

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 1 | Issue 16

14 - 20 June 2021

deployment of Army
ecotourism
tourism
free and fair elections
fair elections
refugee voters
Gilgit Baltistan
Muslim Conference
illegal transfer of funds
Pak-China Border Trade Association
Save Merit in AJK



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

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Political Developments

Alleged illegal transfer of funds by AJK govt triggering unrest in Poonch

Daily Times, 14 June 2021

A news article reporting an illegal transfer of funds to some other districts which was originally allocated to Poonch, has created unrest among the people of Poonch. As per reports, Out of Rs. 125 million allocated for District Hospital Rawalpindi for the financial years 2020 and 2021, Rs. 55 million has been illegally transferred by the Department of Physical Planning and Housing to District Hospital, Sadhnauti. Rs 5 million allocated for a heart hospital in Bagh have also been transferred to Sadhnauti. This year, the PML-N government had transferred Rs 30 million for water supply projects of Hajira and Abbaspur in Poonch. These details were published in a news article reported by stateviews.pk

Muttahida Mahaz Chak has once again declared a protest movement against the illegal transfer of funds and betrayal against the people of Poonch. The spokesperson of Muttahida Mahaz Chak, Dhamni said emergency meeting of Muttahida Mahaz will be convened soon and the next course of action will soon be given.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/772751/illegal-transfer-of-funds-by-ajk-govt-triggering-unrest-in-poonch/>

AJK govt bars TLP from contesting July 25 elections

Samaa News. 14 June 2021

The government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir has barred the outlawed Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan from contesting the upcoming election for

the legislative assembly. The election is scheduled for July 25. According to a notification issued by Kashmir's home department, the group was banned under the anti-terrorism act and it would not be allowed to continue any of its political activities. Pakistan had banned the TLP under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, following violent protests that erupted after the arrest of its leader Saad Hussain Rizvi in Lahore.

The TLP influence is growing in Pakistan politics and it had secured over 2.2 million votes in the 2018 elections and has three members in the Sindh Assembly. The direct elections to the 45 seats of the Azad Kashmir legislative assembly will be held on July 25, Sunday with over 2.8 million registered voters in Azad Kashmir and 0.4 million voters in Jammu.

<https://www.samaa.tv/news/2021/06/ajk-govt-bars-tlp-from-contesting-july-25-elections/>

Kashmiri journalist Dr. Shujaat remembered

Pakistan Observer, 15 June 2021

Glorious tributes were paid by journalist fraternity across Azad Jammu Kashmir and Pakistan-based Kashmiri journalists to veteran legendary senior Kashmiri journalist Dr. Syed Shujaat Bukhari Shaheed, on his 3rd martyrdom anniversary, which was observed on both sides of the Line of Control [LoC] – AJK and IIOJK, with the renewal of the pledge to continue his mission of securing and protecting the rights of expression besides the birth rights of the people of Jammu & Kashmir State.

Bukhari, who was leading voice for peace, justice and human rights besides being a senior journalist, writer and

intellectual was martyred by unidentified gunmen outside his office at press enclave in occupied Srinagar, this day three years ago in 2018 when he was leaving for his home.

Special ceremonies were held in line with the set SOPs due to wave of Covid-19 pandemic under the auspices of press clubs and journalists organizations in various parts of AJK including the State's metropolis – Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli and other districts.

<https://pakobserver.net/kashmiri-journalist-dr-shujaat-remembered/>

PPP accuses PTI, PMLN using official machinery in AJK polls

The News, 15 June 2021

The PPP while demanding free and fair elections in Azad Kashmir has questioned the role of Election Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. They have accused the PTI led central government and the PML-N led state government of using the administration in election campaign saying that voter lists are being fiddled with. The PPP also accused that many refugee voters have been deliberately removed from the electoral list.

“The PTI government is using Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resources for votes, and the ECP should take notice of this,” said the PPP Secretary General Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari while addressing a press conference along with the PPP Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi and Sardar Salim.

The PPP spokesperson demanded free and fair elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and said that all rules and regulations should be aptly followed in the upcoming elections and all

procedures should go along as per the defined schedule. He demanded that the Election Commission play its role under the Constitution.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/849875-ppp-says-pti-pmln-using-official-machinery-in-ajk-polls>

‘Save merit in AJK’

Friday Times, 18 June 2021

In his Friday Times article, Mubashar Naqvi explains the latest controversy which threatens to transform into a mass movement in AJK. Hash tag SaveMeritInAJK has been trending on social media recently opposing the PML-N government's passage of the notorious law 'AJK Regulation of the Service of Certain Categories of Contractual, Ad-hoc or Temporary Government Employment (Terms and Conditions) Act, 2021'.

'Save Merit in AJK' has now avalanched into a full-fledged youth led movement which started on the social media and is now pouring out into the streets. The protestors allege that the controversial law was a legal cover for the regularization of over 4,000 people connected to politicians and bureaucrats who were inducted in service without any open competition and were not selected through competitive exams, which itself is against the law.

Naqvi also goes on to compare this move to a similar stunt attempted by the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in its tenure in 1992 in which 480 ad-hoc employees were regularized through an identical law, which was labeled as Attique Commission. The government of the time faced a huge backlash and the move was scrapped by timely action of the judiciary. Lawyers, civil society and youth activists continued to register

their protests against the law using all available forums and a number of writ-petitions have been filed in the apex court with hope that the law would be declared as ultra-vires.

<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/save-merit-in-ajk/>

Economic Developments

PCB officials to review technical feasibility of Pissan Nagar, Passu stadiums

Daily Times, 14 June 2021

Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid on his visit to the Passu Cricket Stadium in upper Hunza said that International cricket matches in Gilgit-Baltistan have the potential to provide a huge boost to the economy of the province and increasing the tourist footfall in GB. The GB CM also announced that PCB officials are soon expected to visit the sites of Pissan Nagar and Passu cricket grounds to make an assessment of the feasibility of constructing a stadium that could host International cricket matches.

Khalid Khurshid also visited the newly-constructed rainbow adventure bridge near the Batura Lake. He appreciated efforts of the local community for the promotion of tourism. He also took stock of the recent flooding situation and that of glacial melting speaking to the various officials present. The locals also informed the chief minister regarding severe power crisis in Gojal and the need of constructing the two megawatts run-of-the-river Tupopdan power house.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/772949/pcb-officials-to-review-technical-feasibility-of-pisan-nagar-passu-stadiums/>

Model resort set up in Nagar to promote ecotourism

Dawn, 15 June 2021

Hoper Valley of the Nagar district saw the establishment of a model resort with a twin aim of protecting the snow leopard population and promoting ecotourism. The 'Leo camp' was inaugurated by the advisor to the Prime Minister, Malik Amin Aslam in the presence of officials of the Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF), GLOF-II project and local community conservation members. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Aslam said the SLF had helped develop three eco-resorts in Hoper valley in order to empower and involve local community for ecologically sensitive tourism promotion.

Mr. Aslam also expressed hope that people from all across Pakistan will visit the resort and also take notes and establish similar ecotourism centres in other parts of the country. While these resorts are expected to contribute to tourism promotion and environment protection, they also have the potential to provide avenues for provision of jobs for the locals.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1629458>

AJK govt objects to 'interference' by Centre in budget 2021-22

Geo News, 17 June 2021

The Budget for Azad Jammu and Kashmir which was supposed to be presented on the 16th of June was not presented by the PML-N government. The scheduled budget session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly was discontinued without any reason provided during the session. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet reportedly did not approve the

presentation of budget 2021-22 claiming that there were attempts of interference by the federal government.

Earlier, the AJK cabinet, which met in the state capital Wednesday afternoon with AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider in the chair, did not give formal approval to the budget summary. PM Haider said that federation had allotted five billion rupees to the Minister for Kashmir Affairs, further accusing that this amount will be distributed among PTI candidates in the elections.

He also accused the federal government of squandering funds by stopping projects that were approved in the last budget. In addition, he also objected to a fixed tax on a mega energy project, calling it "a robbery" of AJK's rights.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/355441-ajk-assembly-session-discontinued-without-budget-2021-22-presentation>

[From Vernacular Urdu Media](#)

AJK EC seeks deployment of army, paramilitary forces

Nawa-e-Waqt, 14 June 2021

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) election commission has issued directives to the Chief Secretaries of all the four provinces of Pakistan and also to the commissioner, Islamabad, for the implementation of the code of conduct effectively in connection with the forthcoming general elections of legislative Assembly.

The election commission has approached interior ministry for the deployment of Pak-Army, Rangers and Punjab constabulary to maintain law

and order and peaceful conduct of Elections on the polling day. The election commission has also directed the AJK Chief Secretary to contact the authorities concerned in all the provisional governments for the implementation of the code of conduct prepared in the light of the proposals presented by all the political parties. The Chief Election Commissioner AJK had earlier said that deployment of Army and Rangers prior to the upcoming elections were one the EC's top priorities and ensuring security remained at the top of their agenda of conducting a successful election

<https://www.nawairwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/AJK/2021-06-14>

AJKMC chief Sardar Attique calls on PM Imran

Muhaasib, 17 June 2021

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Muslim Conference, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, called on Prime Minister Imran Khan and discussed matters relating to the next elections in AJK. The meeting decided that both PTI and Muslim Conference will participate in the AJK elections according to their respective manifestos. However, with the complete unanimity of views on the issue of Kashmir, the two parties have agreed to continue their joint efforts to highlight the issue of Kashmir. Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Ali Amin Gandapur, Chief Organizer Saifullah Niazi and Secretary General Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) Amir Kiyani were also present in the meeting.

Sardar Attique on the occasion also said that the defection of many important political personalities to Muslim Conference is a sign of the victory that

is to come for the party in the upcoming elections. Both parties also discussed the possibility of post-poll coalition should the need arise.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edit ion=muzzaffarabad&dt=17-06-2021>

More Trade organisations join the opposition to closed Pak-China border

Daily K2, 18 June 2021

An important meeting of the Pak-China Border Trade Association, Gilgit-Baltistan was held at a local hotel in Gilgit under the chairmanship of Wasim Badami, President Pak-China Border Trade Association, Gilgit-Baltistan and Baggage Association Nagar Chief, Irshad Hussain. They expressed grave concern over the continuous closure of borders in the name of Covid protocol and demanded that government takes immediate steps in the restoration of traffic and movement of goods across the Pakistan-China border. Talking to media after the meeting, Wasim Badami said that the closure of Pak-China border under the pretext of Corona is exploiting the traders of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Thousands of traders involved in Pak-China border trade have gone bankrupt and jobless due to long-term border closure. Corona vaccines are being produced in great numbers in China. They have managed to control the pandemic and are helping us to do the same. Therefore, we demand that the government of Pakistan and the government of Gilgit-Baltistan take steps to open the border with strict SOPs; otherwise we will be forced to protest.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/2412>

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Compiled by

Bilal Ahmad Tantray

Edited By

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

Project Team

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

Dr. Ashok K Behuria

Dr. Priyanka Singh

Bilal Ahmad Tantray

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.



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: pokdigest@gmail.com