

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Skardu airport
COVID-19 tourism
W POK elections
Women climate
Gilgit-Baltistan
change



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
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Political Developments

Germany to help mitigate climate change impact in GB

Dawn, 07 July 2021

As per a press release from the Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid's office, the German envoy Bernhard Schlagheck called on the Chief Minister in Gilgit. The German Ambassador has said cooperation will be extended for mitigating climate change impact in Gilgit-Baltistan. The chief minister appreciated the German government for supporting GB in augmenting health, education and power sectors.

The CM briefed the German envoy about the vast opportunities in tourism, minerals and power sectors of the region. He informed the diplomat of GB's vulnerability to climate change, and sought help from international financial institutions to mitigate impact of the phenomenon.

Mr. Khurshid also informed the German envoy of Prime Minister Imran Khan's special interest in ensuring development of the region as the federal government had approved a development package of Rs370 billion for GB. The German Ambassador reaffirmed the German government's resolve to help and assist in improving health, education and power sectors in the GB region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1633582>

Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs wants to share details on Kashmir issue

The News, 09 June 2021

The Senate Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, in a meeting held with its Chairman Senator Prof Sajid Mir in the chair, took

a serious notice of the absence of the minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan. The members were of the view that the minister's presence was imperative to discuss policy matters. The meeting was attended by Senator Falak Naz, Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan, Senator Muhammad Qasim, Senator Shahdat Awan, Senator Kamran Michael, Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt and senior officers from the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

The committee decided to hold another meeting on August 5 in solidarity with the people of IIOJK and it was also recommended that details of all efforts made by the MoFA must be shared with the committee in an in-camera meeting and details of international stance on the subject must be stressed. The committee was informed by the MoFA spokesperson that two human rights reports were published under the UN umbrella, highlighting the plight of Kashmiris, sparking a call for international dialogue. A three pronged policy to highlight the issue internationally that included legal aspects, human rights and peace and security concerns in IIOJ&K is being pursued.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/861681-senate-body-wants-to-share-details-on-kashmir-issue>

Senate body expresses reservations over procedure of appointment of chief secretaries in AJK, G-B and provinces

Business Recorder, 09 July 2021

The Senate Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation held a meeting under the chairmanship of Senator Farooq Hamid Naek which was

attended by the officials of the Ministry of Law and Justice, Additional Secretary Establishment Division and Health Ministry. The chairman of the Committee objected to the rules regarding the appointment of the chief secretaries in the provinces and directed the additional secretary to present the revised rules at the next meeting. The committee members expressed concern that the rules for the appointment of the chief secretaries in the four provinces, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are apparently against the spirit of the constitution.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40106043/appointment-of-chief-secretaries-in-ajk-g-b-and-provinces-senate-body-expresses-reservations-over-procedure>

COVID-19 cases continue to soar in Gilgit-Baltistan, as daily positivity ratio reaches 12.8%

Pamir Times, 09 July 2021

From being declared a Covid free area in March 2021, GB has once again seen an upsurge in positivity ratio as it touched 12.84 percent on the 8th day of July. The worst affected district is Gilgit, having a staggering 305 active cases out of the 490. Skardu and Hunza are the second and third worst affected districts, with 54 and 44 active cases, respectively. Critics however believe that these numbers are a gross underestimation as the testing infrastructure in GB is very limited. The whole GB region has three labs with a collective capacity of conducting 400 tests every day, said the region's Information Minister Fatehullah Khan, addressing a press conference yesterday.

Vaccination campaigns are underway, but accurate numbers of how many people have already been vaccinated in

the region are not available. The region comprising of 10 districts has an estimate population of 1.5million people. The Information Minister, however, said that the GB government's target is to vaccinate 10,000 people a day. He, however, did not mention the actual vaccination rates. A complete ban on public gatherings and closing down of schools is already being observed but the local media is reporting an utter disregard for Covid protocols as tourists and locals are thronging the vacation spots to enjoy the region's short summer

<https://pamirtimes.net/2021/07/09/covid-19-cases-continue-to-soar-in-gilgit-baltistan-as-daily-positivity-ratio-reaches-12-8/>

Furore over handout given by federal minister in AJK constituency

Dawn, 10 July 2021

A PTI candidate from Mirpur district was forced to give an undertaking to the Returning Officer regarding the observance of the Code of Conduct after a video clip of Ali Amin Gandapur giving an unspecified sum of money to a party worker went viral on the internet. As the clip, which shows Mr. Gandapur giving money to a PTI activist supposedly for the repair of dilapidated roads went viral, criticism from the rival parties poured in. The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lodged a complaint with RO Raja Shamraiz.

Both Mr. Sadiq (PTI candidate for the constituency) and Mr. Rasib (PTI activist who received the money) appeared before the RO and pleaded not guilty in their statements. The money has for now been deposited with the Returning Officer and the final decision regarding it will be taken by the Election Commission. The RO said

he had also ruled that from now onwards no federal government functionary would visit the constituency without prior intimation to the administration and his (RO's) office.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1634183>

Economic Developments

Govt to construct international airport in Skardu: Fawad Choudhary

The Nation, 07 July 2021

Taking to media here in Islamabad, the federal minister said a decision has been taken to construct a new all-weather international airport at Skardu while existing airports of Skardu and Gilgit are being upgraded to all-weather airports to promote tourism in the area.

“Prime minister has strictly directed to keep all airports linked with tourism operational through the year,” he further added. Currently, there is a domestic civil airport in Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan. Skardu airport has two asphalt runways, one 8,740 ft (2,664 m) long and the other 11,944 ft. (3,641 m) long. Skardu, along with Gilgit, are the major tourism, trekking and expedition hubs in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Last month, PIA had launched its Air Safari flights to boost tourism in the country. The airline's first scenic Air Safari flight took off from the Islamabad International Airport with 91 tourists, including foreign nationals from as many as 13 countries, on board.

<https://nation.com.pk/07-Jul-2021/govt-to-construct-international-airport-in-skardu-fawad-ch>

Better facilities should be provided to foreign tourists: Khalid Khurshid

Daily Times, 06 July 2021

While on a visit to the camp office setup in Islamabad for convenience and facilitation of domestic and foreign tourists, Chief Minister of GB, Khalid Khurshid has said that the GB government and the Tourism department are committed to making the tourism experience of GB better for guests arriving from different parts of Pakistan as well as the rest of the world. The chief minister stressed that the Tourism Department should review its policies and takes more steps like the installation of the camp office. He added that the GB government will buy its own helicopters to rescue tourists from difficult terrain and mountains to ensure that more and more foreign tourists visit Gilgit-Baltistan and be provided with the best possible facilities which will solve many problems. With tourism, the actual revenue will also increase.

Deputy Director Tourism Sajid Hussain on the occasion informed Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid Khan that they had expedited the process of tourist clearance and other important matters and the work which used to take several days earlier can now be resolved in a matter of hours. Meanwhile, the Gilgit-Baltistan Tourism Department is also getting significant revenue. During the last one month, Rs. 36,040,000 has been deposited in the treasury of Gilgit-Baltistan in terms of trekking and expedition fees, Rs. 63,065,000 in clean up fees and thirty-three applications for trekking and expedition have been

processed and permits have been issued, while more than 200 online applications have been received and 42 permits have been issued as well.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/785855/better-facilities-should-be-provided-to-foreign-tourists-khalid-khurshid/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Budget sets aside a huge sum for women development: Dilshad Bano

Daily K2, 05 July 2021

Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly member Dilshad Bano while inaugurating the office of Women Business Association Aliabad, said that the recent budget has allocated a huge amount of funds for the development of women which no other government has done before. The provincial government will co-operate to bring the office expenses of the business association Aliabad and the products made by women to the domestic markets. She added that they were happy that the Hunza Aliabad Women's Business Association had become an educated association in Gilgit-Baltistan.

In her address, the Member Assembly further said that the Women's Chamber of Commerce at the Gilgit-Baltistan is its final stages of development. Through this, a workshop on business for women will also be organized. Assembly member Dilshad Bano in her speech further said that some defeated elements are busy spreading rumors that Dilshad Bano has no connection or sympathy with Hunza. I want to say that I was born in Hunza and I am Hunza's daughter. I am proud to be married in Hunza and my ancestors are in Hunza and the people of Hunza especially my sisters, elders and

daughters of Hunza will continue to work day and night for the development of Hunza

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/2653>

President Alvi urges international community to stop the persecution of Kashmiris

Nawa-i-Waqt, 07 July 2021

A conference was organised by the International Relations Department of the National Defence University (NDU) where intellectuals from the United States, China, Iran, Germany and Pakistan gathered to deliberate upon the global rise of Islamophobia in the local perspective of Hindutva extremism. Speaking on the occasion, President Dr Arif Alvi cautioned India of internal strife if it continued persecuting Muslims under its Hindutva ideology, based on racism and hate. Dr Alvi said the world, due to its vested interests, is not seriously taking the disturbing situation in IIOJK. "We want the international community to see the 'true colours' of India, that reflect an open hatred against Muslims," he added.

He said India's recently amended "Citizenship Act" reflected the prejudiced mindset of Hindutva which aimed at changing the demography of the Muslim-majority Kashmir. He regretted that such acts on part of the Modi regime were amounting to "ethnic cleansing" that required the special attention of the world to build pressure on India to stop committing human rights violations in IIOJK.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-07-07/page-1/detail-30>

Chief Election Commissioner urges Imran Khan to stop ministers from violating election rules

Daily Ausaaf, 07 July 2021

In a letter addressed to the Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, Chief Election Commissioner of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Retired Justice Abdur Rashid Sahariya urged the PM's office to ensure that government resources are not used to support or to oppose any particular party's candidate in the upcoming election in AJK on July 25. Following the furore over the video clip that shows Federal Minister of Kashmir Affairs, Ali Amin Gandapur handing out an unspecified sum of money to a party worker, the CEC asked the PM to discipline his party comrades from indulging in such activities threatening disqualification of candidates in case of a repetition of such action. In the letter, it was also mentioned that the local government should also refrain from making use of their resources for electoral benefits and the code of conduct should be strictly adhered to.

The CEC urged all office bearers to do their bit in ensuring that free and fair elections are held in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and no unfair practices or actions should be carried out, failing which the election commission will have to take strict measures including disqualification of candidates.

https://www.dailyausaaf.com/epaper/popup.php?news_src=issues/2021-07-10/139490/p1_03.gif

Burhan Wani's 5th martyrdom anniversary observed in AJK

Muhaasib, 09 July 2021

In Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), mass public rallies and demonstrations besides special prayer meetings for the Shaheed Wani and other martyrs in all ten districts and tehsil headquarters including the capital city of Muzaffarabad were the hallmark of the fifth martyrdom anniversary of the young Kashmiri freedom fighter. In Indian Illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), there was a complete shutdown across the occupied valley to mark the day followed by anti-India and pro-freedom rallies and demonstrations.

The speakers said that ongoing indigenous struggle for freedom has reached at the point of no return in the IIOJK following the daily supreme sacrifices of lives being given by the youth including the street children who are determined to get the motherland free from the Indian despotic unlawful rule without taking care of their precious lives. The speakers called upon the international community including the United Nations to exercise their due role for getting the Indian brutalities stopped in IIOJK where the population was fighting for the liberation of the homeland from the forced Indian occupation for the last 74 years.

[https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edit_ion=muzaffarabad&dt=09-07-2021%20\(Burhan%20Wani\)](https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edit_ion=muzaffarabad&dt=09-07-2021%20(Burhan%20Wani))

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Disclaimer

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