

POK NEWS DIGEST

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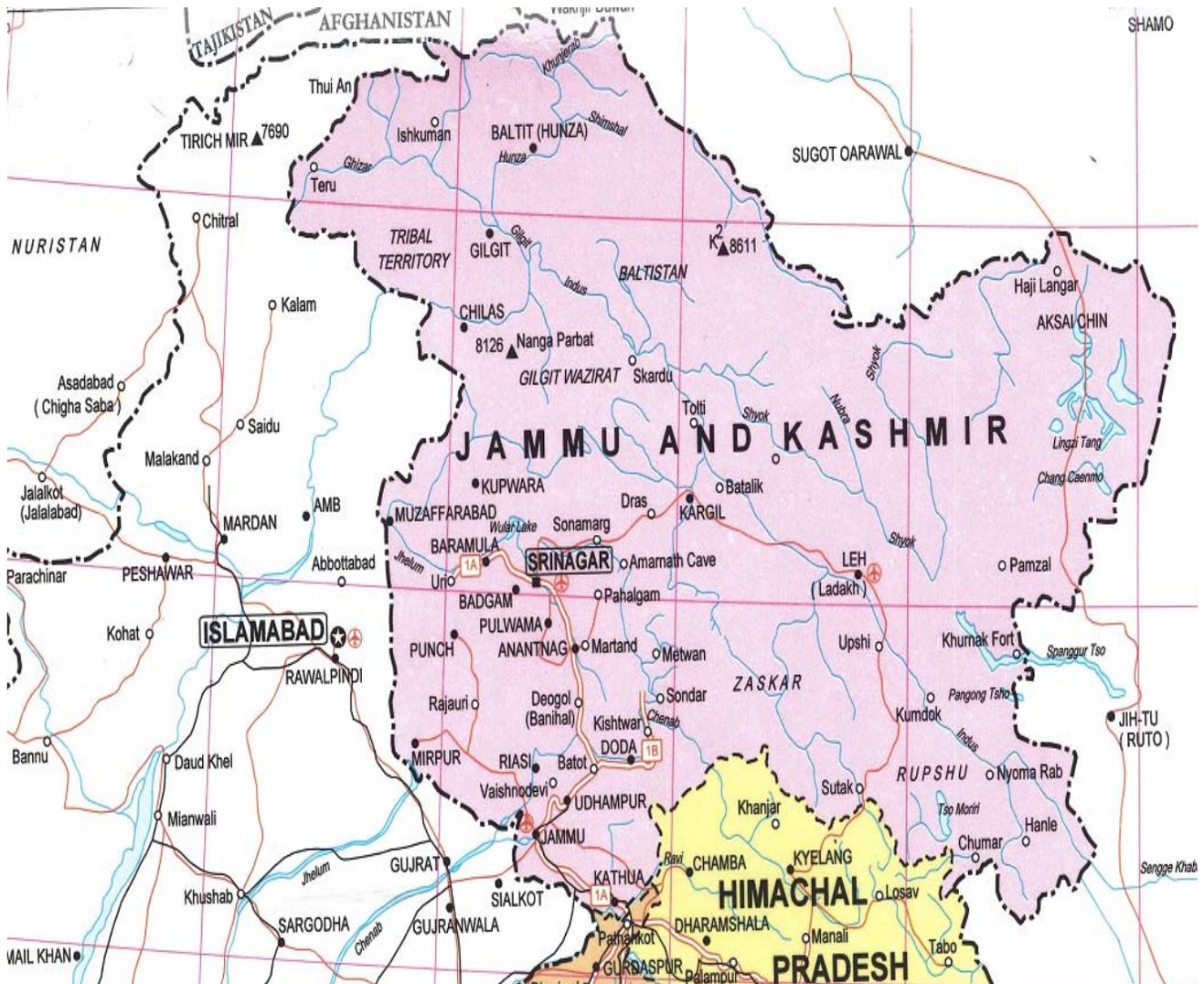
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

About this Issue

In the aftermath of Mumbai attack, Pakistan launched raids on the offices of various militant groups located in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Several militants including Lashkar chief, Zaki-Ur-Rehman Lakhvi were arrested from Muzaffarabad during the raids. The situation was paradoxical as the both the president and the prime minister of the so called 'AJK' denied presence of militant organizations in the area. It is proven after all that this region houses training camps for some prominent terrorist organizations operating in Kashmir and elsewhere. Nonetheless, the arrested militants were soon released by Pakistani authorities as is indicated in one of the reports in this issue.

There was instability in the governing structure in 'AJK' which was resolved to an extent with a 15 member cabinet taking oath on December 17. Some members did not attend the oath taking ceremony as they were not happy with the developments.

The issue also includes a commentary on Bhasha Dam written by Captain Alok Bansal and myself. The article traverses various contentious issues related to the Bhasha Dam Project and its possible adverse effects.

Priyanka Singh

Commentary

Bhasha Dam: A Tomb Stone of Gilgit-Baltistan's Aspirations

Alok Bansal & Priyanka Singh

This year Pakistan is facing an acute water shortage and the shortage during the current Rabi crop is estimated to be around 35 to 40 per cent, which will adversely affect the wheat output, critical for the country's food security. Pakistan also faces an acute power shortage, which has exacerbated by the reduced outflow from Tarbela Dam. To tide over the problems, Pakistan is building Bhasha Dam on River Indus, which is the largest dam being built in Pakistan since Tarbela was completed in 1976. Continuous silting has reduced the storage capacity of Tarbela and Mangla dams considerably. It had been estimated that to tide over the problems of Pakistan's water shortages it needed to build a dam of Tarbela's size (world's largest rock filled dam) every seven years. However, political discord and lack of clear vision among Pakistan's ruling elite have prevented even a single dam from being constructed during the last three decades. For a country where agriculture contributes one fifth of the national GDP and employs over 40 percent of the labour force, it could be a costly oversight.

The experts opine that the ideal site for building a mega dam in Pakistan is Kalabagh, which could provide millions of acres feet of water for irrigation in addition to cheap electricity. Though Punjab, the most populous province of Pakistan has always been supportive of Kalabagh, the other three provinces have been resolutely opposed to it. Although Sindh is opposed to any dam on Indus, NWFP feels that a dam at Kalabagh will inundate large agricultural tracts as well as the thriving city of Nowshera. In spite of being small, NWFP has always wielded considerable influence on the security establishment of Pakistan and it was therefore impossible for the then military rulers to overlook its objections. Despite General Musharraf's fervent attempts, a consensus eluded

Kalabagh. In fact Asfandar Wali Khan, the ANP leader, went to the extent of asking him to choose between Kalabagh Dam and the federation.

As a result Musharraf in the year 2006, settled for less 'contentious' Bhasha Dam to be built as the first mega dam as part of his 'Water Vision 2025', which envisages building at least five dams across Pakistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK). The site of the proposed Bhasha dam is located on the Indus River 314 kilometres upstream of Tarbela dam and about 120 km downstream of its confluence with the Gilgit River. Its proponents claim that it could enhance the lifespan of Tarbela dam; by reducing silting. It is also expected to have a longer life span than Kalabagh as the sediment load at Bhasha is considerably lower than at Kalabagh. The construction is expected to start by September 2009 and is estimated to cost a whopping \$ 12 billion. The dam is slated to have 12 power generating units of 375 MW capacity and the average annual hydel power to be generated by the dam is estimated to be 19,000 GWH. The dam with a height of 272 m, will be the highest roller-compacted concrete dam in the world. There will be 14 gates of 11.0 x 16.5 m size. The gross capacity of the dam will be 7.3 Million Acre Feet (MAF) and the live (usable) capacity of the dam will be 6.4 MAF. A number of roads need to be built to provide access to the project site and the funding requirement has been forecast as Rs 31 billion, however, only Rs 2.6 billion have been provided in the budget for the current financial year. For the project a meagre sum of Rs 200 million has been assigned in the budget and the bulk of funding was expected from the World Bank and the ADB. However, the World Bank has refused to fund the dam or any other project in POK. Moreover, with the global economic slowdown, funding from any international multilateral organisation may become a serious problem and may further slowdown the already slow progress of the project.

However, the dam will not only take much longer

to build, it will inundate large tracts of land in Gilgit-Baltistan. Besides it would also inundate 120 Kilometre stretch of Karakoram Highway, which links China with Pakistan and provides the main access to this otherwise inaccessible region. The dam is therefore strongly opposed by the local population but the hapless population of Gilgit-Baltistan, without any representation in Islamabad's policy making institutions, has no avenue of getting its voice heard in Islamabad. The local population already has serious grievances against the Pakistan government for the continuing 'oppression,' for the last six decades. The government has not only not allowed the people any say in the decision making process, it has even prevented them from forming unions.

The dam has grave socio-economic and environmental implications. It will displace the residents from at least 32 villages in Diamer District as soon the construction work starts. The large tracts of fertile land, which is extremely scarce in Gilgit-Baltistan will get inundated, making the region even more dependent on Pakistan for its food requirements. The construction will bring in large number of workers from outside the region. As it is the State Subjects Rule, which prevented outsiders from acquiring land in the region has been done away with, consequently, the migrants have been settling in the region and altering the unique ethnic composition of the region. The dam may further disturb the already delicate ethnic and sectarian balance in the region. The construction of a huge reservoir in a tectonic faultline may result in serious ecological complications. The recurrence of a massive earthquake like the one experienced in the Mirpur-Muzaffarabad region of POK in 2005, could lead to severe calamity as a breach in a huge reservoir like Bhasha Dam could inundate most of the cities located downstream on the banks of Indus.

The fundamental problem with the dam is that while almost the entire inundation will take place in Gilgit-Baltistan, the power plant will be located in Bhasha in NWFP and hence it will receive the royalty from the power generation. Although the entire water in

the reservoir will be available for irrigation downstream in Pakistan, not even an acre of land will be irrigated in so called 'Northern Areas' (Gilgit-Baltistan). As a sop to the local population the name of the dam was changed from Bhasha to Diamer-Bhasha to give them a false sense of ownership and it was announced that the royalty will be shared with the 'Northern Areas'. However, NWFP government has refused to share the royalty and Pakistani constitution supports their contention. The provision in the constitution states that the royalty would go to the state where the powerhouse for generating electricity is located. However, this is not a valid justification for the NWFP to reap the benefits of royalty from the dam, as the constitution of Pakistan does not apply to Gilgit-Baltistan, where the dam is actually located.

There is another dimension of this dam that needs to be highlighted and it is related to the preservation of archaeological assets. In April 2008, there were reports that approximately one thousand rare stone carvings, sculptures and statues of Buddha were discovered at the construction site of the dam. Pakistan as a signatory to international conventions is obliged to protect these heritage sites. However, obliterating the region's pre-Islamic past may suit Pakistan's political and ideological objectives, but India's reticence is baffling. The dam is being built in a territory that legally belongs to India and the population of the region, who are 'de jure' citizens of India are being persecuted to facilitate its construction. The Government of India must raise its voice against persecution of its citizens. It will be difficult for Pakistan to obtain funding for the project, if India educates the international multilateral organisations about the illegality of the project and consequent violation of the basic human rights of the population of Gilgit-Baltistan. Its unique ethno-nationalist character and pristine environment is being threatened to provide irrigation and electricity to Pakistan, without any concurrence of the local population or India.

Political Developments

Wajih Abbasi, “Terrorism and future of Pakistan,” The Post, December 19, 2008

The United Nations Security Council’s ban on Jamaatud Dawah (JuD) and four other personalities associated with it, including its Amir, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, is a new twist to the events which started after terrorist attacks on Mumbai in November 2008. Even before the UN decision, Pakistan government had started operation against the camps maintained by JuD) and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) in Azad Kashmir during which several people, including operational head of LeT was arrested. The operation was intensified after the UN resolution and was extended to the Punjab and other provinces where bulk of assets of at least JuD are situated.

(<http://thepost.com.pk/OpinionNews.aspx?dtlid=196894&catid=11>)

“Pakistan Targets Mumbai Attacks Planners,” December 08, 2008

Pakistan’s military launched an operation targeting militant groups linked to deadly terrorist attacks in Mumbai. A military statement on December 08, 2008 confirmed that security forces had also made arrests, following rising tensions with India. Pakistan also proposed sending a high-level delegation to New Delhi “as soon as possible” to help with the ongoing investigation.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack stated that Pakistani President, Asif Ali Zardari telephoned Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to inform her of the operations. McCormack further added that Pakistan is making what he called “positive steps” to help find those responsible for the attacks. It was not immediately clear if the operations detailed in today’s military statement included a raid conducted on December 07 on a suspected militant camp near Muzaffarabad.

(<http://www.issuepost.com/news/story/12287.html>)

“Govt seals JuD offices in AJK,” December 13, 2008

MUZAFFARABAD: Police and other law enforcement agencies launched a crackdown on Jamaat- ud Dawa and sealed its offices and other facilities in Pakistan and arrested scores of activists after the government announced it would comply with the UN decision placing Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, founder of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, on its terrorism sanctions list of people and organisations linked to al Qaeda and the Taliban.

In AJK the authorities carried out an overnight action, sealing the JuD offices in all eight districts as well as two madrassas, a health facility, a middle school and a mechanical workshop run by it. “Yes we have sealed their offices in Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Bagh, Bhimber, Rawalakot, Kundal Shahi, Sudhnoti and Mirpur, a dispensary and madrassa in Mirpur, another madrassa in Bhimber and a school, madrassa and a mechanical workshop in Muzaffarabad in accordance with the directives of the federal government,” additional secretary (home) Muhammad Zafar Khan confirmed.

(http://www.greaterkashmir.com/full_story.asp?Date=13_12_2008&ItemID=42&cat=1)

“Dawa offices sealed in NAs,” The Frontier Post, December 14, 2008

GILGIT: Police in a crackdown launched against the banned organization, sealed four offices of the Jamat-ut-Dawa and confiscated the record for further investigation. This was stated by Syed Nizam-ud-Din, Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police (Operations), while talking to this correspondent on December 13. Police sealed the offices of the banned organization in Skardu, Ghanche and Gilgit areas. The operation was launched on the directives of the government, AIG stated. The local administration and police acquired all the records of these offices into their custody.

(<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/News.aspx?ncat=ts&nid=3357&ad=14-12-2008>)

**“Cleaning up the act with conviction,”
Editorial, Daily Times, December 13, 2008**

The government of Pakistan, together with the leaders of the armed forces, and the main opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), have done Pakistan a great service by heeding the voice of the international community in general, and China in particular, by taking action against the organisations banned on December 10 by the Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council: Jama'at-ud Dawa and Jaish-e Muhammad. Most Pakistanis will be shocked at the outreach of Jama'at-ud Dawa in the country after its “education” and charity institutions were raided on December 11 in compliance with the UN Security Council ban. In fact, action had begun before December 11 after Pakistan became aware of the extent to which Dawa-Lashkar was possibly involved in the Mumbai attacks. The network is also highly developed from Karachi to Peshawar and Azad Kashmir.

(http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C12%5C13%5Cstory_13-12-2008_pg3_1)

Ramesh Vinayak, “Kashmir jihadi groups in Pak disappear,” December 13, 2008

Following the Pakistan government’s crackdown against the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), both branded and banned as terrorist outfits by the United Nations, a conglomerate of five major jihadi organisations spearheading militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and led by fiery Hizbul Mujahidin chief Syed Salahuddin, disappeared and have gone incommunicado, according to reports in the Pakistani newspapers on December 12. The United Jihad Council (JUC), a Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir based coalition of militant groups headed by Salahuddin, temporarily dissolved itself, closed its offices, removed all signs and asked its leaders to stay quiet, as stated by a report in the widely circulated *Jang* newspaper.

(<http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/india/pti-com-ent&sk-view&id=2284&ssid=19&isid=31&mid=1>)

“No terrorist training camp exists in Azad Kashmir: President AJK”

ISLAMABAD: Urging exposing of Indian conspiracies by sending diplomatic mission abroad, President Azad Kashmir Raja Muhammad Zulqarnain categorically stated that no terrorist training camp exists in Azad Kashmir. Talking to different delegations in Islamabad, President AJK emphasized that India has always tried to harm Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and put responsibility of every incident on Pakistan without investigation and proofs.

(<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=137489>)

“Pak releases four detained workers of JuD,” Press Trust of India, December 15, 2008

ISLAMABAD: Just days after launching a crackdown on the Jamaat-ud-Dawah after the UN banned it, Pakistani authorities released four detained workers and removed police guards deployed at the home of a senior leader of the organisation. Authorities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir released the four detained workers of the Lashkar-e-Taiba’s front organisation and also withdrew police guards posted at the home of the group’s regional head, Maulana Abdul Aziz Alvi. Chaudhry Imtiaz, the Deputy Commissioner of PoK capital Muzaffarabad, stated that police guards had been removed from Alvi’s residence but he had been asked not to leave the area without informing the administration. Alvi, who heads the PoK chapter of the Jamaat, was put under house arrest in his Karyan village.

(<http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/BFFA5560D32A771E65257520002CD186?OpenDocument>)

Mazhar Tufail, “Zardari gives signal to topple AJK PM,” The News, December 15, 2008

ISLAMABAD: A final decision on removing the incumbent Azad Jammu and Kashmir government was taken at a meeting between central leaders of the PPP AJK chapter and President Asif Ali Zardari

in Islamabad, as quoted by an official on December 14. The source confided that after the success of the no-trust motion in the Legislative Assembly, the forward bloc in the ruling Muslim Conference, backed by the AJK PPP and its allies, would elect a new PPP leader of the house.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=151973>)

“Opposition to table no-trust against PM AJK,” December 18, 2008

MUZAFFARABAD: The opposition and the forward block members of ruling Muslim Conference agreed on December 18 in principle to table no-trust motion in Azad Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly against Prime Minister Sardar Atique Ahmed Khan. The opposition has also authorized the former AJK PM Sardar Sikandar Hayat to nominate the next Leader of the House.

(<http://www.thearynews.com/english/newsdetail.asp?nid=18801>)

“15-member AJK cabinet takes oath,” Dawn, December 18, 2008

ISLAMABAD: A 15-member Azad Kashmir cabinet was sworn in on December 17. Azad Kashmir President, Raja Zulqarnain Khan administered the oath of office to the ministers at the Kashmir House. AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan administered oath to three advisers. Three ministers, including Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, a close aide of the prime minister, abstained from ceremony. Others who refused to take oath were Sardar Muhammad Naseer Khan and Chaudhry Sadiq Batli. The prime minister while addressing a press conference after the oath taking ceremony maintained that mid-term reshuffle of the cabinet had become due and he would shortly induct two to four more ministers.

(<http://www.dawn.com/2008/12/18/top16.htm>)

“Azad Kashmiris support charity, condemn Pakistan-UN,” World Bulletin, December 12, 2008

Kashmiri groups condemned Pakistan and UN over shutting down Jamaat-ud-Dawa which operates hospitals, schools and relief centres without evidence. The action came a day after the United Nations listed Jamat-ud-Dawa as a front group for Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was blamed for the strikes. The U.N. also subjected Jamat-ud-Dawa to sanctions as a so-called “terrorist group”, including an asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo.” The UN Security Council acted in haste,” said the Pakistan-based United Jihad Council (UJC) in a statement published in local papers in Kashmir.

(http://www.worldbulletin.net/news_detail.php?id=33088)

“The confessions of Mumbai terrorist,” Asia Window, December 14, 2008

Ajmal Ameer Kasab, the only terrorist caught alive for the attack, gave details of his indoctrination and training. Kasab’s recruitment into the terror fold began in mid-2006 when he wanted to buy a firearm and was asked to contact an LeT operative in Rawalpindi. It was through this contact that he was introduced to top leaders in the terror outfit and radicalised through sustained indoctrination by Zaqi-ur-Rehman Lakhvi. Kasab told interrogators that the ten terrorists were handpicked from a larger group and that they attended training camps at Mansera, Muridke, Muzaffarabad and a location near Karachi.

(<http://asianwindow.wordpress.com/2008/12/14/the-confessions-of-mumbai-terrorist/>)

Maitreya Buddha Samantaray, “PoK Refugees: No Homeland in Two Nations,” December 29, 2008

Life for these settlers is like a suspension bridge hanging on the ropes of suffering, madness, and death.

Their frustrations vindicate the reality that their coming generations have no future and will continue to remain as second class citizens. These community members are none other than refugees from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) who have been compromised to live with the memories of lush fields and orchards that they had left behind in their true homes across the Line of Control (LoC). With an estimated 12,000,00 PoK refugee population in India, at least 40 percent of them have been living for the past three generations in Jammu, Kathua, Rajouri, Poonch and Udhampur districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Approximately 2, 000, 00 refugees from the total population are settled in 34 camps in Jammu province, especially in RS Pura and Jammu areas. Most of them were compelled to quit their native soil in Muzaffarabad, Mirpur and Poonch first in 1947 and then again in two phases in 1965 and 1971 after India-Pakistan wars.

(<http://kashmirihindu.wordpress.com/>)

“Mumbai attacks a well thought Indian conspiracy: Lord Nazir,” The News, December 28, 2008

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiri leaders have said that India’s straining relations with Pakistan could give a boost to the extremists in the region. Kashmiri leader and a member British House of Lords, Lord Nazir accompanied by Azad Kashmir former Prime Minister, Barrister Sultan Mahmud in a press conference in Islamabad. Lord Nazir in reply to question relating to the ongoing efforts for a political change in Azad Kashmir said that the existing Pak-India standoff was very explosive and in such a situation, Pakistan should not be further burdened. He said that Pak-India tension would benefit the extremists and extremism could get a boost in the region. He said that if the Pak troops were pulled out of the western borders, then Taliban would take advantage from it.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=63415>)

“Pak sepoy among three Jaish ‘suicide bombers’ held in Jammu,” Indian Express, December 24, 2008

JAMMU: On the eve of the last phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir, the police said they had foiled a Jaish-e-Mohammed plan to carry out suicide attacks in Jammu city with the arrest of three persons, including a serving soldier of the Pakistan Army. The trio, arrested from a Jammu hotel, had entered India via Bangladesh, reaching Jammu by train from Kolkata.

(<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/pak-sepoy-among-three-jaish-suicide-bombers-held-in-jammu/402216/>)

“Pakistani Army Disowns Soldier,” RTT News, December 24, 2008

The Pakistan Army on December 24 denied that Ghulam Farid, one of the three terrorists arrested on December 23 by Indian police in Jammu for allegedly planning a suicide attack was a serving soldier of Pakistan’s 10 Azad Kashmir Regiment, as stated in media reports. A Pakistani military official said that Farid deserted Army in 2006 from the central city of Okara. “He’s certainly not an army employee and his unit was not deployed at the Line of Control when he deserted the army,” the military official further stated on condition of anonymity.

(<http://www.rttnews.com/ArticleView.aspx?Id=810943&SMap=1>)

Stephen Graham, “History, dissent cloud Pakistan’s Mumbai reaction,” December 19, 2008

ISLAMABAD: The black-and-white flag of Jamaat-ud-Dawa still flutters over a relief camp for survivors of an earthquake that hit a remote corner of Pakistan in October 2005. But medics

who work with the group had vanished from the huddle of tents and mud huts when a half-dozen police showed up to close the operation following allegations the charity was linked to militants blamed for the deadly Mumbai attacks in India. How Pakistan deals with the Islamic group — popular among many for its aid to the needy — is a key test of its pledge to help investigate the Mumbai tragedy and, more broadly, to prevent militants from using its soil to attack both India and Afghanistan. The U.S. and the U.N. say Jamaat-ud-Dawa is a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba, the group India says trained and sent the gunmen who attacked India's commercial capital last month, killing 164 people and straining what had been improved relations between the countries.

Lashkar-e-Taiba has been an unofficial ally of the Pakistan army. Some believe the moment has come for Pakistan, which also backed the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, to make clear it has abandoned a shadowy policy of using militant proxies as a foreign policy tool.

(<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hTq7XLNBvXUwcjBo2dZQIBaOOR1gD9566FR82>)

“Need for a new social contract,” Weekly Bang Sahar, December 13 – December 26, 2008

Gilgit Baltistan has been the epicenter of international conspiracies ever since because of its unique geography. After 1935, when the west started conspiracies to stop socialism and in order to implement its policies, its eyes rested on Gilgit Baltistan. In the notorious lease pact, the people of Gilgit agency too were sold or given on lease along with the land of the region which became known as the ‘great game’ and this conspiracy was referred to by John Key in his book written in 1890. In the early forties, during the Second World War Britain faced tragic defeat and the English finally decided to leave subcontinent. They cloned from the state they ruled a fake and unnatural land in order to create suitable environment for fulfillment of their notorious

agendas against socialism, but still they saw their efforts failing due to Gilgit agency. The mid 1940's was the decade of independence of nations and the people of Gilgit Baltistan too fought for their independence. Understanding the nature of the issue, English sabotaged their fresh gained independence.

(<http://gilgitbaltistantimes.blogspot.com/2008/12/bang-e-sahar-volume-02-issue-23.html>)

“Azad Kashmir cabinet emergency session called,” December 10, 2008

MUZAFFARABAD: An emergency session of Azad Kashmir cabinet was called following the tension between Pakistan and India. Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Atiq Khan called the emergency meeting to mull over the situation emerged in the wake of the Mumbai attacks. The ministers hailing from a forward block in Muslim Conference refused to attend the meeting, saying the issues pertaining to national security should not be allowed to enter the internal politics.

(<http://www.apakistannews.com/azad-kashmir-cabinet-emergency-session-called-94376>)

Ramesh Vinayak, “Lashkar patron slams Pak govt for crackdown,” December 08, 2008

In the first signs of mounting heat of the Pakistani security agencies under pressure from India and the US to crack hard on the elements responsible for the Mumbai attack, Jamaat ud Dawa Chief, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed slammed the Pakistan government for arresting his followers and closing down the organisation's offices in Muzaffarabad. “The operation (by Pakistan security agencies) in Azad Kashmir is under the Indian pressure and is unwarranted,” Hafiz, widely known as father figure to terror outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba, stated in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir

that Pakistan refers to as ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’.

(http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/content_mail.php?option=com_content&name=print&id=22138)

**Tariq Naqash and Syed Irfan Raza,
“Operation against LeT-Dawa launched in
AJK,” Dawn, December 08, 2008**

MUZAFFARABAD/ISLAMABAD: Security forces launched a ‘quiet’ crackdown on activists belonging to the banned jihadi outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba in different parts of the country and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In Muzaffarabad, a major army operation was under way in the city suburbs on December 07 against a site being used by the Jamaatud Dawa, which is headed by Hafiz Mohammad Saeed. Sources stated that more than 20 members of the banned organisation and Lashkar-i-Taiba’s ‘commander’ Zakiur Rehman Lakhwi had been arrested. Pakistan is under international pressure to take action against the organisation for its alleged involvement in the Mumbai attacks.

(<http://www.dawn.com/2008/12/08/top3.htm>)

**“Indian move to be dangerous for it:
Attique,” Pakistan Times, November
30, 2008**

Prime Minister AJK Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan said that some behind the scene Indian forces wanted to initiate restricted war with Pakistan to put it under pressure on Kashmir issue. “The war will be severely dangerous for India if it initiates”, he said while addressing a press conference. He demanded that US and the rest of the international community should deter India from the ‘expected adventure,’ as it would harm not only the region but the entire world.

He termed India’s ‘expected adventure’ as a move against US President-elect Barack Obama’s vision of sustaining peace in the region.

However, he strongly condemned Mumbai attacks and paid condolence to the loss of human lives. Attique Strongly rejected Indian media’s allegations regarding existence of the terrorist camp in AJK and termed it as baseless saying more than 42 foreign NGOs are working in the area but they never even gave a hint about it. He also urged Pakistani leadership to be united to face the time of calamity and on his part, AJK PM assured the leadership and the nation that Kashmir would be ready to sacrifice their lives for the country.

(<http://www.pak-times.com/2008/11/30/reaction-in-azad-jammu-kashmir-over-indian-media-reports/>)

**Usman Manzoor, “Naek turns down summary,”
The News, December 19, 2008**

ISLAMABAD: The Law Ministry of Pakistan, headed by Farooq Naek, commented about the summary moved by the AJK Secretariat to appoint the senior-most judge of the AJK SC as the chief justice that such an appointment would create problems for the federal government and would result in more pressure to restore the deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=152589)

Economic Developments

Rabia Noor, “On 8th cross-LoC trade session, Valley sends no fruit to AJK,” December 16, 2008

SRINAGAR: On the eight session of the cross-LoC trade today no fruit was dispatched from the Valley to AJK, even as a mini-truck carrying vegetables went to Muzaffarabad. According to the custodian at Salamabad, Muhammad Ashraf Wani, the fruit was not dispatched to AJK because the traders “were getting better prices” in Delhi. However, many traders declined to buy into this theory.

Wani further said that the traders were now getting better prices from Delhi for their fruit hence “they preferred sending their fruit to Delhi rather than AJK.”

”I was informed by some traders that Delhi traders were now approaching those offering better prices for the fruit as compared to that of the previous year,” Wani said, adding that the price increase was the result of opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road for trade.

(http://www.greaterkashmir.com/full_story.asp?Date=17_12_2008&ItemID=7&cat=5)

“Traders dispatch goods across LoC ,” The News, December 26, 2008

NEW DELHI: The trade across Line of Control (LoC) continued as Azad Kashmir traders on December 25 sent a truck-load of goods to a business firm in Poonch via Chakan-da-Bagh point. Similarly, the Indian traders dispatched goods to their counterpart in Azad Kashmir on December 23. The consignment comprised 2,200 kgs of tomatoes as demanded by the Azad Kashmir trader. On December 25, the Azad Kashmir trader dispatched 150 boxes of oranges and 100 boxes of pomegranate besides 252 pairs of special Peshawari sandals, Indian district officials in Jammu stated.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=153846)

“Cross-Loc trade: FCIK submits proposals to govt on trade modalities”

In order to make the cross-LoC trade more “viable,” the Federation Chamber of Industries Kashmir (FCIK) submitted a proposal to the government, emphasizing on the modalities that require to be fixed for the trade. The organization has mentioned over fifteen suggestions in the proposal. “There are many things that are hampering the cross-LoC trade, like lack of communication between the two parts of Kashmir, then we have not searched for our market on the other side that could be possible only when our trade delegations frequently go there and likewise. These things should be taken care of, if the government is really serious to go ahead with this trade, otherwise it would be reduced to mere symbolism,” said Shakeel Qalandar, president, FCIK.

As per the FCIK, the relevant chambers from either side need to be authorized with nominating 100 members in trade from each segment of economy, in whose favour a travel permit with validity of minimum 2-3 years is issued. Then FCIK is demanding that the travel for members, so nominated, should be made possible on all days. They are also demanding the permission for the nominated members to go up to Kaman Post in their own vehicles and after crossing over their counter parts/hosts may take them to their destination.

(<http://paknewsupdate.com/?p=1418>)

“PPAF distributes \$225 m as housing compensation, “ The Frontier Post, December 01, 2008

MANSEHRA: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), has disbursed \$ 225 millions among the earthquake survivors of NWFP and Azad Kashmir as housing compensation amount. “World Bank had given us \$ 238 million to carry out and pay the housing compensation amount to 127,000 October 8, 2005 earthquake survivor families, we had disbursed \$ 225 million and remaining would be disbursed in the first quarter of year 2009, following which housing payment programme would be wound-up.” Kamran Akbar, chief operating officer and team leader of reconstruction and rehabilitation project (RRP) expressed these views with media persons during his visit to Siran valley on Friday. The regional coordinator NWFP, Momina Sanam and other officials were also present during the visit. Mr Kamran met with the survivors during his visit and inquired about their newly reconstructed houses.

(<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/News.aspx?ncat=hn&nid=3193&ad=01-12-2008>)

**“Abdul Hameed Khan, Chairman BNF’s
Speech at European Parliament,”
Balawaristantimes**

This is the fact that the so-called democratic government in Pakistan is subservient to the Pakistani Military and is totally unaware of ISI’s covert acts of terror including the recent attack in Mumbai. I have the privilege to elucidate some facts about the alarming situation of China’s new designs to occupy Gilgit Baltistan with the blessing of Pakistan and process of this occupation is already underway with the huge presence of Chinese nationals in our Area- to occupy our lands by leasing mountains heights and the construction of Dams and roads everywhere.

It is the result of lack of judicial structure and rule of law that can guarantee the fundamental freedoms to the indigenous people in Gilgit Baltistan. There is no credible institution in the Area including a legitimate political system that may assure an independent judiciary which is vital to provide justice and protect the rights and freedoms of the people. Neither the people have the right to appeal in any Court of Pakistan nor do they have their own High Court and Supreme Court. Gilgit Baltistan is ruled by the occupying regime of Pakistan and it’s Military. Politically, people have neither representation in Pakistan nor in Gilgit Baltistan. The so-called Northern Areas Legislative Assembly is an ineffective body that is controlled by Pakistan Minister for Kashmir and Northern Areas. As a matter of fact, this region is treated as a colony of Pakistan even in the 21st Century.

(<http://balawaristantimes.blogspot.com/2008/12/abdul-hameed-khanchairman-bnfs-speech.html>)

Other Developments

“Govt focuses on agriculture,” The Post, December 19, 2008

KOTLI: The President of Zarai Taraqyati Bank Limited (ZTBL), Zaka Ashraf stated that the government wanted to promote agriculture sector of the country. He said that through ‘Benazir Zarai Card Scheme,’ agriculture loans would be given to farmers. Zaka Ashraf said that President Asif Ali Zardari wants to boost agriculture throughout Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He announced that ZTBL would open more branches in AJK which will provide jobs opportunities to the educated youths of the area in addition to giving loans to farmers for the enhancement of agriculture.

(<http://thepost.com.pk/CorpNewsT.aspx?dtlid=196883&catid=8>)

“ERRA official inspects AJK projects,” The News, December 18, 2008

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman, Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) Lt-Gen Sajjad Akram on December 17 visited the quake-affected areas of Azad Kashmir to inspect the pace of ongoing development projects. Following the devastating earthquake-2005, ERRA is carrying out various development projects in AJK, including reconstruction of houses and roads besides providing water, sanitation, health and educational facilities to the people of Azad Kashmir.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=152456)

“PM approves gas supply project for Muzaffarabad,” The Frontier Post, December 13, 2008

ISLAMABAD: 10th ERRA Council meeting which was held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at the Prime Minister’s Secretariat on December 12, approved the supply of gas to Muzaffarabad. The Prime Minister said

(Other Developments continued after Abbreviations)

ABBREVIATIONS

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

the provision of gas to Muzaffarabad would not only facilitate the people at large but also help reduce deforestation. The Prime Minister while expressing satisfaction over the progress made by ERRA gave directions for speeding up efforts to complete remaining projects at the earliest.

(<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/News.aspx?ncat=ts&nid=3320&ad=13-12-2008>)

“56 people cross sides in Karvan-e-Aman,” United News of India, December 26, 2008

SRINAGAR: As many as 56 passengers crossed sides on the Line of Control onboard the Karvan-e-Aman bus despite strained relations between India and Pakistan over the Mumbai terror attacks. Official sources said that 15 residents of this side crossed over to Muzaffarabad, the capital of AJK to meet their relatives separated since 1947 partition.

Similarly, 15 residents of AJK who met their relatives in Kashmir also left for their homes across the LoC. They said 26 passengers; including 16 residents of AJK also arrived in Sri Nagar from AJK for meeting their relatives. Ten returned after visiting AJK, they added. This was the first time that after central minister’s visit and cricket tour to Pakistan were officially cancelled following terror attacks, the passengers crossed sides on LoC.

(http://www.greaterkashmir.com/full_story.asp?Date=26_12_2008&ItemID=20&cat=21)

“Quake strikes Abbotabad, Gilgit and Chitral,” The News, December 29, 2008

PESHAWAR: A moderate 5.7quake jolted upper parts of Pakistan on the morning of December 29. According to US Geological Survey, the epicenter of the tremor, which occurred at 8:37 am, was located just 141 kilometers beneath the earth whereas 145 kilometers in northwest of Mingora and 71 kilometer in northwest of Chitral.

The tremor felt in Dir, Chitral, Malakand, Swat, Peshawar, Attock, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Takhtbai,

Mansehra, Dargai Sakhakot, Para Chinar, Kurram Agency, South Waziristan and other tribal areas. There were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=63451>)

“Alpine model for Gilgit-Baltistan development suggested,” Hunza Times, December 23, 2008

A two-day workshop on “Regional Development Practices and Experiences in Alpine Europe; Lessons for High Asian Mountain regions” was concluded in Gilgit with the recommendations to develop synergies among development actors in Karakoram-Hindukush-Himalaya and Pamir (KHHP) regions for the sustainable development of the marginalized mountain communities.

The workshop was organized by the participants of the one year International leadership training programmes from Gilgit-Baltistan conducted by InWEnt-Capacity Building International in the Alpine Europe Regions with the collaboration of AKRSP. The main objective of the workshop was to share best practices and experiences from Alpine Europe with development actors in Gilgit-Baltistan and discuss mechanisms to implement these models in Karakoram-Himalaya-Hindukush and Pamir (KHHP) regions for sustainable development. The sessions were participated by 30 high officials and representatives from Government, NGOs, Conservation Committees and local support organizations in Gilgit-Baltistan.

(<http://hunzetimes.wordpress.com/2008/12/23/alpine-model-for-gilgit-baltistan-development-suggested/>)

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir-An Overview

Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), legitimately an integral part of the Indian Union is presently under Pakistan's control. Pakistan occupied the territory as a result of tribal invasion in 1947 engineered by the Pakistani army. It covers one-third of the total area of 86,023 square miles/ 222,236 square kilometers of the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The area under occupation comprises two administrative units: Mirpur- Muzaffarabad and Gilgit Baltistan referred as 'Azad Kashmir' and the 'Northern Areas' respectively by the government of Pakistan. Pakistan ceded a segment (2,700 sq miles) of this occupied territory lying to the north-east border of the Northern Areas known as the Trans Karakoram Tract to China in 1963.

“AZAD KASHMIR”

Pakistan envisaged the Azad Kashmir as a country with a President, a Prime Minister and a Legislature of its own according to the Karachi Agreement of April 28, 1949. These structures and the designations are only titular in nature as this invaded territory is neither a country nor even a province. Significant subjects such as defence, supposed 'foreign policy' of POK, rehabilitation of refugees and the overall control have been carefully placed under the discretion of the political establishment of Pakistan.

Area: 13,297 square km

Mirpur comprises 3 districts: *Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur*

Muzaffarabad is divided into five districts: *Bagh, Muzaffarabad, Neelum, Poonch, Sudhnati*

Population: 3,271,000 (1.685 million Male, 1.665 million Female)

Capital: Muzaffarabad

“President”: Raja Zulfikar Khan

“Prime Minister”: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan

“Azad Jammu and Kashmir” Council: Total 11 members- 6 from the government of AJK and 5 from the government of Pakistan. The AJK Council is headed by the President AJK.

Legislative Assembly: 49 seats

Tribal population: Awan, Abbasi, Ansari, Gilani, Gujar, Jarral, Jat, Qureshi, Malik, Mughal, Pashtuns, Rajput, Rachyals, Sudhan, Tarkhan

NORTHERN AREAS

The **Northern Areas** officially referred to by the government of Pakistan as the **Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA)**, is the northernmost political entity within the Pakistan occupied part of Kashmir and is a self governing unit under Pakistani control. The area is five times bigger to that of Azad Kashmir. The status of this region being unstated in the successive constitutions of Pakistan over the years, the people are denied basic socio-political and legal rights. The Northern Areas have no representation in the National Assembly and are governed by the Northern Areas Council headed by Minister of Kashmir and Northern Areas. A Judicial Commissioner exercises judicial powers in the absence of a High Court. The population mainly comprises Shia, Sunni and Ismaili Muslims. Ethnic groups include Baltees, Shinas, Vashkuns, Mughals, Kashmiris, Pathans, Ladhakhis and Turks.

Governor/ Commissioner: Imran Ali

“Chief Minister”: Irfan Ali and Shahid Hussain

Legislature: Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (29 seats)

Languages: Balti, Shina, Brushaski, Khawer, Wakhi, Turki, Tibeti, Pushto and Urdu

Area: 72,496 km

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: seven

Baltistan is divided into *Ghanche and Skardu*

Gilgit divided into *Astore, Diamer, Ghizar, Gilgit and Hunza Nagar*

Population: 1.5 million

Political groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, Balwaristan National Front (BNF) and Gilgit Baltistan United Action Forum for Self Rule, Gilgit Baltistan United Movement (GBUM).

Literacy rate: 14% male- 3.5% female

State of Infrastructure: No pipelines for water supply and no electricity supply for at least two thirds of the population in Northern Areas.

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

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