

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 5 | Issue 11

10 March - 16 March 2025

POK
Dasu dams
rehabilitation
grid connectivity
medical facilities
Expansion of Tax-net
Gilgit-Baltistan
Diamer protest
Locals stranded
CPEC



No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

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Political Developments

Diamer protest continues despite govt cajoling

Dawn, 10 March 2025

The protest organised by the people affected by the Diamer-Bhasha dam continued on Sunday despite a meeting between a federal committee — formed by the prime minister — and the protesters in Chilas to break the deadlock.

The 20-day-long protest in Chilas is seeking the implementation of a 31-point charter of demands, which pertain to their rehabilitation, and the allotment of agricultural land, among other things.

In his meeting with the protesters, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam said that the government has included the rehabilitation of the affected people of Bhasha and Dasu dams, and the development of the area in its top priorities. He assured that their demands concerning a financial package for the affected households, a resettlement programme, health, education, and infrastructure would be resolved on a priority basis. He also promised a ‘Danish School’ for the area.

The minister directed Wapda officials to ensure payment of land compensation along with the construction of 23 schools. Protesters tell federal committee to implement doable demands at once, seek assurances for the rest. Earlier, the dam-affected people presented their problems to the special committee. The

committee issued instructions to the technical committee to prepare recommendations and send them to the federal government.

In the meeting, Hazratullah, a representative of the protesters, presented their charter of demands and said the protesters were not asking to implement all of their demands at once, but the government could express its seriousness by enforcing basic demands, such as a financial package for the households that had not received any.

“If you are serious about solving the demands, you can solve some demands, for example, the financial package for the missing households, six kanal agricultural land each for the affected people, CBM schemes, including health, education, development, and resettlement of affectees,” he added.

He suggested that the committee could promptly announce the measures it can in the meeting and for the remainder, it could provide a written assurance that these would be fulfilled as well.

“...[S]o that we can tell people that your demands have been solved and will call off” the sit-in, Hazratullah said, adding that the people who were protesting had “sacrificed everything for the dam” and justice should be ensured. Diamer people are peaceful, but that does not mean everything should be imposed on them, he warned. Sources said after the meeting, the organisers did not decide to call off the protest.

However, Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, GB ministers Rehmat Khaliq and Shah Baig continued negotiations with the protesters to convince them to end the protest. However, there was no further word until going to press.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1896954/diameer-protest-continues-despite-govt-cajoling>

India leaves no opportunity to destabilize Pakistan: PM 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 10 March 2025

Prime Minister 'Azad Kashmir' Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that India has consistently rejected the two-nation theory and has, in fact, sought to undermine Pakistan. In his statement issued here today, the 'AJK' premier said that India leaves no opportunity to destabilize Pakistan.

The Prime Minister said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal's vision led to creation of a separate homeland for Muslims, which he said, became the center of hope for Muslim Ummah.

He said that nuclear Pakistan stands as a strong deterrent against India's expansionist ambitions in the region. Terming India as a wolf in sheep's clothing, the PM said that India has virtually become a terror-sponsoring state. "Kulbhushan Jadhav's arrest and his involvement in terrorist activities within Pakistan stands as irrefutable evidence in this regard", the statement said. He said that the killing of a Sikh activist in Canada by Indian secret agents has also exposed India's hand in transnational terrorism.

Referring to India's 'illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir', the Prime Minister said that India has imposed a war against Kashmiris. India has denied the fundamental freedoms and rights of the people of Kashmir, he stated, further noting that it was India that initially brought the Kashmir issue to the United Nations but subsequently reneged on its commitments. He expressed the hope that the region of 'occupied Kashmir' would be liberated from Indian control, leading to its integration with Pakistan.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/03/10/pm-ajk-india-has-consistently-rejected-the-two-nation-theory-and-has-in-fact-sought-to-undermine-pakistan/>

Planning minister irked by officials' lethargy on CPEC projects

Dawn, 12 March 2024

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has expressed annoyance over the slow progress on mega projects that are part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Mr Iqbal chaired a meeting to prepare for the Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) meeting — the top decision-making body of CPEC — in July.

The planning minister expressed concern over poor progress on three crucial projects — grid connectivity to Gwadar, water desalination plan and socio-economic development initiatives — which are considered central to the port city.

The minister also noted that officials have done little to move forward on the

critical Karachi-Peshawar Railway Mainline (ML-1) project worth \$10bn. The minister directed the diplomatic mission in Beijing and the Economic Affairs Division to engage with Chinese authorities to finalise a date for the visit of technical and financial experts to assess the project. He stressed the need for early coordination to facilitate the visit, an official statement said while quoting the minister, who is also Pakistan's focal person on CPEC. The planning minister had also issued similar instructions in October and December 2024 as progress on ML-1 remained stalled since PML-N's previous government from 2013 to 18.

In the first week of October 2024, the planning minister also pushed for the finalisation of the financing agreement before the visit of the Chinese prime minister in the mid of that month. On October 2, while presiding over a meeting on CPEC, Mr Iqbal had urged the ministries of railways and finance to conclude financing terms with China within the next few days, according to a statement released after the meeting.

In the following meeting on December 6, the planning minister requested China to expedite the visit of its technical and finance teams to Pakistan to finalise the agreement and implementation of the first phase of the ML-1 project and build two model special economic zones in Karachi and Islamabad. Mr Iqbal told the meeting that he had asked the Chinese ambassador to simultaneously

dispatch teams of technical and financial experts to expedite consultations.

He recalled that the Chinese premier, in his October visit to Pakistan, had agreed to send a technical team of railway experts.

A team of financial experts, along with the technical team, would be helpful in finalising financing arrangements for \$1.1bn for the first phase of ML-1 between Karachi and Hyderabad. It was also agreed that a team of financial experts would accompany the technical team to ensure an efficient resolution of all matters related to the project," said an official statement after the December 6 meeting.

It added that representatives of the economic affairs division and ministries of railways and finance were directed to complete their homework so that both technical and financial aspects could be finalised simultaneously. The ambassador had reportedly assured the minister that the technical team would soon visit Pakistan. The minister expressed dissatisfaction over the delay in connecting Gwadar to the national grid for electricity supply.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1897376/planning-minister-irked-by-officials-lethargy-on-cpec-projects>

Locals stranded in GB as snowfall blocks roads

Dawn, 10 March 2025

Thousands of people remained stranded in upper areas of Astore

district on Sunday due to blocked main and linking roads due to record snowfall which triggered avalanches a week ago, cutting off several upper areas from other parts of the country.

Dasakram, Chilam, Manimarg, Darle, Kala Pani, Mir Malik, Nanga Parbat Rupal Valley, Parsheng and many other areas of GB remained cut-off, causing serious problems for the people living in those areas like shortage of medicines, food items and no electricity and mobile phone network.

Avalanches in the affected areas badly damaged roads and knocked out power lines.

People living in disconnected areas have been forced to bring their patients to hospitals on shoulders or by dragging them on mattresses for miles to hospitals as roads are blocked by layers of snow. Local people rescued a patient from Chilum area in Astore and brought him to Astore city hospital by keeping him on the mattress and dragged the mattress on snow for miles.

Local resident Aqil Hussain Baqiri told Dawn that it is painful to see patients being shifted to and from hospitals and from one area to another on mattresses or on people's shoulders as stretchers and wheelchairs cannot be used due to heavy snow on roads. Many patients are still awaiting treatment and medicines in areas cut-off by the massive snowfall and blocked roads.

Local people said that if immediate rescue measures are not taken, the situation may become more serious. They said the Gilgit-Baltistan government should take steps to restore roads and provide medical facilities, food items and other essential goods to the people trapped in the snow-affected areas on emergency basis.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1896951/locals-stranded-in-gb-as-snowfall-blocks-roads>

Journalists should highlight the good works of the govt, irresponsible behavior causes chaos in society: Ministers

Daily Parliament Times, 11 March 2025

Colonel Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor, most Senior Minister of the 'Independent Government of Jammu and Kashmir', Information Minister 'Azad Kashmir' Pir Mohammad Mazhar Saeed Shah, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Faisal Mumtaz Rathore have said that they welcome positive criticism. Journalists should also highlight the good works of the government, irresponsible behavior causes chaos in the society, media should broadcast the news after investigating the matter, understanding the difference in judicial decisions, government orders and legislation. Without research news is against the basic principles of journalism, the government believes in negotiations, not always allowing hatred and spreading chaos in the state. People should not listen to rumours on

social media and journalists should refrain from broadcasting news without research.

They expressed these views while addressing a press conference at the PID Complex. Information Minister Maulana Pir Mohammad Mazhar Saeed Shah said that the condition of hospitals have improved with special interest in the health sector. The government has ensured the supply of commodities to the public in accordance with standard and hygiene principles from the mobile food testing lab. Opposition to the Public Action Committee's mobile food testing lab is a testament to the public enmity.

The state will not obstruct the work of any good. Criticism of the salaries of the Assembly members is premature and unlawful. Only the Finance Committee has just come up. Senior Minister Colonel (R) Waqar Ahmad Nur said that the unfortunate incident in Poonch resulted in the martyrdom of ASI, which is very sorry. The government will not be discounted with the criminals involved. One has arrested the accused while the police are working to arrest the other. We should not back down such crimes, but should openly condemn.

Addressing a press conference, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that the government had held successful talks with the Public Action Committee and the local representatives and believes in

resolving the problems through negotiations in the future.

The government has the power to legislate. Responding to a question, Finance Minister Abdul Majid Khan said that a proposal to increase the salaries of the Assembly members on the style of Punjab and the federal has come before the Finance Committee which is being considered. The Finance Committee is headed by the Speaker Assembly, which also represents the opposition and the law minister is also a member. The minimum salary of the labourer has been fixed at Rs 37,000. Notification has also been issued in this regard. The relevant forum can be processed on a salary of less than 37 thousand.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/03/11/journalists-should-highlight-the-good-works-of-the-govt-irresponsible-behavior-causes-chaos-in-society-ministers/>

Former 'AJK' PM Tanveer Ilyas set to join PPP after leaving IPP

The Nation, 12 March 2025

Former Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, has decided to join the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) after parting ways with the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), sources confirmed on Wednesday. He is expected to formally announce his decision following a meeting with the PPP leadership.

However, his potential inclusion in the party has raised concerns among some

PPP leaders in 'AJK', who have urged the leadership not to grant him a key position. Speculations are also rife that Ilyas may be considered as the party's candidate for the post of 'AJK' President in the future.

His political move comes after the Supreme Court of 'AJK' overturned his disqualification, reinstating his eligibility to contest elections. The court accepted his appeal against the 'AJK' High Court's ruling, which had disqualified him in a contempt of court case. After seeking forgiveness, Ilyas was granted relief by a full bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan. Following the verdict, he will be eligible to participate in elections after a month. Ilyas previously served as 'AJK's' 14th Prime Minister from April 2022 to April 2023 and held the position of PTI 'Azad Kashmir' president from September 2021 to April 2023.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Mar-2025/ajk-s-former-pm-tanveer-ilyas-decides-to-join-ppp>

Jaishankar's Controversial Remarks on 'Azad Jammu And Kashmir': A Threat to Regional Stability

Friday Times, 11 March 2025

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar recently made highly controversial remarks regarding 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), describing it as a "stolen" part of India that should be brought back into the Indian Union. His statement not only reflects an aggressive diplomatic stance but also escalates tensions between India and

Pakistan. These two nuclear-armed neighbors have already fought three wars over the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. Such rhetoric is not only provocative but also in direct violation of international norms and the United Nations' resolutions, which advocate a peaceful and democratic resolution to the Kashmir dispute.

India took a unilateral and contentious step in August 2019 by revoking Article 370 of its constitution, thereby stripping Jammu and Kashmir of its special status and converting it into a union territory. This move was widely condemned as a breach of international law, as it disregarded the UN resolutions that call for a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir to determine its future. By making such statements about 'AJK', Jaishankar is reinforcing an ultra-nationalist narrative that fuels hostility instead of fostering diplomatic engagement.

Pakistan has strongly objected to Jaishankar's remarks, viewing them as yet another indication of India's aggressive posture under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Pakistan has long accused India of interfering in its internal affairs, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), by allegedly supporting non-state actors to destabilise the country. The case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian spy arrested in Pakistan and currently in custody, is often cited as evidence of India's covert operations. Jaishankar's statements only add to these concerns,

thus, further straining relations between the two South Asian rivals.

If the Indian government believes it can reclaim 'AJK' through military means, it is making a grave miscalculation. Any such attempt would undoubtedly trigger a war between the two nations. Importantly, when Jaishankar attended the SAARC summit in Islamabad last year, there was a sense of optimism among pro-peace groups that India and Pakistan might take steps toward resolving outstanding issues and exploring avenues for trade and cultural exchange. However, despite Pakistan's willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue, India's belligerent approach has dashed such hopes. Rather than promoting diplomacy, Indian leadership appears to be taking a hardline stance that undermines regional stability.

For the sake of long-term peace and socioeconomic prosperity, New Delhi needs to adopt a more pragmatic and responsible approach. As a larger country in terms of population, economic strength, and global influence, India has much to gain by engaging with its neighbors, particularly Pakistan, constructively. Hence, confidence-building measures (CBMs) are essential to discussing contentious issues such as Jammu and Kashmir, without resorting to inflammatory rhetoric.

From Pakistan's perspective, economic constraints make it even more logical to seek commercial engagement with India under a mutually agreed

framework. However, aggressive remarks rooted in hyper-nationalism would only push both sides further apart. If the Indian government believes it can reclaim 'AJK' through military means, it is making a grave miscalculation. Any such attempt would undoubtedly trigger a war between the two nations, and given Pakistan's limited conventional capabilities, the conflict could escalate into a nuclear confrontation. This outcome would be catastrophic for the entire region.

Major global powers, particularly the United States and China, have a crucial role to play in preventing further deterioration of India-Pakistan relations. They must urge India to refrain from provocative statements and instead focus on finding a UN-oriented resolution to this lingering dispute. The international community should also remind India that peace in South Asia is essential not only for regional stability but also for broader global security.

<https://thefridaytimes.com/11-Mar-2025/jaishankar-s-controversial-remarks-on-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-a-threat-to-regional-stability>

Dr. Raja Zahid terms the ban on two political parties in 'IOJK' as a practical demonstration of fascism

Daily Parliament Times, 16 March 2025

Chief Organizer Tehreek e Jawanan Kashmir Dr. Raja Zahid Khan has termed the ban on two political parties in 'Indian-Occupied Jammu and

Kashmir’ as a practical demonstration of fascism. The notification to ban the parties was issued by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, accusing the organizations of being involved in separatist activities.

Dr. Raja Zahid Khan said that the Indian establishment has imposed a five-year ban on both parties, violating the Universal Charter of Human Rights, which guarantees the rights of political parties even in times of war. The shameful aspect of the whole matter is that the Modi government has imposed a ban on 10 political organizations in ‘Occupied Kashmir’ since 2019, all of which represented Muslims, while no order has been issued against any Hindu party.

Dr. Raja Zahid Khan said that the ban on political organizations is a setback for the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir, as suppressing dissenting voices will increase tension and violence, which India has always exploited in the form of oppression.

Dr. Raja Zahid Khan said that democracy is the guardian of citizens’ rights, but the BJP’s political agenda of suppressing voices is being used to bulldoze the fundamental rights of Kashmiris, especially the right to vote, but the Hindutva mindset will face defeat as always.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/03/16/dr-raja-zahid-terms-the-ban-on-two-political-parties-in-iojk-as-a-practical-demonstration-of-fascism/>

Economic Developments

Expansion of Tax-net in ‘AJK’: State IRD introduces new features in ‘AJK’ IRIS system bringing more innovation

Daily Parliament Times, 16 March 2025

‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’ Inland Revenue Department has introduced some new features in ‘AJK’ IRIS system bringing more innovation, it was officially said.

An Inland Revenue Department spokesperson told that the IRD has added some new modules in the automation system keeping in the wider convenience of taxpayers. Tax payers of ‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’, it may be added were facing difficulties regarding Active Taxpayer List and this list was available only on the online portal of Federal Board of Revenue, Government of Pakistan.

” In this regard, the field of Active Taxpayer List containing tax filers of the state has been added in ‘AJK’ IRIS system, the spokesperson said adding that the tax filers will be able to check their online status easily and resultant online verification will be easy to ascertain swiftly..

“The facility of online tax payment was already available in ‘AJK’ IRIS system. By bringing more innovation in it, after paying tax online on the long cherished demand of taxpayers, the taxpayers now will be able to get confirmation of payment slip and computerized

payment receipt to be issued online”, according to the spokesperson.

The new system will lead to eradication of the issue of fake CPRs, the spokesperson said adding that the Department was determined to ensure transparency in the tax payment and verification procedure besides to improve the tax collection system.

According to the spokesperson, a new tax profile inquiry module has also been introduced in the ‘AJK’ IRIS system, under which the Computerised National Identity Card number, e-mail and mobile number etc. containing the necessary details of any taxpayer will be accessed, since the new feature stands very important to verify the details of any taxpayer, he underlined.

“Apart from this, with further expanding the automation system of ‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’, the registered tax resident now could obtain the verification certificate under section 7E of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 regarding the purchase and sale of property through online access, to be presented by the tax payer to the relevant authorities as a verification to be considered acceptable, the spokesperson underlined.

The spokesperson further continued that evidential feature has been added to the system for the convenience of taxpayers. He clarified that all these new features will bring significant progress in the automation system of ‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’ since the same online facilities were available to the

taxpayers of Pakistan from the Federal Board of Revenue.

These facilities will now also be available to the taxpayers of the ‘AJK’ state on a single click, said the spokesperson who added that these facilities will result in reducing the physical contact between the tax collector and the taxpayer besides encouraging the paperless environment between the above stakeholders. The spokesperson revealed that the technical team of the ‘AJK’ Inland Revenue Department was working day and night to bring more new features and modules in the automation system and soon more innovation will be seen in the ‘AJK’ IRIS system developing the tax culture to greater extent in the region, he added.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/03/16/expansion-of-tax-net-in-ajk-state-ird-introduces-new-features-in-ajk-iris-system-bringing-more-innovation/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The situation in ‘Occupied Kashmir’ is profoundly worrying: Barrister Sultan

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 13 March 2025

President ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ Barrister Sultan Mohammad Chaudhary said that in the past days he met with ambassadors of Islamic countries over an iftar and briefed them about the Kashmir issue and also various human rights violations on part

of India over there. He further said that he urged upon them to play a role so that a stop is put over such actions, and pressure be built upon India so as to resolve the Kashmir issue. Towards this end, he also urged upon the OIC to play its role. Islamic countries have always spoken in favour of Kashmir's right to self-determination and I am hoping that in future too, the Muslim ummah will fulfil its responsibilities towards Kashmiri's and would play its role in implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Kashmir.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-13.jpg>

Opting for a muscular approach is not a wise decision: Farooq Haider

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 15 March 2025

Former Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) and Muslim League (N) prominent leader of 'AJK' Raja Farooq Haider Khan said that the foundation for the current situation of 'Azad Kashmir' was laid on 5 August 2019. In 1980s a big movement was into action, which in fact was much bigger than the current movement of the Awami Action Committee. However, with certain political party's rule, the order was not affected but gave birth to new political parties in 'AJK', and efforts are being made to create a situation of political uncertainty in the region. Hybrid order is poison for the political parties.

Efforts are being made to reduce the role of political parties.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-15.jpg>

From Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

14 March 2025

Above three billion rupees lost people in a digital scam, majority from Hunza, it emerged on Thursday.

whale Intel

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1900280690136277462>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

12 March 2025

Tree plantation and cleanliness campaign launched in Nagar

#Nagar #gilgitbaltistan #plantation #drive

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1899878652550275423>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

14 March 2025

A rare sighting of four snow leopards in a single frame was captured in Hushe Valley, Ghanche, Baltistan.

The footage, recorded by Sakhawat Ali, a Game Watcher in the Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP),

offers a remarkable glimpse into the elusive big cats' natural habitat.

Listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, snow leopards face threats from habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict, making such sightings a significant conservation milestone.
#snowleopard #wildlife #baltistan

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1900546527019360714>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

10 March 2025

People face shortage of medicines, food items and no electricity, mobile phone network.

Source: <http://DAWN.COM>

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1899027357651886235>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

11 March 2025

Huqooq do dam banavo movement announces next course of action

#Diamer #DiamerBashaDam #chilas
#protest #strike #movement

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1899506549782937871>

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Compiled by

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

Edited By

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

Disclaimer

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: pokdigest@gmail.com