

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 4 | Issue 12

18 March - 24 March 2024

sustainable industrialization
Abduction
tourism POK
Climate Change
Gilgit-Baltistan
Daanish schools
malicious propaganda



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

India's extremist policies have shattered the socio-political fabric of Kashmir: Altaf Wani

Pakistan Observer, 18 March 2024

Kashmiri representative Altaf Hussain Wani has said that the extremist policies of 'India's apartheid regime' have shattered the socio-political fabric of 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK). Wani stated this while taking part in a general debate held under agenda item 3 on the sidelines of the 55th session of UNHRC in Geneva. Speaking on behalf of the World Muslim Congress, he drew the attention of the Council toward the fast-deteriorating political and human rights situation in 'IOK'. He told the world audience that abuse of basic human rights, arbitrary detentions, and curbs on freedoms of expression and movement had become a new normal in Kashmir.

He termed the recent visit of India's Prime Minister to the valley of Kashmir as an attempt to show a fake normalcy. He said that besides forcing public servants to participate in Modi's political rally, people were gathered from different locations and herded to the main venue to ensure a crowd for the prime minister. He said that Narendra Modi's visit to Kashmir took place at a time when his right-wing extremist party had not only failed in restoring the political process but incarcerated political leadership with the fear of public resentment, banned political parties, curbed freedom of expression through application of

arbitrary laws, and applied a blanket ban on civil society organizations.

Modi visited a place where access to justice, truth, and reparations is a far cry, he said, adding that the leader of the so-called biggest democracy cherishes the demise of democracy, self-determination, and civil and political rights in Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the UN Human Rights Council to understand the compelling nature of events to carry out comprehensive inquiry and accountability of the arbitrary laws and mechanisms used to torture, discriminate, and crush the peaceful resistance of Kashmiris for the right to self-determination.

<https://pakobserver.net/indias-extremist-policies-have-shattered-socio-political-fabric-of-kashmir-altaf-wani/>

'Modi regime wants to disempower, disenfranchise IIOJK people'

Pakistan Observer, 18 March 2024

The Modi regime has taken several steps to disempower and disenfranchise Kashmiris after August 2019 when it repealed the special status of 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) and imposed military siege in the territory. According to a report released by Kashmir Media Service, today, the main purpose of Modi's 5th August 2019 illegal actions was to demote, disempower and disenfranchise Muslims in 'IIOJK.' It said the Modi regime is enforcing a process of political, constitutional, cultural, and economic disempowerment in the occupied territory. Muslims, belonging

to every class, sect, or ethnicity in 'IIOJK', are targets of Hindutva policy, it added.

The report said the Modi regime is arbitrarily issuing orders one after the other to further its anti-Kashmiris agenda. It is the dream of RSS-BJP to make every Kashmiri Muslim homeless in their land, it lamented. It said India is illegally altering the demography of 'IIOJK' in violation of United Nations resolutions and international laws as Modi is hell-bent on eradicating the Muslim character of the territory. The report said the BJP-RSS wants to revive Hindu civilization in Muslims majority Jammu and Kashmir but the people of Kashmir are determined to thwart Modi's sinister designs and would continue their just struggle for the right to self-determination.

<https://pakobserver.net/modi-regime-wants-to-disempower-disenfranchise-iiojk-people/>

Pakistan denounces fresh round of curbs on political parties of 'India-occupied Kashmir:' FO

Dawn, 19 March 2024

Pakistan denounced Indian authorities' decision to declare several political parties of 'India-occupied Kashmir' (IOK) as 'unlawful associations.' In a statement, the Foreign Office (FO) said: Pakistan denounces the Indian authorities' decision to declare the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Freedom League (JKPFL) and four factions of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League (JKPL) as 'unlawful associations'. It also denounced the decision to extend the ban on the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) (Mohd. Yasin

Malik faction) for five more years. Last week, the India home ministry declared the Yasin Malik faction of the JKLF as an 'unlawful association' and designated the JKPFL as a banned group for five years 'for abetting secession.'

The report added that the ministry also declared four factions of the JKPL Mukhtar Ahmed Waza, Bashir Ahmad Tota, Ghulam Mohammad Khan, and Aziz Sheikh led by Yaqoob Sheikh as unlawful associations for alleged involvement in inciting terror in the region. According to The Hindu, the decision came hours before the dates for elections to the Lok Sabha, the Indian parliament's lower house, were announced. The move was made under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The FO noted that with the fresh notifications, a total of 14 political parties 'have become outlawed in 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK).' The affiliates of these parties are also facing persecution, it added. The statement recalled that a death penalty had been sought for Malik, the JKLF chief who was given a life sentence in 2022. However, such oppressive tactics cannot suppress the Kashmiri people's aspirations for [the] realisation of their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the FO asserted.

India's ongoing campaign to crush dissent in 'IIOJK' contravenes the international human rights and humanitarian law as well as democratic

norms, it added. The FO urged the Indian government to lift the curbs on the banned parties; release all political prisoners, including Malik; and implement the UNSC resolutions on India-occupied Kashmir. Earlier this year, the FO had condemned India's decision to declare the Tehreek-i-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir (TeH) as an 'unlawful association' for five years. Days before that, India had also banned the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction), declaring it an 'unlawful association' as well.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1822532/pakistan-denounces-fresh-round-of-curbs-on-political-parties-of-india-occupied-kashmir-fo>

Kashmiris will not accept the slavery of India: JI leader

Daily Parliament Times, 10 March 2024

Leader of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq Ahmed has said that the resolutions in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) provided clear evidence of the legal status of the Kashmir conflict. He said that India unilaterally revoked the constitutional status of 'occupied Kashmir' which is a clear violation of UNSC resolutions. The legal and international status cannot be changed, as long as the heads of two crores Kashmiris are safe. Kashmiris will not accept the slavery of India, and they will continue to be active for freedom.

Narendra Modi and Netanyahu are certified global terrorists, he alleged. Journalists have always raised the issue of Kashmiris at the national and

international level. Journalists have always praised and supported the services of JI whether it is for the freedom of Kashmir, the need for help for poor people, or natural disasters. He expressed these views while addressing the iftar dinner given in honor of senior journalists. Condemning the recent transfer of 2.1 acres of land in Budgam district to the Maharashtra government as part of a deliberate agenda to change the Muslim-majority character of the region, he said that the JI on 13 July will hold an International Kashmir Conference to highlight the urgency of this issue. He urged the international community to play its role in resolving the Kashmir issue.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/03/19/kashmiris-will-not-accept-the-slavery-of-india-dr-muhammad-mushtaq/>

Critics deflate Modi's tourism narrative in disputed Jammu and Kashmir

Pakistan observer, 20 March 2024

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the Kashmir Valley, with a pronounced stress on tourism promotion, has ignited a debate surrounding the internationally disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, despite some tourism projects inaugurated by Modi during his visit, Jammu and Kashmir remains a longstanding bone of contention between Pakistan and India, and the two countries have fought some wars on the issue. Critics denounce Modi's tourism narrative as a misguided endeavor, deeming it insensitive in the

presence of the enduring Kashmir conflict. They contend that promoting tourism in a disputed territory risks exacerbating hostilities rather than fostering peace.

Tourism thrives in tranquil environs, asserts a senior APHC leader, cautioning against the veneer of progress amid military occupation. While the Modi government is persistent in its bid to resuscitate Kashmir's tourism sector, the road ahead is fraught with challenges as long as the region remains embroiled in territorial disputes.

<https://pakobserver.net/critics-deflate-modis-tourism-narrative-in-disputed-jammu-and-kashmir/>

'AJK' ministers dismiss govt change rumors

The Express Tribune, 21 March 2024

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) senior minister Waqar Ahmad Noor, along with five other ministers, has unequivocally dismissed any notion of a government change in the region. Addressing a news conference in Muzaffarabad, Noor noted that disinformation and propaganda were being spread by certain elements with vested interests in this regard. He was flanked by five other ministers from the three ruling parties, including Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Sardar Javed Ayoob, Majid Khan, Ahmad Raza Qadri, Nisar Ansar Abdali, and Akbar Ibrahim.

Noor reaffirmed the government's resolve to foster good governance and accountability across all sectors. He pointed out that those threatened by accountability had been spreading

malicious propaganda to undermine the process. He unequivocally stated that 'AJK' Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq was untainted and would boldly pursue the accountability process in the region. He emphasised that all coalition parties remained steadfast in their support for the government under Haq's leadership throughout its tenure.

The minister stated that the premier would strictly adhere to the book and rules for the betterment of governance. He noted that those affected by the stringent adherence to rules were vocal in their opposition to the government, potentially aiming to destabilise it. He affirmed that Haq had no vulnerabilities that would render him susceptible to blackmail by mafias. Noor stated that funds had been redirected towards development schemes and social sectors such as health by reducing non-development expenditures under the prime minister's directives.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2460015/ajk-ministers-dismiss-govt-change-rumours>

Speakers raise concerns over India's misuse of its judiciary to suppress dissenting voices in Kashmir

Pakistan Observer, 21 March 2024

In a seminar held on the sidelines of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), speakers hailing from various backgrounds expressed concerns over India's misuse of its judiciary to suppress political dissent in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The seminar hosted by the

Community Human Rights and Advocacy Center, was addressed by noted international law experts including advocate Ahmer Bilal Sofi, Barrister Tanvir, Altaf Hussain Wani, and Ronald Brones, while Muzammil Thakur moderated the panel. While shedding light on the denial of fair trial to Kashmiri prisoners, the panelists raised serious doubts about the impartiality of the Indian judiciary.

Referring to Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Geneva Convention, the speakers said that, as per these international covenants, every prisoner is entitled to an impartial and public hearing when his or her rights are at stake. They asserted that the right to a fair trial, recognized as a fundamental human right internationally, forms an essential pillar of justice and democracy. Underlining the dire situation faced by Kashmiri prisoners languishing in various jails in and outside Kashmir, the speakers lamented the denial of fair trials to political activists, human rights defenders, and civil society activists in Kashmir.

They denounced the Indian government for arresting Hurriyat leaders, rights defenders, and civil society activists and subjecting them to prolonged imprisonment without adequate opportunities to defend themselves in a court of law. They also raised concerns about the conduct of judges in Indian courts, saying that some of them act more like prosecuting or police officers than impartial arbiters of justice. Referring to the Indian judiciary's biased approach towards

Kashmiris, the speakers said that while hearing the case of Kashmiri prisoners, Indian courts had failed to maintain the required level of neutrality to ensure justice. The judiciary appeared to be compliant with the current government's agenda that seeks to crush every kind of dissent in the region, they said.

<https://pakobserver.net/speakers-raise-concerns-over-indias-misuse-of-its-judiciary-to-suppress-dissenting-voices-in-kashmir/>

'AJK' Speaker suggests Bilawal Bhutto as chairman Kashmir Committee

Daily Times, 22 March 2024

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Legislative Assembly Speaker Ch. Latif Akbar has suggested Federal government appoint Ex Foreign Minister and Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as Chairman of the parliamentary Kashmir Committee to effectively present the Kashmir cause, particularly in the changing circumstances of 'illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) after 05 August 2019 where occupier have suppressed all the political and human rights of the people. Speaking at a press conference along with 'AJK' Ministers Sardar Javed Ayoob and Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi, he counted several suppressive measures taken by the Indian government including banning the political parties, and said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had enough experience to make the committee vibrant and functional to highlight the plight of the people of Kashmir.

He said that the subjugation of the people in the hands of India had been multiplied after the abrogation of Article 370 from the Indian constitution and now the political rights have been snatched from the people by banning different political parties including Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), National Party, Peoples' League and others. He said that Modi's recent visit to the 'occupied valley' failed as the students; police and armed forces personnel were brought in plain cloths to attend the gathering he addressed and people boycotted his visit saying no to its hegemony and unlawful occupation of their land.

He said all the political and fundamental rights of the people had been snatched in the 'occupied' valley by the use of draconian laws, human rights activists including a renowned one Khurum Pervez had been detained and the intensity of the atrocities was going to match the Israeli ones against the Palestine people. While condemning the genocidal killings of the Palestine people by Israel, he demanded the international community to halt Israel from mass killings by force and likewise exert pressure on India to stop human rights violations in 'IIOJK.'

The speaker said the Pakistan government should raise the issue of usurpation of the fundamental rights in 'IIOJK' at every forum and for better advocacy, the Parliamentary Kashmir Committee should be made functional with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as its Chairman whose experience will add to mobilize the masses and committee's activities to highlight the issue. On the

occasion, Minister Sardar Javed Ayooob said that before the polls were held in 'IIOJK', political parties were being banned though the elections were not the alternative to the plebiscite for the people to decide their fate but internal political rights had also been usurped and a cognizance of that must be taken by the international community.

He said Modi was trying to suppress even the lowest voice of the people of Kashmir who were already leading a miserable life that was not tolerable and here we hope that when grand elections are held in most parts of the world including India and the United States, the people of 'IIOJK' will get their political right as well. The only solution to the Kashmir issue was to let the Kashmir representatives decide the future of their coming generations and the world power to respect the democratic rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1179322/ajk-speaker-suggests-bilawal-bhutto-as-chairman-kashmir-committee/>

Kashmiri rights activist urges UN to support recognition of Kashmiri's rights over all five rivers emerging from the disputed region

Daily Parliament Times, 24 March 2024

The US-based acting chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF-Yasin Malik) and Kashmiri rights activist Raja Muzaffar Hussaid has urged the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General to support the recognition of the rights of the people of Kashmir over the five rivers, ensuring sustainable and equitable

management of water resources for the benefit of all. In a letter sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the occasion of World Water Day, Muzaffar, a prominent advocate for the rights of the people of Kashmir, highlights the significant issue of the rights of the people of Kashmir over the rivers originating from the region and flowing into India and Pakistan.

Kashmir, known for its abundant water resources with five major rivers—Jhelum, Tawi, Indus, Chenab, and Ravi, holds a historical and inherent right to these rivers, crucial for the livelihoods and well-being of its people, he underlined. Muzaffar emphasized the importance of recognizing and respecting these rights of the Kashmiris by India particularly by international agreements and conventions such as the Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers, he added.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/03/24/kashmiri-rights-activist-urges-un-sg-to-support-recognition-of-kashmiris-rights-over-all-five-rivers-emerging-from-the-disputed-region/>

Falak Noor Abduction Case: A Litmus Test for Gilgit-Baltistan Police

Pamir Times, 24 March 2024

The alleged abduction of 13-year-old Falak Noor from Sultanabad, Gilgit, gained attention when her father approached the media 50 days after filing an FIR for her disappearance. He accused police officials of bribery and protecting the culprits, reminiscent of the Dua Zehra case, raising integrity

concerns about the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Police. Reportedly missing since 20 January 2024, from Sultanabad, Gilgit, the 13-year-old girl prompted her father, Sakhi Ahmed Jan, a laborer, to file FIR No. 10/24 under Sections 364-A PPC at Police Station Danyore, Gilgit. Once her father involved the local media, demanding a change in the police team handling the case, alleging bribery and collusion with the culprits, the police denied the accusations and defended their actions.

A social media video surfaced where Falak claimed she was happy and had married Fareed Alam willingly. However, discrepancies in her age emerged from a Nikah Nama stating she was 16 by preparing a medical certificate from a local clinic in Mansehra indicating she was 16. Fareed obtained interim bail from the Abbottabad bench of the Peshawar High Court until 6 April 2024. Despite Falak's statements, her father refuted them, presenting NADRA records confirming her age as 13 and demanding her appearance in court to decide based on evidence, alleging bribery attempts by the culprits.

Support from the legal fraternity and civil society, along with planned protests in major cities, indicates growing pressure on the GB Police to handle the case transparently and by the law. This case is viewed as a critical test for police performance and will set a precedent for future cases.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/03/24/falak-noor-abduction-case-a-litmus-test-for-gilgit-baltistan-police/>

Economic Developments

'Azad Kashmir', Gilgit-Baltistan to get Daanish schools

Dawn, 19 March 2024

As the prime minister directed the authorities to set up Daanish schools in Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', (AJK), the federal education ministry expedited efforts to materialize this initiative at the earliest. As per the PM orders, three schools each will be set up in 'Azad Kashmir' and GB and one school will be constructed in Islamabad. According to a statement issued by the PM's office, these boarding schools will accommodate 1,000 bright students each from marginalised segments of society, boasting state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment. It said that the focus will be on providing the best faculty to impart 21st-century skills, particularly in STEM and computer sciences, with admissions based on merit. The PM has instructed the fast-tracking of project designs for approval by the relevant authorities, with a preference for the construction on the state land.

In this regard, Education Special Secretary Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani contacted the chief secretary of GB for PC-I of the project. The 'AJK', GB and federal government are in close coordination for starting these schools as soon as possible, he said. Speaking to Dawn, Mr Wani said that the PC-I of Daanish School in Islamabad has been prepared, which will be taken up in the Central Development Working Party's meeting soon. Asked about the timeline for the Islamabad project, he said that

land had already been earmarked for this project in the Kuri area of Islamabad and the PC-I will also get approval in a few days. As per PC-1, the project should be fully completed by March 2026, he said, adding that the ministry would try its best to get it completed before the deadline.

According to the secretary, the federal secretary of education had been personally supervising the paperwork for the PC-I which would be approved in the next few days before hiring a consultant/contractor, etc. Meanwhile, GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan in a statement appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for deciding to set up Daanish schools in GB. He termed this project highly beneficial for underprivileged students of areas of GB, particularly those living in far-flung areas. Last week, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) approved a summary to set up this school in the Kuri area of the capital.

Daanish schools provide free quality education for underprivileged children in Punjab and this project was started by then Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif in 2010. These schools offer boarding facilities to students. According to sources, this project is close to the heart of PM Shehbaz and he wanted to bring this education facility to Islamabad as well. Punjab, which is also ruled by the PML-N, is also interested in establishing this school in the federal territory, apparently to help the underprivileged and talented students of the capital.

As of yet, there is no decision on how the school will be run. Sources said the

decision about whether a new authority would be established for this school or it would be run by the Punjab Daanish Schools authority has yet to be taken. In January last year, the federal government announced the establishment of a Daanish School and Center of Excellence Authority in Balochistan to materialise Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of imparting free-of-charge education to poor children of the province.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1822414/azad-kashmir-gilgit-baltistan-to-get-daanish-schools>

The 'Historical Climate Change Crisis' in Gilgit Baltistan

Pamir Times, 20 March 2024

Gilgit Baltistan (GB) is home to some of the world's highest peaks. It is also the region where the gigantic Himalayas, Hindu Kush, and Karakoram mountain ranges converge, forming thousands of peaks. Located among these massive peaks are over 7,000 glaciers, precious sources of fresh water! What's becoming a major concern is that these glaciers are melting faster than before! Residents of GB, the so-called 'Paradise on Earth', are increasingly experiencing hellish scenarios in the aftermath of climate-related disasters, the region's depleting natural resources, like land, and the connected political and socioeconomic instabilities.

Though the climate is an ecological crisis, according to Fraser, it is a 'general crisis... of economy, society, politics, and public health... whose effects metastasize everywhere, shaking confidence in established worldviews and ruling elites' (Fraser

2021, 95). Yes, as a result, climate change has a ripple effect, and it has rocked everything as postulated; the current situation in GB does not contradict the preceding assertion. The climate crisis is like a train wreck in slow motion.

As a resident of Skardu, I can attest first-hand, along with other locals, to the quick changes in temperature and the season's duration. A study on the fluctuating temperatures in GB was conducted using daily data from 1955 to 2018 and temperature evaluations. The results revealed a downward trend in the country's summertime temperatures. The falling trends in summer temperatures decreased the flow of water in the Indus River and its tributaries, which seriously disturbed water supply in the upper valleys and lower plain areas for agricultural purposes, the research noted. Therefore, the primary planting seasons—spring and summer—affect crop yields as well. The disparity in temperature between these seasons has a profound effect on fruit flavors and yields.

The flood of 2022 was destructive for the whole world. Though rain seems to give some relief, it has the potential to clean up and gather momentum when it comes to more quantity than usual. The Indus River and its numerous tributaries record their maximum volumes in the summer because of ice melting from the rugged highlands, maintaining a very constant equilibrium that has endured for ages. However, this balance has been upset by rising temperatures. Irreversible glacier melts have led to the creation of

more than 3,000 glacial lakes in GB, of which more than 30 are prone to glacial lake outburst floods, according to a report compiled by the Ministry of Climate Change in 2021.

The report further says that due to rising temperatures, glaciers in Pakistan's northern mountain ranges (the Hindu Kush, Himalayas, and Karakorum) are melting rapidly, and a total of 3,044 glacial lakes have developed in GB and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Of these, 33 glacial lakes have been assessed to be prone to hazardous glacial lake outburst flooding (GLOF). GLOFs are sudden events that can release millions of cubic meters of water and debris, leading to the loss of lives, property, and livelihoods amongst remote and impoverished mountain communities. Over 7.1 million people in GB and KP are vulnerable; in these areas, 26.7 percent and 22 percent of the population, respectively, are below the poverty line.

The devastation caused by the 2022 floods was unprecedented, as 17 people lost their lives during heavy rains and flash floods in GB, according to the GB Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA). The GBDMA said that losses totaling Rs7,406 million had happened throughout GB, with 17 people having perished and six more being injured as a result of the floods. 22 powerhouses were harmed by the floods in Gilgit-Baltistan, according to GBDMA. There were 78 damaged drinking water supplies and 49 damaged roadways. In addition, 56 bridges sustained damage, and 500

irrigation canals suffered damage. According to the GBDMA, Rs7406 million in losses have resulted from the flood.

These are the facts, but the government's financial support is insufficient and not substantial enough. In fact, throughout the last 20 years, Pakistan's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions has grown tremendously, from 0.3% of the global total at the turn of the millennium to 0.9% in 2021 (Government of Pakistan 2021). Pakistan ranks among the top 20 global emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) in absolute terms, yet it is a very small emitter per person. Methane in agriculture and carbon dioxide in the energy sector are the primary sources. The Pakistani authorities should prioritize mitigation, but to meet international GHG reduction obligations, we must step up our efforts. Reforming energy prices, subsidies, and taxes—which might potentially help raise substantial and easily obtainable funds—should be among the primary initiatives. e.g., to help finance the Sustainable Development Goals); implementing technology-based measures for green and inclusive development; and garnering more external support in the form of financing and know-how transfer.

Currently, the GB community is working on ice stupas. An oasis could be created in a parched region by utilizing pipes, gravity, and nighttime temperatures to create artificial glaciers at lower elevations. Instances of neighborhood-based and grassroots

programs focused on sustainable development and environmental preservation: specialists from Baltistan University, a nearby institution, have teamed up with the people of Husainabad to construct man-made glaciers, also known as ice stupas. These structures, which resemble the towers found in Buddhist temples, are used to gather and store copious amounts of water during the winter so that it can be utilized during the dry season, especially in March and April when water is most needed for the cultivation of wheat, maize, and potatoes.

Sonam Wangchuk, an engineer in Ladakh, India, developed the method in 2013. As we stand at the precipice of a defining moment in GB's history, we must unite in a concerted effort to confront the longstanding crisis of climate change. Through increased collaboration among communities, governments, and organizations, we can foster resilience and implement sustainable solutions to mitigate the adverse impacts of environmental degradation. Urgent investment in renewable energy, conservation initiatives, and infrastructure projects is essential to safeguarding the region's ecological diversity and securing a prosperous future for generations to come. Let us advocate tirelessly for policy reforms, raise awareness, and mobilize resources to address this existential threat and pave the way toward a more sustainable and resilient GB.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/03/20/the-historical-climate-change-crisis-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The 'AJK' Assembly opposition leader protested against the black laws and the humanitarian aggression committed by India against the people of Kashmir

Urdu point, 18 March 2024

Speaker of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Assembly Choudhary Latif Akbar while referring to the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by India, fiercely opposed the Indian government's imposition of 'black laws,' claiming that they were driven by animosity for Muslims, humanity, and religion. He called on influential countries and institutions like the OIC, EU, and UN to act quickly to stop India. He stated that among other things, Muslims were asked to present proof of residence from their great-grandpa to be granted Indian citizenship. He asserted that after eliminating Article 370 and Section 35A in 2019 and altering the unique status of 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government now wants to enact discriminatory citizenship rules. He said that in both instances, Muslims were being directly targeted.

As a consequence, he claimed that the flame of religious fanaticism between the two nuclear-armed nations would heighten the likelihood of a collision of civilizations if India persisted in its expansionist aspirations and polarising tactics. Latif Akbar claimed that since Israel and India are both 'occupying nations' that support terrorism to

undermine international peace, the world should unite against these heinous deceptions and brutal acts of both countries. Akbar claimed that, despite having eight million 'occupation troops' stationed in Kashmir, India is unable to maintain its violent rule over the local populace. He claimed that the people of Kashmir on both sides of the line of control are passing on the ideological ties between Pakistan and Kashmiris to the next generation, and stressed that Pakistan serves as our (Kashmiris) spokesperson and our national pride.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3953953.html>

A new trial for the Chinese national will take place

Dailyk2, 19 March 2024

Leading a two-judge panel that included Justices Johur Ali Khan and Ali Baig, the Chief Justice of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Court overturned the Special Judge-Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) ruling against a Chinese resident detained due to an illegitimate and counterfeit visa. The Chief Justice asked the FIA to reopen the case and gave the order for a new trial. Details indicate that the Chinese national entered Pakistan using a forged visa and was apprehended by FIA officers at the Sost border (Hunza). Following his apprehension, the accused was sentenced by the FIA Special Judge to five days in prison and an Rs one lakh fine based on his confession. However, the accused had appealed in the GB Chief Court against the Special Judge

FIA's ruling. Consequently, Chief Justice Ali Baig, in light of the accused's confession of guilt, declared the sentence to be null and void during the hearing and directed the trial court to redo the case by the law.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/21121>

'Azad Kashmir's industry must be promoted if unemployment is to be eliminated: 'AJK' President

Nawaiwaqt, 20 March 2024

While describing unemployment as the largest issue facing 'Azad Kashmir', the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has stated that encouraging industrialization is essential to combating the rising rate of unemployment in the region. During a conversation with a group of local entrepreneurs and industrialists, the president said that as prime minister, he had supported industrialization in 'Azad Kashmir' and also ensured smooth facilities for the investors. As a result, many people invested and set up industrial units in 'AJK', especially at Mirpur, and regretted that later administrations had not been able to offer the same amenities that the investors had under his administration.

Chaudhry urged the visiting delegates to invest in 'Azad Kashmir', promising them that the government would be happy to offer them any form of assistance or facility. He stressed that the government was unable to hire all of the unemployed in the public sector due to the decreasing number of work

prospects. He claimed that encouraging a policy of sustainable industrialization in the liberated territory was the only way to give young people employment options.

He stressed that industrialization would contribute to the achievement of self-sufficiency as well as an improvement in the level of living for the people of 'Azad Kashmir.' The delegation was led by the president of the 'AJK' Chamber of Commerce (AJKCC) and Industry, Syed Sabir Hussain Shah. The president of the 'AJKCC' updated the president on the recently resorted 11,000 plots in the Mirpur Development Authority, the Rathoha Hariyam Bridge, and the Mirpur dry port.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2024-03-20/page-1>

From Social Media

Roshan Din Diameri @Rohshan_Din22
March 2024

Legal action underway! Lawyers from Gilgit-Baltistan High Court Bar Association are stepping up to file a petition for the recovery of Falak Noor, the underage girl reportedly abducted from Sultanabad, Gilgit. Let's stand united for justice!

#JusticeForFalakNoor" #GilgitBaltistan
#RecoverFalakNoor @csgbpbk

Video link:

https://twitter.com/Rohshan_Din/status/1771169523950915888

Balochistan Current Affairs
@BalochistanCur1

22 March 2024

Pakistan Army Clears Barzal Pass in Gilgit-Baltistan. Barzal Pass, a crucial link in Gilgit-Baltistan, was closed on February 18, 2024, due to heavy snowfall. The Pakistan Army swiftly mobilized 14 bulldozers, 11 snow vehicles, 2 wheel dozers, and 1 excavator for Operation Claris, which started on March 9, 2024, and concluded within 10 days. The pass's reopening on March 19, 2024, is vital for the region's connectivity. Local residents lauded the Pakistan Army for their dedicated efforts in clearing the pass.

<https://twitter.com/BalochistanCur1/status/1771068142216773950>

Basharat Issa@BasharatIssa

22 March 2024

Like development, politics and sustainable tourism etc women empowerment in Gilgit-Baltistan is just a fancy story that has no connection to the grass root reality. It's just the privileged ones enjoying while the poor are unheard and voiceless.

<https://twitter.com/BasharatIssa/status/1771053331252691173>

PAMIR TIMES ® @pamirtimes

23 March 2024

Various civil society organizations are planning a protest demonstration against the alleged abduction case of

Falak Noor, a resident of Sultanabad (Gilgit). The protest demonstration is scheduled to start at around 3pm on Sunday (tomorrow) in front of the National Press Club in Islamabad, said a press release. A press conference will also be held.

Falak Noor's father has said that his minor daughter, reportedly 13 years old, was abducted on January 19 and

married off, in what is being described as a child trafficking case. A video of the child saying she was 16 years old and that she married of her free will is also circulating on social media.

Details in the link:

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1771464358448488896>

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 4 | Issue 12

18 March - 24 March 2024

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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.



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