

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 1 | Issue 42

13 - 19 December 2021

GB Expressway Jaglot-Skardu road
Bunji POK CPEC
Dam tourism phase-II economic hub
Diamer infrastructure
Bhasha hydroelectricity
Dam regional connectivity
Skardu International Airport
mega developmental package



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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Contents

Political Developments

- AJK President meets Malaysian Parliament member
- 'PM Imran Khan urges Muslim think tanks to highlight atrocities in Kashmir'
- 'APHC delegation seeks Malaysian government's role in Kashmir dispute'

Economic Developments

- 'AJK Government encouraging PPP to promote tourism'
- '100 billion projects to be implemented every year:' AJK PM
- 'CPEC and Gilgit-Baltistan'
- 'Skardu will be made Dubai:' Khalid Khurshid
- 'PM Imran Khan inaugurated Skardu International Airport and Jaglot-Skardu road'
- 'Pakistan can earn billions from tourism:' Pakistan PM
- Sardar Masood Ahmed and Cameron Munter visit MTBC Bagh

Vernacular Urdu Media

- 'Peace and prosperity will remain a major challenge without the resolution of Kashmir Dispute:' Shah Mehmood
- The nation must unite on the Kashmir issue: AJK President to Senator
- A peaceful solution to the 'Kashmir dispute' is essential for stability in the region: Pakistan Army Chief

Political Developments

AJK President meets Malaysian Parliament member

Daily Parliament Times, December 13, 2021

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry and Malaysian member of parliament Datuk Ustad Haji Hassan-ud-Din bin Muhammad Younis held a detailed meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr Kashmir House. During the meeting, the AJK president said that Malaysia has always supported the Kashmiri people. He noted that all political leaders including former Prime Minister (PM) of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad have “raised the issue of Kashmir” at every forum. Din bin Muhammad Younis said that we are raising the “issue of Kashmir” all over the world including our country. He invited the AJK president to visit Malaysia, which the president accepted.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/12/13/president-ajk-meets-malaysian-parliament-member-haji-hassan-ud-din/>

‘PM Imran Khan urges Muslim think tanks to highlight atrocities in Kashmir’

Daily Times, December 14, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan, Imran Khan while speaking at the inaugural session of the Margalla Dialogue said that the West was ignoring the “atrocities committed by India in Illegally Occupied Jammu and

Kashmir” (IOJK) and stressed the need for a strong voice from the platform of Muslim think-tanks. He stressed that “no western country is criticizing India for the wrongs it is committing in Kashmir. Had it been some other country, it could raise a lot of hue and cry in the world.” The dialogue was organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), a think-tank focusing on regional and international situations. Imran Khan said that the Muslim world lacked the think tanks that could effectively highlight “India’s actions” before the world. He regretted that foreign think-tanks concentrated on Pakistan’s extremists and painted the entire nation in a specific way.

He noted that the lack of in-depth research led to reliance on second-hand information by the western think-tanks on important issues such as Afghanistan. He further stressed that a strong response by Muslim think-tanks was important to counter negative propaganda, Islamophobia and to nullify the impression of Islam’s link with violence and terror.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/854595/pm-urges-muslim-think-tanks-to-highlight-kashmir-atrocities/>

‘APHC delegation seeks Malaysian government’s role in Kashmir dispute’

Daily Parliament Times, December 14, 2021

The Malaysian parliamentarian Hasanuddin Bin Mohd Younus while talking to a three-member delegation of

the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) asserted that “his country’s support Kashmiris’ legitimate cause.” He has vowed to play his role in galvanizing the Malaysian government’s “role to seek an early solution of the Kashmir dispute.” He further noted that Malaysia was keenly observing the situation in “Indian occupied Kashmir”. He said that he will be visiting “Azad Kashmir” and would brief his colleagues in the Malaysian parliament so that they can play a forceful role in bringing an “end to rights violations and for the early solution of the issue.”

The Hurriyat members while thanking the parliamentarian for the support of Malaysia and its civil society to Kashmir cause, said that it was high time that the international community particularly the Muslim world should take “effective notice of India’s apartheid regime’s” political and administrative machinations intended to change the “demographic complexion of the Muslim majority state.” He was also briefed about the fake encounters, termination of Muslim employees from job, land grabbing to build more military cantonments, and human rights abuses that are being committed by the Indian forces in Kashmir.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/12/14/malaysian-parliamentarian-reiterates-his-countrys-support-to-kashmir-cause/>

Economic Developments

‘AJK Government encouraging PPP to promote tourism’

Pakistan Observer, December 13, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi stated that his government is encouraging public-private partnerships to promote tourism and development. He was talking to the executive chairman of Medical Transcription and Billing Company (MTBC) Mehmood ul Haq. The AJK PM said that some special projects in the tourism sector would be incorporated in the 500 billion mega-development packages and noted that the government is pursuing comprehensive planning for the development of tourism, information technology, and other sectors to create job opportunities for the youth.

<https://pakobserver.net/govt-encouraging-ppp-to-promote-tourism/>

‘100 billion projects to be implemented every year:’ AJK PM

Nawaiwaqt, December 14, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) informed “Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly” (AJKLA) members that out of the 500 billion “mega-development package”, projects costing 100 billion would be implemented every year.

He thanked the PM of Pakistan, Imran Khan for assuring 12 billion for the completion of the remaining work of the 2005 earthquake-damaged

infrastructure. He stressed that the “historic mega developmental package” of 500 billion would bring revolutionary development in tourism, infrastructure, hydel, health, education and other sectors and that will make the state and its people prosperous.

He further noted that on the one hand, PM Imran Khan is effectively highlighting the “Kashmir issue” at the international level and on the other, his entire focus is on the “development and the prosperity” of the people of AJK. He noted that PM Khan wants to see tourism and industrial development in AJK to bring the state on a road to progress and prosperity.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2021-12-15/page-1>

‘CPEC and Gilgit-Baltistan’

Pakistan Observer, December 15, 2021

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is rapidly developing the infrastructure of Pakistan and is strengthening even the domestic economy of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The GB has a very important geo-strategic location as it shares borders with three neighbouring countries: India, China and Afghanistan. Therefore, CPEC will connect the entire region with the Gwadar seaport which will eventually make Gilgit an international trade hub. The future socio-economic transformation of the GB is therefore directly correlated with the development and expansion of CPEC.

According to Asian Development Bank (ADB), GB produces tons of organic

apples, cherries and apricots, if these are exported to China, which is a huge international market, the profits of the local agro-industry will double and thus the economy of Pakistan will further improve. Similarly, according to reports (2021) of the GB government, the research conducted by national and international organizations have indicated that the land of Gilgit is enriched with various minerals which involve metallic and non-metallic reserves as well as energy minerals, such as gold, gypsum, uranium, marble and feldspar, etc. These minerals too can be exported to China which would further boost the economic growth of the area.

The revival of Diamer Bhasha Dam, located on the Indus River in GB which is part of CPEC phase-II is set to produce 4500 Megawatts (MW) of energy. The ADB (2020-2021) has also stated that Gilgit has the potential to produce about 50,000 MW of energy due to its infinite water resources. It is already producing 7100 MW of energy from Bunji Dam, located on the Indus River in Bunji, Gilgit. Therefore, investing in these hydropower projects in Gilgit would not only solve Pakistan’s energy crisis but could also be sold to neighboring countries. Thus the role of CPEC is imperative for the overall energy production of the country in which the GB would play a very important role. Moreover, the Pakistan government decided to launch high speed 4G internet broadband services in GB. This would not only generate revenue for the

government but would also be essential in promoting tourism in the area. Thus numerous projects of the CPEC in GB would be game-changers for the youth and instrumental for creating new jobs.

In addition, the government has already increased the budgetary allocations by more than 25% for the GB which shows its strong commitment to achieving greater socio-economic integration and regional connectivity in the GB. The world's second-highest peak K2 and the Nanga Parbat has a huge tourism potential but the lack of basic infrastructure is hurting the capitalization of the true tourism potential of this region. The government of Pakistan along with the government of GB is working together to overcome these issues. The GB government has contacted private investors to make five-star hotels in the area and the construction of three five-star hotels has already been announced.

More projects of CPEC such as micro-dams, special economic zones, agro-industry, health, and last but not the least, infrastructure development should be included. GB is located in the north-eastern part of Pakistan and is renowned for its famous snow-capped mountainous ranges, splendid valleys, bio-diverse wildlife, high altitude Forest Rivers and its exotic culture which should be further explored and tapped under the flagship project of CPEC phase-II. In this connection, road, highways and superhighways should also be included in the CPEC phase-II which

will ultimately strengthen its tourism potential, agro-industry, small and Mid-Size Enterprises (SMEs), regional connectivity, handicrafts and cottage industries, non-traditional exports of precious stones and marbles to China and beyond. The CPEC is transforming GB as the region hosts several beautiful valleys including Nagar, Hunza, Gilgit, Attaabad, Khaplu, Shiger, Gupis, Astore and Skardu Valley, thus attracting local and foreign tourists.

CPEC has brought investment in road and railway networks of the GB that will connect the region with the rest of the country. Under CPEC, the Karakoram Highway will be improved and a railway track is also expected to be constructed connecting the Kashgar city of China to Havelian of Pakistan. Similarly, work on GB Expressway, Havelian-Thakot Motorway, Shonter-Astore Road, Gilgit-Shandur Road, and Chitral-Chakdara Road is near completion.

<https://pakobserver.net/cpec-and-gilgit-baltistan-by-zulkafil-hassan-khan/>

'Skardu will be made Dubai:' Khalid Khurshid

Dailyk2, December 15, 2021

The Chief Minister (CM) of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Khalid Khurshid said that his cabinet has drafted a major development package for GB which will be formally approved by the Prime Minister of Pakistan during his "historic visit" on December 16. He said that Skardu city is going to become an economic hub and the city will be

made like Dubai. While addressing the gathering, Khalid Khurshid said that PM Imran Khan is a fearless and honest leader. He has done many favours to GB. PM Imran Khan approved a financial package of 370 billion for GB. He said that a time will come when Skardu city will not only be an economic hub but will also surpass Dubai and Singapore. He noted that a permit has already been issued to two international airlines to operate their service in the region.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/4886>

‘PM Imran Khan inaugurated Skardu International Airport and Jaglot-Skardu road’

Samaa TV, December 16, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan during his visit to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has inaugurated Skardu International Airport and the Jaglot-Skardu strategic road, two major pieces of infrastructure which it is hoped will ramp up tourism spending in the region. The development in Skardu is a part of PM Imran Khan’s initiative to boost tourism and economic growth in GB.

While addressing a public gathering at municipal stadium Skardu, PM Imran Khan said that he knew how important connectivity was for regions such as Skardu. He said that the people of GB should safeguard their interests and avoid selling their land to outsiders who would want to take over their assets. He urged them to consider opening tourist-friendly accommodation along with the

government planned resorts. He stressed that “you can't imagine the change it will bring to your lives.”

<https://www.samaa.tv/news/2021/12/pm-to-inaugurate-worlds-highest-altitude-airport-in-skardu-today/>

‘Pakistan can earn billions from tourism:’ Pakistan PM

The Nation, December 17, 2021

The Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan, Imran Khan said that with improved road connectivity along with Skardu International Airport, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was about to turn into a top destination for local and foreign tourists, ensuring economic prosperity. While addressing the locals at the municipal stadium, Skardu, he said that “the people of GB will soon witness an unprecedented era of economic prosperity with revenue generation through tourism and employment opportunities.” He noted that “if Switzerland can annually earn \$70 billion revenue, the GB has the natural resources to exploit its potential.” He stressed that Pakistan could earn billions from tourism, may it from the scenic northern areas or the diversity of religious tourism. He lauded National Highway Authority (NHA) and Frontier Works Organization (FWG) for working relentlessly in improving roads connectivity across GB. He emphasized that connecting GB with “Azad Kashmir” through roads would also bring improvement in the lives of locals. He said hydroelectricity projects have been set up in GB to meet the water requirements.

He further stressed that the Jaglot–Skardu was the “main strategic road” that connect Karakorum Highway at Jaglot, Skardu. The up-gradation of Jaglot-Skardu road will not only boost tourism but will also enhance the comfortable road ride to locals as well as tourists by increasing.

<https://nation.com.pk/17-Dec-2021/pakistan-can-earn-billions-from-tourism-says-pm>

Sardar Masood Ahmed and Cameron Munter visit MTBC Bagh

Daily Parliament Times, December 19, 2021

Pakistan’s ambassador-designate to the United States (US) and former president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) Sardar Masood and former US ambassador to Pakistan Cameron Munter visited Medical Transcription and Billing Company (MTBC) Bagh. Sardar Masood Khan and Cameron Munter had a detailed meeting with MTBC executive chairman Mahmoodul Haq. While briefing Masood Khan and Cameron Munter, Mahmood–ul- Haq said that MTBC is a leading billing company that provides services in billing matters as well as working on various projects for the promotion of tourism in “Azad Kashmir”, improvement of the education system and raising the standard of education and promotion of Information Technology. He said there was a tremendous potential for tourism in “Azad Kashmir” and in this connection, MTBC has leased various tourist destinations from the government of “Azad Kashmir” and

provided them five-star facilities as per modern standards. Mahmood-ul-Haq further noted that MTBC is going to launch new projects in “Azad Kashmir” in future under which investments will be made in Kashmir airline helicopter service and various other sectors.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/12/19/sardar-masood-ahmed-and-cameron-munter-visit-mtbc-bagh/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

‘Peace and prosperity will remain a major challenge without the resolution of Kashmir Dispute:’ Shah Mehmood

Urdu Point, December 14, 2021

The Foreign Minister (FM) of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that without resolving the “Kashmir dispute”, the people of South Asia cannot be saved from “chronic instability” and therefore “peace and prosperity” will remain a major challenge. Pakistan's efforts to strengthen peace cannot be one-sided. He said that “Indian oppression is so open and inhumane” that it cannot be hidden under the veils of secularism and democracy.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/important-news/live-news-2988794.html>

The nation must unite on the Kashmir issue: AJK President to Senator

Jasarat, December 16, 2021

The president of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Sultan Mehmood

Chaudhry meet with Senator Dr. Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur at Aiwan-e-Sadr Kashmir house. During the meeting, the president of AJK said that he will continuously keep highlighting the “Kashmir issue” at international forums and in various parliaments in Europe. He urged that Pakistan too has to “unite as a nation on the Kashmir issue.” The Senate and the National Assembly have to take initiatives to pass resolutions on the “Kashmir issue” from time to time and continue to condemn the “atrocities in occupied Kashmir.” In his response, Senator Zarqa Suharwardy assured the president of AJK that “you keep raising voice on the ongoing atrocities in Occupied Kashmir” in international forums aggressively. We will also continue to play our part in bringing the “Kashmir issue to the attention of the international community.”

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/12/16/211216-08-8/>

A peaceful solution to the 'Kashmir dispute' is essential for stability in the region: Pakistan Army Chief

Jasarat, December 17, 2021

The Chief of Army Staff General (CASG) Qamar Javed Bajwa met with the ambassador of Japan, Mr. Kuninori Matsuda at General Head Quarters (GHQ). During the meeting, both the officials discussed issues of mutual interest, regional security and the current situation in Afghanistan, especially cooperation in humanitarian aid. The Army Chief stressed the need

for an immediate institutional mechanism to deliver aid to Afghanistan to avert the humanitarian crisis. The Army Chief also stressed that a “peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute” is essential for stability in South Asia and noted that Pakistan wants cordial relations with all its neighbours for regional peace and prosperity. The Japanese ambassador appreciated Pakistan's role in the Afghanistan peace process and its “special efforts for regional stability” and vowed to play its part in further enhancing diplomatic cooperation with Pakistan at all levels.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/12/17/211217-08-29>

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Volume 1 | Issue 42

13 - 19 December 2021

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Disclaimer

PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.



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