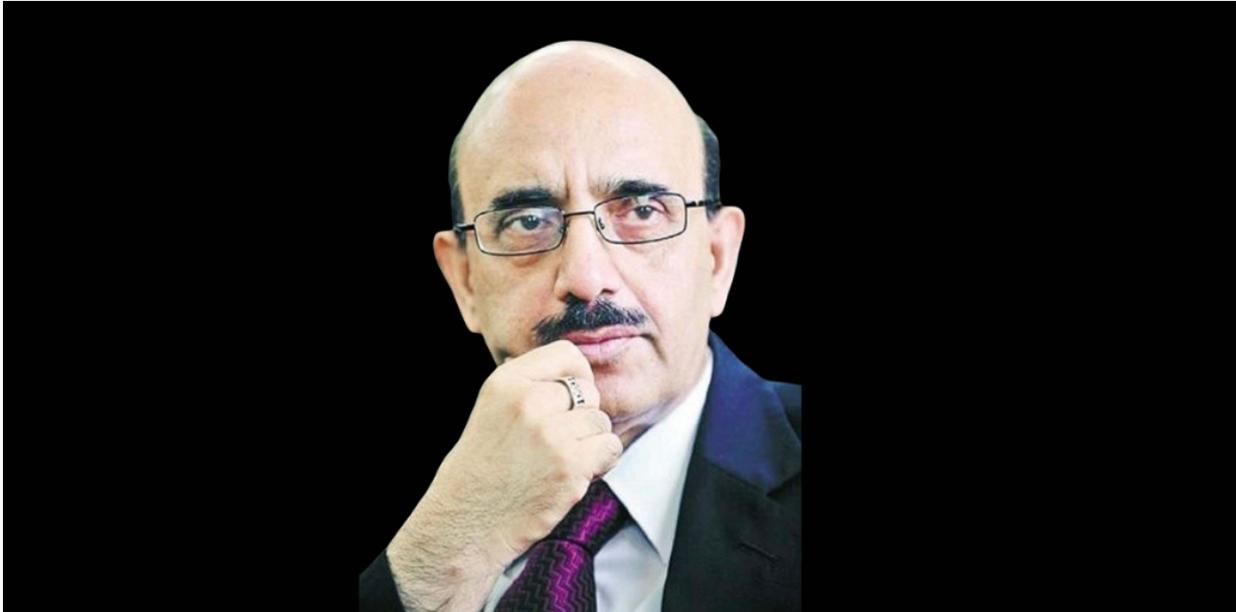


## **NO DEMOCRACY IN IOJK; ELECTIONS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN RIGGED BY DELHI – MASOOD KHAN**



Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, while giving an interview to a leading private news channel said that in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) there is no sign of democracy. India has since its independence raised a non-representative political class in the occupied territory and in a consistent manner has been rigging election after election.

The President said that in AJK we have appointed a Chief Election Commissioner and the whole government machinery including the people of AJK are preparing for next year's elections. IOJK, on the other hand, has no elected government, a governor rule is in place and the political leadership is under lock, he said while adding that human rights violations are rampant and its people are under a severe occupational lockdown. Voter turnout has always remained dismally low, he said, adding that people have rejected Delhi-orchestrated

elections in IOJK

The AJK President went on to say that over the past seven decades, India has rigged every election in IOJK. He said that in the elections to 75 seats of the first constituent assembly, all candidates were “elected” unopposed. This farcical show was maintained in one form or the other by bringing forward a selected class up until the last Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti was disgracefully removed from office in 2018. After the illegal actions of August 5 last year, the whole area of IOJK was brought under a siege and now the territory has been bifurcated into two parts without consulting its people or, in this case, the select political class that once had been in power under the patronage of Delhi.

Masood Khan said that the situation in IOJK is dire and there are no signs of normalcy or peace. Every day people are tortured, arrested and killed; and now after the abrogation of the special status of the State, Kashmiris have been deprived of their reserved right to permanent residence, ownership of property, livelihoods and education. In the same manner in which the citizenship of Muslims and other minorities have been questioned in India under the Citizenship Amendment Act; Kashmiris, under the New Domicile Rules are running from pillar to post just to prove that they are State subjects. “Such is the sorry state of affairs in IOJK’, he lamented.

Responding to a question on the recent Ladakh standoff between India and China, the AJK President said that this event has brought to the forefront India’s evident diplomatic failure. He added that during the Ladakh standoff, even USA – an ally of India – did not play an active role and a weakly worded offer by President Trump to deescalate tensions was rejected by China. Similarly, QUAD – an alliance of Japan, USA, India and Australia – who has always supported India and opposed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC) did not come to India's rescue validating India's global diplomatic isolation.

President Masood Khan said that other than just Pakistan, India has over the years fought wars with all its neighbours, be it Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka or its constant interference in Afghanistan's domestic issues. They (India) have made the whole region volatile by jeopardising peace and security.

India, he said, has never triumphed against a military equal and has instead thumped its chest by fighting its own people and the unarmed people of Kashmir. He said that despite India being the third largest arms purchaser at \$71 billion annually, it is the army that fights the war and the Indian army till date has not faced a worthy adversary.

President Khan while responding to another query said that there are divides forming between western and eastern India and also northern and southern India. India, he said, was loosely glued together by a façade of secularism that has eroded over the years and the BJP-RSS regime's Hindutva policy could very well be the last nail in the coffin.

"Voices of dissent echo all over India", said the President, adding that non-Hindus alone are not the target of the proponents of the Hindutva doctrine supported by the so-called "upper-caste" Hindus. Dalits (the untouchables) are also being disenfranchised by the government in power. These voices of dissent are being chanted all over India because they have rejected the exclusionist fascist-Hindu supremacist policy towed by the BJP-RSS axis.