

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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education Gilgit-Baltistan
subsidy Economic Coordination
Land Reforms Public Action Committee
POK Neelum Jhelum
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No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

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Political Developments

Indian malafide intentions and Pakistan's Kashmir strategy

Pakistan Observer, 26 March 2023

Kashmir has been a contentious subject between India and Pakistan since they gained independence in 1947. In a quest to govern the disputed land, which is divided between the two nations, they have engaged in several wars. However, in August 2019, the Modi administration unilaterally removed its long-standing autonomy and divided it into two regions under the jurisdiction of the central government to make up for a promise it had made to its rightwing constituency. The government of the territory was dissolved, local politicians were detained, and the longest internet blackout in history i.e., about 18 months was enacted. All these events involved the deployment of thousands of troops into the 'occupied territory.' Kashmir has long been the target of malicious Indian government plans. PM Modi asserted that normality has returned to Kashmir after rescinding Article 370. On 10 October 2022, Narendra Modi claimed that he had been successful in settling the Kashmir dispute while speaking at a rally in Gujarat's Anand district. His comment about the 'settled Kashmir problem' demonstrates how ignorant the Indian leadership is of the ground realities.

Pakistan, on the other hand, categorically rejected the claims made by Modi and said that the Indian leadership must fulfill its obligations to

Kashmiris and the international community by ensuring that the people of Kashmir are granted their unalienable right to self-determination rather than making irrational claims that the conflict has been resolved unilaterally. Rajnath Singh, the Indian Defence Minister, expressed his desire for Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to become a part of India at an event in Budgam on 27 October 2022, hoping to finish the mission the Modi administration started by annexing 'occupied Kashmir' in August 2019. However, Pakistan's Foreign Office denounced it as an unwarranted and inappropriate statement. In November, the commander of the Northern Army, Lt. Gen. Upendra Dwivedi, declared that the Indian Army was prepared to carry out instructions like reclaiming Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Moreover, he asserted that the Indian Army is prepared to obey any directives issued by the Indian government.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) denied the Indian Army's 'fallacious claims' of annexing 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir.' Also, the high-ranking Indian army officer's unjustified comment is a perfect example of the deluded thinking of the Indian armed forces and demonstrates the distinct influence of domestic political theatrics on the Indian military mindset. On 3 December 2022, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Syed Asim Munir, paid a visit to frontline soldiers in the Rakhchikri Sector of the Line of Control (LoC). In a bid to intimidate India, he adopted an aggressive approach. He claimed that

recent remarks made by the Indian government against GB and 'AJK' were extremely reckless. He unequivocally stated that should war ever be declared against us, Pakistan's military forces will be prepared to not only defend every square inch of our nation but also to retake the battlefield. India is only attempting to deflect attention from the 'oppressive use of force' and flagrant 'human rights abuses' by the Indian army against innocent, defenseless Kashmiris who are fighting for their right to self-determination.

In 'IIOK', democracy is still elusive. After August 2019, the administration of the territory was never reinstated, and there haven't been any regional elections for nearly five years, thus Kashmiris have no political representation or means of airing their grievances. In terms of the Pakistani Army, it is a positive force that promotes stability and peace in the region. Pakistan has repeatedly warned that its desire for peace is matched by its capabilities and willingness to 'nullify any misadventure or assault on our land,' a claim that has been thoroughly proven several times, most recently in the Balakot incident. Any misunderstanding that leads to a mishap will always be handled with the full might of the military forces, supported by a strong country. The Indian state will never be able to carry out its evil plans. According to UN resolutions, the international community must provide justice and fulfill its promises to the Kashmiri people.

Although India wishes to avoid international engagement, it is important to address Kashmir's human rights issues since doing so is the first step in breaking the cycle of violence. The government is reactivating civilian militias in the unstable Jammu area of Kashmir, exposing the limitations of its military strategy there. It is bizarre that in the world's most militarized zone, you need to equip people to safeguard the residents, which surely is the army's role. In many ways, it contradicts itself. The Indian military would be wise to refrain from using reckless hyperbole and hostility to endorse the regressive ideology of their political elite on the campaign trail to promote peace in the region. The international community needs to play an active role in resolving the Kashmir conflict. Instead of 'military occupation', Kashmiris need the right to self-determination.

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-malafide-intentions-pakistans-kashmir-strategy/>

Kashmir freedom struggle reflects sentiments of 'IIOJK' people

Pakistan Observer, 27 March 2023

People in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) are engaged in a struggle for the exercise of their UN-pledged right to self-determination which reflects the sentiments of the general populace of the territory. An analytical report released by Kashmir Media Service said Kashmiris' freedom struggle is an indigenous popular movement as its Indigenous character is evident from

the sacrifices rendered by the Kashmiris daily. It said the Kashmiris' freedom movement has been accepted as a just struggle at the global level and Modi's designs to term the Kashmir freedom struggle as sponsored are aimed at giving a bad name to it. The report said the Modi regime must remember that people struggling for freedom cannot be linked to terrorism, adding that India could not fool the world by terming the homegrown Kashmiris' freedom struggle as sponsored.

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmir-freedom-struggle-reflects-sentiments-of-iiojk-people/>

Fascist Modi regime wreaked havoc in 'IIOJK:' Sultan

Pakistan Observer, 27 March 2023

The president of 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has said that after revoking the special status of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK), Modi-led India's 'fascist regime' has wreaked havoc in the region by stepping up 'state terrorism' and human rights violations. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation led by 'AJK' leader Faiz Hameed Faizi, at Jammu Kashmir House in Islamabad. While referring to relentless suppression and 'brutal barbarism' in 'occupied Kashmir', the president said that human rights violations were on the rise not only in 'IIOJK' but also in India, where minorities were being 'persecuted' and crushed violently by 'Hindutva warriors.' He said that it was high time

to expose India's ugly face and 'Modi's Hindutva policies' before the world. He said that Kashmiris at home and abroad should come forward in a big way and play their much-needed role to draw the attention of the international community towards the sufferings of Kashmiri people. Faiz Hameed Faizi said that the Britain-based Kashmiri expatriate community was actively engaged in playing their vibrant role to highlight the need for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue for lasting peace in South Asia through securing Kashmiris birthright to self-determination under the spirit of international norms and commitments.

<https://pakobserver.net/fascist-modi-regime-wreaked-havoc-in-iiojk-sultan/>

Indian forces getting indoctrinated with Hindutva ideology

Pakistan Observer, 29 March 2023

In present-day India under the 'Hindutva government' of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Narendra Modi, 'saffronization' or 'politicization' of the Indian military is no more a matter of dispute. Indian armed forces are fast getting indoctrinated with the 'Hindutva ideology' since the advent of the BJP government in 2014, as the Modi regime has been encouraging military officials to subscribe to the ideas and policies of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Interestingly, A Kashmir Media report said, the BJP leaders without an iota of shame refer to the Indian armed forces as 'Modi ki Sena' (Modi's Army). The development is in line with the long-

standing commitment of the RSS and BJP nexus to instill the Hindutva ideology in the Indian Army and other forces. As a part of the plan, the late General Bipin Rawat was promoted to first Chief of Defense Staff because he supported the ideology. Former Lt. Gen of Indian Army HS Panag has expressed his concern over the politicization of the Indian Army as a 'worrying trend.' Without naming Hindutva, he said, the top brass of the Indian Army is getting too closely identified with religion and the ruling party. The report said that presently only 2% of Muslims are serving in the Indian armed forces against population, which is 14% of the country's total population.

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-forces-getting-indoctrinated-with-hindutva-ideology/>

'IIOJK' people need the urgent attention of UNHRC to attain basic political rights: Zaffar

Pakistan Observer, 29 March 2023

Zaffar Qureshi, Chairman of Kashmir Campaign Global, has said that the people of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) need urgent attention of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to attain the right to self-determination. While addressing the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Zaffar Qureshi said that since 2019, when India unilaterally scrapped Jammu and Kashmir's special status, New Delhi has drastically 'intensified repression' of rights in the 'occupied territory.' He said reports have noted

how political activists, civil society at large, journalists, human rights defenders, and lawyers are facing relentless interrogation, imprisonment, and even custodial deaths. He informed the UNHRC participants that access to justice or human rights bodies is non-existent in 'occupied Kashmir', and that clampdown on dissent, guides of the tax rate, foreign funding regularities, and financial irregularities, facilitated by the draconian laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and Public Safety Act (PSA) are used to curb the political voices. Qureshi claimed that the freedom voices like Khurram Parvez, Massarat Aalam Butt, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, and many others have been imprisoned under these 'false allegations.' Rape, he claimed, is used as a weapon of war with over 10,000 women having been 'raped by Indian troops' without being delivered justice. He also mentioned the Kunan-prosphora mass rape and gang rape of a minor child Asifa Bano by the extremists.

<https://pakobserver.net/iiojk-people-need-urgent-attention-of-unhrc-to-attain-basic-political-right-zaffar/>

Delegation of JI 'AJK' visit headquarters of Saadat Party

Daily Parliament Times, 30 March 2023

A delegation led by the former Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)-'Azad Kashmir', Abdul Rasheed Turabi visited the headquarters of Saadat Party in Turkey. On the suggestion of Abdul

Rasheed Turabi, Saadat Party announced the inclusion of the Kashmir issue in its election manifesto. The senior vice president of the Saadat party, Mustafa Kamal, added the Kashmir issue in his election manifesto and announced that the United Nations should organize a vigorous campaign for the solution of this long-standing issue. The solution to the Kashmir issue is the responsibility of the international community. He said that Necmettin Erbakan, who was the Prime Minister of Turkey from 1996 to 1997 always declared Kashmir and Palestine as a part of his body, therefore every worker of the Saadat Party considers it his duty to interpret and support the oppressed Kashmir, and the issue of Kashmir has always been a permanent part of the agenda in his conferences and seminars. Muslim rulers should play an effective role in the solution of problems like Kashmir and Palestine. Abdul Rasheed Tarabi, while explaining the purpose of the visit, said that the people of Kashmir have come to express solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Turkey. The children of Kashmir and Pakistan are equal participants in the grief of the Turkish brothers and want to play their part in the rehabilitation of the victims. Saadat Party, he added, has always played a leadership role regarding the Kashmir issue. The Modi government wants to erase Kashmiris from the page and that their culture and signs of identity are being destroyed. He said that there are great expectations from the people and government of Turkey as only Turkey and Pakistan can lead the nation, so the

global colonialist conspirators want to destabilize them.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/03/30/saadat-party-announces-to-include-the-kashmir-issue-in-its-election-manifesto/>

Saghar pays tributes to Majid Wani, other Kashmiri martyrs

Pakistan Observer, 31 March 2023

The Convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference-'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK) chapter, Mahmood Ahmed Saghar has paid tributes to 'renowned' liberation leader Ashfaq Majid Wani and other martyrs of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). Saghar in a statement said that Ashfaq Majeed Wani was killed by Indian troops on this day in 1990 in the Hawal area of Srinagar and that he was a 'beacon of light for the freedom movement of Kashmir', who will always guide the freedom-loving Kashmiris and will show them determination and courage against 'oppression' by India. He claimed that the Indian forces have been subjecting 'innocent Kashmiris' to 'massacres' and the worst cruelty and violence for the last three decades, but they could not weaken their freedom spirit. He said, the sacrifices of the Kashmiri martyrs will never be allowed to go to waste and their mission will continue till taking it to its logical conclusion. Saghar claimed that, the resolutions of the United Nations on Kashmir are the basis of our freedom movement and that India is morally, internationally, and politically bound to resolve the Kashmir dispute through

a free and fair plebiscite according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<https://pakobserver.net/saghar-pays-glowing-tributes-to-majid-wani-other-kashmiri-martyrs/>

Economic Developments

Centre asks GB to rationalise the wheat price

Dawn, 27 March 2023

Amid criticism over the distribution of free wheat flour in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the federal government has called upon the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) administration to urgently rationalize the cost of subsidized wheat for citizens in a phased, targeted manner and charge the affluent people market rates to ensure a sustainable supply. The GB's elected government has recently committed to increasing flour prices, which are more than ten times lower in the mountainous region than those in the rest of the country. About 8 billion wheat subsidy earmarked for GB in this year's federal budget has already been exhausted against the supply of about 90,000 tonnes early this year, as prices went up amid expensive imports. The finance ministry has been critical of the huge price gap and rising subsidy account amid fiscal reviews with the International Monetary Fund. The ministry has been trying to either clip or contain subsidies while the political government tends to appease the population ahead of general elections. The finance ministry conceded at a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet to

provide a 2.9bn additional subsidy to cover the supply cost of 25,000 tonnes to GB for only two months March and April to avoid any difficulties in the region's people during Ramazan because of supply shortages.

The committee, however, set a condition that the GB government and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and GB must reach a consensus on rationalizing wheat prices within a month. Wheat supply to GB on subsidized rates has been going on since the 1970s. This was necessitated due to exorbitant prices of wheat flour in the area as the staple was sparsely cultivated in the region and transportation was too costly due to underdeveloped infrastructure. However, the difference between the prices of GB's subsidized wheat and the unsubsidized one sold in the rest of the country has substantially widened over time, as the flour sale price in GB has not been enhanced for quite some time.

The federal government provides GB with about 160,000 tonnes of wheat per year. With the purse in hand, the finance division gives the go-ahead to the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) for wheat supplies in a manner that subsidy should stay within the budgetary allocation. During the current financial year, Rs8 billion was allocated for wheat procurement for GB, but the amount has been fully utilized with around 90,000 tonnes of supplies due to the high cost of imported wheat and increased transport charges. As a result, supplies

are held up and wheat prices in GB's shadow market have increased substantially. The matter was, therefore, placed before the ECC, which recommended political engagement to pave the way for broader consensus on realistic flour prices. Accordingly, the representative leadership of the region was engaged by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and the prime minister's adviser on Kashmir Affairs and GB, Qamar Zaman Kaira, to develop a consensus on the issue. Meanwhile, the GB government's certain payments for the next year may be partially diverted to wheat subsidy this year, given the tight federal kitty. In the interim, the GB government would appropriately raise wheat prices and encourage local wheat cultivation with the guarantee to procure it at the support price for future needs.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1744386/centre-asks-gilgit-baltistan-to-rationalise-wheat-price>

Neelum-Jhelum to resume power generation from July

Dawn, 31 March 2023

The 969-Mega Watt (MW) Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHPP) would get back to power generation by July after a year-long closure due to tunnel collapse and K-Electric (KE) is entering into a 10-year agreement with the federal government for enhancing its intake from national grid to 2,600 MW. These were the upshot of the two separate public hearings on increase in fuel charges for the consumers of KE and ex-WAPDA Distribution

Companies conducted by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) but could not reach a conclusive decision. During the discussion on expensive power generation, NEPRA Chairman Tauseef H. Farooqui said the NJHP was expected to come back into production in July-almost a year after it was abruptly closed because of a tunnel collapse. The representatives of the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) told the hearing that the power generation cost was higher than the reference cost due to the lower availability of hydropower generation as the 969-MW plan remained closed. The KE representatives also reported that they were in the process of entering into an agreement for 2,600 MW from the national grid. Of this, 1,000 MW would be on a firm basis and the remaining 1,600 MW on an as-and-when-available basis. At present, the KE is drawing about 1,100 MW from the national grid but without any legal cover for over half a decade.

The NEPRA members noted that certain higher cost impacts were also because of transmission system constraints. At the conclusion, the regulator noted that there would be zero increase in the Fuel Cost/Charges Adjustment (FCA) for Distribution Companies and somewhere between 56 paise to Rs 1.07 per unit increase in FCA for KE. NEPRA said the Distribution Companies FCA could be increased but a final decision would be notified next week after verification of certain

evidence and transmission constraints. The hearings were told that distribution companies and K-Electric had demanded permission to charge about 8.5bn additional fuel cost to their consumers at the rate of about 86 paise and Rs 1.66 per unit, respectively, in April for electricity consumed in February. The increase in FCA is even though the base average tariff has gone up by more than Rs 7 per unit and reduction in the cost of import fuels like furnace oil and liquefied natural gas. The biggest contribution to the overall national power grid came from hydropower generation at 26.46pc in February followed by 24.28pc from nuclear power plants. Hydropower has no fuel cost. The third largest generation share in the national power grid came from LNG-based electricity at 18.86pc, followed by 14.07pc from coal and about 11pc from domestic natural gas.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1745082/neelum-jhelum-to-resume-power-generation-from-july>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The federal government's interference in GB affairs is alarming: Imran Khan

Dailyk2, 27 March 2023

Imran Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), meets with Khalid Khurshid, the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The present political environment was discussed during the gathering at Zaman Park which also included, Senator Saifullah Niazi, Azam Swati,

and other party officials. Imran Khan voiced his anger at the meeting regarding the federal government's interference in GB's internal matters. Imran Khan claims that in contrast to the PTI's pro-GB policies, the current federal government is acting unfairly towards GB and is taking actions that have never been taken before. The chief minister of GB promised to utilize every legal tool at its disposal to oppose the federal government's actions and discriminatory policies.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/13161>

General Secretary of JUI 'Azad Kashmir' attends a meeting of the Kashmir Overseas Forum in Saudi Arabia

Daily Pakistan, 27 March 2023

The Kashmir Overseas Forum decided to keep up the fight to bring attention to the Kashmir issue during a conference that was held in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh. Maulana Imtiaz Abbasi, general secretary of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) of 'Azad Kashmir', presided over the conference and stated that Pakistan and Kashmir are intrinsically intertwined and cannot ever be separated. He asserted that Pakistan and Kashmir cannot be split apart by India's 'evil plans.' Many speakers at the meeting shared their opinions and argued that the Kashmir dispute should be brought up at the UN and other fora and that Pakistanis and Kashmiris residing abroad should never abandon their family members in 'occupied Kashmir.' The speakers

emphasized the need to highlight India's 'heinous side' by drawing attention to the crimes it committed against innocent Kashmiris in 'occupied Kashmir.'

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/27-Mar-2023/1561977>

State subject law should be reinstated in GB: JI

UrduPoint, 30 March 2023

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) contends that the state-subject law in GB must be reintroduced and that public opposition to the Land Reforms Act must be taken into account. According to the Public Action Committee's (PAC) representative group, the committee would rather accept and adopt a land reform measure developed in conjunction with the local population than accept the Land Reforms Act as it has been provided by the government. In addition to thanking the PAC group representative, Maulana Abdul Sami said that no land in GB belongs to the Khalsa and that every square inch of land will be preserved because the government has not dealt with the pressing issues. Our problems will not be resolved, according to the JI leader, unless we are one nation, and our province and assembly governments are at the whim of the federal and local bureaucracies. He claims that JI GB has consistently insisted that the people of GB are citizens of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and that an 'Azad Kashmir'-style system of

administration should be put in place for their benefit and security. After Ramadan, he stressed, JI GB will call a huge jirga to address the issues the area is facing.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/important-news/live-news-3530060.html>

The Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov stated in a seminar that Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir Issue

UrduPoint, 30 March 2023

According to Khazar Farhadov, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan are two amiable Muslim nations that are linked together politically, geographically, historically, culturally, religiously, and ethnically. He said that Azerbaijan desires a resolution to the Kashmir conflict in light of the UN resolutions and concurs with Pakistan's stance on the matter. In his remarks at an Allama Iqbal Open University seminar on 'Pakistan-Azerbaijan Relations,' he stated that efforts are being made by the two nations to boost commerce and people-to-people connections. He asserted that skilled and experienced professionals from Pakistan are required by the Azerbaijani IT and pharmaceutical businesses. He noted that the two countries have historical ties that have evolved through time and that these ties need to be further strengthened. He claimed that Azerbaijani youths in particular are eager to find out more about the language and society of Pakistan.

He asserted that the Azerbaijani Embassy in Islamabad was working to make all facilities available to Pakistani citizens so they could quickly receive online Azerbaijan visas in only three hours as opposed to three days. He claimed that the younger generation of Azerbaijanis desired that the two countries' academic institutions and universities work together on language and historical projects. While speaking at the event, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, vice chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), noted that Pakistan was the second nation to recognize Azerbaijan's independence in 1991 and that diplomatic ties between the two nations were subsequently established in 1992. He claimed that through collaborating on educational initiatives, AIOU can deepen the bonds between the two friendly nations. He stressed that since AIOU has opened up education to everyone in the world, Azerbaijanis can enrol in the university online programme.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3529543.html>

The GB Police cannot offer security outside of its jurisdiction: Islamabad High Court

UrduPoint, 31 March 2023

The Islamabad High Court maintained the federal government's power to prohibit GB police from acting outside of its established territorial limits and that VIP security cannot be given by the GB Police outside of its borders. Court proceedings involved a case

challenging the prohibition on provincial police personnel in charge of the chief minister of GB's protection traveling to adjacent provinces. The GB Chief Minister's argument disputed the Home Ministry's declaration that the ability of GB security personnel to provide protection had been restricted. Attorney General Additional Manzoor Duggal laid out in court the guidelines established by the federal government for VIP protection. According to Duggal, the cabinet enacted the VIP security guidelines on 10 September, 2021, while the PTI government was in office, hence it is now untenable for it to say otherwise. He said that the wording of the guidelines clearly states that responsibility for VIP protection shall rest with the respective province administrations.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3529874.html>

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Compiled by
Mohd. Usman Bhatti

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