

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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19 - 25 September 2022

Rehmat Ul -Lil Alamin Authority
Elementary Education
Tarbela Dam Foundation
Gilgit-Baltistan POK
CPEC Diamer Basha

economic zone



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

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Political Developments

OIC contact on Kashmir meeting to be held at UN

The Express Tribune, 18 September 2022

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hissein Brahim Taha, is expected to hold bilateral meetings with leaders and presidents of OIC member states and officials of regional and international organizations, on the sidelines of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The OIC Secretariat in Jeddah in a statement said that the general secretariat will hold the annual coordination meeting at the level of the OIC foreign ministers, in addition to the meetings of the OIC six-member committee on Palestine, the Contact Group on Muslims in Europe, the Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir, and the Contact Group on the Muslim Rohingyas in Myanmar.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2377218/oic-contact-on-kashmir-meeting-to-be-held-at-un>

GB government to challenge judges' appointment

Dawn, 20 September 2022

The recent appointments by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) chief court have led to a controversy as the region's cabinet has 'rejected' the appointments and announced it would challenge them in the Supreme Court. The cabinet, while rejecting the appointments, said they were made without consultation with the regional government and declared the appointments 'illegal'. The meeting was told that the GB governor was mandated by law to consult the

regional government before sending the summary to the center for the appointment of judges. However, the process was 'sabotaged'. The GB CM Khalid Khurshid said that the federal government wants to completely 'paralyze' the elected government of GB as it intends to dissolve the elected assembly of the region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1711047/gb-government-to-challenge-judges-appointment>

'AJK' president seeks OIC's proactive role to resolve the Kashmir issue

Daily Parliament Times, 22 September 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has said that the international community should play its much-needed role to help resolve the Kashmir dispute that happens to be the main cause and consequence of 'bloodshed' and human rights violations in the region. He said this while addressing a special meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at the United Nations, New York. The OIC Secretary General Hussain Ibrahim Taha, Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, and other Islamic countries also participated in the meeting. While speaking on the occasion, the president said that the OIC has always supported the Kashmiris' just cause and condemned the human rights violations being committed by the 'Indian forces' in Kashmir.

He said that 'I am burdened' by the expectations of one and a half million Kashmiri people who want that the

member countries of the OIC should move beyond the 'political rhetoric', and come forward in a big way and openly express their support for Kashmiris' 'legitimate right', the 'right of self-determination.' He said that the Kashmiri people in 'occupied Kashmir' were currently going through a 'serious' and 'alarming situation', adding that in the aftermath of August 5, 2019, India has started large-scale changes in 'occupied Kashmir', aimed at changing the region's demography, claiming that India has issued 'fake domiciles' to more than 42 million non-state Hindus to change the population ratio. While referring to the delimitation of constituencies, he said that the BJP government was changing the entire electoral landscape of the region to install a Hindu Chief Minister in the state. He also raised the 'unjust' sentencing of Yasin Malik and other Hurriyat leaders, who have been arrested and left to rot behind the bars. He said that the 'occupied Kashmir' remains the world's largest militarized zone and that the 'Indian forces' are involved in 'extra-judicial killings' of Kashmiri youths in fake encounters, adding that 'rape of women' was being used as a weapon war by India against Kashmiris.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/09/22/ajk-president-seeks-oics-pro-active-role-to-resolve-kashmir-issuel>

Growing extremism and persecution of Kashmiris should cause concern for the world: Hina Rabbani Khar

Pakistan Today, 22 September 2022

Pakistan minister of State Hina Rabbani Khar during her meeting with US Ambassador at Large for International

Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain in New York has said that growing 'intolerance,' 'rising extremism,' and 'persecution of minorities' in India and its continued 'repression' against Kashmiris in 'Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) should be a matter of 'grave concern' for the international community, particularly the US. She said Pakistan attaches the highest importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities, adding that their rights are protected in the Constitution of Pakistan and upheld by the judiciary. The Parliament of Pakistan takes the protection of human rights of all citizens including minorities very seriously noting that religious diversity is Pakistan's strength and religious minorities are playing a very important role in the socio-economic development of Pakistan. She added that they are represented in parliament, judiciary, and services. Conscious efforts are being made to integrate them into the political fabric and to enhance their representatively.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/09/22/growing-extremism-persecution-of-kashmiris-should-cause-of-concern-for-world-ms-khar/>

Reference to Kashmir dispute by Erdogan at UN 'frustrates' India

Pakistan Observer, 23 September 2022

Within hours of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statement on the Kashmir dispute at the ongoing UNGA session in New York, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar tweeted that during his meeting with his Turkish counterpart, he discussed 'crisis in Ukraine, food security, G20 countries, and Cyprus.' This act by

India is being seen by diplomatic circles as a 'blackmailing tactic.' They say that Cyprus was a part of the Ottoman Empire and hence belongs to Turkey while the British Empire unjustly divided it after its occupation. On the contrary, Kashmir is an international dispute and the United Nations have passed many resolutions asking for its political settlement through a plebiscite. A few hours before the meeting of Jaishankar and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Erdogan said that it has been 75 years since India and Pakistan became independent and sovereign countries, but till now there is no peaceful relationship between the two countries.

<https://pakobserver.net/reference-to-kashmir-dispute-by-erdogan-at-un-frustrates-india/>

Kashmiris facing biggest 'threat' from India in terms of 'military repression': Speakers at a Seminar

Pakistan Observer, 23 September 2022

Speakers at a seminar have termed India's 'military repression,' demographic 'engineering' and its 'religious and civilizational aggression' in Kashmir as the 'biggest threat' Kashmiris have ever faced. The seminar titled 'Indian Military repression, demographic engineering, and religious and civilization aggression in occupied Kashmir' was organized by World Muslim Congress on the sidelines of the 51st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The seminar was attended and addressed by international 'experts,' human rights defenders, academicians, and political activists hailing from different parts of the world, including Ch. Muhammad

Yasin, president of Pakistan People Party (PPP), 'AJK' chapter, Tehreek-e-Kashmir leaders Fahim Kiani, Sardar Amjad Yousuf, Executive Director of Kashmir Institute of International Relations, APHC-'AJK' leaders Syed Faiz Naqshbandi and Altaf Hussain Wani.

While underlying the 'dangerous dimensions' of the Kashmir dispute, Altaf Hussain Wani said that Indian 'belligerent military occupation' of the territory coupled with multi-front political, social, and 'religious aggression' pose a 'serious existential threat' to the region's 'indigenous' population who happen to be the Muslims. He said that it was quite unfortunate that the world has been 'blatantly ignoring' the 'systematic slow-motion genocide' of Muslims that has been going on in the region for the past several years. The Speakers said in the aftermath of 5th August 2019, the human rights situation in the territory has 'deteriorated' to alarming levels, while on the other levels, a multi-front 'onslaught', aimed at 'identity erosion', is yet another biggest challenge Kashmiris have been facing since the abrogation of article 370 and 35 A. In addition to 'modifications' of the 'IIOJK's old laws, the speakers pointed out the government of India has introduced hundreds of new laws that 'lent impetus' to 'BJP's settler colonialism campaign' to completely 'erase' Kashmir's political, religious, and cultural identity.

While referring to delimitations of constituencies, they said the reorganization of assembly constituencies to favor a particular 'party' was used as a tool to politically

‘disempower’ and ‘marginalize the indigenous’ population. The speakers mentioned that the Delimitation Commission’s report would be presented as an ‘example’ in the political history of the world of how to turn a ‘dominant majority’ into a ‘political minority’ in the guise of democracy through ‘gerrymandering, cracking and packing.’ The speakers also said that the wide use and ‘abuse’ of anti-terror laws such as the Public Safety Act and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act by the Indian government, against the human rights defenders, working journalists, and civil society groups, who have played an important role to ‘document human rights abuses’ in ‘IIOJK.’ While referring to the religious and cultural ‘aggression’, they said that the ‘right-wing Hindutva warriors’ who ‘practically call shots’ on the ground have demanded the government of India to ‘impose a ban on Pheran’ (a traditional dress of Kashmiris) in Kashmir. Similarly, they pointed out that the ‘RSS-influenced regime’ led by PM Modi had renamed roads, historical places, and educational institutions to ‘erase’ the region’s ‘indigenous historical imprints.’

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmiris-facing-biggest-threat-from-india-in-terms-of-military-repression-speakers/>

Economic Developments

Female teachers of Basic Education Community Schools in Upper Chitral were not paid for 16 months

Pamir Times, 20 September 2022

Around thirty female teachers of Basic Education Community Schools in

Upper Chitral District, Gilgit Baltistan (GB), along with hundreds of male and female students held a peaceful protest demonstration and rally to get their salaries. The protesting teachers said that they have not been paid for 16 months and are facing immense financial difficulties. The teachers said that the said school were being run since 1996 under a ‘federal government project’ but in June of 2021, the ‘project’ was handed over to the provincial government, which further transferred it to the Elementary Education Foundation (EEF) A Basic Education Community School is run by a single teacher, who is teaching students from grade 1 to 5. There are almost 96 such schools in both the districts, Upper and Lower Chitral. The protesting teachers said after taking over the schools, the EEF has shown many schools as closed during a verification process, despite the fact that these schools are open and children are getting an education there.

The teachers also mentioned that the EEF’s District Program Officer is asking them to sign an agreement by which they would not be allowed to raise voices for their rights, or approach courts to settle issues. They said that the agreement was unfair and unethical and that their salaries have been withheld for the last 16 months because the teachers did not sign the ‘cruel contract’ agreement. The teachers were joined in the protest by several young children carrying placards and raising slogans. The female teachers and students also walked to the DC office and ended their protest after successfully negotiating with the DC. DC Manzoor Ahmed Afridi assured them after talking to the Additional

Secretary of the Education Department that their problem will be solved in two weeks. It is pertinent to note that these Basic Education Schools are usually established inside houses in areas that are very remote and lack primary school infrastructure and other facilities. The teachers are paid minimal remunerations and their jobs are not guaranteed.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2022/09/20/female-teachers-of-basic-education-community-schools-in-upper-chitral-not-paid-for-16-months/>

The federal government should offer GB a large economic package: JI head

Dailyk2, 21 September 2022

The Amir/leader of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan, Sirajul Haque during a press conference said that the federal government should use international aid to provide the flood victims of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) a significant share. During a press conference in Gilgit, Siraj-ul-Haq suggested that the central government should make a significant contribution in form of a large economic package, in addition, to aid from international donors to help advance GB out of its current state of backwardness. He said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif is urged to take action and allocate more funding to GB than other provinces because GB serves as the entrance to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). If GB develops, Pakistan develops, it's time to establish an economic zone in GB. He said that since unemployment fuels discontent and 'terrorism', and efforts should be made to create jobs in GB to lower the unemployment rate. The people of GB are suffering as a result of poverty and inflation. He

emphasized that GB has abundant natural and human resources and that it is capable of producing 50,000 megawatts of electricity and added that the people of GB should receive royalties earned from dam. He said that JI is assisting the nation and the country on all fronts.

He further claimed that Pakistan's 'aorta is Kashmir.' If the adversary has control over the 'aorta,' how can the nation be kept secure? He stressed Pakistan must take charge of 'freeing Kashmir' from India's 'oppression', and added that 'practical' steps and deeds, not words were spoken in the General Assembly, will 'set it free.' He said that people have faith in JI, believing that they will 'free Kashmir,' make Pakistan Islamic and make it rich. Many leaders of JI including its 'AJK' leaders spoke at the press conference. Dr. Khalid Mahmood, leader of JI-'AJK' stated that GB should be given a status similar to that of 'Azad-Kashmir' in response to questioning from the media.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/8690>

PM of 'AJK' aghast over the federal government's indifference towards 'Azad Kashmir'

Daily Parliament Times, 22 September 2022

While highlighting the financial crises faced by his government, the PM of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan has said that after imposing budgetary cuts last year the federal government has now withheld the allocated share of funds for the current fiscal year. The 'AJK' PM expressed these views while speaking at a dinner hosted by him in honor of a

delegation composed of senior journalists, electronic, print, and digital media representatives from Lahore in addition to the 'AJK' government ministers. While terming the withholding of funds by the federal government as an attempt to push his government against the wall, the PM said that the government was standing at the brink of 'financial crises' of a serious nature, adding that at present we (govt of AJK) do not have enough money to pay salary and pension to employees next month. He said that both 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) were given a variable grant because they were not part of the NFC award. He said that during the last financial year, we were given 49 billion rupees while this year we were supposed to get 75 billion rupees, but despite the sudden increase in the rate of inflation, the federal government agreed to give only 59 billion rupees through a letter but did not provide these funds.

While referring to the coalition government's apathy towards 'Azad Kashmir', the PM said Shahbaz Sharif has not visited the region after assuming the post of Prime Minister. While hailing the party chairman Imran Khan's vision of a prosperous and self-sufficient 'Azad Kashmir', he said, the former premier not only provided full funds but also increased the development budget in 'Azad Kashmir' even though there was a PML-N government in the region. Regarding his government's pro-people initiatives, the PM said that the government has taken several initiatives to improve the lives of common people in the region,

including the establishment of Rehmat Ul -Lil Alamin Authority, improving the health care system by making young doctors permanent, the establishment of IT parks, starting a project to build 1300 permanent houses for Kashmiri refugees. In response to a question, he said that the 'AJK' government raised its voice at every available forum against the 'unjust' sentencing of prominent Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, adding that the government is well aware of its responsibilities regarding Kashmir's 'freedom movement' and will not leave its Kashmiri brothers alone at any stage.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2022/09/22/pm-ajk-aghast-over-federal-govts-indifference-towards-azad-kashmir/>

WAPDA chief visits Diamer Basha Dam

Business Recorder, 23 September 2022

The chairman of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (retired) visited Diamer Basha Dam (DBD), which is being constructed on River Indus, 40 km downstream of Chilas town. During his visit, the CEO of DBD Company and DBD project, CEO Diamer Basha Consultants Group, and representatives of the contractors including the Chinese staff were also present on the occasion. The project management briefed him about targets and progress on the project. The WAPDA chairman visited the sites of dam abutments, diversion system, permanent access bridge, and the contractors' camps and reviewed construction activities. He was informed that construction work is

continuing simultaneously on 10 different sites which include access roads, a permanent access bridge across River Indus downstream of the main dam, excavation of dam abutments from the top, diversion tunnel, diversion canal, and power intake. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2029.

It has been said that DBD will have a gross water storage capacity of 8.1 MAF to irrigate 1.23 million acres of additional land. With an installed power generation capacity of 4,500MW, the project will provide 18 billion green and low-cost electricity units on average to the national grid every year. With the completion of DBD, the life of Tarbela Dam will also increase by another 35 years. A sum of 78.5 billion has been earmarked for Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the project area for the uplift of the locals. Besides, 4,100 people hailing from the project area have so far been provided employment opportunities on the project. Jobs for locals will further increase, as the project progresses ahead.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40199111/wapda-chief-visits-diamer-basha-dam>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The OIC and UN should stop India from ‘erasing’ the identity of the Muslim majority in ‘occupied Kashmir:’ APHC-‘AJK’ leader

Urdupoint, 19 September 2022

The former convener of the All Party Hurriyat Conference's ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (APHC-AJK) branch, Muhammad Farooq Rahmani, has expressed ‘grave’ concern about the political manacles imposed by the

current ‘Hindutva’ government and the ‘widespread detention’ of ‘children’s’ and adults in ‘India’s illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IIOJK). He criticized the ‘unjustified detention’ of six Islamic clerics and preachers in ‘occupied Kashmir’ and claimed that the ‘Hindutva government’ is attempting to ‘eliminate’ the region’s Muslim majority character and their faith in Islam, its core principles, and the Muslim ‘cultural heritage’ of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. ‘Hindutva’, on the other hand, he claimed, favors imposing ‘civilization.’ He said that the cleric’s arrests are aimed at regulating and modeling the Islamic prayers and speeches in line with the ‘RSS agenda’ of the PM Modi government of India.

He further claimed that the arrests were made to keep an eye on ‘sermons’ and ‘prayers’ in line with the ‘RSS goal’, adding that the ‘Hindutva rulers’ are determined to replace the secular provisions of the Indian Constitution with ‘antiquated Hindu beliefs.’ He said that it is undeniable that the people of Kashmir have been subjected to the most ‘brutal laws’ in their history as a result of the repeal of Articles 370 and 35A, while no room was provided for the expression of differing political and religious opinions. He claimed that thousands of individuals are languishing in jails in India and Jammu and Kashmir without being charged with a crime. He asked the OIC and the UN to take decisive action to ‘thwart’ India’s ‘aim’ to ‘erase’ Kashmir’s Muslim majority and its distinctive identity.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/islamabad/national-news/live-news-3285792.html>

Pakistan criticizes the detention of Islamic scholars in 'IIOJK'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 20 September 2022

Pakistan strongly 'condemned' the 'arbitrary' arrests and 'illegal' detention of 'prominent Islamic scholars', including Maulana Abdul Rasheed Dawoodi, Maulana Mushtaq Ahmed, and five members of Jamaat-e-Islami, in 'Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). These 'deplorable actions' only days ahead of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session 'manifests' India's growing defiance, and utter disregard of human rights and fundamental freedoms said the foreign ministry in a statement. These arrests have marked a 'new low' in the Indian 'occupation forces' 'blatant' and continued 'onslaught' on the human rights of the 'innocent' Kashmiris. The 'illegal detention' of the Kashmiri 'Islamic scholars' at a time when the 'true representatives' of the Kashmiri people are already under Indian custody under 'fictitious cases' and on 'fallacious grounds', is yet another Indian attempt to 'rob' the Kashmiri people of their distinct religious and cultural identity. The reprehensible arrests of the Kashmiri 'Islamic scholars' under the 'draconian' Public Safety Act (PSA) that defies all international humanitarian laws and permits detention for as many as two years without the need of any trial, is a 'deplorable' pre-emptive step by the Indian authorities planning to 'illegally

occupy' the religiously significant 'Waqf Board' properties.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Resize-of-20.jpg>

PM Modi's government is 'enforcing' Kashmiri students to recite 'bhajans' as part of its 'Hindutva' strategy

Jasarat, 21 September 2022

India has demonstrated a new form of 'state terrorism' in 'occupied Kashmir.' The young school students and girls in hijab were 'forced' to read the 'Hindu religious' hymn/bhajan. The attendees at school included representatives from the education department. The teachers of a school in South Kashmir are 'reportedly' seen 'forcing' female students wearing hijabs to recite bhajans in a video of the school that has been made public. However, the 'compulsory' teaching of bhajan was met with 'vehement opposition' from the students' parents. The social media users 'attacked' India's 'puppet' government in 'occupied Kashmir' after the bhajan video went viral on social media.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2022/09/21/bhajan-in-kashmiri-schools/>

The president of 'AJK' urges the US to take a proactive role at the UN in resolving the Kashmir dispute

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 21 September 2022

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhary has said that following the

history of 'grave human rights' violations in the region, the United States (US) should take part in efforts to find a long-term resolution to the Kashmir issue. The 'AJK' president made these claims at a meeting with US Deputy Secretary of State Elizabeth Hors and Christopher Jester, the bureau head for Pakistan, South and Central Asia, was also present at the meeting. The president briefed US Elizabeth Horst on the 'deteriorating' political and 'human rights' situation in the 'occupied Kashmir', claiming that since the 5th of August 2019, 'human rights violations' have increased by the Indian 'occupation forces.'

He said that the Kashmiri people, who have been 'trapped' in difficult situations were desperately seeking assistance from civilized nations, added that the 'killing of innocent Kashmiris' and 'arbitrary' arrests of civilians, 'harassment and humiliation' of common citizens have become a 'new normal.' During the meeting, he underlined how important it is for the US to do its part in putting the UN resolutions into action to end the Kashmir conflict once and for all. He claimed that as America is the only superpower, it is its responsibility to use its diplomatic 'clout' to help resolve the 'occupied Kashmir' issue. While speaking with journalists after the meeting, the 'AJK' president said that the world urgently needs to pay attention, notably the US to the 'catastrophic situation' in Indian 'occupied Kashmir.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-21.jpg>

India is 'misleading' the UNGA on the Kashmir crisis: Pasban-e-Hurriyat

The Jammu and Kashmir Times, 23 September 2022

The chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat, Uzair Ahmad Ghazali has said that India will 'mislead' the world at United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) about the 'grave' 'human rights violations' in Indian 'Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).' While appealing to the leaders and representatives of the countries participating in the ongoing UNGA, he said that India is trying to change the 'demographic condition' of the 'IIOJK' under draconian laws. He claimed that such Indian laws and acts are testimonials of 'state terrorism' in 'IIOJK', and added that India is constantly creating 'impediments' in the solution to the Jammu and Kashmir issue. He said that the members of the UNSC should play their role in solving the Kashmir conflict to avoid a nuclear war in the region, added that if the major powers of the world do not fulfill their responsibilities, the Kashmir dispute may lead to a nuclear conflict. He further said that Jammu and Kashmir are not an 'internal matter' of India, but a nuclear flashpoint in South Asia and a matter of the political future of the 22 million Kashmiri people. He demanded that the UN should send a high-level fact-finding mission to 'investigate' human rights violations and Indian 'military aggression' in 'IIOJK.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Resize-of-back-page-23.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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