative domains must be resolved on an emergency basis so that every child from every corner of Gilgit-Baltistan can avail of the right to quality education at their doorstep. Otherwise, we can say the world is progressing through artificial intelligence, and we are moving backward into backwardness.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/02/21/the-education-crisis-in-gilgit-baltistan-challenges-and-the-need-for-reform/>

Citizens affected by Diamer Dam vow to continue sit-in at Chilas

Dawn, 23 February 2025

The first meeting of the federal committee discussed issues of Diamer-Basha Dam affected people and decided to meet their genuine demands as thousands of protesters continued their sit-in at Chilas for the sixth consecutive day on Saturday.

The protesters announced that they would not allow the government to

complete the dam until their 31-point charter of demands was met. The first meeting of the committee, constituted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif recently to address the grievances of the affected people, was held in Islamabad on Saturday with Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam in the chair.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Water Resources Musadik Hussain Malik, GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, Wapda Chairman retired Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani,

Committee formed by prime minister holds maiden meeting and promises to resolve genuine issues of affected people. Secretary Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Zafar Hassan, GB Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza and others.

Speaking on the occasion, Amir Muqam said resolving the legitimate demands of the affected people of the dam was the priority of the federal government. He said as per the instructions of the prime minister, speedy work on compensations, water and sanitation schemes, schools and other projects was underway. He said that on the demand of the GB chief minister he will soon visit Diamer and meet the representatives of the dam affected people.

The minister for water resources said legitimate issues of the affected people would be resolved by Wapda. Meanwhile, the protesters in Chilas vowed to continue their sit-in till the fulfilment of their demands.

Maulana Hazratullah, the head of the movement, said conspiracies were being hatched to sabotage the protest movement which had been started with the support of all tribes, political, religious parties, youth and social organisations. It was also backed by the GB government. He said without resolving the issues of the affected people, the dam could not be built.

He said local people sacrificed everything for the project but the government was reluctant to solve the genuine demands of the local people who were going to be displaced after completion of the dam.

The 31 points charter of demands included 80 per cent royalty of Diamer Dam and 30pc royalty of Dasso Dam for Gilgit-Baltistan; free electricity to Diamer district and on discounted rate to the people of GB from Diamer Dam, compensation for 18,000 acres acquired for the dam, financial package for the remaining 3,000 families of affected by the dam, commercial and residential plots, education, health, sewerage projects, appointments of local people on the dam project from grade 1 to grade 16 and regularisation of contingent and daily wage employees.

Meanwhile, a large number of people from other areas also arrived in Chilas to show solidarity with the protesters. Opposition leader in GB assembly Kazim Mesum said the federal government through Wapda committed injustices with Diamer Basha Dam affected people, adding local people have awakened for their rights. The opposition leader said the

federal government exploited GB people's rights.

He warned the government to settle the issues without further delay otherwise the protest movement would be expanded to other areas.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1893656>

Hepatitis C elimination initiative launched in G-B

Express Tribune, 22 February 2025

The government has launched an initiative in two districts of Gilgit-Baltistan to combat the spread of Hepatitis C, as part of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Hepatitis C Elimination Program, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Barth, spokesperson for the Ministry of Health announced. Dr. Barth highlighted the importance of controlling the disease, as Pakistan has now been ranked as the country with the highest prevalence of Hepatitis C globally.

As part of the program, a pilot project has been initiated in two locations in Gilgit-Baltistan, namely MC Chilas in Diamer and UC Mirkhunja in Shigar, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Development Network.

This project aims to provide free screening and treatment facilities to the local population. Dr. Barth further stated that after evaluating the outcomes of the pilot project, the central program will be expanded this year to all districts of Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, and 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir', followed by a nationwide rollout across all provinces.

Highlighting the severity of the issue, Dr. Barth noted that Hepatitis C is a major public health concern in Pakistan, which now leads the world in its prevalence. To combat the crisis, the Ministry of Health has launched a Rs68 billion Hepatitis C Elimination Program in collaboration with all four provinces.

A comprehensive strategy has been devised to curb the widespread transmission of the disease. Dr. Barth underscored that Hepatitis C can be treated with a three-month course of medication. However, early detection remains a significant challenge.

Timely screening and treatment are essential in preventing liver failure and liver cancer among affected individuals.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2530202/hepatitis-c-elimination-initiative-launched-in-gilgit-baltistan>

Revisiting General Musharraf's Solution to the Kashmir Imbrolio

Friday Times, 22 February 2025

In early 2007, eight years after he had launched a covert military operation in Kargil, General Pervez Musharraf, as president of Pakistan and the army chief, offered a peace plan to India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh.

The plan was realistic and ambitious. It recognised that both India and Pakistan laid a claim to all of Jammu and Kashmir going back to their independence in August 1947. They had fought two major wars, one in 1947-48 and one in 1965, that were focused exclusively on Kashmir.

In July 1972, Prime Ministers Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan and Indira Gandhi of India signed the Simla Peace Agreement. It was mostly focused on the return of Pakistani prisoners of war, but it also touched upon Kashmir. What was hitherto known as the Cease-Fire Line was renamed the Line of Control. Other than that, nothing substantive was agreed upon.

Since then, India repeatedly claimed that it was ready to discuss all issues with Pakistan besides Kashmir. It also stated that it did not want to internationalize the dispute. Pakistan repeatedly said it regarded Kashmir as the core issue between the two countries and sought a multilateral solution. The impasse seemed to be permanent.

After the failure of the Kargil incursion, which elicited worldwide condemnation, Musharraf was convinced that Pakistan could not wrest Kashmir by force. He began to pursue a negotiated solution with India in 2004 through a "The Back Channel." In April 2005, he visited India at Singh's invitation.

The diplomacy that occurred during the Back Channel was described in 2009 in *The New Yorker* by renowned journalist and author, Steve Coll. Later, he appeared on NPR's *Fresh Air*. The solution envisioned that Kashmir would become an autonomous region in which Kashmiris would move freely across the Line of Control and trade with each other. Over time, the LoC would

become irrelevant, and declining violence would allow a gradual demilitarisation of the region.

Musharraf gathered his formation commanders at GHQ in Rawalpindi and told them Pakistan's *raison d'être* was not to live in permanent enmity with India. The *raison d'être* was Pakistan's permanent security. He asked, "what is security?" He said that it was the safety of our borders and our economic development. He added that war was no longer an option for either side since both had nuclear weapons.

He asked the corps commanders to put their hands on their hearts and tell him if Kashmir would gain freedom without negotiating a settlement with India. He also told the corps commanders that peace with India would produce economic benefits that would strengthen Pakistan and the military. The Army had a fifteen-year development plan which would only be achieved through rapid economic growth.

Through that speech, he brought about a big change in the thinking of the corps commanders about Kashmir and India. They began to focus on the economy of Pakistan and how the world viewed Pakistan, rather than warfare.

At the same time, a fundamental change in India's strategic thinking also began to take place. After 2002, India's economic outlook changed dramatically, and it began to see itself as a rising power. The ranks of its middle-class consumers swelled. Indian strategists began to visualise

their country rising to a great power status by the mid-21st century.

They began to realise that a catastrophic war with Pakistan - or Pakistan's collapse into chaos - would stand in the way of India's greatness. "We were convinced these two countries must learn to live in accord--must," Jaswant Singh, who was India's foreign minister, said.

On 8 January 2007, Manmohan Singh remarked in public, "I dream of a day, while retaining our respective national identities, one can have breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore, and dinner in Kabul." Singh's decision-making was grounded in military realism. If India were to launch even selective strikes at targets in Pakistan, it would likely deepen Pakistan's internal turmoil and thus exacerbate the terrorist threat faced by India.

Any Indian military action would also risk an escalation that could include nuclear deployments - which may be precisely what the jihadi leaders hoped to provoke. "There is no military option here," Lalit Mansingh, a former Indian Ambassador in Washington, said. India had to "isolate the terrorist elements" in Pakistan, he said, not "rally the nation around them."

Peace was at hand. And then tragedy struck. In March 2007, Musharraf overplayed his hand domestically and fired the Chief Justice of Pakistan. That unleashed an outcry across the length and breadth of the political spectrum.

His standing in the nation was shattered. He was no longer able to

strike a deal with Singh. Pressure mounted on the general to step down from the army and “remove his uniform,” which he had called his “second skin.”

In July 2007, the Red Mosque incident occurred in Islamabad and Musharraf’s harsh response drew widespread condemnation. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was likely to succeed Musharraf, was allowed to return to the country. Sadly, she was assassinated in December 2007.

Musharraf declared a state of emergency. The US withdrew its support, triggering his political death spiral. He exited the stage in August 2008.

In November, terrorists concerned that peace might break out between India and Pakistan attacked Mumbai. That halted the Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Twenty-one years have elapsed since Pakistan began a peace dialogue with India. It is time for the leaders of both countries to resume the Back Channel dialogue. The quality of life of the 1.7 billion inhabitants of the two countries will improve dramatically if Pakistan permanently calls off the Jihad to liberate Jammu and Kashmir, accepts the Line of Control as the international border with India, and begins to trade with India.

Of course, this will only happen if India extends the hand of friendship to Pakistan, the much smaller sibling, drops its accusatory stance and temper, and offers Pakistan “substantial”

concessions in other areas. Will Prime Minister Modi seize the moment?

<https://thefridaytimes.com/22-Feb-2025/revisiting-general-musharraf-s-solution-to-the-kashmir-imbroglio>

[Economic Developments](#)

CDS and COMEX sign MoU

Business Recorder, 20 February 2025

In a significant step toward promoting Pakistan’s IT sector on the global stage, the Centre for Digital Solutions (CDS) and COMEX have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the COMEX head office in Muscat, Oman.

The partnership aims to promote the COMEX 2025 exhibition in Pakistan, opening new avenues for Pakistani IT companies to showcase their innovations at the GCC region’s largest technology event.

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by key dignitaries, including CEO COMEX Amr Abdullah Babood, senior COMEX team members Haseena, Huziafa, and Hina, along with CDS Director General Dr Irfan Ashraf.

Scheduled for September 2025 in Oman, COMEX 2025 will feature cutting-edge technologies, products, and services, providing a strategic platform for Pakistani IT firms to connect with global industry leaders and investors. The collaboration is expected to boost Pakistan’s IT sector by fostering innovation, growth, and international partnerships.

Under this initiative, CDS aims to engage the federal and provincial governments, including 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan, to ensure a unified national presence at the exhibition. This collaborative effort will enable Pakistan to effectively showcase its technological advancements, attract foreign investment, and create business opportunities for local IT firms.

Pakistan's IT industry has achieved a major milestone, generating \$1.8 billion in export revenue in the first half of the 2024-25 fiscal year. With COMEX 2025 providing an ideal platform for further expansion, this collaboration presents a valuable opportunity for the government and private sector to explore new markets and partnerships.

Through a comprehensive national participation strategy, Pakistan aims to highlight its digital transformation, innovation, and IT capabilities to a global audience, strengthening its position in the international tech ecosystem.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40348933/cds-and-comex-sign-mou>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Shah Ghulam Qadir to contest both seats of the Neelum Valley

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 18 February 2025

Upon frequent demand from the workers President Pakistan Muslim League (N) 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'

Shah Ghulam Qadir has decided to fight the elections from both the seats of the Neelum Valley. While interacting with the media, Ghulam Qadir told that in the upcoming elections, his party will display an overwhelming performance. He further said that the elections in 'Azad Kashmir' can happen at any time. The workers of the PML-N should prepare for the upcoming elections. The current government's performance is zero. There is no tangible development on the ground and this comes to question the performance of the current government. Shah Ghulam Qadir said that the fate of adhoc employees in 'AJK' remains uncertain. He further said that the PML-N remains the largest political organisation of the region and expects two-third majority. He further said that the future of the party is great and also underscored that there remains no fractures within the party.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Resize-of-PAGE-03-2-6.jpg>

Confiscation of Islamic and historical Kashmir literature in 'Occupied Kashmir', Hurriyat Conference Expresses Concern

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 18 February 2025

Under the administration of Governor Manoj Sinha, the Indian government has started an operation in 'occupied Kashmir' against the Islamic and literature to Kashmir history. Hurriyat

Conference has expressed deep concern over the confiscation of the literature. The government's agenda is clear, which is to take away its Islamic identity and change the demographic composition. The Hurriyat Conference in their statement, issued by the leader Advocate Abdul Rashid Manhas said that the BJP government as per the directives of the RSS agenda is trying to erase the Muslim identity of Kashmir and wants to mislead the new generation of Kashmir, and as such wants to set the school curriculum aligning that design. In the statement it was also mentioned that the plan is to evict the Kashmiris from their land, homes and their properties.

Indian security forces measures of erasing Kashmir culture won't be successful: Information Minister

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 20 February 2025

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Information minister Maulana Peer Mohammad Mazhar Sayeed Shah has expressed deep concern over the seizure of books related to Islamic history and Kashmir history by the Indian security forces. He said that the efforts by the extremist forces to eliminate the Kashmir history and culture won't be successful. Even after the 5 August 2019 unconstitutional, unlawful and unethical decision, the governments continues to undertake such actions. The government of India's target remains Kashmiri Muslims. The information minister

said that the India's extremist leaders are following the rule book of the RSS and as per that it wants to eliminate its Kashmiri identity and wants to change the demography of the region.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-20.jpg>

From Social Media

AMMAR ALI JAAN @ammaralijaan

18 February 2025

An incredible movement is taking place in Diامر called "Haqooq do, Dam banao" by affectees of Diامر Bhasha Dam. State has not compensated people for the land taken for the project. Such land grab is widespread because people are considered disposable. But GB is fighting back!

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/ammaralijan/status/1891903366185316861>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

19 February 2025

The protest for rights of Diامر Basha Dam affected people intensified as protesters blocked Dam periphery road, deadline ends tomorrow, organisers announced for massive participation, situation getting worse, government waiting an incident, WAPDA being blamed for the agitation

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1892249840483979367>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

20 February 2025

Fully support the "Haqooq do, Dam banao" movement, says Interior Minister Shams Loon

#homeminitar #GilgitBaltistan
#DiAmerBashaDam #protest

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1892639714793951396>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

19 February 2025

Protest sit-in in Chilas continued for the last 3 days, demanding rights for those affected by the DiAmer Basha Dam. #GilgitBaltistan, where the project is being established is a disputed territory, the government even denied basic rights of locals, situation getting worse....

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1891942680424300883>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

13 February 2025

Students who scored 33 instead of 40 will pass. The Department of Education has implemented a new formula.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1890062680062668888>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

21 February 2025

The Education Crisis in Gilgit-Baltistan: Challenges and the Need for Reform

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1892808818842619953>

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 5 | Issue 8

17 February - 23 February 2025

Compiled by

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

Edited By

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

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.



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