

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Lost in the din

Editorial, Dawn, 5 June 2023

On a crisp September day in 2005 at the Wagah-Attari border, the flags of Pakistan and India were flying high, while the drums rolled on both sides to announce one of the largest prisoner exchanges between the two countries. On the ground standing in a neat line were prisoners from both countries, some with no shoes on their feet, waiting anxiously to reunite with their families. They glared at the big gates dividing the two rival nations with disillusionment; most of them had spent a long time in prison than their sentences required. Some had even developed mental illnesses as a result of their incarceration. This prisoner exchange took place as part of the 'confidence-building measures' (CBMs) between India's then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan's Gen Pervez Musharraf. Later in May 2008, a consular access agreement was signed, under which both countries are required to exchange lists of prisoners in each other's custody, to provide timely consular access and prompt repatriation after the prisoners had completed their sentence. However, after the Mumbai attacks, the process suffered and prisoners continued to be incarcerated even though they had served their sentences. Similarly, as part of the CBMs, a bus service across the Line of Control in Kashmir was launched in April 2005, allowing divided families to meet.

However, every time there was a skirmish or an attack, the bus service was suspended. And finally, it was suspended completely in April 2020, when, in a unilateral move, India announced the suspension of trade. But much before that, the die had been cast on India-Pakistan relations after the Mumbai attacks. The Mumbai attacks were a watershed moment for India where 174 people were killed on live television for the world to see. Young Indians were convinced that Pakistan was exporting terror to their cities and the new narrative negated the romantic notions that the older generation of Indians had nurtured since the partition of a land lost. The new generation of Indians now viewed Pakistan through the prism of the Mumbai attacks. When Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari embarked on his journey to Goa to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, he was taking an immense political risk. In Pakistan, the trial of those accused in the Mumbai attacks is still to be concluded.

Three prosecutors have been changed in this case since 2009. One was murdered, the second died of a heart attack and the third was abruptly dismissed. While the accused in the Mumbai attacks are being tried in anti-terrorism courts in Pakistan, the state has tried civilians and even human rights activists in non-civilian forums. The inconsistency in pursuing cases linked to the Mumbai attacks has not

gone unnoticed by New Delhi. When Foreign Minister Bhutto-Zardari arrived in Goa recently, his past remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 'Osama bin Laden is dead, but the butcher of Gujarat lives...' still rankled the BJP. Mainstream Indian media were waiting to take a swipe at Pakistan's top diplomat, but they had little opportunity because he did not hold a press conference with Indian media. At home, the hawks in PTI were condemning Bhutto-Zardari for even attending the summit, while political commentators were piling on the pressure to raise the issue of Kashmir at the multilateral forum. As a goodwill gesture, the foreign minister announced the release of 600 Indian fishermen, a move that should have softened the Indians.

However, his interviews with two top Indian journalists where he defended Pakistan's position on Kashmir irked the BJP leadership, who were of the view that at a multilateral summit, bilateral relations should not have been brought up. The Indians were even more upset when he cautioned them 'not to get caught up in weaponizing terrorism for diplomatic point-scoring.' All hopes for the resumption of diplomatic ties were crushed when the foreign minister said it would not happen unless India went back to its position in Kashmir before August 2019. He condemned India for hosting a G20 meeting in Srinagar and warned that when it was held 'we will give such

a response that it will be remembered.' His remarks were promptly carried by the media and patched with the news that in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district five army personnel were killed in a gun battle with militants, an insinuation that Pakistan would be held responsible for any militancy in Kashmir during the G20 summit.

As soon as Bhutto-Zardari was on the tarmac to fly home, India's External Affairs Minister Subramanian Jaishankar in a scathing press conference burst out: 'Weaponising terrorism! We are not scoring diplomatic points, we are diplomatically exposing Pakistan.' And on Kashmir, he thundered: 'Pakistan has nothing to do with the G20 summit or Kashmir, they should just vacate ... Kashmir [AJK]!' Suddenly the SCO, a multilateral forum where members were discussing ways to economically take the bloc further, was turned into an India-Pakistan round-off, a rude reminder of how their mutual hostility had made SAARC redundant. And here lies another opportunity for this two cantankerous nations-either move forward with the rest of the world, which is focused on regional and economic integration, or continue to undermine the potential of their people. For now, stray fisher folk and divided families who pose no threat to the security of either nation, continue to pay the price of self-proclaimed patriotism.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1758029>

SCO summit: Indian surprise*The Express Tribune, 5 June 2023*

India is the current president of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The 8-nation regional forum comprises Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and key central Asian states. The SCO has emerged as a potent regional bloc as other countries, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE to name a few are eager to be part of the forum. Both Pakistan and India were admitted to the security forum, dominated by Russia and China, only a few years ago. India as having the rotating presidency is hosting a series of meetings this year. In early May it hosted the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Goa. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, contrary to expectations, attended the meeting. This was the first visit by any Pakistani foreign minister to India since 2011. On 4 July, India is set to host the summit meeting of SCO. As Pakistan was contemplating whether to attend the meeting in New Delhi, India sprang a surprise by announcing that it would hold the summit virtually. The move immediately raised questions as to why India avoided holding an in-person summit. There was no official reason given. Virtually meetings had become a norm in the Covid-19 pandemic era. However, during the last year or so, such strict protocols are now done away with it. More and more meetings at the international level are taking

place in person. The recent G-7 meeting in Japan was one example. Even the SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Goa suggested that Covid-19 was not an issue. Therefore, it was intriguing why India decided to hold the summit virtually.

Officials in Pakistan said their initial sense was that India decided not to hold an in-person summit possibly because of a lack of confirmation by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the summit in New Delhi. If both the Chinese and Russian Presidents decide to skip in-person attendance at the summit, that would be a diplomatic embarrassment for India, according to the official. This was probably the reason that led New Delhi to hold the summit virtually. Another source said there could be a Pakistan factor too. Given what happened in Goa during the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, India might have felt that if the Pakistani Prime Minister attended the summit in New Delhi, it would overshadow the proceedings of the SCO. There would have also been a lot of international headlines and a spotlight on whether Pakistani and Indian leaders would meet on the sidelines of the summit. This was exactly what India wanted to avoid, the source said.

Nevertheless, sources said India's border tension with China and Russia's invasion of Ukraine might have also

played a part. India seemed not interested in hosting Russian and Chinese leaders, the adversaries of the West and the US, at this juncture. Indian media reports at a time when New Delhi is engaging intensively with the West in the hope of acquiring cutting-edge technology, the arrival of their adversaries in the Indian capital would have complicated the matter. Other reports, however, said since India would host these leaders in September on the occasion of the G20 summit, it would not make any difference if the SCO leaders meet via video link.

But observers feel that it appears as if India finds itself a misfit in the SCO which is dominated by the US adversaries, China and Russia. The SCO policies may in the future come in direct conflict with the US and other Western nations. While India has so far maintained a balance in ties with the West and Russia, the situation may not be that easy in the future. As tensions between the West and Russia and China deepen, there is a possibility that India will be under pressure to align itself more with the West. Hence, the Indian plans to not host the Russian and Chinese leaders in July make a lot of sense.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2420250/sco-summit-indian-surprise>

In his conversation with Australia's High Commissioner, PM 'AJK' states

that implementing UN resolutions is the best way to resolve the Kashmir issue

Daily Parliament Times, 5 June 2023

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Choudhury Anwar ul Haq has said that the implementation of the United Nations (UN) resolutions was the only way forward to settle the prolonged Kashmir dispute peacefully. While talking to Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins, the PM, while stressing the need for early resolution of the dispute said that hundreds of thousands of 'innocent Kashmiris' have been martyred by the 'Indian troops during the ongoing freedom movement.' There are thousands of anonymous mass graves discovered in different areas within and outside the Kashmir valley, adding that he was not in favor of trade with India until the Kashmir issue was resolved. Referring to the massive troops' concentration in the 'Indian-held territory' of Jammu and Kashmir, he said that the 'occupied Kashmir' has been classified as the world's highest militarized zone where India had deployed over 9 lakh forces to crush the Kashmiri's Legitimate political struggle. The human rights situation has further worsened in the 'Indian Occupied Kashmir' (IoK) since the Modi government stripped the region of its special status by abrogating Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution, adding that essential fundamental freedoms including the people's rights

to freedom of assembly, the right to protest and rights to freedom of speech and expression remain largely suppressed in the region.

Referring to the existing political harmony in the 'liberated territory', he claimed that democratic traditions were very strong in 'Azad Kashmir' and people fully enjoy their political and democratic rights. In 'Azad Kashmir' people enjoy complete freedom, there are no restrictions whatsoever and there is not a single political prisoner, while the situation on the other side of the Line of Control is quite different, he claimed. He further said that his government was working to exploit the full potential of hydel and tourism in the region and stressed that after the thirteenth constitutional amendment, the status of the Kashmir Council is no more than an advisory council and the powers of the council have been transferred to the 'Azad Kashmir' government. While speaking on the occasion, Neil Hawkins expressed his pleasure that the 'Azad Kashmir' is one of the most beautiful places in the world, the natural beauty here is a source of great interest for tourists, adding that along with domestic tourists, foreign tourists' influx into the region was a good sign for the local economy. The Australian High Commissioner said that he was happy to attend the literary festival held in Muzaffarabad. He said that Australia will provide its full support regarding water and food security in the region.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/06/05/pm-ajk-chudhary-anwar-ul-haq/>

India Targeting Kashmiri Children under the well thought-out Plan: Pasban-e-Hurriyat

Pakistan Observer, 5 June 2023

Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir have said that the 'Indian troops are killing and arresting children' in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) and are using pellet guns on them. On the occasion of International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression, Pasban Hurriyat's media cell in a statement said that the 'victimization of children' by the 'India in the Kashmir valley proves that Indian soldiers' are targeting innocent Kashmiri children under a well-thought-out plan. In Sopore, a three-year-old child's grandfather was shot in front of him, after which the child sat on the martyred grandfather's chest and tried to lift him. The authorities have detained thousands of minor Kashmiri children in jails under the black law Public Safety Act (PSA) and subjected them to torture. Later, they were released after taking huge sums of money from their parents. Meanwhile, APHC-'AJK' chapter leader Mushtaq Ahmad Butt in a statement appealed to the United Nations and other international human rights organizations to take notice of the plight of the Kashmiri children. He said children are facing a very serious and dangerous situation in the occupied territory, where children are being called to military camps and police

stations and subjected to torture and put in jails under black laws.

<https://pakobserver.net/india-targeting-kashmiri-children-under-well-thought-out-plan-pasban-e-hurriyat/>

GB speaker withdraws resignation, to face no-trust

Dawn, 6 June 2023

Days after he resigned to avoid a no-confidence vote, the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly speaker, Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi, in a surprising move, took back his resignation, putting his fate in the hands of lawmakers. The GB Assembly Secretariat has issued notices to members to conduct proceedings on the motion on 6 May 2023. Mr. Zaidi resigned on 31 May, after a group of assembly members, led by his deputy Nazir Ahmed, submitted the motion for 'not honouring an agreement to share the post.' The resignation had been sitting on GB Governor Syed Mehdi Shah's desk sans approval.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1758225/gb-speaker-withdraws-resignation-to-face-no-trust>

GB Assembly unanimously passes resolution condemning 9 May incident

The Nation, 6 June 2023

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly unanimously passed a resolution condemning the 9 May incidents. This resolution was presented by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) member of Assembly Zakaria Moqpoon and JUI Member of Assembly Rehmat Khaliq.

The resolution demanded strict legal action against the miscreants involved in the incidents of 9-10 May. According to the resolution, on 9 and 10 May 2023, various cities of the country were attacked under a well-thought-out plan by miscreants to damage national property, attacked military installations, and desecrated the monuments of Shahada Pakistan. It condemned the act of miscreants and demanded the federal government and the security agencies to take strict timely action against the anti-national elements, miscreants, and saboteurs who were involved in these sad events and bring them to justice. The miscreants must be made an example so that no one in the future can dare to commit treason against the beloved country, it added.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Jun-2023/gb-assembly-unanimously-passes-resolution-condemning-may-9-incident>

Hurriyat organizations condemn India for building mega power projects

Pakistan Observer, 7 June 2023

In 'India Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK), Hurriyat leaders and organizations have condemned India for building mega power projects in Kishtwar. In their separate statements, they claimed the projects are being built in violation of the Indus Water Treaty, and added that New Delhi is using land and resources of Kashmir, while benefits go directly to the Indian states. They further said Kashmiris are

deprived of locally generated electricity. Meanwhile, people staged a massive protest demonstration in the Rajouri district of Jammu region against the killing of a college student by a vehicle of the Indian Border Security Force. The youth, Muhamad Saqib Malik, was critically injured after his motorcycle was deliberately hit by a BSF vehicle in the Kallar area of the district. He was shifted to the Government Medical College Rajouri where succumbed to his injuries.

Meanwhile, in their interviews in Srinagar, political experts, and Kashmir watchers said the Narendra Modi-led Indian government is using its dreaded agencies including National Investigation Agency and State Investigation Agency as a weapon to suppress the Kashmiris' ongoing 'freedom movement' and intimidate them into submission. In a statement issued in Jammu, All Parties Hurriyat Conference leader, Advocate Devinder Singh Behl deplored that India has turned 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' into the world's largest open-air prison by deploying more than one million army and paramilitary personnel in the territory. In a message from Naini Central Jail in Uttar Pradesh, 'illegally detained' APHC leader Noor Muhammad Fayyaz said India is punishing the Kashmiris for demanding their birthright to self-determination.

<https://pakobserver.net/hurriyat-organizations-condemn-india-for-building-mega-power-projects/>

Extensive mining, and other environmental degradation factors behind the rise in cancer cases in 'IIOJK'

Pakistan Observer, 7 June 2023

Health experts have revealed that extensive mining, construction of dams, and setting up of colonies for Indian soldiers and employees and other such environmental degradation factors being carried out by the Indian government are contributing to the increasing cases of cancer and other diseases in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). According to Kashmir Media Service, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) President Dr Nisarul Hassan in a statement said that environmental pollution is behind a spike in cancer which has reached epidemic proportions in Kashmir. He also cited the increasing number of vehicles, construction, brick kiln, cement, and other factories as the additional factors behind the deteriorating air quality in Kashmir. He said that research has shown that polluted air is associated with an increased risk of lung cancer which is the most prominent cancer among men in Kashmir.

According to a research paper 'War in Kashmir and its effect on the environment' by scholar Jennifer Crook, 'in the Kashmir region, the environmental degradation can be traced back to after the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and

Pakistan that heavily affected the Himalayan region. While referring to the heavy deployment of the Indian army, the research paper said that this 'led to large-scale poaching of rare species such as ibex, blue sheep, the big-horned sheep, antelopes, and the snow leopard. Crook further wrote that, at first, 'the soldiers were killing the animals for food but when the poorly paid soldiers realized how valuable the animal furs and skins were in the international markets, they started to slaughter the Kashmiri animals with much greater zeal.'

<https://pakobserver.net/extensive-mining-other-environmental-degradation-factors-behind-rise-in-cancer-cases-in-iiojk/>

Modi regime imposing Hindutva agenda in 'IIOJK' schools too

Pakistan Observer, 9 June 2023

Narendra Modi-led 'fascist' Indian government is imposing the Hindutva agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the schools of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). The female students from the Vishu Bharti (VB) School in the Rainawari area of Srinagar staged a protest against the school administration stating that they were disallowed to enter the premises of the school wearing Hijab. The school management told the students that they had received the orders from 'higher-ups.' The students said they do not have issues with anyone coming in

any dress, but they should not be stopped from following their choice of covering their heads.

<https://pakobserver.net/modi-regime-imposing-hindutva-agenda-in-iiojk-schools-too/>

Peace in region linked with the resolution of Kashmir: 'AJK'-PM

The Nation, 11 June 2023

Terming the resolution of the Kashmir dispute as a key to regional peace, 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has urged the international community to help resolve the lingering dispute peacefully. He claimed that sustainable peace in South Asia hinged on a just and equitable solution to the Kashmir issue. While terming Kashmiris' ongoing 'freedom movement' as a 'legitimate struggle', he claimed that 'hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris have sacrificed their lives to achieve their cherished goal of freedom.' While claiming that the massive human rights violations taking place in the 'Indian-occupied' territory of Jammu and Kashmir, he alleged that bloodbath of 'innocent civilians, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and molestation of women' at the hands of 'occupation forces' have become a new normal in Kashmir. Despite all these 'cruel tactics', India could not suppress the 'spirit of freedom' from the hearts of Kashmiris, he claimed.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Jun-2023/peace-in-region-linked-with-resolution-of-kashmir-ajk-pm>

Economic Developments

The governments of Pakistan and China are working together to transport agricultural and seafood products from Pakistan via the Karakoram Highway: Ambassador Moin-ul-Haq

Urdupoint, 5 June 2023

Pakistan Ambassador to China Moin-ul-Haq said that the governments of Pakistan and China are working together to increase the amount of seafood and agricultural products exported from Pakistan via the Karakoram Highway to China. Haq said that both the government emphasized that Pakistanis products should reach the Chinese market via this land route, and stressed that China, the second-largest consumer market in the world, wants to import more high-quality Pakistani goods. He was speaking about Pakistan's first overland containerized seafood cargo, which safely arrived in Xinjiang via the Karakoram. To enable trade and the export of Pakistan's high-quality goods over the Khunjerab Pass to Kashgar in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of eastern China, Haq emphasized that this is a shared objective of Pakistan and China. As a key project of the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is being used for the first time to move marine food containers from Pakistan from Karachi to Kashgar via road. Additionally, a Pakistan Transport Company spokesperson said that this

was the first time a Chinese company had joined forces with a bilateral partner to conduct cross-border road transport business. According to him, the costs of the land route's cold chain transportation are being examined, and our Chinese partners are also searching for further options to import more products from Pakistan.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gwadar/national-news/live-news-3609990.html>

India is transforming 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir into a power hub, but Kashmiris are still unable to get electricity

Urdupoint, 5 June 2023

Intending to establish the region as an Indian power hub, India is working swiftly to finish several hydroelectric projects in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK), particularly in the districts of Kishtwar and Doda. For more than 70 years, India has exploited the people of Kashmir without returning any of their resources. Pakal Dul Dam which has a 1000 MW production capacity, is a significant energy plant in Kishtwar district. Its projected completion date is 2025, with an estimated cost of Rs 8,112.12 crore so far. Kiru Hydroelectric Project, which has a 624 MW capacity, is another significant project. It is anticipated that the project would be finished by 2025 and will cost an estimated 4,285.59 crore rupees. The Kwar Hydroelectric Project, with a capacity of 624 MW and an estimated cost of Rs. 4526.12 crores, is another project with a location

roughly 43 kilometers from Kishtwar. A 54-month completion window is given for the project.

The Kirthai (II) Hydropower Project, which has a 930 MW capacity, is another hydropower project located about 25 kilometers from the Kiru project. Furthermore, a joint venture between India and 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir was formed to resuscitate the 850 MW Ratle. Additionally, the Dul Hasti Dam will have a 260 MW capacity compared to the 390 MW installed capacity of the current project. These projects are all located in Doda and Kishtwar, the two districts in the Jammu region of 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir', and India will profit from the large-scale electricity production, but the locals will not benefit from them. As all the electricity would be transferred to India and Kashmiris won't receive any, Indians are denying Kashmiris of their fundamental rights while taking their assets. India is investing a sizable sum of money in the construction of these projects since it is aware of their substantial benefits. If the local community has any advantages, they primarily relate to the infrastructure that India is developing to facilitate access to these projects. However, even if thousands of megawatts of electricity are produced today, Kashmiris still lack access to it. Rivers, woods, and the tourism sector are among the places where resources are still being pillaged.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/kashmir/live-news-3609918.html>

Diamer Basha Dam: WAPDA all set to divert River Indus by November

The Nation, 8 June 2023

The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) is all set to divert River Indus for Diamer Basha Dam Project (DBDP) through an almost 1 km-long diversion tunnel and 0.8 km-long diversion canal by November this year. After the diversion, River Indus will flow through the diversion system and re-join its natural course downstream of the main dam site, management of DBDP said while briefing Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen (r) Sajjad Ghani during his visit to the dam site. It was informed that river diversion is one of the key activities for the implementation of this mega multi-purpose project. DBD is being constructed on River Indus, 40 km downstream of Chilas town. The construction work is progressing on 13 different sites. The upstream starter (coffer) dam to facilitate river diversion under stage-1 has been completed, while work on the downstream starter (coffer) dam is going on and is expected to be completed by November for stage-1 diversion. The chairman was also briefed about progress on the diversion canal to be used during the high-flow season. Targets and achievements on the project were also discussed during the briefing.

The WAPDA chairman had a detailed visit of various sites; diversion tunnel, diversion canal, up and downstream starter (coffer) dams, and downstream

permanent bridge in particular. He also inaugurated a newly-constructed field hospital at the project site. DBD has a gross water storage capacity of 8.1 MAF to irrigate 1.23 million acres of additional land. The power generation capacity of the project stands at 4,500 MW, with annual energy of 18 billion units of green and clean hydel electricity. A sum of Rs.78.5 billion is being spent on the resettlement of affected CBMs in health, education, and infrastructure development. The chairman also visited Dasu Hydropower Project and reviewed construction activities on the project. The 4320 MW-Dasu Hydropower Project is planned to be completed in two stages. WAPDA is constructing its stage-I with an installed generation capacity of 2160 MW and an annual energy generation of 12 billion units. Rs. 17.34 billion have been earmarked to execute CBM schemes for economic and social development in the project area.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Jun-2023/diamer-basha-dam-wapda-all-set-to-divert-river-indus-by-nov>

A delegation from Huawei Company Pakistan called on 'AJK' president Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry

Daily Parliament Times, 8 June 2023

A delegation from Huawei Company Pakistan called on the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry in the Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis. The delegation comprised

Pan Feng, Managing Director, Dai Kong, Zahid Maqbool, Ahmed Bilal Masood, and Khawaja Affan Tariq briefed the president about Huawei's ongoing projects and investments in and outside Pakistan. The visiting delegation also expressed its desire to invest in 'AJK.' During the meeting, Sultan Mahmood appreciated the Huawei team and termed it as a very welcoming and positive development. He assured the visiting delegates that the government of 'AJK' would provide all-out support and assistance in this regard. Pan Feng, the head of the Huawei Pakistan team, also presented a memento of the company to the president.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/06/08/a-delegation-from-huawei-company-pakistan-called-on-president-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-barrister-sultan-mahmood-chaudhry/>

PIA's services for Gilgit-Baltistan need an overhaul

Pamir Times, 10 June 2023

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), the national carrier of Pakistan, has long been a symbol of national pride and connectivity. However, recent developments regarding fares, services, and operational decisions have raised serious concerns. Particularly, the exorbitant fares on flights from Gilgit/Skardu to Islamabad/Karachi, combined with inconvenient connecting flights, reflect a disheartening disregard for the economic realities and limitations faced by the people of Gilgit Baltistan (GB).

Skyrocketing Fares: The fares for PIA flights from Gilgit/Skardu to Islamabad/Karachi have reached unprecedented levels, disproportionate to the time, distance, and quality of service provided by the airline. Astonishingly, these fares exceed those for flights from Karachi to Dubai, which is an international route with considerably greater distance and operational costs. PIA's exorbitant pricing not only places an undue burden on the passengers but also contradicts the airline's responsibility to serve the people of Pakistan. Adding insult to injury, PIA recently announced its direct operation from Skardu to Karachi. However, instead of offering a true direct flight, the airline continues to subject passengers to the inconvenience of a connecting flight through Islamabad. This unnecessarily elongates the travel time to a staggering 9 hours, while one can reach destinations like Gambia or Turkey in a direct flight within the same duration.

Neglecting the Economic Status of GB: The GB is a region known for its breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage. However, it is also characterized by economic limitations and a comparatively low-income population. PIA's pricing strategy fails to acknowledge the economic disparities faced by the people of this region, effectively rendering air travel unaffordable for many. This perpetuates a sense of exclusion and highlights the airline's failure to fulfill

its social responsibility towards the people it should serve.

Call for Reform: PIA needs to reassess its fares, services, and operational decisions, particularly in regions like GB. The national carrier should strive to make air travel accessible and affordable for all citizens, regardless of their economic background. The unjust practices of PIA, particularly regarding fares, services, and operational decisions, have left the people of GB feeling neglected and excluded. Skyrocketing fares, inconvenient connecting flights, and a lack of consideration for economic disparities reflect a disregard for the airline's responsibility toward its customers.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/06/10/pias-services-for-gilgit-baltistan-need-an-overhaul/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Anti-India protest in 'Azad Kashmir' following the completion of 1400 days of August 2019 measures

Urdupoint, 5 June 2023

A protest rally was organized by Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir in Muzaffarabad to mark 1400 days since Jammu and Kashmir's special status came to an end on 5 August 2019. The protestors demonstrated slogans and hoisted black flags and wore black armbands to call on the UN and OIC to revoke India's acts. Slogans like 'Occupier India, Leave Jammu and Kashmir' and 'Wake up, Wake up United Nations, Wake up' were being chanted by the

protesters. Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Speaker of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Legislative Assembly, and Chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat led the anti-India demonstration. Civil society members and political leaders also attended and criticised India's 5 August 2019 act during the events.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3609919.html>

Nazir Ahmed elected as Speaker GB Assembly without any opposition

Pamir Times, 7 June 2023

Nazir Ahmed Advocate was unanimously elected as speaker by the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly. After Amjad Zaidi, a PTI member, was earlier dismissed from his position as a result of a no-confidence motion approved by his party members, Nazir Ahmed, another member of the PTI, took the oath. Interestingly, the assembly members who are connected to the opposition decided not to vote on the motion of no confidence.

<https://urdu.pamirtimes.net/2023/06/07/%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%af/>

PPP wins 'AJK' by-elections with a thumping majority

Jasarat, 8 June 2023

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) LA-15 by-election was won on 8 June 2023 by Sardar Ziaul Qamar of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). In comparison to Mr. Zia's 25755 votes, Mushtaq Minhas of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) received

20485 votes. A little over fifty percent of eligible voters cast ballots. The former 'AJK' PM Sardar Tanvir Ilyas, who had won the 2018 election with 20,010 votes, was found to be ineligible by the 'AJK' High Court, which left the seat vacant. Eighteen individuals have filed for the position, including Colonel Zamir of the PTI. 101,145 people are registered to vote, including 53,107 males and 48,038 women, out of the total eligible population.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/06/08/azad-kashmir-2/>

PML-N accused PPP of rigging the 'Azad Kashmir' by-election

Daily Pakistan, 9 June 2023

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has been charged with rigging the results of the 'Azad Kashmir' by-elections by the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N). Hina Parvez Butt, the leader of the PML-N, asserted that the PPP had once again seemed to be involved in election fraud through their back door stumping operation in recently concluded by-elections in Kashmir while uploading CCTV videos on social media as proof. The PPP, she claimed, is deliberately involved in rigging the election results to benefit itself, although it is illegal in the country to do so. Given the outcomes of the by-elections in 'Azad Kashmir' Constituency LA 15, it is important to note that Zia Qamar of the PPP has triumphed.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/09-Jun-2023/1590173>

'Azad Kashmir'-style administrative setup should be implemented in GB: JI-'AJK' leader

Jasarat, 11 June 2023

Dr. Khalid Mahmood Khan, the Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami-'Azad Jammu Kashmir' (JI-AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), has stated that GB's administrative setup should be formed in the same manner as 'Azad Kashmir' and that the Pakistani government should grant additional rights to the provinces without compromising the special status of GB. Khalid stressed that JI has fought since the very beginning for the constitutional and political rights of the people of GB, and the fight will go on until those rights are granted to the people. He emphasized that young people should be given interest-free loans, tourism should be promoted, that funding for the upgrading of the health and education sectors should be boosted, and the GB people should receive a share of the royalties from dams.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/06/11/dr-khalid-mehmood-10/>

Social Media (tweets)

Khalif ur Rehman @Khalifurrehman1

6 June 2023

The devastating impact of some Pakistan dramas on the family system in cities has now started at Karakoram International University (KIU) in Gilgit. Any program of Gilgitites be it educational, political or cultural is incomplete without Gilgiti dance.

#KIU #GilgitBaltistan #gilgit #GB #Gilgit_Baltistan

Story Link.

<https://twitter.com/Khalifurrehman1/status/1666101687013068800>

israruddin israr @israruddinisrar

9 June 2023

Shutter down strike is being observed in Gilgit Baltistan on the call of Awami Action Committee against negligence of GB Govt. regarding the provision of civic facilities across the GB.

Images in the link.

<https://twitter.com/israruddinisrar>

Naseer Kazmee @inaseerkazmee

10 June 2023

Students of GB are being harassed and booked under fake charges by police in Karachi where PPP is ruling and the SSP Counter Terrorism Department uses his influence to launch FIR with fake charges.

Video link/Story.

<https://twitter.com/inaseerkazmee/status/1667567546764238848>

Developing Pakistan @devpak47

11 June 2023

Under Construction 4500 MW Diamer Basha Dam Project: WAPDA all set to divert River Indus by November this year © Shabsabg

#DiamerBhasha #DiamerBashaDam #GilgitBaltistan #GB #Hydropower #Pakistan #BhashaDam #Bhasha #Diamer PKPK

Video Link.

<https://twitter.com/devpak47/status/166794468033052672>

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Disclaimer

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