

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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22-28 March 2021

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Political Developments

GB People Mark Pakistan Day with Zeal, Fervour

Urdu Point, 23rd March 2021

Like other parts of the country, Pakistan Day was celebrated by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan with traditional zeal, fervour and enthusiasm. In most places, the day started with special prayers for the growth and development of the country followed by special events which were organized in all the districts of Gilgit-Baltistan to mark the Pakistan Day.

GB Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid hoisted the National Flag at Chinar Bagh in Gilgit which hosted the biggest celebratory event in the province. The CM also laid flowers at the memorial of the martyrs and offered Fateha for their departed souls.

A well-armed contingent of the police presented a guard of honor.

A colorful function was also organized at the City Park Gilgit, which featured cultural dance, and various sports competitions including ancient tug-of-war, Basra and others.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gb-people-mark-pakistan-day-with-zeal-fervou-1202463.html>

Gilgit-Baltistan Set to Play Role in Country's Development: CM Khalid Khurshid

Urdu Point, 24 March 2021

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid Khan said on Wednesday 24th March that after getting interim provincial status, GB would play its dynamic role for the economic development and progress of the country.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that PTI-led government was heartily focusing on development and progress of hitherto neglected areas like GB and will make every endeavor to provide all basic facilities to the people at their doorsteps.

He said that all opposition parties and government are "on one page" in their movement to turn G-B into a province, adding that he hoped that the opposition would further give their full support for a bright and progressive GB future.

He further said after consultation with all stakeholders, the government had decided in principle to give constitutional rights to Gilgit-Baltistan and that will end the deprivation of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan soon.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan-set-to-play-role-in-country-1202980.html>

Pak Foreign Minister expresses hope that Joe Biden will play a role in Kashmir resolution

The Nation, 26 March 2021

Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, on 25th March held a meeting with the Pakistan origin American Democrat leader, Tahir Javed. The meeting focused on the Pak-US

bilateral relations, economic diplomacy and other matters of mutual interest. The meeting also encompassed the matters related to the Pakistani diaspora in the US.

Tahir Javed who was in Pakistan to receive the Tamgha-e-Imtiyaz honour thanked the Foreign minister and assured him of continuous efforts to strengthen the Pakistan-US ties.

The Foreign Minister expressed hope that the incumbent US administration will play an active role in promoting peace in the region and specifically in the resolution of the Kashmir issue. He also said that people holding key positions in the Biden administration have a major role to play in the said issue. Reference to the cooperation between the two countries in the Afghan peace process was also made while pointing that the two states were allies in efforts for regional peace.

<https://nation.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2021-03-26/page-10/detail-0>

5-day AJK Wide Anti Polio Campaign Commence

Urdu Point, 27 March 2021

A 5-day anti Polio campaign was inaugurated in Azad Jammu and Kashmir on 27th March, under which, more than six and a half lakh children under the age of 5 will be administered anti-polio vaccine drops. Under the state wide polio eradication programme, the campaign will commence on the 29th of March and will conclude on the 2nd of April. For this purpose, 359 mobile teams have been constituted and 58 fixed and 19 transit points have been set up by Polio Eradication Committee.

Highlighting the salient features of the five days anti polio campaign in AJK for immunisation of children up to five years of age across AJK, the sources said that over 2000 mobile Para-medical staff teams have been constituted and whereas 397 fixed units and 124 transit points at prominent public places including buses and wagons stands were set up in all ten districts of Azad Jammu Kashmir. Besides, the parents will also get their children administered anti-polio vaccine drops at the fixed centres close to their homes including hospitals and district and tehsil health offices, basic health units, rural health centres as well as various other spots to vaccinate the children with the anti-polio drops from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The total staff involved in the drive including mobile teams comprising over 4500 workers, will visit door to door to immunize the children of and under 5 years of age during the campaign across AJK. It is worth mentioning that no cases of polio have been registered in children of AJK for the past 21 years.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/miscellaneous/5-day-ajk-wide-anti-polio-campaign-commence-1206213.html>

To maintain peace in the region, Arms display, firing in the air banned in GB

Dawn, 28 March 2021

After a firing incident in Naltar left 6 people death, Section 144 was imposed across Gilgit-Baltistan on Saturday, banning carrying and display of arms and firing in air for two months to maintain peace in the region. According to a notification issued by GB home secretary Mohammad Ali Randhawa on Saturday, the measure was taken to avoid any untoward incident as the Naltar incident and subsequent developments had created a precarious situation in the region.

In addition, the Gilgit-Baltistan government also decided to take strict action against people misusing social media to spread false information. A letter sent to GB police chief, commissioners and DIGs of Diamer, Gilgit and Baltistan divisions, deputy commissioners and SPs of all the 10 districts, the FIA and cyber-crime wing by the GB home department on Saturday observed that several false, fabricated, intimidating messages, rumors and hate material had been uploaded by miscreants on social media platforms.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1615081/arms-display-firing-in-air-banned-in-gb>

Economic Developments

President Masood believes that Pak-China ties will bring economic stability to AJK

The Nation, 26 March 2021

The CPEC Project would not only provide infrastructure development to AJK and Pakistan but it will also provide jobs to local youth and thus raise the general living standards in the area. This corridor will also bring socio-economic prosperity to AJK and end its longstanding energy crisis. These views were expressed by the President of AJK Sardar Masood Khan after a briefing from chief executive officer of China Three Gorges South Asia Investment (Pvt) limited Yao Feixiong on the hydropower generation project currently under execution at Karot Hollar in Kotli district of Mirpur Division. In the briefing, the President was told that presently, the project employed 3000 people including a thousand Chinese workers and the project with a capacity of producing 3.2 billion units of cheap electricity would be completed by next year.

“The execution of 720-MG Karot hydropower generation project would provide jobs to the local people and the completion of this project early next year will provide electricity to more than two million households in the country,” he added.

<https://nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2021/pak-china-ties-to-bring-economic-stability-in-ajk-president>

NAB board launches inquiry against ex-CM GB

The News, 25 March 2021

The Executive Board of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has recently approved holding of 12 fresh inquiries, including one against PML-N’s ex-chief minister Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Hafeezur Rehman. Ex City Nazim of Quetta, Maqbool Ahmad Lehri is also to be investigated. The Executive board of NAB held a meeting on the 25th of March where the board authorized 12 inquiries against various personalities including Hafeezur Rehman, former GB CM and others including Rashid Ali Atro, Syed Masood Hussain Shah, Nasreen Kamran, Sajawal of Sindh Workers Welfare Board Government of Sindh, Abdul Hafeez and others, Fazal Amin Shah, Maqbool Ahmed Lehri, former city Nazim Quetta, former chairman Quetta Development Authority, and others, Saddam Bazai, Irrigation and Power Department Government of Baluchistan, Saleh Muhammad of Plan International (NGO), Saeed Ahmed Proprietor GNS Traders, Abid Solango, Accountant, Population Department and others, Abdul Ghaffar, proprietor Rao and Rana Builders and Developers, Sukkur.

Achieving the target of corruption-free Pakistan and eradication of the menace is the priority of the Bureau, said Justice Javed Iqbal (Retired) adding that the NAB is vigorously pursuing the policy of accountability for all.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/809617-nab-board-launches-inquiry-against-ex-cm-gb>

Vernacular Urdu Media

India-Pakistan water issue

Editorial, Daily Pakistan, 23 march 2021

After the ceasefire announcement by the DGMOs of Pakistan and India, other issues between India and Pakistan are witnessing some progress. One major pending issue was that Bharat Cricket Board (BCCI) was keeping silent on a complaint filed by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) about the T20 World Cup. But finally, India has told the ICC that it would give visa to Pakistani cricket team and its staff and also other members. It is being reported that talks on the water issue between India and Pakistan would take place on 24 March in New Delhi. In this regard, Pakistani delegation led by the Chairman of Pakistan's Indus water commissioner Mehr Ali Shah has reached New Delhi. The Indian team will be led by Indus water commissioner Pradeep Kumar Saxena. Pakistan has serious reservations about India's dam and power house constructions in "occupied" Kashmir (Pakistan water commission ko maqboza Kashmir mei Bharat ki taraf se dam aur power house banana ke hawale se tahfizaat hain). Besides raising these matters, the issue of the distribution of the water is also likely to be discussed.

These important developments imply that despite the pending of the Kashmir issue, the two countries have started talking. They are ready to discuss the disputed issues. In all this, is it possible that India will change its rigid position on Kashmir?

<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-03-23/page-4/detail-1>

Pakistan Day celebrated across AJK

Daily Ausaaf, 24 March 2021

The Kashmiri people from all 10 districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and other side of LOC observed March 23 as a Pakistan Day with great zeal and national fervor and different functions were held at district levels despite of heavy rains. The main function was held at Prime Minister House in AJK capital on Tuesday and Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan hoisted the National flag of Pakistan with the pledge of love with Pakistan on behalf of Kashmiri people. The flag hoisting ceremony was kept simple and epigrammatic. Due to heavy rains it was held within the premises of PM House. Earlier, the smart contingent of AJK police presented the national anthem and also presented the guard of honor to Prime Minister of AJK.

In Muzaffarabad, Hattian Bala, Neelam Valley and Mirpur Pakistan day was celebrated with religious fervor. *Awami Etihad* organised a ceremony in Muzaffarabad which was joined by a host of intellectuals from across AJK. The ceremony was chaired by *Awami Etihad* President Waseem Khan Parvaana. Waseem said that only a stable Pakistan could provide peace and

prosperity to the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and the dream of Pakistan will remain unfulfilled until and unless Kashmir is united with it.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-03-24/131904/p1_32.gif

6 killed, 7 injured as suspects open fire at passenger vehicle in Gilgit

Daily K2, 26 March 2021

At least six people were killed and seven were injured when a passenger coach came under fire on Thursday. The passenger vehicle was on its way from Gilgit to Niltar Bala when it was fired upon at the RC bridge by unidentified suspects. Five people were killed while seven were injured in this incident. The injured were shifted to the Gilgit Hospital for treatment, said police. The five deceased all hailed from Niltar Bala, where the passenger vehicle was travelling to, said police. The injured also include two personnel of the Air Force who were shifted to the CMH Lahore Medical College.

Immediately after the incident, a protest against this act of terrorism started in Sultanabad. The Karakorum highway was also completely blocked by the protestors who demanded immediate and strict action.

SSP Mirza Hassan said that three accused involved in firing on a passenger van have been arrested. The arrested accused belong to Niltar. Police have cordoned off the area and are trying to arrest the accomplices of the accused. In an earlier statement, DIG Operations Gilgit, Owais Ahmed said that the Niltar incident had signs of an old enmity. The authorities have requested the people to stay calm under the circumstances and the security arrangements have been tightened.

<https://cutt.ly/dxD6sGv>

Judiciary Crisis stirs Lawyers protests throughout AJK

Daily Ausaaf, 26 March 2021

Lawyers from all districts of Azad Kashmir hit the streets in protest against the judiciary crisis which has come up in the state. Protests by lawyers were recorded in Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli, Rawlakot, Bhatiyan, Neelam etc. The lawyers were protesting against the failure of the President AJK in performing his constitutional duties. Bar Council Vice Chairman, Khawaja Maqbool War, while addressing the protestors said that the Judiciary crisis in AJK has put the state in a very vulnerable position. The top courts of the state are practically dysfunctional and this can have an effect on the upcoming elections as well. The President of AJK should reach out to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and to the Chairman of Kashmir Council to sort out their problems failing which the President should resign.

The non-permanence of judges in the courts of AJK is causing a huge backlog. A continuous change in the procedure to appoint judges and the varying interests of the parties involved in the appointing process has led AJK judiciary in a horrible mess.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-03-26/132042/p1_17.gif

AJK Prime Minister gets a huge welcome at Bagh Rally

Jammu Kashmir Times, 26 March 2021

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan was welcomed by a huge gathering in Bagh in what is being considered as the biggest political gathering of the district. The Prime Minister was accompanied by a huge rally comprising of hundreds of vehicles and motorcycles which covered the road from Bagh Bypass all the way to Reida. As soon as they reached the Bagh district, the PM was welcomed by large groups which kept joining the rally at regular intervals. Slogans in favour of Raja Farooq Haider, Nawaz Sharif and Mir Akbar reverberated throughout the area. The PM was showered with flower petals at every corner he turned. In his address, PM Farooq Haider said that Kashmir should be used as a playground between India and Pakistan. It is rather a residence of twelve and a half million people. These people have made great sacrifices. In 1947 alone, 2 lakh 37 thousand Kashmiris were killed. Another 2500 sacrificed their lives in 1953 with the ousting of Sheikh Abdullah. Another hundred thousand have been martyred in the ongoing freedom struggle. These sacrifices should not be forgotten or belittled.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Resize-of-fp-26-3-2021.jpg>

India-Pakistan Brigade Commanders conduct meeting at Poonch crossing point

Daily Ausaf, 27 March 2021

A Brigade Commander level flag meeting was held at Rawalkot, Poonch crossing point. Pakistan Army's Public department, ISPR, issued a statement which said that a meeting was held between India and Pakistan at the Brigade commander level. The meeting was held at Rawalkot, Poonch crossing point. The aim of the meeting was to brief each other and discuss the progress in the implementation of the DGMO agreement of maintenance of ceasefire along the LOC.

India Pakistan relations have been subject to various ups and downs ever since the two states came in existence. Indian tendencies to cause unprovoked escalations in the border regions have not only worsened the relations but also caused a deadlock in reconciliation attempts and talks. Common people on both sides of the border have borne the brunt of these hostile relations and are hopeful of a calmer future. Pakistan has always been in favour of resolving all issues through dialogue and peaceful means.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-03-27/132100/p1_16.gif

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Disclaimer

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