

POK NEWS DIGEST

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• Political Developments

PPP's Sardar Yaqoob Elected AJK President

Change of Guard: AJK Elects Chaudhry Abdul Majeed as PM

Uproar in Senate Over AJK 'Rigging'

Azad Kashmir Government: Money Over Merit for Top Slots in AJK

G-B Assembly Session: Mehdi Shah 'Protecting Illegal Appointments'

• Economic Developments

KJCCI Welcomes Launching of CBMs

J&K JCCI Proposals to Expand Cross-LoC Trade

Cross-LoC Trade Remains at Low Key After Resumption

• International Developments

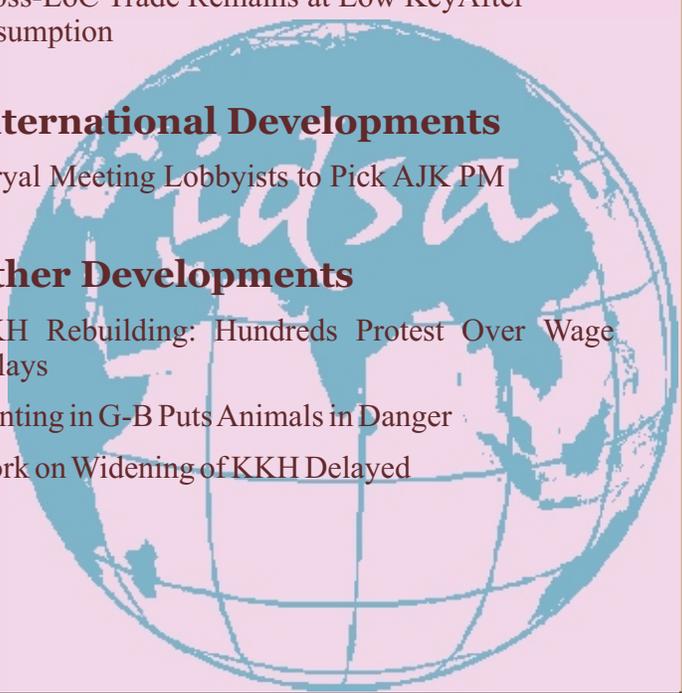
Faryal Meeting Lobbyists to Pick AJK PM

• Other Developments

KKH Rebuilding: Hundreds Protest Over Wage Delays

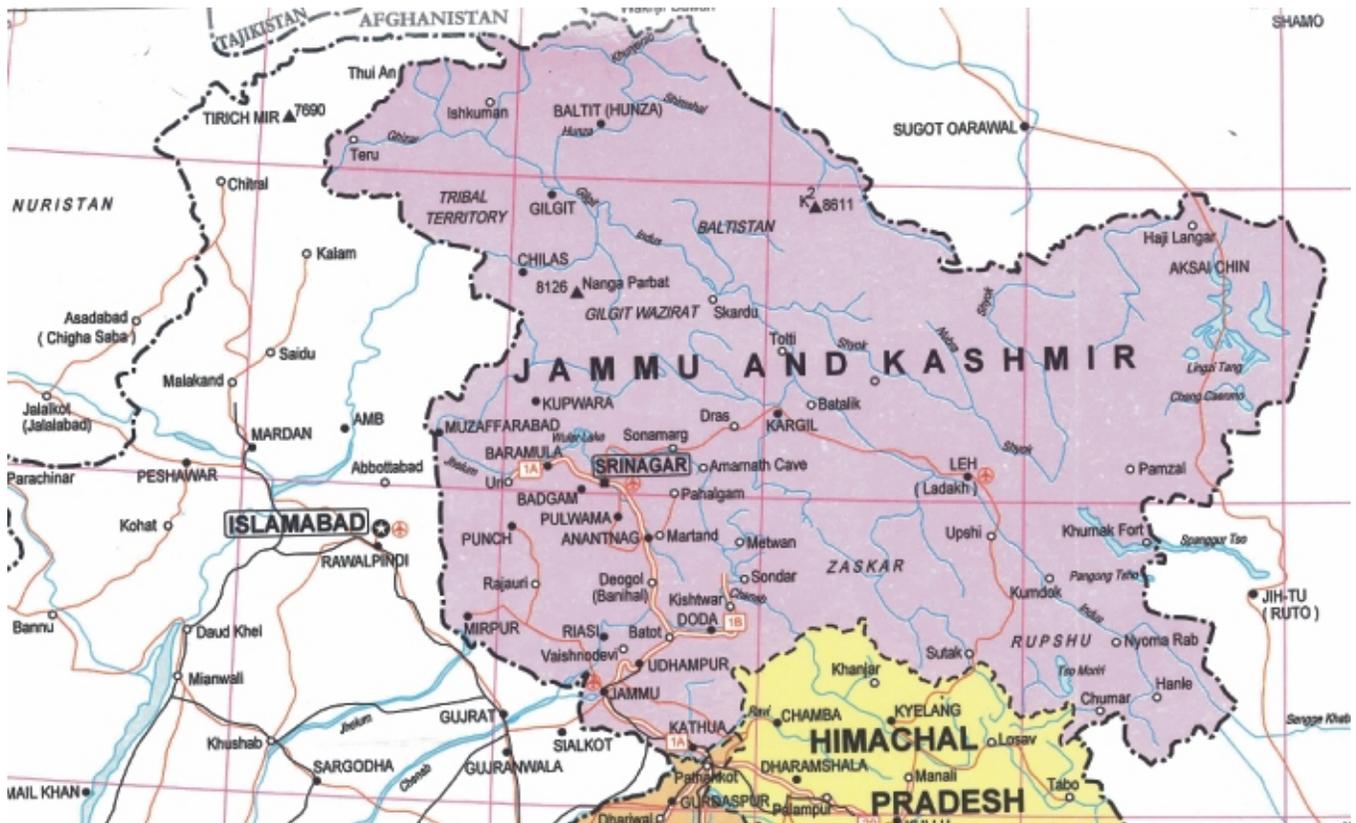
Hunting in G-B Puts Animals in Danger

Work on Widening of KKH Delayed



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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

The nomination of Chaudhry Abdul Majid as the new Prime Minister of the so called AJK put a full stop on much of the preceding speculation. There were reportedly hectic parleys before consensus within the victorious side, the PPP, could be reached on the name of the new Prime Minister. Former Prime Minister Barrister Sultan Mehmood's candidature for the prime ministerial office was almost finalized, as is indicated in one of the reports included in the issue, that he would take oath as the next prime minister of the so called AJK. The report has been accommodated precisely to bring out the extent of uncertainty regarding the issue. Nevertheless, Majid was the final choice for the post after intense discussions took place within the PPP under Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani.

Meanwhile, Sardar Yaqoob Khan of the PPP, who is also a former prime minister of the so called AJK was elected the next president by majority of votes. He will succeed Raja Zulqarnain who will complete his tenure on the 25th August, 2011. Interestingly, the Interim Constitution of AJK 1974 Act requires that the next president be elected a month in advance before the term of the current incumbent expires.

Even though Cross LoC trade resumed after months of breakdown, it is yet to gain momentum. There was a drop in the number of total trucks passing across even as the issue of increasing the number of trading days from two to four per week was discussed just before the Indo Pakistan Foreign Ministerial talks in New Delhi last month. Nonetheless, the traders in AJK have expressed happiness on the increase in the number of CBMs between the two countries which could probably enhance the level of cross LoC trade and transport in future.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Raja Riaz, PPP's Sardar Yaqoob elected AJK president

Daily Times, July 30, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate, Sardar Yaqoob Khan, has been elected new president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) by securing 40 votes on July 29. His rival Khan Bahadur Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) obtained only 11 votes. Sardar Yaqoob served as the AJK prime minister in the last tenure of the legislature and was a health minister in Sardar Sikandar Hayat's cabinet in 2001. He has a long association with the Muslim Conference and joined the PPP a few months before the general elections.

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Mian Manzoor Wattoo also cast his vote while PPP General Secretary Jehangir Badr and several other party leaders were present on the occasion. Besides the AJK assembly members, six Kashmir Council members, that is considered the upper house of the state, and Pakistan Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs are the voters for presidential elections. The total number of votes are 56 but 51 cast their vote, as two seats are still vacant.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C07%5C30%5Cstory_30-7-2011_pg7_1

Mushtaq Mughal, AJK PM renounces any divide in PPP over his election

The Nation, July 28, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Ruling out any split or divide in the party, newly-elected AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed stated they were all united under the leadership of PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari and would serve the cause of the people of Azad Kashmir. In an interview on July 27 in Islamabad, Ch Abdul Majeed stated his election to the slot of

AJK premiership was unanimous and he brushed aside the impression of any divide in the party over his election.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/28-Jul-2011/AJK-PM-renounces-any-divide-in-PPP-over-his-election>

Govt to resolve problems of people

Pakistan Observer

ASTORE: Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Syed Mehdi Shah stated on July 27 that the government will resolve the problems of the people of district on priority. While addressing a gathering at Inter college ground he announced various welfare programme for the people of district. The chief minister Mehdi Shah also assured that wheat quota would be enhanced. Meanwhile, the top leadership of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) congratulated the newly formed government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). In their separate statements, Chief Minister GB Syed Mehdi Shah, Speaker GB Assembly Wazir Baig and Deputy Speaker Jamil Ahmed expressed the hope that elected PPP government would work on the interest of the masses. The statement further noted that GB and AJK government would make joint efforts for the settlement of Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspiration of the Kashmiri people.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=105756>

Peer Muhammad, Feeble infrastructures: G-B still reeling from last year's damages

The Express Tribune, July 28, 2011

ISLAMABAD: People from the remote areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have expressed concern over the government's negligence in repairing roads and bridges damaged in last year's floods. They stated that they face much difficulty while crossing these damaged roads and bridges, most of which are built

over fast flowing waters. The infrastructure damaged by the floods last year had severed the region from the rest of the country for almost one and a half month.

Most of the damaged infrastructure in remote areas of G-B, including Qadamabad, Hussainabad (Ishqamghoro), Dass Payeen and Thalti, still remains unrepaired and is posing threat to the lives of locals in case of further floods. Local representatives on July 27 demanded the government to repair the damaged roads and bridges as a priority.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/218912/feeble-infrastructures-g-b-still-reeling-from-last-years-damages/>

Govt strategy to revive AJK industry

The Nation, July 25, 2011

MIRPUR: The government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) launched a strategy for the revival of dozens of sick industrial units located in the industrial districts of Mirpur and Bhimbher in this division to make them the production-earning concerns, official sources stated. The plan was approved in a recent high level meeting attended among others by senior officials of the state industries department and representatives of the local business fraternity. Sources stated that the government was determined to accelerate the pace of Industrial development in AJK by getting laid the network of industries by the private sector in various parts of AJK particularly in Mirpur division.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Business/25-Jul-2011/Govt-strategy--to-revive-AJK-industry>

Raja Riaz, PPP continues 'reconciliatory policy' in AJK

Daily Times, July 25, 2011

LAHORE: The ninth legislative council of AJK took oath on July 25 as the result of 48 seats out of 49 has been notified by the election commission. According to the latest position after the elections on 'reserved seats', the PPP leads the House with 29 seats while the second largest party is PML-N with 11 legislators. The Muslim Conference led by

former Prime Minister Sardar Attique has four members in the House and MQM has representation with two members while All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has one female member in the House.

The PPP continued its 'policy of reconciliation' in AJK as well and the seat given to the APHC was conceded to Mrs Mehrunnisa, deputy speaker in the last assembly and wife of APHC leader Yousaf Naseem. She was an active member of Muslim Conference but contested the election under the banner of APHC and the PPP supported her. This fact also indicates the unannounced alliance of the PPP and the Muslim Conference.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C07%5C25%5Cstory_25-7-2011_pg7_21

PPP clinches six out of eight AJK Assembly reserved seats

Daily Times, July 27, 2011

MUZAFARABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK), on July 24, won six out of eight reserved seats in the elections for AJK's Legislative Assembly, raising its strength to 29 in the House of 49. Elections for the reserved seats were held at the assembly building. PPP secured six seats, three for women and one each for ulema mashaikh (religious scholars), technocrats and overseas Kashmiris, while Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Muslim Conference won one woman seat each. Those who were elected on five reserved seats for women included PPP's Shazia Akbar, Sadaf Sheikh and Shaheen Dar, Fauzia Ashraf of PML-N and Meheru-Nisa of Muslim Conference, whose victory was facilitated by two votes of PPP.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C07%5C25%5Cstory_25-7-2011_pg1_5

Shahbbir Mir, Post landslide: Displaced Haramosh locals threaten to block Gilgit-Skardu highway

The Express Tribune, July 25, 2011

GILGIT: The government's inability to provide adequate relief to the people of Haramosh valley has

triggered unrest among the locals. They have threatened to block the main highway connecting Gilgit with Skardu, in a bid to have the rulers address their problems. With a population of nearly 300, Kholtoro is a remote village in Haramosh valley located midway off the road between Skardu and Gilgit, and is about 100 kilometres from Gilgit. Back in April, nearly 200 people were displaced after sporadic landslides demolished houses in Khaltoro, forcing residents to stay in tents provided by Gilgit-Baltistan's disaster management authority. The landslide also damaged water and irrigation channels, causing threat of an impending drought in the valley where the residents mostly depend on agriculture and livestock for their sustenance.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/216740/post-landslide-displaced-haramosh-locals-threaten-to-block-gilgit-skardu-highway/>

Tariq Naqash, Sadiq elected AJK assembly speaker

Dawn, July 26, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Sardar Ghulam Sadiq Khan and Shaheen Kausar Dar of Peoples Party AJK were elected as speaker and deputy speaker, respectively, of the AJK Legislative Assembly after defeating their rivals from the PML-N by a clear majority in Muzaffarabad on July 25. Mr Khan, who was until recently serving as adviser to the chairman AJK Council, was elected on June 26 from LA 18, Poonch-II for the third consecutive term whereas Ms Dar, who belongs to a Rawalpindi based Kashmiri refugees' family, was elected on July 24 against one of the five seats reserved for women.

Earlier, of the 47 directly and indirectly elected Legislative Assembly members (MLAs), 46 were administered oath by the outgoing speaker Chaudhry Anwaarul Haq. They included 29 from the PPAJK, 10 from the PML-N, five from the Muslim Conference and two from the MQM. PML-N's chief organiser Raja Farooq Haider, who has returned from two constituencies, did not take oath as he was yet to decide as to which seat he would retain.

<http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/26/sadiq-elected-ajk-assembly-speaker.html>

Kashmir slipping away

Daily Times, July 26, 2011

The issue of Kashmir seems to become more complicated as Pakistan's direct involvement in its affairs and unsightly handling of the matters is doing more damage to it rather than benefitting it. Recently, general elections for Azad Jammu Kashmir's (AJK's) Legislative Assembly were held in which mainstream political parties of Pakistan participated in full force. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) dominated the polls. It also won six seats out of eight in the reserved seats elections on July 24, which is a logical consequence of its victory in AJK's elections. Unfortunately, AJK witnessed widespread use of administrative machinery, pressure and violence for all kinds of pre- and post-poll rigging by the PPP, the PML-N and the MQM. The political parties' enthusiastic participation in the AJK elections has questioned the status quo of the disputed territory as an independent state and negated its people's right to self-determination. The situation has only added to their despondency as their cause has been left far behind in this game of power.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C07%5C26%5Cstory_26-7-2011_pg3_1

Roshan Mughal, Change of guard: AJK elects Chaudhry Abdul Majeed as PM

The Express Tribune, July 27, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) was elected on July 26 as the eleventh prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Newly-elected members of the AJK legislative assembly voted for the position of the prime minister in Muzaffarabad. Majeed secured 35 votes while his opponent Farooq Haider Khan, from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), managed to secure only 11 votes. Majeed, who was nominated by President Asif Ali Zardari for the premiership, was elected in the June 26 election from a constituency in the Mirpur district. A secret balloting procedure was held in the house in order to elect the new PM. Outgoing ruling

party, the Muslim Conference, also voted for him as did the Muttahida Qaumi Movement.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/218020/change-of-guard-ajk-elects-chaudhry-abdul-majeed-as-pm/>

Shabbir Mir, Ultimatum: 'Lift ban on sale of Timber or prepare for legal battle'

The Express Tribune, July 27, 2011

GILGIT: Lawmakers hailing from Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Diamer valley served on ultimatum to the government: allow transportation of impounded timber rotting in Chilas or let the issue be settled in court. "If the government cannot take a decision on this issue, we will be forced to approach the courts for justice," opposition leaders including Bashir Ahmed, Haji Gulbar, Rehmat Khaliq and Janbaz Khan told the media in Gilgit on July 26.

Hundreds of feet of timber have been lying unattended alongside the Karakoram Highway in Chilas for as much as a decade, following the imposition of a ban on lumber movement. The purpose of the ban was to discourage illegal logging in Gilgit's Diamer valley, which was once Pakistan's biggest forests reserve. The ban came after wide-scale commercial deforestation stripped much of the area bare.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/217912/ultimatum-lift-ban-on-sale-of-timber-or-prepare-for-legal-battle/>

Repeated dictatorship damaged Kashmir cause: Sultan

The News, July 23, 2011

FORMER Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir and PPP leader Barrister Sultan Mehmood stated repeated dictatorships in Pakistan caused dents in the peaceful settlement of Kashmir issue. "There has been multiple reasons in the delay of the settlement of Kashmir issue but one of the major reason behind it was the dictatorial regimes of Pakistan, which caused enormous damage to the issue," stated Barrister Sultan Mehmood in an interview. Sultan Mehmood is also one of the prime contestants for the slot of prime ministership. He stated the four pronged policy of Gen Pervez

Musharraf was also unsuccessful and didn't catch the interest of Kashmiris.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=59061&Cat=5&dt=7/23/2011>

PPPAJK for immediate release of Dr Fai

July 24, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir has expressed deep concern over the situation arising out after the arrest of Executive Director Kashmiri-American Council Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai and announced for All Parties Conference to forge a consensus on the issue. Talking to media in Muzaffarabad on July 23, the PPP Azad Kashmir President Chaudhry Abdul Majeed called upon the United States to release Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai immediately as fifteen million Kashmiris are gravely concerned for his detention in the United States.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/2011/07/24/ppp-ajk-for-immediately-release-of-dr-fai/>

Imran Mukhtar, Uproar in Senate over AJK 'rigging'

The Nation, July 23, 2011

ISLAMABAD: The Treasury as well as Opposition benches in the Upper House of the Parliament on July 22 locked horns over the initiation of debate on the alleged massive rigging and misuse of Federal government resources in the recent general elections of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK).

However, the House could not start the debate on the issue until it was adjourned sine die due to lack of quorum pointed by Senator Faisal Raza Abidi from Treasury benches. The current Senate session which was requisitioned by the Opposition on the three major issues, including killings in Karachi, non-implementation of superior judiciary orders by the executive and massive rigging in AJK elections, could only debate the first one and left the other two unattended.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/23-Jul-2011/Uproar-in-Senate---over-AJK-rigging>

Billion of rupees betted in the name of prospective AJK PM

ISLAMABAD: Gamblers have betted billion of rupees in the name of prospective prime minister of AJK. Well-placed sources told foreign investors of Pakistan origin had gathered in Muzaffarabad and Islamabad to support their favourite candidates for the top slot of AJK premier. Billion of rupees had been betted in the name of Barrister Sultan Mehmood, Chaudhry Yasin, Chaudhry Abdul Majid and Sardar Yaqub for premiership of AJK. Sources told Barrister Sultan Mehmood who enjoyed support of foreign ambassadors in Pakistan and establishment was making all out efforts to attain the seat of prime minister. Active leaders of Zardari House Islamabad are engaged in lobbying for appointment of Chaudhry Yasin as AJK prime minister. Barrister Sultan Mehmood and Chaudhry Yasin have met GOC Murree but the latter is distancing him from this matter. Sources noted Chaudhry Abdul Majid was enjoying full fledged support of president Asif Ali Zardari, PPP central leadership and parliamentary committee of AJK PPP.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=181673>

Shahbbir Mir, G-B Assembly session: Mehdi Shah 'protecting illegal appointments'

The Express Tribune, July 22, 2011

GILGIT: Lawmakers in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly on July 21 accused G-B Chief Minister Mehdi Shah of blocking an inquiry against illegal appointments made in the police force. They demanded that all such appointments be annulled. "The G-B police appointments made by the previous government were illegal, but ironically the chief minister is protecting them," stated the lawmakers during the G-B legislative assembly session. Shah stated the move was justified because an inquiry could leave several people unemployed. The issue of illegal appointments was not the only complaint on the table at the session. Shah assured the assembly that restoration of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) along the Attabad Lake spillway will start soon. "We will be visiting China soon and

the task of restoration of KKH will be given to a Chinese company," Shah stated as a lawmaker, Mutabiat Shah, voiced dissatisfaction over the slow pace of work on the lake that has cut off more than 25,000 people in the Gojal area.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/214741/g-b-assembly-session-mehdi-shah-protecting-illegal-appointments/>

AJK PM phones Mirwaiz, Gilani; Discusses Fai's arrest

Pakistan Times

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Attiq Ahmed Khan talked to All Parties Hurriyet Conference Chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and veteran Kashmiri Hurriyet leader Syed Ali Gilani by phone and discussed measures as to how jointly raise the issue of Dr Fai's arrest with the US.

Sardar Attiq in a media interview stated, "Dr Fai is working for the Kashmir cause under spirit of the UN resolutions accepted by the United States and his arrest is violation of the UN Charter." A renowned communication professor, who has been highly respected and regarded amongst intellectuals, should not be sent behind the bars without any solid proof," Attiq added.

<http://www.pakistantimes.net/pt/detail.php?newsId=23456>

Zardari to visit China soon

July 21, 2011

GILGIT: President Asif Ali Zardari would visit china in few days and would sign different projects with china during visit. Pakistan and China would struck various projects including making Gilgit-Baltistan economic zone, to construct gas and railway line on Shakra-e-Karakoram, Chinese investment and other important development projects during the next week. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah with other officials of government will visit China to give final shape to these projects. Official sources noted that Chinese government has prepared the feasibility study for the construction of the railway tract on the Karakorm highway.

Meanwhile, break through regarding the establishment of cement factory and other projects are included and have been finalized. At diplomatic level, the matters have been finalized and in the result of the agreement the historical investment from the Chinese investors in GB is expected. For rectification of these mega projects, President Asif Ali Zardari and Chief Minister GB Syed Mehdi Shah will visit China in next few days, which would bring historical revolution in the economic condition of the area.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/2011/07/21/zardari-to-visit-china-soon/>

Irfan Ghauri, Azad Kashmir government: Money over merit for top slots in AJK

The Express Tribune, July 19, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Marred by controversies since the beginning of the election process, the race has intensified among contenders of the top slots, including the new Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime minister, with money seemingly playing a more pivotal role than any other merit. The newly-elected legislators of the AJK legislative assembly will elect the leader of the House on July 26. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) emerged as the single largest party after winning 22 seats so far. The PPP also expects to win one or two more general seats where elections are pending, while it will grab six of eight reserved seats in the legislature. In the 49-member House, the PPP stands in a comfortable position to form its government even without the support of any party.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/212780/azad-kashmir-government-money-over-merit-for-top-slots-in-ajk/>

Gilani asks CM, Cabinet of GB to prepare comprehensive development plan

July 17, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani asked the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan and his Cabinet colleagues to prepare a comprehensive development plan for Gilgit-Baltistan with a futuristic vision leading to self sufficiency. He emphasized for preparing policies

to help create economic opportunities and generate economic activities. The objective of according autonomy to the Gilgit-Baltistan region, he added, was to ensure good governance and welfare of the people. The Prime Minister was talking to the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah and members of his Cabinet who called on him at PM's House in Islamabad.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/2011/07/17/gilani-asks-cm-cabinet-of-gb-to-prepare-comprehensive-development-plan/>

Affectees of Mangla Dam raising take to the streets

The Nation, July 16, 2011

MIRPUR: A large number of affectees of Mangla Dam Raising Project on July 15 took to the streets to protest against Wapda. The demonstrating Mangla dam affectees warned that the reported raising of water in Mangla Dam reservoir by July 31 this year, will not be allowed at any cost unless the rehabilitation of thousands of families falling displaced due to raising of the dam was completed. Led by the leaders of the Action Forum the Mangla dam affectees belonging to various parts of Mirpur city as well as adjoining areas reached in various procession to the central Quaid-e-Azam Chowk in Mirpur city where they held protest rally.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/16-Jul-2011/Affectees-of-Mangla-Dam-raising-take-to-the-streets>

AJK SC declares null and void High Court's order

The Nation, July 16, 2011

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu & Kashmir Supreme Court on Friday declared null and void, the recent order of AJK High Court directing holding of re-polling in five more polling stations in the electoral constituency LA-16 (Bagh-4 Haveili) of AJK Legislative Assembly, AJK SC sources noted. 'The Full Bench of AJK Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan on an appeal filed against the AJK HC order, by Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, candidate of PPP in the aforesaid

constituency LA-16, Bagh-4 Haveili, declared null and void the July 1st, 2011 verdict of AJK High Court about holding of re-polling in five more polling stations', sources added.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/16-Jul-2011/AJK-SC-declares-null-and-void-High-Courts-order>

Malik M Ashraf, Chinese mega projects in Pakistan

Pakistan Observer

China has played a significant role in the economic progress of Pakistan ever since the establishment of diplomatic ties between them. The first major initiative in this regard was the setting up of Heavy Mechanical Complex at Taxila; a project of immense importance that nudged the process of industrial development in Pakistan and continues to contribute to the overall progress of the country in a big way. The construction of KKH Highway, termed as the eighth wonder of the world not only laid the foundation for an infallible and eternal friendship between the two neighbours but also generated tremendous economic activity in Gilgit-Baltistan besides boosting trade between the two countries.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=103439>

Charles Kennedy, China Assisting Pakistan in Upgrading Power Infrastructure

July 16, 2011

Chinese fiscal assistance is allowing Pakistan to begin rebuilding its energy infrastructure in its portion of the contested Himalayan state, which it labels "Azad Kashmir," heavily damaged during last year's flooding. A senior official at the Planning Commission told journalists, "The main objective of the project is the restoration of the power supply to the flood affected areas in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) which were fully or partially damaged due to floods in July-August 2010. The reconstruction of the distribution infrastructure in in AJK will reverse the devastating impact of the flood, reviving the areas' economic activity and enabling the people to return to normal life and to provide

electricity to the areas which were turned into dark due to damage of electrical works. This project will support the AJK government to achieve targets for revenue collection from the industrial, agriculture and social sectors."

The 2010 floods, heavy rains and landslides damaged 11 0.4 kilowatt lines, distribution transformers and other equipment throughout Azad Kashmir and the recent government initiatives are intended to restore and rehabilitate the province's power infrastructure to pre-flood levels, as reported.

http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article_63398.shtml

Wattoo for optimum hydel power generation from GB

Pakistan Observer

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan, Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo Thursday underlined the need for devising a comprehensive strategy to utilize the hydel and other sources of power generation from Gilgit-Baltistan. The minister stated this while chairing a high level meeting of Gilgit- Baltistan Power Generation Board in Islamabad noted a press release. The meeting was attended by Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah, Minister for Water and Power GB, Secretary KA&GB, Muhammad Javed Malik, Joint Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Council, Shakil Malik, representative of Ministry of Water and Power and others. The Federal Minister and Chief Minister GB agreed that government of Gilgit-Baltistan and GB Council should be given equal representation in the GB Power Generation Board.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=103297>

Ashraf Ansari, Barrister to take oath as AJK premier

Pakistan Observer

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, prominent leader of People's Party, Barrister Sultan Mehmood is all set to take oath as Prime Minister of the AJK, following his party's sweep in the recent general elections.

According to sources in the Presidency, President Asif Ali Zardari in his capacity as co-Chairman of Pakistan People's Party has finally decided in favour of Barrister Sultan Mehmood for the slot of AJK premiership. It is learnt that the decision by President Asif Ali Zardari also took input from Bilawal Zardari Bhutto, the Chairman of Pakistan People's Party.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=102976>

IMTD for Muzaffarabad-Hazratbal bus service

July 12, 2011

SRINAGAR: Institute for Multi Track Diplomacy (IMTD), a Washington based think-tank, has called for starting bus service from Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) capital Muzaffarabad to Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar. Welcoming recent developments in Indo- Pak relations, IMTD's Kashmir Program Manager Tanweer Wani in a statement, noted that it had been pushing for the resumption of the sub-continental peace process that had come to standstill after 26/11 and the 2010 summer agitation in Kashmir.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/13/imtd-for-muzaffarabad-hazratbal-bus-service-20.asp>

Shah Hasan, China to assist in restoring power infrastructure

Pakistan Observer

ISLAMABAD: The government is going to initiate a project of Rs 165.130 million for the restoration of power distribution infrastructure damaged due to the 2010 flood, heavy rains and land sliding, a senior official at Planning Commission noted. "The main objective of the project is the restoration of the power supply to the flood affected areas in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) which were fully or partially damaged due to floods in July-August 2010." The sponsoring agency is the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit while the AJK electricity department is the executing agency. To overcome the existing damages in AJK, the strategy has been developed to build and rehabilitate the existing damaged system on war footing basis through the financial assistance of China.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=102787>

Plan being inked to boost agri sector

Pakistan Observer

MIRPUR: To give an impetus to the agriculture sector, the AJK government was seriously contemplating to ink an integrated phased plan for establishing fair price shops across the State for the supply of seed and other related agricultural items, official sources stated. Sources further noted that mega vegetable markets at district and tehsil level were also being established to facilitate farmers.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=102749>

Reconciliation politics to be pursued in AJK: PM

Associated Press of Pakistan, July 9, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on July 8 stated the cooperation and reconciliatory politics will be pursued in Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the post election period as well. He directed that all his announcements made during visit to Neelum Valley last year should be implemented without delay. The Prime Minister was talking to Mian Manzoor Ahmed Wattoo, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan who called on him at the PM House. The Minister appreciated the leadership qualities of the Prime Minister and stated that the recent electoral win in Kashmir is result of the Prime Minister's sagacity and political acumen. He also discussed matters relating to Gilgit-Baltistan Council.

http://ftpapp.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=144388&Itemid=2

Roshan Mughal, Leadership overview: In AJK, PP leaders battle for top offices

The Express Tribune, July 8, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Several senior leaders of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Party (PP), which emerged as the largest party in the AJK legislative assembly following the elections, have started vying for the two top government slots. Two former prime ministers, a former and a sitting leader of the opposition in the legislative assembly, and two other senior party leaders are lobbying hectically in Islamabad to secure positions. PPP

President Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and former prime minister and opposition leader Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry, both belonging to the Mirpur District, are frontrunners for the office of the premiership and presidency.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/204856/leadership-overview-in-ajk-pp-leaders-battle-for-top-offices/>

Steps on to make AJK PID a vibrant institution'

The Nation, July 7, 2011

MIRPUR: AJK Secretary Information Khawaja Muhammad Salim Bismil stated that under the spirit to make AJK Press Information Department a vibrant institution, an integrated plan was being evolved to promote and strengthen the relationship between the AJK government and the media in order to ensure the performance of the media in most excellent manner harmonious to the need of the modern age. "The proposed plan involve the inter-district, inter-provincial and intra-Kashmir study trips of the AJK journalists to strengthen and improve their professional skills and potential to enable them to serve the nation and the country through the best of their professional activities and high intellect and pen", Bismil stated this while addressing journalists, belonging to the national print and electronic media as well as the regional press at the Kashmir Press Club in Mirpur.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/07-Jul-2011/Steps-on-to-make-AJK-PID-a-vibrant-institution>

Mushtaq Mughal, PM slot sandwiched between govt, military

The Nation, July 3, 2011

Asif Ali Zardari and the civil-military establishment are not on the same page regarding the nomination of future prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), sources noted on July 2. President Asif Ali Zardari who is also the Co-Chairman of PPP has given a green signal to Chaudhry Abdul Majeed as the next state prime minister. Zardari, who is in London, telephoned Ch Abdul Majeed and asked him to arrange a press conference in Islamabad for the purpose. Also, the Majeed group

comprising Ch Yaseen, Ch Latif Akbar and Matloob Inqlabi held dozens of closed door meetings with Faryal Talupur, a sister of Asif Ali Zardari, on the formation of government in AJK, sources added.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/03-Jul-2011/PM-slot-sandwiched-between-govt-mly>

Report Examines Chinese Mining Companies' Inroads into Pakistan-Controlled Mineral-Rich Gilgit Baltistan Region, and Protests by Locals

July 6, 2011

In Gilgit Baltistan more Than 100 local rights defenders are locked up in Pakistani jails and face sedition charges for denying space to the Chinese and Pakistani mining companies. At a time when the distance between American and Pakistani priorities in the post-Osama period continues to grow, China is passionately vouching for Pakistan's entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which is seen as the upcoming Asian NATO. For some time now, China and Pakistan have aspired to create a regional alliance comprising the Arab countries, Central Asian Republics, Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey, and SCO could most likely help that dream come true. "But there is more to it than meets the eye. The lynchpin connecting these countries will be Gilgit Baltistan, a disputed region rivaling Serbia in area. Although constitutionally a part of India and bordering China's Xinjiang province, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, Gilgit Baltistan remains in Pakistani control since 1947."The political uncertainty owing to India's claim to the region is especially worrisome for China, which currently depends on her southern neighbor for two reasons. First, China uses transit routes of Gilgit Baltistan to reach Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and the ports along the coastline of the Arabian Sea; and second, Chinese mining companies control the region's much valued mineral deposits of uranium, gold, copper, marble, and precious stones. Today, Chinese miners and their affiliates are everywhere in Gilgit Baltistan, especially in the Hunza-Nagar district, which is rich in uranium"

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/5433.htm>

Economic Developments

KJCCI welcomes launching of CBMs

The Nation, July 28, 2011

MIRPUR: Jammu & Kashmir Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry here on July 27 welcomed the launching of more CBMs comprising additional measures announced by governments of Pakistan and India foreign ministers-level talks held in Delhi to expand the scope of cross-LoC Trade and Travel. New CBMs include increase in trade days from 2 to 4 in a week, introduction of travel permit for 6 months with multiple entries to be issued within a maximum time period of 45 days, facilitation of regular meetings of Chamber of Commerce and Industry from both sides, strengthening of telecommunication facilities for cross LoC trade and provision of adequate facilities at Trade Facilitation Centres on both sides.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/28-Jul-2011/KJCCI-welcomes-launching-of-CBMs>

Rs 200.5m approved for construction of new schools

Pakistan Observer

DIAMER: Director Admin Gilgit Baltistan Ghulam Statedain stated that an amount of Rs. 200.5 million lac have been approved in the upcoming ADP for the construction of new schools in different districts of Gilgit Baltistan. He stated an amount of Rs. 19 crore and 50 lac have also been approved for purchase of new furniture for schools. He further added that we would construct new buildings for schools and purchase furniture for schools. He noted that the education department Gilgit Baltistan is continuously working for the welfare and upgrading education in the area.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=104262>

J&K JCCI proposals to expand cross-LoC trade

The Nation, July 13, 2011

MIRPUR: The Jammu & Kashmir Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry July12 moved in-depth proposals to the Ministry of foreign Affairs of the government of Pakistan for improvement and expansion of the on-going weekly cross-LoC trade being experienced between Azad Jammu & Kashmir and the Jammu & Kashmir through Muzaffarabad-Srinagar and Rawalakot-Poonch routes. Announcing this President Jammu & Kashmir Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Zulfiqar Abbasi noted that primarily proposals had been sent for the Pakistan-India foreign minister level talks (scheduled to be held in New Delhi on July 26 and 27) to improve and boost trans-LoC trade between AJK and J&K.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/13-Jul-2011/JKJCCI-proposals-to-expand--crossLoC-trade>

Cross-LoC trade remains at low key after resumption

July 8, 2011

JAMMU: The cross-LoC trade on Poonch-Rawalakote route, resumed after over three and half months suspension, remained a low key affair with two days trade this week standing at just Rs 5.02 crore. It was just half the amount than what used to be before the trade was suspended by the businessmen dealing the cross-LoC trade. On many occasions, trade had surpassed the figure of Rs 10 crore a week. Cross-LoC trade on Poonch-Rawalakote route is conducted every Tuesday and Wednesday. Official sources stated very less enthusiasm could be seen among the traders after the trade was resumed last week.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/cross-loc-trade-remains-low-key-after-resumption>

International Developments

Murtaza Ali Shah, Faryal meeting lobbyists to pick AJK PM

The News, July 16, 2011

LONDON: President Asif Ali Zardari's sister Faryal Talpur held meetings in London with Kashmiri lobby groups in Britain to decide about the next prime minister of Azad Kashmir. The PPP women's wing central president arrived in London on a

“private” visit but she spent every day and every hour of her stay here holding meetings with lobbyists working on behalf of PPP Azad Kashmir stalwarts Chaudhary Majeed, Chaudhary Yaseen and Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhary.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=57998&Cat=2&dt=7/16/2011>

Other Developments

The KKH - a pain to travel on

The Express Tribune, July 26, 2011

HUNZA: The Karakoram Highway (KKH) is a strategic road for Pakistan. It is used by national as well as international traffic since it provides for a land border between Pakistan and China. And for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, it provides a crucial land link to the rest of the country.

However, in recent years, it has suffered considerably from the elements. And while this is only to be expected, given the harsh terrain and unpredictable weather of the regions it traverses, what is worrying is that those in charge of its maintenance do not seem to be doing their job. The highway is badly damaged in some places and the result is that while previously it would take between 15-16 hours to travel from Islamabad to Gilgit by bus, now it takes well above 20. Moreover, a large stretch of the highway between central Hunza and Upper Hunza remains blocked for the last 20 months because of the massive landslide at Attabad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/217728/the-kkh--a-pain-to-travel-on/>

Shabbir Mir, KKH rebuilding: Hundreds protest over wage delays

The Express Tribune, July 26, 2011

GILGIT: Hundreds of labourers and contractors staged a sit-in on Monday, protesting against non-payment of wages, in front of the office of a Chinese construction company which is upgrading the Karakoram Highway in Gilgit-Baltistan. "The sit-in continues and we will not end until we are paid our wages," Farman Baig, noted a contractor from Dhee, a village near the Pak-China border in Gojal. "We haven't been paid since March," stated the contractor, where more than 300 labourers and contractors had gathered and chanted slogans

demanding the release of their accumulated wages, which run into hundreds of millions of rupees.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/217480/kkh-rebuilding-hundreds-protest-over-wage-delays/>

WASA fails to ensure smooth water supply

Pakistan Observer

AZAD Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), the paradise on GILGIT: The overstuffed Water and Sanitation Agency gave a tough time to people of the city as most parts witnessed suspension of water supply due to ill-planned 'Greater Water Supply Project' due to blockade in main supply line at many places. The water supply lines are blocked due to sand and other material and the entire area is without water.

The multi-billion Greater Water Supply Project completed a couple of years back was supposed to meet requirements of consumers in the capital city of Gilgit-Baltistan. The most uncomfortable situation is seen by residents when they find no body to listen to their miseries. After repeated requests, the Superintendent Engineer, Executive Engineer and Assistant Engineer of WASA visited the affected areas but due to absence of the technical staff the matter could not be resolved.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=105027>

Shabbir Mir, Hunting in G-B puts animals in danger

The Express Tribune, July 23, 2011

GILGIT: People from Azad Jammu and Kashmir enter Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and hunt threatened animals. They smuggle highly valuable herbal and medicinal plants outside of G-B, Abdul Hameed, a Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawmaker noted in the House on July 22. He added that residents of Astore Valley had approached him with the complaint that illegal chopping of forests is also on the rise while

relevant officials remained indifferent to the situation. Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah taking notice of the complaint summoned Secretary Forest in his office.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/215368/hunting-in-g-b-puts-animals-in-danger/>

Peace Bus Sans Kashmiris Crosses LOC

July 22, 2011

SRINAGAR: The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus which crossed over to other side of the Line of Control (LoC) on July 21 with 22 guests from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir had no passengers from the Kashmir valley onboard. Official sources stated that not a single resident of Kashmir valley crossed over to the other side. This is for the 50th time that no resident of Kashmir valley went to PoK in the weekly bus during 2011. Officials attribute procedural delays as the reason behind less number of Kashmiris from this side availing the service.

However, 40 PoK residents, who had arrived here in previous buses, returned to their homes after completing their stay here. They stated 22 fresh guests from PoK arrived at Kaman post, the Military post on the LoC in Uri sector after crossing the Aman Setu (peace bridge) on foot. A Kashmiri also returned from across the divide after completing his stay with family members separated in 1947.

http://www.kashmirobsviewer.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8170:peace-bus-sans-kashmiris-crosses-loc&catid=3:regional-news&Itemid=4

Work on widening of KKH delayed

Pakistan Observer

GILGIT: Work on widening of Karakoram Highway (KKH) has been delayed due to non

provision of funds from the federal government. According to Mr Cheng, the Project Manager of Chinese construction company engaged in widening of KKH, federal government has not released funds for the stated project for the last 16 months.

He stated that development work on KKH between Raikot Bridge and Khunjrab Pass, the border area of Pakistan and China has been stopped due to non availability of funds. Mr. Cheng stated that federal government will be approached soon for release of the funds to continue work on the project. It's worth mentioning that KKH (Silk Route) holds key importance for both Pakistan and China as most of the trade between the two countries is carried out through this route.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=104277>

Work on Neelum-Jhelum project in full swing

The Nation, July 16, 2011

MIRPUR: Construction work on all the sites of AJK-based 969MW Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project, including intake and power house, is in full swing, official sources stated. Finances amounting to \$ 2.16 billion required for the completion of the project (located in Muzaffarabad district) have already been arranged, added the sources. Besides other related works, drilling of the adit and head-race tunnels up to five and a half kilometer respectively have already been completed, the sources stated. The WAPDA is actively considering the use of modern tunnel boring machine for the completion of project earlier than scheduled.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Business/16-Jul-2011/Work-on-NeelumJhelum--project-in--full-swing>

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, 2010)

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: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

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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