

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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29 November - 05 December 2021

Skardu airport
optic fibre
POK agribusiness
Diemer Basha Dam
Gilgit-Baltistan tourism
GB investment initiative
renewable energy



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir held a Meeting

Pakistan Observer, November 30, 2021

The chairman of the parliamentary committee on Kashmir, Shehryar Khan Afridi while addressing the participants of the Kashmir Committee at the parliament house in Islamabad has said that “India’s transfer of Kashmiris’ lands to Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is a part of making a demographic change in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK). Shehryar Khan Afridi, further said that the Indian regime is accelerating the transfer of land in “occupied Kashmir to Indian forces” under the garb of turning them into 'strategic areas' which is a “war crime and crime of aggression under international law.”

He said that the world community should put India under scrutiny for “extra-judicial killings of the Kashmiri people.” He added that the silence of the world over India’s “war crimes in IIOJK” is encouraging the present Indian regime to exacerbate its crimes against helpless Kashmiris.

<https://pakobserver.net/afridi-warns-india-against-transfer-of-kashmiris-lands-to-crpf/>

AJK PM meets with the Sindh Governor

Business Recorder, November 30, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) Sardar

Abdul Qayyum Khan Niazi meet with the Sindh governor Imran Ismail. During the meeting, the Sindh governor said that the Kashmiri people had “presented unprecedented sacrifices during their struggle” for seven decades and India during the same time could not lower the morale of Kashmiris despite all tactics. He said that Pakistan would continue its support for the people and stand shoulder to shoulder with Kashmiris of “Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK).

The AJK PM said that the international community should come forward to pressure India for resolving the issue of ‘IIOJK’ for sustainable peace in the region. Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had a clear policy on ‘IIOJK’ and we support his policies.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/4013677/6/ajk-pm-meets-sindh-governor>

Pakistan Army chief appoints General Sarfraz Ali as Col. Commandant of AJK Regiment

The Express Tribune, December 01, 2021

Pakistan Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Qamar Javed Bajwa lauds “Azad Kashmir Regiment” (AKR) for its professional excellence and outstanding operational performance. Pakistan military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that COAS visited the “Azad Kashmir” (AK) regimental centre, Mansar camp and laid “floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada and offered Fateha.”

During his visit, COAS installed lieutenant general Sarfraz Ali, commander Quetta corps as colonel commandant of the 'AK' regiment. While addressing the participants, the COAS Qamar praised the AK regiment for its glorious history, professional excellence, outstanding operational performance and war worthiness. During the meeting, the situation in "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir" (IIOJK) including "continued Indian unilateralism" and situation along the Line of Control (LoC) was also discussed.

The "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) Prime Minister (PM) appreciated the Pakistan Army's "contribution towards the security and development of AJK." The COAS, during the meeting, also paid tribute to Syed Ali Geelani for his "historical and selfless struggle for Kashmiris' right to self-determination."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2331941/army-chief-appoints-lt-gen-sarfraz-ali-as-col-commandant-ak-regiment>

'Centre directed to implement Supreme Court order on GB people's rights'

Dawn, December 01, 2021

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Supreme Appellate Court (SAC) has directed the federal government to implement the verdict of the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan on GB order 2019 to ensure fundamental rights to the people of the region at the earliest. A two-member bench comprising justice Syed Irshad Hussain Shah and judge Wazir Shakeel Ahmed issued the directives during the hearing of a petition, seeking

implementation of the supreme court's verdict of 2019 on GB people's rights.

The petitioners include SAC Bar association president Mohammad Hussain Shahzad advocate, GB Bar council vice-Chairman Shafqat Wali and the president GB High Court Bar association Mohammad Zakaria Advocate. The federation of Pakistan is the respondent in the case through the secretary Kashmir and GB affairs. The petitioners pleaded with the court to get the SC judgment implemented with immediate effect. Recently, these lawyers had also filed a petition in the Supreme Court for implementation of its judgment, but the registrar returned it, asking them to approach an appropriate forum for its implementation. During the proceedings, the petitioners told the court that the respondents had been delaying implementation of the judgment for last over two years. They noted that as the judgment involved fundamental rights of the people of GB, it should be implemented at their earliest. After hearing the arguments, the SAC judges observed that keeping judgment of the country's apex court concerning fundamental rights of the people unimplemented for a long time was a serious issue that must be addressed immediately. The judges directed to implement the Supreme Court order immediately and submit its report within two weeks.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1661288/centre-directed-to-implement-supreme-court-order-on-gb-peoples-rights>

'PTI-led government to improve economic conditions of people:' AJK president

The News International, December 03, 2021

The "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) president, Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led government would improve the judicial system and ameliorate the economic conditions of the common man. While talking to reporters, the AJK president said overseas Kashmiris must now come forward to invest in the AJK. He said scores of the immigrants from Jammu had been residing in Sialkot for decades and he had come to Sialkot to lay the foundation stone of the memorial for the martyrs of Jammu. The AJK president said currently the entire world was supporting the cause of the "freedom-loving Kashmiris" and condemned the "Indian government for ordering torture and killings of innocent and unarmed civilians in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir."

He said that he had visited several countries in Europe and America to raise and enhance the public support in favour of the people of "occupied Jammu and Kashmir." He stressed that every nook and corner of the world must be reached to raise a voice in support of the people of Kashmir. He further urged overseas Pakistanis to expose the "real cruel face of India" in the world, saying without a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue, long term peace in the south-Asian region is

impossible. He further said that "despite blatant cruelties in the occupied Kashmir", Kashmiris are determined to be part of Pakistan.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/913677-pti-led-govt-to-improve-economic-conditions-of-people-ajk-president>

'No political party allowed to distract in Occupied Kashmir freedom way:' Raja Farooq Haider

Daily Parliament Times, December 05, 2021

The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) president and former Prime Minister (PM) of 'AJK' Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan has said that the United Nations (UN), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and human rights organizations should stop the "massacre of Kashmiris by the Indian occupying forces in the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir." The former AJK PM said that all avenues for "lasting peace in the region pass through Kashmir." He noted that Imran Khan's government has made a "deal with Kashmir" and stressed that on the one hand, four businessmen and a doctor were martyred by "Indian forces" in Srinagar and on the next day, Indian spy Kulbhushan was given National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) by the parliament of Pakistan.

He further said that the government formed by Imran Niazi in "Azad Kashmir" would not last long. We will not allow anyone to stand in the way of

the journey of construction and development. He noted that the Kashmiri people will never give up their basic rights and apart from the political leadership of the state, including the Hurriyat leaders, by imprisoning the youth and innocent children, “India has made the occupied state the largest prison in the world.” The struggle of Kashmiris will continue till the “right of self-determination is achieved.” Let the Kashmiri people living in the outside world play their strong and effective role by becoming the “vanguard of the freedom struggle.” He was addressing a reception hosted by Abid Malik, former coordinator and president of Pakistan Society of North Texas, at his residence.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/12/05/no-political-party-allowed-to-distract-in-occupied-kashmir-freedom-way-raja-farooq-haider/>

Economic Developments

GOC Major General Wajid Aziz Visits Diyar Resorts Project Site

Daily Pakistan, November 29, 2021

The General Officer Commanding (GOC) Major General Wajid Aziz visited the project site of Diyar Resorts, a project of Medical Transcription and Billing Company (MTBC). The executive chairman of MTBC received the GOC and briefed him about the new project of Kashmir Airlines and stressed that MTBC would start helicopter service to facilitate tourists and transport facilities to tourist

destinations. He said that MTBC was working on various projects for the promotion of tourism in the region. In this regard, various tourist destinations are being leased from the government and high-quality tourism facilities are being provided. He also noted that MTBC is also providing services by investing in education, Information Technology (IT) and other sectors. During the meeting, the GOC said that he would cooperate fully with MTBC for the promotion of tourism.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/29-Nov-2021/1371620>

105m GB Invest Initiative for sustainable Development Launched'

Business Recorder, November 30, 2021

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Rupani Foundation and Karakorum International University (KIU), has formally launched the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) investment initiative costing \$105 million. The initiative for sustainable development across GB will focus on six major areas, tourism, technology, agribusiness, renewable energy, mineral/mining, and trade/commerce.

While speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor (VC) of PIDE, Nadeem Haque said that this was the first step by the private sector in the GB to uplift the area, adding that the federal government and the GB government must also play their active role. He said that the success of the project will not only help the locals but can become a role model for the rest of the country.

He further said that Pakistan was facing serious investment-related challenges and active participation of the Pakistanis expat in this regard could greatly help the country to create job opportunities for the locals, which will encourage other investors and boost their confidence.

It was noted during the occasion that this private sector-led GB investment initiative not only aims to mobilize private sector investments in GB but will also support equitable and sustainable development for the region's people and the local economy while preserving the unique ecosystem. The proposed 105 million will be channeled from 2022 to 2023 by connecting GB's private sector with investors from resident and overseas Pakistani communities, as well as with stakeholders from global corporate, financial, development, and public-sector organizations. While addressing the media, representatives of the partnering/collaborating organizations he noted that the GB invest initiative will globally invite all stakeholders from public and private sectors, and Pakistan's civil society, to participate in a series of partner outreach programs, including webinars and roadshows, to be held shortly after the brand launch, followed by a grand GB invest conference in March 2022, at Karakorum International University in Gilgit city.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/4013681/1/105m-g-b-invest-initiative-for-sustainable-development-launched>

'WAPDA, SCO sign contract for State-of-art communication, IT services for Diamer Basha Dam construction'

Daily Parliament Times, December 01, 2021

An agreement was signed between the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and Special Communication Organization (SCO) worth 860 million for uninterrupted and state-of-the-art communication and Information Technology (IT) services for the Diamer Basha Dam project. The services may also be utilized for other WAPDA projects. WAPDA general manager Diamer Basha Dam project Muhammad Yousuf Rao and SCO director development Col. Muhammad Saadi Manzoor signed the contract on behalf of their organizations. During the ceremony, it was noted that the Diamer Basha Dam project is of immense strategic significance, construction of which requires uninterrupted and state-of-the-art communication and IT services in the project area. Under the contract, SCO will provide 4G cellular sites equipment, transmission media comprising 300 Km optic fibre cable from Thakot to Chilas, power arrangements and all required civil works including construction of towers as well as commissioning of 4G at various locations of Diamer Basha Dam Project.

The multi-purpose Diamer Basha Dam is being constructed on River Indus, 40 kilometres downstream of Chilas town.

The project commenced in mid-2020, is scheduled to be completed in 2028-29. Diamer Basha Dam will have a gross water storage capacity of 8.1 MAF to irrigate 1.23 million acres of additional land. With an installed power generation capacity of 4,500 MW, the project will provide more than 18 billion units per annum to the National Grid. Construction of Diamer Basha Dam will also have a positive impact on the annual energy generation of the existing hydel power stations including Tarbela and Ghazi Barotha that will increase by another 2.5 billion units. In addition, the life of Tarbela Dam, which has been playing a pivotal role in the progress of the country since 1974, will also increase by another 35 years.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/12/01/wapda-sco-sign-contract-for-state-of-art-communication-it-services-for-diamer-basha-dam-construction/>

Skardu airport gets International Status: Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority

Pakistan Observer, December 02, 2021

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) announced that the Skardu airport, which is located at one of the world's highest altitudes, is set to operate international flights for boosting tourism in the northern area in line with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

According to the PCAA, the Skardu airport would start operating as an international facility from December

02, 2021, however "initially, the operations will be only under Visual Flight Rules (VFR)." The PCAA authority further said the initiative was taken in line with the "PM's Vision Master Plan" to promote tourism across the country. Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Tourism Minister, Raja Nasir Ali Khan said that initially, a test flight for international travel was being started, whereas regular operations were likely to commence from March next year.

<https://pakobserver.net/skardu-airport-gets-intl-status-pcaa/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

AJK President urges Journalists and Lawyers to unite and raise the Kashmir issue globally

Urdu Point, November 29, 2021

The president of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has said that India does not consider the "Kashmir issue as an issue" rather it considers it as its integral part. He noted that instead of following India, "we must unite and take all schools of thought into confidence" and aggressively raise the Kashmir issue globally. He maintained that India is already in a defensive position at the international level. The Indian government has recently withdrawn the agrarian reforms bill which was against the farmers and therefore "we strongly hope that they will also withdraw Articles 370 and 35-A in Occupied Kashmir." He expressed these views while addressing a function of the Rawalkot district bar

association in Rawalpindi and the officials of Jammu and Kashmir Union of Journalists, Poonch District. During the function, the AJK president further noted that the “independence movement of Kashmir has now entered a critical juncture and now is the time to unite and rise above all political and social affiliations” and raise the issue of Kashmir aggressively in front of the international community. He emphasized that all the media outlets and journalists, including social media, print and electronic media have an important role to play.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/rawalakot/kashmir/live-news-2974709>

Pakistan Foreign Minister laud Parliament for evolving consensus on Kashmir Issue

Jasarat, November 30, 2021

The Foreign Minister (FM) of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that lasting peace in the region is not possible unless the “Kashmir issue is resolved amicably.” He noted that despite the political differences, the unanimity of the entire Parliament and all other institutions of state on the Kashmir issue is welcome. He stressed that after the “unilateral Indian initiative” on August 05, 2019, the Kashmir issue was fully highlighted in all the international forums including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). While briefing the parliamentary committee on Kashmir, he said that the matter of “human rights violations in Indian Illegally

Occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK) was discussed at UNSC, Human Rights Council (HRC), and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) which is second to the UN. Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that the UNSC resolutions “invalidate India's claim that Kashmir is its internal issue.” The FM said that Pakistan has a clear stance that the Kashmir issue should be resolved in the light of UNSC resolutions and as per the wishes of Kashmiris.

He further noted that “India is making demographic changes in the occupied territory.” During the meeting, the chairman of the Kashmir committee Shehryar Afridi appreciated the role of Pakistani immigrants in highlighting the “serious human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir” in international forums. The chairman Kashmir committee further said that he was deeply grateful to Pakistan FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi and also to his team who assisted him in his meetings with important personalities to appraise them on the developments in “occupied Kashmir” in different countries including the United States (US).

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/11/30/211130-01-4/>

‘AJK PM visits mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam’

Jasarat, November 30, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan Niazi paid a visit

to the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and offered Fatiha. While speaking to the media, Sardar Qayyum said that Quaid-e-Azam had declared "Kashmir as jugular vein of Pakistan;" however, due to the connivance of the "Indians and the British, the partition agenda" of the subcontinent could not be completed. He said that "India forcibly occupied the Kashmir Valley through oppression while Kashmiris wanted to join Pakistan" and Muslim Conference passed a resolution in favour of affiliation with Pakistan on 19 July 1947. He said that Kashmiris "war for liberation from India" continued to date. The AJK PM noted that India had been "persecuting Kashmiris" for decades with its 900,000 troops while in the last two years a new story of oppression is being inflicted on the people. He further noted that the present Indian government not only

violated international conventions but also undermined the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and Security Council (SC).

He stressed that India "was trying to change the demography of the occupied Jammu and Kashmir" by the settling "Hindu population" in the valley after abolishing the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir. PM 'AJK' noted that tricks of India would never succeed and India will have to ultimately withdraw from "occupied Kashmir" just like major powers of the world withdrew from Afghanistan. Pakistan is created on the Ideology of Islam by Allah and the Almighty has made it a nuclear power, and India and international community should take a note of this as the world cannot afford a nuclear war."

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/11/30/211130-8-8/>

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Disclaimer

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