

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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POK
Climate
change
new anthem
water crisis
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toll tax for tourists
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local economy
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CPEC



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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

GB Assembly passes resolution on Kashmir Solidarity Day

The Nation, 5 February 2025

The Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on Kashmir Solidarity Day, reaffirming its full support for the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom. The resolution stated that on October 27, 1947, India 'illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir', violating United Nations resolutions and international laws. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan salute the Kashmiri people's 77-year-long struggle for independence and will continue to support their right to self-determination on every forum. Assembly members strongly condemned Indian oppression and atrocities and called on the international community to take notice of human rights violations in 'occupied Kashmir'. The resolution urged the United Nations to implement its resolutions to ensure that the Kashmiri people receive their legitimate rights. In addition to expressing solidarity with the Kashmiri people, the resolution urged the global community to play its role in securing their right to self-determination.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Feb-2025/gb-assembly-passes-resolution-on-kashmir-solidarity-day>

Freedom movement of Kashmiris: Speakers for empowering 'AJK', G-B regions to set up 'real base camp'

Business Recorder, 4 February 2025

Speakers at a conference have called for empowering 'Azad Jammu and

Kashmir' (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) regions to establish a "real base camp" for the freedom movement of Kashmir.

Speaking at National Kashmir Conference, organised by the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan and attended by political, social and religious leaders from Pakistan, 'AJK', and G-B, along with experts, media professionals, and representatives of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), participants deliberated on the situation in 'India's Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK).

The conference was presided over by Hafiz Naeemur Rahman, Ameer JI Pakistan. They said that "Jammu and Kashmir dispute is neither a land nor a dispute between two countries. The freedom of Jammu and Kashmir, the right to self-determination in the light of UN resolutions and the immediate end to human rights violations are the points of our position and narrative."

The people of Jammu and Kashmir were promised the right to self-determination, yet even after more than seven decades, they have not been given the opportunity to vote in a UN-conducted plebiscite. The failure of the United Nations to enforce its resolutions, coupled with India's intransigence, has directly contributed to instability in South Asia, leading to repeated military conflicts.

It is no surprise that the people of Jammu and Kashmir, like those of Palestine, continue to resist their 'illegal occupation'. According to international

law, they have every right to oppose foreign occupation and oppression.

The conference expressed grave concern over the illegal Indian moves, including steps to change the disputed status of the 'occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir' as recognised by the United Nations and altering the demographics by amending laws while allowing settlements of lakhs of ex-servicemen and RSS terrorists through the continuous changes in domicile laws. We consider these steps a serious violation of international laws and fundamental human rights. The conference condemns the detention of political and social leadership, restrictions on journalists, media workers, and civil society, arrests of youth in the name of search operations, custodial killings, confiscation of properties, and other means of coercion and regards these as serious acts of state terrorism.

The pledged right to self-determination must be immediately granted to the people 'under occupation and rigorously enforced'. Justice must be served to the victims of Jammu and Kashmir through the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), akin to the Nuremberg trials.

In the opinion of the conference, the most effective weapon to defeat Indian state terrorism is a constitutionally empowered and resourceful government in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', which can fulfill the right to represent the Kashmiris at the

international level in collaboration with the Hurriyat Conference. In this context, the conference expected the government of Pakistan to make arrangements to make the independent regions of the state, 'AJK', G-B, more dignified in terms of powers and resources and not to commit any misadventure at this critical juncture of the movement, which may result in harming the national position of Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir at the international level or justifying India's nefarious actions.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40346147/freedom-movement-of-kashmiris-speakers-for-empowering-ajk-g-b-regions-to-set-up-real-base-camp>

Water Crisis in 'AJK': A Wake-Up Call for Action amid Climatic Changes

Daily Parliament Times, 3 February 2025

The scenic and mountainous region of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), long known for its lush green landscapes and abundant water resources, is now facing an increasingly dire water crisis. Over the past six months, the region has witnessed a significant drop in rainfall, contributing to the drying up of vital water sources, including streams, springs, and wells. This persistent lack of water has sparked widespread concerns about the sustainability of water access, impacting local communities' daily lives, health, and overall well-being.

The Growing Crisis

The absence of clean drinking water has emerged as one of the most

immediate and alarming challenges faced by the residents of 'AJK'. Pipelines that once supplied fresh, potable water are now dry, leaving communities scrambling to meet even the most basic water needs. The problem is further compounded by the rapid depletion of the region's groundwater table, with deep wells that were once reliable now running dry. This issue has not only caused inconvenience but has also triggered serious public health concerns. As access to clean water becomes increasingly limited, hygiene levels are dropping, heightening the risk of waterborne diseases that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly. The shortage of water is also severely impacting agriculture and livestock, both of which are the lifeblood of the local economy. Fields once rich in crops have turned barren, with farmers struggling to irrigate their crops due to the lack of water. The arid conditions have stunted crop growth, leading to lower yields and economic losses for rural communities that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Moreover, the depletion of pastures has made it difficult for livestock to survive, further exacerbating the economic strain on the population.

The Impact on Ecosystems and Wildlife

The water crisis is not confined to human settlements alone; the entire ecosystem is feeling the effects. Local wildlife and forests are facing

significant stress as the region's streams and rivers run dry, leaving animals without natural water sources. The drying up of water bodies has led to a decline in biodiversity, with many species at risk of losing their habitats. Similarly, the scarcity of water has affected the region's forests, which rely on regular rainfall to thrive. The long-term implications of this disruption to the natural balance could be disastrous for 'AJK's' unique biodiversity and the environment at large.

The Root Causes

The underlying causes of the water crisis are multi-faceted, combining natural climatic changes with human-induced factors. Experts point to a combination of environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, and climate change as key drivers of the region's water woes. One of the primary contributors is the increase in the number of motor vehicles in urban areas, which has led to rising temperatures and altered local weather patterns. With fewer people relying on mass transit, the resultant air pollution has aggravated the situation, contributing to more extreme and unpredictable weather events, including prolonged dry spells. Additionally, deforestation has played a significant role in worsening the water crisis. In the past few decades, large swaths of forests have been cleared to make way for infrastructure development, agriculture, and urbanization. The loss of trees has had a direct impact on the local climate,

reducing rainfall and diminishing the region's ability to regulate water cycles. Forests play a crucial role in maintaining water flow, as they act as natural buffers that absorb and release water into the ecosystem. Their destruction has disrupted this vital process. Moreover, the construction of concrete buildings, which has become increasingly common in urban centers, has replaced traditional housing methods that were more in harmony with the environment. The widespread use of impermeable surfaces in urban areas has hindered the natural infiltration of rainwater into the ground, further depleting underground water reserves.

The Depletion of Groundwater Resources

Another critical factor exacerbating the water crisis in 'AJK' is the rapid decline of the underground water table. Over the years, there has been a noticeable reduction in rainfall and snowfall, which has traditionally replenished the region's aquifers. Without sufficient rainfall, the region's groundwater reserves are being depleted at an alarming rate. This unsustainable extraction of groundwater has left many communities in a vulnerable position, as underground sources that once served as a reliable backup are now running dry. If these trends continue, the long-term consequences could be severe. Groundwater is a critical resource, particularly in a region where surface water sources are scarce or unreliable. The depletion of aquifers could lead to an even greater

water scarcity crisis in the coming years, further complicating efforts to meet the growing demands of 'AJK's' population.

Urgent Call for Action

The time to act is now. The government of 'AJK', in collaboration with environmental organizations, local communities, and other stakeholders, must prioritize efforts to address the water crisis before it becomes irreversible. One of the most effective and sustainable solutions to the water shortage is the development of large-scale rainwater harvesting projects at the community level. These projects would allow communities to collect and store rainwater during the monsoon season, providing a much-needed buffer during the dry months. Such initiatives could significantly reduce the pressure on traditional water sources and provide a more reliable supply of water, especially in rural areas. In addition to rainwater harvesting, there is a need for a widespread public awareness campaign focused on water conservation techniques and the responsible use of water. Local governments, NGOs, and community leaders should come together to educate residents about the importance of preserving water resources and adopting more sustainable practices. These efforts could include encouraging the use of water-saving technologies, such as low-flow taps and irrigation systems, as well as promoting the repair of leaking water pipes to minimize waste. Educational institutions must also play a pivotal role in tackling the

water crisis. Schools and universities should incorporate environmental education into their curricula, with a focus on sustainable water management and the importance of rainwater harvesting. By instilling these values in young people, 'AJK' can cultivate a generation that is better equipped to deal with the challenges posed by water scarcity and environmental degradation. Additionally, community-led initiatives to educate the public about the importance of protecting natural resources and preserving the environment could foster a collective sense of responsibility. The water crisis in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' serves as a wake-up call for both the government and the people to take immediate action. Without swift and effective measures, the region risks facing long-term water shortages that will affect not only human populations but also local ecosystems, agriculture, and wildlife. It is essential for all stakeholders to come together to develop and implement strategies to safeguard 'AJK's' water resources, ensuring that future generations have access to the clean water they need to thrive. The time to act is now—before the region's water crisis spirals out of control.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/02/03/water-crisis-in-ajk-a-wake-up-call-for-action-amid-climatic-changes/>

WATCH: ISPR releases new anthem marking Kashmir Solidarity Day

The Express Tribune, 4 February 2025

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) has released a new anthem, "Kashmir

Banay Ga Pakistan," on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, which is observed annually on February 5 to show support for the people of 'Indian-administered Kashmir'.

The song, which conveys a strong message of unity and commitment to the Kashmiri cause, features the vocals of renowned singer Ahmed Jahanzeb. The music was composed by Irfan Saleem and Kamran Khan, with the lyrics written by Imran Raza.

The anthem was specifically created to mark this significant day and reinforces the sentiment of solidarity with the brave and resilient people of Kashmir.

The song opens with a historic speech by the late Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Geelani, in which he declared, "Islamically, Pakistan is ours, and we are Pakistan." He also led the crowd in chanting slogans for freedom.

This anthem serves as a reminder of Pakistan's unwavering support for Kashmir's struggle for self-determination and highlights the nation's commitment to standing by the people of the region.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2526345/watch-ispr-releases-new-anthem-marking-kashmir-solidarity-day>

Kashmir will be free one day and part of Pakistan: COAS

The Nation, 6 February 2025

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, visited Muzaffarabad, where he paid homage to the sacrifices of the martyrs. Upon

arrival at the Jammu and Kashmir Monument, he laid floral wreath at the Martyrs' Monument and offered rich tributes to the unparalleled sacrifices of the Shuhada, says a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

While paying homage to the martyrs of Kashmir, COAS also commended the unwavering dedication, professional excellence, and combat readiness of the deployed officers and soldiers in the face of challenging operational conditions in Kashmir. He lauded their high morale and vigilance, emphasising the importance of maintaining peak operational preparedness to deter and counter any hostile provocations.

COAS expressed complete confidence in the battle readiness of the Armed Forces, and reaffirmed that no act of aggression would go unanswered and underscored Pakistan Army's commitment to defend the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity with full resolve.

COAS stated that Indian atrocities and rising Hindutva extremism only strengthens the resolve of Kashmiri people in their struggle for self-determination. He reaffirmed that Pakistan will always stand by them in their just and legitimate cause against state-sponsored repression and oppression. He remarked: "Without any doubt Kashmir will be free one day and part of Pakistan as per the free will and destiny of the people of Kashmir". Earlier, upon arrival, COAS was

received by the Commander Rawalpindi Corps.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that for the lasting peace and progress and prosperity of the region and the world, peaceful and just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir issue in line with the UN Security Council resolutions and the aspiration of the Kashmiri people was imperative.

Addressing the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the prime minister reiterated that resolution of Kashmir dispute could only be made under the UNSC resolutions and wishes of the people of Kashmir by allowing them to exercise their right to self – determination in a just and impartial manner. The global community, democracies, institutions and world bodies supported the rights of the people of Palestine and Kashmir, he said, adding "Two separate standards for democracy and justice and discrimination in the enforcement of the international laws cannot be accepted because such is the requirement of international laws and demands of humanity."

The prime minister reassured that he would continue raising voice for the Kashmiris as he had vociferously highlighted the issue at the UNGA and OIC and other foras and clearly expressed Pakistan's stance.

India had already used all kinds of atrocious tactics but could not succeed.

By shedding blood, burning of homes, extrajudicial killing of youth, strangulating children, putting Kashmiri leaders under house arrests and Kashmiri people in jails could not resolve the issue, he added. He said 'IIOJK' had been turned into the world's largest jail with huge Indian military presence.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged India to get out of its August 5, 2019 sort of thinking for the interest of peace in the region and implement UNSC resolutions and promises it made with the international community by holding meaningful dialogue.

He said Pakistan had always been an advocate of peace with all its neighbours, in the region and beyond, and it wanted peaceful negotiations under all diplomatic norms for the progress and prosperity of the millions of people living in the region. The prime minister reiterated that Pakistan's quest for peace was not a sign of weakness rather it was deeply rooted in the teachings of Islam, national heritage and their system.

He said Pakistan was a nuclear state with strong and professional armed forces always standing like a strong bulwark against all aggressions, adding from the creation of Pakistan till now, the country had responded strongly against all aggressions and referred to arrests of Kulbhushan and Abhinandan as reflection of the same. "For the sake of national interests, we will use all our force and will not desist," he declared.

The prime minister said former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had conducted nuclear tests on 28 May 1998 to show that they would not compromise on the national interests. The former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee came to Lahore and agreed to resolve all issues including Kashmir which was the only way forward and still written in Lahore. The prime minister, reaffirmed solidarity with the Kashmiri people and the government of 'AJK' on Kashmir Solidarity Day, saying 'it is not a day but an occasion to reiterate our resolve and commitment to Kashmir'.

He also paid tribute to Kashmiri shuhada who shed their blood in the last seven decades, and mentioned leaders like Burhan Wani, Syed Ali Geelani, Asiya Andrabi, Yaseen Malik and Mirwaiz Omar Farooq who had contributed in the movement for freedom. In this movement, they were standing shoulder to shoulder with their Kashmiri brethren unless they got their freedom and succeed in their efforts, he said, adding with their determination, the Kashmiri people had defeated the Indian forces by bracing all kind of brutalities and shedding their blood. With each passing moment, their resolve was getting stronger.

"Quaid e Azam had called Kashmir as a jugular vein of Pakistan. There are no other words that can define it perfectly," he added. The prime minister also assured that the government of Pakistan was committed to equal progress and

prosperity of all its areas and would continue supporting 'AJK' with provision of development funds as done in the recent past, adding Danish schools network would be broadened in other areas of 'AJK'.

Speaking on the occasion, 'AJK' Prime Minister Anwarul Haq lauded the moral, diplomatic and political support extended consistently by the government and people of Pakistan for the just cause of Kashmiris. Kashmiris and the people of Pakistan enjoyed strong bonds and would stand with each other, he added. He thanked the prime minister for financial support to the 'AJK' government for the development projects.

Talking to a delegation of All Parties Hurriyat Conference here on Wednesday the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's moral, diplomatic, and political support for the struggle of Kashmiri brothers and sisters. "The sacrifices of Kashmiris who have laid down their lives in the struggle for the right to self-determination will not go in vain," the Prime Minister said.

He also directed Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Engineer Amir Muqam to formulate a strategy to address the concerns and issues faced by refugees in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'. The leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) expressed their appreciation to the Prime Minister and the Government of Pakistan for their continued solidarity with the Kashmiri people. They also

praised Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kashmir freedom movement.

The Hurriyat leaders commended the Prime Minister for highlighting the Kashmir issue before the international community through the United Nations platform. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, Speaker of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Engineer Amir Muqam, and Attaullah Tarar, among with Kashmiri leaders Ghulam Muhammad Safi, Advocate Parvez, Ijaz Rahmani, Syed Gulshan, Muhammad Ashraf Dar, Shaheen Iqbal, Mushtaq Ahmed, Khurshid Ahmed Khan, and Raja Khadim Hussain Shaheen.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Feb-2025/kashmir-will-be-free-one-day-and-part-of-pakistan-coas>

Kashmir Undefeated

The Nation, 6 February 2025

Kashmir Solidarity Day, observed every 5th of February, serves as a reminder that Pakistan's journey toward becoming a state for all the peoples of South Asia who wish to join it remains incomplete. A significant part of Pakistan's beating heart is still denied its right to self-determination, subjected to daily atrocities of unimaginable horror, and slowly being crushed under the boot of a violent military force. Until that boot is lifted and the people of that region are

allowed to determine their own future, Pakistan's mission remains unfulfilled.

Our nation was founded on the principle of self-determination—the belief that people have the right to choose their own destinies and their own nations. It was under this principle that the peoples of South Asia sought independence from the British. It was on this basis that Pakistan emerged as an independent state, distinct from the rest of India, within historical, religious, and geographical boundaries that made sense. This same principle compels Pakistan to stand with Kashmir until the very end. If one of us is not free, then none of us are truly free. While political progress on Kashmir may appear stagnant, the reality is that Pakistan and India remain locked in a strategic battle over the region, with extensive military build-up on both sides, signalling their readiness to defend their positions. Kashmir remains the primary point of contention between the two nations, and resolving this issue peacefully, in a manner that benefits the Kashmiri people, is crucial for the broader stability of the region.

Even if the situation does not seem to shift significantly each year, Pakistan's collective stance—expressed from the highest offices of the Prime Minister and President to every single citizen—reinforces our unwavering commitment to Kashmir. Our continued solidarity is vital, for it strengthens our resolve to ensure that our brothers and sisters in 'Indian-

occupied Kashmir' achieve the freedom they rightfully deserve.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Feb-2025/kashmir-undefeated>

Kashmir integral to Pakistan's destiny: JI

Business Recorder, 6 February 2025

Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeemur-Rehman has declared that Kashmir is a tripartite issue, integral to Pakistan's destiny and completion. Speaking at a massive Kashmir March organized by the JI Lahore chapter on Mall Road to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day on Wednesday, he warned that anyone who attempts to sell out Kashmir will face the wrath of the Pakistani nation.

He criticized the government's policies, stating that the Kashmir cause has been sidelined in recent years. "On this Kashmir Solidarity Day, we announce the reorganization of the Kashmir freedom movement," he proclaimed. "Pakistan should not seek trade with India but work to isolate it globally."

Rehman criticised Islamabad's "apologetic stance" on Kashmir, urging the government to advocate the cause internationally instead. He stressed that 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir' (AJK) should be turned into the base camp for the Kashmir freedom movement, adding that "silence on Kashmir is equivalent to supporting Hindutva imperialism and the Butcher of Gujarat." He reassured the people of Kashmir that "the entire Pakistani nation stands behind you."

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40346539/kashmir-integral-to-pakistans-destiny-ji>

Aga Khan's efforts for transforming GB remembered

Dawn, 7 February 2025

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) paid tributes to Prince Karim Aga Khan on Thursday, recalling his services for humanity that have left an indelible mark on the region. A public holiday was declared on Thursday and the government announced three days of mourning from Feb 5 to 7.

A large number of people from all sects, government officials, religious scholars and activists of political and religious parties visited Jamaatkhanas in Gilgit, Hunza and Ghizer to record their sense of loss.

Through a letter to Prince Rahim Aga Khan, the new spiritual leader of the Ismaili community, Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan recalled the late Aga Khan's visionary leadership and dedication to humanitarian causes. The chief minister lauded his unwavering commitment to G-B's socio-economic development and tireless efforts for lifting the people from poverty and deprivation. "The Aga Khan was not only a spiritual leader but also a beacon of hope, peace, tolerance and sustainable development."

The projects undertaken by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) have brought about an unbelievable change in people's lives, he added.

The JI leader said seeds introduced by the AKRSP had enabled local farmers to produce high-quality potatoes and to

earn good money. "Introduction of new fruit production techniques, training for local farmers and construction of irrigation channels in remote areas went a long way to empowering the poor." He said skill development programmes for the youth and women improved job opportunities.

Amjad Hussain, a GB Assembly member and president of the PPP's local chapter, said the Aga Khan had dedicated his life to philanthropy, especially in Pakistan.

Baba Jan, a leader of the Awami Workers Party, recalled Prince Karim Aga Khan's contribution to preservation of the region's cultural heritage, citing the example of forts in Baltit, Altit, Shigar and Khaplu.

Protection of environment, promoting female education in conservative areas, and improving access to healthcare are some of the countless endeavours undertaken by Aga Khan, Baba Jan said. The AKDN supported rural communities, set up women's organisations and encouraged women to go into business by giving them small loans, he added.

First visit in 1960

After his first visit to the region in Oct 1960, Prince Karim Aga Khan left no stone unturned to transform the Gilgit region from a backward area into a model of human development that is now the envy of the rest of the country.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and other agencies launched

projects for poverty alleviation, improving access to healthcare, lifting education standards, skills enhancement, and preservation of cultural heritage.

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, a non-profit organisation, was established in 1982 to help improve the quality of life of communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

The AKRSP has been working across all 10 districts of Gilgit-Baltistan and two districts of Chitral, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The organisation expanded its network to Sindh last year, reiterating its mission to ameliorate the suffering of the poor in the country's rural areas.

Day of mourning

The nation will observe a day of mourning on Saturday (Feb 8) to mark the demise of Prince Karim Aga Khan, according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division. The notification said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had ordered observance of the day to coincide with the funeral of Aga Khan.

The national flag will fly at half-mast across the country on the occasion. Meanwhile, the funeral of Prince Karim Aga Khan will take place at the Ismaili Centre in Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, at 11am on Saturday. The event will be open to invited guests only. He will be laid to rest at a private ceremony in Aswan, Egypt, on Sunday (Feb 9).

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1890258/aga-khans-efforts-for-transforming-gb-remembered>

Economic Developments

Cut in power tariff for SEZs: SIFC directs PD to take concrete measures

Business Recorder, 3 February 2025

The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has directed Power Division to undertake concrete measures for reducing industrial electricity tariff for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to regionally competitive rates i.e. Cents 9 per unit, well informed sources told Business Recorder.

These directions were issued at a recent meeting of the Apex Committee of the SIFC, presided over by the Prime Minister and attended by Army Chief, Chief Ministers and high level civil and army officials wherein it was decided to shift SEZs from a 'Real Estate model' to a 'Classic SEZ model'.

According to sources, Power Division was also directed that shortlisted/matured projects for ensuring grid stability with essential safeguards against unplanned outages be initiated at priority.

To ensure secure working environment, customized accommodation for foreigners in the form of Foreigner's Enclave with all amenities (minimizing undue exposure) to be developed inside / proximate facility by the developer in a sustainable mode.

Provincial Governments have been directed to consider the possibility of establishing a pool of bullet-proof vehicles, which should be available to

interested private parties on a rental basis.

Board of Investment/ Provincial SEZAs to ensure obligatory inclusion of accommodation in development plan with financial allocations by Federal/ Provincial Governments to public sector developers.

Dedicated security apparatus from SFU/ Police will be ensured to respective provinces for all to optimize SEZs. It was also decided that required amendments in the master plans of SEZs be completed by March 31, 2025.

Considering the importance of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) in overall ambit of CPEC, notification of Moqpondass SEZ on 250 allocated + 150 (aval). Chinese investors/developers be engaged immediately for initiating development process/planning of Moqpondass SEZ including innovative energy solution.

Amendment in SEZ Act: The forum also decided to remove bottlenecks and simplify complex judicial impasses (including establishment of SEZ tribunal/ investment ombudsman in province), amendments in SEZ Act be undertaken by BoI in consultation with SIFC and Ministry of Law and Justice. These amendments must cover broad spectrum including but not limited to protection of existing incentives and legal jurisdiction.

The forum further decided that future focus of industries be planned in clusters, considering availability of HR, raw

material, skilled workforce, connectivity etc. Some of the safeguard clusters are as follows: (i) textile; (ii) electronic/ IT; (iii) pharma/ surgical; (iv) construction; (v) agro processing including dry fruits; (vi) sports; (vii) marble; and (viii) warehousing etc.

Integrated federal and provincial Business Facilitation Centre/ OSS (one stop shop) will also be established by the BoI, Ministry of IT&T, provincial government in consultation with SEZAs.

BQIP, M3IC, QABP, AIIC, Hattar, Bostan SEZS : All external & internal utilities of these SEZS to be completed by June 30, 2025. Due to reduction in land cost remaining development works in BQIP be undertaken through available funding with PIDC and gap, if any, be filled with PSDP. PC-1 for remaining development work be processed for approval from relevant forums.

Dhabeji SEZ : completion of development including all utilities by December 31, 2026 with maximum possible PSDP support. Sindh Government may consider the existing PPP model of Dhabeji for making it more expeditious, efficient, attractive and cost effective to the investors.

Rashakai SEZ (phase 2 & 3): Power Division to pursue priority approval of bulk supply at competitive tariff by developers. The initiative facilitates reduced land cost in PPP model SEZs besides provision of affordable electricity supply to industries.

It was also decided that an invisible, intelligent, surveillance -based balanced security plan for SEZs be prepared to reassure the investors.

Earlier, Secretary to Apex Committee-SIFC delineated the agenda of the 11th AC meeting, and delivered a wholesome presentation on SIFC's strategic focus, initiatives and expectations.

He briefed that SIFC aims to align the National Economic Transformation Plan (2024-2029) 'Uraan Pakistan' with the Grand Vision of positioning the country among the G20 Nations by 2037, and the G10 by 2047.

In this regard, he urged the provincial chief ministers to partner with SIFC, and to nominate dedicated and proficient subject matter experts / focal persons from provinces, not below BPS 20-21, to be housed in respective CM Secretariats for close coordination with SIFC.

Director General-SIFC (Army) presented a comprehensive action plan for the optimization of SEZs in Pakistan. It would be spearheaded by the Board of Investment, being the Secretariat of SEZs, in collaboration with SIFC. He informed that to reach the depth of the matter, SIFC initially conducted a comprehensive study consultation with BoI and relevant stakeholders.

A holistic 360 degree view of the issues in SEZs has been obtained. The findings reveal that Pakistan's SEZ have every single ingredient of

corporate appeal available. These have the potential to play the role of a catalyst to propel speedy export-led industrialization to reap real dividends and attract billion- dollar enterprises into the country.

Since the establishment of SEZ regime in 2012, and initiation of CPEC in 2013, desired outcomes could not materialize owing to policy inconsistencies marred with weak implementation and monitoring.

There is need for a paradigm shift of SEZs from a 'Real Estate model' to a 'Classic SEZ model' embodying a harmonized adoption of national framework by all federating units with high-end corporate management ensuring plug and play (ideally turnkey), initially through PSDP funding.

DG-SIFC specifically stressed that ownership and direct patronage of SEZ development by all chief ministers will act as game changer to materialize the dream of rapid industrialization with financial dividends, export surplus and socio-economic development.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40345997/cut-in-power-tariff-for-sezs-sifc-directs-pd-to-take-concrete-measures>

Federal minister Aleem Khan proposes toll tax for GB tourists

Dawn, 9 February 2025

Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has proposed the introduction of a toll tax for tourists

visiting the scenic Gilgit-Baltistan, with a blanket exemption for residents.

GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan met the federal minister in Islamabad where they discussed the National Highway Authority's (NHA) role in Gilgit-Baltistan and expanding communication facilities to improve transportation, according to a press release issued on Friday.

The minister for communications said that the federal government was committed to improving the road network through the NHA, asserting that Gilgit-Baltistan's development was linked to the country's prosperity.

With the number of tourists to Gilgit-Baltistan multiplying each year, the federal minister proposed introducing a toll tax to fund road infrastructure development. However, locals should be exempt from this tax, he suggested.

CM Gulbar Khan suggests construction of tunnels to ensure travellers' safety on Baltistan Road. CM Khan praised the federal minister's development initiatives and expressed his determination to collaborate with the NHA for regional development. The federal minister said a Rs 15 billion feasibility study was submitted to the Planning Commission to address the issue.

On this occasion, Aleem Khan also assured the chief minister that steps would be taken to pay land compensation to the affected people of Karakoram Highway.

Meanwhile, the Gilgit-Baltistan government has announced a new 'fee' for non-local vehicles.

The GB government termed it an updated fee for non-local vehicles, including motorbikes and private vehicles, entering the region and registration fee for hotel businesses in Gilgit-Baltistan.

According to the notification, tourists on motorbikes will now pay Rs 500 per person, which was previously Rs 300. Private vehicles entering the region will now be charged Rs 2,000 per vehicle.

A one-time registration fee has been introduced for hotels operated by non-domicile holders of Gilgit-Baltistan, ranging from Rs 40,000 for 1-star hotels to Rs 250,000 for five-star hotels, along with a periodic renewal fee.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1890699/federal-minister-aleem-khan-proposes-toll-tax-for-gb-tourists>

President, Xi discuss CPEC 2.0

Business Recorder, 6 February 2025

President Asif Ali Zardari met with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping here wherein two sides discussed the positive trajectory of the bilateral relationship, high-quality development of CPEC 2.0, and the significance of people-to-people linkages and cultural exchanges.

In the meeting held at the Great Hall of the People during the five-day official visit of President Zardari to China, two leaders also discussed regional and international issues of common

interest, and opportunities to even further expand the scope of bilateral partnership, especially through continued high-level exchanges.

They highlighted the vital role of CPEC 2.0 in promoting regional connectivity, shared benefits and common prosperity, including through partnerships with other countries.

Both sides also underlined the significance of people-to-people linkages and cultural exchanges for strengthening the China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the New Era.

Underlining the enduring friendship between the two countries, both leaders also reaffirmed support for each other on the issues of core interest.

President Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to its All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China and underlined the unique, time-tested and special relationship between the two countries. He also commended China's exemplary development, progress and prosperity, calling it a manifestation of the vision of the Chinese leadership and the dynamism of the Chinese people.

President Zardari also paid rich tribute to President Xi Jinping for China's profound contributions to global development under the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). He termed China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a shining model of the BRI's visionary concept of win-win cooperation.

President Zardari extended the invitation to President Xi to visit Pakistan, emphasizing that the people and government of Pakistan hold him in high esteem as a visionary leader and as a special friend of Pakistan.

The meeting was followed by a MoU signing ceremony where the two leaders witnessed the signing of MoUs to enhance cooperation in the fields of science & technology, media, clean energy and socio-economic development, among others.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40346545>

[From Vernacular Urdu Media](#)

5 February loudly reminds that through 5 August Kashmir doesn't become part of India: Prime Minister

Urdu Point, 5 February 2025

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that 5 February is loudly reminding that any 5 August will not make Kashmir part of India and Kashmiri's legitimate and just demands can only be ascertained and fulfilled through plebiscite which will not only help in the resolution of Kashmir issue but also help in ensuring peace in the entire region. Stationing more Indian soldiers have emboldened the yearning of freedom among Kashmiris. It would be in India's interest if they come out of 5 August thinking, he said. Building the modern weaponry will not help in reducing poverty, and our capabilities and skills are equally competitive as could be seen through the cases of Kulbushan and Abhinadan.

Speaking at a special session of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Assembly, Prime Minister said that we the 24 crore population are expressing solidarity with the brothers and sisters, and on behalf of them I am present here. We are saluting all those martyrs who in the last seven decades gave their blood for keeping the cause of freedom alive.

Prime Minister said that Kashmiris through their resolve and struggle have defeated the Indian forces. Indian forces have unleashed every kind of barbaric act on the innocent Kashmiris and despite so much spill of Kashmiri blood they remain adamant in their resolve for freedom.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/important-news/live-news-4321844.html>

'Azad Kashmir' is best spot for foreign tourists: Prime Minister

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 7 February 2025

Prime Minister 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Chaudhary Anwar ul Haq met with media influencer Carrie and Mac Candee in Prime Minister's secretariat. On this occasion most senior minister Colonel (retired) Waqar Ahmad Noor, Chaudhary Izhar Sadiq and Abdul Majid Khan were also present. Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq during the conversation said that the 'AJK' place for its beauty and weather remains a source of attraction. It is beautiful because of its natural mountains and water bodies. He said that 'Azad Kashmir' is a peaceful spot

in the region and because of this tourists all across the world prefer this location. The government of 'Azad Kashmir' is trying every effort to provide facilities of all kind to the tourists. Regarding this special attention is being given to upgrade roads and infrastructure. Prime Minister said that 'Azad Kashmir' is emerging as the best spot for the foreign tourists. The 'Azad Kashmir' government is taking steps to protect environment and forests. He said that the Indian government has stationed 10 Lakh armed forces in 'occupied Kashmir' and have made the local Kashmiris lifeless. Social media and modern technology have become a weapon, said Prime Minister.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Resize-of-PAGE-03-1-3.jpg>

Dasu Project to receive 1 Billion from the World Bank

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 4 February 2025

For Dasu Project World Bank has announced 1bn loan. After approving amended loan PC 1, new timeline will be included in it. Regarding this senior officers of the World Bank told that 1 billion dollar new loan will be provided. It was told, WAPDA has prepared PC 1, which at the moment lies with the Water resource management and for approval it will be soon sent to the planning commission. In its first phase it will generate electricity of 2160 Megawatts.

World Bank under the framework of 10 year country partnership had promised of 20 Arab dollar. World Bank will procure three-fourth part through the international development association's sources. For approval of the framework, 19 out of 24 directors have voted in favour of Pakistan.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Resize-of-PAGE-03-1-1.jpg>

From Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

7 February 2025

The socio-economic transformation initiatives started by Prince Karim Aga Khan in #GilgitBaltistan after his first visit to the landlocked region in 1960 are remarkable and have had a lasting impact on the lives of local communities. My piece will be published in Dawn today.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1887584282085867821>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

9 February 2025

Rights of the Diamer Bhasha Dam Affected People's Protest Movement Continues

#diamerbashadam #kkh #chilas
#protest #movement

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1888558011322376316>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

9 February 2025

Imposition of taxes on tourists visiting #GilgitBaltistan already affected the tourism sector in the region, more taxes, more restrictions will close tourism window.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1888652726906626254>

PAMIR Times @pamirtimes

5 February 2025

"The Aga Khan's contributions transcended borders, bringing hope and progress": PM Shahbaz

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1887030218587545630>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

8 February 2025

Students in Diamer have started a movement. Student leader Raja Abid's powerful speech after his release

#students #movement #diamer
#gilgitbaltistan #protest #kkh
#education #rights

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1888189510032163065>

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Disclaimer

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