

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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ovid funds **News**
easefire agreement
Bilateral dialogue **National Command Operation**
all-weather road **centre**
K **hydropower**
arot project **Fake**
Tunnel Lowari



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Political Developments

Silk Route to KKH and CPEC

Masud Ahmad Khan, The Nation, 10 May 2021

Historically, parts of Gilgit-Baltistan especially Gilgit and Hunza were extremely important transit points in the Silk Route that spread from Europe to China which at that point was the most important trade route in the world. In modern history of Pakistan, this silk route was replaced by the Karakoram Highway which was built with great labour and sacrifice by both Pakistan and China. The KKH construction has increased the status of GB which has gained all the more strategic importance as China's presence next door and an unobstructed connection between China and Pakistan which will soon extend to other parts of the world as well. The US interests of containing Chinese influence converge with those of India. And with this convergence, comes the threat of attempts to destabilise CPEC projects both from India and the US

Earlier, India was also involved in terrorist attacks on the Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar and the Chinese consulate in Karachi. India is beyond any doubt, directly involved in terrorism—especially in Balochistan. Pakistan has already exposed India's nefarious design against CPEC. DG ISPR last year exposed India's links, financing, training and sponsorship of terrorism to the world. Pakistan's security forces will continue to thwart all hostile attempts to sabotage the project and destabilise the country.

<https://nation.com.pk/10-May-2021/silk-route-to-kkh-and-cpec>

Protest in AJK against Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque

Parliament Times, 11 May 2021

People in Azad Jammu and Kashmir took out a rally in protest against the Israeli aggression at the *Al-Aqsa* mosque and in solidarity with the Palestinian people. A significant number of people marched from the Shaheed Burhan Wani Chowk towards the main city and chanted slogans against Israeli atrocities in Palestine. Sloganeering against Indian atrocities in IOK was also heard. The protest was organised by Pasbaan-e-Hurriyat with support from many local political and religious personalities.

The protestors held banners showing solidarity with the people of Palestine and demanding the establishment of an independent Palestine. They called on the International organisations especially the UN to intervene in the volatile situation. They also reiterated that the OIC should formulate a solid and comprehensive strategy to counter Israeli terrorism. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmad Ghazali said the Israeli attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque and Muslims is the open testimony about usurpation of religious rights.

“People of Kashmir stands shoulder to shoulder with their Palestinian brethren,” adding that the United Nations must take stern notice Israeli attacks on innocent Palestinians.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/05/11/protest-in-kashmir-against-israeli-attacks-on-mosque-al-aqsa/#.YKC-KqFX7IV>

GB Govt Issues Guidelines for Eid-ul-Fitr Celebration in order to minimize the risk

Urdu Point, 11 May 2021

Gilgit-Baltistan government issued guidelines for Eid celebrations in accordance with the instructions of the National Command Operation Centre (NCOC) which is the nerve centre to synergize and articulate unified national effort against COVID-19. As per this notification, worshippers were ordered to organise Eid prayers in open space under stringent covid-19 protocols. If because of any reasons prayer is organized inside the Mosque, all doors and windows needs to be kept open to minimize chances of spread of the virus in the closed space.

The *Ulemas* were asked to keep the Eid sermon short so that people only gather for a short period of time. Thermal screening was made mandatory at the entry points of all places of worship. People were also asked to perform the ablutions at home and come to the Eidgah with their own prayer mats. Banners highlighting Covid management protocols were also to be displayed at prominent places at the prayer venue.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gb-govt-issues-guidelines-for-upcoming-eid-ul-1248204.html>

Reversal of IIOJK status should be precondition for talks with India: Masood

Daily Times, 13 May 2021

Azad Jammu Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan has cautioned the Pakistan authorities from getting involved in a bilateral dialogue with India without India reversing its decision of revoking the special status of the ‘Occupied Territory’. The President said that a bilateral dialogue without these pre-conditions will endorse India’s ‘fascist agenda’ in Kashmir and the various war crimes which include demographic change, land grabbing, detentions, killings and cultural invasion.

While not undermining the importance of the ceasefire agreement in saving and improving lives of the people living on both sides of the LoC, the President still insisted that the Pakistan should be cautious while going down that road with India without being fully aware of India’s intentions.

Lifting of the protracted and brutal military siege of Kashmir, restoration of the pre-August 5, 2019 status of the occupied territory and revocation of all illegal domicile certificates issued to more than three million non-natives are some of the minimum confidence-building measures required before any engagement with India, he said. The President went on to say that the Kashmir issue had been successfully internationalized in the past few years and any concession

from the Pakistani side would release that pressure on India and losing the international space that Kashmir had so acquired.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/755844/reversal-of-indian-sinister-actions-should-be-precondition-for-talks-with-new-delhi-ajk-president/>

AJK celebrates Eid-ul-Fitr with full religious fervour but with simplicity

The Nation, 16 May 2021

Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated across Azad Jammu and Kashmir with religious fervor but with simplicity in view of COVID-19. The largest Eid gathering was held at central Eidgah and central Mosques in the State's capital Muzaffarabad town according to SOPs to avert threat of spread of Corona Virus, where *Ulema* (Priests) in their sermons highlighted the significance of the sanctified festival in the backdrop of the Islamic history. Meanwhile, thousands of Muslims thronged to various Eidgahs, shrines and Mosques in all 10 districts of AJK this morning to offer Eid prayers.

On the occasion, imams prayed for upholding of the teachings of Islam, promotion of peace, unity, integrity and harmony among the Muslim Ummah and freedom of Indian occupied JAMMU KASHMIR from Indian yoke. Elaborate arrangements were made by the divisional and districts administrations at all three divisional and district headquarters for celebrations of Eid festival across the liberated territory.

<https://nation.com.pk/16-May-2021/ajk-iiojk-celebrate-eid-ul-fitr-with-full-religious-fervour-but-with-simplicity>

Economic Developments

Rs 50 Billion Shandur-Gilgit road included in GB development package

PT Profit, 11 May 2021

The federal government of Pakistan has decided to include the 216-kilometre Shandur-Gilgit road into the recently announced Rs 370 billion upliftment package for GB. The 50 billion rupees investment project which will provide an alternate route to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would be completed under the umbrella of the Integrated GB Development Plan 2021-26. The new road would be an all-weather road, providing an alternative route to CPEC during the winter when the Silk Route is closed due to snowfall. After Lowari Tunnel, the project will be another top notch and time saving route for travelling to the region.

The total length of the road is 363 km, of which 216 km are within GB territory. The project PC-1 has been submitted to the Planning Commission for subsequent approval from Central

Development Working Party (CDWP) and Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC).

<https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/05/11/rs50bn-shandur-gilgit-road-included-in-gb-development-package/>

First CPEC hydropower project on Jhelum reaches closer to completion

Pakistan Observer, 12 May 2021

Lieutenant General (retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa, Chairman of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority announced on Wednesday that 88% work on 720 megawatt Karot Hydropower Project has been completed. The Chairman claimed that the project had created 5,000 jobs for the local residents. The project that spans over Punjab and AJK on the river Jhelum is expected to be completed in the year 2022 with total estimated investment of \$ 1720 million.

This news comes only a month after the GB government signed an agreement with the Three Gorges Company of China to implement 1124 MW Kohala Hydel Project under CPEC. The 2.4 billion dollar project in Kohala will be the Chinese company's largest investment in Pakistan. In his tweet, General Asim used the hash tag, 'CPEC making progress' which clearly shows he is trying to clear any doubts regarding the slowing down of CPEC projects.

<https://pakobserver.net/first-cpec-hydropower-project-reaches-closer-to-completion/>

'It is deplorable that the Pakistan government has curtailed Covid funds for AJK': Farooq Haider

Daily Muhaasib, 13 May 2021

Pakistan Muslim League (N), AJK convened the parliamentary board meeting of its members which was chaired by President of PML (N) Shahbaz Sharif in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by many senior members of the party like Prime Minister AJK Sardar Farooq Haider, former Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khakan Abbasi, and Secretary General Ehsan Iqbal among others. In the meeting, rich tributes were also paid to the deceased former Advisor to the Prime Minister and senior party member Zia Sardar.

Speaking on the occasion, Shahbaz Sharif said that Farooq Haider and his team deserve applause for their positive work in AJK that they have done in the past five years. He said that the PML (N) government had put AJK on the path to development and growth which the previous governments failed to do. Both Shahbaz Sharif and the AJK Prime Minister accused the federal government of stopping AJK's Covid funding which was deplorable and condemnable. They however maintained that the PML (N) government had the situation in control and for their performance the people will bring them back to power in the upcoming AJK elections.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/muzaffarabbad.php>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

No talks with India until Aug 2019 steps undone: PM Imran

Daily Jung, 12 May 2021

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that Islamabad will not resume talks with New Delhi until it restores the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

"Unless India reverts its August 5, 2019 action, Pakistan will not hold talks," Premier Imran said while responding to a caller on 'Apka Wazir-e-Azam Apke Sath' programme during which he took telephone calls from citizens. We will not talk to India until they withdraw their unilateral August 5 move. Western countries are preparing India against China as an opponent on the global economic front. That is why these countries are silent on atrocities in Occupied Kashmir. PM Imran's comments during the programme came days after Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said that Saudi Arabia will work to encourage reduction in tension between Pakistan and India.

In the same programme, the PM also answered important questions regarding the sugar mafia, rebuilding of the economy, curbing corruption and inflation, border security, Covid-19 situation and expat portal.

https://jang.com.pk/news/925333?_ga=2.45570404.1358174715.1621058550-503364375.1621058549

LoC, Ceasefire agreement and the Kashmiri people

Editorial, Daily Ausaaf, 12 May 2021

The agreement to implement the 2003 ceasefire agreement was signed on February 25, 2021 between India and Pakistan. Pakistan, as usual, once again decided to give peace a chance. This agreement was highly appreciated by the international community, especially in the Western world and in the United States. It should be remembered that this agreement was signed during the tenure of General Musharraf. India had by then erected an iron fence on the LOC with the cooperation of Israel and as soon as its nefarious objectives were achieved, India adopted its traditional policy of state terrorism in J and K and started violating the ceasefire as per its convenience.

For the past ten years, the Indian Army has fired on the vehicles of UN military observers in Chhamb, Rawalpindi and other sectors, yet the UN has remained silent in the name of lack of evidence. These international military observers are allowed to do their work with full authority in the Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir region and they are doing so but in occupied Jammu and Kashmir they are confined to their camps. They have been evicted from their official residences in Delhi and many human rights groups have been asked to leave the country but the United Nations has remained suspiciously silent.

The need of the hour now is not just to implement the ceasefire agreement, because India will unilaterally violate it whenever it feels expedient. But for the world powers, institutions and the United Nations to try and implement the resolutions on Kashmir in accordance with more than 18 unanimous resolutions that were passed by the Security Council has become difficult. Pakistan urges the world community to ensure the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination and implement the report of the Human Rights Commission and punish the Indian occupiers like it did in the case of Yugoslavia.

Unconditional release of political prisoners, repeal of black laws should also be ensured. International measures should be taken to restore all civil, human and political rights of the people of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and to stop the systematic genocide of Kashmiris so that real and meaningful results of the ceasefire can be achieved.

<https://dailyausaf.com/urdu-columns/news-202105-103825.html>

‘Fake News deliberately being peddled about the judicial crises’: Government Spokesperson

Jammu Kashmir Times, 12 May 2021

In an attempt to clear the air regarding the growing apprehensions about the Judiciary crisis, the government spokesperson accused certain groups with vested interests of trying to misinform people deliberately to raise questions on the credibility of both the government and the judiciary.

He said that the procedure to appoint the judges of the Supreme Court and the High Court of AJK is fixed by the constitution and the AJK Prime Minister has made no attempts to jeopardize that process. Media is being used to peddle lies to give an impression of a broken down system.

He asked the media to be responsible and refrain from making conjectures and assumptions without confirming the truth. The government also hopes that the courts themselves will take cognizance of these irresponsible acts.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/1-4.jpg>

Numerous workers desert PPP and PML (N) to join PTI

Daily Ausaaf, 13 May 2021

The election campaign is in full swing in constituency LA-30 Muzaffarabad-4. Thousands of people from across the constituency have come forward in support of the PTI candidate and former Minister, Choudhary Muhammad Rashid. Leading political activists of *Tanoli* community from Union Council Langarpora, Shalabagh, those of *Mughal* community from Malsi, Thotha and Luasi and those of Abbasi community from Union Council Kai Manja not only announced their support for Chaudhry Muhammad Rashid but also pledged to run a campaign for him.

On his arrival at his hometown in Phandgaran, Chaudhry Muhammad Rashid was given a hearty welcome. On the occasion, many former members of the PPP and the PML (N) deserted their respective parties and joined the PTI. Among these were Sabir Ali Akbar Abbasi, Sher Zaman Abbasi, Arzam Khan Abbasi, Nazir Khan Abbasi, Sharafat Khan Abbasi, Razaqat Abbasi, Mushahid Abbasi, Adnan Abbasi, Naseer Abbasi, Bilal Abbasi, Saleem Abbasi and others.

<https://dailyausaf.com/kashmir/news-202105-103960.html>

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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.



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