

Kashmir group rejects claims of Indian meddling

A protest group at the centre of deadly unrest in Pakistan-administered Kashmir has denied receiving any backing from India and has challenged critics to show evidence for the allegations. SA Khan, a member of the advisory council of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee, said his coalition of civil society and political organisations was “not answerable to India” and rejected accusations that it was financed or directed by Delhi. Pakistan-administered Kashmir is in the grip of its worst political unrest in years, with deadly violence, an internet blackout, and allegations of police brutality overshadowing regional elections.

What began as demonstrations over soaring costs of electricity and essential commodities has evolved into a movement demanding political reforms, representative government, and greater accountability. Since the protests started earlier this year, Islamabad has repeatedly alleged that the Awami Action Committee is backed by India and has portrayed it as an armed

group seeking to disrupt elections. Mr Khan said his group “is an indigenous civil-rights movement rooted in local concerns about electricity prices, essential commodities, governance, public resources, implementation of signed agreements and political representation”. *Namita Singh in Delhi*