

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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2021



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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Political Developments

CAF to help maintain law, order in holding AJK polls

Pakistan Observer, 18 July 2021

The Civil Armed Forces (CAF) consisting of the Frontier Constabulary, Punjab Constabulary and Rangers have started landing in many regions of Azad Jammu Kashmir including Mirpur for assisting the local law-enforcement institutions of the civil administration to maintain peace and order for the elections scheduled to be held on July 25. Member of Azad Jammu Kashmir Election Commissioner, Farhat Ali Mir, told APP that the Pak Army troops would not be directly posted at the polling stations during the polling.

4000 personnel from Frontier Constabulary (FC), 2000 from Pakistan Rangers, 19000 from Pakistan Army, 4000 from KP Police, 6000 from Punjab police, 1000 from Federal police and 4000 security individuals from Punjab Constabulary have been acquired to assist the local law enforcement agencies to maintain peace and order during the polls. The Pakistan Army Troops will be at the 'stand-by position', to take care of any unwanted chaotic situation at the polling stations or at any other public place

<https://pakobserver.net/caf-to-help-maintain-law-order-in-holding-ajk-polls/>

Kashmiris observe 'Accession to Pakistan day'

The News, 19 June 2021

Kashmiris living on both sides of the Line of Control observed the 'Accession to Pakistan' day on Monday with the firm determination to continue their struggle for the liberation of occupied Kashmir from India in line with the United Nations resolutions. Functions and seminars were held in the state to draw the world's attention towards the unresolved Kashmir dispute, which poses a potential threat to world peace.

In his message on the occasion, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister, Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan said that 19th July had a significant importance in the freedom history of Kashmir, when the Kashmiris decided to link their destiny with Pakistan.

A report released by a Kashmiri media outlet on this day revealed that about 500,000 Kashmiris have laid down their lives for Jammu and Kashmir's freedom from Indian occupation during the past seven decades. It said the worst kind of Indian brutalities have failed to wipe out the Kashmiris' love for Pakistan. The report added that Indian troops have martyred over 95,830 Kashmiris, including 7,185 in custody since January 1989.

The report, while giving the background of the Accession to Pakistan Day, said that it was on July

19, 1947 when the destiny of Kashmir was ascertained through a historical Accession to Pakistan Day resolution adopted by the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference at Abi Guzar in Srinagar during an emergency convention at the residence of Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan. The historical resolution of July 19, 1947 calls for the Accession of J&K to Pakistan, considering its religious, cultural and geographical proximity to Pakistan and the aspirations of the Kashmiri Muslims.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/866270-kashmiris-to-observe-accession-to-pakistan-day-today>

12 refugee seats become talking point in AJK polls

Express Tribune, 22 July 2021

Out of 45 general seats for which elections will take place on Sunday, 12 are reserved for 464,000 refugees - six each for those migrated from the Jammu division and Kashmir Valley division of Indian illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) in 1947 and 1965. Analysts point out the disparity in the distribution of these seats, saying that while 30,000 people registered as refugees from Kashmir Valley elect six representatives, 434,000 people registered as refugees from the Jammu division also elect an equal number of representatives.

Bashir Sadozai, a Karachi-based Kashmiri political analyst and author says that while the rationale behind the allocation of seats was to representation to Kashmiris, it has now become the "trump card" used by

Pakistan's ruling parties to turn results in their favor.

Danish Irshad, a Muzaffarabad-based political analyst says that the refugee seats have been often used for "political engineering" to form the government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the "AJK" Election Commission is in no position to exercise authority and regulate the conduct of elections in these 12 seats, which makes the exercise "suspicious" and "faulty". Moreover, he added, these constituencies are spread across three provinces, making it impossible for candidates to cover such a huge area to lure voters with their agenda.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2311800/12-refugee-seats-become-talking-point-in-ajk-polls>

PM Imran Khan announces referendum for Independent status of Kashmir

ARY News, 23 July 2021

Speaking at an AJK election 2021 rally in Tarar Khal, the prime minister said that the UN resolutions in 1948 gave rights to the Kashmiris to decide their fate. The PM announced that his government would hold a referendum after the liberation of occupied Kashmir, seeking Kashmiris' opinion if they wanted to stay with Pakistan or maintain an independent status. "It is the Kashmiris who had to decide through a referendum if they had to join India or Pakistan," he said. After this referendum, Imran Khan said that his government would hold another referendum seeking the opinion of the people of the territory

if they wanted to join Pakistan or maintain an independent status.

The PM also rubbished the claims of PML-N leaders that the PTI government was planning to declare AJK as a province. He also reiterated his resolve to raise the Kashmir issue at as many international fora as possible. Imran Khan also paid rich tributes to freedom fighters Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Yaseen Malik and declared his continued support for the Kashmiri cause.

<https://arynews.to/imran-khan-referendum-independent-status-kashmir/>

AJK Election Forecast

Friday Times, 25 July 2021

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) seems to be the strongest contender to emerge as the largest party in the Assembly. But that contendership comes from a host of reasons other than the quality of their campaign and their general Kashmir Policy. The PTI government has sit around blowing hot and cold rhetoric while Narendra Modi and his government scrapped the special status of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The government's overall position on Kashmir has been incoherently disappointing. In spite of all these failures and the relatively satisfactory performance of the PML-N government in AJK, PTI is the favorite because the party which is at power in the centre has always has the favorite in AJK. This can be majorly attributed to the dependent relationship of the state and the centre and people not wanting to

waste their vote on a local government which has an opponent presiding over its fate at the centre.

The PML-N campaign has been the most vibrant with Maryam Nawaz roaring from one popular rally to another. Her infectious energy was reminiscent of Benazir Bhutto and like her they have put up a brave face against the militabishment. This should at least earn them a respectable place as the main opposition. The PPP has softened its stand against the PTI and for the sake of political relevance may end up supporting the PTI government in case that support is required.

The whole election process and the matter of its fairness and freeness are brought into question by the recent developments in AJK, especially Ali Amin Gandapur's transgression of electoral rules and the subsequent failure of the EC to reign him in. Another factor to be watched out is the anticipated diversion of PTI's path from the one charted by the militabishment which sooner or later is likely to have negative repercussions for the government in Islamabad and inevitably in Muzaffarabad as well.

<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/ajk-election-forecast/>

2 killed in rival political parties Clash in Kotli

Parliament Times, 25 July 2021

Two Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) workers were killed in a clash in Kotli during the Azad Kashmir Legislative

Assembly elections. According to media reports a clash broke out between the workers of two political parties in the LA-12 Charhoi constituency of Kotli in which two PTI workers were killed and seven others were injured in the firing.

SSP Raja Muhammad Akmal Khan said that one of the youths killed during the clash was identified as Zaheer and further investigation into the incident has been started. Police officials said that a heavy contingent of police has been deployed in the area after the incident and the situation in the area is under complete control.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2021/07/25/189576/#.YP-o7egzbIV>

'Will seek India's help' if administration fails to cooperate: PML-N Candidate

Geo News, 25 July 2021

PML-N candidate for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections from LA-35 Jammu-2, Chaudhary Muhammad Ismail Gujjar said that he would "seek India's help" if the local administration does not cooperate with him. This happened after the Deputy Commissioner allegedly kicked out PML-N and Muslim Conference polling agents after a heated argument.

According to the candidate, the behavior of the administration cast doubts over the free and fair nature of the elections. He also threatened of 'consequences' if the polling process wasn't allowed to be completed without any interference. After drawing flak due his controversial statement, the candidate retracted his

'help from India' statement and issued a clarification to the media

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/361593-ajk-elections-will-seek-indias-help-if-administration-fails-to-cooperate-pml-n-candidate-says>

Economic Developments

Gilgit-Baltistan to host first B-5 National Championship

Dawn, 19 July 2021

Five provincial teams from Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad along with the host GB will participate in the first ever B-5 championship to be held next month. Baseball 5 (B-5) is a modern format of softball & baseball in which the term baseball 5 refers, requirement or bases, a ball, and five players; this version of the merge is getting popular at a rapid pace in the world as it can be played anywhere with no big ground and no softball or baseball equipment needed.

The organizing committee delegation is expected to visit Gilgit-Baltistan soon for administrative matters. This was jointly announced by PBF president Syed Fakhar Shah and Secretary-General Asif Azeem. Fakhar Shah told the media that the B-5 championship will help promote the globally popular sport in Pakistan. Before the national championship, B-5 training and coaching workshops will be organized in Karachi and Lahore, in which players and coaches of schools, colleges, and universities will be trained.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1635969/gilgit-baltistan-to-host-first-b-5-national-championship>

Six PIA flights land at Skardu Airport

Business Recorder, 25 July 2021

In line with the vision of Prime Minister of Pakistan to promote domestic tourism, PIA has increased its flights to Skardu. The Skardu Airport is now handling flights like any other major airport of the country. The flights arrived from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Faisalabad and Sialkot.

CEO PIA, Air Marshal Arshad Malik sharing his views on the number of flights operated to Skardu in day thanked Prime Minister of Pakistan, Aviation Minister and Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan for their direction and support. He said that it is important that the beautiful destinations of northern areas may be introduced to foreigners and pledged that PIA as a National Flag Carrier will play its role in further enhancing domestic as well as International tourism. The first flight from Multan will also be soon received at Skardu. The PIA and the governments of Pakistan and GB have worked tirelessly to increase the air connectivity between GB and the rest of the country and this years has seen a phenomenal growth in the air capacity of PIA in northern province of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40108841>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

AJK govt grants magisterial powers to Army for elections

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 20 July 2021

On the Election Commission's request, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir

government granted magisterial powers to Pakistan Army officers summoned on July 25 to assist the electoral body and administration for maintaining law and order on the polling day.

Earlier this month it was reported that the army would be on "standby" to assist the conduct of the General Election for the Legislative Assembly on July 25 after a requisition request for troops was made by AJK Election Commission. A notification by the Ministry of Interior dated July 8 states that it is "pleased to authorise the deployment of Pakistan Army (standby) 1,600 x troops of Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) at highly sensitive polling stations and 4,000 x troops of Frontier Constabulary for conduct of General Election of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly scheduled to be held on 25th July 2021".

The notification went on to state that the exact dates of deployment will be worked out between the AJK government and its election commission and concerned authorities in Pakistan, subject to the laws enforced in the country. An approval by Prime Minister Imran Khan and the Federal Cabinet for the deployment of troops to AJK has already been obtained.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/1-5.jpg>

Vaccination in Gilgit-Baltistan targeted to be completed by September: Chief Minister

Daily K2, 24 July 2021

Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid Khan has said that 10,000 people are being

vaccinated daily in Gilgit-Baltistan. The target

is to complete the vaccination of the entire population by September. He said that the number of beds in hospitals in the province was being tripled for the patients of Corona and there was no shortage of oxygen in the area. Gilgit-Baltistan ranks first in the country in terms of vaccination. 39% of the population has already been vaccinated. The Chief Minister said that the manner in which the NCOC has handled corona is appreciated by the whole world. He also said that lockdown is not the solution to the problem. The Corona Virus has become a part of life. SOPs should be strictly followed and vaccination drive needs to be conducted efficiently. The chief minister said the lockdown could reduce the speed of spread of the virus and the pressure on the hospitals may be lessened but the epidemic will not be completely eradicated. 'The policy of smart lockdown is going on in the province. The current wave of Corona is caused by virus that originated in India which is more dangerous'. The Chief Minister said that if people in Gilgit-Baltistan do not take precaution, they would be forced to lock down which would affect economic activities.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/2843>

Position of political parties in Refugee seats of AJK

Daily Ausaaf, 25 July 2021

Polling for Azad Kashmir elections is going to be held on Sunday, July 25. All major political parties in Pakistan have been campaigning for almost a month.

The PML-N has been in power in Azad Kashmir for the last five years and this is its plus point. The PPP has a very strong vote bank in some constituencies and here it seems to be competing fiercely. Although the PTI has been limited here in the past, it is the first election in which it has fielded candidates for almost all the seats. The Muslim Conference seems to be fighting for its survival. The general impression is that the elections in Azad Kashmir have been won by the party which has a government in Islamabad.

Political analysts while speaking about the 12 seats reserved for refugees Azad Jammu and Kashmir assembly spread from Gujarat to Karachi, say that the ruling PTI is likely to win 7 to 8 seats while 4 seats may go to N-League and other parties. If this analysis is correct, this should help PTI in getting a simple majority in the 45-member House granted they perform as per expectations in other constituencies as well. However, because of the vastness of these constituencies and disparities in the demographic, these seats are controversial because they could be manipulated by the party in power at the centre. Allegations of rigging have already been raised by the PPP and PML-N. By the looks of it, PTI is the favorite to be the largest party but it will still have to defend the process that makes them so.

<https://dailyausaf.com/kashmir/news-202107-116281.html>

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Disclaimer

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