

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Gilgit Airport
Green Tourism **POK**
Neelum-Jhelum jailbreak
Diamer tax revenue
attack Gilgit-Baltistan



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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Resistance by other means

Dawn, 1 July 2024

On his first visit to Srinagar after he was re-elected prime minister, Narendra Modi declared that elections in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK) would soon be held. He also indicated that its statehood would be restored. Meanwhile, the Election Commission of India announced that updated electoral rolls for J&K would be published on 20 August. To understand the significance of this development and what the BJP government's motives and intentions are, it is necessary to rewind and recall what happened five years ago and thereafter. Ever since India illegally annexed J&K in 2019 by abrogating Article 370 of its constitution, which gave the state special status, it has tried to convey the impression that the situation there is normalising.

5 August 2019, had, in fact, opened a new chapter in the tortured history of the occupied territory. A prolonged lockdown and communication blackout followed, the military siege tightened, public assembly was banned, the press silenced and Kashmiri leaders including pro-Delhi politicians were jailed to prevent a popular upsurge against the move, which robbed the Kashmiri people of virtually all their rights.

The Modi government's claim that, over time, normalcy and stability had returned to Kashmir, was belied by

continuing repression and human right violations, curbs on political activities, crackdown on the media, jailing of journalists, and induction of additional troops into what was already the world's most militarised region. Leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) continued to languish in jail or house detention. Modi's earlier efforts to hold legislative elections by enticing pro-Indian political leaders to participate came to naught. In June 2021, he invited these leaders to a round table conference on Kashmir.

The aim was to consolidate the 2019 action by persuading select politicians to rejoin a revived political process and create a facade of 'normality'. But even handpicked Kashmiri leaders rejected the government's controversial delimitation move and, instead, demanded restoration of J&K's statehood. In May 2022, India's Delimitation Commission carved out new electoral constituencies in J&K that aimed to disempower the Muslim population. The delimitation plan handed Jammu six more seats in the 90-member J&K Assembly, while Kashmir was given only one more. Under this plan, Jammu's representation went to 43 seats, leaving Kashmir with 47. This, despite the fact that, according to the 2011 census, the Kashmir Valley's population was seven million, while Jammu's was 5.3million.

Delhi's move to recast the electoral map was rejected across Kashmir. APHC leaders denounced it while pro-Delhi Kashmiri politicians called the plan

unacceptable as it sought to alter Kashmir's demography and aimed to turn the Muslim majority into a minority. A series of steps administrative, demographic, electoral were taken to disempower and disenfranchise Kashmiris and alter the Muslim identity of Kashmir.

Demographic changes involved new domicile rules, with millions of so-called domicile certificates issued to non-Kashmiri outsiders, who became eligible after abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the constitution. Voting rights were also given to non-residents. Properties were confiscated and new land laws introduced to enable land to be seized from locals and transferred to outsiders. In 2022, BJP authorities seized the J&K Waqf Board and all its properties across the region. This marked a drive to take control of all prominent places of religious significance for Muslims in the occupied territory, including shrines.

Religious leaders and Islamic scholars were arrested and prayers barred in many mosques across Kashmir. These and other measures sought to systematically erode Kashmiri religious identity and culture. The announcement about polls in J&K comes against this grim backdrop of Delhi's use of force and fraud to marginalise Kashmiri Muslims and set the stage for assembly elections, designed to 'endorse' and legitimise its 2019 action. The government is legally obliged to hold polls by Sept 30, 2024, by the Supreme Court verdict of December 2023, which upheld the

abrogation of Article 370 as 'constitutional'. The last assembly elections were held in 2014.

Apart from having to comply with the Supreme Court order, the Modi government has read the higher turnout in the Lok Sabha elections in J&K as a return to normalcy. Turnout in the three Lok Sabha constituencies in Kashmir certainly went up compared to the past, although in Srinagar, two-thirds of voters didn't cast their ballot. Still, the higher turnout was disingenuously cast by BJP leaders as 'vindication' of the abrogation of Article 370.

This was contrary to reality, which was so strongly evidenced by the election of Abdul Rasheed Sheikh from Baramulla. A fierce opponent of abrogation, he won from jail, being incarcerated on terrorism charges, defeating former chief minister Omar Abdullah. His campaign was run on the slogan "Jail ka badla vote se leinge" (Voting will avenge the jailing). The support he drew across the board, especially from youth, reflected the depth of Kashmiri anger with Delhi in what was widely seen in the Valley as a vote against India.

With other avenues to voice their demands closed, the vote may become a vehicle of protest against Delhi. Although it is too early to say how this will play out, for now many Kashmiri residents are quoted in news reports as saying that voting, far from endorsing India or its policies, would be a way to register their dissent and resistance.

The question, then, is if Delhi sees an electoral upsurge of resistance, would it still hold assembly elections? What is beyond doubt is that the people of occupied Kashmir will reject any regime foisted on them and continue, one way or another, to express their aspiration for freedom from Indian occupation.

Maleeha Lodhi: The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1843097>

19 break out of derelict Rawalakot prison in 'AJK'

Dawn, 1 July 2024

In a major security breach in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), 19 inmates, including six on death row, escaped from the Rawalakot prison while one inmate, who was injured during the escape, succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital, said police and official sources. The incident occurred in Rawalakot, the district and divisional headquarters of Poonch, between 2pm and 2:30pm. The thirty-year-old prison located adjacent to the district courts in the heart of the town has been in a dilapidated state for quite some time, whereas work on a new prison site on the outskirts of town has yet to be properly initiated.

In light of the jailbreak, eight prison officials, including the deputy superintendent, were detained for investigation while the 'AJK' government also formed an inquiry committee to investigate the incident within a week. In a late-night press

release, Information Secretary Ansar Yaqoob said 'AJK' PM Chaudhry Anwarul Haq had suspended prison officials, apart from removing special home secretary Badar Munir, who happens to be the ex-officio inspector general of prisons. He was attached with the services department as OSD. The information secretary said the government also requested the high court chief justice to constitute a judicial commission to probe the matter.

Poonch Commissioner Sardar Waheed Khan and SP Riaz Mughal shared preliminary information from the jail administration with journalists. They said a prisoner had asked a sentry to move his "lassi" (a yoghurt-based drink) outside his barrack. When the sentry obliged, the prisoner overpowered him, snatched his keys, and opened other barracks from where at least 19 prisoners made their way to the main gate. At that point, a pistol was thrown inside through the roof, which was used to break the lock from the inside. One prisoner was injured during the gunfire, but the others managed to escape, they said.

Among the escaped prisoners were six death row inmates. The escape was allegedly led by Ghazi Shahzad from 'AJK's Sudhnoti district, who had been arrested by the Counter-Terrorism Department along with three colleagues from the town of Hajira last year. Booked under Section 6 of the Anti-Terrorism Act and Section 302 of the Azad Penal Code (APC), he had not been convicted as of yet. Interestingly,

Shahzad's three associates did not escape, neither did the man who had killed a former JuD militant in a Rawalakot mosque last September.

It may be noted here that on 15 June, the 'AJK' high court approved the transfer of Shahzad's case from the Poonch anti-terrorism court (ATC) to Mirpur ATC, because the Poonch jail was extremely unsafe for detaining hardened criminals. Later, police across the division were placed on high alert, and all entry and exit points of Poonch were sealed to recapture the prisoners. The 'AJK' government's committee will probe the incident and submit its report within a week. According to a home department notification, the committee is headed by Chaudhry Muhammad Raqeeb, AJK Inland Revenue secretary, with Commissioner Sardar Waheed Khan and DIG Poonch Range Shehryar Sikander as members.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1843075/19-break-out-of-derelect-rawalakot-prison-in-ajk>

Modi's Srinagar Visit: A Rhetorical Misstep

Mehr un Nisa

Pakistan Observer, 1 July 2024

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Srinagar, ostensibly aimed at heralding a new era of development and stability in Jammu and Kashmir, has once again spotlighted the glaring inconsistencies in his government's approach to the region. Modi's speeches during the visit, imbued with rhetoric, failed to address the core issues faced by the Kashmiri people.

Rather than fostering an environment conducive to peace and reconciliation, his statements aggravated existing tensions and further made locals feel like aliens. Modi's visit was marked by the inauguration and foundation stone-laying of multiple developmental projects worth more than Rs 3,000 crores.

Despite significant developmental initiatives, Modi's persistent focus has overshadowed any potential for meaningful engagement with the Kashmiri people. Modi's approach in Srinagar represents a strategic miscalculation in addressing the larger issue of Kashmir. The multifaceted nature of the Kashmir issue encompasses historical grievances, ethnic identities, political aspirations, and socio-economic disparities. Modi's strategy lacks the necessary depth and nuance required for a comprehensive conflict resolution approach, as it reduces the problem to a mere security concern framed around countering terrorism. In international relations theory, this can be likened to the pitfalls of reductionism, where complex issues are oversimplified, often leading to ineffective or counterproductive policies.

A more holistic approach would require addressing the root causes of discontent, engaging with local stakeholders, and integrating diverse perspectives into the peace-building process. The securitization of the Kashmir issue, where the Indian state frames the region's challenges primarily through the lens of national

security, has been a recurring theme in Modi's rhetoric. Modi's continuous emphasis on Pakistan's role in fomenting terrorism acts as a strategic diversion from the legitimate political and socio-economic grievances of the Kashmiri people.

This tactic not only reinforces a binary us-versus-them mentality but also legitimizes heavy-handed security measures that further alienate the local population. For example, the emphasis on external threats has historically been used by states to deflect from internal problems, such as in the Cold War era, where the US focused on the Soviet threat to divert attention from domestic civil rights issues. Similarly, Modi's rhetoric shifts the focus from pressing issues such as human rights abuses, political disenfranchisement, and economic marginalization in Kashmir. The narrative construction neglects the diverse identities and aspirations within Kashmir, perpetuating a sense of disenfranchisement among its people.

Modi's approach exacerbates feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement by failing to recognize and address the unique cultural, ethnic, and political identities within Kashmir. For instance, the abrogation of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was seen by many Kashmiris as an assault on their unique identity and autonomy. This move ignored the region's historical and cultural complexities, leading to widespread resentment and unrest.

The abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent rhetoric around it can be viewed as an imposition of a monolithic national identity over the pluralistic and contested identities within Kashmir. Modi's declaration that "the Constitution of India has finally been adopted by Jammu and Kashmir in the true sense" following the abrogation is a stark reminder of the central government's unilateral actions that many Kashmiris perceive as a betrayal. This move, while celebrated by some, has been a source of profound discontent and has intensified the sense of alienation among the Kashmiri population.

Modi's assertion that "the Kashmir Valley is gradually emerging as a major hub of start-ups, skill development, and sports" may be optimistic, but it overlooks the pervasive sense of mistrust and disillusionment towards New Delhi. This highlights a gap between developmentalist rhetoric and the lived realities of the locals. In international relations, this can be seen as a form of "symbolic politics", where political leaders use symbols and narratives to create a perception of progress while underlying issues remain unaddressed.

Development initiatives, without accompanying political engagement, risk being perceived as mere instruments of control rather than genuine efforts to improve the lives of the locals. The realist critique highlights the limitations of relying solely on economic incentives to pacify

a region with deep-seated political grievances. Sustainable peace and stability in Kashmir require addressing the power asymmetries and ensuring that the voices of the Kashmiri people are heard and respected.

Diplomatic implications

Modi's anti-Pakistan rhetoric also has significant diplomatic implications. India risks alienating potential international allies who advocate for a more balanced and sophisticated approach to the Kashmir issue by continuously framing Pakistan as the primary antagonist. Over-reliance on a hardline stance against Pakistan can lead to diplomatic isolation and weaken India's position in the international community. This rhetoric undermines India's position on the international stage. From a liberal internationalist perspective, a country's standing is enhanced by its adherence to international norms and its ability to engage in constructive diplomacy.

India risks being perceived as an intransigent actor unwilling to engage in dialogue or adhere to international calls for peaceful conflict resolution by adopting a confrontational stance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Srinagar visit, rather than paving the way for genuine peace and reconciliation, has only served to add salt to the wounds of a community that continues to feel marginalized and unheard. It is evident that without addressing the legitimate grievances of the Kashmiri people and shifting focus from externalizing blame to internal

resolution, sustainable peace in the region will remain elusive.

<https://pakobserver.net/modis-srinagar-visit-a-rhetorical-misstep/>

Demonstration of Pakistani Kashmir community in Greece's capital Athens

Daily Parliament Times, 1 July 2024

Pakistani Kashmiri community held a strong demonstration against the ongoing Indian state terrorism in Kashmir in front of Greek parliament. A large number of Pakistani and Kashmiri communities living in Athens participated in the demonstration. Hurriyat leader Altaf Hussain Wani and Sardar Amjad Yousaf spoke on this occasion. The speakers in the demonstration strongly condemned the Indian extremist government's policies and state terrorism and urged the international community to condemn India's extremist behavior and the ongoing state terror by Indian forces in 'Occupied Kashmir.' Protestors raised high pitch slogans against Indian occupation and pledged to continue struggle till the cherished goal of self-determination is achieved.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/07/01/demonstration-of-pakistani-kashmir-community-in-greeces-capital-athens-hurriyat-leader-altaf-hussain-wani-and-sardar-amjad-yousaf-khan-participated-in-the-event/>

Kashmir gains prominence in UK election campaign

Pakistan Today, 4 July 2024

The Kashmir issue has become a focal point in the UK elections, with

candidates across various parties advocating for the right to self-determination for Kashmiris, it was reported. Marco Longhi, seeking re-election as a Tory candidate in Dudley, has publicly supported Kashmiri independence from India, reflecting the significant Pakistani and Kashmiri community in his constituency. A member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Kashmir, Longhi committed to continuing his advocacy in Parliament. I will stand up for Kashmiris, he affirmed, earning praise from Fahim Kayani, leader of Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK. Kayani lauded Longhi's participation in parliamentary events that highlighted human rights violations in Kashmir.

However, Longhi's stance has attracted criticism from Hindutva supporters, which Kayani denounced as unfounded. We thank him for calling out the atrocities by the Indian government in Kashmir, Kayani stated, defending Longhi against accusations of divisiveness. In contrast, Sonia Kumar, the Labour candidate in Dudley, faced criticism from local Kashmiri groups for not signing the Kashmir declaration, which supports the UN resolution on self-determination and the release of political prisoners. Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK has expressed gratitude towards Longhi and urged voters to support candidates who advocate for Kashmir, emphasizing the importance of cross-party support for the cause.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/07/04/kashmir-gains-prominence-in-uk-election-campaign/>

Terrorist involved in Chilas bus attack killed in GB

Dawn, 5 July 2024

Security forces claimed to have killed an alleged terrorist in an operation during which two civilians and four Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Scout personnel were injured in Deral Valley of Diamer district. GB Interior Minister Shams Lone said that security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation to arrest three wanted terrorists who were allegedly involved in the attack on a passenger in which nine people were killed in Diamer last year. According to Faizullah Faraq, the GB government spokesperson, the region's police, GB Scouts, and Pakistan Army soldiers jointly conducted the operation at a house in Deral Valley. As forces closed in on the suspected location, an exchange of fire with the alleged terrorists ensued, Mr Lone added.

In the gun battle, a local terrorist commander, Shah Faisal, who was also the alleged mastermind of the Diamer attack, was killed. His accomplice, Zahidullah, was injured, along with two civilians, a young girl and an elderly man, and four GB Scouts members. Mr Lone added that a third terrorist was still at large, and the forces were combing the area for his arrest. The injured have been shifted to a government hospital in Deral, Diamer, and they are said to be out of danger. Following the attack, the GB health department imposed an emergency in all health facilities across the district. A

notification issued by the health department directed all medical superintendents of the Chilas Regional Headquarters Hospital, Tangi Tehsil Head-quarters Hospital, as well as the Diamer District Health Officer, to remain at their stations and not leave without seeking permission.

Situation normal in GB

The hours-long shootout led to a very tense situation in the district, Mr Lone noted and added that the situation was now normal across the region and all roads, including the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and Babusar Top road, are open for traffic. Earlier, Mr Faraq, the GB government spokesperson, had told Dawn that KKH and Babusar Road had been closed as 'precautionary measures.' Following the operation, security has also been intensified across the region as part of Muharram, he added. Mr Faraq said that over half a dozen extremists were nominated in last year's bus attack after three facilitators arrested by police identified them. The GB government and security agencies have repeatedly approached Diamer elders and other stakeholders for their handover to security forces, but no progress was made. He clarified that Thursday's operation was against the suspected terrorists, not the locals of Diamer, whom he called 'peaceful and patriot.' He said that all 12 suspects involved should be handed over to the police.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1843886/terrorist-involved-in-chilas-bus-attack-killed-in-gb>

Economic Developments

Cherry on the top: Gilgit Baltistan's fruit industry shines

Associated Press of Pakistan, 30 June 2024

Gilgit Baltistan (GB), a region of breathtaking beauty and cherry orchards, has emerged as the producer of the high-quality fruit that has now paved way to international markets. The cherries of GB are renowned for their sweet and tangy taste, juicy texture, and high nutritional value. The famous cherry-producing areas of Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Phundar, and Nomal are known for their ideal climate and fertile land. These regions produce high-quality cherries and have put GB on the map as a premier fruit-producing region. In a significant development, GB has sent its first shipment of fresh cherries to China, marking an important moment in its agricultural exports. The milestone, achieved this summer, is in implementation of the Plant Health agreement made between the two countries in 2022.

China's cherry market is worth \$3 billion and needs 350,000 tons of cherries each year, providing a great opportunity for Pakistani growers. An owner of the largest cherry farm in Gilgit Rahimabad, which is approved by the Chinese Customs, emphasizes the benefits of the partnership between Pakistan and China in agricultural exports. The approval of GB cherry orchards by Chinese customs is a testament to the region's high standards, said Arman Shah, CEO of

Hashwani Group, and owner of the largest cherry farm in Gilgit Rahim Abad approved by Chinese Customs. His cold storage facility allows exports even after the season ends, ensuring a steady supply. The cherries from GB, he said, are already sold in the Middle East and that this year's export prices ranged between Rs 700-1,000 per kg.

Over 100 cherry orchards and a cold storage and packing center in Gilgit's Rahimabad have been registered with China's General Administration of Customs, meeting high-quality and safety standards. This certification means growers from GB can get better prices for their cherries. Currently, GB produces about 5,000 tons of cherries each season, but with access to the Chinese market, production is expected to increase. Experts and cherry growers are optimistic about the future of cherry exports. Dr. Fatima, a horticulture expert from GB, highlights the importance of this development, stating that it would boost the economy and promote the region's rich agricultural heritage.

Muhammad Hassain, a local cherry farmer from Gilgit, shares his excitement about the new market opportunities, confident that their cherries would be a hit in China and beyond. However, he stresses educating local farmers through modern techniques of cherry production in a bid to increase the fruit export. Pakistan can boost its cherry exports and earn valuable foreign exchange if bilateral agreements are signed with other countries, similar to

the one inked between China and Pakistan on cherry production and trade, he said. Raja Mir Wazir Mir, a visionary farmer, made a bold move in 2020 by replacing potato crops with over 500 cherry plants. His gamble paid off, as he now earns a staggering Rs 0.5 million annually, a significant increase from his previous income.

Inspired by his success, numerous farmers in GB have adopted this innovative approach, reaping handsome rewards and transforming their livelihoods. By embracing cherry cultivation, these farmers have not only boosted their earnings but also contributed to the region's economic growth and development. Amidst the success of cherry cultivation in GB, a concern has emerged among local residents. The price of cherries in local markets has surged, with a kilogram now costing Rs 600, up from Rs 300 just a year ago. For Hamid, a local vendor, this significant price hike has made it challenging to source high-quality cherries for the local market. It's difficult for me to afford the best quality cherries at this inflated price, he pointed out, highlighting the struggle to balance business needs with the pressures of inflation.

The recently-held third National Cherry Festival at Rakaposhi View Point in Nagar also celebrated the region's cherry production and exports. The festival featured stalls selling various cherry varieties and local products, attracting hundreds of tourists and locals. This event generated significant economic benefits

for farmers and local businesses. During the two-day festival, Deputy Commissioner Nagar Aatur Rehman highlighted that Nagar produced approximately 2,000 tons of cherries this year, with most being sold in other parts of the country at a marginal rate.

As the cherry blossoms bloom, signaling a season of sweetness, GB is on the brink of an agricultural transformation. Entering the Chinese market promises economic benefits for local farmers and strengthens international trade relationships. With its unique taste, high nutritional value, and potential for exports, GB's cherry industry is poised to revolutionize the region's economy and share its treasured cherries with the world.

<https://www.app.com.pk/features/cherry-on-the-top-gilgit-baltistans-fruit-industry-shines/>

Hundreds of climbers reaching GB to climb K2, other peaks

Dawn, 2 July 2024

As climbing season kicks off, hundreds of local and foreign climbers are making their way to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to climb eight-thousander peaks, including K2. According to GB Tourism Department, over 1,700 permits have been issued to foreign tourists to climb peaks in the region, while 175 permits have been issued to scale K2 (8,611 metres). Many climbers have established their base camps at K2, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum-I and Gasherbrum-II peaks. Sajid Ali Sadpara, the son of world-famous high altitude climber,

Mohammad Ali Sadpara, has also arrived at K2 base to attempt to climb K2 without oxygen. He is also scheduled to climb Broad Peak (8,051 metres) this year. Talking to Dawn, Mr Sadpara said that several expedition groups, including female expedition teams, have arrived at K2 base camp.

Some climbers have established their base camps, some have started trekking from Skardu and Shigar districts. A base camp staff told Dawn that supplies of various expedition teams are being delivered to them at base camps through local porters. Expedition teams will start summit push after July 20. Two expedition teams consisting entirely of women are reported to be on way to Skardu in an attempt to scale K2, the world's second highest peak at 8,611 metres. One of the teams is a joint Pakistan-Italy expedition group while the other comprises six Pakistani women. A Pakistani female climber and a Saudi Arabia's female climber will also attempt to scale K2. Last year, the GB government collected Rs450 million in permit fees from mountaineers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1843306/hundreds-of-climbers-reaching-gb-to-climb-k2-other-peaks>

Inland Revenue Dept Achieves Rs. 44 billion annual tax revenue target with surplus Rs. 16 billion amount in 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 2 July 2024

The State Inland Revenue Department (IRD) in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) has surpassed its annual tax revenue collection target of Rs 44

billion by whopping Rs. 16 billion set for outgoing 2023-24 fiscal year, official sources said. The department registered tax collection of Rs 59.70 billion rupees by the close of the fiscal year 2023-24, disclosed 'AJK' IRD (South Zone) Commissioner Ishtiaq Ahmed. It was expected that, when the final accounts were settled in a couple of weeks, the actual tax collection will go beyond Rs 60 billion. The department, he underlined, has effected surplus collection of 36% against the assigned tax target for the fiscal year and 44% against the tax collection of the preceding fiscal year i.e, 2022-23.

Ishtiaq attributed the historical rise in tax collection to the policy of transparency and merit followed by Ch Anwar-ul-Haq, the Prime Minister of 'AJK' and Ch Muhammad Raqeeb, Chairman Central Board of Revenue. He said that the 'AJK' Prime Minister, who was also the Minister incharge of the department, and Ch Muhammad Raqeeb provided an enabling environment for the staff of the department where they could perform their duties with honesty, dedication and without any intervention from any corner. The IRD Commissioner said that the department had reportedly barely achieved its budgetary target of Rs. 41.60 billion for the FY 2022-23. Ishtiaq Ahmed said that the 'AJK' IRD, which has been allegedly mired in the scandals of corruption, indiscipline and favouritism, in the past, was given a robust shake-up by the Prime Minister Ch. Anwarul Haq as he removed the

officers from the key positions in the department for their alleged involvement in massive corruption malpractices and irregularities and replaced them with those of proven integrity in the department.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/07/02/inland-revenue-deptt-achieves-rs-44-billion-annual-tax-revenue-target-with-surplus-rs-16-billion-amount-in-ajk/>

Design flaws in Neelum-Jhelum project

Business Recorder, 4 July 2024

In yet more bad news for Pakistan's blighted power sector, serious design flaws have been identified in the 969MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHPP), which has been off-grid since the first week of May, causing a financial impact to the tune of Rs55 billion per annum. This is just the latest setback the project has faced, as it has been in the news for all the wrong reasons ever since its inception. Its shutdown was followed by the prime minister ordering an inquiry into the possible causes, with the investigation panel being manned by senior bureaucrats. It should be noted that a month before the shutdown, a major operational issue had been discovered in the NJHPP that had resulted in considerable pressure fluctuations in the project's headrace tunnel (HRT), with the press reporting the dewatering of a 17km section of the tunnel, indicating some sort of a crack in the HRT, but with little else concrete information emerging at the time, the need for a detailed inquiry was evident.

Now, with reports of the serious design flaws emerging, it is imperative that pressure is exerted upon the builders of the project to rectify the faults as soon as possible, as the country can ill-afford a project of such magnitude remaining off-grid for this long. The story of the NJHPP is one marked by a series of never-ending problems, from multiple missed deadlines with respect to its completion to significant cost overruns and an earlier 13-month-long shutdown that lasted from July 2022 to August-September 2023 due to major cracks being discovered in its 3.5km tailrace tunnel (TRT). It should be noted that the 2022 shutdown had occurred just four years after the project had been completed at a massive cost of Rs508 billion.

With another shutdown occurring less than a year after the NJHPP was made operational, there was always a high possibility of there being significant design and engineering failings in its construction. While its builders need to be questioned over their performance and made to remedy the deficiencies that have emerged on an urgent basis, the debacle also raises questions over the kind of governmental oversight there was over the project. Why did the power ministry, Wapda and other governmental bodies fail to identify these design flaws while the NJHPP was still in its construction phase?

It should also be noted that the inquiry committee tasked by the PM with investigating the causes of this latest shutdown has also been charged with

ascertaining the reasons for the delay in submission of the findings of the experts who had been hired to examine why the earlier 2022 shutdown had occurred. Now, press reports have revealed in recent days that these experts, while investigating the collapse of the TRT in 2022, had pointed towards several geographical faults, as well as flawed construction procedures, and significantly, had also raised red flags about the HRT and had recommended certain precautionary measures to ensure its safety and stability. It has further emerged that these recommendations weren't followed by Wapda and the Neelum-Jhelum Company, and it is imperative that answers are sought regarding why the experts' suggestions were ignored and responsibility apportioned for the fiasco.

On current evidence, it is difficult to disregard the conclusion that the entire saga of the NJHPP speaks of utter incompetence on the part of various stakeholders, including the builders of the project, Wapda, the power ministry and the Neelum-Jhelum Company. With the public expected to weather hours-long load-shedding on a daily basis in the summer months as well as foot exorbitant bills, the least the government could do was to ensure the smooth running of vital power projects. It clearly hasn't been able to do so and it is the people of Pakistan that have to pay the price.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40311107/design-flaws-in-neelum-jhelum-project>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

'AJK' President: An assertive strategy is required to seek European countries help in resolving the Kashmir dispute

Nawaiwaqt, 2 July 2024

Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, the president of 'Azad Kashmir', has stated that an aggressive strategy to seek the United Kingdom (UK) and European nations' assistance for an early settlement of the Kashmir conflict is imperative. Speaking with Barrister Karamat Hussain, and Chaudhry Majeed Ismail, the convener of the Kashmir Peace Forum International UK, he stated that by supporting candidates of Pakistani and Kashmiri descent who share our views on the Kashmir issue, the diaspora community living in the UK and other European nations can significantly contribute to raising the voice of Kashmir in the British Parliament. We can also make our voice heard more effectively by fortifying the All-Parties Kashmir Committee in the Parliament.

According to him, it is the primary duty of Kashmiris living abroad is to intensify their advocacy for the cause of Kashmir and speak out against the cruelty and injustices Kashmiris endure at the hands of 'Indian occupation' troops. The time has come for the expatriate Kashmiri community to rise beyond partisan politics and take a proactive role in promoting worldwide support for resolving the Kashmir

dispute in accordance with UNSC resolutions, he added.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2024-07-02/page-1>

It is imperative that the reality of the Kashmir Azadi movement be presented in an appropriate and effective framework: 'AJK' Secretary of School education

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2 July 2024

Razak Ahmad Nadeem, the secretary of schools education in 'Azad Kashmir' said that all teachers must be acquainted on the political, legal, constitutional, and historical facets of the Kashmir dispute. He emphasized that teachers may be crucial in informing the next generation about the facts surrounding the Kashmir dispute and effectively drawing attention to it. He stated that it is imperative that the Kashmiri liberation movement be brought to light in its actual context and that it is our duty to fortify the bonds between us. He said that we have the ability to reach a global audience by using social media and that it is not only the Liberation Cell's task but also our collective obligation to draw attention to the Kashmir issue.

He voiced these opinions as a distinguished guest at the Teachers' Training Workshop opening ceremony, which was sponsored by the Kashmir Policy Research Institute. The workshop on the subject of the Kashmir

issue and its facets was attended by subject matter experts and head teachers of different government schools. Dr. Raja Mohammad Sajjad Khan, the director of the Kashmir Policy Research Institute, and Syed Usman Bukhari, the assistant director, both spoke at the two-day workshop's inauguration ceremony. Also present on this occasion were District Education Officer Niswan Syeda Darshahwar Naqvi, Director of Education Extension Ms. Fozia Sadiq, Director General Curriculum Development and Research Raja Muhammad Naseer Khan, and others.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Resize-of-BACK-PAGE.jpg>

Victims of Gilgit Airport are willing to delay their sit-in

Dailyk2, 4 July 2024

Law Minister Ghulam Muhammad said that the issue of land rates concerning Gilgit Airport will be taken to the federal government after the Muharram ceremony. He said that the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government will continue its investigation into the current rates of the civilian lands even during the days of Muharram. A summary of the findings will be forwarded to the federal government, and in the meanwhile, every attempt will be made to resolve the issue with the affected airport. The government is taking the problems pertaining to airport land very seriously for the first

time, he stressed. The sit-in was called off only after the local administration ensured the protestors that a meeting between the protestors and the Secretary of Kashmir Affairs will be held. The protestors said that the sit-in will be suspended for ten days during Muharram if they were satisfied with the meeting with Kashmir Affairs. Law Minister Ghulam Muhammad gave the protestors reassurance, saying that since no provincial government had ever completed the task related to airport, this time we wanted to handle it ourselves.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/23427>

The government of Modi is planning to deny Kashmiris their identity and their homeland: Sardar Atiq Ahmed

UrduPoint, 4 July 2024

Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan, the president of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) and a former Prime Minister, stated that the Modi government is planning to rob Kashmiris of their identity and homeland as they are determined to make the region's Muslim majority a minority. He claimed that the BJP and RSS seek to restore the pre-Islamic Hindu civilization in Jammu and Kashmir, while Hindutva leaders have publicly declared their intention to obliterate the distinctive identity of 'occupied Kashmir.' The BJP-RSS is methodically laying the groundwork for non-local habitation in the 'occupied' territories because it wants

to realize its long-standing goal of fully integrating Jammu and Kashmir into India.

Speaking to the representatives of the Muslim Conference, he stated that the relocation of non-Kashmiris into 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK) is another goal of the Article 370 abrogation. However, Kashmiris will never allow the BJP and RSS to take away their identity, and they would sooner die than be forced into slavery by Hindu extremists, despite the Modi government's desire to render them jobless and landless in their own country.

Locals view the Modi government's devious plan to settle non-Kashmiris in the occupied land as a direct assault on their culture and way of life, which has caused considerable indignation. What will happen to the Kashmiri people in the near future is demonstrated by the anti-Muslim mindset of the Modi government and the series of colonial actions implemented in Jammu and Kashmir. He claimed that the dream of peace and prosperity in the region will not be fulfilled unless the serious problem of Jammu and Kashmir is resolved according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4072959.html>

[From Social Media](#)

Gilgit Baltistan Tourism.
@GBTourism_

7 July 2024

Former Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General (R) Hasan Azhar Hayat has been appointed as the head of Green Tourism Pakistan. There are two important questions here, one is that the people are protesting all over Gilgit-Baltistan that the objectives of this company are not clear. Second, instead of a retired army, it would be better to make a Pakistani who has done PHD in Tourism from outside the country as the head so that he can boost tourism in the northern regions of Pakistan including Gilgit-Baltistan.

https://twitter.com/GBTourism_/status/1809892343274746153

Wajahat Kazmi @KazmiWajahat

8 July 2024

Pakistan Army and civil armed forces deployed in Islamabad, 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', and Gilgit Baltistan during Muharram.

<https://twitter.com/KazmiWajahat/status/1810247413019639949>

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Disclaimer

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