

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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05-11 April 2021

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Political Developments

Economically strong Pakistan can help guarantee Kashmir freedom: AJK PM

Daily Heights, 05 April 2021

The Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan said that an economically strong Pakistan was the ultimate destination of all Kashmiris. Arguing that greater economic importance will also affirm greater political clout, the PM said that economic growth will enable Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue globally more effectively. Lauding Pakistan's positive role in the attempt for resolution the Kashmir conflict, Farooq Haider Khan said economic prosperity will make Pakistan a greater guarantor of liberation of the people of Occupied Kashmir.

Speaking on the issue of restoration of trade with India, the AJK PM expressed his reservations on the subject and said that any decision regarding the future of the Kashmiri people should be taken after consulting them only. Staying true to his Kashmir narrative course, he reasserted the importance of resolution of the Kashmir conflict with assistance from the United Nations and in consideration of the wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<http://heights.com.pk/page-heights.php?id=1&edition=heights&dt=05-04-2021>

Kashmiris need ceasefire in entire territory of IOJK: Masood Khan

Parliament Times, 07 April 2021

In a webinar titled "Thaw in the India-Pakistan relations and the Kashmir imbroglio: the way forward", President Azad Jammu and Kashmir called for a complete ceasefire all across the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. While acknowledging that reinstatement of the 2003 ceasefire is a positive development, President Masood claimed that the move was incomplete and partial unless Indian state put a stop to the killing and maiming of people in the Indian held Kashmir.

"The ceasefire should not be partial. The real pressing and compelling ceasefire that we need is the ceasefire in the valley of Kashmir where people are being killed, maimed, tortured and incarcerated. We need ceasefire in Srinagar, Baramulla, Shopian, Pulwama, Jammu, Poonch and Rajouri to get rid of the tyranny of a foreign occupier," Masood asserted. He however added that an effective ceasefire would bring relief to the people living along the LOC especially the 80 thousand households housing over 6 lakh 40 thousand residents on the AJK side which were under a constant threat of shelling from the Indian army.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/04/06/kashmiris-need-ceasefire-in-entire-territory-of-iojk-masood-khan/#.YG7Dj-gzbIV>

UNDP signs pact with GB government to protect mountain communities from natural disasters

Daily Times, 07 April 2021

A number of important Letters of Agreement (LoA) were signed between United Nations Development Programme, Gilgit-Baltistan and the KPK governments to protect the lives and livelihoods of the people in these regions from the devastating impact of climate change induced disasters especially the Glacial Lake Outburst flood events. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam, on the occasion said that the present government is taking all-out measures to mitigate adverse impacts of climate change-caused disasters on mountain communities in the country's north.

Melting of glaciers because of soaring temperatures in the country's north has resulted in the formation of over 3,044 lakes in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, putting some 7.1 million people at risk from potential GLOF events.

Sharing details of the activities to be conducted by relevant GB and KPK government departments in support with the climate change ministry and UNDP-Pakistan, the climate change ministry official said that the activities to be carried out under the LoAs would seek to achieve significant results in the form of studies undertaken for risk assessments, GIS mapping of hazard locations and completion of forestry surveys in addition to ushering in climate-resilient infrastructures and improved GLOF monitoring and warning systems.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/741879/relationship-between-government-of-ajk-and-government-of-pakistan/>

'Political consensus a must' for changing GB Status

Express Tribune, 09 April 2021

Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Thursday underlined the need for political consensus and national cohesion to change status of the region.

He said a unanimous resolution, passed by the GB assembly recently, for changing its status was a true reflection of its people's aspirations, adding the federal government was making all out efforts in that regard. The minister was chairing a maiden meeting of the committee, constituted by Prime Minister Imran Khan to make recommendations for granting Gilgit-Baltistan the status of a provisional province of Pakistan.

It was attended by Minister for Law and Justice, Barrister Farogh Naseem, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid and officials of Ministry of Defense and Foreign Affairs. The meeting discussed in detail various models for changing the status of Gilgit-Baltistan and stressed the need to make progress over the issue of national interest.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-04-09/MmEwZDVhMDk1ODcxYzQ1ZTQwMwY4YjBlMmMxNzAyYTguanBlZw%3D%3D>

APHC-AJK holds anti-India protest demo in Islamabad*Pakistan Observer*, 11 April 2021

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter held a protest demonstration outside Islamabad Press Club.

The protest, led by Hurriyat leader, Hassan Al-Bana, was held against the fresh killing spree by Indian troops in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The participants holding banners and placards bearing anti-India slogans condemned the Indian brutalities in the occupied territory.

The speakers on the occasion said that killing and other cheap tactics could not prevent the people of Kashmir from their just struggle for right to self-determination, adding that the ongoing liberation movement would be accomplished at all costs. They appealed to the United Nations and other international human rights organizations to put pressure on India to stop rights' abuses in IIOJK and settle the lingering Kashmir dispute according to the UN resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<https://pakobserver.net/aphc-ajk-holds-anti-india-demo-3/>

Economic Developments**First ever direct PIA flight from Lahore lands in Skardu***Dawn*, 08 April 2021

A grand welcome was organized at the Skardu airport for the Flight PK-8453 which was the first direct flight to land in Skardu from the Alama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore. The passenger flight carried 153 passengers and completed the journey in 1 hour and 15 minutes. The passengers were welcomed with flower bouquets by the PIA workers.

The flight is aimed at providing a new corridor to national and international tourists. The tourism minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Nassir Ali Khan announced that there would be two weekly flights along the Lahore-Skardu air route and it will do wonders for the Gilgit-Baltistan tourism sector. He said he was looking forward to the flight's sustainable operation as this would not only promote tourism but also add up to the revenue of the national flag carrier.

The first flight also received a water canon welcome upon landing at the Skardu airport.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1616983>

AJK Govt. To Resolve Pensioners Problems on Priority Grounds: PM*Urdu Point*, 08 April 2021

Speaking to a representative delegation of pensioners association of Azad Jammu Kashmir which called on him in the State metropolis on Thursday, AJK Prime Minister Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan said the pensioners are the respectable segment of our society and resolutions of their problems is the prime responsibility of the government and added that the

government would channelize all resources to facilitate the pensions of those who had served the state. The Prime Minister said facilitation centre would be established in the Secretariat and medical facilities would also be extended to the pensioners. The Prime Minister also said that government has resolved the problems of the people belonging to all segments of society and referred to the setting up of a special fund for the widows and orphans to extend financial assistance to mitigate their sufferings.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-govt-to-resolve-pensioners-problems-on-p-1218011.html>

Minister accused of shifting bidding for GB projects to Islamabad

Dawn, 11 April 2020

The Gilgit-Baltistan contractors association on Saturday alleged that the bidding process for development projects under PSDP had been shifted to Islamabad from GB allegedly on the instructions of minister for Kashmir affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ali Amin Gandapur. Addressing a news conference at the Gilgit Press Club here, the association's president Firdous Ahmed, general secretary Murtaza Ali and information secretary Mohammad Ismail claimed that the bidding process of PSDP projects had been shifted from GB to Islamabad under a plan after the formation of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf government in the region.

Their argument was that since the projects' bidding would be held in Islamabad local officials of different departments could not monitor the process. They said shifting of the projects' bidding process to Islamabad showed the federal government's lack of confidence in GB administration. Thousands of people associated with the local contractors would lose jobs if the tendering process of GB development projects was held in the federal capital.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1617506>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

GB assembly members demand inclusion of local languages in Curriculum

Daily K2, 06 April 2021

Assembly members from both the government and the opposition put forth the demand of including the teaching of local languages in the educational curriculum and urged the government to make necessary steps in the right direction. Peoples Party's member of Assembly, Syeda Danish raised the issue in the Assembly and then other members joined the discussion.

The members demanded that local languages should be made part of the curriculum to ensure their protection. Minister of Agriculture, Kazim Maisam on the occasion said that the establishment of the Gilgit-Baltistan Literature Board is being deliberated. Making such a Board functional is imperative for the protection of local languages in GB and also their inclusion in the school and college curricula. Opposition leader, Amjad Hussain Advocate, also

weighed in on the matter and said that the issue of local languages is of extreme importance and should not be taken lightly. He cited the example of KPK where all local languages have been included in the curriculum officially. While accepting that the last government had made some progress in this regard, he said that a lot more needs to be done.

https://www.epaper.dailyk2.com/Home?Issue=NP_GB&p=2318

Deliberations between students and authorities fail, Jamia Kashmir (AJK University) protests continue

Jammu Kashmir Times, 06 April 2021

Deliberations between the students and University authorities at the Jamia Kashmir University AJK failed and the student protests resumed soon after. The students have been demanding a reduction in semester and transportation fees from the past few days. The university authorities had offered the students a fee reduction of Rs. 2000 which the students termed as a 'Joke'. The students soon resumed their sit-in protest at the city campus and called for the continuation of the protests till all their demands were met. The students raised slogans against the university authorities and demanded a 50 percent fee waiver on semester and transportation fees.

Addressing the gathering which comprised of hundreds of students, the student leaders said that in the horrible conditions of the pandemic, the university instead of providing relief to the students and parents are forcing them to take to the streets. With the campuses being closed for greater parts of the last year, a fee hike is totally unacceptable. And now to offer a waiver of mere 2 thousand rupees is an insult to the students and to the institutions. The student leaders also said that the protests would continue till all the demands of the students are met.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Resize-of-Front-06.jpg>

An 'Intra-Kashmir' Conference is the need of the hour: Showkat Javed

Daily Ausaaf, 06 April 2021

In view of the growing bloodshed in the Indian occupied territory of Kashmir, the illegal detention of the Hurriyat leaders and the extension of the curfew and clampdown in Occupied Kashmir to more than 610 days, the Pakistan Peoples Party, Azad Kashmir has demanded to call a joint National Assembly and Senate session along with an Intra-Kashmir Conference. Speaking to the media, Peoples Party's Secretary Showkat Javed accused the PTI government of betraying the Kashmiris as it has softened its stand on the abrogation of Article 370 and the blood which Kashmiris are shedding every day. He said that PTI had showcased weak diplomacy along with a weak Kashmir policy. People's Party demanded the resignation of the Kashmir Committee Chief for failing to get any substantial work done.

Mr. Javed further said that trusting India would be like seating a thief on the Judge's chair. He said that thousands of Kashmiris had sacrificed their lives for their right to self-determination and an India-Pakistan ceasefire, while a step in the right direction should not in any way try to belittle those sacrifices.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newsrc=issues/2021-04-06/132825/p2_31.gif

Hanging bridge set on fire in Chilas GB

Daily K2, 09 April 2021

A hanging bridge connecting Chilas with Pine was destroyed as it was set on fire on Thursday. According to Rescue-1122 Diamer, the wooden bridge was almost reduced to ashes as unidentified people set it on fire in the middle of the night.

The Rescue-1122 officials said they immediately rushed the fire-fighting vehicles to the site after receiving a call at 3 am. The fire-fighters took an hour to bring the fire under control.

Gas Bala and Gas Pine were cut off from Chilas city after the bridge was destroyed.

Earlier, another bridge in Khunair Village was set on fire by unidentified miscreants.

Authorities soon rushed to the site to take stock of the situation. Coordinator to CM Shaad Alam also reached the spot and directed starting on an alternate mode of crossing using boats immediately. Diamer Commissioner and DG Disaster management were also seen in action. They ordered the commencement of the repair work of the bridge immediately.

<https://bit.ly/32aOpVy>

Social Media

Tweets

Jamil Nagri @jamilnagri

The #PIA first direct flight from Lahore to Skardu, carrying 153 passengers landed Skardu airport today.

There will be two weekly flights on Lahore and Skardu route.

GB tourism minister Raja Nasir Ali Khan termed the development as new era of tourism in #GilgitBaltistan.

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri/status/1379827793396068355>

Progressive Students' Collective @PSCollective_

PSC stands in Solidarity with the Students of AJK University in demanding 50% reduction in University fee. Not just AJK University but all universities must reduce their fee because students are not using campus facilities.

[#FeesMustFall](#)

https://twitter.com/PSCollective_/status/1379160684978700290

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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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