

POK

News Digest

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh

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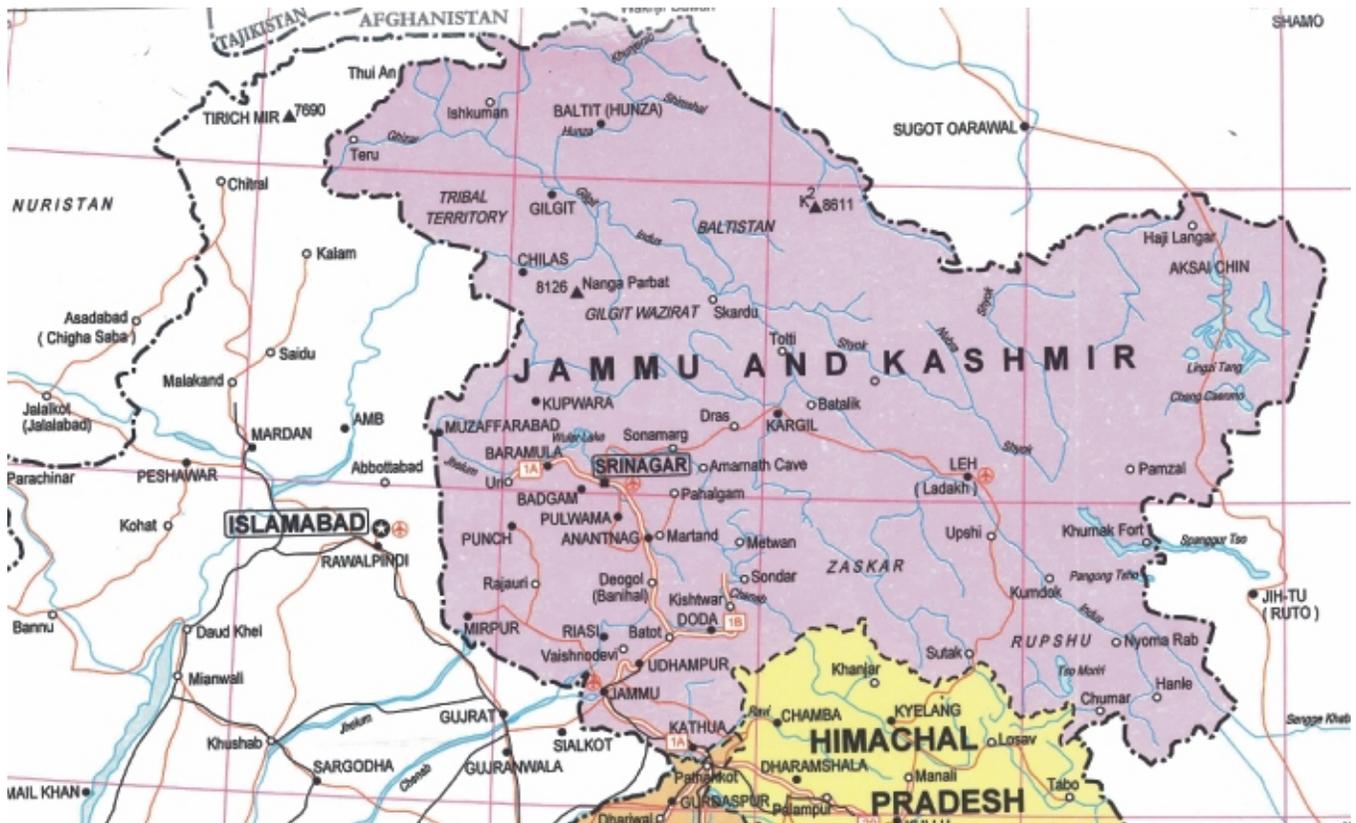
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

The killing of innocent pilgrims belonging to Gilgit Baltistan in a grisly incident in Kohistan on February 28, 2012 has shattered life in the region. These people were attacked while they were travelling in buses en route to Gilgit Baltistan on the Karakorum Highway. The victims had paid a visit to the holy shrines in Iran. The outlawed terrorist group Jundullah claimed the responsibility of the attack. The killings and the ensuing violence crippled life in the region with the administration largely failing to restore some kind of law and order in the disturbed areas.

The current issue covers this particular incident comprehensively keeping in view its gravity. To give the readers a feel on the popular perceptions of the people enraged by the act of violence, this issue also includes some letters from the general public which were published in the several mainstream newspapers of Pakistan. There is evidently widespread discontent both in Gilgit Baltistan and outside due to state apathy in the aftermath of the incident. Demonstrations were held in Pakistan urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to restore peace and order in the region and address the aggrieved sections of the local population.

A report published in early March 2012 suggests that US has agreed to give partial funding for the controversial Diamer Bhasha dam project. This is even though India has opposed the construction of this dam in Gilgit Baltistan in PoK, being an integral part of India. Keeping in view the overall sensitivity of the issue, if US goes ahead with this decision, it is likely to act to India's detriment. The decision could also adversely impact the improving India US ties which have witnessed an upward movement during the last decade.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Sectarian menace

Dawn, March 1, 2012

The brutal sectarian massacre on the Karakoram Highway in a remote part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kohistan district bore a chilling resemblance to the butchery witnessed last year in Mastung, Balochistan. As in the Mastung attack, passengers travelling in a convoy of buses, and comprising mostly Shia pilgrims returning from Iran to Gilgit via Rawalpindi, were pulled out and killed on the basis of their belief by men apparently in army uniform. Kohistan has not witnessed the sectarian bloodletting other parts of Pakistan have, yet it is possible the atrocity was carried out as communal tensions in neighbouring Gilgit-Baltistan spilled over. A few Sunnis were killed in Gilgit recently, and the targeting of passengers may have been a reprisal, with indications that the killers came from Chilas. Though Jandullah has claimed responsibility, it is unclear if it is the same group involved in past sectarian attacks in Karachi or a new one.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/01/sectarian-menace.html>

Pakistanis protest killing of Shias by Jundallah terrorists

Hundreds of Pakistanis have staged protest rallies against the February 28 attack on Shia Muslims in northern Pakistan that left 18 people dead. People rallied in Skardu town of Gilgit Baltistan province where funeral prayers for 18 slain Shia Muslims were offered on February 29 under tight security. Meanwhile, hundreds also staged a massive rally in Shikarpur city of southern Sindh province.

Chanting anti government slogans, the protestors demanded President Asif Ali Zardari and the premier Yousaf Raza Gilani's resignation over their government's failure to protect Shia people from militants. The Shia Muslims were killed on February 28 when a bus, carrying passengers from

Rawalpindi to the northern town of Gilgit, came under attack in the mountainous region of Kohistan. Several others were injured during the attack. The bus was carrying 39 people, mostly Shia pilgrims, returning to their hometowns after visiting holy shrines in different Iranian cities.

<http://presstv.com/detail/229376.html>

India silent on Gilgit-Baltistan lease issue: Panun Kashmir

Press Trust of India, March 2, 2012

JAMMU: Demanding a complete overhaul of the Centre's policy with regard to Pakistan and China, a Kashmiri Pandit body today accused the political leadership of being silent on the reported Gilgit-Baltistan lease issue. Panun Kashmir also called for statements by the government and political parties on the reported lease of Gilgit-Baltistan region to China by Pakistan. "It is highly disturbing that the reported lease of the region to China by Pakistan has not evoked any concern and attention of political leadership and the Central government. They are silent over the issue," Ajay Chrungoo, Chairman, Kashmir Panun noted while talking to media.

<http://ibnlive.in.com/generalnewsfeed/news/india-silent-on-gilgitbaltistan-lease-issue-panun-kashmir/970064.html>

Kohistan tragedy still haunts Gilgit-Baltistan

The News, March 2, 2012

GILGIT: Tension gripped different areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) after 16 passengers were brutally killed in Kohistan on February 28. Local residents were already restricted to their houses while thin transport was observed on the roads. Sixteen people were killed in a sectarian attack when unidentified gunmen forced them to disembark from four Gilgit-bound passenger buses and sprayed them with bullets in Kohistan district. Violence erupted in Gilgit as a result of the attack, claiming at least one life.

All government and private offices, educational institutions and business centres across Gilgit-Baltistan were shut down till March 4 by the local administration as a precautionary measure in the wake of a possible violent reaction by members of the victim community.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-37823-Kohistan-tragedy-still-haunts-GB>

Shabbir Mir, Kohistan shootings: Escorted by police, traffic resumes on Karakoram Highway

The Express Tribune, March 4, 2012

GILGIT: After four days of suspension, traffic on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) resumed on March 3 with a special police force escorting convoys through Kohistan, where 16 passengers, on their way from Rawalpindi to Gilgit were killed. Hundreds were stranded across the region due to suspension of traffic on the highway that connects Gilgit-Baltistan with Pakistan.

For the first three days after the attack, protestors in Kohistan had blocked the highway against the use of their territory for the heinous killings. Following the attack, Interior Minister Rehman Malik had announced deploying a special highway police along the KKH, with half of the expenses to be borne by the federal government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/345212/kohistan-shootings-escorted-by-police-traffic-resumes-on-karakoram-highway/>

COAS Gen Kayani visits outposts in Gilgit Baltistan heights

The News, February 29, 2012

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani on February 29 visited Skardu and Forward Locations at Minimerg and Domel Sectors in Gilgit Baltistan. The COAS was briefed about the current internal security situation of the region, in the aftermath of shahadat of 18 innocent citizens at Harban Nullah, Dassu on 28 February. He instructed the local commanders to extend full cooperation to Civil Administration in maintenance of law and order. Later, the COAS met troops deployed in sub zero temperatures, at the highest mountainous region.

He commended their selfless devotion and fortitude in braving the rough weather and performing duties in an area where even survival is an achievement. The COAS was accompanied by Lieutenant General Khalid Nawaz, Commander Rawalpindi Corps.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-37609-Gen-Kayani-visits-outpost-in-GB-heights>

Gilgit-Baltistan students demand protection

Daily Times, March 4, 2012

LAHORE: Students from Gilgit-Baltistan have condemned the ongoing killings of innocent people, and demanded protection from the government. Addressing a press conference on March 3, the students stated they wanted a high-level probe into the Kohistan massacre, saying that the people of the region had never indulged in such sectarian attacks. "It is a conspiracy hatched against the people of Kohistan," remarked one of the speakers. Chaudhry Aashaan Ahmed, Rabnawaz Malik and Amir Azeem Qureshi were prominent among the speakers.

They alleged the security situation in the area had turned the worst during Chief Minister Mehdi Shah's tenure. They stated that around 650 people had been killed since January 8, 2005, of which 450 were killed during CM Mehdi's government. They alleged that the CM was supporting a specific sect, adding that the killings of the people belonging to Sunni sect were much more than the killings of Shias.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C03%5C04%5Cstory_4-3-2012_pg7_23

Tariq Husain Khan, AJK Govt performance

Pakistan Observer

There are the reports that internal differences of ruling party (PPP) are on the rise. Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly has become rubber stamp. Faryal Talpur sister of Asif Ali Zaradari is a shadow PM of AJK. She is enjoying the powers of AJK government. It is on her discretion that how she uses the powers. PM AJK is helpless and unable to make a single appointment without Faryal Talpur nod.

Miseries of a common man are increasing due to unstable and powerless government. AJK is an independent territory and has own government. What is the justification for interfering in the matters of an independent government?

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=143147>

Umer Nangiana, Kohistan bus carnage: 'We will stand tall against forces of oppression'

The Express Tribune, March 3, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Wearing black bands on their arms, hundreds gathered at the central Imambargah in Sector G-6 on March 2 to protest the sectarian killings of 16 passengers in Kohistan. The protesters, supporters and activists of Majlis-i-Wahadatul Muslimeen (MWM), held banners displaying slogans demanding “end to killing of Shia at the hands of terrorists”, “down with Saudi supported madrassas”, “down with Salafi establishment”, “down with America, Israel” and “Down with CIA, Mossad”, rallied to China Chowk in F-6 to mark their protest. Traffic on main Jinnah Avenue remained suspended for over an hour, while commuters were redirected to alternate routes by the Islamabad Traffic Police to avoid the protest. They demanded that the government provide security to Shia passengers on Karakoram Highway (KKH) and relocate Rangers from Gilgit to KKH.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/344689/kohistan-bus-carnage-we-will-stand-tall-against-forces-of-oppression/>

Kohistan killings

Dawn, March 3, 2012

Surprisingly, the horrendous killings of Kohistan have not evoked the kind of condemnation they warranted from the rulers or the religious parties. Also, these killings did not attract as much media attention as they deserved. That shows the state of mind of the rulers, the media and probably the people as well who have started taking such killings as a routine matter.

Not a day passes by when there is not a bomb blast or suicidal attack in Pakistan, killing and maiming several innocent people. A perfunctory, run-of-the-mill statement by the interior minister usually says

'we shall not be demoralised by the terrorists and shall fight them to the last man, etc'. It is more of a joke than something serious. Such hollow threats have no effect on the terrorists for they know that not a single terrorist has been hanged till date. Look at Mumtaz Qadri who killed the governor of the ruling party in broad daylight and was garlanded by lawyers themselves for such a dastardly act.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/03/kohistan-killings.html>

Kohistan bus attack FC, police jointly guard KKH

The News, March 3, 2012

MANSEHRA: The Frontier Constabulary (FC) has been deployed along with the police on Karakoram Highway (KKH) in Kohistan to ensure security to travellers on the road that leads to Gilgit-Baltistan and onward to the border with China. Three platoons were deployed in the backdrop of the bus attack in which 16 passengers were killed in Harban Nala area in Kohistan district on the boundary with Gilgit-Baltistan on February 28.

Kohistan District Police Officer Mohammad Ilyas noted that besides deployment of the FC, a number of patrolling police parties were already deployed on the highway had been increased manifold. He stated patrolling would continue round-the-clock to avert any untoward happening on the road.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-Kohistan-bus-attack-FC-police-jointly-guard-KKH-2-95749>

Unjust and harmful ban

Pakistan Tribune, March 12, 2012

Pakistan has put a popular religious party, Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), and three other religious parties on the already imposing list of 28 banned organisations in the country. The total number of such entities now stands at 32. The charge against the ASWJ is its suspected involvement in terrorist activities and sectarian violence. The other three outfits are: Shia Tulaba Action Committee, People's Amman Committee and Tanseem Naujawan-e-Sunnat of Gilgit. There has been no official word about the imposition of the ban from the Interior Ministry,

though sources within it have confirmed a BBC report that the Ministry had issued a notification last month (on February 15) advising all provincial governments and concerned departments about the decision.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Pakistan-bans-Ahle-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat-248190.html>

Mangla Dam Affectees: Much-touted rehabilitation delayed

The Express Tribune, March 11, 2012

MIRPUR: Mangla dam affectees on March 10 charged the AJK government of maneuvering delaying tactics in the dispensation of the already-committed package for rehabilitation of additional families of Mangla dam affectees, including Jammu & Kashmir refugees. Young Action Forum Secretary General Sardar Attique Sadozai noted that the affectees had called off their protest in support of their demands after the assurance of AJK Prime Minister Ch Abdul Majeed. Earlier, the forum had threatened to hold a long march to press the government for acceptance of their demands without further loss of time.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/348438/mangla-dam-affectees-much-touted-rehabilitation-delayed/>

Shabbir Mir, Kohistan bus attack: Granting demands of locals, Malik makes a disclosure

The Express Tribune, March 11, 2012

GILGIT: Five people allegedly involved in the Kohistan massacre have been arrested, claimed Interior Minister Rehman Malik, who flew into Gilgit March 10. It was his second visit to Gilgit this month and came after the Shia community resumed protests March 9 against the 'non-serious attitude' of the government in accepting their demands; including the arrest of culprits; compensation for the heirs of the victims of the sectarian attack and creating a special highway force for the Karakoram Highway Local clerics had earlier set March 8 as the deadline for the government to grant their demands or else they would launch protests across the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) region.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/348422/kohistan-bus-attack-granting-demands-of-locals-malik-makes-a-disclosure/>

Elders to visit Diامر to evolve strategy

The News, March 12, 2012

MANSEHRA: A 70-member delegation of elders and Ulema from Kohistan would visit the Diامر district of Gilgit-Baltistan in a couple of days to evolve a joint strategy to avert incidents like the Harban bus attack in which 16 Shia passengers were killed by gunmen wearing military uniforms. The selection of 70 elders and Ulema was made at a grand Jirga, which was also attended by District Coordination Officer (DCO) Aqil Badshah and District Police Officer (DPO) Mohammad Ilyas at Dassu in Kohistan on March 11.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-97219-Elders-to-visit-Diامر-to-evolve-strategy>

Foreign hands involved in Kohistan incident, says Malik

Dawn, March 10, 2012

GILGIT: Interior Minister Rehman Malik March 10 stated that foreign hands were involved in the Kohistan bus firing incident. Talking to newsmen here after attending a meeting on law and order situation, Malik claimed that those involved in the incident have been identified, adding that the culprits will be brought to justice at all costs. "The list of identified persons will be handed over to local Jirgas who will hand over the culprits to the security forces," he stated.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/10/foreign-hands-involved-in-kohistan-incident-says-malik.html>

Dialogue important for peace in Baltistan: Rehman Malik

Dawn, March 10, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik has stressed the importance of dialogue to solve the deteriorating law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan. Malik met Baltistan's Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah, Governor Pir Karam Ali Shah and other high officials of GB.

"The ministry would provide the list of the alleged miscreants to the 'jirga' (the tribal assembly of elders) and it would be their responsibility to make sure their arrest," he stated. Malik added that if the

situation could not be handled through negotiations or jirga's involvement then the route of military operation could also be opted for. The minister was holding talks with high officials of the province after sectarian violence erupted in the region, when 18 Shia bus passengers were killed by gunmen after forcing them to disembark on the Karakoram highway.

<http://dawn.com/2012/03/10/dialogue-important-for-baltistan-peace-malik/>

The Kohistan carnage

The News, March 7, 2012

The Kohistan carnage, in which 18 innocent Shia people were gunned down, was another example of the barbaric mindset of terrorists. Targeted killing of Shias in the northern areas is not a new phenomenon. In 1988, during dictator Zia's regime, the jihadi elements from the tribal belt of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Kohistan and Diamer attacked the Jalalabad area of Gilgit, killed hundreds of innocent people including women and children, set ablaze houses, plants and standing crops and even shot animals.

Every attack on Shias is termed 'sectarian violence'. It is mainly because of this misnomer that the government and law-enforcement agencies show reluctance in going after the terrorists. All such heinous incidents must be treated as terrorist attacks. Lastly, I would say that if the federal government fails to realise its responsibility and address the grievances of the local people, Gilgit-Baltistan might go the Balochistan way.

M H Waziri, Islamabad

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=96376&Cat=11>

Shabbir Mir, Kohistan massacre: KKH blocked to protest suspension of police official

The Express Tribune, March 10, 2012

CHILAS: Sectarian temperatures ran high in Gilgit-Baltistan on March 10 as thousands of angry protestors blocked Karakoram Highway in Chilas after Interior Minister Rehman Malik suspended a senior police official deputed in the valley on the

demands of the Shia clergy. "The decision is one-side as the government is under pressure from a certain group," stated the protestors who had reached Chilas the main town of Diamer from adjacent valleys by a car rally. "Enough is enough, we will not let it happen," stated the speakers while addressing a crowd that had blocked the highway and disrupted traffic. The speakers included Abdul Wakil Shah, Faizullah, and Maulana Abdul Majeed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/348176/kohistan-massacre-kkh-blocked-to-protest-suspension-of-police-official/>

Malik announces operation in GB

Pakistan Today, March 11, 2012

GILGIT: Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik on March 10 stated that a large scale operation would be launched in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan to maintain law and order in the region. Chairing a meeting to review law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan, Malik stated that investigation teams have tracked down the elements involved in the brutal killing of at least 18 Shias in Kohistan on February 29. He stated that five suspects involved in the massacre were arrested by the law enforcement agencies, adding that foreign elements were also involved in the incident. Malik stated that no one would be allowed to play with the law and order of the region and he was in constant touch with the Gilgit-Baltistan chief minister as part of government efforts to bring peace.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/03/11/news/national/malik-announces-operation-in-gb/>

Govt delays operation in GB

The Nation, March 11, 2012

GILGIT: Interior Minister Rehman Malik stated on March 10 that Dr Shakeel Afridi, who aided Americans in operation against Osama bin Laden, can be tried for treason and a decision in this regard will be taken in a day or two. Malik stated Dr Afridi would have informed the Pakistani government or the local police about the information regarding Osama bin Laden.

The minister also stated the security agencies arrested five culprits involved in the Kohistan

incident, adding that 'foreign hand' was involvement in the heinous crime. Malik also stressed the importance of dialogue to solve the deteriorating law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan. After meeting with different delegations in Gilgit, Malik told reporters that a peace Jirga along with the security forces would be reinstated to restore peace in Gilgit areas.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/11-Mar-2012/govt-delays-operation-in-gb>

Manzoor Qadir, GB on verge of violence and bloodshed

Daily Times, March 11, 2012

ISLAMABAD: After volatile Balochistan, the situation in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has turned into a volcano that could erupt at any time, exposing hundreds of locals to violence, hatred and death. At present a great deal of unrest that is being witnessed among the residents of GB representing various religious sects, including Deobandi, Shia, Sunni and Ismaili, could disrupt the law and order situation, triggering large-scale violence in the northern areas anytime.

Sources stated a large amount illegal arms and ammunitions have been dumped in various parts of the GB by various communities under the nose of government while administration had its eyes closed over the issue. This huge cache of illegal arms and ammunition has reached the GB - where arms and ammunitions are not manufactured unlike FATA - after crossing three-hundred kilometres, passing through various security checkpoints and pickets set up by the law enforcement agencies.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C03%5C11%5Cstory_11-3-2012_pg7_7

GB people's anguish

Dawn, March 11, 2012

THE tragic bus shooting incident in Kohistan has shocked the people of Gilgit Baltistan. The people are now avoiding travelling by road from Gilgit/Skardu to Rawalpindi because of fear as there are insufficient security arrangements. There is nothing but lawlessness in Kohistan.

The government's attitude regarding solving people's problems is pathetic. People have been demanding a new airport at Gilgit for wide-bodied aircraft to cope up the travelling needs of the public, but all in vain. I would appeal the army chief to call back all the Northern Light Infantry Regiment units and Gilgit/Chitral Scouts from Fata and Balochistan for re-deployment across the Gilgit and Kohistan regions to ensure safe travelling on the Karakoram Highway.

Hakim Jan, Karachi

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/11/gb-peoples-anguish.html>

M Rafique Goraya, Bhasha Dam is no substitute for KBD

Business Recorder, March 24, 2012

The Punjab Forum, an NGO dedicated to political and economic rights of Punjab, has stressed the need for construction of Kalabagh Dam on river Indus for hydel power generation and water storage on war footings and stated the difficult Diamer-Bhasha Dam was no substitute for KBD. Punjab Forum President Baig Raj stated in a statement on March 23 that existing dams were not enough to save the country from becoming a desert, while the Diamer-Bhasha Dam would take almost a decade to start power generation.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1168658/>

Gilani for measures to utilise untapped resources of GB

Daily Times, March 22, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on March 21 urged collective efforts by the Gilgit-Baltistan Council and the government to optimally utilise the untapped resources of the area for the socio-economic uplift of its people.

Chairing the third session of Gilgit-Baltistan Council, the prime minister stated the council and the government, pursuant to their respective legislative lists, should jointly chalk out policies and plans especially in the area of mineral development, tourism, forest, and electricity. Prime Minister Gilani, who is also the chairman of

Gilgit-Baltistan Council, expressed the hope that the council and the government together can make a difference. "Both can join hands to bring in an era of revolution in Gilgit-Baltistan, whereby the ultimate goal of socio-economic empowerment of the people should be the priority," Gilani stated.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C03%5C22%5Cstory_22-3-2012_pg7_19

Ghulam Bhatt appointed AJK presidential coordinator

March 22, 2012

Ghulam Nabi Bhatt, a resident of Jeddah for over 30 years, has been appointed as a coordinator for Azad Kashmir. "President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan has appointed me as a presidential coordinator," Bhatt noted. Bhatt thanked the president for reposing trust in him and stated he conveyed to the presidential office that he has accepted the new responsibility.

<http://arabnews.com/saudiArabia/article591437.ece>

Amir Karim Tantray, Pakistan govt leases land in Gilgit to China

Hindustan Times, March 24, 2012

Keeping with the developments of the past two years, the Pakistan government has leased land in Gilgit-Baltistan to China for 30 years to work on a few projects whose security the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has taken charge of. Some of those are hydel works, railway projects, tunnels for the railways and roads.

"Pakistan and China have come to an understanding where land in the disputed territory of Gilgit Baltistan has been leased to China and the PLA has taken over its security," a senior army official who monitors the situation in Gilgit-Baltistan closely noted. "Earlier, the army had information on the presence of the PLA in Gilgit-Baltistan but now it has (transpired) that Pakistan has leased land to China for 30 years to work on a few projects important for Pakistan and China," the officer added. Gilgit-Baltistan, formerly known as the Northern Areas, was part of the

princely state of Kashmir but after partition Pakistan occupied the area. In 1963, Pakistan had ceded to China PoK's 5,180 square km for the Karokaram highway.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/Jammu%20Sec/Pakistan-govt-leases-land-in-Gilgit-to-China/Article1-830017.aspx>

Shabbir Mir, Bus massacre aftermath: In Gilgit, govt expedites efforts to resolve sectarian strife

The Express Tribune, March 19, 2012

GILGIT: To ensure peace in Gilgit, the government is expediting efforts in bringing clerics of the two rivals sects involved in the Kohistan bus massacre to the negotiating table. This was stated by a Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) legislator on March 18. The politician, asking not to be named, stated that the government is making "hectic" efforts to bring Qazi Nisar Ahmed and Agha Rahat Hussaini of the Sunni and Shia sects respectively to sort out their differences. He added that a grand jirga, comprising community elders, politicians, retired bureaucrats, religious leaders and social activists from both sects, has also been summoned in this regard. The efforts are aimed to ensure that Sunnis and Shias live peacefully in future, he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/351753/bus-massacre-aftermath-in-gilgit-govt-expedites-efforts-to-resolve-sectarian-strife/>

India turns its back on people of Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily Pioneer, March 19, 2012

Despite repeated assertions that all of J&K is an integral part of India, New Delhi has chosen to ignore atrocities Pakistan commits in areas occupied by it. Armed gunmen dressed in Army fatigues killed 18 Shias from Gilgit-Baltistan on the Karakoram Highway in the Kohistan area of Khyber-Pukhtoonkhwa province of Pakistan while the Shias were returning in a convoy from a pilgrimage to Iran on February 27. Ironically, this report, involving the lives of people from Gilgit-Baltistan, which India claims to be an integral part of its sovereign territory and is now currently under the occupation of Pakistan, was published on the 'international' page of one of India's leading national newspapers. Of course, many others did

not bother to publish the news at all. The publication of the news item involving the massacre of de jure Indian citizens on the international page as against the front page hype given to a racial attack in Australia or United States against 'mainstream' Indians not only reflects an editorial oversight but also the gradual disappearance of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from the collective consciousness of the nation as a whole.

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/columnists/item/51262-india-turns-its-back-on-people-of-gilgit-baltistan.html>

Oppn walks out in J&K assembly over PoK issue

Press Trust of India, March 20, 2012

Expressing concern over alleged leasing out of land of Gilgit, Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to China and increasing their presence in these areas, the opposition staged a walkout from J-K assembly amidst uproarious scenes. Opposition BJP, JKNPP and Jammu State Morcha (JSM) staged the walkout demanding liberation of PoK and getting it back to the Indian fold. BJP members led by Jugal Kishore, JKNPP members headed by Balwant Singh Mankotia and JSM member Ashwani Kumar raised the issue of alleged leasing out of land by Pakistan in Gilgit, Baltistan and PoK to China. They expressed concern over the alleged increasing presence of China in these areas and sought a reply from the government. Asserting that the Centre should take measures in this regard, they demanded that PoK should be liberated and taken back as per a resolution in Parliament that PoK and other areas are parts of India.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Punjab/Chandigarh/Oppn-walks-out-in-J-and-K-assembly-over-PoK-issue/SP-Article1-828197.aspx>

AH Nizami, Groundbreaking ceremony: AJK's longest bridge to help revive tourism

The Express Tribune, March 13, 2012

MIRPUR: Prime Minister (PM) Yousaf Raza Gilani was present in Mirpur on March 12, where he laid the foundation stones of two development projects, most notably the Rs4.23 billion Hazrat Meeran Shah Bridge. The bridge, approximately seven kilometres (km) in length, will be the longest bridge

in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and will connect Mirpur city with Islamgarh town. It is being constructed in the wake of the Mangla Dam Raising Project and is expected to be completed by August 2014. It is expected that the bridge will reduce the distance between Mirpur and Islamgarh from 23 to 7 km, besides opening up new avenues for tourism in the area.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/348990/groundbreaking-ceremony-ajks-longest-bridge-to-help-revive-tourism/>

Ijaz Kakakhel, NA body seeks more allocation for GB, AJK

Daily Times, March 14, 2012

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) sub-committee on Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan on March 13 recommended the government increase its block allocation for both the autonomous states as shares of four provinces had increased under the new NFC Award. Ninety percent of internal resources of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan are spent on public servants and a lesser amount is left for development purposes. The federal government had made a block allocation for development projects, but it could not enhance the share accordingly. AJK and GB Secretary Babar Fateh Yaqoob told the committee that during 2010-11, the federal government, under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), had allocated Rs 1.958 billion for Gilgit-Baltistan. He added the allocation had been reduced to Rs 1.584 billion for the current year.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C03%5C14%5Cstory_14-3-2012_pg7_14

Shabbir Mir, Call for protests: ASWJ warns against curriculum change in G-B

The Express Tribune, March 14, 2012

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan chapter of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamat (ASWJ) issued a strong warning to the government on March 13 against changing the existing curriculum, saying it would trigger unending protests in the country. The reaction came after the process of changing the curriculum entered its final stage, as claimed by the ASWJ.

“We demand immediate withdrawal of the decision being made to change the existing curriculum,” stated ASWJ leaders Abdullah Haidary, Attaullah Saqib and Himayatullah, while addressing a news conference in Gilgit. The reaction came days after Interior Minister Rehman Malik announced in Gilgit that a notification regarding changes in curriculum would be issued soon. Malik was in Gilgit to end protests resumed by Shia leaders in the wake of the Kohistan bus tragedy that left 16 people dead last month.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/349711/call-for-protests-aswj-warns-against-curriculum-change-in-g-b/>

PM directs prioritizing construction of Mirpur airport

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 14, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on March 13 directed the Secretary Ministry of Finance and other relevant authorities to prioritize the building of an international airport in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Chairing a meeting on the state of disaster preparedness at the Prime Minister House here, he directed for the project to be completed on the basis of public-private partnership and be included in the next Public Sector Development Programme. He stated the demand of the airport must be met at the earliest.

http://app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=184309&Itemid=2

Shabbir Mir, Kargil tragedy: Dead soldier's family still waiting to receive his body

The Express Tribune, March 15, 2012

GILGIT: A decade after the Kargil war, relatives of Ghulam Haider who was killed by enemy fire, are still waiting for news about his body. Haider, 33, resident of remote Chipurson valley in Gilgit-Baltistan, was a soldier in the Northern Lights Infantry when he died in the line of duty. His body has not been found, a fact that continues to haunt his family to this day. “We know Haider died in the line of duty but the fact that we have not received his body or any clue leading to it is even more painful,” his brother Ehsan Ali stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/350144/kargil-tragedy-dead->

[soldiers-family-still-waiting-to-receive-his-body/](#)

Mangla Dam-hit victims: AJK Prime Minister for timely rehabilitation

Business Recorder, March 17, 2012

Azad Jammu Kashmir, Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed directed Mangla Dam Resettlement Organisation to provide possible residential facilities and ensure timely rehabilitation of dam raising project affected people. Addressing various delegations of the Mangla dam affected persons and local traders on March 16, the Prime Minister ordered to ensure the supply of building material to the affected according to the market rates in their new housing abodes.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1166111/>

Safety measures: More check posts to be set up on KKH

The Express Tribune, March 8, 2012

GILGIT: In reaction to the Kohistan bus massacre, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) governments have decided to establish nearly 30 check posts on Karakoram Highway (KKH). “The check posts will be set up as part of a security plan being devised to make the journey safer for passengers,” stated an official in the G-B government. In addition to that, a special highway patrolling police will be entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring a safe journey for passengers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/346903/safety-measures-more-check-posts-to-be-set-up-on-kkh/>

Gilgit-Baltistan government has cancelled all arm permits as part of the efforts to maintain law and order in the region

Business Recorder, March 9, 2012

This was revealed by Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah while addressing a joint meeting of the cabinet and elected members of Gilgit on March 7. The Chief Minister stated the government would take all necessary steps to establish peace in the area. He stated all the outlawed organisations are being kept under strict vigilance and no one would be allowed to violate the law.

Mehdi Shah, on the occasion, announced to constitute a committee for the preparation of peace recommendations led by the Law Minister Wazir Shakeel, having MLA Dedar Ali, Deputy Speaker Jamil Ahmad, Amjad Advocate, Maulana Atta Ullah Shahab and Razi-ud-Din as members.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1162968/>

Shabbir Mir, Kohistan bus massacre: Shia clerics conditionally call off strike

The Express Tribune, March 9, 2012

GILGIT: A call for a strike on March 8 by Shia clerics to protest against the delay in the arrest of the perpetrators of the Kohistan bus massacre was postponed after interior minister Rehman Malik assured them he would visit Gilgit as soon as the weather clears. According to sources, Rehman Malik spoke to members of Anjuman-e-Imamia this morning on telephone and assured them that he would reach Gilgit on March 9. He requested them to call off the protests till his arrival. Anjuman-e-Imamia postponed the strike till March 9 following the assurance, but they warned that they would go ahead if the government failed to fulfil its commitments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/347442/kohistan-bus-massacre-shia-clerics-conditionally-call-off-strike/>

Gilgit-Baltistan: empowering assembly

Dawn, March 9, 2012

The federation of Pakistan comprises four provinces and four non-provincial units, namely Fata, Northern Areas, which is now Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the Islamabad Capital Territory. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been living in a constitutional vacuum for over 64 years. They are neither given representation in the parliament nor a constitutional mandate to the local assembly.

In August 2009, an ad hoc ordinance was introduced by the government of Pakistan called Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-governance Order. The Pakistan People's Party called it a democratic change in Gilgit-Baltistan. Names have been changed: executive to governor and deputy

executive to chief minister, Northern Areas to Gilgit-Baltistan. There is no doubt that ministers have been increased but the budget is the same.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/09/gilgit-baltistan-empowering-assembly.html>

Mohammad Jamil, Terrorism stalks the land

The Nation, March 7, 2012

Out of 26 passengers, 18 died in an unfortunate incident when about a dozen unidentified armed men opened fire on a bus in Kohistan area, which was heading towards Rawalpindi from Gilgit. Against this backdrop, all government and private offices, educational institutions and business centres across Gilgit-Baltistan were shut down. Reportedly, the terrorist network, Jundallah, claimed responsibility for the heinous crime. There is a perception that the group was created by an alien agency to conduct attacks in Iran mainly to create tensions between the two brotherly countries Iran and Pakistan.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/columns/07-Mar-2012/terrorism-stalks-the-land>

Aziz Ali Dad, After the Kohistan carnage

The News, March 9, 2012

From Khunjerab on the Chinese border right down to Karachi, violent events keep taking place in Pakistan. On February 28, there was a massacre of passengers travelling from Rawalpindi to Gilgit. The buses carrying the men and women were forced to stop in Kohistan district by armed terrorists who, after checking the travellers' identity cards for their names, shot 18 passengers belonging to the Shia community, and left eight people wounded.

Soon after the massacre, the banned organisation Jundallah claimed responsibility for the killings. Though the region of Gilgit has witnessed sporadic sectarian violence since 1988, this became a regular phenomenon since 2005 following the assassination of a prominent Shia leader and subsequent violent events. Sectarianism has entered every sphere of life in Gilgit. It has provided fertile ground to fanatical elements to push a terrorist agenda using religion as an excuse.

Jundallah's entry into the sectarian imbroglio in Gilgit-Baltistan is a particularly alarming development.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-96810-After-the-Kohistan-carnage>

Arms recovered, seven held in Gilgit

Dawn, March 5, 2012

GILGIT, March 4: Punjab Rangers and Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts on March 4 recovered live rockets, light machine guns and other arms from two separate points of the city and arrested seven suspects. Separately, a scout's man and two civilians were injured in a firing incident, senior administration officials stated. "GB Scouts raided a suspected house in Yadgar Mohallah and took into custody eight live rockets while in Amphary Punjab Rangers recovered two light machine guns, four SMGs, 3 pistols and 900 bullets," informed Home Secretary Sajid Chohan at a press briefing in GB Scouts headquarters.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/05/arms-recovered-seven-held-in-gilgit.html>

Shabbir Mir, Riven by fear: Gilgit scout, two others hurt in sectarian clash

The Express Tribune, March 5, 2012

GILGIT: Violence reared its ugly head again in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) capital on March 4 when three more people were wounded in a fresh episode of sectarian strife. A Gilgit scout and two others were injured in a clash in Baseen, about 15 kilometres from the capital. The fighting was triggered by an exchange of gunfire between rival sects as a procession passed through the area. The scout was caught in the crossfire.

The latest strife led to an escalation of tensions in Gilgit, already riven by fear in the wake of the Kohistan episode that had left 16 people dead last week. Residents were forced to stay indoors throughout the day as authorities repeatedly sounded warnings in various residential areas through loudspeakers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/345619/riven-by-fear-gilgit-scout-two-others-hurt-in-sectarian-clash/>

Educational institutions, govt offices in GB reopen after 3-day mourning over Kohistan tragedy

Pakistan Today, March 5, 2012

GILGIT: Educational institutions and government offices across Gilgit-Baltistan were reopened on March 5 after three-day mourning and protests over Kohistan tragedy. According to details, due to fear of possible lawlessness and violence in response to killing of 18 members of Shiite community in Kohistan on February 28, the provincial administration closed all the government offices and educational institutions across GB for three days. During past three to four days, the entire GB remained in the grip of mourning and protests. Routine activities remained suspended as people preferred staying indoors besides the business and trade activities also remained stalled. Though the institutions were reopened on March 5 after row of mourning and protests but attendance of staff and students in schools remained very low.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/03/05/uncategorized/educational-institutions-govt-offices-in-gb-reopen-after-3-day-mourning-over-kohistan-tragedy/>

Security forces arrest six persons in Gilgit

Pakistan Today, March 5, 2012

GILGIT: Tense situation prevails in Gilgit since the Kohistan tragedy while Section 144 has been imposed and security forces have arrested six crooks. Security forces started search operation against the miscreants to establish law and order while a large quantity of weapons was recovered during the patrolling and six people were arrested. On March 4, protesters clashed with security forces and two people were injured due to the firing of the security personnel who were later shifted to hospital.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/03/05/news/national/security-forces-arrest-six-persons-in-gilgit/>

Sectarian violence

The News, March 6, 2012

Protest demonstrations all over Gilgit-Baltistan including the Diamer and Chilas districts which are

Sunni-majority areas show that the people of these areas want peace and harmony in this region. The history of sectarian killings in Gilgit dates back to the days of Gen Zia and the atrocities committed during his rule. It was during the Zia era that the seeds of extremism were sown in the whole country. During his era, a large number of people were massacred on the basis of their sect and entire villages destroyed in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Sectarian strife has become a serious challenge for the federal government as well as the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. However, peace could be restored if all segments of society played their role. The GB government must be provided with financial, logistic and technical support to deal with terrorist groups operating in the region. A judicial commission should be set up to investigate all sectarian conflicts in Gilgit-Baltistan starting from 1988 onwards in order to get to the bottom of the issue. Lastly, the religious leaders of the area should be strictly stopped from propagating hate and revenge through their sermons.

Ejaz Karim, Lahore

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=96243&Cat=11>

India has a moral responsibility towards easing the plight of people of Gilgit-Baltistan

ANI, March 5, 2012

NEW DELHI: After more than six decades of independence, there are a million plus people entitled to citizenship of India who are being suppressed, humiliated and exploited by mercenary forces. This statement may come across as ludicrous to all those who are unaware about the state of affairs in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Jammu and Kashmir.

This region was a part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir at the time when the erstwhile Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession. The region was not liberated by Indian forces during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1948. Intervention by the United Nations led to a ceasefire and a huge mass of land was forcibly

occupied by Pakistan and renamed as Northern Areas (NA).

<http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/03/05/272976-India-has-a-moral-responsibility-towards-easing-the-plight-of-people-of-Gilgit-Baltistan.html>

Gilgit-Baltistan: call for rights

Dawn, March 6, 2012

The Supreme Court has recently taken up the issue of Gilgit-Baltistan. The people of Gilgit are in a desperate mood to witness the solution of this dispute that has put its developmental progress on halt. The Constitution of Pakistan has simply turned a blind eye to our rightful provisions. Our courtesy and respect to Pakistan are reciprocated with a flat slap on our faces by the Constitution. We are condemned to be treated as the step-children of this motherland throughout the course of 64 years. In sharp contrast, the Indian constitution embodies an extra status to this region declaring it an integral part of its peninsular body. We are still thrown out of it like the malarial plasmodium. The heartiest plea of our people is returned back with a label of 'disputed territory' branded on our backs.

Rehan Khan Gilgiti, Rawalpindi

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/06/gilgit-baltistan-call-for-rights.html>

Sense of deprivation

Dawn, March 6, 2012

Gilgit-Baltistan has been going through turmoil since 1988 due to sectarian violence which is resulting in instability in the region. As a gateway to some of the powerful countries like India, China, Russia, and Central Asian States, Gilgit-Baltistan has geopolitical importance. But despite its importance, it has been politically underestimated since its affiliation with Pakistan. The result is in front of us: the recent Kohistan killings. The solution we all know is education which is the best remedy for most of our problems.

Awais Ali Baig Hunzai, Lahore

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/06/gilgit-baltistan-call-for-rights.html>

Integrated healthcare plan launched in AJK

Business Recorder, March 6, 2012

Azad Jammu Kashmir government has launched an integrated plan to extend basic health care facilities to the masses at their doorsteps. The official sources noted on March 5 that under the plan the newly-constructed 50-bed hospital, set up by a non-governmental organisation, in Jatlan town of Mirpur has yet started functioning. The hospital has been furnished with all required latest equipment of the most modern technology. Free eye and medical camps would separately be set up to provide free treatment to the patients, sources stated. Meanwhile, under the plan, the AJK government has allocated colossal funds in the current fiscal year to improve the medical services from the public-sector hospitals.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1161902/>

Section 144 imposed as unrest revisits Gilgit

Daily Times, March 5, 2012

GILGIT: Unrest returned to haunt the city of Gilgit as two people, including a security official, were injured in a shooting incident in Baseen area on March 4. A convoy of security forces had stopped in Baseen when miscreants pelted stones on them. Security forces had to retaliate which resulted in shooting in the area. Two persons were injured in the unrest, forcing the government to impose Section 144 in the city. The shooting took place as a rally was being taken out to mourn the recent killing of 18 Shias during a bus ambush in Kohistan. Gunmen disguised in military uniform hauled 18 Shias off buses on February 28 and shot them dead in cold blood in the usually quiet Kohistan region. The outlawed terrorist group, Jundallah, had claimed responsibility for the attack.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C03%5C05%5Cstory_5-3-2012_pg7_9

Tension prevails in Gilgit, Hunza Nagar

The News, February 29, 2012

GILGIT: Tension has gripped different areas in Gilgit and Hunza Nagar after 16 passengers were

brutally killed in Kohistan on February 28. Meanwhile, the funeral prayers of 15 identified victims were held on February 28, while curfew has been imposed in Gilgit. Local residents were already restricted to their houses while thin transport was observed on the roads.

Sixteen people were killed in a sectarian attack when unidentified gunmen forced them to disembark from four Gilgit-bound passenger buses and sprayed them with bullets in Kohistan district on February 28. District Police Officer, Kohistan, Muhammad Ilyas stated the armed men hiding on both sides of the road intercepted many buses in the Harban Nala area and ordered more than 100 passengers to get off the vehicles.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-37511-Tension-prevails-in-Gilgit,-Hunza-Nagar>

Efforts launched to arrest culprits

The News, March 1, 2012

MANSEHRA: The authorities in Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chilas district of Gilgit-Baltistan on February 29 launched joint efforts to arrest those involved in the attack on a bus in Kohistan's Harban Nala area in which 16 passengers were killed. Kohistan District Coordination Officer Aqil Badshah noted that search operation led by District Police Officer Mohammad Ilyas was underway in the mountainous Harban Nala area. He stated he had talked to the Chilas deputy commissioner and they had agreed to cooperate and share evidence, which could lead to the arrest of the attackers. He stated the people of Kohistan were peaceful and had never indulged in sectarian strife in the past.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=95364&Cat=7&dt=3/1/2012>

Protest: 'Shias and Sunnis have traditionally lived peacefully'

The Express Tribune, March 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Youth from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on February 29 held a protest against the recent spate of sectarian violence in Kohistan. Over a dozen students, from the Student Youth Alliance G-B assembled before the National Press Club and

staged a demonstration against the killing of members of Shia passengers in the ambush. Carrying banners and placards inscribed with anti-government slogans, the protestors condemned the incident and demanded the immediate arrests of the culprits. Representatives of the Student Youth Alliance criticised the government for what they called “a failure to protect the lives of its citizens”. They condemned the killings and termed the violence a conspiracy to create sectarian tension in G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/343685/protest-shias-and-sunnis-have-traditionally-lived-peacefully/>

Peer Muhammad, Kohistan massacre: Deployment of army on KKH demanded

The Express Tribune, March 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Following the gruesome massacre of 16 passengers on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) at Harban, bus services from Rawalpindi to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have been suspended and passengers, including the victims' relatives are now stranded, unable to attend the funerals of their loved ones. The stranded passengers and the local Shia community have urged President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani to deploy army personnel along the KKH to ensure security for commuters on one of the “longest and most dangerous highways of the country”.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/343680/kohistan-massacre-deployment-of-army-on-kkh-demanded/>

Shabbir Mir, Kohistan shootings: Escorted by police, traffic resumes on Karakoram Highway

The Express Tribune, March 4, 2012

GILGIT: After four days of suspension, traffic on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) resumed on March 3 with a special police force escorting convoys through Kohistan, where 16 passengers, on their way from Rawalpindi to Gilgit, were killed. Hundreds were stranded across the region due to suspension of traffic on the highway that connects Gilgit-Baltistan with the rest of Pakistan. For the first three days after the attack,

protestors in Kohistan had blocked the highway against the use of their territory for the heinous killings.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/345212/kohistan-shootings-escorted-by-police-traffic-resumes-on-karakoram-highway/>

Farooq Ahmed Khan, Perpetrators of Kohistan killings traced, claims Malik

Dawn, March 1, 2012

GILGIT: Federal Minister for Interior Rehman Malik stated here on February 29 that perpetrators of Kohistan killing were traced down and soon they would be produced before the nation. Speaking to journalists after having detailed meetings with religious scholars of various schools of thought, he stated that it was not an incident of sectarianism rather an attempt to create law and order situation in the entire country. Mr Malik stated that Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts were given powers of police for three months to control the situation. He stated that conspiracy of the enemies was thwarted.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/01/perpetrators-of-kohistan-killings-traced-claims-malik-2.html>

Shabbir Mir, Calming anger: Heirs of Kohistan victims to get Rs2 million each.

The Express Tribune, March 1, 2012

GILGIT: A host of new security measures and a revised compensation package helped avert a standoff between rival sects in Gilgit on February 29. Tensions had peaked in the otherwise simmering region after 16 people belonging to the area, travelling from Rawalpindi to Gilgit, were shot in cold-blooded murder in Kohistan. Outlawed militant group Jundallah claimed responsibility for the attack. “Rs2 million will be given to the heirs of the dead as compensation,” announced Interior Minister Rehman Malik, who flew to Gilgit on February 29.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/343778/calming-anger-heirs-of-kohistan-victims-to-get-rs2-million-each/>

Economic Developments

A.G. Noorani, Revive LoC trade

Dawn, March 3, 2012

It is a great pity that trade across the Line of Control (LoC) between the two parts of Kashmir, which started in October 2008, continues to suffer under crippling restrictions which could and should have been foreseen. Trade continues to be based on barter in a clime in which progress in trade and communication facilities is the order

of the day. The ancient Silk route is being revived. All across Central Asia plans are being made to ensure seamless connectivity by road and the railways. This is apart from plans for oil and gas pipelines across national frontiers, of which there are more than one. In a context such as this, barter trade across the LoC stands out like a sore thumb.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/10/revive-loc-trade.html>

International Developments

Press Release: UNO asked to protect people of Gilgit Baltistan: GBNC

March 17, 2012

The natives of Gilgit-Baltistan residing in the United States held a demonstration outside the United Nations building in New York City on March 16, demanding end to atrocities against the Shias of Gilgit-Baltistan. Gilgit-Baltistan is a UN declared disputed area under Pakistani control.

Present among the protestors were members of Gilgit Baltistan National Congress including the president, Imtiaz Hussain, and director, Muhammad Sabir, who urged the United Nations to provide security for the Shias, Ismailis and Nurbakhshis of Gilgit-Baltistan who face religious oppression. The protestors urged the United Nations to play its due role in restoring genuine autonomy in Gilgit-Baltistan since Pakistan lacks constitutional capacity to ensure fundamental rights and protection to the natives of the region. The protestors also demanded protection to local languages and cultural identities.

http://www.expertclick.com/NewsReleaseWire/UNO_asked_to_protect_people_of_Gilgit_Baltistan_GBNC,201239721.aspx

Mehtab Haider, US, ADB agree to finance Diامر-Bhasha Dam

The News, March 8, 2012

ISLAMABAD: United States and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have agreed to jointly finance the validation exercise of technical and financial feasibility and safeguard mechanism related to environment, social and displacements of people for construction of much-awaited \$11.2 billion Diامر-Bhasha Dam, it was learnt.

“The estimated cost of \$11.2 billion for Basha dam will be escalated keeping in view depreciation of

rupee against dollar and efforts are underway to convince the World Bank to become part of consortium led by ADB,” top official of economic team noted on March 7. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Shakeel Durrani held important meetings with top economic and planning managers in the federal capital on 7 March to accelerate the process of accomplishing compensation package for displaced people in Northern Areas as donors' community asked the government to accomplish this process without hue and cry of local community.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-96493-US-ADB-agree-to-finance-Diامر-Bhasha-Dam>

Stop Pak from committing rights abuses in Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan: Expert, ANI

March 13, 2012

LONDON: Pakistan continues to violate human rights of people living on its side of Kashmir as well of those residents living in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, a noted Kashmiri leader has claimed. Addressing a recent seminar arranged by International Committee for the Respect and Application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights during 19th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Dr. Shabbir Choudhry, Director Institute of Kashmir Affairs, London, stated the lack of a vibrant media, human rights organisations and near absence of civil society were factors responsible for this. Choudhry also claimed that the total lack of control of the local administration over army and secret agencies of Pakistan, has contributed to the existing malaise.

<http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/03/13/274876-Stop-Pak-from-committing-rights-abuses-in-Kashmir-Gilgit-Baltistan-Expert-.html>

Other Developments

A H Nizami, Not a drop to drink: No water brings Mirpur residents on roads

The Express Tribune, March 12, 2012

MIRPUR: Agitated over water shortages, people took to the streets and stormed a tube-well here on March 11. The situation emerged after the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) cut down supply of water in various residential sectors due to faults in man tube-wells. The residents raised slogans against the PHED and the district administration for failing to control the crisis. Ex-Councillor Shoaib Mir, who led the demonstration, stated that despite the orders of the AJK government, the local PHED has failed to ensure sufficient supply of water in the residential sectors.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/348708/not-a-drop-to-drink-no-water-brings-mirpur-residents-on-roads/>

Natco to launch service in AJK

Dawn, March 6, 2012

MUZAFFARABAD: The Northern Areas Transport Corporation (Natco), the largest public sector transport company of Gilgit-Baltistan, has shown its willingness to launch its service in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, initially on four routes, an AJK minister stated here on March 4. Tahir Khokhar, the minister for transport noted that a delegation of Natco would soon visit AJK to inspect the region's road network while the service would formally commence next month. Initially, a trial service would be launched between Rawalpindi and Muzaffarabad, Mirpur and Rawalakot as well as between Muzaffarabad and Neelum valley, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/26/natco-to-launch-service-in-ajk.html>

Power mess: 'Extended power cuts in G-B a human rights violation'

The Express Tribune, March 26, 2012

GILGIT: The extended power outages in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) are a violation of basic human rights, stated the local chapter of International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) on March 25. The organization called for widespread protests to depose "the corrupt and inept officials responsible for the power mess". In a press release, the IHRO urged all citizens to demand that the government hand over the affairs of the water and power departments to a foreign company capable of delivering these services in the resource-rich region. The statement was issued in response to a continuous 22-hour-long power outage in the region's capital city, IHRO Gilgit Coordinator Muhammad Farooq noted.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/354923/power-mess-extended-power-cuts-in-g-b-a-human-rights-violation/>

Tariq Naqash, Over 60pc quake-hit schools yet to be rebuilt

Dawn, March 7, 2012

MUZAFFARABAD: Almost six-and-a-half-year down the lane, more than 200,000 Kashmiri children in Azad Kashmir are still quenching their thirst for education under the open sky, braving biting winter cold and scorching summer heat, as 62 per cent of the earthquake-affected educational institutions are either under construction 'at a snail's pace' or work on them is yet to be started, it has been observed.

<http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/07/over-60pc-quake-hit-schools-yet-to-be-rebuilt-2.html>

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: Sardar Yaqoob 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 Assembly: Total 33 members (24 members directly elected)

Governor of G-B: Pir Karam Ali Shah

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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