

POK

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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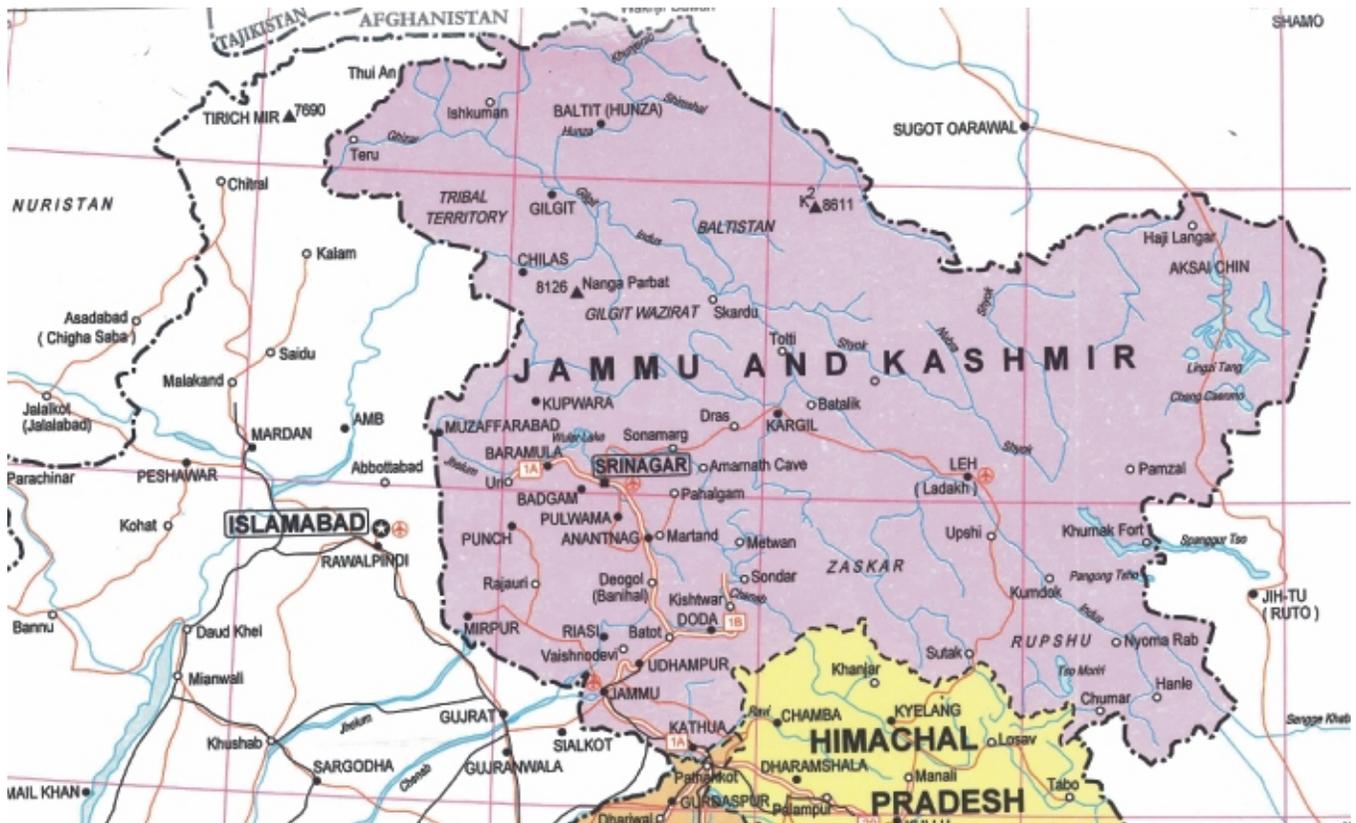
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(Source: Based on the Survey of India Map, Govt of India 2000)

In this Edition

Gilgit Baltistan has been reeling under sectarian turmoil ever since the Kohistan incident took place on February 28, 2012. Following this, a series of other violent incidents which included an attack on Sunni procession in Gilgit and killing of bus passengers (noted to be Shias) in Chilas have led to a deteriorating law and order situation in the region. The local administration failed to control violence and the federal government was caught unaware which led to delay in action. Normal life was disrupted due to imposition of curfew and closing of schools, markets and offices. The common people were badly hit by shortage of essential items.

The recent spate of violence in Gilgit Baltistan has drawn international attention. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon condemned the Kohistan incident where innocent Shia pilgrims were forced to disembark from the buses and shot to death. Even before the situation could normalise after this particular incident, the April 3 episode has further complicated the problem. Continuous unrest and violence in Gilgit Baltistan has led to thinking that Pakistan should be put on the Genocide Watch list.

Amidst allegations that the sectarian riots are taking place at the behest of the state, the government of Pakistan is facing ire for having failed to curb the sectarian violence. Pakistan, on the other hand, has been trying to shove responsibility by hinting at the involvement of external forces in perpetrating violence in Gilgit Baltistan.

Inter sect rivalry and eruption of sectarian violence in Gilgit Baltistan is not new. Zia ul Haq encouraged sectarianism to perpetuate Pakistan's unlawful control on the region and counter the Shia predominance there. The policy continues till today and in its current manifestation seems to have crossed all limits.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Sectarian violence

Dawn, April 4, 2012

GILGIT: Baltistan plunged once again into violence on April 3. A number of people were killed and injured when a grenade was reportedly lobbed at an Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (formerly Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan) rally in Gilgit. Supporters of the 'banned' party were demanding the release of a detained leader. Though curfew was imposed rivals continued to trade fire, while there were reports of the violence spreading to Chilas. Tension had been simmering in the region for the past few days, as sectarian clashes had occurred on April 1. It seems that the attack was only a trigger and considering the region's troubled history the situation has the potential to deteriorate much further.

The underdeveloped area, otherwise known for its stunning natural beauty and towering peaks, is rarely discussed on the national stage. Communal tensions first emerged in Gilgit-Baltistan during the 1970s, when the princely states were abolished and amalgamated into the Northern Areas. This process, along with the opening of the Karakoram Highway in the mid-1980s, initiated demographic changes as the inhabitants' traditional way of life began to disappear and 'settlers' from other parts of Pakistan started arriving in the area. However, the sectarian conflict in this Shia- and Ismaili-majority region did not reach its current, bloody proportions until the late 1980s when under Gen Zia's watch sectarian and jihadi elements were introduced into the area. Communal relations have nosedived since, with periods of uneasy calm sandwiched between regular cycles of deadly violence similar to what we are seeing now.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/04/sectarian-violence-2/>

Sectarian violence leads to frenzied agitation in Skardu

The News, April 6, 2012

SKARDU: Scores of protestors on April 5 took to

the streets to demonstrate against the outbreak of sectarian lawlessness in the region as well as the cold-blooded, execution-style killing of 13 bus passengers at Chilas in early April 2012. Section 144 had been imposed in Skardu as protests and shutdown strike across Gilgit-Baltistan continued into the third consecutive day, with angry residents burning tyres and blocking roads. Alama Sheikh Muhammad Husan Jaffari led the procession and appealed to the public to remain peaceful and calm during the protest. Thousands of people staged a sit-in demonstration against the provincial government in Gamba, a suburban area of Skardu, while mobile phone services remained suspended. Tension prevailed in other adjoining areas as sporadic firing punctuated the calm.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-101481-Sectarian-violence-leads-to-frenzied-agitation-in-Skardu>

Pakistani jackboots in Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily Pioneer, April 6, 2012

At least 15 people have died and 50 others injured as sectarian violence recently broke out in the Gilgit-Baltistan area of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, but the Government of India has virtually ignored the incident. For decades now, New Delhi has painstakingly cultivated a consistent disinterest in the happenings in what it has maintained is legally its territory. If Gilgit-Baltistan is legally a part of India, its residents are the responsibility of the Union Government and its sovereignty is to be guarded by the Indian state. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the conduct of India to show that it cares. In fact, New Delhi seems to have virtually ceded the territory to Islamabad. Affairs of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir barely feature on the Government's agenda. The Government does not even take the trouble any more to fill up the seats reserved for PoK representatives in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly. And, while New Delhi looks the other way, Islamabad continues to tighten its grip on the region in the most vicious and violent

manner. Unlike the rest of PoK which is primarily Sunni Islamic in nature, the Gilgit-Baltistan area has had a Shia-majority population. For the past two and a half decades, Pakistan has slowly but steadily worked to change that demography and convert it into a radical Sunni Islamic region.

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/columnists/item/51379-ignored-by-the-world.html>

Shujat Hussain Mesam, Government involved in Chilas Shia-massacre: Pakistan sheds more blood

April 5, 2012

It is very difficult to get the right information about how many people have died in recent target killing incident in Gilgit-Baltistan. Some put the numbers as high as 80. However, there are people who have received information from eye witnesses about the massacre of Shias in Chilas. One person is Shujat Hussain Mesam who has recorded statements of three witnesses who were riding the buses which were attacked in Chilas. The passengers were interviewed by Hussain's father, who is a retired government employee. One eyewitness, Aslam, is a 30 year old male who stated that about three thousand (3,000) fully armed assailants intercepted a convoy of 25 buses. They pulled all the passengers down. After confiscating the luggage, the buses were then set on fire. Aslam claims that it was all pre-planned and even the police and administration were either helping the assailants directly or turned a blind eye throughout the entire episode of bloodshed and mayhem.

http://www.expertclick.com/NRWire/Government_involved_in_Chilas_Shiamassacre_Pakistan_sheds_more_blood,201239966.aspx

Shabbir Mir, Deadly Sunday: in G-B, sectarian unrest boils over

The Express Tribune, April 4, 2012

GILGIT: Authorities clamped a curfew in the Gilgit-Baltistan region and called out the army after 16 people were killed and dozens wounded in one of the worst bouts of sectarian violence in the region. Clashes erupted between Shia and Sunni communities early on April 3 after masked motorcyclists attacked a rally staged by the G-B

chapter of Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat [ASWJ] to protest the detention of one of its leaders. According to witnesses, when protesters reached near the Gari Bagh neighbourhood of Gilgit city, masked motorcyclists hurled a hand grenade at them, resulting in the death of five. Many more were wounded. Some witnesses stated an Elite Force policeman threw the grenade at the protesting crowd.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/359487/deadly-sunday-in-g-b-sectarian-unrest-boils-over/>

Anwer Abbas, Over 30 killed in Gilgit violence: Army called out

The Frontier Post, April 4, 2012

ISLAMABAD: More than 30 people lost their lives leaving behind dozens injured on April 3 in fresh wave of violence in Gilgit-Baltistan which started in the morning whereas local lashkers from Kohistan and Chilas started moving towards Gilgit-Baltistan. Army took control of Gilgit city which has imposed curfew to prevent violence. According to details, the violence started after two separate incidents at Kashroot and Gilgit city resulting in the death of around eight locals, following which the wave of violence gripped whole of Gilgit Baltistan like a fire in the woods.

<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/155388/>

Shoot-on-sight orders in Gilgit

The Nation, April 4, 2012

GILGIT: The authorities issued shoot-on-sight orders to the law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order situation after 17 people were killed and more than 50 wounded in sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan on April 3. The attacks led to an army deployment and imposition of curfew in the city, confining the inhabitants to their homes, as the situation turned violent. The ISPR in a statement stated the Army has been summoned to Gilgit to control the law and order situation. The casualties occurred in two separate incidents in the northern towns of Gilgit and Chilas.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/04-Apr-2012/shoot-on-sight-orders-in-gilgit>

Kashif Abbasi, Gilgit-Baltistan CM's squad booked for firing

Pakistan Today, April 3, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Two gunmen of Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah have been booked for firing at lawyers, police stated on April 1. According to details, two gunmen deployed with the CM fired at a group of lawyers over a roadside dispute. The gunmen were on their way in a police vehicle to escort Mehdi from his house but when they reached Faisal Avenue, the traffic was jammed as some lawyers were fighting with a car driver over a minor accident. On this, the commandos interfered into the matter and got the driver freed from the lawyers. The lawyers tried to scuffle with the gunmen on which they fired at them and left the area.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/04/03/news/national/gilgit-baltistan-cm%E2%80%99s-squad-booked-for-firing/>

Shabbir Mir, Sectarian violence: Two injured in Gilgit gunfire exchange

The Express Tribune, April 2, 2012

GILGIT: The city saw yet another tense day as rival sects exchanged heavy gunfire on April 1 evening, leaving two persons critically injured. The clashes erupted after Shia protesters ended a strike launched against a ban on a sect-based transport service by government. On the call given by Anjuman Imamia the protesters blocked roads at various locations in the city disrupting traffic. They demanded that the permission be restored for the transport service that started privately on specific routes. During the strike, police used tear gas to disperse the crowd which reportedly led to aerial firing.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/358530/sectarian-violence-two-injured-in-gilgit-gunfire-exchange/>

Zaem Zia, Make Gilgit-Baltistan the fifth province of Pakistan

The Friday Times

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have always been unequivocal in defending their association with Pakistan. Although the region is not a constitutional part of the country, it has never lagged behind any

other province in terms of sacrifices for the sovereignty of the state. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have never complained about their miseries despite having no right to cast votes, no representation in the national assembly or senate, and a strong sense of deprivation in many other fields where other provinces enjoy constitutional rights.

In 1948, the Republic of Gilgit-Baltistan emerged on the map of the world and survived only for a couple of weeks. The people of the region fought their own war against the tyrannical regime of Dogra Raj and won their freedom. Because of the political circumstances that included a lack of resources, governance skills and political leadership, the victorious freedom fighters opted to accede to Pakistan unconditionally.

<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/blog.php?blogstory=44>

Lahoris hold peaceful protest against Shia killings

Daily Times, April 22, 2012

LAHORE: Thousands of people from across the city held a peaceful protest at Liberty Roundabout against the killings of Shia community members, stressing that target killings in Quetta, Karachi and Gilgit-Baltistan are a conspiracy against the solidarity of Pakistan. The protest was organised by the Shia Rabta Committee Pakistan (SRCP), and led by its Chairman Khurran Abbas Khawaja. The protesters condemned the continuous killing of innocent people, and demanded the government protect the lives of countrymen. They stated that some hidden forces wanted to provoke the Shia community through such incidents, adding that they would remain calm.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C04%5C22%5Cstory_22-4-2012_pg13_3

Sajjad Shaukat, External Secret Agencies behind Sectarian Terrorism

April 21, 2012

In the last few years, Pakistan has been facing suicide attacks, bomb blasts, abductions, targeted-killings, ethnic violence coupled with sporadic

battles of the security forces with the militants in some tribal areas and assaults on the security agencies, while, external secret agencies have also intensified sectarian terrorism in the country.

As part of new wave of sectarian terrorism, at least 20 people were killed in clashes between the extremist Shias and Sunnis after hand grenade attack on the banned organisation Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat rally in Gilgit city on April 3, 2012. The rival sects used sophisticated weapons against each other, and six buses were also set ablaze by the terrorists. In another incident, nine people were killed when unidentified gunmen killed nine passengers after offloading them from a bus in Chilas. A curfew was imposed and the Army was called in to control the situation, while sectarian violence continued intermittently in wake of other areas of the Gilgit-Baltistan province. On February 28, this year, gunmen disguised in military uniform hauled 18 Shias off buses and shot them in the Kohistan region.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/opinions.php/2012/04/21/external-secret-agencies-behind-sectarian-terrorism.html>

Gilgit people demand opening of KKH during curfew relaxation hours

Pakistan Observer

GILGIT: The citizens in sectarian violence hit Gilgit have demanded the provincial and federal governments to allow transportation of commodities and fuel from down country to overcome the shortage of essential commodities and reopen the mobile phone service. During curfew relaxation hours, people rushed to markets to purchase food and other items but most had to return disappointed due to scarcity of commodities and higher prices. It should be mentioned that due to curfew imposed in Gilgit city after sectarian violence, transport service and transportation of items through Karakorum Highway had been closed for more than two weeks.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=151483>

Fazal Khaliq, Road safety: Transporters demand protection on KKH

The Express Tribune, April 21, 2012

BISHAM: As their strike entered the sixth day on

April 20, transporters demanded assurances of protection from the government to resume supply of goods to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Apart from bloodshed and large-scale destruction of personal and public property, several trucks and oil tankers were looted and their drivers brutally beaten following the sectarian violence in G-B in early April.

In reaction, the Trucks and Oil Tankers Owners' Association had called for a strike and suspended supply of goods to the region, demanding foolproof security on Karakoram Highway (KKH). "The miscreants snatch not only the goods but our personal belongings as well. They don't even spare the diesel and batteries of our vehicles," stated Haji Asfandyar, the president of the association.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/367818/road-safety-transporters-demand-protection-on-kkh/>

Murtaza Haider, Pakistan imploding under sectarian violence

Dawn, April 18, 2012

After decades of waging the propaganda war against India for its highhanded treatment of Kashmiris, Pakistan is now the subject of a similar campaign by India who has highlighted the plight of Shias being murdered by sectarian terrorists in Gilgit-Baltistan. It is reported recently that "in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan's only Shia dominated province, ethnic cleansing is being carried out systematically." At the same time, the Shia-dominated town of Kargil in Jammu & Kashmir recently shut down the main bazaar in solidarity with the Shias of Gilgit and Chilas who were murdered in cold blood in early April. Several Sunni Muslims also lost their lives a few days later when sectarian violence broke out in the region.

The comparative statistics on terrorist violence between India and Pakistan speak volumes of how the tide has indeed turned against Pakistan. The data compiled by South Asian Terrorism Portal reveals that in the current year alone, approximately 150 civilians, mostly Shias, have died in sectarian violence in Pakistan.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/18/pakistan-imploding-under-sectarian-violence/>

PML-N to raise issue of Gilgit-Baltistan killings in parliament: Nawaz

The Nation, April 18, 2012

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Nawaz Sharif on April 18 stated that his party would raise the issue of targeted killings in Gilgit-Baltistan. He was talking to Ulema and religious scholars of various sects and school of thoughts in Skardu. The former prime minister held a long meeting with the Ulema and assured them that the PML-N would raise the issue in the parliament. The religious leaders apprised the PML-N chief about the precarious law and order situation in the region. Nawaz Sharif stated that the government had failed to bring peace in Gilgit-Baltistan as it had no interest in the region. Sharif had arrived in Skardu on April 17 to express solidarity with the army over the Gyari sector incident.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/18-Apr-2012/pml-n-to-raise-issue-of-gilgit-baltistan-killings-in-parliament-nawaz>

Youth Parliament demands constitutional reforms for AJK, GB

The News, April 19, 2012

ISLAMABAD: The Youth Parliament has demanded that the government and the Parliament must take immediate steps to introduce constitutional reforms for Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan to bring these two territories into the mainstream of Pakistan. The second day of the second session of Youth Parliament began with the discussions on the impact of energy crisis in Pakistan. The first resolution was moved by Member Youth Parliament (MYP) Ahmed Numair Farooq urging the provincial governments to play a pivotal role in the establishment of their own power generation units.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-103775-Youth-Parliament-demands-constitutional-reforms-for-AJK-GB>

Two mosques sealed in Gilgit

Dawn, April 18, 2012

GILGIT: The authorities sealed two mosques in the city and asked their administrations to change their

prayer leaders or give assurances in writing that their mosques would not be used to spread hatred. Central Imamia Mosque and the main mosque of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat were sealed by magistrates after receiving directives from the higher officials.

Official sources stated the move was part of steps aimed at restoring peace in the region. More measures would be taken soon to eliminate anti-peace elements, they stated. The daytime curfew was lifted in Gilgit as life began to return to normality. People queued up outside banks to draw cash to buy essential commodities. Attendance in offices and schools was thin. Traffic remained suspended on the Karakoram Highway, while the PIA resumed its service and operated a flight between Islamabad and Gilgit. Business activities resumed in markets and in commercial centres. People, who had left the city when violence erupted, started returning to Gilgit.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/18/two-mosques-sealed-in-gilgit/>

Aurangzeb, Who Benefits From anti-Shia Violence in Pakistan?

April 17, 2012

There is a sudden rise in recent weeks, especially focused on Karachi, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. The question that all Pakistanis should ask is this: Who benefits from inciting sectarian conflict in three strategic locations: in Pakistan's business hub, in the sectarian attacks in Pakistan province where the Iran gas pipeline will pass, and near our only land link to China? The timing is interesting. It comes when Pakistan rebuffed desperate US calls to reopen the military supply route from Karachi to Afghanistan. Some of the players behind this mess, like terror group BLA in Balochistan, and two militant Pakistani political parties in Karachi, have links to the United States. The TTP enjoys safe havens in US-controlled Afghanistan.

<http://www.pakistankakhudahafiz.com/category/pakistan/>

Shabbir Mir, G-B unrest: Govt forms special security force for Karakoram Highway

The Express Tribune, April 24, 2012

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan government

announced on April 23 the formation of a special highway task force to monitor the security situation on the Karakoram Highway (KKH). “The task force will be led by a serving major of the Pakistan Army while Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts, Frontier Constabulary (FC) and elite units of the police force will be part of it,” stated G-B Education Minister Ali Madad Sher, while talking to the media after chairing a cabinet meeting. This was the first cabinet meeting held since sectarian violence gripped the region, claiming more than 20 lives and bringing everyday life to a complete standstill.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/369088/g-b-unrest-govt-forms-special-security-force-for-karakoram-highway/>

Faiza Mirza, Will their sun rise in Kargil?

Dawn, April 23, 2012

He was a great man because nothing could mar his spirit. His conviction to battle against all the odds and injustices of our system, amongst many other qualities, will always keep him alive,” is how Agha Syed Abbas Rizvi recalls his 30-year-old brother who was killed near Chilas amidst a renewed spate of sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan. Agha Roohullah was one of the unfortunate passengers who was travelling to Gilgit when an unruly mob of 3,000 people attacked the bus and killed many people on the basis of their sect. Roohullah, who retaliated when the mob attacked, was shot countless times in the chest for his courage.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/23/will-their-sun-rise-in-kargil/>

Chilas incident: Jirga hands over accused to police

Pakistan Observer

GILGIT: The grand Jirga of Diamer district has finally handed over those people who are wanted by the police in connection with the killings on April 3 in Chilas town, police and administration officials stated. “Thanks God all matters resolved amicably and Jirga agreed and people nominated in the FIR are being given in Police custody” District Magistrate Shohaib Saeed noted. He stated use of force was not solution in this particular area. Due to cooperation of the Jirga it became possible to arrest them. “The grand Jirga told Police in Chilas

meeting that all the wanted people would be handed over by this evening” top administration official of Diamer stated.

Official stated the negotiations lasted for more than five days between Police and Jirga in this regard. Initially Molana Muzamil Shah, Sher Ghazi and two others people had reached Chilas rest house from where they were about to be taken to a secret place for investigations.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=150701>

Gilgit-Baltistan: Paradise turned bloody

The Express Tribune, April 17, 2012

The bloodbath in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has started yet again, as a severe wave of sectarianism has revisited the landlocked, but strategically key, part of the country. It began on February 28 when masked miscreants forced passengers travelling in four buses out at gunpoint and shot dead 16 of them in Hurban area of Kohistan. Since then, the law and order situation in G-B has worsened. On the morning of April 3, violence erupted again in the tense city of Gilgit when masked men riding on a motorcycle hurled a hand grenade on Sunni activists who were trying to force shopkeepers to close their shops in support of a strike called by them. Soon after the grenade attack, the city fell to the control of religious activists of the two sides who killed and injured as many people as they could from the rival sects in four hours in the presence of law-enforcement agencies. Soon the violence spread to other areas, including Chilas.

<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/11158/gilgit-baltistan-paradise-turned-bloody/>

Shabbir Mir, Temporary respite: In Gilgit, residents breathe a sigh of relief as markets, banks reopen

The Express Tribune, April 17, 2012

GILGIT: Thirteen days after the worst sectarian violence erupted in Gilgit, curfew was partially lifted in the city on April 16. People crowded markets in large numbers to stock up on essential items amid tight security. The authorities had asked residents not to come out wearing jackets, coats or chadars to prevent anyone from

concealing firearms under their garments. Curfew was relaxed and major schools and banks were allowed to reopen.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/365723/temporary-respite-in-gilgit-residents-breathe-a-sigh-of-relief-as-markets-banks-reopen/>

Shabbir Mir / Farman Ali, Sectarian tensions: Alleged mastermind, five others arrested for GB unrest

The Express Tribune, April 17, 2012

ISLAMABAD / GILGIT: The alleged mastermind and three others suspects wanted in the Kohistan, Chilas and Gilgit killings were arrested by law enforcement agencies on April 16, official sources in the Gilgit-Baltistan Police noted.

Over 450 personnel of law enforcement agencies army, Northern Scouts, Gilgit Scouts, Rangers and FC led by major and captain level officers took the wanted men into custody after five days talks with a jirga in Chilas. The forces had besieged the madrassah run by the main accused, Qari Muzamil Shah. The local jirga intervened and persuaded the wanted cleric to surrender. His other accomplices arrested were identified as Sher Ghazi, Shamsul Haq, Nisar, the official requesting anonymity stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/365827/sectarian-tensions-alleged-mastermind-five-others-arrested-for-gb-unrest/>

Sectarian killings

The Nation, April 17, 2012

In the wake of the ongoing bloodbath, with the recent deaths of 8 men in Quetta on April 14, the Balochistan provincial government has announced a security roadmap to arrest the rising incidence of sectarian killings. Only time will tell how effective this plan turns out to be since this is not the first one and besides already the miscreants seem to be having a field day.

What is alarming is that at the receiving end of this sectarian violence are the people belonging to a minority group living in areas of Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan. The killings are regular but the worrying thing is that the criminals are killing almost with impunity given the law enforcement

agencies' lacklustre performance. The violence is so systematic that the members of the minority group are executed on the basis of their name and sect mentioned on their ID cards. The despair and helplessness of the victims beggars' description as the only resort they can have is to take out protests.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/editorials/17-Apr-2012/sectarian-killings>

Put Pakistan on a genocide watchlist

April 16, 2012

Pakistan's religious and ethnic minorities are under attack; the number of mass murders have escalated and how! At this time it is already a human tragedy that is unconscionable for Indians to ignore. Earlier this month, provoked by a grenade attack, hundreds of militants affiliated to radical Sunni groups stopped buses in Gilgit-Baltistan (a part of the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir under Pakistani control), rounded up Shia passengers and executed them. Similar incidents in the region over the past few months have claimed scores of lives.

We do not know how many exactly, because Pakistan has imposed a media blackout. It is already clear though, that the killings of Shias were systematic and carried out with the connivance of the Pakistani state authorities. That's not all. All of Pakistan's religious and ethnic minorities are under attack.

<http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-put-pakistan-on-a-genocide-watchlist/20120416.htm>

GB smouldering with sectarianism

Dardistan Times, April 16, 2012

A superficial calmness seems to be prevailing in Gilgit Baltistan for now. There is, however, lava boiling beneath the surface. Long since, the rulers sitting in Islamabad have controlled the region, plundered its resources and enjoyed ruling the locals; they did more to divide the masses than to bring any peace and prosperity. As a result, today the people of the whole region seem to be pitched against each others and apparently look blood-thirsty.

Each group is staging sit-ins with demands which are hardly possible to be fulfilled. It may be noted that the seed of sectarianism was sowed in the region in the 1970s which has now become a giant tree. The roots of this tree are soaked in the blood of hundreds of innocent people and the sapling is protected by thousands, eager to behead anyone who attempts to harm the tree.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/gb-smouldering99-sectarianism-opinion23>

Civil society holds candlelight vigil for sectarian victims

Daily Times, April 16, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Scores of civil society members held a candlelight vigil at the National Press Club on April 15 for the victims who fell prey to sectarian violence in Chilas and Gilgit. The Green Development Welfare Organisation of Gilgit-Baltistan and Agahi Pakistan organised the event in which a large number of social activists from Islamabad and Rawalpindi took part. The event aimed to convey peace message to the people representing various schools of thought of Gilgit-Baltistan to live in harmony. They pledged to work for the solidarity and peace of the country without considering race, creed, faith and colour.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C04%5C16%5Cstory_16-4-2012_pg7_24

BJP appeals to government to intervene in Gilgit-Baltistan

Times of India, April 15, 2012

JAMMU: The BJP today appealed to the Centre and state government to intervene to stop the killings in Gilgit-Baltistan. "The party has been closely watching the developments in Gilgit Baltistan and appeals to the Government of India and state government to intervene to stop bloodshed and killings in Gilgit Baltistan," J&K state BJP chief Shamsher Singh Manhas noted.

He stated the party will launch a country-wide campaign to make people aware of the state government and the UPA government's apathetic attitude towards people of Gilgit Baltistan. "We will launch a country-wide campaign to make people

aware of the apathy of Central and state governments," Manhas stated.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-15/india/31344964_1_gilgit-baltistan-bjp-appeals-kargil

Chris Cork, G'bye, Gilgit

The News, April 16, 2012

There was for me a moment of profound sadness in the last week. It came with the news that 120 foreigners had been flown out of Gilgit-Baltistan in a C-130; their evacuation organised by the army and the civil administration. In all probability this is the last nail in the coffin of tourism in G-B, and certainly in the Gilgit/ Hunza/ Nagar area, for years to come. It is possible that Skardu will revive as a tourist destination, but it was always more a centre for mountaineers than the common-or-garden tourist.

My last visit was in June 2011, and I spent a delightful few days with friends old and new, luxuriated in the tranquillity of the orchards in Minapin and gasped afresh at the sight of Rakaposhi limned against the sky perhaps one of the most beautiful 'stand alone' mountains in the world.

I wandered the empty streets lined with the trappings of tourism, the knick-knack and souvenir shops that even then were devoid of life and had an air of desperation in their attempts to pull me inside. At what should have been the height of the tourist season there was a hush about the place that was unnatural, eerie. And now that hush has deepened into a profound silence.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-103285-G%20bye,-Gilgit>

Demo against killings in G-B

Dawn, April 11, 2012

LAHORE: A large number of people belonging to the Shia community on April 10 held a peaceful demonstration in front of the Lahore Press Club to condemn the killings in Gilgit-Baltistan. The demonstration was organised by the Majlis Wahdatul Muslemeen and led by the community leaders, including Agha Haider Moussavi. Carrying banners and placards, the demonstrators chanted

slogans against the spate of killing of the people of their community in Gilgit-Baltistan, demanding action against those responsible for it.

Their leaders stated the community was peaceful and considered unity of various sects of Muslims as the basic element of their faith. One should not take the killing in Gilgit-Baltistan merely as sectarianism.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/11/demo-against-killings-in-g-b/>

Fruits of mediation

Dawn, April 12, 2012

Though Gilgit-Baltistan has remained cut off from the rest of Pakistan since April 3 when sectarian violence engulfed different towns, the freeing of 34 hostages on April 10 was a bit of good news to emerge from the troubled region. The hostages, which included government officials, were kidnapped in reaction to sectarian killings in Chilas. Their freedom was secured after local clerics got involved in mediation efforts. The episode shows that the region's Shia and Sunni communities are willing to work together and attempt conflict resolution, and that much of the violence is orchestrated. Also, there is a distinction between reactive violence involving ordinary citizens and attempts to sabotage local peace by sectarian elements; this leads to a vicious cycle, and all that is needed to spark violence in the emotionally charged atmosphere of Gilgit-Baltistan is a trigger, which sectarian militants are more than willing to provide. True, local religious and political leaders can and should play a role in ensuring lasting peace. Yet if cycles of violence continue and perpetrators go unpunished, Gilgit-Baltistan society may be further radicalised and what the clerics, politicians and state say or do may not matter anymore.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/12/fruits-of-mediation/>

Mumtaz Alvi, Governor, CM stay away at critical time

The News, April 16, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Even eleven days after the worst ever violence hit the once peaceful Gilgit-Baltistan following the massacre of at least 23 men and

women at Chilas on April 3, there is no one in the regional government to come up with accurate figures how many are still missing and what exactly the death toll is.

The Governor Pir Karam Ali Shah and Chief Minister Mehdi Shah have stayed away from their people as well as from the media for reasons unknown to them in the most critical times of the region's history. Life continues to remain at a standstill, as neither the government offices nor educational institutions have been re-opened; moreover, business and trade is also close to a halt.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-103218-Governor-CM-stay-away-at-critical-time>

Address religious intolerance to curb sectarian killings: HRCP

Daily Times, April 12, 2012

LAHORE: The continuous spilling of blood in sectarian killings in Quetta and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is a result of failure to address religious intolerance in society, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) stated on April 11. In a meeting, the commission stated, "HRCP is alarmed by the continuing sectarian bloodshed in Pakistan, particularly in Quetta and GB. The killings demonstrate a disturbing pattern and appear to be part of a well-planned sequence. It has been stated that miscreants from Afghanistan have been involved. That may be one problem, but it certainly is not the only one. The mindless bloodshed that we witness day in and day out is rooted in religious intolerance cultivated by the state."

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C04%5C12%5Cstory_12-4-2012_pg7_13

Diamer-Bhasha Dam to strengthen country's economy

Business Recorder, April 16, 2012

The Diamer-Bhasha Dam would be the best project to strengthen the economy of the country as the dam will have the capacity to store 6.4 million square feet water. An official of Water and Power noted on April 15 that agriculture sector would get benefit from this big water reservoir project and a sufficient

quantity of water could also be stored through the construction of this dam in the country. He stated the Dam would be helpful for agricultural sector and would ensure food and water security, besides increasing cultivable lands. To a question, he stated the project would also extend the life of Tarbela Dam, located downstream, by 35 years and would help control flood damages in the country.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1177662/>

Safety along Karakorum Highway (KKH), some pragmatic solutions

Dardistan Times, April 13, 2012

Series of killings and exterminations along KKH have clutched attention worldwide and little of the Kohistan carnage can possibly be forgotten. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan received 19 bullet-riddled bodies on 28th of February; nonetheless, such occurrences have happened in the past. Unfortunately, people on the basis of their affiliation have been hauled off the buses and shot dead. It is lamentable and peace loving people would always condemn such brutalities. The need of the hour then was to look for permanent practical solutions to ensure public safety along the KKH. But the government's sheer disinterest in saving human lives resulted in yet another brutality in Chilas town where several passengers were gunned down.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/safty-along-karakorum-highway-kkh-some-pragmatic78-solutions-opinion23>

Kamran Yousaf, Pakistan welcomes journalists from across LoC

The Express Tribune, April 12, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has agreed to allow a group of Indian journalists to travel to its part of Kashmir and the tribal areas in a rare development that indicates gradual normalisation of ties between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. The Indian delegation, comprising journalists from print and electronic media, was due to arrive late night in Lahore on April 11 for a week-long tour, a government official stated. The visit is arranged by

the government and is part of an exchange programme between the two countries.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/363462/pakistan-welcomes-journalists-from-across-loc/>

Ethnic cleansing of Shia Muslims in PoK

April 11, 2012

NEW DELHI: In Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan's only Shia dominated province ethnic cleansing is being carried out systematically, away from media glare and international attention. Hundreds of Shia Muslims staged a protest in front of the Lahore Press Club on April 10 urging the media to pressurize the Pakistani government to stop the atrocities on its community in Gilgit Baltistan. On April 9 a rally was held in Kargil against targeted killings in GB and local leaders appealed to the Indian government to take up the issue with the international community.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/south-asia/ethnic-cleansing-of-shia-muslims-in-pok_769477.html

Shabbir Mir, A story of harmony: Civilian vigilantes narrowly save 200 lives

The Express Tribune, April 12, 2012

GILGIT: Even as lives were lost and blood spilt during last week's sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), the community of Chilas managed to save at least 200 Shia passengers including women and children and swiftly shift them to areas where they would be out of danger.

The passengers were travelling from Rawalpindi to Gilgit and Skardu, and had just reached the town of Chilas when sectarian violence broke out in Gilgit after unidentified men attacked a Sunni rally with hand grenades, killing six people and injuring 50 others. The violence led to the imposition of a curfew in the city. The saving of human lives in Chilas, however, was overshadowed by the killing of 10 Shias in reaction to the hand grenade attack at the Sunni rally in Gilgit. The vehicle of the top Sunni cleric in Gilgit-Baltistan, Qazi Nisar, also came under fire, leaving his driver injured.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/363392/a-story-of-harmony-civilian-vigilantes-narrowly-save-200-lives/>

Mehbooba asks India, Pakistan to keep promise, open Kargil-Skardu road

Hindustan Times, April 11, 2012

SRINAGAR: Kashmir's main opposition political party Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on April 11 asked India and Pakistan to stick to their word and open the traditional route between Kashmir's Kargil and Baltistan's Skardu area. "The opening up of Kargil-Skardu road would be a part of the process started with the opening of Srinagar-Muzaffarab and Poonch-Rawalakote roads in Kashmir and Jammu regions," stated PDP president Mehbooba Mufti in Srinagar. India and Pakistan allowed opening up trade routes in 2008 between parts of Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir with Rs. 600 crore trading done already in the last four years.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Srinagar/Mehbooba-asks-India-Pakistan-to-keep-promise-open-Kargil-Skardu-road/Article1-839067.aspx>

Ali Ashraf Khan, The siege of innocent

Pakistan Observer, April 12, 2012

While Balochistan, Fata and Karachi are burning, Supreme Court is busy investigating the memogate and others, the parliament tries to find a solution for new US-Pakistan relations by suggesting to extend legal protection to CIA Operatives and Contractors, and the people of Pakistan are upset about the latest rise in petrol prices hardly any attention is given to the killing of Shias in Gilgit by Sunnis from Chilas and Kohistan that cost the lives of almost forty to fifty people who were traveling by road on the KKH. Gilgit is under curfew for the last five days, Skardu is under large-scale agitation and families are locked in their homes with no ration available because the road via Chilas is the only way for supply to this area, which is almost under siege.

This northern-most part of our country and their people formed an Independent government known as Frontier Government with Raja Shah Raees Khan as its first President, but later when they offered this territory to be included into Pakistan under Karachi treaty, the then Government of Pakistan's appointed one Sardar Mohd Alam as the Political Agent and ever since then the legitimate rights of people have been neglected by successive

governments, even today the decoration of a province of Gilgit & Baltistan looks more a political stunt than a real development as the area has not been given the shape of a province as is required under the law. It won't be out of place to recall that when General Ziaul Haq imposed martial law in 1977 this area was made the Martial Law Zone E bringing it at par with Pakistan's other four provinces, while Azad Kashmir was not brought under martial law administration.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=149816>

Kamran Yousaf, People of violence-hit Gilgit-Baltistan urge Pakistani govt. to restore order

Press TV, April 10, 2012

ISLAMABAD: It was once a famous tourist resort of Pakistan, but now it is facing a serious law and order problem. The scenic Gilgit-Baltistan, formally known as northern areas of Pakistan, has been in the grip of violence in recent weeks. The latest wave of violence was triggered by a grenade attack on a religious gathering in Gilgit on April 3.

The incident has led to assaults on Shia Muslims by members of a mob reportedly due to their religious affiliation. The growing unrest has so far claimed over 100 lives most of them Shia Muslims, compelling the authorities to call in the army and impose curfew in the region. Some of the affected members of the Shia community have set up a protest camp outside the Parliament in the capital Islamabad. These protestors have strongly criticized what they call the government's failure to restore law and order in Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://presstv.com/detail/235604.html>

Rabia Mehmood, G-B violence: 'We are all Muslims, no harm will come to me'

The Express Tribune, April 10, 2012

LAHORE: Hundreds from the Shia community protested against the killings in Gilgit baltistan outside Lahore Press Club on April 10. Organized by the Majlis-e-Wahdat-ul-Muslimeen (MWM), the speakers called for action to be taken by the Chief Justice of Pakistan regarding the G-B incident. Women and children from the Shia community, students from Imamia Students Organizations and

students from Gilgit-Baltistan participated in the 3 hours long sit-in.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/362698/g-b-violence-we-are-all-muslims-no-harm-will-come-to-me/>

G-B people condemn governor, CM

The News, April 10, 2012

ISLAMABAD: An MQM legislators' delegation visited the protest camp set up outside the Parliament House, by Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) to mourn the massacre of 16 persons, who were executed on April 03 in Chilas area of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). They were forced to come out of the buses and after confirming that they belonged to Fiqah-e-Jafaria school of thought, they were slaughtered in cold blood.

The camp, established four days back, has been echoing with slogans against Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Pir Karam Ali Shah and Chief Minister Mehdi Shah, who after the gory incident, left for Naudero to please Bhutto family, leaving their people in anarchy and arson.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-102163-G-B-people-condemn-governor,-CM>

The Gilgit knot

The News, April 10, 2012

The Gordian knot of mythical fame was supposed to be impossible to untie, a problem solved at the single stroke of a sword by Alexander the Great. It is likely that Alexander passed through the valley in which Gilgit lies today, and were he to make a return visit he would find a knot beyond even his skills. Over the last week Gilgit-Baltistan has been convulsed by the worst sectarian violence since 1988. On April 8, in a very necessary operation, the army evacuated those foreigners that had been stranded since April 3, when a curfew was declared. Japanese, American, Chinese, Croatian, Norwegians and Thais were flown out in an army C-130 from Gilgit and Skardu, and it is going to be a long time before foreign visitors are seen there again the death-knell for tourism in the region.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-102229-The-Gilgit-knot>

Shiites start sit-in against sectarian violence in northern Pakistan

April 7, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Majlis Wehdat Muslemeen (MWM) has started a week long sit-in against sectarian violence in northern Pakistan. The sit-in was started in front of the Parliament house on April 6 night in which thousands of people representing Shiite community of Pakistan participated. According to the police of Gilgit-Baltistan dozens of Shiite Muslims have been killed in past few days.

The protesters adopted a resolution in the sit-in demanding the government to disclose exact number of deaths of Shiites in Gilgit and Chilas and their dead-bodies must be handed over to their families immediately. The resolution asked the government to recover Shiite missing persons in Gilgit and Chilas and they should be given full protection after returning their homes.

<http://www.irna.ir/News/Politic/Shiites-start-sit-in-against-sectarian-violence-in-northern-Pakistan/80065675>

MQM demands urgent steps to restore normalcy in GB

Daily Times, April 9, 2012

KARACHI: Co-ordination Committee of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has expressed concern over the law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and demanded the government to take urgent steps for restoring peace and order. In a statement issued on April 8, the committee stated the situation in GB had been extremely tense for the past one week after the killings of innocent people in various violent incidents.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C04%5C09%5Cstory_9-4-2012_pg12_8

Gilgit tension

Dawn, April 9, 2012

After several days of violence, an army-led crackdown started on April 5 against members of sectarian outfits in Gilgit. The military is being assisted by the local administration, while the local police have been excluded from the operation.

Curfew was also lifted for two hours in the Gilgit-Baltistan capital on April 6, giving citizens the chance to stock up on essential items. Violence erupted on April 3 when a grenade attack targeted protesting workers of the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (formerly Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan) in Gilgit. In related violence, passengers were pulled off buses in Chilas and reportedly due to their sectarian affiliation shot by members of a mob, recalling February's Kohistan tragedy. The violence spiralled from that point on, inspiring more killings and kidnappings. Though the army's action was needed, matters remain far from normal in the troubled region. There is shortage of food, medicine and cash, while residents are being fleeced by traders. The region is also cut off from cellphone coverage while flights to Gilgit have been suspended. Demonstrations in various towns continued on April 7.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/09/gilgit-tension/>

Manoj Parashar, India must speak up for Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily Pioneer, April 8, 2012

The massacre of 15 Shias in Gilgit-Baltistan area of the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir is not a stray incident, but it is a larger conspiracy by Islamabad aimed at the ethnic cleansing of Shias from the area. This is proved by the fact that this massacre is the handiwork of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, previously called Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, and is backed by the ISI. Since PoK is legally part of India, the deafening silence of successive Indian Governments on Islamabad's nefarious designs in Gilgit-Baltistan has been shocking. The way New Delhi has always remained tight-lipped on the affairs in the area has only helped Islamabad.

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/home/online-channel/394-letters-to-editor/56124-india-must-speak-up-for-gilgit-baltistan.html>

Rani of Hunza asks GB CM to resign

Pakistan Observer

ISLAMABAD: Atiqa, Rani of Hunza has asked Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan to resign accepting his failure in maintaining the writ of the government throughout the peace-loving northern areas. The head of formerly ruler family, Rani

Atiqa stated pro-development people of the areas were deprived of working environment at the beginning of their earning season. When asked about the reason behind recent unrests in the tourist-favorite areas, she stated nothing but lack of attention on part of both the newly installed provincial and the PPP-led federal government. "Thus the Chief Minister should resign to start with in acceptance of his failure to deliver," she added.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=149258>

AH Nizami, PML-N in AJK: Sudden sandstorm uproots Nawaz's Mirpur rally

The Express Tribune, April 6, 2012

MIRPUR: The sudden emergence of a severe dust storm on April 5 uprooted the first-ever convention of the PML-N Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) branch, forcing PML-N President Nawaz Sharif to exit the venue without addressing the congregation. The congregation of nearly 25,000 people was made up of party workers from various parts of Mirpur division and the rest of AJK at Chitterpari ground, and was arranged to mark the emergence of the PML-N party in AJK.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/360511/pml-n-in-ajk-sudden-sandstorm-uproots-nawazs-mirpur-rally/>

Situation in Gilgit & Chilas getting from bad to worse: Imran

April 7, 2012

ISLAMABAD: The situation in Gilgit and Chilas is getting from bad to worse, stated Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan. Commenting on horrendous story of death and destruction coming out Gilgit-Baltistan, he stated that there are reports of over two hundred people being killed in the last three days in a horrific escalation of violence. Imran expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased and expressed deep sympathy with their plight. The extent of barbarity, he stated, has extended to physically distorting the dead bodies. This shows the extent of hatred between sects prevalent in GB.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/situation-in-gilgit-chilas-getting-from-bad-to-worse-imran/>

Ministers in Nagir to negotiate release of hostages

Dawn, April 8, 2012

GILGIT: A team comprising ministers and members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, headed by Law Minister Wazir Shakil, arrived in Nagir valley to negotiate the release of 32 people who were taken hostage by a mob in protest against those killed in Chilas earlier this week, police officials stated on April 7. A civil judge and a district health officer are among the hostages.

Police stated they were hopeful of a positive outcome of the talks between the team formed by the Gilgit-Baltistan chief minister and the community leaders. A senior police official stated that as soon as the hostages were released a massive crackdown would be launched to clean the region of extremists and miscreants who created a law and order problem.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/08/ministers-in-nagir-to-negotiate-release-of-hostages/>

Sikander Shaheen, Avalanche buries army Skardu base

The Nation, April 8, 2012

ISLAMABAD: April 7 was a sad day for Pakistan as its adored army lost about 124 soldiers deployed at remote northern border. It was the nature known for its indiscriminate assaults that unleashed a devastating avalanche engulfing an entire camp of the army in Skardu. Eleven were civilians among the casualties suffered in this remote area billed as the world's highest battleground near Siachen. This battalion headquarter of Northern Light Infantry (NLI), an operational regiment based in Gilgit-Baltistan, was situated at the urban region of Gayari. Troops with sniffer dogs, aided by helicopters, were frantically trying to find signs of life in the deep snow after the avalanche hit the camp in this mountainous Himalayan region.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/08-Apr-2012/avalanche-buries-army-skardu-base>

G-B violence aftermath: More than 30 people still missing, 12 foreigners also stranded

The Express Tribune, April 8, 2012

GILGIT: More than 30 people are being held captive in Nagar Valley for the past four days following an outbreak of sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) that has already claimed at least 20 lives and injured 50 others. Meanwhile, G-B police, district administration, Rangers and G-B Scouts submitted a report regarding the unrest in the region to the federal government for necessary action. Authorities have not yet recovered the abducted people, who reportedly belong to the Sunni community. Imposition of section 144 has prevented verification of whether or not further kidnappings have occurred.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/361400/g-b-violence-aftermath-more-than-30-people-still-missing-12-foreigners-also-stranded/>

Manzoor Qadir, Security forces arrest 100 during GB raids

Daily Times, April 7, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Security forces carried out raids in several parts of the Gilgit city and arrested 100 people on April 6. People were also barred from offering Friday prayers. Law and order situation remained volatile in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as people in Skardu, Chilas and other parts of GB took out protest rallies to condemn the recent killings and abductions. Sources stated security forces carried out raids in several parts of the city and arrested 100 people. They also detained top clerics of both Shia and Sunni sects to bar them from leading demonstrations against the government.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C04%5C07%5Cstory_7-4-2012_pg7_18

Rallies held against sectarian violence in northern areas

ISLAMABAD: Rallies were organised against sectarian violence in Gilgit. The protests were held on the call of Majlis-e-Wehdat Muslimeen (MWM) across Pakistan. The protestors

condemned attacks and demanded of the government to expose the elements behind the killings. The situation in Gilgit-Baltistan province aggravated after the activists of 'Ahli-Sunnah Wal-Jamaat' group, including its leader Maulana Attaullah Saqib, had been arrested in connection with the last month firing on a procession.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=191104>

Peer Muhammad, Gilgit-Baltistan sectarianism: Police chief denies foreign hand in violence

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) police Inspector General (IG) Hussain Asghar has denied any foreign involvement in the recent strain of violence in the region, which has claimed around 20 lives. The IG maintained that few job opportunities and a high literacy rate among the resident youth was fuelling dissatisfaction and was feeding the rise in sectarianism. "I don't think there is any foreign hand involved in the sectarian riots. The key thing in my understanding is the high rate of literacy without employment opportunities, which allows the frustrated youth to be easily used by some elements," he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/360991/gilgit-baltistan-sectarianism-police-chief-denies-foreign-hand-in-violence/>

Noman Ahmed / Sohail Khattak, For Karachi's students from Gilgit, journeys home aren't always completed

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2012

KARACHI: Thousands of people from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), who settled in Karachi, are stuck between their homeland and the city which they still struggle to be a part of. The route to and from G-B is no less than a land mine. When people come to Karachi or Peshawar, it's the same as passing through a war zone. When people from either sect pass through areas dominated by the other, they are often targeted and killed. The bus massacres like the one in Kohistan and grenade attacks like that in Gilgit serve as proof.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/360904/watch-your-step-for->

[karachis-students-from-gilgit-journeys-home-arent-always-completed/](http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=191104)

Tension, curfew continues in Gilgit, scarcity of food, other commodities emerge

The Nation, April 6, 2012

Scarcity of food and other commodities has gripped Gilgit and other districts as curfew remained imposed in the city to maintain law and order. Situation remained tensed across Gilgit-Baltistan on April 6 as security forces have arrested more than 100 suspected people during overnight patrolling in the streets of Gilgit following the recent spate of violence. Roads remained deserted as traffic remained at a standstill. Residents also complained of running short of food items in their homes due to the imposition of curfew. Markets were also running short of food and other items due to closure of transport.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/06-Apr-2012/tension-curfew-continues-in-gilgit-scarcity-of-food-other-commodities-emerge>

Mushtaq Ghumman, Diامر-Bhasha dam: "US, ADB are fast losing interest"

Business Recorder, April 26, 2012

Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) is reportedly facing some serious problems in financing Diامر-Bhasha dam as neither the Asian Development Bank (ADB) nor the United States (US) are showing any interest despite past promises, sources close to the Chairman Wapda, Shakil Durrani noted.

On October 17, 2011, Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani laid the foundation stone of the \$12 billion Diامر-Bhasha dam capable of generating 4,500 megawatts of electricity and a reservoir capacity to store over eight million acre-foot of water to meet the country's growing power and irrigation needs. The sources stated the chairman Wapda was being criticised for not pursuing the matter of ensuring financing for some key hydropower projects.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1182376/>

NPSU holds protests against rights violations in Gilgit

PTI, April 25, 2012

JAMMU: Asserting Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of India and Pakistan has illegally captured it, the National Panthers Students Union (NPSU) today held a protest demonstration to press for end to human rights violations in that area. Led by NPSU Provincial Chief Partap Singh Jamwal, over 200 activists raised anti-Pak slogans for massive human rights violation in that region. Jamwal stated Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of India and Pakistan has illegally captured it disturbing the peace and harmony there. Stating the Central government had passed a resolution in both houses of Parliament on February 22, 1994 that Gilgit-Baltistan is an integral part of India, Jamwal stated, in the last 12 years it did not impose this resolution in these areas resulting in Pakistan and ISI creating terror conditions in these areas. Jamwal further stated that when Maharaja Hari Singh acceded Jammu and Kashmir with India the region was also included as a part of J-K.

<http://ibnlive.in.com/generalnewsfeed/news/npsu-holds-protests-against-rights-violations-in-gilgit/990518.html>

Law and order in GB returns to normal

Pakistan Today, April 25, 2012

GILGIT: Law and order situation in Gilgit and other districts has started returning to normalcy but scarcity of food commodities, fuel and other daily use items besides closure of mobile phone services still persists. Students along with government and private employees have started attending the educational institutions and offices as relaxation in curfew has being given.

However, a ban remain imposed on certain activities like gathering of two or more persons, wearing chaddar in Gilgit city during curfew relaxation hours. Moreover, the citizens continued to suffer owing to an acute shortage of food items, fuel and suspension of mobile phone service. The two central mosques in Gilgit city remained sealed after April 3 in the wake of deteriorating law and

order situation after sectarian violence claimed 22 lives in different parts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/04/25/news/national/law-and-order-in-gb-returns-to-normal/>

All possible resources to be utilized for peace in G-B: Malik

Associated Press of Pakistan, April 27, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rehman Malik on April 27 stated the government is providing all possible support for further improving law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). He stated this in a meeting with Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah. The minister stated that all available resources would be utilized for peace in the area in this regard. State Minister for Interior, Chaudhry Imtiaz Safdar Waraich and Secretary Interior were also present on the occasion.

http://app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=192245&Itemid=1

Peer Muhammad / Shabbir Mir, Gilgit-Baltistan unrest: CM spells out measures to heal sectarian rifts

The Express Tribune, April 30, 2012

ISLAMABAD / GILGIT: A day after the Gilgit-Baltistan administration lifted a 25-day-old curfew in the region, Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah spelled out measures to check the outbreak of sectarian violence in the future. Shah told journalists in Islamabad that a 410-strong force has been raised to patrol the strategic Karakoram Highway (KKH). The new force has been drawn from police, paramilitary Frontier Corps and rangers, army and Gilgit Scouts. It will start patrolling the highway from May 1. The force will report to the region's home department.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/371939/gilgit-baltistan-unrest-cm-spells-out-measures-to-heal-sectarian-rifts/>

Women ignored in peace-building process of Kashmir

Pakistan Today, April 28, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Women in the Azad Jammu and

Kashmir (AJK) are directly affected by the Kashmir conflict but their voices are missing in the peace-building processes in Kashmir. These views were expressed by senior research fellow, Dr Shaheen Akhtar, during a discussion organised by Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), titled “the Role of AJK Women in Peace-Building in Kashmir,” on April 27. “There is hardly any AJK woman who is not affected by the Kashmir conflict, but his voice is missing in the peace-building processes in Kashmir,” she stated.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/04/28/city/islama-bad/women-ignored-in-peace-building-process-of-kashmir/>

Nawaz's announcement of long march conspiracy against democracy: Majeed

April 28, 2012

MUZAFFARABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Chaudhry Abdul Majeed came down hard on PML (N) president Nawaz Sharif's statement and has termed PML (N) president Nawaz Sharif announcement for long march a conspiracy against democracy saying all such efforts will be nullified by the workers of the party and the people of Pakistan. The AJK premier was addressing to a press conference in Central Press Club Muzaffarabad on April 28.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/nawaz%E2%80%99s-announcement-of-long-march-conspiracy-against-democracy-majeed/>

Shabbir Mir, Unsuspecting victims: Gilgit violence leaves 20 children stranded

The Express Tribune, April 6, 2012

GILGIT: When Gilgit shut down after the recent violence, 20 children, all under the age of 12,

found themselves stranded at a house with limited supplies, and a single caretaker. Violence broke out April 3 morning and schools asked children to head back home.

A group of 20 children, however, found themselves in the middle of heavy shelling in Khomer area, and sought refuge at a temporary shelter. They entered the house of a former engineer, Muhammad Hussain, who had died recently. According to a neighbour, who informed about the incident on April 5, there was one woman in the house to take care of all of them.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/360534/unsuspecting-victims-gilgit-violence-leaves-20-children-stranded/>

Shabbir Mir, Ready reference: Sherbaz Ali Bercha - a living encyclopaedia of Gilgit-Baltistan

The Express Tribune, April 6, 2012

GILGIT: Sherbaz Bercha is no ordinary librarian or cataloguer of books, he is a “living encyclopedia” of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Scholars from far and near and research students come to him to seek his help in digging up events from the ancient and modern history of this mountainous region that not so long ago was the subcontinent's remotest region. Bercha knows the story of his land as if by heart and can quote author, book and page if it concerns G-B, provided the source is authentic. Author of a number of books on the culture and history of G-B, Bercha has translated into Urdu four historic works by famous personalities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/360331/ready-reference-sherbaz-ali-bercha-a-living-encyclopaedia-of-gilgit-baltistan/>

Economic Developments

AH Nizami, Natural gas woes: Absence of supply in Mirpur draws locals' ire

The Express Tribune, April 19, 2012

MIRPUR: The government's neglect in catering to the rising demand for natural gas in Mirpur city has drawn criticism from consumers and industrialists. Though the Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) has constantly been carrying out expansion projects, locals say the largest city of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has always been neglected. In 2002, a project worth Rs334 million was inaugurated to supply natural gas in the city. However, despite the passage of a decade, a major part of the densely populated city is still deprived of the facility. Despite repeated assurances by authorities in Pakistan and AJK, Mirpur does not have a full fledged office of the gas company to manage and execute its expansion plan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/366626/natural-gas-woes-absence-of-supply-in-mirpur-draws-locals-ire/>

AJK mulls over survival of industrial structure

Pakistan Today, April 8, 2012

MIRPUR: To ensure the survival of industrial structure in AJK and establish a new industrial zone, the state government is considering devising a plan to allocate the required funds in the upcoming budget. Official sources stated on April 7 that the new industrial zone was proposed to be established on an area of 25,000 kanal of land at Mirpur-Jatlan road, for which, the required land was being acquired by the government.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/04/08/news/profit/ajk-mulls-over-survival-of-industrial-structure/>

50 wheat flour depots set up in AJK

The Nation, April 9, 2012

MIRPUR: A comprehensive plan has been

launched by the Azad Jammu Kashmir government to ensure the supply of quality flour at inexpensive and subsidized rates to the general public across the liberated territory. Over 50 new flour supply depots have been established by the AJK govt in various parts of the region including the earthquake-hit districts to supply flour at cheapest rates to the masses. The AJK administration, has meanwhile decided to take immediate severe action against the profiteers and hoarders involved in the artificial shortage of the commodities of daily use especially eatable items.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/09-Apr-2012/50-wheat-flour-depots-set-up-in-ajk>

Iqbal Mirza, Gilgit-Baltistan: fruits, horticulture exports could fetch billions

Business Recorder, April 26, 2012

The main strength of the economy of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) depends largely on fruits and horticulture, but lack of interest of public sector organisations towards this paradise from where we could earn billions of rupees through fruits exports has remained neglected. What is needed is establishment of proper infrastructure there. Instead of investing on research and innovation, Pakistan's agriculture sector is focused on increased use of inputs, including fertilisers, pesticides and water, which has led to stagnation in productivity," stated CEO Harvest Trading and member export Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Ahmad Jawad. He further stated: "Huge opportunities exist in the agriculture sector and organic farming in GB area.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-allied/183/1182473/>

International Developments

Khalid Mustafa, Japan may aid Gilgit-Baltistan horticulture

The News, April 20, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Japan has agreed to provide around Rs. 437 million in aid for promoting manufacture of value added fruit products in Gilgit-Baltistan, a senior official of the Planning Commission noted. "The main strength of the economy of the Gilgit-Baltistan is the fruits and horticulture and Japan International Cooperation Agency has extended the firm commitment to fund value addition of apples and apricots," he stated.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-103902-Japan-may-aid-Gilgit-Baltistan-horticulture>

UNO must intervene in Gilgit to stop Pakistan led Genocide

April 17, 2012

Subject: UNO should intervene to stop genocide and rights violation in Gilgit Baltistan

WASHINGTON .D.C: I intend to draw your attention to a vital human rights issue which affects the two million people of Gilgit Baltistan. The region, declared disputed between India and Pakistan in 1948, is sandwiched strategically between India, Pakistan, China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. UNO allowed Pakistan to assume temporary control over Gilgit Baltistan and stationed officials representing the UN Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan in both Gilgit and Skardu cities.

Till date, the natives of Gilgit Baltistan remain deprived of basic rights, the national identity and the right to self-governance as prescribed by the UN resolutions. On the other hand, gross level of human rights violations have continued to occur and in the aftermath of passanger's massacre in Kohistan and Chilas, the right to free and safe travel has also been snatched away from the powerless residents. These

incidents draw our attention towards involvement of militants and secret service personnel.

<http://www.expertclick.com/NRWire/Releasedetails.aspx?id=40098>

USTATED, PERRP join schools communities of Bagh: AJK celebration of World Book Day

Business Recorder, April 24, 2012

The US Agency for International Development (USTATED) and Pakistan Reconstruction and Recovery Programme (PERRP) joined schools communities of Bagh district in Azad Jammu and Kashmir for the first ever-AJK celebration of the World Book Day, which was participated by 36 schools of AJK and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa schools destroyed in the 2005 earthquake. "We commend USTATED for joining and supporting us in our first-ever celebration of the World Book Day, which is marked in over 100 countries of the world since 1995.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1181847/>

Huma Imtiaz, Hafeez Shaikh caps off 'successful' US tour securing promises of aid, loans

Associated Press Pakistan, April 24, 2012

WASHINGTON: Federal Finance Minister Hafeez Shaikh, wrapping up a week long tour in Washington, stated that Pakistan will be receiving as much as \$5.27 billion from the US, UK and international monetary organisations over the next four years. Having met managing director of the World Bank Sri Mulyani, the Asian Development Bank President Haruhijo Kuroda, US AID administrator Dr Rajiv Shah, Sheikh, and IMF Pakistan mission chief Adnan Mazarei among senior US officials, confirmed that both the Asian Development Bank and the US have reaffirmed investment in to the Diamer Bhasha dam project in Pakistan. "We have told the ADB to send their

assessment team to Pakistan soon,” the Finance Minister stated.

Addressing a press conference at the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, DC, Shaikh stated that the US has also agreed to invest in the renovation of the Mangla Dam, and for the Kurram-Tangi dam project. He stated the US government had notified Congress that it would be spending \$223 million on the projects.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/369070/hafeez-shaikh-caps-off-successful-us-tour-securing-promises-of-aid-loans/>

Anwar Iqbal, US and WB renew pledge to finance Bhasha dam

Dawn, April 24, 2012

WASHINGTON: The World Bank and the United States have both reconfirmed their commitment to

financing the Diamer-Bhasha dam, Finance Minister Hafeez Shaikh told a briefing on April 23 in Washington. Diamer-Bhasha is an under-construction roller-compacted concrete dam on the Indus River in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Upon completion, it would produce 4,500 megawatts of electricity through hydropower generation; store an extra 8,500,000 acre feet of water, extend the life of Tarbela Dam by 35 years and help control flood. Diamer-Bhasha would be the highest RCC dam in the world. According to a November 2008 estimate, the dam will cost about \$12.6 billion.

<http://dawn.com/2012/04/24/us-and-wb-renew-pledge-to-finance-bhasha-dam/>

Other Developments

AH Nizami, Endangered species: Snow leopard shot dead by villagers in Kashmir

The Express Tribune, April 16, 2012

MIRPUR: A scared cat climbs up a tree, is spotted by an innocent child and consequently rescued by local heroes – an anecdote of human compassion often narrated in children's books. However, in the remote town of Rawalkot in Azad Kashmir, when a snow leopard, an endangered species, climbed up a tree in fear, the villagers shot it down.

Kashmir is home to two of the world's big cats, the common leopard (*Panthera pardus*) and the snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), a cat so secretive few have been privileged enough to get a glimpse of it. A businessman of the area, Waseem Khursheed, is a witness to the killing. “A snow leopard climbed up a tree and remained there for eight hours in the town of Banjosa, some 18 kilometres from Rawalkot.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/365362/endangered-species-snow-leopard-shot-dead-by-villagers-in-kashmir/>

Shabbir Mir, Dusty road: Three years on, unending Karakoram Highway reconstruction leaves commuters fuming

The Express Tribune, April 3, 2012

GILGIT: Instead of making travel easier, three years after upgradation work on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) started, the journey remains no less of a nightmare for more than 60,000 people living in Jaglot valley. The 55-kilometre patch

connecting Jaglot with Gilgit is rough, bumpy and unmettled, stretching the once 50-minute-long drive from Jaglot to Gilgit to nearly three hours. Those commuting daily have to put up with additional health issues caused by the amount of dust here. For people in Jaglot, which is the biggest town near Darote, Damote and Chakarkote, KKH is the only land route linking them to the state capital, Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/358801/dusty-road-three-years-on-unending-karakoram-highway-reconstruction-leaves-commuters-fuming/>

Telenor, AJK govt sign MoU for IT promotion

Daily Times, April 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Telenor Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote information technology in AJK education department. Telenor Pakistan is set to launch a nationwide project that would help empower a new digital generation in Pakistan. Telenor Talkshawk I-Champ is a knowledge-based initiative that aims to provide learning and training to young people to enable them to become future proponents in the digital age. In the first phase internet workshops will be held in schools in the semi-urban areas of Pakistan starting in AJK.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C04%5C01%5Cstory_1-4-2012_pg5_12

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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