

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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28 June - 4 July 2021

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election
elections
check posts
budget
TOURISM
G
ilgit-B
altistan
manifesto
elections
vote bank
drone attack
Balawaristan National Front



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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Political Developments

HRCP concerned about ‘continuation of status-quo’ in Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 28 June 2021

In its annual report on the state of human rights for the year 2020, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan questioned that despite the long-standing demand that Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) be made a constitutional part of Pakistan, its citizens are deprived of the right to political representation in the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan and other policymaking institutions.

The report pointed out that like the rest of Pakistan, GB struggled to counter the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, which led to job losses for daily-wage labourers, caused education at all levels to come to a standstill, and put severe strain on the healthcare system.

While the release of political prisoners including Baba Jan of the AWP was a welcome step, the misuse of anti-terrorism laws continued in 2020, with youth, rights activists, journalists, political workers, and nationalists monitored regularly under Schedule Four of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. Elections for the GB Legislative Assembly were held on 15 November last year. Although the polling process was largely peaceful and orderly, HRCP was concerned to learn that independent election observers—including its own team of observers in four cases—were not allowed into polling stations in the city of Gilgit during the vote counting process. The report also notes the absence of local bodies since the last elections in 2009

has scuttled the emergence of leadership at the grassroots level, explaining why the election for the GB Legislative Assembly in 2020 witnessed a large number of candidates.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2021/06/28/hrcp-concerned-about-continuation-of-status-quo-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Pakistan rejects India's 'irresponsible' statement linking Islamabad to Jammu drone attack

The News, 30 June 2021

The Foreign Office, in a statement, categorically rejected the "irresponsible and misleading statement" of Indian Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy who said that Islamabad's involvement in the blasts caused by drone in Indian Air Force base at Jammu airport could not be ruled out.

"The Indian government has once again leveled serious allegations against Pakistan. This is yet another manifestation of the unsubstantiated propaganda and smear campaign against Pakistan that is characteristic of the Indian government and an obliging Indian media," the statement said. The Foreign office also said that such allegations only prove the point that the PFO has been making for a long time that BJP government carries out false flag operations either for electoral victories or to divert attention away from their electoral losses. The externalizing of blame is used to undermine the indigenous struggle for independence of Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/857368-pakistan-rejects-indias-irresponsible-statement-of-linking-islamabad-to-ijjk-drone-attack>

AJK PM threatens to boycott security briefings

Ex Bulletin, 01 July 2021

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister, Raja Farooq Haider on Wednesday announced his intention not to attend the national security briefings, to protest Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision to resume relations with India without any change in IIOJK's status. "Prime Minister Imran Khan and Narendra Modi are two sides of the same coin. The measure of August 5, 2019 was taken with the consent of Modi and Imran," he said during a press conference in the federal capital.

Speaking about the AJK elections, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan was being aggressive with polls in the region. He said the elections would be held against the "divide Kashmir" agenda.

On the situation in illegally occupied Indian Jammu and Kashmir, he said Modi had brazenly violated United Nations resolutions. He claimed that the prime minister and the government in power has failed to present Kashmir's cause "effectively" on the international stage. Haider further alleged that the Foreign Ministry did not do any important Kashmir-related work on the international stage. "Nobody pays attention to the government of Prime Minister Imran on the international stage. Imran has no reputation. Nobody answers their phone", declared the Prime Minister of the AJK.

<https://exbulletin.com/politics/1031858/>

Pakistan Navy organizes free medical camps in AJK

Bol news, 04 July 2021

Pakistan Navy on Sunday set up free medical camps for the Kashmiri populace in far flung localities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) providing free consultation, medicines and treatment to over 3,000 patients of Chilabandi, Chikar and Bata Khundal Shahi areas.

A team of Pakistan Navy doctors comprising Medical Specialists, General Surgeons and Physicians examined the patients through latest diagnostic equipment. The patients were also provided free medicines and minor surgical procedures were also carried out at the medical camps, as per a Navy press release. The locals were also briefed about the various precautionary measures to be carried out in the wake of continuing Covid 19 pandemic. The locals welcomed the initiative by the Navy and were thankful for their efforts. They acknowledged PN's continued support for the just and legitimate struggle of Kashmiri brethren in IIOJK for their right of self-determination.

Pakistan Navy is devotedly committed to providing continued quality support and assistance in health and education sector across the country for all citizens.

<https://www.bolnews.com/pakistan/2021/07/pakistan-navy-sets-up-free-medical-camps-at-different-areas-of-ajk/>

GB: Hameed group abandons centrifugal politics

The News, 04 July 2021

In a major development for Gilgit-Baltistan politics, former head of the banned Balawaristan National Front (BNF Hameed Group) Abdul Hameed Khan has announced to abandon centrifugal politics and expressed his resolve to play active role in the politics of Gilgit-Baltistan. While talking to media here on Saturday, he thanked Pak Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and Prime Minister Imran Khan for facilitating his return to Pakistan from self-imposed exile in Europe. He sought apology for his anti-state activities in the past and said, "I am thankful to the courts for granting me relief through bail and orders of return of my properties."

<https://nation.com.pk/04-Jul-2021/gb-hameed-group-abandons-centrifugal-politics>

Economic Developments

AJK assembly approves over Rs141bn surplus budget

Dawn, 30 June 2021

The fifth and last budget presented by the PML-N government estimated an income of Rs114.4 billion from different internal and external resources during the next fiscal year, of which Rs113.4 billion was proposed for recurring expenditures and Rs1.018 billion for the overdraft adjustment.

The budget session was presided over by Speaker, Shah Ghulam Qadir and his Deputy Sardar Aamer Altaf, with 20 lawmakers in attendance proposed that

28 billion rupees be provided by the federal government for the Annual Development Programme (ADP) which includes foreign aid of Rs 2 billion.

The finance minister said that the budget was not just an account of income and expenditures of a government but a complete reflection of its national resources, ambitions, creative abilities and future planning. He claimed that the present government had inherited a deficit of Rs25 billion when it came to power but were bequeathing a surplus of Rs10 billion to the next government. Commenting on the ADP, he said it was 14pc higher than the current year. Additionally, he added, the federal government had spared Rs4 billion in its 2021-22 budget to be spent through the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs on its ongoing projects in AJK.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1632282/ajk-assembly-approves-over-rs141bn-surplus-budget/>

Federal Govt to help G-B meet certification requirements

Express Tribune, 03 July 2021

In a meeting with the Gilgit-Baltistan Agriculture minister Kazim Meesam, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Syed Fakhar Imam expressed the government's aim to turn the GB region into a hub of organic and high-value food production. Imam reaffirmed the government's resolve to provide all available resources for the development of agriculture sector of Gilgit-Baltistan. Lamenting the heavy losses incurred post production in the horticulture sector, Imam proposed

value addition installations on a public-private-partnership basis. He stressed the need for promoting organic farming and producing different kinds of jams, which was a viable option for the preservation of fruit pulp.

Support to trout farming and cottage industry was also discussed in the meeting. Meesam also said that the agriculture sector of Gilgit-Baltistan was in dire need of marketing support and investment in development and research work. He said the agriculture extension department of the region had been provided Rs3.75 billion over the past four years to extend and step up its services.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2308504/govt-to-help-g-b-meet-certification-requirements>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Azad Kashmir elections: JUI announces support for PTI

Jasaarat, 28 June 2021

All Jammu and Kashmir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) has announced its support for PTI in the elections. Political maneuvering is on the rise in Azad Kashmir for the 2021 elections as several political leaders are announcing their desire to leave their respective parties and join other parties, many parties seem to be forming coalitions. All Jammu and Kashmir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam has announced its support for PTI in the 2021 elections.

A delegation of All Jammu and Kashmir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam led by Chief of Jamiat Qazi Mahmood Al-Hassan called on the Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Punjab Sardar

Tanveer Ilyas. Qazi Mahmood Al-Hassan said that PTI will be supported by JUI in all constituencies; the alliance of both the parties will create a conducive environment in the state. Sardar Tanveer Ilyas said that Jammu and Kashmir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam has a vote bank in every constituency. “Yes, we will contest the general elections of Azad Kashmir together with them”, he said.

<https://www.jasaarat.com/2021/06/28/210628-08-9/>

PTI AJK releases election manifesto: promises representation of AJK in the National Finance Commission, the National Economic Council, Council of Common Interests and IRSA

Daily Ausaaf, 30 June 2021

PTI President of AJK Chapter, Barrister Sultan released the election manifesto in which they promised many new reforms. Elaborating the salient features of the manifesto, released by the party Chief, Barrister Sultan Mehmood, also the party’s candidate in the 2021 AJK Polls contesting from his parent constituency of Mirpur city LA-3 Mirpur III, the Central Information Secretary of PTI AJK Chapter, Ershad Mahmood said that the most outstanding issues faced by the people of Azad Kashmir had been identified in the 30 page document. The party has also reiterated its unflinching faith to resolve the long-standing issues in order to bring the much-needed change in the region’s political system. “The dream of a prosperous and modern Azad Kashmir as envisaged by the party leadership would be pursued with utmost commitment, sincerity and honesty”, declares the manifesto, assuring a solution to the most pressing

issues without weakening Pakistan's position on the current status of the Azad Kashmir and Kashmir issue. The manifesto also promised representation of AJK in the federal decision-making bodies such as the National Finance Commission, the National Economic Council, Council of Common Interests and IRSA.

"Women's seats will be increased by 17% on federal and provincial lines to ensure an effective participation of women in the legislation process", the statement said. Furthermore, the manifesto assures the establishment of Human Rights Commission, the passing of Access to Information Act and strengthening of the local press.

https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?news_src=issues/2021-06-30/138742/p1_16.gif

AJK president hails UN's concerns over Indian violence and use of pellet guns in IIOJ&K

Jang, 30 June 2021

Commenting on the report titled "Children and Armed Conflicts" unveiled by the UN secretary general in which he mentioned the ill-treatment being meted out to the children of occupied Kashmir, the AJK president said thousands of Kashmiri children had been orphaned by the Indian Army during the last 30 years while hundreds of others were killed, injured, maimed or blinded. "What secretary general's report about IIOJ&K has stated was the just tip of the iceberg. The real situation is even worse as the occupation army is not only abusing the rights of children but also is engaged in carrying out genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

He asserted there are children of 10 to 13 years of the age among the 14,000 civilians the Indian Army had arrested during curfew and the lockdown in different parts of the occupied territory since August 5, 2019. These children are still in custody in different prisons in northern India and occupied Kashmir, and they are not being released even after the outbreak of coronavirus, he added. He demanded an open debate on the UN secretary general's report in the UN Security Council along with other patterns of repression being let loose against the children in the held territory to prepare recommendations and to propose action against the perpetrators of these brutalities.

<https://e.jang.com.pk/06-30-2021/London/pic.asp?picname=314.png>

For the first time in AJK, budget presented and approved on the same day

Jasaarat, 30 June 2021

For the first time in the parliamentary history of Azad Kashmir, the budget of the AJK was presented in the Legislative Assembly and approved in a single day. It announced a 10% increase in salaries and pensions. Azad Kashmir's budget of Rs.141 billion for the financial year 2020-21 was presented on the 29th of June. In the budget for the next financial year, it is proposed to allocate Rs. 113.40 billion for non-development expenditure and Rs. 28 billion for development expenditure. The development budget has been increased by 14% as compared to the previous financial year. Finance Minister Dr. Najib Naqi Khan presented the historic Budget and Finance Bill for the financial year 2021-

22 in the assembly session presided by speaker Shah Ghulam Qadir. Later, a committee presented its report on the bill in the House, which passed the Finance Bill for the financial year 2021-22 by consensus. On this occasion, the demands of the Finance Minister for the revised Budget 2020-21 and Estimated Budget 2021-22 were also unanimously approved.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/06/30/210630-01-6/>

Removal of Check posts in Baltistan a foolish decision: Akbar Tabaan

Daily K2, 01 July 2021

Haji Tabaan, the former senior minister and general secretary of PML-N Gilgit-Baltistan, has said that removing all external and internal check posts in Baltistan as Muharram approaches is a show of irresponsible decision making and that all check posts should not be removed in the name of tourism. The abolition of these check posts will increase the crime rate in the area, it will be difficult to maintain check and balance and the people in the area will be insecure as a result of this action. He said that the check posts will be abolished to increase the police force in Baltistan. He said that dismantling the CDT police camp in Skardu along with the removal of security check posts is not a good decision as the days of Muharram approach. Chief Minister, Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Chief Secretary and IGP Gilgit-Baltistan have a responsibility not to ignore the sensitivity and security of Baltistan.

Before Muharram, the shortage of security forces in the area should be met and the important check posts in the area should be restored immediately. Care must be taken to maintain law and order in the area.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/2612>

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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.



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