

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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08 July - 14 July 2024

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Mangla dam
Strike
Sost
border
POK
Trade suspension
Tourism industry
Gilgit-Baltistan
Khunjerab Pass
Tarbela
Hydel power
barter trade



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Burhan Wani is an epitome of courage, says Mushaal Mullick

The Nation, 8 July 2024

Former adviser to prime minister on human rights Mushaal Mullick, wife of incarcerated Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik, said on Monday Burhan Wani was a symbol of unflinching commitment for freedom for the people of Kashmir.

In a video message shared on social media on the eighth martyrdom anniversary of Burhan Wani, Mullick stated that the movement started by Burhan had reached every nook and corner of Kashmir.

She said the courage and bravery of the late freedom fighter with which he fought against the brutality of occupied Indian forces was a beacon of inspiration for every Kashmiri youth.

She further said Wani unveiled the actual face of Indian oppression in his fight for an independent Kashmir, emphasising that young Kashmiris were following in the footsteps of Wani to expose the ill intentions of India in front of the whole world.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Jul-2024/burhan-wani-is-an-epitome-of-courage-says-mushaal-mullick>

President and PM AJK paid rich tributes to Shaheed Burhan Muzaffar Wani and his associates on their eighth martyrdom anniversary

Daily Parliament Times, 8 July 2024

President 'Azad Kashmir' Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry and Prime

Minister Chudhary Anwar ul Haq have paid rich tributes to Shaheed Burhan Muzaffar Wani and his associates on their eighth martyrdom anniversary.

In their separate messages, the duo, while highlighting the martyred commander's role in imbuing a new spirit in the freedom movement, termed him as a shining star and a powerful symbol of resistance against the Indian occupation, who raised the banner of revolt against India at a tender age and spearheaded the movement with utmost courage and diligence.

Hailing the Kashmiri martyrs' matchless struggle and sacrifices for the noble cause, they said, "The sacred blood of the Kashmiri martyrs will never go in vain".

They regrettably noted that since the past several decades the Indian rulers have shamelessly used its military might and repressive policies to crush the Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for right to self determination guaranteed to them by the international community.

They said that the mass uprising triggered after the martyrdom of Burhan Wani not only rendered the Indian government's narrative on Kashmir irrelevant at global level but also proved it beyond any reasonable doubt that the ongoing freedom movement was indigenous. The duo also lauded the Kashmiri people's resilience in the face of the Indian state terrorism.

Terming the Kashmiris' ongoing liberation movement as a legitimate political struggle, they said, it was quite

unfortunate that Kashmiris were being subjected cruel treatment merely for demanding fulfilment of their promised right and implementation of the UNSC resolutions that calls for holding plebiscite in the region.

“The right to self-determination is an inalienable right of the people of Kashmir”, they said, adding that it was high time that influential world governments and institutions must come forward and play their much needed role to resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute peacefully.

They said that the international community must play its due role to help stop human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir and pressurize the government of India create a conducive atmosphere for the resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/07/08/president-and-pm-ajk-paid-rich-tributes-to-shaheed-burhan-muzaffar-wani-and-his-associates-on-their-eighth-martyrdom-anniversary/>

Gilgit Baltistan CM assures robust security for Muharram

Dawn, 12 July 2024

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan has assured robust security arrangements to ensure peace during Muharram in the region.

Speaking to journalists in Chilas on Thursday, the CM reiterated his government’s commitment to maintaining peace during the holy month. He said high-level meetings were held to finalise security

arrangements and all institutions had been directed to remain vigilant at entry and exit points across GB.

A Peace Committee, led by GB Interior Minister Shams Lone, has been established to promote religious harmony and peace through meetings with prominent figures, notables, and religious scholars from all sects.

According to the GB Home Department, a central control room has been set up in Gilgit to monitor the law and order situation. Surveillance will be conducted through CCTV and drone cameras along sensitive routes. Flag march

Meanwhile, a joint flag march was organised in Gilgit on Thursday, led by Deputy Commissioner Amir Hamza, to ensure the security of Muharram processions and majalis.

It was participated, among others, by officials from various law enforcement agencies and government departments.

The Gilgit deputy commissioner said the purpose of the flag march is to maintain high alert security for Muharram gatherings and processions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1845293/gilgit-baltistan-cm-assures-robust-security-for-muharram>

Establishment of Service Tribunal registries in GB approved

Dawn, 12 July 2024

Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Syed Mehdi Shah on Thursday approved establishment of GB Service Tribunal registries in Diamer and Baltistan regions.

The Service Tribunal has also been given a special status equal to the GB Supreme Appellate Court and GB election commission.

“In exercise of the powers conferred under Article 117 of the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018, the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan has given special status to GB Service Tribunal under GB rules of business, 2009. The GB Service Tribunal has also been given a special status equal to GB Supreme Appellate Court and GB election commission,” said a notification issued by the GB law and persecution department on Thursday.

The department also issued another notification which stated: “In exercise of the powers conferred upon him under Section 3(1) of the Gilgit-Baltistan Service Tribunal (Amendment) Act 2022, and on the analogy provided under Article 89 of Government of Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018, regarding Seat of the Chief Court, the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan has been pleased to establish two Registries of Gilgit-Baltistan Service Tribunal, one each in Skardu for Baltistan Division and Chilas for Diamer-Astore Division with immediate effect.”

A press release issued by the GB government said the establishment of Service Tribunal registries in Skardu and Chilas will make it possible for the authorities to provide justice to employees of both divisions — Baltistan and Diamer — at their doorstep.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1845299/establishment-of-service-tribunal-registries-in-gb-approved>

IIOJK Insurgency

The Nation, 10 July 2024

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s new Kashmir rhetoric is dying a natural death. The insurgency in the occupied valley and ambushes on the occupying forces have become more frequent, exposing the false sense of normalcy. Recently, a grenade attack by insurgents killed five soldiers, and two more were killed earlier in Kulgam District. These events draw attention back to the insurgency fighting for Kashmiris’ right to self-determination, suppressed by a large number of occupying forces.

The heavy presence of military, paramilitary, and Central Reserve Police Force personnel has failed to deter the native insurgents. These forces operate under special powers allowing on-sight shooting and cordon and search operations. India is replicating Israel’s occupational tactics in Palestine, including settler colonialism. However, Kashmir’s insurgency has survived and become more emboldened. Against international obligations to hold a referendum in occupied Kashmir and decide the fate of the valley as per the will of the native Kashmiris, India opted to suppress, attack, kill, detain, and occupy. It even went a step further by constitutionally altering the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir. The surge in insurgent attacks on the occupying forces implies that all these tactics are failing. Perhaps India needs to acknowledge that. J&K has a long seventy-year history of freedom fighting and resistance. Deprived of any agency, the native

freedom fighters use ambushes and attacks to express their dissent and unwillingness to accept Indian occupation. In addition to these on-ground fighters, Kashmir's diaspora plays a significant role by lobbying for UN resolutions that require India to hold a referendum. Recently, the Legal Forum for Kashmir released its biannual report, recording an upward trend in state repression in the valley from January to June 2024. In the face of persistent repression and counter-insurgency operations, the insurgents hit back whenever possible, calling on the world to recognize their agency, right to self-determination, and freedom.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Jul-2024/iiojk-insurgency>

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to provide political, diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiris

Pakistan Today, 11 July 2024

Pakistan on Thursday reiterated its call for the Indian government to cease its campaign of extrajudicial killings and indiscriminate use of lethal force against the Kashmiri people in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, at her press briefing, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to provide political, diplomatic, and moral support to our Kashmiri people for the just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

She told the media that the 93rd 'Youm-e-Shuhada-e-Kashmir' (Kashmir

Martyrs Day) would be observed on July 13 to honor the martyrdom of 22 Kashmiris who sacrificed their lives in Srinagar in 1931, bravely facing the indiscriminate firing of Dogra forces under the former Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We salute their courage, which ignited a determined movement for the rights and freedoms of the Kashmiri people and their right to self-determination. This movement continues to this day."

"Burhan Muzaffar Wani, an iconic youth leader from Kashmir, was among the hundreds who fell victim to extrajudicial killings in IIOJK. His eighth martyrdom anniversary was observed on July 8th," she remarked.

Commenting on Israeli aggression, she said Pakistan strongly condemned this week's indiscriminate attacks by Israeli occupation forces on four schools in Gaza, which resulted in the massacre of dozens of women and children seeking shelter there. These attacks are further evidence of Israel's genocidal campaign against the people of Gaza.

The indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations and facilities is a grave violation of international law and constitutes war crimes.

With its latest actions, Israeli occupation forces have once again demonstrated their contempt for international law and the basic tenets of decency and acceptable international behaviour, she said.

These flagrant violations of international humanitarian law must not be permitted to become the new norm.

She told the media that Pakistan and Azerbaijan will engage in wide-ranging discussions on areas of mutual interest to further strengthen their bilateral strategic cooperation during the two-day official visit of President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/07/11/pakistan-reaffirms-commitment-to-provide-political-diplomatic-and-moral-support-to-kashmiris/>

Economic Developments

GB importers go on strike against trade suspension

Dawn, 9 July 2024

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) traders have shut their businesses as they have gone on strike against the suspension of trade with China since April. The traders' bodies, GB Importers and Exporters Association and GB Chamber of Commerce and Industries warned that they would block the Karakoram Highway at Sost if their demands were not met by Ashura. While addressing a press conference at the Gilgit Press Club on Monday, GB Importers and Exporters Association president Muhammad Iqbal and GB Chamber of Commerce president Imran Ali said trade between Pakistan and China through the Khunjerab Pass has been suspended since 1 April, after it was reopened following a four-month-long closure. Senior traders Johar Ali Raki, Basharat Bhutt, Iqbal Pathan, Muhammad Ali Qauid and other businessmen were also present at the press conference.

The suspension of trade activities since April has left locals without jobs as they

rely on cross-border trade to earn a living in the absence of industries or private sector jobs in the area. The business leaders claimed that consignments imported from China had been stuck at the Sost Dry port since April due to Customs clearance issues. They alleged that Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) wrong policies have resulted in the suspension of trade. According to the business leaders, income tax and sales tax are not applicable on imported items for GB residents. Under the border agreement between Pakistan and China, there is no tax on GB residents for barter trade. They demanded relaxation of income and sales taxes collected and sought a 20 per cent land route valuation concession on imported goods for locals. They said the same is already being provided to traders in Quetta and other areas of Pakistan. According to them, there is no tax on goods worth 20,000 yuan in China, and the same relaxation should be introduced here. They also warned of possible legal challenges in court against officials' decisions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1844744/gb-importers-go-on-strike-against-trade-suspension>

Rains, glaciers melting help raise Mangla water level

The Nation, 9 July 2024

Following continual melting of glaciers at the upper reaches of the Himalayan since the very advent of the rising scorching heat-oriented summer, water level in the country's second largest reservoir-Mangla dam was constantly rising but with routine pace. The water level in Mangla dam rose to 1192.05 feet with live storage of 3.773 MAF against

maximum conservation level 1242 feet on Monday, officials said. The inflows of Jhelum river at Mangla reservoir reported as 54700 cusecs with the outflows of 16900 cusecs of water. The overall position of the river inflows and outflows at Tarbela, Mangla and Chashma along with the reservoirs levels and the barrages in the country remained satisfactory.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2477992/rains-glaciers-melting-help-raise-mangla-water-level>

Neelum-Jhelum HPP generates 762m units of cheap electricity

The Nation, 9 July 2024

The Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) has generated 762 million units of green, clean and low-cost hydel electricity in fiscal year 2023-24, according to WAPDA statistics. According to the authority, fiscal year 2023-24 proved a better year for green, clean and low-cost hydel electricity generation in Pakistan. Twenty-two hydel power stations of WAPDA cumulatively provided 34.436 billion units of electricity to the National Grid, which is 3.266 billion units more than that of FY 2022-23. This additional generation is because of the improved hydrology and effective operation and maintenance of the hydel power stations.

The production of 3.266 billion units helped save national exchequer an amount of Rs143.7 billion, if the same quantum of electricity had to be generated through imported furnace oil. The contract for the remedial work at NJHP was entrusted to China Gezhouba Group Corporation which completed the work at earliest and the

power production was successfully reinstated in August 2023. Prior to the suspension of power generation, NJHP had provided more than 18 billion units of electricity to the National Grid.

According to WAPDA, currently, the cumulative installed generation capacity of WAPDA hydel power stations, including Neelum Jhelum, stands at about 9,500MW. Hydel generation is the most economical electricity generated in the country. The tariff for fiscal year 2023-24 determined by NEPRA for WAPDA hydel electricity is Rs3.81 per unit which constitutes about 30% of the total electricity provided to the National Grid. A number of mega projects are under construction in Water and Hydropower Sectors including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project and Tarbela 5th Extension etc scheduled for completion in a phased manner. These projects will increase the WAPDA hydel generation in next four to five years from 9,500MW to 20,700MW with an addition of about 11,200MW clean, green and low-cost hydel.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Jul-2024/neelum-jhelum-hpp-generates-762m-units-of-cheap-electricity>

The Impact of PIA Flight Suspension on Gilgit: An Urgent Call for Action

Pamir Times, 10 July 2024

The suspension of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights between Islamabad and Gilgit has cast a long shadow over the residents of Gilgit-Hunza and the region's burgeoning tourism industry. This disruption has created significant

challenges for local travel and has dealt a severe blow to the hospitality sector, which heavily relies on the influx of tourists. For the people of Gilgit-Hunza, the suspension of PIA flights has made traveling to and from Islamabad increasingly difficult. The mountainous terrain and limited alternative transportation options mean that residents must endure long, arduous road journeys. These trips are not only time-consuming but also come with safety risks, particularly during harsh weather conditions when road travel can be treacherous.

Access to essential services, educational opportunities, and business activities in Islamabad has been severely hampered. Medical emergencies, which necessitate swift travel to major cities, have become a significant concern for the local population. The lack of reliable air travel has thus disrupted daily life and hindered the overall well-being of the community. The suspension of flights has had a pronounced impact on Gilgit-Hunza's tourism industry. Known for its breathtaking landscapes, rich culture, and historical significance, the region attracts tourists from around the globe. However, with the current travel constraints, the number of visitors has dwindled dramatically. Hotels, guesthouses, and other hospitality businesses that thrive on tourism are now grappling with substantial financial losses. Many have had to lay off staff or shut down entirely, leading to increased unemployment and economic instability in the region. Local artisans and small businesses, which depend on tourist trade, are also struggling to stay afloat.

A Call for Government Action

To mitigate these challenges and revitalize Gilgit-Hunza's tourism sector, it is imperative for the government to take swift and decisive action. The restoration of regular PIA flights between Islamabad and Gilgit is a crucial step towards alleviating the travel woes of the residents and rejuvenating tourism. Ensuring reliable and frequent flights will not only facilitate easier and safer travel for locals but will also encourage tourists to return to this picturesque region. The revival of tourism will, in turn, stimulate the hospitality industry, create jobs, and foster economic growth. The suspension of PIA flights has brought to light the pressing need for improved connectivity in Gilgit. The government must prioritize the restoration of these flights to support the residents' travel needs and to help the tourism sector recover from its current slump. By taking immediate action, the government can ensure that Gilgit-Hunza and Ghizer continues to thrive as a key tourist destination and that its people enjoy better access to essential services and opportunities.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/07/10/the-impact-of-pia-flight-suspension-on-gilgit-an-urgent-call-for-action/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Kashmiris all across the state mark the martyrdom day of Kashmir independence movement brave leader Burhan Wani

Nawaiwaqt, 9 July 2024

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) celebrated Burhan Muzaffar Wani's eighth martyrdom day as Resistance

Day. Along with other Kashmiri martyrs and the national flags, young people honored the Burhan Wani martyrdom with his pictures held high. Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir was in charge of organizing the event. The youths performed the national anthems of Jammu and Kashmir and pledged to resist India's 'occupation' and the liberation of 'Occupied Kashmir.' To show their support for the young people of 'occupied Kashmir', they also organized a competition named 'Run for Freedom' in which young people started running from Burhan Muzaffar Wani Chowk to Yadgar-e-Shohda. Adorned with t-shirts featuring images of Burhan Wani 'Shaheed', peoples honored Burhan Wani and the other martyrs.

In addition, they were chanting pro-freedom and anti-Indian phrases like 'Burhan your blood brought revolution,' 'Kashmiri youth will take freedom from India,' 'Freedom is our right,' 'Long live Kashmiri resistance,' 'Kashmir is watered with our blood, Kashmir is ours, and so on. Mushtaq-ul-Islam, Vice Chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat, Zahid Saifi, Leaders of the Hurriyat Conference 'Azad Kashmir' chapter, and Chairman Uzair Ahmed Ghazali among others addressed the youths. They said that Burhan Muzaffar Wani was martyred on 8 July, 2016, in the Kukarnag area, for his bravery in facing the Indian army. They claimed that the whole Kashmiri people honors this great defender of Islam and freedom from oppression.

They believed that Burhan Wani played the most important role during the most challenging stage of the

Kashmir liberation movement, exposing the terrible face of India to the world. They added that the world need to make an effort to comprehend the rage and hatred that millions of young people in Jammu and Kashmir harbor toward India. They claimed that hundreds of Kashmiri youths, including Drs. Sabzar, Manan Wani, Rafi Butt, Saifullah, and other highly educated youths, were martyred in the liberation struggle against India following the martyrdom of Burhan Wani. Speakers advised India to keep in mind that tyranny will never be able to end the Kashmiri people's resistance. They declared that the fight for Kashmir's independence will go on in any event.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2024-07-09/page-1>

Traders threaten to protest at Sost border after Ashura

Urdupoint, 9 July 2024

The 13-member core committee of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Importers and Exporters has put forth a three-point agenda to the government and warned to stage protests at the entry and departure points in the Pakistan-China border area of Sost if the demands are not met by Ashura (Muharram). During a press conference, along with Imran Ali, the President of the GB Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other members of the Core Committee, Mohammad Iqbal Nagri, one of the 13 members of the Core Committee stated that small traders at the Khunjerab border pass between Pakistan and China need to be involved in resolving issues and being represented in trade. Since 15 January

and the start of the season on 1 April, 2024, hundreds of containers have lain at Sost, and thousands of small traders have ceased trading at the border pass.

Since GB lacks any industry, the government does not offer any employment chances either. The only source of employment for the vast majority of educated youth is the trade between Pakistan and China; however, because Federal Board of Revenue of Pakistan (FBR) has not established any appropriate policies, all small and large businessmen in GB have lost their legal rights. He stressed that while the business community does not make any unlawful demands, it does legitimately want a 20% exemption from sales tax, income tax, and property value (three demands). Nagri said that this is not an unreasonable demand; the business community is entitled to legal representation, and they will submit a statement of fundamental human rights of the GB peoples to the GB Assembly together with supporting documentation.

Given our relative backwardness, small traders who receive free goods through the Pakistan-China Border Trade Agreement and whose commodities are valued at between fifteen and twenty thousand Chinese yen should also not be subject to taxes. He stated that if these demands particularly the three charters of demand are not met right away, they will be forced to hold a peaceful demonstration in every GB district and hold a protest at the entrance and exit of Sost border point after Ashura.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/23528>

The horrific events of 13 July 1931, mark a turning point in the prolonged struggle for Kashmiris' liberation

UrduPoint, 11 July 2024

In his tribute to the martyrs of 13 July 1931, Secretary of Information for the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Mushtaq Ahmad Butt stated that the 13 July violent event against oppression served as a source of inspiration for Kashmir's protracted struggle for freedom. This is a historic moment because 22 martyrs who gave their lives to defend the cause of freedom for oppressed Kashmiris have opened common Kashmiris eyes. They have demonstrated that the blood of martyrs is the starting point of any revolution. Butt claimed that there has never before been a more extraordinary way for these remarkable 1931 martyrs to reach the pinnacle of martyrdom. And it is our collective responsibility to honor what was undoubtedly a tremendous and unique sacrifice.

Their martyrdom will go down in Kashmiri history. Butt reaffirmed his will for the Kashmiri people to carry on with their rightful fight until the objective is met, as well as their willingness to be patient and persistent in the face of India's violence and cruelty. He claimed that, the martyrs' sacrifices will be crucial in getting us where we are going. And thanks to their great martyrdoms, the day when Kashmir is released from India's slavery is not far off.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4080891.html>

From Social Media

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

14 July 2024

At least three tourists, three others sustaining injuries in a traffic accident at Skardu road, yesterday GB government has suggested to the chief ministers of the 4 provinces PM of AJK to initiate an awareness drive for tourists visiting GB as traffic accidents increased in GB. Content link:

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1812433045854556652>

Pamir Times @pamirtimes

10 July 2024

The Impact of PIA Flight Suspension on Gilgit: An Urgent Call for Action. Twitter link:

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1811046286008738006>

Wajahat Ali @wajahatgilgiti

12 July 2024

The unelected federal representatives of Gilgit-Baltistan who will make the

decisions of GB then say that all the powers rest with the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Link:

<https://twitter.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1811565671593152749>

Muhammad Junaid
@Muhamma64144514

8 July 2024

Gilgit Baltistan prone to climate catastrophe is severely affecting by flash floods... Recent incident at Skardu indicates so @naveedakhtr1261 highlights this in his article. Link:

<https://twitter.com/Muhamma64144514/status/1810250278379344078>

N. U. Baig @PPP_Hunza

11 July 2024

Our heart cries when the Chapri tourists from Pakistan leave their dirty footprints like this in Gilgit Baltistan. Link:

https://twitter.com/PPP_Hunza/status/1811402264453751002

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Disclaimer

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