

# POK NEWS DIGEST

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Compiled & Edited

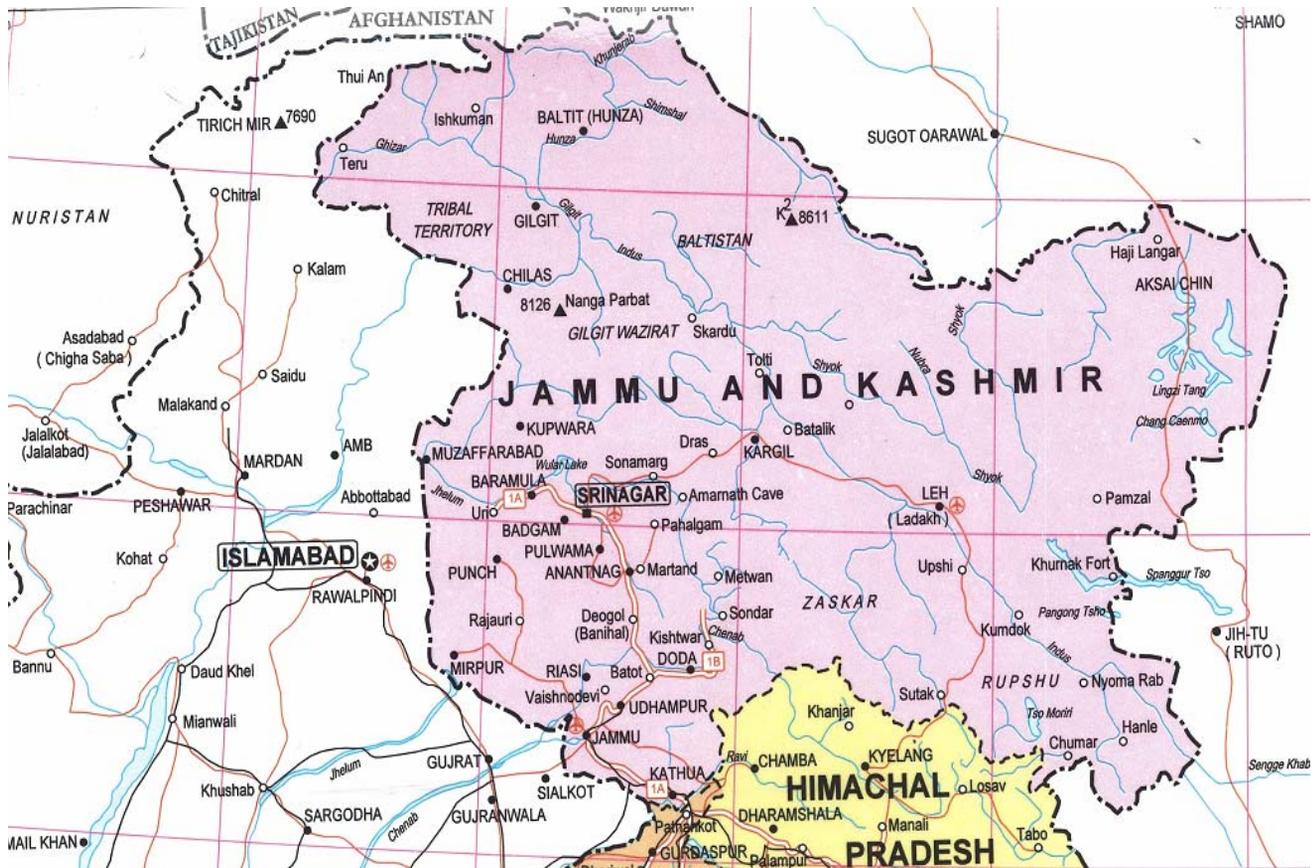
by

Dr Priyanka Singh

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**INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
New Delhi-110 010



## Jammu & Kashmir

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

## About this Issue

*The first ever elections to the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly were held in November 2009 amidst criticism of large scale rigging and misuse of state machinery by the ruling parties especially the PPP. PML-N chief, Nawaz Sharif campaigned rigorously in various constituencies and made high sounding promises to the voters. The final results were completely in favour of the PPP and with two thirds majority, Syed Mehdi Shah was appointed as the Chief Minister of the Gilgit Baltistan.*

*Several reports in this issues hint to the ever growing opposition to the Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and Self-governance Presidential Ordinance 2009. People have not yet to come to terms with the new arrangement denying Pakistan's jurisdiction on the region. According to them, Pakistan has no legal right to issue any such order as there is no mention to Gilgit Baltistan in the constitution of Pakistan.*

*A very significant development at the international level has taken place in Brussels, where a group of members from the European Parliament have form a group known as the 'Friends of Gilgit Baltistan' as is indicated in one of the reports included in this issue. The group has raised concerns on the problems prevailing in the Gilgit Baltistan taking note of the absence of local ownership in the political process of the region.*

*The cross LoC trade has gathered some momentum but the basic problems of infrastructure and banking channels continues to persist. If not checked, this is likely to adversely affect the cross border trade in future.*

*For the first time ever, we have included reports accessed from the original prints of some local newspapers in PoK which describe some pertinent issues prevailing there.*

**Priyanka Singh**

## **Election Special - Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly Election November 2009**

*Senge Hasnan Sering*

When November 12, 2009 was announced as the date to hold election for Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) under the newly promulgated Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-governance Presidential Ordinance 2009, political parties had less than 50 days to prepare for the first ever of its kind of political gala. At that time, no one could have guessed the scale of attention and media coverage this election was going to receive. While 256 potential candidates were in the race to be part of an institution, which was going to debut with the right to legislate, only 24 were actually going to make it. Advent of new players in the fray, including mainstream Pakistani parties and local nationalists, generated tough competition for the People's Party (PPP), which is the currently in power in Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, federal ministers, chief minister of Punjab, members of Pakistan's parliament, retired generals, heads of Pakistani religious and political parties and even President Zardari and PM Gillani were seen hurrying to the region.<sup>2</sup>

During rallies, leaders promised to provide jobs, educational quotas, social benefits and constitutional rights; however, no party could present a proper welfare program for the common people or a manifesto to explain how these things will take place. Just 48 hours before the polling day, Gilgit-Baltistan was on high as Pakistan's prime minister and acting governor of Gilgit-Baltistan paid yet another flying visit to Skardo and announced heavy packages including creation of two districts in Baltistan and several tehsils and sub-divisions in Gilgit.<sup>3</sup> Skardo and Gilgit were declared 'mega cities' with creation of city development authority (CDA) and increase in funds for the metro areas. Announcements were made to raise minimum wage to Rs. 6,000 per month and temporary and contract employees were declared permanent. Thousands of jobs for teachers and police were announced. Police wages were doubled (Rs. 16,000 per month) to compensate their counter terrorism duties. Skardo airport was declared

international to accommodate flights from China, Central Asia and Nepal. Further, free tractors were announced as part of farmer empowerment scheme.<sup>4</sup>

Following the footsteps of PM Gilani, the Sharif Brothers (Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif) arrived in Gilgit-Baltistan and announced educational quotas for students of Gilgit-Baltistan in Punjab's institutions and funds to build student hostels, and medical and engineering colleges<sup>5</sup> in Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, MQM had brought in doctors from Karachi and established medical camps to persuade voters. They also announced special job quotas for citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan residing in Karachi.<sup>7</sup> Among one hundred thousand citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan residing in Karachi, many have joined MQM who went to villages and established camps to ensure effective canvassing. Analysts predict MQM will be a force to reckon with in the next assembly election in 2014.

As the electioneering progressed through October, Skardo and Gilgit towns felt drowned in party flags and banners. MQM is said to have imported two truck-loads of bamboo batons (not available locally) from Islamabad to hoist flags and banners. Car rallies added extra color to the event as thousands of vehicles were rented by parties for show of power. On the other hand, it also created logistical problem for residents as every day hundreds of people were seen queuing for buses and wagons to get to offices, hospitals and schools. Campaigns were run systematically and some parties even brought experts from different parts of Pakistan to train local activists and their potential voters.

Because of heavy presence of armed forces during electioneering, Gilgit and Skardo towns looked more like a neighborhood of Swat or Waziristan in the first two weeks of November.<sup>8</sup> However, in the far flung sensitive areas of the region, army or police presence was dissatisfactory. Several incidents of clashes were reported from different parts of the region during the process. In places like Shigar, Denyor, Hussainabad, Rondu, Diamer and Gilgit, party workers of MQM and JUIF displayed weapons to intimate opponents. Clashes in Shigar led to casualties and damage to assets<sup>9</sup> when MQM attacked a hotel injuring 30 PPP

supporters and destroying their vehicles.<sup>10</sup> Further, police arrested 40 MQM workers in Shigar and confiscated their jeep which was loaded with Kalashnikovs, pistols, and other ammunition. In Skardo, MQM, PMLN and PPP supporters clashed injuring 8 people. In yet another incident, MQM workers pelted stones at female supporters of PPP who were leaving the polling station after casting votes. MQM and PPP workers also clashed in Denyor which led to arrest of 30 including the MQM contestant and injuries to several others.<sup>11</sup> In Rondu, Governor Kaira was refused an address to a rally as opposition parties attacked the venue and chanted anti-PPP slogans.<sup>12</sup> An unfortunate incident occurred in Diامر, where in a unanimous decision by representatives of various political and religious parties of Diامر, women were barred from using their right of franchise.<sup>13</sup>

According to acting Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, Mr. Kaira, close to 40% of the 714, 966 eligible voters used their right of franchise.<sup>14</sup> Similar to previous cases, the ruling party in Islamabad emerged victorious in Gilgit-Baltistan. While PPP bagged 13 seats, two each went to PML-N, PML-Q and JUIF, and one seat to MQM. Remaining two seats were taken by independent candidates, who are expected to join PPP soon. The ruling party was a true winner in Baltistan where it got 7 out of 9 seats, however, failed to grab any seat in the Diامر district. On November 19, PPP nominated its regional president as the first chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>15</sup> As the next step, voting on reserved seats for female, technocrats and Gilgit-Baltistan Council will take place. Elections are still to be held in Ghizer, where a candidate died of heart attack and in Diامر, where election was postponed due to heavy shooting between two parties leading to death of two and injuries to many others.<sup>16</sup>

The big surprise is advent of MQM which won the lone seat from Shigar valley of Baltistan. In the past, many have accused MQM as the party of establishment<sup>17</sup> while others have blamed it for receiving support from USA<sup>18</sup> and India.<sup>19</sup> Some fear that MQM will introduce culture of target killing and extortion in Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>20</sup> Other surprises include victory for two independent Shia candidates from the heart of Gilgit-Baltistan i.e. Gilgit town, where PPP

and PML-N were considered hot favorites. In order to win over Sunni immigrant-votes in Gilgit-2, PPP, for the first time, fielded a Sunni candidate; however, Sunni vote divide between PPP and PMLN allowed independent Shia candidate to win a seat previously held by PMLN.<sup>21</sup> Success of Shia candidates in Gilgit-Baltistan (all six seats of Gilgit district are taken by Shias this time) may also lead to further sectarian clashes and casualties as Sunnis feel election results undermining their right of representation in the newly incepted legislative assembly. In Ganche district of Baltistan, religious vote-factor helped Grand Nurbaxshi Mufti M. Abdullah to win against PMLQ candidate Amina Ansari.<sup>22</sup> PMLQ took two seats by exploiting Musharraf's popularity,<sup>23</sup> who as president of Pakistan allocated a large budget for Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>24</sup>

Despite intimidation and lack of media coverage, separatist parties like GBDA, GBUM, APNA, BNF, KNM and GBDA also put up an impressive show for the first time. Nawaz Naji of BNF is considered favorite in Ghizer district where election has been postponed until December 22, 2009.<sup>25</sup> APNA boycotted the election protesting Pakistani intentions of annexing Gilgit-Baltistan through the self-governance package. Realizing the potential challenges, government banned election campaigning of Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA) and Balwaristan National Front (BNF) for an indefinite time period and detained more than 100 nationalists including three GBDA election candidates and two sons of the late Gilgit war hero, Colonel Hassan on November 1, 2009<sup>26</sup> who were later deported to Islamabad.<sup>27</sup> Party workers blocked Karakoram Highway for two hours to protest their leaders' detention and demanded their immediate release.<sup>28</sup> In another incident, candidate from Gilgit-2 and general secretary of BNF, Kalamuddin's house was damaged by a bomb blast.<sup>29</sup>

Critics say that Pakistan proclaimed the so-called self-governance ordinance and conducted election, as it does not want to see a Balochistan like situation emerging on its border with China. Given the context, China may as well be breathing easy with the completion of the election process, which despite some isolated incidents, remained peaceful. China has

invested heavily in the mega projects in this region like Karakoram Highway, mega dams at Bunji, Diamer, Satpara, Neelum, and Naltar Hydro-power schemes. Only a peaceful and investor-friendly environment will allow China to sustain its presence in the region,<sup>30</sup> which can be achieved by fulfilling political demands of the locals and thereby gaining their support and goodwill.

Opposition parties and NGOs like Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, and Free & Fair Election Network (FAFEN)<sup>31</sup> accused Islamabad of rigging, ballot stuffing and utilizing government machinery to influence voters.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, election manager of PPP, Chaudary Manzoor complained of media biasness as TV channels maintained focus on MQM and PMLN rallies. Opposition claimed that government distributed registration forms of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) – a monthly poverty allowance of Rs. 6,000 - among potential female voters.<sup>33</sup> They also accused the regime of intentionally extending the term of local bodies (district and union councils), which were going to be dissolved along with Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA).<sup>34</sup> This may have allowed the members of district and union councils to utilize their funds for government-backed candidates.

PPP won a two-third majority despite several odds, which include rigorous media trial against PPP leadership, failure of NRO to wash the wrong-doings of the ruling elite, the rift between PPP and army created by Kerry-Luger Bill, the rising separatism in Balochistan, the unabated suicide bombings, and last but not least the unavailability of commodities like electricity, petrol, gas and sugar to the common people. Political analysts were viewed this election as the litmus test of current regime's popularity and opposition parties went quite a few extra miles during canvassing to limit PPP's chances of victory. Islamabad has termed the success in Gilgit-Baltistan as confidence of people in the leadership; however, election results will not help PPP maintain its popularity in the rest of the country. For locals, victory for PPP also means continuation of the political process, which they fear could have jeopardized if the ruling party in Islamabad had lost the election.

The historical association of the region with PPP cannot be denied. In 1974, PM Bhutto declared Gilgit-Baltistan a federally administered Northern Areas (FANA), which was until then an agency governed under NWFP. Subsequently, he abolished the draconian law called Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and dropped heavy agriculture taxes, which the poverty-stricken locals were paying to Islamabad since 1947.

While Islamabad may also have acquired support of the powerful contractor community to garner votes, which benefits from government infrastructure and military supplies' contracts, Pak-China trade, tourism, transport corporations and timber trade; personality and kinship of a candidate also influenced voters. Some also believe that the predominant Shia, Nurbaxshi and Ismaili community of Jammu & Kashmir preferred PPP over PMLN and others. The misconception that Kashmiris oppose self-governance and political empowerment for Gilgit-Baltistan and therefore rejected the presidential ordinance was also exploited successfully by government and used as 'Kashmir card' to attract votes from pro-Pakistani groups.<sup>35</sup>

Apparently, majority of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not happy with the self-governance ordinance,<sup>36</sup> however, they expect that the newly incepted legislative assembly will amend it suiting to their needs. Two-third majority for PPP (assuming independents join PPP soon) could mean an opportunity to pass laws favoring common people. However, if Gilgit-Baltistan Council loaded with Pakistani federal ministers restricts the powers of the assembly then the same two-third majority may also become a threat for Pakistani government and its interests in the region. Shias and Sunnis will have to reconcile to the fact that the legislative assembly can be put to work to benefit both communities. The ordinance is the first baby step taken by Pakistan in 63 years and all stakeholders should give the political process a chance to evolve and mature.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://gecanews.wordpress.com/2009/09/28/ppp-and-pml-q-stretch-muscles-for-gilgit-baltistan-polls/>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://pamirtimes.net/2009/11/10/pt-election-pm-concludes-ppps-election-campaign-in-skardu/>

- 3 <http://mygilgit.wordpress.com/2009/11/page/2/>
- 4 <http://pamirtimes.net/2009/11/24/shaheed-benazir-tractor-schemeone-of-ppps-many-promises-for-gb/>
- 5 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/provinces/16-nawaz-promised-medical-engg-colleges-in-baltistan-hs-04>
- 6 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/19-gilgit-baltistan-on-high-as-voters-go-to-polls-today-hh-05>
- 7 <http://mygilgit.wordpress.com/2009/11/page/2/>
- 8 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/07-polling-underway-in-gilgit-baltistan-polls-ha-05>
- 9 <http://pamirtimes.net/2009/10/24/twelve-ppp-men-hurt-in-clash-with-mqm/>
- 10 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/provinces/19-post-election-clashes-in-skardu-eight-injured-hh-05>
- 11 <http://pamirtimes.net/category/gilgit/>
- 12 The author was present in the vicinity when the incident occurred
- 13 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/07-polling-underway-in-gilgit-baltistan-polls-ha-05>
- 14 [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/international/2009/November/international\\_November709.xml&section=international&col=](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/international/2009/November/international_November709.xml&section=international&col=)
- 15 Weekly Northern Time Gilgit-Baltistan (English paper) issue 16, volume 1, 23-29 November 2009
- 16 <http://elections.com.pk/newsdetails.php?id=804>
- 17 <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Karachi/26-Nov-2009/MQM-playing-a-tool-role-for-establishment-Zulfiqar-Mirza>
- 18 A quite a few political activists assume that MQM has been sent by USA to counter Chinese influences in Gilgit-Baltistan, while others think that MQM will help contain sectarianism thereby allowing China and Islamabad to pursue economic development in the region with peace.
- 19 <http://pakistanz.blogspot.com/2009/11/mqm-supported-by-india.html>
- 20 <http://www.chowk.com/ilogs/74826/51576>
- 21 Daily K2, Monday November 2, 2009, Issue 179: Page 1
- 22 <http://dardistannews.wordpress.com/2009/11/14/unofficial-results-of-election-in-gilgit-baltistan/>
- 23 <http://www.grandtrunkroad.com/?p=425>
- 24 Thaindian news, November 9, 2009
- 25 <http://gecanews.wordpress.com/2009/11/07/news-in-brief/>; Weekly Baang-e-Sahar Gilgit-Baltistan, 7-13 November, 2009, Issue 3, Volume 17. Karachi: Page 1
- 26 <http://mygilgit.wordpress.com/2009/11/page/2/>
- 27 <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/10282/81/>
- 28 Weekly Azaan Gilgit-Baltistan issue 6, volume 4, 1-10 November 2009
- 29 Daily Baad-e-Shimal Gilgit-Baltistan issue 12, volume 93, 3 November 2009
- 30 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/nwfp/300-suspected-people-expelled-from-n-areas-gilgit>
- 31 <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/16-hrcp-sees-flaws-in-gilgit-baltistan-elections-hs-04>
- 32 Thousands of bogus votes registered in Gilgit and Skardo town constituencies. (Weekly Siachen Gilgit-Baltistan issue 13, volume 12, 1-7 November 2009)
- 33 <http://dailyk2.com/large.php?id=8641>
- 34 Weekly Waadi Gilgit-Baltistan issue 4, volume 11, 1-11 November 2009
- 35 <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/05-Sep-2009/Kashmiris-reject-NAs-autonomy>
- 36 The prominent religious scholar of Baltistan and a close associate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Allama Shiekh Mirza Yusuf Hussain, termed the whole process as eyewash. He stated that federal parties make false promises and exploit sentiments of people of Gilgit-Baltistan therefore they are not sincere to locals. He believes that only a local political party can address needs of the local people. (Weekly Qayadat Gilgit-Baltistan volume No. 32, Issue No. 1, 4-10 November 2009)
- \* *The Author is Visiting Fellow at IDSA. The views expressed are his personal and not that of IDSA.*

# Political Developments

## **“Militants blow themselves up in Muzaffarabad,”**

MUZAFFARABAD: Three suspected militants blew themselves up after police and villagers and surrounded them in a mountainous area. According to officials, police launched a search in a suburb of the Azad Kashmir capital after residents reported that three men had dumped a bag of weapons behind a house.

Police and civil defence department officials found three Kalashnikovs along with 18 magazines, 12 grenades, six guided missiles, one pistol with two magazines and two jackets in the bag. The suspects, in the meantime, had crossed over to the other side of the town using a suspension bridge on River Jhelum. Finally, police and local people surrounded the three suspects on the Sarar hill and when they got close, the militants blew themselves up.

<http://www.defence.pk/forums/pakistans-war/39700-militants-blow-themselves-up-muzaffarabad.html>

## **Weekly Qayadat Gilgit-Baltistan,**

*Volume 32, Issue 1, November 4-10, 2009*

The Gilgit-Baltistan Self-governance and Empowerment Ordinance draws suspicions. When strong leaders like Bhutto and Musharraf couldn't announce such packages, how come a weak government of Zardari could take such a big step? People of Gilgit-Baltistan should have their own regional party and not rely on federal parties since they make false promises and exploit sentiments. Federal parties have no genuine and sincere interest in our region and its people. During the tenure of KANA minister Mehtab Abbassi, sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan heightened. This was said by a prominent religious scholar of Baltistan Allama Shiekh Mirza Yusuf Hussain, a close associate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

## **Weekly Qayadat Gilgit-Baltistan,**

*Volume 32, Issue 1, November 4-10, 2009*

The inspector general of police IGP Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Tehseen Anwar has admitted that police personnel have worked for sectarian causes in the

past. In future, if police personnel are found involved in sectarian activities or promoting cause of sectarianism within the police organization, then they will be fired. He admitted that banned religious political and Jehadi parties have their network intact and functional in Gilgit-Baltistan.

## **Weekly Iwan-e-Sadaqat Gilgit-Baltistan,**

*Volume 36 Issue 2, November 4, 2009*

More than 25000 illegal immigrants from Pakistan have purchased land in AJK who are settling mostly in Muzaffarabad and Rawlakot. They engage in drug and weapon business and have been found involved in cases pertaining to 90 deaths, 109 kidnappings, and 300 robberies.

## **“United Kashmir People’s National Party demand exit of Pakistan Army from POK,”**

*November 27, 2009*

Today entire Pakistani state and society is encompassed by terrorism, communalism and fanaticism. Poverty, unemployment and social unrest are increasing day by day. It is all due to those cold war era policies of Pakistani state institutions and security establishment and policy makers that is why entire south Asian region has been destabilised today.

We have strong resentment over the prevailing situation in both regions of so called Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. Our fertile lands have been turned into jungles and means of production and mode of production have been badly destroyed. The local authority at Muzaffarabad has also failed to address grave issues like poverty, ignorance, unemployment and underdevelopment. The world has seen poor performance of these while elephants that are using public money but there is no change on the ground. The earthquake victims of 2005 are still wandering between ERRA and SERA offices. Pragmatically they have been left unattended and abandoned by the state institutions.

We have been demanding since years that Government of Pakistan should recognise constitutional, political, democratic, and socio-economic and human rights of the people of this

region, despite given them fundamental rights and freedoms Islamabad has imposed Governor Rule on this region after 63 years. Legally Pakistan has no locus standi to impose such package on these areas.

[http://www.australia.to/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=16811:united-kashmir-peoples-national-party-demand-exit-of-pakistan-army-from-pok&catid=71:world-news&Itemid=301](http://www.australia.to/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16811:united-kashmir-peoples-national-party-demand-exit-of-pakistan-army-from-pok&catid=71:world-news&Itemid=301)

### **“PML-N to play constructive opposition role in GBLA,”**

*November 25, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) would play a constructive role of opposition party in Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) to strengthen the nascent democracy in the country, PML-N spokesman Siddiqui Farooq stated on November 25.

Addressing a press conference here at the PML-N's Central Secretariat, he said his party has been cooperating with Pakistan Peoples Party-led government to create an atmosphere of understanding and promote democratic norms. He said results and votes secured by the party candidates showed that PML-N is the second largest political party in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, he expressed dissatisfaction over the election process and blamed that unfair means were used to defeat rival candidates.

<http://www.southasianow.com/pml-n-to-play-constructive-opposition-role-in-gbla/>

### **“Gilgit-Baltistan polls rigged to large extent: Siddiqui Farooq,”**

*Dawn, November 25, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: PML-N leader Siddiqui Farooq on November 25 said the general elections in Gilgit-Baltistan were rigged to a large extent. Addressing a press conference at the PML-N Secretariat in Islamabad, he said the PML-N will not recognise the Pakistan People's Party's government in Gilgit-Baltistan as de jure.

Farooq further noted the state machinery was used by Qamar Zaman Kaira to help the PPP candidates. He said Kaira should have been impartial but he supervised the PPP election campaign prior to the

polling. Farooq said the electoral lists and postal ballots were forged and were made in haste.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/04-gilgit-baltistan-farooq-qs-06>

### **“Syed Mehdi Shah refutes claims of rigged elections,”**

*Dawn, November 27, 2009*

The president of the PPP in Gilgit -Baltistan refuted claims of the recently held elections being rigged. He also said that his party would form a strong government in the region after the PPP's victory in the elections.

Syed Mehdi Shah has said his party will form a strong government in the region after its electoral victory in the recently-held elections. In a statement, he refuted the claims of any temperance in the electoral exercise in Gilgit-Baltistan and said that the PPP has emerged as the single-largest majority party in the region. Shah also stated that the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Free and Fair Election Network had endorsed the elections as being transparent and without interference. According to the Election Commission about 300 independent observers closely monitored the election and appreciated the peaceful participation and administration that took place.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/provinces/03-syed-mehdi-shah-refutes-claims-of-rigged-elections-ss-03>

### **“A PPP government in Gilgit-Baltistan will only be de facto, not de jure: PML-N,”**

*Gilgit Baltistan Times, November 27, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Accusing of mass rigging in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) legislative assembly elections, PML-N has said that the PPP would form a de facto government in the region. “The PML-N would not accept it as a de jure government of the PPP in Gilgit-Baltistan. The media reports, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Free and Fair Election Network have confirmed the rigging in Gilgit-Baltistan elections”, PML-N leader Siddiqui Farooq said while addressing a news conference in Islamabad on November 25.

Siddiqui Farooq claimed that according to pre-planned rigging, the electoral lists were prepared within 15 days, which were to be completed in four months under Acting Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan Qamaruz Zaman Kaira. The work of electoral lists was completed within fifteen days according to the interests of PPP candidate, he noted.

<http://gbtimes.wordpress.com/2009/11/27/media-review-a-ppp-government-in-gilgit-baltistan-will-only-be-de-facto-not-de-jure-pml-n/>

### **“Package a ploy to occupy Gilgit Baltistan, says BNF chief,”**

*Weekly Baang, Volume-02, Issue-34, November 27, 2009*

BRUSSELES: Chairman Balawaristan National Front (BNF), Abdul Hamid Khan stated the so-called package of self-governance and internal autonomy was finalized by a committee under the chairmanship of Qamar Zaman Kaira, a Pakistani national who cannot in anyway claim to represent Gilgit-Baltistan. In a letter addressed to the president of the European parliament, he said Pakistani PM Gilani claimed that major political parties including the President of Pakistan occupied Kashmir were taken on board but not a single person from Gilgit-Baltistan was taken into confidence before and even after the package was devised. The so-called Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) was not taken in to confidence. Even the so-called powerless local Chief Executive Meer Ghazanfar was not aware of this package before it was announced. “Despite its high claims of granting self-governance or internal autonomy, Martial Law in the form of a governor-administrator has been introduced and the head of the package committee has declared himself as governor. This is an indication that the two million people of Balawaristan have been betrayed for the fifth time by the so-called package that has been unfolding since 1971,” the letter stated.

[http://weeklybaang.blogspot.com/2009/11/weekly-baang-karachi-volume-02-issue-34\\_27.html](http://weeklybaang.blogspot.com/2009/11/weekly-baang-karachi-volume-02-issue-34_27.html)

### **“Former jihadi says LT running new camps,”**

*Daily Times, November 24, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: The Lashkar-e-Toiba (LT) has opened several new training camps in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), a former Lashkar member stated. Abdullah Muntazir, who is now an analyst on Islamist issues, said the authorities had closed many Lashkar training camps in AJK after the Mumbai attacks but that had a limited impact. “The main camps have been shut down but a few new small ones are sprouting in remote areas. I’ve met them there,” he noted.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C24%5Cstory\\_24-11-2009\\_pg7\\_13](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C24%5Cstory_24-11-2009_pg7_13)

### **“Taliban is active in PoK,”**

*Headlines Today, November 23, 2009*

Worrying new revelations suggest that the Taliban is much closer to India than was previously thought. A United Kingdom based Kashmiri leader has claimed that the group has been active in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). Three suspected Taliban militants blew themselves up in PoK capital Muzaffarabad on Saturday. After the incident, fears are rife that the group has spread its tentacles in PoK. The Taliban can turn it into another Swat or Waziristan if not checked. Syed Mujtaba Ali Shah, the UK based Information Secretary of the United Kashmir Peoples National, confirmed these fears. “The three militants were members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Kashmir and the terror group has developed deep roots in PoK,” Mujtaba said.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/Story/71973/India/'Taliban+is+active+in+PoK'.html>

### **Gilgit-Baltistan assembly to hold first session after Eid: Kaira,”**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, November 21, 2009*

RAWALPINDI: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Qamar Zaman Kaira on November 21 said the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly is likely to hold its first session after Eid ul Azha. Mr. Kaira,

who is also Acting Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, was speaking at a reception held in honour of the elected members of the GB Legislative Assembly. It was also attended by Mehdi Shah, the nominated Chief Minister of the GBLA.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=90384&Itemid=1](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=90384&Itemid=1)

### **“Gilgit Baltistan: All Parties National Alliance Stages Sit-in Protest over GB Elections,”**

*UNPO, November 20, 2009*

Protesters gathered to voice their discontent with unlawful arrests of several leading members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA) on October 31, just prior to the elections in Gilgit-Baltistan. The leaders were detained by Pakistani security forces during a peaceful demonstration against Pakistani occupation. Abdul Hamid, Chairman of the Balawaristan National Front, a member of the GBDA, said he “condemns the brutal and illegal act”. The GBDA has since boycotted the elections, calling them fraudulent and undemocratic. Among those in attendance at the sit-in were students from the Balawaristan National Students Organization as well as APNA Chairman, Wajahat Hassan Khan, Retired Colonel Nadir Hassan, Professor Abdul Razq Khalid and Arif Shaid, all of whom had been detained by Pakistani police during last month’s demonstration.

<http://www.unpo.org/content/view/10366/254/>

### **“HRCP observers reach GB to monitor elections,”**

*Daily Times, November 10, 2009*

LAHORE: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan’s (HRCP) observers reached Gilgit-Baltistan to monitor the general elections to be held on November 12. The HRCP team is being led by the organisation’s Co-chairperson, Iqbal Haider. The press release said the commission had already organised a meeting to consult all stakeholders and trained local observers for monitoring the electoral process in their respective areas, adding that monitoring of elections in Gilgit-Baltistan was of vital

importance “because they were the first step towards democratic governance and rule by consensus”.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C10%5Cstory\\_10-11-2009\\_pg7\\_37](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C10%5Cstory_10-11-2009_pg7_37)

### **“Rumpus hits Gilgit polling,”**

*The News, November 18, 2009*

GILGIT: Re-polling is underway at four polling stations of Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly constituency LA3-Gilgit 3 amid ariel firing by police to disperse supporters of boycotting candidates. The polling has been postponed for indefinite period in LA-17 Diامر. The polling process at four polling stations of LA3-Gilgit 3 had been stopped in November 12 elections due to violence and polling had been rescheduled on November 18.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=91636>

### **“Pak NGOs reports massive irregularities in Gilgit-Baltistan elections,”**

*November 17, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government may have denied reports of massive irregularities in Gilgit-Baltistan elections, but a report issued by a coalition of non-government organisations (NGO’s) has said the polls were marred by fallacies. “Government interference, weak administration, procedural irregularities and erroneous voter lists characterised the Gilgit-Baltistan polls,” the report compiled by the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) said. The report blamed the ruling Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) of misutilising state’s resources and authority.

[http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/pak-ngos-reports-massive-irregularities-in-gilgit-baltistan-elections\\_100276072.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/pak-ngos-reports-massive-irregularities-in-gilgit-baltistan-elections_100276072.html)

### **“Kashmiri leadership should make dialogue agenda public: JKCHR”**

LONDON: The Jammu Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) Secretary General, Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani has said that the political process in Kashmir has to be validated by the people. In a statement

issued here the other day, Dr. Nazir Gilani says, “dialogue is the age old instrument of civilizations to resolve disputes, yet it has to be transparent and validated in an open debate by the people. A Kashmiri politician in his dialogue with India and Pakistan is restrained by this principle in the same manner in which the British and Irish governments and Northern Ireland political parties were restrained during Belfast Agreement”.

<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/11/18/kashmiri-leadership-should-make-dialogue-agenda-public-jkchr/>

### **“PPP names Mehdi Shah as first CM of Gilgit-Baltistan,”**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, November 19, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People’s Party has nominated Syed Mehdi Shah for the post of first Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan. Mehdi Shah was elected from LA-7 Sakardu 2 of Gilgit-Baltistan and he is the president of PPP in Gilgit-Baltistan. According to a private news channel, PPP leadership has started consultations to finalize the names of Gilgit-Baltistan Cabinet. PPP bagged 11 of 23 seats in Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly elections held on November 12 and one independent candidate also joined the PPP.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=90182&Itemid=2](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=90182&Itemid=2)

### **“How Azad is ‘Azad Kashmir’,”**

*November 17, 2009*

If you want to study the situation in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and cannot go to even the minuscule part of this region designated as ‘Azad Kashmir’, the best place to go to is England. Bradford, Birmingham, Nottingham, Luton, Slough and Southall which are perhaps better sources of information about the POK than Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Bagh Rawalakot and Kotli. For the Kashmiris living in Britain breathe free air that it not much available in the so-called Azad Kashmir. Even if you apply for a job you have to sign an affidavit saying you believe in the ideology of “Kashmir banega Pakistan” (Kashmir will become Pakistan).

<http://stateofpakistan.blogspot.com/2009/11/how-azad-is-azad-kashmir.html>

### **Gilgit-Baltistan polls,”**

*The Nation, November 17, 2009*

The elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, held on November 12, amid the charge of pre-poll rigging against the PPP, later caused other major political parties also to take to the streets of Skardu, the principal town in the region, in protest at what they alleged was massive manipulation of the polls. The exercise of conducting elections, the first since the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order was promulgated last August, was not without problems. Supporters of opponents clashed with one another resulting in loss of life and injuries. Later, on November 15, the third consecutive day of opposition parties’ demonstrations against the rigging charge, 23 protesters received injuries as a result of clashes between rival groups- PML-N and PPP in Skardu.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Editorials/17-Nov-2009/GilgitBaltistan-polls>

### **Hameed Shaheen, “PPP to form govt in Gilgit Baltistan,”**

*Kashmir Watch*

ISLAMABAD: The first ever general elections held on November 12 in the geo-physically strategic region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for its 33-member legislative assembly are of utmost significance keeping in view the forthcoming scenario on Kashmir. Almost all major political parties of Pakistan enthusiastically participated in the exercise backed with equal zeal by the people. The break-up of 33-member House is as following: 24 members elected directly; 9 reserved seats (3 for technocrats and six for females). The poll contestants: 23 from PPP, 20-MQM, 14-PML-N, 14-PML-Q, 6-Jamiat-e Ulema-e Islam, 3-Jamaat-e Islami, 10-Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance, 4-ANP, 2-PTI and 2-Balawaristan National Front. Actual elections were held against 23 seats as in the electoral constituency number 19 the polling was postponed due to the death of an MQM candidate.

[http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1258155345&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=15&var1news=value1news](http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1258155345&archive=&start_from=&ucat=15&var1news=value1news)

## **“Gilgit-Baltistan poll a cosmetic exercise: India”**

India decried the just-concluded polls in the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan, formerly the Northern Areas which was renamed by Pakistan a few months ago, as “just another cosmetic exercise intended to camouflage” Islamabad’s illegal occupation of areas of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. “The elections in Gilgit-Baltistan are just another cosmetic exercise intended to camouflage the fact of Pakistan’s illegal occupation of areas of the state of Jammu and Kashmir,” External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, Vishnu Prakash stated.

[http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/gilgit-baltistan-poll-a-cosmetic-exercise-india\\_100274428.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/gilgit-baltistan-poll-a-cosmetic-exercise-india_100274428.html)

## **“Official results of Gilgit-Baltistan elections announced”**

GILGIT: In a step forward, the Election Commission announced on November 15 the official results of Gilgit-Baltistan elections held in 19 constituencies for the Legislative Assembly. It is pertinent to mention here that the historic Gilgit-Baltistan elections concluded peacefully with no untoward incident noticed during the polls. As per elections official results, the ruling Pakistan peoples party emerged victorious getting 12 seats, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz 2 seats; PML-Q 2; Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam and Muttahida Qaumi Movement 1 each and while 4 independent candidates secured their victory.

[www.sananews.com.pk/.../official-results-of-gilgit-baltistan-elections-announced](http://www.sananews.com.pk/.../official-results-of-gilgit-baltistan-elections-announced)

## **PML factions and MQM step up protests in Gilgit Sunday,**

*November 15, 2009*

GILGIT: The N and Q factions of Pakistan Muslim League and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement organised separate protests here on November 13 against alleged rigging in the Gilgit-Baltistan elections. Hundreds of political workers took to the streets and raised slogans against the government, calling for re-elections in LA-1, LA-2 and LA-3 constituencies. The PML-N candidate in LA-1, Jafarullah, and his supporters held a demonstration outside the Supreme

Appellate Court to challenge the results of some polling stations in the constituency. Several other demonstrations were held in different parts of the city in which enraged protesters blocked roads.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/provinces/16-pml-factions-and-mqm-step-up-protests-in-gilgit-hs-06>

## **Nirupama Subramanian, “Pakistan: India’s statements unwarranted,”**

*The Hindu, November 14, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan angrily rejected India’s statements against the Gilgit-Baltistan elections on November 13 as “unwarranted” and said a U.N. Security Council-mandated plebiscite was the “just solution” to the Kashmir issue. “These remarks are unwarranted. The government of India has no locus standi in the matter,” the Foreign Ministry stated, responding to remarks by the External Affairs spokesman that the Gilgit-Baltistan elections were a “cosmetic exercise” by Pakistan to “camouflage [its] illegal occupation” of parts of Jammu & Kashmir State.

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/11/14/stories/2009111461281000.htm>

## **“Post polls festivities, protests continue in G-B,”**

*The News, November 13, 2009*

GILGIT: The winning candidates and their supporters are celebrating after Gilgit-Baltistan legislative elections while those who lost opposed the results.

Deputy Commissioner Gilgit Asad Zamin has said that the situation is completely under control. The unofficial results of 21 slots have come out after November 12 elections in Gilgit-Baltistan. A large crowd of workers have assembled at the offices of the political parties and houses of the winning candidates in six districts – Ghizar, Astore, Ghanche, Diamir, Gilgit and Skardu. Sweets are being distributed amidst celebrations there.

On the other hand, protests are being staged by the workers of losing candidates on the alleged rigging in the polls.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=91343>

## **Saleem Chandio & Bachal Chandio, “Ministers felicitate PPP candidates in Gilgit-Baltistan polls,”**

*Regional Times, November 14, 2009*

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Irrigation and Power, Syed Murad Ali Shah, Minister for Revenue, Jam Mehtab Dahar, Minister for Population Welfare, Syed Ali Mardan Shah congratulated the PPP candidates on their victory in the Gilgit-Baltistan polls. In their congratulatory messages to the winning candidates, the Ministers said that the people always voted for the PPP due to its revolutionary policies initiated by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and taken forward by Benazir Bhutto for the people of Gilgit. They hoped that newly elected PPP members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly will carry forward the vision and mission of our party leaders to serve the poor and down-trodden and strengthen the party more amongst people and in the area as well.

<http://www.regionaltimes.com/14nov2009/metrokarachinews/minsiter.htm>

## **“No big surprises,”**

*The News, November 14, 2009*

There have been no major surprises in the first election for the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. The PPP is set to claim majority in the 24-seat house. This success has been marred by some allegations of rigging. A number of pre-poll analysts had predicted a hung house – but traditionally Gilgit-Baltistan, accustomed to decades of rule from the centre, has leaned towards the ruling party. The turnout was generally good despite the bitter cold, but the refusal to allow women to vote in a few constituencies is a matter the authorities need to take up. The interest shown by people in the electoral process, with large rallies forming a part of the run-up to voting, highlights the strong desire for democracy everywhere in our country. It is unfortunate that people have so often been denied this right through our history.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=208340>

## **“Intl Conference on Kashmir issue in Srinagar on Nov 15,”**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, November 13, 2009*

MIRPUR: The High Court Bar Association of Indian-held Jammu & Kashmir is organizing an International Conference on Kashmir issue in Srinagar on November 15. Mian Abdul Qayoom, President of the J & K High Court Bar Association stated in his invitation letter to various leading politicians of AJK on November 13 that the scheduled conference would chalk out future strategy. In this effect, the Indian occupied J&K Bar Association invited a cross section of people from the various parts of Jammu and Kashmir including Azad Kashmir besides India and Pakistan.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=89732&Itemid=2c](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=89732&Itemid=2c)

## **“Two killed, 40 injured in Diamir clash,”**

*Daily Times, November 13, 2009*

LAHORE: Two people were killed and another 40 injured as two rival groups clashed in the Darail area of Diamir during the Gilgit-Baltistan election, according to a report on TV channel on November 12. The channel said the clash took place in Diya Murdarali area and police recovered the two bodies from a polling centre in Darail.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C13%5Cstory\\_13-11-2009\\_pg1\\_4](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C13%5Cstory_13-11-2009_pg1_4)

## **“LHC questions election campaign in Gilgit-Baltistan,”**

*The News, November 11, 2009*

LAHORE: A Division bench of the Lahore High Court, while hearing the appeals against the delay in the by-election in Punjab took notice of the massive election campaign in Gilgit-Baltistan despite the government's warning regarding unfavourable law and order situation in the country for any such activity.

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=207914](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=207914)

## **“BISP jurisdiction being expanded to Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK,”**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, November 11, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Farzana Raja on Tuesday said that development of Gilgit-Baltistan is among the top priorities of the Pakistan People’s Party government. “Following the vision of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, the government has initiated the development process to end the sense of deprivation among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan,” she said in a press statement.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=89602&Itemid=1](http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=89602&Itemid=1)

## **Masood Rehman, “SC takes up impugned appointment of AJK CJ,”**

*Daily Times, November 10, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) will resume hearing of a constitutional petition challenging the appointment of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) SC Chief Justice Riaz Akhtar Chaudhry on November 12. A three-member SC bench – consisting of Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Justice Ijaz Ahmed and Justice Rahmat Hussain Jafferri – will also take up other controversies relating to the judicial set up in AJK.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C10%5Cstory\\_10-11-2009\\_pg7\\_31](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C10%5Cstory_10-11-2009_pg7_31)

## **“Kaira appeals masses to show enthusiasm in upcoming election,”**

*November 11, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan and Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Qamar Zaman Kaira appealed people on November 8 to participate with enthusiasm in the upcoming elections. It is pertinent to mention here that election campaigns of various political parties are in full swing as many as total 264 candidates are contesting for 24 seats of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly scheduled to be held on November 12.

There are 23 candidates contesting from PPP, 20 from MQM, 14 from PML-N, 14 from PML-Q, 6 from Jamiat-e Ulema-e Islam, 3 from Jamiat-e Islami, 10 from the Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance, 4 from the ANP and 2 from TIP and 2 from Balawaristan National Front.

<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/11/09/kaira-appeals-masses-to-show-enthusiasm-in-upcoming-election/>

## **“Gilgit students walk to Lahore on ‘peace mission’,”**

*Daily Times, November 8, 2009*

LAHORE: Two students from the Karakoram University in Gilgit reached Lahore on a peace mission after traveling on foot for 30 days during the first phase of their trip, according to private TV channel report on November 7. According to the channel, Ejaz Ali Romi and Azghal Ali Romi began their journey for Karachi in October and reached the Minar-e-Pakistan after 30 days.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C08%5Cstory\\_8-11-2009\\_pg13\\_6](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C08%5Cstory_8-11-2009_pg13_6)

## **M Ismail Khan, “The Gilgit-Baltistan election: who stands where!,”**

*The News, November 09, 2009*

Gilgit-Baltistan’s first election after attaining the province-like status is set to produce a hung assembly. Major mainstream political parties are likely to get a small part of the pie while a handful of seats would go to independent candidates.

The 12 November election witnessed intense campaigns. The PML-N, the PML-Q, the MQM, the PPP, the ANP, the PTI, the JI, the JUI and the Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA) — a local nationalist party — are all fielding candidates for the 24 members to be directly elected to the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA). Election on nine reserved seats, six for women and three for technocrats, will be held later.

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=207492](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=207492)

## **“Nawaz vows to resolve Gilgit-Baltistan people’s issues,”**

*November 6, 2009*

GILGIT: Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) chief Mian Nawaz Sharif on November 5 vowed that he would work day and night to resolve the problems of the Gilgit-Baltistan people. Addressing a public gathering in Ghanche area of Gilgit-Baltistan, he said the day is not far when Kashmir would be free. Nawaz urged the people to make success possible for election symbol of ‘Lion’—his party symbol for elections.

<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/11/06/nawaz-vows-to-resolve-gilgit-baltistan-people%E2%80%99s-issues/>

## **“Journalist community briefed on Reforms Package,”**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, November 5, 2009*

GILGIT: The Federal Ministry of Information and Broadcasting arranged a short briefing for working journalists of Gilgit to throw light on the salient feature of the Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009 held in Gilgit. On the occasion, Amjad Bhatti, an official of ministry read out some important sections of the order and told the media that new set up would give autonomy to the people of the area and after the upcoming elections, the elected representatives would have the opportunity to solve their issues more effectively.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=89297&Itemid=1](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=89297&Itemid=1)

## **“JKLF Marches Up to 20,000 Protestors Towards Islamabad”**

Convoys from all over Azad Jammu and Kashmir moved towards Islamabad to protest Pakistan’s recent move to give province-like status to Gilgit-Baltistan. They were stopped at Pak-Patan, the border of Azad Kashmir and Pakistan, where police erected hurdles on the roads, preventing the protestors marching towards Islamabad. JKLF activists say they are determined to move towards Islamabad where hundreds of JKLF activists and other Kashmiri people are waiting for them. They have crossed six hurdles so far.

<http://newsblaze.com/story/20091105134717nnnn.nb/topstory.html>

## **Hameed Shaheen, “Politics heads to amazing maze in AJK,”**

*Pakistan Observer, November 5, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Just a fortnight away from installation of government by the re-united Muslim Conference the party politics seems streaming to a new irretrievable maze, as senior level voices have started clamoring that the re-united party cadre is yet to be finalized. This newest stance belies the earlier media statements placing the re-unified party-head cap on Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan.

In December 2008 the ruling Muslim Conference had split into two mutually vying factions, one under MLA Raja Farooq Haider Khan and other led by ex-premier Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, with intensive awareness of ‘loss’ on part of both at the same time. However, the re-unification matured in middle of October 2009 with party headship rolled to Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan and premiership of AJK jumping into the fortune of Raja Farooq Haider Khan. The ‘understanding’ of this apportionment of higher offices of government and the party was instrumental in bringing the present set-up in AJK under prime ministership of Raja Farooq Haider, ousting Sardar M Yaqub Khan in a no-trust vote on October 22, 2009 in the assembly, although the latter had resigned six days earlier to avoid his parliamentary trouble.

<http://pakobserver.net/200911/05/news/topstories10.asp>

## **“Independent Assembly for Gilgit Baltistan demanded,”**

*November 1, 2009*

KARACHI: An “Independent Gilgit Baltistan” is the ultimate solution to current dissatisfaction of the people of Gilgit Baltistan, said speakers at a seminar organized by Gilgit Baltistan Students Alliance here on November 1 at Liaquat Memorial Hall in Karachi.

Speaking to the seminar, Qari Abdul Jabbar Nasir, a prominent political analyst and senior journalist said granting a provincial status to Gilgit Baltistan is beyond the limits of constitutional jurisdiction of Pakistani Parliament. Instead of implementing UN resolutions, Pakistan continued not only violating the UN

resolutions but also defaming the people to Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://gbtribune.blogspot.com/2009/11/independent-assembly-for-gilgit.html>

### **Pak's Gilgit-Baltistan reforms, attempt to divide Kashmiris: JKLF,”**

*November 4, 2009*

LAHORE: Terming the Gilgit-Baltistan reforms as a 'colonial-type' package, the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has said that it would stage a long march to Islamabad on November 5 demanding the withdrawal of the package. Interacting with media persons during a press conference in Islamabad, JKLF President, Syed Faisal Nazki criticised the package saying the powers would not be vested in the people of the region but in the Gilgit-Baltistan Council. "The Kashmiris considered the Gilgit-Baltistan package as an attempt to divide their homeland," Nazki stated.

[http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/paks-gilgit-baltistan-reforms-attempt-to-divide-kashmiris-jklf\\_100269797.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/paks-gilgit-baltistan-reforms-attempt-to-divide-kashmiris-jklf_100269797.html)

### **Shams Rehman, "A third government within Jammu & Kashmir state"**

*Kashmir Watch, November 3, 2009*

Top leadership of Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA) and Jammu Kashmir All Parties National Alliance (APNA) along with all three GBDA candidates for Gilgit constituencies for Legislative Assembly elections to be held on 12th November were detained prior to the election rally here in Gilgit. The leaders of APNA including its chair and ex member of Gilgit Baltistan Council, Mr Wajahat Hassan, Secretary Gen. Arif Shahid, Col (rtd) Nadir Hassan and Engineer Amanullah Khan (not the JKLF head) were later forcibly expelled to Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, reports noted.

[http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showarticles.php?subaction=showfull&id=1257270621&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=3&var0news=value0news](http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showarticles.php?subaction=showfull&id=1257270621&archive=&start_from=&ucat=3&var0news=value0news)

### **"Zardari directs for early completion of AJK development projects,"**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, November 2, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on November 12 said the federal government gave special attention to the development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and directed for early completion of all projects. Talking to AJK Prime Minister Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the President called for prompt completion of matters relating reconstruction in earthquake-hit areas, raising of the Mangla Dam, rehabilitation of Mangla Dam affectees and development of new Mirpur city. The President felicitated Raja Farooq Haider on his election as AJK Prime Minister and hoped that he would work with full dedication for the upliftment of the people of AJK.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=88997&Itemid=1](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88997&Itemid=1)

# Economic Developments

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## **“Cross-LoC trade increases,”**

*The News, November 20, 2009*

MIRPUR: Trade worth Rs 73 million was conducted at Chakan Da Bagh Tairtinote entry point on Poonch Rawalakot route during November 18-19. Cross-LoC business on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route touched Rs60 million, official sources stated. The sources said that 50 trucks exchanged sides till stipulated hours late on November 18 on Poonch-Rawalakote route, 25 from each side. Twenty-five trucks carrying coconut, kernel, bananas, apple and brown cardamom reached from Poonch to Rawalakot in Azad Kashmir on November 18. These supplies were valued at Rs15.6 million. All 25 trucks that reached Poonch from AJK carried dal moong worth Rs 22 million.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=209401>

## **“Trade across LoC: Problems persist,”**

*Rediff, November 16, 2009*

Trans-Line of Control (LoC) trade that opened up between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad has started picking up even though it continues to take place purely on a barter basis. According to an official statement, trade between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad from April 1 this year to the end of last month was transacted to the tune of 25.73 crore (Rs 257.3 million) through 972 truck loads and 48 consignments according to the list framed by standing operating procedure and on traders demand from both sides. The goods most sought after in Muzaffarabad are Kashmiri fruits, coconuts, pulses, mixed vegetables and embroidery, while Peshawar sandals, rice, dry fruits, dates and pulses are in high demand.

<http://business.rediff.com/report/2009/nov/16/problems-persist-in-trade-across-loc.htm>

## **“KEF receives donations to open schools,”**

*The News, November 12, 2009*

RAWALPINDI: The Kashmir Education Foundation (KEF) in Pakistan and AJK has received a donation of 70,000 pounds from the Pakistani community in the United Kingdom. The donation was recently given

to KEF in a ceremony held in UK. On this occasion, Haji Ch Abdul Ghafoor pledged to donate a new school to KEF in Gujjar Khan. This was stated by KEF Chairman Vice Admiral (r) Farooq Rashid in Rawalpindi on November 11.

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=208153](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=208153)

## **“UK to give £35m to AJK: Sultan,”**

*The News, November 24, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Azad Kashmir and President AK People’s Muslim League Barrister Sultan Mehmood said on November 23 the United Kingdom will give 35 million pounds for reconstruction in Azad Kashmir.

In a press release issued by the AJK PML Secretariat in Islamabad, the ex-premier noted UK’s Minister for International Development, Micheal Foster stating in a letter: “This aid will be in addition to 665 million pounds for Pakistan. The aid is to be used for another 750 schools and construction of 50 bridges,” Sultan maintained. He pointed out that the Kashmiris, living in large numbers in the United Kingdom, wanted Britain to provide aid for the inhabitants of Azad Kashmir. The United Kingdom government, he said, had shown interest in various development projects in Azad Kashmir in addition to its keenness in fighting various diseases in the area.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=210090>

## **Mansoor Ahmad, “Overseas Kashmiris keen to invest, but need incentives,”**

*The News, November 22, 2009*

LAHORE: Kashmiri immigrants living abroad have liquid assets of over 20 billion pound sterling which they will willingly invest to exploit the huge potential of Azad Jammu and Kashmir provided the federal government offers them proper infrastructure and incentives. Muslim Conference President and former AJK Prime Minister Sardar Atiq Khan stated this while making a presentation on the economic potential of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to the Lahore Economic Journalists Association.

He said the region had a potential to generate 17,000 megawatts of hydropower, which needed an investment of \$40 billion. He said the entire investment could be recovered in five years and the cost of electricity could be brought down to lower the cost of doing business of industries.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=209730>

## **Hameed Shaheen, “EU delegation to visit Pakistan, Azad Kashmir,”**

*Kashmir Watch*

ISLAMABAD: To keep its manifesto on Kashmir moving, an eight-nation European delegation including France, Spain, Belgium and Sweden is to visit Pakistan/Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the last week of November. Prior to Pakistan/AJK visit, the delegation visiting Jammu & Kashmir from November 22, 2009 for three days to have a close feel of the ground situation there. In its AJK visit the delegation will meet Azad Kashmiri leaders including AJK president, prime minister, Hurriyat chapter of AJK/Pakistan to have their inputs.

[http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1258574674&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=15&var1news=value1news](http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1258574674&archive=&start_from=&ucat=15&var1news=value1news)

## **“UK envoy for resolution of Kashmir issue,”**

*Daily Times, November 12, 2009*

MIRPUR: The Kashmir dispute should be settled by India and Pakistan in line with the views and aspirations of the people of the region, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Robert Brinkley stated on November 11. He was responding to questions raised by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation League president and former AJK High Court Chief Justice (retd), Abdul Majeed Mallick during a meeting.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C12%5Cstory\\_12-11-2009\\_pg7\\_11](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C11%5C12%5Cstory_12-11-2009_pg7_11)

## **Members of the European Parliament Form “Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan” in the European Parliament,”**

*Reuters, November 5, 2009*

BRUSSELS: A group of Members of the European Parliament, including Jurgen Creutzmann, have decided to form a group called “Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan.” There is great concern from these members that the future of Gilgit-Baltistan is being determined not by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan but by the Government of Pakistan under the Constitution of Pakistan, even though Gilgit-Baltistan is not mentioned in Pakistan’s Constitution as part of its territory.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUS188352+05-Nov-2009+PRN20091105>

# Other Developments

## Lok Virsa gets award,”

*The Nation, November 21, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, Lok Virsa participated in the Second Contest on Better Practices in Communities held in Tokyo, Japan through its entry/ presentation on the topic “Revival of Performing Arts in Baltistan”. In line with its on-going efforts to document and safeguard intangible cultural heritage of Pakistan, the entry was presented in the contest by Syed Muhammad Abbas, a writer and researcher from Gilgit-Baltistan on behalf of Lok Virsa.

The contest was organized under the aegis of Asia Pacific

Cultural Centre for UNESCO, Japan.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Islamabad/21-Nov-2009/Lok-Virsa-gets-award>

## Mehtab Haider, “Delegation visits Mangla, Neelum-Jhelum projects tomorrow,”

*The News, November 12, 2009*

ISLAMABAD: A high-powered delegation, headed by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission (PC), Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali, is getting a rented helicopter at the cost of national exchequer for a one-day visit to the sites of the Mangla Upraising Project and the Neelum-Jhelum Hydro Power Project (NJHEP) on November 13.

The national exchequer will have to bear hundreds of thousands of rupees for the visit without exactly determining what will be achieved out of it. The delegation comprises Sardar Assef, AJK Prime Minister Farooq Haider amongst others.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=208006>

*(Other Developments continued after Abbreviations)*

### ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AJKHEB</b>	Azad Jammu and Kashmir Hydro Electric Board
<b>AJK</b>	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
<b>APHC</b>	All Parties Hurriyat Conference
<b>BNF</b>	Balawaristan National Front
<b>CBM</b>	Confidence Building Measures
<b>CDP</b>	Community Development Programme
<b>FATA</b>	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
<b>FBR</b>	Federal Board of Revenue
<b>GBDA</b>	Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance
<b>GBUM</b>	Gilgit Baltistan United Movement
<b>ISI</b>	Inter Services Intelligence
<b>JIAJK</b>	Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Jammu & Kashmir
<b>KAC</b>	Kashmiri American Council
<b>KKH</b>	Karakoram Highway
<b>KNM</b>	Karakoram National Movement
<b>LoC</b>	Line of Control
<b>NLI</b>	Northern Light Infantry
<b>NALA</b>	Northern Areas Legislative Assembly
<b>NAEDC</b>	Northern Areas Executive Development Committee
<b>NWFP</b>	North West Frontier Province
<b>PoK</b>	Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
<b>POGB</b>	Pakistan occupied Gilgit Baltistan
<b>PPP</b>	Pakistan Peoples' Party
<b>UJC</b>	United Jihad Council
<b>WAPDA</b>	Water and Power Development Authority

## **“PIA flies to Gilgit and Skardu,”**

*The News, November 4, 2009*

KARACHI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is operating twice weekly flights between Gilgit and Skardu. The flights being operated every Monday and Thursday between Gilgit and Skardu, meet the longstanding demand of the residents of the two cities, a PIA press release stated. “More destinations would be added while increasing the frequency of flights in future keeping in view the demand, preferences of passengers and economic viability of flights.”

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=206639](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=206639)

# Pakistan Occupied Kashmir-An Overview

Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoK) is constitutionally an integral part of the Indian Union and remains under Pakistani occupation since 1947, when Pakistan's Army engineered a tribal invasion and took control of more than 114,500 square kilometers of J&K. In 1949, the leaders of AJK Muslim Conference were forced to hand over Gilgit Baltistan Regions to the Pakistani federal government through the 'Karachi Agreement'. Since then Gilgit & Baltistan are ruled directly from Islamabad. Again in 1963, Pakistan ceded Trans-Karakoram Tract including a segment of Baltistan Region known as 'Shaksgam' and part of Gilgit Region known as 'Raskam' to China. Further, Chitral and parts of Chilas called Shinaki Kohistan, which constituted parts of Jammu & Kashmir before its partition in 1947, were also merged into the NWFP of Pakistan in 1970 and 1955 respectively.

**Total Area of PoK (under the current form):** 85,793 sq. km

**Administrative Divisions:** Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad and Gilgit & Baltistan; referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK, and the 'Northern Areas' respectively by the government of Pakistan

**Area ceded to China by Pakistan:** 5,800 sq kilometers

## AZAD JAMMU & KASHMIR (AJK)

After the partition of Jammu & Kashmir, the Muzaffarabad district of Kashmir province, and Mirpur and parts of Poonch districts of Jammu province went into Pakistani occupation. Pakistan amalgamated these districts together and created the so-called AJK. AJK is envisaged as an autonomous region by Pakistan. The government of AJK is considered as a parallel government, which was established to challenge the legitimacy of the J&K government in Srinagar. Despite the fact that AJK is neither a country nor a province of Pakistan, it has its own President, a Prime Minister, a Supreme Court, national anthem and a flag. These structures and the designations are only titular in nature and real authority lies with the federal government of Pakistan. Significant matters such as defence, supposed 'foreign policy',

rehabilitation of refugees and the financial control have been carefully placed under the discretion of the political establishment of Pakistan. As of today, the parts of Kashmir province under PoK is divided into three districts of Muzaffarabad, Bagh and Neelum, while the parts of Jammu province under PoK is divided into five districts namely Poonch/Rawalakot, Sudhnati/Pallandari, Bhimber, Kotli and Mirpur.

**Area:** 13,297 square km

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

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

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

**Capital:** Muzaffarabad

**President:** Raja Zulqarnain Khan

**Prime Minister:** Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan

**“Azad Jammu and Kashmir” Council:** Total 12 members- 6 each representing governments of AJK and Pakistan. The AJK Council is headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49, of which 29 are directly elected from the AJK, 11 are elected from Pakistan under the provision for the 'Kashmiri refugees', whereas rest of the 8 seats are reserved for females, overseas Kashmiris and the technocrats.

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

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

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

**Political 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)

## GILGIT BALTISTAN

Gilgit Baltistan was initially referred to by the government of Pakistan as the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA). It is the northernmost political entity within the Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoK) and is under direct control of the Islamabad government. The area, after separation of Chitral and Shinaki Kohistan, is still five and half times bigger to that of AJK. The status of the *Gilgit Baltistan* is not defined in the successive constitutions of Pakistan. Pakistan accepts *Gilgit Baltistan* as part of the Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, however, does not consider it as part of AJK. Due to a direct control imposed from Islamabad, the locals still await basic political and judicial rights. For instance, they do not have the right to cast vote and lack representation in the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan. Further, they cannot access the provincial high courts as well as the Supreme Court of Pakistan for justice. The Judicial Commissioner exercises judicial powers in *Gilgit Baltistan* who is a political figure nominated by the Minister for Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs. The Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) is a political institution which lacks power to legislate and is headed by the Minister for Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs, who is currently a Member of the National Assembly elected from the Gujrat district of Punjab province.

**Area:** 72,496 km

**Population:** 870,347 (1998 population census)

**Capital:** Gilgit

**Districts:** six

Baltistan Region is divided into Ganche and Skardu districts

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Diamer, Ghizar, Hunza-Nagar and Gilgit districts

**Ethnic Groups:** Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Mon, Pashtun, Khowar, Dom, Gujjar and Kashmiri

**Religious Groups:** Shia (Twelvers), Nurbakhshi (Twelvers), Ismaili, Sunni, and Ahlehadith

**Languages:** Shina, Balti, Wakhi, Khowar, Gujjari, Burushaski, Puriki, Kashmiri, Pashto

**Legislature:** Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA), total 33 seats, of which 24 are directly elected and 6 female and 3 technocrat members are selected by GBLA members.

**Acting-Governor of G-B:** Mian Manzoor A. Wattoo

**Chief Minister G-B:** Syed Mehdi Shah

NALA was dissolved on July 25, 2009 before it could complete its 5-years term, and along with that, advisors to the Chairman including the Chief Executive were sacked. Elections for GBLA was held on November 12, 2009. Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the ruling party of Pakistan, won the majority and formed government.

**Political 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)

**Literacy rate:** 15% male- 3.5% female (World Bank estimates of 1997)

**State of Infrastructure:** More than two-thirds of the villages lack potable water, electricity, telephone, health units, girls' schools, paved roads, ration depot, and pony tracks.

**Disclaimer**

*PoK News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Northern Areas' 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

***Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses***

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in); Email: [lbscidsa@gmail.com](mailto:lbscidsa@gmail.com)

