

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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corruption **POK** **Diamer-Bhasha**
Neelum-Jhelum tunnel
Gilgit-Baltistan **legal**
status
hydropower **projects**



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Political Developments

Pakistan's embassies across the globe observe Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir

Pakistan Observer, August 7, 2023

Pakistan's embassies across the world organized events to observe Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir to mark four years since India repealed the special status of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) and imposed military siege. The participants in attendance expressed solidarity and reiterated their commitment to raise their voices for Kashmiris to ensure the realization of their legitimate rights. The events were held in the Pakistani missions and embassies in South Africa, Afghanistan, New Zealand, Sweden, United States, China, Nepal, Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Myanmar, Kazakhstan, Korea, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, France, Japan, Ghana and other capitals of the world. A special documentary on Indian 5th August 2019 illegal action in 'IIOJK' and repercussions was also displayed on the occasion. Special messages of President Dr. Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif were read by officials of embassies. The gatherings were attended by members of the Pakistani community. The participants were unanimous in reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering moral, political, and diplomatic

support for the indigenous freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people.

<https://pakobserver.net/pakistans-embassies-across-globe-observe-youm-e-istehsal-e-kashmir/>

International conference calls for resolution of Kashmir dispute

Daily Parliament Times, 7 August 2023

Calling for respect for the fundamental rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, speakers at an international conference in Istanbul sought the resolution of the Kashmir dispute based on UN resolutions. Lawmakers, diplomats, activists, and civil society members from Türkiye, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Kashmir expressed their views at the conference, which was hosted by Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK. Among the distinguished guests of the ceremony were the Ambassador of Pakistan to Turkey, Dr. Yunus Junaid; Turkish Member of Parliament from the ruling AK Party, Tugba Isik Ercan; Member of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of Yeni Refah Party, Dogan Bekin; Member of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of Saadet Party, Mustafa Kaya; and Member of Parliament from Kuwait, Muhammad Al-Mutairi. Human rights lawyers Mejbel MM Al-Rashidi and Dalal Alajmi from Kuwait were also present as international speakers. Several senior Kashmiri leaders and members of the Constituent Assembly of 'Azad Jammu

and Kashmir' (AJK) attended the occasion. Chaudhry Latif Akbar; former member of 'AJK' Assembly, Abdul Rasheed Turabi; leaders of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Altaf Ahmed Bhat, and Mahmood Ahmed Sagar; along with senior Kashmiri leader Dr. Mubeen and the President of Tehreek Kashmir UK, Faheem Kayani, graced the event. Dr. Yunus Junaid, Ambassador of Pakistan to Turkey, while addressing the occasion said that today, we gather here to advocate for the fundamental rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Let us stand united in seeking a just resolution based on UN resolutions.

Tugba Isik Ercan, Turkish Member of Parliament, said that as a representative of the ruling AK Party, I extend our unwavering support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters. We condemn the 'Indian atrocities' and call for concrete measures to address this grave situation. Dogan Bekin, Member of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of Yeni Rafah Party, said that the plight of the oppressed Kashmiris demands urgent attention. Let us join hands to raise our voices against injustice and uphold the principles of human rights and freedom. Mustafa Kaya, Member of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of Saadet Party said that as a nation that values peace and justice, we must not remain silent on the suffering in Kashmir. Muhammad Al-Mutairi, a Member of Parliament from

Kuwait, during his address, said that Kashmir's struggle is not just theirs, but a matter of global concern. Together, we must urge the international community to take decisive action against the oppressors and stand for justice.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/08/07/international-conference-calls-for-resolution-of-kashmir-dispute/>

Modi regime enforcing Independence Day celebrations on 'IIOJK' people, employees

Daily Parliament Times, 8 August 2023

In what observers call enforcing Independence Day celebrations on Kashmiri people and government employees as they consider India as an 'illegal occupier' of their motherland, the Modi regime has asked government employees to hoist Indian flag over their houses in connection with the Independence Day falling on 15 August. The Directorate of School Education Jammu (DSEJ), in a declaration, said 'All government officers and officials of the Education Department may hoist the Tricolor over their houses while giving due regard to the flag code'. It further added that no government employee of the education department shall avail of leave on Independence Day-2023. All employees shall invariably participate in the Independence Day Celebrations. All Government buildings and offices including schools shall be decorated

with lights and hoist National Flag on them while giving due regard to the flag code and share videos of the same with the respective Divisional Commissioner, it reads.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/08/08/modi-regime-enforcing-independence-day-celebrations-on-iiokj-people-employees/>

GB lawmakers demand probe into 'misuse of funds' for flood-hit

Dawn, 9 August 2023

Members of the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly have demanded an investigation into alleged corruption and misuse of funds provided for the rehabilitation of flood-affected people in the region. According to the lawmakers, billions of rupees of funds provided by the federal government and non-government organisations for flood-affected areas have been embezzled. Javed Ali Manwa, an opposition member, tabled a motion in the GB assembly to draw attention to the flood-hit people. He told the assembly that rains, flash floods, and glacial lake outburst floods (Glof) had triggered disasters across GB and damaged roads, bridges, water and irrigation channels, cultivated lands, and homes. Mr. Manwa said the assembly needed to review the utilisation of funds for flood rehabilitation. He suggested a parliamentary committee to probe the implementation of the foreign-funded

project Glof-II at a cost of billions of rupees. He said installing early warning systems, conducting seminars in five-star hotels, and arranging exposure visits under the project cannot control disasters. The GB Disaster Management Authority had only one task: to provide tents and food in affected areas, Mr Manwa said.

Another opposition member, Nawaz Khan Naji, also claimed that funds for last year's flood victims have been misused and embezzled. The victims have voluntarily restored water channels while funds in the name of disasters have been embezzled. The government provided a lot of funds to flood-affected people, but the money was distributed among blue-eyed people, he said. Deputy Speaker Sadia Danish also claimed that billions of rupees marked for the Glof-II project have been misused in the name of seminars but no practical work can be witnessed. She suggested the project's representatives should appear before the house and brief about the implementation. Replying to these claims, GB Interior Minister Shams Lone said disaster losses across GB were being assessed. Advocate Amjad Hussain, a lawmaker from the treasury benches, said funds provided for flood-hit people were not utilised properly by the last government.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1769171/gb-lawmakers-demand-probe-into-misuse-of-funds-for-flood-hit>

India green-lights probe agencies to implicate more Kashmiris in murder cases of the 1990s

Pakistan Observer, 9 August 2023

In an attempt to award more and more Kashmiris hard punishments to inflict mental trauma on Kashmiri people and also pave the way for a win in 2024 general elections, the Modi regime has green-lighted its dreaded investigation agencies to implicate Hurriyat leaders and activists in all murder cases that took place during the start of the armed resistance in 1990s in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). The move comes after the State Investigation Agency (SIA) launched a probe into the murder case of retired Judge Neelkanth Ganjoo, a Kashmiri Pandit, who was assassinated on 4 November 1989, by unknown persons. The Indian agencies are building a case to blame the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for the killing, but no arrest was made as the agencies had no evidence in the case. A few more cases are being re-opened. Approximately 10 cases which include that of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, an Indian web portal News 18 reported citing its sources.

<https://pakobserver.net/india-green-lights-probe-agencies-to-implicate-more-kashmiris-in-murder-cases-of-1990s/>

Modi would become 'butcher of Kashmir': Bilawal

The Express Tribune, 10 August 2023

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari doubled down on his criticism of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he was the 'butcher of Gujarat' and would become the 'butcher of Kashmir.' In his farewell press conference as the foreign minister, Bilawal defended his foreign policy and said the lack of progress to normalize ties with India had to do with the current Indian leadership. He said that Narendra Modi is neither Atal Behari Vajpayee nor Manmohan Singh. He was a 'butcher of Gujarat and would become butcher of Kashmir.' While some hailed his candid statement, others thought the foreign minister shouldn't have made such a statement against the sitting prime minister of India.

His remarks were also contradictory to his opening statement where he highlighted that his foreign policy was based on three key principles. One of those principles includes following a dispassionate policy and one that was not based on populism. However, his renewed branding of Modi would be seen as an attempt to invoke popular sentiments. Meanwhile, FM Bilawal listed several achievements on the foreign policy front during his 16-

month tenure. On the lack of progress in Afghanistan and India, Bilawal said: 'What do you expect? We should bring change in 16 months that did not happen in 70 years.' Throughout this feverish and extensive diplomatic push, we never compromised on the core tenet of our foreign policy – Kashmir; even as I participated in the SCO Foreign Ministers' meet in Goa this year, becoming the voice of the oppressed Kashmiris of the 'Indian Occupied Kashmir' (IOK) was my foremost priority.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2430035/modi-would-become-butcher-of-kashmir-bilawal>

The Aftermath of Abolishing Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir

Pakistan Today, 11 August 2023

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is the only state that defined its terms of accession and got special status in the Indian Constitution through Article 370. This special status was a constitutional provision that allowed the state assembly and government to make legislation and define its other relationships with the Indian Union. The inclusion of Article 370 in the Indian Constitution was the result of negotiations between the leaders of Kashmir and India. As global citizens, we must remain vigilant and push for a resolution that respects Kashmir's unique identity and guarantees its

people a prosperous and secure future. However, over time, various changes were made to weaken this special status. In 1950, the 'Indian-Occupied Kashmir' (IOK), Constituent Assembly was established with the authority to create its constitution and endorse relevant articles of the Indian Constitution.

One significant addition was Article 35A, which continued Maharaja's state-subject rule, empowering the state government to define permanent residents and restrict property acquisition by non-residents. Article 370 was of symbolic significance for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, as it preserved their identity and culture despite their facing Indian aggression, brutality, and tyrannical rule. It allowed the state legislators to enact laws for Jammu and Kashmir, with some exceptions like defense, communications, and foreign affairs.

The third clause of Article 370 stipulated that any change or abrogation of this Article required the recommendation of the J&K Constituent Assembly. However, that Assembly was dissolved on 26 January 1957, making the abrogation of the special status unconstitutional. The BJP government forcefully abrogated this legislation, effectively converting the state into a sub-jail. New Delhi claimed that this move would lead the state

towards prosperity, but reality paints a different picture. After the revocation of Article 370 on 5 August 2019, the state was divided into two separate union territories: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. This move brought the region directly under the jurisdiction of the Indian central government. Many critics likened the situation to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, where mass migration and settlement of a particular group altered the demographic balance.

The abrogation was seen as an attempt to transform the long-standing international dispute over Kashmir into a domestic issue within India's borders. In the aftermath, the illegal union territory government issued a staggering number of domicile certificates, totaling up to 3.5 million, to outsiders in Jammu and Kashmir. The new rules for claiming domicile in 'IOK' allowed individuals who had lived in the region for 15 years or served in various capacities, such as in universities, banks, or other jobs, for 10 years to become eligible for obtaining domicile.

Even children of persons serving in 'IOK', or those who had passed the 11th and 12th exams, were granted eligibility for claiming domicile. Critics have expressed concerns about the domicile issuance, particularly the significant number of domiciles being

issued to ex-army personnel (Sainiks). This has raised suspicions of a deliberate attempt to alter the demographic landscape of the region and posed potential security threats for the residents. The intentions behind these changes have sparked controversy, with some alleging that the ruling party, BJP, plans to settle extremist Hindus in the Valley, potentially leading to ethnic cleansing and the creation of new conflicts to control the demographic superiority of the Muslim population in the region.

According to UNHCR reports of 2018 and 2019, 'IOK' is living with widespread and organized human rights abuses for the past four decades. In 2020, the NIA conducted multiple raids on the residences and offices of well-known human rights defenders like Khurram Parvez, three of his associates, and Parveena Ahanger.

The region has also witnessed a rise in unlawful killings perpetrated by armed groups. Reports from the Jammu & Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCC) indicate that in 2019 alone, Indian forces carried out 195 search and cordon operations, resulting in the deaths of 165 individuals after 5 August. The abrogation of Article 370 has also had a significant impact on the region's economy and employment prospects. The unemployment rate has surged to 16.2 percent, as reported by

the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), which is more than double the unemployment rate of the Indian Union, which stands at 6.7 percent. The economic repercussions have been acutely felt by the people of Jammu & Kashmir, with around 500,000 people losing their jobs following the revocation of the special status. The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) has estimated that the Kashmiri business community faced losses of about Rs 40 billion, and the situation remains unfavorable for the business sector. While the Indian government has propagated that Article 370 was the primary reason for the state's economic underdevelopment, the reality seems more complex and multifaceted.

During the communication clampdown in Kashmir, the Indian government decided to conduct online auctions for mineral extraction tenders. However, this made it impossible for Kashmiris to apply, leading to an overwhelming majority of these licenses being allotted to Indians rather than Kashmiris. Over 200 mineral blocks in the Jhelum River and its tributaries, spanning all 10 districts of the region, were opened for mining of sand, boulders, gravel, and other riverbed materials. Consequently, an unprecedented 70 percent% of the total mining contracts were awarded to

Indians. The implications of these changes remain complex and multifaceted, raising various concerns about the region's future.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/08/11/the-aftermath-of-abolishing-article-370-in-jammu-and-kashmir/>

GB assembly passes a resolution for constitutional empowerment

Dawn, 13 August 2023

The members of the opposition and treasury benches in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly have passed a unanimous resolution, urging the federal government to transfer the authority to amend the GB Order 2018 to the GB Assembly. In addition, the GB Assembly has called for appointments to the GB Supreme Appellate Court and Chief Court to be made through a judicial commission. They have also demanded a resolution to the allocation of GB's financial share in the National Finance Commission (NFC). During the GB Assembly session, presided over by deputy speaker Sadia Danish, the opposition leader Kazim Mesum, along with opposition members Ayub Waziri and Javed Ali Manwa, presented a resolution. The resolution highlights the concerns of the House on the powers conferred to legislation, administration, and judiciary in GB and the technical and legal challenges for complete provincial autonomy. It said

until the constitutional status of the region is settled and provisional province status is granted, amendment in GB order 2018 should be given to GB Assembly. The resolution said until GB becomes a formal part of the NFC, a financial agreement should be established with GB to define its financial share based on the NFC's pattern.

It demanded the enforcement of the 2019 verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan to ensure the appointment of judges to the highest echelons of the judiciary, including the GB Supreme Appellate Court and Chief Court, through the judicial commission. Javed Ali, while presenting the resolution, highlighted that the people of GB have been engaged in a seven-decade-long struggle to become a constitutional part of Pakistan. He said that unfortunately, the GB Assembly has no power to amend the presidential order, 'GB 2018', through which GB is being governed. The lawmaker said until GB's inclusion as a constitutional part of Pakistan, GB Assembly should be empowered to amend the law. There are flaws in rules of business to legislation on important matters for better governance, he regretted. He said the GB government depends on the federal government for financial grants, as the financial share of GB has not been defined in the NFC. He said a

fiscal agreement with the GB government is needed to ensure GB's financial share. Another opposition member, Ayub Waziri said the GB residents are deprived of the rights enjoyed by people in other parts of the country. He said the federal government has not treated the people of GB equally in comparison to those from other parts of the country. With both the opposition and treasury benches members showing support for the resolution, Deputy Speaker Sadia Danish announced the unanimous adoption of the resolution.

On 17 January 2019, the SC issued a landmark judgment on the legal status and constitutional rights of the people of GB. For the past 70 years, GB has been administered through ad hoc presidential decrees, the latest being the Government of GB Order, 2018, issued by the outgoing PML-N government that diluted the already limited constitutional rights conferred on GB in 2009. In response to a challenge against the order, the court directed the federation to prepare a fresh draft for GB's governance, keeping in view the Sartaj Aziz committee report. In compliance, the sitting government submitted the draft GB governance reform order, in 2019. Meanwhile, talking on calling attention, Javed Ali Manwa said ice addiction rapidly increasing among the

local youth. He said illicit drug addiction needs prevention. He emphasised the need to tackle this illicit drug addiction and urged law enforcement agencies to actively control and prevent ice addiction.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1769867/gb-assembly-passes-resolution-for-constitutional-empowerment>

Economic Developments

Federal govt approves mega project for GB

Dawn, 7 August 2023

The federal government has approved a mega project for Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to address climate change impacts and overcome electricity shortage in the region. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) meeting recently approved the rural development and climate resilient project worth over Rs16 billion. The project is supported by Agence Française de Développement (AFD), European Union (EU), and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and is estimated to cost Rs16.26bn with foreign financing amounting to Rs1.1 billion. GB Additional Chief Secretary Aziz Ahmed Jamali said it is the largest foreign-funded project in the history of GB. The responsibility for implementing the project lies with the Planning and Development Department (P&DD) in partnership

with AKDN. The scope of the project includes various aspects of community support such as providing drinking water supply, sanitation facilities with treatment plants, climate-resilient and energy-efficient housing, and micro hydropower projects. It also focuses on strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and conducting capacity-building programs for government officials.

Moreover, it plans to pilot a green hydrogen project and conduct studies for sustainable tourism in the region, promoting environment-friendly and sustainable practices in GB. According to Chief Secretary Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani, the design of the project has been made to address developmental challenges and impacts of climatic changes and to enhance the region's capacity. The scope of these projects includes improving access to clean and safe drinking water for local communities, implementing effective public health measures, establishing healthcare facilities, and constructing environment-friendly and energy-efficient housing. Meanwhile, the Executive Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has recommended the development of 245 megawatts of three hydropower projects in GB. The GB chief secretary said that the SIFC headed by Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Ehsan Iqbal has

recommended the development of hydropower projects of 245 MW in GB with one in Ghizer, two in Gilgit and one in Skardu. A total of 260,000 domestic and commercial consumers will benefit from these projects. Now, the recommendation will be presented to the apex committee of SIFC headed by the prime minister for approval.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1768772/federal-govt-approves-mega-project-for-gb>

Some questions about the proposed 54MW Attabad Lake Power Project

Pamir Times, 9 August 2023

The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) is holding public consultations to start the construction of a 54MW power project which will use the Hunza River (Atta Abad/Shishkat Lake) as a reservoir. When (and if) built, the 'High Head Run of the River Peaking' project will take around five years to complete, if the pace of past power projects in the region is any evidence. Given the power crisis in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and particularly in Hunza, the project appears to be a panacea for the power-starved region's many woes. However, the locals, including myself, have questions, suspicions, and apprehensions that need to be addressed fully before any such work can be started. Let's also pause and acknowledge that Attabad Lake, a

lethal beauty, is a reminder of many traumas for us locals. Inside this lake are hundreds of homes, places of worship, orchards, graveyards of our elders, and other memories and symbols of the past that are irreplaceable.

I remember all the people who lost their lives on 4 January 2010, and in the months and years after, and also those who suffered, continue to suffer, because of the miseries and hardships the Attabad landslide and the blockade of River Hunza inflicted on us. While those affected by the flooding of their houses were protesting for their rights. They are yet to receive justice. I will try to sum up some of the questions/points that need to be clarified. These are my thoughts as a concerned son of the soil.

1. Does Hunza need a 54MW power project? Can smaller power projects address the power shortage? The total annual demand is not more than 20MW. With the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam and Dassu Dam going on, the region's power shortage can be adequately addressed in a few years, especially when a regional grid is already being constructed to connect GB with the rest of Pakistan.

2. Is the area around Attabad Lake stable? Are there any seismic risks that could be compounded by the construction activity or the weight of

the reservoir itself? Around 37000 tons of concrete will be used to build the reservoir. How will that impact the region? Locals have been experiencing massive tremors in Ayeenabad, Shishkat, Chamangul, Gulmit, and also Ghulkin. At times the impact of the tremors can be felt miles away in Passu. Will this massive power project deteriorate the situation for the locals who have lived in this area for centuries?

3. Will the water level in the river rise after the project is constructed? How high will the water rise? How many more homes and properties will be destroyed if the water level goes up? What is in the pipeline for those that are likely to get affected?

4. What will be the impact of the reservoir on the area's climate patterns? Will there be more landslides? Will precipitation increase? Will rainfall increase? Snowfall? How will that affect the infrastructure and the region's farmlands?

5. Around 800 acres of land, according to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report embedded above, developed by 'Attabad Hydropower Management Consultants', will be acquired for the project, on a temporary or permanent basis. The proposal says that there's government land in the area. Which land exactly belongs to the

government? In my understanding, and according to the local historical memory, there's no government land in the area. Everything belongs to the locals. How does the govt plan to compensate the communities/families whose land will be acquired? Moreover, the government had failed, 13 years after the Attabad Landslide disaster, to compensate the locals who lost their lands and means of livelihood due to the damming of the Hunza River. How does the government plan to compensate them? What alternative lands will be made available for the affected, uprooted, families?

6. The report erroneously mentions that 'flooding is not a common feature' in the Hunza River. They probably don't know about the 1974 flooding in Baltbar that sank a massive bridge on the Karakoram Highway. They also seem to be unaware of multiple devastating floods that have originated in Shimshal Valley and inundated large swathes of land, per the region's historical memory. What impact could another flood of that scale have on the locals living upstream, the reservoir itself, and the downstream populations, after the project is built?

7. The report says that the powerhouse will be built on the left side of the Hunza River, because the right side is volatile/vulnerable, as that is where the Attabad landslide occurred. There are

historical records of a massive landslide happening on the left bank in the mid-19th century, which is not very far in the past, as long as geological events are concerned. Has the left side mountain been studied for stability?

8. The EIA report mentions that 175.5 kilograms of solid waste will be generated per day during the construction phase (which equals almost 300,000 kilograms of waste in 55 months). Moreover, around 28,000 liters/day of wastewater will be generated for a workforce of 350 people, which amounts to almost 50 million liters of wastewater generated by the time the project is completed (55 months.) How will the issue of industrial-scale solid/liquid waste and other forms of environmental pollution be tackled? How will Hunza River be kept clean?

9. Such large-scale projects, contextually speaking, create numerous social, economic, and political issues. What policies and frameworks will be built to address these issues? The social and economic environment and the ethics and principles of climate justice are equally important, along with the natural and built environment.

10. If the project commences, what mechanisms will be put in place to protect the interests and rights of the local laborers and other professionals?

How will local entrepreneurs, already systematically marginalized by big money from outside the region, be protected? Moreover, locals have also started complaining that the consultation process is not inclusive. The public consultation mustn't be treated as 'Khana-Puri.' Taking locals on board and addressing their issues, and anticipating and mitigating the negative impacts of the project, is vital to avoid political and social complications down the road. I would also urge the region's youth and professionals, and other members of the civil society, not to stay silent and docile. Read the proposal (embedded above) in detail and ask questions and be ready to advocate for safeguarding the region's rights and interests.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/08/08/some-questions-about-the-proposed-54mw-attabad-lake-power-project/>

Fault at Neelum-Jhelum tunnel rectified

The Express Tribune, 10 August 2023

The 969-megawatt Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) has started generating electricity again after a gap of one year following the completion of the restoration work in its tail race tunnel. The Federal Water Resources Minister Khursheed Ahmed Shah visited the power project to inaugurate its electricity generation

afresh. Earlier a fault had developed in the NJ plant on 4 July 2022, leaving the powerhouse dysfunctional. The project was commissioned in 2018 and had since been working satisfactorily with power generation of 18.28 billion units. However, on 4 July, when the plant was running at its full capacity (969MW), an abnormal increase in water leakage was observed which was controlled through continuous drainage pumps, and an investigation into the excessive leakage was started.

On 5 July, an emergency meeting was held between the project management and the project consultant's team to analyse the situation and determine the root cause of excessive water leakage. It was observed that Tail Race Tunnel (TRT) had obtained an abnormal pressure of 616m instead of the normal 600m. It was also pointed out by the project consultants that abnormal pressure of 616m in the TRT had been recorded which otherwise remained below 600 meters. On 6 July, it was determined that the abnormal increase in pressure and water leakages/seepage was due to blockage in TRT, and considering the safety of the structure and all other equipment, the powerhouse was shut down on 6 July.

After necessary preparation (lowering of bulkhead gates by Mobile Crane, functional check of dewatering pumps,

etc.), dewatering was started on 10 July. After completion of dewatering up to the main collapse point (293m), an inspection of the tunnel was carried out. It was found that the tunnel is fully blocked in a 42m portion (between 251m and 293m) besides other damages, a report said. M/s China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC), the contractor for the construction of civil works, was engaged in carrying out repairs. The contractor started mobilisation at the site and subsequently, a contract agreement was signed with the firm on 25 August. Work on the restoration of the plant is going on day and night, the report added. According to a report, 17 consulting firms were contacted. Since the task to ascertain the causes of the fault was urgently needed almost all the firms expressed their unwillingness for undertaking the services on such short notice. The ministerial committee was requested to engage the Independent Panel of Experts (IPoEs) instead of engaging the consulting firms, which was accordingly approved by the inter-ministerial committee on 25 August. The NJHP is a run-of-the-river hydropower project that started electricity generation in April 2018. It envisages the diversion of the Neelum River through a system of tunnels out-falling into the Jhelum River.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2430146/fault-at-neelum-jhelum-tunnel-rectified>

Unregistered SCOM SIMs face crackdown in GB and AJK

Pakistan Today, 10 August 2023

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has issued a stern ultimatum in a bid to curb the rampant use of unregistered mobile devices paired with Special Communication Organization (SCOM), SIMs in Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK). Effective from 1 September 2023, all mobile devices must be registered with the PTA, failing which local SIMs will be deactivated on unregistered devices. The decision comes as an increasing number of unregistered mobile phones, largely smuggled and thus avoiding import duties and PTA registration fees, flood the regions of GB and 'AJK.' This thriving market for illicit devices is thriving due to the absence of the Device Identification, Registration, and Blocking System (DIRBS) in these territories. The PTA has now introduced the Device Identification Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS) in GB and 'AJK.' The DIRBS system ensures the usage of legitimate mobile devices compliant with technical standards and regulations. Industry insiders have estimated that over 100,000 smuggled mobile phones are currently in use in GB and 'AJK', primarily linked to the SCOM network. This startling figure is attributed to the

lower cost of smuggled phones in comparison to locally manufactured or imported devices, as well as the lack of regulatory enforcement in these regions. Mr. Manzar Shigri, a local businessman in Gilgit, emphasized that smuggled or non-duty paid phones are mainly compatible with the SCOM network, as it is the predominant mobile operator in GB and 'AJK.' He noted that other major network operators like Telenor, ZONG, and Jazz are not operational on the same phone sets.

To address this discrepancy, PTA and the Ministry of IT and Telecom have reached out to the Cabinet Division, urging the integration of SCOM into the DIRBS system. Once this integration is approved, it is expected to extend the regulatory reach of DIRBS to SCOM connections as well, discouraging the use of unregistered devices. The introduction of the DIRBS system was initially aimed at safeguarding local mobile device manufacturing by imposing import duties on mobile sets and deterring smuggling. Integration of SCOM into the DIRBS system is expected to substantially reduce the usage of smuggled phones in GB and 'AJK,' generating additional revenue through import duties.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/08/10/unregistered-scom-sims-face-crackdown-in-gb-and-ajk/>

Hydropower generation peaks above 8,000MW

Dawn, 13 August 2023

The country's hydel generation peaked above 8,000 megawatts after the 969MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHPP) resumed operations a couple of days ago. The power stations owned and operated by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) contributed 8,158MW to the national grid during peak hours last night. A WAPDA spokesman said that statistics show that Tarbela Hydel Power Station generated 3,478MW followed by Tarbela 4th Extension which generated 1,410MW, Ghazi Barotha 1,450MW, Neelum Jhelum 798MW, Mangla 305MW, while all other hydel power stations of WAPDA contributed 717MW cumulatively. Hydel electricity by WAPDA is the cheapest if compared with other sources of generation as the cost of hydro generation stands at Rs3.51 per unit. Several mega projects are being constructed in the hydropower sector scheduled to be completed from 2024 to 2028-29 in a phased manner. These projects will double the installed generation capacity of the country with the addition of about 10,000MW of clean, green, and low-cost hydel electricity to the grid.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1769898/hydropower-generation-peaks-above-8000mw>

[From Vernacular Urdu Media](#)

'AJK' and Saudi Arab have a long history of cordial ties: 'AJK' President

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 8 August 2023

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, has commended the Saudi Arabian government for its constant support of Kashmiris' just struggle for the right to self-determination and its significant contribution to the growth of 'Azad Kashmir.' He made these remarks to a high-level delegation of the Saudi Development Fund (SDF), led by Dr. Saud Ayed Al-Shammari, director general of operations. The president stated that the KSA has stood up for the people of 'Azad Kashmir' through thick and thin, in addition to supporting Pakistan for taking a moral stance on the Kashmir issue. He claimed that Saudi Arabia was instrumental in the development of the state's infrastructure and the rescue and reconstruction efforts following the terrible earthquake that devastated the region in 2005. The president mentioned the newly opened King Abdullah Campus of 'AJKU' and stated that it cost 13.5 billion rupees to build. He claimed that the campus was a priceless gift from the Saudi government to the residents of 'Azad Kashmir.'

On this occasion, the SDF delegation updated the President on the ongoing

and completed projects by the Saudi government in 'Azad Kashmir.' He expressed his gratitude to the Saudi government and people for starting economic and humanitarian initiatives worth billions in 'Azad Kashmir' including the university campus. The President was informed by the SDF team on the current and completed projects by the Saudi government in 'Azad Kashmir' at the time. He asserted that Saudi Arabia has consistently supported the Kashmiri people during trying times. He also claimed that the Saudi government has consistently taken a principled stance on the Kashmir issue and spoken out for Kashmiris' rights in public.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-08.jpg>

Turkish MP Dogan Bekin met with a delegation of Kashmiri leaders

UrduPoint, 9 August 2023

Dogan Bekin, a Turkish member of parliament who also serves as the Istanbul deputy in the Re-Prosperity Party, met with a delegation of Hurriyat and political leaders from both sides of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation was led by Chaudhry Lateef Akbar, speaker of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Legislative Assembly. Other members of the delegation included Mehmood

Ahmed Saghar, Convenor of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Abdur Rasheed Turabi, a former member of the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly, Altaf Ahmed Bhat, and Dr. Mubeen Shah, Senior Vice Chairman of the Kashmir Diaspora Coalition. The meeting was marked by a commitment to advancing the Kashmiri cause on a governmental level. Mr. Bekin affirmed his support for the Kashmir cause and pledged to lend his voice to the ongoing struggle for justice and human rights in the region.

While emphasizing the pressing need for international attention to the Kashmir issue and the grave violations of human rights taking place, the delegation urged for the involvement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) contact group to address the Kashmir conflict. The delegation voiced the importance of facilitating and supporting Kashmiri students from 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) who have come to Turkey for education. The education of these students represents not only an investment in their future but also a means to empower and strengthen the Kashmiri youth in their quest for justice and freedom, they added.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3683496.html>

The Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir proclaimed that 14 August would be Thanksgiving Day and 15 August would be Black Day

Urdupoint, 12 August 2023

The Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir leaders said that a Thanksgiving Day will be observed on 14 August and Black Day on 15 August. In addition to Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ali Hashim, Liaqat Ali Rana, Muhammad Fayaz Khan, and Faisal Farooq, Chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmad Ghazali addressed the media. Ghazali claimed that while India is engaged in the deadliest kind of terrorism by denying freedom to the Kashmiri people. He claimed that on 14 August, the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day as a day of gratitude for Pakistan's consistent efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute by the desires and aspirations of the Kashmiri people and the resolutions adopted by the United Nations (UN). He further claimed that India is currently 'occupying' Jammu and Kashmir as an 'invading power' while also making a futile attempt to rewrite history by using terrorism, the harshest draconian laws, and military force to solve the Kashmir problem.

The leaders urged India's leaders, politicians, civil society members, and common people to act with moral

courage to establish a free, fair, and impartial referendum in the state of Jammu and Kashmir following UN resolutions, free of military force and terrorism. They claimed that violence, terrorism, and deception cannot alter the significance, sensitivity, or historically contentious nature of the Kashmir issue. The leaders urged the citizens of Kashmir to fly the green crescent flag on 14 August to show their appreciation to Pakistan and to observe Black Day on 15 August by flying black flags at residences, marketplaces, and other public junctions. They said that demonstrations will be held throughout 'Azad Kashmir' on 15 August as black day.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3686728.html>

Social Media (tweets)

Nida Nayab Shah @NidaNayabShah_4

12 August 2023

It's for all the Uneducated Tourists, visiting GB from all over Pak. Plz respect our privacy, respect our culture, and keep our land clean. The people of #GilgitBaltistan are so welcoming. Don't snatch this pleasing act by ur uneducated acts. We don't want GB to become a mini Karachi.

Video link:

https://twitter.com/NidaNayabShah_4/status/1690411905184366592

Hasnain Ramal @nisarhasnain4

12 August 2023

- 1- Why has the Diamar Dam agreement been kept secret till date?
- 2- Who is the owner of Diamar Dam? China, Pakistan or Gilgit-Baltistan?
- 3- 3- Why is the illegal customs post on the GB-China border not being shifted to its constitutional limits?

<https://twitter.com/nisarhasnain4/status/1690345646887174144>

sohaib riaz bodla @sohaibriazbodla

13 August 2023

Take a look at the Table of Contents of a newly published book. My contribution in the book talks about the control of Pakistani state over Gilgit-Baltistan through roads and my personal journey of knowing G-B as a Punjabi. Please recommend, share or order the book.

Book link details:

<https://twitter.com/sohaibriazbodla/status/1690675373900476416>

PNA @Scheherzadeh

14 August 2023

Two scenic airports of beautiful #Pakistan! L: Skardu International Airport. R: Gilgit Airport. Milestones in our history; 1st International flight

lands at Skardu on 76th Independence Day Pakistan.

Images link:

<https://twitter.com/Scheherzadeh/status/1690978588378439681>

israruddin israr @israruddinisrar

14 August 2023

Local people staged a protest against lack of internet and connectivity in District Nagir Gilgit Baltistan. Protestors blocked KKH. It is pertinent to mention that Nagir and Hunza are hubs of tourism in GB.

Protests details link:

<https://twitter.com/israruddinisrar/status/1691009658121805824>

Pakistan Observer @pakobserver

14 August 2023

WATCH: First international flight landed safely at the Skardu Airport in Gilgit-Baltistan, announced office of the chief secretary on Monday (August 14) on social media. The first international airport was operated by the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) from Dubai to Skardu. The national carrier was welcomed with a customary water cannon salute.

<https://twitter.com/pakobserver/status/1691002245930684416>

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Disclaimer

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