

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Gilgit-Baltistan
Air Blue **tourism authority** **Diamer**
Lohar Gali Tunnel
Lepa Tunnel **POK**
unemployment **Chilgoza project**



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Political Developments

‘Azeri Envoy Discusses Kashmir, Afghanistan Issues with Punjab Governor’

The Nation, March 28, 2022

The ambassador of Azerbaijan in Pakistan Khazar Farhadov meet with the governor of Punjab, Ch Sarwar and discussed the promotion of “bilateral relations, issues of mutual interest, Kashmir and Afghanistan.” The governor shared with the ambassador the steps taken by Pakistan for peace and eradication of terrorism in the country and the region at large, the current situation in “Kashmir and Afghanistan.” He said that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have a long-standing religious, cultural and historical relationship which was a sign of strong ties between the two countries. Governor Sarwar said that there were vast opportunities for bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, commerce, and energy between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, adding that the development of high-level relations between the two countries was a welcoming sign. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the present government was striving for maintaining peace in the region and “we urge the world to play its role in the elimination of atrocities in Kashmir and Palestine and for the establishment of peace.” The Azeri ambassador said that Azerbaijan would continue to play its role alongside Pakistan in connecting Central Asian states through Afghanistan.

<https://nation.com.pk/2022/03/28/azeri-envoy-discusses-kashmir-afghanistan-issues-with-punjab-governor/>

‘GB should be given ‘AJK’ like governance setup:’ Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman

Daily Parliament Times, March 30, 2022

The former Chief Minister (CM) of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman said that GB should be given an “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) like governance setup. He also said that the people of ‘AJK’ were not an obstacle to the rights of GB. He said that Imran Khan had formed a government in GB through “rigging” and it was not possible for him to make GB a province. He said that a two-thirds majority is mandatory not only in the national assembly but also in the Senate to create a new province. He said that the people of “Azad Kashmir” were not an obstacle to the rights of GB, added that when he was the CM, he made four visits to ‘AJK’ to create harmony among the people of GB and ‘AJK’.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/03/30/gilgit-baltistan-should-be-given-ajk-like-governance-setup-hafiz-hafeez-ur-rehman/>

‘Sheikh Mateen new APHC-AJK general secretary’

Pakistan Observer, March 31, 2022

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (APHC-AJK) chapter collectively elected Shiekh Abdul Mateen as the new general secretary of the forum. The meeting was presided over by APHC ‘AJK’ convener Mohammad Farooq Rehmani, while all members of the executive council assured Shiekh Abdul Mateen of their full cooperation and support in his efforts to serve the Kashmir cause. It is to mention that Shiekh Abdul Mateen is also a “special

representative” of APHC chairman Masarat Alam Butt.

<https://pakobserver.net/sheikh-mateen-new-aphc-ajk-general-secretary/>

‘AJK assembly member remanded in FIA custody’

Dawn, April 01, 2022

The judicial magistrate of a local court, Maqsood Anjum remanded a member of the “Azad” Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (MLA) Chaudhary Mohammad Yaseen to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in connection with “alleged corruption” in a private housing society. Mr Yaseen was the chairman of a private housing scheme, Jammu and Kashmir Cooperative Housing Society, from 2004 to 2015. He also had held the portfolio of senior ministers in the ‘AJK government. In September last year, Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari appointed him as the president of the PPP ‘AJK’ chapter. The FIA arrested Mr Yaseen for corruption in the affairs of the housing society along with Mohammad Zaheer Khan, then executive secretary, Naseem Anjum, treasurer, and land provider Ali Wiqar.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1682787/ajk-assembly-member-remanded-in-fia-custody>

‘APHC-‘AJK’ leader urges world to help resolve Kashmir dispute

Pakistan Observation, April 01, 2022

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) leader, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar has urged the world leaders to help resolve the “lingering Kashmir dispute” following the United Nations

Security Council Resolutions (UNSC). Mehmood Ahmed Saghar in a letter addressed to leaders of P5 countries, highlighted the “woeful plight of the Kashmiri prisoners and India’s repressive policies to stifle democratic dissent in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (IIOJK). He said that “Kashmir has been turned into a virtual prison where essential fundamental freedoms such as the right to peaceful assembly, right to freedom of opinion and expression and right to peaceful protest remain largely suspended.” He noted in his letter that since 5th August 2019 the “Indian government” had arrested thousands of Kashmiris on “trumped-up charges.”

The rights groups, he said, are being targeted for their work and cooperation with the UN and other international organizations in exposing “human rights violations” being committed by Indian troops in the territory. Saghar pointed out that the Indian government was “using judiciary” and other “repressive state apparatus” to enable complete silence in Kashmir by “suppressing every voice of dissent.” While highlighting the “plight of illegally detained” APHC leader, Shabir Ahmed Shah, he said that Shabbir Shah had been suffering from multiple chronic ailments and being a diabetic and heart patient, his health condition in the prison has deteriorated to dangerous levels due to the “lack of medical care.” He appealed to the world leaders to use their good offices to help secure an early release of Shah and other political prisoners. In a separate letter to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) secretary-

general, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar thanked the Muslim body for renewing solidarity and reiterating its full support for “Kashmiris’ legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination.”

<https://pakobserver.net/saghar-urges-world-to-help-resolve-kashmir-dispute/>

‘Pakistan believes in diplomacy, dialogue to resolve outstanding issues with India including Kashmir:’ COAS

Daily Parliament Times, April 02, 2022

The Chief of Army Staff (CAOS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said Pakistan does not believe in camp politics and seeks to expand and broaden its ties with both China and the United States (US). While addressing Islamabad Security Dialogue (ISD), he said that Pakistan enjoys close and strategic cooperation with China demonstrated by our commitment to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC), added that Pakistan equally shares a long history of excellent and strategic relationship with the US which remains our largest export market. The CAOS said that Pakistan continues to believe in using diplomacy and dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues with “India including the Kashmir dispute”, and added that Pakistan is ready to move forward on this front if India also agrees to do so. While expressing deep concerns over the recent landing of an Indian supersonic cruise missile inside Pakistan territory, the Army chief said that such an incident raises “serious questions about India’s ability to manage and operate high-end weapon systems”, stressed that Pakistan has

called for a thorough probe into the incident. He said we expect India to provide evidence to ensure Pakistan and the world community that their weapons are safe and secured.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/04/02/pakistan-believes-in-diplomacy-dialogue-to-resolve-outstanding-issues-with-india-coas/>

Economic Developments

‘Chairman MTBC briefed PM of Azad Kashmir on ongoing projects’

Daily Pakistan, March 28, 2022

The executive chairman of Medical Transcription and Billing Company (MTBC) Mahmood Haq meet with the Prime Minister (PM) of “Azad Kashmir”, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi and briefed him about the ongoing projects and future plans of MTBC in education, tourism, health and Information Technology (IT) sectors. The PM of AJK said that the government has set up a tourism authority to promote tourism in “Azad Kashmir” and steps are also being taken to facilitate investors, added that the Dubai Expo has a special focus on bringing investors to “Azad Kashmir.” He said that a comprehensive plan has been drawn up to eradicate unemployment and also seeking the services of the private sector to achieve better results in less time. He further said that MTBC is doing a good job in “Azad Kashmir” and the government will take the services of MTBC for upgrading infrastructure as well as upgrading tourist places and providing modern facilities in rest houses.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/28-Mar-2022/1419899>

‘Air Blue decides to operate flights to Skardu’

Dailyk2, March 29, 2022

The private airline Air Blue has decided to operate flights from Islamabad to Skardu to promote tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The first flight from Islamabad to Skardu will arrive on April 26. The airline company has advertised for staff recruitment in Skardu, according to which applications can be submitted till March 31. The move is being hailed by the public in GB.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/5917>

‘Chairman Senate, AJK PM discuss political situation, Development Projects and Tourism’

Daily Pakistan, March 29, 2022

The chairman senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani called on “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) Prime Minister (PM) Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi at Kashmir House. During the meeting, they discussed the overall political situation in the country and issues related to industrial development, hydel power and promotion of tourism in “Azad Kashmir.” The 'AJK' PM said that his government had chalked out a comprehensive strategy to launch mega development projects in "Azad Kashmir" and stressed that PM Imran Khan has approved several mega development projects for the region. He said that "Azad Kashmir" offers vast investment opportunities in tourism, hydel, minerals and other sectors," adding that the incumbent government was committed to ensuring the provision of facilities to investors within "Azad Kashmir."

He further said that the government has formulated a vibrant and investment-friendly policy that offers attractive incentives to investors. He noted that with the cooperation of the federal government, work on other projects including Kashmir Highway, Lohar Gali Tunnel, and Lepa Tunnel would be started soon. He said that the timely completion of these projects will usher in a new era of development and prosperity in "Azad Kashmir" besides boosting tourism in the region. He said that as per the vision of PM Imran Khan, the government of "Azad Kashmir" was using all its resources for construction and development in the region. Sadiq Sanjrani said that the Pakistani nation and people stand with their Kashmiri brethren who have been fighting for their just cause and stressed that "Kashmiris and Pakistanis were tied in an ideological relationship" which is based on strong foundations. He said that the centre would provide full cooperation and support to the AJK government to ensure the timely completion of the ongoing development projects that have been initiated in different areas of the region.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/909419/chairman-senate-ajk-pm-discuss-political-situation/>

‘AJK government to establish model tourism spot along with Neelum River’

Daily Times, March 30, 2022

The government of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) would establish a model tourism spot along with the Neelum river to enhance the beautiful scenic view of the capital city. The AJK cabinet had decided to formulate an authority of tourism to exploit its rich tourism potential for the social-

economic development of the area. He said the 'AJK' government is investing millions of rupees to uplift this sector, adding that a summary regarding the setup of a new tourism authority would be presented in the next meeting of the 'AJK' cabinet for its approval. It has been noted that the tourism authority would establish its offices at the district, tehsil and local level to promote this sector and generate the maximum revenue. The cabinet meeting also stressed that Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan has a clear vision in this regard and added that Imran Khan wants "Azad Kashmir" to turn tourism into a key source of income for its people, particularly those inhabiting the areas with fascinating natural beauty.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/910508/ajk-govt-to-establish-model-tourism-spot-along-with-neelum-river-3/>

'Chilgoza project to facilitate processing and access to the international market:' GB CM

Dailyk2, March 31, 2022

A delegation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) led by Florence Rolle called on Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister (CM) Khalid Khurshid. During the meeting, the FAO head said that work is being done under the Chilgoza project in 5 different areas of Diamer for packing and market access as per international standards. The project will be taken forward in collaboration with the government of GB to enable the large-scale production of chickpeas to reach the international market. The GB CM said that this project of processing Chilgoza and making it possible to access the international market is of

utmost importance and added that technical assistance from FAO for ensuring the successful and efficient implementation of Chilgoza project phase II would further expand the project in 10 more areas of Diamer.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/5954>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

'KIIR chairman Altaf Wani demands release of Khurram Pervez and Ahsan Untoo'

Urdupoint, March 29, 2022

The chairman of Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR), Altaf Hussain Wani has urged the United Nations Human Right Commission (UNHRC) to influence the government of India to help release "illegally detained Kashmiri rights activists" Khurram Parvaiz and Ahsan Untoo. While taking part in the debate held under agenda item 5 of the 49th session of UNHRC Geneva, on behalf of the World Muslim Congress, the KIIR chief said that the "Modi-led Indian government" had responded to the "expression of dissent" and the freedom of expression with "arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and a campaign of misinformation aimed at discrediting the work of Kashmiri rights activists." Wani said, "recently two prominent human rights defenders" Khurram Parvez and Ahsan Untoo were arrested on "false and fabricated charges." He said that these activists were being "victimized for their work and standing up for the rights of their people," and as a consequence "Modi-led apartheid regimes" aimed at "silencing these rights" defenders who have time and again played a vital role in raising

alarm over the rights situation in the region and criticized the “authoritarian regime’s brutal policies towards Kashmir.”

He urged the council to call upon the government of India to release Khurram Parvez and Ashan Untoo and end “reprisals against human rights defenders.” He further said that the revival of Village Defence Committees (VDCs) “disastrous recipe to legitimize persecution of Kashmiri Muslims”, added that the decision was being taken at a time when “Hindu nationalist leaders” openly call for a “Muslim genocide in Kashmir” after watching Bollywood’s “propaganda-laden” film the Kashmir files, which “portrays Kashmiris as terrorists.” He stressed that “Indian forces” operating in Kashmir have been working closely with these VDCs. He said that the world conference on Human Rights considers the “denial of the right of self-determination as a violation of human rights” and underlines the importance of the effective realization of this right. He said that the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was recognized by no less an authority than the UNSC.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/mirpur/kashmir/live-news-3086645.html>

‘AJK’ president hails overseas Kashmiris’ role in projecting Kashmir cause’

Mahasib, March 30, 2022

The president “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK), Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has appreciated the overseas Kashmiris’ role in highlighting the “issue of Kashmir” at the global level. The ‘AJK’ president

while talking with the advisor of overseas Kashmiris, Muhammad Shaban said that overseas Kashmiris especially those living in the United Kingdom (UK) have played a significant role in raising the “Kashmir issue” at every forum. He said that given the “worsening political and human rights” situation in Kashmir there was a dire need that the Kashmiri diaspora community in the UK should join their hands to sensitize the world about the early solution of the Kashmir dispute and expose “Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir.”

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/muzaffarabbad.php>

‘AJK’ government decides to reorganize JKLC’

UrduPoint, March 30, 2022

The government of “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) has decided to reorganize the “Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell” (JKLC) under a new name to “project Kashmir cause effectively” at the national as well as international level. The decision was taken during a meeting held under the chairmanship of the ‘AJK’ Prime Minister (PM) Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi. The meeting was attended by chief secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, principal secretary Ehsan Khalid Kayani, secretary ‘Liberation Cell’ Ejaz Ahmed Lone and others. As per the decision, the JKLC would now be called the Liberation Commission. The Commission has been tasked to evolve a comprehensive strategy on Kashmir thereby hiring/securing services of researchers and thinkers having deep insight and understanding of Kashmir and international affairs. The Liberation Commission will take steps to highlight the “serious human rights

violations in occupied Kashmir” besides promoting the “narrative regarding the ongoing freedom movement in the Indian occupied Kashmir.”

During the meeting, PM Niazi said that it was unfortunate that this prestigious institution was turned into a recruitment agency and stressed that the JKLC should not have been used for political purposes. He noted that JKLC was created for a particular purpose and the sole objective behind the establishment of this institution was to “highlight Kashmir issue at the global level.” He said that “Azad Kashmir” would continue to play its role as the base camp of Tehreek-e-Azadi (freedom movement) and alleged that “freedom from Indian occupation”, was the first and foremost priority of the PTI government.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3087974.html>

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Disclaimer

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