

Weekly POK News Digest

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Sectarianism Neelum-Jhelum
hydro-power Sost
Gilgit-Baltistan Dry
POK China-Afghanistan Port
sectarian hate speech



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Political Developments

Strict action will be taken against hatemongers, no one will be allowed to block KKH, JSR road: Apex Committee

Pamir Times, 29 August 2023

The Apex Committee of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) met under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister to discuss the prevalent law and order situation. The meeting was attended among others by the Commander of Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA), the Chief Secretary, IG Police, the Home Secretary, and representatives of various law enforcement agencies. It was decided that no one will be allowed to block the Karakoram Highway or the Jaglote-Skardu Road (JSR), said a press statement issued after the meeting. The committee, which has political and military leadership, as well as other law-enforcement agencies as members, also decided to send delegations of scholars to Skardu and Chilas to hold dialogue and resolve the situation caused by protests and counter-protests in the two cities. The latest issue started after two Skardu-based Shia scholars were accused of uttering 'derogatory remarks' against personalities revered by Sunni Muslims.

The Apex Committee further decided to urge civil society groups from the two regions to interact regularly to diffuse the tension caused by the recent protest. The Committee made decisions that nobody shall be allowed to take the law into their hands and violate the SoPs for the maintenance of law and

order and strict action shall be taken against the violators. It also said that any person indulging in hate speech and religious intolerance shall be proceeded against as per relevant provision of law. It decided to take strict action against any person propagating hate speech and such like material on social media shall be taken to task and legal action shall be taken without any impunity.

Movement of all vehicles plying from and to the down country through KKH, JSR, and Babusar Top shall be made safe and secure by the deployment of the Karakoram Task Force and Police throughout the route. Heavy contingents of GB Scouts, Rangers, and Police shall be deployed in all major cities of GB to ensure peace and safety of people. Simultaneously, the process of engagement with religious scholars of both sects shall be spearheaded by the Chief Minister, GB himself. He along with the Parliamentary Committee on Law and Order shall visit Skardu first to meet with Scholars of all sects and afterwards to Chilas and other areas to engage all stakeholders for sustainable peace in the region.

GB CM further directed the Parliamentary Committee headed by Minister Home to meet religious leaders of various sects and ask them to ensure strict adherence to the provisions of the Code of Conduct agreed by all sects to ensure durable peace in the region. To enhance the soft image of GB and to orientate students with modern trends in Education and career avenues, a four-day Education/Career Expo shall be

organised at Skardu during the last week of September 2023. Many renowned educationists, scientists, entrepreneurs, intelligentsia, and other celebrities from all walks of life will be invited to share their experiences with students and people of GB. Moreover, people-to-people contact amongst all districts shall be ensured through frequent meetings and exchange of delegation of civil society periodically.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/08/28/strict-action-will-be-taken-against-hatemongers-no-one-will-be-allowed-to-block-kkh-jsr-road-apex-committee/>

Fostering Unity: Combating Sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 29 August 2023

History makes it clear that unity and harmony among nations play a pivotal role in their rise and fall, progress and decline, prosperity and adversity, well-being and misfortune, and strength and weakness. Nations that hold onto the bonds of unity achieve success and triumph, while those that forsake mutual harmony, falling into internal disagreements, divisions, and mutual hatred, face the worst defeats, failures, and humiliation. For the preservation of any nation's existence, unity and agreement are imperative, enabling them to respond resolutely to their adversaries' conspiracies. Unfortunately, recent days have witnessed an alarming situation in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), marked by concealed and brazen strife and sectarian biases, resulting in protests staged at every street corner due to hatred and enmity.

Regrettably, a trend has begun where whenever peace and tranquility need to

be established and sustained in the region, sectarian differences are inflamed to create divisions between Shia and Sunni, leading to the erosion of unity and solidarity, serving the interests and objectives of those who seek to capitalize on the situation. GB is a region of strategic significance, attracting both external and internal opportunistic elements, with their gaze fixed on personal gains, always seeking excuses to spread sectarian animosity among the populace. This is vital because, in this era of the internet and social media, situations like these can be manipulated by vested interests. Our region cannot endure the burden of further discord and divisions, necessitating the urgency of unity and agreement.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/08/28/fostering-unity-combating-sectarianism-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Indian forces commit heinous acts with complete impunity in Kashmir: Mushaal

Pakistan Observer, 30 August 2023

Pakistan Caretaker Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussain Mullick, has said that 'rape is being used as a weapon of war' by the state in 'Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) to instill fear amongst the public. She said the Indian forces' personnel are carrying out these heinous acts with complete impunity, emphasizing the importance of advocating for the victims. She mentioned that eleven thousand cases of sexual assault have been reported in 'IIOJK' and noted the under-reporting

of such incidents in the ‘occupied territory.’

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-forces-commit-heinous-acts-with-complete-impunity-in-kashmir-mushaal/>

JKSM pays rich tributes to veteran Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Geelani

Daily Parliament Times, 31 August 2023

Altaf Ahmed Bhat, Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM) Pays tributes to Baba-e-Huriyat, veteran Kashmiri leader late Syed Ali Geelani on his ‘martyrdom’ anniversary. Bhat in a press statement said that Baba-e-Hurriyat Syed Ali Geelani was a top resistance leader, a greatly gifted orator, and a writer par excellence. He was a multifaceted visionary who played a leading role in the political and social awareness of his people. While hailing the matchless services of the late leader, spokesman Bhat said that his contribution to the resistance movement of ‘occupied territory’ will always be recalled with respect and appreciation. He further added that during his life and struggle against ‘occupational forces’, the late leader was harassed and even his property seized. He said that Geelani worked to promote the Kashmir cause till his last breath and added that the Kashmiri people would continue their mission of freedom struggle till the last Indian soldier was present in ‘occupied state.’ He said that the best tribute to the late leader was to carry forward his mission.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2023/08/31/jksm-pays-rich-tributes-veteran-kashmiri-leader-syed-ali-geelani/>

Baba-e-Hurriyat....Syed Ali Gilani

Pakistan Observer, 1 September 2023

Syed Ali Gilani, the veteran J&K leader of the Kashmiri Separatist Party, the proponent of ‘Hum Pakistani Hain, Pakistan Hamara Hai’ with his uncompromising advocacy for Kashmiri identity and the pro-Pakistani struggle to achieve ‘nationalism’, the ‘nation’ part of which transcends all geographical borders, ethnicities, and norms but entirely focuses on the unwavering bedrock of religion. He had a life-long mission to compel the Indian establishment to fulfill its commitment explicitly made to the people of Kashmir as well as the allegiance sworn to the international community to allow Kashmiris to determine their future. He believed that the forcible inclusion of Kashmir ultimately insults India's professed morality and political values and so to save what is left of its honor, India must demilitarize the valley and end state terrorism. He understood Pakistan's support to the indigenous struggle of Kashmiris morally, diplomatically, and politically but he disregarded the idea that Pakistan should ever decide the future of Kashmir. This issue concerns the people of Kashmir and thus, is their call.

This was exactly why he didn't think twice before rejecting Pervaiz Musharraf's four-point formula, otherwise a ‘tactical retreat’, that proposed a threat to the autonomy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Musharraf had told him that ‘India is a large country, with a population of over a billion. It possesses nuclear

power and enjoys the support of Western countries. You have made sacrifices, and we have fought three wars too, but we have not achieved anything yet. Now, we must choose the path of reconciliation and compromise.’ He responded to these points made by Pervez Musharraf, stating, 'Our stance and stand are based on truth. We should have faith and trust in Allah Almighty and continue our struggle unwaveringly. Allah Almighty will surely help us. We must never lose hope.'

Gilani being a champion of Kashmir freedom said that Kashmir is not any border dispute between India and Pakistan which they can solve by bilateral understanding. It is the issue concerning the future of 15 million people. The Hurriyat is not in principle against a dialogue process but without the involvement of Kashmiri people, such a process has proved meaningless in the past. Gilani's approach was reminiscent of Iqbal's emphasis on the significance of self-discovery and self-realization for nations. Iqbal's concept of 'khudi' (selfhood) and his call for Muslims to become aware of their inner aptitude and unique identity resonated with Gilani's vision of Kashmiri identity and aspirations. Apart from this, Geelani aimed to achieve Islamic governance based on Islamic principles, a perspective shaped by Abu Al'Ala Maududi's founding of a pan-Islamic movement that advocated Islamic conduct for Muslims in South Asia.

As the public face of Jamaat, Geelani was often heavily criticized for

promoting violence and was often displayed as being an 'extremist' when some of the other leaders in the same campaign managed to compromise their beliefs to attain India's approbation of being 'moderate'. Jamaat, as Geelani clarified, promotes changing public opinion through democratic means, preaching, and counseling; it does not achieve its goal through any means that are against the truth and integrity or those that lead to anarchy. Jamaat-e-Islami does not champion the Kashmir cause for the sake of patriotism, nationality, race, language, or regionalism but for establishing the truth and justice," he said in his interview with Oppressed Nation in 2001.

Geelani openly expressed and gave the credit of 'India's occupation' to Sheikh Abdullah. He said it was not a momentary lapse on his part, but a clearly formulated agenda. He engineered the state's forceful accession to India. He also clearly said that his son, Farooq Abdullah was the one who approved Maqbool Bhatt's execution. His residency was made a subjail where he was kept in detention. This took a toll on his health. He suffered many complications due to improper medical care and eventually breathed his last in Srinagar on 1st September 2021 at the age of 92. His passing brought to an end an era of valor, courage, and resistance against intimidation and subjugation. Geelani had wished to be buried among the martyrs of Kashmir in Mazar-e-Shohda, Srinagar. Indian forces had violated his wish to be buried there, only to have him buried immediately

near his residency in Haiderpura. Permission be granted to Geelani's family to retrieve his body from the custody and the earthly remains, according to his wish, should be laid to rest at the Martyrs' Graveyard in Srinagar. Yasin Malik, Shabir Shah, Masarat Alam, Asiya Andrabi, Abdul Hamid Fayaz, Naa'im Khan, and other political prisoners should be reunited with their families. India should prevent the scheme of altering the demographic balance by settling non-Kashmiris in Kashmir and thus changing the proportion of the Muslim population from majority to minority.

<https://pakobserver.net/baba-e-hurriyat-syed-ali-gilani/>

EU's principled position on Kashmir remains unchanged

Pakistan Observer, 1 September 2023

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Vice-President Joseph Borrell while stressing that the EU's principled position on Kashmir remains unchanged have expressed their commitment to addressing the dire human rights violations in 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK). They recognised the concerns raised by European Parliament members and assured that the matter would be taken up with the Indian government shortly. In a letter to lawmakers, President von der Leyen and Vice-President Borrell stressed the importance of negotiations surrounding human rights issues in 'occupied Kashmir' and specifically highlighted the need for talks on human rights violations. The EU is the

only external partner with whom India has a dedicated dialogue on human rights. Its latest edition took place in July 2022 in New Delhi and addressed human rights issues comprehensively, including the topic of security and human rights, notably in Jammu and Kashmir, the letter read.

It highlighted that the human rights dialogue was also used to raise several individual cases, such as that of Khurram Parvez, a Kashmiri human rights defender. The EU's principled position on Kashmir remains unchanged, they reaffirmed and stated that they continue to encourage India and Pakistan to find a lasting solution to the situation in Kashmir, by engaging in a positive dialogue, and by involving as far as possible the Kashmiri people on both sides of the Line of Control. Addressing the concerns raised by the lawmakers regarding India's controversial decision to host G20 meetings in the disputed territory, von der Leyen and Borrell said that the EU's position was that preparations for these events, including the selection of their venues, are the prerogative and responsibility of the presidency. For the third G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar in May 2023, after careful reflection on the political sensitivities including security aspects, the EU decided to send a representative from the EU Delegation in New Delhi to the event, they pointed out.

In a letter addressed to the European Commission president and vice-president, prominent European Parliament members, including Castaldo Fiore Massimo, Spinelli

Sabrina, Rozemarie Demata, Satoorh Monir, Solé Jordi, Abiusi Clara, Kologlu Stelios, and Van Orden Geoffrey, have raised their voices against human rights abuses in 'Indian-occupied Kashmir' (IoK). They bemoaned that since the revocation of the special status of the region, the people of the valley have continued to endure systemic and intolerable suppression of their basic freedoms and fundamental rights, with loss of innocent lives and severe restrictions imposed by Indian security forces.

<https://pakobserver.net/eus-principled-position-on-kashmir-remains-unchanged/>

Syed Ali Gilani paid homage on his 2nd anniversary

The Nation, 2 September 2023

The second 'martyrdom' anniversary of veteran Kashmiri Hurriyet leader Syed Ali Gilani was observed on Friday. Syed Ali Gilani embraced 'martyrdom' in the custody of Indian police on 1 September 2021 at his Hyderpora residence where he remained under house detention for over a decade. Imams and ulemas remembered the veteran leader in their special prayers at mosques. Kashmiris living on both sides of the Line of Control and across the world held protest demonstrations to draw the attention of the international community towards the Indian brutalities in the 'occupied territory.' Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar paid homage to the 'iconic Kashmiri leader' on the occasion of his second death anniversary.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Sep-2023/syed-ali-gilani-paid-homage-on-his-2nd-anniversary>

Unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan as cleric's court controversy

Dawn, 3 September 2023

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government, which has been dealing with a tense situation for over a week, dismissed reports of army deployment as baseless, saying it has requisitioned the services of the Pakistan Army and civil armed forces to maintain law and order only for the chehlum of Imam Hussain falling next week. Meanwhile, mobile int-er-net service has been suspended across the region by the authorities concerned till further orders. The decision came after two clerics from different schools of thought made insensitive remarks over the past few days, hurting the feelings of the respective communities. The situation turned tense on 1 September, when demonstrations were held in the Gilgit city and surrounding areas on the call of Anjuman-i-Imamia, hours after prominent cleric Maulana Qazi Nisar Ahmed allegedly made derogatory remarks during a protest in Gilgit. The protesters were demanding action against the cleric. Talking to Dawn, an official said an FIR had been registered against Maulana Qazi Nisar Ahmed at the City Police Station Gilgit, while another FIR against Agha Baqir Al-Hussaini had already been registered in Skardu. Earlier in August, Agha Baqir had allegedly used controversial language during a speech in Skardu. Unrest spread in the region after protesters in Chilas in Diamer blocked the Karakoram Highway and the Babusar Pass road for three days, demanding Agha Baqir's arrest.

Soon, demonstrations also engulfed the regions of Astore and Gilgit and were only called off after a case was registered against Agha Baqir. However, the action did not go down well with his supporters and a shutter-down and wheel-jam strike was observed in Skardu, with the protesters also blocking Juglot-Skardu Road and other thoroughfares on 25 August. The government suspended two police personnel and a schoolteacher on allegations of sharing sectarian posts on social media and over 12 persons were picked up for posting controversial posts. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom joined Canada and the US on Saturday in advising its citizens to avoid visiting the northern areas. The US embassy's statement said that American citizens should exercise heightened caution in GB due to recent protests in Skardu and Diamer and the potential for additional demonstrations, road closures, and associated disruptions to local mobile and internet networks in the region.

CM reviews situation

According to a statement issued by the information department on 1 September, a meeting chaired by GB Chief Minister Gulbar Khan reviewed the security situation in the region. The meeting attended by GB ministers Shams Lone, Sohail Abbas, and Rehmat Khaliq, the chief secretary, interior secretary, IGP, and officials of intelligence agencies decided that the army would be called to ensure the protection of people's lives and their property, and Rangers, GB Scouts, and

FC personnel would be deployed in major cities. The meeting decided that legal action would be taken for 'insulting the beliefs of any religion and holy persons' and the government would take all measures to maintain law and order and ensure normal business and tourism activities in all circumstances. Any kind of mischief that mars the atmosphere will be rejected and law enforcement agencies are ready to uphold the writ of the state, resolved. The government is keeping a close watch on those who propagate hatred through social media and other means. The meeting was further informed that so far no loss and damage of public and private property had been reported, but that protest demonstrations had created panic and uncertainty in the area. Talking to Dawn, a top official said the security situation in GB is normal and added that the decision to suspend internet services and impose Section 144 had been taken to maintain law and order. He said the Pakistan Army and Civil Armed Forces will be requested only for processions to be organised on the chehlum of Imam Husain. In a statement, the home department said the situation is "completely peaceful and the news and speculations circulating in the media regarding the deployment of Pakistan Army are baseless. Moreover, it said, special measures have been taken for the security of the procession routes and imambargahs as per the past practice.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1773695/unrest-in-gilgit-baltistan-as-clerics-court-controversy>

Economic Developments

Inaugural China-Afghanistan consignment via TIR agreement sets new milestone

The Express Tribune, 28 August 2023

In a momentous occasion that highlights the strength of international cooperation and connectivity, a consignment of dry fruits was ceremoniously sent from China to Afghanistan, transiting through Pakistan under the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) agreement. The event was held at Sost, Gilgit was attended by key dignitaries, including the Director of Transit Trade Peshawar, the Deputy Commissioner of Hunza, and the Collector of Customs in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The consignment, carrying an assortment of exquisite dry fruits, embarked on its journey from China, traversing through Pakistan, before reaching its final destination in Afghanistan. This milestone underscores the significance of strategic partnerships, diplomacy, and collective aspirations for global progress. This inaugural ceremony reflects a monumental step towards fostering stronger ties between nations and promoting cross-border trade, said GB Chief Secretary Mohyuddin Wani.

By facilitating the movement of goods from China to Afghanistan via Pakistan, the TIR agreement stands as a testament to the potential of cooperative initiatives in boosting economic growth and regional stability, he added. As international trade through the Sost Dry Port continues to surge, the event coincides with another significant

development—the commencement of international flights at Skardu. These combined advancements are expected to further enhance the region's connectivity, facilitating the seamless movement of goods and people.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2432827/inaugural-china-afghanistan-consignment-via-tir-agreement-sets-new-milestone>

The climate crisis has a profound impact on 'AJK's small farmers

The Nation, 28 August 2023

The changing climate is having a profound impact on small-scale farmers in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK). The region is one of the most fragile and sensitive territories because its geographical location, water resources, glaciers, forests, fisheries, and associated biodiversity are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The majority of the rural population depends on forestry, livestock, and agriculture for their subsistence. Ikramullah, a farmer from 'AJK', said that there used to be four seasons that were predictable and timely, arriving at similar times every year. Now there are only two seasons: summer and winter. We do not have spring anymore, so our vegetables are scorched early on because of the unexpected heat. He said that green chilies, tomatoes, and ginger used to be grown in our yard, but the change in rainfall caused the roots to become infested with worms. The rain affects the germination process of our plants and the production of fruits and veggies. In the past, we had an abundance of production, but now we

have only a few kilos. We had flourishing peach and guava plants in our garden before, but now they don't bear fruit, he added.

Talking to Wealth PK, Sardar Javed Ayub, Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Irrigation, and Small Dams, 'AJK', said that heavy rainfall and intense heat are negatively affecting 'AJK's agriculture, increasing the reliance of farmers on high-priced agricultural products for their survival. The heat, drought, and off-season heavy rain ruin our crops. Buffalo milk is a staple food for subsistence farmers in 'AJK', providing a source of income and nutrition for struggling families. But some are seeing milk yields fall as extreme heat takes its toll on their animals. Ayub said, that our goal is to provide the necessary support framework by engaging NGOs and research institutes to help 'AJK's small-scale farmers navigate climate uncertainty.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/28-Aug-2023/climate-crisis-has-profound-impact-on-ajk-s-small-farmers>

Hydro-power potential vital for socioeconomic uplift of Kashmiris: 'AJK' PM

Pakistan Today, 28 August 2023

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Chaudhry Anwar Ul Haq, while referring to the region's incredible hydro-power potential, has said that taking full advantage of the existing hydro-power potential was imperative for the socioeconomic uplift of the people of 'AJK.' While speaking at a high-level meeting of the Energy and Water Resources Department, he

stressed the need for an uninterrupted supply of electricity across the state and added that along with repair and maintenance of the feeders, there was an urgent need to improve the power distribution system. The PM also sought feasibility reports regarding the Khurshidabad Power Project, the Transmission Line from Minhasa to Bagh, and the Transmission Line from Rampura to Barora. He directed the concerned authorities to prepare a feasibility report on whether the Mang area should be linked to Rawalakot or Palindri. He said that the Betaar Power Project should be upgraded for the comfort of the people of Haveli. He said that the demands/needs of commercial, industrial, and domestic users should be taken into account and the billing system should be made transparent so that there was no inconvenience to the public.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/08/28/hydro-power-potential-vital-for-socioeconomic-uplift-of-kashmiris-ajk-pm/>

Traders observe shutter-down in Islamabad, 'AJK' against inflated power bills

Dawn, 1 September 2023

Like many parts of the country, a shutter-down strike was observed in the federal capital and Muzaffarabad by traders in protest against inflated electricity bills. The strike, on the call of All Pakistan Anjuman Tajran, was observed by the majority of the business community across Pakistan. President Anjuman-i-Tajiran Ajmal Baloch told Dawn that the reason for the strike was apolitical and had

nothing to do with the upcoming elections. Mr. Baloch said that we are facing serious financial constraints due to this high electricity cost, and this shutter-down strike was only to pressure the government. The strikes began from 'Azad Jammu Kashmir' (AJK) capital Muzaffarabad and its adjoining Neelum and Jhelum valleys also observed a shutter down and wheel-jam strike in a protest against 'cruel taxes' in power bills and environmental ramifications of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) among other issues. The protest call was given by the 'Awami Action Committee' of Muzaffarabad, with traders and civil society activists in the lead, after the enforcement of additional taxes in power tariff. Some key PTI and PML-N leaders belonging to Muzaffarabad had also proclaimed their support for the strike, but they were not seen in any of the demonstrations.

According to witnesses, inter and intra-city arteries in all three districts of the division Muzaffarabad, Neelum in the northeast, and Jhelum Valley in the south and southeast saw zero traffic movement until late afternoon. All shops and business units, including pharmacies, clinics, and labs, remained shut throughout the day. Even street vendors and daily wagers were nowhere to be seen in many parts of the division. Several rallies and demonstrations taken out by traders and civil society groups were held in almost all towns of Muzaffarabad division, resounding with emotional slogans in favor of a charter of

demands amid 'fiery speeches' by some of the participants. In many areas in the state capital and elsewhere, young boys had placed obstacles on roads. They burned used tires on major roads to prevent the movement of traffic, particularly motorbikes. In Muzaffarabad, the rallies which originated from different neighbourhoods finally merged into a gathering at the otherwise bustling Bank Road. Except for the 'AJK's colorful flags, no other flags were seen in the hands of protestors anywhere. Speakers took strong exception to the federal and 'AJK' governments, saying it was the 'height of injustice on their part to slap brutal taxes' on the people of the area which was generating more than 2,500 megawatts of cheap hydel power. While referring to hydropower projects, one protestor noted that 'isn't it the recognized universal principle that the area which produces any commodity shall benefit from it first before its transportation or transmission to other parts of the country? So why should we pay a heavy price for a cheap product?'

Environmental hazards

Protestors also vented anger at the 'environmental hazards' caused by the diversion of the Neelum River for the hydropower project and the alleged apathy of the authorities to address these issues. Let the 'Neelum and Jhelum (rivers) flow [to] let us survive,' they chanted. An untoward incident also occurred at the main gathering when some of the participants started chanting 'pro-independence' slogans, which were responded to with 'pro-

Pakistan' slogans by a local Muslim Conference leader and his supporters. The situation was defused, however, by the organizers after some time. Faisal Jamil Kashmiri, a key civil society activist, claimed that they had already received reports that some people would attend the rallies under an agenda to sabotage the basic purpose of the event. 'We have credible reports that a local PPP leader had hired some people to create controversy in the event... We have identified both and will expose them soon,' he said.

Action Committee's gratitude

In a press conference in the evening along with active 'action committee' members, Shaukat Nawaz Mir, president of the traders of Muzaffarabad, expressed gratitude to people 'for rising above their political ideologies and affiliations...to give a categorical message to the government that they would not budge from their charter of demands.' Asking people to gear up for the next course of action, he said a decision on a proposed state-wide protest on 5 September would be taken in consultation with the leadership of the Mirpur and Poonch divisions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1773322/traders-observe-shutter-down-in-islamabad-ajk-against-inflated-power-bills>

4,026 bags of wheat grain missing from depots in Gilgit alone, says inquiry report

Pamir Times, 1 September 2023

More than 4,000 bags of wheat went 'missing' from Gilgit since July 2022,

according to a report submitted by a fact-finding committee constituted after reports of corruption appeared in the media. The report says that there's a discrepancy between the number of bags received from Islamabad and the amount distributed by the regional depots. A total of 4,026 bags (each of 100 kilograms) have disappeared in thin air during the last year alone. A large quantity of wheat has also been found rotten or in 'partially consumable' condition, the report added. The report has also proposed that a committee be constituted to fix responsibilities and take disciplinary action against the officials involved. It is pertinent to note that the wheat shortage has caused widespread agitations in GB during the last year, with thousands of people coming on the roads in almost all districts to demand the supply of wheat grains.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2023/08/31/4026-bags-of-wheat-grain-missing-from-rsd-gilgit-alone-says-inquiry-report/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Two police officers and a government teacher were suspended in GB for sharing controversial content on social media

Pamir times, 29 August 2023

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government has begun taking legal action against officials who are suspected of engaging in sectarian hate speech on social media. The GB Police suspended two police officers from duty and opened an investigation for further disciplinary action. Both have been charged with distasteful sectarian content circulation

on social media. Similarly, the GB Education Department also suspended a government school teacher on similar allegations and gave him a show cause notice. The GB government also issued a notification ordering all government offices to compile a list of personnel engaged in inciting sectarian animosity and take appropriate action against them. The general public has also been cautioned that social media is being watched and that anyone caught promoting sectarian hatred will face consequences.

<https://urdu.pamirtimes.net/2023/08/29/asd-2817/>

The valiant Kashmiris of 'Occupied Kashmir' have a strong morale despite India's atrocities: 'AJK' PM

Urdupoint, 29 August 2023

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq claimed that the Indian army's atrocities against civilians in 'occupied Kashmir' should be seriously noted by international human rights organisations. While expressing his profound concern over the rapidly deteriorating political and human rights situation in the 'Indian-occupied' Jammu and Kashmir, he alleged that Indian forces have gone beyond all bounds of barbarism and cruelty in Kashmir. He further claimed that the Indian government had put Kashmiris' fundamental human rights under jackboots. But he insisted that despite its oppressive and repressive policies, India could not crush the Kashmiris' spirit or their political will to pursue their cherished dream of freedom. He urged the international community to

develop a viable plan of action to stop the killing of innocent civilians by 'Indian occupation forces.' He stressed that it was the right time for the international community to exert pressure on the Indian government to keep the promises and commitments that its leaders have made regarding the resolution of the Kashmir dispute at an international level. He said that the Indian Prime Minister was the one who brought the Kashmir issue to the UN. He expressed regret that India had not only broken its promises but also disregarded UNSC resolutions that demanded the holding of a plebiscite in Kashmir. He claimed that Kashmiris view Pakistan as their future and that the Kashmiris' ultimate goal, for which they have been tirelessly working at all levels with unwavering dedication and resolve, was joining Pakistan. The PM commended the Kashmiri people for their supreme sacrifices made in the ongoing fight for their right to self-determination. He expressed hope that the sacrifices made by the Kashmiri people would soon bear fruit.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-3707513.html>

The situation is calm, people should not believe in rumors: GB Government

Dailyk2, 30 August 2023

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in a statement said that social, commercial, educational, and economic activities are all continuing as usual across the province, and there is perfect tranquility in the area, and added that the GB government is making every

effort to maintain the status quo and to guarantee the safety of both people and their property. The government is engaging with all relevant parties, including social, religious, and traders to sustain peace in the province. People are urged not to believe rumors and to stand united and in unison with the government. The provincial government is certain that the populace will disapprove of any antics that threaten the region's sense of peace and brotherhood and that law enforcement will deal with those who want to incite violence and sectarianism. The provincial government is keeping a close eye on those who spread hatred through social media and other means.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/16453>

There is irrefutable evidence of India's involvement in state terrorism: Caretaker Govt., Foreign Minister

Jasarat, 1 September 2023

The interim foreign minister Jalil Abbas Jilani claimed that there is unquestionable proof of India's involvement in state terrorism, and added that without settling the Kashmir dispute with India, relations between the two countries cannot progress. Jilani during a conversation with journalists in Islamabad said that India is engaging in water aggression, is breaking the Indus Basin Agreement, and that Pakistan has a clear and consistent strategy regarding the Kashmir issue. The Kashmir dispute should be settled following Kashmiris' wishes and United Nations Security

Council (UNSC) decisions. In response to a question, he said that the Supreme Leader of the Taliban, Mullah Baitullah, will not be pleased that Afghanistan soil is being used to attack Pakistan and added that each day, 1800 containers leave Pakistan for Afghanistan, some Central Asian countries, and Russia. According to him, maintaining the IMF program and improving the economy are the main priorities of the interim government, and he also promised to deepen Pakistan's ties with China, the United States, and the European Union.

He asserted that trade, investment, and anti-terrorism collaboration with the US will increase; new preferential trade agreements with the EU are being tried including the GSP Plus status. The acting foreign minister declared his determination to advance Pakistan's economic, strategic, and political ties with Beijing. He also expressed his determination to continue CPEC projects in the future which include railway, information technology, and agricultural projects. He further stated that the creation of the investment council had eliminated red tape impediments, that the mining and mineral sector offers 30 trillion dollars of investment prospects, and that significant investment is anticipated from other Gulf nations, notably Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2023/08/31/there-is-irrefutable-evidence-of-indias-involvement-in-state-terrorism-observes-foreign-minister/>

Social Media (tweets)**Zaighum Abbas** @harf_e_nagufta

29 August 2023

Diamer is the last fortress where they haven't been able to capture resources & lands, because Daimris know how to protect them. Inciting violence in Diamer is a first step towards full-fledge militarization.

https://twitter.com/harf_e_nagufta/status/1696565402904547536

Jalil Abbas Jilani @JalilJilani

1 September 2023

I pay rich tribute to Syed Ali Shah Geelani, on his second death anniversary. He was a brave and steadfast leader. He inspired generations of Kashmiris in their struggle for realization of their right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant UN Resolutions.

<https://twitter.com/JalilJilani/status/1697478825976741890>

PAMIR TIMES ® @pamirtimes

2 September 2023

Cellular services downgraded across #Gilgit-#Baltistan. Only 2G services will be available to users in GB. The decision has reportedly been taken as part of the 'law and order maintenance efforts'.

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1697710149916356756>

U.S. Embassy Islamabad
@usembislamabad

2 September 2023

Travel Advisory: American citizens should exercise heightened caution in Gilgit-Baltistan due to recent protests: <https://pk.usembassy.gov/travel-advisory-protests-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Details in the link:

<https://twitter.com/usembislamabad/status/1698033717258957106>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

3 September 2023

Chinese Embassy donates Rs 7 Million to Karakoram International University (KIU) for scholarship and other activities. Under the scholarship program of Chinese Ambassadorial Program, every year 140 scholarships are disbursed to the needy and talented students of KIU. The Vice Chancellor KIU met with Ms. Zhang Bao Conuseller and Mr. Zhang Heqing Cultural Counselor of China Embassy Pakistan.

Details in the link:

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1697997654058221754>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

3 September 2023

Large numbers of people protested today in #Skardu against "derogatory statements" made by a Qazi Nisar, a religious scholar based in Gilgit.

Details in the link:

<https://twitter.com/pamirtimes/status/1698311911564087704>

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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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