

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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• Political Developments

- FIA, NAB Offices Proposed in Gilgit-Baltistan
- AJK on Its Way to Expel 11,000 Illegal Afghan Refugees
- PTI Demands Army Supervise Elections in Gilgit-Baltistan
- PTI Asks Election Commission to Stop Pre-Poll Rigging in G-B
- Misappropriation: G-B Govt to Probe Alleged Corruption
- PML-N Supporters Join PTI in AJK
- Case Closed: G-B Chief Court Acquits Baba Jan, 11 Other Protesters
- PM Puts GB on Fast Track to Development

• Economic Developments

- Rs 780 Mln Gilgit-Baltistan Council Budget Approved
- Advance Tariff for AJK Power Project Approved

• International Developments

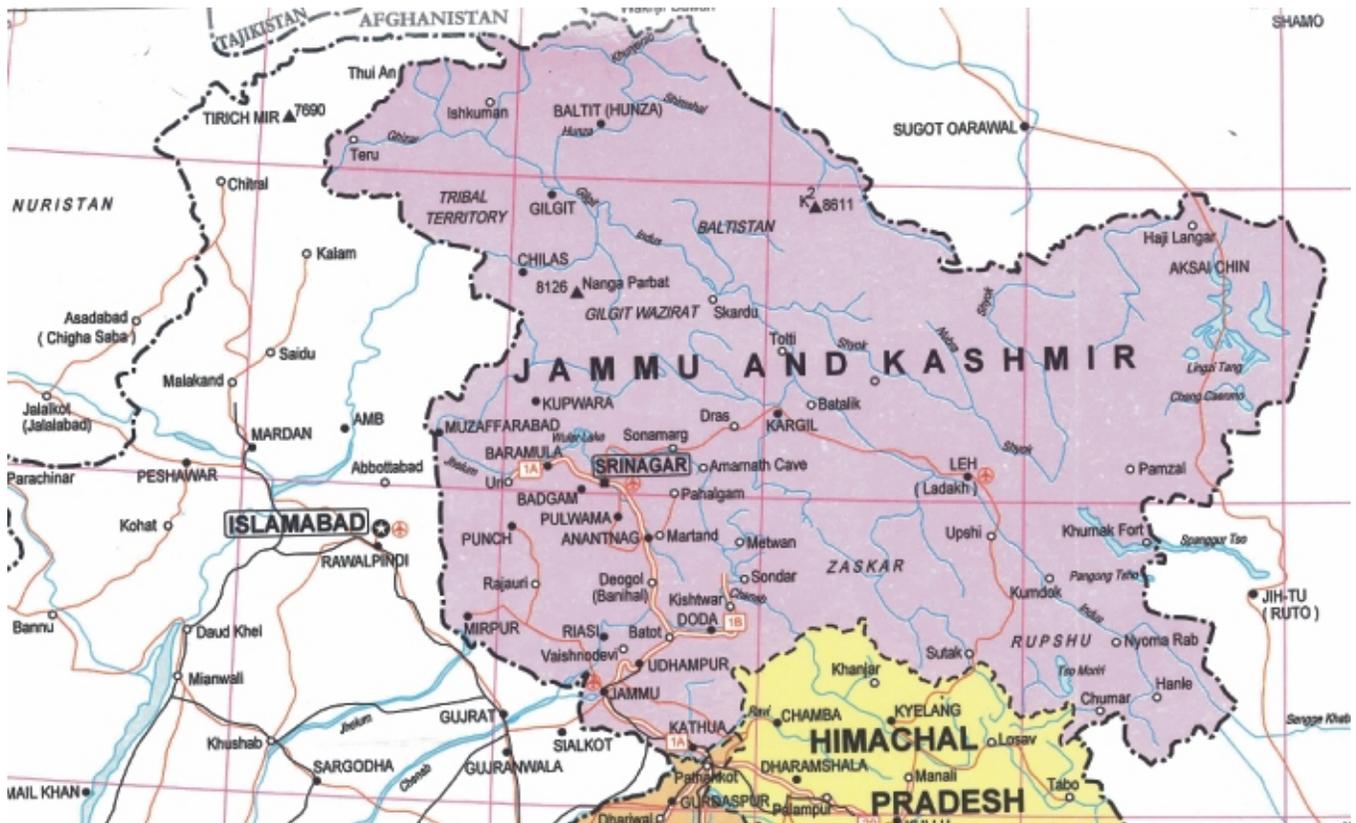
- Chinese Minister Asks India Not To Be 'Over Concerned' About Pak Corridor
- UKPNP Leader Calls on UN to Protect Rights of People of Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan

• Other Developments

- Inconvenient Security': Transporters Strike Against Convoy System on KKH
- Nature's Wrath: Several People Left Homeless as Landslide Hits Skardu
- Existence of 5,000 Decades-old Trees Under Threat in Gilgit



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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

In the wake of the Peshawar school massacre of December 2014, which shook the entire world, the National Action Plan was introduced to curb the militant threat in Pakistan. As part of this plan, some 11,000 Afghans who had been living in the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir were expelled by the authorities. According to available figures, some 3 million Afghans had been living in Pakistan. Most of these afghan nationals have been displaced from Afghanistan due to the perpetuating war situation in the last few decades.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) led by Imran Khan is actively pursuing its electoral campaign in Gilgit Baltistan as is evident from several reports included in the current issue. The party has been raising concerns regarding the possibility of rigging in the forthcoming elections which are due to be held in June 2015. The PTI demanded that the polls be held strictly under the supervision of the Pakistan army. The PTI had earlier opposed the care taker set up which was installed in Gilgit Baltistan by making amendments in the Empowerment and self-rule package 2009. The term of the previous PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party) led government ended on December 10, 2014 but fresh polls could not be held on time. Therefore, a care taker government was set up and the Federal Minister of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Muhammad Barjees Tahir, was appointed as the Governor of the region. Such developments has raised a great deal of apprehension whether it was part of a deliberate strategy by the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) to ensure a win the Gilgit Baltistan elections.

The PML-N which is hoping to get a majority in the upcoming polls is proactively showcasing its commitment towards the region. As part of this effort, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, paid a visit to the region during April 2015. During the visit, Sharif reiterated that his party was committed to bring all round development and prosperity in the long neglected Gilgit Baltistan region.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Peer Muhammad, “FIA, NAB offices proposed in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, April 1, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Officials at a key ministry have proposed setting up special departments of the premier law enforcement and anti-corruption agencies in Gilgit-Baltistan to probe graft cases in development projects and other financial and administrative matters. A senior officer in the ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (KAGB) noted on the condition of anonymity that the ministry has sent a special recommendation to the Prime Minister Secretariat for formal approval of establishing these two institutions in G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/862164/fia-nab-offices-proposed-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Peace Walk: Marchers to embark for Islamabad today”

The Express Tribune, March 31, 2015

GILGIT: Participants of a 'Peace Walk', that started two weeks ago from the Baltistan region, will embark for Islamabad from Chilas town on March 31. The 12-member delegation of climbers and porters started its journey from Khaplu town on March 19 and reached Gilgit after covering about 300 kilometres on foot on March 26. There they met the Gilgit police chief and Gilgit-Baltistan Minister for Information Inayatullah Shumali, briefing them about their initiative. “The purpose of this march is to advocate a peace-loving and harmonious public space,” noted Hussain, the team leader.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/861396/peace-walk-marchers-to-embark-for-islamabad-today/>

Zahid Gishkori, “Economic corridor: 12,000-strong force to guard Chinese workers”

The Express Tribune, March 30, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan plans to establish a

'special security division' for Chinese workers attached to the multi-billion Pakistan-China Economic Corridor projects in the country. The military will train over 12,000 personnel who will be inducted into the special division, officials familiar with the latest development stated.

“A formal announcement is to be made as the Chinese President Xi Jinping arrives in Islamabad,” a senior security official noted. Beijing and Islamabad are working on a \$45 billion economic corridor, which will run through 3,000 kilometres from Gwadar to the Chinese city of Kashgar.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/861078/economic-corridor-12000-strong-force-to-guard-chinese-workers/>

Faseeh Mangi & Kamran Haider, “Pakistan Wants to Become China's Newest Superhighway to Europe”

Bloomberg News, April 1, 2015

Over some of the world's tallest peaks, across disputed terrain and through an insurgency that has killed more than 50,000 people lies what Pakistan hopes will be China's newest route to Europe and beyond. Pakistan and China will announce more than two dozen deals when President Xi Jinping visits this year, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal stated.

The 3,000-kilometer economic corridor will start in China's western region of Xinjiang and run to Gwadar, a Chinese-funded port on the Arabian Sea. “For the first time China is going to become a strategic economic partner of Pakistan,” Iqbal, who traveled to China last month, stated on March 30 at his office in Islamabad. “Gwadar is the shortest link to Europe, Africa and Middle East,” he added, calling it “a very attractive proposition for China and for its competitiveness.”

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-04-01/pakistan-s-sharif-seeks-energy-deals-during-china-visit>

“AJK on its way to expel 11,000 illegal Afghan refugees”

The Nation, April 2, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir is set to expel some 11,000 illegal Afghan refugees under a national anti-terror plan announced in the wake of the country's worst ever militant attack, police noted. There are an estimated three million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, either officially or unofficially, most of whom left their country to escape conflict in the 1980s and 1990s. But they are viewed with deep suspicion inside Pakistan and routinely accused by authorities of harboring militants. “Under the National Action Plan against terrorism, some 11,000 Afghans would be expelled from Azad Kashmir,” senior police official Faheem Abbasi told a press conference in Muzaffarabad. The plan, which involved the outlawing of militant groups, registration of seminaries and crackdown on hate speech, was announced in the wake of a Taliban massacre that killed 154 people, mostly school children, in December 2014.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Apr-2015/ajk-on-its-way-to-expel-11-000-illegal-afghan-refugees>

“Peace walk participants get warm welcome in Mansehra”

The News, April 3, 2015

MANSEHRA: Participants of a peace walk, comprising 12 mountaineers, reached the district on April 2 after covering a distance of 850 kilometer on foot. The participants of Skardu-Islamabad walk were extended a warm welcome on arrival at the King Abdullah Teaching Hospital. Doctors and students of Frontier Medical College led by Medical Superintendent Dr Naeem Awan showered rose petals on them. The peace walk, started from Ghanche district in Gilgit-Baltistan on March 13, would end in the federal capital after covering a distance of 1000km. Speaking on the occasion, Ghulam Hussain, spokesman for the campaigners, stated that 12 mountaineers were on the peace walk to give a message of interfaith harmony to people in Pakistan and entire world.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-310448-Peace-walk-participants-get-warm-welcome-in-Mansehra>

Jamil Nagri, “PTI demands army supervise elections in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Dawn, April 3, 2015

GILGIT: The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf on April 2 demanded the holding of the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly elections under the army's supervision to check possible rigging. “As the PML-N-led federal government has planned to rig the upcoming (GB) legislative assembly elections through the regional government installed by it, we want the army troops deployed at and outside polling stations to ensure that the imminent electoral exercise is conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner,” PTI central secretary general Jahangir Tareen noted.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1173660/pti-demands-army-supervise-elections-in-gilgit-baltistan>

Qamar Zaman, “PTI asks election commission to stop pre-poll rigging in G-B”

The Express Tribune, April 2, 2015

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on April 2 to ensure an immediate halt to pre-poll rigging in Gilgit-Baltistan. “It is requested that you should immediately take note of the illegal activities of governor G-B and chairperson BISP and ensure that this pre-poll rigging is stopped immediately,” PTI secretary general Jahangir Khan Tareen wrote in a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Justice (retd) Sardar Raza Khan. The PTI further requested army personnel be deputed in G-B on polling day to supervise the polling.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/863050/pti-asks-election-commission-to-stop-pre-poll-rigging-in-g-b/>

Meraj Alam, “Op devised against sale of forces' uniforms”

The Nation, April 4, 2015

GILGIT: Fearing misuse of the uniforms of law enforcement agencies, the government is considering to seal all those shops which are engaged in such businesses, sources stated on April 3. Official sources further stated that a list of total such shops has been prepared and shortly

magistrates would be assigned to go and seal them. Sources noted that this step is being taken under the National Action Plan. The authorities have taken this measure into consideration keeping in view the misuse of uniforms of the law enforcement agencies in past.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Apr-2015/op-devised-against-sale-of-forces-uniforms>

“GB governor dubs media mirror of society”

The Nation, April 5, 2015

SHEIKHUPURA: Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Governor Ch Barjees Tahir stated that media was the mirror of society and can play effective role in pinpointing wrongdoings in society. “It was the media that challenged dictatorial regime of Pervez Musharraf and had acted as catalyst for the restoration of judiciary, supremacy of law and constitution.”

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Governor Ch Barjees Tahir was addressing the oath-taking ceremony of newly-elected office bearers of Sheikhpura Press Club on April 4. Earlier, he administered oath to the newly-elected office bearers including Press Club President Shahbaz Khan, Senior Vice President Sh Imtiaz, General Secretary Sultan Hameed Rahi, Finance Secretary, Joint Secretary, Information Secretary and executive council members. A large number of citizens, journalists and political leaders attended the function.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/05-Apr-2015/gb-governor-dubs-media-mirror-of-society>

Shabbir Mir, “Switching sides: PML-N welcomes new leaders into the party's fold”

The Express Tribune, April 5, 2015

GILGIT: President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in Gilgit-Baltistan Hafeezur Rahman hailed former Pakistan Peoples Party leader Syed Yahya Shah's decision to join his party. Speaking on April 5, the regional president stated Shah's contributions to introducing democratic principles into the political system in G-B are unparalleled. “He will be a valuable addition to our party,” he added. Earlier on April 4, Shah had decided to change allegiances and join PML-N.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/865058/switching-sides-pml-n>

[welcomes-new-leaders-into-the-partys-fold/](#)

M.B.Kalhero, “AJK president, PM meet Zardari”

Dawn, April 6, 2015

LARKANA: AJK President Sardar Mohammed Yaqoob and Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed called on PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari at Naudero House on April 5 and briefed him about the political situation, budget and development plans for Azad Jammu and Kashmir. They informed Mr Zardari that the AJK government was concentrating on education and it had set up three medical colleges, four universities, one university for women and one information technology university. MNA Faryal Talpur and Bakhtawar Bhutto-Zardari attended the meeting.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174239/ajk-president-pm-meet-zardari>

Shabbir Mir, “Misappropriation: G-B govt to probe alleged corruption”

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2015

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan caretaker government formed teams to investigate alleged corruption in various departments of the region during the five years of the previous Pakistan Peoples Party-led regime. The teams were formed on the directives of Chief Secretary Sultan Sikandar Raja, stated an official. According to him, they would look into corruption scams and then pin responsibility. “Besides scrutinizing the records of the last five years, physical verification of projects will also be carried out to determine if there is any truth to the allegations,” he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/865516/misappropriation-g-b-govt-to-probe-alleged-corruption/>

“Language issue: AJK district bans channels dubbed in Hindi”

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: The local administration has banned four foreign television channels on April 6, not for any content issues, but simply for being dubbed into Hindi. According to the notification issued by the Deputy Commissioner Office Muzaffarabad, National Geographic, Discovery,

Pogo and Cartoon Network, have been banned for three months across the district. The ban does not affect the original English versions of the stated channels which will remain on air as usual in the district that overlooks Jammu & Kashmir.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/865683/language-issue-ajk-district-bans-channels-dubbed-in-hindi/>

“Mirpur by-election”

The News, April 7, 2015

The success of the PTI candidate in the Mirpur by-election shows that the party can give a tough time to the PML-N in Azad Kashmir. People, mostly the younger generation, want to see Imran Khan in power and the victory of Barrister Sultan Mehmood clearly shows that. Imran should focus on education in AJK and try to increase the literacy rate. AJK students do not have the standard of education necessary to compete with other students. Schools and colleges are available but their standard is very poor. Education and health are basic needs for a nation to survive but Azad Kashmir lacks facilities. Imran Khan should take steps to solve this problem.

Safeer Naseer

Kotli

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-311240-Mirpur-by-election>

“Officials involved in political activities face action”

Dawn, April 8, 2015

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Chaudhry Mohammad Barjees Tahir directed the heads of departments of the regional government to take disciplinary action against the staff involved in political activities. According to an official source, the GB governor sent letters to the heads of GB government departments and organisations recently, informing them that he had received complaints against GB government employees for their involvement in political activities. A source stated in the letters the governor had identified 48 government officials from grade 14 to 18 who were blamed for involvement in political activities. Mr Tahir directed the department heads to take

cognisance of the matter and take legal action against the erring employees.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174658/officials-involved-in-political-activities-face-action>

Ishita Mishra, “Look beyond PoK to Gilgit-Baltistan, urges US scholar”

Times of India, April 8, 2015

AGRA: Senge H Sering, president of the Institute for Gilgit-Baltistan Studies in Washington, at a recent talk in Agra, claimed India should bring Pakistan occupied Kashmir and the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan into the limelight, giving moral support to the aspirations of people there who are "deprived citizens from no man's land". Sering was in Agra to create awareness about this region and to seek the support of civil society groups for the people living in the rugged, snow-laced Gilgit-Baltistan. Gilgit-Baltistan is home to the world's second-highest peak, K2, and is wedged between India, China and Afghanistan. "Both India and Pakistan lay claim to Gilgit-Baltistan. The last major battle between the two, in 1999, was centred on the Indian town of Kargil, along the Line of Control that divides the territory from the Jammu & Kashmir. Both countries maintain several thousand troops in a standoff on the Siachen Glacier, at 22,000 feet above sea level on the eastern edge of Gilgit-Baltistan," stated Sering.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agra/Look-beyond-PoK-to-Gilgit-Baltistan-urges-US-scholar/articleshow/46854590.cms>

“PML-N supporters join PTI in AJK”

The Nation, April 8, 2015

Bagh- A large number of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supporters from Bagh district; have announced to join the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, after it rose to victory in the recently held by-election in Mirpur. PML-N's disgruntled supporters from Bagh headed by Sardar Tahir Akbar, met with PTI AJK President Barrister Sultan Mehmood and PTI General Secretary Jahangir Tareen in Islamabad, to formally announce their joining of the party.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/867852/reshuffling-fde-chief-transferred-to-ajk-council/>

“Asma against 'state oppression' in GB”

Dawn, April 5, 2015

LAHORE: Supreme Court Bar Association former president Asma Jahangir warned the government against continuing 'oppression' in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). In a statement issued on April 4, Ms Jahangir criticised arrest of nine political activists of Majlis-i-Wahdatul Muslimeen for protesting against the government's decision to support Saudi government's stance on its war in Yemen. She stated in the last six months, 40 political and human rights activists had been charged with sedition simply for their peaceful protests against denial of their political rights.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174044/asma-against-state-oppression-in-gb>

“The extra-territorial territory”

The Nation, April 7, 2015

Although Pakistan exercises considerable influence over the affairs of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir, yet, with its own elected government and legislative assembly, technically and constitutionally this area is not a part of Pakistan. Likewise, Gilgit-Baltistan is also a semi-autonomous self-governing territory in Pakistan. Owing to its international obligation with regard to Kashmir dispute, Pakistan has yet not formally decided to annex these territories. At present, there are fully-functioning and independent High Court and Supreme Court in AJK. Likewise, an independent Chief Court and Supreme Appellate Court are efficiently dispensing justice in the Gilgit-Baltistan.

It is quite ironic that the people in these areas are comfortably enjoying their basic legal and citizenship rights despite the disputed nature of these territories but the FATA people have been deliberately deprived of these rights despite living in an area which is part of Pakistan constitutionally. Are these people being punished only for being the Pakistanis? As matter of fact, the FATA is more populous than AJK and its land area is almost double the size of the latter.

<http://nation.com.pk/columns/07-Apr-2015/the-extra-territorial-territory>

“AJK govt declares 22 men as terrorists”

Dawn, April 9, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir government declared on April 8 22 men as terrorists for their alleged involvement in acts of terrorism and put their names under the 4th schedule of the AJK's Anti-Terrorism Act, 2014. According to a notification issued by the Home Department, 20 of the suspects belong to AJK and two to Punjab.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174822/ajk-govt-declares-22-men-as-terrorists>

Israr Ahmad, “Rawalpindi, AJK police plan to set up joint check posts”

The Nation, April 10, 2015

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Israr Ahmed Khan Abbasi held a meeting with senior police officers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) at his office on April 9. The AJK senior police officers who attended the meeting included SP Bagh Kamran Ali, SP Palandari Jamil Ahmed, DSP Kottli Sattian Waheed Gilani, DSP Muzaffarabad Zafar Ali, DSP Mirpur Mirza Zahid and DSP Rawalakot Muhammad Salim. During the meeting the plan of establishing joint check posts between Rawalpindi and AJK to curb car theft came under discussion. Similarly, the police officers also decided to hammer out a comprehensive mechanism to round up the proclaimed offenders taking refuge in AJK.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/10-Apr-2015/rawalpindi-ajk-police-plan-to-set-up-joint-check-posts>

Muhammad Sadaqat, “On the road: Kohistan, G-B transporters' strike to be called off today”

The Express Tribune, April 10, 2015

ABBOTABAD: Protesting transporters from Kohistan and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have agreed to call off their strike as the Hazara divisional administration accepted most of their demands, stated insiders privy to the negotiations. The transporters have been on a strike from April 1, keeping over 700 passenger vehicles off the road against the government's enforced convoy system

for passenger vans and buses plying Karakoram Highway. The convoy system started in 2012 after passengers on KKH were selectively attacked.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/867735/on-the-road-kohistan-g-b-transporters-strike-to-be-called-off-today/>

Shabbir Mir, “Case closed: G-B Chief Court acquits Baba Jan, 11 other protesters”

The Express Tribune, April 9, 2015

GILGIT: The Chief Court of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) acquitted Baba Jan and 11 others, setting aside an earlier anti-terrorism court verdict that sentenced them to life imprisonment. The acquittal was announced by G-B Chief Court's Justice Muhammad Alam and Justice Yar Muhammad on April 9. The chief court in the region has powers equivalent to high courts in the rest of the country. Baba Jan, Iftikhar Hussain, Shakoorellah and nine others were sentenced to life in prison by an anti-terrorism court in October 2014 for allegedly ransacking a police station and torching government property in Hunza in 2011.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/867209/case-closed-g-b-chief-court-acquits-baba-jan-11-other-protesters/>

“PM puts GB on fast track to development”

Pakistan Today, April 12, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will visit Gilgit-Baltistan on April 14 to have an on the spot briefing on development projects being executed in the area. According to Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, and Gilgit-Baltistan Governor, Barjees Tahir, the PM is keen to put the entire area on the fast track to development. He would approve several important development projects during the visit. The PM is also expected to meet important personalities of the area and attend a special function to be hosted in his honour.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/04/12/city/islamabad/pm-puts-gb-on-fast-track-to-development/>

Meraj Alam, “Opp parties to protest during PM's visit to Gilgit”

The Nation, April 12, 2015

GILGIT: Opposition political parties in Gilgit

Baltistan have to stage protest demonstrations during Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif's visit to Gilgit. Member of Gilgit Baltistan Council and PPP provisional leader Amjad Husain noted that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit prior to elections is tantamount to pre-polls rigging. He stated that Nawaz's visit will influence public opening as he would announce mega projects aimed at luring people to cast votes for his party during elections in Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/12-Apr-2015/opp-parties-to-protest-during-pm-s-visit-to-gilgit>

“Reshuffling: FDE chief transferred to AJK Council”

The Express Tribune, April 11, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) director general Aamir Ashraf Khawaja was on April 10 transferred to Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council, paving the way for reappointment of former DG Shahnaz A Riaz.

Khawaja has been transferred to AJK Council as a joint secretary. Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD) Secretary Faridullah Khan had transferred Riaz to special education department and appointed Khawaja in her place in November 2014.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/867852/reshuffling-fde-chief-transferred-to-ajk-council/>

“Left in the lurch: Gojal residents threaten to boycott G-B polls”

The Express Tribune, April 11, 2015

GILGIT: Residents of Gojal Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan's Hunza-Nagar district threatened to boycott elections in the region if they are not allocated an additional seat in the legislative assembly. Moreover, they have urged the government to declare Hunza as a separate district. These demands were put forward through Gojal-Hunza Awakening Movement, a citizen-based organisation, during a news conference at Gilgit Press Club on April 11.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/868328/left-in-the-lurch-gojal-residents-threaten-to-boycott-g-b-polls/>

Shabbir Mir, “Greater transparency: G-B governor promises completion of unfinished projects”

The Express Tribune, April 11, 2015

GILGIT: G-B Governor Barjees Tahir on April 11 stated his main task was to ensure completion of unfinished development projects in the region. “I have been assigned the responsibility by the prime minister and will get the projects completed in a transparent way,” Tahir stated during his address at Gilgit Press Club where he earlier administered oath to newly-elected office bearers of the press club. Tahir's comments come days after the government identified at least 106 incomplete projects, payments of which were made in advance during the previous regional government's tenure.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/868325/greater-transparency-g-b-governor-promises-completion-of-unfinished-projects/>

Asma Ghani, “Khawaja out, Shahnaz in as FDE DG”

The Express Tribune, April 11, 2015

ISLAMABAD: The establishment division on April 10 transferred the Director General of Federal Directorate of Enducation (FDE) Aamir Ashraf Khawaja, paving the way for the reappointment of former DG Dr Shehnaz A Riaz. Khawaja had been appointed the chief of Federal Directorate of Education by the prime minister. He has been transferred to Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council as joint secretary while the earlier officer Tahir Sarfraz has been appointed Gilgit-Baltistan chief secretary. The Supreme Court on April 6 last restored Dr Shehnaz A Riaz to her grade-20 position as director general of FDE, declaring her transfer orders by Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD) as void ab initio.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/11-Apr-2015/khawaja-out-shahnaz-in-as-fde-dg>

Peer Muhammad, “Election campaign: PM to announce package for G-B next week”

The Express Tribune, April 13, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will visit Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on April 14 to kick off

his party's election campaign in the region by announcing a development package for the area, official sources stated. However, he is unlikely to grant more constitutional rights to G-B as expected by the people. Opposition parties have termed the prime minister's trip and announcement of any package a gimmick to get votes in the upcoming assembly election, which the PML-N is unlikely to win due to its 'unpopular policies' for the region.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/868961/election-campaign-pm-to-announce-package-for-g-b-next-week/>

Parvez Jabri, “People welcome PM's visit to Gilgit-Baltistan”

Business Recorder, April 15, 2015

ISLAMABAD: People from different segments of society welcomed the visit of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif to Gilgit Baltistan and hoped that it will go a long way in development of the region. In interview with Radio Pakistan, PML-N leader Haji Fida Muhammad Nashad stated Prime Minister has fulfilled demand of people of the area by laying foundation stone of Jaglot-Skardu road project.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/politics-a-policy/238384-people-welcome-pms-visit-to-gilgit-baltistan.html>

“Gilgit Baltistan will be brought at par with country's developed parts: PM”

Dunya News, April 14, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on April 14 stated that Gilgit Baltistan will be brought at par with developed parts of the country, the Radio Pakistan reported. While chairing a meeting of Gilgit Baltistan Council, the Prime Minister directed the concerned authorities to spend development funds in transparent manner. He stated corruption will not be tolerated in any circumstance. Governor Gilgit Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir gave briefing on development projects. He stated a special force is being established for the security of Shakra-e-Karakoram. He stated that a policy for protection of forests has been formulated for thirty years.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/273746-Gilgit->

Baltistan-will-be-brought-at-par-with-count

“The PM's Gilgit-Baltistan visit”

The Express Tribune, April 16, 2015

GULMIT: The recent short visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has left behind many questions in people's minds. People were expecting a great deal from the prime minister during his visit, but were left disappointed. The visit seemed to be nothing more than an election campaign for the electoral candidates of the PML-N in G-B. The orphaned land, Gilgit-Baltistan, has been neglected since a decade by all government actors and is still waiting for its constitutional rights. Despite the solid stance by its people regarding the region's constitutional rights, they have been pushed back into darkness and been swindled.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/870449/the-pms-gilgit-baltistan-visit/>

Yogesh Pawar, “People of Gilgit-Baltistan want what the Indian Kashmiris have: Senge Hasnan Sering”

DNA, April 16, 2015

Given India, Pakistan and China's stakes in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, no surprise Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has emerged a hub of geo-strategic activity. Senge Hasnan Sering, director of the Washington-based Gilgit Baltistan Institute is in Mumbai for a series of talks about the persecution of locals by the Pakistani establishment.

He noted that many hardliners opposed to India in J&K try to show things as being better on the other side he could not comment on what they say but nothing's further from the truth. People of GB want what Indian Kashmiris have -- membership of parliament, special status, democratic rights, right to choose our own government, etc. Even pro-Pakistani leaders, talk about how Indian Kashmiris have both special status and benefits of Indian judicial, political and economic institutions.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/interview-people-of-gilgit-baltistan-want-what-the-indian-kashmiris-have-senge-hasnan-sering-2077794>

“A hearty welcome: PML-N workers in G-B

prepare for PM's visit”

The Express Tribune, April 14, 2015

GILGIT: The regional president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Hafizur Rehman, on April 13 stated government employees have no role in the public meeting that is being arranged on the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Gilgit. “There will be a huge rally that will be made successful by party workers and the public, not government employees,” Rehman stated a day before the PM's first official visit to Gilgit-Baltistan since the 2013 general elections.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/869366/a-hearty-welcome-pml-n-workers-in-g-b-prepare-for-pms-visit/>

“PM approves Gilgit-Baltistan elections on June 8”

Daily Times, April 18, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has approved a summary of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan for holding of elections to the GB Legislative Assembly on June 8. The summary for polling on June 8 was sent by Gilgit-Baltistan Federal Minister and Governor Birjees Tahir. These will be the second elections after the area had been given provincial status. First elections for the provincial legislative assembly were held in November 2009. Caretaker government in GB was set up on December 12, 2014, to arrange the holding of elections.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/18-Apr-2015/pm-approves-gilgit-baltistan-elections-on-june-8>

“Imran Khan terms PM's Gilgit visit 'pre-poll rigging’”

Dunya News, April 14, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on April 14 termed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Gilgit-Baltistan 'pre-poll rigging', adding that announcement of development package by Prime Minister is a political gimmick. In his recent post on Twitter, Khan stated that he 'strongly condemns' Prime Minister's alleged pre-poll rigging. He stated Prime Minister first appointed a federal minister as

governor GB, adding that the caretaker government is allegedly Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) loyalist.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/273824-Imran-Khan-terms-PMs-Gilgit-visit-prepoll-riggi>

Imaduddin, “PM breaks ground for development projects in GB”

Business Recorder, April 14, 2015

GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on April 14 broke ground for various projects of power, health and infrastructural development to uplift the living standard of the residents. Among the projects, kicked off by the Prime Minister, included a cardiac hospital, 16-megawatt Naltar-3 Hydro Power Project, four PTV Rebroadcasting Stations and Juglot-Skardu road.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/109-world-top-news/238234-pm-breaks-ground-for-development-projects-in-gb.html>

Shabbir Mir, “On second thought: PML-N leaders in Astore withdraw resignations”

The Express Tribune, April 17, 2015

GILGIT: Leaders of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in Astore Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan withdrew their resignations, saying they had resigned due to a series of misunderstandings. The decision came a day after party leaders in Astore, led by vice president Advocate Muhammad Iqbal, resigned over the prime minister's failure to announce development projects for their region during his visit to Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/871084/on-second-thought-pml-n-leaders-in-astore-withdraw-resignations/>

“AJK PM announces Rs 2m grant for PU Kashmir Cell”

Daily Times, April 18, 2015

LAHORE: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majid on April 17 stated that the solution of Kashmir dispute is connected with the integrity of Pakistan. He announced Rs 2 million grant for the newly set up Kashmir Cell at Punjab University to organise conferences. He was addressing a seminar organized by Punjab

University Pakistan Study Centre at Al Raazi Hall on “Kashmir Issue: Past and Future” on April 17.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/punjab/18-Apr-2015/ajk-pm-announces-rs-2m-grant-for-pu-kashmir-cell>

“G-B legislative assembly: JI to contest elections from 10 constituencies”

The Express Tribune, April 18, 2015

GILGIT: Jamaat-e-Islami announced the party will contest the Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly elections from 10 constituencies out of 24. “We have decided to field candidates in 10 constituencies of G-B,” stated a senior JI leader, Advocate Noorul Bari, during a news conference at Gilgit Press Club on April 18. On April 17, the G-B Council notified June 8 as the date for election as was proposed by the regional government. However, the chief election office stated it would announce the election schedule in a couple of days.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/872159/g-b-legislative-assembly-ji-to-contest-elections-from-10-constituencies/>

“Imran flays PM for addressing GB 'poll rally”

The Nation, April 15, 2015

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Imran Khan on April 14 strongly condemned Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's address to a rally in Gilgit-Baltistan, saying it was tantamount to pre-poll rigging ahead of general elections in the area. "Not satisfied with planting his federal minister Birjees Tahir as Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, a biased appointee of the PML-N caretaker government and Election Commissioner, the PM has now announced a so-called development package for GB just before elections clearly as a gimmick to buy votes and influence the elections," Imran Khan noted in a statement. He stated this was absolutely unacceptable and brazen pre-polls rigging. "It is time that the PML-N learns the essentials of democracy which begin with fair and free elections with a truly neutral caretaker government in place and no attempts to influence polls through pre poll rigging. So far Nawaz Sharif has not been able to rise above cronyism and use of money to buy influence," Imran Khan added.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/15-Apr-2015/imran-flays->

pm-for-addressing-gb-poll-rally

“Another promise of uplift”

The Express Tribune, April 16, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan has been on the receiving end of innumerable pledges and promises by successive governments for the last 50 years. Often they come to nothing, or are only partially achieved. Some never get beyond the purely conceptual stage. Now it is the turn of the government of Nawaz Sharif to tackle the woes and grievances of the many and varied peoples of G-B. Top of their wish list is the unresolved issue of its constitutional status which has remained unresolved indeed largely unaddressed since Partition. This means that the people of G-B are unable to get representation in the legislature, a long-standing bone of contention.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/870426/another-promise-of-uplift/>

“Bhasha, Bunji dams to bring revolution: PM”

The Nation, April 15, 2015

GILGIT: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on April 14 stated Gilgit-Baltistan would be brought at par with the developed areas of Pakistan by launching a string of development projects. Addressing the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, Prime Minister Sharif stated corruption was unacceptable and that all the funds should be spent in a transparent manner. He directed the authorities concerned to spend development funds in transparent manner. During the meeting, Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Chaudhry Barjees Tahir gave a briefing on development projects.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/15-Apr-2015/bhasha-bunji-dams-to-bring-revolution-pm>

Economic Developments

“Rs 780 mln Gilgit-Baltistan Council budget approved”

Aaj TV, April 14, 2015

GILGIT: Prime Minister and Chairman Gilgit-Baltistan Council, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on April 14 approved the Council's fiscal budget for the year 2014-15 with a total outlay of Rs780.906 million. Chairing a meeting of the 8th Session of the GB Council, the Prime Minister also accorded approval to the Gilgit-Baltistan Council Protection of Pakistan (Adaptation) Bill, 2015 and Gilgit-Baltistan Council (Adaptation) of Laws Bill, 2015. Briefing the Prime Minister, Minister-in-Charge of GB Council Ch. Muhammad Birjees Tahir, lauded Rs47.2 billion special package for the uplift of the GB and stated that the people of the area also highly appreciated Rs45 million annual wheat subsidy granted by the PML-N government.

<http://www.aaj.tv/2015/04/rs780-mln-gilgit-baltistan-council-budget-approved/>

“Khaleeq Kiani, Advance tariff for AJK power project approved”

Dawn, April 11, 2015

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) approved on April 10 an average tariff applicable for 30 years of 7.24 cents per unit (Kwh) for the 1,100MW Kohala Hydropower Project, to be set up in Azad Kashmir by a subsidiary of the China Three Gorges Corporation at an estimated cost of \$2.3 billion. The tariff was finalised following negotiations between the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) and the China International Water and Electric Corporation (CWE). The project would take six years to become functional and would provide cheap electricity for around 50 years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1175229/advance-tariff-for-ajk-power-project-approved>

“Delay in MUST project costs exchequer Rs45m”

The Nation, April 11, 2015

MIRPUR: Alleged financial mismanagement and irregularities on the part of the AJK government led to the inordinate delay of about three years in the much-awaited completion of Rs2 billion project of New Campus of Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST). A survey revealed that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) - funded the construction of New Campus over 4,500 kanals of land at Tariq Abad Road at Jarikass near Khaliqabad and it was to be completed by the end of 2015.

The project was allegedly deliberately delayed by some higher authorities of the AJK government with connivance of the contractors. The inordinate delay in execution of the construction work had also compelled the HEC to abandon the release of the funds for the project. The project is now scheduled to be completed by June 2018 if no hurdle is created again.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/11-Apr-2015/delay-in-must-project-costs-exchequer-rs45m>

“India plans to install body scanners at LoC”

The Nation, April 14, 2015

MIRPUR: The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs reviewed measures for easing trade and travel restrictions on Chakan-Da-Bagh and Salamabad routes of the Line of Control, and approved the installation of full-body scanners at the two LoC points to check smuggling of non-permitted goods. The ministry is expected to take decision shortly on opening cross-LoC travel for the Jammu and Kashmir people living in AJK and J&K, noted a report.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/14-Apr-2015/india-plans-to-install-body-scanners-at-loc>

“Landslide hampers cross-LoC trade”

The Nation, April 15, 2015

MIRPUR: The Cross-LoC trade at Muzaffarabad-Srinagar ancient route through Chakothe-Uri sector in Jammu & Kashmir could not reportedly take place on April 14 due to road blockage caused by landslide on this side of the LoC, official sources confirmed. According to officials at Trade Facilitation Centre, Chakothe, the road was blocked near Chinari in Muzaffarabad due to heavy

landslide. The landslides hit the ancient road connecting Muzaffarabad to Srinagar at Chinari in AJK, an official at TFC explained. “So, there was no trade activity between either side of the Line of Control on April 14.” Meanwhile, due to the landslides, the routine bus service too was affected on April 13.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/15-Apr-2015/landslide-hampers-cross-loc-trade>

International Developments

“China offers enhanced access for agri produce”

The Nation, April 9, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of commerce concluded fourth meeting of second phase of negotiations of China-Pakistan FTA held in Beijing in which tariff reduction, regulatory duties, trade in services and investment, e-commerce and visa facilitation remained the focus of the negotiations. Yao Wenliang, DDG ministry of commerce China, and Robina Athar, additional secretary Ministry of commerce, co-chaired the meeting. The Chinese side highlighted that there is no restriction on export of citrus and mango from Pakistan to China. The protocols signed earlier between AQSIQ (General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection & Quarantine) and MNFSR (Ministry of National Food Security and Research) are applicable and export can be done without any pre-clearance. This easy access is highly beneficial for the fruit produce nationwide including Gilgit Baltistan. It was agreed to expedite the registration of rice millers/exporters and the trade would continue as normal till the registration process gets completed. Trade of rapeseed meal and cherry would be streamlined after completion of the formalities.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/09-Apr-2015/china-offers-enhanced-access-for-agri-produce>

Abdul Rasheed, “2005 quake-hit areas of KP, AJK: UAE Red Crescent to provide Rs 12 billion for construction of schools, healthcare centres”

Business Recorder, April 14, 2015

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) assured Pakistan that the UAE Red Crescent to provide Rs 14 billion for the reconstruction of 800 schools and 50 healthcare facilities in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The UAE Red Crescent asked Pakistan to build 2 pilot projects from the company and rest of the 848 projects to be completed by the company. Sources in the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) noted on April 13 that the Director of UAE Red Crescent, Hamad Abdullah Abu Seem Al Ali, has recently inaugurated the first school in Mansehra.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1173813/>

Naveed Butt & Ali Hussain, “China to invest \$37 billion in energy projects”

Business Recorder, April 18, 2015

Out of the total \$45 billion investment in Pakistan, China will invest up to \$37 billion in various energy projects while give \$8 billion concessional loan for infrastructure development projects of Pak-China Economic Corridor project. This was stated by Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms while speaking at a press conference along with Information Minister Pervez Rashid and Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi on April 17. Briefing journalists about the two-day state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who will arrive on April 20, Ahsan Iqbal stated that the investment in energy and infrastructure projects would be done by the Chinese companies and the Chinese banks will provide loans.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0/1176605/>

Saibal Dasgupta, “Chinese minister asks India not to be 'over concerned' about Pak corridor”

Times of India, April 18, 2015

BEIJING: Chinese assistant foreign minister Liu Jianchao on April 17 asked India not be "over-concerned" about the proposed China-Pakistan

economic corridor, which would connect Gwadar sea port with Xinjiang. He insisted it does not pass through any area, which India has territorial claims over. "The project between China and Pakistan does not concern the relevant dispute between India and Pakistan. I do not think the Indian side should be over concerned about that," Liu told reporters ahead of president Xi Jinping's two-day visit to Islamabad beginning April 20.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/Chinese-minister-asks-India-not-to-be-over-concerned-about-Pak-corridor/articleshow/46965425.cms>

“China-aided highway changes life of Pakistanis”

Xinhua, April 19, 2015

ISLAMABAD: "I really love working here for the Chinese company," Abass Ali, a Pakistani employee of the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), told Xinhua at a construction site next to a barrier lake that is two hours drive from the northern city of Gilgit. The ongoing construction work by the CRBC is the last phase of a project undertaken by the Chinese company to renovate a 335-km stretch of the Karakoram Highway, the only overland connection between China and Pakistan at present. The highway, built with fund from China during 1966-1978, is the only economic lifeline for Pakistan's northern region. Hundreds of Chinese engineers died while building the road.

http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=277254

“UK eases travel advisory to Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, April 16, 2015

The United Kingdom (UK) foreign office lifted advice against travelling to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as the region was previously considered unsafe owing to security concerns. The scenic G-B region of the country was deemed unsuitable in June 2013 after a group of foreign mountaineers were massacred by militants in the region. Gunmen had killed 9 foreign tourists and a local

guide near the base camp of Nanga Parbat in June 2013. Gilgit-Baltistan Northern Pakistan which is home to some of the world's tallest mountains, including K2, the world's second-highest peak and the lifting of the advice means that some of the most scenic mountainous ranges will become more accessible to Britons.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/870852/uk-eases-travel-advisory-to-gilgit-baltistan/>

“UKPNP leader calls on UN to protect rights of people of Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan”

Business Standard, April 2, 2015

GENEVA: Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, the exiled chairman of United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP), has once again called for the protection of the human rights of the people residing in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Participating recently in the 28th session of UN Human Rights Council, Kashmiri described the human rights situation in these three regions as grim. In a press release, Kashmiri stated Pakistan is a signatory to the UN resolutions on Kashmir as well as on agreements related to the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, and therefore, there was a need for the UN to put pressure on the former to withdraw its forces from these two regions and grant autonomy to its inhabitants.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/uknpn-leader-calls-on-un-to-protect-rights-of-people-of-kashmir-gilgit-baltistan-115040200584_1.html

Umer Nangiana, “Former AJK premier lauds Qatar Charity”

GulfTimes, April 19, 2015

Sardar Atiq Khan, former PM of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, expressed gratitude for the relief and rehabilitation work in the wake of 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Former prime minister of the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Atiq Khan, lauded Qatar Charity (QC) for its extensive support to the people of earthquake-hit areas of his state and other parts of Pakistan during the devastating calamity in 2005.

<http://www.gulf-times.com/culture/238/details/435573/former-ajk-premier-lauds-qatar-charity>

Other Developments

Shabbir Mir “Inconvenient security': Transporters strike against convoy system on KKH”

The Express Tribune, April 1, 2015

GILGIT: Transporters in Gilgit and Kohistan announced a strike against the convoy system on Karakoram Highway (KKH) on March 31. The strike means public transport between Gilgit-Baltistan and the rest of the country will be cut off, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded. “Our strike is against the convoy system and poor security on KKH,” stated Bilal Khan, a transporter, referring to the introduction of the movement of buses and vans in convoys. The move came as a security measure by authorities in G-B and Kohistan following repeated attacks on buses in 2012 when selected passengers were made to disembark and shot dead.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/862015/inconvenient-security-transporters-strike-against-convoy-system-on-kkh/>

Myra Imran, “Lok Mela to begin tomorrow at Lok Virsa”

April 2, 2015

The much awaited annual folk festival popularly known as 'Lok Mela' will begin on April 3 at Lok Virsa, Garden Avenue, Shakarparian. Formal announcement in this regard was made by the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) Executive Director Lok Virsa Dr Fouzia Saeed in a press conference organised on April 1.

Main features of the 10-day Mela will be artisans-at-work exhibition of dying crafts, performing artists from Chitral, Kaalash, Gilgit- Baltistan etc. provincial governments cultural pavilions, cultural evenings, commercial sector and NGO's stalls working for the well-being of artisans and artists, traditional cuisine, kids' corner and others. Minister for Information, Broadcasting and National

Heritage, Pervaiz Rasheed will inaugurate the festiva, the guests will witness a colourful 'dastarbandi' and 'chaddarposhi' of artisan and performing artist together with several regional spell-bounding cultural performances.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-310256-Lok-Mela-to-begin-tomorrow-at-Lok-Virsa>

Shabbir Mir, “Nature's wrath: Several people left homeless as landslide hits Skardu”

The Express Tribune, April 3, 2015

GILGIT: A landslide triggered by heavy rain damaged many houses in Borgay Kushmara area of Skardu town in Gilgit-Baltistan, residents noted on April 2. According to locals, the landslide hit the region on April 1. At least seven houses were damaged while over three dozen trees were swept away. The landslide dealt a critical blow to the agriculture sector, which is the mainstay of the local economy. “The villagers returned to the fields on April 1 after heavy rain lashed the region over a few days,” stated Muhammad Ismail, a resident.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/863341/natures-wrath-several-people-left-homeless-as-landslide-hits-skardu/>

“GB varsity to have centre for cultural, heritage studies”

Dawn, April 5, 2015

GILGIT: The Karakoram International University (KIU) Vice-Chancellor Dr Mohammad Asif Khan vowed to make the varsity a centre of quality learning in Gilgit-Baltistan. He announced to establish a centre for cultural and heritage studies in the varsity's main campus for preservation and promotion of unique cultural and arts history of the region. Addressing 'meet the press programme' at KIU main campus in Gilgit on April 4, Asif Khan lamented that so far nothing had been done for conservation of the cultural heritage of the area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174043/gb-varsity-to-have->

“Khanpur Dam spillway opened”

The News, April 5, 2015

HARIPUR: The Khanpur Dam authorities opened the spillway of the reservoir on April 4 after dam's water level rose to a high level due to heavy rains in upper Hazara and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The spillways would remain open for next eight hours, discharging over 6,000 cusecs of water, sources stated. Because of heavy rains that lashed Hazara division, especially the hilly region of Galiyat and AJK, watertable in the reservoir increased to 1981 feet, while maximum conservation level is 1982 feet. An official source privy to the daily data gathering process noted that the spillway remained opened between 4pm on April 4 to 12am, discharging surplus water of over 6,000 cusecs and the level lowered down to 1978 feet to create space for the fresh inflow, which is expected during the next couple of days.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-310912-Khanpur-Dam-spillway-opened>

“Seminar on Shandur festival next week”

Dawn, April 7, 2015

PESHAWAR: The Tourism Corporation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (TCKP) is arranging a one-day seminar in the provincial capital in connection with the upcoming Shandur Polo Festival. According to organisers, the seminar to be held on April 13 will engage stakeholders for organising the festival in a befitting manner and promote peace and tourism in the province. The decision to organise the seminar was made during a meeting chaired by provincial tourism secretary Dr Aftab Akbar Durrani on April 6, stated a news release.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174471/seminar-on-shandur-festival-next-week>

Shabbir Mir, “Back on track: NATCO resumes service, private transporters remain adamant”

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2015

GILGIT: The government-owned Northern Areas Transport Corporation (Natco) resumed its bus service between Gilgit-Baltistan and Rawalpindi

after a week-long gap on April 7. Transportation services along Karakoram Highway, the only land route connecting G-B to down country, had been suspended following a strike called by the region's transport association against the convoy system implemented by the government. The protest had virtually cut G-B off from the rest of Pakistan, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded on both sides. While Natco vehicles hit the roads on April 7, private transporters are still up in arms and have announced they will continue to protest until the government accepts their demands.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/866009/back-on-track-natco-resumes-service-private-transporters-remain-adamant/>

“Lok Mela artisans awarded”

The Nation, April 9, 2015

ISLAMABAD: An award ceremony for artisans of the folk festival of Pakistan “Lok Mela” was held at Shakarparian under the aegis of National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa). Chief Minister Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, who was chief guest on the occasion, gave away cash awards to winning artisans representing different provinces and regions. He congratulated Lok Virsa for organizing the cultural event and providing an opportunity to all provinces and regions to showcase their indigenous folk culture at the national level.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/09-Apr-2015/lok-mela-artisans-awarded>

Syed Mehdi Bukhari, “Skardu: An embodiment of nature's perfection”

Dawn, April 13, 2015

In the extreme north of Pakistan, Skardu the central valley of Gilgit-Baltistan, is an epitome of beauty, serenity and wilderness. Paths to some of the world's highest mountains that includes K2, K3, and Gasherbrum; all are connected through this valley. These towering mountains attract thousands of climbers from all over the world each year; some have even lost their lives in efforts to summit these steep climbs.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1174695>

Shabbir Mir, “Existence of 5,000 decades-old trees under threat in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, April 14, 2015

GILGIT: At least 5,000 trees, most over 50 years old, are likely to be chopped down to make way for a judicial complex in Gilgit city. The city government plans to allocate a major chunk of woodland for the building. “The paperwork is complete and awaiting approval by higher authorities,” shared one source privy to the matter. “According to the proposal, 50 kanals of land will be allocated for the building of the Chief Court.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/869322/existence-of-5000-decades-old-trees-under-threat-in-gilgit/>

Shabbir Mir, “Longstanding issue: Panel to decide G-B's constitutional status”

The Express Tribune, April 15, 2015

GILGIT: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on April 14 announced resolving the longstanding issue of Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) constitutional status a problem which is unresolved since independence and which bars its citizens from getting representation in the national legislature. “I have formed a committee, headed by [the PM's Adviser on Foreign Affairs] Sartaj Aziz, to decide the constitutional status of the region,” stated Nawaz while addressing a big rally at Gilgit's Lalak Jan stadium.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/870092/longstanding-issue-panel-to-decide-g-bs-constitutional-status/>

Shabbir Mir, “Crying foul: PTI leaders raise doubts over projects announced by PM”

The Express Tribune, April 15, 2015

GILGIT: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership in Gilgit-Baltistan called the development schemes announced by the prime minister an attempt to woo voters before the legislative assembly elections in June 2015. Speaking at a news conference at Gilgit Press Club on April 15, senior PTI leader Izhar Hunzai noted the announcement is a form of political maneuvering to ensure the prime minister's party comes into power in the region. “The Diamer-Bhasha Dam and Hanizal projects have been

promised to us time and again,” stated Hunzai. “They have also been approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC).”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/870540/crying-foul-pti-leaders-raise-doubts-over-projects-announced-by-pm/>

“Perception of rigging in GB”

Dawn, April 7, 2015

Actions taken by the federal government in Gilgit-Baltistan after the end of Mehdi Shah's tenure in December 2014 have led opposition parties to conclude that the administration was out to rig the forthcoming elections. With the GB Assembly comprising only 33 members, the number of caretaker ministers was suddenly raised from three to 12. This led the PPP to complain that the measure was aimed at influencing the elections through the large team of new ministers who were mostly PML-N supporters. The subsequent appointment of a federal minister and a PML-N loyalist as Governor of the region further strengthened the perception. The PPP moved a resolution in the Senate condemning the appointment which it called a “sudden, mysterious and inexplicable rollback of the GB Empowerment Order”. The PTI also expressed apprehension about foul play in the polls. The party described the appointment of governor, the chief election commissioner and expansion in the caretaker cabinet as “pre-poll rigging”.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/04/15/comment/perception-of-rigging-in-gb/>

“Man arrested for illegally hunting in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, April 15, 2015

GILGIT: As the highly-lucrative trophy hunting season continues in Gilgit-Baltistan, police arrested a man for illegally shooting an ibex. Noor Khan hunted an ibex measuring 25 inches on the horn on April 13 in Bar Valley of Hunza-Nagar district, a resident noted on April 14. According to another resident, community representatives informed wildlife officials and police about the unlicensed hunting.

“They raided his house on April 14 morning and

arrested him,” he stated. “His gun was also confiscated.”

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/04/15/uncategorized/man-arrested-for-illegally-hunting-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Vehicular convoy system on KKH to continue”

Dawn, April 15, 2015

MANSEHRA: The Hazara administration decided to continue with the vehicular convoy system in the division to ensure the safety of the people traveling between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. The decision came after the top officials of the divisional administration consulted deputy commissioners and police officers of the relevant districts.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1176071>

“Aga Khan School, Sherqilla Ghizar upgraded to AKHSS, Sherqilla Ghizar”

Dardistan Times, April 15, 2015

GHIZAR: In continuation to providing quality education to the youngsters especially the females, Aga Khan School Sherqilla was upgraded to Aga Khan Higher Secondary School. With this upgradation, the number of AKHS Schools reached up to 4 in Gilgit-Baltistan namely AKHSS Gilgit, AKHSS Gahkuch, AKHSS, Hunza, and AKHSS, Sherqilla. AKHSS Sherqilla is considered one of the oldest schools providing quality education to the females in Ghizar.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/news/391037015/aga-khan-school-sherqilla-ghizar-upgraded-akhss-sherqilla-ghizar>

“Investment: Seminar highlights opportunities in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, April 17, 2015

GILGIT: Foreign investors expressed willingness to invest in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) if the government sets up a consortium to pool resources. “We are ready to provide support to bring investments if a consortium is setup,” stated Pakistan Policy Institute USA Chairman Dr Gholam Mujtaba, while

addressing a seminar in Gilgit. Many delegates from the United States and government officials were present at the seminar, Investment Opportunities in G-B, organised by the Islamic Institute of Knowledge Management and Development, a local institution.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/871107/investment-seminar-highlights-opportunities-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Tahir Ali, “Dying crafts of GB need preservation”

The Nation, April 13, 2015

ISLAMABAD: As the artisan Arab Khan, 70, is one death bed, there is no one left in Shimshal, a large Wakhi-speaking village in Gilgit-Baltistan, to weave 'Patti' (woven strip made of yak wool) from 'Sargaz' (a kind of knitting thread). The people of Shimshal villages weave different kinds of wools at their homes being used in 'Patti' and 'Plos' (kinds of carpets). 'Patti' is used for making clothes, 'chughas' (winter coat), caps, waistcoats and many more products. Like other women of Shimshal village, Anar Begum, 65, is an expert in making wool threads which are used in weaving 'Patti' (also known as Pattu).

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/13-Apr-2015/dying-crafts-of-gb-need-preservation>

Syed Mehdi Bukhari, “The serenity of Ghanche: Of mountains, rivers and valleys”

Dawn, April 18, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan's Ghanche district stands almost aloof with its beautiful valleys and settlements inhabited by the most hospitable locals and river irrigated lands. The central location in the district is Khaplu, which is a beautiful landscape with high summits, flowing blue waters and waterfalls. The people of this small settlement on the bank of River Shyok, are warm and loving, as they were centuries before, when travellers, wandering through Yarkand and Saltoro, first arrived here.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1176091/the-serenity-of-ghanche-of-mountains-rivers-and-valleys>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,180 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2.973 million (1998 population census), Male, 1.850 million; Female, 1.832 million

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Sardar Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

Ethnic Groups: Gujjars, Jats, Mughal, Rajputs, Sudhan, Awan, Qureshi, Pashtuns, Shins, Ladakhi, Baltis etc.

Religious Groups: Sunni, Ahlehadith, Shia, Nurbakhshi, Christians, Qadianis, Hindus

Languages: Punjabi, Hindko, Pahari, Kashmiri, Balti, Puriki, Shina

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Source: Azad Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www. www.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: 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: Pir Karam Ali Shah

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Sources: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk>, & website of the Balwaristan National Front, <http://www.balawaristan.net>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Disclaimer

PoK News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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