

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 4 | Issue 29

15 July - 21 July 2024

Neelum-Jhelum POK
Gilgit-Baltistan
Sustainable tourism Climate
Sost Dry Port Change
Sales tax Khunjerab Pass
mountaineering school



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Contents

Political Developments

- Three tourists killed as car plunges into Indus River in Skardu
- Security beefed up across AJK ahead of Muharram
- ‘Role of the Diaspora Kashmiri Youth in the National Liberation Movement’: JKLF hosts successful Youth Conference in UK
- Chairman JKSM Altaf Ahmed Bhat Reaffirms Commitment to Kashmiri Rights and Self-Determination
- Kashmiris to take out rallies to observe Accession to Pakistan Day
- ‘Govt to establish world class mountaineering school in GB’: PM’s aide

Economic Developments

- PM livid over negligence in construction of key hydel project
- GB court stops FBR, Customs from taxing imports through Khunjerab
- ‘AJK’ sets new electricity rates after violent protests

Vernacular Urdu Media

- Every effort will be made to incorporate Kashmir's history and geography into the school curriculum: ‘AJK’ Minister of Law, Mian Abdul Waheed
- Kashmiris' dedication to Pakistan is demonstrated by their July resolution to join Pakistan: ‘AJK’ Minister of Information
- Pakistan is the centre of Kashmiris’ hopes: ‘AJK’ PM

Political Developments

Three tourists killed as car plunges into Indus River in Skardu

Dawn, 15 July 2024

Three tourists, including a child, were killed and three injured when a car plunged into the Indus River in Roundu valley of Skardu. According to the police, the car was travelling from Islamabad to Skardu when it was hit by falling rocks from a mountain on Baltistan Road near Malupa village. The driver lost control of the car, and it fell into the river. The three deceased were identified as Sajid Qureshi, a minor girl from Jhelum and Syed Hassan, a local driver from Skardu. Local police, Rescue 1122 and volunteers moved the dead and injured to the Combined Military Hospital, Skardu, where the injured are said to be in critical condition.

Following the accident, locals blocked the Baltistan Road to protest against frequent accidents. They claimed that the road is prone to accidents due to its flawed design and structural issues. Imran Nadeem Shigri, PPP leader and a former member of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly said, vehicles travelling without proper maintenance, and violation of traffic rules are claimed to be the main source of traffic accidents. But little is said about the safety of road infrastructure. What we fail to recognise is that the structural flaws in road infrastructure are mainly the reason many preventable accidents occur on a daily basis, he added. Mr Shigri said that time and again, concerns have been

raised over the structural engineering of Baltistan Road, but the authorities have not made any efforts to fix the issues. Earlier on Saturday, the GB government advised chief ministers of all four provinces and the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' prime minister to initiate a road safety awareness drive for tourists visiting the region. As per the data, the number of such incidents had risen from 150 in 2020 to 230 in 2023, a trend that is deeply alarming and demands immediate action, the GB CM added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1845826/three-tourists-killed-as-car-plunges-into-indus-river-in-skardu>

Security beefed up across 'AJK' ahead of Muharram

The Nation, 16 July 2024

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) beefed up security measures across the region to maintain peace and traditional religious harmony during Muharram-ul-Haram. According to official sources, extra police contingents have been deployed at vulnerable locations, including places of worship and Imambargahs to prevent any untoward incident during the holy month.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Jul-2024/security-beefed-up-across-ajk-ahead-of-muharram>

'Role of the Diaspora Kashmiri Youth in the National Liberation Movement': JKLF hosts successful Youth Conference in UK

Daily Times, 17 July 2024

A successful youth conference titled 'Role of the Diaspora Kashmiri Youth

in the National Liberation Movement' held in Nottingham, United Kingdom (UK) was organized and hosted by the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Encouraging numbers of British born Kashmiris including the Kashmiri youth studying and working in the UK participated in the conference. The conference was also attended by many Kashmiri scholars, intellectuals, academics, businessmen, professors, political leaders, civil society representatives and human rights activists. Liaqat Ali Lone, the President JKLF (UK) Zone, spoke about the aims and objectives of the conference while as the Zonal head of the political department Sardar Naseem Iqbal Advocate highlighted the legal status of the Jammu Kashmir issue.

During the first open interactive session of the youth from universities including Cambridge, Sheffield University among others also presented their views. While paying homage to martyrs of 13 July, 1931, they remembered the great JKLF leaders for their role in the Kashmir freedom movement. The participants paid rich tributes to the illegally incarcerated chairman of JKLF Muhammad Yasin Malik and to other Kashmiri prisoners detained in Indian Jails for their unflinching and unwavering role and commitment they have been exhibiting, and for all the discomfort they have been going through especially during the current extremist regime in India. The young Kashmiri participants while

expressing their resolve to continue the freedom struggle till its logical conclusion of independence unanimously passed the following resolutions named as 'Nottingham Declaration'. The conference condemned the unleashing of terror and genocide of Palestinians by Israeli forces in Gaza and demanded an immediate halt of Israeli bombing against Palestinian people. The young participants of the conference supported freedom of Palestine.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1209240/role-of-the-diaspora-kashmiri-youth-in-the-national-liberation-movement-jklf-hosts-successful-youth-conference-in-uk/>

Chairman JKSM Altaf Ahmed Bhat Reaffirms Commitment to Kashmiri Rights and Self-Determination

Daily Parliament Times, 18 July 2024

Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM), Altaf Ahmed Bhat, marked the historic significance of 19th July, commemorating the resolution passed in 1947 that aimed to secure Jammu and Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. On this occasion, he reiterated the unwavering stance of the Kashmiri people against Indian rule, emphasizing their steadfast determination for self-determination. Our forefathers, with unwavering resolve, laid the foundation stone by passing the resolution to accede with the newly born Pakistan. Their vision was rooted in the ideals of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, seeking to fulfill the dreams of the visionary poet, Allama Iqbal. This historic

decision echoed their deep commitment to shape a future aligned with the aspirations of a united nation under the banner of Pakistan.

He highlighted the pivotal moment in history when Kashmiri people, through a resolution in Srinagar, expressed their unequivocal desire to not coexist with India. This act, occurring just weeks before Pakistan's formation, symbolized Kashmiri aspirations for independence, free from Indian control. Bhat emphasized that this historical struggle continues to define the resolve of the Kashmiri people today. Addressing the current situation in the region, he condemned India's unilateral and unlawful actions, particularly the revocation of Articles 35A and 370, which he described as illegal, immoral, and apolitical.

Bhat called upon Pakistan to escalate its efforts in providing political, moral, and diplomatic support to Kashmiris in their pursuit of self-determination. He underscored the urgent need for a free and impartial referendum under international supervision to ascertain the will of the Kashmiri people regarding their future. Recognizing the sacrifices made by Kashmiri martyrs, prisoners, and the general populace, Chairman Bhat paid homage to their resilience and unwavering spirit in the face of adversity.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/07/18/chairman-jksm-altaf-ahmed-bhat-reaffirms-commitment-to-kashmiri-rights-and-self-determination/>

Kashmiris to take out rallies to observe Accession to Pakistan Day

The Nation, 19 July 2024

Kashmiris in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) will take out rallies and hold seminars to highlight the plight of the people and human rights violations in the 'Indian-occupied' valley on the occasion of 76th Accession to Pakistan Day on Friday. Kashmiris all over the world observe the day with renewed pledge to continue struggle for their right to self-determination under United Nations resolutions. It was on 19 July 1947, when genuine representatives of the Kashmiris unanimously passed the resolution of Kashmir's Accession to Pakistan in a meeting of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in Srinagar.

Ceremonies to commemorate the day will be held in the capital city of Muzaffarabad besides all the three divisional and district headquarters in 'AJK' wherein the importance of implementation of this historic resolution will be highlighted by the speakers belonging to various walks of life. 'Azad Kashmir' Transport Minister Javed Ahmed Butt, said in a statement that Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control would struggle for freedom from Indian yoke on different fronts like their forefathers. He said that hundreds of thousands Kashmiris have been martyred by 'Indian occupation' forces to deprive them of their right. Since the 1990s, India has martyred more than 97,000

Kashmiris. Javed Butt said more than 500,000 Kashmiris sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the 'Indian-occupied' valley during the past seven decades.

Preparations for YOUM-E-ISTEHSAL (Kashmir Seize Day)

Meanwhile, in Islamabad, a high-level meeting was held with Prime Minister's Coordinator for Kashmir Affairs, Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, in the chair to finalize preparations for Youm-e-Istehsal observed in Pakistan every year to condemn India's controversial actions to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on 5 August 2019. The meeting, attended by the Additional Secretary for Kashmir and GB Affairs Syed Khalid Gardezi and other senior ministry officials, brought together representatives from various ministries and departments. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, police, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom, Capital Development Authority, Ministry of Education, Pakistan Railways, National Heritage and Culture Division, Cantonment Board, along with senior officials from all provinces, and representatives from the district administrations of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, were present.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/19-Jul-2024/kashmiris-to-take-out-rallies-to-observe-accession-to-pakistan-day>

'Govt to establish world class mountaineering school in GB': PM's aide

Dawn, 22 July 2024

Romina Khurshid Alam, the coordinator to the prime minister on climate change and environmental coordination, announced that the government will establish a world class mountaineering school in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to promote sustainable and environment-friendly climbing in the country. The PM's aide said this institution would offer structured training and educational facilities tailored to mountaineering, Sherpa training and sustainable tourism practices, aiming to promote world-class, environment-friendly mountaineering and tourism in the country's northern regions. At a meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee to establish the Mountaineering School in GB, Ms Alam said the plan is being implemented in close coordination with the GB government to set up the first government-run mountaineering school of world-class standard in Skardu.

The school aimed to equip aspiring mountaineers and climbers with skills and knowledge needed to safely enjoy mountains while respecting the local environment, values, and cultures of the communities living in the area. This initiative also seeks to create new employment opportunities for local communities and promote

sustainable mountaineering and climbing, she said. The PM's aide noted that GB, celebrated for its scenic towering peaks, including K2, the world's second-highest mountain, has long attracted adventurers and explorers from around the globe. The region's untapped potential for promoting mountaineering and climbing can be realised through the provision of skill development training and facilities.

By equipping local and international participants with necessary skills and knowledge at the proposed mountaineering school in Skardu, we aim to foster a new generation of mountaineers and tourism professionals committed to preserving the natural and cultural integrity of GB, Ms Alam said. The meeting also discussed the curriculum for mountaineering and climbing, skill development modules, rescue training, site identification for the school, training programmes for local tour guides, and potential funding and collaboration opportunities for the school's establishment and management. The meeting was attended by officials of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission, GB Planning and Development Department and members representing the mountaineering community.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1847152/govt-to-establish-world-class-mountaineering-school-in-gb-pms-aide>

Economic Developments

PM livid over negligence in construction of key hydel project

Dawn, 15 July 2024

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formed a committee to reactivate the Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project, directing the relevant officials to complete investigation into its recent closure and identify those responsible for the defects in its design. While chairing a meeting at PM House during which a preliminary investigation report was presented, the prime minister expressed annoyance over the 'criminal negligence' committed in the past and ordered immediate completion of the probe and strict action against those found responsible for it. Experts pointed out that there were defects in the design, concrete lining was not done, how unfortunate is that such a big and important project was neglected, Mr Sharif said, while questioning why a detailed geological survey had not been conducted for the project.

He remarked that 'criminal negligence' was committed by not conducting a third party validation of the project. Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Information Minister Ataullah Tarrar, Power Minister Awais Leghari, Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Jehanzeb Khan, Coordinator to PM Rana Ehsaan Afzal, Wapda Chairman Sajjad Ghani, former interior secretary Shahid Khan and other high

officials attended the meeting. Former interior secretary Shahid Khan, who is heading the investigation committee probing recent faults in the hydropower project, presented the preliminary investigation report at the meeting.

In a detailed briefing, the PM was informed that due to a drop in pressure in the right and left headrace tunnels of Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project on 29 April, there was a reduction in power generation, which completely stopped later on 2 May. While issuing directives for immediate completion of the investigation, the PM told the officials that the project's closure was causing a loss of millions of rupees to the national exchequer. Mr Sharif was informed that the place where the current fault occurred was the rock burst zone.

The meeting was apprised that a significant decrease in power generation was seen due to an abnormal drop in pressure in the headrace tunnel in 2021 as well, but the abnormal change in the pressure had been ignored and not even reported. The matter was deliberately suppressed, the PM was told. During the PTI regime, no repair work was done after the abnormality in the project, which resulted in an increase in losses, the meeting was told. The PM was informed that defects developed in the hydropower project in 2021 were also being made part of the investigation report. Also, due to a fault in the tailrace tunnel, power generation was suspended in 2022. Besides,

geophysical and seismic factors were ignored in the construction of Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project and adequate concrete lining of the headrace tunnel was not carried out.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1845817>

GB court stops FBR, Customs from taxing imports through Khunjerab

Dawn, 21 July 2024

The income tax, sales tax and additional sales tax collected by revenue authorities on goods imported from China through the Khunjerab Pass is illegal, the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Court declared. The court stopped the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Customs from collecting these taxes. The order was issued by Justice Raja Shakeel Ahmed on a petition filed by GB Importers and Exporters Association president Muhammad Iqbal through his counsel. The trader challenged the taxes collected at the Sost Dry Port on Chinese goods imported through the Khunjerab Pass. The petitioners said the FBR, through a 1996 notification which is still operational had suspended the collection of sales tax on imported goods in GB.

He also referred to the subsequent orders by the GB Council Secretariat in Islamabad, the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and GB and the GB law department, which declared the region exempt from these taxes. Still, the FBR and Customs were 'illegally' collecting these taxes in violation of their authority, the petitioner pleaded.

Following the proceedings, Justice Ahmed issued a short order and admitted the petition for regular hearing. He noted that GB was indeed exempted from all kinds of taxes, and the issue has been decided by courts in the past. The petition will now be fixed for hearing after summer vacations. While talking to Dawn, Advocate Adnan Hussain, one of the petitioner's lawyers, said federal and regional authorities had issued several notifications exempting GB from sales tax, income tax, and additional sales tax.

Additionally, the region's chief court has already decided that GB is exempted from these taxes. 'Despite [these] exemptions, FBR has been illegally collecting and deducting the taxes from GB traders on imported items from China at Sost Dry port,' he added. Mr Iqbal, the petitioner, said GB traders were ready to pay the custom duty and other taxes, but they will continue their struggle against 'all illegal taxes at Sost Dry port.' The discontent among GB traders over these taxes has already resulted in numerous strikes and halting of trade activities in the region since April, with the latest strike earlier this month. Earlier in June, the GB Assembly also passed a resolution demanding the federal government stop collecting taxes on goods imported from China through the Khunjerab Pass.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1846948/gb-court-stops-fbr-customs-from-taxing-imports-through-khunjerab>

'AJK' sets new electricity rates after violent protests

Pakistan Today, 21 July 2024

Following massive protests, the 'Azad Kashmir' government has implemented a new electricity tariff, setting the rate at Rs3 per unit for consumers. This decision comes in the wake of an agreement with the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) after recent violent protests. The clashes also resulted in the death of a police official, sub-inspector Adnan Qureshi, and injuries to several others. Qureshi suffered a fatal gunshot wound in the chest while attempting to halt a rally in the town of Islamgarh. Details reveal that the new tariff rates are Rs3 per unit for up to 100 units, Rs5 per unit for 100-300 units, and Rs6 per unit for above 300 units. The government has issued a notification to enforce these rates, fulfilling its promise to make electricity more affordable. Additionally, outstanding amounts will be collected in 12 installments, ensuring easier payment terms for residents.

The move follows intense confrontations between police and activists of a rights movement during a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory. The JAAC has been advocating for electricity pricing based on hydropower generation costs in 'AJK', subsidized wheat flour, and the end to elite class privileges. During the protests, multiple vehicles were damaged, and public life was disrupted

with the closure of markets, trade centers, offices, schools, and restaurants across 'AJK.'

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/07/21/aj-k-sets-new-electricity-rates-after-violent-protests/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Every effort will be made to incorporate Kashmir's history and geography into the school curriculum: 'AJK' Minister of Law, Mian Abdul Waheed

UrduPoint, 18 July 2024

Minister of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs Mian Abdul Waheed declared that every effort will be made to incorporate Kashmir's geography and history into the curriculum. He said this at the Government Boys High School in Jura at the farewell speech of eminent educationist Muhammad Zaman, Senior Science Teacher. Additionally, he stated that it is reasonable to expect that teachers receive scale upgrades.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/national-news/live-news-4087728.html>

Kashmiris' dedication to Pakistan is demonstrated by their July resolution to join Pakistan: 'AJK' Minister of Information

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 19 July 2024

According to 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Information Minister Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah, the resolution passed on 19 July, which approved Kashmir's integration into

Pakistan, is evidence of the region's dedication to Pakistan. The Kashmiris made the decision to join Pakistan as a whole, added that in Kashmiri history, this day is particularly significant. A historical injustice occurred when Indian forces militarily occupied Jammu and Kashmir in October 1947. He claimed that every Kashmiri and every Pakistani makes a commitment on Pakistan Accession Day to keep up the fight until Kashmir gains full independence. He said that time and again Kashmiris made it evident that Pakistan is the final destination for the Kashmiris.

He claimed that Kashmiris on both sides have a strong sense of loyalty to Pakistan. Pakistan has consistently supported its fellow Kashmiris and campaigned for their rights in a just manner throughout the world. He claimed that on 24 October 1947, Ghazi Millat Sardar Ibrahim Khan, the man who founded the sovereign state of 'AJK' made it apparent that Pakistan is the goal for Kashmiris, and they will stop at nothing to get there. With millions of martyrs lost, he claimed, the fight against Indian military occupation is still ongoing.

Pakistan is our destination, and that we shall persist in advocating on all diplomatic and political platforms the military occupation of Jammu and Kashmir by India. He said that the sacrifices made on the Line of Control, are valued by Pakistani forces. He claimed that India is complicit in the

greatest human rights abuses occurring in the 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir. He claimed that every Kashmiri and every Pakistani makes a commitment to keep up the battle till Kashmir gains full freedom on Pakistan's Accession Day.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Resize-of-front-colur-19-july.jpg>

Pakistan is the centre of Kashmiris' hopes: 'AJK' PM

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 19 July 2024

While referring to Pakistan as the source of Kashmiris' hopes, Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has claimed that 19 July is particularly significant in the history of Kashmir's freedom movement. In his message on the occasion of Kashmir's day of accession to Pakistan, Haq stated that the decision to align their destiny with Pakistan was made by the Kashmiri leadership on this day in 1947. He claimed that the fact that the day is observed on both sides of the line of control (LoC) is a testament to the unwavering love and faith that Kashmiris have for Pakistan. Every Kashmiri is inherently fond of Pakistan; those who sacrificed their lives to uphold this philosophy are our true heroes. He claimed that Kashmiris have made unmatched sacrifices in order to realize the ideal that their forefathers had made long before Pakistan was founded.

He expressed hope that the hardships and sacrifices made by the Kashmiris will soon pay off. He called the unwavering affection that Kashmiris have for Pakistan the greatest embarrassment to India and mentioned the tremendous sacrifices made by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, which is under 'Indian occupation'. He said that soon after the partition, 250,000 Kashmiri Muslims were massacred in and around Jammu city, and others were forced to migrate to Pakistan. He continued, saying that the people of Kashmir were still fighting to realize the vision their forefathers had 76 years ago in the face of over eight lac 'Indian occupation forces.' Despite all these brutal tactics India has miserably failed to eliminate Pakistan's love from the hearts and minds of the Kashmiri people, he claimed.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Resize-of-front-colur-19-july.jpg>

From Social Media

Muhammad **Junaid**
@Muhamma64144514

18 July 2024

Gilgit Baltistan's health conundrum are so huge even no functional MRI machine for whole community. Is it not a matter shame? @csgbpbk @IDGB_Official

#healthcoundrum #GilgitBaltistan

<https://twitter.com/Muhamma64144514/status/13842276323557648>

Fahad @ShahFahdB

21 July 2024

PM and others from Pakistan will build a mountaineering school in GB, but this doesn't include a single local, despite GB's many record-holding climbers. Superseding GB's public, giving chair of committees to non-locals isn't in GB's favor.

#GilgitBaltistan #LocalRepresentation.

<https://twitter.com/ShahFahdB/status/1814996956533395527>

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

22 July 2024

The discontent among #GilgitBaltistan traders over taxes has halted trade activities between #Pakistan and #China since April. The income tax, sales tax, and additional sales tax collected by FBR on goods imported from China declared illegal.

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1815068196484866377>

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 4 | Issue 29

15 July - 21 July 2024

Compiled by

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

Edited By

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

Disclaimer

PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: pokdigest@gmail.com