

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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ENTREPRENEURS
FRF Funds
corridor
Skardu-Kargil-Ladakh
CORONA cases surge
Muslim Conference
CEASEFIRE
AGREEMENT
Gilgit-Baltistan
trade services
matriculation
restoration of Bus
POK



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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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Contents

Political Developments

- **Residents along the LOC welcome the ceasefire agreement but doubt its sustenance**
- **Mirpur to undergo a month long lock down as Corona cases surge**
- **GB Assembly passes resolution to open Skardu-Kargil-Ladakh corridor**
- **GB Govt Constitutes Committee to Review Reforms**
- **Use Mosques, Seminaries to highlight Indian repression in IIOJK': AJK President to Ulema**
- **AJK President proposes Nuremberg-like trials against Indians for human rights violations in IIOJK**

Economic Developments

- **Entrepreneurs from Azad Jammu and Kashmir to get their own Incubation centre**
- **After ceasefire agreement, locals demand restoration of Bus and trade services**
- **Chief Minister GB Seeks Plan for the Utilization of FRF Funds**

Vernacular Urdu Media

- **Ceasefire- an Indian delay tactic**
- **The 'Three Elders' of the Muslim Conference unite**
- **The end of matriculation as a requirement to be an AJK assembly member**
- **AJK has a much better law and order record than the rest of Pakistan and the credit for that goes to the judiciary**
- **If a GB type drama unfold in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, then there will be no difference between India and Pakistan: PM AJK**

Political Developments

Residents along the LOC welcome the ceasefire agreement but doubt its sustenance

Dawn, 27 February 2021

Residents in Azad Kashmir welcomed the understanding reached by the Pakistani and Indian armies to strictly maintain the ceasefire along the Line of Control. The residents along the line of control who have been subjected to incessant shelling and firing for the past many years took a sigh of relief when the agreement to maintain ceasefire was announced in a joint statement. Indian violations of ceasefire have killed more than a hundred civilians in the last three years while injuring several hundred. The people of Azad Kashmir while welcoming the agreement didn't seem too hopeful of its sustenance. They referred to India's record of ceasefire violations and believed that it was bound to happen again.

AJK PM Raja Farooq Haider also acknowledged that the resumption of talks was a step in the right direction. He however, warned against letting this agreement push the real issue of the Kashmir dispute be pushed to the backburner. He said that a permanent state of peace in the region can only be achieved when the Kashmir dispute is solved as per the aspirations of the Kashmiris.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=27_02_2021_003_001

Mirpur to undergo a month long lock down as Corona cases surge

Parliament Times, 28 February 2021

In the view of resurgence of Covid 19 in the Mirpur, the local authorities have decided to re-impose a month long lockdown in the district. The phased lockdown will come into effect from 6 in the morning on the 1st of March. Mirpur district magistrate Badar Muneer, in an official notification announced a complete ban on movement to and from Mirpur and closure of all tourist locations. Medical stores and petrol pumps will be exempted from the lockdown for the whole period while provisional stores and other services of daily importance will be allowed to function late in the evening.

These measures were taken in apprehensions of the spread in pandemic as the number of cases kept increasing in past few days of February. DM advised on strict adherence to SOPs during and after the lockdown and promised legal action on compliant parties.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/02/28/mirpur-goes-under-monthlong-phased-corona-lock-down-from-march-1/#.YDyB8WgzblU>

GB Assembly passes resolution to open Skardu-Kargil-Ladakh corridor

Skardu.pk, 02 March 2021

The Gilgit-Baltistan assembly passed a unanimous resolution and urged the federal government to take concrete steps in opening the Skardu-Kargil-Ladakh corridor. The govt made a

reference to the recent opening of the Kartarpur corridor and demanded that something similar should be done for the Kargil-Skardu road. The resolution said that the corridor had been an important trade route in the past and can open economic opportunities for both the people of Ladakh as well as Gilgit-Baltistan. It can also help in promoting tourism and creating jobs for the locals. It will also provide opportunities for the families divided by the border to reconnect with their loved ones. The joint resolution of Sheikh Akbar Ali Rajai and Minister for Construction Muhammad Saleem was presented in the House by Sheikh Akbar Ali Rajai on Monday. Supporting the resolution, Nawaz Khan Naji said that borders have been created everywhere and the corridor between Sindh and Gujarat is open. The border is always open in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir at three places. Families are also divided in the Ladakh region. Roads should be opened everywhere. If this is not possible, then at least Ladakh Kargil road should be opened and special arrangements should be made to unite the people of the Ladakh region. Besides, the last village on the GB side of the border where Ayatullah Sheikh Ali Najafi is buried is also an important pilgrimage site for people of the Ladakh region.

<https://www.skardu.pk/gb-assembly-passes-resolution-to-open-skardu-kargil-ladakh-corridor/>

GB Govt Constitutes Committee to Review Reforms

Urdu Point, 03 March 2021

The Gilgit-Baltistan govt formed a 7 member committee headed by Chief Minister Khalid Khursheed to overview the constitutional, administrative and governance reforms in the province. The committee has been tasked to consulting with all elected parties in this regard. The Law Department GB r4ecently issued a notification announcing the action. The committee headed by the Chief Minister will also include opposition Leader Amjad Hussain (PPP), Ghulam Muhammad PML (N), Muhammad Kazim (MWM), Haji Rehmat Khaliq (JUI), Col (retd) Obaidullah Baig (PTI) and Raja Azam Khan (PTI).

The purpose is to build a general political consensus regarding the most important issues and to come to acceptable decisions on constitutional, administrative and governance reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan so that a unified strategy can be worked out for progress on these important issues.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gb-govt-constitutes-committee-to-review-refo-1183566.html>

‘Use Mosques, Seminaries to highlight Indian repression in IIOJK’: AJK President to Ulema

Express Tribune, 02 March 2021

While speaking to a delegation of *Ulema* (Religious Scholars) which called upon him under the leadership of the Central Secretary General Jamiat e Ulema e Islam Jammu and Kashmir Maulana Imtiyaz Ahmad Abbasi in Mirpur, President AJK Sardar Masood Khan said that we hold it as an article of faith to expose raise our voice against what is happening in Indian Occupied Kashmir. He said that he was proud of the active role that the Ulema have played in keeping the struggle for Kashmir’s liberation alive. He also urged the religious leaders to use

all the platforms like mosques, seminaries and shrines at their disposal to project the Kashmiri liberation movement and highlight Indian repression in IIOJK.

The President then reiterated the state's and center's resolve to keep supporting the Kashmiri people till they succeed in realization of their inalienable right to self-determination.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-03-02/Y2I1Mjk0YzZiYiAwZTE4MmY4ZDc3YmZhY2ZiOGU1ZDIuanBlZw%3D%3D>

AJK President proposes Nuremberg-like trials against Indians for human rights violations in IIOJK

The News, 05 March 2021

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Masood Khan, while addressing a seminar titled 'inhumanity in Kashmir' in Islamabad has called for constituting an international tribunal on the pattern of Nuremberg Trials for prosecuting the Indians responsible for human rights violations in the Indian Illegally-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K). He said that Pakistan is responsible for convincing the OIC to come up with a strong resolution condemning the atrocities in Kashmir.

The President also thanked the many European lawmakers who have time and again expressed concern for Kashmiri people and shown solidarity with them. He further cautioned against attempts to make LOC a permanent border. Any decision regarding Jammu and Kashmir has to be taken by all the three stakeholders i.e. Kashmir, Pakistan and India together.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/799439-human-rights-violations-in-iioj-k-ajk-president-proposes-nuremberg-like-trials-against-indians>

Economic Developments

Entrepreneurs from Azad Jammu and Kashmir to get their own Incubation centre

Techjuice, 03 March 2021

The National Incubation Centre (NIC) inaugurated a new incubation centre on Tuesday in a ceremony held in Mirpur, Azad Kashmir. The prime minister of the province, Raja Farooq Haider Khan, lauded the NIC's efforts in highlighting the role of technology in empowering the youth and promoting entrepreneurship across Pakistan.

The project will comprise collaboration between the National Incubation Centre, Azad group, and a non-profit organization, Muslim Hands, to establish a state-of-the-art innovation hub in Mirpur. Addressing the occasion, Prime Minister AJK said, "Our aim is to play a pivotal role in setting up a strong platform for youth to embrace entrepreneurship and solve the major socio-economic problems in AJK." The Azad Kashmir government has boosted its efforts to promote entrepreneurship and tourism in the province. The president of AJK, Sardar Masood, had invited investors to take advantage of the various opportunities to invest in the province at the beginning of the year. The AJK government also entered an agreement with a Chinese firm to

build the 700MW Azad Pattan hydropower project and launched Muzaffarabad's first Software Technology Park last year.

However, the tourist destination remains afflicted with clashes between Pakistani and the Indian forces. Keeping up the pace of progress despite the prevailing geopolitical situation remains a challenge for both the provincial and federal governments.

<https://www.techjuice.pk/entrepreneurs-from-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-to-get-their-own-incubation-center/>

After ceasefire agreement, locals demand restoration of Bus and trade services

Muhaasib, 01 March 2021

For the 1st time since 2014, Pakistan and India have made an agreement to strictly impose the ceasefire conditions as agreed upon in the 2003 LOC ceasefire agreement. The locals along the LOC expressed happiness on the agreement and said that it had the potential to reduce the problems that the people living in border areas have been facing for these past years. The hostilities along the LOC are expected to significantly be reduced if the agreement is successfully implemented by both sides. The shelling incidents across the Line of Control not only cause damage to life and property of the locals but has also affects their daily life considerably. The locals welcomed the restoration of talks and said that both parties should amicably try and sort out the differences without any violence. They also demanded restoration of Bus and Trade services along the LOC which will help the peace process in the long run and also give a chance of reunion to all the families separated by the LOC.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=01-03-2021>

Chief Minister GB Seeks Plan for the Utilization of FRF Funds

Urdu Point, 04 March 2021

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khursheed has recent asked the Forest and Wildlife department to prepare a comprehensive plan for the utilisation of the Forest regeneration Fund (FRF). He also pointed to the fact that participation of the local communities should be ensured. The purpose for such plans should be to bring in economic activity to the far fledged regions while protecting, propagating, and utilising the valuable resources of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Chief Minister suggested that the whole process should with a complete survey of the available area for forest promotion and afforestation and accordingly a long term road map should be formulated for tree plantation in Gilgit-Baltistan. An announcement to introduce cloth and paper bags as an endeavour to make GB plastic free was also made. He also directed the Forest Department to take steps in promotion of local tree nurseries to reduce the importance of imports while creating job opportunities for local people.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/chief-minister-gb-seeks-plan-for-the-utilizat-1184803.html>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Ceasefire: an Indian delaying tactic

Editorial, Daily Ausaaf, 02 March 2021

A few days ago, a news not only surprised the people of the subcontinent but those of the whole world was the agreement between the Indian and Pakistan DGMOs to restore 2003 ceasefire agreement and implement it from March of 2021. This news while getting different reviews and reactions from different people, should be seen as what it truly is - a delaying tactic.

The truth of the matter is that the Occupational forces need time to force a demographic change in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir by bringing in members of Hindutva organizations, ex-army men, criminals and pro Hindutva traders to reside in Kashmir. So that the local Muslims will be reduced to a minority and a plebiscite at any point in the future goes India's way. This time will also be utilized to crush the pro-freedom activists and organizations using state, military and judiciary terrorism.

Another aspect is the growing political and economic turmoil in the Indian mainland. The Indian government also needs time to set its house in order and thus requires the borders to be quite for a while.

Pakistan should act with maturity and see through this sinister plan of India. Once India achieves the targets it has set for itself or gets in a relatively better domestic position or when it has achieved a certain level of success it will bring about a demographic change in IIOJK, it is sure to do a volte face on this agreement like it has on so many occasions before.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-03-02/130277/p8_03.gif

The 'Three Elders' of the Muslim Conference unite

Muhaasib, 03 March 2021

The oldest political party of Jammu and Kashmir, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference after years of splits and divisions seems to finally be making its way to a formidable union. As the elections draw closer, many leaders and supporters of the ruling PML-N are finding their way back into their old political party – Muslim conference. The return of former President, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Muslim Conference Sikandar Hayat was just a first of the many. And now, another former President of AJK Raja Zulkernain Khan has also rejoined the Muslim Conference. The 'Three Elders' of the Muslim Conference Sikandar Hayat, Sardar Ateeq Ahmad Khan and Raja Zulkernain Khan in a joint press conference explained the importance of Muslim Conference's survival for the politics of Jammu and Kashmir. Sikandar Hayat claims that Muslim Conference still has what it takes to contest and win an election and to form the government in AJK. Whether they succeed in this objective or not is for the time to tell. But the resurgence of Muslim Conference is in itself a surprising and significant in the politics of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=2&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=03-03-2021>

The end of matriculation as a requirement to be an AJK assembly member

Editorial, Muhaasib, 04 March 2021

The removal of matriculation as a basic eligibility criteria for contesting elections in AJK assembly has reopened the age old debate about the link between politics and education. Do only people with college degrees and diplomas have what it takes to be a lawmaker. While most argue in the affirmative, some even question the notion. The counter to the argument is given through the example of present government offices which are filled with mostly highly educated people at the top. But still the problems facing the country multiply everyday rather than diminishing. Although trying to find a correlation between educational qualification of lawmakers and the political situation of the day a bit of an oversimplification, the triumphant argument still is that education trains you for the business of law making and people with higher education are more suitable for the roles of member of assembly and ministers. The decision making of the present government of Azad Jammu Kashmir has been generally good. All changes and amendments it has brought about till now have been welcomed by the media. But the decision to remove matriculation as an eligibility criteria for being a member of assembly is a poor decision. The govt needs to make graduation and post-graduation as the criteria to contest for the assembly election. The decision may be tough but it needs to be made.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=2&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=04-03-2021>

AJK has a much better law and order record than the rest of Pakistan and the credit for that goes to the judiciary

Ausaaf, 05 March 2021

Praising the hybrid judicial system of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Chief Justice AJK Justice Raja Syed Akram Khan has said that the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir have immense faith in AJK judiciary. While addressing a *Sharia* training group at Sharia Academy Islamabad, CJ said that the law and order situation is also better in AJK because of the existence of strong cultural traditions and a well knit family system. The judges while being protectors of the constitution also know that Quran and Hadith contain solutions to all problems. Despite the fact that Azad Jammu and Kashmir lacks a judicial academy, our judges have learnt well from the judicial academies of other provinces. The AJK judicial system comprises of one Supreme Court with one CJ and two other judges. It also has a high court and other lower courts. In the lower courts, *Qazis* also sit for the proceedings along with the judges in certain cases that require their presence while the Supreme and High Court have a *Sharia* Appellate Bench.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newsrc=issues/2021-03-05/130475/p1_10.gif

If a GB type drama unfold in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, then there will be no difference between India and Pakistan: PM AJK

Muhaasib, 05 March 2021

PM Azad Jammu and Kashmir and PML-N premier Raja Farooq Haider has said that the flag of PML-N still flies high in AJK. Maryam Nawaz is a daughter of Kashmir. PML-N which was established in AJK by Nawaz Sharif 11 years ago is still the largest party in the region. If the

central government interferes in Azad Jammu Kashmir election like they did in GB last year, then there will be no difference between the governments of India and Pakistan. If there is any kind of interference with peoples votes in Azad Kashmir then let me remind the central government that it takes a twenty hour journey from Gilgit to Islamabad but only two while going from Muzaffarabad to Islamabad. He expressed these views in the PML N General council Meeting which was also attended by Maryam Nawaz and many other important Muslim League leaders. The senate elections mark an important event and the beginning of the end of a dark period that has been brought about by PTI and Imran Khan. The mood of the people is clear. They want Nawaz Sharif to return to power.

<http://mahasib.com/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzafterabad&dt=05-03-2021>

Compiled by
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