

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 4 | Issue 3

15 January - 21 January 2024

health card low-cost Climate
POK power Ice hockey wheat price
Technology parks protests
Tourism Gilgit-Baltistan
Shyok Winter Festival



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

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Political Developments

India's protest on UK diplomat's 'AJK' visit rejected

The Express Tribune, 15 January 2024

Fahim Kayani, leader of Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK, firmly rejected India's 'strong protest' against the recent visit to Mirpur by British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, stating that Pakistan has nothing to hide. Kayani emphasized the importance of increased interaction of foreign diplomats with 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK). He said that the international community and diplomats must visit 'Azad Kashmir' because Pakistan has nothing to hide, urging for transparency in the region's affairs. Earlier India said that it had protested the British diplomat's visit to 'AJK', saying the trip this week had infringed on India's 'sovereignty and territorial integrity.'

Kayani directly addressed New Delhi, saying 'If you claim to be a democracy, you should better allow international community including diplomats, journalists and rights watch groups unimpeded access to occupied Kashmir.' Instead, Kayani told New Delhi to 'unblock access to Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir where you imprisoned millions of beleaguered Kashmiris.'

He claimed that India has deployed more than one million of its soldiers in 'occupied Kashmir', regularly blocking access to communications including internet and phone services. Stop your

so-called coercive diplomacy, Kayani added, and that 'Kashmiris will no longer be bullied by your military might.' He characterised India as a 'rogue state' engaged in extra-territorial and extra-judicial activities. He called on the international community to wake up and address India's violations of the rule of law and the UN Charter, accusing India of blocking the implementation of UN resolutions on Kashmir and harboring agents who are allegedly involved in the murder of citizens from other nations.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2453261/indias-protest-on-uk-diplomats-ajk-visit-rejected>

Lt Gen Hidayat ur Rehman (retd) appointed chief of 'AJK' PSC

Business Recorder, 15 January 2024

The president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) has approved the appointment of Lieutenant General Hidayat ur Rehman (retd) as chairman of the 'AJK' Public Service Commission (PSC). The notification, dated 13 January, also announced the other three members of the commission. They will hold the office for three years and be entitled to draw pay and allowances as prescribed.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40283827/lt-gen-hidayat-ur-rehman-retd-appointed-chief-of-ajkpvc>

Indian army trained in committing genocide in 'IIOJK'

Pakistan Observer, 16 January 2024

Indian army, notorious for being a 'terrorist force', is constantly engaged

in brutalizing Kashmiris and committing war crimes in 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir. A report released by the Kashmir Media Service on 76th Army Day being celebrated by India said that Indian troops continue to perpetrate grave human rights violations in the 'occupied' territory. Indian army establishment influenced by RSS's Hindutva ideology is 'trained in committing genocide' and crimes against defenseless Kashmiris. The occupation troops have no justification to celebrate Army Day for being involved in the killing, abduction, and arrest of innocent people during notorious cordon and search operations and house raids in the territory. Leave the disputed Jammu and Kashmir aside, Indian army troops are even shooting innocent civilians dead in India's states, the report said. It pointed out that the recent killing of three innocent civilians in the Poonch district is ample proof of the Indian army's savagery.

In India's northeastern region, the Indian army has killed over 4,000 civilians mostly Dalits, Christians, and Muslims over the past 2 decades. The report said that killing people in staged encounters has become a regular feature of the Indian army. Killing fields of 'IIOJK' have exposed the real face of the Indian army, which is involved in fake encounters and extrajudicial killings in the 'occupied' territory, it claimed. The report claimed that the Indian army has killed 41 Kashmiris extra-judicially in 2023 while 96,285 Kashmiris have fallen to the

Indian army's bullets in the last 35 years.

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-army-trained-in-committing-genocide-in-iiojkl/>

JKLF leadership appeals for the intervention of UN and other WHRI to save Yasin Malik's life

Daily Parliament Times, 16 January 2024

The Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) termed incarcerated chairman JKLF Muhammad Yasin Malik as the soul of the current freedom movement and said that the Indian attitude towards a tall public political leader like him is an open challenge to the civilized world. JKLF leadership appeals for the intervention of the United Nations and other world human rights institutions to save the precious lives of Muhammad Yasin Malik and other imprisoned Kashmiri leaders, and to enable their immediate and unconditional release. These views were expressed by Supreme Council members of JKLF spread all over the world in an online meeting held yesterday and chaired by its acting chairman Raja Haq Nawaz Khan.

The participants included Vice Chairman and Chairman Policy and Planning Committee Hafiz Muhammad Anwar Samavi, Vice Chairman Khawaja Saif-ud-Din, Vice Chairman Saleem Haroon, Vice Chairman Zahid Hussain (Belgium, Europe), Head of Diplomatic Bureau Professor Raja Zafar Khan (UK), Central Chief Organizer Sabir Gul (UK), Central Deputy Secretary

Finance Hafiz Mumtaz Ahmed (Qatar), Member Supreme Council and President 'AJK'-GB Zone Sajid Siddiqui, Member Supreme Council and President North America Zone M. Haleem Khan (New York, USA) and Muzamil Haq Adil (France), Azam Zia, Sardar M. Saleem Khan Aftab (Riyadh, KSA), Malik Aslam, Tariq Sharif (UK), among others participated as observers.

According to a statement issued from the Central Information Office, in its drive to further expedite the awareness campaign about the injustices and inhuman approach of the Indian government meted out towards the 'illegally imprisoned' JKLF chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik and others, JKLF has decided to hold an international conference in the UK soon after the conference in Europe is held. To make the freedom movement more effective and inclusive at the diplomatic level, the party has also decided to host an important conference of British Kashmiri youth in the UK, the statement read. The time and the venue of the conference shall be decided by the leadership of the JKLF UK zone.

According to the party spokesman, the Supreme Council decided to name the month of February after Muhammad Maqbool Butt Shaheed and expressed determination to celebrate his 40th martyrdom day on 11 February with great devotion and respect. The leadership of JKLF has appealed to the people of 'IOJK' to observe a complete

strike on 26 January (Republic Day of India), 9 February (Martyrdom Day of Afzal Gaur) and 11 February (Martyrdom Day of Maqbool Butt). The JKLF Supreme Council decided to hold public gatherings throughout the nook and corner of the 'AJK'-GB zone, and protest demonstrations in front of the Indian embassies in the UK, USA, and Brussels along with other European countries, the spokesman added.

He said that during these protest demonstrations, the demand for the return of the remains of Muhammad Maqbool Butt and Afzal Guru shall be repeated, who for the cause of national independence of Jammu Kashmir, were hanged and buried in Tihar Jail by India in 1984 and 2013 respectively. According to the decision of the Supreme Council, the protest demonstration to be held in Britain on 11 February under the banner of the British Kashmiri Community, in which a large number of Kashmiri men, women, and children along with supportive non-Kashmiris belonging to different nationalities living in the UK are also expected to participate.

The acting party chairman Raja Haq Nawaz Khan while wrapping up the meeting extended his support for the call of a protest strike in 'AJK' given by the Joint Awami Action Committee. He thanked the members of the Supreme Council for their valuable input. He further demanded the government of AJK to end unemployment and inflation, and to provide due educational, developmental, and

health facilities to the people of 'AJK' besides the restoration of their basic human rights.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/01/16/jklf-leadership-appeals-for-the-intervention-of-un-and-other-whri-to-save-yasin-maliks-life/>

Modi regime constitutes a so-called tribunal to get legal cover for the JKML ban

Pakistan Observer, 17 January 2024

To get a legal cover for its decision to ban Jammu and Kashmir Muslim League (JKML) headed by APHC Chairman Masarrat Aalam Butt, the Narendra Modi-led Indian government has constituted a so-called tribunal consisting of a handpicked Delhi High Court judge for the purpose. According to Kashmir Media Service, the JKML was declared outlawed by the Modi government on 27 December under the draconian law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 for five years. The organization was declared banned for its pro-freedom activities in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (OJK).

In continuation of the Narendra Modi government's ongoing drive to grab Kashmiris' land on one pretext or another in 'IIOJK', the authorities on Tuesday attached an immovable property belonging to a civilian in Kulgam district. According to Kashmir Media Service, the attached property consists of an under-construction house located in the Buchroo area of the district. The house belongs to a Kashmiri man, identified as, Barkatullah Mir. Interestingly, the

authorities have accused the man of being involved in anti-social activities.

<https://pakobserver.net/modi-regime-constitutes-so-called-tribunal-to-get-legal-cover-for-jkml-ban/>

Women worst victim of Indian state terrorism in 'IIOJK:' report

The Nation, 18 January 2024

Women have been the worst victims of 'Indian state terrorism' in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) for the last seventy-five years. An analytical report released by the Research Section of Kashmir Media Service, said at least 685 women have been martyred by the Indian forces' personnel in the 'occupied' territory since January 2001. It maintained that the Kashmiri women have been the worst sufferers of the harrowing conflict, which has rendered 22,972 women widowed since 1989. It deplored that Indian troops, paramilitary, and police personnel had been routinely involved in sexual harassment of women to suppress the Kashmiris' righteous demand for the right to self-determination. It said that the troops had molested and disgraced 11,263 Kashmiri women during the period.

The report pointed out that Kunanposhpora mass rape, Shopian double-rape-and-murder, and Kathua rape-and-murder of an 8-year-old girl are glaring examples of the extreme brutality of the Indian forces' personnel in the occupied territory since 1989. Indian troops had molested around one hundred women during a cordon and

search operation in the Kunanposhpora area of Kupwara on the night of 23 February 1991. Indian men in uniform abducted two women Aasiya and Neelofar on 29 May 2009 in Shopian, raped and subsequently killed them in custody. Their bodies were found in a shallow stream in the town, the next morning. An eight-year-old girl, Aasifa Bano, of Kathua district, was abducted, gang-raped, and subsequently murdered in January 2018. Seven Hindus including four policemen and a temple priest perpetrated the heinous crime. The report said thousands of women have lost their sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers in the 'occupied' territory who were subjected to custodial disappearance by Indian troops, paramilitary, and police personnel. As per the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, over 8,000 Kashmiris went missing in custody during the past 35 years, it added. The report maintained that thousands of school boys and girls were also injured by the pellets fired by Indian troops while over a hundred including 19-month-old Heeba Jan, 2-year-old Nusrat Jan, Tammana (11), Shabroza Mir (16), Insha Mushtaq (16), Ulfat Hameed (17), Shakeela Begum (35) and Rafia Bano (31) lost their eyesight due to pellet injuries in the territory.

The report said that at least 33 women including Hurriyat leaders and activists, Aasiya Andrabi, Fehmeeda Sofi, Naheeda Nasreen, Tabasum Maqbool, Aasiya Bano, Raskeem Akhter, Seeba (an LLM student), Saima

Akhter, Shazia Akhter, Syeda Saiqa (MA post graduate), Aasiya Akhtar, Anjum Younis, Sheema Shafi Waza, Shams Begam, Zaytun Akhtar, Suraya Rashid Wani, Saima Bashir Mir, Mudifa Iqbal, Rashida Salam Din, Rubeena Nazir and Safeeqa Begum booked under black laws were facing illegal detention for their affiliation with the Kashmiris' struggle for right to self-determination.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Jan-2024/women-worst-victim-of-indian-state-terrorism-in-iiqjk-report>

Police claim foiling terror plot in Gilgit

Dawn, 19 January 2024

The police in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) claimed to have thwarted a terrorist plot in the city when the bomb disposal squad successfully deactivated an improvised explosive device (IED) discovered under the Bailey bridge in Chinar Bagh on Thursday. According to a press release from GB police, at around 11:15 am on Thursday, the Gilgit Control Special Branch received information about a suspicious bag under the Chinar Bagh Bailey Bridge. The special branch staff, equipped with full gear, promptly arrived at the location and located a suspicious bag at the entrance of the bridge on the central police office side. Both bridges spanning the Ghizer River in Chinar Bagh Gilgit, namely the Bailey bridge and a wooden bridge, were closed to all traffic. The bomb disposal unit (BDU) personnel carefully moved the suspicious bag to the main road using a

hook-and-line kit. Wearing specialized suits, the BDU staff then safely defused the improvised explosive device (IED) by hand entry.

The remote-controlled IED had two electronic detonators, connected to power through an electric receiver device, and weighed about 3.5kg. SSP Gilgit, Muhammad Ayaz, told Dawn that the police have started investigating the incident from multiple angles, adding that the motives behind the attempt are unknown. A joint investigation team will be formed, experts will be invited, and the device will be sent to a forensic laboratory to investigate its potential for disaster and motives, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1806964/police-claim-foiling-terror-plot-in-gilgit>

Economic Developments

Winter tourism boosts GB economy

Daily Times, 15 January 2024

A land of mesmerizing valleys, towering mountains, chilly deserts, singing brooks, and enchanting lakes, Gilgit Baltistan (GB) offers unlimited bounties of nature to visitors pouring in from across the country and abroad. Boasting the world's most incredible mountain ranges -the Karakoram, Hindukash, and Himalayan, this region is also home to the pride of Pakistan – the K-2 and Nanga Parbat, the second-largest glacier Siachen and the breathtaking Deosai plain situated at 14,000 feet above sea level. The marvel of Karakoram Highway carved through mountains, dozens of lakes

scattered all across GB, and tall pines speak volumes of its natural beauty and serene environment, consistently praised by nature lovers.

But, despite all the natural beauty and loveable scenes of the region, the potential for winter tourism is yet to be fully tapped, and numerous destinations are yet to be either fully explored or developed to attract more tourists. Winter in GB offers yet another opportunity to experience nature's raw beauty through festivals, skiing, snowboarding, trekking, and much more and bring in some money for the local people. Living in a distant and rugged region, most of the region's population usually bank upon earning from tourism, handicrafts, and dry fruits, among whom tourism offers sufficient dividends to keep the mare going.

Sports and Tourism secretary GB Asif Ullah Khan said nearly two million local and international backpackers attended various winter and summer festivities in the area last year while more than 155 high-altitude climbers summited the world's second tallest mountain, K2. These activities provide for an ample opportunity of earning for the GB government and the local people, and we want to see more tourists coming to GB in winter as well, he said. Therefore, we are promoting winter activities and endeavor to keep this area open for tourists throughout the year to experience the unique traditions and culture of the local people, Asif Ullah said.

Although winter tourism is challenging and adventurous, nature-loving souls do not miss embracing the opportunity to see snow-covered peaks and freezing lakes with mercury going down to around minus ten. So, the experts and local people desire the government to play its due role by promoting winter sports like skiing, ice hockey, and mountaineering under challenging terrains and supporting cultural activities and festivals. Despite being in its early stages, GB has hosted several winter festivals like Shyok Winter Festival and winter games at Khalti Lake, Naltar Valley, and other places," remarked Alam Khan, a local tourist guide. But, there is a dire need to properly advertise these events and improve infrastructure to boost winter tourism, Alam added.

Ice hockey is a popular winter sport in GB, with championships held in various districts. Naltar and Rattu areas are famous for skiing, with the National Ski Championship attracting international participants. With increased outreach and funding, new ski resorts can be established across GB. Ali Akbar, a member and trekker of GB-based adventure tourism outfit, has stated that while trekking is often associated with summers, winter trekking in GB has its charm and vast potential. Challenging treks like Gondogoro La Pass and Biafo Hisper Snow Lake Trek always await adventure seekers," Ali said. "Winter mountaineering – although a bit riskier, is yet an exciting opportunity offered by the high-altitude mountains of GB.

Scaling snow-capped mountains during winter can be a memorable expedition.

He mentioned that Naltar has already produced international-level athletes in skiing, showcasing the region's talent. With grassroots-level investment in winter sports, Pakistan can aspire to win laurels at international events like the Olympics. Planning a winter trip to GB involves considering available hotels, heated rooms, transport, and restaurants. Accessible places in winter include Kachura Lakes, Naltar Valley, Hunza Valley, and Khalti Lake in the district of Ghizer Khaplu, with Khunjarab being perfect for snow lovers. Kachura Lakes in the Baltistan region offer a picturesque winter experience as breathtaking Naltar and Hunza valleys are less to none in beauty and adventure, said Imtiaz Ahmad, an expert in winter trekking. The valleys across the region not only offer leisure time for tourists but also provide opportunities for local people to earn some money.

As the region lacks industries and other commercial activities like the rest of the country, tourism emerges as one of the major sources of earning for people, he said and mentioned businesses like hoteling, guiding, shopping, trekking, and jeep traveling. As the regions vary, the earning potentials in this region are associated with tourism, fruits, hoteling, etc, he added. Therefore, the government should promote tourism, small industries to produce handcrafts, and a flourishing fruit market to export its products to world destinations.

Nature has gifted Pakistan with majestic mountain peaks like Nanga Parbat, Tirich Mir, and K2 and picturesque valleys, meadows, lakes, and plains; therefore, it is urgently required to tap this potential for the welfare of local people, earning revenue for the national kitty and promote Pakistan's nature-friendly image across the globe.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1160934/winter-tourism-boosts-gb-economy/>

SCO's Youth-Led Innovation: Reshaping Gilgit Baltistan's Tech Landscape

Pamir Times, 16 January 2024

In an era where information technology (IT) and freelancing hold undeniable significance, Pakistan has proudly secured its place among the top four nations in the world in the digital freelancing and online labor index. Statistics from 2023 highlight Pakistan's lucrative position, having amassed over 500 million US dollars in the freelancing sector, a testament to the country's prowess in this domain. With 15 major software technology parks and over 125 leading IT companies nationwide, Pakistan stands as a beacon of technological progress.

However, until four years ago, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) had yet to witness substantial strides in the domain of information technology. The region's potential in IT and freelancing remained untapped. It was during this crucial period that the Special Communication Organization (SCO)

emerged as a catalyst, not only maintaining telecommunication services but also spearheading unparalleled measures to promote the IT sector in GB. SCO's commitment to expanding the IT industry and uplifting freelancing led to the establishment of groundbreaking Software Technology Parks (STPs) in Gilgit and Skardu. These STPs served as pivotal milestones, offering over 1,000 job opportunities, training for 3,000 IT students, and generating substantial incomes, marking a significant leap in the region's technological landscape.

The creation of Pakistan's first Freelancing Hub in Gilgit, housing 14 IT companies and 45 individual freelancers, set a new benchmark for collaboration and innovation. SCO's collaboration with Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) resulted in the Hunza Innovation Center, a cutting-edge STP in Nasirabad, Hunza, providing top-tier facilities to empower the youth in remote areas. Moreover, SCO's vision extended to the farthest corners of GB, establishing IT labs and Mini IT centers in Frano, Narr Khaplu, and Skardu, ensuring that the benefits of IT reached every nook and corner of the region. These initiatives aim to connect local youth to online platforms, enabling potential employment through freelancing. Similar initiatives are underway in regions like Doodo Shall (Diamer), Chilas, Yasin, ChatorKhand, Karimabad, Nagar District, and Phander Gojal. These projects will pave

the way for progress for the youth residing in these remote areas.

The actions taken by SCO to spread the web of information technology and establish an IT hub in GB are not only providing a new impetus to the field of IT but are also empowering local IT experts and freelancers to earn a substantial income. Furthermore, these IT parks are proving to be instrumental in creating skilled individuals for GB in the context of CPEC and facilitating low-cost business services for local industries. SCO's initiatives are not just about technological advancements; they symbolize a brighter, more prosperous future for GB, empowering communities and steering the region toward unparalleled progress and well-being.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/01/16/scos-youth-led-innovation-reshaping-gilgit-baltistans-tech-landscape/>

How much money does the federal government have to spend each year to provide low-cost power to Azad Kashmir? A stunning revelation

Daily Pakistan, 16 January 2024

How much money does the federal government have to spend each year to provide low-cost power to Azad Kashmir? In this regard, some surprising facts have surfaced. According to a Jang (news portal) special report, the government is losing Rs 50 billion per year for giving cheap power to 'Azad Kashmir' at Rs 2.59 per unit, which cannot be accepted any longer. Instead, the government of

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) has been offered energy supplies at Rs. 22 per unit, as opposed to Rs. 42 per unit in Pakistan, which the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' has refused.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/16-Jan-2024/1669863>

Gilgit-Baltistan wheat price protests enter 22nd day

Dawn, 18 January 2024

Demonstrations continued in various areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for the 22nd day on Wednesday, with protesters urging the restoration of a wheat subsidy in the region. The GB Council members have declared their support for the ongoing protests and have decided to submit a summary to the caretaker prime minister, recommending an increase in the supply of subsidized wheat and the restoration of old prices. Despite challenging weather, protests and sit-ins have endured for the 22nd day in Skardu, Gilgit, and other districts, expressing opposition to the rise in subsidised wheat prices and other concerns. The call for protests has been issued by the Awami Action Committee, an alliance of different political and religious parties in the region. Thousands of protesters have continued their sit-in at Yadgar-i-Shuhada and other areas in Skardu, chanting slogans against the government and public representatives. A protest rally moved from Jail Chowk to Yadgar Chowk in Skardu.

In Gilgit, a sit-in has persisted for the 15th day at Garibagh, with the active

participation of members from various political and religious parties. A protest rally was also organised in Yasin Valley of Ghizer and Nagar Khas. Protest demonstrations have been coordinated in Ghanche, Shigar, Hunza, Ast, Diamer, and Kharmang. The demonstrators have pledged to persist with their protest until their demands are met. On Monday, GB Assembly member Fathullah Khan negotiated with the protesters, attempting to persuade them to postpone their protest until the 8 February general elections in Pakistan.

He assured them that he would raise the issue with the new government. However, the protesters declined to call off the demonstration, adding that if their demands were not fulfilled, they would initiate protest marches from Skardu and Gilgit after 20 January. A meeting of GB Council members was convened at the Council Secretariat on Tuesday to address the matter. Presided over by its standing committee chairman, Ayub Shah, the meeting was attended by the council's joint secretary Siddiq Khan Khattak, and members Sheikh Ahmed Ali Noori, Syed Shabia Al-Hussain, Abdul Rahman, and Hashmatullah Khan. During the meeting, the council members expressed solidarity with the protesters and announced support for their demands.

According to a press release, the council decided to promptly send a summary to the prime minister of Pakistan, who also serves as chairman of the GB Council, demanding an

increase in the subsidised wheat quota for GB and the restoration of old rates. Concerned about the elimination of the health card, the council members called for its immediate reinstatement. They highlighted that numerous patients from Gilgit-Baltistan are currently receiving treatment at hospitals in various cities of Pakistan, including Islamabad.

Expressing worry over the health card's termination, the GB Council members directed the health secretary to resolve the matter expeditiously. In a parallel development, opposition members in the GB Assembly have submitted a requisition for a session to discuss the financial and wheat crises in the region. Opposition leader in the GB Assembly Kazim Mesum, along with other opposition members, declared their support for the protesters.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1806678/gilgit-baltistan-wheat-price-protests-enter-22nd-day>

Hussainabad Ice Stupa: An Initiative Impacting Climate Change and Tourism

Pamir Times, 18 January 2024

In the serene landscape of a region located 7500ft high, the visionary mind of agriculture officer M. Raza and industrious efforts of the local community have given rise to a colossal 70ft high marvel known as the Hussainabad Ice Stupa. This frozen spectacle is not merely an architectural feat but also a symbol of sustainable development, leaving an indelible mark on agriculture, tourism, and climate change mitigation. It is considered to be

the first ice stupa built at a very low elevation in Asia. The ice stupa stands as a guardian against water scarcity in the region. As temperatures rise and traditional water sources dwindle, the ingenious ice structure comes to the rescue, by providing water for crop irrigation, ensuring agriculture sustainability in a challenging environment. The ice stupa thus becomes a lifeline for local fertile fields.

It must be acknowledged that the first ice stupa was built by Sonum Wangchuk, a Ladakhi engineer, and his team in 1918 in the Kargil-Ladakh region. The colossal structure of the ice stupa in Hussainabad has twined both, natural beauty and innovation, as manifested by the flow of visitors drawn not only to witness the architectural marvel but also to understand the complex engineering behind it. This influx of tourists brings economic benefits to the region creating opportunities for local businesses and fostering a sense of community pride. Creation of the Stupa involves diverting glacial melt water, from nearby glacial streams, to freeze it into towering structures during winter. If two-inch wide pipes are used to divert water and construct the ice stupa, it can store up to one crore liters of water over a month. These ice stupa act as natural reservoirs holding water in a solid state until it is gradually released, due to the rise in temperature, during April and May.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2024/01/17/hussainabad-ice-stupa-an-initiative-impacting-climate-change-and-tourism/>

[From Vernacular Urdu Media](#)

The world is not aware of Indian crimes in 'occupied Kashmir:' Speaker 'Azad Kashmir' Assembly

Daily Pakistan, 15 January 2024

The 'Azad Kashmir', Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar claimed that 'Indian atrocities' in 'Occupied Kashmir' are not apparent to the rest of the world as women and children among others are being cruelly abused every day. While speaking at a luncheon hosted in his honour by the Jammu and Kashmir Overseas Community in Jeddah, he stated that by respecting local rules and laws, we can work for the cause of Kashmir and that the Saudi administration has long expressed concern for Pakistanis and Kashmiris. Engineer Arif Mughal, Chaudhry Fanwat Hussain, Chaudhry Akram Gujjar, John Gulzar, former Federal Minister Chaudhry Shahbaz Hussain, and Sardar Anayatullah Arif were among those who spoke at the occasion.

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/15-Jan-2024/1669523>

The 'AJK' president has rejected India's protest against the recent visit to Mirpur by the British High Commissioner

Nawaiwaqat, 16 January 2024

While dismissing India's protest against British High Commissioner Jane Marriott's recent visit to Mirpur, the president of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry described the

Indian government's position as 'highly ridiculous.' He said that the Indian government, which held G20 summit festivities in 'occupied Kashmir' last year, has no moral or legal grounds to criticize the UK envoy's visit to Mirpur. India has no moral or legal justification to object to foreign diplomats visiting Azad Kashmir, he said, adding that envoys from many nations had already visited the territory and will continue to do so in the future. He described Kashmir as an internationally recognized contested area and claimed that Kashmir has never been a part of India. He stated that India should abandon its expansionist ambitions and recognise that it could no longer hold Kashmiris hostage by force.

He said that since 5 August 2019, the political and human rights situation in the 'Indian-occupied' territory of Jammu and Kashmir has deteriorated considerably. He stated that the world community should be aware of the region's rapidly deteriorating political and human rights situation. The international community should take note of the crimes committed by Indian occupation troops against Kashmiris, he said, adding that it was past time for powerful world countries to have a part in preventing carnage and violence in the 'Indian-occupied' territory.

<https://www.nawawaqat.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2024-01-16/page-1>

A girl masquerading as a boy and married in 'AJK' Mirpur has been detained

UrduPoint, 16 January 2024

The arrest of a foreign female in Mirpur, 'Azad Kashmir', has revealed a worrying instance in which an individual came to Pakistan dressed as a boy, married local girls, and then sold them abroad. Accordingly, an arrest was made in response to an application submitted by the family of one victim who had fallen victim to this fraudulent scheme. During the inquiry, it was discovered that the accused, Nargis, would take the identity of a boy to develop connections with girls. Following the marriage, Nargis would take the brides abroad and sell them. The victim's family filed a complaint with the police, resulting in the registration of a case and eventual arrest.

Muhammad Ramzan, the victim's family's head, described the deception, claiming that Nargis posed as Shaaban and began a connection with a girl. After marriage, the daughter was sent to France via Dubai after getting a visa, only for the family to realise later that the purported son-in-law was a girl. According to Ramzan, the girl was tortured by the criminal gang and attempted sales in numerous areas. The family eventually relocated their daughter to a safe location in France. When Nargis returned to 'AJK' in pursuit of her next victim, the victim's

family recognised her and swiftly filed a complaint with the police, resulting in her imprisonment.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/rawalakot/national-news/live-news-3883040.html>

**On February 5, the entire Kashmiri nation would stand in solidarity with their brothers in ‘Occupied Kashmir.’
Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq Khan**

Nawaiwaqt, 19 January 2024

Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq Khan, Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) and-Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), has stated that on 5 February, the entire Kashmiri nation will stand in solidarity with their brothers in ‘Occupied Kashmir.’ He said that despite all of the imperialist techniques adopted by India, Kashmiris are fighting for freedom and that we will bring about true change in the lives of Kashmiris by recruiting millions of people to the JI. He shared these views during the consultative meeting of JI which was also addressed by the Central Deputy of JI, Mir Sheikh Aqilur Rehman Advocate, Amir District Raja Aftab Ahmad Khan, Amir Shahr Syed Saleem Shah, and other leaders. Mushtaq Khan stated that wherever Kashmiris live in the globe, they will stand in solidarity with their brothers in ‘Occupied Kashmir’, as well as the oppressed Kashmiris who believe in democracy and human freedom. He stated that Kashmiris have sacrificed

millions of lives for freedom and that they will continue to do so till they obtain their independence.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2024-01-19/page-1>

From Social Media

Araib Ali Baig @The_North_Blood

16 January 2024

Protests are gaining momentum in Gilgit-Baltistan in response to rising subsidized wheat prices and concerns about constitutional rights. Thousands are engaged in street demonstrations, marking the 20th day of protests in Skardu.

#GilgitBaltistan #GB_STRIKE
#Karakoram #protests

Protests Video link:

https://twitter.com/The_North_Blood/status/1746960603531624586

Basharat Issa @BasharatIssa

16 January 2024

By restricting Gilgit-Baltistan to the strategic and exotic gazes, it has been turned into such a colony where the inhabitants are alienated of their interiority in all senses and almost everything that determines their existence is exterior, from thought to action.

<https://twitter.com/BasharatIssa/status/1747274046432285109>

PAMIR TIMES ® @pamirtimes

17 January 2024

Protesters in #Skardu chant “Go Gulbar Go” slogans, demanding resignation of CM Haji Gulbar Khan. The protest demonstrations have continued for the last three weeks, as locals rejected the government’s decision to raise the price of wheat in the region. Video shared by Agha Riaz #GilgitBaltistan

Video link:

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1747337501327380742>

Ijaz Shigri @ijazshigri

18 January 2024

After the regime change, the effects spread to Gilgit-Baltistan. Remembered that wheat subsidy imposed since 1972. People have been protesting against the withdrawal of wheat subsidy including their basic rights (land issue, Khalisa Sarkar) for the last 23 days

#GilgitBaltistan

<https://twitter.com/ijazshigri/status/1747989713347354626>

PAMIR TIMES ® @pamirtimes

18 January 2024

Bomb Disposal Squad has said that they averted a “terrorist threat” by neutralizing an explosive device in #Gilgit city. The device, apparently assembled locally, was reportedly

placed near the twin bridges in Chinar Bagh locality of the city.

Images in the link:

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1747952890549870625>

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 4 | Issue 3

15 January - 21 January 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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