

# POK

## News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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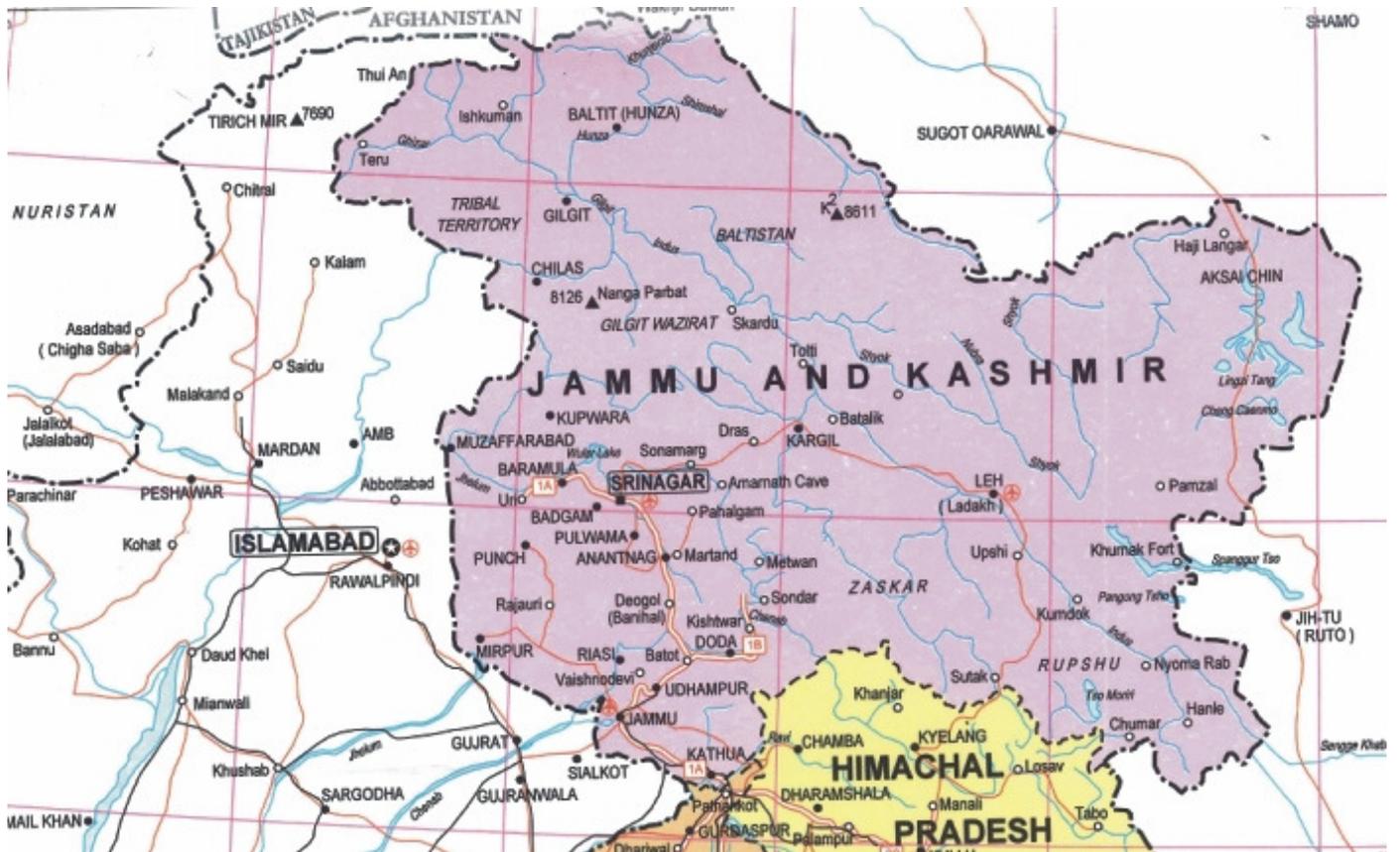
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Jammu & Kashmir

# In this Edition

*The current issue includes a number of reports that extensively discuss the possibilities around making Gilgit Baltistan a province of Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan is part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and has been under Pakistan's control since 1947. The region is claimed by India as part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The entire state of J&K acceded to India by virtue of the Instrument of Accession signed by the Maharaja of Kashmir in October 1947. For over seven decades, the region has been kept in a state of political deprivation citing its link to the Kashmir issue. Gilgit Baltistan is ruled by temporary frameworks of governance and Islamabad exercises tight control over the region. Since the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is slated to cut across the region before getting into Pakistan, the region's political and constitutional ambiguity is a cause of concern not only in Pakistan, but in significant proportions, in China too, as has been noticed in media reports widely.*

*A high level committee had been constituted under Sartaj Aziz to chalk out a strategy that would end the political ambivalence of the region, if possible by making it a province of Pakistan. Since the region's fate is inextricably linked to the larger Kashmir problem, there were reports that even the proposed provincial status could be provisional in nature and not permanent. The committee has submitted its report to the Pakistan government. However, the inordinate delay in taking a final decision only reflects that Pakistan is still grappling with a dilemma of how to absorb Gilgit Baltistan without disturbing its long held position on Kashmir, of which the said region is a vital part of.*

*Owing its standing claim on the entire PoK as part of J&K, India has expressed objections on the proposed provincial status for the region. India has strongly contended that Pakistan has no right to absorb Gilgit Baltistan as this would disregard the region's disputed status and connection with Kashmir issue. Of late, in a series of official statements, India has vociferously laid its claim on the entire J&K including PoK, which is also an integral part of the erstwhile princely state. PoK continues to be under Pakistan's illegitimate control after it staged a deceitful invasion on the territory in October 1947 immediately after India's independence.*

*Priyanka Singh*

# Political Developments

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## **Zia ur Rehman, “AJK govt understands issues of Kashmiris living in Sindh”**

*The News, March 2, 2017*

Abdul Rashid Turabi, a member of the Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly, stated AJK’s current government understands the issues of the Kashmiri community and refugees living in Sindh and, therefore, has been working on several development plans for their welfare. “Two former AJK lawmakers of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement elected from Sindh had embezzled funds allocated for the community members and refugees living in the province, especially in Karachi, and did nothing for their development and welfare,” Turabi, who also heads the Jamaat-e-Islami’s AJK chapter, noted. He was visiting Karachi, where he met community delegations, party leaders and the media. In July 2016, Turabi was elected unopposed as member of the AJK Legislative Assembly on the seat reserved for technocrats after the JI forged an alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. He demanded that the federal government give due share of AJK after determining “water use charge, net hydel profit and royalty” of hydropower projects in the region on a par with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Talking about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, he stated one of the six mega industrial zones was being established under the project in the valley.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/189388-AJK-govt-understands-issues-of-Kashmiris-living-in-Sindh>

## **“Dearth of civil courts causing delay in justice”**

*The Nation, March 2, 2017*

The lack of required number of the lower courts in various parts of Azad Jammu & Kashmir including the major city of Mirpur is causing inordinate delay in the administration of justice, former AJK chief

justice pointed out. Former chief justice Azam Khan was addressing a farewell ceremony hosted in his honour by the citizens of Mirpur after his retirement as CJ. The retired chief justice continued that the extraordinary delay in disposal of the cases by the heavily burdened civil courts was due to the non-availability of the required number of the civil courts. He further pointed out that according to the stipulated criteria only 350 cases could be heard by a civil court. Whereas, over 7,000 cases are lying under trial at a time in some civil courts in AJK particularly in the civil courts in Mirpur city, he referred to. He stated, “In such circumstances, how speedy and inexpensive justice could be expected from the judiciary in the presence of such situation being faced by most of the courts in AJK.” He pointed out that during his term in office as CJ of AJK, he always endorsed the recommendations of the AJK High Court to the government for the immediate increase in number of civil courts in different parts of AJK including in Mirpur district for the sake of the dispensation of speedy and inexpensive justice.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Mar-2017/dearth-of-civil-courts-causing-delay-in-justice>

## **“CPEC to contribute significantly in socio-economic uplift: Haider”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 2, 2017*

Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would contribute significantly in the socio-economic uplift of the state. Addressing a public gathering at Barsala in Muzaffarabad on March 2, he noted that CPEC would also bring job opportunities for unemployed and skilled youth in Azad Kashmir. He further stated that all facilities are being provided to Chinese companies working on Kohala and Karot hydropower projects as part of CPEC. The AJK Prime Minister noted the

state would get twenty two billion rupees annually from the federal government due to the power projects being run in Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/02-Mar-2017/cpec-to-contribute-significantly-in-socio-economic-uplift-haider>

### **MA Mir, “AJK lawmakers approve 50% raise in salaries”**

*The Express Tribune, March 2, 2017*

Despite the financial crisis in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) government approved to increase lawmakers’ salaries by an unprecedented 50 per cent. This was the crux of the five-day session of the AJK Legislative Assembly that concluded on March 1 with the approval of free medical care and nearly 200 percent rise in house rent for elected representatives. Opposition parties boycotted the session, terming the raise in lawmakers’ perks a bid to humiliate the region’s unemployed youth. “Contradicting the government claims regarding austerity measures, they raised the salaries of ministers and lawmakers turning the slogan of good governance into a big joke,” Abdul Majid Khan, the parliamentary leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) informed media persons.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1343396/double-scum-ajk-lawmakers-approve-50-raise-salaries/>

### **“HRCP reports rights abuse in Gilgit Baltistan by agencies”**

*The Nation, March 3, 2017*

A rights body on February 28 released fresh findings into alleged human rights violation by intelligence and law enforcement agencies in Gilgit Baltistan, reported BBC Urdu. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in its latest report on Gilgit Baltistan demanded the government to bar security agencies from allegedly exploiting anti-terrorism laws against youths and political activists. Former HRCP chief Asma Jahangir, who released the findings of the report in Islamabad, asked the federal government to empower democratic forums of Gilgit Baltistan,

appoint judges from among the locals, and address the issues of internally displaced persons (IDPs). “Security agencies have been given powers under the National Action Plan to keep people in check. Anyone who criticises even a little is apprehended under the Anti-Terrorism Act,” she added. According to the report, hundreds of youths and political activists have allegedly been put behind bars under the act. HRCP also called for keeping in check powers given to security agencies.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Mar-2017/hrcp-reports-rights-abuse-in-gilgit-baltistan-by-agencies>

### **“HRCP demands provincial status for Gilgit Baltistan”**

*Pakistan Today, March 4, 2017*

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on March 3 launched a fact-finding report on Gilgit-Baltistan, recommending provisional constitutional status that will lead to a permanent provincial status to the region. Addressing the launching ceremony of the fact-finding report, former HRCP chairperson Asma Jahangir stated that the constitutional status for the Gilgit Baltistan was needed to be resolved as soon as possible. “Integration of the region into Pakistan is essential for addressing most of the political and administrative issues faced by the local people,” she noted. Sharing recommendations, she stated that all fundamental rights guaranteed in the constitution should be extended to the region. She further stated that the Gilgit Baltistan Self Governance Ordinance-2009 has many weaknesses and the people in the area were deprived of many rights enjoyed by residents of other parts of Pakistan. In the region, the judiciary cannot strike down any order, rule and even steps taken by the government at the centre. “This is the unique case in the world that people are termed insurgents for demanding to make their region part of the country. There is no separatist in Gilgit Baltistan, what the residents demand is to recognise their territory as part of Pakistan,” she noted.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/03/04/hrcp-demands-provincial-status-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

### **“AJK pledges to end corruption, outages”**

*The Nation, March 4, 2017*

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated on March 3 that his government would eliminate corruption and power load shedding from Azad Kashmir. The prime minister noted that implementation of health package has been started and education policy has also been promulgated. “Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will become PM in 2018 again despite of all the conspiracies of his opponents,” Haider noted while addressing a public gathering at Barsala. He declared the holding of Economic Cooperation Organisation Summit in Islamabad as a great achievement of the government as enemies of the country were trying to isolate Pakistan. Development budget has been increased while steps are being taken for the promotion of tourism in the region, he noted. He added that for the accountability of corrupt persons, process of legislation was underway and no corrupt elements would be allowed to escape. The government has promoted tolerance in politics and has not targeted the opponents, he also stated. All available resources are being spent on the welfare of people, the prime minister stated.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Mar-2017/ajk-pledges-to-end-corruption-outages>

### **“GB’s political parties as good and as bad as Pakistan’s political parties”**

*Dawn, March 4, 2017*

I hope the situation is not taken to the extent that young people decide not to live with Pakistan,” Supreme Court advocate Asma Jahangir noted on March 3. The former chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) was speaking at a press conference to launch a report on a HRCP fact-finding mission titled ‘Gilgit-Baltistan: aspiration for identity, integration and autonomy’. HRCP co-chairperson Kamran Arif, Asma Jahangir and Khushal Khattack visited GB in August 2016 for the mission, and prepared a report after meeting with politicians, youth activists and rights activists. “We are intolerant, and we have to rethink our past

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mistakes, because multiplying mistakes does not make a nation. Unfortunately, here decisions are made without thinking – such as, it has been decided that Urdu should be enforced all over the country. I say then the Quran should also be taught in Urdu in seminaries,” Ms Jahangir stated. “We should demand our rights, because this country does not belong to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). We have given sacrifices for the country. The people of GB have also given sacrifices for the country; soldiers of the light infantry sacrificed their lives during the Kargil War, and there was an instruction to bury the bodies of soldiers at night.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318289/gbs-political-parties-as-good-and-as-bad-as-pakistans-political-parties>

### **“3 hydro-power projects being executed in Azad Kashmir”**

*The Nation, March 5, 2017*

Three major hydro-power projects are being executed at a fast pace in Azad Kashmir to provide cost-effective electricity to people. Talking to Radio Pakistan in Mirpur, Additional Chief Secretary Dr. Syed Asif Hussain noted that Kohala, Karot and Mahal hydro-power projects have been included in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He also stated that Kohala project, being constructed on River Jhelum, will be completed in four years and it will produce 1124 megawatts of electricity. Karot hydro-power project will generate 720MW electricity after its completion in 2020. Mahal power project, which is located at the boundary of Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, will generate 640 MW electricity.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/05-Mar-2017/3-hydro-power-projects-being-executed-in-azad-kashmir>

### **Babar Ali Bhatti, “Ineluctability of Gilgit-Baltistan in CPEC”**

*Daily Times, March 6, 2017*

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is much more than just roads. Rather, it is a complete framework of energy, infrastructure, ports and industry related projects. It would connect Khunjerab

to Gwadar, and China has pledged to invest over \$46 billion for this project. The establishment of economic zones is also part of the CPEC. This project is causing immense curiosity amongst national and international analysts and economists. It is being considered as the game changer for the entire region because of its unique nature and the fact that it does not have any historical counterpart. Gilgit-Baltistan and its peaceful people have generously offered their lands for the accomplishment of project desired by both China and Pakistan. Gilgit-Baltistan with Ladakh has a combined area larger than Syria. This combined area is a resource-rich landscape of multiple ethnic heritages. Surrounded by Afghanistan and three nuclear power countries China, India and Pakistan, this region's strategic value does not need to be explained anymore. The capital of Gilgit-Baltistan — Gilgit and the capital of Ladakh — Leh are both located on the proposed Silk Road and play their roles as hub cities by establishing the connection among Xinjiang, Punjab and Tibet. Besides, its marvellous beauty also lures the tourists from across the world.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/06-Mar-17/ineluctability-of-gilgit-baltistan-in-cpec>

### **“Bill seeks to reserve seats for Gilgit, PoK residents”**

*The Indian Express, March 6, 2017*

In a bid to give momentum to the demand for creating political space for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in legislative institutions, a BJP MP has moved a Bill seeking to reserve seats in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for the people of Gilgit and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The Bill moved by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey has been listed to be introduced in the second part of Budget Session beginning March 9. The Bill seeks to reserve five seats in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha for the residents of Gilgit and PoK. “When we say Kashmir is an integral part of India and Gilgit and PoK are part of Kashmir, there need to be members representing these regions in Parliament too,” Dubey noted. “It is surprising that Parliament does not take into account this territory while the state Assembly has 24 seats reserved for them in Jammu and Kashmir,” Dubey, MP from

Godda, Jharkhand, stated.

He also stated he had tried to bring in the Bill as a private members Bill in 2013, 2014 and 2015, but it did not get the approval of the committee on private members Bill. “Now it has been approved and it is listed for the upcoming session. I will be able to introduce it in the Lok Sabha,” he added.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/bill-seeks-to-reserve-seats-for-gilgit-pok-residents-4556159/>

### **Federal, “AJK govts lock horns over finance secretary’s appointment”**

*Pakistan Today, March 5, 2017*

A tug of war started between the federal and Azad Kashmir governments on March 5 for the slot of AJK finance secretary as an appointment could not be made even after the lapse of several weeks. Finance secretary’s appointment is facing delay since AJK Finance Secretary Sadiq Malik retired on February 12. According to sources, Establishment Division wanted to appoint senior officers from KP on the slot while Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir and Asif Karmani were striving to appoint a senior bureaucrat from Punjab, however, the AJK government has kept silence in this regard. Sources added that Prime Minister Farooq Haider has also reservations over the name for the slot. The summery could not be transmitted to PM Nawaz Sharif so far in this regard. Sources further added that when tried to contact spokesperson of AJK’s government, he avoided to talk in this regard. It is vital to mention here that until new appointment is not made Azad Kashmir chief secretary will hold additional charge thereof.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/03/05/federal-ajk-govts-lock-horns-over-finance-secretarys-appointment/>

### **Syed Hameed Shaheen Alvi, “Attique optimistic about Kashmir solution”**

*Kashmir Watch, March 6, 2017*

Former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, also head of Muslim Conference, expressed his optimism about the

solution of Kashmir dispute, saying minds of Kashmiris are aligned the right path. In an exclusive talk, Sardar Attique Khan noted that during his forthcoming visit to Saudi Arabia he would find ample opportunities to highlight the legitimate rights of Kashmiris. He will attend Rabita Islami forum meeting in Jeddah around mid-March, 2017. Rabita is the first international forum that had passed a resolution moved by the late veteran Kashmiri leader Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan, then President of AJK, that Kashmiris from both sides of the ceasefire line be permitted mutual meetings. Heads of political parties of Kashmir should be allowed to meet one another, was the core demand of the resolution passed from Rabita platform in 1975. He also agreed to a suggestion from that a diplomatic liaison must be made with democratic countries regarding Kashmir solution.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/attique-optimistic-about-kashmir-solution/>

### **“All Resources Being Utilized To Overcome Energy Shortage: Akbar”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 6, 2017*

Senior Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Muhammad Akbar Taban stated that all available resources are being utilized to overcome energy shortage. In an interview on March 6, he noted that by the end of 2020 Gilgit-Baltistan Government will include ninety five MW more electricity in the system. He pointed out that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has approved ninety MW power projects which will be constructed under Public Sector Development program.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/06-Mar-2017/all-resources-being-utilized-to-overcome-energy-shortage-akbar>

### **“Kashmir dispute: AJK PM urges Arab states to back Pakistan”**

*The Express Tribune, March 6, 2017*

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider called upon Arab states to support the diplomatic efforts that Pakistan has been making to resolve the Kashmir dispute. “The issues of Kashmir

and Palestine remain on the UN agenda for a long time and both Kashmiris and Palestinians have been denied their right to self-determination,” the AJK PM noted in a statement issued on March 5. He stated Israel was the third biggest weapon supplier country to India. “This is time and opportunity for Arab countries to support Pakistan in its just stance on Kashmir and they should not welcome the Indian prime minister on their soil,” Haider noted.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1346884/kashmir-dispute-ajk-pm-urges-arab-states-back-pakistan/>

### **“CPEC exploits Kashmir, creates no job avenues, industry for locals, claim activists”**

*DNA, March 7, 2017*

A sharp criticism and opposition is rising among Kashmiris as Pakistan and China are constructing a multi-layered infrastructure project, which passes through Gilgit Baltistan in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a 51.5 billion dollar project that aims to connect Kashgar, in China’s western province of Xinjiang, with the port of Gwadar in the Pakistani province of Balochistan. The road and rail network under the project traverses through Gilgit Baltistan. While CPEC is being touted as a ‘game changer’ for Pakistan and China by the leaders, the people of PoK and Gilgit Baltistan claim the project is another attempt to make them slaves. The project brings no industry and fails to create jobs for the locals. Mohd. Ali Shafa, an academician and human rights activist in Gilgit noted, “Our educated youth is roaming without any jobs. The SHO, Chief Secretary, IGP, SSP or any other good government post, people from Punjab have been appointed at all these places.” “In the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), our people are not hired as they do not have any government backing. There is no one to raise our point at the assembly or in the senate. There are no jobs, no opportunities and no business, stated Shafa.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-cpec-exploits-kashmir-creates-no-job-avenues-industry-for-locals-claim-activists-2344796>

## **“Steps Being Taken For Empowerment of Women in AJK: Haider”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 8, 2017*

Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that steps are being taken for the empowerment of women in Azad Kashmir. Talking to various women delegations that called on him on the occasion of International Women Day in Muzaffarabad, he noted government will continue its efforts for improving the status of women. AJK Prime Minister stated that twenty five per cent quota is being allocated for women and youth in upcoming local bodies' election in the state. He paid rich tribute to the Kashmiri women who are laying unprecedented sacrifices for their right to self-determination.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/08-Mar-2017/steps-being-taken-for-empowerment-of-women-in-ajk-haider>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Families affected by KKH upgrade project demand compensation”**

*The Express Tribune, March 9, 2017*

The families affected by Karakoram Highway upgrade project in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have given a one-month ultimatum to the government for payment of outstanding dues. “We will block the traffic on the highway from April 10 onwards,” noted representatives of the affected families while addressing a press conference in Gilgit. The press conference was addressed by Jehangir Khan, Numberdar Shifa, Haji Ibrahim and Kasheer who are members of ‘KKH affectees committee’, a body formed to fight for the rights of displaced people. “It’s been seven years since we lost our lands but the government isn’t interested in paying us the compensation,” they claimed, amid threats to mobilise all the communities involved to ensure a successful strike. They also stated that they visited many government offices over the years but to no avail as the red tape was the best tool being used by the government to deny people their rights.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1350937/families-affected-kkh-upgrade-project-demand-compensation/>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Rampant corruption: G-B PPP leaders slam chief minister”**

*The Express Tribune, March 9, 2017*

The regional leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) accused Gilgit-Baltistan’s Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman of flouting merit while making appointments. The party further alleged that the chief secretary and inspector general of police were acting as the chief minister’s facilitators. “There is rampant corruption in every department and ironically the chief secretary and IGP are facilitating him instead of ensuring the rule of law,” stated PPP’s regional president Amjad Hussain while addressing a news conference at the Gilgit Press Club. Flanked by senior PPP politicians such as Jamil Ahmed, Sadia Danish, and Bashir Ahmed, Hussain claimed that at least 40 men had been appointed in the police recently whose names were not on the merit list. He further alleged that Rehman had been appointing his supporters while ignoring deserving candidates. “Likewise, contracts are being awarded to close relatives by passing laws,” stated Hussain, while claiming that they had proof of the corruption committed.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1350056/rampant-corruption-g-b-ppp-leaders-slam-chief-minister/>

## **“CPEC to Bring Progress, Prosperity in AJK: Masood”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 9, 2017*

President Azad Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan noted that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project would bring progress and prosperity to the state. Addressing a function in Muzaffarabad on March 9, he noted the government is utilizing all available natural resources to make the state self-reliance. He also stated that Kashmir liberation movement cannot be linked with terrorism as Kashmiris are struggling to achieve their internationally recognized right to self-determination.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/09-Mar-2017/cpec-to-bring-progress-prosperity-in-ajk-masood>

## **Maqbool Malik, “Rabbani warns against inclusion of AJK, GB in CCI”**

*The Nation, March 10, 2017*

Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani on March 9 warned that addition of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in the Council of Common Interest (CCI) could undermine Pakistan’s international position on Kashmir dispute. Rabbani made these observations in response to a request to the Senate and Chairman for guidance by Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Riaz Hussain Pirzada how to go about bringing AJK and GB into CCI’s fold. The Senate Chairman also observed and emphasised that the federal government ought to establish a separate Secretariat for the Council of Common Interest as per clause two of article 154 of the constitution and in accordance with the recommendations of the House Committee. The chair stated the CCI requires an independent secretariat to set out the agenda of CCI meetings as well as ensure implementation of its decisions. The issue figured high when the Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination noted that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif desires to bring the AJK and G-B into CCI’s fold. The minister made this statement while winding up discussion on the annual report of Council of Common Interest for the year 2015-2016 he laid in the Upper House.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/10-Mar-2017/rabbani-warns-against-inclusion-of-ajk-gb-in-cci>

## **“AJK to reserve a quarter of seats in local bodies for youth, women”**

*The Express Tribune, March 10, 2017*

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government reserved 25 per cent seats for youth and women in the forthcoming local bodies’ elections in the liberated state, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider noted in a statement to mark the International Women’s Day. In a country faced with challenges of extremism and terrorism, PM Haider pinned his hopes on women. Educated, talented and upright women help bring about social change leading to a better society, Haider

stated. “It is a fact that no society can achieve progress without granting due rights to women,” he noted according to the statement.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1351281/ajk-reserve-quarter-seats-local-bodies-youth-women/>

## **“Gilgit Baltistan is an integral part of J&K: Junaid Qureshi”**

*Times of India, March 10, 2017*

Junaid Qureshi, son of Kashmiri separatist leader Hashim Qureshi, on March 10 stated that Gilgit Baltistan is an integral part of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan has no right to divide the state. “Gilgit Baltistan (region) is an integral part of (India’s) Jammu and Kashmir state. Pakistan has no right to divide the state further and sell its resources under false rubric of infrastructure development,” Junaid Qureshi noted, adding that the “state is not for sale.” Qureshi who also heads European Foundation for South Asian Studies, was speaking at the United Nation’s Geneva Convention on March 10. He also rejected the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) along the line of control through Gilgit Baltistan region. “Construction of CPEC is illegal and a contravention of International law. It requires your (UN) urgent attention and intervention,” he stated

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/gilgit-baltistan-is-an-integral-part-of-jk-junaid-qureshi/articleshow/57579239.cms>

## **Shafqat Ali, “PPP to host national conference on Kashmir”**

*The Nation, March, 11, 2017*

Former president Asif Ali Zardari on March 10 stated that the resolution of the Kashmir issue was linked to regional peace and stability. Talking to a delegation of the Kashmiri leaders who called on him, Zardari declared that the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) would host a national conference of all political parties to reiterate the nation’s united stand on the Kashmir issue. “The present government is wavering and the political parties’ conference is intended to keep the

momentum and build sustained pressure so that the Kashmir cause was not compromised,” he noted. The Kashmiri leaders who called on him included Shah Ghulam Qadir, Rashid Turabi, Sardar Yaqoob Khan, Sardar Atiq, Ghulam M Safi and Tahir Mashood. Senators Farooq Naek, Sherry Rehman and Farhatullah Babar were also present in the meeting.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/11-Mar-2017/ppp-to-host-national-conference-on-kashmir>

### **“AJK constitutional reforms: Panel to finalise draft amendments”**

*The Express Tribune, March 11, 2017*

A high-level committee has been constituted to finalise the draft of constitutional reforms in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), official sources stated on March 10. Constituted under the instructions of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the body will be headed by Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and comprised Minister for Kashmir and G-B Affairs Barjis Tahir, Federal Law Minister Zahid Hamid, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider and AJK Law Minister Raja Nisar. The state government has also constituted a panel of additional chief secretary, secretary law and advocate general to prepare a draft of reforms in Interim Constitutional Act 1974 which would be presented to the committee constituted by PM Nawaz, the source added. The committee headed by Aziz will finalise the draft before sending it to PM Nawaz for approval after which a joint sitting of Kashmir Council and AJK legislative Assembly will approve those amendments.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1352280/ajk-constitutional-reforms-panel-finalise-draft-amendments/>

### **Shah Nawaz Mohal, “Reference filed against GB chief judge on misuse of authority”**

*Pakistan Today, March 14, 2017*

A complaint regarding alleged misconduct of Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court Chief Judge Sahib Khan has been filed to the Supreme Judicial Council, Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit-Baltistan. The application

cites the use of private residence as the camp office, construction of a new house with government funds, misuse of government cars by family members, making properties beyond financial resources, nepotism in appointments among others; and has requested for an inquiry look into the matter. The application was filed by Advocate Rehman Ali, who alleged that the chief judge has turned a private house owned by him in Sector I-10 Islamabad into the Chief Court Gilgit-Baltistan Camp Office and rented it out to the Chief Court, while his family lived in the house and enjoyed all the perks and privileges including official vehicles. The applicant also alleged that the judge had constructed a new house at village Gudai, district Astore on the pretext of entitlement of a judge for maintenance of a private house.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/03/14/reference-filed-against-gb-chief-judge-on-misuse-of-authority/>

### **Sajjad Hussain, “Pak may declare Gilgit-Baltistan as fifth province: Pirzada”**

*India Today, March 15, 2017*

Pakistan stated it is planning to declare the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region as the fifth province of the country, a move that may raise concerns in India. Pakistan’s minister for inter-provincial coordination Riaz Hussain Pirzada noted that the decision was on recommendation of a committee headed by Advisor of Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz. “The committee recommended that Gilgit-Baltistan should be made a province of Pakistan,” Pirzada noted. He also stated that a constitutional amendment would be made to change the status of the region, through which the USD 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes. Gilgit-Baltistan is treated as a separate geographical entity by Pakistan. It has a regional assembly and an elected Chief Minister. Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh are four provinces of Pakistan. It is believed that China’s concerns about the unsettled status of Gilgit-Baltistan prompted Pakistan to change its status

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/pak-may-declare-gilgit-baltistan-as-fifth-province-pirzada/1/904161.html>

## **“Pakistan declaring Gilgit-Baltistan as its 5th province is nothing but a sham: Shaukat Ali Kashmiri”**

*Bihar Prabha, March 15, 2017*

United Kashmir People Nation’s Party chairman Shaukat Ali Kashmiri on March 15 slammed Pakistan’s move of declaring strategic Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province and noted that it is nothing but a sham as the decision will not give its people their due rights. Shaukat also alleged that Pakistan has always tried to separate Gilgit-Baltistan from Jammu and Kashmir and their decision proves that they only want to get hold of the area at every cost.

<http://news.biharprabha.com/2017/03/pakistan-declaring-gilgit-baltistan-as-its-5th-province-is-nothing-but-a-sham-shaukat-ali-kashmiri/v>

## **“BJP leader Ram Madhav hits out at Pakistan, says Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan part of India”**

*Financial Express, March 16, 2017*

Hours after Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that entire part of Jammu and Kashmir is and will remain part of India, the BJP also slammed Pakistan, a day after reports of neighbouring country planning to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as separate province. “Since 1948 we are saying that Pakistan has divided POK into Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, it’s a part of India”, senior BJP leader Ram Madhav was quoted as saying. Earlier in the day, speaking to media persons, MEA spokesperson Gopal Baglay stated, “Can’t comment on news reports, but entire state of J&K is & will remain integral Indian part”. He also rejected remarks by Pakistan on Swami Aseemand, saying “Reject Pakistan’s efforts to meddle in Indian affairs. Our judiciary needs no self-serving sermons.”

<http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/bjp-leader-ram-madhav-hits-out-at-pakistan-says-azad-kashmir-and-gilgit-baltistan-part-of-india/590590/>

## **Muhammad Sadaqat / Shabbir Mir, “Census 2017: Headcount kicks off in Hazara, G-B, AJK without a hitch”**

*The Express Tribune, March 16, 2017*

Along with the rest of the country, the first phase of census kicked off in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the Hazara division on March 15. Over 2,000 census staff went across five districts of Hazara division for house counting under tight security. The first phase of the census in Hazara division includes Haripur, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Torghar and Battagram districts. Census in the two newly created districts within Kohistan were deferred till the second phase. Police mobiles and army troops kept patrolling different parts of their assigned areas in the five districts of Hazara division. Police and army were backed by FC troops as well. Officials at the office of Hazara Commissioner stated that the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics had deployed around 2,497 officials for the census exercise.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1356376/census-2017-headcount-kicks-off-hazara-g-b-ajk-without-hitch/>

## **M. Saleem Pandit, “Salahuddin asks Pakistan not to annex Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*Times of India, March 17, 2017*

Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir-based United Jihad Council chief Syed Salahuddin has asked Pakistan not to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as its “fifth province” following recent reports that Islamabad was considering such a step, saying that this would weaken the “disputed status” of Jammu & Kashmir at the United Nations. The UJC chief noted that in the event of any such move by Pakistan, the UN will give India a legal and moral pretext to claim the whole of Kashmir.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/salahuddin-asks-pakistan-not-to-annex-gilgit-baltistan/articleshow/57679472.cms>

## **“Owners from Gilgit-Baltistan reluctant to surrender land for CPEC”**

*Business Standard, March 17, 2017*

Some land owners have filed a complaint before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif against the forced acquisition of the land they inherited for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project by the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) administration. The land in question, which is surrounded by the Himalayas and the Karakoram and Hindu Kush ranges, has been selected for the Special Economic Zone of CPEC. The complaint filed by Shah Jehan Mushapa and other residents of the Maqpon Das Village in the Denyuore tehsil in Gilgit stated that the GB bureaucracy had in order to please their rival tribe forcibly acquired their land, which had been under their possession for generations. According to the complaint, the locals were given rights of the land in 1893. It says the GB administration had recently selected Maqpon Das for the CPEC and acquired the land free of cost. The complainants also noted they are not against the CPEC project but the way the GB administration has acquired their land is unlawful and unacceptable.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/owners-from-gilgit-baltistan-reluctant-to-surrender-land-for-cpec-117031700442\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/owners-from-gilgit-baltistan-reluctant-to-surrender-land-for-cpec-117031700442_1.html)

## **Ashiq Hussain, “Kashmir separatists warn Pakistan against ‘annexing’ Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*Hindustan Times, March 17, 2017*

Kashmir’s separatist leadership on March 17 flayed a reported proposal by Pakistan to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province, and asked it to desist from embarking on a needless “adventure of annexation”. Both moderate and hardline separatist leaders, including Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mohammad Yasin Malik, issued a joint statement terming any proposal to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth state of Pakistan “unacceptable”. “Kashmir, Ladakh, Jammu, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are a single entity,” they stated, adding that

the political destiny of Jammu and Kashmir was yet to be decided. The separatist leaders also asked Pakistan to not take steps that could hamper the political and geographical position of Jammu and Kashmir. “Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mohammad Yasin Malik expressed hope that Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will fulfil his commitment regarding the geographical entity of Jammu and Kashmir, and will desist from undertaking this adventure of annexing Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth state of Pakistan,” the statement noted. India also reacted strongly against Pakistan’s reported designs on the strategic Gilgit-Baltistan region, which borders the disputed PoK territory, stating that such a move would be “entirely unacceptable”.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/kashmir-separatists-warn-pakistan-against-annexing-gilgit-baltistan/story-gE8WRXTQWUCwAcLuW7CQLJ.html>

## **“India slams Pakistan action on Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*The Economic Times, March 17, 2017*

India on March 16 slammed Pakistan for its unilateral action to make Gilgit-Baltistan the fifth province and asserted that such actions have no legal validity. “The position of the government on Jammu & Kashmir is consistent and well known. The entire state of J&K was acceded to India in 1947. It has been, is and will always be, an integral part of India. A part of Jammu & Kashmir has been under illegal occupation of Pakistan. Any unilateral step by Pakistan to alter the status of that part will have no basis in law and will be completely unacceptable,” MEA spokesperson Gopal Baglay noted when asked to comment on Islamabad’s action at a media briefing. It will also be a violation of the agreement between the two countries to address all issues bilaterally through peaceful means, which was enshrined in the Shimla Agreement of 1972 and reiterated through the Lahore Declaration in 1999, Baglay stated.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pakistans-proposal-on-gilgit-baltistan-entirely-unacceptable-india/articleshow/57672717.cms>

## **“AJK vows to complete 2,800 projects this year”**

*The Nation, March 18, 2017*

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that 2,800 developmental projects would complete in the current fiscal year. Addressing a public gathering after inaugurating a newly constructed bridge in Kotli city of Mirpur division on March 16, the prime minister stated that under the Community Infrastructure Development Programme, projects in health, education and communications sectors had been started in AJK without any disparity, focusing on the needs of the people. He stated that all projects were designed keeping in view rapid grass root development in the state. He further stated that an effective online monitoring system has been evolved for assurance of transparency in developmental process. He also stated that the supremacy of law, merit, provision of justice and developmental process has been initiated in AJK. Promoting Kashmir Issue, ensuring good governance and sustainable development are the priorities of the PML-N government, he added. He also stated that the vision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for development has been enhanced in AJK. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is taking concrete steps for empowerment of AJK government and provide it financial resources, he noted.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/18-Mar-2017/ajk-vows-to-complete-2-800-projects-this-year>

## **“Contract of Diamer-Basha dam to be awarded by end of 2017”**

*The Nation, March 18, 2017*

The contract of the Diamer-Basha dam will be awarded by the end of 2017 while three hydropower projects with the capacity of 2,485MW will be added to the national grid by mid-2018. In pursuit of its commitment for optimal utilisation of water and hydropower resources, the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) will add 2,485MW hydel electricity to the national grid with completion

of its three under-construction hydropower projects from end 2017 to mid-2018, stated the Wapda spokesman. These projects include the 969MW-Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project, the 1,410MW-Tarbela 4th Extension Project and the 106MW-Golen Gol Hydropower Project. After completion, these projects will cumulatively contribute 9.432 billion units of low-cost and environment-friendly hydel electricity to the system every year and will help to eliminate load shedding from the country as per the government’s resolve. It is pertinent to mention that the Wapda projects were marred with delays due to certain reasons, and had missed timelines of their completion, however, after an effective monitoring mechanism in place, the Wapda projects are now back on track.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/18-Mar-2017/contract-of-diamer-basha-dam-to-be-awarded-by-end-of-2017>

## **MA Mir, “AJK Opposition leader’s position challenged”**

*The Express Tribune, March 18, 2017*

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court (AJKHC) on March 17 accepted a petition against the Leader of the Opposition of the AJK Legislative Assembly. The petition had been filed by Kotli Bar Association President Raja Akhtar who claimed that Opposition Leader Chaudhry Yasin did not enjoy the support of a majority of opposition members of the assembly. In the house of 49 members, the Pakistan Peoples Party has four seats, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) has three, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has two, while JKPP has one. The one remaining opposition member, Ali Shan Soni, had contested as an independent. In the petition, Akhtar stated that the PTI, AJKMC and JKPP together have six members in the house while incumbent opposition leader only enjoys support from five opposition members. Hence, it contended that Yasin cannot remain the opposition leader.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1358434/ajk-opposition-leaders-position-challenged/>

## “Sixth population census gets under way in AJK”

*The Express Tribune, March 19, 2017*

The sixth population census in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was launched on March 18 by registering data of the AJK President Sardar Masood Khan and his family. The registration was conducted under the supervision of Census Commissioner Raja Tariq Mehmood whose organisation will complete census for AJK in April 2017. According to a press release, President Masood while speaking to the media stated this is an important moment for AJK as the latest census will help collate data on population size, geographical distribution and demographic characteristics of the population in all ten districts. He also stated that such data is important to ascertain living standards for socio-economic development planning, to delimit constituencies and to determine share in federal taxes. The AJK president noted: “As Azad Kashmir embarks on ambitious plans for social and economic development, we need a data revolution. Collection and collation of population data, and disaggregated information about gender, literacy, income, employment and businesses will enable us to plan better and to ensure delivery on the key economic targets.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1359347/sixth-population-census-gets-way-ajk/>

## Manoj Joshi, “India should get a little more creative with its Gilgit-Baltistan policy”

*Scroll.In, March 20, 2017*

It would be difficult to fault the official stand taken by the Government of India on Pakistan’s decision to create a new province of Gilgit-Baltistan. A Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson stated last week that the move was “illegal” and “completely unacceptable”. The legal position is that India holds the sovereignty over the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, though according to the United Nations, it needs to be ratified by a plebiscite. For a variety of reasons, that plebiscite has not taken place for 70 years, and despite many twists and turns, the Jammu

and Kashmir issue has not been resolved. However, that does not negate the fact that as of this moment, sovereignty of all of the state rests with India. Actually it is more than likely that New Delhi’s main purpose is to use the sovereignty issue to oppose the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on the pretext that it passes through Gilgit-Baltistan. Essentially what India is saying to China is: Either accept India’s sovereignty on Jammu and Kashmir or abandon the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

<https://scroll.in/article/832256/india-should-get-a-little-more-creative-with-its-gilgit-baltistan-policy>

## “Gilgit-Baltistan & CPEC”

*Daily Times, March 20, 2017*

Good news is on the cards for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. They are all set to become fully paid up members of Pakistan’s fifth province. This comes some seven years after they went to the polls to vote on a government-led autonomy package that saw the election of their first assembly. Back then the federal government had stopped short of according GB provincial status, fearing that such a move would undermine its claim to the entire Kashmir region. So the natural question is what is behind this change of heart? Or, to be more precise, who? The Chinese Economic Corridor (CPEC) holds the key. Crucial parts of the \$46 million dollar investment project will pass through GB. Thus the price is now right for Pakistan to come on down and jump on the neo-colonial economic gravy train. On paper, this looks like a smart move. China is both a regional player and a strong supporter of Pakistan. But like any country, it acts in its national interests. And one of the most significant features of the Beijing Doctrine has been the delinking of human rights from its investment packages. This is in sharp contrast to US policy. Nations like Pakistan have been quick to embrace the Chinese dragon, given that they are cognisant of Washington’s penchant for playing the human rights card to secure unfair leverage.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/20-Mar-17/gilgit-baltistan-cpec>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Constitutional status: AJK has consented to granting G-B province status”**

*The Express Tribune, March 20, 2017*

In what appears to be a push to get over the final hurdle, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman claimed on March 19 that leadership of Azad Jammu and Kashmir had consented to the idea of granting constitutional status to G-B. Rehman’s comments came days after Indian media created hype quoting certain Kashmiri leaders who are opposed to changing G-B’s constitutional status.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1359955/constitutional-status-ajk-consented-granting-g-b-province-status/>

## **“Lawyers protest against Pakistan’s move to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as 5th province”**

*Bihar Prabha, March 21, 2017*

The Lawyers in Pakistan -occupied Kashmir (POK) and Gilgit held massive protests on March 18 against Pakistan’s move to illegally make Gilgit Baltistan as its 5th Province. The lawyers, who were on strike, also demanded amendments to the PoK interim Constitution Act 1974. The lawyers stated that it is a dark move by the Pakistan Government to carve out Gilgit from J&K and make its land available to the Chinese Government for the Economic Corridor. The protestors raised slogans like “Bacha-bacha katt marega, par ye suba nahi banega”, to voice their outrage.

<http://news.biharprabha.com/2017/03/watch-lawyers-protest-against-pakistans-move-to-declare-gilgit-baltistan-as-5th-province/>

## **“Pakistan has to vacate PoK, Gilgit-Baltistan: India”**

*Times of India, March 23, 2017*

The only issue of dispute between India and Pakistan as far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned is the illegal occupation of PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan by

Pakistan, the government noted. Union minister Jitendra Singh reiterated India’s demand that Pakistan should vacate illegal occupation of these areas. Singh’s sharp remarks came in response to Pakistan High Commissioner Abdul Basit favouring resolution of Kashmir dispute as per the “aspirations of Kashmiris”. Basit was speaking at an event at the High Commission to mark Pakistan’s national day. Talking to reporters outside Parliament, Singh noted “Today if there is any issue between India and Pakistan on J&K, it is only the illegal occupation by Pakistan, whether it is Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) or Gilgit-Baltistan”.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/pakistan-has-to-vacate-pok-gilgit-baltistan-india/articleshow/57794098.cms>

## **“Kashmir cause deeply injected into PPP ideology: Bilawal”**

*Daily Times, March 24, 2017*

Chairman Pakistan People’s Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari stated that the Kashmir cause is deeply engraved into PPP ideology and the Party would never budge an inch from its firm stand for the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir. The PPP Chairman was presiding over a meeting of the Party’s Coordination Committee for Azad Jammu & Kashmir at Bilawal House. Former AJK President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Ch Mohammad Yasin, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and others were present at the meeting. Committee members briefed the Chairman about the unprecedented development carried out by the previous PPP government in AJK.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/24-Mar-17/kashmir-cause-deeply-injected-into-ppp-ideology-bilawal>

## **A. H. Rao, “PPP AJK gets new ‘managers’”**

*The Nation, March 25, 2017*

(AJK)-PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari nominated Ch Latif Akbar, a senior leader of the party to head the party’s Azad Jammu & Kashmir chapter, a step being described as fresh impetus to strengthen

the party in the state. According to the party sources, Bilawal on March 24 formally approved the induction of new office-bearers of the Pakistan People's Party, Azad Jammu & Kashmir chapter, with immediate effect, the sources noted before the media. President Ch Lateef Akbar (President), Ch Pervez Ashraf (Senior Vice President), Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore (General Secretary), Javed Ayub (Information Secretary), Ms Shaheen Kausar Dar, Deputy Information Secretary and Zia Qamar (Youth President). A notification to this effect has been formally issued by his Political Secretary Jameel Soomro from the PPP Chairman's Central Secretariat, the sources added. It is to be noted that the new PPP-AJK head Ch Latif Akber has a distinguished career in the party following his life-long affiliation with party since ZAB's era. He has replaced Ch Abdul Majeed, former AJK prime minister in the outgoing PPP-led coalition government in the State. Ch Majeed was removed from the office of the PPP AJK President by the party's top leadership after the convincing defeat of the party in June 21, 2016, general elections in AJK.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/25-Mar-2017/ppp-ajk-gets-new-managers>

### **Wasim Khalid, "Pak-based pro-freedom representatives support Gilgit Baltistan merger"**

*Kashmir Reader, March 26, 2017*

Pakistan-based representatives of nearly all pro-freedom groups have supported the idea of making Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) the fifth province of Pakistan, sources stated. Their stance is in contrast to the resistance of leadership in Kashmir, which has opposed the move to merge GB with Pakistan, as they believe it will "weaken the position of the resistance". According to sources in the pro-freedom groups, prime minister of Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PaK) Raja Farooq Haider held a closed-door meeting with the representatives of all pro-freedom groups at Kashmir House in Pakistani capital Islamabad to discuss whether GB should be merged with Pakistan or not. "About 30 representatives from both Hurriyats and other pro-freedom groups participated in the meeting convened by Farooq Haider at around

7:30pm on Friday (March 24)," sources noted. "During the meeting, almost all representatives, surprisingly, were in favour of the merger. Many representatives stated that Gilgit Baltistan should have their administrative rights. They stated that it was the right of the people of these regions to govern themselves," sources further stated.

<http://kashmirreader.com/2017/03/26/pak-based-pro-freedom-representatives-support-gilgit-baltistan-merger/>

### **Syed Hameed Shaheen Alvi, "8-member OIC HR panel visits Pakistan, AJK today"**

*Pakistan Observer, March 27, 2017*

A 3-day comprehensive tour of Pakistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir is being undertaken by a panel of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) from March 27-29, 2017. The visit is considered by the Kashmir dispute affectees as a timely one. Hundreds have been killed majority among them Kashmiri youth; thousands have been put into jails and self-declared jails. They are all protesters who were agitating against the Indian parliamentary election being held in the region of Jammu and Kashmir, a move that quite violates the UN Security Council Resolution of 1954. The resolution says that no local election can replace the legal necessity of holding UN-approved international plebiscite in the contested State of J&K, latest reports elaborate. The eight-member delegation belonging to eight OIC countries, reports stated, will be led by Med S Kaggwa, chairperson of the IPHRC. The delegation will visit AJK to gain first-hand understanding of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and will also visit refugee camps. Kashmir Peace Institute Secretary-General Syed Hameed Shaheen Alvi and APHC have welcomed the visit of the OIC panel to Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and assured all cooperation. The delegation will also call on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Adviser to PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Kashmir Affairs Gilgit Baltistan Minister Barjees Tahir. The delegation will also meet AJK president and PM.

<http://pakobserver.net/8-member-oic-hr-panel-visits-pakistan-ajk-today/>

## **“GB not to be made province at any cost, says Sardar Attique”**

*The Nation, March 28, 2017*

Former AJK Prime Minister and President Muslim Conference Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan stated that Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) will not be allowed to be made province at any cost. While addressing a reception hosted by Central leader of Muslim Conference Syed Zahoor Hamdani, Sardar noted “We will not allow GB to be made a province at any cost. PM Nawaz Sharif should not take such steps which hurts the feelings of Kashmiris. GB is part of Jammu and Kashmir. Powers be delegated to it rather than making it a province”. He went on to say Kashmir cause will be affected badly if GB becomes a separate province. Government of Azad Kashmir should adopt a solid approach and then we will support it, he declared. Non resolution of Kashmir issue has put at stake the peace of the entire world particularly south Asia, he remarked. The international community should play its vigorous role to address Kashmir dispute, he urged. PML-N has completely failed in Azad Kashmir as PML-N workers despite having their own government are considering them worse than opposition, he added.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/28-Mar-2017/gb-not-to-be-made-province-at-any-cost-says-sardar-attique>

## **“GBLA passes 5 resolutions”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 29, 2017*

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) in its 2nd day proceeding of 15th session unanimously passed five resolutions. The resolutions include extension of Rout-e-Hilal Committee to Gilgit-Baltistan. The house demanded ban on allotment of Government land and extension of cybercrime Act to Gilgit-Baltistan. The house in another resolution demanded the Government for hundred percent increase in the development budget allocations for members of Legislative Assembly. The assembly paid tributes to Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif,

Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and high official of Statistic Division for conducting population census in the Country and Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/29-Mar-2017/gbla-passes-5-resolutions>

## **“Development Budget being increased in next fiscal year: Haider”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 30, 2017*

The Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that the suggestions have been presented to federal government regarding the amendment in the Interim Constitution Act, 1974. Talking to newsmen in Muzaffarabad on March 30, he noted all political parties would be taken into confidence before finalizing the constitutional amendments. AJK Prime Minister stated that the process has been completed to establish Food Authority in the state. Replying to a question, he stated development budget is also being increased in the next fiscal year.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/30-Mar-2017/development-budget-being-increased-in-next-fiscal-year-haider>

## **“AJK govt has to be a quotable model: JKCHR”**

*The News, March 27, 2017*

Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) stated that people of Jammu and Kashmir on either side of the cease fire line and the Kashmiri Diaspora have been largely performing their duties as voter citizens and have failed to perform their most important follow up as a vigilant citizens, noted a press release. Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani, President JKCHR currently visiting Pakistan and Azad Kashmir stated that it is because of this non vigilance that Kashmir Government in Kashmir waived the entry permit required by an Indian until March 1959 and allowed him a free entry and repeated the error of non-vigilance by allowing BJP a passage into the State governance in 2015. These two errors have not been addressed properly so far. He also stated that on home front we have not addressed the issue of duties at home and duties abroad. The political, moral and diplomatic support provided by the Government of Pakistan to the just cause of the people of Jammu and Kashmir has failed to make an impact, for want of a better government and administration in Azad Kashmir. Its failure to address itself to the duties shared with the Government of Pakistan under UNCIP resolutions needs urgent attention.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/194745-AJK-govt-has-to-be-a-quotable-model-JKCHR>

## **Adrija Roychowdhury, “Gilgit-Baltistan: A bumpy history”**

*The Indian Express, March 27, 2017*

The British parliament on March 23 passed a motion condemning Pakistan’s announcement declaring Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth frontier. The motion headed by British Conservative leader Bob Blackman stated that Gilgit-Baltistan, being part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, has been illegally occupied by Pakistan, denying the people of the region basic fundamental rights. Situated on the north-western corner of Jammu and Kashmir, the region was erstwhile a part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Since 1947, however, the region, along with

its neighbour referred to as ‘Azad Kashmir’ is considered part of Pakistan’s administration. However, a brief examination of Pakistan’s control in the area shows that the country’s authority in the region is fairly ambiguous. Incidentally, Gilgit Baltistan is not even constitutionally a part of Pakistan. At the same time Pakistan has ensured that the region is not given a status of autonomy. For the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, on the other hand, feelings towards Pakistan are quite divided. In June 2015, Nirupama Subramanian wrote that there are three broad political sentiments prevalent in Gilgit-Baltistan. “the most vociferous is for merger with Pakistan, and the next loudest demand is for merger with “Azad” Kashmir. In recent years, a demand for independence from Pakistan has grown as well.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/research/pakistan-jammu-and-kashmir-british-parliament-gilgit-baltistan-the-bumpy-history-of-pakistans-northern-areas-4588020/>

## **Sardar Sikander, “PML-N, PPP at loggerheads”**

*The Express Tribune, March 27, 2017*

With the existing tensions between the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party, a recent move of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir might just add fuel to the fire to further flare up the situation. Lately, the AJK government has sped up its anti-corruption drive which focuses primarily on the corruption in government funds in the past few years. This mainly implicates the top leadership of PPP-AJK chapter that has been long accused of rampant corruption when the political party was in power (July 2011- July 2016). Political sources in the know of things believe the accountability initiative has not gone down well with PPP’s central leadership which is facing pressure from its AJK leadership to act against their ‘political victimisation’. On January 25, in what rang alarm bells for the PPP leadership, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider issued an official statement that contained a clear warning shot for Zardari’s party.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1366241/pml-n-ppp-loggerheads/>

# Economic Developments

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## **Parvez Jabri, “GB’s dry apricot export to Russia may be enhanced through CPEC”**

*Business Recorder, March 2, 2017*

The share of Gilgit-Baltistan in apricot production is 114,286 tons per annum and its export to Russia, the world’s largest importer of dry apricot, could be increased through CPEC connectivity, Director Agriculture Department GB, Fazlur Rehman stated on March 2. One of the most precious gifts, the apricot in the Northern Areas, which was the major fruit among the variety of fruits in Gilgit Baltistan making it the largest apricot producing land in Pakistan. He stated it was estimated that there were a total of 2,971,935 apricot trees in GB, the most common fruit grown with an average 15 trees per household. He also noted that apricot had a long and interesting history and it was generally believed that the origin of apricot was China and Central Asia, where the fruit had been cultivated for food as well as for its therapeutic properties for more than 4,000 years.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/03/02/338179/>

## **“PASDEC signs MoU with AKMIDC for development of marble, granite sectors in AJK”**

*Business Recorder, March 13, 2017*

Pakistan Stone Development Company (PASDEC) will develop Marble and Granite sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir through implementation of modern quarrying methods, establishment of Marble & Granite Industrial Estates (Marble Cities), Machinery Pools, warehouses and other projects. In this regard, an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) was signed by Pakistan Stone Development Company (PASDEC) and Azad Kashmir Mineral & Industrial Development Corporation (AKMIDC) for the development of

marble and granite sector of AJK. According to a press release issued on March 13, CEO PASDEC, Zahid Maqsood Sheikh and Secretary of Industries, Labour and Mineral Resources of AJK signed the document on behalf of their respective organizations. Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Farooq Haider and Chairman BoD PASDEC, Agha Shahid N. Khan were also present on the occasion.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/03/13/339042/pasdec-signs-mou-with-akmidc-for-development-of-marble-granite-sectors-in-ajk/>

## **“GB can earn billions through almond exports”**

*Business Recorder, March 14, 2017*

The main strength of the economy of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) depends largely on dry fruits and agriculture and is famous for its almond, apricot, cherry and other dry fruits production in the world, but, the most popular fruit of Gilgit Baltistan is almond; a huge variety of almond is found in all districts of GB. Each type has its own specific characteristics. Gilgit Baltistan produces about 120650 tons of almonds per year. Farmers of GB could earn billions of rupees through almonds export. The fresh and dried almond in Gilgit Baltistan is famous for its rich taste and organic nature. The pollution free environment and abundant water resources make it ideally suitable for natural growth of fruits and vegetables. The people in the region have highest life expectancy in Pakistan due to the healthy eating of organic and fresh fruits like almond, and having ideal natural environment. During the months of March, April and May the valley is full of flowers and panoramic view. The view of Gilgit from Jutial in spring is incredible, though it remains spectacular at any time of the year Almonds get ready in the month of August and then dried in sun before they are sent to the markets across the country. Tons of almonds transported between Gilgit and other parts of the country by road, take several

hours to reach the destination. Due to the long and difficult road journey fruits worth billions of rupees are destroyed and cannot be dispatched to various markets of the country.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/03/14/339121/gb-can-earn-billions-through-almond-exports/>

### **“AJK Govt To Provide Interest Free Loans For Setting Up Small Industries, Trade Units”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 16, 2017*

AJK government decided to provide interest free loans for setting up small industries and trade units. Secretary industries and trade and small industries

Amjad Pervez noted that these loans would be provided to those skilled man power, who have completed at least six months course in any technical institution. These loans would be provided to them through Bank of Azad Kashmir. The Bank of Azad Kashmir and Small Industries Corporation have already finalized modalities for issuing the loans.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/16-Mar-2017/ajk-govt-to-provide-interest-free-loans-for-setting-up-small-industries-trade-units>

# International Developments

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## **“NGOs raise concern at UNHRC over human rights violation in PoK, Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*DNA, March 15, 2017*

Raising their concerns over gross human rights violation in Pakistan administered Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, several NGOs at the 34th United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have brought to light the utter violence and brutality taking place in the region with an appeal to redress the same. Jamil Maqsood of NGO AIPD stated that the people in the mentioned regions still live in a pathetic condition, adding they do not have any freedom to exercise their fundamental rights. Exploitation of natural resources in Gilgit-Baltistan and the so-called Azad Kashmir has deprived the natives of the region from their own natural wealth. Pakistan is plundering natural resources of both regions without the consultation of local population, stated Maqsood while speaking at the session. Dusan Vejinovic, a senior research analyst at the European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) based in Amsterdam, on his part stated that extensive operations targeting the press and pro-independence groups are carried out by the ISI, Pakistan’s infamous spy-agency in the region.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-ngos-raise-concern-at-unhrc-over-human-rights-violation-in-pok-gilgit-baltistan-2353565>

## **“China mum over Pakistan’s plan on Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*The Economic Times, March 17, 2017*

China today skirted a direct response to Pakistan’s plan to declare the Gilgit-Baltistan region as its fifth province and stated the Kashmir issue should be resolved between India and Pakistan through dialogue. When asked about Pakistan’s plan, Chinese

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying reiterated China’s position on the Kashmir issue. “The essence of your question is about the issue of Kashmir. China’s position on the issue is consistent and clear,” she told reporters. “We believe that it is an issue left over from the history between India and Pakistan and it should be resolved between the two sides through dialogue and consultation through proper manner,” she noted. About the \$46 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which goes through Gilgit-Baltistan region over which India has protested to Beijing, Hua further noted, “the CPEC will not affect China’s position on the relevant (Kashmir) issue”.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/china-mum-over-pakistans-plan-on-gilgit-baltistan/articleshow/57688162.cms>

## **“UK Parliament condemns Pakistan for declaring Gilgit-Baltistan as fifth frontier”**

*The New Indian Express, March 25, 2017*

A motion was passed in the British Parliament condemning Islamabad’s announcement declaring Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth frontier, saying the region is a legal and constitutional part of Jammu and Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan since 1947. The motion which was tabled on March 23 and sponsored by Conservative Party leader Bob Blackman, noted that Pakistan, by making such an announcement, is implying its attempt to annex the already disputed area. “Gilgit-Baltistan is a legal and constitutional part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India, which is illegally occupied by Pakistan since 1947, and where people are denied their fundamental rights including the right of freedom of expression,” the motion read. It was further noted that the attempts to change the demography of the region was in violation of State Subject Ordinance and the ‘forced

and illegal construction' of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) further aggravated and interfered with the disputed territory.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2017/mar/25/uk-parliament-condemns-pakistan-for-declaring-gilgit-baltistan-as-fifth-frontier-1585757.html>

# Other Developments

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## **“Peace prevailed in GB by joint efforts of LEAs, People: Zafar”**

*Radio Pakistan, March 15, 2017*

Inspector General of Police Zafar Iqbal Awan noted that peace is prevailed in Gilgit-Baltistan by the joint efforts of law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and people. This, he noted, while addressing the certificates distributing ceremony of Niat volunteer Force in Chilas. He stated about one million tourists visited in Gilgit Baltistan last year and seventy percent of them reached Gilgit Baltistan via Babusar route. Praising the role of Chilas Volunteer Force, he noted due to their peace efforts and good coordination with law enforcement agencies, no any single untoward incident was reported from Babusar area since long.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/15-Mar-2017/peace-prevailed-in-gb-by-joint-efforts-of-leas-people-zafar>

## **Raddul Fasaad, “20 held, vehicles seized”**

*The Nation, March 19, 2017*

As part of the operation Raddul Fasaad, at least 20 suspects were rounded up while dozens of vehicles of various kinds were impounded during checking at various localities of Mirpur City on March 17. It

was jointly conducted by the police and the army, policemen noted. The army men were seen for the first time on March 17, assisting the local civil administration including police during the search and checking of the vehicles moving in the streets. The law enforcement agencies with the coordination of Pakistan army conducted checking of the vehicles at sector F/1, main Allama Iqbal Road and other localities of the city and apprehended at least 20 suspects besides impounding their vehicles carrying blind windscreens of the vehicles. The nabbed suspects as well as the vehicles have been shifted to the police stations concerned in the city, Additional SP Mirpur Mirza Zahid informed media. The black sheets were removed from the screens of the vehicles. The operation has also been reportedly launched in various other parts of AJK to net illegal immigrants mostly the unlawful Afghan settlers.

<http://nation.com.pk/multan/19-Mar-2017/raddul-fasaad-20-held-vehicles-seized>

# Extracts From The Urdu Media

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## **“On National Resources Gilgit-Baltistan has a Right”**

*Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 4, 2017*

The Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif stated that Gilgit-Baltistan like other provinces has an equal right on the national resources. It is a fact that Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of Pakistan and is controlled by it. People of Gilgit-Baltistan fought against the Dogra ruler and joined Pakistan. Since then, we are sacrificing for Pakistan. From the last six decades, people of the region are asking for rights on national resources and constitutional identity. Much time has gone, but there is no positive response from Pakistan. This attitude of Pakistan has only created hopelessness amongst the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Prime Minister of Pakistan realises that people of Gilgit-Baltistan are dissatisfied. We were told during elections that the crisis of constitutional identity would be addressed by a committee formed by the centre. Since then, no one knows what happened to that Committee and its report. Gilgit-Baltistan will play an important role in the development and progress of Pakistan. People of Gilgit-Baltistan want to get rid of this constitutional uncertainty. For this, the government has to play a positive role. Gilgit-Baltistan also contributes towards the national resources of the country. Pakistani rulers should take our aspirations into consideration, address the constitutional problem and give us equal rights on the national resources.

[http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r\\_date=03-04-2017&img=03-04-2017page-4-4](http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=03-04-2017&img=03-04-2017page-4-4)

## **“For CPEC, Freedom Movement of Kashmir being Sacrificed”**

*Daily Mahasib, March 8, 2017*

President of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Party Sardar Khalid Ibrahim Khan was unhappy with the

government in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad. He campaigned with the PML-N during the elections in “AJK”. However, differences surfaced between Sardar Khan and PML-N after the elections. It started at the time of electing the president. Since then, Sardar Khan has become critical of the federal and AJK government and joined the opposition camp. He issued a statement that they cannot forget the freedom movement of Kashmir for sake of CPEC. He further stated that CPEC is important but not more than the Kashmir issue. He also stated that he opposes the idea of merging GB with Pakistan. According to Ibrahim, Pakistan’s policies are harming the freedom movement in Kashmir. By giving Gilgit- Baltistan a provincial status, we are merely responding to the Indian objection that this project is being carried out in a disputed area. Government must adopt a policy where the opinion of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan is taken into account. It should not weaken Pakistan’s stand on the freedom movement in Kashmir. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have been offering sacrifices. They have been expressing their emotions by hoisting the Pakistani flags. Their sacrifices must be taken into consideration in every decision. This is only a clever ploy by the leadership to take the crisis to a level where a critical choice will have to be made between CPEC and the freedom movement in Kashmir. While CPEC is an international economic project, the freedom movement in Kashmir is a movement against human rights violations. Both these issues are totally different from each other. It would be better if both were not mixed up.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzaffarabad&dt=08-03-2017>

## **“Local Body Elections: Amendment in the Government Act”**

*Daily Mahasib, March 9, 2017*

A meeting was held under the chairmanship of AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider regarding the

local body's elections. In this meeting, it was decided to bring an amendment in the Local Government Act. During the occasion, Faoq Haider stated that past governments did not show any interest in the local bodies and elections were never held. That attitude weakened the local bodies as institutions. He also stated that as promised local body elections would be held at any cost.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=09-03-2017>

### **“Provisional Constitution would be granted to Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 10, 2017*

The Committee headed by Sartaj Aziz in its report has emphasised on giving Gilgit-Baltistan a provisional constitutional identity. It is believed that Gilgit-Baltistan would be given representation in the Senate and National Assembly. Many stakeholders in the Committee agreed to bring Gilgit-Baltistan into mainstream. For representation in the National Assembly and Senate, Article 1 of the Pakistan constitution needs to be amended. The chief minister Hafeezur Rehman stated that he has forcefully pressed his recommendations and suggestions to the committee. The committee recommended 11 seats in the National Assembly and 11 in Senate for the region.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?dt=MDMtMTAtMjAxNw%3D%3D>

### **“Government is using Schedule Four for the Political Vengeance: Amjid Advocate”**

*Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 8, 2017*

Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party's GB chapter Amjid Advocate stated that the PML-N government in GB will not complete its five year term if it does not change its behaviour. He further stated that the government is using Schedule fourth of Anti-Terrorism Act to take political vengeance against opposition political leaders. Amjid Advocate in his address to media in Gilgit Press Club also noted that Hafeezur Rehman prefers his own people over merit.

He made allegations against the chief minister for not advertising tenders for the various projects.

[http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r\\_date=03-08-2017&img=03-08-2017page-1-1](http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=03-08-2017&img=03-08-2017page-1-1)

### **“Opposing Gilgit-Baltistan's constitutional status a Malicious Intentions”**

*Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 20, 2017*

Gilgit-Baltistan's Legislative Assembly speaker Haji Fida Nashd stated that the constitutional crisis of Gilgit-Baltistan would be soon resolved. According to Nashd, Kashmiri leaders who are creating hurdles in GB's constitutional identity are doing so due to their malicious intentions and ignorance. He further stated that Prime Minister of Pakistan is not bound to accept suggestions from the Kashmiri leadership.

[http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r\\_date=03-20-2017&img=03-20-2017page-1-1](http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=03-20-2017&img=03-20-2017page-1-1)

### **“Attempt to Suppress Newspapers OF Gilgit-Baltistan by Government unabated”**

*Daily K2, March 24, 2017*

Not releasing the pending dues and addressing the grievances of journalists of Gilgit-Baltistan, provincial government wants to suppress the media and freedom of expression. Journalists are on strike for last three days. Newspapers have stopped publications. Journalist union of Gilgit-Baltistan and Advertisement Forum also led anti-government rally from Press Club to the Legislative Assembly of the Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1490832000>

# Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

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## 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.*

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