

POK

News Digest

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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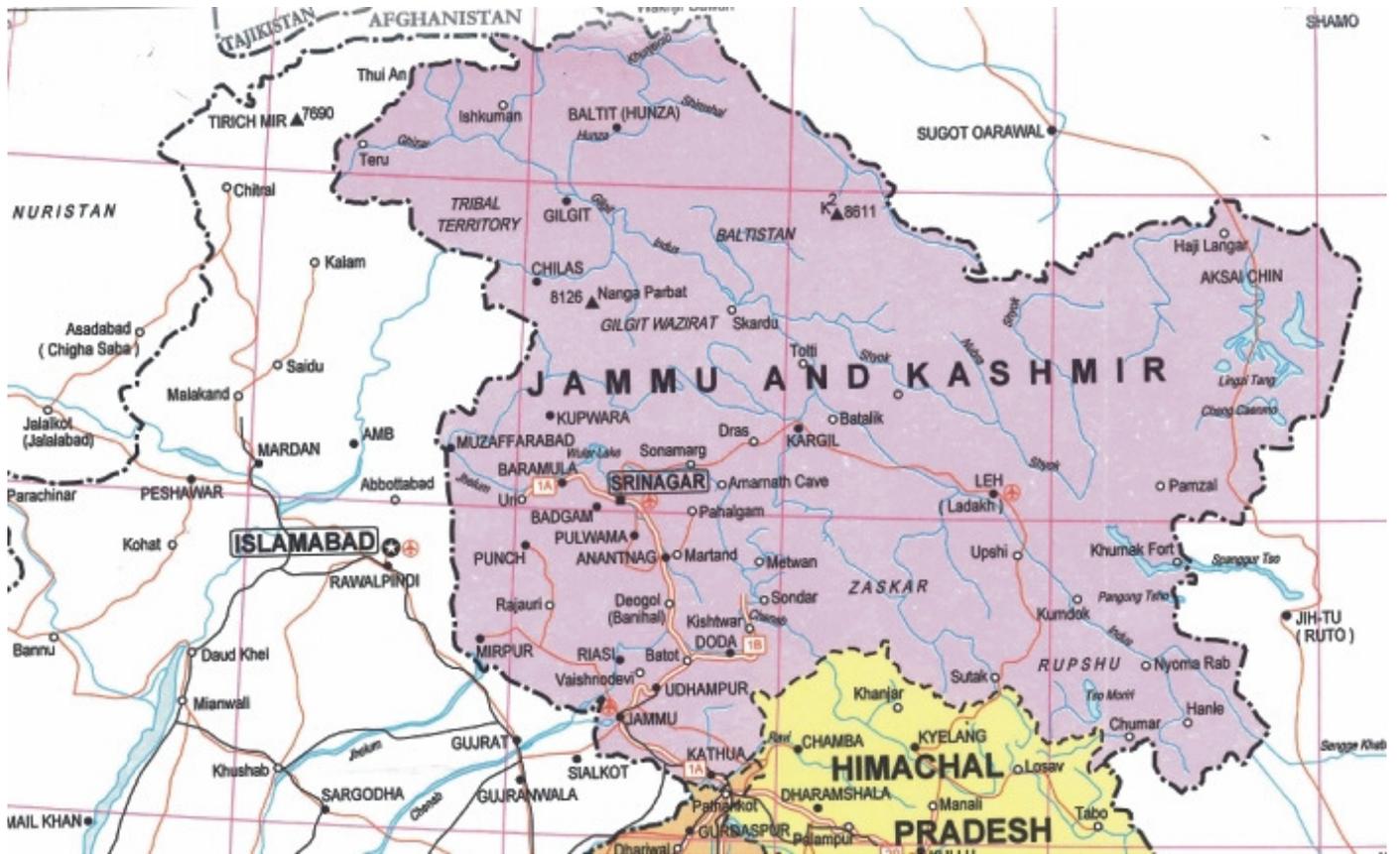
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Jammu & Kashmir

In this Edition

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is gradually unfolding although much of the project is still shrouded in uncertainty. There is lack of transparency regarding finer details of funding structure of the various projects therein. While a section of the mainstream media in Pakistan is animatedly debating the lack of clarity on CPEC details, there seems to be a concerted effort from Pakistan to malign India as one that is persistently trying to sabotage the project through subversive activities. Lately, a number of arrests have been made in Gilgit Baltistan as is evident in the reports included in the current issue. What Pakistan has been doing is to link all these arrests to Indian intelligence agencies whom it alleges is doing so to target CPEC. Such allegations from Pakistan are unfounded and unwarranted. It is Pakistan which for decades has pursued subversive activities against India to fulfil its nefarious strategic interests.

India has expressed its objections on CPEC based on its standing claim on Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). The connectivity corridor between China's Kashgar and Pakistan's Gwadar Port is connected by Gilgit Baltistan that forms the only land link between the two countries. Part of PoK, Gilgit Baltistan has been under Pakistan's illegitimate control since 1947. Therefore, the status of an economic corridor built jointly by China and Pakistan via PoK is as disputed as is Pakistan's control on the region. It is rather intriguing as to how and why the Chinese have overlooked the contested status of PoK while investing billions in the CPEC project. As per Article 6 of the Sino-Pak Border Agreement 1963, the status of Gilgit Baltistan will be re-opened for negotiations during the final resolution of Kashmir issue. Accordingly, investing fortunes in a territory that is inextricably attached to the Kashmir issue and whose status is contingent upon future negotiations (as per China and Pakistan's own admission) reflects dual standards exercised by the two countries in blatant disregard of India's claim over PoK.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Pro-JuD protests hit AJK”

The Nation, February 1, 2017

A number of people especially Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) activists on January 31 took to the streets against the house arrest of JUD Ameer Hafiz Saeed. Holding national flags of Pakistan, AJK and JuD, the people from various walks of life joined the protest demonstrations arranged by the local chapters of the JuD to express resentment against the arrest of Hafiz Saeed. They demanded early release of Hafiz Saeed by lifting all sanctions against his movement. In Mirpur, dozens of JuD activists and people from various walks of life including journalist, lawyers and business community members, staged the protest in front of Kashmir Press Club against the house arrest of the JuD chief. Addressing the furious protesters, speakers including District Ameer Sajaad, Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran (Ittehad Group) President Ch Mehmood Ahmed, Kashmir Press Club President Hafiz Maqsood, Chaudhry Maroof and JuD leaders called upon the government to immediately order for the release of Hafiz Saeed and withdraw the case if registered against him. The speakers termed the action violation of human rights. They underlined that the superior courts of the country have respectfully acquitted Hafiz Saeed whenever he was sent behind bars for the lack of evidence. They urged upon the government to refrain from imposing a ban on JuD in the country. “Any such step will be detrimental to the national interests including the Kashmiris indigenous struggle for freedom,” they warned.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Feb-2017/pro-jud-protests-hit-ajk>

“AJK premier blasts US immigration ban”

The Nation, February 1, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider expressed concerns on the ban announced by US President

Donald Trump on immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries, extending solidarity to those affected as chaos and fear gripped individuals trying to enter the country. He stated that the immigration ban has caused grave concern amongst various countries. On his return from the United Kingdom after a weeklong visit on January 31, Raja Farooq noted, “The current political situation in America and the ban had caused concern amongst many people. “President Trump’s order will, in my view, further spread so-called Islamic phobia and hatred amongst people of different religions,” he stated. “However, I am heartened by the reaction of so many people in America and the rest of the world including Britain where the people have demonstrated their commitment in standing with their fellow human beings and by so doing they have shown that the western democracy is working at its best.” The AJK prime minister thanked the people and the government of the United Kingdom including the UK-based Pakistani and Kashmir Diaspora for according a rousing reception and the high gesture of great hospitality during his stay in UK.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Feb-2017/ajk-premier-blasts-us-immigration-ban>

“ECNEC approves rs8b for up gradation of power sector in AJK”

Radio Pakistan, February 1, 2017

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved eight billion rupees for the upgradation of power sector in Azad Kashmir. Addressing a ceremony in District Bagh, the AJK Information Minister Mushtaq Ahmed Minhas noted that under the project titled “Augmentation of Electricity Department” old transformers, electricity poles and transmission lines would be replaced. The Minister for Information further stated the government is taking tangibles steps to reform the functioning of state institutions according to the needs

of modern era. He directed the concerned authorities to utilize all available resources to serve the masses with missionary zeal.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/01-Feb-2017/ecnec-approves-rs8b-for-upgradation-of-power-sector-in-ajk>

“GOVT determined to development of sports, tourism in GB: FIDA”

Radio Pakistan, February 1, 2017

Minister for Tourism Fida Khan stated that Government is determined to the development of sports and tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan. In a statement on February 1, he noted that he has demanded representation to Gilgit Baltistan in Pakistan Olympic Association during a seminar held in Lahore. He also stated President POA Lt General Syed Arif Hussain has assured to meet the demand and also promised cooperation for the construction of Gilgit Baltistan Sports Complex and Stadiums in Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/01-Feb-2017/govt-determined-to-development-of-sports-tourism-in-gb-fida>

“Security Huddle: G-B apex committee reviews NAP”

The Express Tribune, February 2, 2017

The Gilgit-Baltistan Apex Committee in its meeting held in Gilgit city on February 1 reiterated to fully implement the National Action Plan. According to Radio Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman was presiding over the meeting held in reviewed implementation on NAP. The committee decided to ensure implementation of all points of NAP and take action against those who want to disrupt law and order. The committee also discussed development projects and called for timely completion of power projects to overcome its shortage. The meeting appreciated the performance of law enforcement agencies for maintenance of law and order and hoped that it will continue work for elimination of terrorism and ensure durable peace in the area.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1314390/security-huddle-g-b-apex-committee-reviews-nap/>

Tariq Naqash, “Police arrest suspected terrorist in AJK”

Dawn, February 2, 2017

Police in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on February 2 arrested a man whose name appears on the Fourth Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and is stated to have links to the so-called ‘Tehreek-e-Taliban Kashmir’ (TTK), a police official confirmed. Kashif Hanif, 29, was arrested from Datot village on the outskirts of Rawalakot, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) in Poonch Mir Abid noted. Hanif is suspected of involvement in nine acts of terrorism, the SSP stated. These acts included a suicide attack on an army vehicle near Dothan village in January 2010, in which some army soldiers were injured. He is also suspected of being involved in the planting of a bomb outside a hotel in Rawalakot in September 2010 which killed the bomber and injured a citizen. Hanif has also allegedly been involved in other attacks on military vehicles and installations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312270/police-arrest-suspected-terrorist-in-ajk>

Jamil Nagri, “Large caches of weapons seized in Gilgit-Baltistan; five arrested”

Dawn, February 3, 2017

Large caches of weapons were seized and five people arrested in police actions in Diamer and Gilgit on February 2. Bogus legal documents, including a fake letter from a federal ministry, were also found in the possession of the arrested men. Officials believe that the weapons were brought to Gilgit-Baltistan for carrying out subversive activities. In Gilgit, police on information provided intelligence agencies intercepted a vehicle and during search found a large quantity of weapons hidden in secrete cavities. Two men travelling in the vehicle had been taken into custody. They were identified as Hidayatullah and Mohammad Zaman. DIG Gilgit Division Gauhar Nasees claimed at a press conference later that the arrested men were weapon suppliers and that the seized weapons were being brought to the city for a terror plot. He stated the seized items included 12

sub-machine guns, 20 9mm pistols, 40 30-bore pistols, two repeaters, 2,500 rounds and 60 firearm magazines. The other items found in the possessions of the arrested men were 20 fake arms licences, two fake driving licences, a fake letter from the interior ministry and other fake legal documents. The DIG noted the arrested men belonged to a group which also supplied fake educational certificates and degrees to people in Gilgit-Baltistan for Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000. City police station SHO Zahoor Ahmad stated that cases had been registered against the arrested men under Section 6/7 and 13AO B of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312457/large-caches-of-weapons-seized-in-gilgit-baltistan-five-arrested>

“PM to visit Gilgit, weather permitting”

The Express Tribune, February 6, 2017

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is scheduled to visit Gilgit on February 6 just days after some ‘RAW-linked’ suspects were arrested in an attempt to counter a negative campaign against the mega project. The visit is subject to weather conditions. Bad weather in the area has largely disrupted flight operations between Gilgit and Islamabad, officials noted. Conspicuously, the visit is taking place just as security agencies accelerated their drive in the region to net alleged anti-state elements who are collaborating with India’s intelligence agency, RAW, to halt CPEC. During his visit, the PM is expected to make a strong pro-CPEC public statement, insiders noted. The prime minister is also likely to address the G-B Council and announce development packages. The premier is also expected to announce some relief for local residents from prolonged power outages. Chinese authorities, sources maintained, were concerned about the negative campaign against the project. The prime minister’s visit would lend weight to CPEC, allaying concerns of the Chinese leadership, sources stated. “There is an element active there (in G-B in a bid) to stir public outrage against projects of national and regional importance, including CPEC. “Security agencies are taking operational steps against anti-state elements and (this is why the) political leadership is stepping in for countering potential hostility against

CPEC,” a well-placed government functionary noted.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1318027/countering-propaganda-pm-visit-gilgit-weather-permitting/>

“Parties pledge support for Kashmir cause”

Dawn, February 6, 2017

The Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed on February 5 in provincial metropolis by all political parties and civil society, resolving the whole nation stood by innocent and unarmed Kashmiris. The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Azad Kashmir organised a central ‘Kashmir Solidarity Day’ camp at Charing Cross on The Mall, which was attended by a large number of party workers. They were holding banners and placards and chanting slogans. Talking to the media, PTI Professional Forum chairperson Dr Yasmin Rashid noted the party had always raised voice for the rights of Kashmiris. She stated the Kashmiris’ sacrifices would not go waste. She also stated that Pakistan would remain incomplete till the independence of Indian-held Kashmir, demanding the world nations should put pressure on the Indian government to resolve the Kashmir issue.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1313010>

“Pakistan To Continue Diplomatic, Political, Moral Support To Kashmiris: Barjees”

Radio Pakistan, February 6, 2017

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir noted that Pakistan will continue its political, diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiris in their struggle for right to self-determination. In an interview, he stated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has strongly highlighted Indian atrocities on innocent Kashmiris in the UN General Assembly. To a question he noted the federal government is facilitating the people of Azad Kashmir by launching different welfare projects, especially in education, infrastructure and health sectors. He stated Azad Kashmir is a base camp of the Kashmir freedom movement.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/06-Feb-2017/pakistan-to-continue-diplomatic-political-moral-support-to-kashmiris-barjees>

Syed Abbad Gardezi, “AJK PM regrets opposition boycott on Kashmir Solidarity Day”

The News, February 7, 2017

Prime Minister of the State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan stated that the opposition preferred vested interests to the Kashmir issue by boycotting the meeting of the Legislative Assembly and the Kashmir Council on the occasion of the Kashmir Solidarity Day. Addressing a press conference at the Prime Minister’s Secretariat, he revealed that united opposition demanded development funds to participate in the LA and council’s meeting. He alleged that the opposition wants to make money in the name of freedom. Opposition boycott created a negative mark across the Line of Control. The opposition due to its negative approach tainted the assembly politics. “When we were in the opposition, we always supported the government on the Kashmir cause and bore the shameful taunt of Friendly Opposition but did not allow to derail the system,” he added. He further stated that financially and democratically stronger Pakistan is a guarantee for the success of the Kashmir freedom movement.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/184571-AJK-PM-regrets-opposition-boycott-on-Kashmir-Solidarity-Day>

“Faiz Naqshbandi new Convener of APHC Azad Kashmir Chapter: Mirwaiz”

Brighter Kashmir, February 7, 2017

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Chairman Mirwaiz Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Umar Farooq appointed Faiz Naqshbandi as the Convener of the APHC Azad Kashmir Chapter, a statement of APHC issued on February 7 noted. The statement noted Mir Tahir Masood, whose tenure as the Convener had completed, handed over the charge to Faiz Naqshbandi, who was asked to assume the responsibilities of the Convener from February 7. Terming the performance as Convener by Mir Tahir Masood as satisfactory, the Mirwaiz hoped that the new Convener, Faiz Naqshbandi will coordinate with

all the constituents of the APHC and their representatives and try to perform his political duties as well as duties towards resistance movement with efficiency and dedication.

<http://brighterkashmir.com/faiz-naqshbandi-new-convener-of-aphc-azad-kashmir-chapter-mirwaiz/>

“NAB official’s house attacked by unknown men in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, February 8, 2017

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) official’s house was attacked by unknown attackers on February 8 in the Jodial area of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). According to Station House Officer Syed Murtaza Shah, the assailants fired shots inside the house of NAB Deputy Director Coordination Abdul Majid through a window and set fire to a portion of the house as they fled. Furthermore, the initial investigation revealed that Abdul Majid was probing some major corruption cases in GB. The Police stated a case will be registered against unknown attackers.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/08/nab-officials-house-attacked-by-unknown-men-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Human rights and political activists raise concern over grim situation in PoK, Gilgit”

DNA, February 9, 2017

Human rights defenders and political activists from several parties have expressed concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit Baltistan. Speaking at an event titled Right to Self Determination of Jammu and Kashmir people and Freedom of Expression at the Islamabad Press Club, they highlighted several issues, including a demand to lift the ban on students unions and the right to freedom of speech and expression. Farzana Bari, a Pakistan intellectual and human rights activist stated Kashmiris should have the right to speak about their rights. In Pakistan, the Standing Committee on Kashmir should have representation of Kashmiris.

In Azad Kashmir, the governance should be in the hands of local parties as the people there are feeling that they are being ruled from Islamabad. One of the organisers of the event, the United Kashmir Peoples National Party (UKPNP) stated that it was opposed to the construction of mega projects in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, describing such works as a sheer violation of United Nations resolutions.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-human-rights-and-political-activists-raise-concern-over-grim-situation-in-pok-gilgit-2317088>

Tariq, Naqash, “Three held in AJK over 2009 suicide attack”

Dawn, February 9, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) police have arrested three suspects in a seven-year-old suicide attack outside an imambargah in which eight people were killed. The arrests were made in separate places in Muzaffarabad on February 7 evening. Additional Superintendent of Police Asif Durrani stated at a news conference on February 8. The handcuffed suspects, two of them masked completely and one partially, were also shown to reporters. All were sporting beards. On the night of Muharram on December 27, 2009, a suicide bomber had blown himself up in a small procession passing a security barrier close to Imambargah Pir Alam Shah Bukhari. Eight people, three policemen among them, died and over 60 others were injured in the incident. Mr Durrani identified the masterminds of the attack as Malick Ashfaq of Sarriyan village near Muzaffarabad, Omar Farooq Shah of Neelum valley and Khaqan Awan of Hattian Bala. They had moved out of AJK and settled in South Waziristan, the official noted. The police were able to determine links between them and the attack two years later, after arresting one Rizwan of Charoota village, who had allegedly facilitated the trio and the bomber. The bomber and the masterminds had stayed at the residence of Rizwan who was an active member of their group, according to police sources.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1313659/three-held-in-ajk-over-2009-suicide-attack>

“90pc Neelum-Jhelum Project completes”

The Nation, February, 9, 2017

The 90 percent work at the 969-MW-Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project has completed and it is expected to start functioning in February 2018, officials told the chairman of Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). They further told him that the project was started in 2008 but the work remained slow due to certain reasons like financial constraints and redesigning of the project. However, most of the bottlenecks have been removed during the present regime; they brief Wapda Chairman Muzammil Hussain during his visit to the project in Muzaffarabad district. During the visit, the chairman expressed satisfaction over the progress achieved during the last six months, as most of the critical activities have been carried out successfully on various sites of the project including composite dam, spill way, de-sander, diversion tunnel and power house. The project is heading towards its completion with a good pace, he stated. He also noted it with satisfaction that breakthrough of the right tunnel is likely to be achieved in April 2017, and with this achievement, excavation of 68.5-kilometer tunnels, considered to be the most critical component of the project, will stand completed.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/09-Feb-2017/90pc-neelum-jhelum-project-completes>

“Govt Taking Steps for Socioeconomic Uplift in AJK: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, February 10, 2017

The Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan has stated that government is taking concrete measures for the socioeconomic uplift of the state. He was addressing a function after laying a foundation stone of Children Ward and Officer’s Family Block at CMH under Prime Minister’s Community Infrastructure Program in Muzaffarabad on February 10. Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that government evolved a comprehensive strategy and serving the masses with missionary zeal. It is noted that 1506 public welfare projects would be completed

under Prime Minister Community Infrastructure Program throughout Azad Kashmir. Earlier, AJK Prime Minister planted a sapling at Bela Noor Shah area of Muzaffarabad district.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/10-Feb-2017/pm-s-infrastructure-development-program-being-launched-in-ajk>

“LG Elections to Be Held In AJK in May: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, February 12, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan has announced holding of local bodies elections in May 2017. He stated this while addressing PML-N leaders and workers at in Mirpur on February 12. Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated government is encouraging private sectors in hydel and tourism sectors to create more job opportunities and alleviate poverty. Earlier, AJK Prime Minister inaugurated construction work of two roads in tehsil Dadyal.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/12-Feb-2017/lg-elections-to-be-held-in-ajk-in-may-haider>

“CPEC to equally benefit Pakistan, AJK”

The Nation, February 12, 2017

Federal Minister for Planning & Development Ahsan Iqbal stated Pakistan and AJK would equally derive benefits from the China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC). He was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of FM channel Sautul Quran in the building of Azad Kashmir Radio Mirpur. The federal minister stated that the upcoming grand portion of the CPEC consisting Manshera-Muzaffarabad-Mirpur/Mangla highway will usher in the new era of speedy economic progress and prosperity in Azad Jammu Kashmir through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor since AJK has formally been added in the project. He appreciated the launching of Sautul Quran channel in the studios of AK Radio Mirpur. He stated that AK Radio Mirpur deserves high applause for performing the most sacred job of spreading Quranic education.

<http://nation.com.pk/multan/12-Feb-2017/cpec-to-equally-benefit-pakistan-ajk>

Shabbir Mir, “Police arrest two G-B politicians for alleged terror links”

The Express Tribune, February 12, 2017

Police on February 12 claimed to have arrested two leaders of the Balawaristan National Front (BNF). Safar Ali and Mehboob advocate were arrested just before they were to address a press conference in Gilgit. The BNF, a nationalist party with one seat in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly, has been accused by some of having ties with India’s premier intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). But it is unclear whether these suspicions were behind the arrests. “We arrested them because we had been ordered to,” a police official stated when asked why the two men were arrested. The men were later shifted to Cantt Police Station for further investigation. A source noted the BNF leaders had organised the press conference to clarify their position regarding recent police allegations of sedition and treason.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1324679/police-arrest-two-g-b-politicians-alleged-terror-links/>

Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, “PML-N issues hard-hitting rejoinder to JI”

The News, February 13, 2017

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Political Affairs Dr Syed Asif Saeed Kirmani has asked Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Amir Sirajul Haq to vacate two seats which his party begged from Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) in the wake of his crushing defeat in the polls of the area. Issuing a strong rejoinder to Siraj assertions about the conduct of the PML-N and its leader, he reminded that JI gave assurance and undertaking to the PML-N just four months back for securing the berths in Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly but he changed his colour without assigning any reason. Dr Kirmani noted that Sirajul Haq and JI embarrassed their council in the apex court when they failed in producing any evidence against Nawaz Sharif and PML-N. He reminded the JI chief to return these two seats if he believed in political morality. The Azad

Kashmir assembly's two seats that were bestowed by the PML-N on JI's begging should be vacated by the Jamaat.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/185934-PML-N-issues-hard-hitting-rejoinder-to-JI>

“Annexing Gilgit-Baltistan would be detrimental to Pakistan's claim on Kashmir”

Financial Times, February 13, 2017

Any changes in the status of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) would be detrimental to Pakistan's claim on Kashmir and would never be acceptable to the Kashmiri people, former Prime Minister of Pakistan occupied Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan stated. “Kashmiris living on either side of the Line of Control (LoC) as well as in Ladakh, Aksai Chin and Gilgit-Baltistan are party to the Kashmir issue along with Pakistan and India,” Khan was quoted as saying. Gilgit-Baltistan formed a part of undivided Jammu and Kashmir till 1947 when Pakistan militarily occupied the region along with Muzaffarabad and other parts of the state now known as “Azad Jammu and Kashmir”. The Pakistan government is planning to annex Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan as its fifth province. Khan asserted that the Kashmiri people were the “custodian of the freedom struggle and they would never allow anyone to surrender Kashmir to India”. Asked if the \$46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that passes through the region was a major cause for the Nawaz Sharif government's plan to annex the region into Pakistan, he noted: “The border agreement between Pakistan and China provided the basis for the CPEC and there was no need to change GB's status.”

<http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/annexing-gilgit-baltistan-would-be-detrimental-to-pakistans-claim-on-kashmir/549435/>

“Efforts on to turn AJK into ideal place for tourism, business”

The News, February 14, 2017

Azad Jammu & Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan invited the people of Karachi to come to Azad

Kashmir in the coming summer to see and enjoy themselves at a number of ideal holiday resorts there. “The industrial zone in Bhimber, which will be constructed as part of the CPEC, would be the one place that would attract investment to Azad Kashmir from China and from within and outside the country,” stated Khan, who had led a distinguished career in Pakistan's Foreign Service before becoming the AJK president. He stated eight industrial zones would be constructed in the country, including one in Azad Kashmir, as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The recent connectivity of Azad Kashmir with the CPEC had improved suitability of AJK to attract investment from Pakistani and foreign businessmen for promoting industrial activities there, he added.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/186059-Efforts-on-to-turn-AJK-into-ideal-place-for-tourism-business>

“GOVT Focusing On Energy, Health Sectors To Facilitate Masses: Hassan”

Radio Pakistan, February 14, 2017

Minister for Information Planning and Development Gilgit-Baltistan Iqbal Hassan stated that the Government is focusing on energy and health sectors to facilitate masses. In an interview, he noted one hundred and seventeen projects are being executed to generate hydel power in Gilgit-Baltistan. The Minister further stated that thirty four new projects in health sector are also being implemented to provide better health facilities.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/14-Feb-2017/govt-focusing-on-energy-health-sectors-to-facilitate-masses-hassan>

M A Mir, “MWM leader critically injured in gun attack”

The Express Tribune, February 15, 2017

Shia cleric Allama Tasawur Hussain Jawwadi was critically injured in an attack on February 15 after unidentified men opened fired at his motorcycle near Muzaffarabad. Jawwadi is the general secretary of Majlis-e-Wahdatul Muslimeen (MWM) Pakistan, Azad Kashmir chapter. He was on his motorcycle

with his wife when gunmen opened fire at them near Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (Pima) Hospital, some eight kilometres from Muzaffarabad. The cleric was shifted to Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayid Al-Nahyan Hospital along with his wife for treatment. Doctors further stated Jawwadi was in critical condition and is being operated upon. Secretariat police station SHO Raja Sohail noted that they have collected six empties of bullets of 9mm pistol from the crime scene and are trying to locate the car the attackers were travelling in. “The entire area of Jhelum Valley has been cordoned off and all entry and exit points were blocked in order to nab the attackers,” stated SHO Khan. Opposition leader in AJK Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen condemned the incident and asked the government to arrest the culprits.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1327451/mwms-allama-tasawur-jawwadi-critically-injured-gun-attack-near-muzaffarabad/>

“LEAs go after nationalists, ‘separatists’ in GB”

Pakistan Today, February 15, 2017

Though the situation is different in Gilgit-Baltistan as compared to Balochistan, the law enforcement agencies have started a massive crackdown against activists of nationalist parties and suspected separatists, as the security agencies smell India’s ‘involvement’ to foil China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Gilgit Baltistan police, with the help of other agencies, have arrested over a dozen leaders and activists of the Balawaristan National Front (BNF) and recovered weapons and literature from their possession during the crackdown in district Ghizar and others parts of the region. Last week, the police had arrested at least 12 members of the BNF on charges of anti-state activities. The nationalist party, according to police, was formed in 1995 by a nationalist Abdul Hamid, who is presently in Belgium from where he is allegedly running the network in Pakistan and other parts of the world. According to Inspector General Police of GB, Zafar Iqbal Awan, the arrested activists of the nationalist party were trying to promote an anti-national ideology and had

played into the hands of foreign agencies. Police claim that the stated nationalist party, being operated from outside the country, was getting funds from RAW to sabotage the multibillion dollar project of CPEC, and creating unrest in the area. The IGP during a recent press briefing in Gilgit has also claimed that the law enforcers have uncovered Rs300 million money trails of the party and their usage for purchase of weapons and properties.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/15/leas-go-after-nationalists-separatists-in-gb/>

Mehwish Iqrar, “Gilgit-Baltistan and CPEC”

Daily Times, February 15, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan is a disputed region with an ambivalent constitutional status. Fortunately, in 2014 the Chinese government pledged US \$ 46 billion towards various projects aimed at catalysing infrastructural development in Pakistan. It was perceived that this project will develop all areas of Pakistan uniformly but the reality is quite the opposite. The name of this region is seldom mentioned in the statements of government functionaries regarding CPEC. The only economic zone proposed for Gilgit-Baltistan was upgrading of Karakoram Highway and eight other projects but all are confined to paper works. The governor of Gilgit spoke sporadically, about injustices but the federal government has turned blind eye to this region. A few months ago, the new projects were proposed for Balochistan and Sindh but not a single for Gilgit. It is alarming that the division of Gilgit along with other areas excluded from the benefits of this project. The people of Gilgit joined Pakistan to become Pakistani and enjoy equal rights and privileges of Pakistan with equal representation in the Parliament but still there is no constitutional status. The federal government should redress the grievances of its natives. If this project generated controversies and sense of neglect, it would surely cause collapse of this golden opportunity for Pakistan.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/letters/16-Feb-17/gilgit-baltistan-and-cpec>

“Restructuring legal framework: ‘1974 Act stabbed the rights of Kashmiri people’”

The Express Tribune, February 16, 2017

A constitutional reforms committee, led by a federal minister, has been formed to formulate amendments to replace the 1974 Act of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). This was stated by AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan on February 15. Addressing a news conference at the PWD Rest House in Mirpur, Haider stated that the amendments would lead to major reforms in the valley. “The people of AJK were denied their legitimate rights through this interim constitution,” the AJK premier observed while flanked by several members of his cabinet including Sports and Culture Minister Muhammad Saeed, Senior minister Tariq Farooq, MLA Rukhsar Ahmed and members of local political parties. Calling the 1974 act a “gift” from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Haider noted that formulating the amendments was the top priority for his government. “It (amendments) would strengthen the Kashmir freedom struggle, expedite the progress of AJK through self-reliance of local resources and address of local issues in minimum possible time,” he added. To a question, Haider assured that his government was on the same page as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led government of Pakistan. He disclosed that a constitutional reforms committee headed by a federal minister had been constituted to bring about the amendments in Act 1974, the interim constitution of the AJK State.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1328351/restructuring-legal-framework-1974-act-stabbed-rights-kashmiri-people/>

Shabbir Mir, “Recover Rs8m misappropriated by former CM”

The Express Tribune, February 17, 2017

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in Gilgit-Baltistan recommended that the government recover Rs8 million from the region’s former chief minister Mehdi Shah. The funds had allegedly been misappropriated during this tenure. The recommendations came during a meeting of the

PAC’s sub-committee, chaired by lawmaker Muhammad Shafi, in Gilgit on February 16. “The meeting reviewed finances for the year 2011-12 and found irregularities,” an insider aware of the deliberations in the meeting noted. “The committee may look into the remaining tenure Shah spent as chief minister.” Shah had been sworn in as chief minister in 2010 for five years. His tenure ended in December 2015. He allegedly spent the money on building extra accommodation for himself in Islamabad and Skardu. “The former chief minister had an office in Gilgit and Islamabad,” stated an insider. “But he charged for his house in Skardu besides hiring another house in a posh area of Islamabad even though he was using rooms in the G-B House.” Shah, who was a resident of Skardu, had declared his house as sub-office and reportedly received a handsome amount from the government coffers as rent. Later, while speaking to reporters after the committee’s meeting, Shafi noted they were deliberating means to recover the money.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1329502/pac-meeting-recover-rs8m-misappropriated-former-cm/>

Meraj Alam, “40 suspects arrested in Gilgit”

The Nation, February 18, 2017

The law and enforcement agencies and police on February 17 arrested 40 suspected persons, including six Afghans, during a joint search operation in Gilgit. Earlier, the ministry of interior had dispatched a letter to the government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), warning that terrorists may target the public gathering and community in the region. The department has also urged the Gilgit police chief to take foolproof security measures in the city elsewhere in the region. Following the alert, the local police and law and enforcement agencies conducted the search operation and arrested 40 suspects. The City police station SHO Zahor Ahmad noted that the local police arrested Afghans for living illegally in the area. He further stated that the police arrested six suspects after they could not produce legal documents. Zahor Ahmad added that the city police would make all security measures to ensure implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP). Meanwhile, the security has been

tightened in the region and beefed up at the Karakoram Highway (KKH) to ensure safe passage.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/18-Feb-2017/40-suspects-arrested-in-gilgit>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK, GB on high alert after spate of terror attacks”

Dawn, February 18, 2017

Given the fresh spate of terrorist attacks across the country, government officials in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) have suggested enforcement of the toughest administrative measures to nip the menace in the bud. A joint meeting of police and administration officials of Muzaffarabad division, presided over by Inspector General of Police Bashir Ahmed Memon, discussed the security situation in AJK on February 17. Referring to the recent terrorist attack on a Shia cleric, the officials stated the widespread protests and road blockades by the Shia community had diverted the attention of the security forces from the arrest of the attackers to maintaining the law and order in the city. IGP Memon stated it was surprising that the black car the attackers were driving was not intercepted by any policeman. He directed police officials to increase vigilance in their respective jurisdiction to thwart any attempt to divest the region of its exemplary peace and harmony. Meanwhile, law enforcement agencies in Gilgit-Baltistan beefed up security at exit and entry check posts and started search operations against suspects in hotels and other areas. A high-level meeting was chaired by Gilgit Commissioner Sibtain Ahmed in Gilgit which was attended by GB Inspector General Zaffar Iqbal Awan, heads of intelligence agencies and law enforcement representatives to review the security situation. The meeting directed all intelligence agencies officials to keep a watchful eye on movement of suspects, directing all district administrations to coordinate. It stated that a security threat alert had been issued to the GB government by the federal interior ministry. The government authorities were informed in a letter that places of worship, schools and government installations in the region were under a terrorist threat. The authorities

were asked to enhance security arrangements, particularly in vulnerable areas.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315522/ajk-gb-on-high-alert-after-spate-of-terror-attacks>

“The ball’s in India’s court”: an interview with President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan

Pakistan Today, February 19, 2017

The ball is in the India’s court. Pakistan is ready to commit itself with India for quite some time. You talk about the “peace process”, but before the peace process resumes, you have to start by having contacts, by having a form of dialogue. The bilateral discussions do not work; they don’t produce anything tangible since decades. As long as India is reluctant to engage in Kashmir, we have no other option but to turn to the international community and the United Nations. The Security Council should hold a debate on the situation. Its members cannot remain silent; they have to return to their own resolutions. If they care about peace and security, they have a responsibility to be proactive. They cannot simply say that the problem should be solved by India and Pakistan; especially when a crisis, like the one we have been experiencing for the past six months, has broken out. This matter is about the right of peoples to self-determination. Pakistan fights terrorism under all its forms. The action against Hafez Saeed has been taken in conformation with the constitutional law and in the framework of the engagement of Pakistan in regards to the international community. If India would have been sincere, it would have restarted the dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/19/the-balls-in-indias-court-an-interview-with-president-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-sardar-masood-khan/>

“Nabbing terrorists: Gilgit-Baltistan police rewarded”

The Express Tribune, February 19, 2017

The Gilgit-Baltistan government on February 18

distributed cash awards among police officials who had arrested wanted terrorists. The awards were given at a ceremony attended by Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Zafar Iqbal Awan at Chinar Bagh in Gilgit. City police SHO Zahoor Ahmed and four of his team members were awarded Rs125,000 each for arresting Ikramullah, a notorious terrorists who was carrying a bounty of Rs50 million. Meanwhile, Sub-inspector Murtaza Hussain and his four subordinates received Rs83,000 each for arresting Khan Wali of Darel valley in district Diamer. Wali, wanted for terrorism, was also carrying head money of Rs50 million. Cash prizes were also given to a dozen other officers for showing valour while performing their duties. According to a police official stated that these terrorists were involved in sectarian violence in 2011-12 and the assassination of foreign tourists in Nanga Parbat in 2013 and investigators probing the attack the same year.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1331778/nabbing-terrorists-gilgit-baltistan-police-rewarded/>

“Kashmir Issue Has Become Flashpoint in World: AJK PM”

Radio Pakistan, February 19, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that economically and democratically strong Pakistan is a guarantee for the success of Kashmir liberation movement. He stated that the Kashmir issue has become a flashpoint in the world due to effective foreign policy of the present government. He lauded Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for highlighting the Kashmir issue at international fora and taking keen interest in the development of Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/19-Feb-2017/kashmir-issue-has-become-flashpoint-in-world-ajk-pm>

“30 Afghan immigrants, Waziristan dwellers arrested in Mirpur”

The Nation, February 20, 2017

Over 30 unlawful Afghan immigrants as well others belonging to FATA including North and South

Waziristan Agencies were rounded up during the night-long search operation in Mirpur city till the wee hours of February 19, official sources disclosed. The local law-enforcement agencies including police and institutions of intelligence launched the crack-down in various parts of Mirpur city mid-night to hunt the illegally-settled non-registered Afghan immigrants as well as those belonging to FATA including North and South Waziristan agencies, a senior official of local authorities noted on February 19. Authorities had received info about influx of the unlawful Afghan immigrants as well as those belonging to FATA into Mirpur. Authorities have already banned the entry and presence of the un-registered Afghan nationals including the dubious and unscrupulous elements belonging to FATA and other adjoining areas in AJK including Mirpur district. “The search and combing operation will continue to make the entire City and the district clean of illegally-settled Afghan nationals besides others who, reportedly, had not got themselves registered with the local administration/nearest police station”, the sources stated. Meanwhile, security has been beefed up across Azad Jammu & Kashmir since the recent wave of bloody terrorism in various parts of the country. Security at all the entry and exit points of AJK leading to and from Pakistan has been tightened and those moving on all the routes were being thoroughly scanned and checked in order to maintain peace and order in the area.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/20-Feb-2017/30-afghan-immigrants-waziristan-dwellers-arrested-in-mirpur>

Tariq Naqash, “Justice Zia named AJK CJ”

Dawn, February 21, 2017

Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Ibrahim Zia was appointed Chief Justice of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Supreme Court on February 20 by AJK President Sardar Masood Khan. The appointment will take effect on February 25, a day after the incumbent Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan’s retirement on attaining the age of superannuation, according to a notification issued by the law department. The chief justice is appointed by the AJK president on the advice of the AJK Council headed by the prime

minister of Pakistan. The AJK apex court comprises three judges, including the CJ.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1316053/justice-zia-named-ajk-cj>

“Pakistan, Kashmir incomplete without each other: AJK president”

Daily Times, February 21, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan stated that the people of Kashmir will continue their resolute struggle for self-determination, despite fluctuations in international politics. He was addressing an International Conference on “Kashmir in Focus: Avoiding Conflict and a Quest for Peace”, organised by Punjab University’s Pakistan Study Centre. The conference is being attended by leading scholars from Pakistan, China and the J&K. The AJK president underlined that Pakistan is incomplete without Kashmir; and Kashmir is incomplete without Pakistan. He further stated that Kashmiris and Pakistanis were bound by the bonds of kinship, security, waters and economy. “No power on earth can break this bond”, he noted. He also stated that a strong Pakistan was Kashmir’s freedom movements’ sponsor. “Pakistan’s state and economy are ‘turning a corner’. This provides an opportunity to intensify Pakistan’s call for justice in Kashmir by intensifying its moral, political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris”, he noted.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/21-Feb-17/pakistan-kashmir-incomplete-without-each-other-ajk-president>

“Security concerns: PM’s visit to Gilgit postponed, again”

The Express Tribune, February, 21, 2017

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s visit to Gilgit-Baltistan, scheduled for February 21, was postponed on February 20, apparently due to security concerns, government officials noted. Nawaz had already postponed a visit scheduled to the region earlier this month owing to inclement weather in Gilgit, the gateway to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The prime minister was due to fly to Gilgit

on February 21 to address the joint sitting of G-B Legislative Assembly and the G-B Council. He was also expected to announce reforms in the G-B Empowerment and Self-rule order of 2009, under which G-B’s status was brought at par with a province. The fresh reforms, introduced by a constitutional committee headed by Sartaj Aziz, were set to pave the way for G-B’s representation in the parliament under a temporary arrangement to ensure the larger Kashmir issue is not affected. In addition, Nawaz was also expected to announce some relief for local residents from the prolonged power outages, which extend from 14 to 18 hours a day.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1333594/security-concerns-pms-visit-gilgit-postponed/>

“FM Muhammad Birjis Tahir Visits Gilgit Baltistan, Radio Pakistan”

Radio Pakistan, February 23, 2017

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Muhammad Birjis Tahir has stated that Government is committed for the development of Gilgit Baltistan. Addressing a news conference in Gilgit, he stated Federal Government has approved two billion rupees for Naltar phase four hydropower project to overcome energy shortage. He also stated his Gilgit visit was aimed at to review progress of ongoing projects of Public Sector development program. The Minister also stated that he has directed the concerned authorities for timely completion of the projects. He stated 3G and 4G internet service will be launched in AJK and Gilgit Baltistan soon.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/23-Feb-2017/radio-report-fm-muhammad-birjis-tahir-visits-gilgit-baltistan>

“Life Along LoC: No funds for community bunkers”

The Express Tribune, February 24, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has yet to receive funds for building community bunkers in villages along the Line of Control where people were exposed to Indian firing and shelling. “We have approached the central government for

provision of funds which we have not received yet,” Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Raja Farooq Haider stated while answering a question of MLA Malik Muhammad Nawaz. Speaking on the floor of the AJK assembly, PM Haider reminded that more than 410,000 people living along the LoC were demanding construction of community bunkers for safety from Indian firing. Regarding the administration, Haider stated, his government would establish supremacy of law in the state. Speaking on the floor of the house on February 23 the prime minister noted he respects the assembly, “I am here since 32 years, know everything about AJK history since 1947.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1337163/life-along-loc-no-funds-community-bunkers/>

“Kashmiris want to become symbol of cooperation in the region, Sardar Masood Khan”

Kashmir Watch, February 24, 2017

Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, stated that Kashmiris are peace loving people, we hate war and fighting. We dislike terrorism; we are advocate of diplomacy, peace, harmony and dialogue. Kashmiri nation wants to become the symbol of cooperation and coordination in the region. The President asked international community to come forward for the peaceful resolution of long standing Kashmir dispute and give up double standard towards Kashmir. While addressing a function in Muzaffarabad in connection with the one hundred and fortieth birthday anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The President, Sardar Masood Khan stated that Kashmir was always a theatre of war because of violation of LOC resulting in casualties of both civilian and armed forces.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/kashmiris-want-to-become-symbol-of-cooperation-in-the-region-sardar-masood-khan/>

“GBLA Session Concludes In Gilgit”

Radio Pakistan, February 24, 2017

The 14th session of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative

Assembly (GBLA) concluded in Gilgit on February 24. The Deputy Speaker Jafarullah Khan presided over the session. Minister of Law Dr. Muhammad Iqbal tabled four draft bills in the house for approval. The bills include establishment of Benevolent Fund and Group insurance department in Gilgit Baltistan, Gilgit Baltistan interest on private loans bill 2016, the Gilgit Baltistan anti-corruption establishment and Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management. The Deputy Speaker constituted a ten members select committee and directed to represent it in the next session. The house approved a resolution that unanimously demanded to impose ban on use of mobile during driving. Later, the speaker adjourned the session till indefinite period.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/24-Feb-2017/gbla-session-concludes-in-gilgit>

Pervaz Jafri, “CPEC enhances importance, responsibility of northern areas”

Business Recorder, February 24, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Minister for Information, Iqbal Hassan stated that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was the message of progress and prosperity and will not only change the history of Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan but the whole South Asia. Talking to local media on February 24, the Information Minister stated foreign lobbies and elements were involved behind the recent wave of terrorism in a bid to fail the CPEC project, the game changer of the region. We have to rise to the occasion to foil such conspiracies against CPEC by demonstrating unity and cohesion in our ranks and files. CPEC, he stated was a message of development and prosperity that enhanced the geo-strategic importance and responsibilities of Northern Areas. He noted that the credit for raising three districts at a time in northern areas goes to the PML-N government adding that the Prime Minister not only announced the creation of three new districts in northern areas but also implemented it in letter and spirit. He also stated that the people of northern areas supported the idea of separate province. He expressed the hope that Gilgit-Baltistan would soon become a model province of Pakistan. The Information Minister noted that we are

dead against corruption and it was our mission to make Gilgit-Baltistan government corruption free.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/02/24/337800/>

“Five terrorists arrested, 80kg explosives recovered in Azad Kashmir’s Bagh”

Dunya News, February 25, 2017

Police personnel on February 25 foiled major terror bid and recovered 80kg explosives during operation in Azad Kashmir’s Bagh area. According to details, security officers also arrested five terrorists belonging to Afghanistan and shifted them to some unidentified place for interrogation. Superintendent of Police (SP) Kamran Ali stated that the detainees were living in a rented house. Separately, bomb disposal squad defused 4kg heavy explosive material and also recovered two bombs at Taimour Shah Market in Hangu. Security forces have killed a commander of alleged militant group and arrested six suspects in search operation in Blangoor area of Turbat district. A security forces spokesman stated the security forces personnel carried out the operation on a tip off. He also stated that the suspects opened fire at the security forces and in retaliatory fire an alleged militant commander namely Mullah Rafiq alias Duda was killed and six other were apprehended.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/376614-Five-terrorists-arrested-80kg-explosives-recovere>

Irfan Ghauri, “AJK mentioned as ‘Pakistan Occupied Kashmir’ in 5th graders’ textbook”

The Express Tribune, February 26, 2017

A social studies text book currently being used in many private schools in Islamabad labels Azad Jammu and Kashmir as ‘Pakistan Occupied Kashmir’. Chapter 7 of the Social Studies for Pakistan; An integrated Course of Environment and Social Studies, Book 5 begins with a passage stating “Pakistan has four provinces, namely, Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Other administrative divisions include Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan (formally known as

Northern Areas), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (a semi-autonomous tribal region in the northwest) and Azad Kashmir (Pakistan occupied area of Jammu and Kashmir).” “The term is Pakistan occupied area of Jammu and Kashmir as highlighted in the text book, can easily muddle young Pakistani minds,” stated PPP Senator Sehar Kamran, who filed a calling attention notice with the Senate secretariat seeking attention of the Capital Administration and Development Division (CAAD) on the issue.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1339262/ajk-mentioned-pakistan-occupied-kashmir-5th-graders-textbook/>

“Ministers mull over boosted Pak role in AJK”

The Nation, February 27, 2017

A meeting of a Pakistani federal minister and an AJK minister discussed the matters related to the launching of Prime Minister of Pakistan’s youth scheme in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Minister for Youth, Sports & Culture Chaudhry Saeed called on Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination Mr Riaz Hussain Pirzada at his office in Islamabad and discussed with him AJK’s representation in various international exchange programme was also discussed. They discussed the implementation of the proposal for launching of a Youth Internship Programme in AJK to impart training to the youth in different professional disciplines to make them quality future architects of the nation. The AJK Youth Minister also discussed the idea of collaboration with Pakistan Sports Board to jointly develop various programmes and evaluate the sports policy of AJK. Ch Saeed emphasised for enhancing AJK’s representation to promote the youth belonging to the remote and far-flung terrain of the liberated territory. The youth minister also urged for the inclusion of AJK in the Council of Common Interest (CCI). The proposal was appreciated by the federal minister who assured his support for the issue at the office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, according to the official statement later released by the office of the AJK sports minister. “The meeting concluded on a positive note and a follow-up meeting is expected in Muzaffarabad,” it added.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/27-Feb-2017/ministers-mull-over-boosted-pak-role-in-ajk>

“All Resources Being Utilized To Address Problems Confronted By Masses: Fida”

Radio Pakistan, February 27, 2017

Minister Tourism Gilgit-Baltistan Fida Khan noted all available resources are being utilized to address problems confronted by people of remote areas. This he stated, while talking to people in Phander village which was affected by heavy snowfall this year. He also stated PML-N Government is well aware about the public grievances of upper valleys and not left them alone in this crucial juncture. The Minister directed Public Works Department to remove snow from Barsat village which was blocked again due to snowfall.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/27-Feb-2017/all-resources-being-utilized-to-address-problems-confronted-by-masses-fida>

“AJK PM Calls For Unity, Integrity To Eliminate Terrorism”

Radio Pakistan, February 27, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan stressed the need for unity and integrity to eliminate terrorism from the country. Winding up debate on various resolutions tabled in AJ&K Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad on February 27, he strongly condemned fresh wave of terrorism and stated that enemies have cast an evil eye on Pakistan due to its strategic and geographical location. The AJK Prime Minister termed operation Radd-ul-Fasaad as a good omen after successful operation Zarb-e-Azb. He also stated that the whole nation is standing shoulder to shoulder with its valiant armed forces.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/27-Feb-2017/ajk-pm-calls-for-unity-integrity-to-eliminate-terrorism>

“Collective bargaining: ILO to help organise AJK trade unions”

The Express Tribune, February 28, 2017

International Labour Organisation (ILO) will develop

a plan for promotion of trade unions in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) stated ILO Senior Programme Officer Saad Gilani at a capacity building workshop for trade unions held in collaboration with Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF) in Mirpur. Federation’s Secretary General Zahoor Awan explained the importance of collective bargaining to the visiting delegates. The workshop helped Trade Union representatives understand the international standards on freedom of association and collective bargaining in context of ILO Conventions 87 and 98. The workshop discussed prospects for formation of a state-level federation of trade unions, capacity of trade union leadership, sustainability of trade unions and alliance of AJK trade union federation with Pakistan and international trade bodies.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1341095/collective-bargaining-ilo-help-organise-ajk-trade-unions/>

Economic Developments

“For Gilgit-Baltistan: SECP launches company regularisation scheme”

The Express Tribune, February 1, 2017

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has launched the Companies Regularisation Scheme (CRS) for the firms registered in Gilgit-Baltistan to enable them to file overdue returns on payment of normal fee as prescribed under sixth schedule of the Companies Ordinance 1984. “The purpose of the scheme is to give relief to the companies registered in Gilgit-Baltistan, which were not regular in the filing of statutory returns,” the SECP stated in a statement on January 31. It advised all the companies registered in Gilgit-Baltistan to take benefit in their own interest of the opportunity to regularise their statutory record by filing the overdue returns/annual accounts with the normal filing fee. The scheme will be applicable to all companies and will remain valid for three months from February 1 to April 30, 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1313156/gilgit-baltistan-secp-launches-company-regularisation-scheme/>

“SECP chief for promotion of investment activities in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Nation, February 11, 2017

Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) Chairman Zafar Hijazi has instructed his team to prepare a comprehensive plan in the shortest possible time for the promotion of investment activities in Gilgit Baltistan. He was talking to a delegation from Karakoram Cooperative Bank Ltd (KCBL), headed by Iqbal Hassan, who is also the Minister for Planning and Development in Gilgit Baltistan. The delegation visited the SECP head office on February 10. The SECP chairman highlighted the significance of Gilgit Baltistan and

briefed that how its economic progress could play a vital role in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. He reiterated his commitment to facilitate the local business community as well as other entities that aspire to operate in Gilgit Baltistan to encourage business activities in the region. Appreciating the SECP chairman’s views, Hassan noted that while Gwadar is the last destination of the CPEC route, Gilgit Baltistan is the first. He gave a brief overview of the KCBL, which is in the process of forming a microfinance bank with the style of Gilgit Baltistan microfinance bank. The delegation showed keen interest in mutual funds, investments opportunities in capital markets and leasing business.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/11-Feb-2017/secp-chief-for-promotion-of-investment-activities-in-gilgit-baltistan>

“AJK Industrial Zone & Hydel Projects approved under CPEC”

Pakistan Today, February 27, 2017

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan stated that the industrial zone in Bhimber district and hydel power projects have been approved in AJK under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the projects are likely to bring development in the area. He also stated that CPEC will bring economic revolution not only in Pakistan but AJK as well. He further stated that under the vision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, AJK government is constantly striving to promote good governance, economic stability and independence of Kashmir from India. Masood Khan stated AJK government is in joint efforts with the Pakistani government to develop education, infrastructure, health and tourism sectors, adding that measures are being taken to promote tourism sector as Kashmir has an abundance of natural beauty. He further added that several highways have been constructed to connect AJK with Pakistan and to provide better

travelling facilities to the commuters. In addition, focus is being placed on attracting investment from other countries as well. AJK President further added that the government is striving to reduce

unemployment in the area and provide quality education to the people of the area.

<http://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/27/ajk-industrial-zone-hydel-projects-approved-under-cpec/>

International Developments

“Sardar Masood urges Int'l community, EU to help in resolution of Kashmir dispute”

The Nation, February 7, 2017

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan urged the international community especially European Union (EU) to help Kashmiris in a peaceful resolution of Kashmir dispute. He was addressing a gathering entitled, “Struggle on Kashmir in Europe” arranged by Kashmir Council Europe (KC-EU) in Brussels. The gathering followed by dinner was attended by a large number of people from different walks of life including members EU parliament, members Brussels parliament and representatives of Kashmiri and Pakistani communities based in Belgium. Earlier the president was received by Kashmir Council EU office bearers headed by Ali Raza Syed. The gathering started with recitation of holy Quran by Qari Syed Hasnaat Bokhari and was moderated by KC-EU’s senior member Shiraz Raaj. Chairman Kashmir Council EU Ali Raza Syed expressed his gratitude to the President for visiting Belgium on KC-EU invitation and as well as participants for coming in the event. He further stated, KC-EU has so far organized a number of events on Kashmir in Belgium and other European Countries and would continue its struggle.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/07-Feb-2017/sardar-masood-urges-int-l-community-eu-to-help-in-resolution-of-kashmir-dispute>

“UNSC should conduct urgent debate on Kashmir issue: AJK President”

The News, February 8, 2017

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan, asked United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to urgently conduct a debate on the issue of Kashmir. He was addressing as the chief guest at a conference entitled, “Kashmir Conflict and International Opinion” organized by Kashmir Council EU with collaboration of the Friends of Kashmir Group at European Parliament in Brussels. The conference was also addressed by Chairman Kashmir Council EU Mr Ali Raza Syed, Members of European Parliament (MEPs) Dr Sajjad Karim, Raja Afzal Khan and Amjad Bashir and former EU Ambassador Mr Anthony Crasner. MEP Afzal Khan moderated the conference while Pakistan Ambassador to EU Ms Naghmana Hashmi was also present on the occasion. A number of people from different walks of life including MEPS, human rights activists, intellectuals, researchers and diplomats attended the conference.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/184853-UNSC-should-conduct-urgent-debate-on-Kashmir-issue-AJK-President>

Other Developments

“No Shortage of Food in Gilgit Baltistan: Shafiq”

Radio Pakistan, February 10, 2017

Minister for food of Gilgit Baltistan Muhammad Shafiq stated there is no shortage of food in Gilgit Baltistan. In a statement, he noted that the

government is observing the affected areas hit by heavy snowfall and land sliding. He further stated he has directed the concerned officers to supply food items in the affected areas as soon as possible.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/10-Feb-2017/no-shortage-of-food-in-gilgit-baltistan-shafiq>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Measure Taken against JuD”

Daily Mahasib, February 1, 2017

Interior Minister Choudry Nisar stated that measures taken against JuD are under UN resolution. He also stated that this organisation was under scrutiny since 2010-11. He further noted that JuD was also under the UN Watch List. According to Nisar, the state has to take steps against these organisations and that is why few measures are taken against JuD. These statements of Nisar came after Hafiz Saeed was put under house arrest. The UN passed this resolution under the pressure from US and India. JuD is under attack from the romance between India and America. Hafiz Saeed is highly regarded personality. He is one of the tallest religious figures in the country. His organisation has helped people at the times of difficulties. If this organisation was working against state laws then why it took so much time to take action against JuD. Fact is that it is a demand from the US that compelled Pakistan to put Hafiz Saeed under house arrest. America is threatening Pakistan that it would be included among the list of terrorist sponsoring states. As a result, Pakistani citizens cannot travel to the US. It was after this warning that Pakistan put Hafiz Saeed under house arrest. The US have not left any stone unturned in accusing and discrediting Pakistan. If Pakistanis are not allowed to enter America, heavens will not fall. The state should stand up on its feet and then take measure on its own but not bow to external pressure. It should never come under pressure from America and India.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=01-02-2017>

“No Relations with Kashmir, and they should not become an irritant : Raja Jhanzaib”

Daily K2, February 3, 2017

Legislative Assembly member of GB, Raja Jhanzaib

stated that Gilgit-Balistan has no relations with Kashmir and they should stop creating hurdles in Gilgit Baltistan’s constitutional status. He further stated that the so called Kashmiri leaders are not honest and had they been Kashmir conflict would have been resolved long back. Fact is that these leaders don not want to see the conflict resolved. What they want is to do politics in the name of Kashmir cause. Kashmiri leaders cannot stand the allegiance and loyalty Gilgit Baltistan shares with Pakistan. That is why they are against making Gilgit Baltistan a province. By forcefully linking Gilgit Baltistan with Kashmir and not providing constitutional rights is sheer injustice. Such sentiments were shared by Raja Jhanzaib in an interview with the KNS.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1486080000>

“Change in status unacceptable: Sardar Attique”

Daily Mahasib, February 8, 2017

President of the Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of AJK, Sardar Attique stated that there would be no peace between Pakistan and India without resolving the Kashmir dispute. Burhan Wani has given new vigour to ‘freedom movement’ noted Attique. He also stated that the Government of Pakistan should free Hafiz Saeed. On media reports about Pakistan mulling integrating Gilgit Baltistan as a province, Attique noted that division in erstwhile State of Kashmir is unacceptable. Kashmiris according to Attique will never accept any change in geographical boundaries of Kashmir. According to Sardar he supports giving constitutional and political powers to the Gilgit Baltistan but will never accept any change in the status of the region.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=08-02-2017>

“Peace with Stick is not Sustainable”

Baad-e-Shimal, February 13, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafeezur Rehman stated that his government succeeded in bringing peace to the region. According to Hafeez, 75 percent of that was possible by using force and rest of 25 percent with by using other means. This is fact that peace has been maintained in Gilgit Baltistan and people are feeling relieved. It seems old Gilgit-Baltistan has returned. But there is an issue with it. It is easy to bring peace than to actually maintain it. According to the Chief Minister, harmony maintained through stick is not sustainable. Lack of harmony is the real cause of unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan. Law and order has been maintained but there is still much to do. There is need to bring harmony between sects, on languages and on ethnic differences. In past, these differences were exploited everywhere. People were pitched against each other. It is also a fact that earlier, steps were never taken to address the issues Gilgit Baltistan was facing. Gilgit Baltistan can prosper if there is sustainable peace in the region.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MDItMTMtMjAxNw>

“Nationalism and Sectarianism are used to weak Peoples Party: Amjid Hussain Advocate”

Daily K2, February 20, 2017

President of Pakistan People’s Party Gilgit-Baltistan, Amjid Hussain Advocate stated that Gilgit-Baltistan is not facing a threat from terrorism but from the mind-set of Hafeezur Rehman. Amjid was speaking at a party event at Gahkuch. He also noted that the chief minister should not discriminate and treat people equally. According to Amjid, when people of the region demand their rights, rulers link them with the Kashmir issue. Rulers do not want CPEC to succeed by repeatedly saying Gilgit Baltistan is a dispute. Criticizing government, Advocate stated that Hafeez led government is using nationalism and sectarian tools to weaken the Peoples Party.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1487548800>

March 2017

“Report on Gilgit-Baltistan’s Constitutional Identity completed, PM will announce it soon, spokesperson”

Daily K2, February 26, 2017

Spokesperson of the provincial government Faizullah Farooq stated that the Committee headed by Sartaj Aziz has finalised the report and has handed it over to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He also stated that the Committee has incorporated the recommendations provided by the provincial government. According to Farooq, first time in the history this region will get financial, political, and economic powers. Every issue has been addressed at highest level. Those who are opposing it are using newspapers for propaganda. They are doing it for political benefits. Prime Minister will soon announce it. Farooq in his assurance to people noted that good news is soon coming to the people of the region.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1488067200>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

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 Muhammad Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 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.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Kharmang and Shigar 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: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

Chief Minister G-B: Hafiz Hafiz-ur-Rehman

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 to 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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