

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

The controversial Diamer Bhasha dam project continues to be mired in difficulties. Apart from the pressing issues of large scale displacement, rehabilitation and the ecological impact, arranging funds to undertake the project still remains the biggest challenge for the government of Pakistan. In view of India's objections to a project being built in PoK, a territory which is legally claimed by India, multilateral donors such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have shown reluctance to participate in the funding consortium. Donors have suggested Pakistan to concentrate on other viable projects such the Dasu dam (in Kohistan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Pakistan has refused to take the advice making it clear that it would not allow its development agenda to be dictated by the donor agencies. The insistence by the international lending agencies to seek a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from India, before they decide to commit funds for projects inside PoK, has irked Pakistan.

Several reports included in the current issue discuss at length, the rising concerns of the local people over transportation of timber from Diamer in Gilgit Baltistan to parts of Pakistan. Earlier, in order to control deforestation, this kind of transportation was allowed only within Gilgit Baltistan. The previous policy was reversed with approval of the former prime minister of Pakistan, Raja Pervez Ashraf, a day before he handed over power to the interim government.

In PoK, especially Gilgit Baltistan, the threat of terrorist attacks looms large. In order to avoid any such incident, the non-locals have been kept under strict vigilance. The local police have procured details of outsiders in the region (most of them are from the neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and warned them against undertaking any such activity. Notably, these people have moved into Gilgit Baltistan and living there for business purposes.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Extensive vigilance: Non-locals under 'strict watch' in G-B”

The Express Tribune, April 30, 2013

GILGIT: In a bid to quash any terror plots in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), the police has put 'outsiders' especially those from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) under strict watch. “We have collected a record of the people from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) residing in G-B,” Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Ali Sher noted on April 29. He added all non-locals were called in the police station to 'sensitise' them of the situation.

“We told them as a responsibility of being good citizens they should not associate themselves with trouble makers,” stated Sher, claiming such persons might fall into the hands of terrorists if left unattended. “They are under strict watch.” Most of the non-locals doing business in G-B are from K-P. Last year, over 50 people, mostly Shias, were targeted in separate sectarian attacks in the region.

To a question about the operation in Diamer valley, Sher stated targeted action was only taken against absconders in Tangeer valley where a deputy superintendent police (DSP) was killed last month while chasing an accused. “Those seven proclaimed offenders surrendered and we stopped the operation.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/542225/extensive-vigilance-non-locals-under-strict-watch-in-g-b/>

“Girl raped and then Murdered by Bureaucrats and AJK Ministers”

April 27, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Two weeks ago 3 Ministers of AJK Government and Bureaucrats bring a girl in PC Hotel Muzaffarbad who was MA Student in Kashmir University. They promised her to award her a Government Job. When girl reached in Hotel they raped her. After rape they threaten her to keep

silence and then they injured her badly. Injured girl was in hospitalized and due to pressure and threats she gave statement to police that she was injured in a road accident.

For some days there was quite silence but later the truth revealed and rape case news broke in area, upon which some Civil Society and Students Unions raise voice and start protesting. Victim Girl belonged to constituency of AJK President Sardar Yaqoob Khan who still did not give any statement against his Minister and Bureaucrats who raped girl. Speaker AJK Assembly also belongs to District Poonch but he too has kept silence.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2013/04/27/girl-raped-and-then-murdered-by-bureaucrats-and-ajk-ministers.html>

“Attabad disaster: Aid for Gojalis not distributed fairly, say lawmakers”

The Express Tribune, April 26, 2013

GILGIT: Lawmakers on April 25 expressed doubts over the distribution and utilisation of aid sent after the landslide in Attabad, and ordered an inquiry into the disbursement of funds. “Where have those millions of rupees gone? We should be told about that,” Mirza Hussain, a member from Hunza-Nagar district questioned during the legislative assembly's session. Hussain stated besides NGOs and foreign aid, governments of all provinces also donated millions to the Gilgit-Baltistan government after the landslide in Attabad in 2010 that left over 25,000 people marooned in Gojal. He stated two years on, their situation has still not improved.

“If China had not sent relief for the disaster-hit people, the residents of Gojal would have died of hunger,” he stated, adding that the total donations received by the government were more than Rs400 million. Hussain further stated the matter is of grave concern and should be investigated. Mutabiat Shah, also a lawmaker from Hunza, directed the assembly's attention towards problems with the

education system. He stated a large number of students enrolled in various institutions across the country had to leave their education as they could not pay the tuition fee because the government did not provide the promised funds.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/540500/attabad-disaster-aid-for-gojalis-not-distributed-fairly-say-lawmakers/>

Shabbir Mir, “No-show: Assembly session indefinitely postponed over CM's absence”

The Express Tribune, April 26, 2013

GILGIT: Following a brawl over the absence of the chief minister (CM) at the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly session for the third consecutive day, the speaker postponed the proceedings for an indefinite period. PPP member Raziuddin Rizvi criticised the local head of his party CM Mehdi Shah, whereas Ali spoke in defence of the chief minister. Ali had recently been inducted into the cabinet after a deal struck by President Asif Ali Zardari and Allama Sajid Naqvi over seat adjustment in the general elections.

“The CM is making a mockery of the house by remaining absent,” stated Rizvi, asking the speaker, Wazir Baig, to take legal action against him. “You should have him disqualified,” Rizvi added. Ali, who is yet to be given a ministry, objected to Rizvi's remarks. “You are not Shah's spokesperson, please sit down. It is our internal party issue and you are not supposed to defend him,” replied Rizvi, reminding Ali that he was not a party worker. While Baig's repeated attempts to ease tensions failed, his warning to get the two arrested for defiance of the house also failed to calm things down. Raziuddin sat down but Ali remained defiant, compelling Baig to adjourn the session. Rizvi alleged that Shah had boycotted the session because it was called without his consent, but the CM has denied the allegations.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/540984/no-show-assembly-session-indefinitely-postponed-over-cms-absence/>

“Skardu jailbreak: ATC sentences five officials to 17 years in prison”

The Express Tribune, April 30, 2013

GILGIT: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on April 29

sentenced five officials, including a deputy superintendent of police, to 17 years in prison for letting loose Naveed Hussain, a prisoner on death-row, from a jail in Skardu. Five others accused in the case were acquitted by Justice Raja Shahbaz Khan of ATC-1 during the hearing. Hussain, a resident of Gilgit, escaped from Skardu jail in January 2013. He was sentenced to death for killing ATC judge Jamshed Khan and two others in Gilgit city in 2005 and 2006, respectively. For better security measures, Hussain was shifted from Gilgit to Skardu jail, but he managed to escape by jumping over the prison wall. DPO Ghulam Hussain, Head Warden Mohammad Khan, Warden In-charge Bashir Ahmad, Akhun Raza, and Johar Ali were sentenced for abetting the prisoner's escape under Act 222-223 of the Pakistan Penal Code. A similar jailbreak incident occurred in December 2012 when Shakirullah Jan and Arifuddin escaped from Gilgit jail after reportedly intoxicating the security official on duty.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/542229/skardu-jailbreak-atc-sentences-five-officials-to-17-years-in-prison/>

Shabbir Mir, “Popularity ploy?: G-B CM does not 'like' Facebook updates”

The Express Tribune, April 24, 2013

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Mehdi Shah has directed officials to refrain from using Facebook during office hours. A press release issued from the CM Secretariat on April 22 night maintained government officials waste time on their laptops using facebook. “Irresponsible attitudes will not be tolerated anymore,” it added.

Many say the note indirectly refers to G-B Chief Secretary Sajad Hottiana, who after acquiring the position of chief secretary started updating his status vigorously. The posts were meant to inform his national and international fans of his efforts. “Please help me,” reads one of Hottiana's recent wall posts, “A lot of influential persons and their cronies are vary (sic) of my Facebook presence. I thought I might help people and be more accessible. To be honest, it puts tremendous challenges and increases my job manifold. Am I ahead of the time and G-B not ready for it yet? Should I quit and make

life easy for myself?” In an earlier post Hottiana stated: “I love my people and I want to be available to them every time.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/539509/popularity-ploy-g-b-cm-does-not-like-facebook-updates/>

“Lack of funds: G-B police reeling under budget constraints”

The Express Tribune, April 23, 2013

GILGIT: Complaining about a lack of funds, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Inspector General of Police (IGP) Usman Zakaria on April 22 stated personnel will not be provided complete uniforms this year. Addressing a gathering of policemen and officials at Police Lines, Zakaria stated the department has been allocated the same budget since the past five years, without accounting for inflation. “Jackets, boots and oil (fuel) could not be given to the police this year and I want to bring this to your attention,” he stated.

“Even then, we have managed to do remarkably well,” stated Zakaria, adding 160 proclaimed offenders were arrested for six months by the force. “When I was posted here nine months back, the force was divided along sectarian and regional lines, but it transformed into a single, strong unit,” claimed the IGP, saying the improved security situation was proof of his commitment. G-B Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah was the chief guest, while ministers, army, police and civil officials also attended the event.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/539154/lack-of-funds-g-b-police-reeling-under-budget-constraints/>

“Judicial Conference to promote law supremacy”

Pakistan Observer, April 23, 2013

MIRPUR: President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Supreme Court Bar Association, Raja Fazal Hussain Rabani stated on April 22 that the recently held 3-day International Judicial Conference will promote the supremacy of law and justice in the country and AJK. Addressing the reporters in Mirpur after attending the three-day International Judicial Conference in Islamabad held under the

chairmanship of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, he stated the grand meet of judges of superior judiciary and the jurists has enlighten the name of Pakistan at the international level.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=204602>

“Gilgit Baltistan: Microfinance Scheme For The Youth Approved”

UNPO, April 22, 2013

The government of Gilgit Baltistan plans to start a Microfinance scheme aimed at the unemployed youth to help them gain independence and contribute to the region's economy. The Gilgit-Baltistan government plans to start a Microfinance scheme, specifically for the unemployed youth of Gilgit-Baltistan, to help them gain economic independence and contribute towards the region's economic growth. The Microfinance scheme, to be implemented through a 250 million rupees revolving fund, aims to provide loans of up to 75,000 rupees to the youth of Gilgit-Baltistan. This money, it is expected, will provide the much-needed stimulus for entrepreneurship. The Chief Secretary of Gilgit-Baltistan, Sajjad Saleem Hottiana, stated on his Facebook page that he and the Chief Minister have “inked the scheme together”. The scheme was approved by the Chief Minister at his office and shall come into effect in May 2013.

Unemployment is one of the major issues of Gilgit-Baltistan. Very large number of students graduate from Karakoram International University and other varsities of the country but the region lacks the industries and other opportunities to help them earn money with dignity. It is because of lack of opportunities that a very large number of the youth live in almost all cities and towns of the country, away from their region and, thus, unable to contribute directly to the region's economy.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/15799>

Khaleeq Kiani, “Govt wants to divert water project funds”

Dawn, April 22, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Major water sector projects of

strategic nature are facing serious bottlenecks because of cost overruns and financing constraints that could delay their targeted economic benefits to the nation. Officials noted on April 21 that one of the most important projects- Diamer Bhasha dam was facing cost overruns and financing gaps even before construction could be taken in hand. Over Rs 25 billion had been released but that would be used for land acquisition.

Another strategically important project-Neelum Jhelum hydropower project of 969MW- is facing serious financing problems and even finding it difficult to pay for the services being provided by foreign contractors. Sources stated that in view of slower progress on Diamer Bhasha dam and urgent financing needs of the Neelum Jhelum project, the government had decided to divert about Rs 5bn from Bhasha dam to Neelum Jhelum project but the process stopped because of a general restriction imposed by the Election Commission (ECP) of Pakistan on diversion of funds.

<http://dawn.com/2013/04/22/govt-wants-to-divert-water-project-funds/>

Waqas Naeem, “Bungling decision-making: Activists to campaign against timber policy”

The Express Tribune, April 20, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Civil society organisations in the federal capital are protesting the new timber movement policy for Diamer district in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and have decided to launch a campaign to push for its withdrawal. The controversial policy, which was approved by former Prime Minister, Raja Pervez Ashraf just a day before his term expired, has allowed the transportation of around four million cubic feet (cft) of timber from Diamer to others parts of Pakistan. Previously, timber movement was only allowed inside G-B, as a measure to curb deforestation. Further increasing the threat of deforestation is the fact that the new policy also allows illegally felled timber to be moved out of G-B.

Environmentalists and civil society representatives believe timber movement is likely to increase illegal logging because of weak enforcement and

monitoring mechanisms. On April 19, environmentalists and representatives of civil society organisations such as the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Akhtar Hameed Khan Resource Centre (AHKRC), Bio-Resource Research Centre (BRC) and Sarhad Awami Forestry Ittehad (SAFI) discussed the negative fallout of timber movement approval in Islamabad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/538009/bungling-decision-making-activists-to-campaign-against-timber-policy/>

Shabbir Mir, “Equal opportunity: Women in Gilgit mobilised to get CNICs”

The Express Tribune, April 22, 2013

GILGIT: The importance of a computerised national identity card (CNIC) only dawned on 48-year-old Gulchira when she went to purchase a SIM card for herself. “I was asked for my CNIC number and only then I realised how important this piece of paper actually is,” stated Gulchira, a resident of Oshikhandas, a small town about 30 kilometres from Gilgit. “They stated I will not be given a SIM without a CNIC.”

Gulchira was not the only woman in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) without an identity card at the time. Hundreds of women did not possess one as they were unaware of its importance, while the men did not think it was worthwhile to get it made for them. Following a survey of the region conducted by local NGO Publishing and Extension Network (PEN), the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), in collaboration with the former, launched a programme titled 'Register Women Without CNICs' in 13 union councils of Gilgit.

“So far, we have gotten around 2,500 women registered with Nadra,” stated PEN chief Ejaz Khan. “We are now targeting the remaining women,” he stated. The project was being funded by Aurat Foundation. Under the programme, a team comprising female social organisers was initially sent into valleys including Chakarkot, Haramosh and Bagrote among others to identify women without CNICs.

The team not only conducted interviews of the women in 13 valleys, but also mobilised the men to allow women to get registered with Nadra.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/538647/equal-opportunity-women-in-gilgit-mobilised-to-get-cnics/>

Ali Syed, “Gulf between MoWP, PC over priority widens”

Pakistan Observer, April 1, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The gulf between Ministry of Water and Power influenced by Wapda chairman and Planning Commission has widened over dealing with the Diamer-Bhasha dam in terms of arranging finances, as the ministry is inclined to give priority Dasu hydropower project over Diامر Bahsha dam whereas Planning commission is determined to place the Bhasha dam on priority, a senior official noted.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=202351>

Zaheer Abbasi, “Diامر-Bhasha Dam allocation: MoF urges ECP to allow diversion to Neelum-Jhelum”

Business Recorder, April 21, 2013

The Finance Ministry has reportedly requested the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to allow diversion of Rs 5 billion from Diامر-Bhasha Dam to Neelum-Jhelum power project. Sources stated that Neelum-Jhelum hydel project is facing a funding constraint and the government has been requested to provide Rs 2 billion monthly as interim arrangement for smooth running of the project till some loan arrangements are made.

The timely completion of the project would add around 967MW electricity to the system. Sources stated the Ministry of Water and Power has requested the government for funding and the Finance Division requested the ECP to allow them to divert Rs 5 billion allocated for Diامر-Basha Dam in the current fiscal year for Neelum Jhelum project as more than half of the work on the project has been completed and availability of funds would enable the executing authorities to complete the project on time.

An official also noted that it was decided by the previous government that projects which are near completion would be completed on priority basis.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0/1176927/>

“Regional politics: Two lawmakers sworn in G-B Cabinet”

The Express Tribune, April 20, 2013

GILGIT: Two more lawmakers were inducted into the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Cabinet on April 19, making it 10-member strong. Sheikh Nisar Hussain Sarbaz and Didar Ali were sworn in during a ceremony held at the Governor House on April 19. Sarbaz is a Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawmaker from Skardu, while Didar is a resident of Gilgit from where he won as an independent candidate. The new incumbents will be assigned portfolios in two days. G-B Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah, the assembly speaker and other lawmakers and senior government officials attended the ceremony. The seat had fallen vacant after Advocate Wazir Shakeel was appointed as a judge in the G-B chief court last month.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/537872/regional-politics-two-lawmakers-sworn-in-g-b-cabinet/>

Parvez Jabri, “AJK units of all major political parties start campaigning”

Business Recorder, April 18, 2013

MIRPUR: Since the electioneering by the political parties contesting May 11 general elections in Pakistan is getting momentum day-by-day, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) leaders of all the major national political parties have also moved to various constituencies to join the election campaigns of their respective parties. All the major political parties of Pakistan have strongholds in AJK, particularly Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML- N). The incumbent government of PPP in the liberated state is an ample proof of the fact.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/115828-ajk-units-of-all-major-political-parties-start-campaigning.html>

“Asian Human Rights Commission - Urgent Appeals Programme”

April 18, 2013

PAKISTAN: A human rights organization was banned due to the pressure of fanatical Muslim groups in Gilgit-Baltistan. The office and staff of an NGO are under threat from the authorities and intelligence agencies

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is writing to inform our readers that police action was taken at the offices of the Association of Global Human Rights and Ethics (AGHE). The police with the help of a magistrate have sealed the office and forcibly removed the staff. The government of Gilgit and Baltistan (GB) has banned the AGHE's activities. Please see the previous Urgent Appeal issued on March 1, AHRC-UAC-032-2013. After receiving orders for restrictions on its activities the AGHE has confined its actions to within its offices but the authorities, under pressure from fundamentalist organizations operating under the patronage of the powerful groups of the state, took physical action to close down its offices in the different cities.

On April 10, 2013, police officials in the company of a magistrate raided the project office in Skardu, the district of the highest peak of the country, K2, Gilgit-Baltistan, and took over control of office. The officials ordered the staff to vacate the office immediately and when they enquired as to the reason the officials presented the order of the Superintendent of Police (SP) to seal the AGHE office. They also threatened and harassed the staff which included female members. However, the actions of the administrations did not stop at closing down the offices and stopping the activities but also extended to threatening the female staff to provide information about the funding. They were threatened with dire consequences if they failed to comply with the demands.

<http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAU-014-2013>

Shabbir Mir, “Call for peace: PML-N seeks

donations to strengthen political system in G-B”

The Express Tribune, April 18, 2013

GILGIT: The regional leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has urged the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) to donate money to political parties in the province in order to keep sectarian politics at bay. PML-N Provincial President Hafizur Rehman while talking to the media in his office on April 17 stated a strong and inclusive political system was needed to defeat sectarianism in the region.

“I urge the people to donate generously to parties as only a strong political system can bring harmony among the sects,” Rehman stated, adding the PML-N had launched a fundraising campaign in G-B to make the party self-sufficient. The regional president justified his appeals for donations claiming that if more people contribute to the party's finances, it will not remain dependent on certain people who use their influence to control the party.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/536883/call-for-peace-pml-n-seeks-donations-to-strengthen-political-system-in-g-b/>

Shabbir Mir, “Court acquits Baba Jan, Iftikhar Hussain in treason case”

The Express Tribune, April 19, 2013

GILGIT: A court in Gilgit on April 18 acquitted progressive leaders Baba Jan and Iftikhar Hussain in a treason case. “The two men were acquitted by a civil court in Gilgit in the case 64/2012 filed against them on April 28, 2012 by the government,” stated Wajidullah, a spokesman for the Progress Youth Front (PYF), a party that Baba Jan belongs to.

Advocate Ehsan Ali, who fought the case of Jan and others, stated that earlier the case was filed in an anti-terrorism court [ATC], which however rejected it because there was nothing in the case to substantiate the charges levelled against them. “Jan's 'crime' was that he had organised demonstrations against police firing that had killed two internally displaced persons – a father and son in Hunza,” he stated, adding that the victims were among those demanding compensation for the damage caused by the Attabad Lake. Jan, who is the

chief organiser of PYF, was among the nearly 100 people arrested for allegedly ransacking a police station and torching government offices in August 2011 after a clash with the police. Jan was accused of fuelling the riots and then of treason charges that he denied.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/537662/court-acquits-baba-jan-iftikhar-hussain-in-treason-case/>

Shabbir Mir, “In decline: Tourism in G-B falls prey to 18th Amendment”

The Express Tribune, April 19, 2013

GILGIT: In the past two years, the 18th Amendment has had a far greater negative effect on tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) than the constant threat of terrorism. The Ministry of Tourism was abolished after the amendment was passed in April 2010, devolving control of tourism, forests and minerals to the provinces. However, the devolution afforded little benefit to G-B as the control of these subjects went to the G-B Council, a body headed by the prime minister himself. Additionally, the power to issue trekking permits to tourists also fell under the prerogative of the council under Article 33 of the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order of 2009.

The G-B Assembly cannot make laws on subjects falling in the domain of the council, which is represented by six nominated parliamentarians from the federal government, and representatives of the federal government are yet to be appointed to the council by the caretaker government. “The devolution of the federal powers of the Ministry of Tourism has not served its purpose, at least for G-B,” stated Secretary Tourism Akhtar Hussain Rizvi on April 18. The secretary was speaking at the end of an Italian-funded refresher course for porters organised by the non-profit association Ev-K2-CNR at a hotel in Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/537452/in-decline-tourism-in-g-b-falls-prey-to-18th-amendment/>

“AJK govt for more power projects”

Pakistan Observer, April 15, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir

(AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed has stated government is utilizing all the resources for the completion of reconstruction projects on priority basis in the quake-hit areas of Azad Kashmir. Talking to a public delegation in Muzaffarabad, he stated billions of rupees are being spent for completion of projects under Muzaffarabad city development Project and concerned authorities have been directed to ensure their timely completion. He stated work is in progress to complete by pass road to overcome traffic jams in Muzaffarabad. He stated Parking Plazas and a modern tourist complex would be constructed in Muzaffarabad soon. Chaudhry Abdul Majid stated government is taking measures to set up more power projects to meet the power requirement at local level. He stated agreement of Neelum-Jhelum project would be inked soon and assured that problems of project affectees would be addressed.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=203803>

“IED defused in Gilgit”

The News, April 15, 2013

GILGIT: An Improvised Explosive Devise (IED) was defused outside the residence of Parliamentary Secretary on Health Haji Rehmat Khaliq in Gilgit on April 14, police officials stated. Police disclosed that they were informed in time and the IED was thrown by unknown people. SSP Muhammad Ali Zia stated it was locally made and ingredients of the devise suggest that it was prepared by the local people.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-171544-IED-defused-in-Gilgit>

“GB govt to regularize 11000 employees”

Pakistan Observer, April 17, 2013

GILGIT: The government of Gilgit-Baltistan will regularize services of more than 11000 employees working on temporary basis in different departments of the region, official sources stated. They stated the Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah has directed the Chief Secretary to work out the policy to meet the demands of temporary

employees and their services be regularized.

The official stated presently more than 11000 employees are working on temporary basis and are being categorized so that they could be adjusted in phases. At first, the sources stated, about 4300 employees of Water and Power Department shall benefit from their scheme and then Works Department and other departments will implement the directives of the Chief Minister.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=203966>

“By-election postponed in Skardu”

Dawn, April 17, 2013

GILGIT: The election commission of Gilgit-Baltistan on April 16 postponed the by-elections on GB-9, Skardu-III seat, for an indefinite period. The elections were scheduled to be held on May 9, officials stated. The officials further noted the decision to postpone the by-election had been conveyed to all the concerned quarters. They stated the reason was closure of the road to Galtari subdivision due to snowfall. It is pertinent to mention that Wazir Shakil Ahmed, former minister for law and water and power, vacated the seat after he was made judge of the Chief Court of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://dawn.com/2013/04/17/by-election-postponed-in-skardu-2/>

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit-Baltistan: As police operation continues in Darel Valley, 20 suspects surrender”

The Express Tribune, April 16, 2013

GILGIT: More than 20 suspects have surrendered during the ongoing crackdown against criminals in Darel Tangir valley of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), stated police chief Usman Zakria. During a press conference on April 15, Inspector general of Police (IGP) Zakria gave details of the operation. It was launched by the government after a police van in the valley was attacked. Two policemen, one of them a DSP, were killed and three others were injured in the incident.

Security forces then, following a jirga's orders, blew

up the houses of the accused who had escaped arrest. A total of five houses were blown up. There was a strong reaction to the incident with politicians saying the act was in violation of human rights because the men had only been accused and not convicted by a court of law. Zakria defended the security forces' actions saying they had only exploded the towers of the houses because they feared criminals would target the police from there. Towers are built to guard a house from enemy attacks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/535907/gilgit-baltistan-as-police-operation-continues-in-darel-valley-20-suspects-surrender/>

“Five shot dead in clash”

Daily Times, April 15, 2013

GILGIT: A clash between two groups in the remote Thore Valley left five people of two families, including a woman and a child, dead while four others were seriously injured. According to police, two minors scuffled while returning home from school on April 13 and later their elders joined them with guns and opened fire on each other. As a result, five people were killed and four others were seriously injured.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\04\15\story_15-4-2013_pg7_14

“LEAs foil terror bids in Bannu, Chaman, Gilgit”

Pakistan Observer, April 15, 2013

BANNU/QUETTA/GILGIT/SWABI: Law enforcement agencies (LEAs) foiled multiple terrorism attempts in Bannu, Gilgit, and Chaman towns as they recovered and defused bombs from different public places. Bannu was saved from a major terrorism bid as police found two bombs fitted on two separate motorbikes near a crowded bus stand.

Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) stated the bombs weighted about 45 and 10 kilograms. A bomb fitted on a motorbike was recovered near FC check post in Pak-Afghan border town of Chaman. In Gilgit, police stated bomb disposal squad found a two

kilogram bomb was recovered in a suspected shopping bag outside the house of JUI's member of Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) Rahmat Khaliq, containing metal ball-bearing. Meanwhile, Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) on April 14 averted a possible bid of terrorism by defusing a bomb planted in the under construction house of Muhammad Naeem Khan, the candidate of PPP for NA-13.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=203789>

“Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Meets President Ski Federation”

April 12, 2013

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah visited Air Headquarters and met with Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan, Vice Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, who is also the President Ski Federation of Pakistan. Both the dignitaries discussed matters pertaining to development of the Naltar Ski Resort. President Ski Federation briefed the Chief Minister on aims and objectives of Pakistan Air Force for the development and uplift of the area into an International Standards Ski City. Chief Minister commended the efforts of Pakistan Air Force and the Ski Federation in acquisition of chairlift and general welfare of the people with special emphasis on education to the locals.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/asianet/130412/chief-minister-gilgit-baltistan-meets-president-ski-federation#1>

“AJK: Govt. takes steps to provide maximum relief to people: Majeed”

April 11, 2013

AJK Prime Minister Ch. Abdul Majeed stated that government is taking measures to ensure rule of law, supremacy of equality and justice, good governance in the state. Talking to media in Dadyal on April 9, he stated government is taking steps to provide maximum relief to the people of the State. He stated modern health and education institutions would be set up in Dadyal. The Prime Minister further stated that he has directed the concerned officials for provision of necessary facilities in the residential colonies of New City and Small towns

constructed for the Mangla Dam affectees. He stated WAPDA would also fulfil its responsibilities in this regard.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/asianet/130411/ajk-govt-takes-steps-provide-maximum-relief-people-majeed#1>

Shabbir Mir, “DSP murder case: Security officials destroy militant hideouts”

The Express Tribune, April 11, 2013

GILGIT: Law enforcement agencies, backed by local elders, blew up five houses of militants in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The militants had attacked a police van in March, killing DSP Attaullah and his subordinate Haleem and injuring three other policemen in district Diamer's Darel-Tangir valley. The police patrol was on its way to arrest some fugitives when it came under fire. Following the incident, a jirga, comprising elders of the Diamer valley assured authorities they would force the alleged murderers to surrender. The accused, led by Khalilur Rahman, refused to accept the decision.

On April 9, the jirga decided to “teach a lesson” to the militants and ordered to blow up their residence, stated Mohammad Ali, a resident of Diamer. The accused, however, were not around when the operation was conducted, stated Khalilullah, a police official in Chilas, headquarters of Diamer. DIG Ali Sher supervised the operation which was conducted by the police, G-B Scouts and the Frontier Constabulary.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/533785/dsp-murder-case-security-officials-destroy-militant-hideouts/>

Shabbir Mir, “Environmental degradation: Illegal construction at base camp of the killer mountain”

The Express Tribune, April 10, 2013

GILGIT: A German woman approached Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) chief secretary, complaining about the illegal construction of a lodge at the base camp of Nanga Parbat. With a height of 8,126 metres, Nanga Parbat, also known as 'The Killer Mountain', is the second highest mountain peak of Pakistan and the ninth highest in the world. It is located in the Himalayan mountain range in the Diamer valley.

“Last year I was informed about the illegal construction of a lodge at Nanga Parbat Base camp West Face (Diamer/Buner side),” wrote Marianne Klies from Germany to Chief Secretary Sajad Hottiana in an email which Hottiana shared with his friends on his Facebook account. “Since summer last year, I am in contact with various Pakistani authorities, including former deputy commissioner Sibtain Ahmad, trying to prevent this illegal project. It damages and disturbs the peaceful environment of this completely untouched location at 4,200 metres. The locals do not want or need this building; on the contrary they find it disturbing.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/533296/environmental-degradation-illegal-construction-at-base-camp-of-the-killer-mountain/>

“Diamer-Bhasha dam 'unsafe'”

April 8, 2013

EUROPE: The Diamer-Bhasha Dam in Gilgit Baltistan was inaugurated by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani on October 18, 2011. Pakistan is hopeful of producing 4,500 megawatts of electricity from the dam. However, it is being built despite resistance by residents of the area and it is considered to be highly vulnerable to earthquakes. The Geological Survey of Pakistan Director General, Dr. Imran Ahmad Khan, has informed the Senate's Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources in Islamabad that Zone-4 where Diamer-Bhasha Dam is being constructed falls under a Seismic Zone.

<http://www.newstrackindia.com/videos/Diamer-Bhasha-dam-039-unsafe-039-.html>

“AJK: International Airport to be constructed in Mirpur, says Majeed”

April 9, 2013

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir AJK Prime Minister Ch. Abdul Majeed has stated that an international Airport would be constructed in Mirpur which would facilitate the people to fly direct to Mirpur besides promoting trade activities.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/asianet/130409/aj-k-international-airport-be-constructed-mirpur-says-majeed>

Ijaz Kakakhel, “Senate body concerned over timber smuggling”

Daily Times, April 9, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Senate's Standing Committee on Climate Change on April 8 expressed serious reservations over smuggling of precious timber of Chilas, Chitral to rest of the country with the involvement of top bureaucracy and directed the forest department to either legalise it or stop it. This national asset of the country was being brutally destroyed and regretted that there was no one to check it. The committee's chairperson Saeeda Iqbal suggested that there should be proper sale of timber or barter system with other parts of the country, where it is needed. Deforestation in high hills of Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir is linked to the domestic market of timber in Lahore and Karachi.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\04\09\story_9-4-2013_pg5_8

Waqas Naeem, “Timber chopping in G-B: Authorities move summary to ban practice”

The Express Tribune, April 9, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change agreed to forward a summary to the cabinet secretary to reverse an order, that had allowed the transport of timber from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) down country. The notification, which lifted a ban on the movement of legally and illegally cut timber from the forests in district Diamer, was approved by former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf just a day before the government's term ended on March 16.

The lifting on the timber movement ban had drawn criticism from environmental activists and at least one Diamer native, Muhammad Khan Qureshi, who has been campaigning against deforestation in Chilas. The activists claim the timber mafia in Diamer has already started illegal felling of trees and it would be difficult to monitor if the timber being transported is legal or illegal because of the timber mafia's ties with local forest guards.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/532869/timber-chopping-in-g-b-authorities-move-summary-to-ban-practice/>

“Govt urged to restore Shangla-Kohistan coaster service”

The News, April 9, 2013

BISHAM: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Amir Muqam and Shangla Transport Union leaders on April 8 threatened to launch protest if the Shangla-Kohistan coaster service was not restored. Talking to media, Amir Muqam and Shangla Transport Union president Qutab Alam, general secretary Shah Buland and others asked the government to either stop Gilgit-Swat coaster service in view of deteriorating law and order situation or allow the vehicles to ply between Shangla and Kohistan districts.

They stated that launching of Gilgit-Swat service had created hurdles for the All Transport Union, Shangla district and the union had observed wheel-jam protest against it on March 20. The district administration had accepted the union's demand and issued orders to stop the Gilgit-Swat coaster service but service providers filed a petition in the court against the district administration's decision. “We respect the courts and the service should be halted until the court's verdict,” they added.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-170302-Govt-urged-to-restore-Shangla-Kohistan-coaster-service>

Shabbir Mir, “Lashing out: G-B govt reeks of corruption: Opposition”

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2013

GILGIT: The 167-page report released by the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government to highlight its performance over the last three years has attracted fierce criticism from lawmakers. The G-B coalition government led by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) released the report, which was presented by Information Minister Ali Madad Sher to the media. The document comes in wake of G-B Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig's threats to expose corrupt lawmakers. Wazir, who is himself a member of PPP, developed differences with Chief Minister Mehdi Shah over the formation of two new districts in the Baltistan region.

Wazir accused Shah of being a biased chief minister and had stated: “Corruption is rampant in the region

and I am surprised why no action is being taken against big fishes.” Speaking on the report, Information Minister Sher stated the legislative assembly passed 68 resolutions, enacted legislation on 24 subjects, approved schemes worth Rs 200 million in the mineral sector and filled nearly 2,000 vacancies in government departments. According to the report, a Karakoram Security Force was formed and monetary compensation paid to relatives of those killed in militant attacks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/532057/lashing-out-g-b-govt-reeks-of-corruption-opposition/>

Ikram Junaidi, “Ex-PM's parting gift to timber mafia”

Dawn, April 6, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Just a day before the end of his government's tenure, former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf allowed transportation of timber worth Rs8 billion from the Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan to the down country. Since early 1990s, there was a ban on the movement of timber from Gilgit-Baltistan to other parts of the country to check deforestation in the region. Because of the latest decision, however, the timber mafia has again started cutting woods in the region endangering not only the environment but also increasing the risk of silting in the Tarbela Dam which is fed by the River Indus.

According to available documents, on March 15 a notification was issued by the Gilgit-Baltistan Secretariat in Islamabad, which stated: “The prime minister has approved the disposal of legally and illegally cut timber from Diamer to the down country.” The transportation of the 2.07 million cubic feet legally extracted timber lying in various forests of Diamer has been allowed for transportation to down country as per an agreement between the government and the forest lessees.

<http://dawn.com/2013/04/06/ex-pms-parting-gift-to-timber-mafia/>

“Smeda discusses strategy for AJK”

The News, April 5, 2013

LAHORE: Small and Medium Enterprises

Development Authority (Smeda) is going to formulate the first ever SME development strategy for Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The modalities of the proposed strategy were discussed at a meeting with Secretary AJK for industries, labour and minerals, Muhammad Saleem Bismal, who visited Smeda's head office on April 4. He was accompanied by an official delegation from AJK to identify potential sectors of SMEs that require support. CEO Smeda, Ahmad Nawaz Sukhera, welcomed the delegation and appraised it about Smeda's projects and services.

Bismal appreciated Smeda's openness to suggestions to improve its role in SME development. He thanked the Smeda management for including AJK in the new five-year business plan and proposed evolving development initiatives for AJK while formulating strategies for mineral, horticulture and tourism sectors in the national plan.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-169377-Smeda-discusses-strategy-for-AJK>

Shabbir Mir, “Protecting wildlife: Khunjerab National Park's management plan reviewed”

The Express Tribune, April 9, 2013

GILGIT: The management plan of Pakistan's third largest national park was reviewed in Gilgit on April 8 with suggestions from local communities to make cross-country tourism part of the plan. Khunjerab National Park adjacent to Tashkurgan, China Natural Reserve was first envisaged by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1975 to protect endangered species like Marco Polo sheep and their habitat. Plans for the park were first drawn up in 1994-95 and the park boundaries included some of Shimshal Valley's pastures, a move not welcome by the valley's inhabitants.

The management plan, originally devised to protect and conserve local wildlife failed miserably. Marco Polo sheep continued to be hunted, decreasing the number of Marcos from 800 to a few dozen during the period between 1975 and 1993.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/532956/protecting-wildlife-khunjerab-national-parks-management-plan-reviewed/>

“Approaching courts: Rights organisation to

seek stay order against fees in govt hospitals”

The Express Tribune, April 3, 2013

GILGIT: The International Human Rights Organisation [IGRO] in Gilgit-Baltistan has hinted they will approach the courts to seek a stay order on the government's decision to charge patients at public hospitals. “We will soon register a petition against the government's decision to impose fees in public hospitals,” stated IHRO Coordinator Mohammad Farooq. “The decision is against human rights because more than 75% of people in G-B live below the poverty line.”

The fees went into effect from April 1. Previously, services rendered at public hospitals were free of charge. Patients now have to pay Rs100 for ultrasound, Rs2,250 for a CT Scan and up to Rs300 for a surgery. “The fees are comparatively higher than those in the rest of Pakistan,” Farooq stated. We are consulting lawyers to file a case, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/530204/approaching-courts-rights-organisation-to-seek-stay-order-against-fees-in-govt-hospitals/>

“PPP empowered GB people”

Pakistan Observer, March 15, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in Senate, Jahangir Badr stated that Pakistan Peoples Party government has done tremendous job by giving autonomy and introducing a political set up comprising the people of the Gilgit-Baltistan. He stated this while talking to Governor GB, who called on him in Islamabad. Jahangir Badr noted that the Gilgit-Baltistan government is playing vital role in resolving the problems of the poor people of the area. He stated that prevailing scarcity of resources requires an urgent attention from the federal government to take remedial measures for betterment of the GB people.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=200330>

“Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, April 1, 2013

The area of Gilgit-Baltistan has been linked with the Kashmir dispute based on the ties that the Muslim

population of the region had with Pakistan. It was thought that in case of a plebiscite on Kashmir, the region could serve as a cushion for Pakistan. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan, however, remain politically deprived and constitutionally abandoned. Although several amendments have been introduced into the constitution, it still does not recognise the region as its territory. The people of this region are deprived of any electoral participation in the country's general elections and have no representation, whatsoever, in parliament.

In 2009, the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, an ad-hoc ordinance, was introduced by the PPP government under which the

region has its own governor and chief minister but still doesn't have a provincial status or representation in parliament. The general elections are around the corner and the two million people of Gilgit-Baltistan will yet again remain spectators.

Muhammad Zaheer Abbas

Islamabad

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-168723-Gilgit-Baltistan>

Economic Developments

Ali Syed, “Donors found secretly engaged in dictating their agenda in Pakistan”

Pakistan Observer, April 30, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Planning Commission has for the first time shown its spine and came down heavily on the international financial institutions for being secretly involved in dictating their agenda on economic policies in Pakistan. It is none other than Dr Nadeemul Haq, deputy chairman of Planning Commission who found the World Bank, USTATED, and DFID in dictating their agenda which is not in line with the decisions of National Economic Council and Growth Strategy carved out by the government.

The Planning Commission held a meeting on February 12, 2013 in which Pakistan clearly asked World Bank, USTATED, ADB and others in plain words not to dictate on identifying the projects for loans as it is the prerogative of the government to identify the project priority. This daring response of Pakistan came in the meeting on funding and implementation of Diamer-Bhasha dam and Dasu dam. The minutes of the meeting show that Deputy Chairman, Dr Haq has stated that donors cannot dictate Pakistan from now onwards and it is its prerogative to identify the project priority.

World Bank is asking Pakistan that it is ready to fund the Dasu hydropower project not the Diamer-Bhasha dam on account of Indian claim that Gilgit-Baltistan, wherein the Bhasha dam is being constructed, is the disputed area. The Bank is pushing Pakistan to abandon the Bhasha dam and instead insisting to have the credit line of Dasu dam. Dr Haq came up with bold stance saying who the donors are to dictate Pakistan on projects priority. Likewise, the USTATED that has made many parallel organizations in various ministries and in their attached departments but

their nominal financial assistance in various projects is not showing the results.

Mr Shakil Durrani, advisor to Ministry of Water and Power on Diamer-Bhasha dam noted that the World Bank under Indian influence, does not want any big project in Pakistan therefore prudence demand that Pakistan should not take funding for Dasu, under pressure and must fully pledge available resources for Bhasha Dam project. The most alarming fact of the disclosure is that Economic Affairs Division is also found to encourage International Financial Institutions for promoting their agenda in Pakistan; this startling disclosure has been unveiled in the correspondence of Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission to Secretary EAD.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=205290>

“Rs2.8bn release for development projects”

Business Recorder, April 29, 2013

ASTORE: Provincial Government released a grant of Rs2.8 Billion for development projects and Public Works Department (PWD) ordered the contractors to complete the projects in time. This was stated by Provincial Minister for Works Gilgit Baltistan, Bashir Ahmed Khan on April 29. He stated that stern actions would be taken the contractors who will not complete their projects within stipulated time. He further advised the Works Department officials to report him immediately in case of any negligence regarding the under work projects.

<http://www.brecorder.com/elections-2013/economic-focus/117296.html>

AH Nizami, “WAPDA, others have to pay Rs113m in unpaid power bills”

The Express Tribune, April 5, 2013

MIRPUR: At least 16 government and autonomous bodies of Azad Jammu and Kashmir,

including Wapda, have been declared defaulters and have to pay total unpaid bills of Rs113.33 million to the Electricity Department of Mirpur Division. They have been warned of disconnection of power supply if they fail to clear the dues in the next one week. Mirpur Deputy Commissioner Chaudhry Guftar Hussain, who also enjoys powers of collector of the district under the Revenue Act, sent notices to the defaulters on April 3, directing them to clear all unpaid electricity bills within a week.

“All concerned government departments/autonomous bodies are directed to immediately ensure payment of arrears within the stipulated time and inform the superintending engineer electricity Mirpur Division within one week. Otherwise, the Electricity Department will be directed to disconnect power supply of the defaulters,” the notice stated. The deputy commissioner stated the drive to recover the outstanding amount from power consumers in the division had been undertaken in the light of a recent high-level meeting, chaired by the AJK government's electricity secretary.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/531237/wapda-others-have-to-pay-rs113m-in-unpaid-power-bills/>

Khaleeq Kiani, “53pc per unit hike likely in power tariff”

Dawn, April 2, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Neptra) issued to the government a revised tariff schedule under which consumer-end electricity rates would have to be increased by an average of more than 53 per cent for consumers of all the distribution companies. The Neptra has worked out an increase of Rs2.62 per unit for consumers of Azad Kashmir but has asked the federal government to work out flat rates with AJK government because of a peculiar power agreement under which the government provided subsidy to AJK to compensate for electricity produced from Mangla dam.

<http://dawn.com/2013/04/02/53pc-per-unit-hike-likely-in-power-tariff/>

“Fresh Rs 2.29b uplift projects okayed”

Pakistan Observer, April 1, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee (CDC) has approved Rs 7.29 billion development schemes of public welfare in different areas. According to official sources, the AJK (CDC) approved development schemes in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Ch. Abdul Majeed on March 30. For transport and communication sector, the committee approved Rs 318.289 million for upgradation of the 12 Km (Part I) Kotli-Palandri road, Rs 251.108 million for improvement and metalling of the 25.57 Km patch of Lakarmandi to Paintra Tehsil Barnala District Bhimber and Rs 367 million for different link roads in Muzaffarabad Division.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=202228>

“First private hydropower project starts working”

The Express Tribune, March 26, 2013

LAHORE: The 84-megawatt New Bong Hydropower Project, first independent hydropower project of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir set up by Laraib Energy Limited, has started commercial operations. Laraib Energy, a subsidiary of Hub Power Company (Hubco), successfully commissioned the project on March 23. It will contribute 540 gigawatt hours (GWh) of green energy annually to the national grid under a 25-year power purchase agreement with the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC).

Speaking on the occasion, Hubco CEO Zafar Iqbal Sobani stated, “This project will provide cheaper electricity and energy security for the country. Other benefits of the run-of-the-river hydropower project include replacement of some 135,000 tons of oil imports valued in excess of \$100 million per annum and reduction in carbon emissions.” The project, which was scheduled to be completed in 42 months, got ready two months earlier, compared to three similar low-head hydropower projects on Ohio River (USA) with a total capacity of 191MW that

started a year before New Bong but still have a year to start commercial operations. He acknowledged the support of the governments of Pakistan and AJK, the Private Power Infrastructure Board, Wapda and NTDC. The Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, International Finance Corporation,

Proparco France and domestic commercial banks played a very active role in making the project a reality.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/526363/first-private-hydropower-project-starts-working/>

International Developments

“Pak-China Sost border reopened for trade”

The Nation, April 2, 2013

GILGIT: Pakistan and China have resumed trade and traffic on the Karakoram Highway, through the Khunjerab Pass. The two countries had earlier this year agreed to open the border on 1st April, instead of 1st May, as was the past practice. A bus carrying passengers from China reached the Pakistan Customs House located in the border town of Sost on April 1. The importance of the trade through the Karakoram Highway has increased significantly due to the powerful presence of Chinese business companies in Gwadar. It is pertinent to note that the outgoing Pakistan government had handed over the management of Gwadar Port to a Chinese company recently.

The trade through Karakoram Highway has badly been disrupted due to the blockade and destruction caused by the landslide and the dammed Hunza River. Currently, tunnels are being constructed near Attabad and Ayeenabad to realign the KKH. The realignment work is not likely to be completed before mid of 2014, according to China Roads and Bridges Corporation (CRBC) officials, who are working on expansion and realignment of the KKH.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/02-Apr-2013/pak-china-sost-border-reopened-for-trade>

Shabbir Mir, “Pak-China friendship: Chinese cemetery to be rebuilt in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, April 5, 2013

GILGIT: Chinese and Pakistani officials in a ceremony on April 4 laid the foundation stone of a Chinese cemetery located in Gilgit. Locally known as “China Yadgar”, the cemetery, which is the final resting place of Chinese workers who laid down their lives nearly 40 years ago during construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH), is located in Danyor nearly 10 kilometres across Gilgit River.

At a ceremony held in the cemetery, the Consular of the Chinese Embassy, Zhang Lianyou, and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly Speaker, Wazir Baig laid the foundation stone for a new cemetery which the Chinese officials claimed would be worth the sacrifice rendered by their workers. The cost of renovation is to be borne by the Chinese government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/531177/pak-china-friendship-chinese-cemetery-to-be-rebuilt-in-gilgit/>

Other Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Promoting Culture: Arts and crafts exhibition in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, April 28, 2013

GILGIT: An arts and handicrafts exhibition was held in Gilgit on April 27, allowing local organisations from Gilgit-Balistan's (G-B) remote valleys to display traditional items. More than 50 stalls were put up in the exhibition organised by the Trade Development Authority (TDA) in a hotel.

“This is an attempt to promote local art and culture,” stated Khalid Baig, a TDA official. “The local products are excellent and don't have competitors elsewhere, which is why they can fetch good prices.” Women and children showed up in large numbers and took a keen interest in items, including clothes, food and other decoration articles. Local handicrafts like caps, jewellery and wooden utensils were also on display. Saeeda Parveen, who came from Ghizer valley and had a handicrafts stall set up, stated she saw a good number of buyers at the event.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/541365/promoting-culture-arts-and-crafts-exhibition-in-gilgit/>

Waqas Naeem, “Climate change: Up above in Karakoram, odd weather may be playing tricks”

April 27, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Spread over around 10,000 square kilometres, the Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP) in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) is home to the largest glacial land mass in the world outside the polar region. Thirty-eight per cent of the park's land mass is covered with glaciers, which provide freshwater to the park, local communities and much of the rest of Pakistan via the Indus River. But climate change is beginning to adversely impact the mountain ecosystem of the park.

“The severe impact of climate change is being experienced in the form of floods, droughts, higher average temperatures and changes in precipitation, and all these are projected to affect the availability of water resources in the CKNP area,” stated Daniela Giardina, a scientific coordinator for the Socio Economic Environmental Development (SEED) project in CKNP. “These factors are also expected to cause faster deterioration of water quality.” Giardina was speaking at the launch of a SEED water management policy brief in Islamabad on April 26, which aims to highlight water issues in the CKNP and spell out research-based remedies.

The brief recommends that the communication gap between scientists and policymakers must be bridged for better water management. It also suggests raising awareness on water quality, water protection and hygiene among local communities. Finally, the policy brief states that the risk of water pollution should be reduced through water safety plans at the communal level.

Project Director, Raffaele Del Cima stated SEED intends to improve the quality of life of 230 village communities living on the park's outskirts by diversifying their livelihood options. At the same time, the project is helping in the development of a sustainable park management protocol and conducting scientific research about the park's natural resource, Cima stated. A water laboratory has been set up and a team of Italian researchers have tested water quality in the area.

<http://www.thesiasat.com/2013/04/26/climate-change-up-above-in-karakoram-odd-weather-may-be-playing-tricks/>

“Debate contest: Clash of ideas: Rising to the heights of oration”

The Express Tribune, April 25, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Shaheen Akhter was visibly overjoyed at bagging third position at a

countrywide debate contest. The student of Karakoram International University (KKIU), Gilgit, competed with students of leading national institutions. "I feel honoured to have earned this award," she stated after winning the Allama Iqbal Shield at the All Pakistan Inter University Debate Contest at Higher Education Commission Secretariat (HEC) on April 24. About 30 students from public and private sector institutions participated in the contest.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/540200/debate-contest-clash-of-ideas-rising-to-the-heights-of-oration/>

Atiq ul Amin Khan, "SEA implementation before hydropower projects stressed"

Pakistan Observer, April 25, 2013

MIRPUR: Experts from various nation-building institutions besides environmentalists at a workshop here have strongly emphasized the adoption and observance of the prime principle of Strategic Environmental Assessment before launching of the development projects of Hydropower generation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. "Requisite legislation for making the exercise of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) before launching the study for construction of the Hydro Power projects in letter and spirit is primarily the need for implementation of the SEA", the experts suggested at the day long workshop hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency of Azad Jammu and Kashmir with the coordination of Islamabad-based Embassy of Netherland.

Highlighting the salient features of the workshop seasoned facilitator and the Environmental Expert from Netherland, Dr. David Annandale stated that it was aimed to raise awareness among the participants of the importance of the values of applying of SEA to the hydropower planning in AJK, deciding on the structure of the AJK Hydropower SEA work and commenting on a terms of reference for a SEA study.

"The event also aimed to provide an opportunity for the participants to discuss and share ideas for ensuring complete protection to the natural environment during the course of the execution of

development projects like those in hydropower sector in AJK", he pointed out.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=204846>

"Kashmiri crafts and traditions on display"

The News, April 20, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Like other provinces and regions, the rich culture, crafts, folk music, rituals and traditions of the beautiful Kashmir Valley are being showcased in the Lok Mela through a representative participation of craftspeople in different specialised fields, folk artistes and musicians. The Kashmir pavilion has been set up by the Lok Virsa in collaboration with the AJK Government. A performance pit has also been created in the pavilion. Many professional and amateur singers gave periodic performances and present Kashmiri folk music and entertained the audience with their thrilling performances.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-172401-Kashmiri-crafts-and-traditions-on-display>

"Satpara Powerhouse No 3 starts electricity generation"

Daily Times, April 20, 2013

LAHORE: Satpara Dam Project's Powerhouse No 3 with installed capacity of 2,360 kilowatts (KW) on April 19 started power generation. The under-construction Power House No 4 with an installed capacity of 1,400 KW is also scheduled to go into operation by the end of this month. With completion of these two powerhouses, Satpara Dam Power Complex will attain the installed capacity of 17.36 megawatt (MW). Power House No 3 and 4 utilise the water used for running the Power House No 2, as cascade system for electricity generation.

It may be mentioned that Powerhouse No 1 and 2 of Satpara Dam Project have been in operation since October 2007 and December 2008, respectively, and have contributed over 140 million units of low-cost hydel electricity providing much needed relief to the local populace. Satpara Dam the first-ever mega water and power project in Gilgit Baltistan - is located in the vicinity of Skardu town. The project consists of three components including a dam,

irrigation system and a power complex comprising four powerhouses. The dam was completed in July 2010 and the irrigation system in 2012. The United States Agency for International Development (USTATED) provided a grant of \$26 million to help complete Satpara Dam Project.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\04\20\story_20-4-2013_pg5_4

“Rina Saeed Khan, Going, going, gone?”

Dawn, April 16, 2013

Last summer, I finally got a chance to travel across the scenic Babusar Pass on my way back from Gilgit. Just before Chilas, we turned onto a dirt track that leads to Babusar Top. Our mobile phones soon stopped working as we snaked up to the pass, the jeep laboriously making its way up the steep incline. There were a few scattered villages with little children in rags playing on the roadside. But what struck me the most was the lack of trees. There were hundreds of stumps along the road, so trees indeed grew here but they were all gone! Later on I found out that there were once thick forests in the area but they were all cut once a proper road was made across the top. It is a familiar story in the northern part of the country once you build the roads, in comes the timber mafia and soon goes the forests and the wildlife that lives in them.

<http://dawn.com/2013/04/16/going-going-gone-2/>

“Saghir opens AJK Council stall at Islamabad Expo”

Pakistan Observer, April 14, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Standing Committee AJK Council, Sardar Saghir Ahmed inaugurated the AJK Council stall at the Islamabad Expo 2013 at the Convention Centre in Islamabad. The stall was set up by the teachers and students of various Girls Vocational Centres under the administrative control of AJK Council Secretariat. These Girls Vocational Centres are located in various cities of AJK and Pakistan.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=203733>

“AJK TBB replaces old syllabus”

Pakistan Observer, April 13, 2013

MIRPUR: The AJK Text Book Board (TBB) replaced the old syllabus and introduced new syllabus for secondary and higher secondary classes on April 12. Official sources noted that the Secretary Education AJK ordered to revise the old syllabus under the spirit to ensure the dispensation of quality education compatible to the needs of modern age. Formal official circular to this effect has been issued by the government, the sources revealed. The AJK TBB has published the new books according to the newly-introduced syllabus. A spokesman of the AJK TBB stated that the Board was meant only to introduce and monitor the observance of the syllabus by the educational institutions.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=203585>

“Heli-skiers reach Gilgit Baltistan”

The Nation, April 1, 2013

ISLAMABAD: An eleven-member team of world's top skiers arrived at Gilgit-Baltistan on March 31 to chip in a weeklong Heliski event “Pakistan Pure Discovery”. Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) is organising the event in collaboration with walkabout films, the only film production company of the country focused on extreme sports events, wildlife and natural heritage. It is a unique event, as the international Heli-skiers from across the globe would be skiing in the Karakoram mountain range, an area where no one has ever skied before.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/sports/01-Apr-2013/heli-skiers-reach-gilgit-baltistan>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

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

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

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

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

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

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

Capital: Muzaffarabad

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

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

President: Sardar Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

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

Governor of G-B: Pir Karam Ali Shah

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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