

POK NEWS DIGEST

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Volume 4

Number 3

March 2011

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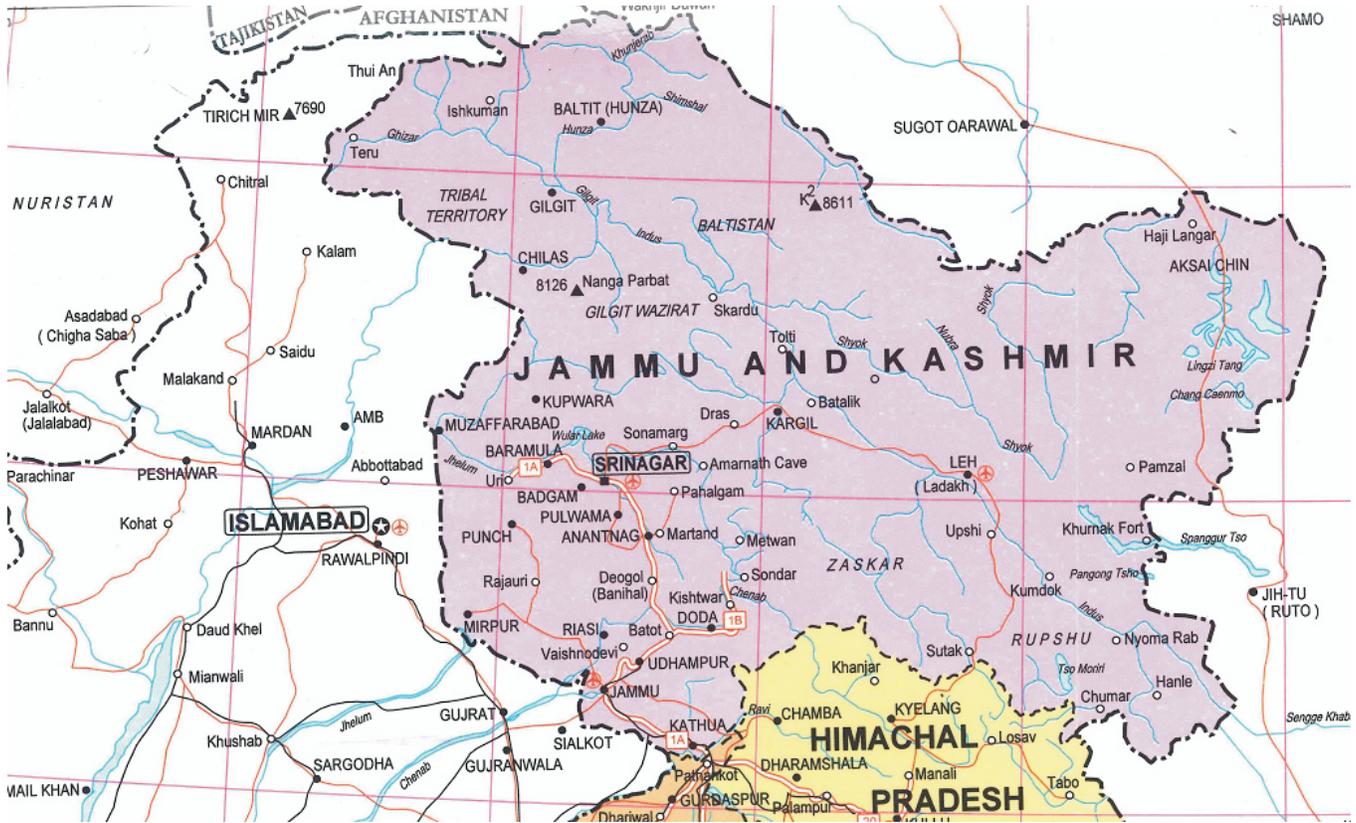
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Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: Based on the Survey of India Map, Govt of India 2000)

In this Edition

Until a few years back, PoK was largely unnoticed on the global scene because of Pakistan's deliberate attempt to keep the occupied territory under closed wraps. The international attention focused on PoK only in the aftermath of 2005 earthquake as part of several relief and rehabilitation projects. Later, Chinese foray in PoK brought the region to the notice of rest of the world including western countries. Chinese presence in PoK bears a great deal of geo strategic implications not only for the immediate neighbourhood but beyond that. A report included in the issue describes China's reckless involvement in building infrastructure in PoK without any heed to the ecological fragility of the region.

Presently, PoK witnesses unprecedented involvement of a number of countries in various developmental projects and the socio economic sector. For instance, a Scottish university has expressed willingness to collaborate with local university in Gilgit as indicated in one of the reports under international developments. The possibility of PoK being able to get some level of international exposure is nonetheless a positive development in itself.

Cross LoC trade reached 70 million mark amidst demands by traders on both sides that they be allowed to use American dollars for exchange of goods. Also, the traders are keen to travel freely on either side of the LoC for business purposes. Such demands were raised in meeting of traders from PoK and J&K.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Gilgit-Baltistan assembly: Resolution slams rules violation in hirings

The Express Tribune, February 1, 2011

GILGIT: Lawmakers in Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly passed a resolution on January 31 calling for strong action against department heads violating recruitment rules. Lawmakers also asked the government to ensure the adoption of service rules. The resolution, tabled by Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee Syed Raziuddin, was unanimously approved. "Rules have persistently been violated over the past two decades," Raziuddin stated, adding that the Public Works Department (PWD), police, education department, health and livestock were some departments where merit was overlooked in appointments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/112286/gilgit-baltistan-assembly-resolution-slams-rules-violation-in-hirings/>

Shahbbir Mir, Peace is my priority, says G-B governor

The Express Tribune, February 2, 2011

GILGIT: Declaring peace in the region is my government's top priority, newly appointed governor to Gilgit-Baltistan, Pir Karam Ali Shah, stated on February 1. "If there is no peace, development is elusive. We should first ensure that peace is here," Shah noted soon after he was sworn in as governor Gilgit-Baltistan on February 1.

The seasoned politician, who hails from Ghizer valley, has served as deputy chief executive of the region in 1994. After the death of Dr Shamma Khalid, Pir Karam Ali is the second governor of Gilgit-Baltistan apart from Wazir Baig, who was acting governor for almost five months. Chief Judge of Supreme Appellate Court, Justice Nawaz Khan Abbasi administered oath to him. Chief Minister Mehdi Shah, cabinet members and advisers

attended the ceremony. "President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani have been taking keen interest in the affairs of this region," stated the governor as he was greeted by PPP workers in the historic Chinar Bagh. Chief Minister Mehdi Shah noted it was his desire that someone from the PPP should be made governor.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/112809/peace-is-my-priority-says-g-b-governor/>

Legislating in G-B: Corporation status for tourism, mineral sector

The Express Tribune, February 3, 2011

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) assembly is set to legislate on tourism and mineral deposits as the G-B Council has finalised its recommendations for awarding both the sectors the status of corporations, sources stated on February 2. An electricity board will be instituted for the power sector, sources added. "The managing committee of the G-B Council has discussed and prepared its recommendations. The laws will be incorporated soon," said a provincial government official. "Various laws dealing with minerals and tourism in other provinces are being studied by authorities in G-B, with an aim to replicate successful models in the region," he noted, adding the bills are expected to be passed from the assembly easily, as legislators do not have specialised knowledge on the subjects.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/113402/legislating-in-g-b-corporation-status-for-tourism-mineral-sector/>

PM directs Water & Power Ministry for early completion of power houses on Sadpara Dam Project

February 5, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has directed the Ministry of Water and Power to take immediate steps for the early completion of

the construction of two power houses on the left bank of Sadpara Dam Project in Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan to ensure smooth and uninterrupted power supply to the local population, as noted in a press release. The Prime Minister in his visit to Skardu in November, 2009 announced construction of these power houses on the left bank of Sadpara Dam Project. The project is considered to be a main lifeline in the socio-economic uplift of the local people.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=174719>

President launches medical college project for Mirpur in AJK

Pakistan Times, February 6, 2011

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari here on February 5 launched Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Medical College project at Mirpur in Azad Kashmir. President Azad Kashmir Raja Zulfikar Khan, AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan and political leaders of Kashmir region were present at the unveiling of the project. The project will be completed at a cost of Rs. 400 million. The classes at the college will start in January, 2012. Later, the college will be upgraded to University of Health Sciences.

<http://www.pakistantimes.net/pt/detail.php?newsId=18782>

Musharraf caused irreparable loss to Kashmir issue: Raja Zafarul Haq

February 6, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Raja Zafarul Haq on February 5 noted that former dictator Pervez Musharraf had caused irreparable loss to Kashmir issue. He stated this during his address to a special function held about Kashmir Solidarity Day at PML-N Secretariat. Raja Zafarul Haq said that those including Musharraf damaged the Kashmir issue faced defeat in their purposes. The history witnessed that PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif had announced public holiday on February 05. However, Musharraf tried to end functions on Kashmir Day and even registered cases against the PML-N workers under Terrorism

Act for staging rallies on Kashmir Solidarity Day, the PML-N Chairman added.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=174742>

Shabbir Mir, Shah says no plans to trim Gilgit-Baltistan cabinet

The Express Tribune, February 14, 2011

GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Mehdi Shah dispelled the impression that G-B cabinet's rightsizing or reshuffling was on the cards. "We have got a small cabinet, and it does not require further downsizing," Shah noted on February 13. He said he would also discuss the issue of appointment of advisers in the G-B council with the prime minister as the matter has already been delayed sufficiently.

Asked if the employees serving on contract in various departments in G-B would be sacked as per the directives of the Supreme Court, Shah further noted that some of them have already been released from their duties while the rest will soon follow suit. He added that employees serving in corporations and projects do not fall in this category.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/118475/shah-says-no-plans-to-trim-gilgit-baltistan-cabinet/>

PPP to win AJK polls

The News, February 14, 2011

Azad Kashmir leader Amira Batool has predicted a massive victory for the party in the upcoming polls. Addressing the media on February 13, the AJK leader stated Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto brought the issue of Kashmir before the world after which major focus was shifted towards it. To a question, she appreciated Chinese decision to issue visas to Kashmiri students on separate passports instead of the Indian passports. Earlier, Advocate Batool accompanied by Sarfraz Naqvi visited the residence of Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Member Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din to condole the sad demise of his mother.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=31039&Cat=5&dt=2/14/2011>

Shabbir Mir, Anti-people mining law: G-B government warned of protests

The Express Tribune, February 16, 2011

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) chapter of the Labour Party Boloristan (LPB) has sought legislation on mining in the mountain region to protect the rights of the people. "All natural resources, including minerals, found in the mountains of G-B are the sole property of the people," noted a statement issued by the party chief Advocate Ehsan Ali in Gilgit on February 15.

The LPB leader questioned the policy adopted by the past governments on issuing licences to non-local companies for exploration and extraction of gemstones and stated, "We will not let it happen now."

Earlier this month, news of the G-B assembly's plans to legislate on mineral and gemstone mining in G-B triggered a heated debate that still continues in various forums. These resources belong to the local people and they are the sole custodians of these. The legislation should be according to what we want, Ali stated, warning if the legislation did not reflect local people's wishes, his party would bring people onto the streets. "The government will be responsible for any eventuality," he warned.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/119514/anti-people-mining-law-g-b-government-warned-of-protests/>

Common interests and common future

The News, February 16, 2011

Against the backdrop of the recent meeting between foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan in Thimpu (Bhutan) where they agreed to resume dialogue on all outstanding issues including Kashmir, the Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation organised a dialogue conference, Common Interests and Common Future: Dialogue across the LoC, at New Delhi on February 13 and 14, 2011.

Politicians, academicians, former bureaucrats, social workers, traders and journalists from both sides of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir besides eminent personalities from India and

Pakistan met at the conference to discuss issues of common concern. Prominent personalities from Pakistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan who were invited included Sherry Rehman, Member of Pakistan Parliament, Justice Majeed Malik, former Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Dr Humayun Khan, former Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Aziz Ahmad Khan, former Pakistani High Commissioner to India, Nasim Zehra, Security Analyst & Journalist, Dr. Toqueer Gilani, Senior Leader and member JKLf and Hafeezur Rahman, President PML-N Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=31358&Cat=14&dt=2/16/2011>

Kashmiri leader says AJK ruled by mafia

The News, February 27, 2011

A secular Kashmiri nationalist group has stated that the political system in Azad Kashmir had become so corrupt in favour of the few that the youth were joining militant groups and leaving for foreign countries risking everything.

Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, Chairman of the United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP) with branches in Europe and Azad Kashmir, told supporters of his rally here that Azad Kashmir was under the control of a mafia, which was favoured by Islamabad because the established political parties only spoke the language dictated to them.

He warned that if the exodus of youth was not stopped through jobs and incentives locally then it would put at risk the peaceful and liberal nature of the traditional Kashmiri society. Kashmiri stated his party would carry on with the peaceful struggle for the unification and sovereignty of the people of former princely state of Kashmir despite facing the state opposition in many ways. "We pushed back the enemies of our national rights in early 90's with a peaceful campaign in Azad Kashmir regions and Gilgit Baltistan. We were the first ones to bridge the gulf between the political and democratic forces of both regions to restore their historic relations. We did it as the state machinery ployed against us.

Those policies of divisions against the progressive elements continue today,” noted Kashmiri.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=33300&Cat=2&dt=2/27/2011>

Shabbir Mir, Mother tongue: Shina group endorses language bill

The Express Tribune, February 22, 2011

GILGIT: The Shina Language and Culture Promotion Society (SLCPS) endorsed a bill tabled in parliament to expand the number of national languages and have asked the Gilgit-Baltistan government to help ensure its passage in the national legislature. “Everybody should lobby and support the bill to see it through,” said Ishtiaq Yaad, general secretary of the SLCPS, urging Gilgit Baltistan legislators to actively play a role in the bill's passage.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/122065/mother-tongue-shina-group-endorses-language-bill/>

British Parliamentarians calls on Wattoo

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 22, 2011

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of British Parliamentarians called on Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan, Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo in Islamabad on February 21. The delegation was led by Lord Nazir Ahmad, Chairman All Parties Parliamentary Group on Kashmir. Mr. Richard Harkton, Andrew Griffith, Simon Danzdock, Karen Brak and Prof Nazir A Shawl were also part of the delegation. The Federal Minister thanked all the parliamentarians for showing interest in Kashmir. Answering a question, the Minister said free, fair and transparent elections would be held in Azad Kashmir in next few months.

http://ftpapp.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=131584&Itemid=1

Pakistan has no right to discuss Gilgit-Baltistan in its parliament: BNF chief

February 22, 2011

The Chairman of the Balawaristan National Front (BNF), Abdul Hamid Khan, has criticized a move

by the Government of Pakistan to raise the issue of Gilgit-Baltistan in the country's Parliament. "Marvi Maman's move in the Pakistan National Assembly is another trick of Pakistani hidden rulers to diffuse the international pressure about Gilgit Baltistan," stated Khan.

"Her unwanted move by presenting herself as the representative of GB (Gilgit-Baltistan) is nothing but a drama on behalf of Pakistani hidden hands. Pakistan has only one option according to UNCIP resolutions, that is to withdraw its forces and civilians and handover the control to the people of Gilgit Baltistan under the supervision of the United Nations", Khan added.

<http://www.sify.com/news/pakistan-has-no-right-to-discuss-gilgit-baltistan-in-its-parliament-bnf-chief-news-international-lcxvOedhhdh.html>

British MPs for peaceful settlement of Kashmir issue

The Express Tribune, February 24, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: British parliamentarians stressed the need for peaceful settlement of Kashmir issue, which is vital for establishing durable peace in South Asia. They called for a comprehensive dialogue between Pakistan and India. Addressing receptions held for the visiting MPs by Azad Kashmir Prime Minister and other political parties in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur, Secretary General of British Parliament's Kashmir committee Richard Irwin Harrington assured Kashmiris of their support.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/123085/british-mps-for-peaceful-settlement-of-kashmir-issue/>

CIA network present from Karachi to Gilgit, discloses Baig

South Asian News Agency (SANA), February 26, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Former chief of army Gen (retd) Mirza Aslam Baig disclosed that the American Central Investigation Agency (CIA) has the network of its agents from Karachi to Gilgit. He said that the CIA expand there network under the

shadow of aegis of former dictator Pervez Musharraf. allowed CIA to expand its network for his personal interests.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/2011/02/26/cia-network-present-from-karachi-to-gilgit-discloses-baig/>

Raza Rabbani holds meeting with AJK Prime Minister

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 26, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Mian Coordination Raza Rabbani held meeting with Prime Minister of AJK Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan on February 25 in the Parliament House in Islamabad. According to the office of the Minister, Mian Raza Rabbani emphasized the need to fully cooperate and support in all areas of mutual interest. During the meeting, problems being faced by AJK were also discussed in detail and both the leaders agreed to end such problems through frequent meetings and discussion.

http://app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=131948&Itemid=2

CM GB meets Rehman Malik: Law and order issues discussed

February 18, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan

(GB) Syed Mehdi Shah and Interior Minister Rehman Malik amicably discussed problems confronted by the masses and law and order situation in the area. According to press release issued in Islamabad on February 17, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah and Interior Minister Rehman Malik held meeting to discuss different issues.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=175266>

Sikander Shaheen, Political manoeuvring at peak

The Nation, February 20, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Political manoeuvring is in full swing in AJK these days as Upper House of AJK Legislative Assembly braces for elections on February 21. The mainstream political parties are using all 'means' to get their candidates elected in Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council. Initially eleven candidates had submitted papers for AJKC elections but five of them withdrew thus curtailing the number of contests to six.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/20-Feb-2011/Political-manoevring-at-peak>

Economic Developments

AJK taxpayers allowed 'sales tax repayment

Daily Times, February 15, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on February 14 allowed repayment of sales tax to persons registered in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) with retrospective effect from June 6, 2005 as against the earlier decision of December 24, 2008. In this regard, the FBR authorities issued a SRO 116 (i) 2011 to amend the SRO 1295 (i) 2008 and with this amendment FBR has amended the repayment of sales tax to persons registered in Azad Jammu and Kashmir Rules, 2008.

The amendment shall be applicable to such persons or class of persons who are registered under the Sales Tax Act, 1990, as adapted in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, hereinafter referred to as AJK registered persons, for the purpose of repayment of sales tax as envisaged in section 61A of the Sales Tax Act, 1990.

Authorisation for repayment of sales tax: The AJK registered persons shall be entitled to receive repayment of input tax paid on any goods acquired in or imported into Pakistan as in excess of output tax declared in their respective monthly returns, provided such input tax relates to their supplies which are either zero-rated or are exported outside Pakistan against a Pakistan Customs Goods Declaration.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C02%5C15%5Cstory_15-2-2011_pg5_9

Neelum Jhelum Project: AJK compensated with over Rs1 billion

The Express Tribune, February 5, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) has given Rs1.105 billion to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Government for land compensation and resettlement package for

those affected by the Neelum Jhelum Project. Water and Power Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf stated on February 4 that 3,200 out of 3,400 kanals of land had been handed over to the Neelum Jhelum Project authority of the AJK government. He added that affected people were being paid through AJK's revenue department as per the draft agreement between the Ministry of Water and Power, Wapda and the AJK government.

The Economic Coordination Committee, on recommendations of a ministerial committee constituted by the prime minister, has also approved increase in the compensation rate for people affected by Diamer Basha Dam, Ashraf noted. The affected people had rejected the rates set by Chilas Deputy Commissioner in 2008. The acquisition of land for Diamer Basha Dam project is being done through the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) administration and the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) government, Ashraf stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/114363/neelum-jhelum-project-ajk-compensated-with-over-rs1-billion/>

Committee begins disbursal of funds

The Express Tribune, February 13, 2011

GILGIT: A committee has been constituted to execute the Chief Minister's special package for the early rehabilitation of Gojal and upper Hunza with a grant of Rs10 million. The committee headed by Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Legislative Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig consists of four administrative secretaries of G-B including Secretary Planning and Development, Water and Power, Works, Education, Chief Engineer Public Works Department, Managing Director Northern Areas Transport Corporation and representatives of various NGOs engaged in rehabilitation operations in the isolated parts of upper Hunza and Gojal. The committee held a meeting in Gilgit to review pace of work on

the Attabad Lake spillway.

Official sources stated the speaker directed in the meeting that two intermediate colleges be established in Gulmit and Morkun, while middle schools in Chapursan, Shimshal, Misgar and Shishkat should immediately be upgraded to a higher standard.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/117896/committee-begins-disbursal-of-funds/>

Cross-LoC trade reaches over Rs70m

Pakistan Observer

MIRPUR: Day-long Cross-LoC trade on Poonch-Rawlakot route reached over Rs. 70 million, stated official sources. Sources stated that the trade, which is conducted every Tuesday and Wednesday on barter system through cross-LoC Chakan-Da-Bagh-Taitrinote route, was confined to the exchange of selected items approved by the governments of Pakistan and India.

Traders from both sides of the LoC, who had formed a first ever joint panel recently to meet and sort out the problems faced by them in cross-LoC trade, also met at Chakan-Da-Bagh for second time in recent times in the presence of civil trade facilitation officers from both sides of the LoC, the sources stated.

The traders, in the meeting, were of the view that till the settlement of currency issue by the governments of India and Pakistan, the trade should be conducted in US dollars, which were available as well as applicable in the two countries. The businessmen from both sides of LoC also reiterated their demand for visit of traders to each other's territory to look for the items which could benefit masses on both sides.

The visit, they opined, would also help them to settle minor disputes of accounts in barter system of trade.

Traders from AJK, who attended the recent meeting, include Munawwar Hussain from Kotli, Zaffar Iqbal from Hajeera, Nadeem Abbasi from Abbaspur, Zaffar Iqbal of Kotli and Choudhary Rashid of Hajeera.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=76732>

Kashmiri traders for using dollars in cross LoC trade

The News, February 19, 2011

MIRPUR: Kashmiri traders on both side of the LoC suggested using US dollars as medium of exchange in trade across Line of Control (LoC) till the settlement of currency issue by the governments of India and Pakistan, sources stated.

A panel of traders from both side of the Kashmir divide in its second meeting held at Chakan Da Bagh retreated their demand that trade across the line of control should be conducted in US dollars, which were available as well as applicable in the two countries, sources stated.

Presently trade across LoC was limited to barter in goods allowed by Pakistani and Indian governments. Goods worth Rs70 million were exchanged on the Poonch-Rawlakot route through historic Taitrinote-Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing this week, officials stated on February 17. Cross LoC trade was conducted every Tuesday and Wednesday, they noted.

The businessmen from both sides of LoC in their meeting also reiterated their demand for allowing traders to freely visit each other's territory for trade purposes. Traders from Azad Jammu Kashmir who attended the said meeting, included Munawwar Hussain from Kotli, Zaffar Iqbal from Hajeera, Nadeem Abbasi from Abbaspur, Zaffar Iqbal of Kotli and Choudhary Rashid of Hajeera.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=31781&Cat=3&dt=2/19/2011>

Mangla Dam's victims to get compensation

The News, February 18, 2011

The government was to pay compensation to the affected persons of Mangla Dam raising project by February 25 as the federal government has already provided Rs6 billion for the affectees despite financial constraints. This was revealed at a meeting held on February 17 with Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan, Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo in the chair, which reviewed

progress on implementation of the package regarding the project. The minister was informed that four towns, one big city were being constructed for the relocation of the victims. He was also informed that the work was in progress regarding infrastructure, water supply, sewerage, Mall road, by pass roads and bridges in the area and would be completed on priority basis.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=31663&Cat=6&dt=2/18/2011>

GB has vast potential for business, investment

Daily Times, February 27, 2011

LAHORE: Karakoram International University (KIU) Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Najma Najam, stated on February 26 that there was a vast potential for research, business and investment in Gilgit-Baltistan in the field of gemstones, marble, fruits and dry fruits. Dr Najma stated this while addressing a seminar, titled “Higher Education and Research Opportunities in Gilgit Baltistan Province”, organised by the Council of Pakistan Affairs (CPA). A large number of teachers, journalists and people from all walks of life attended the seminar.

Dr Najma stated a huge quantity of various kinds of local fruits was being exported from GB. But because of lack of awareness, a huge quantity of

apricot, almost 80 percent, and other fruit items were being wasted, she noted. She invited the investors to invest in the agriculture sector, which would bring prosperity to the lives of locals and contribute billions of rupees to the economy. She further noted that the exceptional breed of snow leopards, Markhor and eagle needed to be preserved. She also stressed the need to conduct research on the herbs of the area for medical purposes.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\02\27\story_27-2-2011_pg13_3

PWD employees seek payment of salaries

The Express Tribune, February 19, 2011

GILGIT: The employees of PWD have not been paid salaries for the last four months. Scores of Public Works Department (PWD) of Gilgit-Baltistan staged a protest demonstration on February 18, demanding release of their salaries. “We have not been given our salaries for the past four months,” stated an employee, joining the over 300 protesters. They took to the streets and disrupted traffic for two hours, burning tyres and blocking the city's main road.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/120713/pwd-employees-seek-payment-of-salaries/>

International Developments

Shabbir Mir, Italy offers to upgrade Skardu airport

The Express Tribune, January 31, 2011

GILGIT: The Italian government has offered help to upgrade Skardu airport. “Italian Ambassador Vincenzo Prati made the offer to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Mehdi Shah in a recent meeting in Islamabad,” stated a source in the provincial government. Apart from the airport, they discussed the possibilities of other development projects in Skardu, the capital town of Baltistan that was declared the twin of Italy's Cortina city in August 2010.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/111663/italy-offers-to-upgrade-skardu-airport/>

Pakistan impresses with Chinese ethnic minorities intertwined in its national fabric: Pak envoy

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 2, 2011

BEIJING: Pakistan is always impressed by China's encouragement to neighbouring countries for strong support to interact with ethnic minorities, stated Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Masood Khan. “The Xinjiang autonomous region, for instance, has eight countries as its neighbours, as Pakistan is one of them, therefore naturally we take interest in this region and its rich ethnic composition”, stated Khan in an interview which appeared in 'China Ethnic' magazine. He noted that Xinjiang and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have signed a pact in 2009 in Urumqi to promote economic, commercial, scientific and technological and cultural relations.

http://app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=129419&Itemid=1

China gives Rs5m for its expats in Pakistan

The Express Tribune, February 3, 2011

GILGIT: The Chinese government has provided Rs5 million for the education of Uigur students studying in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Rawalpindi. Abdur Rehman Bukhari, the General Secretary of the Gilgit-Baltistan Chinese Overseas Association (G-BCOA), stated on February 2, “The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan handed over the money in a ceremony in Islamabad.” Known as Uigur, the Muslims community of China now settled in G-B and Rawalpindi had migrated from China's Sinkiang province before partition. The money will be spent on the education of students studying in G-B and Rawalpindi, meaning those of Uigur origin will not have to worry about tuition fees for at least one year, stated Bukhari. He added that the funds for 2011 had been provided in advance.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/113367/china-gives-rs5m-for-its-expats-in-pakistan/>

Academic support: Scottish university to train KIU faculty

The Express Tribune, February 5, 2011

GILGIT: The Karakoram International University (KIU) will collaborate with St Andrews University in Scotland to bolster its faculty and academic programmes. A KIU spokesperson stated on February 3 that the agreement between the two universities included faculty from KIU going to St Andrews for PhD and postdoctoral programmes and collaborating with the Scottish university's faculty members for joint research. Vice Chancellor Dr Najma Najam, Dr Jillian Taylor (Deans of Humanities) and Dr Iftkhar Hassan visited St Andrews University and met with the university's

vice chancellor, dean, and senior faculty while discussing the possible collaboration.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/114362/academic-support-scottish-university-to-train-kiu-faculty/>

German NGOs to be welcomed in AJK: Attique

February 7, 2011

FRANKFURT/GERMANY: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) assured German NGOs that they would be fully facilitated if they undertake to bring about major economic and social betterment in AJK. We want to make technical education as the basis of AJK economy. We need massive support of NGOs of advanced countries in helping our systems. The process of post earthquake and flash floods reconstruction and rehabilitation is continuing. That will take more time, more resources, more international cooperation of governments and NGOs, he pointed out.

http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showheadlines.php?subaction=showfull&id=1297004863&archive=&start_from=&ucat=1&var0news=value0news

Saudi assistance to Pak flood victims continues

GulfTimes, February 11, 2011

The sixth Saudi flood relief assistance convoy has so far distributed 10,000 pieces of quilts, 500 cartons of dates and 200 cartons of milk in the mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan despite the bad weather and heavy snowfall. According to the information section of the Saudi embassy, the convoy distributed 5,300 pieces of quilts, 250 cartons of dates and 100 cartons of milk in Chilas area and 4,700 pieces of quilts, 250 cartons of dates and 100 cartons of milk in Gilgit district of Gilgit-Baltistan region. The embassy said that the winter relief convoy was launched under the directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz.

http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=415303&version=1&template_id=41&parent_id=23

Japan grants US\$ 203,671 for sanitation Projects in Hunza

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 18, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Japan has decided to grant financial support of US \$ 203,671 (approx. Rs. 17.0 million) to the Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan (AKCSP) for environmental sanitation and water supply projects in Hunza, Gilgit-Baltistan. The agreements for the two projects were signed in Islamabad on February 18 between Chihiro Atsumi, Ambassador of Japan, and Akbarali Pesnani, Chairman of the AKCSP, said a statement issued by the Japanese Embassy. The Environmental Sanitation Project is meant for the Improvement of Community-based Environmental Sanitation, in Altit, Hunza in Gilgit Baltistan.

http://app.com.pk/en/_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=131191&Itemid=2

Syed Iqbal Hasnain, China building road to disaster in Gilgit-Baltistan

February 16, 2011

China's high-stake poker game in Gilgit-Baltistan, a mountainous area that is part of Kashmir, will have disastrous environmental consequences for the entire region and beyond. Reports in the local and international media indicate that, over the past few years, Beijing has been steadily undertaking many infrastructure projects in that ecologically fragile region.

Among the few projects that China and Pakistan have publicly disclosed is the building of a 7,000 megawatt dam, at the place called Bunji, which was announced in September 2009. China is also reportedly financing and supplying skilled labor to build the controversial Diamer-Bhasha dam, which is set to destroy tens of thousands of ancient rock carvings and other priceless archaeological artifacts.

Five years ago, the two sides had agreed to expand the width of the historic Karakoram Highway, which connects Gilgit-Baltistan with the neighboring Xinjiang region in China, from 10

meters to 30 meters and triple its transportation capacity. The official Chinese agency Xinhua reported that the state-owned China Road and Bridge Corporation would be in charge of the designing and reconstruction of the highway.

According to various reports, other projects China has undertaken in Gilgit-Baltistan include construction of roads and bridges; building of a high-speed rail system; and nearly two-dozen tunnels. It is also said to be involved in mineral

exploratory activities by acquiring hundreds of mining leases from Islamabad. Satellite images reveal sporadic construction activities throughout the region.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/113033/20110216/china-korakoram-dam-gilgistan-himalayas-environment-ecology-mountains-glacial-melting-diamer-bhasha.htm>

Other Developments

Wapda missed opportunity to fill Mangla Dam during flood season

Business Recorder, February 3, 2011

LAHORE: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Minister for Information, Environment and Overseas Kashmiris, Mahmood Riaz stated that Wapda missed an opportunity to fill the Mangla Dam during the last flood season and it also failed to settle even 10 percent people, which were affected due to Mangla Dam Raising Project. He was addressing the members of Lahore Economic Journalists Association (LEJA) at Lahore Press Club in Lahore on February 2. The AJK minister underlined it was the first instance that Pakistan got the opportunity to fill the Mangla reservoir to its extended level, but unfortunately Wapda had missed it. He pointed out that the Wapda had completed the construction activity in a remarkable time but it did not bother to complete the housing colony and settle the affected people on time.

<http://www.brecorder.com/news/fuel-and-energy/pakistan/1151521:news.html>

Land sliding blocks Karakoram Highway

Daily Times, February 6, 2011

GILGIT: Landsliding triggered by heavy rains blocked Karakoram Highway at Barsin and Lotar points of Kohistan district on February 5, suspending traffic on the highway, official sources stated. The officials noted machinery was moved to clear boulders from the road so that traffic could be restored. The Northern Areas Transport Corporation (NATCO) officials further noted the service was continued by exchanging the passengers through buses on either side of the blockade. Meanwhile, Pakistan International Airlines also suspended its flight operation between Islamabad and Gilgit due to bad weather conditions.

The local met office predicted that during the next three days weather could remain inclement.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\02\06\story_6-2-2011_pg7_11

Roshan Mughal, Education uplift: CIDA building 42 schools in AJK

The Express Tribune, February 6, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Construction work on 36 primary schools, five higher secondary schools and a degree college in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has started. This was stated in a meeting between Canadian High Commission First Secretary Carrie Lee Chung and State Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency Director General Chaudhry Liaqat Hussain on February 5. The Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA) is funding the project and has assigned American contractor CDM to work on the project. CDM is currently finalising the design and layouts of the schools.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/114607/education-uplift-cida-building-42-schools-in-ajk/>

Quake measuring 4.8 hits northern Pakistan

Dawn, February 9, 2011

ISLAMABAD: An earthquake measuring 4.8 on the Richter scale shook northern parts of Pakistan on the morning of February 9. According to the Meteorological Department, the quake had its epicentre 100 kilometres from Gilgit, at a depth of 13.9 kilometres, as reported by a television channel. Tremors were felt in Gilgit, Mansehra, Balakot and Chitral. People left their homes in panic though there were no reports of damage or casualties, officials noted.

<http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/09/quake-measuring-4-8-hits-northern-pakistan.html>

Ban on precious stones' movement, trade resented

The News, February 15, 2011

The All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA) expressed concern over the restriction on the movement of precious stones and its trade from Gilgit-Baltistan to other areas and demanded its immediate withdrawal. Addressing a news conference on February 14, APCEA, Chairman Atif Rasheed Khawaja stated the chief secretary and industries secretary issued a notification on January 11 imposing ban on movement of precious stones and its trade to other areas of the country.

He noted about 90 per cent export of precious stones mined in the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan was legally carried out to different parts of the country and earned huge foreign exchange every year. Further, he stated the ban on the movement precious stones was illogical and asked the federal and Gilgit-Baltistan governments to immediately withdraw the decision.

Shafi Mohammad, chairman of Pakistan Gems & Mineral Association, stated the poor workers of Gilgit-Baltistan had been affected by the ban and the traders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could also suffer as a result of the decision. He noted the

transportation of precious stones to different parts of country and export to rest of the world was carried out via Peshawar.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=31263&Cat=7&dt=2/15/2011>

Shabbir Mir, Efforts on to restore link with Gojal Valley

The Express Tribune, February 19, 2011

GILGIT: To restore land connection with the Gojal valley, the government has planned to redesign the submerged portion of Karakoram Highway [KKH] by constructing two tunnels and seven bridges on it, disclosed a senior official of the National Highway Authority (NHA) in Gilgit on February 17.

“The submerged portion of the KKH, which is about 17 kilometres, will be redesigned to enable it to stay above water,” NHA Director Abdullah Jan stated. Jan further stated that the Chinese engineers had prepared the design of KKH in a way that there would be no chance of landslides on the highway, meaning that it would not get blocked.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/120714/efforts-on-to-restore-link-with-gojal-valley/>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,130 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14,, 010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2.973 million (1998 population census), Male, 1.850 million; Female, 1.832 million

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Raja Zulqarnain Khan

Prime Minister: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

Ethnic Groups: Gujjars, Jats, Mughal, Rajputs, Sudhan, Awan, Qureshi, Pashtuns, Shins, Ladakhi, Baltis etc.

Religious Groups: Sunni, Ahlehadith, Shia, Nurbakhshi, Christians, Qadianis, Hindus

Languages: Punjabi, Hindko, Pahari, Kashmiri, Balti, Puriki, Shina

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Source: Azad Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www. www.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Seven

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche and Skardu districts

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Diamer, Ghizer, Hunza-Nagar and Gilgit districts

Ethnic Groups: Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Tatar, Mon, Pashtun, Khowar, Dom, Gujjar, Rajput and Kashmiri

Religious Groups: Shia (Twelvers), Nurbakhshi (Twelvers), Ismaili, Sunni, and Ahlehadith

Languages: Shina, Balti, Wakhi, Khowar, Gujjari, Burushaski, Puriki, Kashmiri, Pashto

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Council: 24 members directly elected

Governor of G-B: Wazir Baig (officiating)

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah of Skardu district.

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Sources: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk>, & website of the Balwaristan National Front, <http://www.balawaristan.net>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Disclaimer

PoK 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 as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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