

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Sost dry port POK CPEC
GB-Budget Indo-US
Skardu tourism summit
LoC Gilgit-Baltistan



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Political Developments

India under fascist Modi has become hell for its religious minorities

Pakistan Observer, 26 June 2023

Political experts and analysts in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) have said that India, under fascist Modi, has become a hell for its religious minorities, especially Muslims. The political experts and analysts in their interviews and statements in Srinagar said Modi's government is trampling upon fundamental freedoms of religious minorities and the Biden admin's rock-star reception to Modi, the butcher of Gujarat, is like rubbing salt in the wounds of Indian Muslims. They said the world powers, including the United States, must tell Modi to stop violence against religious minorities instead of rolling the red carpet for him. Hindutva activists are using violence to impose Hindu culture on religious minorities across India, they added. The political experts and analysts maintained that targeting Christians in Manipur is another testimony that the rights and life of religious minorities are under threat in Modi-ruled India. The large-scale violence and discrimination, they said, against India's religious minorities have exposed the country's so-called secularism. They deplored that the human rights violations against religious minorities in India and 'IIOJK' had been on the rise since Modi had come to power, adding that Hindu supremacist forces' attacks on

religious minorities in India had amplified since BJP's rise to power. They said the world rights' bodies have time and again highlighted the Modi regime's failure to stop attacks against religious minorities in India but the world's double standard has allowed the Modi regime to continue its planned ethnic cleansing of religious minorities in India. The political experts and analysts said the global powers, including the US, must shun its double standard and take practical steps to save India's religious minorities from Modi's fascism and the Modi regime must be brought to book for its crimes against 'IIOJK' people and religious minorities in India.

<https://pakobserver.net/india-under-fascist-modi-has-become-hell-for-its-religious-minorities/>

Saghar terms Indo-US joint statement misleading

Pakistan Observer, 26 June 2023

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK) chapter Convener, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, has expressed serious concern over the Indo-US joint statement and termed it as misleading. Saghar in a statement issued in Islamabad said that it was quite unfortunate that the joint statement did not mention the Kashmir dispute, Indian terrorism, human rights violations, and arbitrary arrests of thousands of Kashmiris languishing in different jails of India and 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). He said that it was most

regrettable that the country (US), which has been a co-sponsor of the historic United Nations resolution that acknowledged Kashmiris' right to self-determination and granted legitimacy to the Kashmir issue, turned a blind towards the abysmal situation in the territory that continues to reel under India's relentless and 'brutal repression.'

Saghar, while referring to the US stance on the Kashmir dispute, said being a strong proponent of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, it has always sought and supported a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute through dialogue and diplomacy. He said America still supports the UNSC resolutions calling for a referendum in the region. As far as the issue of Hizbul Mujahideen is concerned, Saghar said that the US should differentiate between a terrorist and a freedom movement. Hizbul is an indigenous Kashmiri resistance organisation whose sole agenda is to liberate Kashmir from 'In-dia's illegal occupation', adding that the Hizbul, which has never been engaged in unlawful activities, has been working under the ambit of the UN character. As per the UN charter Kashmiris have a legal right to armed resistance, the APHC-'AJK' leader said and added that Kashmiris' ongoing struggle was all about the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, be it a Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, or Christian. Urging the Biden administration to revisit its wisdom on Kashmir, Saghar

said instead of compromising its ideals the US must take a bold stance and play its much-needed role to resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute.

<https://pakobserver.net/saghar-terms-indo-us-joint-statement-as-misleading/>

Firing along LOC

The Nation, June 2023

On Saturday, the Indian Army resorted to unprovoked firing on a group of shepherds along the Line of Control (LoC), in the first known ceasefire violation incident since February 2021 when the two countries renewed their truce in the disputed region. This is a concerning development and it is tragic to see how innocent civilians were killed by this senseless act of the Indian Army. As per reports, two civilians embraced martyrdom while one other was critically injured after the Indian Army opened fire on a group of shepherds in the Sattwal sector along the Line of Control (LoC). This is just another manifestation of the Indian Army's usual inhumane approach toward innocent Kashmiris. Islamabad on its part immediately registered a strongly worded protest and has made it clear that Pakistan reserves the right to respond in the manner of its choosing to protect Kashmiri lives in the LOC belt. Further, the ISPR also rightly reminded the Indian side to respect the basic human rights of Kashmiris, particularly, their inalienable right to their lands.

Not only is this incident a clear violation of the 2003 Ceasefire

Understanding, reaffirmed in February 2021, the targeting of civilians is contrary to human dignity and international human rights, and humanitarian laws. It took a lot of effort to renew the ceasefire in 2021 after back-channel talks and such incidents threaten to do away with the little progress the two countries have made toward normalising relations. India must furnish an explanation for this incident, and established mechanisms at the LoC should be relied upon instead of resorting to such measures. The hope is that hostilities are kept at bay and that sanity prevails. There are concerns in some corridors that India's growing security alliance with the US will further enable New Delhi's belligerent tactics that the international community has turned a blind eye towards. This is still conjecture at this point, and the focus between the two sides should be on avoiding any confrontation at the very least, given there appears to be little room for improving bilateral relations in the current climate.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2023/firing-along-loc>

Indian army soldiers enter Pulwama mosque, force worshipers to chant 'Jai Shri Ram in loudspeakers

Pakistan Observer, 26 June 2023

In blatant violation of fundamental rights and the sanctity of religious places Indian Army soldiers entered a grand mosque in Pulwama, and vandalized it before forcing the

muazzin along worshipers to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans in the mosque's loudspeakers in Zadoora of the area of the district. The incident triggered strong anti-protest demonstrations in the area and triggered massive outrage with civil society activists and political leaders terming it a violation of religious freedom and an assault on the sanctity of religious places Muslims. Locals of Zadoora told the media that the incident took place on the intervening night of Friday, 23 June, and Saturday, 24 June, at around 1:30 am when a group of soldiers from the Indian Army's 50 Rashtriya Rifles arrived in the village. The soldiers were accompanied by an unidentified officer.

Mohammad Altaf Butt, who lives in Zadoora said that while the officer was sitting on the bonnet of one of the vehicles, the soldiers asked me to come out. I thought that they were looking for some suspects in the village. Butt, who is the chairman of Zadoora Civil Society, said that the soldiers told him that a new team has been posted in the area and they were carrying out a mock drill in the village to teach the recruits how counterinsurgency operations were undertaken. I told them that the operation could have been carried out during the day also and it was wrong to disturb villagers in the middle of the night, Butt said, adding that the villagers were kept awake till the break of dawn. Locals said that during the 'operation', soldiers detained at least 10 teenagers in the village, five of whom

were beaten up, including Butt's son, Javed Ahmad. They used a belt and beat him repeatedly. His back suffered bruises, Butt said, showing a photograph of his son, purportedly taken after the assault. At the crack of dawn, when a local muazzin went inside the mosque to issue the call for prayers (azaan), Butt said, the Army soldiers followed him, and adding that in the middle of the azaan, the soldiers forced him to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans. The soldiers forced the detained youngsters to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans in chorus behind him also," Butt said.

Local said the Army also vandalised Jamia Masjid Zadoora, the largest mosque in this south Kashmir village, where 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans were also chanted over the loudspeaker. As the news of the assault spread on Saturday morning, agitated villagers came out of their homes and started shouting slogans against the Army. The situation was brought under control after the intervention of the civil and police administration. The incident in Zadoora took place at a time when Indian Home Minister Amit Shah was visiting 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir to review the security situation in the run-up to the Amarnath Yatra which is set to begin next month with more than five lakh pilgrims expected to undertake the annual pilgrimage this year. A section of local media that reported the incident said that the Indian Army's Srinagar-based spokesperson and Kashmir Valley's

police chief Vijay Kumar failed to respond when asked for comments. A senior police officer, however, said that an inquiry has been ordered to ascertain facts. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah and People's Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti demanded a probe into the gruesome incident. Omar tweeted, 'Reports of security force personnel entering a mosque in Zadoora in Pulwama are deeply distressing.'

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-army-soldiers-enter-pulwama-mosque-force-worshippers-to-chant-jai-shri-ram-in-loudspeakers/>

'AJK' speaker warns of more Indian provocative incidents along LoC

Dawn, 27 June 2023

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar warned of an upswing in anti-Pakistan sentiments and activities in India ahead of the country's general elections next year, saying the recent ceasefire violation at the Line of Control (LoC) was its precursory version. During a media talk, he said that 'the fascist Indian government under Narendra Modi is inciting anti-Pakistan sentiments to clinch next year's parliamentary elections,' adding that Saturday's naked aggression in the Tetrinote sector which left two innocent people on our side martyred and another wounded was its clear manifestation. Accompanied by Mian Abdul Waheed and Bazil Ali Naqvi, ministers without portfolios from his party, Latif

apprehended that India could resort to more provocative incidents at the LoC in the coming days. He further said that 'I am also afraid the BJP-RSS regime may execute the incarcerated JKLF chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik in its desperate efforts to win the sympathies of Hindu hardliners.' He called upon the government of Pakistan to exploit and expedite diplomatic efforts to forestall any attempt to execute Mr. Malik under his politically manipulated conviction as well as the unprecedented atrocities within the 'occupied territory' and escalations along the LoC.

He recalled that India had failed to achieve the results it desired from the controversial G20 huddle in 'occupied Kashmir' and before that the SCO conference in Goa, which was why it was looking for other excuses to fulfill its nefarious designs. He called upon the United Nations and other international organisations to take notice of the inhuman actions of India's 'fanatic regime' both within India and in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir.' Mr. Akbar, who is a senior leader of the PPP, asserted that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had presented the Kashmir case at every forum with full force and reason, for which the Kashmiris owed him gratitude, added that 'I am sure that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will continue to represent Kashmiris in the same way in future.' Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Waheed pointed out that across the world parties sought to vote based on their

manifestos, envisaging economic progress and public welfare, but in India, votes were solicited by inciting anti-Pakistan sentiments. He said Mr. Modi was in the US when his army targeted innocent and unarmed civilians in an unprovoked ceasefire violation in the Tetrinote sector, something which should be alarming for the whole world in general and Washington in particular. Mr. Waheed, who has returned from the lower belt of Neelum Valley, which has long borne the brunt of escalations at the LoC, lamented that the silence of the big powers, the US being on the top, was encouraging India to carry on its bloodthirstiness in 'occupied Kashmir.'

He noted that the LoC ran along 'AJK's 14 electoral constituencies and years of indiscriminate shelling from across the divide had failed to break the spirits of the local population. He claimed that if India thinks it can achieve this target by killing innocent citizens, it is mistaken, adding people in 'AJK' would frustrate the enemy's evil designs shoulder to shoulder with their armed forces. He said that we have full faith in the competence and professionalism of our forces who know how to defend their people and frontiers. In response to a question, both Mr. Akbar and Mr. Waheed said the Kashmiris were satisfied with the message given by the government of Pakistan in its response to the Tetrinote incident.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1761922/ajk-speaker-warns-of-more-indian-provocative-incidents-along-loc>

Restrictions on religious freedom in Kashmir and Modi's hollow claims in the US

Pakistan Observer, 29 June 2023

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, during his recent visit to the United States (US), claimed that democracy is in India's DNA and denied that his government has engaged in discrimination based on race, faith, or other such distinctions. Modi addressing a joint press conference with the US President, Joe Biden in Washington on 22 June said, 'We are a democracy... India and America both have democracy in our DNA. Democracy is in our spirit and we live it and it's written in our Constitution. There is absolutely no space for discrimination on the grounds of caste, creed, or religion.' However, the fact is that there has been an erosion of religious, political, and press freedoms under Modi's watch in India, and 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). Mirwaiz Umar Farooq exposes 'no house arrest' lie to the Telegraph, India. India, right from its creation, has been projecting itself as a secular country. However, attacks on the minorities and even low-caste Hindus (Dalits) in the country by the members of the majority Hindu community, particularly the followers of the Hindutva ideology, have remained a norm for the last over seven decades.

This persecution of minorities increased to an alarming proportion

ever since the rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party led by Narendra Modi came into power in 2014. Backed by the extremist Hindu organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Modi government is forcefully pursuing its agenda of turning India into a Hindu Rashtra (state). Sadly, when it comes to Islam and Muslims, especially 'IIOJK'), religious freedom and claims of secularism mentioned in the Indian Constitution are completely absent. After the abrogation of the special status of 'IIOJK' through the repeal of Article 370 on 5 August 2019, the Modi regime is hell-bent on erasing the Muslim identity of the Kashmiri people and imposing the Hindutva ideology of RSS. It has also introduced new domicile rules, allowing Indian citizens to get permanently settled in the occupied territory. So far, over six million Kashmir domiciles have been issued in the last three years.

'Religious diversity: Recognizing religious diversity in physics – Physics World

Historically, Jammu and Kashmir has been a place of not only demographic but also religious diversity where followers of various religions like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism have lived together with peace and harmony for centuries. The three regions of the territory (Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh) differ almost in all respects. The predominant religion in the entire 'IIOJK' is Islam. However, there are different religions dominant in different divisions. Islam is the main religion of Kashmir Valley,

Hinduism of Jammu and more than 40% of people in Ladakh are followers of Buddhism.

Islam came to Kashmir through many Muslim preachers and Sufi saints, who came to the region during the 14th century AD. Many shrines have been made in Kashmir dedicated to these saints. The most important of those is the Hazratbal Shrine, located on the banks of the Dal Lake. The sacred hair of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is preserved in the shrine. The other important shrines include the Charar-i-Shareef Shrine, Mukhdoom Sahab Shrine, Khanqah-e-Mualla, and Dastgeer Sahib Shrine. Different religions are predominant in different divisions, however, the religions are not confined to particular places. Considerable numbers of Hindus reside in Kashmir as well and many areas in Jammu are predominantly Muslim. Many important temples and Hindu pilgrimage centers are placed in Kashmir Valley. Sikhism is also practiced in 'IIOJK' with many important Gurduwaras located in different areas.

Unfair Treatment of Muslims: Stop Killing Muslims in Kashmir

While the Muslim rulers of Jammu and Kashmir treated all of their subjects fairly including Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs alike, the same was not the case when Dogra Hindus took over the reins of the territory in 1846 following the Treaty of Amritsar. Under this Treaty Jammu and Kashmir along with

its people were sold by the British Government to Dogra Maharaja Gulab Singh for just 75 lakhs of Nanak Shahi rupees. The victimization of the Muslims was at its peak during the Dogra dynasty. Several policies, which demonstrated the assertion of Hindu belief over that of the Muslims, were enacted.

Indian invasion and Kashmiris' sufferings: World must bring India to Kashmir peace table, Asia Times

The last Hindu ruler of 'IIOJK' Maharaja Hari Singh sowed the seeds of the unending miseries of the Kashmiris by not respecting their aspirations to accede to Pakistan and inviting India to invade Jammu and Kashmir following the Partition of the sub-continent in 1947. This Indian invasion brought death and destruction in 'IIOJK' which continues even today. In the first week of November in 1947 alone, over 200,000 Muslims were massacred by the forces of Dogra maharaja, the Indian Army, and Hindu extremists, and thousands of women were gang-raped and kidnapped in Jammu region when they were migrating to newly-formed Pakistan.

<https://pakobserver.net/restrictions-on-religious-freedom-in-kashmir-and-modis-hollow-claims-in-us/>

Atrocities in 'IIOJK'

The Nation, 2 July 2023

Ever since India 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian security forces

have been committing gross human rights violations which include 'indiscriminate firing' upon peaceful protestors, 'extra-judicial killings', 'summary executions', 'perpetrated killings', use of pellet-firing guns, forced disappearances, 'rapes, molestation' and restrictions on the freedom of expression. Today 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) is the only place across the globe with the highest ratio of security to troops and the world's most militarised zone. It is estimated that India has deployed one million security forces to control Kashmiris but in reality, it has surpassed this estimate. There is one soldier for six Kashmiris. 14 Indian corps in Ladakh, 15 corps at Srinagar, 16 corps at Nagrota in Jammu, and one corps as reserve corps available at Mathura (UP) have been stationed.

Besides the Indian army, there is a huge deployment of paramilitary forces under the command of the army which includes the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Rashtriya Rifles (RR), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Shashtra Seema Bal (SSB), the Border Security Force (BSF), Jammu and Kashmir police and the personnel of the Indian air force. The Indian security forces deployed in 'IIOJK' operate under a host of draconian laws which give it the power of arrest, and detention without legal formalities and above all, gives immunity to security officials operating under these act. Such laws were passed under the Jammu

and Kashmir Public Safety Act of 1978, the Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Area Act of 1990, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) of 1990, the Armed Forces Special Power Act of 1990, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) of 2002, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Ordinance of 2004, The National Security Act (NSA), Official Security Act, Criminal Procedure Code, Indian Telegraphic Act, and the Newspaper (Incitement to Offense) Act. With the support of these laws, the Indian security forces have executed hundreds of detainees as a method to suppress the Kashmiri freedom struggle.

Thousands of people disappeared under mysterious circumstances. There has been an increase in cases of 'sexual violence' at the hands of Indian 'security forces.' 23 Kashmiri women were 'gang raped' in the early 90s by four soldiers of Rajputana Rifles. Rape is used as a means of targeting those women who have relations with the mujahideen or are accused of being sympathisers. A 'systematic genocide' is being carried out to create a demographic imbalance. Mass graves of thousands killed by Indian security forces have been discovered. The UN human rights agencies, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have raised concerns about the human rights issue on several occasions. There is no freedom of expression as fabricated news is published. Security personnel are rewarded for killing Kashmiris and

creating fear amongst the local population. The silence of the international community in the face of this crisis, especially powers like the US, European Union, the UK, and Canada is unfortunate. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Modi to the US, 75 congressmen wrote to President Biden to raise the issue of human rights violations in 'IIOJK.' This trumpeted visit to the US which was marred by protests, displays of banners and posters for human rights violations, suppression of media, and religious minorities like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Dalits. It is high time that the international community should play its role to resolve the issue pending for the last 75 years.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Jul-2023/atrocities-in-iiojk>

Economic Developments

NLC starts cargo service between Pakistan and China

Pamir Times, 26 June 2023

The National Logistics Cell (NLC) has introduced a regular cargo service connecting Islamabad and Karachi to Kashgar and Shanghai, aiming to facilitate bilateral trade and activate the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. This strategic move is intended to promote trade between China and Pakistan and enhance the implementation of the Quadrilateral Transit Trade Agreement, which involves China, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Additionally, it will

contribute to the future realization of the International Road Transport (TIR) Convention. To commemorate the departure of the trucks destined for China, a ceremony was organized by the NLC at the Silk Route Dry Port in Sost (GB). Following the completion of necessary customs and immigration procedures, the trucks embarked on their journey to Kashgar, eventually entering the border city of China through the Khunjerab Pass.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/06/25/nlc-starts-cargo-service-between-pakistan-and-china/>

WAPDA not releasing enough water from Tarbela: IRSA

The Nation, 26 June 2023

Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has shown serious concern over fewer releases from Tarbela by Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), due to which the country's water regulations are unable to meet with the provincial indents. In a letter written to the Tarbela Dam project's general manager regarding the operation of the reservoir, IRSA said that the authority has shown serious concern over the fewer releases from Tarbela Dam as against IRSA indent of 160,000 cusecs, WAPDA is releasing about 150,000 cusecs. Because of these fewer releases, IRSA is unable to meet with the provincial indents pending implementation. The letter requested immediate action to be taken to fulfill IRSA's indent placed at Tarbela Dam to meet the provincial demands without delay. It is worth mentioning that

Tarbela Dam, one of the largest dams in the world, was built with the primary objective of irrigation water supplies. Electricity generation is an important secondary function of the dam construction. The main objective of the dam is to serve the provincial intends for irrigation purposes. Following is the position of the river inflows and out-flows at Tarbela, Mangla, and Chashma along with the reservoirs' levels and the barrages on 25 June.

Inflows in the Indus River at Tarbela were 250000 cusecs while outflows were 149900 cusecs, inflows & out-flows in Kabul at Nowshera and Khairabad Bridge respectively were 71200 cusecs and 190300 cusecs respectively. Inflows in Jhelum at Mangla were 73500 cusecs while out-flows were 10000 cusecs, inflows in Chenab at Marala were 87800 cu-secs and outflows 60800 cusecs. Tarbela, against a minimum operating level of 1402 feet, is presently at 1475.13 feet. Maximum conservation level 1550 feet, live storage Sunday was 2.050 Million Acre Feet (MAF). Mangla against the minimum operating level of 1050 feet is presently at 1164.05 feet, the maximum conservation level of Mangla is 1242 feet, and live storage was 2.385 MAF. Chashma against the minimum operating level of 638.15 feet is presently level at 645.10 feet. The maximum conservation level of Chasma is 649 feet, while the live storage was 0.128 MAF.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2023/wapda-not-releasing-enough-water-from-tarbela-irsa>

GB BUDGET 2023-24: GB finance minister presents Rs116bn budget

Dawn, 27 June 2023

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) finance minister Javed Ali Manwa has presented a 116 billion budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 in the GB Assembly. In his budget speech, Mr. Manwa said that 74 Billion (bn) has been proposed for non-development expenses, of which, 51bn are estimated as receipts in grants from the center. The GB government has also set a tax collection target of 5bn. The budget deficit was estimated at Rs 18bn. Rs 2.45bn has been allocated for development schemes, while Rs 19.50bn will be spent on ongoing projects under the Annual Development Plan (ADP). The federal government has allocated 7.95bn in Public Sector Development Programmes (PSDP) for the region. The government would spend an estimated 13.70bn on wheat procurement and Rs10.50bn will be received from the centre for providing subsidy on wheat.

Education and health

Mr. Manwa said his government has given special attention to the education sector and allocated Rs350 million for the appointment of 1,000 IT teachers in the region's schools. Separately, Rs150m will be spent on adding new facilities in existing schools and Rs165 million on the provision of free books. Rs50 million each has been set aside for the EdTech and teachers' training programs. For the health sector, the government will spend Rs400m on the

provision of free medicines, Rs 300 million to upgrade district headquarter hospitals, and Rs400 million to induct expert doctors. Rs 500 million has been allocated for the agriculture and livestock sector, according to Mr Manwa. He said the region always depended on grant-in-aid from the federal government to manage its finances. The financial difficulties faced by the country have a direct and indirect impact on GB. He announced that government employees from grades 1 to 16 will get a 35 percent raise in their basic salaries as an 'ad hoc relief', while grade 17 and above employees' basic salaries will go up by 30 percent. The government has also decided to ban the purchase of all kinds of vehicles, except for ambulances and school buses. A complete ban on foreign trips of government employees at official expense has also been banned. It has also been decided to impose a complete ban on lavish official events, Mr. Manwa said, adding that these events will take place virtually to prevent unnecessary use of government resources.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1761972/gb-budget-2023-24-gb-finance-minister-presents-rs116bn-budget>

International Tourism Summit to be held in Skardu next month

The Nation, 29 June 2023

The International Tourism Summit would be held in Skardu from 7-9 July. The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) president Ahsan

Zafar Bakhtawari met Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Mohiuddin Ahmed Wani. Wani was briefed about the first ICCI International Tourism Summit to be held in Skardu and the arrangements and measures regarding the tourism conference were also discussed in detail. The president of ICCI said that the tourism sector is the easiest source of foreign investment for Pakistan and added that there are probably no other tourist destinations in the world like our northern regions. However, our problem is that unfortunately tourism has never been given priority in our country, and due to a lack of concrete measures in this regard, tourists are turning to other countries, he added.

He further said that along with the completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and the construction of Skardu International Airport, more steps need to be taken to promote tourism and that International flights should be launched in Skardu. Apart from this, special attention should be paid to the construction of infrastructure, new restaurants, hotels, and guesthouses should be built to attract tourists. He said that ICCI is taking a special interest in promoting tourism in northern regions. Chief Secretary GB Muhyiddin Wani further informed the president of ICCI about the measures taken to improve education, health, and information technology in GB. New school buildings are being constructed. Several buildings have

been upgraded. GB government has established 5 Software Technology Parks in Gilgit, Chalas Hunza, and Skardu. He however stressed that the lack of funds for GB is also a major problem.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/29-Jun-2023/international-tourism-summit-to-be-held-in-skardu-next-month>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The ‘Azad Kashmir’ cabinet swore in 27 new members

UrduPoint, 26 June 2023

The Prime Minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), Anwarul Haq included twenty-seven new members to his cabinet, which has only had two ministers since it was seated more than two months ago. Less than a week after his administration passed a 232 billion budget with a startling 42 billion deficit, the establishment of the sizable cabinet, which would be followed by the nominations of at least four advisers/special assistants with the title of minister has taken place. Out of the twenty-seven new ministers, sixteen members belong to the like-minded group, while eight members belong to the PPP and four members of the Muslim League-N took oath as ministers. After the 27 new arrivals, the number of ‘AJK’ Cabinet ministers has risen to 30 including the Prime Minister.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/important-news/live-news-3632458.html>

India frequently engages in torture as a state policy: ‘AJK’ PM

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 27 June 2023

The systematic torture of Kashmiris by India, according to Prime Minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), Chaudhry Anwarul Haq is the greatest moral problem facing humanity. He claimed that on the occasion of the International Day of Support for Victims of Violence observed that human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, such as mass killings, forced disappearances, and torture, pose a serious threat to the people of ‘occupied Kashmir’ who have been reeling under unrelenting oppression. He was referring to the use and abuse of power by the Indian occupation forces in the ‘Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IIOJK). The Indian army, he claimed, was using ‘sexual abuse’ against Kashmiris as a kind of state-sanctioned punishment. He said that Kashmiris were subjected to the worst mental and physical violence in torture cells and interrogation centers set up in the length and breadth of the valley. He claimed that India has been using these colonial-era tactics to strengthen and solidify its ‘illegal control’ over the territory of ‘occupied Kashmir.’

He, however, maintained that despite facing India’s worst violence and nefarious tactics, Kashmiris are determined to see their freedom movement to its logical conclusion. The Kashmiri leadership, he said, has been

booked under Draconian laws and thrown behind bars, and that Kashmiri youths are being picked up from their homes and martyred in 'fake encounters' adding that secret burials of martyred youths in faraway places have become a new normal in Kashmir. He claimed that there were thousands of unknown graves in 'IOJK', and that thousands of women whose husbands have been subjected to enforced disappearances were living a miserable life. He continued by claiming that the women even do not know whether their spouses are dead or alive, adding that more than eleven thousand women have been raped in 'IOJK.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/1-3.jpg>

Greater restrictions are in place in 'occupied Kashmir', and there is a widespread feeling of terror

Urdupoint, 2 July 2023

Under the pretext to provide security for the upcoming Amarnath Yatra, a Hindu pilgrimage, the 'occupation authorities' in 'Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK) have further tightened restrictions. According to Kashmir Media Service, hardships in the form of raids, crackdowns, checking, and frisking will continue to be experienced by Kashmiris until the yatra's conclusion on 31 August. To instill dread and terror throughout the country for the next two months, the Modi administration has deployed 60,000 more paramilitary soldiers. Tens of thousands of troops are already

stationed in the area, and this deployment represents an increase to them. Meanwhile, Indian troops launched a cordon and search operation in the Dabi Dharti area of Poonch district. All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders including Syed Bashir Andrabi, Khawaja Firdous, Abdul Samad Inqilabi, and Mohammad Yousuf Naqash in their statements in Srinagar expressed concern over the increasing human rights violations by Indian troops in Kashmir. They criticized the United Nations (UN) for its failure to enforce its resolutions on the Kashmir dispute. Meanwhile, speakers at a seminar in Geneva have expressed grave concern over the continued illegal detention of thousands of Kashmiri prisoners in prisons of 'IOJK.'

The seminar titled 'Plight of Kashmir Prisoners' was held on the sidelines of the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council meeting. The speakers said that thousands of Kashmiris who were arrested before and after 5th August 2019 are languishing in India's notorious jails like Tihar, which has become a death trap for Kashmiris.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/daily/livenews/2023-07-02/news-3637369.html>

Social Media (tweets)

Sharwan Sheikh @BetterNeelum

24 June 2023

Martyrdom of two civilians by firing by Indian Army in Azad Kashmir is sad and condemnable. My deepest

condolences go to the victims' families. The firing and damage inside Pakistan's territory is a matter of concern. Our Armed Forces should give a blantant response. #LoC #AJK

<https://twitter.com/BetterNeelum/status/1672588742291255298>

Basharat Issa @BasharatIssa

23 June 2023

Mining mafia is active throughout Gilgit-Baltistan fooling innocent locals with the help of local facilitators. This is something not talked about much but is an alarming situation disturbing the fragile ecology of GB.

#GilgitBaltistan #Mafias #ClimateCrisis.

<https://twitter.com/BasharatIssa/status/1672120125242191872>

Safiullah Baig @SafiullahBaig14

26 June 2023

GB budget 2023-24, under Pak admin control & run by bureaucracy, allocation 4 non-dev expenditure is PKR 74 billion & dev expenditure 4 over 1.5 million people is mere PKR 28 billion. This is perfect example of control, capture & colonisation. People are struggling 4 basic needs.

<https://twitter.com/SafiullahBaig14/status/1673383908396920832>

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

28 June 2023

Glacier Lake Outburst Floods affected people across #Gilgit_Baltistan r

without support of government or non goverment organisations.

Billion rupees have been spent in the name of rehabilitation & reconstruction &, disaster is a source of corruption here, more details soon.

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1673787379956457472>

Saira Zahid Hussain @CyraHussain

30 June 2023

Today another girl was killed in the name of honor in Skardu and the world is silent. I want to ask all these respectable men, why is your respect so weak and ends with a woman? Your honor is not taken care of by you and you have gone to take care of women's honor.

#stopphonorkilling

<https://twitter.com/CyraHussain/status/1674783198658834433>

Ehsan Ullah @ehsan4QAU

02 July 2023

Why these LUMS volunteers can't come to GB during the peak harsh weather of Dec, Jan and Feb. They only pay a visit in summer that too on the GB government's budget? They came here only to enjoy the serenity and cool breezes, they have nothing to teach CS and AI.

<https://twitter.com/csgbpbk/status/1675476137596821504>

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Disclaimer

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