

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 4 | Issue 33

12 August - 18 August 2024

Khunjerab Tourism Summit
Pass digital economy energy
taxes Flash sit-in protest green
Flood Gilgit-Baltistan
POK 4G internet



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

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Contents

Political Developments

- JI seeks answers on 'Kashmir deal'
- India illegally and forcibly occupied the territory of J&K in brazen violation of UNSC resolutions : President and PM of 'AJK'
- If Modi tries to attack Azad Kashmir, this region will become a graveyard for him: Yaqoob Khan
- Elections under military siege is not more than a drama: Pasban-e-Hurriyat

Economic Developments

- Protest against taxes ends at border pass linking Pakistan to China
- ICCI's 2nd Tourism Summit: Air connectivity key to unlocking GB's tourism potential
- Telenor launches 4G internet services in Hunza, upgrades network in Gilgit, Skardu
- Rains, floods damage bridges, roads, maroon tourists in GB

Vernacular Urdu Media

- Huge rallies are planned for August 14 in Rawalakot to demonstrate Kashmiris' everlasting support for Pakistan
- The Kashmiri people's hopes are centered and oriented towards Pakistan: Muhammad Yusuf Butt
- Kashmiris celebrate India's Independence Day globally as Black Day

Political Developments

JI seeks answers on 'Kashmir deal'

The Express Tribune, 13 August 2024

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman stated that while it is appropriate to court-martial former intelligence chief Faiz Hameed, the JI chief alleged that the rulers negotiated the revocation of Kashmir's special status with Modi as part of an understanding. He claimed that reports were indicating that former army chief General (Retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa was also involved in this compromise. If 'court martials are being conducted over minor issues, then action should also be taken if anyone is implicated in this national issue; otherwise, the ISPR should clarify the matter to the nation,' he asserted while addressing a public rally in Peshawar.

Naeem gave the government a 40-day ultimatum to address his party's demands, threatening a long march to D-Chowk if these conditions were not met. He slammed the government's handling of national security and political issues, calling for accountability for those who betray national interests. He also condemned the alleged electoral fraud and claimed that the public has been exploited for 77 years.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2487641/ji-seeks-answers-on-kashmir-deal>

India illegally and forcibly occupied the territory of J&K in brazen

violation of UNSC resolutions: President and PM of 'AJK'

Daily Parliament Times, 15 August 2024

The president of 'Azad Kashmir', Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry and prime minister Anwar ul Haq have said Kashmiri people have yet again proved that they do not accept 'India's illegal occupation' of their motherland by observing India's Independence Day as a black day. In their separate statements, both the leaders said that India has illegally and forcibly occupied the territory of Jammu and Kashmir in brazen violation of the UNSC resolutions. They said that after occupying the territory India has strengthened its imperialistic control through oppressive means and committing atrocities against Kashmiris. By observing 15 August as a black day, the Kashmiri people conveyed a strong message to the global community making it abundantly clear that India's illegally control over their motherland wasn't acceptable to them under any circumstances, they said.

India, they said, wants to change the demography of 'occupied Kashmir' and turn Kashmiris into a minority in their own country. Since August 2019, Indian authorities have issued fake domicile certificates to millions of non-state subjects, adding that the Indian bid to change the region's demography was a violation of the UN resolutions and other international laws. They said that India should bear in mind the fact

that Kashmir is an internationally recognized disputed territory still pending on the UN agenda. The president and PM made it clear that India cannot change the disputed status of the territory unilaterally.

Sultan Mehmood reiterated his commitment to raise this issue at every international forum. He said that now India wants to stage election drama in 'occupied Kashmir' to deflect world attention away from the real issues. The Kashmiri leadership, he said, have time and again stated that these so-called elections could be a substitute to plebiscite. PM Anwar ul Haq said that Pakistan was the real ambassador of the Kashmiri people that has not only been advocating Kashmiris' cause at international level but supporting them politically, morally and diplomatically. He said that the government of 'AJK' would devote all its energies to strengthen the Kashmiris' ongoing liberation struggle and highlight their plight at international level.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/08/15/president-pm-ajk-say-kashmiri-people-have-yet-again-proved-that-they-do-not-accept-indias-illegal-occupation-of-their-motherland-by-celebrating-indias-independence-day-as-a-black-day/>

If Modi tries to attack 'Azad Kashmir', this region will become a graveyard for him: Yaqoob Khan

Daily Parliament Times, 15 August 2024

Former president and Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' Yaqoob Khan while leading a rally in Rawalkot said that if

Modi tries to attack 'Azad Kashmir', this region will become a graveyard for him. The people's youth organization 'Azad Kashmir' chairman Babrik Khan also led another rally and raised the slogans of freedom and self-determination. They said that peaceful political struggle can lead to the freedom of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Babrik Khan further said that today's protests were held against the Modi government action on 5 August 2019, and that a message has been given to Modi that people do not accept his decision. He said that the best formula to solve the Kashmir issue is referendum. He claimed that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto fought a full battle for Kashmir and today his workers have resolved to bring this war to a logical end. The leaders also appreciated the recent success of the Joint People's Action Committee (JPAC) and the achievements that have been reached as a result of this movement. Yaqoob Khan said that after the success of JPAC, some political parties and groups have tried to spread their wrong ideas criticizing Pakistan under the cover of this movement.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/08/15/if-modi-tries-to-attack-azad-kashmir-this-region-will-become-a-graveyard-for-him-says-yaqoob-khan/>

Elections under military siege is not more than a drama: Pasban-e-Hurriyat

Daily Parliament Times, 18 August 2024

Chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir, Uzair Ahmed Ghazali has said that India should know that

elections at gunpoint, under surveillance of one million soldiers, use of black laws and coercion cannot be a substitute for the freedom of Kashmir. In a statement, he claimed that Delhi government should boldly come forward to establish a free, fair and impartial Plebiscite in the state of Jammu and Kashmir under the supervision of international observers. He said that after the brutal actions of 5 August 2019, an attempt is being made to distort the internationally recognized disputed status of the Kashmir. Ghazali said that the Bharatiya Janata Party led by Narendra Modi has announced fake elections in the occupied state in order to throw dust in the eyes of the world.

He said that the deceptions of the Indian rulers are not hidden from the international community. The world knows how the Delhi government has controlled 'occupied Kashmir' and had usurped all the basic human, social, political and religious aspects of 130 million people. Ghazali said that the Modi government is trying to suppress and eradicate political opponents working for human and religious freedom in 'occupied Kashmir' by imprisoning them in jails for many years. He said that Kashmiri people will not accept the drama of so-called elections by keeping the actual leadership of the occupied state in prisons.

He further claimed that if there is even an iota of moral courage left in India, then it should implement the resolutions of the United Nations

Security Council (UNSC) which have been signed by the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He lamented that Freedom of expression is completely banned in Kashmir, people are being kept in fear and terror through the worst black laws while the houses of those who disagree with the military occupation of India are being demolished, their properties confiscated and that are being dismissed from their jobs. Ghazali said that the elections being held in the darkest period in the history of the state will have no status.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2024/08/18/elections-under-military-siege-is-not-more-than-a-drama-pasban-e-hurriyat/>

Economic Developments

Protest against taxes ends at border pass linking Pakistan to China

Daily Times Pakistan, 12 August 2024

Traders in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region called off a 17-day sit-in protest against taxes on imports at an important border pass linking Pakistan to China, following successful negotiations with the government that will pave the way for trade to resume at the key crossing. Trade and transportation at the high-altitude Khunjerab Pass connecting Pakistan and China remained suspended since 26 July after traders staged a sit-in protest at the Sost dry port against taxes on Chinese imports. On 20 July, the GB Chief Court declared illegal the collection of income tax, sales tax and additional sales tax by Pakistani

revenue authorities on goods imported from China through the Khunjerab Pass. Protesters accused the federal government of violating the court's orders and collecting taxes on imports that arrived through the pass.

The customs department has accepted the GB Chief Court's order and the unanimous resolution of the GB assembly, Imran Ali, president of the GB Chamber of Commerce and Industry noted. So now, we have announced to call off the protest. Muhammad Iqbal, president of the GB Importers and Exporters Association, said a three-member team representing the traders met GB Chief Minister Hajji Gulber Khan and Minister for Kashmir Affairs and GB Amir Muqam in Islamabad to resolve the issue. And they promised to fulfill our demands after assurances with the FBR, Iqbal said. From today, the border is open for all kinds of trade and transport.

Bakhtiar Muhammad, a spokesperson for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) said the customs department was willing to implement the GB court's interim order subject to the provision of monetary security during the case proceedings to safeguard government revenue. Traders finally agreed to provide post-dated cheques as security and customs negotiated a standard operating procedure for the clearance, to which they agreed, Muhammad said. GB Information Minister Eman Shah shared details of the agreement, saying that local traders in GB would not be taxed for imports through the Khunjerab Pass. However, a checkpoint

will be installed at the Thakot Bridge by customs where all taxes will be applicable on imported things being transported to another region, he revealed. Ninety-six percent of trade between Pakistan and China consists of China's exports to Pakistan, while Pakistan's share of exports to China is only 4 percent, as per the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1216691/protest-against-taxes-ends-at-border-pass-linking-pakistan-to-china/>

ICCI's 2nd Tourism Summit: Air connectivity key to unlocking GB's tourism potential

The Nation, 15 August 2024

The ambassadors and business leaders, while addressing the second Tourism Summit under the auspices of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and industry (ICCI), stressed the need for increasing the direct flights and modernisation of tourism infrastructure in Gilgit Baltistan (GB) for promoting tourism industry in the province. In the summit organised by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and industry (ICCI), the speakers emphasized on increasing air connectivity with the countries of the world for the promotion of tourism in GB. The speakers said that GB has the potential of tourism including medical and cultural tourism, mining and precious stones, minerals and natural resources, hydropower, fruits and food and water resources and many other sectors.

The speakers gave a plan of action for the promotion of tourism and said that for elevating tourism sector in GB, global marketing, training of local people in the tourism and hospitality sector and environment-friendly infrastructure is necessary. President ICCI, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that GB is a peaceful region, which is the most popular region for tourism in the world. He said that 65% of the total population in GB consists of youth, for which training in the field of tourism is very important for the promotion of tourism in this region. He said that the government needs more steps to connect GB with the international world by land and air routes so that tourism can be developed, including the potential for adventure tourism in GB.

He said that air connectivity of GB with the world is very important so that the fresh fruit and dried fruit here can be delivered to international markets including Central Asia, Saudi Arabia and the European Union. He said that the role of business community and public-private partnership is very important for business. He said that tourism, mining and precious stones sector has a lot of potential in GB and development of modern technology in these sectors is necessary. He said that the ambassadors of many countries, including the European Union, are present here and they should do their best for the promotion of tourism in GB.

He said that after GB got the status of a province, now they want to get full representation in the Federation of Pakistan so that the country's units can form a strong federation. Meanwhile, Minister for Planning and Development, GB Raja Nasir Ali Khan said that the GB has a lot of potential in tourism, hydraulic power, mining and precious stones. He said that two five-star hotels are being built in GB, which will promote tourism in this area. Ambassador of the European Union in his address said that the European Union is working on several projects in GB in the field of tourism promotion, hydel power, skills education, green energy and sustainable growth and environment. He said that Europe is working together with Aga Khan Foundation in the field of Micro Hydel including clean and green energy in GB, which will lead to inclusive growth of the local economy.

He said that the European Union has established a Center for Excellence for skills and technical education in GB. He noted that for the promotion of economic and trade cooperation between the European Union and Pakistan, the European Union has given the facility of GSP Plus to Pakistan, with which now the European Union is the biggest trading partner of Pakistan. Ambassador of Malaysia emphasized on developing the tourism potential of GB for the promotion of tourism in Pakistan. He said that marketing and branding are very important for the development of the tourism sector in GB.

He said that Malaysia has made many achievements in the field of tourism and now the tourism sector is playing its full role in the Malaysian economy. He said that there is a need to promote mutual cooperation in the field of tourism in Pakistan and Malaysia and both sides can share their experiences with each other. Ambassador of Myanmar said that GB is one of the most beautiful regions of the world where there is immense potential for tourism. He said that there is a lot of potential in tourism and cultural heritage in Myanmar on which the government is working on. Ambassador of Yemen high-lighted the different aspects of cooperation in tourism between both the countries.

In his address, former President ICCI and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari said that the promotion of its tourism in GB is vital not only for the foreign ex-change earning but for the promotion of soft image of Pakistan the world-over. He said that ICCI under the leadership of Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari is focusing on the subject matter and the holding of 2nd tourism summit in Skardu is an ample proof of it. All the visiting ambassadors addressed the ceremony and gave their valuable insight for the purpose along with their fullest cooperation.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/15-Aug-2024/icci-s-2nd-tourism-summit-air-connectivity-key-to-unlocking-gb-s-tourism-potential>

Telenor launches 4G internet services in Hunza, upgrades network in Gilgit, Skardu

Daily Times, 16 August 2024

Telenor Pakistan launched its state of the art 4G internet services in Hunza along with upgradation and expansion of its network in Gilgit and Skardu, marking a significant milestone in the regions digital transformation. The latest move is set to enhance connectivity, stimulate local tourism, and drive the growth of e-commerce in Hunza and the broader GB region, including Skardu. By upgrading its cellular infrastructure, Telenor Pakistan is bringing high-speed mobile broadband to the heart of one of Pakistan's most picturesque and remote areas. This advancement not only addresses the connectivity needs of the local population but also paves the way for GB expanding tourism industry and digital economy.

Enhanced internet speeds will also support the expansion of e-commerce platforms, enabling local businesses to reach broader markets and fostering economic opportunities within and outside the region. To celebrate this significant milestone, Telenor Pakistan hosted a panel discussion titled 'Unleashing the Power of Connectivity: Transforming the Northern Areas of Pakistan into a Digital Hub.' The event delved into various crucial topics, including education, e-commerce, tourism, and skill development. The distinguished speaker line-up featured

Rohma Labeeb, Country Director at Accelerate Prosperity; Ahsan Maykan, VP Consumer Marketing & Digital Products at Telenor Pakistan; and Abdul Wahab, Chief Business Officer at Bookme.pk among others.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1217745/telenor-launches-4g-internet-services-in-hunza-upgrades-network-in-gilgit-skardu/>

Rains, floods damage bridges, roads, maroon tourists in GB

Dawn, 17 August 2024

Speedy melting of glaciers caused by heatwave and intermittent rains in different areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) triggered flash floods in streams, nullahs and rivers, sweeping away a wooden bridge, damaging another, blocking roads and stranding local and foreign tourists in different areas of the region. Flash floods also damaged crops, agriculture land, uprooted trees and disconnected several villages from other GB areas. Official sources said that Astore-Deosai Road has been blocked at various points, stranding several local international tourists in different areas of GB. Local people have also been facing serious difficulties due to damaged roads at several places.

Rescue of tourists ordered

Taking notice of the flood situation in GB, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has ordered the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to rescue the tourists stranded in Astore. The prime minister held a telephone call with NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik and asked him to

take steps to rescue the marooned tourists as soon as possible. He also directed the NDMA chief to provide alternative routes to the tourists and local people of Finna village.

Later in its report submitted to the prime minister, the NDMA said it took immediate action on to rescue foreign and local tourists from the flood-affected areas. The report said that two Italian and an Argentinian tourist were safe and at a distant place from the affected area. GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan has directed all departments concerned to stay alert in view of forecast of more rains in the region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1852782/rains-floods-damage-bridges-roads-maroon-tourists-in-gb>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Huge rallies are planned for August 14 in Rawalakot to demonstrate Kashmiris' everlasting support for Pakistan

Urdupoint, 12 August 2024

According to Sardar Mashal Younis, the spokesperson for the Tehreek-e-Istehkam Pakistan, 'Azad Kashmir' (Pakistan's Azad Kashmir Stabilization Movement), a large-scale event is planned for 14 August 2024, in Rawalakot, 'Azad Kashmir.' The gathering will be attended by the president of the Pakistan 'Azad Kashmir' Stabilization Movement as well as former Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas. He said, the patriots would come to the large gathering on this historic day to show their love and

support for Pakistan and 'Azad Kashmir'. He urged that on this important national day, the people of Poonch Division, Muzaffarabad Division, and all of 'Azad Kashmir' show their commitment by attending the historic public event.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4117253.html>

The Kashmiri people's hopes are centred and oriented towards Pakistan: Muhammad Yusuf Butt

Urdupoint, 13 August 2024

The leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir refugee movement have stated that Pakistan is the fulcrum of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. They pledged to use all available means to liberate Kashmir from 'Indian occupation' and to fight for the independence of 'occupied Kashmir' until the very last drop of Kashmiri blood. Leaders of the refugee's movement including Muhammad Yusuf Butt and Muhammad Younis Mir, among others as well as Kashmiri migrants will attend the meeting. While congratulating the people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on their Independence Day, Kashmiri leaders including the leaders of refugees movement from 'Azad Kashmir' expressed their sincere belief that Pakistan is our hope and that India cannot hold the Kashmiris as captives for very long. The Kashmiris will sacrifice their lives to gain independence from India. They desire Pakistan to be powerful and stable because they believe that only then will

Kashmiris be able to obtain their independence and become a part of Pakistan.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4118430.html>

Kashmiris celebrate India's Independence Day globally as Black Day

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 16 August 2024

India's Independence Day was marked as a black day by Kashmiris across the Line of Control (LoC) and the rest of the globe, including 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) and 'Indian Occupied Kashmir' (IOK), as a protest against India's forcible and unlawful occupation of the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. The speakers denounce the brutal use of force by India against the defenseless residents of curfew-capped 'occupied Kashmir', which has been transformed into the largest jail in the world since the illegal removal of the disputed state's special status by the extremists regime in Delhi on 5 August 2019. A resolution advising India to immediately free Jammu and Kashmir State from its imposed and illegal occupation and grant Kashmiris their birth right of self-determination was unanimously passed by the protest gathering in Mirpur.

The demonstration also included a warning to New Delhi not to attack Pakistan or 'AJK'. The gathering said, every individual of 'AJK' is fully prepared to make defense of inch after

inch of the motherland – shoulder to shoulder with valiant armed forces of Pakistan if India dared to launch any attack against Pakistan or 'AJK.' Large-scale anti-Indian protests and rallies took place in both major and small towns within the liberated territory, including the capital city of Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimbher, Rawalakot, Bagh, Palandri, Neelam valley, Jhelum valley, Havaili, and other towns and villages. Through a separate resolution, the rally urged the international community, in particular the UN, to take prompt action to restore the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and to strive toward an early and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir problem in accordance with UN resolutions. It demanded that the world body immediately take notice of the greatest act of state terrorism and aggression in Indian history, which involved forcibly rescinding the disputed state's special status in order to target innocent civilians in 'IoK'.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-16.jpg>

From Social Media

Zulfiqar Ali Ghazi @AgroXperts

14 August 2024

I lost four online projects due to internet restrictions in #Gilgit region. Even failed to submit online university admission form for daughter. On this day of #14thAugust2024, I am

requesting the owners of #Pakistan to provide us with facilities according to needs of 21st Century.

<https://twitter.com/AgroXperts/status/1823637010957132192>

Diamer Basha Dam PR @DBD_PR

16 August 2024

In Astore GB, devastating floods have destroyed two bridges in Fina, forcing residents to flee. Meanwhile, the provincial government remains oblivious. It's time to declare a climate emergency across Gilgit-Baltistan. #ClimateCrisis #gilgitbaltistan

https://twitter.com/Rohshan_Din

Dawn.com @dawn_com

19 August 2024

In Gilgit's Jaglot and Hunza's Shishkat village, the highway has been blocked due to mudflow. Subsequently, thousands of passengers, including foreign and local tourists, had been stranded due to the road closure.

<https://twitter.com/jamilnagri>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

19 August 2024

Protesting Doctors in GB declared that if their issues are not solved, the doctors will announce a movement on 20 September.

Video link:

<https://twitter.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1825250673723932908>

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Disclaimer

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