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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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• **Political Developments**

Violence in Gilgit: G-B Govt Under Fire for Failing to Maintain Law and Order

Gilgit Baltistan: MWM Leader Detained Without Charges

Pakistan Backed Armed Groups Target Shias in Gilgit

Diamer Bhasha Dam: Turned Away from Elsewhere, Government to Now Knock on China's Doors

Sectarian Violence: G-B Govt Plans Gilgit Deweaponisation

Suicide Attacks Likely to Strike Gilgit Baltistan: GB Police Chief

• **Economic Developments**

Cut Power Subsidies and Invest in Diamer Bhasha Dam, Says ADB

Women Given Role in Economy

• **International Developments**

US to Provide \$200m for Preliminary Work on Diamer-Bhasha Dam: Shaikh

• **Other Developments**

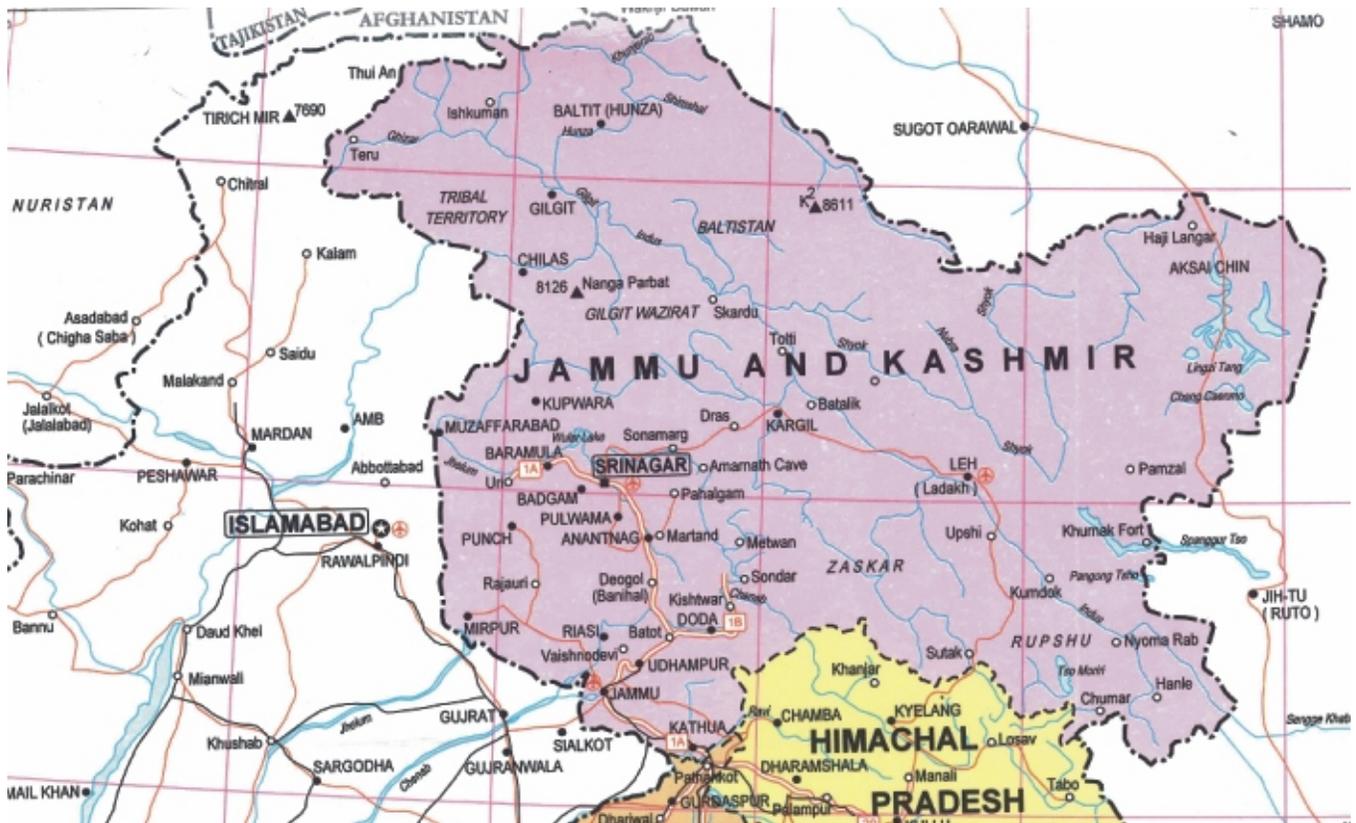
Azad Kashmir Landslide Kills Three Soldiers: Military

Wildlife Threatened: Ibex Family Killed, Accused Caught



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

In this Edition

The spectre of sectarian violence continues to haunt Gilgit Baltistan region which remained tense after a fresh bout of violence during December 2012. Popular unrest followed the arrest of Nayyar Abbas Mustafi, Secretary General of the Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (a leading Shia organisation in Gilgit Baltistan) by the police earlier in December 2012. The local supporters of the Shia leader demanded immediate release and carried out protests on the streets. These people alleged that Nayyar Abbas was arrested without citing any reason for arrest. Sectarian tensions were yet again stirred and as reports included in the current issue note, the government failed to maintain law and order in the aftermath of violence.

The fresh episode of sectarian tensions is a grim reminder of the series of incidents of sectarian violence which shook the region in the year 2012. Beginning with the brutal killings of Shias on the Karakoram Highway while they were on their back to Gilgit in February 2012 and the Chilas massacre in April 2012, Gilgit Baltistan has been reeling under deep rooted sectarian divide. The sectarian problem in Gilgit Baltistan (which is the only Shia majority region under Pakistan's control), most people believe, has been perpetrated by Pakistan to serve its larger interests there. Over the years, umpteen innocent lives have been lost in incidents of sectarian clashes that take place quite frequently.

The United States, as reports note, has finally agreed to offer assistance for the controversial Diamer Bhasha dam project in PoK upto \$ 200 million, mainly for carrying out for preliminary work. On the other side, since Pakistan failed to get assurance from other multilateral funding agencies, it has invited the China Investment Corporation (CIC) to invest in the same. After China, the United States has ventured into PoK, completely overlooking India's legal claim on the territory. It would be interesting to see whether this would impact the broader bilateral ties between India and the US in future.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Violence in Gilgit: G-B govt under fire for failing to maintain law and order”

The Express Tribune, December 4, 2012

GILGIT: Lawmakers criticised the government for failing to maintain law and order in the violence-hit capital city of Gilgit-Baltistan. Chief Minister Mehdi Shah, however, expressed his resolve that the government's writ would be established at all costs. Responding to comments by Didar Ali, an independent member of the assembly from the Gilgit city, who criticised the government for mishandling the situation and arresting clerics that led to violent protests in Nomal valley, at the Gilgit-Baltistan legislative Assembly (GBLA) session on December 3, the CM asked the lawmaker to take up the issue with the Masjid Board and Parliamentary Committee. He stated that the clerics were arrested on the recommendations of the committees being represented by notables from both Shia and Sunni sects.

Leader of the opposition in the house, Janbaz Khan of the PML-N stated that a jirga in Diamer valley voluntarily handed over the accused in Kohistan bus carnage incident to police but regretted the people in Nomal held a police chief hostage instead of cooperating with the law enforcers in arresting the wanted men. Speaker Wazir Baig stated that the assembly had already passed a law against terrorism, adding that the legislators should condemn the acts of terrorism instead of criticising the government. A Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid legislator, Mirza Hussain, stated the federal government collected Rs150 billion from G-B on account of general sales tax every year. However, he lamented only a small portion is given to the region. He urged the CM to be assertive in seeking more powers in respect of legislation on minerals, tourism and hydel power sectors.

CM Shah stated that all the non-customs paid

vehicles in G-B would be taxed and a committee should be formed to keep in contact with Central Board of Revenue in this regard. The issues of health, education, construction of roads were also discussed in the house.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/474783/violence-in-gilgit-g-b-govt-under-fire-for-failing-to-maintain-law-and-order/>

“Pakistan backed armed groups target Shias in Gilgit”

December 3, 2012

EUROPE: A shocking video shot at an unknown location in Pakistan is indicative of the atrocities that are being committed against the Shias in the country. In the video, four masked men brutally cut the throats of two people, after identifying them as Shias. The killers are members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and were freed from Pakistani jails in 2010. Shias are being targeted all across Pakistan, but the epicenter remains Shia majority Gilgit-Baltistan, where the Taliban and other militants groups have gone on a rampage. This video deals with the brutal incident of April 3, 2012, where Al Qaeda affiliated Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) militants stopped six passenger buses in Bonar Das area in Chilas and killed the Shias.

<http://www.niticentral.com/2012/12/pakistan-backed-armed-groups-target-shias-in-gilgit.html>

“Hostage for 10 hours, Police Chief airlifted to Gilgit”

Dardistan Times, December 3, 2012

GILGIT: Law enforcement agencies in Gilgit have launched a targeted operation in the city. Four religious leaders Faquir Shah, Mulana Atta Ullah Saqib, Sheikh Nayer Abbas and Hassan Shah have been arrested. The leaders belong to Anjuman e Imamia, Jammatah Ahle Sunnat and Tehrik e Jafferia

of Gilgit Baltistan. Against the arrest of Nayer Abbas, people took to the streets in Nomal and in the suburbs of Gilgit. They had blocked the roads and were demanding release of Nayer Abbas.

The situation turned serious when Inspect General of Police, Usman Zakaria arrived on the spot to negotiate a way-out. That attempted aborted and the police chief was taken into hostage by protesters for almost 10 hours. They were demanding release of Nayer Abbas in exchange for Zakaria. He was besieged in a private house as reports stated. A large contingent of security forces reached Nomal and negotiated to recover Usman Zakaria. An Army helicopter airlifted him back to Gilgit.

The PPP government of Gilgit Baltistan is criticized heavily for disproportionately dealing with crimes and terrorism in the region. The protesters in Nomal have also besieged a major powerhouse, cutting supply of electricity to Gilgit and other regions. The power was negotiated to be restored after 20 hours but was cut off soon. Meanwhile, efforts are underway for release the three arrested religio-political leaders. They have been arrested under the directives of Mehdi Shah, the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/hostage-10-hours-police-chief-airlifted33-gilgit>

Imaduddin, “Di-amer-Bhasha dam: Govt to seek Chinese funding”

Business Recorder, December 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Government has decided to seek funds from China to finance \$ 14.4 billion Di-amer-Bhasha dam project. Special Secretary Ministry of Water and Power Himayat Ullah Khan informed the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Water and Power on November 30, which directed him to provide complete details as to why the installation of Nandi Pur Power Project was delayed, causing billions of rupee loss to the national kitty.

“China may not be able to provide whole of the required funds, however, it can contribute a major portion for Di-amer Bhasha dam,” Special Secretary informed the committee, which met in Islamabad with Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah in the chair. He

further stated that country would be depending on most expensive thermal power generation owing to decline in hydel power generation in coming month of December as canals would be closed for desilting.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/93220-diamer-bhasha-dam-govt-to-see-chinese-funding-.html>

Zafar Bhutta, “Di-amer Bhasha Dam: Turned away from elsewhere, government to now knock on China's doors”

The Express Tribune, December 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: After failing to secure funds for the multibillion dollar Di-amer Bhasha Dam from multilateral donors allegedly due to Indian lobbying the government has now decided to seek a major portion of the project's financing from China. “China may not be able to provide our entire financing needs: however, it can contribute a major portion of funds needed for the Di-amer Bhasha dam,” Ministry of Water and Power's Special Secretary Himayatullah Khan informed a parliamentary panel on November 30. The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Water and Power which met with Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah in the chair to discuss the project's financing was also treated to a shocking disclosure: amid periodic delays, the cost of constructing the Di-amer Bhasha dam has now shot up to \$14.4 billion, against earlier projections of \$11.5 billion. The special secretary also pointed out that the country will have to depend on expensive power from thermal generation plants due to a decline in hydroelectric power generation in the coming month because of canal closures.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/473456/diamer-bhasha-dam-turned-away-from-elsewhere-government-to-now-knock-on-chinas-doors/>

“CIC invited to invest in Di-amer-Bhasha Dam”

The Nation, December 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Water and Power on November 30 invited the China Investment Corporation (CIC) to invest in hydropower projects particularly the Di-amer-Bhasha dam that has power generation potential of 4500 megawatts. A high level CIC delegation led by its president Gao

Xiqing is currently visiting Pakistan to explore investment opportunities in the country in various fields of economy.

Ministry of Water and Power gave a detailed presentation to the CIC delegation about the investment opportunities in the power sector of the country. The ministry especially highlighted the lucrative investment opportunities in the Diamer-Bhasha dam project, which could also help mitigate energy crisis in the country. Among others, Minister of Water and Power, Ahmed Mukhtar, Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Syed Raghieb Abbas Shah, former chairman WAPDA Muhammad Shakeel Durrani were also present during the briefing. In his detailed presentation, the Chairman WAPDA informed the Chinese delegation that work on several projects related to the construction of dam are underway which include land acquisition as 1945 acres of land has been acquired.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/01-Dec-2012/cic-invited-to-invest-in-diamer-bhasha-dam>

Peer Muhammad, “Sectarian violence: G-B govt plans Gilgit deweaponisation”

The Express Tribune, December 24, 2012

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to eradicate sectarianism, the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government is set to launch an effective targeted operation to deweaponise Gilgit city.

G-B's capital city is in the grip of sectarian clashes for over two decades, as a result of which many precious lives have been lost and the peace of the area has been disrupted.

Amid the deteriorating law and order situation, the government has decided to launch a targeted operation to collect illegal weapons from key locations of the capital. “At this stage, military operation is not the solution to the problems, but we have decided to launch an effective targeted operation in certain localities, as per authentic intelligence reports,” a senior police officer in GB noted on the condition of anonymity.

The political leadership favoured the idea of a

targeted operation and directed the civil administration and local military leadership to press ahead with the plan. In recent meetings held in GB's Force Commander Office, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister G-B Syed Mehdi Shah, it was decided that the issue must be dealt with immediately to establish order. According to a police officer, intelligence reports reveal that huge catches of sophisticated weapons have been smuggled to Gilgit, through different entry points of the area, particularly during summers when borders remain opened.

The officer added that the administration is refraining from carrying out a military offensive in the area to avoid unnecessary botheration to the citizens. However, he stated that they “know where the ammunitions are, and how to reach them.” “Previously, there was [just] sectarianism and target killings. Now the menace is transforming into large scale terrorism, and timely action is crucial to nip the evil in the bud,” the officer stated.

A fresh wave of sectarianism started at the beginning of the year, when unidentified assailants targeted a passenger van at the Dassu area of Kohistan, followed by the killing of passengers at Chilas and a similar incident at Lulusar Top. Commenting on the situation, Speaker G-B Legislative Assembly Wazir Baig, who is active in efforts to bring peace in GB, stated that the government is taking measures to bring normalcy in the area and are involving religious scholars and the wider community.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/483640/sectarian-violence-g-b-govt-plans-gilgit-deweaponisation/>

“Miseries of Gilgit Baltistan”

Dawn, December 21, 2012

Gilgit Baltistan is in the process of getting converted into a jungle where humans are finding it difficult to live. Sectarian violence has gripped the foundations of Gilgit and has put a dent on its social, educational and economic fabric. An air of fear prevails in the vibes of the entire region. Killing in the name of sect has become a tradition in every nook and cranny. The Gilgit city has been polarised into different poles where men from other sects are

welcomed with a barrage of bullets. Educational institutions have literally come to a halt with no advanced version of knowledge. Even the mainstream newspapers printed in Islamabad and Rawalpindi reach Gilgit one day after publication, a reflection of sheer backwardness. In this winter season, the frigid climate has already put a new strain on the lives of people. But the members of our assembly still have not left their cushy lifestyles. They are least bothered about miseries and sufferings of the common man.

REHAN KHAN GILGITI

Islamabad

<http://dawn.com/2012/12/21/miseries-of-gilgit-baltistan/>

Aziz Ali Dad, "The sectarian ghoul in Gilgit"

The News, December 20, 2012

The region of Gilgit-Baltistan made news this year not for its scenic beauty, but for sectarianism in the form of brutal murders and target killings. Historically, the region has been vulnerable to attacks by other powers because of its geographical location at the intersection of the Karakoram, the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush. Gilgit has undergone periods of both war and peace over the years. What makes this current wave of sectarian violence different from previous conflicts is its intensity and scale.

Although sectarian differences existed in the region, these were largely confined to the level of theological debates. Sectarianism in Gilgit started to raise its ugly head in the 1970s and turned violent in the 1980s. Initially, sectarian strife remained confined to the city but in the second half of the last decade it spread to the suburbs as well. This year (2012) saw sectarianism and its ugly consequences engulf all of Gilgit-Baltistan, as well as the district of Kohistan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Since Gilgit is the centre of power and economy in the region, it is natural that a conflict in the capital will have repercussions in other valleys and neighbouring regions. Before the emergence of religious violence in Gilgit the mindset of its society was largely religious, which made it easier for the people there

to internalise the violent agenda of extremist forces. The nexus between religiosity and violence has disrupted social and political arrangements made by kinship-based communities.

Local religious elements have played a pivotal role in establishing this linkage. Incidents such as the killing of travellers on the Karakoram Highway and Babusar Top Pass point to the existence of trained militants in the valleys along these areas. Their operations in far-flung areas are not possible without the logistical support of sectarian elements within those societies. The nexus of local sectarian outfits with militants has aggrandised the power of militants in tactical terms, if not in numbers. Coupled with the mixing of local religious forces with national and global jihad, and the geo-political location of the area, the sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan is at once local, national and global. This blurring of distinctions not only produces a distinct consciousness in the region, but also makes its politics very different from the rest of Pakistan.

Demographic realities in terms of religious composition in Gilgit-Baltistan are different from the rest of Pakistan. As a result, violence assumes a different pattern and necessitates tactical changes in the modus operandi of sectarian militants who try to tilt the local people to their side by spreading violence in the region. The violence in Diamer and Kohistan is indicative of these tactical changes. This tactical manoeuvring, however, does not remain confined to violence it has spread to every part of life in this region. The Shia community fears that elements within the state try to convert the majority group into a minority by covertly supporting Sunni migrants. Gilgit-Baltistan is the only administrative unit in Pakistan where Sunni Muslims are a minority. To compensate for this weakness in number, some tend to look for help from outside brethren, which has helped militants and the discourse of exclusion to establish a foothold in the region.

Such is the dominance of the sectarian mindset in our society that it strips people of other identities and affiliations, so they view the 'other' as a threat to their existence. In the Babusar tragedy the Sunnis

who asserted their solidarity with their fellow (Shia) travellers were also killed because they had dared to associate with the 'others', which is against the monomaniac mind of militants. Martin Sokefeld in his paper, 'Selves and Others: Representing Multiplicities of Difference in Gilgit and the Northern Areas of Pakistan' also thinks that "society in Gilgit became effectively polarised by the Shia-Sunni dichotomy." He further states "The Shia-Sunni dichotomy became effectively a premise that structured the perception of the social space."

In addition to the nexus between local militant organisations with national and global jihadists and the influence of jihadi discourse, some of the cultural practices in the region also imperceptibly contribute to the expansion of violence. The spread of sectarian war from Gilgit to Diamer and Kohistan also needs to be understood in a cultural context.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-149434-The-sectarian-ghoul-in-Gilgit>

Shabbir Mir, "Gilgit-Baltistan unrest: Amidst tense calm, public transport banned on key highway"

December 20, 2012

GILGIT: A day after two people were killed in a spate of sectarian violence in Gilgit city on December 18, police arrested four suspects and banned public transport on Karakoram Highway for security reasons. "Action against the troublemakers is on as we have arrested four suspects so far," Deputy Inspector General Police Ali Sher noted.

Traffic remained thin on the roads, though schools and offices were open on December 19. The ban imposed on motorcycles last week remained in force. The administration also banned the entry of pickups in the city to ensure peace. "A high-level meeting has decided that a ban should be imposed on pickups," stated an official. As part of security measures, the government banned public transport between Gilgit and Rawalpindi via Karakoram Highway. "We have been asked not to run public transport buses on the highway for security reasons," stated Ehsan Shah, a spokesperson for the government-sponsored Natco bus service.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mehdi Shah stated extremists would not be allowed to "hijack" the city. "Those challenging the writ of the government will be taken to task," read a statement issued by the Chief Minister Secretariat.

Shah blamed the violence on a lack of development in the region and stated short- and long-term strategies would be prepared to counter sectarianism in the region. "I appeal to people to identify those involved in sectarianism and terrorism," he further stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/481955/gilgit-baltistan-unrest-amidst-tense-calm-public-transport-banned-on-key-highway/>

"PM promises Rs20b bail-out for AJK"

The Frontier Post, December 7, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Raja Pervaiz Ashraf would be addressing a public rally in Bagh Azad Kashmir on December 15 and will lay foundation stone of Poonch Medical College Rawalakot and Information Technology University in Rawalakot. The Pakistani Premier stated it while talking to President AJ&K Sardar Yaqoob Khab and AJ&K Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed who called on him in Islamabad in Prime Minister House on December 6. The detailed meeting continued for an hour. The current scenario of Kashmir issue, development and prosperity of the state of AJ&K and Prime Minister Ashraf's visit to Kashmir were brought under discussion in the meeting.

The Pakistani Premier assured the AJ&K leadership that 20 billion bail-out package would be released before his scheduled visit on December 15, 2012. He also extended direction to the concerned authorities regarding the construction of International Airport at Mirpur and asked them to complete the planning and designing of the stated projects at earliest possible so that this project could be started soon. He also assured AJ&K leaders that 10 million rupee announced by former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani for Kashmir Press club at Mirpur would be provided very soon.

<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/195914>

“Gilgit Baltistan: MWM Leader Detained Without Charges”

December 6, 2012

Nayyar Abbas Mustafawi, Secretary General of Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, was taken into custody on December 1 and no reason for his arrest was provided. Police have arrested the key official of Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, a leading Shia party of Pakistan in Gilgit-Baltistan province at mid night between December 1-2. Nayyar Abbas Mustafawi slept at home in Nomal area when police stormed into the house and took him into custody without giving any reason. The MWM leaders have demanded his immediate release. They stated that police was trying to enrage peaceful Shiites.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/15232>

Ali Syed, “Pak-US energy dialogue tomorrow”

Pakistan Observer, December 6, 2012

ISLAMABAD: The government is going to pitch the most important and strategic project of \$13.6 billion Diamer-Bhahsa dam in the meeting of Pak-US Energy Working Group meeting and will seek the formal commitment from Washington about funding for the project, a senior official of Planning Commission noted. The Pak-US energy dialogue at working group level was scheduled to be held in Islamabad on December 7.

US have informally agreed to annually provide \$ 200 million for Diamer-Bhahsa dam for five years, but did not give any commitment. So, this time, Pakistan would seek the formal commitment from US side for the project and in case Pakistan succeeds, then it will be easy to persuade World Bank to agree on funding the project. The official stated that the funding of \$ 200 million from US is not up to the mark, but if it extends the commitment, then donor agencies would be at ease to provide funding. In the World Bank, the vote of US has highest influence. After US nod, the World Bank will definitely agree to fund, and if it happens, then ADB would also come forward.

It is pertinent to mention that World Bank has already refused to provide funding for the project

arguing that the location of the project is in the disputed area and in case Islamabad gets the NoC from New Delhi, then it would provide the funding. The Manila-based ADB which used to be considered in the past as the leading donor for the project has already refused the funding saying Pakistan should first arrange the finances from other donors as it is unable to finance the huge project on its own. The official sources also stated that the main reason in failure of arranging funds from the donors is that Pakistan has never made the financing plan of the dam.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=185710>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK govt to launch Youth Parliament”

Dawn, December 20, 2012

MUZAFFARABAD: The Kashmir Youth Parliament would be launched by the end of February 2013, under the official patronage of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government, an AJK minister stated on December 19. Mohammad Saleem Butt, minister for sports, culture and youth affairs, noted that there were two youth parliaments in Pakistan constituted by a non-government organisation (NGO) but the one being installed in AJK was different, as it would enjoy official patronage.

He stated that those interested in becoming a member would have to fill a form, available at all the branches of National Bank of Pakistan and the AJK Bank and send the application to the sports ministry, by January 31, 2013. “We intend to enroll more than 30,000 youths,” the minister stated, adding, the applicants would be short-listed and interviewed by a panel of professionals, appointed by his ministry, for selection of 61 members of the Youth Parliament.

He stated that 30 boys and 10 girls would be inducted from 10 AJK districts, 4 boys and 1 girl from the four provinces of Pakistan, 2 boys and 1 girl from Gilgit-Baltistan, 4 boys and 2 girls from UK, 2 boys from Europe, USA and Gulf and 1 boy from Canada. On December 18, a mega consultation session was organised by Mr Butt's

ministry in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Bargad, an NGO, working for youth development.

Participants, mostly students of various educational institutions, were divided in six groups and asked to give recommendations on empowerment of youth and peace building in conflict areas. Sahiha Shaheen, executive director of Bargad, noted that her organisation had previously conducted 15 consultative sessions in different areas of AJK with youngsters, aged between 18 and 29. The youths were categorised on the basis of their age group, educational and professional backgrounds and every category was taken on board, she stated.

She further stated that even the Kashmiri youths living in foreign countries, mainly in the UK, were also consulted through Skype and other mediums for their inputs in this regard. "The purpose is to build a sense of ownership among the younger lot vis-à-vis the youth policy of the region," she added. In AJK, launching the Kashmir Youth Parliament was in addition to the formulation of the youth policy, she added. Sadaf Jamshad, a university student from Rawalakot told that the initiative would provide an opportunity to the youth to voice their concerns regarding the issues of the younger generation. Zara Shafique, a 2nd year student from Muzaffarabad, also appreciated the initiative but stated: "It should be in harmony with our social values and customs."

<http://dawn.com/2012/12/20/ajk-govt-to-launch-youth-parliament/>

"Akhoon for opening Kargil-Skardu road: Interacts with delegation from Gilgit-Baltistan"

Kashmir Times, December 17, 2012

JAMMU: Urging the need for removing man made barriers between the people living across Line of Control (LOC), the Minister for Consumers Affairs and Public Distribution (CA&PD) and Transport Qamar Ali Akhoon urged the leadership of India and Pakistan to take the ongoing process of dialogue and reconciliation to its logical end so that all the issues are resolved amicably. Interacting with a group of members of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly led

by Aamina Ansari accompanied by Anayatullah Khan Shumali, Akhoon stated that the people of both sides are yearning for revival of trade and cultural bilateral relations which will begin an era of peace, development and prosperity in the region.

Akhoon also advocated for opening of Kargil-Skardu road on the pattern of Poonch-Chakan-da-Bagh and Uri-Muzaffarabad roads for trade and bilateral relations between the two sides of people, adding that the public representatives of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly should pass a resolution in the legislature to impress upon the Pakistan government to remove restrictions through across the road. Akhoon apprised the group about initiatives taken by him in this regard and stated that he has already raised the issue with the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh who has shown positive response. He stated that revival of peoples' movement across Kargil-Skardu road will bring economic prosperity in Kargil and Leh districts also by way of trade and commerce activities. "Fruit, business will specially get boost", Akhoon added. On the occasion MLC, Aga Syed Ahmad Rizvi was also present.

<http://www.kashmirtimes.com/newsdet.aspx?q=9413>

Accused in two high-profile cases escape from Gilgit jail

Dawn, December 14, 2012

GILGIT: Two under-trial prisoners kept in separate barracks of Cheeta sub-jail hoodwinked the jail officials and escaped, police stated on December 13. "The two prisoners were jailed in two high-profile assassination cases of murder of a religious scholar and senior revenue officer," the officials stated. They stated that Shakirullah was allegedly involved in the murder case of Aga Ziauddin whose death followed riots. They stated that the same man was also declared as the main culprit in a case of life attempt on former president Pervez Musharraf at Shandur Point of Ghizer district.

Another accused, Qari Arifullah, was allegedly involved in the murder of tehsildar Akbar, who was killed two years ago. The police stated that six officials, including two jail wardens and four

policemen, were arrested for negligence of duty and an inquiry had been ordered to fix the responsibility. Cases have also been registered against these officials, they stated. GB Chief Minister Mehdi Shah has also ordered investigations into the prisoners' escape through a judicial commission and directed the home department to ensure compliance of Section 144.

<http://dawn.com/2012/12/14/accused-in-two-high-profile-cases-escape-from-gilgit-jail/>

“Gilgit student clashes lead to motorbike ban”

December 13, 2012

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan government December 13 banned motorbike riding and imposed Section 144 in Gilgit after clashes between two student groups a day earlier, media reported. The fighting at Karakoram International University led to the deaths of two men, including a policeman, and injuries to six other people as reported. Section 144 imposed for an indefinite period prohibits the gathering of more than five people in a public place, display of weapons and use of loudspeakers. Authorities closed the university until December 16.

http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2012/12/13/newsbrief-03

Gilgit tense after inter-group clashes

The News, December 13, 2012

GILGIT: The situation in Gilgit city is still tense following the clashes between two student groups on December 12 while the government has imposed Section 144 and ban on motorcycle riding, as reported on December 13. On December 12, two student groups of Karakoram International University clashed with each other.

When the situation deteriorated, the police was called in to control the situation during which two persons including a policeman were killed and six others were injured.

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan has imposed Section 144 for indefinite period prohibiting the gathering of five people at a place, display of weapons and use of loudspeakers. Motorcycle riding in the province has also been banned while

the authorities have warned of strict action against violation. On the other hand, the Karakoram International University was closed till December 17.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-79430-Gilgit-tense-after-inter-group-clashes>

“3 Killed and 7 injured in Gilgit Unrest”

Dardistan Times, December 13, 2012

GILGIT: In a fresh episode of unrest in the city, three people died and several others got injured. A thong of protesters took the streets to agitate, reportedly, against interruption in a religious function commemorating the Yom-e-Husain in the Karakoram International University. Sources stated that two weeks ago, Shia Students were in the process of getting permission from University Administration to celebrate the day when Sunni students grimed and questioned whether or not they would be allowed to celebrate Yom-e-Umar [the companion of Muhammad P.B.U.H]

Shia Students were given permission to celebrate the day. University administration had arranged to allow only the enrolled students of the University to attend the program. The law enforcement agencies did not allow the outsiders to get into the University. These people were attempting to interrupt the program and were gathering outside the University.

They started protesting back and forth along the Konodas road. The situation aggravated when the law enforcement agencies stopped a thong of protesters coming from Gilgit who were trying to get to the University where the program was underway.

They were stopped at Channar Bridge that connects Gilgit to Konodas. The participants of the program were coming back from the University when they were reportedly attacked by those at the Channar Bridge. The two sides took to their majority camps and started violent activities rolling stones into the roads, beating up bystanders and harassing passerbys.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/3-killed-and-7-injured-gilgit12unrest>

“Suicide Attacks likely to strike Gilgit Baltistan: GB Police Chief”

Dardistan Times, December 9, 2012

GILGIT: Forget about the when, who, why and how, a top police official has scared the people of Gilgit Baltistan, announcing that the region is likely to be struck by suicide attacks. The Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) Gilgit Baltistan in a press conference claimed that GB has developed links with the mainstream terrorist organizations and suicide attacks can take place.

The police chief, however, did not give any clarification as to what entity has developed connections with the so-called mainstream terror organizations. He did not resist patting the law enforcement agencies and stated that they are committed and will utilize all resources to maintain law and order situation. The statement of the top police official is perceived alarming news and it has spread fear among the masses. It has become an irony in the country that officials announce the possible terrorist attacks well in advance. They do take place and nothing substantial is done to prevent losses of dear lives.

Talking about the recent crackdown on religious community leaders, he stated that all the leaders were apprehended on the recommendations of Masjid Board and Parliamentary Peace Committee. The Masjid Board is a religious entity created by government to work as an advisory force to deal with sectarian violence in the region. Recently, on the recommendations of the board, citizens have been arrested for charges of hate speech. Public, however, have no vote in the decisions of the Masjid Boards.

When scores of citizens in Nomal protested against the recent arrests, the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan stated that he had nothing to do with the arrests of the people; it was the Masjid Board to point out and the law enforcement agencies to arrest. Critics say that the Masjid Board has no legal stature and has no mechanism to determine: what hate speech is and who should be arrested under what circumstances.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/suicide-attacks99likely45strike-gilgit-baltistan-gb-police-chief>

Economic Developments

“Cut power subsidies and invest in Diamer Bhasha Dam”, says ADB

The Express Tribune, December 28, 2012

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has asked Pakistan that it must reduce power subsidies to spare money for financing the mega Diamer Bhasha dam amid fears that growing cost of the project may lead to its eventual cancellation. According to sources in the Ministry of Water and Power, ADB has expressed fears that if delayed further Diamer Bhasha dam may not remain feasible as its cost is rising continuously.

ADB has conveyed that power subsidies should be cut down and diverted to the \$13 billion dam, which will have the capacity to produce 4,500 megawatts of electricity. The bank has also supported a proposal of mortgaging power turbines of Tarbela, Mangla and Ghazi Barotha projects for raising funds for the dam. “The United States has endorsed this plan,” a source stated. In its nearly five-year tenure, the government has doled out Rs1.4 trillion in power subsidies, annoying international donors. Only in the first five months (July-November) of the current financial year, Rs170 billion has been spent on subsidies.

It has not been easy for the government to generate funds for Diamer Bhasha as multilateral donors are reluctant and stress that Pakistan must seek a no-objection certificate (NOC) from India before going ahead with the project. Delhi has opposed the dam on the grounds that the project site is in a disputed territory and it can have environmental impact.

China was already funding Neelum Jhelum hydropower project in Azad Jammu and Kashmir,

the official stated. The government is negotiating with the donors including the World Bank and Islamic Development Bank, but they seem more interested in financing 4,320MW Dasu hydropower project instead of Diamer Bhasha. However, the US has agreed to provide \$200 million for the dam and government officials hope that Washington will serve as an encouragement for other donors. According to an official of the water and power ministry, ADB has asked Pakistan to conduct financial and environmental risk analysis of the dam. The government must review resettlement plan for people being displaced by the project, the bank stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/485604/cut-power-subsidies-and-invest-in-diamer-bhasha-dam-says-adb/>

“Women given role in economy”

Pakistan Observer, December 1, 2012

ASTORE: Advisor for Tourism Gilgit-Baltistan, Sadia Danish stated on November 30 that the Pakistan Peoples Party government had empowered the women through the passage of Women Protection Bill. Sadia Danish noted that the women were playing a pivotal role in the economic growth of the country. She stated that the government had started various development programmes, including training centres and women skill development centres and hundreds of women of Gilgit-Baltistan were getting benefits from them. The government of Gilgit-Baltistan is taking all necessary steps to safeguard the basic rights of women.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=184788>

International Developments

Huma Imtiaz, “US to provide \$200m for preliminary work on Diamer-Bhasha dam: Shaikh”

The Express Tribune, December 6, 2012

WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Hafeez Shaikh revealed on December 5 that the US has committed to funding \$200 million for preliminary work on the Diamer-Bhasha dam, including for feasibility studies and surveys. This was in addition assistance in repairing four dams and an instalment of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF).

In a press conference at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, Shaikh calmed nerves by revealing that the ADB was not pulling out of the Diamer-Bhasha project. Instead, he pointed out that the mega-project would take up to 10 years to finish and required a consortium to fill the massive funding gap. The minister added that Pakistan was hopeful funding for the project would increase further in the future. Shaikh stated he and his team met with officials from the State Department, Treasury Department, the World Bank, International

Monetary Fund and IFC, as well as OPIC and the US Trade Representative during their visit to the US capital. The Finance Minister stated that in their meetings with US officials, they had agreed to set up a task force which would work on helping Pakistan gain further access to the US market. In addition to the Diamer-Bhasha pledge, Shaikh stated Pakistan had also been promised an instalment of five to six hundred million dollars as part of the CSF.

Shaikh added that the US was also funding repair work on four dams, including Tarbela, Guddu, Muzaffargarh which would help boost electricity production by 900 megawatts. While acknowledging that foreign investment has declined in Pakistan, he stated that they were working on trying to promote Pakistan as an investment destination for US businesses. He added that they also discussed reforms in the energy sector and improving public sector corporations.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/475907/us-to-provide-200m-for-preliminary-work-on-diamer-bhasha-dam-shaikh/>

Other Developments

“Azad Kashmir landslide kills three soldiers: Military”

The Express Tribune, November 30, 2012

ISLAMABAD: Landslides triggered by heavy snow killed three soldiers and left 18 other people missing on November 30 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the military stated. The incident took place in the Kel area on the line of control with India, and the Pakistani military stated a rescue operation was under way. The missing were eight soldiers and 10 civilians.

A first landslide hit early November 30, killing the three soldiers, stated Raja Saqib Majeed, deputy commissioner of Neelam district, of which Kel is part. Later in the morning the 10 civilians and eight soldiers made it to the site to search for, he informed. “Another landslide hit this rescue party and they were buried under it,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/473306/azad-kashmir-landslide-kills-three-soldiers-military/>

“Rescuers find more bodies in Azad Kashmir landslides”

The Express Tribune, December 2, 2012

MUZAFFARABAD: Rescuers have found three more bodies after landslides in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, officials stated on December 2, taking the confirmed death toll to 15, with three people still missing. A military and civilian rescue operation was launched after heavy snows on November 30 triggered two landslides at a remote outpost in the Kel area of the disputed territory near the de facto border with India. “Despite bad weather and heavy snowfall rescuers found three more bodies on December 1 and are searching for three more who are still missing,” local administration official Raja Saqib Muneer noted.

The bodies of the three soldiers had been recovered but rescuers were still hunting for the eight soldiers

and 10 civilians from the search party, local official Raja Saqib Majeed noted. “We hope that rescue workers will find some of them alive. Lets hope for the best,” he stated, but added that efforts were being hampered by continued bad weather. Local police official Mohammad Musa further stated there was heavy snow fall in the past 24 hours in the area and cloud cover was still thick. Avalanches and landslides frequently block roads and leave communities isolated in the mountains of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. Pakistan saw its worst avalanche in April 2012 when 139 soldiers and 11 civilians were buried alive in the 13,000-foot-high Gyari sector of Siachen.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/474122/rescuers-find-more-bodies-in-azad-kashmir-landslides/>

“Death toll in result of avalanche incident in AJK crosses 20; 12 bodies recovered”

December 2, 2012

ATH MUQAM: Over 20 people including 11 soldiers and 10 civilians were killed in avalanche in Neelam Valley on November 30; meanwhile the bodies of the 12 deceased persons have been recovered. The avalanche struck in the mountainous Neelam Valley in the area of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) on December 1. The soldiers were searching for colleagues hit by an earlier avalanche when they were struck by a second fall. The rescue services are hampered due to non-availability of mobile land line phone and electricity in the area. The local administration showed the traditional negligence and tried to conceal the information regarding killings of civilians and the officials stated the hunt for the missing was being hampered by bad weather and the region's harsh terrain.

The party of rescuers had discovered two bodies when the second avalanche struck in Dana Tajian, 80 miles (130km) from Muzaffarabad. A military rescue operation swung into action after heavy snows triggered two landslides at a remote outpost

in the Keel Sector of Pakistani-administered Kashmir near the de facto border with India. "Three bodies of soldiers were recovered on November 30. The dead bodies of five soldiers including a captain and four civilians were recovered on December 1," noted a statement by the military. Local administration officials stated they were searching for more dead bodies as nine people from the rescue party were still missing.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/death-toll-in-result-of-avalanche-incident-in-ajk-crosses-20-12-bodies-recovered/>

Shabbir Mir, "Wildlife threatened: Ibex family killed, accused caught"

The Express Tribune, December 7, 2012

GILGIT: Days after the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government unveiled its trophy hunting programme, police arrested three people for killing an ibex family in Hunza Valley. "It was an unfortunate incident. A male, female and baby ibex were killed," Wildlife Divisional Forests Officer (DFO) Aftab Mehmood stated on December 6. On a routine visit to Hussanabad Nullah, a wildlife department team led by game-inspector Habibur Rehman spotted a suspicious vehicle. However, the hunters fled leaving the dead ibexes behind when they saw wildlife officials approaching them.

The vehicle and dead animals were seized by the authorities, who registered a case at a police station in Hunza. The police managed to catch the culprits a day later and presented them in court for further proceedings. The meat and hides of the dead ibexes were sold off in the presence of a magistrate for Rs 20,000, while the horns were taken into the wildlife department's custody, added DFO Mehmood. According to wildlife officials, the men could face up to two years in jail and a heavy fine.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/476289/wildlife-threatened-ibex-family-killed-accused-caught/>

"Motorcycle ban lifted in Gilgit"

The News, December 24, 2012

GILGIT: The situation has returned to normal in Gilgit after six days as the government has lifted the ban from riding motorcycles, as reported on December 24. According to sources, ban on driving

motorcycle and pickup was imposed six days ago after the city faced commotion due to firing that left two persons dead and four injured. Markets and trade centers resumed their regular business activities. The Gilgit-Rawalpindi section of Karakoram highway was also closed after the incident but then opened for traffic.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-80945-Motorcycle-ban-lifted-in-Gilgit>

"Educational institutions closed in Gilgit"

The Nation, December 20, 2012

GILGIT: In the backdrop of intense tension triggered as aftermath of December 12 clashes, the city's educational institutions were closed down and inter-city public transport had been banned on December 19. A notification regarding the ban on the public transport has been issued. Sources stated the intra-city transport will continue within the city as usual.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/20-Dec-2012/educational-institutions-closed-in-gilgit>

A H Nizami, "Amid controversy: Girls college in AJK to be renamed after Malala"

The Express Tribune, December 15, 2012

MIRPUR: The Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Chaudhry Abdul Majeed revealed plans to rename a girl's college in the region after Malala Yousafzai. Addressing a huge public rally in Bagh on December 15, he informed the participants that the Malot Girls Degree College will be renamed after the peace icon. The announcement comes at a time when students at the now Government Malala College for Girls in Swat are protesting the renaming of their school after the activist, saying it would make them a likely target for militants.

The AJK premier also told participants that state's first women's university, he announced that the state's first women's university, which is to be named after Asifa Bhutto Zardari, will be established in Bagh, along with announcing a Rs30 million package for the district.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/480146/equal-opportunities-ajk-pm-unveils-first-womens-university-plan/>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,130 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

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

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

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

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

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

Capital: Muzaffarabad

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

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

President: Sardar Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Seven

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche and Skardu districts

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly: Total 33 members (24 members directly elected)

Governor of G-B: Pir Karam Ali Shah

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah of Skardu district.

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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