

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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GB Action Committee
land religious tourism **Dasu**
land Gilgit-Baltistan **dam**
reform **Corridor** **POK**



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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

BJP government hell-bent upon destroying the Muslim identity of 'IIOJK'

Daily Times, 3 April 2023

The Indian 'Hindutva government', led by Narendra Modi, is denying space to political leaders, civil society, and activists by repeatedly harassing and arresting them on fake charges under black laws. The political experts and analysts in their interview and statements in Srinagar said Narendra Modi-led 'fascist Indian government' is furthering the 'Hindutva agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' (RSS) to turn the Muslim majority into a minority in the territory, Kashmir media service reported. They said the Indian authorities have formulated a cruel policy of snatching properties, and lands and suspending the Kashmiri government employees and so far dozens of employees have been sacked. India has started the process of deploying non-Kashmiris in all the institutions of 'occupied Kashmir' in a planned manner so that the control of Kashmiris over these institutions could be ended, they added. Indian troops and police personnel, they said, during their continued cordon and search operations are harassing, terrorizing, summoning, and arresting youth in different areas of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). They maintained that 70 civilians including Hurriyat activists were arrested in the last month of March in the 'occupied territory.'

They thought that India was using its notorious probe agencies like National Investigation Agency (NIA) and State Investigation Agency and its Units mostly headed by non-Kashmiri Hindutva mindset as a weapon to intimidate the Kashmiris into submission. The illegally detained Kashmiris lodged in small cells in Indian jails and 'IIOJK' are denied basic facilities including legal facilities, medical treatment, and hygienic food, they lamented. They said mass arrests, raids, and search operations in occupied Kashmir are manifest of the Modi regime's frustration to subdue the Kashmiris. They said the Kashmiri people are ready to render every kind of sacrifice in their struggle for securing their right to self-determination and urged the international human rights organizations to take notice of unlawful detentions in 'IIOJK' and hold India accountable for brazenly violating the prisoners' rights.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1080022/bjp-govt-hell-bent-upon-destroying-muslim-identity-of-iiojk/>

The JKLF objected to the 'AJK' Assembly's resolution calling for the creation of a Kartarpura-style corridor along the CFL

Daily Parliament Times, 4 April 2023

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) spokesman Muhammad Rafiq Dar in response to the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Assembly's acceptance of the resolution regarding the opening of a Kartarpura-style corridor said that it cannot be established here because the infamous

bloody Cease Fire Line (CFL), which divides the state of Jammu and Kashmir and occupies an area of 85,000 square miles, was forcibly drawn against the state's residents' wishes. Approximately 25 million people on opposing sides of the conflict are fighting for the universally recognized rights to freedom and self-determination. In a statement issued from the Central Information Office, the 'JKLF' spokesman called the demand from the 'Azad Kashmir' Assembly for the establishment of a Kartarpura-style corridor on the cease-fire line not only a manifestation of the irresponsibility of the members, but also confirms their disconnection with the movement as well as with the Kashmir history. He said that following the cancellation of bus service and trade on the CFL for Kashmiris, the Modi-led 'extremist' Indian Government trampled international laws, bilateral agreements, and promises made with the Kashmir leadership after the utter aggression of 5th August 2019 not only abrogated Article 370 and 35A unilaterally but also jailed Yasin Malik along with thousands of political workers besides banning the political activities in the state.

The Indian government is hell-bent on changing the demography of the state by issuing domicile to non-state subjects, thus making the atmosphere in the region hostile and uncondusive to such demands, the spokesman added. The statement further read that in such a situation, one can only regret the intelligence and wisdom of the members of the Assembly of 'Azad

Kashmir', who are unaware of the political implications of this kind of demand, and are knowingly or unknowingly trying to paint the sketches drawn by the Indian Home Minister Mr. Amit Shah. He said no individual, organization, group, assembly, government, or country is allowed to slander the blood-soaked freedom movement of Kashmir. He termed the demand for a Kartarpura-style corridor on the ceasefire line by the 'AJK' Assembly as the fulfillment of the agenda of the government of India and termed it as an indicator for the permanent division of the state of Jammu Kashmir. Dar while reminding them of the common national stand of Kashmiri people that the state of Jammu Kashmir is an indivisible political and geographical unity said that this resolution negates our national stand.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/04/04/jklf-spokesman-called-demand-from-ajk-assembly-for-establishment-of-a-kartarpura-style-corridor-on-cess-fire-line/>

Corridor, religious tourism misleading proposals on Kashmir: Rehmani

Pakistan Observer, 5 April 2023

According to Muhammad Farooq Rehmani, the chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir People's Freedom League and a former convener of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), India has flagrantly changed the history, demography, culture, and religion of Kashmir while also trampling on all universal human rights principles. What purpose does religious tourism

and corridor along the Line of Control (LoC) serve, when India is engaged in a brutal campaign of lynching and killings against Indian Muslims, demolishing mosques, erasing all traces of Islam and Islamic history in Kashmir and India, maintaining its ban on religious celebrations and prayers in Jamia-Mosque Srinagar, and allowing 'Hindutva goons' to 'slaughter Muslims' under the guise of 'Cow Protection' in India, he argued? Rehmani claimed that the decision to open the corridor and the initiative to promote religious travel in 'Azad Kashmir' amounted to the creation of a second Amarnath and a greater threat to the region of 'Azad Kashmir.' It will be the final symbolic nail in the coffin of the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, he remarked, if it is ever implemented. In light of the Indian government's 'merciless campaign against Kashmiri Muslims and Islam in both Kashmir and India, he described such motions and resolutions as complementing to burying the Kashmiri uprising.

Instead, he advised mounting a determined and persistent effort before the UN Security Council to support Kashmir's citizens' right to self-determination. The 'Azad Kashmir' government should refrain from wasting time on such endeavors and urge the 'Azad Kashmir' Legislature to pass a comprehensive resolution condemning the deteriorating human rights situation in 'IIOJK.' He urged Pakistan to launch an international campaign at the UN for the implementation of the right to self-

determination and India to repeal all laws in Jammu and Kashmir that were in opposition to UN resolutions, rules, and principles, and that had ultimately obstructed the UN road-map towards a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict.

<https://pakobserver.net/corridor-religious-tourism-misleading-proposals-on-kashmir-rehmani/>

No politics on Kashmir, we all have the same viewpoint on the issue: PM 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 5 April 2023

The Prime Minister 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Tanvir Ilyas Khan has said that a comprehensive strategy and wisdom was required to thwart India's conspiracies and its nefarious designs in the region. While addressing the Legislative Assembly session, he asserted that all the political parties in 'Azad Kashmir' were one and united on the issue of Kashmir. There should be no politics on Kashmir, we all have the same viewpoint on the issue, the PM said. He further suggested that the government and opposition should together hold a march in Brussels to convey a strong message to the world that Kashmiris were not dumb-driven cattle. While appreciating Barrister Sultan Chaudhry's role in promoting the Kashmir cause, he said that the President has played a key role in highlighting the Kashmir cause internationally. He was of the view that along with the government of Pakistan, the OIC member countries should observe Kashmir Day to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people on 5 February. He said that the leadership

of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has expressed satisfaction over the resumption of the Gilgit-Muzaffarabad bus service and appreciated the government's efforts in this regard.

While terming the resumption of the bus service as an important milestone to strengthen the historical and cultural relationship between the people of the two regions, he said the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) also appreciated the bus service. He said that the government of 'Azad Kashmir' would support the government of GB in developing road infrastructure and housing, besides cooperating in establishing a medical college in Gilgit. Meanwhile, the Legislative Assembly expressed its grave concern over the fast deteriorating political and human rights situation in 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK). While denouncing the Modi government's attempts to change the region's demography, the session, through a unanimous resolution, called for an early resolution of the dispute in line with the UNSC resolutions. While presenting the resolution, Tanvir Ilyas Khan said that the Kashmir issue was the oldest unresolved issue on the agenda of the UN. The session, through a separate resolution, appreciated Pakistan's unwavering moral, diplomatic, and political support of the Kashmir cause and lauded the determination, courage, and undying spirit of the people of 'OJK.' The session voiced its concern over the massive troops' concentration in the region and denounced in strong terms the 'extrajudicial killings' of innocent

civilians and destruction of property and belongings of citizens during the so-called search operations and seizure of the APHC office in Srinagar and the ongoing 'anti-encroachment' campaign in 'Occupied Kashmir.' The meeting demanded the government of India allow an independent investigation into human rights violations committed by its forces against the Kashmiris in 'occupied Kashmir.'

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/04/05/no-politics-on-kashmir-we-all-have-the-same-viewpoint-on-the-issue-pm-ajkl>

Silencing Kashmiri media

Pakistan Observer, 6 April 2023

The recent arrest of Kashmiri journalist Irfan Mehraj has sparked widespread concern about the state of press freedom and journalist safety in 'Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir.' Mehraj is the third journalist to be arrested under 'terrorism' charges by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in recent years. The NIA has accused Mehraj of working closely with the human rights organization 'Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society' (JKCCS), whose director Khurram Parvez has been imprisoned on similar charges since November 2021. The JKCCS has done extensive work documenting human rights violations in 'occupied Kashmir' and has exposed state repression through well-researched reports. Mehraj's arrest and Parvez's imprisonment are being viewed by Amnesty International and ten other leading human rights organizations including the UN as politically

motivated and fabricated charges, and they have called for their immediate and unconditional release.

Press freedom has always been challenging in 'Indian-occupied Kashmir' (IOK), but the region has witnessed a range of human rights abuses, including unprecedented restrictions on freedom of speech and the press since August 2019 when the Indian government revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, journalists in the region face numerous challenges, including threats, physical attacks, and harassment. The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) is a controversial law used against journalists in Jammu and Kashmir as the UAPA allows the government to designate individuals as terrorists and detain them without trial. It is widely believed that journalists, including Fahad Shah, Aasif Sultan, and Sajad Gul, have been detained and rearrested on false charges. It is reported that over 49 cases have been registered against journalists since 2016. At least 35 journalists have faced police interrogation, raids, threats, physical assault, restrictions on freedom of movement, or fabricated criminal cases for their reporting since August 2019.

Indian authorities employ various intimidation tactics to silence journalists, including malicious investigations, random raids by the NIA and other government agencies, and restrictions on freedom of movement. For instance, raids had also been carried out at the offices of the newspaper 'Kashmir Times', and the residence of 'Agency

France-Press' Kashmir correspondent Parvez Bukhari. In June 2018, journalist Shujaat Bukhari was assassinated by unknown gunmen in Srinagar. Bukhari was the editor of the 'Rising Kashmir' newspaper and had been a vocal advocate for peace in the region. Anuradha Bhasin, the executive editor of 'The Kashmir Times', has written in the 'New York Times' that Indian Prime Minister Modi's 'repressive media policies' are destroying Kashmiri journalism, intimidating media outlets into serving as government mouthpieces and creating an information vacuum in a region of about 13 million people. Nearly 400 print publications are registered in 'occupied Kashmir', in addition to regional television networks and internet-based news channels. None of them is permitted to cover the activities of pro-freedom parties such as the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), and hardly any newspaper reports on the gross human rights violations committed by 'Indian security forces' in Kashmir.

<https://pakobserver.net/silencing-kashmiri-media/>

COAS Asim Munir's statement infused a new spirit in Kashmiris: APHC

Pakistan Observer, 9 April 2023

In India's illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders have thanked the Government and people of Pakistan for their continued moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris' struggle for securing their inalienable right to self-determination. The APHC leaders including

Muhammad Saleem Zargar and Dr. Musaib in their statements issued in Srinagar lauded Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir's statement in support of Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for freedom. General Syed Asim Munir while visiting forward areas along the Line of Control (LOC) said that the Pakistan army was determined to support the 'just cause of Kashmiris and seeks resolution of Jammu and Kashmir following UN resolutions.' The APHC leaders said that the statement has infused a new spirit among the Kashmiri people who are fighting for freedom of their motherland from India's 'illegal occupation.' They said the entire world knows that the unresolved Kashmir dispute is the main cause of tension between Pakistan and India which is also affecting regional peace and stability. The statement said that Pakistan and India should start a dialogue process for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute and appealed to the United Nations and the world community to play role in this regard.

<https://pakobserver.net/coas-asim-munirs-statement-infused-new-spirit-in-kashmiris-aphc/>

Economic Developments

China-bound passengers stuck in heavy snow, criticize authorities for inadequate preparations ahead of the border opening

Pamir Times, 4 April 2023

A group of eight passengers, four Chinese and four Pakistani, traveling to China have been stuck on the

Karakoram Highway (KKH) near the border crossing for over eight hours due to heavy snow on the road. This is although the Khunjerab Pass has been opened for travelers after three years. The passengers have expressed their frustration over the delay and criticized the authorities for not taking adequate measures to ensure the road was cleared before allowing travelers to pass through. The incident has highlighted the need for better coordination and communication between the authorities on both sides of the border to ensure the safety and convenience of travelers on the KKH.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/04/04/china-bound-passengers-stuck-in-heavy-snow-criticize-authorities-for-inadequate-preps-ahead-of-border-opening/>

Fire rips through Chinese camps at Dasu Dam

Dawn, 5 April 2023

Dasu hydropower project's warehouses and residential camps of Chinese engineers and workers were gutted in a heavy fire in the Barseen area of Lower Kohistan. The fire, which started due to short-circuit at about 4:30 am, ripped through the residential camps of Chinese engineers and workers. No loss of life was reported. Rescue 1122 fire tenders and fighters from Upper Kohistan and Lower Kohistan rushed to the spot after receiving emergency calls and started extinguishing the blaze. Khaliq Dad, the district emergency officer of Rescue 1122, Upper Kohistan, said that the enraged flames engulfed the entire area

and gutted camps and warehouses. He said it took five hours to put out the fire completely as firefighters from different districts and Chinese companies put their lives in danger to extinguish the blaze. We have launched an inquiry into the incident and it would be completed in three days as it is part of our standard operational procedures, Anwarul Haq, Dasu Dam's General Manager, told reporters.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1745976/fire-rips-through-chinese-camps-at-dasu-dam>

The country's interests will be considered while deciding whether to amend the Indus Basin Agreement: Pakistani officials

Jasarat, 5 April 2023

The Indian Indus Water Commissioner (IWC), in a letter delivered to the Pakistan Indus Water Commissioner's Office on 25 January, suggested amending the Indus Basin Agreement (IBA). Although Pakistan has not yet responded to India's request, a source claims that Pakistan and India must approve the IBA revision because paragraph 12 of the agreement permits changes. However, the Indus Basin Agreement, according to a Pakistan Indus Water Commissioner personnel, cannot be modified unilaterally. Although there is no such requirement in the Indus Basin pact for Pakistan to react to the Indian letter within 90 days, Pakistan wants to know why India wants to amend the pact as India's letter does not explain why it requires the revision. According to reports, once a decision is reached about the

amendment of the Indus Basin Agreement, Pakistan's interests will take precedence.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/04/04/sindh-tas-treety-2/>

Two killed in accidental GB dam blast

The Express Tribune, 7 April 2023

Two people were killed and seven others seriously injured in an accidental explosion at the Diamer-Bhasha Dam (DBD) construction site in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). A blast occurred at the DBD during mountain exploration using explosives in which two people were killed and seven injured. According to reports, the explosive material, which is used in construction activities, blew up while work was ongoing.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2410452/two-killed-in-accidental-g-b-dam-blast>

GB's Dreadful Tourism Situation: Examining the Impact of Government Policies

Pamir Times, 9 April 2023

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), which was formerly known as the northern area of Pakistan, has a vast mountainous region covered by sky-touching mountains, delightful valleys, beautiful lush green meadows, the coldest desserts, and rivers. It also nested the three great mountain ranges of the world: the Karakorum, the Himalayas, and the Hindukush. The roof of the world, the Deosai Plan, which is about 14000 feet above sea level, the second-largest mountain, K2, and the 8th-

wonder Karakorum Highway (KKH), which has been made in the heart of mountains, are also situated in GB. However, the tourism industry in this region faces severe problems due to the worse policies of the government. One of the main reasons behind the struggle for tourism in GB is the lack of infrastructure development. Although the region has fascinating natural beauty, the people who live here lack basic amenities such as water, electricity, and roads. This made it difficult for the tourists to travel to this area and also compelled them to stay only for a short period. The second reason the tourism industry is struggling in this region is because of a lack of government support for local people through investment or economic opportunities.

As the people of GB are marginalized and have no other income source, the tourism sector is their last hope for income generation. Almost 90% of youth are directly or indirectly linked with this sector, and besides providing or creating economic opportunities, the government is blindly neglecting this site and working as an attractive institution that is only fulfilling their interests. As a consequence, most people are compelled to sell their land for a better future to other people in down cities, which mainly affects the demography, culture, and rights of the local people. Due to the absence of economic initiatives, most of the profits from tourism go to the government or outsiders rather than benefiting the local communities. Additionally, the

tourism sector is also affected by the lack of environmental protection policies. Due to deforestation, overgrazing, and excessive tourism, the unique ecosystem of this region is on the verge of collapse, and most of the natural habitats are also degrading. If action is not taken soon, the tourism industry in GB may suffer irreparable damage, and the local communities that depend on it will suffer.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/04/09/gilgit-baltistans-dreadful-tourism-situation-examining-the-impact-of-government-policies/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Land reform facilitators will not be forgiven by the nation: GB Action Committee

Dailyk2, 3 April 2023

In response to comments made by Information Minister Fathullah Khan regarding the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Land Reform Act, the chairman of the Public Action Committee (PAC), Fidah Hussain, said that while the Minister may be successful in getting the Assembly to approve the Land Reform Act, the public will not support any legislation that jeopardizes the future of the region. The people of GB will not allow any law passed against the public interest, and those who enable such laws will be held accountable in front of the public. Before making any choices about the future of the region, the leaders of GB should consult the local population and other pertinent parties and consider their feedback. According to him, the PAC disapproves of terms

like 'Khalsa Sarkar' and 'Government Land' and is adamant that GB's land exclusively belongs to the people. He said that everyone who contributes to undermining the public good will be prosecuted as a national criminal and must learn their lesson, as the people of GB are ready to protect their lands and resources. If protesters were to flood the streets and towns, these incompetent authorities would be helpless to control the situation, he added.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/13291>

India repeatedly disregards international law in occupied Kashmir: Sagar

UrduPoint, 4 April 2023

Mehmood Ahmed Sagar, the convener of the All Party Hurriyat Conference's (APHC's), 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) branch, stated that India regularly violates international law in the 'Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK). Sagar claimed in a statement that paramilitary soldiers and officials from the State Investigation Agency (SIA), which is under the control of New Delhi, had wrongfully detained Hurriyat leaders Bilal Siddiqui and Maulvi Bashir Ahmed, as well as human rights activists, journalists, and members of the civil society. He claimed that these agencies raided homes and harassed everyone inside, including women, and that they are using false accusations against civilians and home raids as revenge tactics to crush the spirit of

Kashmiris. He lamented the way PM Modi's 'fascist' Indian government is using the infamous investigative agencies NIA, SIA, and Enforcement Directorate as instruments to undermine and persecute Kashmiris who are battling for their freedom. The struggle of the Kashmiris for their inalienable right to self-determination, according to Sagar, cannot be stopped despite the efforts of the Indian intelligence services.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/kashmir/live-news-3535375.html>

The President of the Muslim Conference vehemently condemned the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly's resolution over the Sharda Corridor

UrduPoint, 4 April 2023

The recent Sharda Corridor resolution introduced in the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Assembly reeks of the geographical split of Kashmir, according to Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, president of the Muslim Conference and a former prime minister. This is because Indian media is already using it as part of their narrative. He warned that both the 'AJK' government and the Assembly must refrain from joining this sinister plot. According to the resolution's language, a corridor will provide Indian Hindus access to Sharda, a magnificent Hindu sacred site in the Upper Neelum Valley that is heavily forested and strategically important. The Indian media is yelling that this action is part of their plan.

He added that his party's opposition to the resolution in the 'AJK' Assembly is due to what he called an anti-Kashmir cause action that also seriously harms Pakistan's Kashmir claim. He claimed that while his party has supported the promotion of religious tourism, the Shardah corridor is a plot, and no one should fall victim to it. He urged the 'AJK' government and the Assembly to reject this resolution right away, and he urged the government of Pakistan to consult with all relevant parties, including the 'AJK' government and the APHC, before deciding on this highly sensitive nature. He said that any action that diminishes the significance of the approximately 600,000 Kashmiris who gave their lives in the course of the Kashmir conflict would be regarded as unpatriotic and completely overruled.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3535374.html>

Will keep supporting Kashmiris on every platform until the Kashmir issue is resolved: Pakistan FO

Jasarat, 5 April 2023

Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, during a weekly briefing, stated that until the issue of Kashmir is settled, Pakistan will continue to support Kashmiris at all forums. She claimed that India had set fire to more than 4000 Islamic literature, including the Holy Quran, and that Pakistan fiercely condemned the persecution of Muslims

in India, with the worst atrocities taking place in nine of the states. She commended the OIC for their statement condemning the ongoing atrocities committed against Muslims in India. She stated that there are ongoing atrocities taking place in 'occupied Kashmir' and that human rights organizations must receive a response from India, adding that the lives of common Kashmiris in the 'occupied Valley' are facing immense difficulties. She asserted that the statement made by the Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar was intended to harm Pakistan diplomatically and that, rather than placing the blame on Pakistan, India should examine how its institutions and people are destroying Muslim religious sites, lynching Muslims, and getting away with it by using the legal system. She asserted that the insult made by the Indian foreign minister towards the Pakistani government and foreign minister is proof that the country is on the verge of imploding. She also said Pakistan is dedicated to implementing the Indus Basin pact and that Pakistan will reply to India's letter.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/04/05/we-will-continue-to-help-kashmiris-in-every-forum-till-the-solution-of-the-kashmir-problem-said-the-spokesperson-of-the-foreign-office/>

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Disclaimer

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