

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 4 | Issue 40

30 September - 06 October 2024

SUPARCO **Tourism** **POK** **eCommerce**
Digital economy
Gilgit-Baltistan
Water Contamination



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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

Contents

Political Developments

- Pakistan dismisses Indian bid to portray itself as terror victim
- Kashmir's Struggle
- As legacies of colonialism go
- Detailed Study on Water Conditions of Muzaffarabad JK
- Kashmir Black Day: A Reflection on 27th October 1947
- No one can be allowed to weaken the eternal bond between people of Kashmir and Pakistan: PM AJK

Economic Developments

- The tourism hub is located in GB, whereas the seminars are unfortunately being held in Islamabad: GB Governor
- SUPARCO launches research centre in GB
- The Scope of e-Commerce in Gilgit Baltistan: Capitalizing on the Growing Digital Economy

Vernacular Urdu Media

- Pasban-e-Hurriyat staged a protest in Muzaffarabad against the fake third round of elections in 'occupied Kashmir'
- Strengthening Tourism will make 'AJK' a self-sufficient state: Tahir Khokhar
- People from 'Occupied Kashmir' always raised slogans in favour of Pakistan: Mazhar Saeed

Political Developments

Pakistan dismisses Indian bid to portray itself as terror victim

Dawn, 30 September 2024

Pakistan on Saturday said it was well documented that India was not only committing state terrorism in held Kashmir but also abroad. Pakistani diplomat Muhammad Faheem stated this before the 193-member UN General Assembly in response to Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's accusation that Pakistan was a promoter of terrorism.

The minister said a dysfunctional nation "coveting the lands of others" must be exposed and must be countered. The issue to be resolved between the two countries only relates to 'Azad Kashmir', he claimed.

Mr. Jaishankar had protested against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for raising the 'Kashmir dispute' in the General Assembly and accused Islamabad of pursuing a policy of cross-border terrorism. In his Sept 28 forceful speech, PM Shehbaz had urged both Israel and India to stop targeting innocent Palestinians and Kashmiris.

Highlighting New Delhi's threat to cross the Line of Control (LoC) and occupy 'Azad Kashmir', the premier had issued a stern warning to India. "Let me state, in no uncertain terms, that Pakistan will respond most decisively to any Indian aggression," the premier had asserted, his words emphasised by a firm thump on the rostrum.

On Saturday, while exercising his right of reply after the Indian minister's speech, Mr Faheem said, "It is most ironic that India, which is committing the worst form of state terrorism in 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' while also actively engaging in sponsoring terrorism abroad, is portraying itself as the victim."

The third secretary at Pakistan's mission in the US, Mr Faheem said, "It is a familiar ploy of all occupiers and colonisers to paint legitimate struggles for freedom and liberation as terrorism. India is failing to grasp the enormity of the indigenous Kashmiri resistance against its stranglehold and wrongly calling it cross-border terrorism."

He said, "India must introspect, reflect, and immediately implement the Security Council resolutions that provide for the Kashmiris to exercise their right to self-determination."

Mr Faheem called for holding India accountable for its actions that violate international law. Highlighting that India finances terrorism against Pakistan using its proxies, he said New Delhi's campaign to damage and destroy Pakistan's economy was no secret, including by impeding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through the sponsorship of terrorist groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army and the Majeed Brigade.

"India is also supporting terrorism in Balochistan," he added. "India's assassination campaign against its dissidents residing overseas has been exposed in Canada and the United

States, while its leaders publicly boast of murdering their citizens abroad.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1861995/pakistan-dismisses-indian-bid-to-portray-itself-as-terror-victim>

Kashmir's Struggle

The Nation, 30 September 2024

India's persistent stance on Kashmir as an internal matter continues to disregard the reality of international agreements and longstanding commitments made by both sides. Pakistan's position on the Kashmir dispute is clear: this is not just a bilateral issue but one of global significance, anchored in the right to self-determination. India's dismissal of the matter as its internal affair not only undermines past dialogues but also ignores the UN Security Council resolutions, which unequivocally call for a plebiscite in Kashmir. The Kashmiri people, who have long sought to determine their own future, are yet to be given the opportunity to voice their will.

India's frequent allegations of cross-border terrorism serve as a convenient diversion from the core issue. It is important to recognize that what is unfolding in Kashmir is not a case of external interference but an indigenous uprising against occupation. 'Freedom fighters' like Burhan Wani symbolise the Kashmiris' struggle for autonomy, resisting what they perceive as illegal control over their homeland. Under international law, the right to resist an occupier is recognised, and Kashmir's ongoing movement for self-rule must be understood in this context. The

international community's silence and inaction over Kashmir perpetuate the suffering of its people. The situation in Kashmir cannot be reduced to a security issue or dismissed under the guise of national sovereignty. The calls for justice, self-determination, and peace must be heard, and any resolution must be based on the principles of international law and the will of the Kashmiri people. Anything less would be a betrayal of the region's long-standing fight for freedom.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Sep-2024/kashmir-s-struggle>

Kashmir Black Day: A Reflection on 27th October 1947

Daily Parliament Times, 3 October 2024

October 27, 1947, marks a pivotal moment in the history of Kashmir, a day that has since been commemorated as Kashmir Black Day. On this day Indian government send its troops to Jammu and Kashmir against the will of the Kashmiri people. This date signifies the beginning of a prolonged struggle against illegal occupation by Indian forces. Each year, Kashmiris and their supporters worldwide observe this day to express solidarity with the people of Indian 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' who have endured decades of turmoil, oppression, and human rights violations.

The roots of the Kashmir conflict can be traced back to the partition of British India in 1947, which created two independent states: India and Pakistan. The princely states were given the autonomy to join either nation. Maharaja Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler

of the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir, initially chose to remain independent. However, later what is believed as controversial and nonexistent instrument of accession India send troops to Kashmir and later claimed Maharaja of Kashmir has signed Instrument of Accession, allowing Indian troops to enter Kashmir on October 27.

This accession is contested; critics argue that it was signed under duress and without the consent of the Kashmiri people. The subsequent arrival of Indian troops marked the beginning of an occupation that has lasted over seven decades. India took the matter to United Nations, and UNSC after listening to India and Pakistan, established that people of Kashmir will decide its political future through a free and fair plebiscite that remains unfulfilled till date.

The human cost of this conflict is staggering. Since 1947, millions have lost their lives due to violence, military operations, and human rights abuses perpetrated by 'Indian occupation forces' and Hindu extremists. Reports document extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and sexual violence against civilians. The region is often described as one of the most militarized zones in the world, with approximately one million Indian soldiers stationed there. The situation escalated dramatically on August 5, 2019, when India revoked the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of its Constitution.

This move was met with widespread condemnation and further fuelled

tensions in an already volatile region. It also intensified fears among Kashmiris about demographic changes aimed at altering the region's Muslim-majority status through change in state subject laws.

Kashmir Black Day serves as a reminder not only for Kashmiris but also for the international community about the ongoing suffering faced by those living under occupation. On this day, protests are held globally to raise awareness about human rights violations in Indian 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir'. Activists distribute literature detailing these abuses and call for international intervention to uphold the rights of Kashmiris. In Pakistan, government officials and citizens alike participate in rallies and demonstrations to express solidarity with their Kashmiri brethren. The day is marked by speeches from political leaders reiterating their commitment to supporting Kashmiris in their quest for self-determination. A call for global attention despite numerous United Nations resolutions advocating for a plebiscite in Kashmir, international attention has waned over the years.

The ongoing human rights violations have often been overshadowed by geopolitical interests and regional stability concerns. This neglect highlights a broader failure within international systems designed to protect human rights and uphold justice. The plight of Kashmiris is emblematic of larger global issues where powerful nations act with impunity while weaker populations suffer under 'occupation'.

As we observe Kashmir Black Day this year, it is imperative that we reflect on our collective responsibility to advocate for justice and support those whose voices are silenced by ‘oppression’. Kashmir Black Day is not merely a commemoration; it is a call to action for all who believe in justice and human rights. It reminds us that the struggle for self-determination is ongoing and that we must not turn a blind eye to the suffering endured by millions. As we remember October 27, 1947, let us stand in solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir and demand an end to their suffering through peaceful means, through dialogue and adherence to international law. The hope remains that one day soon, the aspirations of Kashmiris for peace and self-determination will be realized, allowing them to live freely in their homeland without fear or oppression. Until then, October 27 will continue to resonate as a stark reminder of both historical injustices and ongoing struggles for freedom across the globe.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/03/kashmir-black-day-a-reflection-on-27th-october-1947/>

As legacies of colonialism go

Dawn, 1 October 2024

Palestine and Kashmir have too readily been likened to each other, and to this end, they were mentioned in the same breath last week at the UN — not for the first time — by Pakistan’s prime minister.

There are a few similarities, yes, but they are mostly notional. Israel was

created in 1948, the year India and Pakistan clashed over Kashmir. They are legacies of colonial cynicism, and their people have been bludgeoned for seeking rights promised by UN resolutions.

Military conflicts between India and Pakistan over Kashmir have ended in stalemates, and this doesn’t include the 1971 war, which had an entirely different set of reasons and outcomes. Unlike the unending Palestinian struggle, the Kashmir dispute went into a freeze in 1972.

It stayed thus until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which signaled the demise of the USSR and announced the West’s triumph in the Cold War. That’s when an armed revolt flared up in Kashmir and it continues to stalk the heavily militarized region unabated. Palestinians and Kashmiris have also hijacked planes to press their rights, but this is where the similarities begin to wane. Palestine was supported by the USSR and Kashmiris had the backing of the West, not least because Pakistan was a handy ally.

Palestine straddles a different history altogether. All countries in the Middle East that were close to Moscow stand wrecked today by US-led military campaigns. Needless to say, this could not have happened without the vengeful support of the West’s allies, led by Saudi Arabia and Jordan. (The Pakistani military was used to crush a Palestinian uprising in Jordan in 1968.) Among the US-led targets are Libya, Syria, Iraq, and the erstwhile Marxist-ruled South Yemen. Iran got into the crosshairs by overthrowing the Shah.

The ongoing targeting of Palestinians thus has different roots from Kashmir. India was spared the ordeal inflicted on former Soviet allies as it changed corners in the footsteps of Egypt. The former non-aligned friends ardently support Israel as America's "unsinkable ship" in the region.

In the 1990s, at the height of the upsurge against Indian rule in Kashmir, it was normal to hear from resistance leaders in Srinagar that the dispute over their Himalayan region could lead to nuclear war. It was offered as a reason for nuclear-armed India and Pakistan to settle the Kashmir dispute amicably before it was too late. The argument was romantic at best and luckily delusional. It was spawned by well-regarded thinkers of the Hurriyat Conference. Prof Abdul Ghani Bhatt, the mild-mannered, Rumi-loving Persian scholar, led the field, peppering his fears of a war with ornate stanzas from Persian anthology. Last week's speech at the UN by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif claiming preparedness against a real or imagined military adventure by India was of a piece with what Indians clumsily call Pakistan's 'internationalisation of the Kashmir issue'. It's worth noting though that China, which also has territorial disputes with India, has seldom, if ever, taken the international stage to raise bilateral differences with India. Part of the reason could be that it seeks to have India as a partner, not adversary in its economic and political plans. Nor do we hear of dire threats made against China by India. This is not to say the

two sides don't remain militarily primed for a contingency.

In its zeal to take on India before an international audience, Pakistan may have missed the visuals of India itself 'internationalising' the Kashmir issue, which it laughably did by giving a guided tour of the elections underway in J&K to a clutch of foreign diplomats. (Did we ever see a foreign diplomat taken to elections in Uttar Pradesh?)

Unlike the skies over Kashmir, nine Western satellites are permanently stationed over territories of interest to Israel's defence. For years they have been observing the landscape very minutely, a point Prof Bhatt shouldn't miss. The eyes in the sky have been watching Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, and possibly the Houthis, but curiously, not Hamas.

Thus, when the Israeli woman officer who detected Hamas activity in Gaza before the catastrophic events of Oct 7 last year, alerted the male colonel responsible for keeping vigil on the open prison, he told her: "Your job is to ply us with coffee, just keep that coming." The exact details of the conversation would be known when Benjamin Netanyahu is removed from office, which he is working feverishly to delay by widening Israel's war in the region and keeping it perpetually on the boil. Else, peace was an earshot away: heed the call to end the Gaza slaughter and nobody would shoot rockets into Israel anymore. The US elections gave Netanyahu the leeway to dismiss the ceasefire calls with contempt and impunity.

Hassan Nasrallah's death thus followed a deep study of his bases for years with human, visual, and technical intelligence. The Israeli military was preparing for this venture, not the conflict with Hamas, an embarrassment hard to live down. The satellites and saturated intelligence enabled the precision killing of a Hamas leader in Tehran, followed by decapitating strikes against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Striking fear among Lebanese civilians was part of the battle drill, and it was staged by exploding pagers, killing dozens and injuring thousands.

Having said that, the war in Lebanon may have only just begun, unless big powers, out of sheer self-interest, douse the inferno quickly. An estimated 90 per cent of Hezbollah fighters, commanders with their lethal arsenal of well concealed hardware, are believed to be keeping the powder dry.

This was evident in the signal from Tehran, which said the "battle against Zionism" post Nasrallah would continue to be led by Hezbollah. Iran sees itself as more useful guarding the supply lines to Lebanon, and this it's doing without the need for an untenable arsenal India and Pakistan keep flaunting, mercifully vacuously, over Kashmir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1862297>

Detailed Study on Water Conditions of Muzaffarabad JK

Daily Parliament Times, 03 October 2024

The growing population worldwide has increased the need for clean water

for all in various sectors for instance irrigation. The frequency and intensity of hydro-climatic extremes (e.g., droughts, floods) are significantly affected by climate changes. The increase in agricultural, industrial, urban water extraction and consumption has exacerbated the decline of water quality, especially in developing countries. These reforms will challenge the sustainable management of 'clean water accessible to all'; one of the goals of the UN-Sustainable Development Goals. To date, water scarcity testing has focused on its quality-related parameters. The most commonly used indicator for drinking water shortage is the proportion of fresh water used relative to available water sources.

This index has been used for several scientific studies and was also presented as a USDGs-indicator for measuring water stress levels. Researchers examined the shortcomings of existing water resources, including the lack of water quality, the negligence of using non-traditional water resources and the lack of management of polluted water resources. We must understand the areas of water scarcity in terms of water quality and quantity, as it is us humans, who are dependent on the water quality and quantity parameters. Clean water technologies that meet water quality requirements i.e., desalination of seawater and wastewater recycling are proliferating around the globe.

Both of these options are considered to be an essential part of reducing global water pollution and water shortages

(USDGs refer to 6.3 and 6.4). However, testing related to water quality and the development of clean water technology has still been lacking, especially on a large scale in developing countries. Water and climate quality assessments are vital for the survival of the biosphere. Bacterial and mineral pollutants in water have been considered as one of the most severe problems. These contaminants are the cause of lethal diseases i.e., gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis A&E many types of cancer mental disorders etc. According to several international and national studies in Pakistan, each year, about 0.5 million children die from diarrhoea alone. In addition, a research study in developing countries showed childhood mortality rate due to diarrheal diseases is 2.5 million each year. The primary cause of this health stigma has been the presence of pathogenic bacteria and fungal agglomeration in drinking water infusing potential adverse effects on human health in the region.

The bacteriological and mineral toxicology of drinking water of Muzaffarabad is a relative concern in many areas that have no protection from the pollutants such as; agricultural mud, animal husbandry and solid waste disposals. District Muzaffarabad is the capital of the State of 'AJK' and spreads over 130.2 km away from Islamabad, Pakistan. Most rainfall occurs during the rainy season (July to September). Domestic water sources are springs, rivers, groundwater, treated river tap water, and minor surface water bodies. Some filter

plants also operate in the region, supplying drinking water to the local people. Water usage is domestic but it has also been provided for irrigation in some agricultural areas of the nearby towns and villages. Though agriculture is not the mainland practice of the district but, it has been practiced in some distant regions on a very small scale.

There is no actual ongoing industrial setup present in DMZD, 'AJK'. The small household industries such as; domestic weaving and food, a flour mill, pickle making and concrete block manufacturing factories are notables that cannot be related to major environmental pollutants. Chemical testing and microbiological analysis of the waters of DMZD were the crucial parameters considered to monitor water quality of an area. Microbial agglomeration has been considered an important source of pollution in the aquatic environment and causes various diseases. Regional springs were also polluted by many sources i.e., chemically loaded water from dumping of organic waste and poor management of other solid waste materials. Therefore, anthropogenic activities along with domestic sewage and leaching out minerals from mountains are the products that contaminate fresh-water sources with various organic, inorganic and toxic wastes. Due to the industry-free zone, DMZD is almost free from industrial pollutants and effluents. The metallic content can be chiefly attributed to geologic changes and area's mineral distribution, including human activities (i.e., construction, glazing,

paints, etc.). Water is generally treated with chlorine to decontaminate it from different pathogens. Regional Office PCRWR, Muzaffarabad conducts site-specific research on water Quantity and Quality Challenges in 'AJK' and efficient mitigation strategies development with Water Sector Stakeholders, Government of 'AJK'.

This Regional Office was established with specific objectives as follows; to conduct the research on the water shed of Neelum, Jhelum Rivers and glaciers in Neelum Valley. To carry out applied research and efficient Water Resource Management in 'AJK'. To provide consultancy services to public/farming communities to utilize Water Resources efficiently. To undertake monitoring of water quality in cities, rivers, springs and aquifers in 'AJK'. To maintain liaison and working relationship with various 'AJK' Departments, Universities, NGOs etc. in water sector. To document and disseminate research results to 'AJK Government' and community/end users. To conduct Wastewater Assessment and Regional Treatment Strategies Development in AJK.

The primary cause of the rise in diarrhoea, jaundice, and typhoid cases is water contamination in the city. Seventy per cent of the water samples taken for testing purposes in Muzaffarabad were unsafe for consumption. Natural springs are the major source of water in the households of district Muzaffarabad. 43 per cent of Muzaffarabad city's population relies on spring water, while 90 to 95 per cent of these springs

are contaminated and not fit for drinking. Natural springs and the water supplied through the Public Health Engineering Department's distribution system in Muzaffarabad were 40 per cent contaminated. Reasons of dirty water is the presence of septic tankers around springs, and inadequate cleaning of dirty water (less than 1 per cent is cleaned).

There are also signboards near the springs that say to avoid using water from these springs a project costing 540 million rupees was initiated to improve, rehabilitate, and maintain the water supply, which is still in the completion phases. After the completion of this project, the situation is expected to improve significantly. Waterborne diseases have become prevalent in Muzaffarabad city, where hundreds of children are brought to hospitals monthly. The largest hospital in the city, Abbas Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS), sees most children admitted for treatment suffering from diarrhoea, jaundice, and typhoid. Dr Waqar Ashraf, a pediatric specialist, has explained that the primary reason for the rise in these diseases is water contamination in the city. Almost every other child brought to the hospital presents these complaints. According to research conducted by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) in 2015, natural springs and the water supplied through the Public Health Engineering Department's distribution system in Muzaffarabad were 40 per cent contaminated. However, surveys conducted from 2020 to 2021 showed that this contamination had increased to 70 per

cent. Steps should be taken to improve the water conditions and provided the city with clean and clear fresh water.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/03/detailed-study-on-water-conditions-of-muzaffarabad-ajk-2/>

No one can be allowed to weaken the eternal bond between people of Kashmir and Pakistan: PM AJK

Daily Parliament Times, 03 October 2024

Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Ch. Anwarul Haq said that no one can be allowed to weaken the eternal bond between people of Kashmir and Pakistan which is based on the concept that there is no God but Allah and Prophet Muhammad SAW is His messenger. The Prime Minister Haq said this while speaking at an oath take ceremony of the newly elected office bearers of All Kashmir Newspapers Society (AKNS) here today. Speaking on the occasion, the PM said that promoting and protecting the ideology of Pakistan was his first and foremost priority. He said that raising voice for one's legitimate demands was a democratic right of every citizen but let it be clear that no one can be allowed to spread anarchy in the state under this pretext.

The government, he said, won't allow anyone whosoever to jeopardize the constitutional system of the state. Commenting on the Jammu and Kashmir People's Action Committee's role, the PM said that if the leadership of Action Committee was so impatient to protect rights of the people then they should form a political party. Reiterating his commitment to serve

the masses, the PM said that his mission to serve the people of the state would continue despite all odds. The Prime Minister said that establishing a merit-based system, supremacy of rule and law and rooting the rot out from the system was the incumbent government's top priority. He said that recruitments, in the public sector, were being made on merit through PSC and NTS and there was no complaint of any sorts, anywhere. "Work to complete the remaining part of Rathoa Haryam Bridge project has been started", the PM said, adding that the government had brought dead projects like Jagran Hydel Power Project back to life. He said that the present government has launched an initiative to enrol out-of-school children with the cooperation of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Qatar Foundation. Highlighting the importance of the media, the PM said that the government would provide all resources for the welfare of journalists. He said that the government would welcome positive criticism but it was the sole responsibility of media representatives to strictly uphold the ethics and norms of journalism. Stressing the need for upholding the sanctity of pen, the PM said.

"Newsmen are custodians of the pen's sanctity and they must not compromise on their integrity under any circumstances". He said that playing with one's dignity and honour in the name of news was not journalism. The Prime Minister on the occasion announced a 2-million rupee grant for the AKNS. He assured the media organizations that measures would be

taken to pay the arrears of newspapers on a priority basis. The PM also stressed on the Media's role in promoting the Kashmir cause and exposing Indian brutalities in occupied Kashmir at national and international level. The event was attended by government ministers including Colonel Retired Waqar Ahmad Noor, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Chaudhry Muhammad Akhlaq, Pir Mazhar Saeed Shah, Muhammad Akmal Sargala, Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, Dewan Ali Khan Chaghtai, Abdul Majid Khan, Sardar Amir Altaf Khan, Javed Butt, Chaudhry Akbar Ibrahim and Ms. Intiaz Naseem. Whereas a large number of journalists were also present.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/10/03/no-one-can-be-allowed-to-weaken-the-eternal-bond-between-people-of-kashmir-and-pakistan-pm-ajk/>

II-Economic Developments

The tourism hub is located in GB, whereas the seminars are unfortunately being held in Islamabad: GB Governer

Dailyk2, 30 September 2024

The governor of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Syed Mehdi Shah said that while GB is the hub of tourism, drawing both local and foreign visitors to its stunning sites, regrettably, however, tourism-related seminars are being held in Islamabad. He stated that tourism will not generate foreign cash unless the large scale development in GB and the tourism industry improves. Speaking at the International Tourism Forum award ceremony, he added that GB is

home to peaks higher than 8,000 meters, and hundreds of foreign visitors visit them each year, which boosts the economy of the nation. Regrettably, though, GB is still known as the Northern Areas. He said that the famous local mountaineers like late Hasan Sadpara, Ali Sadpara among other hoisted Pakistan's green crescent flag at K-2's summit and illuminated the name of the nation under trying circumstances. The upkeep of GB's infrastructure is crucial for the growth of the tourism industry, he stressed.

While the government of the region is working to make tourist-friendly amenities available, such as renovated entertainment venues, more has to be done. He expressed gratitude for the National Tourism Award's hosting event and stated that it will promote both domestic and international travel. He predicted that one day Pakistan will rank among the world's top tourist destinations. During the event, he gave out awards to individuals who had demonstrated the best performance in the growth of the travel and tourism industry.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/25384>

SUPARCO launches research centre in GB

Business Recorder, 3 October 2024

The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) has launched the Space Applications and Research Centre (SPARC-GB). According to a statement issued, the Centre was launched in Gilgit-Baltistan in a ceremony presided over by Chief Minister GB, Gulbar Khan.

The opening of SPARC-GB marks a pivotal moment for the region, as it will play crucial role in addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges, the statement said. In collaboration with the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan and international research organizations, SPARC-GB will provide technological assistance to address local challenges, including disaster management, ecological conservation and socio-economic development, it added.

The Centre will focus on critical issues such as climate change, glacier melt, and water resource management, positioning itself as a vital player in monitoring natural disasters and protecting biodiversity in GB, the statement added. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman SUPARCO Muhammad Yousuf Khan said, the establishment of SPARC-GB aims at conducting cutting-edge research and innovation. The Centre would support the local community through employment, capacity building, and development initiatives, he said.

The CM GB said the launch of SPARC-GB is a significant step towards addressing the region's pressing challenges. Senior officials concerned attended the event.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40325215/suparco-launches-research-centre-in-g-b>

The Scope of e-Commerce in Gilgit Baltistan: Capitalizing on the Growing Digital Economy

Pamir Times, 06 October 2024

Why do we still face unemployment problems in Gilgit Baltistan? One

reason is that we rely on old education systems that no longer match today's world needs. The job market has changed, and to find right opportunities, we need to learn new skills, that are aligned with the latest trends.

In the beautiful region of Gilgit Baltistan, a new type of businesses are growing—eCommerce and IT expert services. This means selling and buying things online, and it's creating exciting opportunities for the people of GB. More people are learning about online shopping and buying various items from different vendors from all over the Pakistan, and as a result, the market is expanding. This is a great time for anyone in Gilgit Baltistan who wants to start an eCommerce business he/she should start from some basics to sell online products.

Although eCommerce is not yet widely established in Gilgit Baltistan, the region is well-known for its unique products like dry fruits, handmade crafts, and other natural resources. These items are in high demand across Pakistan, and as internet access improves, the potential for eCommerce businesses will grow significantly. In the near future, online platforms will provide sellers in Gilgit Baltistan with the opportunity to reach customers not just locally but all over the country and beyond.

Starting your own online business might seem difficult, but with the right steps, anyone can get started. One of the easy ways to begin is by using platforms like building website on Shopify or WordPress. WordPress is a free platform but domain and hosting

cost involve here but you can sign up for just USD 1 on Shopify, create a website, and start listing your products for sale. After a month shopify will start charging you a basic amount monthly, it depends on the plans. Once your store is ready, you can use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to promote your business.

You don't need a big budget to advertise; you can start small by sharing your products with friends and family or through online groups. By using social media, you can reach a large audience quickly and efficiently all over the Pakistan. To get start you can proceed with the Basic plan that include all the basic features which are required to list a product and sell it.

While eCommerce offers great opportunities, it's important to be professional and honest in your business. Building trust with customers is key to long-term customer retention. Don't overcharge for low-quality products or don't make false commitments in while your product promotions. Providing high-quality products at fair prices will help you build a loyal customer base. The better you treat your customers, the more likely they are to come back to buy again in the future. It is a great possibility your satisfied customer would recommend your products to others as well.

Also a social proof is very important in your business, keep asking your customer to review your product. Positive reviews can help you in

boosting the sales. In Gilgit Baltistan, more people are spending time online than ever before, because this is something new that we are experiencing. But instead of just browsing meaninglessly, that time could be spent building a business or searching online new income streams. The internet is a powerful tool, and it's time to use it to create opportunities instead of just scrolling the social media feeds and reels.

One way to prepare for the future is to teach students in schools and colleges about basics of online businesses. By introducing digital courses in the syllabus will be the big change here, also offering an opportunity for practical experiences on trial base projects, that way can help young people in Gilgit Baltistan develop the skills they need to succeed in the digital world. This will prepare them for businesses, jobs and other opportunities in the growing eCommerce industry.

The eCommerce industry in Gilgit Baltistan is full of potential. With unique products, an increasing number of internet users, and growing interest in online purchasing, now is the right time to enter the market. While there are challenges in every business, the opportunities in eCommerce are huge, and with the perfect planning, anyone can succeed. By focusing on honesty, quality, and customer satisfaction, Gilgit Baltistan can become a key player in the digital economy.

Let's make the most of the internet, build businesses, and prepare the next

generation to lead in this exciting new business world of eCommerce and Digital marketing.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/10/06/the-scope-of-ecommerce-in-gilgit-baltistan-capitalizing-on-the-growing-digital-economy/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Pasban-e-Hurriyat staged a protest in Muzaffarabad against the forced third round of elections in 'occupied Kashmir'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2 October 2024

Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir staged a protest demonstration in opposition to the third round of forced elections taking place in 'Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IOJK). A large number of citizens participated in the protest by waving black flags and held up banners criticising India. Protesters chanted anti-India and anti-army slogans as they marched down major roads leading to Burhan Wani Shaheed Chowk. Speaking at the event, speakers claimed that the elections in the 'occupied state', which were conducted under duress, were plots by the Indian government, however, the Kashmiris right to self-determination cannot be replaced with such elections.

Speakers claimed that Narendra Modi is demanding sham elections by imprisoning the legitimate leadership and political opponents in 'occupied Kashmir', adding that New Delhi seeks arbitrary outcomes under the cover of the harsh application of draconian

laws. The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), according to speakers, is working to end the Kashmir dispute in line with UN resolutions, and Kashmiris view the APHC as the true leadership of their people.

They claimed that holding polls in 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK) under duress is not a way to resolve the Kashmir issue. They said that India need to have the guts to carry out its pledge to hold a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir while having international observers present. They claimed that the only reason, India is holding elections in 'OJK' is to legitimize and sustain its 'illegal occupation', and also to justify its unlawful actions on 5 August 2019. They reaffirmed that the arrest of APHC leaders and banning of pro-independence parties cannot demoralize Kashmiris. The protests were led by chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmed Ghazali, Vice Chairman Usman Ali Hashim among others.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Resize-of-PAGE-FRONT-02.jpg>

Strengthening Tourism will make 'AJK' a self-sufficient state: Tahir Khokhar

Urdu Point, 30 September 2024

MQM leader and former minister of tourism and transport, Tahir Khokhar in his visit to Mirpur mentioned that tourism industry has a capacity to transform the AJK into a happy and prosperous state. He further added

that if the previous leaders had given due attention to this sector, right now there would have been no unemployment crisis in the region. Underscoring upon the good work done under his reign as tourism minister, he had prioritised tourism in Neelum valley and created thousands of employment opportunities for the common people. "This region is full of resources", added Khokhar but it remains dependent upon the leaders of the country and their ill driven policies. The local leadership is dependent upon centre. It can't even create grade-one employment vacancies and even for that it has to remain dependent on the central government.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/mirpur/kashmir/live-news-4173616.html>

People from 'Occupied Kashmir' always raised slogans in favour of Pakistan: Mazhar Saeed

Urdu Point, 4 October 2024

The Information Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah said that people from 'Indian occupied Kashmir', have always raised slogans in favour of Pakistan despite facing strict restrictions from Indian rule. Doing so, they express their inner emotions.

The conduct of the recent elections, which he terms as 'fake elections' according to him cannot replace plebiscite. Saeed, while addressing Kashmir journalist's forum, reiterated government's keen concern to address problems of people and according to

him remains steadfast in upgrading their lives. All parts of 'AJK', irrespective of any discrimination will receive developmental funds, and proper merit system will be made in place, Saeed added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4179004.html>

Social Media

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

4 October 2024

Minister Hasnain Raza should be released by abolishing the black law of Schedule 4, protest of Gilgit Youth

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1842176251550708078>

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din

5 October 2024

Assess the rule of law in Gilgit-Baltistan. In presence of the Chief Minister, people are firing with illegal weapons and there is no restraint.

Video to the link:

https://x.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1842278699971879335

Ilyas @ilyas_siachen

02 October 2024

Strongly condemn the illegal and baseless arrest of Wazir Hasnain Raza by Skardu police. #ReleaseWazirHassnain

https://x.com/ilyas_siachen/status/1841462335623574010

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 4 | Issue 40

30 September - 06 October 2024

Compiled by

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

Edited By

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

Disclaimer

PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.



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