

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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constitutional status **CPEC**
POK Gilgit-Baltistan
hydropower projects **women**
Jagran-2 empowerment
Joint Awami Action Committee
taxation without representation
deployment of FC



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Political Developments

Empowering Gilgit-Baltistan

Dawn, 17 June 2024

THE Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region, the neglected mountainous expanse within the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, has recently risen to prominence. Previously perceived as a remote liability and officially referred to as the Northern Areas, it was a nameless region of Pakistan. Local Kashmiri leaders, deeming it a barren land and a financial burden, forsook its ownership. Thus, in the Karachi Agreement between 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) and the government of Pakistan, the region was handed over to Pakistan unconditionally. This set in motion an ad hoc governance arrangement under the control of a joint secretary of government of Pakistan. For the simple folk of the region, the presence of Pakistani officials and the fluttering Pakistani flag symbolised their merger with Pakistan; they were, oblivious to the reality that they possessed no constitutional rights, as a disputed territory governed through decrees by the government of Pakistan.

The people had merely exchanged one harsh ruler for a cadre of benign and slightly sympathetic overseers, who continued to operate under the legal and governance framework of the Dogra government. In a merciful turn of events, the 1973 PPP leader abolished the old legal structure, replacing it with Pakistani laws but preferred to govern through

administrative decrees, instead of addressing the key issue of the settlement of the constitutional status that the Pakistan government controlled without the consent of the people in the 'greater national interest.' This charade persisted until a significant breakthrough in 2009, when the PPP again took a major step by recognising the region's identity, naming it GB, and establishing a legislative assembly with powers to legislate on a few subjects.

The titles of chief minister and governor, modelled after other provinces and conferred upon the top political offices by decree, gave the region the semblance of a federating unit. Meanwhile, the construction of the Karakoram Highway and the efforts of international NGOs exposed the people to the outside world. The youth received education, and the area now boasts the highest literacy rate of any region in Pakistan. This enlightenment sparked protests demanding the region's merger with Pakistan and full constitutional rights. The persistent demands forced the hand of the succeeding PML-N government, which formed a committee under the late Sartaj Aziz. After thorough examination and consultations, he produced a report endorsing the people's demands for an empowered and reformed legislature, executive, and judiciary.

An old petition for constitutional rights came before the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The court accepted the Sartaj Aziz Report's recommendations and

directed the PML-N government to comply. Instead of implementing the order meaningfully, the PML-N introduced a new presidential decree in 2018, rolling back even the limited empowerment granted in the 2009 governance order. This manoeuvre was not accepted, and the Supreme Court directed the incoming PTI government to establish a new legal framework in line with the court judgement, ensuring the protection of the people's constitutional rights. The new government drafted the 2019 order. The court's full bench set aside the 2018 governance order and directed the government to implement the new order.

However, the government, realising belatedly that the new law would curtail their unbridled power, filed a revision petition against this judgement and frustrated a historic moment for true liberation of the region. In the meantime, considering a petition regarding appointments to the Supreme Appellate Court of GB, the Supreme Court issued an order stating that 'no further appointments in the Chief Court or the Supreme Appellate Court of GB shall be made until further orders (March 1, 2023). This order has rendered the judicial system of the region dysfunctional, creating a legal void. Important cases cannot be heard by any judicial forum.

Unfortunately, the superior judiciary of Pakistan, which had previously issued landmark judgements for granting constitutional rights, has not ensured the implementation of these historic

rulings, resulting in devastating consequences for the region. What is needed is a fraction of the attention given to demolishing the Nasla Tower. When we analyse the governance issues of this region objectively, it becomes clear that the key players are all complicit in the ongoing tragic drama that unfolds in real life. Successive governments have failed to consider the status of this region from a historical and legal perspective. Instead, they have entertained proposals like the Chenab formula, based on treaties between the British and the Sikh/Dogra rulers, which were already rescinded under the Indian Independence Act of 1947.

Despite the locals' clear and unequivocal desire to join Pakistan, the state continues to reject their demand for merger, even conditionally. Mean-while, our adversary consistently and blatantly claims this region as an integral part of their territory. National mainstream parties prioritise their national political agendas over local interests, leading to mismanagement and an unsustainable administrative structure. The creation of 10 small districts for a population of less than two million has hindered the growth of local government institutions and drained resources that should be allocated to education, health, and social services. As if this were not enough, the current federal government is considering the creation of additional revenue districts, perpetuating this reckless administrative engineering. To sustain

this administrative anomaly, they may then resort to ‘taxation without representation.’

Local political leaders continue to be subservient to the national party leadership or seek patronage from agencies. They make decisions blindly under external direction, bypassing due process. This strategically sensitive region now faces a series of crises, pushing it to the brink. To address these recurring crises and resultant protests, the government is forced to take flawed decisions aimed only at placating the protesters and buying time, which is fast running out. The region risks descending into uncontrollable chaos with potentially tragic outcomes for its people.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1840437/empowering-gilgit-baltistan>

India masking aggression on Kashmiris with provocations against Pakistan: COAS

The Express tribune, 17 June 2024

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir visited the Line of Control (LoC) in the Haji Pir sector to celebrate Eid ul Adha with the troops, the military said in a statement. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief offered Eid prayers with officers and soldiers at the front line, praying for Pakistan’s peace and prosperity. He also paid respects to the sacrifices of the martyrs of Pakistan, acknowledging their contributions to the nation's security. Addressing the assembled troops,

COAS commended their dedication, high morale, and unwavering commitment to defending the motherland. As soldiers, we take pride in celebrating such festivities away from our homes and loved ones while on duty, ensuring the security of our country and fellow citizens, he remarked.

During his speech, Munir discussed the ongoing indigenous freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people in ‘Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IIOJK). He reiterated Pakistan’s principled stance, which aligns with relevant United Nations resolutions. The army chief condemned India’s continued oppression and brutalities against Kashmiris, noting that post-election, India has been attempting to mask its aggression with false propaganda and provocations against Pakistan. Pakistan has always supported peace and stability in the region; however, any provocation or violation of Pakistan’s territorial sovereignty will be met with a swift and resolute response, with the full support of the nation, COAS concluded.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2472219/india-masking-aggression-against-kashmiris-with-provocations-against-pakistan-coas>

FO asks India to implement UNSC resolutions on Kashmir

Dawn, 20 June 2024

Pakistan has said India has no right to object to the references made to Jammu and Kashmir in Pakistan-China joint

statement issued in Beijing after talks between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang on 8 June, and reiterated it is an established fact that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally-recognised disputed territory. It is an established fact that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally-recognised disputed territory. The dispute has been on the agenda of the UN Security Council for over seven decades, the Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson said in a statement while responding to media queries regarding the remarks made by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

The FO statement explained that ‘the relevant Security Council resolutions clearly stipulate that the final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. In that backdrop, the Indian claims over Jammu and Kashmir are totally unfounded and misplaced. India should not mislead the international community about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is a flagship developmental endeavour, agreed upon by two sovereign nations. Instead of making baseless claims about CPEC, India should implement, at the earliest, the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1840764/fo-asks-india-to-implement-unsc-resolutions-on-kashmir>

Rescue called off in GB after Japanese climber deemed untraceable

Dawn, 20 June 2024

A rescue mission was called off after one of the two Japanese mountaineers, Atsushi Taguchi, remained untraceable during an extensive search on Spantik peak in Shigar district as rescuers believe he is no more. On the other hand, consultation is underway to start a mission to bring down the body of the other member of the Japanese expedition team, Ryuseki Hiraoka, from the peak. Addressing a press conference, Shigar Deputy Commissioner Waliullah Falahi along with Naiknaam Karim, CEO of Adventure Tours Pakistan, and local rescuers said the two Japanese climbers went missing during their attempt to summit 7,027-metre Spantik peak.

On 13 June, an aerial search operation was launched by Pakistan Army helicopters. In the search operation, the Japanese climbers were located at 5,300-metre altitude. However, due to the challenging terrain and weather conditions, the helicopters were unable to land or hover in the area to reach them. Subsequently, a day later, a nine-member ground rescue team comprising four Japanese climbers who were already at the base camp, launched a mission to rescue the fellow climbers. They reached camp 2 at 5,300m altitude on 15 June evening. They descended 300 metres deep into a crevice to rescue the climbers. After a very risky and dangerous mission, the team managed to recover the body of

Ryuseki Hiraoka and kept it at a safe place.

However, the team members could not spot the other climber, Atsushi Taguchi, and finally had to return to base camp. The team searched extensively to trace the missing climber and couldn't trace. Subsequently, the rescue team suspended their expedition and returned to the base camp same day. The Japanese climbers had fallen into the 300-metre-deep crevice. Most probably he is buried under snow or has fallen deep down in the abyss. His survival is not possible. More search will be a futile exercise, the rescuers believe after abandoning the search, he said.

Deputy Commissioner Falahi said the mission to search for another Japanese missing climber Atsushi Taguchi has been officially called off. While talking to reporters, the rescue team members earlier said he was presumed dead as his body couldn't be traced despite hectic efforts. According to some rescuers, his body might surface when snow melts in August.

Efforts to retrieve body

DC Falahi said every effort was made to trace and rescue the two Japanese in consultation with Japanese embassy officials and family members of the climbers. Adventure Tours Pakistan CEO Naiknaam Karim said as soon as information about 'missing' climbers was received, they initiated all-out efforts to rescue them. Unfortunately, both Japanese climbers were not alive, he said. Rescuers utilised their best

efforts and skills to trace and reach the climbers and they managed to bring one of the two bodies to a safer place, he added.

Mr Karim, however, regretted that despite having a big potential for adventure tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan, little attention was paid to train local guides and as there was only one mountain school to train high-altitude porters, guides and climbers. Bringing down the recovered body from the peak is a hard job, as it requires strong, high-altitude porters and helicopters, besides huge funding. Mr Karim said the decision to start the mission to bring back the body of Ryuseki Hiraoka would be taken after consultation with family members.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1840759/rescue-called-off-in-gb-after-japanese-climber-deemed-untraceable>

Indian army's brutal action in 'IIOJK' claims lives of two young men

The Express Tribune, 20 June 2024

In 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK), the Indian army's state-sanctioned terrorism resulted in the martyrdom of two more Kashmiri youths. According to international news agencies, in the Baramulla district, the Indian army conducted a search operation during which they indiscriminately fired at a house, resulting in the martyrdom of two unarmed Kashmiri youths, whose identities have not yet been disclosed. In a serious violation of human rights, the 'occupying Indian forces' handed

over the bodies to the police and denied journalists access to the scene. The pro-India administration in 'occupied Kashmir' tried to cover up the state terrorism of the occupying forces by unsuccessfully attempting to portray the youths as militants, sources claimed.

Following the martyrdom of the youths, a large number of residents came out in protest. They chanted slogans against the Indian government and the Indian army, and voiced their support for the Kashmir freedom struggle. It may be noted that most Kashmiris had boycotted elections held earlier in the month. Since then, the occupying Indian forces have extrajudicially killed more than five Kashmiri youths in June alone.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2472640/indian-armys-brutal-action-in-iiok-claims-lives-of-two-young-men>

People in Kashmir protest on Indian PM's visit to Kashmir

Daily Parliament Times, 21 June 2024

People in 'Azad Kashmir' demonstrated protest on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kashmir. According to details, a large number of citizens participated in anti-Modi demonstration organized by Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir carried banners and placards. During the rally, people were chanting Anti-India and pro freedom slogans like "Killer, killer, Modi, killer", "Go Modi, go back" etc. Speaking on the occasion, speakers said Narendra Modi

visit to Srinagar under the guard of soldiers is moral defeat for Narendra Modi.

They said that people of Jammu and Kashmir rejects the illegal occupation of India in disputed territory. If Narendra Modi has moral courage, he should come forward for plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir, speakers asked. Kashmiri people will continue their struggle till independence, they reiterated. They said that people of 'Azad Kashmir' are with the brethren of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) in their resistance against India. Narendra Modi is the eternal enemy of the Kashmiri people, the visit is unacceptable", they added. Protest was led by Chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmed Ghazali, Hurriyat Leaders Mushtaq-ul-Islam, and others.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/06/21/people-in-kashmir-protest-on-indian-pms-visit-to-kashmir/>

Interior Minister approves deployment of FC in 'AJK' at premier Haq's request

Dawn, 23 June 2024

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi approved the deployment of the Frontier Constabulary (FC) in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) at the request of Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, in a decision that raised eyebrows in the region given the recent incidents that had led to three deaths in state capital Muzaffarabad allegedly at the hands of a paramilitary force. The

deployment comes on the heels of a warning by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) that the activists of the rights movement would stage 'peaceful sit-ins' at 'AJK's entry and exit points with Pakistan if the authorities did not honour the pledges made to the alliance leadership and released the detained activists by 25 June.

According to a press release issued by the 'AJK' government, the meeting between Haq and Naqvi, held in the latter's office in the federal capital, focused on the law and order situation and overall security in the liberated territory. Both leaders also discussed the political climate and 'AJK's upcoming budget for the new financial year, the press release added. In response to a request by the prime minister, the federal minister approved the deployment of the Frontier Constabulary in 'AJK', assuring Haq that all possible cooperation would be extended to maintain peace and improve security in the region, it said.

While renewing the government of Pakistan's support for the progress and development of the 'AJK' territory, the federal minister reiterated their commitment to fulfilling promises made to the 'AJK' people in this regard. On his part, Prime Minister Haq expressed his gratitude to the Federal Minister for taking immediate steps to address the issues facing 'AJK.' However, the news of the deployment of the paramilitary force which the 'AJK' government has been asserting would be restricted to some important

hydropower projects in the territory was met with skepticism by many. As the news was aired by TV channels, former 'AJK' premier and regional president of the PTL, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi, submitted a calling attention notice in the Legislative Assembly secretariat for a debate on the issue when the house would resume its sitting.

Currently there is no law and order situation in 'AJK' that warrants the deployment of the FC in the territory, he said in the notice, addressed to Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar. Niazi recalled that the situation in 'AJK' had become tense previously due to the deployment of the FC and Rangers, among other factors, and a failed attempt was made to create a rift between the people of AJK and the people of Pakistan. Now, once again, with the deployment of the FC, the situation in 'AJK' will further worsen, he warned. While questioning what concerns were prompting the AJK premier to recurrently invite the FC to the state, Niazi said that it was essential that the House held a debate on the important issue.

Hafeez Hamdani, a spokesperson for JAAC, told Dawn.com from Mirpur, where the core committee meeting of the alliance was in progress, that they had given the government the deadline of 25 June for the fulfilment of all of the demands. These demands included the establishment of a judicial commission, consisting of the judge(s) of the 'AJK' High Court, to investigate all violent incidents, withdrawal of all cases

against the activists and unconditional release of the detained persons. If the government fails to meet the deadline, people will peacefully march towards their concerned entry point on the given dates and stage a sit-in there, he said, warning that any attempt to stop the peaceful march would result in an indefinite lockdown across the state. Hamdani said the JAAC core committee had decided that from 26-29 June sit-ins will be held at the entry points in Poonch, Mirpur and Muzaffarabad divisions, respectively.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1841488/interior-minister-approves-deployment-of-fc-in-ajk-at-premier-haqs-request>

Economic Developments

GB cabinet approves women-centric development policy

Dawn, 17 June 2024

In a first, the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) cabinet approved a women-centric development policy aimed at gender equality and women empowerment through infrastructure development and other measures. The GB Women Empowerment Policy, Strategy, and Action Plan 2024-2029 is aimed at the empowerment of women in seven priority areas, including education and lifelong learning, economic empowerment and inclusive growth, health, civic participation, climate resilience, human rights and social protection. The policy also hopes to encourage women towards the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) field. For greater

visibility of women in public life, enforcement of women's quotas in recruitment has been emphasised. Likewise, the removal of barriers to the free mobility of women through extensive infrastructure development has been promised.

Several large-scale behavioural change communication projects have also been designed to break taboos and create a women-friendly public discourse for effective participation in all walks of life. The policy also envisages close coordination with the GB Election Commission to enforce the pro-women clauses of the Election Act 2017 during the upcoming local government as well as regional elections. The policy also suggests measures to combat climate change which disproportionately affects women and thus requires special measures. Pakistan's national commitments to women described in the National Gender Development Framework 2012-2030 are also included in the policy along with its international commitments.

It also ensures constitutional guarantees for the uplift of women and the elimination of discrimination. The policy is set in the broader context of the global women development goals by the United Nations and other international conventions and covenants, Yasmin Karim, a gender expert, said. According to lead consultant Riaz Akbar, the policy has seven thematically organised objectives, with each objective comprising a five-year action plan, a one-year action plan, and a quarterly

action plan. The policy is underpinned by five strategic pillars that will be deployed to achieve the policy objectives. A general assessment of the state of development of GB's women across districts is also presented in the policy.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1840383/gb-cabinet-approves-women-centric-development-policy>

Deputy PM visits Jagran-2 Hydropower Plant in Neelum

The Nation, 19 June 2024

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar visited Jagran-2 Hydropower Plant under construction in Neelum district, 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK). He was briefed on the progress of the construction of 50MW power plant. He was briefed that the work on the Jagran-2 is proceeding as per the plan and that the construction will be completed in the year 2025. Expressing satisfaction and appreciation at the progress of the project, the Deputy Prime Minister promised to take up the issue at the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) to fast track the approvals through an early action.

The Deputy Prime Minister also met the Chinese engineers and Pakistani team working on the Jagran-2. He conveyed the best wishes of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Government for the engineers, technicians and workers employed in the project and assured full support and security of the for its timely

completion. He expressed the confidence that the project will contribute significantly towards electrical power generation in 'AJK' and bring benefits to the local population in terms of employment, education, agriculture, industrial development and tourism.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/19-Jun-2024/deputy-pm-visits-jagran-2-hydropower-plant-in-neelum>

Tourism: Unplanned Investments and Endangered Mountain Communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral

Pamir Times, 21 June 2024

Responsible tourism requires a careful balance between promoting tourism and preserving the natural, cultural, and economic well-being of local communities. Recent controversies surrounding tourism investments in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Chitral regions highlight the challenges in achieving this balance. The tourism and cultural economies being the recent priorities of the government policies the regularisation still need to be worked on to guarantee this development doesn't affect the local indigenous natural and cultural settings. The Case of Monal Restaurant and Adjacent Buildings in Islamabad.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan's decision to seal the Monal Restaurant and adjacent buildings in the national park reflects a growing recognition of the need to protect natural spaces from unchecked commercial development. While this decision may inconvenience many Islamabad residents who

frequently visited the restaurant for its scenic views and natural ambiance, it underscores a broader principle: tourism should not come at the expense of environmental degradation and the displacement of small communities. This ruling aligns with a global trend towards sustainable tourism, which seeks to minimize the environmental footprint of tourist activities while maximizing benefits for local populations.

The Debate Over New Developments in Hunza:

In Hunza, the situation is more complex. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has historically played a pivotal role in the region through its Historic Cities Program. The restoration of Baltit Fort and its surroundings is a celebrated example of how cultural preservation can drive economic and social development. This project not only boosted tourism but also improved the quality of life for residents by providing essential services and infrastructure, thereby preserving the area's historical and cultural integrity. The pilot project in implementing the basic services integrated in these century old settlements were first of its type imagine of services of sewerage, underground electric and communication systems, making it liveable again for generations to come.

However, the recent addition of Serena hotel building in Karimabad/Baltit by Tourism Promotion Services (TPS), a subsidiary of AKDN, has sparked

significant debate. Critics argue that the new hotel, with over 100 rooms, contradicts the principles of responsible tourism that the AKDN has long championed. Concerns have been raised about the environmental impact, the hurried nature of the decision, and the appropriateness of the architectural design. The hotel's construction, along with the installation of solar panels at Duikar, another scenic site with a skyline of 7000 meters peaks, been covered with the solar panels, has been perceived as disruptive to the local landscape and community.

The architecture and construction quality of this new building doesn't seem promising compared to past AKDN projects, with the past projects and associated with the world top Architects as Fumihiko Maki, Norman Foster, Nayar Ali Dada, Rafael Vinoly with projects as Aga Khan Centre London/Toronto, University of Central Asia-Campus, Aga Khan University Karachi, Serena Hotel Islamabad, marking these projects as symbol of buildings not only functional and aesthetically pleasing but also sustainable and culturally relevant. In similar area through its historical cities program and Aga Khan Trust for culture initiatives, AKDN has set high standards with thoughtfully designed buildings like the Leif Larson Music School in Altit Fort, the TMS Building in Karimabad, Abruzzi School Shigar, Serena Shiger Fort Palace recent extension building. These projects blend local architecture and

contemporary functions and are renowned as symbols of responsible tourism.

The new hotel significantly exceeds the allowable floor area ratio, altering natural slopes and leading to a substantial increase in its carbon footprint. Local architectural norms emphasize buildings facing south to maximize sunlight and minimize reliance on mechanical energy. In contrast, the new hotel is likely to necessitate a robust HVAC system, requiring heating during severe winters and cooling in summers, thereby further escalating its carbon footprint. Moreover, the hotel's sewerage system places additional stress on local water resources by discharging waste into them, exacerbating current infrastructure challenges. Despite its design featuring heavy concrete structures coated with mud-coloured paint, the building falls short of environmental friendliness standards.

Furthermore, the large west-facing glass windows raise privacy concerns among the long-standing residents of the nearby small local neighbourhood. The suggested LEED certification appears inadequate in justifying its scale, whereas the LEED certification has various value points, the rating system focuses on building design and construction quality, impact on environment and carbon foot print, which this building clearly seems have more negative impacts, on immediate environment and surroundings.

Importance of Comprehensive Planning and Stakeholder Involvement:

The success of earlier AKDN projects in Hunza can be attributed to their holistic approach, involving comprehensive planning and stakeholder engagement. Drafting master plans, establishing policies for construction and environmental management, and actively involving government bodies, local communities, and NGOs were crucial to these projects' success. These efforts ensured that tourism development was aligned with the region's cultural and environmental values. In contrast, the controversy surrounding the new Serena Hotel highlights the risks of deviating from these principles. For responsible tourism to be effective, it must prioritize local needs and sustainability over rapid development and commercialization. Architectural and design choices should enhance, rather than detract from, the local environment and community.

The Way Forward:

To move towards truly responsible tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, the following steps should be considered: **Enhanced Environmental and Cultural Impact Assessments:** Rigorous assessments should be conducted for all new projects to evaluate their potential impact on the environment and local culture. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Local communities, civil society, and government bodies should be actively involved in the planning and decision-making processes to ensure that

developments meet their needs and priorities.

Sustainable Architecture and Design: New constructions should reflect sustainable practices, blending local architectural styles with modern needs without compromising the natural landscape.

Balanced Development: Tourism development should be balanced with the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, ensuring that economic benefits do not come at the cost of environmental degradation or cultural erosion.

Regular Review and Adaptation: Policies and plans should be regularly reviewed and adapted based on feedback from all stakeholders and evolving environmental and cultural conditions. By adhering to these principles, tourism in GB and Chitral can be developed responsibly, ensuring that it benefits both visitors and local communities while preserving the unique natural and cultural heritage of the region. Kashif Essa is an expert in cultural heritage conservation, specializing in documenting and preserving historical sites. With a background in archaeology and advanced technology, he manages heritage projects globally. Kashif has led significant initiatives like digital documentation in Pakistan and conservation projects in Venice, Italy. He holds a Master's in World Heritage Projects and a bachelor's in architecture.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/06/21/responsible-tourism-unplanned-investments-and-endangered->

[mountain-communities-in-gilgit-baltistan-and-chitral/](#)

PIA flights delay, cancellations hit tourism in GB

Dawn, 23 June 2024

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan has expressed concern over extraordinary delays and frequent cancellations of PIA flights to the region, particularly during peak tourism season. In a letter sent to federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif, the GB CM criticised PIA for its erratic flight schedule to Gilgit and Skardu airports, terming it irresponsible behaviour and demanding that the minister ensure regular flights to both airports. These cancellations have not only caused significant inconvenience to the residents and visitors of the region but also severely impacted the ability of the GB government to meet its commitments at the federal level, he lamented. He said air travel is the primary mode of transportation for officials and representatives of the GB government to attend crucial meetings, conferences, and other engagements in Islamabad and other parts of Pakistan.

In recent months, he added, there has been a noticeable increase in the frequency of cancellations, delays, and unreliable scheduling with PIA flights. This has had a profound impact on travelers, both domestic and international, causing inconvenience, financial loss, and heightened anxiety among passengers, CM Khan said. The chief minister further emphasised that

the lack of prior notice regarding these cancellations aggravates the issue, leaving passengers with minimal time to make alternative travel arrangements. This has resulted in missed opportunities, delayed projects, and a significant erosion of trust in PIA's reliability as the national airline. CM Khan requested the federal government and the aviation minister to address this issue promptly.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1841325/pia-flights-delay-cancellations-hit-tourism-in-gb>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

APHC demands for a shutdown on Modi's visit to 'IOJK'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 16 June 2024

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has demanded an end to all activities in 'Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK) on Friday, 21 June, in opposition to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to the 'occupied region.' The APHC spokesperson, Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, made the request for the public strike, according to Kashmir Media Service. The purpose of the strike is to demonstrate Kashmiris' opposition to the anti-Kashmir policies of India's Hindutva government, which is led by the BJP. A spokesperson for the APHC said that the shutdown is also intended to express opposition to 'India's illegitimate occupation' and to reaffirm the ongoing call for a resolution to the Kashmir issue in order to promote regional peace. He continued, saying that the strike places a focus on

opposition to ongoing atrocities, unlawful detentions, the removal of Kashmiris' political rights, including Article 370 and 35A, the firing of Kashmiri government personnel, and property seizures.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/4-3.jpg>

Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami 'Azad Kashmir' Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq Khan gave an oath to hundreds of newly recruited members from 'AJK' Bagh constituency

UrduPoint, 21 June 2024

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Amir in 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Dr. Mushtaq Khan while talking to the JI Union Council on Eid Milan said that society ought to assist JI in its endeavors to construct a fair and equitable Islamic system. Many civilians from Bagh's surrounding areas stated their intention to join JI and hundreds of them were sworn in by the JI Amir. Mushtaq Khan in his address stated that JI has given the people great service through the Al-Khidmat Foundation, Red Foundation, and by giving more than 14,000 orphans free education through the Red Foundation. He urged people to make JI politically strong and also ask them to use their vote in favor of JI and we guarantee to develop JI into a legislative force. He said that the Al-Khidmat Foundation among other JI supported organisation is at the service of the people, no matter whether it is earthquake or flood.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4058593.html>

Modi's visit to the contentious region amounted to adding salt to Kashmiris' wounds: 'AJK' PM

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 22 June 2024

The prime minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), claimed that Modi's latest visit to the volatile region amounted to 'salting the wounds' of Kashmiris who were often being slain, wounded, and blinded by the Indian soldiers. According to Haq, the visits aimed at portraying an idealized image of Kashmir to the world and that have been rejected by the people of Kashmir. In reference to the sectarian politics of Modi and his party, the prime minister said Modi spoke disparagingly about Muslims and Pakistanis on a regular basis during the recently held elections. He added that Modi did not win a majority in the Lok Sabha elections in spite of his hate campaign, which targeted Muslims. He expressed concern about the rapidly worsening political and human rights conditions in the 'Indian-occupied' territory of Jammu and Kashmir, stating that since the BJP took office, the situation in the volatile area has gotten worse.

In an attempt to further his political objectives, he claimed, the Modi government has a documented history of discrediting Pakistan and Kashmiris and carrying out false flag operations. He stated that despite Modi's lofty boasts of peace and normalcy in Kashmir, Modi has refrained from fielding any candidates in the recent elections out of fear of losing. He said

that despite India's tall claim, over half of the people in Kashmir are compelled to live below the poverty line, the prime minister stated, adding that 'the situation in Occupied Kashmir has become even worse due to Modi's sledgehammer policies.' He said that unemployment of youths is highest and economic conditions of the common Kashmir's is worsening day by day.

Prior to Modi's arrival, he claimed that the whole region of Kashmir has been designated as a Red Zone. A curfew was in place throughout all of 'occupied Kashmir' for security reasons because Modi is so terrified of the response from the Kashmiri people, he added. He remarked that the international community cannot be duped by Modi's kind of travels. He stated that Kashmiris aspire for independence from India and will not give up on their cause till they realize their dream of independence, for which they have made unmatched sacrifices.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE.jpg>

From Social Media

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din

17 June 2024

The Babusar Sco Tower has been switched off, leaving us without essential connectivity. Babusar is one of the top tourist spots in Gilgit-Baltistan, attracting thousands of visitors daily. Without network and signal, SCO is

destroying our tourism. We urgently demand it be switched back on.

https://twitter.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1802419909059572098

SaiB SardaR @Saib_Sardar

23 June 2024

On the request of 'Azad Kashmir' Prime Minister, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi approved the deployment of FC in 'Azad Kashmir.' After this decision, the entire responsibility of any untoward incident in Azadi Base Camp will be on the current government. #Azadkashmir.

https://twitter.com/Saib_Sardar/status/1804811001641979905

Siasi Dugout@siasidugout

24 June 2024

Breaking News: The missing citizen of Azad Kashmir Khwaja Khursheed Ahmed has been found, Khwaja Khursheed is in the custody of the military, the Additional Attorney General informed the Islamabad High Court.

#AzadKashmir #IslamabadHighCourt.

<https://twitter.com/siasidugout/status/1805100651673772433>

Azad Kashmir Affairs.
@AzadKashAffairs

24 June 2024

Protests erupt in #'Occupied Kashmir' over unfair electricity tariffs, while

#'Azad Kashmir' enjoys uninterrupted power at a fraction of the cost! AJK residents pay only 23% of what others in Pakistan pay, showcasing the benefits of freedom and good governance!

Video link:

https://twitter.com/search?q=azad%20Kashmir&src=recent_search_click&f=live

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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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