

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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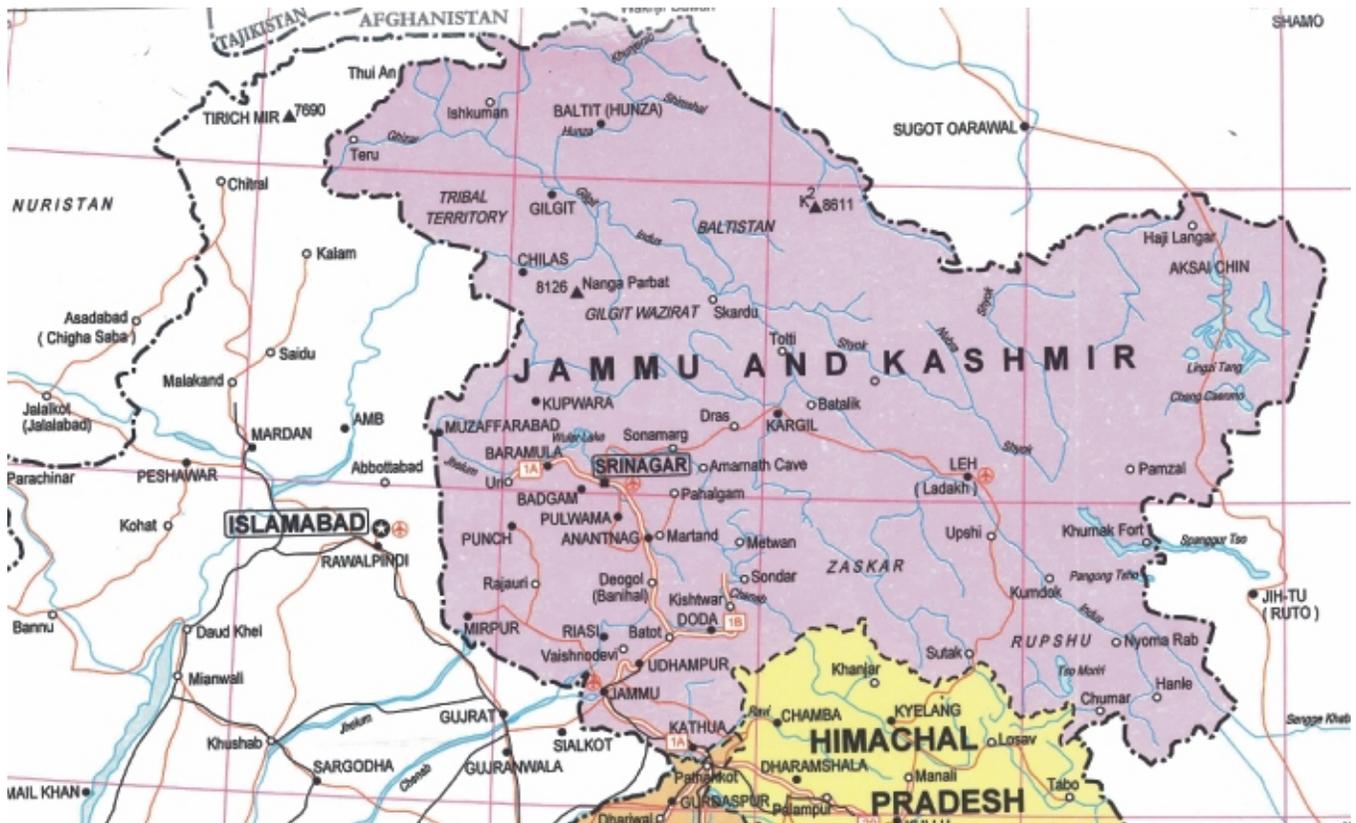
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Elections for the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly will be held around June-July 2016. The incumbent Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) led government in the region is due to complete its five year term by that time and is currently preparing in full force to participate in the electoral fray. On the other hand, there is the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) beaming with confidence after winning decisively in the June 2015 Gilgit Baltistan elections. The PML-N led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is leaving no stone unturned to ensure it comes to power in the other part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) as well. Apart from this, the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI)-AJK is also looking geared up for the polls especially after the appointment of Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry as the regional chief of the party. Earlier, Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry was a member of the PPP and formerly Prime Minister in the so called AJK during 1996-2001. Due to his strong political base, his induction into the PTI-AJK chapter has reportedly given a lot of boost to the party's hope in the upcoming 'AJK' elections. Meanwhile, campaigning by several parties, mainstream and regional, is underway in the entire 'AJK' and members of diaspora have begun to pour in their native places to campaign and motivate people to judiciously exercise their franchise during the elections.

The 'AJK' Election Commission is undertaking the task of updating the voter list in the entire region. In few places, the number of voters has actually come down instead of going up. The discrepancy in the figures regarding the number of voters as compared to the previous registration hints at the possibility of dereliction or a deliberate wrong exercise, as indicated in some of the reports included in the current issue.

While no decision has yet been taken on granting a provincial status to Gilgit Baltistan, speculations are rife on what would be the final outcome of the long standing deliberations taking place in Islamabad. The ongoing debate on granting a constitutional status to Gilgit Baltistan has been mostly linked to the upcoming multi-billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Local apprehensions are based on the fear whether the lack of constitutional status would deprive the region of possible benefits that may accrue from the strategic high-potential economic corridor in future.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“JKIF bewails Pak parties 'meddling' in AJK”

The Nation, March 1, 2016

The Jammu & Kashmir Intellectual Forum (JKIF), a non-political entity, stated that the increasing influence of the Pakistani political parties in Azad Jammu & Kashmir could harm the status of Kashmir state and its relationship with Pakistan. The JKIF Executive Council expressed these views in its quarterly meeting held in Mirpur under the president ship of its Chairman Abdul Majeed Mallick.

It discussed the current regional, national and global affairs in the backdrop of the Kashmir conflict and internal political affairs of AJK. Speaking on the occasion, JKIF chairman stated that latest political developments in AJK envisaging induction of various political parties of Pakistan in Azad Jammu & Kashmir on the pattern of induction of Indian political parties in Jammu & Kashmir have raised serious apprehensions. He added that in disguised manner, Pakistan and India were discreetly moving towards the division of the Jammu & Kashmir state. "Thus, in view of the such situation, the concerned political leadership on both the sides of the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir are of the view that in order to shed fears and apprehensions, Pakistan must advise its entire political leadership to keep away from the internal power politics of AJK," Mallick noted.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Mar-2016/jkif-bewails-pak-parties-meddling-in-ajk>

“Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, Mushtaq Minhas joins PML-N”

The News, March 1, 2016

The federal government announced developmental package of rupees 47 billion for Azad Kashmir with the claim that it would bring mark change in the condition of the area and help in mitigating miseries

of the people of Azad Kashmir who have been suffering at the hands of corrupt administration. The pronouncement has come in reception that was held to greet distinguished Kashmiri leader Mushtaq Minhas joining of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) on March 2. Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Chaudhry Barjees Tahir, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Political Affairs Dr. Asif Saeed Kirmani, former chief minister Azad Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider, Shah Ghulam Qadir, Abdul Khaliq Wasi and Noreen Arif, Chairman Evacuee Property Trust Board Siddiaq ul Farooq and Mushtaq Minhas addressed the gathering.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/102264-Mushtaq-Minhas-joins-PML-N>

Shabbir Mir, “Delayed devolution: G-B CM says elections to be held after amendments to LG law approved”

The Express Tribune, March 1, 2016

Local government elections will be held soon after amendments to the Gilgit-Baltistan Local Government Act 2014 are approved. This was stated by G-B Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman while speaking to journalists in Gilgit on February 29 “The legislation will be complete once amendments to [the legislation] are tabled and approved by assembly for polls,” he noted. A series of amendments were suggested by lawmakers during a seminar organised last week by Gilgit-Baltistan Policy Institute (GBPI) – a non-profit organisation set up in 2009 to explore policy options for the region.

The organisation also drafted the LG Act 2014 after holding a series of consultations with stakeholders in G-B and Islamabad. According to Rahman, G-B was “an ideal region to govern” because it is not overpopulated and has sufficient natural resources. “But what is lacking is effective legislation,” he

added. “We will hopefully achieve this soon.” The CM also stated people's participation was central to the formulation of policies in a democratic regime.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1056650/delayed-devolution-g-b-cm-says-elections-to-be-held-after-amendments-to-lg-law-approved/>

“FPSC authorised to make recruitment in GB”

Dawn, March 2, 2016

The Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) on March 1 unanimously approved an amendment to the Gilgit-Baltistan Public Service Commission Act, 2016, authorising the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) to make appointments to the vacant posts in the region till establishment of its own commission. The bill seeking amendment was tabled by parliamentary law secretary Aurangzeb Khan. Mr Aurangzeb informed the lawmaker that appointments on 750 posts could not be made for the last four and a half years due to non-establishment of GB Public Service Commission. Under the GB Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009, GB is empowered to have its own Public Service Commission. The parliamentary law secretary informed the house that FPSC refused to recruit candidates to 700 vacant posts above grade 16 on the premise that after enactment of the law for formation of a Public Service Commission in GB by the GBLA it had no authority to make recruitments in the region. He also stated the FPSC refusal forced GBLA to insert a provision in the Gilgit-Baltistan Public Service Commission Act, 2016, to authorise FPSC to carry out recruitments in GB. Deputy Speaker Jafarullah Khan chaired the GBLA's 7th session.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243023/fpsc-authorized-to-make-recruitment-in-gb>

M A Mir, “AJK elections: UK city mayor campaigns for education promotion”

The Express Tribune, March 2, 2016

As general elections draw closer, potential candidates and activists have started the campaign in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Potential candidates are striving to approach voters to win their hearts as well as a seat in the state legislative assembly. The elections will be held in 2016

summer. Kashmiris from abroad have started arriving in their native areas to motivate voters to vote for honest and clean candidates in the forthcoming elections. Councillor Mohammad Hanif, Mayor of High Wycombe in the United Kingdom (UK), is also on a mission to motivate people of his native Dadyal town of Mirpur district to 'vote for education promotion.' “I want to remind the people in the area to bring change through the ballot in coming elections. I want to motivate them to vote only for those candidates who want to promote education,” Hanif added. When asked why he was meeting people on the agenda of education only while avoiding health and other civic issues, the mayor noted that developed countries like the UK still have education on the priority number one to three.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1057389/ajk-elections-uk-city-mayor-campaigns-for-education-promotion/>

Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai, “Getting Kashmir's priorities to the table”

Pakistan Today, March 2, 2016

With India and Pakistan engaging in small talk, holding hands and contemplating (maybe) a discussion of their differences over Kashmir, there is an exigent need for Kashmiris to weigh in carefully and review again any opportunities to participate in such discussions as proprietors of their own nation. Most importantly, who will represent them at the negotiating table? There is an urgent need now for Kashmiris to press upon India and Pakistan the importance of approaching this issue constructively rather than like some game of chess at a local parlour. The foolhardiness of repeating the same gambit over and over again eventually becomes costly as well as unsuccessful. The opportunity for real change is at hand. The first challenge, as we know, is for Kashmir to get to the table. The second and equally important challenge is the ability of any agreement on Kashmir to be acceptable to the broad spectrum of the people of Jammu and Kashmiris in the Valley, Ladakh, Jammu, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Kashmir was at the table, at least in name, when late Prime Minister Nehru had an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah which is known as the “1952 Delhi

Agreement”. One may disagree with the political philosophy of Sheikh Abdullah but the fact remains that he was the most charismatic leader that Kashmir ever produced. But even that powerful leader could not sell this agreement to the people of Kashmir. In fact the Sheikh later tried to distance himself from it and eventually was arrested.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/03/02/comment/getting-kashmir-priorities-to-the-table/>

“8 Kashmiri cross to other side of LoC, 14 PaK residents arrived”

Kashmir Watch, March 2, 2016

Eight people from Kashmir crossed over to Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) while 14 people from there arrived here in Karwan-i-Aman Bus that was introduced in 2005 when late Mufti Muhammad Sayeed was the Chief Minister of the State. Officials informed CNS that 14 residents from Pakistan administered Kashmir including 8 females arrived in Kashmir through bus while 8 people from Indian administered Kashmir reached Muzaffarabad the capital of PaK to meet their relatives.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/8-kashmiri-cross-to-other-side-of-loc-14-pak-residents-arrived/>

“Nadra to expedite preparation of CNICs in AJK”

Pakistan Herald, March 2, 2016

National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) has agreed to increase the number of its mobile registration teams in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). At a high-level meeting held at Kashmir House in Islamabad on March 1, it was also decided that Nadra mobile registration teams would work under the supervision of the AJK Election Commission. The meeting was convened by the AJK Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal to seek technical assistance from Nadra to prepare new electoral rolls for the upcoming AJK polls.

Under the recent electoral reforms, production of the CNIC or B-form is mandatory to cast vote. The meeting decided that the Election Commission, in line with its schedule for compiling electoral rolls,

would provide draft (preliminary) lists to Nadra for comparison with its database.

<http://www.pakistanherald.com/news/9877/02-march-2016/nadra-to-expedite-preparation-of-cnics-in-ajk>

“Survey for Azad Jammu and Kashmir electoral rolls from tomorrow”

The Express Tribune, March 4, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission (AJKEC) is scheduled to carry out a door-to-door survey to revise electoral rolls from March 5 to March 20. “During the survey people will be asked to present their computerised national identity cards (CNICs) for registration of their votes for finalising the electoral rolls,” stated AJKEC Secretary Mian Nayeemullah. He also stated that any person present at home could show the CNICs of his family members to election commission officials to register the votes. He, however, stated that valid CNICs and birth certificates were mandatory for registration. “After March 20, data would be shared with NADRA for verification before publishing the final electoral lists,” he further stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1059012/survey-for-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-electoral-rolls-from-tomorrow/>

Shoaib-ur-Rehman Siddiqui, “PM Attaches Due Importance to Development of Gilgit-Baltistan: Dar”

Business Recorder, March 4, 2016

Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar stated on March 4 that Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif attached due importance to development of Gilgit- Baltistan (G-B). He noted all possible cooperation would be extended to G-B for economic development and welfare of the people. He also stated that undoubtedly G-B has great tourism potential which should be fully exploited for good of the people. Ishaq Dar stated this at a meeting with the Governor of G-B Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan. The Governor G-B was accompanied by Mrs Rania Attiqah Ghazanfar, member legislative assembly, G-B on the occasion. The Governor apprised the Finance Minister about

the economic profile of G-B and briefed him about some problems being faced by people of the area, especially in the wake of the Attabad lake disaster. He further stated the incident badly affected tourism which was the major source of income for the people.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/pakistan/282689-pm-attaches-due-importance-to-development-of-gilgit-baltistan-dar.html>

“Construction along KKH banned”

The Nation, March 4, 2016

The Mansehra district administration banned all type of construction within radius of 60-foot on both sides of the Karakorum Highway. The district administration issued directives to assistant commissioners and town municipal officers not to allow construction within the radius of 60-foot along the highway, which is being expanded as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. The district administration stated that strict action will be taken against violators.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Mar-2016/construction-along-kkh-banned>

“Education: Public and private sectors must deliver quality, says Majeed”

The Express Tribune, March 6, 2016

AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on March 5 called for the delivery of quality education, from primary to university level by private and public sector educational institutes. He was speaking as chief guest at the annual prize distribution ceremony of Kashmir Model College. Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST) Vice Chancellor Dr Habibur Rehman, College Principal Muhammad Nazir Chaudhry, and Education Director Shaheen Ashie also addressed the ceremony. The ceremony was held to award shields and certificates of merit to outstanding academic and co-curricular performers from the previous school year. The Prime Minister paid rich tributes to founder of Kashmir Model College and Chaudhry Muhammad Yousaf, a former AJK education secretary.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1060168/education-public-and-private-sectors-must-deliver-quality-says-majeed/>

“Rs1 bn land procured for Bhasha Dam”

The News, March 7, 2016

The government procured land worth Rs1 billion from its own resources for the Diamer Bhasha Dam and work would start by the end of this year. After Tarbela and Mangla dams, nothing was done for water storage and today Pakistan has 30-day capacity and upon completion of the Diamer Bhasha it will reach 90 day according to official sources in the Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms. Diamer Bhasha Dam, one of the most important energy projects of the country is likely to be part of the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The project is life and death for Pakistan as it would not only generate 4500 MW of electricity but would also serve as a huge water reservoir for the country. After a decade or so, the country is expected to face acute shortage of water, so in order to prevent food starvation this project would be developed at any cost. The government assigns the highest priority to Bhasha Dam because a serious water crisis is looming in next five to ten years which will be much bigger than electricity crisis. The foundation stone of Diamer Bhasha Dam a gravity dam on River Indus in Gilgit Baltistan was laid on October 18 2011. Upon completion, Diamer Bhasha Dam would be the highest roller compacted concrete (RCC) dam in the world. The dam site is situated near a place called Bhasha in Gilgit Baltistan s Diamer District hence the name. Diamer Bhasha Dam would produce 4,500 megawatts of electricity through environmentally clean hydropower generation, store an extra 8 500 000 acre feet (10.5 km³) of water for the country that would be used for irrigation and drinking, extend the life of Tarbela Dam located downstream by 35 years and control flood damage by the River Indus downstream during high floods. It will have a height of 272 meters spillway with fourteen gates each 11.5 m x 16.24 m.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/103431-Rs1-bn-land-procured-for-Bhasha-Dam>

Ejaz Karim, “Mainstreaming Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily Times, March 7, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan has a unique history, a complicated

present and an ambiguous future. It has been known by several names due to its geographic location, strategic importance and natural beauty. In ancient history the region was called Balawaristan or Boloristan. Some people see it as the 'Roof of the World', 'Garden of Eden' and as the 'Last colony of the World'. Recently, the region is officially renamed Gilgit-Baltistan from Northern Areas, one of its several names! Since the inception of Pakistan, rights of people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been compromised between local incompetent political leadership and federal governments. Packages were designed time and again to create the impression of self-rule in Gilgit-Baltistan. Even as the order was named as empowerment, it failed to give the region a well-defined political status or any form of representation in the federal structure of Pakistan. All these so-called empowerment and self-government presidential orders are neither legally binding nor empowering local people. So, names and portfolios have been changed time and again due to international pressure or indigenous struggle of nationalists. Successive governments and political parties have been promising and claiming reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan, but no democratic participation exists at the grassroots level.

The popular elected Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly cannot debate issues related to defence, finance, internal security and foreign affairs or question the conduct of the judges of the Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court and the Chief Court. The budget is passed by the assembly but prepared by bureaucrats in Pakistan. The chief secretary in the ministry of Kashmir affairs is a non-local bureaucrat and the governor a political appointee. Three generations of the region passed away without identity and remaining disenfranchised. Realistically, Pakistan has two options: either to grant maximum autonomy to the region or make it an independent state. Indeed this is high time for Pakistan to clear the ambiguity over Gilgit-Baltistan and give maximum autonomy to the local legislative assembly with proper check and balance mechanism.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/07-Mar-2016/mainstreaming-gilgit-baltistan>

“Bilawal to expose 'pre-poll rigging' in AJK”

The Nation, March 8, 2016

Pakistan People's Party chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is upbeat to expose the alleged pre-polls rigging by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his team in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir ahead of the June polls, close aides stated on March 7. The AJK Election Commission announced that general elections will be held on June 26. Around 220,000 voters from Azad Kashmir and 610,000 Kashmiri refugees in Pakistan will exercise their right to vote, according to the official data. The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has already announced candidates to run for the AJK Legislative Assembly elections while the PPP is collecting applications from the aspirants. The PPP blames the PML-N government of pre-polls rigging. The party claims the visits of Prime Minister Sharif and his cabinet members before the June elections were designed to attract voters. The PPP believes announcement of development projects at this point was tantamount to buying votes. Recently, the incumbent lawmakers from AJK held a protest demonstration in front of the parliament building. They demanded of Prime Minister Sharif to sack Minister of Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir. The protesters, led by AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, also accused the federal government of misusing funds of Kashmir Council for pre-poll rigging.

<http://nation.com.pk/newspaper-picks/08-Mar-2016/bilawal-to-expose-pre-poll-rigging-in-ajk>

Bashaarat Masood, “PoK government bans two books written by Maqbool Bhat”

The Indian Express, March 8, 2016

The Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) government banned the sale and display of two books authored by pro-independence leader Mohammad Maqbool Bhat, who was hanged inside Tihar Jail three decades ago. Bhat's two books are among the 16 books on Kashmir history that have been banned by the PoK government. “The sale, display and import of these books is banned,” PoK based newspapers noted quoting the official handout of PoK government. “The books have been banned by the president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.” The books

include two written by the pro-independence Kashmiri leader and founder of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Mohammad Maqbool Bhat, who was hanged by the government inside Tihar jail in 1984. Bhat's books that have been banned are 'Mein Kaun Hoon? (Who am I)' and 'Srinagar Jail Say Farar Ki Kahani (The story of escape from the Srinagar jail)'. One of the banned books is on the “life and struggle” of Bhat and authored by Shams Rehman. In past, the PoK government had also banned a book that comprised of letter written by Bhat to his friends and relatives.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pok-government-bans-two-books-written-by-pro-independence-leader-maqbool-bhat/>

“People Not Getting Basic Medical Facilities in Gilgit”

ANI News, March 8, 2016

Access to health care is a basic human right, but people of Gilgit Baltistan have been deprived of it for several decades. The government hospitals in the region make a mockery of the health care as basic machinery and medical professionals are missing. It has been 68 years since Pakistan occupied the region forcibly against the will of the people. And successive governments continue to pay lip service to the health care, forcing people to opt for costly private treatment. Ironically, not many people can afford private treatment, risking their lives. If poor medical services are not enough, the region is grappling with a severe shortage of potable water. As a result, people are battling several waterborne diseases. In the absence of an effective sewage system and treatment plants, waste is directly emptied into surface water bodies from where the drinking water is sourced, leading to severe water contamination. Today, when other countries are improving the health sector by introducing latest technologies, people of Gilgit Baltistan lack basic medical facilities because of the negligence of authorities in the region. The people of Gilgit Baltistan continue to suffer due to the inability of the government to develop medical infrastructure of the region.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/50369-people-not-getting-basic-medical-facilities-in-gilgit.html>

“Per capita water availability decreases in 2016”

Business Recorder, March 9, 2016

WAPDA Advisor (Diamer Basha Dam) Dr Izhar-ul-Haq stated that per capita water availability in the country has decreased to 1,032 cubic meter in 2016 from 5260 cubic meter in 1951 due to rapid growth in population and depleting water storage capacity of the reservoirs because of the natural phenomenon of sedimentation. He was briefing a delegation of Command and Staff College, Quetta who visited WAPDA House and attended a briefing on the water and power sectors. The delegation was led by Lieutenant Colonel Salman Tajwar. WAPDA Managing Director (Administration) Muhammad Ashraf Khan and senior officers of WAPDA and PEPCO were also present on the occasion. He also stated that Pakistan can store only 10 percent of its annual rivers flow against the world average of 40 percent. He further stated that WAPDA is committed to optimum development of water and hydropower resources in the country and working on a comprehensive strategy for exploitation of hydro resources in Pakistan. He also appraised the delegation about various hydel projects being implemented by WAPDA. He further added that 1410 MW-Tarbela 4th Extension and the 969 MW-Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project will start generating electricity in 2017. In another briefing, General Manager (Revenue and Commercial Operation) PEPCO Muhammad Saleem briefed the delegation on power sector.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/23847/>

“Last two years: Over 1,500 officers recruited in AJK”

The Express Tribune, March 10, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (AJKPSC) recruited more than 1,500 young officers in different government departments during the last two years. AJKPSC Chairman Justice (retd) Khawaja Shahad Ahmad told AJK President Sardar Yaqoob Khan during a meeting. The AJKPSC chairman along with other members met the president. “The inductions have been made on merit and none of them have any political backing and even a good number of them belong to

poor families of remote areas of AJK,” Justice Ahmad stated. The AJK president agreed to enhance perks and salaries of AJKPSC members equal to that of Punjab Public Service Commission members. The president also directed the AJK chief secretary to allot the present President Secretariat to the AJKPSC for official use.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1062659/last-two-years-over-1500-officers-recruited-in-ajk/>

Shabbir Mir, “PPP to table bill to protect indigenous property”

The Express Tribune, March 11, 2016

Pakistan People's Party plans to introduce a bill in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly to give ownership rights of barren land to locals. The development came weeks after the G-B government allocated a vast area of barren land in Diamer district to the army to ensure security for the China-Pakistan Economic Project (CPEC). “We have done [our] homework and the bill will be tabled in the next session,” PPP G-B President Advocate Amjad Hussain noted. The bill will be titled the G-B Village Common Land (Shamilat Deh) Regulation Act 2016. Amjad was the first person to oppose the government's move to allot land to the CPEC. He asked authorities to pay compensation for the land acquired. “This bill will ensure compensation for locals if the government acquires their land,” stated Amjad who drafted the bill. He also plans to table it in the assembly through Imran Nadeem, PPP's lone ranger in the 33-member house. He further stated that of total Shamilat or inclusion, 15% will be reserved for common purposes and 5% for the poorest villagers under the management of the union council. Once enacted into a law, the Nautor Rules 1980 and previous Nautor rules, which he stated were against human rights, will stand repealed. Nautor laws deal with the utilisation of wastelands.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1063519/keeping-it-local-ppp-to-table-bill-to-protect-indigenous-property/>

“AJK polls: PML-N, PPP using govt funds to woo voters: Sultan”

The Express Tribune, March 11, 2016

Former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime

minister Barrister Sultan Mahmood accused Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) of distributing Rs1 billion to influence the AJK general elections. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf AJK chapter president was addressing a press conference on March 10. “We have solid evidence that the PML-N has distributed Rs1 billion among proposed candidates under the name of a special development fund (SDF) to influence voters,” Mahmood stated. He claimed that Sharif will release the second instalment of Rs2 billion in a couple of weeks. He also accused Pakistan People's Party of using government resources to win the polls. He appealed to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Mustafa Mughal to take notice of the “illegal distribution” of Kashmir Council funds among PML-N ticket holders.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1063640/ajk-polls-pml-n-ppp-using-govt-funds-to-woo-voters-sultan/>

“Vote is Trust of Nation: AJK CJ”

Kashmir Observer, March 11, 2016

The Chief Justice of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Supreme Court Muhammad Azam Khan called upon the civil society businessmen, traders, media and other segments of the society to play their role for fair and free elections by casting their votes to just candidates, noted a press release March 10. Addressing the seminar “sanctity and importance of vote and our obligation” arranged by AJK Election Commission the Chief Justice stated that vote is a trust of nation and a voter should use this right according to the efficiency and ability of the candidate. He also stated that sanctity of voter is possible when voter lists are correct and up to dated. Chief Election Commissioner Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal while expressing his views stated that true use of vote can bring an honest and capable leadership into power and corruption can be defeated this way. He emphasised that all citizens should register their votes and exercise it in best interest of the nation on the polling day. He also advised the voters to cast votes on their permanent address otherwise they have to get confirmation from registration officer at temporary address.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/10/vote-is-trust-of-nation-ajk-cj/>

“CPEC will be used by Pak, China to exploit Gilgit-Baltistan resources”

Business Standard, March 12, 2016

Leaders and activists from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan stated that the proposed multi-billion dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through Gilgit is a design by Pakistan and China to exploit the region's resources. "I believe that the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is illegal and the worst form of state terrorism. In this case, the states of China and Pakistan - the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not in need of the economic corridors of exploitation - they are longing for their basic human rights and their political liberties", stated Junaid Qureshi, an Amsterdam-based Kashmiri writer, who was originally a resident of Srinagar. The CPEC is a collection of projects currently under construction at a cost of US dollar 46 billion which are intended to upgrade and expand Pakistani infrastructure. The corridor is considered to be an extension of China's ambitious proposed 21st century Silk Road initiative. CPEC is considered central to China-Pakistan relations, and its central importance is reflected by China's inclusion of the project as part of its 13th five year development plan. Should all the planned projects be implemented, the value of those projects would be equal to all foreign direct investment in Pakistan since 1970.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/cpec-will-be-used-by-pak-china-to-exploit-gilgit-baltistan-resources-116031200239_1.html

Aziz Ali Dad, “Colonial transactions in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, March 13, 2016

For the last few months, news about making Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) a province of Pakistan has been making the rounds. This development is eliciting different responses from various sections of society in Pakistan, GB and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Unfortunately, the whole debate about the status of GB hinges upon treaties and agreements made during the colonial era. In fact, it is because of such

transactions that GB has been pushed into a liminal political position. That is why it is imperative to expose the debilitating impact of the transactions between the ruling powers in the colonial period on the colonised region of GB. The Dogra ruler of Kashmir made inroads into Baltistan in the 1830s and completely subjugated it by 1842. Later, the Dogras brought Gilgit under their control. This was a prologue to a process whereby the power of local principalities started to wane and external forces intruded deeper into the region. The colonial rulers were different from the local ones because they introduced a system that was meant to safeguard colonial interests in the region. In the nineteenth century, GB was still an unchartered territory for the Dogras of Kashmir and the British. Therefore, the British embarked upon a project of mapping and collecting information about the region. At the same time, Tsarist Russia also started charting the unknown territories of High Asia. The intersection of political power and treaties with cartography laid the foundation for the formation of new entities, including unified Kashmir.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/104848-Colonial-transactions-in-Gilgit-Baltistan>

“British foreign secretary's remarks on Kashmir draw flak”

The News, March 13, 2016

Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) Secretary General Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani stated that the remarks of British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond advising Pakistan to delete Kashmir from the Pakistan-India dialogue are unfortunate and a misdirected wisdom of a British parliamentarian, noted a press release. Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani, secretary general of London-based JKCHR, who is currently visiting Pakistan, stated that in fact Philip Hammond has caused an offence to nearly a million British Kashmiris and many more living in Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well as Jammu & Kashmir and others as a diaspora all over the world. JKCHR Secretary General reminded the British foreign secretary that his proposal violates the character of British policy on Kashmir since November 1947 before the matter featured at the

UN in January 1948. It was British Prime Minister who in paras 3 and 4 of his telegram addressed to the Prime Minister of Pakistan suggested a reference to be made to International Court of Justice. Dr. Nazir Gilani further stated that on his return to UK his organisation will pursue the matter and seek an apology from the British parliamentarian for his no holds barred politics.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/104777-British-foreign-secretarys-remarks-on-Kashmir-draw-flak>

“Chinese Army spotted along LoC in Azad-Kashmir: TOI”

The Nation, March 13, 2016

After frequent incursions in Ladakh area, Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops have been spotted at forward posts along the Line of Control (LoC) on the Pakistani side of Kashmir, ringing alarm bells in the security grid. The Army spotted presence of senior PLA officials at the forward posts opposite Nowgam sector in North Kashmir after which some intercepts of Pakistani army officers suggested that the Chinese troops have come to create some infrastructure along the LoC, sources stated on March 12.

Though the Army has officially maintained complete silence on the issue, they have been constantly updating various intelligence agencies about the presence of PLA troops along the Line of Control, sources noted. The PLA troops were first spotted in the later part of 2015 and ever since their presence was witnessed opposite Tangdhar sector as well. In this area, Chinese government-owned China Gezhouba Group Company Limited has been building a Jhelum-Neelum 970 MW Hydrel power project. The hydrel project is being built in response to India's Kishanganga power project being built in Bandipore of North Kashmir. The Indian project is designed to divert water from the Kishanganga River to a power plant in the Jhelum River basin and will have an installed capacity of 330 MW. Construction on the project began in 2007 and is expected to be complete this year.

<http://nation.com.pk/international/13-Mar-2016/chinese-army-spotted-along-loc-in-azad-kashmir-sources>

“Cheques' distribution starts in Diamer”

The Nation, March 14, 2016

District Administration Diamer started distribution of compensation cheques of land acquired for the construction of Diamer Basha Dam Project in Gilgit-Baltistan. According to Radio Pakistan, Rs 8.35 billion would be distributed among the affectees of Goharabad circle. Additional Deputy Commissioner Diamer Dildar Malik gave away cheques to the affectees at a function held in Chilas. Speaking on the occasion, he noted 8.35 billion rupees would be distributed among the affectees of Goharabad circle. He also stated the administration has so far given an amount of twenty-nine billion to Dam affectees as land compensation

<http://nation.com.pk/business/14-Mar-2016/cheques-distribution-starts-in-diamer>

“Diamer-Bhasha Dam: process of land acquisition to be completed this year: minister”

Business Recorder, March 15, 2016

Minister of State for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali stated that the process of land acquisition for Diamer-Bhasha Dam will be completed in 2016 and construction work would start in 2017. The minister informed the National Assembly on March 14 while replying to supplementary questions of the members. He also stated that negotiations are underway with different banks for financing of the project but the government is resolved to fund it from its own resources if no financing was available. He further stated that China did not offer financial assistance to Pakistan for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam. He also stated that the electricity of 9000MW to 10000MW would be added to the national grid station by 2018. He noted that power load shedding in the country would be overcome at the end of 2018. Answering a question about Nandipur Power Project, the minister noted that this project is generating 425MW of electricity. He added that many projects of power generation are on-going and most of the projects would be completed in 2017. He stated work on Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project is in full swing and the project is expected to start generation by August 2016.

<http://www.brecorder.com/fuel-a-energy/193/25568/>

Shabbir Mir, “Matter of priorities: 'G-B govt welcomes legislation on women, children'”

The Express Tribune, March 14, 2016

The G-B government agreed to welcome all moves to legislate on matters involving women and children in the assembly. This was stated by Minister for Housing and Works Dr Muhammad Iqbal at a news conference in Gilgit on March 13. Iqbal made the comments in response to Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) decision to introduce a bill in the G-B Assembly to provide ownership rights of barren land to locals. The announcement had been made on March 10 by PPP G-B President Advocate Amjad Hussain. “The PPP leadership is misleading people by raising such issues,” Iqbal noted. “The real issues for which legislation [is required] involve the torture and exploitation faced by women and children, honour killing and deforestation. And we will support [lawmakers] if they bring a bill to this effect.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065122/matter-of-priorities-g-b-govt-welcomes-legislation-on-women-children/>

“Majeed Complains To Bilawal of Federal Ministers Interference”

Pakistan Observer, March 14, 2016

Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Prime Minister/President PPP AJK Ch Abdul Majeed on March 13 held a meeting at Zardari House and discussed the strategy for upcoming general elections in Azad Kashmir. Interfering by federal ministers in AJK, misuse of Kashmir Council funds and schedule of Bilawal's speeches to public gatherings during his tour to AJK also came under discussion in the meeting. The Prime Minister while briefing the Party Chairman told that the party was in a position to win the elections again on its performance during past five years. He also brought to notice of party head the intervention in AJK affairs by federal ministers and their abusive language against party leadership. While briefing the Party Chairman Ch Abdul Majeed told that Muslim League (N) ministers were interfering in AJK affairs and they tried to destroy the peaceful political atmosphere of Azad Kashmir. He also stated that Development Funds of Kashmir

Council were also being misused in an act of pre poll was rigging. The Prime Minister assured Bilawal Bhutto that AJK government would fulfil its obligations regarding holding of fair and free elections and full cooperation will be extended to Election Commission in this regard.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/14/majeed-complains-to-bilawal-of-federal-ministers-interference/>

“Dr. Abdul Jalil, CPEC and Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, March 15, 2016

Back in 1979, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) saw the commissioning of Karakoram Highway (KKH) linking the area with the rest of the country. Being an extremely difficult, inaccessible and seismically active terrain, it was almost a herculean task to reach GB about forty years ago. The mighty mountains of Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Himalayas meeting at a point about forty kilometres to the west of Gilgit city always posed a great challenge to the climbers and road builders. It was simply beyond imagination of the people of GB that they shall ever be linked with their own country and the world around by a road wide enough to accommodate a loaded truck bringing in goods and other essential commodities to this remote, isolated mountainous landlocked area. If somebody had a chance to visit GB about forty years ago and happens to revisit now, he will probably not believe his own eyes and shall be amazed to see the tremendous tangible development that has occurred in all spheres of life during the last four decades. During the late President Ayub Khan's era in 1960, a team of Pakistan Army engineers carried out the initial survey and prepared lay out of the road along the banks of River Indus. While preparing the feasibility report the American experts were also consulted. It is reported that one American expert was so disappointed on seeing the mountains and narrow valleys that he was heard as saying, 'We just cannot see a road pushed through these terrible mountains and if we manage to build one, we shall probably spend the rest of our lives to keep it open'.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/03/15/comment/cpec-and-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Avoiding nuclear war: 'India, Pak must resolve

Kashmir issue"

The Express Tribune, March 15, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) Azad Kashmir president and former prime minister of Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood stated that in order to avoid a nuclear war, Pakistan and India must peacefully solve the Kashmir issue as soon as possible. Addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club on March 14, he noted that peace in the sub-continent is related to the resolution of the Kashmir issue. He also stated that no formula can be successful without taking the people of Kashmir in confidence. He further added that in the upcoming election in Azad Kashmir, PTI would not make an alliance with any political party and demanded that the elections be conducted in the presence of the army. Mahmood reiterated that Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with the UN resolutions.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065730/avoiding-nuclear-war-india-pak-must-resolve-kashmir-issue/>

"PPP (SB) announces contesting AJK polls"

The Nation, March 16, 2016

Pakistan People's Party on March 15 announced contesting the forthcoming general elections in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Making the announcement, PPP (SB) AJK President Munir Hussain Chaudhry communicated to reporters at Sanwala House that his party would field its candidates in all the 49 constituencies of the AJK Legislative Assembly in elections scheduled for July 2016. "The high command has formally given a go-ahead to the party to participate in the general elections", Munir claimed and added that the party's top leadership including Chairperson Ghanwa Bhutto, Secretary General Dr Ghulam Hussain and Ms Fatima Bhutto would visit the AJK soon after the announcement of the elections schedule to address public rallies during the party's election campaign. He underlined that the meritorious services of the Bhutto family for the Kashmir cause - especially Kashmiris right to self-determination, were crystal clear.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/16-Mar-2016/ppp-sb-announces-contesting-ajk-polls>

Shabbir Mir, "G-B welcomes death warrant of terrorist"

The Express Tribune, March 17, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government on March 17 welcomed the decision to award death penalties to terrorists involved in the massacre of foreign climbers at the Nanga Parbat base camp in 2013. The support from G-B government came a day after Army Chief General Raheel Sharif signed death warrants of 13 militants convicted of terrorism-related offences, including the massacre of 10 foreign mountaineers at a base camp of Pakistan's second highest mountain. The execution will be the first for an act of terrorism in G-B. Irfan Ullah Khudayar was condemned to death by a military court for the attack on foreign climbers. A faction of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed credit for the attack, which shocked the world and scarred the country's climbing tourism industry. On that fateful night of June 24, 2013, gunmen dressed in Gilgit Scouts uniforms stormed the camp and shot dead 10 foreign hikers – including one American with dual Chinese citizenship, two other Chinese, three Ukrainians, two Slovaks, one Lithuanian, one Nepalese and a Pakistani guide.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1067396/media-talk-g-b-welcomes-death-warrant-of-terrorist/>

Jamil Nagri, "Beleaguered militant blows himself up in GB"

Dawn, March 18, 2016

A suspected militant allegedly involved in a number of high-profile terrorist attacks blew himself up while security forces were trying to arrest him in Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan on March 17. His wife and a daughter and two soldiers of Pakistan Army were killed in the blast. Hazrat Noor was believed to be a senior leader of the militants blamed for the 2013 Nanga Parbat base camp attack which had left 10 foreign mountaineers and a local guide dead. He was also a suspect in the killing of Shia passengers travelling from Rawalpindi to Gilgit in 2012 and on August 2013 attacks on a convoy in Chilas in which a senior superintendent of police and two army officers were killed. According to

sources, security forces launched an intelligence-based operation in Tarel valley, near Chilas town, for the arrest of Hazrat Noor. Security personnel surrounded his house and when they were trying to move close to it, the militant opened fire on them from inside the house.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1246409/beleaguered-militant-blows-himself-up-in-gb>

“NADRA Mobile Teams Start AJK-Wide Drive to Issue CNICs”

Pakistan Observer, March 18, 2016

The mobile teams of National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) started Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) wide drive to issue CNICs to make afresh the computerized voters lists for the upcoming general elections. Mirpur Deputy Commissioner Amjad Iqbal noted on March 18 that the mobile teams also rushed in Mirpur district for issuance of CNICs to the eligible citizens for their onward entry in the computerized voters lists being prepared for facilitating maximum number of the eligible voters to exercise their right of franchise in AJK legislative assembly elections – 2016, due to be held by July 25, 2016. The District administration advised those citizens, who have not so far obtained the CNIC, to get themselves registered with NADRA for ensuring their enlistment in voters lists.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/18/nadra-mobile-teams-start-ajk-wide-drive-to-issue-cnics/>

“Imran Khan to visit AJK on March 28”

The Nation, March 19, 2016

Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan is scheduled to visit Azad Jammu and Kashmir on March 28. The party organization started its preparations to give him warm welcome. Sources noted that Imran Khan during his visit to AJK would address a big public rally in Bagh, a district of AJK and call on the local party leaders. “All matters of Ex-Minister for public works AJK Col (Retd.) Muhammad Naeem Khan have been settled with the leadership of PTI and he ultimately decided to leave PML-N and join PTI. He was likely to meet with Chairman PTI Imran Khan before public rally while he would formally announce his

joining in the party on March 28 public rally,” sources added. Sources further noted that on the special directives of Col (Retd.) Nasim Khan, his son called on PTI's President AJK chapter and former PM AJK Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry at his residence in Islamabad and settled all matters in this regard.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/19-Mar-2016/imran-khan-to-visit-ajk-on-march-28>

“Majeed wants supremacy of rule of law in AJK”

Pakistan Observer, March 20, 2016

The Prime Minister of Azad government of the State of Jammu & Kashmir Ch Abdul Majeed has directed the civil administration to take every possible step for establishment of rule of law and provision of justice to common people. While addressing to divisional administration at PM House the AJK Premier directed the administration to fully cooperate with election commission staff in preparation of voter lists and other assignments. The Prime Minister also directed to monitor the on-going development projects and complete them within fixed time without compromising on quality of work. “All civil servants make sure their presence in offices and follow the rules of business,” he stated. The Premier noted that people would be given full respect in government offices and that their complains would be addressed properly. With reference to Mirpur City issues, the Premier directed the Mirpur Development Authority and district administration to focus on cleanliness and beautification of the city. He also directed for early resolving of shortage of the drinking water in Mirpur. AJK Minister for Mangla Dam affairs Muhammad Hussain Sargala, divisional commissioner Raja Amjad Ali Pervez, Chairman MDA Ch Javed Iqbal, administrator district council Ch Mushtaq and officials were present on the occasion.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/20/majeed-wants-supremacy-of-rule-of-law-in-ajk/>

Virender Gupta, “Reign of Oppression in PoK and Indian Response”

The Northlines, March 21, 2016

The whole of Jammu and Kashmir, including Gilgit

and Baltistan acceded to India after the then Maharaja of the State signed the Instrument of Accession and in consequence to that the whole territory of Jammu and Kashmir included in the territorial jurisdiction of Indian Union as per Article 1 of the Indian Constitution. The Maharaja signed the instrument of accession, with the hope that Indian forces would be able to defend the state from Pakistan aggression would be able to vacate the area occupied by the invaders and the integrity of the state would be restored. The Indian Parliament by its resolution of 1994 again reasserted that whole of Jammu and Kashmir that existed before Pakistan's invasion in 1947 is part of India and pledged to get vacated that part of it which had been forcibly occupied by Pakistan. It may be mentioned that Pakistan occupied part of Jammu and Kashmir was divided by Pakistan into Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan with its well-planned game plan to keep "Kashmir" into focus before the international forum. Therefore, it is obligatory on the part of Indian Union to have a watch on the wellbeing of the people residing in that part of its territory, which is in forceful occupation of the invader, in this case Pakistan. The available information indicates that the conditions of the people residing there are critical. People are leading a miserable life. Their freedom is curtailed, their fundamental human rights are denied and reign of oppression is hanging on their destiny.

<http://thenorthlines.com/readMore.aspx?nid=72283>

“AJK EC extends voters' registration deadline”

Pakistan Today, March 21, 2016

A spokesman of AJK Election Commission stated that the deadline for registration of votes has been extended until March 25, due to heavy rains and land sliding, in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He noted that new voter lists are almost complete but in some areas the process is partially affected due to heavy rain. According to the spokesperson, the prepared draft of voter lists will be sent to NADRA for verification. The schedule issued on 28th February 2016 has been cancelled and the schedule will be re-announced after the commission receives verified voter lists from NADRA. He informed that the EC

has written a letter to government asking them not to transfer the staff deputed for preparation of voter lists without prior consent of the chief election commissioner.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/03/21/national/ajk-ec-extends-voters-registration-deadline/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan: Progressive Marginalization”

NewKerala.com, March 21, 2016

The latest round of elections was widely acknowledged to be a farce. Local as well national political parties alleged that there was large scale riggings. PTI Chairman Imran Khan, while rejecting the election results, stated on June 9, 2015, that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had followed his decade-old habit of installing his own umpires. Earlier, on June 2, 2015, reacting to the elections in GB, the Indian Government, which has its stated position that the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir which includes the regions of Gilgit and Baltistan is an integral part of India, had observed that the electoral process was an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its forcible and illegal occupation of the regions. We are concerned at the continued efforts by Pakistan to deny the people of the region their political rights, and the efforts being made to absorb these territories. The fact that a Federal Minister of Pakistan is also the Governor of Gilgit Baltistan speaks for itself, the official spokesperson in India's Ministry of External Affairs, Vikas Swarup, noted. Not surprisingly, according to September 29, 2015 video report, people in large numbers in several areas of PaK, including Muzaffarabad, Gilgit and Kotli, were seen protesting against the Pakistani establishment, demanding freedom, raising pro-India slogans, and asking for jobs and other rights. The Pakistan military, according to the video, was using brutal force to suppress their voices. Referring to the video, Jitendra Singh, Minister of State in India's Prime Minister Office (PMO) observed that this is nothing new in PoK. There has been unrest in the region. People are being oppressed. Pakistan has been holding sham elections in the region. Despite decades of military subjugation, demographic engineering, and the ceding of some territories and influence to China,

Islamabad has failed to win the support of the people of GB. Further militarization of the region perpetuates a strategy of indiscriminate use of force to silence local voices, even as local populations are progressively marginalized.

<http://www.newkerala.com/news/2016/fullnews-38550.html>

Niloofer Qureshi, “No 'Azadi' in 'Azad' Kashmir?”

Daily Kashmir Images, March 22, 2016

At a time when the issue of 'azadi' (freedom) in Jammu & Kashmir is gaining momentum, the government of Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) has gone and banned sixteen books published by National Institute of Kashmir Studies. This move has once again demonstrated that in what is officially known as 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) the citizens don't actually enjoy 'azadi'. What makes this decision of the PaK government even more disturbing is that all these banned books that have been written by Kashmiris and amongst them there are two ('The story of Escape from Srinagar Prison' and 'Who am I') that have been authored by the icon of Kashmir struggle Maqbool Bhat. Islamabad has always boasted of the people of PaK being absolutely content as they enjoy the 'azadi'. Yet, the AJK Interim Constitution Act 1974 belies Islamabad's claims as Part 2 of Section 7 of the same stipulates that “No person or political party in Azad Jammu and Kashmir shall be permitted to propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to the ideology of State's accession to Pakistan.” If accession to Pakistan is genuinely the ultimate and unanimous desire of all Kashmiris then where was the requirement of including this undemocratic section in the AJK constitution which disallows freedom of expression?

<http://dailykashmirimages.com/Details/105282/no-%E2%80%98azadi-in-%E2%80%98azad-kashmir>

Sarosh Rao, “AJK elections: Judiciary throws weight behind EC”

The Nation, March 22, 2016

The AJK Judiciary will fully support and facilitate the Election Commission to hold the forthcoming general elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

scheduled to be held in July 2016 in a free, fair and transparent manner. AJK Chief Justice Azam Khan stated at a seminar titled “Democratic Elections - Standard and Challenges,” hosted by the state-run Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST) on March 21. Newly-inducted Chief Election Commissioner, who is the AJK High Court Chief Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal, MUST Vice Chancellor Dr Raja Habibur Rehman, Dr Amman Ullah of Punjab University, Prof Maj (r) Shehzada Ahmed, Station Director Azad Kashmir Radio Mirpur Muhammad Shakeel, eminent Kashmir journalist Altaf Hameed Rao and Press Club's President Muhammad Zafeer also addressed the seminar. Speakers emphasized on the people of AJK to ensure their enthusiastic participation in the upcoming AJK Legislative Assembly elections to pave the way for the establishment of a true democratic government. They also passed various healthy proposals for the AJK Chief Election Commissioner to ensure that the general elections are held in a free, fair and transparent manner.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Mar-2016/ajk-elections-judiciary-throws-weight-behind-ec>

“PML-N to Lay Foundation of Developed, Prosperous Kashmir: PM”

Business Recorder, March 22, 2016

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on March 22 stated the PML-N government would lay the foundation of a developed, prosperous and enlightened Azad Kashmir. He stated if the people of Kashmir voted the PML-N to power, its government would leave no stone un-turned to bring Azad Kashmir at par with the developed cities of Pakistan through reforms in the areas of infrastructure, health, energy and education. The Prime Minister expressed these views while talking to former President and Prime Minister of AJK and Senior Vice President of PML-N, Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, who called on him at the PM House. The upcoming elections in AJK and the party matters were discussed in detail during the meeting. The Prime Minister noted he had special attachment and affection for Kashmir and the Kashmiris, adding, whenever he visited Kashmir he got much love and respect from the people of Kashmir and he

valued it. The Prime Minister lauded the sacrifices and services of the family of Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan in the Kashmir freedom struggle and stated Sardar Sikandar being a notable political figure in Kashmir was an asset for PML-N. Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan told the Prime Minister that by seeing the excitement of Kashmiri people he could foresee the convincing victory of PML-N in the upcoming AJK elections. He noted the people of Kashmir were highly appreciative of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif who by using his wisdom and political sagacity had highlighted the issue of Kashmir at international level.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/pakistan/286581-pml-n-to-lay-foundation-of-developed-prosperous-kashmir-pm.html>

“Bilawal blasts govt's apathy towards rain-affecteds”

The Nation, March 22, 2016

Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari criticised the federal government for doing nothing while the rains and hailstorms coupled with land-sliding and avalanches are playing havoc with people, livestock and crops in several parts of the country. Last week, PPP chairman alerted the federal and other provincial governments about the predicted heavy rains and hailstorms and their negative effects on the farmers and areas prone to land-sliding and avalanches asking for preparing themselves in advance to face the situation and mitigate sufferings. “It seems the government is in deep slumber and ignored my calls for pre-emptive measures to save human lives and standing crops.”. The federal government extended no support to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir where heavy rains caused land-sliding and damaged so many houses in many areas. Bilawal pointed out that there were reports of 79 deaths and around 100 injuries but the actual losses could not be estimated with accuracy as many of the affected areas were inaccessible following the mud-sliding and avalanches where first aid relief had not reached so far.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Mar-2016/bilawal-blasts-govt-s-apaty-towards-rain-affecteds>

M A Mir, “Health hazard: Over 70% spring water in AJK contaminated”

The Express Tribune, March 23, 2016

A study has found that spring water, the only source of water for 60 percent population of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), is being polluted by sewage lines. A survey conducted by the AJK Environmental Protection Agency (AJK-EPA) stated that more than 70 per cent spring water is being contaminated by sewage lines running close to springs. “It is hard to avoid the contamination. The government should provide tap water to avoid the rising threat of waterborne diseases,” noted Akram Aziz, a hygiene expert. Aziz suggested that the government must introduce rain harvesting projects in the remote areas where people have no excess to tap water and springs are impure. Besides the sewage lines, tons of liquid and solid waste being dumped in rivers and streams is also polluting the water resources in the region. More than 30 per cent villagers in AJK walk one or two kilometres a day to fetch the water for household use. The AJK government has been claiming to spend millions of rupees on water supply schemes over the years but there has been no visible change on the ground. Experts say deforestation and unplanned constructions were also a threat to the fresh water resources in AJK.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1071375/health-hazard-over-70-spring-water-in-ajk-contaminated/>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B court issues arrest warrant for Shaheen Air's deputy MD”

The Express Tribune, March 24, 2016

The Supreme Appellate Court (SAC) of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on March 24 issued non-bailable warrant for Shaheen Air International deputy managing director for not showing up in court. The decision was taken by a full bench headed by Chief Judge Justice Rana Muhammad Shamim while hearing a suo-moto notice on operation of flights between Gilgit and Skardu. The SAC, which is the apex court of G-B, stated it could direct the government to suspend Shaheen air flights for an indefinite period if its deputy MD Faisal Rafiq failed to appear in the court in the next hearing on

March 25. During the hearing, PIA representatives assured the court that the airline would operate flights to Skardu from March 28, for which reservation of seats was in progress. Four additional flights between Islamabad-Skardu and Gilgit would also be started in compliance with the court orders, PIA officials added. Meanwhile, a representative of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) stated the Pakistan State Oil (PSO) should be provided land for fuel storage in Gilgit and Skardu. Deputy Attorney General Javed Akhtar, Advocate General Sher Madad, Deputy Secretary Aviation Farooq Hasan and Obaid Abbasi were also present in the court besides PIA Sales Manager Muhammad Raza.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1072400/g-b-court-issues-arrest-warrant-for-shaheen-airs-deputy-md/>

“On the bench: Raja Sadaqat appointed to AJK high court”

The Express Tribune, March 25, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government appointed senior advocate Raja Sadaqat Hussain as a permanent judge of the AJK High Court (AJKHC). According to a notification issued by the Law, Justice, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Department on March 24, AJK President Sardar Yaqoob Khan in consultation with the The Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court chief justice and on the advice of the Kashmir Council made the new appointment in the judiciary, bringing the total strength to five. AJKHC five-member bench includes Chief Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal, Justice Aftab Alvi, Justice Raja Sheraz Kiyani, Sardar Azhar Saleem Babar and Justice Hussain.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1072309/on-the-bench-raj-sadaqat-appointed-to-ajk-high-court/>

“AJK delays legislative assembly elections”

Dunya News, March 25, 2016

Azad Jammu Kashmir legislative assembly elections have been delayed by Chief Election Commissioner AJK Mustafa Mughal on March 24 as he has stated that it is impossible to conduct elections unless and until the commission is provided with complete voters list by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), reported Dunya News. AJK legislative assembly

elections have been delayed and are likely to be held in July instead of June 2016. Mustafa Mughal stated that voter's registration has not been completed due to heavy rainfall and land sliding. March 25 is the due date for voter registration while April 12 for the constituencies of migrants. It is not possible to release election schedule without final publication of voters list by NADRA. He also stated that due to the Islamic month of Ramazan in June, it is certainly not possible to conduct elections in the very month. The whole procedure may take more than a month, he added.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/329097-AJK-delays-legislative-assembly-elections>

“AJK elections: PML-N to contest all seats: Kirmani”

The Express Tribune, March 25, 2016

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Dr Asif Kirmani stated on March 24 that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will field its candidates in all constituencies of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) in the upcoming general elections. Party tickets would be awarded to suitable candidates in consultation with the parliamentary board on merit, he noted in a statement. “The parliamentary board will hold its meeting soon,” Kirmani stated expressing confidence that the PML-N would win the elections by a two-thirds majority. He also stated that AJK would be made a developed and prosperous state as per vision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The PML-N government would promote good governance in AJK after coming into power, the adviser stated, adding that provision of facilities like modern education and improved healthcare services to the people of AJK was the top priority of PM Nawaz Sharif.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1072394/ajk-elections-pml-n-to-contest-all-seats-kirmani/>

“PIA Announces Schedule for Four More Flights for Skardu, Gilgit”

Business Recorder, March 25, 2016

Pakistan International Airlines announced to start four more flights between Islamabad and Gilgit Baltistan. According to schedule, which will come

into effect from March 28, Islamabad to Skardu and Gilgit flights will operate on every Monday and Thursday as reported by Radio Pakistan. PIA has made the decision on the direction of Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit-Baltistan to facilitate people of the area.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/industries-a-sectors/286888-pia-announces-schedule-for-four-more-flights-for-skardu-gilgit.html>

Khaled Ahmed, “How free is 'Azad Kashmir'?”

The Indian Express, March 26, 2016

On February 13, trouble started brewing in Pakistan-administered Kashmir called Azad Kashmir (AJK). The ruling party in Islamabad, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) ruling in Azad Kashmir clashed at Nakial, in Kotri district, the hometown of the AJK prime minister. A PPP convention became a procession and challengingly passed through a PML-N stronghold, also venue of a convention. It began with foul language, leading to rock-throwing which soon escalated to firearms, resulting in one dead and seven injured. Given the polarised parliament in Islamabad, TV channels soon convulsed with the harsh language of agitation and walkouts. AJK PM Chaudhry Abdul Majeed hurled his own challenge at his counterpart, PM Nawaz Sharif, and was soon getting flak from Islamabad ministers on behalf of their boss. It soon became a rough debate about “interference” from Islamabad. Once again, Pakistan is highlighting the “constitutional relationship” between Islamabad and AJK, with the latter threatening to approach army chief, General Raheel Sharif. The most interesting aspect of the legal governance of Azad Kashmir is the myth expressed in the epithet “azad”, as opposed to the “non-azad” part administered by India across the Line of Control. The constitution of Azad Kashmir gives it a lot of symbolic independence for instance, it has a prime minister whereas Indian Kashmir only has a chief minister. But if you read Article 21 of the 1974 Interim Constitution Act passed by the 48-member Azad Jammu and Kashmir unicameral assembly in 1974, describing the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council, it becomes apparent that the AJK PM is as completely

subordinated to the PM of Pakistan as the CM of Indian-administered Kashmir is humbled through constitutional amendments.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/azad-kashmir-india-pakistan-pakistan-peoples-party-ppp-nawaz-sharif/>

“Muzaffarabad: Voters' numbers slashed in new electoral lists”

Dunya News, March 26, 2016

Startling new revelations were made on March 25 in Azad Kashmir's electoral lists as the numbers of voters were found to be slashed. The initial process of preparation of electoral lists for the general elections in Azad Kashmir has been finalized, however, instead of an increase in the voters, their numbers were found to be decreased by thousands. According to the details, the numbers of voters in the upcoming elections of Azad Kashmir were found to be less in many of the constituencies as compared to the elections of 5 years ago. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) stated that according to the rules, only factual voters were included in the lists due to which the numbers of voters has reduced instead of increasing. According to the ECP records, voters' numbers have decreased by 23,000 in Rawalakot city's constituencies, by 10,000 in Abbaspur, by 20,000 in Hajeera, by 27,000 in two constituencies of Mirpur, by 23,000 in two constituencies of Kotli and more than 21,000 bogus voters were taken out from electoral lists in two constituencies of Muzaffarabad. Citizens, along with expressing reservations over previous elections, have expressed their confidence over current ECP. ECP stated that the electoral lists will be sent to NADRA for verification in first week of April after all reservations over the list have been satisfied.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/329274-Muzaffarabad-Voters-numbers-slashed-in-new-elect>

Maqbool Malik, “PML-N in solo flight for AJK elections”

The Nation, March 28, 2016

The ruling party PML-N has decided to contest the forthcoming elections for 49-seat Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu Kashmir without any

electoral alliance after its failure to win over crucial support of the Muslim Conference. Well-placed political sources noted that PML-N's decision comes after its efforts to woo former AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, head of the Muslim Conference that enjoys significant public support. Sources also stated that Sardar Attique refused to enter into electoral alliance with the PML-N out of his frustration over his opposition from some leaders of the PML-N AJK chapter who are not in favour of PML-N-MC alliance allegedly because of their political differences with Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan. According to sources, few central leaders of the PML-N have approached Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan of the Muslim Conference to discuss prospect of an electoral alliance but their efforts faltered because of deep political differences. One of the differences, sources claimed is the PML-N's list of its candidates it wanted to field in the constituencies which are previously regarded the strongholds of the Muslim Conference. "The PML-N will contest the AJK election independently", Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Special Assistant on Political Affairs Dr. Kirmani told a charged political gathering in Muzaffarabad on March 26, a development largely being seen by the political observers in the context of PML-N's failure to secure the support of the Muslim Conference.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/28-Mar-2016/pml-n-in-solo-flight-for-ajk-elections>

“AJK PM for Collective Efforts to Eliminate Terrorism from its Roots”

Business Recorder, March 29, 2016

The Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Ch Abdul Majeed stated that government and nation should fight terrorism collectively with more unity and strength so enemies of Pakistan could be eliminated soon. He was addressing a Committee meeting held on March 29. Maj. Gen. Muhammad Kalim Asif, minister for education Mian Abdul Waheed, Chief Secretary Jalal Skindar Sultan Raja, Inspector General Police Bashir Memon, Secretary Finance, Malik Muhammad Sadiq and others civil and military officials attended the meeting. Prime Minister stated we

have no option but to win the war against terrorism, forecasting the elimination of this threat from every corner of the country. "Terrorism will be eliminated from every nook and corner of the country," the Prime Minister noted. The meeting was held to review the progress on the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) and discuss matters related to overall law and order situation in the AJK. In the wake of the Peshawar tragedy, he stated, the NAP was approved by the entire political leadership and the ultimate decision of the state was to eliminate terrorism from the country. The government was committed to implement the NAP in true letter and spirit. The police was being strengthened by procuring necessary equipment.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/politics-a-policy/287420-ajk-pm-for-collective-efforts-to-eliminate-terrorism-from-its-roots.html>

“AJK AB probes corruption in MDA”

The Nation, March 30, 2016

The AJK Accountability Bureau (AJK AB) has confiscated the official record pertaining to four cases of allotments of plots by Mirpur Development Authority (MDA), following a series of corruption complaints against MDA officials. A police party of AJK Ehtesab Bureau, led by DSP Sardar Ghalib, confiscated four files containing the official record related to the allotment of different plots, at the Estate section of the MDA. "The AJK Accountability Bureau initiated the action on various complaints about the alleged massive irregularities, malpractices and corruption, in the official record of the allotment of different nature of plots in the housing sectors of the MDA," stated Investigating Police Officer of AJK Accountability Bureau Sardar Muhammad Ghalib when contacted. "Yes, we have confiscated four files related to the allotment of plots from Estate Section of the MDA", the DSP noted. He also stated that the Accountability Bureau took the action in response to the series of complaints lodged by the masses including the allottees and other related stakeholders. DSP Sardar Ghalib further stated that one of the confiscated file is related to the allotment of Plot No 63 in Sector D/3 East Mirpur. It was purchased by complainant Mrs Mussarat Jabeen for

Rs2.1 million from Latif in 2008. The complainant asserted that neither the aforementioned plot was transferred to her nor she was given the possession of the plot by the MDA, despite passage of over eight years. The investigation officer stated that the town planner, overseer and the sitting head clerk of the Estate Section of the MDA have been summoned in Accountability Bureau Mirpur office on March 30 to probe into the confiscated record of the allotments.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/30-Mar-2016/ajk-ab-probes-corruption-in-md>

“PPP to take part in AJK polls”

The Nation, March 31, 2016

Pakistan People's Party decided to take active part in Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections. A meeting headed by PPP Punjab president Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo decided that the party would field candidates on two seats which are allocated for Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting also decided to lead a big caravan of party leaders and workers to Ghari Khuda Buksh to take part in the death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on April 4. The meeting was also attended by Tanvir Ashraf Kaira, Khurram Latif Khosa, Abid Hussain Siddiqi, Aslam Gill, and others. The participants shared suggestions on AJK elections and evolved strategy to put up a strong and winning fight. Manzoor Wattoo was optimistic that the party would win both the seats. He directed the party office bearers and the workers to fully prepare for the polls and mobilise the party voters. “The PPP at the moment is fast regaining roots in Punjab, thanks to the brave and courageous leadership of Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari,” Wattoo stated, adding that ZA Bhutto was great leader of the Islamic world as he united Muslims from all over the world and made defence of the country impregnable by giving it nuclear capability. “It was Bhutto who encouraged students, workers, women and farmers to speak for their rights and make their identity known to the world,” he added.

<http://nation.com.pk/lahore/31-Mar-2016/ppp-to-take-part-in-ajk-polls>

S. A. Khan, “Unlocking the Potential of Religious Tourism across LOC in Jammu Kashmir”

Ground Report, March 31, 2016

In South Asia, Jammu & Kashmir has been a key center of learning Sanskrit and Persian and a unique place of multi ethnic and religious harmony where early Indo-Aryan civilization has originated and flourished. Unfortunately, the people from both sides of the line of control have been deprived of the opportunity to visit key places of religious significance and to participate in cultural and religious events/ Uras/festivals such as Ziarat Mubarak of Moi-e-Muqqadas Rasool Pak (SAW) at Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar, Uras Mubarak of Hazrat Pir e-Shah Ghazi Qallender (Damri Wali Sarkaar) and Uras Mubarak of Hazrat Mian Muhammed Bukhsh at Khari Sharif, Mirpur; Uras Mubarak of Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Mohiuddin Ghaznavi, Nerian Sharif, Azad Kashmir and many other annual events of religious significance for Muslims of Jammu Kashmir. Similarly, members of the non-Muslim communities Pandits, Sikhs and Buddhist from Indian administered Jammu Kashmir are unable to visit their place of religious significance in Pakistan administered Azad Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan such as Sharda Temple in Neelum valley and Dehra Sahib, Rawalakot, and Buddhist Monasteries in Shigar, Baltistan and Napura Stupas and Kargah Buddhist Settlement in Gilgit and other historic places across the region.

<http://www.groundreport.com/unlocking-potential-religious-tourism-across-loc-jammu-kashmir/>

Economic Developments

“AJK PM Lays Foundation Stone of Rs350MN 33KV Grid Station”

Business Recorder, March 1, 2016

AJK Prime Minister Ch. Abdul Majeed laid the foundation stone of Rs. 350 million 33-KV Grid Station in Mirpur district to electrify the remote and far flung areas with supply of uninterrupted power to the masses. The Grid station is being constructed at Sahaar village of Chakswari town near Mirpur by the State Electricity Department with the coordination of the Islamabad Electric Supply Corporation (IESCO). The project will not only help in to electrify rest of the remote and far-flung areas of Mirpur division but also ensure the smooth and stable electricity to the consumers in remote areas of Sahaar, Samani, Charhoi and Kala Dub areas of Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimbher districts. AJK Prime Minister Ch. Abdul Majeed stated that his government was determined to furnish the remote and far flung areas in the rural belt with all latest amenities of life including water and power at par with the urban areas of AJK. Chief Engineer (South) Raja Ejaz Ahmed Khan apprised the audience, on this occasion, the salient features of the project, to be completed in stipulated time frame. AJK minister for Electricity Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and Secretary Electricity AJK govt.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/282151-ajk-pm-lays-foundation-stone-of-rs350mn-33kv-grid-station.html>

“Code Inaugurates Gilgit Baltistan Youth Development Project”

Phone World.com, March 4, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan Youth Development Project is the pilot phase of a radical initiative taken by Code and Marafie Foundation to develop and empower individuals of this region. These individuals were graduates and students with an IT background, selected through a rigorous process and trained for

two months in several IT courses. The project is exceptional for the fact that it has focused on enabling these individuals in becoming leaders in the future and empowered them to be self-sustainable. It has also paved way for establishing incubation centers in the remote areas of Pakistan. The Chief Guest of the event was Mr. Zulfiqar Ahmad, the executive director of National Vocational & Technical Training Commission. It was attended by several accomplished industry professionals particularly the heads of USTATED, UNDP, PPAF from the international non-profit organizations, leading professionals of PTCL, and Zong from telecom sector and heads of IT department from GIKI and NUML from the education sector.

<http://phoneworld.com.pk/code-inaugurates-gilgit-baltistan-youth-development-project/>

“ERRA completes 10,002 projects in Azad Kashmir, KPK”

Dispatch News Desk, March 6, 2016

Earthquake Reconstruction, Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) has completed 10,002 projects in Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK), and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), worth billions of rupees to help improve quality of life. In a monthly review meeting, different projects were discussed in detail. The meeting was presided over by ERRA, Acting Deputy Chairman Brig. Abu Bakr Amin Bajwa and reviewed progress of completed and under construction projects. Deputy Chairman congratulated ERRA staff and also those who worked devotedly in the past with collective efforts which made possible to complete over ten thousands projects. He expressed his commitment to complete task assigned by the Government of Pakistan and the confidence shown by international community. Director General (DG) State Reconstruction Rehabilitation Authority AJK (SERRA), DG Pakhtunkhwa Reconstruction

Rehabilitation Authority (PERRA), Projects Directors, ERRA officials and NESPAK representatives also attended the meeting. Acting Deputy Chairman stated that despite facing funds problems we are committed to complete ongoing projects especially educational institutes. "It is unfortunate that Balakot site has not been handed over to ERRA and we stand by the people of old Balakot to develop safe housing projects with all civic amenities," he further stated.

<http://www.dnd.com.pk/erra-completes-10002-projects-in-azad-kashmir-kpk/107200>

"BIPL, BAJK sign agreement"

Business Recorder, March 9, 2016

Bank Islami Pakistan Limited (BIPL) and Bank of Azad Jammu Kashmir (BAJK) signed the home remittance agreement for facilitating the transfer and disbursement of the remittances of Overseas Pakistanis in Azad Jammu Kashmir. With this agreement, Bank Islami aims to facilitate the Home Remittance Business in AJK as well as in the adjoining areas. It will create fast and efficient service to the people of AJK through the banking network of BAJK.

<http://www.brecorder.com/money-a-banking/198/23882/>

"State development: Investment in AJK tourism urged"

The Express Tribune, March 10, 2016

Additional Chief Secretary of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Government Dr Tashfeen Khan has stated that AJK has a huge potential in tourism, hydropower generation and minerals sector investment which could be exploited by investment through private-public partnership. While speaking to a visiting delegation of National Defence College Islamabad, Additional Chief Secretary Dr Tashfeen Khan noted that AJK was ideal region for investment as security situation was ideal as compared to other provinces and tribal area, noted a press release issued on March 9. He added that "dual weather and scenic beauty of Kashmir has a special attraction for tourists last summer we attracted millions of tourists only in Neelum Valley and Rawlakot."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1062045/state-development-investment-in-ajk-tourism-urged/>

Rizwan Khan, "PTA & MoITT Extend Android Development Training for Women to AJK"

Phone World.com, March 11, 2016

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Ministry of IT & Telecom have organized a special training program for female IT Developers under its women empowerment initiative of Smart-Pakistan. The Android Development Training for women IT Developers is being conducted in University of Poonch, Rawalakot Azad Jammu & Kashmir. More than 40 IT fresh graduates and Students enrolled themselves in the training. The five day training session will end on March 11, 2016. Dr. Syed Ismail Shah-Chairman PTA expressed towards PTA and MoITT, full support to women developers attending the course of the Government of Pakistan in bringing them at par with the rest of the IT World.

<http://phoneworld.com.pk/pta-moitt-extend-android-development-training-for-women-to-ajk/>

"AJK Uplift Plan of Socio-Economic, Tourism Sector Evolved"

Pakistan Observer, March 25, 2016

The AJK government has chalked out an integrated plan for the uplift of socio-economic sector through the promotion of trade and tourism sectors in Azad Jammu Kashmir. The plan primarily involves the promotion of adventure tourism in Azad Jammu Kashmir, official sources stated. The sources further noted on March 24 that in order to materialize the idea of making AJK an attractive hub of prospective tourism activities in South Asia, an international tourism conference will be held in Mirpur in the near future. Various world fame tourism organizations will be invited to attend the scheduled global moot on tourism. The sources revealed that in order to promote the technical education in AJK, a Technical Education Board would also be set up in the near future. The government has also directed the state-controlled Azad Jammu Kashmir Logging & Sawmills Corporation to set up Artisan Schools at Mirpur and Muzaffarabad for producing the skilled man- power

related to the wooden Industry. The sources further revealed that district level Chambers of Commerce & Industry was being set up in all rest of the districts of Azad Jammu Kashmir for the sake of accelerating the trade and commerce activities across the Azad area. The AJK government officials are trying to accelerate the work for the execution of the projects like Export Processing Zone, Industrial Estates and the proposed Mirpur International Airport at Mirpur, the major industrial and business hub in AJK.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/25/ajk-uplift-plan-of-socio-economic-tourism-sector-evolved/>

Shabbir Mir, “Groundswell of support: G-B CM receives green signal for projects”

The Express Tribune, March 27, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif asked Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman to go ahead with development plans and has also vowed to increase the budget in this regard if required. Speaking to Rahman over the telephone, the PM stated the Rs50 billion Gilgit-Skardu Road project will soon be tendered and the federal government plans to provide additional financial support, if the need arises. The prime minister voiced his satisfaction over the peaceful environment in the region and asked the CM to work for the welfare of the people. As part of the government's policy to boost tourism in the region, the PM asked the regional government to submit a feasibility report on chairlift projects in Deosai plains, Rakaposhi

and Rama Astore. “Nawaz also enquired about the progress on ongoing hydropower projects and cancer and cardiac hospitals and assured support for their early completion,” Rahman stated before reporters in Gilgit on March 26. “We will submit a detailed progress report to the prime minister now,” he further stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073406/groundswell-of-support-g-b-cm-receives-green-signal-for-projects/>

“Intra-Kashmir trade suspended on Pakistan Day”

The Nation, March 24, 2016

On the occasion of Pakistan Day, intra-Kashmir trade at Muzaffarabad-Srinagar and Tetri Note Chakkan da Bagh crossing points remained suspended. Travel and Trade Authority (TTA) Azad Kashmir kept suspended intra-Kashmir trade at two crossing points on March 23. Dozens of trucks carrying goods could not cross Line of Control. Srinagar-Muzaffarabad trade will be restored on March 24. Intra Kashmir trade will take place on March 25 as per daily routine if the weather remains clear otherwise trade will be suspended on March 25 as well, it was noted.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/24-Mar-2016/intra-kashmir-trade-suspended-on-pakistan-day>

International Developments

“Exiled PoK leaders protest at UN office against Pak atrocities”

Big News Network.com, March 11, 2016

Exiled leaders from Sindh, Baluchistan, Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan staged a protest against Pakistan for its oppressive policies and human rights violations at the United Nations headquarters. "In Pakistan, the oppressed nations - Sindhis, Baloch, and Pashtuns, people from Gilgit, Baltistan and from Pakistan occupied Kashmir - are facing one of the worst human rights atrocities," Lakhu Luhana, Chairman of World Sindhi Congress noted. "The purpose of this protest is to make UN and the international community aware of these human rights violations, and to request them to save us from these atrocities," he added. The protesters also submitted a petition in the United Nations office in Geneva demanding an end of atrocities by Pakistan. Meanwhile, exiled Baloch leader Mahran Marri stated it is the responsibility of the United Nations to take note of the human rights violations being faced by people in Punjabi dominated Pakistan.

"We are standing united and appeal to the UN to take a note of the human rights violations in Pakistan," Marri stated. Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, Secretary General of United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP) stated there are common issues and they would like to strengthen and send message to Pakistan government to change their attitude and respect the human rights of people. The activists from PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan also joined the protest and opposed the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) calling the multi-million dollar project as a design by Pakistan and China to exploit their resources. "The people of Gilgit have no placement in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) committee. The locals have no hope of getting any revenue with this

project. We also don't have any expectations of establishment of an economic zone in the area," Senge Hasnan Sering, Director of Gilgit Baltistan National Congress told ANI. "The CPEC lane from Gilgit-Baltistan is only a strategic lane as similar to Karakoram highway, so it will not provide any economic benefit to the local people", Senge added.

<http://www.bignetwork.com/news/242096181/exiled-pok-leaders-protest-at-un-office-against-pak-atrocities>

“China Dodges Response to Its Soldiers Moving To Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir”

NDTV, March 15, 2016

China on March 14 dodged a response to reports that its troops are being moved to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to help guard its plans for new economic corridor that will give it much shorter access to Middle East oil and more. "We are closely watching these developments," a top Indian government official noted on March 13, adding, "We have a fair idea of the number of Chinese troops that are likely to be positioned there."

The Indian Army has spotted senior Chinese military officials at forward posts along the Line of Control in Northern Kashmir, news agency Press Trust of India reported on March 13. "Chinese military personnel are being used to build infrastructural projects, including repairing the crucial Karakoram Highway," top military commanders stated. The 1300 kilometre long Karakoram Highway, one of the highest paved international roads at a height of 1500 feet, forms the last leg of the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor connecting Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to Xinjiang province.

<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/china-dodges-response-to-its-soldiers-moving-to-pakistan-occupied-kashmir-1287018>

“Institute for Gilgit-Baltistan Studies president seeks UN intervention in PoK human rights issue”

First Post, March 17, 2016

UN's intervention has been sought to address the grievances of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), especially the lack of constitutional rights and educational facilities, particularly for women and children. The issue was raised by Senge Sering, president of the Institute for Gilgit-Baltistan Studies during his address to the 31st Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva, Switzerland. "The lack of constitutional rights, autonomy and viable and accountable governance structures challenges the educational efforts and sustainable growth of Gilgit-Baltistan," Sering stated on March 16. "We urge the special attention of UN Rapporteurs and Experts on Child Rights,

Cultural rights, right to Education, Right of Indigenous Peoples to support the people of Gilgit-Baltistan by addressing these grievances," he stated. Sering alleged that despite progress in basic education, including quality and access to primary school education in other regions of Pakistan, significant barriers persist in regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan. This requires targeted and concerted action at the national as well as international level in order to achieve the stated millennial goal of education for all.

http://www.firstpost.com/world/institute-for-gilgit-baltistan-studies-president-seeks-un-intervention-in-pok-human-rights-issue2681172.html?utm=FP_CAT_LATEST_NEWS

Other Developments

Shahazad Anwar, “Green Pakistan Project: Meeting fails to decide on implementation”

The Express Tribune, March 26, 2016

The first meeting of the Green Pakistan Project (GPP) failed to take any tangible decision to implement the project after three federating units showed reluctance to bear 50 per cent cost of the initiative. Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid chaired the meeting held at the ministry on March 25. The project, a brainchild of the prime minister, aims to revive and boost forest cover besides taking steps for conservation of wild life. According to the cost-sharing formula, after contributing 50 per cent share, Punjab will get Rs2.5 billion, Sindh Rs2 billion, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Rs1.5, Balochistan and AJK and Rs1 billion each, FATA and G-B Rs700 million each, the Capital Development Authority Rs500 million, and the Climate Change Ministry Rs100 million. According to a source, AJK, FATA and G-B representatives flatly opposed the 50 per cent cost-sharing formula, saying that their status was not equal to provinces, all their development projects were funded by the federal government, and that they did not have their own financial resources to bear the cost.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1072921/green-pakistan-project-meeting-fails-to-decide-on-implementation/>

“Collapsed highway's rehab yet to start”

The Nation, March 26, 2016

The collapsed portion of Mirpur-Kotli highway passing along Mangla Reservoir Rim near

Khaliqabad and Shinwari Hotel will be rebuilt soon, official sources stated. "The case for approval of Rs814.627 million for rehabilitation of Mangla Reservoir Rim near Khaliqabad and Shinwari Hotel and Rs433.287 million for rehabilitation of Mangla Reservoir Rim along Mirpur Bypass Road is being processed," stated General Manager and Project Director of Mangla Dam Organization (MDO) Ghulam Sarwar Memon while addressing a meeting. He stated that Wapda is making sincere efforts in consultation with the stakeholders to meet the targets already shared with Indus River System Agency (IRSA) for maintaining the reservoir level at 1120 feet SPD from March 21 to 31, 2016. Earlier, IRSA chairman Rao Irshad Ali Khan visited various places at the site. The consultants of Nespak briefed him on the work methodology with designs, drawings and Google maps. The IRSA chairman and the commissioner expressed full satisfaction over the efforts made by Wapda besides on pace of progress and expeditious response of Wapda to this direction. Appreciating IRSA, representative of Mangla Dam Organization stated that IRSA has already extended utmost help and assistance in view of ongoing heavy rains in the area and for the adjustment of the reservoir levels matching with the unforeseen circumstances including weather conditions.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/26-Mar-2016/collapsed-highway-s-rehab-yet-to-start>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

Muneer din Khan, “Gilgit-Skardu Road and Muslim League-N”

Daily Salam, March 1, 2016

Skardu is in north of Baltistan. The population according to the 1998 census is around 350000. From 1950 to 1965 there were no roads. People used to travel by foot for weeks from Skardu to Gilgit. It was only in 1984 that government decided to construct Skardu- Gilgit road. Once the road was completed, Skardu got developed. We got connected with the region. However, since 1985, this road has never been repaired. Skardu is of immense strategic significance. It borders China and India. Kargil war was fought from Skardu. It borders the highest battlefield of Siachen. In past, people from Skardu sacrificed for Pakistan. Food and other supply for the Pakistani military stationed are coming through this road. But it is a matter of shame that Skardu road was not included in the CPEC. Nawaz Sharif promised several times in past but nothing happened as such. Prime Minister should take the people of the region into confidence otherwise PML-N will be shown door in next elections. When billions of dollars are spend in infrastructure development in the country then why are we being ill-treated? Is it the cost of having no constitutional identity? We have been left at the mercy of the Kashmir issue. Whom should we call and where should we go with our demands?

<http://www.dailysalam.com/index.php>

“Development of Gilgit-Baltistan our top priority”

Daily Salam, March 3, 2016

The governor Gilgit-Baltistan Mir Gaznafer Ali while meeting with the representatives of the area stated that his office is in touch with the federal government for the development of the region. He further stated that the federal government is giving top priority to Gilgit-Baltistan. During his

interaction, he asked the delegation that they should also take the responsibility of the region and point out the areas that need attention and where it is feasible to carry out developmental work.

<http://www.dailysalam.com/index.php>

“Poor Performance of the Government”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 7, 2016

Lack of funds for the developmental work has further worsened the situation of the labour class. Government claims that they are doing well but reality is different. We have not seen results on the ground. Funds for the flood rehabilitation and construction work have not been released yet. Both contractors and labourers have been affected by the government's lack of interest. Since the region got the provincial like setup, the developmental work has stagnated. There are no salaries for government officials. The aspiration of development and progress under the new setup has remained a distant dream. Provincial government has to take the responsibility and acknowledge that under the present setup, the opportunities for development and progress are minimal.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=03-07-2016&img=03-07-2016page-4-4

“Success of CPEC depends on Constitutional Status”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 9, 2016

The Pakistan People's Party leader Amjad Advocate stated that CPEC will not succeed until Gilgit-Baltistan is not granted a constitutional status. He stated the fact that all the mainstream political parties are united for making Gilgit-Baltistan a province is a huge success. In his criticism of the provincial government, he stated that it is the failure of the government that people of the region have to give away instead of getting back from the CPEC project. For the security of the corridor, thousands

of acres of land is being forcefully taken. Government needs to take people into confidence. We will not allow this to happen. In his warning to the government, he stated that his party will raise the land issue in assembly. He was quoted as saying that there could be CPEC without constitutional status for Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS0x&dt=M DMtMDktMjAxNg>

“Pakistan and China Should Consider Gilgit-Baltistan as an Owner, BNF”

Bang-e-Sahar, March 14, 2016

Leaders of the Balwaristan National Front and Balwaristan Students Organisation Shahid Hussain, Qayyum Khan, Shair Nadir Shahi, and Asif Ali Asharaf while talking to media at Rawalpindi Press Club stated that Gilgit-Baltistan is a disputed territory. Pakistan and China being the signatories of the UN Charter are occupying our land and exploiting our resources. Being a disputed territory, Gilgit-Baltistan occupies a special place. It is an owner of its resources. It is not good to exploit natural resources without taking permission from the owner. Not being a part of Pakistan we deserve special attention from the world community. Through media, we are not only requesting international community but also to Pakistan and China to consider us a third party of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Instead of relying on so called legislative assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan, a free and fair referendum should be held in Gilgit-Baltistan so that the people are given an opportunity to decide their future. They further stated that Pakistani establishment is forcefully taking land on the pretext of development. Therefore, we request the world community to take notice of the developments inside Gilgit-Baltistan.

http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=03-14-2016&img=03-14-2016page-1-2

“Three Terrorists Killed in Diامر”

Daily Salam, March 18, 2016

Security forces killed three wanted terrorists in Gilgit-Baltistan on March 17, stated Inter Services Public Relations. The ISPR noted in a statement that the terrorists were killed in a successful intelligence

based operation in Tarel valley in village Gayyal near Chilas. Two security personnel also embraced martyrdom during exchange of fire with the terrorists. The militants, killed by the security forces, were involved in attacks on civil transport, tourists and security forces. Meanwhile, the security troops also killed five terrorists in Darmu Drabs Pass of Khyber Agency when they attempted to attack a check-post.

<http://www.dailysalam.com/index.php>

“We did not get reward for our Sacrifices for Pakistan”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 24, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly speaker Haji Fida Mohammad Nashid has stated that Gilgit-Baltistan completed the map of Pakistan. He further stated slogans like Greater Baluchistan and Sindu Deash were raised in other parts of Pakistan but in Gilgit-Baltistan we always chanted Pakistan Zindabad.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=03-24-2016&img=03-24-2016page-1-1

“We did not get reward for our Sacrifices for “No pressure from Kashmir acceptable to Centre on Constitutional Status, Governor”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, March 24, 2016

Governor Gilgit-Baltistan made it clear that centre did not come under pressure from Kashmir on the issue of the proposed constitutional status for Gilgit-Baltistan. Constitutional identity is a right which no one can deny to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. He further stated that PML-N is very sensitive towards the issue that is the reason why the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan was made one of the members in the committee working on the region's constitutional status. The Governor was addressing the media.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=03-24-2016&img=03-24-2016page-1-1

“Extremists hiding in Diryal should Surrender”

Bang-e-Sahar, March 25, 2016

Major Gen. Asim Muneer, Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Tahir Hussain and other official visited

Diryal where they addressed the gathering of retired soldiers. At the occasion Maj. Gen. Asim Muneer stated that terrorists hiding in Deryal are nothing in comparison to the Pakistan military. If we wish we can turn them into ashes within short period of time. But we do not want women, children and old people to suffer. We want to avoid collateral damage. We request people of Diryal to ask these terrorists to surrender. In reply retired soldiers gave assurance to the military and other officials that they will try their best to make sure that these terrorists surrender.

http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=03-25-2016&img=03-25-2016page-1-3

“Nawaz Called Hafeez”

Bang-e-Sahar, March 28, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called on chief minister Hafiz ur Rehman and gave him assurance that work on Skardu road will start soon. He also told him that the centre will release extra funds for the road and this year the developmental budget would be enhanced. Prime Minister assured him that all the projects announced would be completed on time. All said and done Nawaz Sharif has no time to see the leaders of Gilgit-Baltistan. For last eight

months Nawaz has not given time to meet them. It is believed that the prime minister has no time for Gilgit-Baltistan. These days he is busy with the forthcoming elections in Azad Kashmir. He is trying his best to make his party win in the upcoming elections. As far as Gilgit-Baltistan is concerned, talking on phone is not enough and it is not going to solve the problems of the region. It is not the first time Nawaz Sharif has talked about the Skardu road. Since last one year we have heard thousand times that centre will start working on the Skardu road. In the last elections, people voted PML-N to power for one particular reason that the government may construct the road. Nawaz Sharif might be have been informed that people are not happy. The elections for Gilgit-Baltistan Council are near so it is politically expedient to call the chief minister and assure him once again that everything will be fine.

http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=03-28-2016&img=03-28-2016page-2-1

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: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

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

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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