

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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tourist influx POK Gilgit-Baltistan
Climate space CPEC
Change technology
Karakoram Highway Dasu
Hydropower



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Family of 'AJK' man who inadvertently crossed LoC seeks his return

Dawn, 23 September 2024

Family members of a resident of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), who inadvertently crossed the Line of Control (LoC), on Sunday appealed to civil and military authorities in Pakistan to take urgent measures for his repatriation, fearing that Indian forces might harm him by falsely branding him a militant. Hassam Shahzad, who reportedly suffers from a mental illness, had entered a house located near the heavily militarised LoC in the Tetrinote sector of Poonch district on Saturday afternoon. Startled by the presence of a stranger, women from nearby houses raised a commotion, causing the 30-year-old to panic and flee. In his confusion, he inadvertently crossed the unmarked border and ended up in Indian-held territory, where he was apprehended by security personnel.

His family became aware of his situation after news portals and social media accounts in India-held Kashmir uploaded his picture, identifying him as a Pakistani intruder. The photo showed him barefoot, kneeling with his hands tied with rope. Expressing concern for his safety, the family feared that the Indian army, especially amid the ongoing elections in the disputed region, could inflict serious harm on him by labelling him as an infiltrator or

militant. Given the current situation and the desperation of Indian forces to find pretexts for accusations, we are extremely worried about his safety, said Rashid Iqbal, Hassam's cousin.

Mr Iqbal said Hassam had been struggling with personal issues and had previously undergone treatment at a rehabilitation centre in Mirpur, but had not fully recovered. Today, someone informed me [...] Hassam is now in 'occupied Kashmir.' Given his physical and mental state [...] I believe that instead of heading back, he panicked and fled towards the LoC, crossing into the other side, said Mr Iqbal. When contacted, Poonch Deputy Commissioner Syed Mumtaz Kazmi said they had sent a report regarding the inadvertent crossing to the higher authorities and were hopeful of appropriate action on their part at the earliest.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1860531/family-of-ajk-man-who-inadvertently-crossed-loc-seeks-his-return>

India cannot rule Kashmir by force: Pasban-e-Hurriyat

Daily Parliament Times, 24 September 2024

Chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir Uzair Ahmed Ghazali has said that the Indian government's claim of peace at gunpoint in 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK) is a lie. He said that the Delhi government has failed to mislead the international community by deploying more than 1

million soldiers in 'IOK' and keeping the people silent at gunpoint. India is trying to prove with lies and deceit that all is well in Kashmir, while the ground reality is that all the imperialist plans of the Delhi government are failing miserably in Jammu and Kashmir, he claimed. He said that nothing good is happening in 'Occupied Kashmir', adding that Indian coercion has deprived millions of Kashmiri citizens of all their civil, political, social and religious rights.

The Kashmiri people are constantly suffering from Indian oppression, he lamented. Ghazali said that the central leadership of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference and freedom activists at the tehsil, district and division levels are locked up in Indian jails, while Mirwaiz Maulvi Umar Farooq is repeatedly facing house arrest. He claimed that the Kashmiri people want freedom from India and the oppressed people do not consider elections as a substitute for referendum. He said that the Kashmiri people have immense love for their state, their soil and their Islamic identity. He said that the Kashmiri freedom fighters are facing the Indian occupiers in the forests, mountains and plains of Kashmir, and the Hurriyat leadership is struggling for freedom and the right to self-determination despite all oppression and tyranny.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/09/24/india-cannot-rule-kashmir-by-force-pasban-e-hurriyat/>

'AJK' observes black day against the second phase of India sponsored elections drama in 'IIOJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 25 September 2024

People across 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) thronged streets to observe black day for registering protest against staging of New-Delhi sponsored 2nd phase of sham elections to the so called Legislative assembly of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir' (IIOJK) state commenced. The call for observing Black Day was given by 'AJK' Prime Minister Ch. Anwarul haq government and backed and supported by all the social, political and religious organizations. In addition, the people belonging to all walks of life to express resentment against the forced holding of the farcical elections in 'IIOJK' under the shadow of the Indian guns against the wishes of the freedom loving Kashmiris represented by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

Protest rallies and processions in all major cities including the district and divisional headquarters of Muzaffarbad, Mirpur and Rawalakot were the hallmark of the black day. Raising anti-India and pro- freedom slogans, the rallies passed through the major streets in all small and major towns in the liberated territory. Addressing the rallies, speakers declared that any sort of elections in an internationally acknowledged

disputed region under the Indian constitution have no legal validity nor could be the substitute of the Kashmiris legitimate right of self-determination committed by the international community through UN resolutions on Kashmir issue.

They declared that the people of Jammu and Kashmir neither ever accepted the illegal occupation of their motherland by India in the past nor will accept the same at any cost at present and in the future. By observing black day against the Indian elections drama in 'IIOJK', the people of Jammu and Kashmir reiterated their firm stance to the international community of their complete dissociation and hatred against the 'Indian illegal occupation.' Speakers called upon India to show realistic approach towards the early peaceful resolution of Kashmir conflict to ensure emergence of everlasting and durable peace in South Asia in general and the 77-years long conflict zone of Jammu Kashmir state in particular.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/09/25/ljk-observes-black-day-against-2nd-phase-of-india-sponsored-elections-drama-in-iiojk/>

Don't be fooled by India's false narrative on Kashmir, Wani to foreign diplomats

Daily Times, 25 September 2024

Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman of the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR), has stated that India's orchestration of assembly elections in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK)

aims to mislead international opinion and propagate a false narrative of normalcy. According to Kashmir Media Service, in a joint communique to foreign diplomats invited to witness the election process, Wani emphasized that the region's grim situation is a matter of international significance. Wani referred to UNSC resolutions adopted since 1947, which affirm that Jammu and Kashmir's final disposition must be determined through a free and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices. He cautioned diplomats that their visit might be used by India to project legitimacy and normalcy, rather than reflecting Kashmiri concerns. Wani urged diplomats to; recognize restrictions on accessing local populations and human rights victims, support a UN fact-finding mission in Kashmir, permit international human rights organizations to monitor violations and secure the early release of political leaders, activists, and human rights defenders.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1228746/dont-be-fooled-by-indias-false-narrative-on-kashmir-wani-to-foreign-diplomats/>

Farcical polls in 'IIOJK' under Indian military siege can't be substitute for Kashmiris Right to self-determination: 'AJK PM'

Daily Parliament Times, 26 September 2024

Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that elections held in

'occupied Kashmir' under military siege cannot be a substitute for Kashmiris Right to self-determination. While addressing the 8th convocation of Mirpur University of Science and Technology, he reject the 'sham polls' being held under the shadow of guns, adding that India was using the so-called elections to perpetuate military occupation and hide barbaric brutalities and the violation of human rights in 'occupied Kashmir.' Holding a referendum in the region under the UN auspices, he said, was the unanimous demand of the Kashmiri people. Referring to the continued bloodshed and violence in the 'Indian occupied Kashmir' (IoK), the PM said, Kashmiri people have not only been deprived of basic human rights and freedoms, but they were being subjected to enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, claiming that in presence of Indian forces the held territory has become a hell hole for its citizens.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/09/26/farcical-polls-in-iojk-under-induan-military-siege-cant-be-substitute-for-kashmiris-right-to-self-determination-ajk-pm/>

Economic Developments

Dasu Hydropower Project: Construction continues on 15 key work fronts

The Nation, 24 September 2024

Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen (r) Sajjad Ghani has said that Dasu Hydropower Project is of immense importance for meeting the energy requirements of the country through

indigenous yet clean, green and affordable hydel electricity, therefore, concerted efforts are needed for completion of the project as per the timelines. The chairman had a detailed visit of the various sites of the project, which included left and right abutments of the main dam, underground power house and transformers cavern, main crushing and batching plants and re-located Karakoram Highway (KKH-I), and reviewed construction activities there.

The consultants and the contractors briefed the chairman about the site-wise targets and achievements on the project and it was noted that construction activities on 15 key work fronts are progressing ahead uninterruptedly and at a good pace. After construction of upstream starter dam up to 798 feet above mean sea level, the diversion system this season successfully passed the recent floods through the two diversion tunnels and a bypass tunnel. Excavation and slope stabilisation continued on left and right abutments of the main dam, power house and transformers cavern. While, all seven tunnels of KKH-I have achieved their breakthrough mark. While, land acquisition for the Project is also complete.

Later, the chairman also participated in a Jirga with elders and civil administration of the three districts namely Upper Kohistan, Lower Kohistan and Kolai Pallas. The matters about payments under Enhanced Self-

Managed Relocation (ESMR) Package and implementation of Local Area Development Schemes (LADS) were discussed in detail. Reiterating his resolve, the chairman said that WAPDA is committed to bringing positive change in the life of the people residing in the project area, and with this in view, WAPDA is spending Rs 17.34 billion on the schemes of resettlement, environmental management and social development in the area. He directed the project management to promptly address grievances of the locals about ESMR Package and LADS.

It is to be noted that the 4320 MW-Dasu Hydropower Project is planned to be completed in two stages. At present, WAPDA is constructing stage-I with installed generation capacity of 2160 MW and annual energy generation of 12 billion units of low-cost and environment-friendly electricity. The stage-II, when implemented, will also provide 9 billion units to the national grid. On completion of the both Stages, Dasu will become the project with highest annual energy generation in Pakistan i.e., 21 billion units on the average.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/24-Sep-2024/dasu-hydropower-project-construction-continues-on-15-key-work-fronts>

Climate Change: A Call to Action for Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 24 September 2024

Climate change, a vital component of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs, Goal 13), poses a significant threat to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), requiring immediate attention and collective action. Rapid changes in GB are attributed to various factors, including modern communication, transportation, farming instruments, business practices, deforestation, wildlife threats, tourist influx, and excessive use of explosives for infrastructure development, melting glaciers, abrupt mining, and the use of diesel generators for electricity production in winters. Furthermore, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the One Belt One Road initiative have exacerbated environmental degradation. To combat these issues, community awareness campaigns, alternative fuel energy sources, suspension of polythene bags, sanitation, waste disposal, and hydroelectric projects in GB are necessary.

Additionally, accountability and transparency in tree planting initiatives, legislation, and bilateral agreements with border-sharing countries can contribute to green energy and climate conservation. The Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) project, initiated by the UNDP, aims to generate funds for plantations in hazardous areas by mobilizing local communities. However, despite large-scale plantations, the project's outcomes have been less than satisfactory due to unfavorable plant species selection, inadequate care, adverse climate conditions, and unrestricted grazing.

While the Clean and Green Pakistan initiative serves as a commendable example of waste management, it still requires substantial efforts to achieve its long-term objectives. To address climate change in GB, a multi-faceted approach is essential, incorporating:

- Environment-friendly curriculum in educational institutions
- Establishing environmental clubs in schools
- Involvement of Boy Scouts and Girls Guides for youth inspiration
- Community awareness campaigns
- Establishment of public toilets in tourist flow areas
- Fixation of proper dustbins with proper cleaning follow-up
- Modification of free grazing practices by local bodies in coordination with community support
- Mandatory hydro energy sources in GB
- Proper reforms in local bodies for sanitation, cleanliness, and water management with community support
- Responsible legislation in GB Legislative Assembly (GBLA) followed by good governance
- Bilateral agreements with border-sharing countries to sustainable environmental practices

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/09/24/climate-change-a-call-to-action-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

Pak-China agree to work together to complete mega projects

Daily Times, 25 September 2024

Pakistan and China will work together for the completion of ML-1, M-6 and M-9 projects in order to strengthen trade and economic cooperation between both the countries. While 2nd Phase of KKH and construction of Kaghan Naran, Jhal Khand, Babusar Top and Tunnel till Karakoram Highway will also be constructed. The consensus to this effect was developed in a meeting between Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan and Transport Minister of China Li Xiapeng during International Transport Conference, which was held at Beijing. Both the ministers held a detail discussion and agreed on 4 mega projects to be completed in Pakistan, said a press release.

In the meeting Public Private Partnership and other financial modalities were came under discussion. It is mentionable that missing links of CPEC projects will be completed which include Motorway from Sukkhar to Haider Abad and Karachi. Similarly, railway project of ML-1 Seaport to Multan and to Lahore, Karakrum Highway Thakot to Raikot and Highway of Kaghan Naran, Jhal Khand and Babusar Top will also be constructed.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1228801/pak-china-agree-to-work-together-to-complete-mega-projects/>

Zong expands its footprint in Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily Pakistan, 29 September 2024

Pakistan's leading cellular and digital services provider, has officially launched its network in Gilgit Baltistan (GB), marking a significant milestone in the region's digital development. The launch event was held at the prestigious Gilgit Serena Hotel and was graced by prominent dignitaries, including Mr. Ghulam, Minister of Law and Tourism, Government of GB, who graced the event as the chief guest. The event, held on 27 September, celebrated the commercial activation of 59 4G sites across the region, with further expansion plans slated for next year. Zong's presence in GB promises to empower local communities, enhance connectivity, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the area.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1230027/zong-expands-its-footprint-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

SUPARCO to open Pakistan's first space research center in Gilgit-Baltistan

The Express Tribune, 29 September 2024

The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) is set to make history with the inauguration of the Space Applications and Research Center (SPARC-GB) in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) on 02 October. According to an official

source, this pioneering event, to be attended by distinguished scientists, environmental experts, and students, will mark a significant milestone in the nation's journey toward space and environmental research. Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Gulbar Khan, will be the chief guest of the ceremony. This center represents SUPARCO's growing efforts to implement space technology and environmental monitoring across Pakistan, with a particular focus on Gilgit-Baltistan's unique challenges.

Its geography makes it susceptible to climate change and natural hazards, necessitating innovative solutions for better understanding the region's vulnerabilities. SPARC-GB aims to advance space-based environmental research that addresses these urgent challenges. The center will function as a research hub, concentrating on crucial areas such as glacier monitoring, climate change mitigation, and disaster management. It will facilitate cutting-edge studies on glacier dynamics, natural hazards, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management. By promoting collaboration among scientists, students, and experts, SPARC-GB is poised to become a leading institution in tackling some of the region's most critical environmental issues.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2499483/suparco-to-open-pakistans-first-space-research-center-in-gilgit-baltistan>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The Indian spectacle of holding mock elections in a military-occupied, besieged region of Kashmir has been rejected by the people of Kashmir: Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah

Urdupoint, 17 September 2024

Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah, the state's minister of information claimed that Kashmiris have rejected the theatrical sham elections that India is holding in order to turn 'occupied Kashmir' into a military cantonment. He said that the holy blood of our Kashmiri brothers means that even though the independence struggle in Kashmir is going through difficult times, it will not buckle. He claimed that the situation in 'occupied Kashmir' is quite tense since 5 August 2019, as a result of the unconstitutional, illegal, and immoral conduct of New Delhi. He said that Modi's target is the Muslim identity of Kashmir and that the majority of Kashmiris are unable to leave their houses, and the true representative leadership of 'occupied Kashmir' are in prisons.

He said that the theatrics surrounding the elections in 'occupied Kashmir' is being rejected by the people of 'AJK' and that they are demonstrating against Modi's deceit whenever there is a chance, he said. The right to self-determination of Kashmiris cannot be replaced by mock elections in 'Occupied Kashmir', he claimed. He claimed that the Modi government's

play is a cunning plot to draw attention away from the serious human rights abuses occurring in 'OJK'. Following 5 August 2019, the Kashmiri people will no longer tolerate rigged and fraudulent elections, which is why the Modi government is taking these steps to skew the demographic ratio in the region.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4168329.html>

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell-organized protest demonstrations against the staged elections in 'OJK'

Urdupoint, 25 September 2024

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell (JKLC) organized a protest demonstration against the 'alleged elections' that are taking place in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK). Secretary for Kashmir Cause, Arts and Languages Mirza Wajahat Rashid Baig, Muzaffarabad Mayor among others led the protest. Muzaffarabad Deputy Commissioner Syed Sikandar Nisar Gilani, various councillors and representatives of the civil society, Mudassar Farooq, Director (Administration), Dr. Raja Muhammad Sajjad Khan, Director (National Awareness Wing), and Raja Muhammad Aslam Khan, Director (Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell) were also present in the demonstrations. The demonstrators chanted anti-Indian slogans, criticizing the country's violence, unlawful

occupation, and alleged elections. Speakers in their address stated that elections in 'IOK' are not a replacement for referendum, and that elections in the disputed region are merely theatrical, and that India is gravely violating the human rights of those living there.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/national-news/live-news-4168331.html>

Skardu International Airport saw a record 18,900 passenger arrivals in July, which is thirty times higher than Gilgit Airport

Dailyk2, 26 September 2024

In July 2024, Skardu International Airport welcomed a record 18,900 passengers—30 times more than it did at Gilgit Airport. Sources within the Civil Aviation Authority state that in June of this year, 94 flights carried 16920 people to Skardu International Airport, while 16 flights carried 720 passengers to Gilgit Airport. This is 23 times smaller than the airport in Skardu. Similarly, 105 flights brought in a record 18,900 passengers to Skardu International Airport in July. While during the same month of July, just 630 passengers landed at Gilgit Airport with 14 aircraft, which is 30 times less than Skardu Airport.

Experts claim that although the number of flights has increased as a result of increased tourism, Gilgit Airport's passenger count is far lower than that of Skardu Airport since big planes don't

regularly arrive there. Many road travellers from Gilgit use Skardu Airport to reach other regions of the nation. Flights are cancelled, scheduled seats are postponed by many weeks, and many people are forced to travel by road due to the unfavourable weather at Gilgit Airport.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/25312>

The issue of airport victims will be settled peacefully: Amir Muqam

Dailyk2, 26 September 2024

Amir Muqam, the Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) affairs chaired a high-level advisory committee meeting to address the concerns of GB airport victims (issues of land and compensation). The meet was attended by the officials of ministry of Defence, Civil Aviation, Law and Justice, Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, Additional Secretary Khalid Ali Raza, Joint Secretary Muhammad Hamid Khan, and the representatives of GB Government. The officials from GB government among others also took part in the discussion and presented their views on the matter to the federal minister. Engineer Amir Muqam, declared that a peaceful solution will be found to the victim of airport. He claimed that all pertinent ministries and departments convened in this regard and they were urged to resolve the issue at the earliest.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/25313>

From Social Media

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

19 September 2024

The students of Karakoram University have announced to start a protest movement.

Details Video link:

<https://twitter.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1836756327173091603>

Wahid Kashir 🍁 @WahidKashir

25 September 2024

"Resistance is the lamp that shines as a ray of hope in the darkness. When people stand together, no power in the world dares to suppress them." Unite, protect your rights, save your resources and your national identity.

#RightsMovementAJK #AzadKashmir

https://twitter.com/i/bookmarks?post_id=1838975732560588891

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

29 September 2024

Thousands of people across #Gilgit_Baltistan took to streets against the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, chanted slogans against Israel and America.

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1840466257805447522>

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din

30 September 2024

Punch Medical College female students in Kashmir demonstrate against inadequate security, leaky ceilings, poor administration, unreasonable fee increases, and a dearth of essential amenities. Not even a border wall exists at the college! "#Kashmir #PeacefulStudents #EducationRights @farooq_pm

https://twitter.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1840471607703220704

Ali Syed@_Syed_Ali_Raza

30 September 2024

The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) is set to make history with the inauguration of the Space Applications and Research Center (SPARC-GB) in Gilgit-Baltistan.

https://twitter.com/Syed_Ali_Raza/status/1840637835000398250

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Disclaimer

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