

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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Emergency **M**edical Services
Uplift **M**ovement
projects Corona free Legislators Fisheries interim
Judicial academy **status** province
Indigenous Banking sector
Khunjerab border
adverse effect



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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Political Developments

Preparations to celebrate Pakistan day begin

Parliament Times, 07 March 2021

Brisk preparations have begun for the celebration of Pakistan Day on the 23rd of March on both sides of the Line of Control i.e. in “Azad Jammu Kashmir as well as in Indian Occupied Kashmir. “

Requisite arrangements are being made across AJK including to celebrate Pakistan Day with traditional zeal and fervor coupled with renewal of the pledge to continue the struggle for freedom of occupied Jammu & Kashmir from Indian subjugation and accomplish the dream of accession of entire Jammu & Kashmir state to Pakistan”, organizers said while talking to this Correspondent here Sunday.

On the 23rd of March flag hoisting ceremonies will be held across AJK, grandest of which will be held in Muzaffarabad. The President and Prime Minister of AJK are both expected to be present at the Muzaffarabad hoisting. A contingent of the Azad Jammu Kashmir Police will present salute to the hoisted flags of Pakistan and that of Azad Jammu Kashmir.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/03/07/kashmiris-begin-preparations-to-celebrate-pakistan-day-on-march-23-with-fabulous-zest/#.YEh-j2gzbIV>

International Women Day observed in AJK with renewed resolve to raise and maintain the high image of women folk.

Parliament Times, 08 March 2021

Like rest of the world, Universal Women Day was also observed in Azad Jammu & Kashmir on Monday with the renewed the pledge to provide and safeguard equal rights and dignified status besides to maintain high respect, honour, dignity of the women folk in all segments of society. Due to the pandemic however, the ceremonies this year in AJK were brief and simple but no less impressive. The day was marked with special ceremonies held under the auspices of various Women Organizations in all ten districts of AJK with the resolve to maintain the equal rights and status of the women in the society.

In Mirpur, a ceremony to celebrate the Universal Women’s Day was held under the auspices of *Awaz* Foundation Azad Jammu Kashmir, NGO, serving for the betterment and uplift of the women folk of AJK. Ex minister for women development of AJK and Supreme Head of *Awaz* Foundation Mrs. Naheed Tariq was the chief host of the ceremony. All the three radio stations of Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Tararkheil broadcast special programmes on the World Women’s Day highlighting the importance of the role and rights of women in the society

https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/03/08/universal-women-day-observed-in-ajk-with-renewed-resolve-to-raise-and-maintain-the-high-image-of-women-folk/#.YEcV_2gzbIU

GB Legislators seek filling of vacant judges’ posts

Dawn, 09 March 2021

Demands for immediate filling of vacant judges’ posts in the higher court were heard in Gilgit-Baltistan assembly. Opposition and treasury members expressed concerns and apprehensions

over the delay in this process. A privilege motion was also moved by the JUI-F member against the delay in appointment for more than two and half years. Amjad Hussain, leader of the opposition and member of the PPP reminded the house that one post in the Supreme Appellate Court and three in Chief Court have been vacant for up to 30 months now. Also, the appointments in Banking tribunal, Service tribunal and Customs Court had been pending for some time.

Under the GB order 2018, the power of appointment of judges rested with the Prime Minister but under the GB order 2019, such powers were given to the judicial commission.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=07_03_2021_008_001

GB Assembly demands interim province status

ARY News, 09 March 2021

The Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly has passed a resolution seeking appropriate representation of the region in the Pakistan National Assembly, Senate and all other federal institutions. The resolution also contained a demand for an interim province status along with a constitutional amendment safeguarding all these changes. The resolution read that “While amending the constitution, it should also be taken in view to ensure a continuity in Pakistan’s stance over the Kashmir dispute.”

It clarified that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are totally in support of the freedom struggle of Kashmir and resolving of the Kashmir issue. This resolution of great significance because the provincial status was promised to GB by the Prime Minister himself and Gilgit-Baltistan at present has a PTI government.

<https://arynews.tv/en/gilgit-baltistan-assembly-demands-interim-province-status/>

Mega Uplift projects completed in AJK: PM Haider

Express Tribune, 14 March 2021

Talking to a delegation of the Union Council ‘*Siayan Daman*’, the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider said that mega projects are more for the socio economic wellbeing of the people. These projects have been carried out and successfully completed by the present government and that too without any political discrimination. The goal of these projects was to bring governance to the doorsteps of the citizens. The PM said that preference was given to projects relating to healthcare, communication and education. The federal government has also been very keen on pushing uplift schemes in the regions of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. In January, the executive committee came up with a programme that involved projects such as National Health upgradation programme, National programme for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Covid-19 interventions for less developed areas. The PM urged that the government had devised a comprehensive plan to serve the masses. He also urged the party workers to stay united in their ranks in the run up to coming elections.

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-03-14/MzVIMTNkYjZjMWNkNTdlYzA3ZmIxY2Q5MDUxNWQ2YjQvanBIZw%3D%3D>

Economic Developments

GB Traders want Khunjerab border to be opened next month

Dawn, 08 March 2021

The local traders around the Khunjerab border between Pakistan and China are demanding the reopening of the border which has been closed since October 2019 following the Corona virus outbreak. The trade association, while talking to media said that thousands of people had become jobless due to closure of the border. Zulfikar Ali, President of the traders' association said goods worth billions of rupees were stuck on the Chinese side and there is apprehensions over what the Chinese authorities have done with the goods. The traders were scared.

Javed Hussain, a former member of assembly pointed out that almost 70 percent of the GB people depend on the trade through the Khunjerab pass. He requested the Federal govt to take up the issue with the Chinese authorities and come up with a way to restart business across the pass, failing which the traders have threatened to block the Karakoram Highway from April.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=08_03_2021_009_004

Federal government approves Bill to Promote Fisheries in Azad Kashmir.

Muhaasib, 10 March 2021

The Federal govt has approved a plan concerning fish production in Azad Jammu Kashmir. As per this plan, under the 'Promotion of Trout farming in Northern Areas of Pakistan', 30 fish farms would be established. The initial formalities of the process have been completed. In addition to these, 20 warm water fish farms under the Public Private Partnership model will also be started. While the construction and functioning of the fish farms will provide job opportunities for the local population, it will also provide an affordable protein option to their diet.

According to the Director Nayeem Dar and Deputy Director Abdul Shakoor of the department of Fisheries, the said plan is set to not only ensure sufficient supply to the existing hatcheries in AJK but would also lead to the establishment of an additional hatchery in the Jhelum Valley.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/muzaffarabbad.php>

AJK President optimistic of bright future of AJK's Indigenous Banking sector

Associated Press of Pakistan, 10 March 2021

Speaking during his visit to the head office of the Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the State metropolis, Azad Jammu Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan praised the performance of Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and said that it is playing an important role in the socio-economic uplift of the liberated territory.

The CEO briefed the President about the Bank's performance which after a yearlong lull in 2019 had made a remarkable comeback in 2020 with record profit of 301 million rupees. Profit, deposits and remittances remained highest in 14 years history of the bank. The state president was also told that the bank had provided loans of 2.4 million to the people during the year 2020. Appreciating steps taken by the top management of the Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan said that the government would provide all possible cooperation to the bank.

The Chief Executive Officer thanked the President for the special visit. The visit of the President will encourage the staff of the bank. He expressed his determination that the Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir would continue to perform well in future.

<https://www.app.com.pk/national/ajk-president-optimistic-of-bright-future-of-ajks-indigenous-banking-sector/>

Free Emergency Medical Services Kick Off In AJK: Farooq Haider

Urdu Point, 10 March 2021

Speaking to a delegation of The Young Nursing Association in the state capital, AJK PM Farooq Haider said that free emergency medical services have been introduced in all the ten districts of Azad Jammu & Kashmir for dispensation of free health cover at the door step across the state indiscriminately. The delegation lauded AJK government's recent steps for the improvement of the performance of the nursing staff serving in the public-sector health facilities including the district and tehsil headquarter hospitals across the State. Farooq Haider said that the role of nursing for the rehabilitation of the ailing humanity was of exceptional significance and the government will not ignore the untiring services of the nursing staffers in the hospitals ever. In view of the national significance of the Palandri AJK-based State-run Cadet College, the AJK government promised to extend all possible financial support to this institution including the construction of a state-of-the-art hostel.

Farooq Haider also directed to finalize the recommendations of the pension committee and pay scales of the academic and administrative staff of both of the public-sector Cadet colleges in Muzaffarabad and Palandri.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/free-emergency-medical-services-kicks-off-in-1190482.html>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

In Muzaffarabad, sit in protest against Indian atrocities on Kashmiri women

Muhaasib, 09 March 2021

On International women day, a protest march followed by a sit-in was organized by Paasbaan-e-Hurriyat in Muzaffarabad. The protestors expressed solidarity with the women of Indian Occupied Kashmir who have been facing atrocities of the Indian security forces for decades without end. The protestors set ablaze the Indian flag in the protest and demanded action from the United Nations pertaining to the security of women in Occupied Kashmir. They also demanded the release of women prisoners and prosecution of Indian soldiers involved in war crimes. The demonstrators first staged a sit-in along a busy thoroughfare near Burhan Wani Chowk from where they marched up to Garhi Pan Chowk amid loud pro-freedom and anti-India chants. Scores of women attended the march and the sit-in.

Separately, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan and Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider also attended two different events in the town to mark the day.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=09-03-2021>

1st ever Judicial Academy inaugurated in Gilgit-Baltistan

Ausaaf, 09 March 2021

The 1st ever judicial academy was inaugurated at Gilgit-Baltistan on the 8th of March. At the inauguration, GB Chief Court Chief Justice Malik Haq Nawaz, Professor Niyaz Shah of Hill University of England, Justice Ali Baig and other prominent personalities were present. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Justice said that the primacy of merit will continue to be maintained in the GB judiciary and any kind of political interference would not be allowed. He lauded the GB judiciary for clearing the backlog on court cases and increasing the efficiency of the local judicial system. He said that the goal of the judiciary is to make justice easily available and affordable. To this end some corrections were made in the judicial system last year and due to the hard work of the judges, 1876 civil and criminal cases were resolved in a matter of 6 months.

The inauguration of the judicial academy will bring about a revolutionary change in the Gilgit-Baltistan judiciary as judges will be trained in the latest and most effective ways of resolving cases. Registrar GB chief Court Abbas Choupa has been given the additional charge of the academy's director general and Assistant Registrar Information Technology Shamil Ahmed as director.

The first training session at the academy will start on March 8, which will continue till March 12. The participants of the training include district and session's judges, additional session's judges and civil judges. Besides judges, lawyers and employees will be given training at the academy.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-03-09/130819/p1_03.gif

Political parties in AJK believe that *Interim Province* status can have an adverse effect on the Kashmir movement

Ausaaf, 10 March 2021

Muslim League AJK, Jamaat-e-Islaami AJK, Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam Jammu Kashmir (JUI JK), Jamaat-e-Islaami GB and many other groups have expressed concerns regarding the demand to give an interim province status to Gilgit-Baltistan saying that it will have a negative impact on the Kashmir issue. It will weaken Pakistan's stand on the matter. The Jamaat-e-Islaami Chief has said that Pakistan should have reacted swiftly after the 5th August move by the Indian government but nothing was done in that regard. Now, further division can do the freedom movement no good.

Muslim League Additional Secretary, Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi said that all apprehensions of PTI selling out Kashmir have turned out to be true. The Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam Secretary General Maulana Imtiyaz Abbasi said that division of Kashmir is an international conspiracy. It is under this design that Imran Khan has come into power. Narendra Modi has forcibly divided Indian Occupied Kashmir, and under Imran Khan Pakistan will complete the process with provincializing Gilgit-Baltistan.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-03-10/130889/p1_24.gif

Making GB a province would support India's position

Wajih Ahmed Siddiqui, Ummat, 10 March 2021

The resolution, demanding a provisional province and fair representation of GB in the national institutions, passed by the GB assembly unanimously, has been sent to the Prime Minister's secretariat. Chief Minister of GB, Khalid Khurshid, has said that the people of GB are hopeful that it would get a provisional provincial status.

In this regard, talking to Ummat, the opposition leader in the Senate Raja Muhammad Zafar-ul-Haq said that giving GB a provincial status would strengthen India's position on the Kashmir issue. According to the UN resolutions, GB is part of Kashmir. Raja Muhammad further said that after the abrogation of Article 370 on 5 August 2019, Modi government has been on the defensive. "The international community and international media is criticizing India for these measures. The whole world has started taking an interest in the Kashmir issue. "Azad Kashmir" and GB are independent parts of the state. It is government's responsibility to help them run their governments in free and autonomous manner. The government should not take any measure in haste that would weaken our principled position and create problems in our diplomatic efforts."

Raja said that "the government is non-serious about the Kashmir issue. It is not being fair towards the Kashmiris. Even Pervez Musharraf had said that the issue would be resolved bilaterally. How can a bilateral agreement replace the UN resolutions? Even Supreme Court of India has said that Kashmir has a special status. India acted against the UN resolutions by abrogating Article 370 and 35A. We all are united on the Kashmir issue. Like Winston Churchill, who fought and defeated Germany, we need to adopt the same approach. But the Prime Minister seems to follow Prime Minister Chamberlin. If we move backward, "India would take more steps forward", Raja Muhammad added.

<http://ummat.net/2021/03/10/news.php?p=story3.gif>

Gilgit-Baltistan becomes Corona free with zero active cases

Daily K2, 11 March 2021

In Gilgit-Baltistan, all the patients infected with corona virus have recovered and no new case has been reported. The report issued by the health department said that no new case had been reported on the previous day while all those suffering from corona have recovered. According to the report, 4959 people were affected Corona virus in Gilgit-Baltistan out of which 4856 recovered and 103 people died. Dr Muhammad Iqbal, Director, Extended Immunization Program, told media that it was a historic day in Gilgit-Baltistan as the number of active cases are zero. He said that with the cooperation of the people who took precautionary measures as per the SOPs with great discipline, Gilgit-Baltistan has become virus-free. Dr. Shah Zaman, Focal Person for Corona Virus in GB said that despite limited resources, the epidemic was brought under control. He also said that with time bound vaccination process and through practicing caution, this record can continue.

<https://cutt.ly/OzWSgBU>

“AJK Election would be the last nail in the coffin for PDM”

Muhaasib, 14 March 2021

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf District President and former Advisor Sardar Tabarak Ali has said that the loss of Yusuf Raza Gilani and the victory of Sadiq Sanjirani has ended the political lifespan of the PDM. The AJK elections will prove the final nail in the coffin. The country has rejected the PDM and it will be a fight for their survival in the upcoming AJK elections. The loss in the Senate election proved that the PDM is not really united. Amongst them are people who support Prime Minister Imran Khan. The political inference from the Senate elections are clear, said Tabarak Ali. PTI is far more popular than any of the other political parties like the PPP or the PML-N. There is a great respect for Imran Khan's honesty and his anti-corruption stand. That is why PTI will also come to power even in AJK and it is here the PDM would be buried. The fact that the Prime Minister himself asked for the trust vote is a testament of not only his honesty but also the confidence he has on the people and the people have on him.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=14-03-2021>

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Disclaimer

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