

Weekly POK News Digest

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election
Floriculture **PTI**
Attabad Lake
POK **Hydropower Project**
Gilgit-Baltistan **interim province**



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Political Developments

'AJK' president elections to take place on August 17

The Nation, 10 August 2021

The 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission announced that the election for 'AJK's president is scheduled to take place on August 17 from 10am to 2pm. The nomination papers will be filed on August 12 and, on the same day these nominations will scrutinized, said the issued notification.

The candidates can withdraw their nominations till August 16 and the polling will take place on August 17 from 10am to 2pm at the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly Hall. The newly-elected president will take oath on August 24 when Sardar Masood Khan's tenure comes to an end.

Moreover, the schedule of election for seats of four members of 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir Council (AJK) has also been announced. For the election of these four members, polling will be held on August 23, 2021 at Assembly Hall.

<https://nation.com.pk/10-Aug-2021/election-commission-of-ajk-issues-schedule-for-presidential-elections>

IPHRC concludes five-day visit to AJK

Express Tribune, 10 August 2021

The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) concluded its five-day visit to Pakistan and 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) today.

The 12-member IPHRC delegation was led by its chairperson, Dr. Saeed Al Ghufli, and undertook the visit to 'AJK' to meet with refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir and assess the "deteriorating human rights situation" there.

In 'AJK', the IPHRC delegation called on President Masood Khan and widely interacted with Kashmiri refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir, the leadership of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Kashmiri civil society members and media representatives. The IPHRC delegation also visited the Line of Control (LoC) and met with the victims of cease-fire violations. "The IPHRC delegation also witnessed the human impact of the indiscriminate shelling carried out by Indian security forces across the LoC which results in the precious loss of lives, injuries to civilians including women and children, and damage to civilian property and infrastructure in AJK," the foreign office said.

Several requests have been made by the IPHRC to India over the years to allow a fact-finding mission to visit Srinagar. All have been denied.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2314866/iphrc-concludes-five-day-visit-to-ajk>

PTI names Barrister Sultan candidate for AJK president slot

Dawn, 12 August 2021

Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry is set to become the new President of 'Azad' Jammu Kashmir as the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf finalized his name for the top slot. Barrister was

previously a strong candidate for AJK Prime Minister's slot along with Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan but both of them were eventually dropped by the PTI national leadership. Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi was eventually elected the new 'AJK' premier.

Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur yesterday announced that Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry had been nominated as the presidential candidate for 'AJK' by the ruling PTI. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan had approved the name of Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry as he has held a prominent position in the 'AJK' politics for many years. The presidential election for 'AJK' is set to be held on August 17.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1640141/pti-names-barrister-sultan-candidate-for-ajk-president-slot>

Religious and Social Stratification of Politics in Gilgit-Baltistan

Opinion, Pamir Times, 13 August 2021

The political spectrum of Gilgit-Baltistan resembles the other four provinces of Pakistan, in one way or other. Feudal lords, elites and industrialists continue to have the legacy of holding key roles in politics to quench their thirst of power and authority. Likewise, the elite of Gilgit-Baltistan are playing cards in power corridors have no time to decide the fate of the down trodden and the poor.

The popular opinion is that the poor lack resources and capital to garner votes. If someone from lower or middle class raise voice for the voiceless, she or he is compelled to withdraw. This divide erodes the system from inside

out. The major caste identities in Gilgit-Baltistan i.e., Sheen, Yashkun, Dom and Kamin, also come into play during elections. The chest thumping ego of Sheen and Yashkun always make them resort to confrontation on "Election Day" and during election campaign. Dom and Kamin community replicate them. Therefore the will of the people is docile and democratic norms on which the Assembly should stand gradually getting atomized.

Religious and sectarian divide also plays a pivotal role in GB politics. The populace in Gilgit-Baltistan mostly follow the clergy on religious and political issues. Clergy is considered one of the power houses to elect the desired candidate and people follow suit. It is an unhealthy and unfortunate practice in Gilgit-Baltistan. Social stratification is entrenched in the political canvas of Gilgit-Baltistan. It is chronic to the "democratic" institutions and the bulwarks behind.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2021/08/13/religious-and-social-stratification-of-politics-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Niazi Pays Tribute to Jinnah on the eve of Independence Day

Urdu Point, 13 August 2021

'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi has paid rich tribute to the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his untiring efforts to carve out a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent.

Addressing the nation on the eve of Pakistan's independence day, Prime Minister said that Pakistan was achieved after a long struggle of

Muslims of the sub-continent under the charismatic and dynamic leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Prime Minister reassured Kashmiri brethren that the people of Pakistan and AJK were firmly standing behind them and the day was not far when the occupied Kashmir will be liberated from Indian clutches and Kashmiri will celebrate the Independence Day of Pakistan together.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/niazi-pays-tribute-to-jinnah-on-independence-1326014.html>

New 'AJK' set up: All prime ministerial hopefuls get a slice of the cake

The News, 15 August 2021

In order to avoid a power struggle within the party and healing the hurt egos of the senior party members sidelined for the premier post of the 'AJK' Prime Minister, PTI is calming the temperatures down by awarding prestigious offices to all its Prime Ministerial hopefuls.

Veteran Kashmiri politician Barrister Sultan Mahmood's willingness to accept the mere ceremonial post of the 'AJK' president has defused the dispute and seemingly alleviated his disappointment over not being given the prime ministerial slot.

Billionaire Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, who was another leading aspirant for the position of the AJK prime minister has been awarded a slot in the new 'AJK' cabinet. The two other aspirants -- Khawaja Farooq and Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq -- who had also been interviewed

by Imran Khan, are also being inducted in the new cabinet.

By inducting all the four main contenders for the office of the 'Azad' Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) prime minister in key government positions, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) has tried to surmount a simmering row in the 'AJK' party. However, it also means that there is a greater difficulty for the PM to maintain his primacy in a star studded cabinet.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/878582-new-ajk-set-up-all-prime-ministerial-hopefuls-get-a-slice-of-the-cake>

Economic Developments

Floriculture in GB Ideal to Generate Income, Promote Women Entrepreneurship

Urdu Point, 08 August 2021

The project head "Promotion of Floriculture in Gilgit Baltistan (GB)" Hina Maryam has said that the entire region of Pakistan had a favorable environment and best quality soil in the world to raise a variety of flowers from locals to foreign species.

She said that the potential was especially high in GB as the environment of the area was suitable for flower production. The region had low rainfall and moderate climate which was prerequisite for better flower production. The Floriculture could be promoted in GB through cultivation of high value flowers.

She, however, regretted that the floriculture industry was not so developed in Pakistan despite the

conducive atmosphere and high potential primarily due to lack of attention and limited knowledge about its "worth and value".

"The output from flower business is much more than any other agri-business. Presently, the cash crops in GB like Potatoes and Cherries give farmers less output of only Rs 50,000 to Rs 90,000 per kanal annually. But the farmers can get one million to two million rupees on cultivation of flowers on one kanal land as flowers are very expensive in big cities.

The GB flower market can meet the 70 percent flowers demand from local production which is imported from other countries," she added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/miscellaneous/flori-culture-in-gb-ideal-to-generate-income-1321394.html>

ECNEC approves Rs25.4bn Attabad Lake hydropower project

Business Recorder, 12 August 2021

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) which met here on Wednesday has asked the government of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) to prepare an updated proposal regarding the 54 MW Attabad Lake Hydropower Project for approval.

During meeting of ECNEC, which was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin, the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives presented a summary regarding Attabad Lake Hydropower Project to be executed by WAPDA amounting to Rs25.4 billion.

Federal Minister for Planning & Development Asad Umar, Advisor to the PM on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to the PM on Institutional Reforms and Austerity, Dr Ishrat Hussain, federal secretaries and other senior officers participated in the meeting.

The project envisages construction of 54 MW hydropower project located on the bank of Hunza River, towards downstream end of Attabad Lake. The energy generated from the above project will be transmitted to the load centres in Hunza Valley.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40112884/ecnec-approves-rs254bn-attabad-lake-hydropower-project>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

India seeking escape from the ceasefire agreement: Foreign Office

Daily Jasaarat, 09 August 2021

Foreign Office spokesman in his media briefing in Islamabad said that India is looking for excuses to flee the ceasefire agreement. India needs to refrain from misleading the world about the situation in Kashmir and they should also abstain from leveling baseless allegations of so-called infiltration against Pakistan. India's heinous conspiracies against Pakistan are common.

Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry said that 900,000, if not more, Indian soldiers are present in occupied Kashmir but still they are blaming Pakistan for 'infiltration'. The spokesman also pointed out that these allegations were unoriginal and

blandly repetitive and India's hate campaign against Pakistan has now been exposed to the world.

"I said that India is involved in state terrorism against Occupied Kashmir and Pakistan. The Samjhauta Express tragedy in February 2007 and the Lahore blast in June 2021 give indisputable proof of India's involvement in state terrorism and its sponsorship," the spokesperson said.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2021/08/09/210809-1-2/>

Decisions regarding Provisional Provincial status will be taken through consensus of all stake holders: GB Government

Daily K2, 11 August 2021

An important meeting was held in Islamabad regarding the constitutional amendment to make Gilgit-Baltistan an interim province. The meeting was chaired by Federal Minister for Law, Barrister Farogh Naseem and was attended by Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister, Khalid Khurshid, Federal Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Legal Adviser GB, Sohail Abbas and other senior federal and provincial officials.

In the meeting, it was decided that the Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan would present the proposals and proposed amendments before the parliamentary committee and also take suggestions from them. According to sources, all stakeholders are presenting their views for making Gilgit-Baltistan a transitional province and the government has assured that any decision will be taken through building a consensus among all stakeholders for all relevant matters including representation and changes to the

Supreme Court and Parliament. The government said that this time there wouldn't be ordinances to bring in changes but reforms would be brought through regular constitutional amendments.

Prime Minister Imran Khan last year announced the formation of Gilgit-Baltistan as a transitional province for which he had formed a high-level committee. A committee headed by the federal law minister is considering various aspects of amending the constitution to make GB an interim province. The next meeting of the committee will be held in fifteen days.

<https://www.dailyk2.com/Post/3030>

'AJK' PM bans new appointments, transfers in all government departments

Jang, 13 August 2021

Newly elected Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan Niazi has announced a ban on appointments and transfers in all government departments. He also demanded details regarding the placements in primary and security education through NTS (National Testing Service). He also ordered a halt to the implementation of the local government's developmental policies and tendering processes until further orders.

These orders later transpired into official notifications from the Services department of the 'AJK' government. The Prime Minister has also asked for a detailed report of all the appointments made within government offices after the announcement of the poll schedule a couple of months earlier. The report is

to reach the 'AJK' PM's Secretariat after going through the Chief Secretary's office.

<https://e.jang.com.pk/08-13-2021/london/pic.asp?picname=312.png>

'AJK' celebrates Pakistan's Independence Day with fervour

Daily Jammu Kashmir Times, 15 August 2021

The people of Azad Jammu & Kashmir celebrated the 75th Independence Day of Pakistan with national zeal and fervour besides marking Kashmir Solidarity Day to express solidarity with the suffering, freedom-loving people in the curfew-clamped Indian-occupied Jammu Kashmir State.

The historic day was marked with renewal of the pledge that the Jammu & Kashmir would continue the ongoing struggle for its right to self-determination till the struggle reaches its logical end despite India's sinister move of ending special status of the disputed Jammu & Kashmir state through abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A of her constitution.

A public holiday was observed across the liberated region. Flag hoisting ceremonies were also held in all ten district headquarters as well as tehsil headquarters of AJK including the capital city of Muzaffarabad, besides Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimbher Bagh, Sudhanoti, Bhimbher, Rawalakot, Havaili, Jhelum valley and Neelum valley districts. The flag hoisting ceremonies and Kashmir Solidarity Day rallies were also held at all tehsil headquarters as well as subordinate towns and villages. The national flag of Pakistan was also hoisted on private

and public buildings. Great enthusiasm was witnessed among the people including children found hectically busy purchasing national flags of Pakistan.

<http://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1-2.jpg>

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Disclaimer

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