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## **Community of Gulmit starts work for restoration of Ondra Fort**

Posted on October 29, 2010 by Pamir Times



A view of the fort's exterior wall.

**PT Report, Photos: Asghar Khan**

**Gulmit, October 28:** Located above a hill on northern end of the polo ground in Gulmit, the head-quarter of Gojal Tehsil, are ruins of the historic Ondra Fort, built hundreds of years ago by the local people as a defence against invaders.

According to local oral history the fort was built hundreds of years ago during the regime of Mir Qutlugh. However, much is not known about exact history of the fort. Some boundary walls of the fort were built or repaired with mud and stones around 150 years ago, according to sources, but the inner rooms and walls are much older.

The fort has been ruined by climatic variations, as well as human interferences. Wooden doors of the fort's rooms were taken out by the local people several years ago for personal usage. However, now the people have agreed to return the doors and other valuables taken from the fort earlier for the restoration project.

It is pertinent to note that Ondra Fort restoration project would be the first of its kind in the region, completely initiated by the local community. The local people have also started generously donating money for the restoration project. The local community is relying on internal funding because generally the donors do not invest in restoration of ruins.

A local notable, Ayub Khan, has been selected by the villagers as Chairman of the restoration project of Ondra Fort.

The committee has held meetings with the villagers and the project has been launched with consensus.

The restoration project committee has urged the youth of Gojal Valley to come forward for restoration of a symbol of the region's history on self-help basis.

The plan seems to be rebuilding and strengthening of the outer walls of the fort, as well as re-installation of the removed wooden doors and roofs, where possible. One or two of the restored rooms of the fort will be used to showcase relics of the region's history, including different equipment taken by the local villagers several years ago from the fort itself.

In a time of ICT led coming together and, in many cases, integration of global cultures and civilizations, it is important to preserve symbols of the past. Identity and self-worth are determined by confidence in and knowledge of one's history.

The restoration project of Ondra Fort is an excellent example of civic engagement and symbolizes the people's interest in their history and the willingness to work together for a common goal.









