

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Gilgit-Baltistan wheat
tourism subsidy
Neelum-Jhelum
hydropower **POK**



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

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Political Developments

‘Indian troops mercilessly killing, maiming innocent people in IIOJK’: report

The Nation, 6 March 2023

A report released by Kashmir Media Service claimed that Indian troops are ‘mercilessly killing, maiming and harassing’ the innocent Kashmiris in ‘Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IIOJK). The report claimed that India has accelerated the process of changing ‘IIOJK’s demography through ‘massacres’ and that international experts have also warned of the impending danger of ‘genocide’ in the ‘occupied territory.’ It added that 96,180 Kashmiris had been ‘martyred’ by Indian troops in the last 33 years in ‘IIOJK’. The report deplored that Indian troops, instead of being punished, were ‘rewarded’ for killing innocent people in the territory and the accused are enjoying impunity under the garb of draconian laws. It said the United Nations and other international human rights organizations should come to the rescue of helpless Kashmiris as it is time to tell India, clearly and forcefully, to stop the ‘genocide’ of the Kashmiris in the ‘occupied territory.’

<https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Mar-2023/indian-troops-mercilessly-killing-maiming-innocent-people-in-iiojk-report>

Altaf Wani-led 10-member Kashmir delegation leaves for Geneva to attend 52nd UNHRC Session in Geneva

Daily Parliament Times, 6 March 2023

A ten-member Kashmiri delegation hailing from both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) left for Geneva to attend the 52nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The Chairman of the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) Altaf Hussain Wani led the Kashmiri delegation, besides attending the UNHRC session, is scheduled to attend a host of important meetings with the UNHRC high commissioner, special rapporteurs, diplomats, and representatives of international NGOs. The main objective of the visit is to bring to focus the ongoing human rights violations in ‘Indian-occupied Kashmir’, in particular the rising incidents of ‘extrajudicial killings’, mass destruction of properties, clampdown on dissent, attacks on people’s right to education and religious rights and the plight of Kashmiri prisoners. The delegation would also apprise the world audience of the Indian government’s ‘sinister designs’ aimed at changing the demographics of the region and its anti-Kashmir policies intended to minimize the majority community’s role in the decision-making process and reduce their political representation in

the legislature by granting voting rights to non-Kashmiris.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/06/52nd-unhrc-session-in-geneva-alf-wani-led-10-member-kashmir-delegation-leaves-for-geneva-to-attend/>

Opinion divided over move to make hijab mandatory in 'AJK' schools

Dawn, 7 March 2023

An order of an 'urgent nature', requiring the heads of the co-educational institutions in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) to compulsorily enforce the observance of the hijab (veil) by female students and teachers drew a mixed reaction after it was widely shared and reported on social and traditional media. However, 'AJK' Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Deewan Ali Khan Chughtai defended the move, saying it had been taken in consultation with parents and teachers. A circular issued with the signatures of a deputy director of the 'AJK's Directorate General of Elementary and Secondary Education noted that, 'it has been observed that the female students/teachers are not made to wear hijab in institutions where co-education is practiced. Therefore, under the passed-on instructions, female students/teachers should be strictly bound to wear hijab.' the circular warned that in case of violation of 'instructions,' 'disciplinary' proceedings under rules shall be initiated against the heads of the institutions concerned. A copy of the

notification sent to the Poonch division was shared on social media, drawing a mixed response from netizens, with some criticizing the move and some appreciating it. Journalist Murtaza Solangi likened it to the 'AJK' PM 'breaking the shackles of slavery', a reference to ex-PM Imran Khan's comment regarding the Afghan Taliban after they took over Kabul in 2021.

Mr. Chughtai said that the 'AJK' government 'have done it exactly in observance of the injunctions of Almighty Allah and His Messenger. The women have been ordained to wear veils and men have been ordained to lower their gaze.' The minister maintained that in some rural areas, the government could not establish separate high and higher secondary schools for girls, mainly due to resource constraints and because of their limited number. Therefore, they would be enrolled in institutions meant for boys to study in a co-education environment. However, following some complaints by parents, he said the government decided to enforce a dress code and hijab for female students and teachers, he added. He further said that it's not a forced decision, rather we have taken it in consultation with parents and teachers. Everyone has accepted it because our society has visible leanings toward religion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1740826/opinion-divided-over-move-to-make-hijab-mandatory-in-ajk-schools>

India cannot hoodwink world by holding G-20 summit in 'IoK:' PM 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 7 March 2023

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Tanveer Ilyas Khan, while terming Kashmir as an UN-recognized disputed territory, has said that the Indian government has no justification whatsoever to hold a G-20 summit in Srinagar or elsewhere in the 'illegally occupied' territory of Jammu and Kashmir. While addressing a press conference in Mirpur, he said that India cannot hoodwink the world by holding such events in the region and that India has no moral, diplomatic, and political justification to hold such a conference in a disputed state. While referring to the abrogation of article 370 of the Indian constitution, he said that the move was a sheer injustice to the people of 'occupied Kashmir' and that the Kashmiris had rejected the move and refused to accept the Indian dictates.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/07/india-cannot-hoodwink-world-by-holding-g-20-summit-in-iok-pm-ajk/>

Economic situation worsening in 'IIOJK'

Daily Times, 7 March 2023

India's Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai presented investment data on 13 December last year for the 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). The numbers spoke for themselves: investments have fallen by 55 percent over the past four years. According to

an article published on the Al-Jazeera website, the declining investments and violence contradict two central arguments that have been at the heart of the Indian government's rationale for the 2019 abrogation of the semi-autonomous status that the region previously enjoyed: that the move would help improve security and spur economic development. In the past, federal governments in New Delhi have often blamed Jammu and Kashmir's woes on local governments in power in the region. That's no longer an excuse that works. When the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi eliminated Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, it also carved out the territory of Ladakh from the region. Kashmir's statehood was withdrawn, and it was made a union territory, directly controlled by New Delhi.

Jammu and Kashmir do not even have the disempowered legislature that other union territories have as the region has not had elections in seven years. Yet it should now increasingly be clear, that sidelining democratic processes and principles, and steamrolling constitutional provisions, are not working in improving the region's security or economic allure. The abrogation of Article 370 allowed non-residents to buy and own land in Jammu and Kashmir for the first time. Critics of the region's previous special status frequently cited restrictions on land ownership as a major reason why private sector industries were reluctant to set up businesses there. However, data published by the Indian

government's Ministry of Home Affairs and made public by Rai calls a bluff on those claims. Total investment in 2021-22 in Jammu and Kashmir stood at \$46 million, down from \$50.5 million, the previous year, and dramatically less than the \$102.8 million spent in 2017-18.

While the COVID-19 pandemic no doubt affected Kashmir's economy, the statistics suggest that was not the biggest factor in investments drying up. After all, the steepest fall in investments came the year that the Indian government ended Kashmir's semi-autonomous status, before the pandemic, halving from \$72.3 million in 2018-19 to \$36.3 million in 2019-20. The Indian government had claimed that Article 370 restricted people's participation in the political process and led to a few families dominating the politics of the region. However, since 2019, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party has taken steps to further disempower local Kashmiris. First, constituency boundaries for the region's legislature were redrawn in a way that gives Hindu-majority Jammu a greater say in elections than its Muslim population. In effect, that strengthens the chances of the BJP coming to power in Jammu and Kashmir. Then a revision of the voter list was carried out, giving voting rights to outsiders. Jammu and Kashmir are home to hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and army personnel – if allowed to vote, their electoral influence is going to be significant. Some Kashmiri leaders have invoked the region's 1987

elections which were allegedly rigged and were considered a tipping point when the armed freedom movement in Kashmir took off. While Kashmiris and non-locals alike suffer, there is no reason to expect that Modi and his government will change their policy towards the region.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1069943/economic-situation-worsening-in-iiojk/>

Kashmiris women worst sufferers of Indian savagery: Mushaal

Daily Parliament Times, 8 March 2023

The chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick condemned the Indian government for using the 'rape of Kashmiri women' as a weapon of war to humiliate Kashmiris and suppress their ongoing struggle against Indian 'subjugation.' While speaking as Chief Guest at a seminar titled 'Status of Women's Rights in 'IIOJK' at the National University of Modern Languages on the occasion of International Women's Day, she said although every Kashmiri was the victim of Indian 'state terrorism', the women were the worst sufferers of the 'Indian savagery.' She claimed that the miseries and victimization of the Kashmiri women at the hands of 'occupation forces', which include police, paramilitary, and intelligence agencies continue unabated in 'IIOJK', making everyday life hell for the residents of the valley.

While paying glowing tributes to the Kashmiri women for their supreme

sacrifices in the ongoing freedom movement, she claimed that thousands of women are among 96,181 people of Jammu and Kashmir, who were martyred by Indian troops since January 1989 till date. She claimed that at least, 682 women have been martyred by the troops since January 2001 but the fascist authorities could not dampen the courage of the brave women. She stated that the gravity of the situation could be judged from the fact that over 22,958 women were rendered widowed while 11,256 women were 'molested'/'disgraced' by Indian troops. She further claimed that thousands of women lost their sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers in the 'occupied territory' who were subjected to 'custodial disappearance' by Indian troops, adding that over 8,000 Kashmiris went missing in custody during the past 34 years. She urged that the world community must wake up to contain 'sexual violence' being perpetrated by Indian forces in 'IIOJK.'

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/08/kashmiris-women-worst-sufferers-of-indian-savagery-mushaal/>

Sultan Mahmood and Masood Khan discuss the political, Human Rights situation in 'IIOJK'

The Nation, 8 March 2023

Pakistan's ambassador to the United States (US), Sardar Masood Khan meet with the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry in Islamabad. They discussed in detail the issues of mutual

concern, particularly the prevailing political and human rights situation in the 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). While voicing their serious concerns over the 'simmering situation' in the 'IIOJK', they agreed to intensify efforts to raise the Kashmir issue at the international level and expose 'atrocities' being committed by the 'Indian forces' against helpless Kashmiris.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Mar-2023/sultan-mahmood-masood-khan-discuss-political-hr-situation-in-iiojk>

US must play its due role to help resolve Kashmir dispute peacefully: 'AJK' president to US Official

Daily Parliament Times, 12 March 2023

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry in a meeting with the United States (US) Deputy Ambassador Andrew J. Schofer, has said that the US should play its due role to help resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute peacefully. While referring to the 'worsening' political and human rights situation in the 'occupied' territory of Jammu and Kashmir, he claimed that currently Kashmiri people were stuck in a grave situation of violence and therefore it was incumbent upon the international community, especially the US to play its much-needed role to stop the violation of human rights in the region. While thanking the US administration for its generous support to flood victims in Pakistan, he said that we are deeply grateful to the US for the

assistance it extended to the flood victims in Pakistan.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/12/usa-must-play-its-due-role-to-help-resolve-kashmir-dispute-peacefully-president-ajk/>

Economic Developments

Hong Kong's Silicon Valley delegation calls on President Barrister Sultan

Daily Parliament Times, 6 March 2023

A high-level delegation from Hong Kong's Silicon Valley headed by the Chairman of Silicon Valley Pakistan, Lal Dino Mari Baloch met with the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry. During the meeting, the delegation gave a detailed briefing to the president regarding their plan of investment in IT, hydropower generation, tourism, banking, and other sectors in 'Azad Kashmir.' The president welcomed the delegation and said that there were plenty of investment opportunities in 'Azad Kashmir', especially in hydropower generation and other sectors. He said that the government of 'Azad Kashmir' was ready to provide all possible support, security, and other facilities to foreign investors. Minister for Information Technology Muhammad Iqbal, who was present at the meeting also ensured the delegation that there were massive investment opportunities available for investors in 'Azad Kashmir' and stressed that all kinds of support will be provided to the investors. Besides Lal Dino Mari Baloch, Chief Executive Soo Bee Geok,

Vice President Wong Siu Ling, Muhammad Yaqub Sisoli, Salman Latif Mari Baloch and others were part of the delegation.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/06/hong-kongs-silicon-valley-delegation-calls-on-president-barrister-sultan/>

MTBC Director meets PM of 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 6 March 2023

The Medical Transcription Billing Corporation (MTBC) Director, Sardar Zartif Badshah meet with the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Tanveer Ilyas, and held a detailed discussion on Kashmir Airline project and MTBC projects for tourism promotion. He said that MTBC's new projects aimed to create employment opportunities for the people of 'Azad Kashmir', and added that Kashmir Airline will provide better connectivity to the region and boost tourism. He also said that MTBC intends to promote tourism in 'Azad Kashmir' and all kinds of measures will be taken to attract more tourists to the region and its potential benefits for the local economy. He stated that the government of 'Azad Kashmir' could support these projects and address any legislative or administrative obstacles that could affect the sustainability of MTBC's projects and added that MTBC intended to make sure that these projects had a positive impact on the surrounding area's environment and communities.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/06/mtbc-director-pr-sardar-zartif-badshah-meets-pm-ajk-sardar-tanveer-ilyas/>

Deadline for the federal government to supply wheat: GB Chief Minister

Dailyk2, 8 March 2023

A crucial meeting addressing the worsening wheat crisis and the lack of funding for Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was held between the Chief Minister (CM) of GB Khalid Khurshid and Federal Secretary of Finance Hamid Yaqoob Sheikh. Javaid Ali Manwa the provincial finance minister, and Fathullah Khan, the provincial minister of planning, development, and information, were also present. According to Fathullah Khan, the GB CM was successful in convincing the Federal Finance Secretary to take the appropriate measures regarding the wheat issue and GB development projects that have stagnated as a result of the federal government's unfavorable behavior. He said that the Tehreek-e-Insaf government is being unfairly blamed by the current federal administration because the public is protesting the absence of cash for the wheat subsidy. In addition to lowering the wheat ceiling, the federal government is being evasive regarding funding subsidies. If concrete actions are not taken to ensure that wheat is accessible before the start of Ramadan, the regional government will start protests.

On this occasion, GB CM added that the stagnation of development projects was caused by the reduction in the budget for development and that the federal government had not only decreased the funds allocated to other

provinces but also had not been diligent in supplying the budget. He said that due to GB's unique constitutional structure and geographic location, the federal government should stop its strategy of walling the region and refrain from putting its residents' loyalty to the test. The provincial leadership and cabinet ministers, he continued, had meetings with Ahsan Iqbal, the federal planning secretary; Ishaq Dar, the minister of finance, to obtain funding for the country's economic issues and the completion of public projects. The PTI provincial government, according to him, is committed to the region's interests and stands for its constituents.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/12674>

Neelum-Jhelum surcharge: PAC directs Power Division to refund an additional amount to the masses

Business Recorder, 10 March 2023

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) directed the Power Division to refund the additional amount collected under the Neelum-Jhelum surcharge from the public. Noor Alam Khan chaired the meeting of the PAC which examined the Audit Report of the Power Division 2021-22. The committee sought details of receivables/circular debt of the power sector in the next meeting. The audit officials revealed that various Distribution companies received an additional surcharge than the limit fixed by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on Neelum-Jhelum is 9 billion. The committee directed to adjust the additional amounts in

March's electricity bill and share the compliance with the committee. The members of the committee expressed serious concern over overbilling of electricity bills despite heavy load shedding. The committee also expressed their displeasure over the delay in the completion of development projects and the non-receivables of 34 billion penalties imposed on the contractor for not completing projects in time.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40230621/neelum-jhelum-surcharge-pac-directs-pd-to-refund-additional-amount-to-masses>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The 'Azad Kashmir' government has mandated that female teachers and students wear hijabs in educational institutions

Daily Pakistan, 6 March 2023

The education department in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), has made the hijab a compulsory requirement for female students and teachers in co-educational schools. The 'AJK' administration in a circular said that both the female student and teachers in all co-education institutions are strictly bound to wear hijab and that disciplinary action would be taken 'against the heads of the institutions concerned' if the orders were not followed. However, the circular did not specifically mention what kind of actions or punishment will be awarded to those female students or teachers who choose not to wear hijabs.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/06-Mar-2023/1553435>

India's actions in Kashmir are a violation of international law: Mushahid Hussain

Jasarat, 7 March 2023

According to Senator and the chairman of the Senate Defense Committee, Mushahid Hussain, India is selling Kashmiris' land to non-Kashmiri, which he claimed is a flagrant violation of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. He claimed that India is also attempting to change the population ratio in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' as quickly as possible and that it has granted 45 lakh domiciles to non-Kashmiris to settle in the 'occupied' territory. He said that the international community should play a part in putting the Security Council's resolutions on Kashmir into action and hold India responsible for the crimes being committed in 'occupied' Kashmir. He said that Pakistan's citizens support their Kashmiri brothers and will also continue to do so in their fight for self-determination on a political, diplomatic, and moral level.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/03/07/mushahid>

India is targeting women in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir: Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

Jasarat, 8 March 2023

The foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari claimed that India is discriminating against women in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir. While speaking at the Security Council's led discussion on women, peace, and

security, he said that civilians, including women and girls, are disproportionately affected by wars and conflicts, and that women are suffering in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Ukraine. He further claimed that India is targeting women in Jammu and Kashmir and seizing civilian land and resources. To hold the occupation troops accountable, he emphasized the importance of setting up a monitoring system for crimes against women and girls in areas that are under foreign control, such as 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). He claimed that the goal of violence in cases of 'foreign occupation' was to suppress the civilian population and that this is especially evident in the Palestinian territories and the 'Indian-occupied' region of Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/03/08/india-is-targeting-women-in-occupied-jammu-and-kashmir-bilawal-bhutto/>

Pasbane Hurriyat organized a symposium in support of women in 'occupied Kashmir'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 8 March 2023

Mehnaz Qureshi, a Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir female wing representative, chaired a seminar and led a protest on International Women's Day to draw attention to the 'brutality against women' and the deteriorating situation in 'occupied Kashmir.' She claimed that by subjecting women to the worst forms of 'state repression' and violence in 'occupied Jammu and

Kashmir', the Narendra Modi government is violating international rules about women's rights. She claimed that the purpose of the anti-India demonstration at Burhan Wani Chowk was to raise the attention of the European Union, the United Nations, and other international human rights organizations to 'Indian military atrocities' against Kashmiri women.

Qureshi claimed that the BJP government in Jammu and Kashmir is flagrantly violating women's rights by using intimidation and brutality against Kashmiri women as a weapon of war. She added that the presence of millions of 'hostile soldiers' in the remote region of 'occupied Kashmir' forces Kashmiri women and girls to live under the shadow of dread. She stated while the world celebrates women's day to protect women's rights, India's cruelty and violence against women in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' flagrantly breach international agreements and laws. She claimed that Kashmiri women, who have endured oppression for more than 30 years, never stop clamoring for justice. She mourned, Syed Asia Andrabi, Nahida, Nasreen Akhter, Fehmida Sufi, and other Kashmiri women imprisoned in Indian jails are still demanding justice. She inquired as to what punishment the Indian soldiers responsible for the tragic incident in Kunnan Poshpora had received.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Resize-of-B-09.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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