

## AJK-based Christian community celebrates Christmas with full traditional religious zeal, fervor



میرپور: ڈپٹی کمشنر چوہدری ساجد اسلم کریمس کے موقع پر مسیحی برادری کو پھول دے رہے ہیں

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MIRPUR (AJK): Dec. 25: In Azad Jammu Kashmir, Christmas, the birth day of Jesus Christ (AS) – the religious festival of Christian fraternity, was also celebrated in AJK including all three districts of Mirpur division on Thursday with fullest traditional religious fervor and devotion and with the renewal of the pledge to continue spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ (AS) for maintaining complete harmony, brotherhood and love and affection among the humanity, it was officially said.

The Christian community in the area prayed through special prayer services for the progress, prosperity and sovereignty of Pakistan and the freedom of Occupied Kashmir from long Indian subjugation. They prayed for the unity, solidarity, progress and prosperity of Pakistan coupled with the renewal of the pledge to perform an active role for the stability, progress and prosperity of Pakistan side by side the majority Muslim community of the country, the Christian community” organizations, hosting the Christmas ceremonies told our Special Jammu Kashmir state Correspondent Altaf Hamid Rao here Thursday evening.

Special Christmas ceremonies were hosted at Mangla (Mirpur) and at District Council Hall Mirpur under the auspices of Christian Welfare Foundation the central organization of local Christian community and other representative organizations of the Christian community with the support and coordination of the local social welfare and public representative organizations of the

majority muslim community, in Mirpur district to celebrate the Christmas with great enthusiasm and devotion and religious zeal and fervor, the organizers said while elaborating the day long ceremonies.

Mirpur-AJK Deputy Commissioner Sajid Aslam Chaudhry was the chief guest on these occasions besides other senior officials of the district and tehsil administrations. SSP Mirpur Khurram Iqbal also graced the occasion being guest of honour.

The ceremonies were also attended by large number of people from classes of the Christian community. The venues of the ceremonies were beautifully decorated with colorful buntings and banners. Special gifts were distributed among the children and the social workers

Addressing the ceremonies, speakers including the DC Sajid Aslam Chaudhry, Mirpur SSP Khurram Iqbal and the leaders of Christian Welfare Foundation including Priest Naveed Qaiser Supreme Head of the Foundation Younis Bhatti and others said that the Jesus Christ (AS) gave the message of love and affection and tolerance, which, they added, is required to be observed by all classes of the humanity to establish peace and harmony across the globe.

Speakers said that all segments of the society shall have to work collectively above the religious difference for the sake of safety and eternity of the humanity.

Speakers vowed to lend all of potential and capabilities for the speedy progress, prosperity, solidarity and integrity of the country and promoting and maintaining complete harmony and brotherhood among all classes of the society.

Earlier addressing, a day earlier, a largely-attended ceremony marking the advent of the Christmas celebrations in Azad Jammu Kashmir, here, the Chairmen of Christian Welfare Foundation of AJK Younis Bhatti reiterated his community's resolve by declaring that the minorities in Pakistan including Azad Jammu Kashmir will not lag behind to serve for the speedy progress and prosperity of the country including AJK side by side their fellow countrymen belonging to the majority Muslim community of the country.

Prominent local Christian leaders including central president of the community religious leader Babu Arshad, Father Yaqoob Sajaad, Javeid Younis Gill, President Christian Welfare Foundation AJK and others also addressed the ceremony, according to the chief host of the major ceremony.

Bhatti, also the Executive Member of National Council of Christian said that minorities including Christian community in the country including AJK were enjoying full liberty to perform their religious rites and other obligations – since they were enjoying an excellent life coupled with all benefits along with other fellow-countrymen.

The Christian community leader called for immediate establishment of a Christian Colony for homeless local Christians besides the reservation of site for the establishment of grand Church in Mirpur district. He said that although the AJK government has accorded approval for construction of both the projects in this district – but both the much-need projects were being made the victim of traditional red tapism at the hands of the concerned lower revenue department staff most particularly the ‘patwaris’, he blamed.

Bhatti underlined that the former AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan had laid the foundation stone of a Christian colony in AJK, during his tenure in power few years back for housing the shelterless state subject Christians living in AJK. He called upon the AJK government for continuation of performance of this high gesture to facilitate the minority christian community dwelling in various parts of AJK.

He also called for the simplification of the process for registration of eligible state-subject Christian voters hailing from the state to enable the community to exercise their right of vote in the coming AJK Assembly elections.

Younis Bhatti continued that because of the liberal approach of the government and the people of Pakistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir, the soil of motherland – Pakistan and AJK are the paradise for the minority communities where there was complete sovereignty and freedom to them to perform

their religious and other due obligations.

He declared that the minority Christian community will not hesitate to give any sacrifice to make the Kashmir freedom movement complete success. Since the minorities are bent upon to pay their due share for the achievement of Kashmiris legitimate right to self determination, he added.

Bhattii said that the minorities will bring about all of their potentials for the speedy progress, prosperity and uplift of the country and will leave no stone unturned to make the defense of the country more stronger up to the required extent.

Younis Bhatti said that all religious festival of Christian community including Easter and Christmas are celebrated every year with fullest religious solemnity and fervor. The meeting marked the day of pledge to serve for the maintenance of religious obligations by the community besides for the welfare of the community and uplift and prosperity of the country including AJK.

He said that there was complete freedom to the minorities across Azad Jammu Kashmir to perform their religious rights and other traditional and cultural obligations like other parts of Pakistan at par with the majority Muslim population of the country.

The AJK CWF Chairman said that his organization was striving hard for the uplift and welfare of the Christian community inhabiting across AJK including Mirpur division. Chairman Christian

Welfare Society said that his organization prepared an integrated Christian community welfare plan by proposing to the government for early establishment of an exclusive graveyard for the Christian community in Mirpur, elderly people, widows, recreation projects for welfare of children, youth, women, and most particularly for the physical growth of the sick including handicapped persons belonging to the local Christian community. The plan also primarily involve special attention for the promotion of the role of minorities to encourage the efforts for boosting the interfaith religious harmony in the healthy society.

Participants also offered special prayers for the speedy progress, prosperity and security and stability of the country and early liberation of occupied Jammu & Kashmir from the Indian unlawful occupation.