

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Bajwa Gilgit-Baltistan
doctrine geo-economic
Inland Revenue
Department trade ties
wheat subsidy POK



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Political Developments

‘AJK’ President terms India's intransigence stumbling block in way of a peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute

Pakistan today, 20 march 2023

The president of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry said there was a dire need that the influential world governments, especially the US should play their role in the early peaceful resolution of the lingering issue of ‘Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir’ (IOJK). He expressed these views while addressing the participants of the training course of the National Defense University at the presidency hall. Military officers from more than 25 countries, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Germany, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Egypt, Palestine, Nepal, Myanmar, Indonesia, Kenya, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Oman, Malaysia, Jordan, and Iran were in the delegation. While terming India’s policy of intransigence as the biggest hurdle in the way of peace in South Asia, the ‘AJK’ president said that an inclusive dialogue, involving all the parties, including the Kashmiri representatives was imperative to find a lasting solution to the long-drawn conflict.

While referring to third-party mediation, he said that countries like the US should play the role of mediation to solve this problem once and for all. While referring to the fast

deteriorating situation in the ‘IOJK’, he said that the international community has a moral responsibility to get the dispute resolved in line with the UNSC resolutions, besides guaranteeing the right to self-determination to the people of Kashmir, also provided a comprehensive roadmap for an amicable settlement of the dispute. He said that Kashmiris had rendered matchless sacrifices to achieve their promised right and that all Kashmiris want United Nations to must fulfill its obligations to Kashmir and make sure that the resolutions are implemented. He said that after revoking the special status of ‘Occupied Kashmir’ on 5 August 2019, India was hell-bent on changing the demography of Kashmir to convert the Muslim majority into a minority and added that the ‘occupation’ authorities have issued more than 42 lakh fake domiciles to outsiders.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/03/19/ajk-president-terms-indias-intransigence-stumbling-block-in-way-of-peaceful-solution-of-kashmir-dispute/>

Trading for peace

Dawn, 20 March 2023

One key suggestion to resolve the bitter, decades-old Pakistan-India dispute is for both states to foster deep, enduring economic ties. While this might seem like an unlikely option at the moment, considering the currently frigid bilateral ties, there are signs that better relations can be achieved if trade ties, snapped after India did away with held Kashmir’s autonomous status in

2019, are restored. Indian Deputy High Commissioner Suresh Kumar discussed this possibility while speaking at an event at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Mr. Kumar said India wants 'better relations with Pakistan because we cannot change our geography', and called for normalizing trade ties. He added that India was interested in tapping Central Asian markets, which Pakistan could facilitate through transit trade.

It is significant that the Lahore Chamber invited an Indian official to its function, and that New Delhi's representative spoke of improving ties. This is a welcome departure from the toxic rhetoric that has been witnessed over the past few years, especially since the events of 2019 in occupied Kashmir. This paper has frequently argued in these columns that better trade ties can lead to a more congenial atmosphere in the subcontinent. Trading with India and other states in our neighborhood, indeed the wider Asian region, makes geo-economic sense and is in Pakistan's interest.

The economies of Pakistan's principal Western trading partners, the US and EU appear to be slowing; therefore, the currently lukewarm ties with regional trading partners must be improved. Several past attempts have been made to establish robust trade ties with India, but these have fallen victim to other factors, usually resulting in the military establishment nixing plans to improve trade relations with our eastern neighbor. Yet even former army chief

Gen Qamar Bajwa on numerous occasions talked of the need to improve ties with India. It remains to be seen whether the current army leadership agrees with this part of the Bajwa doctrine, or has other ideas where India is concerned. Indeed, the BJP government's anti-Pakistan outbursts have not helped matters. But better ties, helped by improved economic relations, can create a more conducive atmosphere to resolve the more complex bilateral disputes.

Pakistan needs to internally discuss all contours of its India policy thoroughly. These discussions should involve all stakeholders-the civilian leadership (including the opposition), the establishment, and trade bodies and a unified policy should be pursued, without resorting to embarrassing U-turns later in the day. However, implementing a new trade policy will only be practical after a new government takes charge in Pakistan and next year's elections in India bring a new administration to New Delhi. In the meantime, both states can start the spadework by restoring their respective diplomatic missions to full strength and easing visa restrictions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1743147>

UN urged to implement its Kashmir resolutions

Pakistan Observer, 20 March 2023

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference-'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK) chapter has demanded the United Nations (UN) implement its resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir without

further delay so that the Kashmir dispute can be resolved. The APHC-‘AJK’ General Secretary Sheikh Abdul Mateen in a statement issued in Islamabad said that the UN Security Council had passed a historic resolution on Kashmir. He lamented that the UN did not take any concrete steps to implement its resolutions, which gave India the courage to crush the just struggle of the Kashmiris with military force. He further claimed that India had turned Kashmir into a huge prison by deputing over 10 lakh soldiers and has given free hand to its soldiers to ‘kill Kashmiris.’

The Hurriyat leader claimed that the Indian soldiers are trampling humanity under their boots in the ‘occupied territory’, adding the martyrdom of more than one lakh Kashmiris, the destruction of over one and a half lakh buildings and the desecration of 13,000 Kashmiri women since 1989 is a proof of the ‘Indian brutalities.’ Mateen alleged that by issuing domiciles to thousands of Hindus, giving them lands in the ‘occupied territory’, and implementing other anti-Kashmir laws, the evil intentions of ‘Hindu extremists’ have become clear that they want to take away their identity, culture, and lands from the Kashmiris. He said Pakistan has always supported the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris and has spoken about the resolution of the Kashmir dispute following the UN resolutions at every forum.

<https://pakobserver.net/un-urged-to-implement-its-kashmir-resolutions/>

Kashmir freedom struggle is a continuation of the Pakistan Movement

Pakistan Observer, 24 March 2023

The resolution passed on 23 March 1940 is the main driving force behind the Kashmir freedom struggle, which is a continuation of the Pakistan Movement. A report released by Kashmir Media Service in connection with Pakistan Day said that the Kashmir dispute is the unfinished agenda of the partition of the sub-continent as Pakistanis and Kashmiris are tied in strong bonds of religion, history, and culture. It maintained that the Kashmiri delegation that had attended the 23rd March 1940 public event at Lahore, where Pakistan Resolution was passed, had declared that the people of Jammu and Kashmir would be a part of a future Muslim state in the region. The report said Kashmiris consider Pakistan and its armed forces as their saviors and protectors. It said the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, had rightly termed Kashmir the ‘Jugular Vein’ of Pakistan. It said Pakistan is committed to continuing its support to the Kashmiris’ struggle till they achieve freedom from the Indian yoke and Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir’s statement in which he urged the international community to ensure justice and deliver what is promised to the Kashmiri people as per the UN resolutions is its proof.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has also said that the struggling Kashmiris draws inspiration from the historic 23 March 1940 resolution and that a strong and stable Pakistan is very

important for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. The report further said Pakistan and Kashmir are incomplete without each other and pro-Pakistan slogans in 'IIOJK' show the oneness of Pakistan and Kashmir. The report further noted that Kashmiri unfurl Pakistani flags on Pakistan's national days to show their attachment and love for Pakistan, and added that right from 1947, the people of the 'occupied territory' have been celebrating Pakistan's national days under the shadows of Indian guns. The 'Kashmir Baney Ga Pakistan' slogan is the voice of every Kashmiri Muslim, it claimed. The report pointed out that the actions taken by Narendra Modi-led Indian government on and post 05 August 2019 once again proved that Muslims needed a separate homeland in the sub-continent and that 'IIOJK' is destined to become part of Pakistan, it added.

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmir-freedom-struggle-is-continuation-of-pakistan-movement-2/>

Federal govt bans GB Governor and CM from carrying security to other provinces

The Nation, 26 March 2023

The federal government prohibited the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) governor and chief minister from accompanying their official security personnel during their visits to all other provinces and the federal capital. The Ministry of Interior through a notification informed all the provincial chief secretaries and inspector generals of police that no security personnel of GB would be allowed entry into the respective province and Islamabad Capital

Territory (ICT) during any VIP movement. The provinces and the capital administration have been asked to arrange security of their own during the visits of the GB governor and the CM. The decision comes days after reports emerged that the official security personnel escorting GB Chief Minister Khalid Khursheed had resisted the Punjab police action at Zaman Park in Lahore, the residence of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. It was reported that the GB CM used his police guards to protect Khan from possible arrest. Some media reports also said that the GB chief minister, along with his official guards, had rescued PTI leader Senator Shibli Faraz to avoid his arrest during clashes between the party workers and police at Islamabad's judicial complex when Khan had to appear in a local court on 18 March.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2023/fed-govt-bans-gb-governor-cm-from-carrying-security-to-other-provinces>

Economic Developments

'AJK' inland commissioner removed

The Nation, 20 March 2023

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Tanveer Ilyas has removed Asim Shaukat, the commissioner of the Inland Revenue Department. The government has also decided to set up check posts on the routes connecting 'Azad Kashmir' with Pakistan to prevent tax evasion. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Inland Revenue Department of 'Azad Kashmir' have agreed to end the evasion of federal excise duty and sales

tax on cigarettes. The FBR, in a meeting with the (Central Board of Revenue) CBR, has set up check posts on the routes entering Pakistan from Mirpur, Bhimber, and Muzaffarabad. Officers and small staff are also being called from the FBR so that the two FBR and CBR together can eliminate the evasion of federal excise duty and sales tax on cigarettes.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Mar-2023/ajk-inland-commissioner-removed>

ECC approves 25000 MT additional wheat supply to GB

Pakistan Today, 21 March 2023

Following the wheat shortages and supply in Gilgit Baltistan (GB), the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet, chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, has approved an additional supply of 25000 Mega-Ton (MT) of wheat to GB to meet the required quota during the holy month of Ramadan. Keeping in view current wheat prices, the ECC granted an additional amount of 2.9 billion through Technical Supplementary Grant to meet the urgent requirements of GB. The ECC further directed the Ministry of Kashmir and GB affairs to submit a comprehensive plan for price rationalization in consultation with concerned stakeholders for consideration of the ECC within 30 days.

Following the high prices of largely consumed commodities, the allocated subsidy of 8 billion in the federal budget was not enough to purchase the required quantity of wheat in GB, thus

creating a severe shortage. Since the region has also been supplied with imported wheat, the price difference has made it difficult to purchase the required quota of wheat for GB under the allocated budget (subsidy). However, the center, while approving the additional quota of wheat, has directed the GB government to increase/ rationalize the existing price of the commodity in the area to avoid further grants and subsidies.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/03/21/ecc-approves-25000-mt-additional-wheat-supply-to-gb>

GB govt to move the apex court against 'held-up funds'

Dawn, 23 March 2023

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) cabinet has decided to approach the Supreme Court of Pakistan against the federal government for allegedly holding up the region's budget and development funds. It has also decided to approach the federal law ministry for not taking the GB government into confidence in transferring and posting the chief secretary and inspector general of police (IGP). The federal government transferred GB IGP Muhammad Saeed from his post following allegations that GB police officers were being pitted against Punjab police as the latter attempted to arrest PTI chief Imran Khan from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. Ministers at the 28th meeting of the GB cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid and held at GB House in Islamabad, also expressed reservations over the 'negative propaganda' against the GB police by some national and local political leaders.

It was decided in the meeting that the GB government would approach the Supreme Court of Pakistan against the reduction of funds by federal law for regular development projects in GB. The meeting noted that GB was being deprived of its legitimate rights since it was not covered under the National Finance Commission (NFC), a mechanism for disbursing federal funds to provinces. Mr. Khurshid said the region was paying a heavy price for not being a constitutional part of the country. He said that while the annual budget of other provinces had been increased by more than 20pc, GB had seen its budget reduced.

He said the GB government would approach the Supreme Court to formulate a clear procedure for providing the budget for the region. He said the federal law ministry would also be approached to end the practice of not taking the GB government into confidence in transferring and posting its officials. If the federal law ministry delayed the implementation, the Islamabad High Court would be approached, the cabinet noted. Mr. Khurshid said the recent transfer and posting of GB's chief secretary and inspector general of police would not be accepted without the consent of the GB government. He also issued an order to the finance and food secretaries to devise a coordinated strategy to provide a targeted wheat subsidy. It was decided that government employees above Grade 17, including members of the GB assembly and cabinet, would not get a wheat subsidy. The GB cabinet also decided to speed up a public awareness

campaign for the proposed land reforms. All the ministers were instructed to consult stakeholders about the proposed land reform act.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1743694/gb-govt-to-move-apex-court-against-held-up-funds>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The freedom and rights of Kashmiris cannot be compromised upon: Abdur Rasheed Turabi

Jasarat, 20 March 2023

The former chairman of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami 'AJK', Abdul Rashid Tarabi, while speaking with media at Karachi Press Club said that the 'Kashmiri people' will not accept any compromise on the rights and freedom of Kashmir. He said that the people of Kashmir have made countless sacrifices for freedom, and they will not accept any bargain over their rights or freedom. Turabi claimed that India is attempting to undermine the Indus Basin Agreement and is preparing to construct a huge dam by stealing water from 'rivers belonging to Pakistan', rendering Pakistan's territory uninhabitable.

He further claimed that the Indian government now started a 'constitutional terrorism' after engaging in 'state terrorism' and that India has given citizenship to 4 million non-Kashmiris to reduce the number of Kashmiris to a minority in Kashmir. He said that after seizing the assets of over 300 Jamaat-e-Islami institutions, the Indian government now seizing the

property of the Hurriyat activists. He claimed that Pakistan is the only country in the Islamic world to have an atomic bomb, which it would have used as a bargaining chip in international negotiations and to protect the people of Kashmir, but this is not happening.

He claims that Kashmiris are becoming frustrated because Pakistan is the only nation that can stand with them against India's 'terrorism and brutalities,' but Pakistan's stance towards Kashmir has also weakened as a result of poor economic policies and political unrest. In response to a question, he said that while the leaders of Pakistan, other Muslim friends, and other countries lacked a firm stance on Kashmir, the OIC had supported the Kashmir problem. The people of Kashmir have always held sway over Pakistan as a state, and they would have acknowledged Pakistan as their nation. There should be a clear policy towards Kashmir, and Pakistan should recognize that each country has individual commercial interests as trade between Saudi Arabia and India is valued at 86 billion dollars.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/03/20/abdul-rasheed-turabi/>

Pakistan supports Kashmiri, and without Kashmir independence, Pakistan is incomplete: Qamar Zaman Kaira

Nawaiwaqt, 21 March 2023

Pakistan is incomplete without the freedom of its 'jugular vein', Kashmir, claimed Qamar Zaman Kaira, advisor to the prime minister of Pakistan for

Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) affairs. When speaking to a gathering at Mirpur District Bar Association, Kaira stated that Pakistan and Kashmir's long-standing bond, firmly embedded in geography and blood ties cannot ever be detached. According to Kaira, Pakistan has always been the only country that can bring about an early, peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict following the desires and ambitions of the Kashmiris. He claimed that no force on earth can separate Kashmir from Pakistan, as Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had stated. According to him, India's 'historical betrayal' and rejection of international norms and agreements for the equitable and principled settlement of the Kashmir conflict is the reason why the Kashmir case has been an unresolved global issue for the past 75 years. He paid tributes to Kashmiris living in the 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu Kashmir' (IIOJK) for continuing their struggle for the liberation of the motherland from 'Indian occupation.' He said that Kashmiris are not only giving the supreme sacrifices of their lives and properties but also suffering the everyday reign of 'state terrorism', violence, and the worst human rights abuses at the hands of over a million Indian 'occupational forces' in the state. He said that the sacrifices given by our brothers and sisters for the freedom of their motherland from Indian 'unlawful occupation' are 'unprecedented' in the freedom struggles in the world.

He further said that India could not quell brave Kashmiris high morale and spirit of freedom of their homeland

from Indian ‘occupation’ despite inflicting history’s worst kinds of ‘brutalities and state terrorism.’ Pakistan, he claimed, always firmly supported Kashmiri’s struggle for the achievement of its internationally recognized right to self-determination. He said that none of the governments of Pakistan had ever lagged behind the Kashmiri cause of freedom nor the future governments could ever do so since the Kashmiri’s freedom struggle is the struggle for the completion of Pakistan, adding that Pakistan would continue safeguarding its jugular vein.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2023-03-22>

A Kashmir Committee will shortly be established in the Irish Parliament: ‘AJK’ President

Nawaiwaqt, 22 March 2023

The president of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry said that a committee on Kashmir would be established in the Irish Parliament to bring attention to the troubled situation in the ‘Indian-occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir’ (IOJK). While speaking with Ms. Sadia Butt, vice president of the Kashmir Peace Forum International Ireland, he stated that the creation of the Kashmir committee will be crucial in bringing up the Kashmir problem in international fora, particularly in Europe. He stated that Kashmiris living in Ireland may be very helpful in bringing attention to the severe human rights situation in ‘occupied Kashmir.’

He compared Kashmir to Ireland and remarked that there were many similarities between the two countries, and added that Ireland’s citizens and government can better grasp the Kashmir situation. As one of the oldest unresolved conflicts on the UN agenda, he claimed that the Irish people can contribute significantly to settling the Kashmir issue.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2023-03-23>

Kashmir and Palestine are two prime examples of ongoing colonialism: speakers in a seminar

Urdupoint, 23 March 2023

The International Relations Department of the University of Karachi and the Palestine Foundation Pakistan jointly conducted a conference on ‘The Future of Palestine and Kashmir: A Study of History and Geopolitical Importance.’ Dr. Shaista Tabasim, chair of the department of international politics at the University of Karachi, stated that Kashmir and Palestine are two prominent examples of colonialism. After 1967, she noted, Israel made colonial settlement strategy its official state policy, while the Indian government, by repealing provisions of 370 and 35-A, had advanced a similar colonial settlement policy in ‘occupied’ Jammu and Kashmir. She claimed that similar to what Israel did in Palestine, the Indian government is currently attempting to drastically alter the demographics of the ‘occupied territory.’ Dr. Saber Abu Maryam,

secretary general of the Pakistan-based Palestine Foundation, explained the origins of Israel and the hardship experienced by the Palestinian people. She claimed that the creation of 'Greater Israel' is the aim of the state of Israel. The practical application of the right to self-determination through a free and fair referendum, according to Dr. Saber, is the only way to resolve the Kashmir and Palestine issue.

Dr. Khalida Ghous, a human rights activist, referred to the UN resolutions on Palestine and Kashmir as well as the UNHRC findings. She noted that while the international community individually and collectively remained engaged on the Palestine issue, nothing has been done specifically to address the Kashmir issue despite resolutions. She expressed concern that the Muslim world was remaining mute and not speaking out against the crimes committed by the Israeli and Indian regimes in 'occupied' territories. According to retired brigadier Haris Nawaz, issues in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir have gotten worse after Article 370 was repealed, and claimed that the Hindutva government in India created new constituencies to win elections in 'occupied Kashmir.' He claimed that 'assaults' on women and children's rights in 'occupied Kashmir' are getting worse every day, and added that the Pakistan Army will never give up on the cause of Kashmir.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/karachi/kashmir/live-news-3521494.html>

'IIOJK' continues to see the appearance of posters with Pakistan flags and new images of the Army Chief

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 24 March 2023

Pakistani flags have been flown in honor of the Pakistani people and government on Pakistan Day for the fifth day in a row in Srinagar, Islamabad, and other parts of the 'occupied' territory. Pakistan Day is observed on March 23. According to Kashmir Media Service, people in the 'occupied region' has displayed the Pakistan flag and placards, as well as pictures of Army Commander General Syed Asim Muneer. The poster reads that the Pakistan Army Chief's forceful comments on the Kashmir issue had not only boosted the mood of the people of 'IIOJK' but also disproved recent lies spread by a part of the Indian media that the conflict had been settled for 20 years. The banners went on to say that Pakistan would never, under any circumstances, abandon its Kashmiri brothers and sisters and would continue to support the cause of Kashmir no matter what. According to 'political experts,' the posters are a warning to India that its 'military occupation' and atrocities cannot be used to stifle the freedom movement in Kashmir. They claimed that the posters effectively outlined Kashmiris' demands for an end to Indian 'occupation' and 'unlawful rule.'

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Resize-of-fronnt.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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