

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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24-30 May 2021

direct beneficiary
North Air
controversial centres
free VACCINATION
coronavirus
Tourism Provincial status
Promotion budget
Election 2021
Jheeng hydropower project



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

Bosnian envoy, AJK President discuss Kashmir

The Nation, 25 May 2021

A statement released by the AJK President's office said that the AJK President and the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sakib Foric discussed ways to strengthen relations between the people of Bosnia, Pakistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Ambassador Sakib Foric said Bosnia President Sefik Dzaferovic had especially asked him to convey his greetings and good wishes to President of AJK which were reciprocated with warmth and gratitude.

The Bosnian ambassador was all praise for the AJK president and expressed his desire of strengthening ties between Pakistan and Bosnia in many sectors including military. The Ambassador said that Pakistan was playing a leading role in promoting the unity of the Muslim Ummah. He also said that being a country which had itself witnessed genocide and excessive violence, Bosnia is fully aware of the plight of people of Jammu and Kashmir and extended full support for their fundamental rights.

<https://nation.com.pk/25-May-2021/bosnian-envoy-ajk-president-discuss-kashmir>

AJK Supreme Court to have two judges

Dawn, 26 May 2021

Prime Minister Imran Khan recently advised on the induction of two senior lawyers to the bench of AJK Supreme Court in order to reach the sanctioned strength of one CJ and two judges. The two lawyers Khawaja Mohammad Nasim and Raja Raza Ali Khan were suggested to the PM by the AJK President Sardar Masood Khan after consultations with AJK's chief justice (CJ) Raja Saeed Akram. The AJK Constitution also allows direct induction of judges in the region's Supreme Court, apart from elevation from the high court.

The Prime Minister also sent his advice on the confirmation of Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja as the permanent Chief Justice of the AJK High Court. Justice Sadaqat has already been acting as the Chief Justice since the unfortunate demise of former Chief Justice Raja Shiraz Kiyani.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1625732/ajk-supreme-court-to-have-two-judges>

Election Commission Pledges On Time Elections in AJK

Urdu Point, 28th May 2021

According to a Press Release issued by the spokesperson of the Election Commission, it is progressively making necessary arrangements for holding upcoming General Election 2021 of the state legislative assembly in accordance to Article 22(4) of the AJK Interim Constitution 1974 and the election laws that for the time being is in force. The EC reaffirmed that it will fulfill its responsibility of conducting free and fair election well within the sanctioned time.

The Press Release stated that AJKEC has already made necessary preparations including the preparations and printing of electoral rolls of the voters in the 33 Constituencies located within the AJK territory and has asked the Executive Authorities of the Government of AJK to provide needful administrative, financial and logistic support to the Commission on emergent basis.

Chief Election Commissioner has also categorically stated that general elections will be held within the prescribed period mentioned in the constitution. He has also cautioned the people against spreading rumors and confusion regarding the same.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/election-commission-pledges-on-time-elections-1262733.html>

AJK assembly passes ‘controversial law’ amid opposition’s protest

Dawn, 28 May 2021

Citing reasons of “good intent and humanitarianism”, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday got a controversial piece of law enacted by the Legislative Assembly making full use of its majority in the house.

AJK Regulation of the Service of Certain Categories of Contractual, Ad-hoc or Temporary Government Employment (Terms and Conditions) Act, 2021 is said to be reminiscent of an identical piece of legislation by Muslim Conference (MC) government in 1992 whereby around 480 people were inducted as gazetted officers without any competitive exams. That law was struck down after judicial review by the AJK superior Courts.

The opposition called for withdrawal of the bill, but as there were no signs of acceptance of their demand, the trio, including Abdul Majid Khan and Deevan Mohiuddin of PTI, staged a walkout, allowing the government to claim that the bill had been passed unanimously. Opposition members claimed that that many of the beneficiaries had been appointed by the present government under a well thought out plan and that the ruling party was a direct beneficiary of these appointments.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1626057/ajk-assembly-passes-controversial-law-amid-oppositions-protest>

On Youm-e-Takbeer, AJK Legislative Assembly lauds Nawaz Sharif for his role in Nuclear Tests

Daily Heights, 29 May 2021

In its session Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu Kashmir Assembly adopted a resolution paying rich tributes to Nawaz Sharif for his contribution in the conducting a series of Nuclear Tests namely Chagai-I and Chagai-II series on 28th May 1998. This was a bold move and was a direct response to India's aggressive new nuclear policy which was important for the maintenance of the balance of power in the region. The resolution called the event historic not only for the people of Pakistan but also for the whole Muslim Ummah as Pakistan became the 1st Muslim nation to possess nuclear weapon. The resolution also termed the event as remarkable for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and their fight for self-determination.

The Prime Minister of AJK, Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider also paid glowing tributes to Mian Nawaz Sharif for conducting the nuclear tests and standing firm in the face of international pressure. He said that the decision to carry out the tests made Pakistan's defense invincible and hence became a deterrent to all its enemies.

<https://heights.com.pk/>

Economic Developments

GB airports become Pakistan's busiest

PT Profit, 25 May 2021

The northern skies looked unusually crowded as Skardu and Gilgit saw a massive rise in flight operations, when nearly 16 PIA flights operated to and from both the cities. Reportedly, PIA operated eight flights each to Gilgit and Skardu airports in a day on the 24th of May, making it the highest number of flights ever operated in a day in the country's history.

"PIA's role is instrumental in the development of these areas which rely heavily on air connection due to difficult surface networks," said the PIA spokesperson. He said pricing has been maintained in a way that is affordable to a common Pakistani. Meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued Tourism Promotion and Regional Integration (TPRI) license to a newly launched private airline, North Air, amid country-level efforts to boost tourism. The private carrier is planning to operate flights to Gilgit, Skardu, Chitral and Gwadar from different cities of Pakistan. The aim

of these developments is to tap the tourism potential of the beautiful northern areas, greater integration with the rest of the country and help in employment generation.

<https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/05/25/gb-airports-become-countrys-busiest/>

GB's budget increased to Rs 45bn for next fiscal year

Daily Times, 26 May 2021

In yet another important development in the federal government's renewed focus on Gilgit-Baltistan, the centre has approved an increase of 13 billion rupees in the regular budget of Gilgit-Baltistan for the next financial year.

The Spokesperson of the Gilgit-Baltistan CM, Imtiyaz Ali Taj announced that Prime Minister Imran Khan has agreed to enhance the GB regular budget from 32 billion rupees to 45 billion rupees on a special request by the GB Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid. The spokesperson said that this increase reflects the special interest that Imran Khan is taking for the development of the region. This enhancement of the regular budget comes less than a month after the Prime Minister announced the 370 billion rupee upliftment package on his visit to GB which in turn came shortly after the announcement of granting provisional provincial status to the region.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/761446/gbs-budget-increased-to-rs-45bn-for-next-fiscal-year/>

GB CM seeks 'Seed Technology' to produce wheat

Express Tribune, 26 May 2021

Speaking of plans to make changes in agricultural policy of GB to help the region reach its true potential, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister, Khalid Khurshid said that he has asked the PTI led federal government to bring the available 'seed technology' to assist in producing wheat in the province. The CM discussed many such matters with the federal minister for food security and research, Syed Fakhar Imam.

Among the matters discussed were the need for research on the matter of preserving the fruit produce, 70 % of which goes to waste in the province. The CM also sought a contribution of 50 million tons of wheat seed through PARC in order to reduce the province's dependency on PASSCO.

In addition, setting up of Angora Rabbit Rabbiteries, value addition to trout, setting up packing houses in cluster farms for cherries were discussed. All these proposals are in accordance with the Prime Minister's vision of a new strategy for GB agriculture to reach its full potential

<https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Karachi/2021-05-26/N2ZhOWZjODc1NmMzYWM4YjEzOWFjZTI5YTI2MDFjZjQuanBlZw%3D%3D>

KP and Gilgit-Baltistan re-open to tourists

Samaa, 30 May 2021

The NCOC along with the governments of Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have decided to open up the regions for tourists once again. Tourism Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Raja Nasir Ali Khan announced that the travel will be unrestricted and the visitors will be allowed to visit all the tourist spots. The road to the Babusar Top is expected to be cleared by the 29th of May. Flights and road travel to both these regions are now allowed. International tourists can visit once international flights commence to Skardu Airport.

Tourists are encouraged to carry their coronavirus negative test results. There will, however, be no consequence if they choose not to carry a negative certificate. It is however mandatory for people to follow SOPs, cautioned the tourism ministers of both the provinces. Rescue workers, health department employees, hotel managers, and tour operators have all been trained to follow safety protocols in KP. Most hotel staffs have been vaccinated. They have been instructed not to allow people above the age of 50 who are not vaccinated.

<https://www.samaa.tv/living/travel/2021/05/kp-and-gilgit-baltistan-are-open-to-tourists-once-again/>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

‘AJK government taking steps to provide equality of opportunity for women’

Daily Ausaaf, 27 May 2021

While speaking at the convention of State commission on the Status of women, AJK Prime Minister, Raja Farooq Haider said that the AJK government is taking all steps necessary to provide equal opportunity to the women of Azad Kashmir. He said that women comprise of 51 percent of the population of the AJK. Growth of AJK is not possible without the growth and development of its women. They are also a huge reservoir of potential that can be tapped into to help build a strong and prosperous nation.

The PM gave references from the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and how chivalrously he treated women. Islam has granted a high status to the women in both the society and the family. These teachings need to be remembered. He also urged the people to bring to the notice of local administration and police, any event of gender discrimination in any workplace

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-05-27/136281/p1_16.gif

Farooq Haider inaugurates Jheeng hydropower project

Jammu Kashmir Times, 28 May 2021

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider inaugurated the 14.4 MW Jheeng hydropower project and inspected the workings of the project. The senior members of the Power Department briefed him on the functioning of the project. Later, while interacting with the media, PM said that the 13th constitutional amendment has given AJK a lot more autonomy to plan its budget. This has given a boost to the development projects in the state. Projects like these will not only pacify the electricity shortage in the region but will also create job opportunities. Also, more electricity will mean lesser pressure on forest wood as fuel. The PM further said that had there been less economic autonomy, this project could not have been completed so early. The government would also have been forced to borrow money from the state bank and then to pay the loan back in installments. He said that this project was a part of the greater plan to establish a solid foundation for the economic growth of AJK. He explained how in the long run, this power project will bring in more money than what was spend on it. This project like many others projects that are underway will bring economic growth of AJK and employment to its people.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/1-15.jpg>

Number of Vaccination centres in Gilgit doubled

Daily K2, 28 May 2021

The number of vaccination centres in Gilgit have been doubled. Gilgit District Health Officer, Dr Mubeen Khan, while talking to KPN said that the number of Corona Vaccination Centres in Gilgit District was 9 which have now been increased to 18. New centres have been set up in remote areas so that people can get free vaccination at their doorstep. He said, so far more than 20,000 people in Gilgit district have been vaccinated against coronavirus.

Dr Mubeen said that after the announcement of free vaccination for the youth by the NCOC, the number of people getting vaccinated is likely to increase. Therefore, the elderly and the young should immediately send their ID card number to 1166 to get the registration code so that they can be vaccinated in time. He also asked people to not pay heed to the rumours about the ill effects of vaccines. Doctors are the first to get vaccinated; therefore people should come forward and get the jab as soon as possible

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/2091>

3 Amendments, 7 Acts passed in AJK Legislative Assembly

Muhaasib, 29 May 2021

The AJK Legislative Assembly met on the 28th of May under the chairmanship of Deputy Speaker, Sardar Amir Altaf. The sitting started with the recitation of the holy Quran and soon traversed into a volley of Acts and Amendments. 3 Amendments and 7 Acts namely; The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Elections (Amendment), The West Pakistan Epidemic Diseases (Amendment), The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Trusts (Adaptation), Transfer of property Amendment Act, The Azad Jammu and Kashmir subsistence allowance for widows and orphans Act, The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Voluntary social welfare agencies Registration Act, The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Local Government Amendment Act, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Benevolent employees funds and group allowances Act, Zakat and Usher Amendment Act and Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regularization and grant of Khaha land Amendment Act all were passed with the agreement of the whole house.

<https://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=29-05-2021>

Prime Minister's special interest in the development of Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily K2, 29 May 2021

Prime Minister Imran Khan has shown an immense interest in the development of remote areas and in this context he has a very specific vision for the growth of Gilgit-Baltistan. The GB government has worked tirelessly in this regard and only within a span of 5 months, they have managed to get Rs 122.75 billion worth of projects which were approved through the Gilgit-Baltistan Comprehensive Development Plan. These projects have been approved by CDWP and ECNEC. Among these important approvals are projects worth Rs. 29.32 billion in energy sector. Road infrastructure and communication projects costing Rs 84.89 billion including construction of Daril and Tangier Expressways, construction of inter-provincial link roads and construction of Gilgit-Shandur Expressway have also been approved. Projects in health sector cost 7.88 billion including establishment of medical and nursing college in Gilgit. Various other projects dealing with the education sector are also in the pipeline. The results is visible due to the special interest taken by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan. He is keen in the construction and development of projects in Gilgit-Baltistan and cooperating fully with the provincial government the results of which will be seen in the days and months to come. For the first time in the history of Gilgit-Baltistan, the federal and the provincial governments cooperating closely to bring development to the region.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/2103>

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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

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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