

POK

News Digest

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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

During December 2013, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, paid visit to both parts of PoK i.e. the so called 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit Baltistan. During his visit to Gilgit Baltistan, Nawaz Sharif inaugurated a new terminal of the newly constructed Gilgit Airport and also conducted an aerial recce of the area which will comprise the proposed Pakistan China economic corridor. During his aerial tour of the region, Sharif was also briefed on the Attabad Lake tragedy and its aftermath, as reports included in the current issue indicate. The prime minister later headed a meeting of the Gilgit Baltistan Council during which the Pakistan Protection Bill was adopted by the council. The adoption of the particular bill, it is noted, would facilitate speedy trial and justice for the criminals of the Chilas massacre and the Nanga Parbat incident.

Before this, Nawaz Sharif visited Muzaffarabad where he presided over a meeting of the AJK Council. Under his chairmanship, the council approved Rs 14 billion budget for the AJK region. Both in the so called AJK and Gilgit Baltistan, the council is headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan and it is this upper chamber which wields virtual powers in both parts of PoK.

Since the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) government has taken over in Islamabad, there has been a great deal of clamour and levelling of corruption charges against the PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party) led government, especially in the so called AJK. It was in this context, that the opposition in AJK claimed that they have handed over evidence to Nawaz Sharif which prove AJK government's gross indulgence in corruption and malpractices. Sharif while presiding over the meeting of the AJK Council urged the government of AJK to ensure transparency in various projects. He noted that the federal government supports efforts towards AJK's growth and prosperity but the government in AJK on its part must make sure there is proper utilisation of resources and a high level of accountability.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Some relief: Neelum-Jhelum to generate power by end of 2015”

The Express Tribune, December 4, 2013

MIRPUR: Minister of State for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali stated that the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)-based Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project is an important one for generation of low-cost and environment-friendly electricity in the country. “The government is making concrete efforts towards completion of the project of national significance on time,” stated Ali during his visit to the 969MW Neelum-Jhelum project in AJK.

He further stated that the government was exploring all possible avenues to solve the energy crisis under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. “It is his utmost desire to provide maximum relief to the common man by way of availability of affordable electricity,” stated Ali while adding that optimum development of renewable sources of energy was being focused by the government which includes hydel, coal, wind, solar and biomass.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/640730/some-relief-neelum-jhelum-to-generate-power-by-end-of-2015/>

“Govt to continue support for AJK uplift projects: Nawaz Sharif”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 3, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif stated on December 3 that he wanted to serve the Kashmiri people by initiating a string of development projects. Speaking to a 37-member delegation of PML-N AJK chapter led by its President Raja Farooq Haider, the Prime Minister stated his government would continue its financial support for the uplift projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), including construction of roads networks and infrastructure. He noted with the introduction of road network, investment opportunities would increase resulting into

reduction of unemployment and overall betterment in peoples' lives. “The building of roads is the first step towards the attainment of economic development,” he added.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=252625&Itemid=1

“AJK council meeting: PM expected to approve Rs14 billion budget”

The Express Tribune, December 3, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will arrive to Muzaffarabad on December 3 to preside over a budget meeting of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council. The prime minister, who is also chairman of the AJK Council, will approve the Rs14 billion budget 2013-14, after a delay of five months. Some 80 per cent of the budget will be financed by the AJK government while the money for the remaining 20 per cent will be arranged by the federal government to carry out development projects throughout the region. Sharif is also expected to meet leaders of various political parties, AJK assembly members and representatives of both factions of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/640281/ajk-council-meeting-pm-expected-to-approve-rs14-billion-budget/>

“Vulnerable: Aggrieved family demands justice”

The Express Tribune, December 5, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: A family from Mirpur along with dozens of their neighbours staged a protest on December 4 in front of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly to seek justice against the alleged murder of their family members. According to details, a woman of Mirpur Nosheen Raja, accused the Mirpur police of backing the alleged killers of her father, two brothers and three uncles who have been killed by their cousins one by one during the last decade to grab their land.

The AJK Inspector General of Police Malik Khudabaksh Awan took notice of the protest and formed a committee comprising senior police officers to investigate the issue. “The Mirpur police have not investigated the murder of seven people of my family. They have freed all the alleged killers,” stated Raja.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/641250/vulnerable-aggrieved-family-demands-justice/>

“Development projects: PM Nawaz wants AJK govt to ensure transparency”

The Express Tribune, December 4, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on December 3 emphasised that the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) should ensure complete transparency and accountability in public welfare projects. Presiding over 49th session of AJK Council as its chairman, PM Nawaz stated his government would extend all possible support to AJK to attain progress and prosperity but the funding would come with accountability. “The similar reflection should also be seen here, where people may realise whether their hard earned money is being justly spent,” he added. About Kashmir issue, the PM stated that he had always considered it his prime duty that the issue should be resolved in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of Kashmiri people and UN resolutions. In regards to relations with India, the premier expressed satisfaction that the situation on LoC has improved.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/640813/development-projects-pm-nawaz-wants-ajk-govt-to-ensure-transparency/>

“Nawaz Sharif set to visit Gilgit-Baltistan on Dec 6”

The Express Tribune, December 5, 2013

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is expected to embark on his maiden visit to Gilgit-Baltistan on December 6. During his visit, the first since he was sworn into the prime minister's office in June, he would chair a meeting of Gilgit-Baltistan Council to discuss budget for the next fiscal year. The annual budget of Gilgit-Baltistan Council worth Rs826 million against revenue target of Rs543 million was

presented for the year 2013-14 at Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan on November 23. Allocation of Rs145 million has been proposed for the construction of the G-B Council building in Islamabad. Aside from discussing the budget, Prime Minister is also expected to inaugurate the new terminal building of Gilgit Airport which has been completed at a cost of Rs 148 million.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/641641/nawaz-sharif-set-to-visit-gilgit-baltistan-on-dec-6/>

“Corruption in AJK: Proof given to Nawaz, claims opposition”

The Express Tribune, December 6, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The opposition leader in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly has claimed that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been provided with ample proof of corruption in the AJK government during his recent visit to the capital. Speaking at a press conference on December 4, Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that corruption, political appointments, nepotism and kickbacks from contractors have been the hallmarks of the AJK government since it came to power.

However, Information Minister Bazil Ali Naqvi rejected the allegations of corruption levelled by the opposition leader against the ruling party, saying, “If the PML-N has proof of corruption against us, they should approach the National Accountability Bureau. We are ready to face any kind of accountability”.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/641674/corruption-in-ajk-proof-given-to-nawaz-claims-opposition/>

Shabbir Mir, “You're dismissed': Teachers from Gilgit protest in biting cold”

The Express Tribune, December 4, 2013

GILGIT: Nearly 183 teachers, who were earlier fired, spent December 2 night at a protest camp at Ittehad chowk outside the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Education Directorate in sub-zero temperature to press the government for reinstating them. “We are not going to leave this place until we get written orders restoring our jobs,” stated Rizwan Ali, a

teacher, on December 3. Ali is spearheading the movement. The protesting teachers appointed over the past five to six years were sacked in March after a departmental inquiry which found their appointment to be illegal. They were restored on a court's orders but only for a short period of time. The protest began on December 2 afternoon and continued throughout the night, with speakers flaying the government for its decision which resulted in the loss of income to several families.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/640711/youre-dismissed-teachers-from-gilgit-protest-in-biting-cold/>

“Efforts afoot for timely NJHPP completion: Abid Sher”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 4, 2013

LAHORE: Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHPP) is an important project for generation of low-cost and environment friendly electricity in the country and in the light of Prime Minister's instructions, all efforts are being made to ensure timely completion of this vital project. State Minister for Water and Power, Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali stated this during his visit to the NJHPP in Azad Jammu and Kashmir on December 3. WAPDA Chairman Syed Raghob Abbas Shah, the NJHPP Chief Executive Officer Lt. Gen[®] Muhammad Zubair, representatives of the consultants and contractors and senior officers of WAPDA were also present.

The Minister stated that any compromise on quality of the construction would not be tolerated, adding that in case of any breach of quality, serious action would be taken against the contractor. He stated that democratic government was exploring all possible avenues to solve the energy crisis under the able leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was very much desirous of providing maximum relief to common man by way of availability of affordable electricity, for which the Ministry of Water and Power was particularly focusing on development of water and hydropower projects in the country.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=252562

“Misquoting Sharif: Three AJK information officers suspended”

The Express Tribune, December 7, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir government has suspended three officers of the information department for their 'poor performance' during the recent visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Muzaffarabad, sources in the Press Information Department (PID) noted on December 6. According to the sources, PID Director Chaudhry Abdur Rashid, Press Information Officer (PIO) Parvez Ahmed and Assistant Director Khawaja Imran were suspended for issuing “irrelevant material” to the media that embarrassed premier Sharif and his government.

The sources stated that PID Secretary Dr Shehla Waqar had also sent a summary to the state's information ministry to hold an inquiry into the matter. Some officials in the AJK information ministry had released a press statement misquoting Sharif, stating that “Kashmir was a flashpoint and that unless the issue was resolved there was a possibility of a fourth war between Pakistan and India.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/642287/misquoting-sharif-three-ajk-information-officers-suspended/>

A H Rao, “Era of injustice coming to end gradually: CJP”

The Nation, December 7, 2013

MIRPUR: Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry stated on December 5 that the era of injustice was gradually coming to a permanent end with supremacy of the Constitution and rule of law in the country. But Justice Chaudhry, who was addressing a mammoth reception hosted in his honour by Mirpur District Bar Association and Azad Jammu and Kashmir Bar Council, also noted that “the judiciary has yet to face challenges to ensure the fundamental rights to both the rich and the poor, on the high principle of equality”.

Pakistan had been passing through a crucial period being a victim of extremism and sectarianism, so all counterterrorism efforts called for a multi-pronged strategy, stated Justice Chaudhry, who was flanked

by CJP-designate Tassadaq Jilani, Justice Khilji Arif and Justice Sheir Alam.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/editors-picks/07-Dec-2013/era-of-injustice-coming-to-end-gradually-cjp>

“PM takes aerial view of Greater Economic Corridor, Attaabad Lake”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 7, 2013

GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on December 6 had an aerial view of the Alignment of Greater Economic Corridor and new alignment along Attaabad Lake in Gilgit Baltistan. The Prime Minister was briefed that Attaabad Lake was formed as an artificial lake due to massive land sliding and an alternative route of about 25 km was being constructed due to the damage caused to Karakoram Highway. He was shown the alignment of Greater Economic Corridor and was told that a road of international standard would be built to enhance trade with China and other countries of the region. The Prime Minister also directed for timely completion of the alternative route to ensure smooth transportation on the important route and to facilitate the local population.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=253213&Itemid=1

“First visit: PM unveils swift court, new police unit for G-B”

The Express Tribune, December 7, 2013

GILGIT: On his maiden official visit to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on December 6 announced setting up of swift courts in the territory to try the accused involved in heinous crimes. “Criminals involved in kidnapping for ransom and sectarian killings will be tried in the swift court for speedy justice,” stated PM Nawaz, underscoring the need for security in the region. A railway track connecting Pakistan with China is also expected to pass through the territory. To ward off threats, he stated a highly trained and fully equipped police unit would be raised to secure highways across G-B. Talking about Pakistan-China economic corridor, PM stated it would turn around the economy. The PM announced a scheme under which youth aged between 21 and 45 years

would be provided loans up to 2 million for setting up businesses on easy terms. “The loan will be for a period of seven years and all those youth wishing to avail it can do so,” Nawaz stated. There will be seven per cent interest on the loan. The project has been started with Rs100 billion initially, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/642344/first-visit-pm-unveils-swift-court-new-police-unit-for-g-b/>

“Nawaz Sharif inaugurates new airport building in Gilgit”

December 6, 2013

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif today inaugurated a new terminal at the airport in the disputed Himalayan region of Gilgit, built to serve domestic and international tourists. The project, completed at a cost of Rs 148 million, comprises a new terminal building and has facilities like a separate lounge for women, conveyor belt, fire detection system and internet. Speaking on the occasion, Sharif stated, "It is my dream that jets should land here and in Skardu. We are working on plans to rebuild the runway."

Hundreds of tourists visit Gilgit-Baltistan region, earlier known as the Northern Areas, every year for its picturesque mountains and sporting activities. The strategically located region, which borders Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to the west and Afghanistan and China to the north, is part of the original state of Jammu and Kashmir and claimed by India. In August 2009, the Pakistan government renamed the Northern Areas as Gilgit-Baltistan and a special administrative structure was put in place.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-nawaz-sharif-inaugurates-new-airport-building-in-gilgit-1930639>

“GB Council adopts Pakistan Protection Ordinance”

The News, December 7, 2013

ISLAMABAD/GILGIT: The Gilgit Baltistan Council on December 6 adopted the Pakistan Protection Bill for speedy trial of the criminals involved in the firing incidents took place in Chilas and Nanga Parbat and other heinous crimes including kidnap for ransom and sectarian killings.

The terrorists had killed 11 foreign tourists in Nanga Parbat and a military colonel, captain and SSP in Chilas.

The bill was adopted on the direction of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who chaired the Council meeting that also passed the Council's budget worth Rs826.602 million besides other 26 bills on various subjects. Addressing the meeting, the prime minister lauded the arrest of 11 culprits including the mastermind and congratulated the CM, the district management and other law enforcement agencies who nabbed the culprits.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-218788-GB-Council-adopts-Pakistan-Protection-Ordinance>

Shabbir Mir, “Sustaining development: G-B's sole water testing lab critical to what lies ahead”

The Express Tribune, December 8, 2013

GILGIT: The Water Quality Testing Laboratory set up recently in Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Karakoram International University (KIU) is specifically designed to enable experts to examine water samples from far-flung valleys for contamination. The laboratory was established through an Italian government's project, Social Economic Environment Development (SEED), which funded the facility through non-profit association EV-K2-CNR. The association aims to promote scientific and technological research with particular emphasis on the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalayan region. The water testing facility is intended to assess water quality from villages surrounding Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP), the largest national park of the country.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/642585/sustaining-development-g-bs-sole-water-testing-lab-critical-to-what-lies-ahead/>

“PM performs ground breaking of 14.4 MW Naltar-V Power project”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 7, 2013

GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on December 6 performed ground breaking for the execution of a 14.4 Mega Watt power project in Naltar area of Gilgit Baltistan. The ground breaking ceremony was attended by Governor Pir Karam Ali

Shah, Chief Minister GB Syed Mehdi Shah and other government officials besides the Chinese team involved in the construction of the project. The power project named as Naltar-V Hydropower Project would be executed by Chinese firm as feasibility study has already been completed. The run-of-the river project would cost Rs 3.84 billion and would be completed by 2016. Once completed, the project would help overcome the power shortage confronting the area.

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=253228&Itemid=1

“Govt to help AJK in restoration of Muzaffarabad, Mirpur airports: Barjees Tahir”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 10, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir has stated that the federal government will help government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) in restoration of Muzaffarabad Airport and construction of international airport in Mirpur with the help of private sector on Sialkot Airport Model. He stated this while talking to Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in a meeting on December 9. Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Ch Abdul Majeed met Ch. Barjees Tahir to discuss development projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir especially rehabilitation of affectees of Mangla Dam.

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=253648&Itemid=2

“Verdict announced: Man accused in bombing awarded life sentence”

The Express Tribune, December 9, 2013

GILGIT: A man accused of bombing a house has been sentenced to life imprisonment in Gilgit, stated his lawyer on December 8. The verdict was announced by anti-terrorism court judge Justice Raja Shahbaz Khan on December 7. According to his lawyer Sherbaz Ali, Ashiq Hussain was sentenced to a life term. Muhammad Jaffar, another accused, was exonerated over lack of evidence. Ashiq Hussain and Muhammad Jaffar, both

residents of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), were accused of attacking the house of contractor Afsar Jan, in 2009. Hussain and Jaffar were arrested under anti-terrorism laws in the days that followed and were subsequently jailed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/642933/verdict-announced-man-accused-in-bombing-awarded-life-sentence/>

“Govt committed to empowering G-B People: Minister”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 9, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhary Barjees Tahir on December 8 stated that government is seriously interested in the empowerment of the people of G-B and restarted the development work on various incomplete projects in the area. The Minister stated that the main reason behind Chalas and Basham road blockade is land sliding and government was taking steps to resolve the issue. He stated he was interested in the recommendations of committee which will help to work in better way to provide the basic facilities to the Gilgit-Baltistan. Replying to a question, he stated government would provide facilities to the affectees of Attabad Lake and a colony will be established to redress their problems.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=253393&Itemid=2

“Memorial reference: AJK PM, journalists pay tribute to Mandela”

The Express Tribune, December 8, 2013

Speakers at a memorial reference at the National Press Club on December 7 paid rich tributes to the iconic leader Nelson Mandela and described his death a great loss to all freedom movements and oppressed people of the world. The event was organized by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and the National Press Club (NPC) which was chaired by Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and PFUJ Secretary General Khurshid Abbasi, stated a press release.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/642673/memorial-reference-ajk-pm-journalists-pay-tribute-to-mandela/>

“Federal govt not to conspire against AJK govt”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 11, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhary Muhammad Barjees Tahir has stated that federal government does not want to conspire against AJK Government but 'no confidence motion' is constitutional right of opposition. He stated that Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is seriously concerned about unbridled corruption in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. He stated this while talking to Raja Farooq Haider, President PML (N) Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

A delegation of PML (N) led by Raja Farooq Haider called on Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan in his office on December 10. Raja Farooq Haider stated that with the coming of PML (N) Government, there was a substantial decline in corruption all over the country and that corruption index improved considerably on international level but people of Azad Jammu & Kashmir were still deprived of fruits of good governance.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=253969&Itemid=2

“Talk of war and peace”

The Hindu, December 10, 2013

The denial by Nawaz Sharif of his “fourth war over Kashmir” remark, and his reiteration that problems with India have to be resolved through peaceful methods, came not a moment too soon. The Pakistan Prime Minister had been quoted as saying that “Kashmir is a flashpoint and can trigger a fourth war between the two nuclear powers at any time,” in his address to the “Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council” in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Denying that he had ever made such a remark, his office put out a transcript of his speech that had no mention of the word war. This is the second time that Mr. Sharif has had to deny words attributed to him on India, the first when he was stated to have made a personal remark against Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It can only mean one of two things: either Mr. Sharif speaks without thinking through the impact of his

words, only to regret it later; or what he says is deliberately distorted. Both have the same effect, of vitiating the already bad bilateral atmosphere. In this instance, the reported talk of war set off alarms in India, and was even seen in the context of the recent change at the top in the Pakistan Army.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/talk-of-war-and-peace/article5441180.ece?homepage=true>

Shabbir Mir, “New name, new face: G-B Assembly demands makeover for Gilgit-Chitral Road”

The Express Tribune, December 10, 2013

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly on December 9 unanimously passed a resolution demanding the Gilgit-Chitral Road be renamed and upgraded. Deputy Speaker Jamil Ahmed chaired the first day of the assembly session in the absence of Speaker Wazir Baig. The resolution demanded renaming the Gilgit-Chitral Road as 'Hindukush Highway,' which connects G-B's Ghizer valley with Chitral in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa via the Shandur Pass. “The thoroughfare is very crucial for the local economy, particularly when the Karakoram Highway (KKH) is closed,” Ayub Shah, a lawmaker from Ghizer valley, read from the text of the resolution during the session. The 300-kilometer road remains blocked during the winter due to snow. Shandur is halfway between G-B and Chitral and is famous for the Shandur Polo festival that takes place every year. “Passengers get stuck in G-B when the KKH is closed for whatever reason,” stated Shah, referring to the KKH's recent suspension due to security concerns following the Rawalpindi riots which claimed 13 lives. KKH remained inaccessible to commuters for two weeks, leaving thousands of people stranded in G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/643282/new-name-new-face-g-b-assembly-demands-makeover-for-gilgit-chitral-road/>

“Diabler -Bhasha Dam govt's priority: NA told”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 12, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The government is giving highest priority to the construction of Diabler -Basha Dam project. In a written reply in the National Assembly, Ministry of Water and Power stated the project is

already under implementation as the infrastructure development and acquisition of land and resettlement activities at site are in progress. The government has not revised Diabler-Basha Dam project. The PC-1 for Diabler Basha dam project was approved by ECNEC on August 2009 for an amount of US \$ 11.178 with Foreign Exchange Component US \$ 3.912..

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=254197&Itemid=1

“Protest rally for rights in Baltistan”

Dardistan Times, December 11, 2013

SKARDU: Thousands of people staged a protest rally in Roundu village of Baltistan, demanding political, economic and constitutional rights. More than that, protesters demanded international road links with Tajikistan and Ladakh. The call for protest was given by Gilgit Baltistan United Movement and Open the Frontiers Movement. “We want an end to Human Rights violations in Gilgit Baltistan. We want freedom of speech, freedom of movement and an opportunity to freely trade with neighboring countries,” GBUM chairman, Manzoor Parwana told to the gathering. “If Punjabis of Punjab can trade with India through Wahaga, If Balochis of Baluchistan can trade with Iran, If Pashtuns of KPK can trade with Pashtuns of Afghanistan; why Baltis of Skardu cannot trade with Baltis of Ladakh? Why people of Gilgit Baltistan cannot trade with Tajikistan?” Parwana raised questions. Syed Haider Shah Rizvi, Chief Organizer of Open the Frontiers Movement, demanded the federal government to open Skardu-Kargil road immediately so that the people of Gilgit Baltistan can look for alternative means of subsistence.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/News/1269731208/protest-rally-rights-baltistan>

“Deeptiman Tiwary, LeT, others whip up public opinion against proposed wall on Jammu border”

Times of India, December 12, 2013

NEW DELHI: The construction of a 10-metre high embankment on the India-Pakistan border in

Jammu sector by India is causing considerable hostility in Pakistan. Security agencies noted that though Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif has extended a hand of friendship, a propaganda to form public opinion against the wall is being spread with participation from members of his own party.

The Border Security Force (BSF) recently revived a five-year-old plan to build a 179-km-long, 10-metre high mud embankment on the Jammu border to prevent border villages and its own jawans being hit by Pakistan Ranger bullets and mortar shells during ceasefire violations.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-12-12/india/45120662_1_border-security-force-pakistan-ranger-wall

“ICRC hands over physical rehabilitation centre to AJK government”

The News, December 12, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: More than six years after it was set up by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Muzaffarabad Physical Rehabilitation Centre has become an autonomous body through an ordinance of the Government of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The centre will continue to provide services under the supervision of its board of directors for people disabled by mines, bomb blasts, diseases, natural disasters and other hazards. The ICRC will continue to provide the centre with financial and technical support.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-219719-ICRC-hands-over-physical-rehabilitation-centre-to-AJK-government>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B Assembly: Put the brakes on Pak-China railway track, say lawmakers”

The Express Tribune, December 12, 2013

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly on December 11 set aside routine business to debate over the Pak-China railway track project that will pass through the region. The discussion kicked off after Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) lawmaker Mirza Hussain tabled a motion requesting the speaker to address the issue of the railway track as it entailed the future of G-B. “The project was signed by the prime minister without

consulting any public representative from G-B, not even the chief minister,” stated the lawmaker from Nagar Valley while voicing his reservations. “I fear the project, once completed, might deprive local people of whatever little they are earning from the existing Pak-China trade.” Hussain also raised questions over the constitutional status of the region and called for its settlement before implementing the project.

Chief Minister Mehdi Shah appeared equally upset over the proposed project as he spoke on the floor of the house. “Work on the project should not be started without talking to our representatives,” he stated on the third day of the assembly session. “We are not against development, but we need surety in advance that G-B will benefit from it,” he added. “The region is disputed and such a huge project cannot be initiated without first settling the ambiguous status [of G-B],” maintained the chief minister.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/644143/g-b-assembly-put-the-brakes-on-pak-china-railway-track-say-lawmakers/>

“G-B neglect”

The News, December 12, 2013

Gilgit-Baltistan has been neglected and has not been granted its due budget let alone given any funds or opportunity for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. The geo-strategic and geo-political location of GB also adds to its importance in the region. GB alone has the potential of producing 50,000MW of energy through hydel generation. There is a long list of services the region has rendered. Patriotism is deeply ingrained in the hearts and souls of the people of GB.

Unfortunately, it has always been given a step-motherly treatment by the centre. There are no industries in Gilgit-Baltistan and the downtrodden population solely depends on outsourcing products of daily consumption. It is pertinent to mention that the area had been enjoying subsidies on wheat since the 1970s. These have now been withdrawn by the federal government under the IMF's policies. After this a sack of wheat will cost more than double its previous price. The government should revisit its

decision as it would deteriorate the already worsened lives of the masses.

Kaleemullah, Abbottabad

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-219662-G-B-neglect>

Fakhar Durrani, “Gilgit-Baltistan leads the way”

The News, December 12, 2013

ISLAMABAD: A Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan's official has lost his job in an attempt to expose the corruption and malpractices of the top bureaucracy of his ministry. Documents available reveal that secretary ministry of Kashmir affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Shahidullah Baig dismissed Haq Nawaz Abbasi, an accounts officer of grade-18, on charges of corruption and misusing his authority and illegal appointments.

Haq Nawaz Abbasi who was posted as accounts officer in the Kashmir Council on May 2, 2013. However, within two days of his joining, he was sent a bill of Rs10.375 million in the name of session allowance to the employees working in the Kashmir Council. The accounts officer refused to entertain the bill after mentioning that there are a few individuals who are not entitled to the allowance. Upon this his office was sealed and he was threatened by deputy secretary (admin) Hamidul Hassan not to enter the premises of the Kashmir Council.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-219624-Gilgit-Baltistan-leads-the-way>

“GB still looking for rights”

The Frontier Post, December 12, 2013

Gilgit-Baltistan has remained a constitutional limbo since its independence on 01, November 1948. Since then it's annexed with Pakistan after defeating the 'Dogra Raj', the then rulers of GB. The region has been overlooked in a wide spectrum of aspects pertaining education, healthcare and infrastructure development. It has not been granted with its due budget let alone initiatives of socio-economic development and poverty alleviation which fall under state's responsibilities. The geo-strategic and

geo-political location of GB also adds to its importance in the region. It connects our all-weather friend China via the KKH to warm water seaport. GB alone has a potential of producing 50,000 MW of energy through hydel generation. There is a long list of services the region has rendered. Patriotism is deeply ingrained in heart and souls of the inhabitants of GB, reflected in the sacrifice put forth in defending the soil. Lalik Jan, a soldier from Yasin valley of GB being awarded with the highest gallantry award of Nishan-e-Haider speaks for itself.

<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/61186/GB-still-looking-for-rights/>

“GB oil mafia active again at the onset of winter”

Daily Times, December 13, 2013

KARACHI: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on December 12 stated Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) oil mafia, which reaped illegitimate benefit to the tune of billions during Musharraf's era has become active again. The mafia is using all the ploys to tame state-run oil marketing company and the officials of OGRA as well as petroleum ministry to get desired results. As always, the GB oil mafia has created artificial shortage of fuel and a strike by the carriage contractors has been engineered during the biting cold, stated Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW. However, he stated, the concerned government departments have refused to bow down to the unjust demands.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013%5C12%5C13%5Cstory_13-12-2013_pg5_13

“Four including two women shot dead in Chillas”

December 30, 2013

GILGIT BALTISTAN: Some unidentified armed attackers shot dead four persons including two women in Chillas area of Gilgit Baltistan on December 29. According to the local police, some unknown armed attackers intruded into a house in Chillas and opened indiscriminate fire at the residents. The armed attackers fled from the scene uninterrupted, leaving two women and two men dead in the house. The police moved dead bodies to

hospital and launched probe into the incident while linking the killings, in initial guess, to an old enmity between the attackers and firing victims.

Special Secretary (Admin), National Assembly Syed Munawar Abbas conducted the election of the Chairmen. While felicitating the newly elected Chairmen of the Standing Committees on behalf of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker and Murtaza Javed Abbasi Deputy Speaker, National Assembly the Special Secretary assured the new elected Chairperson, National Assembly Secretariat's full cooperation for smooth functioning of the Standing Committees.

<http://www.samaa.tv/fr/%20icdi%20w%20wme%20h%20dead%20i%20chia-75420-1.html>

Shabbir Mir, “Tug-of-war: G-B seeks 'top' lawyers to defend claim over disputed territory”

The Express Tribune, December 29, 2013

GILGIT: With the row over the territorial boundary between Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Kohistan district still lingering, lawmakers from G-B have decided to seek assistance from 'top' lawyers to fight out their legal battle. The bone of contention between the people of the two regions is a 10-kilometre stretch of land on either side of Basari check post, which separates Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) from G-B. Residents of Diamer valley and Kohistan have clashed in recent times, with each claiming the disputed area.

In wake of the unrest which also put the future of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam at risk, the federal government stepped in to mediate between the two sides and formed a commission for a resolution of the issue.

“We have decided that the best available lawyers would be engaged to defend the land before the commission,” G-B opposition leader Janbaz Khan stated while chairing a meeting attended by residents of Thore in Diamer valley on December 28. Minister for Works Bashir Ahmed, Parliamentary Secretary Ayub Shah, G-B Council member Amjad Hussain, Public Accounts Committee Chairman Raziuddin Rizvi and

Minister for Water and Power Didar Ali were also present among others.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/651948/tug-of-war-g-b-seeks-top-lawyers-to-defend-claim-over-disputed-territory/>

Peer Muhammad, “Diamer Bhasha: Boundary dispute threatens to stall key dam project”

The Express Tribune, December 28, 2013

ISLAMABAD: As a pre-emptive measure, the federal government will soon deploy security forces along the disputed territory of the Diamer Bhasha dam site. The ownership of the land stretched over eight kilometres is disputed between the people of Diamer and Kohistan. Officials from the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan noted that a letter has been written to the interior ministry asking the federal government to deploy forces in the disputed territory to avoid any clashes between the two parties.

Dispute between the two parties had worsened in the past month after the people of Kohistan blocked the Karakorum Highway for days warning to march toward Diamer claiming the dam site. A source in the ministry of water and power stated that this boundary dispute between Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and G-B might lead to a delay in the construction of the mega dam. “The dispute will make it difficult for the government to formally start working on the construction of the dam without settling the boundary dispute between the two parties,” stated a senior official of WAPDA. In a high-level ministerial meeting, held at the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (KAGB), it was decided that security forces will be deployed along the disputed boundaries.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/651710/diamer-bhasha-boundary-dispute-threatens-to-stall-key-dam-project/>

Shabbir Mir, “Curbing sectarianism: G-B lawmakers recommend use of special law”

The Express Tribune, December 27, 2013

GILGIT: Lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have proposed that the government try those found involved in fomenting sectarian clashes under the 'Code of Conduct' (CoC) law. The G-B Legislative

Assembly enacted the CoC last year as a law to curb sectarian violence in the region. “This is our recommendation to the government to deal with troublemakers,” stated Amjad Hussain, an assembly member from the Pakistan Peoples Party on December 26. Recently, spontaneous violence in Gilgit had left three people dead and four injured in separate incidents. The CoC is a comprehensive law meant exclusively for individuals involved in committing sectarian violence, stated Hussain, who had played an instrumental role in shaping the law in 2012. The parliamentary committee, of which Hussain is a member, directed the government to nab those who incite violence rather than chasing ordinary criminals.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/650997/curbing-sectarianism-g-b-lawmakers-recommend-use-of-special-law/>

“AJK integrated healthcare plan devised”

Business Recorder, December 24, 2013

Affixing priorities for dispensation of basic health facilities across Azad Jammu and Kashmir with proposed allocation of required funds in the fiscal year 2013-14, the AJK government has advised doctors, affiliated with state-run hospitals, to serve ailing humanity with missionary zeal. Sources noted on December 23 that the existing DHQ Hospital Mirpur had been elevated to the status of Divisional Headquarter Hospital. It is being expanded with the establishment of a separate about Rs 700 million 500-bed block in the hospital complex in near future. The AJK government is determined, under prevalent rules and law about the confirmation of the adhoc services of doctors, working in various parts of AJK subject to qualification of the AJK PSC competition exam.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1267071/>

“Charity begins at home: In AJK, over 100m embezzled from Zakat fund”

The Express Tribune, December 14, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: As if misappropriation of funds in general was not enough, the Prime Minister's (PM) office in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has allegedly started interfering with the charitable Zakat fund, according to sources in the

Zakat Department. The department has also recently received a handwritten letter from Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed directing it to provide Rs200,000 to a Pakistan People's Party (PPP) woman activist, according to the sources, requesting not to be named. “On the PM's instructions, Rs50 million from the fund have already been distributed among politicians for their foreign trips and medical treatment. During the last 11 months, funds in excess of Rs8.56 million have been given to former prime ministers, ministers and advisers.” About Rs3 million, earmarked for the treatment of poor patients, were given to some “financially-sound PPP workers.”

About Rs80 million were distributed among the voters and supporters of the party. Out of these, Rs10 million, though, were given to the needy families, affiliated with the ruling party. “Besides the unfair distribution of funds meant for medical treatment and dowries for the needy, the premier has disbursed over Rs30 million allegedly to “favourites” without complying with the procedure of selecting beneficiaries, the sources added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/645099/charity-begins-at-home-in-ajk-over-100m-embezzled-from-zakat-fund/>

“Money matters: AJK premier appoints three more advisers”

The Express Tribune, December 14, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Despite repeated warnings from Islamabad to control non-developmental expenditures and lavishness, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government appointed three more advisers. Two of the advisers were sworn in by the Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on December 13. The PM approved the appointment of Chaudhry Muhammad Riaz, (non-state subject), Raja Mubashir Ejaz and Chaudhry Ilyas as “advisers” under section 6-A of the Rules of Business, 1985. According to the AJK Interim Constitution 1974, only “Plebiscite Adviser” can be appointed. However, the special posts have been created to accommodate the political workers as “advisers”. These advisers will get perks similar to that of a minister.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/645097/money-matters-ajk-premier-appoints-three-more-advisers/>

“Yaqoob warns against sale of Poonch House”

Dawn, December 24, 2013

RAWALPINDI: Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Mohammad Yaqoob Khan visited the Poonch House on December 23 and warned against any attempt to get the property vacated and dispose it of at a 'throwaway price'. Poonch House is one of the buildings the Dogra ruler of the formerly princely state of Jammu and Kashmir owned in areas that are now part of Pakistan. All these places, commonly referred to as 'Kashmir properties,' are in the administrative control of the federal Ministry of Kashmir affairs. Kashmiri leaders have been demanding that the control of these properties be given to the elected government of AJK. For long, Poonch House housed the camp office of the AJK president. However, after the construction of the Kashmir House in Islamabad, major part of the president's office was taken over by the ministry, except for three rooms which became the camp office of the AJK election commission.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1076040/yaqoob-warns-against-sale-of-poonch-house>

“Senate body assures timely completion of Diamer-Bhasha and Dasu dams”

The News, December 13, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Syed Raghif Hussain on December 12 stated that the government has decided to complete the Diamer-Bhasha and Dasu dams within stipulated time and the issues in this regard have also been settled with the World Bank. A committee meeting under the chairmanship of Senator Zahid Khan was held in the Parliament House. WAPDA chairman stated that Dasu Dam will be completed in five years and after its completion 2160 MW Power would be produced.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-219922-Senate-body-assures-timely-completion-of-Diamer-Bhasha-and-Dasu-dams>

“Jirga wants GB checkpoint removed”

The News, December 15, 2013

MANSEHRA: A grand jirga of the Kohistan district

has warned the government to remove a checkpoint established by the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government in the territory of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province or else they would forcibly remove it after expiry of the deadline. A grand jirga, held at Dassu, the district headquarters of Kohistan, was largely attended by elders of all clans and tribes along with officers of the district administration. The jirga, convened to evolve a strategy, demanded the two governments to settle issues as people wanted their rights at all cost. The elders took a strong notice of the checkpoint established by the GB government and warned the federal and GB governments to remove it before December 18 or else they would storm it. “The GB government has set up a checkpoint in an area which, according to a notification issued by survey of Pakistan in 1955, is the ownership of KP,” stated Member Provincial Assembly Abdul Sattar Khan.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-220227-Jirga-wants-GB-checkpost-removed>

Shabbir Mir, “PML-N leaders in G-B criticise party's regional chief”

The Express Tribune, December 15, 2013

GILGIT: Differences have surfaced within the ranks of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) following Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif's recent visit to the region. Four senior leaders including opposition leader Janbaz Khan, PML-N Gilgit President Abid Baig, Jafarullah and Shafiquddin issued a press release criticising the regional chief of their party, Hafizur Rahman, for 'misleading the PM regarding issues being faced by the region.' Rahman should have discussed the party's and region's issues with the PM instead of promoting himself, stated the leaders who are aspirants of being the next governor, replacing the existing governor of PPP, Pir Karam Ali Shah. Nawaz Sharif was on his first official visit to G-B after becoming the premier for the third time. However, he reportedly failed to spare enough time for party issues due to other commitments. Though he did address party workers, Sharif avoided talking about recruiting a governor.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/645597/pml-n-leaders-in-g-b-criticise-partys-regional-chief/>

“Govt. keen to exploit Gilgit Baltistan's economic potential: President”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 17, 2013

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon Hussain on December 16 stated the government was keen to exploit the economic potential of Gilgit-Baltistan particularly its energy and natural resources for the prosperity of people. Talking to Prince Karim Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili community, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the President stated the government would continue to work with the Aga Khan Foundation for poverty alleviation and other social welfare and economic activities. He appreciated the services of Prince Karim Aga Khan across the world and particularly for the people of Pakistan in diverse sectors including education, health and poverty eradication.

The President lauded the continued support of Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and Aga Khan Foundation in taking lead in a number of important social sector projects especially in Northern Areas. He stated Aga Khan Network's continued engagement in Gilgit Baltistan was making positive impacts on lives of the people and infrastructure in the area.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=255169&Itemid=2

“Govt keen to improve healthcare: Provincial Minister”

Associated Press of Pakistan, December 17, 2013

ASTORE: The government is working on a strategy to monitor the performance of doctors and paramedical staff of all hospitals, stated Provincial Minister for Health Gilgit-Baltistan, Haji Gulbar Khan on December 17. “We are utilising all our best available resources to upgrade health sector in Astore”, he added. He stated that fifty bed hospital in Astore has been completed and this facility is available to the people of Astore and other adjacent valleys.

He further stated that we will finish the deficiency of medicines and medical staff from all the hospitals of Gilgit Baltistan and will recruit doctors as and

when required. He also stated that it was noted that some doctors were not doing their duties in farflung areas but I instructed them clearly that if they will not do their duties in these areas they will be treated badly and strict disciplinary action will be taken against them.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=255370&Itemid=2

“Kohistan elders vow to keep KKH blocked”

The News, December 18, 2013

MANSEHRA: The elders from Kohistan on December 17 vowed to keep the Karakoram Highway (KKH) blocked till the removal of a checkpost established by the Gilgit-Baltistan government in the territory of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The elders made the announcement after a meeting with government officials. On December 16, angry protesters blocked the KKH at Shatial area in Kohistan, demanding the dismantling of the checkpost.

A delegation, including Commissioner of Hazara division Abid Ali Khan, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Hazara Range Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur and advisor to the chief minister Abdul Haq, reached Shatial by helicopter to hold parleys with representatives of the protesters. The officials tried to persuade the protesters to re-open the KKH, saying they would convince the quarters concerned to accept the demand, if the blockage was raised. They stated that passengers were facing problems due to the blockade of the road.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-220879-Kohistan-elders-vow-to-keep-KKH-blocked>

“Three dead in Gilgit unrest, mobile services suspended”

Pakistan Tribune, December 19, 2013

GILGIT: Mobile phone services were suspended in Gilgit early on December 18 morning after the death toll from incidents of violence reached three. Panic has gripped the area since December 16 because of the killings. The residents of the area are also facing trouble in accessing Internet. Deputy Commissioner Shahbaz Tahir stated the security forces were working on a plan to curb violence and the

suspension of mobile services was part of the plan. He did not disclose any further details of the plan. Tahir stated the authorities were taking action against troublemakers and the writ of the government would soon be restored in the area.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Three-dead-in-Gilgit-unrest-mobile-services-suspended-265380.html>

“Lining pockets: Inductions in Kashmir liberation cell in violation of merit”

The Express Tribune, December 21, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The ruling party in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has allegedly inducted its workers in liberation cell violating merit and at the expense of the taxpayers' money, sources noted on December 20. In the last two years, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) state chapter has appointed 53 people in the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell on grades 17 and 18, who do not meet the criteria, a source in the cell requesting not to be named stated.

The degrees and the appointment orders of the officers are not found in office file which suggests that the government has something to hide, the sources added. The cell was established in mid-1980s to highlight the Kashmir cause at the international forums. It is a semi-government organisation meeting its budgetary requirements from a special tax deducted from the government employees. These officials are drawing fixed salaries between Rs20,000 and Rs74,000. The money meant for the freedom struggle, welfare of the Kashmiri refugees and for the rehabilitation of the victims is being diverted to please the party workers, the source stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/648447/lining-pockets-inductions-in-kashmir-liberation-cell-in-violation-of-merit/>

“FC being deployed in area disputed by Kohistan, GB”

Dawn, December 30, 2013

MANSEHRA: The federal government has started deployment of Frontier Constabulary and other forces in the area between the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where a dispute over a check post set up by the GB led to blockade of Karakoram Highway and protests in Kohistan this

month. “Yes, the deployment of neutral forces has been started in the disputed territory in the boundary area between the KP and GB and these forces would stay there until a commission established by the Supreme Court decides the issue once and for all,” stated deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur while speaking to media persons on December 29.

The KP government had made a commitment with the elders of Kohistan on December 20 that the government would address their reservations about the check post established by the GB in the disputed territory on Karakoram Highway within 15 days. “Yes, the deployment of forces led by the federal government is part of the agreement reached between the district administration and local jirga of Kohistan people earlier this month,” stated Mr Gandapur.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1077294/fc-being-deployed-in-area-disputed-by-kohistan-gb>

Imaduddin, “Finance minister discusses financial issues with AJK PM”

Business Recorder, December 31, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a meeting with members of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council and its Prime Minister and deliberated upon its financial issues at the Finance Ministry. The delegation was led by Prime Minister AJK Chaudhry Abdul Majeed. The meeting was also attended by Minister-in-Charge, AJ&K Council Secretariat, Muhammad Birjees Tahir, Abdul Waheed Member of Education AJK and senior officials of AJK Government, AJK Council and Ministry of Finance. The Finance Minister stated that the Federal Government is committed to provide assistance to the AJK Government but expects it to follow the policy of austerity as espoused by the present government.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/151018-finance-minister-discusses-financial-issues-with-ajk-pm.html>

Economic Developments

“IFC offers help in bonds launch”

Dawn, December 3, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to float 'Global Rupee' and 'Euro Dollar' bonds in association with the International Finance Corporation to raise funds for the construction of power projects including Diemer-Bhasha dam as well as low-cost housing schemes. IFC, the global development institution of the World Bank group, has expressed its readiness to partner with Pakistan for floatation of bonds in furthering the financing of the development programmes planned by the government. A six-member delegation of IFC held detailed discussions with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on December 2. The delegation indicated all-out support for the issuance of bonds on behalf of the government.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1060121/ifc-offers-help-in-bonds-launch>

“Energy development: Bong hydropower paves way for 8,800MW power projects”

The Express Tribune, December 25, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The successful completion of the 84 megawatt Bong Escape Hydropower Project, located in Mangla Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has paved way for numerous medium size independent power projects. The power project has the cumulative power generating

capacity of 8,800 megawatt. The projects that are launched by Independent Power Producers (IPPs) include a 620 MW project, which is under progress in Azad Pattan and another 80 MW project in Pashkot.

The Bong project, which has been operating since March 2013, is located about seven kilometres downstream of Mangla Dam. It is utilising the water from River Jhelum which was earlier going to waste. “Following the Bong project, more than 8,800 megawatt projects are in various stages of development currently and the impact of the project will increase manifold,” S Hasnain Haider, chief executive officer of Laraib Energy Limited, a HUBCO subsidiary which is executing the project, told the press at the project site.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/650094/energy-development-bong-hydropower-paves-way-for-8800mw-power-projects/>

International Developments

Murtaza Ali Shah, “Top UK surgeons to treat patients for free in AJK”

The News, December 20, 2013

LONDON: A team of around two-dozen senior doctors and surgeons from the UK will travel to the remote areas of Azad Kashmir in March next year to treat poor children and families for free. The visit is being organized by a UK based welfare charity, working in Azad Kashmir for over 21 years, as part of its 1000 Smiles4Kashmir programme. At a seminar in the House of Lords, the project coordinator Dr Adeel Iqbal announced that the delegation would stay in Azad Kashmir for two weeks and will administer treatment to at least 160 patients with complex surgical conditions, besides carrying a large quantity of medicines from the UK.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-221361-Top-UK-surgeons-to-treat-patients-for-free-in-AJK>

Other Developments

“SEEDs being sown to manage 'park between earth and sky'”

The Hindu, December 2, 2014

The Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP), the largest protected area in Pakistan spread over 10,000 sq. km covering four districts in Gilgit Baltistan province, could well be the country's most charming and sustainable tourist destination if a community-driven programme of conservation gets its way. According to Raffaele Del Cima, Country Operation Manager and Project Director of the Pakistan-Italy government-funded project Social, Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) for the CKNP, 40 per cent of the area is covered by glaciers and it has a unique environment with rare flora and fauna. The project focuses on villages on the boundaries of the park and they are a doorstep to the CKNP, dubbed a park between the earth and the sky.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/seeds-being-sown-to-manage-park-between-earth-and-sky/article5411322.ece?homepage=true>

Maha Mussadaq, “Glorifying mountains: Festival kicks off with music, art contest, photo show”

The Express Tribune, December 10, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The mountain festival kicked off with cultural show and art competition and photo exhibition at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) on December 9. The three-day festival being organised in connection with International Mountain Day, falling on December 11, garnered an audience of students from different departments across the university, who also participated in various activities to learn about the unique culture and lifestyle of mountain communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/643452/glorifying-mountains-festival-kicks-off-with-music-art-contest-photo-show/>

“Daewoo starts service from Mirpur to Lahore, Pindi”

The Nation, December 17, 2013

LAHORE: Daewoo Pakistan Express Bus Service has introduced bus service from Mirpur (Azad Kashmir) to Lahore and Rawalpindi. Azad Jammu and Kashmir's President, Sardar Yaqoob Ahmed inaugurated the bus service at a mega event which was also attended by Daewoo Pakistan Express Bus Service's President, C.I. Park. While addressing the people, he stated that Daewoo Pakistan Express Bus Service is honored to expand their bus service till Azad Kashmir. He also stated that in order to promote tourism in Azad Kashmir, it is crucial to expand bus service along with expansion of road network. He also pointed out that the people of Mirpur will now have access to Daewoo Pakistan Express Bus Service's widespread bus service network.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/17-Dec-2013/corporate-corner>

“Oath-taking ceremony: Teachers pledge to work with sincerity, commitment”

The Express Tribune, December 6, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: More than 60 teachers took oath in Azad Kashmir on December 5, pledging to work sincerely to impart the best possible education to children. At a ceremony held in Bhimber, some 250 kilometres from here, which was attended by 500 teachers, Minister for Education Mian Abdul Waheed stated the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is spending more than 50 per cent of its budget on the education department. “Since they educate children, teachers are responsible for assuring quality and play a vital role in moulding a child's future.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/641639/oath-taking-ceremony-teachers-pledge-to-work-with-sincerity-commitment/>

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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