

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 4 | Issue 32

05 August - 11 August 2024

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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Youm-i-Istehsal Kashmir: PM Shehbaz urges India to ‘move to dispute resolution’ for lasting regional peace

Dawn, 5 August 2024

As the nation marked five years since India revoked the special autonomy of ‘occupied Kashmir’, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on New Delhi to move from ‘dispute denial to dispute resolution’ for lasting peace in South Asia. Pakistan observed Youm-i-Istehsal (Exploitation Day) today to mark the fifth anniversary of India revoking Kashmir’s special autonomy and to show solidarity with Kashmiris. On 5 August, 2019, India’s Narendra Modi-led government stripped the Muslim-majority territory of its special status by repealing Article 370 of the constitution, splitting the former state into two territories directly ruled by New Delhi.

The move allowed people from the rest of India to acquire property in ‘India-occupied Kashmir’ (IoK) and settle there permanently. Kashmiris, as well as critics of India’s Hindu nationalist-led government, saw the move as an attempt to dilute the demographics of Muslim-majority Kashmir with Hindu settlers. Shehbaz vowed that Pakistan would continue to extend its strong moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people till the realisation of their inalienable right to self-determination.

Country marks Youm-i-Istehsal

A one-minute silence was observed at 9am and the national anthems of

Pakistan and ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) were also played, Radio Pakistan reported. It further said that protest gatherings and rallies have been called in ‘AJK’s capital Muzaffarabad by the Kashmir Liberation Commission, Hurriyat organisations, trade unions, political parties, the journalist community, and civil society. Banners, placards, and posters were displayed across ‘AJK’ while documentaries were to be screened in major cities of the region. In the morning, a rally was held at Constitution Avenue in Islamabad to protest against the Indian government’s revocation of ‘IoK’s special status, Radio Pakistan reported. Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Amir Muqam, the minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, among others, addressed the rally.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1850239/youm-i-istehsal-kashmir-pm-shehbaz-urges-india-to-move-to-dispute-resolution-for-lasting-regional-peace>

India needs reminder from history, ‘IIOJK’ globally recognized issue: Khawaja Asif

The Nation, 5 August 2024

Minister for Defence, Aviation and Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that India needs a reminder from history that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized conflict which remains on the agenda of the United Nations and its solution lies in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. In his message on the

Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir, the minister said the act of 5 August is not acceptable in any way, as Pakistan is standing on the frontline for the freedom of Kashmir. Khawaja Asif said Pakistan will always extend all possible assistance to the people of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) in their just struggle to achieve their right to self-determination. Pakistan also calls on the international community to take practical steps to stop India from continuing atrocities on the Kashmiri people and illegal attempts to alter the demographic structure of the 'IIOJK', he said. Pakistan, he said is a supporter of regional peace and stability, adding, we are fully capable of thwarting any aggressive intentions and have demonstrated our resolve and capability in this regard on several occasions including in the recent past.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Aug-2024/india-needs-reminder-from-history-iiojk-globally-recognized-issue-khawaja-asif>

India 'disregarded' world laws through Aug 5 step: president

Dawn, 5 August 2024

President Asif Ali Zardari has said India's actions in the held Kashmir since 5 August 2019, demonstrated a complete disregard for international laws, the aspirations of the Kashmiris and the UN Security Council resolutions. In his message on Youm-i-Istehsal observed on 5 Aug to mark the Indian government's action of revoking Kashmir's special status-the president criticised New Delhi for its 'unilateral

actions.' Today marks the completion of five years of India's latest campaign to consolidate its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Zardari said. India's unilateral and unlawful steps five years ago undermined the region's internationally recognised disputed status. Since 5 August 2019, India has embarked upon a ceaseless campaign to alter the demographic structure and political landscape of the valley, and the precedent has continued. He vowed Pakistan will continue to extend moral, diplomatic and political support to the just struggle of Kashmiris and the realisation of their right to self-determination. In his message, Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani stated that 5 August 2019, will be remembered as a dark day in history. He stressed that the global community should acknowledge the pain and suffering of the Kashmiri people and raise their voices on humanitarian grounds.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1850150/india-disregarded-world-laws-through-aug-5-step-president>

Pak Army reiterates support for Kashmiris' self-will right

The Nation, 5 August 2024

On the occasion of Youm-e-Istehsal, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Services Chiefs, and the Pakistan Armed Forces have reaffirm their steadfast solidarity with the courageous and resilient people of 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). We unequivocally support Kashmiri people legitimate

and protracted struggle for the inalienable right to self-determination, says a statement issued by the ISPR media directorate. It said that the Indian Security Forces' egregious violations of international law, including the ongoing draconian military lockdown, unlawful attempts to alter the demographic structure of the occupied territory, and persistent human rights abuses, are deeply reprehensible. These unjust actions, coupled with the Indian government's belligerent rhetoric and hostile posturing, perpetuate the security and humanitarian crises in 'IIOJK', posing a constant threat to regional stability.

The statement added that it is axiomatic that lasting peace and stability in the region hinge on the resolution of the long-standing Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the United Nations resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The Pakistan Armed Forces pay tribute to the martyrs of 'IIOJK' for their extraordinary sacrifices and reaffirm their unwavering commitment to supporting the Kashmiri people in their righteous struggle against oppression and tyranny, on political, moral, and humanitarian grounds.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Aug-2024/pak-army-reiterates-support-for-kashmiris-self-will-right>

KMU holds seminar, walk to mark Kashmir Exploitation Day

The Nation, 6 August 2024

Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar held a seminar and walk to mark Kashmir Exploitation Day, with a

significant turnout of students and faculty members. The event featured skits and renditions of the national songs, reflecting solidarity with the Kashmiri cause. In his address on the occasion, Dr Haji Bahadur, the Chief Proctor of the university, emphasised the ongoing struggle of the Kashmiri people, who have been fighting for their freedom for the past 76 years. The purpose of observing Kashmir Exploitation Day is to amplify the voice of Kashmiris across the world through the media and awaken the conscience of the global community, Dr Bahadur stated. He reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for Kashmiris, emphasising that Pakistan will never abandon them in their struggle for self-determination.

There are two paths: one chosen by the Kashmiri people to confront the oppressive Indian forces, resulting in over one lakh Kashmiris sacrificing their lives and thousands imprisoned; and another path, which involves Pakistan's continuous efforts to advocate for Kashmir on every international forum, he said. Meanwhile, Prof Dr Zia-ul-Haq Vice Chancellor KMU highlighted that resolving the Kashmir issue remains an incomplete agenda for Pakistan, and the country will persist in supporting Kashmiris until they achieve their right to self-determination. The event was also held in other parts of Khyber Pakthuna which was attended by political leader's and civil society members.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Aug-2024/kmu-holds-seminar-walk-to-mark-kashmir-exploitation-day>

Resolution on Kashmir supported by all but one lawmaker

Dawn, 7 August 2024

The National Assembly passed a resolution rejecting India's unilateral revocation of held-Kashmir's special status, which was approved with consensus, amid opposition from one lawmaker. The Youm-i-Istehsaal-i-Kashmir Day Resolution, tabled by Safron and Kashmir Affairs Minister Amir Muqam, demanded that India release Kashmiri political prisoners, provide humanitarian aid, stop the ongoing violations of human rights and sincerely implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), so that the Kashmiri people can determine their future through the democratic process of a fair and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations.

The House reiterates its moral, political and diplomatic support to the struggle of the Kashmiri people for the right to self-determination and pays tribute to their courage and bravery, it read. Taking the floor on a point of order following the passage of the resolution, Mehmood Khan Achakzai said he had opposed the resolution as he had not been allowed to move an amendment to the draft. In a hard-hitting speech, parts of which were censored in the NA livestream, Mr Achakzai said they had always supported freedom movements, but the people of Kashmir should be asked which country they wanted to join.

He said if they wanted to join Pakistan of their own free will, they would be welcomed. Mr Achakzai also hit out at the speaker for not allowing him to speak on the resolution and called him a 'havaladar'. In response, the speaker said he was proud of being called a 'havaladar', as they were the frontline defenders of the country. He also told Mr Achakzai that his opposition to the resolution had been recorded. Speaking on a point of order, PPP MNA Shazia Marri regretted that Mr Achakzai had opposed the resolution. Later, PTI members Ali Muhammad Khan and Barrister Gohar Ali Khan clarified that their party had supported the resolution on the Kashmir issue.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1850577/resolution-on-kashmir-supported-by-all-but-one-lawmaker>

UN says it's stance on Kashmir issue unchanged

The Nation, 9 August 2024

United Nations (UN) has said that its position on Jammu and Kashmir remains 'unchanged', saying that the final settlement of the dispute concerning Jammu and Kashmir is to be reached by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the UN and full respect for human rights. Our position on Kashmir remains unchanged, Farhan Aziz Haq, the UN's deputy spokesperson, said in response to a question about the deteriorating human rights situation in Kashmir and the continued suffering of the people there following India's annexation on 5 August 2019. While speaking at a

regular media briefing, the spokesperson asserted that the UN position on this region is governed by the Charter of the UN and applicable Security Council resolutions. The Secretary-General, Farhan Haq added, 'also recalls the 1972 agreement on bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, also known as the Simla Agreement.' Pakistan marked the fifth anniversary of the day when the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi stripped 'IOK' of its special status, which allowed it a separate constitution and inherited protections on land and jobs under Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution.

Article 370 also forbids Indians from outside Jammu and Kashmir from permanently settling, buying land, holding local government jobs, and securing education scholarships. India's move was accompanied by a telecoms blackout in Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir state, restrictions on public movement, and the deployment of thousands of troops. Apart from stepping up its repression, India has granted domicile certificates to thousands of Indians to settle in 'occupied Kashmir' in a bid to change the State's demographic character. The certificate, a sort of citizenship right, entitles a person to residency and government jobs in the region, which till last year was reserved only for the Kashmiris.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Aug-2024/un-says-it-s-stance-on-kashmir-issue-unchanged>

Economic Developments

'AJK' varsities' VCs demand immediate financial aid to prevent collapse

The Nation, 5 August 2024

An urgent meeting of the Vice Chancellors of all five public sector universities of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) was held in Islamabad to discuss the severe financial crisis facing these institutions, specifically concerning the payment of salaries and pensions to university staff and pensioners. The Vice Chancellors conveyed their concerns and the potential repercussions of the financial crisis to the President of 'AJK' who is the Chancellor of the universities following the meeting. Participants in this crucial meeting included Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi, Vice Chancellor of the University of 'AJK', Muzaffarabad; Brigadier (R) Prof. Dr. Muhammad Younis Javed, Vice Chancellor of Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST); Prof. Dr. Abdul Hameed, Vice Chancellor of Women University Bagh; Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zakria Zakir, Vice Chancellor of the University of Poonch; and Prof. Dr. Rahmat Ali Khan, Vice Chancellor of the University of Kotli.

The Vice Chancellors highlighted that they have repeatedly informed all relevant forums and authorities about the financial crisis over the years through written and verbal communication, but no positive development has occurred.

Consequently, the crisis has intensified, leaving the universities with no resources to pay salaries and pensions. The main reasons for this crisis include the lack of increase in funding from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) since 2017, low student fees in public sector universities, the introduction of BS degree programs in colleges, resulting in decreased university enrollments, and HEC's discontinuation of private degree programs. Simultaneously, salaries and pensions have increased by 135% over the past seven years, rendering the universities unable to manage payments within their current financial resources.

The Vice Chancellors have made continuous efforts to resolve the financial issues, including meetings with the President of 'AJK'/Chancellor of the universities and the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission. As a result, the President expressed concerns in a letter to the Prime Minister of 'AJK' on 7 June 2024, warning that the absence of financial support from the 'AJK' government could lead to potential unemployment of faculty and staff and affect over 30,000 students enrolled in higher education programs. The President demanded a grant of at least 3 billion rupees to mitigate the financial deficit. Similarly, continuous meetings and efforts by the Vice Chancellors with the HEC Chairman led to a letter from Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of the HEC, to the Prime Minister of 'AJK' on 24 June 2024.

In this letter, Dr. Mukhtar emphasized the need for the 'AJK' government to allocate the required funds in the 2024-25 budget for state universities, similar to other provinces. The HEC Chairman highlighted the significant reduction in grants to state universities and the financial strain caused by inflation, warning that universities across Pakistan, especially in 'AJK', are operating under frozen budgets despite rising costs. The senior faculty delegation from the universities also met with the Prime Minister of 'AJK' during the budget session, informing him of the crisis's sensitivity and the severe threats to the universities' existence without immediate government financial intervention. The delegation stressed that without this support, ongoing essential educational and research activities could be halted, potentially harming the region's socio-economic development.

University officials emphasized that the government should revise its budget and immediately allocate 3 billion rupees to state universities to prevent further financial decline and support long-term development and innovation essential for regional and national progress. It is worth noting that this financial crisis is not the first of its kind; universities in Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab have also faced similar issues. The governments of Sindh and Balochistan have permanently allocated grants in their annual budgets to rescue their universities from financial crises, with 35 billion rupees

and 5 billion rupees respectively allocated for the current financial year. Following the 18th Amendment, higher education is a provincial responsibility, and provinces have been allocating funds for their universities in their budgets, a step yet to be taken by the government of 'AJK'.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Aug-2024/ajk-varities-ucs-demand-immediate-financial-aid-to-prevent-collapse>

Pak-China trade, travel suspended as GB traders' protest intensifies

Dawn, 7 August 2024

The ongoing protest by Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) traders against the Federal Board of Revenue and Pakistan Customs has intensified, with protesters blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH), also a key CPEC route, suspending travel and trade between Pakistan and China through Khunjerab Pass. A large number of foreign passengers, including tourists from the United Kingdom, Spain, France, as well as China, who were travelling to China from Pakistan, have been stranded at Sost. The protest outside Sost Dry Port by those affiliated with trade between Pakistan and China through Khunjerab Pass entered the 13th day, as they pressed the authorities to implement court decision and meet their demands.

The protest has resulted in foreign and local passengers being unable to travel by road to the neighbouring country. While some foreigners have now been allowed to travel, local passengers and transporters have not been able to cross

the border for five consecutive days. A protest sit-in was staged on the KKH in Sost, blocking exit and entry points between the two countries. The protest sit-ins continued outside Sost Dry Port and on KKH, blocking all trade and travel operations between the two countries. Over 50 foreign tourists, who arrived at Sost to travel to China via Khunjerab Pass, remained stranded at Sost Dry Port due to the protest.

The foreign tourists faced problems as some of their visas have expired. The travelers joined the sit-in of the traders and showed their solidarity, appealing to the protesters to allow them to travel to China. However, the organisers asked the foreigners to wait for one day for a decision. The protest sit-ins at both points were attended by traders, labourers, transporters, custom clearing agents, and workers from political, religious, and social organisations. Addressing the protest, Javed Hussain, Mohammad Abbas, Mehboob Rabbani, and others said trade activities between Pakistan and Chi-na had remained suspended for many months due to the policies adopted by Pakistan Customs officials.

Judiciary, legislature

The GB chief court has already declared the collection of income tax, sales tax, and additional sales tax on imported items from China through Khunjerab Pass as unlawful. Later, the GB chief court divisional bench also issued contempt of court notices to the respondents. Additionally, the GB assembly had unanimously passed a

resolution favouring the traders' demands.

'Conspiracy against Pak-China ties'

The protesters blamed the Customs member, chief collector North, and GB customs collector for the worsening situation, alleging that they were responsible for a 'conspiracy' against Pakistan and China's friendship and historical linkages between both regions. They demanded that the officials be suspended immediately and a high-level inquiry be ordered against them. They announced that they would call off the protest after the fulfilment of their demands.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1850613/pak-china-trade-travel-suspended-as-gb-traders-protest-intensifies>

GB traders warned against continuing protest

Dawn, 9 August 2024

Pakistan Customs advised the protesting traders to lift restrictions on consignments lying at the Sost dry port after having been imported from China. Besides, the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) customs announced approaching the GB Chief Court with a request to vacate its orders halting the collection of taxes, sales tax and additional sales tax from traders on items imported from China. Last month, Justice Raja Shakeel Ahmed of the Chief Court stopped Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Customs from collecting these taxes, observing the region was exempted from such taxes. Local traders have been staging a sit-in

for the past two weeks, blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and suspending travel and trade between Pakistan and China for implementation of the court directives.

Assistant Collector Customs Sost Imtiaz Shigri through a notice sent to GB Importers and Exporters Association president Muhammad Iqbal sought clearance of the customs premises. You are hereby strongly advised to clear the occupation of customs premises and allow the normal trade activity to flow. You are also strongly advised to clear your goods so that other traders have the opportunity to use the port, read the notice. Defying the notice, the traders continued their sit-in outside the dry port and KKH. They announced that they would call off the protest only after their demands were fulfilled. Addressing the protesters, traders' representatives Javed Hussain, Muhammad Abbas, Imtiaz Gilgiti and others accused the customs officials of insulting the Chief Court and GB Assembly.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1851018/gb-traders-warned-against-continuing-protest>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

The world need to speak out against India's crimes against Kashmiris: GB CM

Dailyk2, 5 August 2024

In an address for Kashmir Exploitation Day, Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Haji Gulbar Khan stated that on 5 August 2019, India committed unlawful and unilateral acts in 'occupied Jammu

and Kashmir' (OJK). He said that international community failed to take notice of India's barbaric acts and the sufferings of oppressed Kashmiris. He claimed that Indian violations of the Geneva Convention and UN Security Council resolutions are ongoing, adding that fundamental rights have been taken away from Kashmiris. Global observers can now clearly see through India's alleged democratic façade. The Indian government is blatantly attempting to alter 'occupied Kashmir' demographic composition by advancing the Hindutva agenda.

The people of 'occupied Kashmir' have the right to freedom and human rights. GB's administration and people will never stop standing up for their suffering Kashmiri brothers and sisters, and they will speak out against Indian atrocities and usurping decisions in all forums.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/24129>

Currently not even a single megawatt power project has been added in GB: Former GB CM

UrduPoint, 6 August 2024

The former chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that during the current government reign, the region has not seen a single megawatt of electricity projects. Due to them, even after four years, the 28 MW projects of the preceding Muslim League (N) leadership could not be finished. He claimed that because of the worst load shedding throughout in the scorching

heat, the people are experiencing serious issues including the lack of basic facility. For the residents of Gilgit, access to projects such hospital roads, water, and electricity continued to be a barrier, he added.

<https://www.urduPoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4110356.html>

Protests against continuous load shedding in several locations around Gilgit

Dailyk2, 7 August 2024

The civilians from various parts of Gilgit held protests against the department of electricity for prolonged load shedding in the district. The demonstrators added that the local administration need to take notice of people's human rights concerns and they also demanded the resignation of the concerned authorities. The protestors also held that since their protests is against the department of electricity rather than the country and that all those officials who are twisting the issue need to be held accountable. The protesters stressed that the current state of affairs including the power shedding has brought about the destruction of local business and that it is impossible for women, children, and the elderly to live in the extreme heat.

They maintained that the government does not care that people are suffering. After waiting patiently for a while, the residents of Gilgit City eventually became impatient and protested. Nobody knows where the electricity is going, even after spending so much

money. Therefore, all the mafias, including the Secretary of the Department of electricity, should be transferred, and investigations should be carried out against these dishonest officials. They are making a thousand excuses instead of supplying electricity. Gilgit City would be closed indefinitely and the Department of electricity and Tehsil Office will be encircled if the Government fail to supply electricity, they added.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/24179>

The demands of traders and airport victims in GB should be accepted immediately: JI leader

Dailyk2, 9 August 2024

The Amir of Jamaat-e-Islamia (JI) Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Maulana Tanveer Hydari said that GB is a disputed area and therefore taxes cannot be levied there. He said that civilian's protests are taking place throughout GB over a number of concerns, including the load-shedding and land compensation. People are speaking up for what they consider to be their fundamental rights, he added. Since GB is geographically and historically a part of Jammu and Kashmir, no taxes are allowed here. The Chief Court's ruling and the Supreme Court's ruling from 2019 both state that GB should be granted all rights, and that the imposition of taxes at the Sost border is nothing more than obstinacy and rudeness of administration. According to him, JI has been supporting the airport victims since day one and has brought up all of their demands in the Sena and National Assembly. They have a right to their

demands, and the federal government need to acknowledge them right away.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/24233>

From Social Media

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

6 August 2024

Citizens started sit-in at many places of Gilgit against nerve-wracking load shedding in Gilgit city. #gilgitbaltistan #loadshedding #powercrises #protest #strike #citizen #Gilgit #city #dharna

Video report:

<https://twitter.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1820790924483441116>

Diamer Basha Dam PR @DBD_PR

7 August 2024

Adviser WAPDA (Projects) Nasir Hanif visited the Diamer Basha Dam site. He reviewed construction progress & activities, receiving briefings from project officials, consultants & contractors. Hanif also visited 21 MW Tanger Hydro Power Project to inspect its ongoing construction.

Images link:

https://twitter.com/DBD_PR/status/1821238633946304794

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

8 August 2024

Businessmen associated with Pak-China trade have been protesting for 14 days. What are their demands? #Pakistan #China #trade #business #strike #protest #cpec. Video report.

Video link:

<https://twitter.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1821537912367845716>

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Disclaimer

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