

POK

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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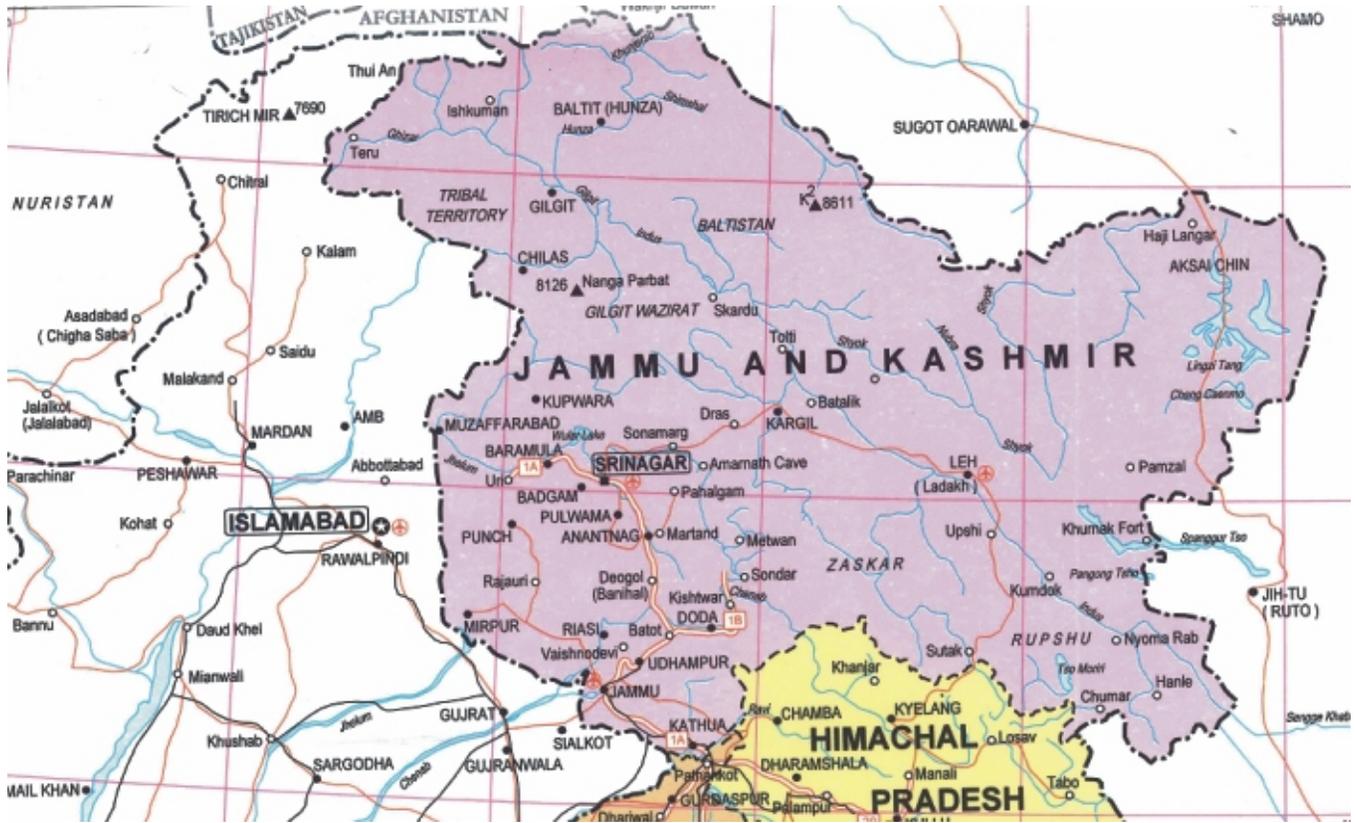
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Trade and travel across the LoC which was suspended for weeks finally resumed in mid-February when both sides agreed to release the stranded trucks. The Indian authorities released all trucks except for the driver of the truck which was allegedly caught trafficking narcotics from across 'AJK' (Azad Jammu and Kashmir). The breakthrough could be achieved only after hectic parleys were held between the two sides. Notably, trade and travel remain suspended since January 19, 2014 after a driver from the 'AJK' side was arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir police for carrying narcotics in his vehicle. The spill over effect of the standoff on the LoC was still showing in the month of February. The crisis continued even after several rounds of talks were held between the Indian officials and the Pakistan authorities. In the wake of the crisis, there were added checks at the trade centers which further miffed the traders. The entire process of checks and cross checks threatened to damage the traded items. The traders resisted such stringent checks alleging this would incur them financial losses as the goods would be damaged even before reaching the destination.

Meanwhile, India failed to convince Pakistan on establishing banking facilities to cater to the cross LoC trade which presently works on barter system. This was stated in the Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir 2013-14, tabled before the Jammu and Kashmir assembly. According to the report, a representative from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) made a representation before the Joint Working Group meeting but the idea failed to fructify.

On the other side, the boundary issue between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan has surfaced yet again. This time around the Karakoram Highway was blocked for traffic after residents of Kohistan confiscated over 400 goats, belonging to a man from Diامر, grazing in a disputed area claimed by both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Removal of key officials: Govt rejects AJK PM's recommendation”

The Express Tribune, February 27, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Establishment Division has turned down Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed's recommendation to take back the services of the AJK Chief Secretary Khizar Hayat Gondal and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Malik Khuda Bakhsh Awan, official noted.

The official sources further stated the Establishment Division in reply to the letter of the AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed refused to take back the assignments of Gondal and Awan saying the subject was not related to the AJK premier's office and both the officers would continue the duty as per their portfolio. On February 23, AJK PM Majeed had written a letter to the federal government to take back the services of the two powerful officers of the state. Majeed, in his letter to the Establishment Division, accused the chief secretary and inspector general of police of violating the chain of command and rules of business.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/676671/removal-of-key-officials-govt-rejects-ajk-pms-recommendation/>

“Contesting the law: G-B's apex court admits petition against services tribunal”

The Express Tribune, February 28, 2014

GILGIT: The chief court of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has admitted a petition challenging recently made appointments in the G-B services tribunal. “Notices have been issued to the chief minister, governor and others for a regular hearing,” stated G-B Supreme Court Bar Association President Advocate Shahbaz Khan on February 27. “We have also challenged the ordinance that led to the appointments.”

The petition was filed jointly by lawyer bodies, including the Supreme Court bar, High Court bar, Skardu district and Gilgit district bar associations, pleading reversal of the appointments and the ordinance. G-B Governor Pir Karam Ali issued an ordinance, establishing the first ever services tribunal in G-B. Through the ordinance, former bureaucrat Hafizur Rahman was made its chairman and two others district judge Khurshid Alam and bureaucrat Fida Hussain were made its members.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/676949/contesting-the-law-g-bs-apex-court-admits-petition-against-services-tribunal/>

Asim Qadeer Rana, “In-house change in AJK Legislative Assembly likely”

The Nation, February 28, 2014

ISLAMABAD: An in-house change in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly may be on the cards as the PML-N led federal government is coming under severe pressure these days from its AJK chapter as well as PPP splinter group to have the incumbent Premier Ch Abdul Majeed replaced with another jiyala. Recently, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the Federal Governments locked horns over the removal of the chief secretary and IGP of AJK after an election controversy emerged in one of the constituencies of the AJK assembly as PML-N won the seat.

This situation, sources stated, has led to escalation of tensions between the federal and AJK governments. Sources stated that PML-N President AJK Raja Farooq Haider along with 12 legislators of AJK met with Dr Asif Karmani, Political Secretary of PM Nawaz Sharif, and submitted their written reservation and complaints on the ongoing issues in AJK, and the way state of affairs of the government were being handled.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/28-Feb-2014/in-house-change-in-ajk-legislative-assembly-likely>

Irfan Ghuari, “Second day in a row: Opposition again blocks Senate proceedings”

The Express Tribune, February 28, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Opposition parties in the Senate on February 27 blocked the proceedings of the house for the second consecutive session, leaving all but the question hour pending. In the Opposition dominated upper house, members of opposition parties protesting the termination of service of contractual employees and alleged rigging in by-polls in a constituency of Azad Jammu and Kashmir staged a walkout and pointed out the lack of quorum. Only 13 members were sitting on the treasury benches when the headcount was made. The chairman rang the bell for five minutes, but treasury failed to gather even one-fourth of its strength in the 103-member upper house. This forced the chair to adjourn the session for a second time.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/677091/second-day-in-a-row-opposition-again-blocks-senate-proceedings/>

“Opposition walks out of Senate over minister's AJK speeches”

Pakistan Tribune, February 26, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The combined opposition in Senate staged a walkout on February 25 against the speeches of Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir during election campaign in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Leader of opposition in Senate Aitzaz Ahsan told senators that during the recent election in AJK, the minister issued "irrelevant statements". He stated that AJK prime minister wrote a letter to his Pakistani counterpart and asked for the removal of chief secretary and AJK IG because of interference in some government affairs relating to holding of elections. But he regretted that the Pakistan government did not call these two top officials from the AJK.

Aitzaz stated that two Pakistan People's Party workers in AJK were killed during clashes with PML-N workers but no action was taken against them. He demanded the government to clarify its position. However, when leader of the House Raja Zafarul Haq told the House that Kashmir Affairs Minister Barjees Tahir will brief the House in detail.

But Aitzaz Ahsan stated, "We will not hear him and leader of the house has to brief the House". Aitzaz announced a walkout when his request was not entertained. He was supported by all the opposition parties.

Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami lauded the role of Minister in bringing good governance and eliminating corruption from AJK and lauded posting of reputable Chief Secretaries and IG Police in AJK and GB. Abdul Rasheed Turabi brought into notice of Minister the culture of a huge cabinet in AJK government when there are economic challenges. He mentioned mushrooming growth of universities and Medical Colleges in AJK and also irregularities going on in these institutions regarding appointments.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Opposition-walks-out-of-Senate-over-ministers-AJK-speeches-267131.html>

“Centre not meddling in AJK, says Zafar”

The News, February 26, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in the Senate Raja Muhammad Zafarul Haq on February 25 claimed that over 100 persons still enjoyed status of minister in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and they consumed 82 per cent of the budget. He indirectly blamed what he called divisions in PPP-AJK for the violence that marred the bye-poll in LA-22 on February 22. Responding to a string of charges aired by Leader of Opposition Aitzaz Ahsan, he contended that AJK PML-N President Farooq Haider was approached by some PPP elements for removal of Prime Minister Abdul Majeed, who toeing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's policy of non-inference, declined to support them.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-234945-Centre-not-meddling-in-AJK,-says-Zafar>

“GB government appoints members of the GB Services Tribunal”

Dardistan Times, February 26, 2014

Oath taking ceremony of the newly appointed Chairman and members of the GB Services Tribunal took place on February 25 at Gilgit-Baltistan House, Islamabad. Hafeez-ur-Rehman a former bureaucrat Sworn in as the Chairman of the

newly established GB Services Tribunal whereas a former judge Khursheed Alam and another former bureaucrat Fida Hussain took oath as the members of the tribunal. Chief Justice, GB Chief Court, Justice Sahib Khan administered the oath of the office bearers and senior judges of GB, bureaucrats, journalists and Civil Society of the region attended the ceremony.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/News/976826818/gb-government-appoints-members-gb-services-tribunal>

“PML-N demands early elections in AJK”

The Nation, February 27, 2014

MIRPUR: Demanding fresh elections, the PML-N leaders in Azad Jammu and Kashmir denied the allegation levelled by the AJK prime minister that the bye-election was rigged through the deployment of paramilitary troops of Rangers on the polling day. Addressing a joint press conference, they were of the view that the recent victory of their party in the bye-election held in Sudhanoti district was primarily due to people's confidence in its leadership and unpopularity of the PPP-led AJK government.

PML-N AJK Secretary Finance Ch Muhammad Saeed, former minister Ch Rukhsar Ahmed, Ch Maalick, Nazir Inqlabi and Tahir Mirza called upon AJK Prime Minister Abdul Majeed to immediately step down by accepting his party's defeat in the by-polls held on February 22 in Baloch (LA-22) constituency following “the ill-governance, extremely corrupt government and malpractices on the part of the sitting AJK ruling clique”.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/27-Feb-2014/pml-n-demands-early-elections-in-ajk>

AH Rao, “AJK PM returns CS, IGP services to Islamabad”

The Nation, February 24, 2014

MIRPUR: Accusing the AJK Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police of manoeuvring rigging in the February 22 by-election to the AJK Legislative Assembly from LA-22 (Baloch constituency of Sudhanoti district), AJK Prime Minister Ch Abdul Majeed on February 23

announced returning the services of both the officers to the Pakistani government, it was officially announced. According to an official communiqué issued by the AJK PM Press Secretary on February 23, PM C Majeed blamed both the officers - Chief Secretary Khizer Hayat Gondal and the IG of Police Malik Khuda Bakhsh Awan of having been involved in rigging in by-elections to constituency LA-22 Baloch Town of Sudhanoti district in Poonch division allegedly on the behest of Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Ch Barjees Tahir to facilitate the PML-N nominee Sardar Farooq Tahir to win the election.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/24-Feb-2014/ajk-pm-returns-cs-igp-services-to-islamabad-allegations-of-manoeuvring-in-by-polls>

“PPP activist dies in clash with PML-N workers over rigging in AJK by-poll”

February 24, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) activist died in a clash with the workers of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), when the PPP workers were agitating against the alleged rigging in the LA-22 Poonch-6 by-poll, reports noted. Later, the enraged demonstrators torched the Baloch police station and blocked the main highway, sources stated. Police stated that PPP workers were agitating against the alleged rigging in the by-poll, when a clash started between the workers of PPP and PML-N that soon turned ugly by firing in the melee killing one PPP activist. PML-N candidate Faruque Ahmad was declared the winner in the LA-22 Poonch-6 by-poll.

<http://www.geo.tv/article-138967-PPP-activist-dies-in-clash-with-PML-N-workers-over-rigging-in-AJK-by-poll>

“AJK SC orders amendment to Public Service Commission Act”

The Nation, February 25, 2014

MIRPUR: The Supreme Court of Azad Jammu & Kashmir declared all the AJK presidential ordinances related to the Public Service Commission null and void, and stressed a need for adopting merit for induction of proper persons in the commission. An apex court bench comprising

Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan, Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Zia and Justice Raja Saeed Akram issued these orders while dismissing the appeals filed by the AJK government and the AJK Public Service Commission against the recent judgment of the AJK high court whereby the AJK HC had declared that all the AJK president has no power to re-enact any ordinance after expiry of the stipulated period of four months. Thus, the SC upheld the orders of the AJK High Court to this direction.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/25-Feb-2014/ajk-sc-orders-amendment-to-public-service-commission-act>

A H Rao, “Attique pours scorn on AJK PML-N”

The Nation, February 26, 2014

MIRPUR: Alleging massive rigging in by-elections to AJK Legislative Assembly LA-22, former AJK prime minister and Muslim Conference Chief Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan on February 25 demanded a high level commission to probe the rigging and killing of a People's party activist in a protest against the rigging in Baloch Town a day after the election. Addressing a press conference at the residence of former city Mayor Ch Muhammad Ashraf, Sardar Attique accused the AJK PML-N leadership especially Kashmir Affairs Minister Ch Barjees Tahir of manoeuvring rigging in the election to facilitate their party's candidate. It is to be noted that Sardar Farooq Tahir of the PML-N was declared victorious against his nearest rival PPP Fahim Akhter Rabbani with a margin of 4,676 votes. The MC chief was flanked by the party leader leaders including Ch Muhammad Ashraf, Haji Zulfiqar Ahmed, Abdul Qayyum Qamar and others.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/26-Feb-2014/attique-pours-scorn-on-ajk-pml-n>

Shabbir Mir, “Personal preferences: Lawyers reject appointments for service tribunal”

The Express Tribune, February 24, 2014

GILGIT: The first ever service tribunal of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has become controversial after lawyers termed its appointments 'illegal'. The G-B Assembly passed the service tribunal law two years ago after which it was referred to G-B Governor Pir Karam Ali Shah for approval. The governor signed

it on February 21, 2014 officially establishing the first ever service tribunal of G-B. Through an ordinance, a former bureaucrat Hafizur Rahman was made its chairman while district judge Khurshid Alam and former bureaucrat Fida Hussain were made its members. “We demand the ordinance be withdrawn and the appointments reversed,” stated G-B Supreme Court Bar Association President Shahbaz Khan on February 23. “The appointments were made overnight to accommodate men of their own choice,” Khan stated, referring to the service tribunal's members. He added under the original law, enacted by the assembly, it was mentioned that a high court judge or a senior lawyer should be chairman of the tribunal but that part was removed from the ordinance.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/675327/personal-preferences-lawyers-reject-appointments-for-service-tribunal/>

“Government committed to uplifting Gilgit-Baltistan: President”

The Nation, February 24, 2014

ISLAMABAD- President Mamnoon Hussain stated his meetings with the top Chinese leadership focused on prioritization and early completion of those projects having direct and immediate benefits for the people. He stated this while talking to a delegation from Gilgit-Baltistan led by Minister for Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs, Barjees Tahir in Islamabad. Mamnoon Hussain stated Pak-China Economic Corridor would usher a new era of socio-economic development in the region and would open new vistas of opportunities especially for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/24-Feb-2014/government-committed-to-uplift-gilgit-baltistan-president>

“Injustice against G-B”

The Express Tribune, February 23, 2014

GILGIT: I am an unemployed but educated young man from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and wish to bring to the notice of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif a festering issue, that of the stealing of government jobs in G-B. Let me state that we, the people of G-B,

are indebted to successive federal governments which created thousands of jobs for our area in the recent past to be filled on merit. These became a ray of hope for the educated youth of the region, particularly when there is no industrial base or private sector in G-B.

Nevertheless, these vacant posts, particularly of the level BS-16 and above, have been held hostage in the hands of local politicians and a section of the local judiciary, which have established a nexus for obvious reasons, thereby depriving the deserving educated youth of an opportunity of being selected for these posts. The incumbent chief secretary G-B, Muhammad Younus Dagha, has diagnosed the issue and has begun to take firm action against the job mafia by forming a team of upright officers to handle this issue to its logical end but local politicians and a section of the regional judiciary are adamant at absorbing the so-called contractual incumbents against 400 vacant posts falling in BS-16 and above.

Asgher Ali Mehmud

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/675219/injustice-against-g-b/>

“AJK By-Polls in LA-22 held in peaceful manner”

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 23, 2014

MIRPUR: The bye-elections of AJK Legislative Assembly seat LA-22, in Sudhnoti district of Azad Jammu Kashmir was held on February 22 in a peaceful manner except the minor incidents at some polling stations. The seat were lying vacant after the death of the PPP Legislator Sardar Akhtar Hussain Rabbani on December 25, 2013. Late Rabbani was performing as the minister in AJK Prime Minister Ch. Majeed's cabinet at the time of his demise. The polling to the by-polls started at 8.00 a.m and continued till the stipulated time of 5.00 p.m on February 22 without any pause in peaceful manner. Deputy Commissioner Sudhanoti, Shahid Ayub, noted that the civil administration including police had made adequate arrangements to maintain peace and order.

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=267802&Itemid=2

Javid-ur-Rahman, “Fazl seeks overhauling of 1947 interim act of AJK”

The Nation, February 20, 2014

ISLAMABAD: JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on February 19 asked the PML-N government for major overhauling of 1947 Interim Act of Azad Kashmir. “There is need of drastic efforts to amend this interim act of 1947 as after nearly 60 years it still has not been brought in line with the new realities of Azad Kashmir,” stated Fazl in a letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The JUI-F chief, in a letter to PM, stated that he during his visit to AJK met various political leaders, government functionaries and other stakeholders. Maulana after these interaction felt that there have been minor amendments in 1947 Interim Act but they are not drastic enough to serve the interests of different stakeholders.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/islamabad/20-Feb-2014/fazl-seeks-overhauling-of-1947-interim-act-of-ajk>

“Govt approves funds for construction of Astore-Neelum AJK Road, Tunnel Project: Naseer”

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 22, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Excise and Taxation Gilgit-Baltistan Muhammad Naseer Khan has stated the Government has approved funds for construction of Astore-Neelum AJK Road and Tunnel Project. Talking to a news channel, he stated that work on this project would be started this year. He stated that Astore-Neelum Valley Road via Shountar will be alternative of Karakoram Highway and its construction will reduce distance between Gilgit and Rawalpindi by 8 to 10 hours. He stated the road, after construction, will bring people of Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK further close.

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=267568

“Borderline: Boundary issue flares up again, KKH blocked”

The Express Tribune, February 22, 2014

GILGIT: The row over the territorial boundary between Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Kohistan

district has flared up once again, leading to suspension of traffic on Karakoram Highway (KKH). “This time the issue has come up again because residents of Kohistan forcibly took away more than 400 goats from a resident of Diamer. The goats had been grazing on a piece of land to which both regions lay claim,” stated Faizullah, a resident of Chilas. The incident irked residents of Diamer valley and led to protest in the area which resulted in blocking the highway. “The people were already upset over the claim from Kohistanis; the act of stealing of goats has added fuel to fire,” stated Mujeebur Rahman, another resident. The status of nearly 10 kilometers of land on both sides of the Basari check post which separates the two regions is not clear and often leads to unrest between people of Diamer and Kohistan. This piece of land has become the bone of contention between residents as it involves compensation and royalty in the longer run.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/674708/borderline-boundary-issue-flares-up-again-kkh-blocked/>

Salman Abduhu, “Inquiry on to find irregularities in dam land acquisition”

The Nation, February 22, 2014

LAHORE: As the Gilgit Baltistan Commission has failed to probe irregularities in Diamer Bhasha Dam land acquisition process despite the lapse of two years' period, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ordered a fresh inquiry into multi-billion rupees scam involving several big names and influential personalities. Officials in Water & Power Ministry noted that the government of Gilgit Baltistan had constituted a commission back in January 2012 to probe wrongdoings in 486 kilometer stretch of barren land identified for Diamer-Bhasha dam construction and which had been declared fertile land to increase the compensation amount for land owners. The commission was to investigate the case against Gilgit Baltistan revenue department officials, including tahsildars as well as patwaris, who were reported to be involved in dam corruption scandal.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/22-Feb-2014/inquiry-on-to-find-irregularities-in-dam-land-acquisition>

Shabbir Mir, “Accept or pack up’: Charter of demands presented for Diamer-Bhasha Dam”

The Express Tribune, February 19, 2014

GILGIT: Residents of Diamer have warned to end support for Diamer-Bhasha Dam if the rights of locals are not upheld as per their wishes. The Diamer Action Committee (DAC) presented a 37-point charter of demands in a news conference on February 18 and asked the government to 'accept them or pack up'. “The demands we have presented are genuine and directly linked to the future of the dam,” stated Ahmad Alam, president of DAC, a body which represents a majority of villages from Diamer. “We would not allow anyone to deprive us of our rights and the government will have to accept our demands or just leave our area,” he added. DAC's charter of demands calls for a revision of the prices of land being acquired by the government for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam in Diamer Valley. It also demands that residents of Diamer be given employment opportunities in the dam's construction on a priority basis.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/673416/accept-or-pack-up-charter-of-demands-presented-for-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

“GB corruption”

The News, February 17, 2014

The federal government passed a self-governance ordinance for Gilgit-Baltistan in 2009. The ordinance gives enough rights for the region to deal the internal affairs. Under the ordinance, elections were held in the same year. In the history of GB, it was the first time that a chief minister and governor took oath after going through a successful democratic process. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan were relieved that their issues would be addressed by their elected representatives. However, the elected representatives went against the wishes of the common public. Ministers, politicians and influential bureaucrats appointed their near and dear ones in different departments of Gilgit-Baltistan.

It is very strange to say that in GB posts are sold or especially created. Recently the chief secretary of

GB has taken notice of this. This is a good step but it is not enough because to root out corruption, the chief secretary needs strong support from the federal government. I request the federal government to investigate all departments in order to control corruption.

Ikram Ullah

Gilgit-Baltistan

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-233090-GB-corruption>

Noor Aftab, “Mamnoon receives revised summary for KIU vice chancellor post”

The News, February 17, 2014

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon Hussain received revised summary carrying five names for the post of the vice chancellor of Karakoram International University (KIU) with senior academician Dr. Najma Najam was pushed out of the race on political pressure from the Gilgit-Baltistan government, sources stated on February 16.

Sources further stated the summary now carries names including Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad, chairman of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, Dr. Asif Khan from Peshawar University, Dr. Muhammad Memon from Aga Khan University, Dr. ZA Hilai of Peshawar University and Dr. G Raza Bhatti, director of the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation at Shah Abdul Latif University.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-233075-Mamnoon-receives-revised-summary-for-KI>

Saleem Shaikh and Sughra Tunio, “Pakistan opens the tap on hydropower projects”

Thomson Reuters Foundation, February 17, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Faced with a chronic power shortage that is stymieing economic growth, Pakistan has announced plans to tap some of the enormous potential for hydropower in the country's north. The government aims to add 13,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the national grid system through a series of hydro projects ranging in size from 10 to 1,000 MW, according to officials in the federal water and power ministry. This will

represent a nearly eightfold increase in hydro capacity.

<http://www.trust.org/item/20140217142812-dhgm0/>

“India fails to persuade Pakistan on bank facility”

The Nation, February 17, 2014

JAMMU: New Delhi failed to persuade Islamabad to set up banking facilities for the cross LoC trade, which is presently being carried on a barter system. According to Jammu and Kashmir Economic Survey 2013-14, which was tabled during the ongoing Budget session in Jammu, the representatives of the RBI made a presentation on the proposed banking mechanism in the Joint Working Group Meeting. The report stated India had made a lot of effort to persuade the Pakistani delegation on the issue for the cross-LoC trade considering the significant increase in the volume of trade across Jammu and Kashmir and Azad Kashmir. Cross-LoC trade is not an international trade and presently, 21 items are listed as permissible for trading between Azad Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/17-Feb-2014/india-fails-to-persuade-pakistan-on-bank-facility>

Muhammad Iqbal, “AJK Govt to introduce computerized Driving Licenses soon”

Business Recorder, February 17, 2014

MIRPUR: The Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) government is seriously contemplating to introduce computerized driving licenses of all categories in AJK to ensure the issuance of the same only to the well trained persons. Official sources noted on February 16 that already-issued manual driving licenses will also be computerized subject to the eligibility of the concerned person having the full knowledge of driving. The AJK government has increased, since last fiscal year AJK budget, the new driving license fee up to about Rs 800 for private light public service vehicles including car, motor/bike scooter.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/158262.html>

Faisal Raza Khan, “Gold panning leaves toxic mercury trail in Pakistan”

February 17, 2014

ISLAMABAD: A three-year project to study gold ore in Pakistan's northern areas in collaboration with the US has discovered new deposits of the yellow metal as well as concentrations of toxic mercury spilling into the environment from primitive extraction methods. “During research for the US-Pakistan 'gold mineralisation' project, hyper-spectral remote sensing and geo-chemical analyses were used besides field work,” says Shuhab Khan, associate professor of geology at the University of Houston. “Although most of northern Pakistan is known to have gold deposits, the new findings in Astore (in the Gilgit-Baltistan region) are significant and need extensive research with a view to safe extraction,” Khan noted.

<http://www.scidev.net/south-asia/environment/news/gold-panning-leaves-toxic-mercury-trail-in-pakistan.html>

“Govt focusing to establish industrial zones in GB: Barjees”

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 13, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ch. Muhammad Barjees Tahir stated the government was focusing to make a policy for establishing industrial zones in Gilgit-Baltistan in order to utilize locally produced cheap power. The minister stated Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was blessed with tremendous hydro-power potential which could not only fulfill the needs of the areas but also prove to be a cheapest solution to the energy crisis of the country. He was chairing the meeting of GB Power Development Board on February 12 in which Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah and Chief Secretary Muhammad Younas Daga also participated. According to a press release, Ch. Barjees stated the provincial government should be authorized to attract private sector for small power generation projects. He emphasized the need of a local grid for Gilgit-Baltistan and extension of national grid to the region to get benefit from the cheap resource of energy.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=265945&Itemid=2

“Gilgit Baltistan: wheat price to be subsidised soon, says Birjees”

Business Recorder, February 14, 2014

The issue of 'subsidy on wheat price' to Gilgit Baltistan, first introduced by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, is again going to become a major tool for a political party (PMLN) to increase public support in Gilgit Baltistan. Increase in wheat prices during the last few months in the region, following a decision of Economic Co-ordination Committee (ECC) made on November 22, 2011 to end gradually the subsidy being given to the people of GB for decades, has enraged the public, who started coming out on streets against the move.

There was also confusion and exchange of accusations between then PPP government and PML-N t regarding the decision affecting around two million people during the last few months. Ending the confusion, the PM-N government, has decided to take back the increases in price till further order. ECC in this regard would make changes in decision of 2011.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1153288/>

“Ruling on appeals: AJK court sacks head of public service commission, 9 others”

The Express Tribune, February 14, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Supreme Court (AJKSC) on February 13 declared the appointment of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (AJKPSC) Chairman Mumtaz Hussain Naqvi and its nine members illegal. A full bench of AJK Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan gave its verdict on separate appeals filed by the AJK government and the Public Service Commission against the high court decision of September 10, 2013 in which the PSC, under the chairmanship of Mumtaz Naqvi, was declared illegal.

The SC in its judgment stated the appointment of the PSC chairman and its members was made through an ordinance. It is necessary that such appointments be presented in the Legislative Assembly within 120 days and this has not been done in this case. The bench urged the government of AJK to ensure

appointments on merit and stated the government in AJK should follow the process laid out by the Federal Public Service Commission.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/671606/ruling-on-appeals-ajk-court-sacks-head-of-public-service-commission-9-others/>

“Barjees urges AJK govt to ensure free by-polls”

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 14, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs (GB&AJK), Barjees Tahir on February 13 urged the AJK government for ensuring free, fair and transparent by-polls, to be held on Feb 22. He stated that he had asked the Chief Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for taking measures and providing Rangers security to stop any kind of rigging and clashes on election day. He was addressing a press conference along with the leader of PML-N, Marvi Memon. The secretary of the Ministry of GB & AJK, Shahid Ullah Baig was also present at the occasion. The minister stated that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) had respected the mandate of other political parties in AJK and Balochistan province despite having ability to form its government.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=266095&Itemid=1

Peer Muhammad, “Circular debt resurfaces: Provinces run up Rs500b power debt”

The Express Tribune, February 1, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Water and Power Ministry on January 31 informed the National Assembly that around Rs500 billion is outstanding against various organisations and provincial governments, which is the main reason for a ballooning circular debt. The ministry informed the house that heavy amount stuck with AJK and all provincial governments mainly due to non-implementation of policy decisions of the government about the tariff determination and recovering mechanism. The house was told that the AJK government does not accept Nepra's jurisdiction for tariff determination and owes Rs30 billion in power dues.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/666138/circular-debt-resurfaces->

[provinces-run-up-rs500b-power-debt/](#)

Noor Aftab, “President rejects summary for KIU vice chancellor post”

The News, February 10, 2014

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon Hussain rejected the summary carrying names of three eminent persons for the post of vice chancellor of Karakoram International University (KIU) and directed the relevant authorities to send new names for this post, sources noted on February 9. According to rules, the Search Committee that is formed by Higher Education Commission (HEC) shortlists applicants and holds interviews after which it prepares a list containing names of three selected candidates and moves it to Senate of KIU.

The KIU Senate then gives its final approval and sends the list to the president who is the chancellor of KIU.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-231587-President-rejects-summary-for-KIU-vice-chancellor-post>

“Appointing superior court judges: Gilgit-Baltistan lawyers warn of boycott if judges not hired 'legally'”

The Express Tribune, February 9, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Gilgit-Baltistan High Court Bar Association (HCBA) pressed for the appointment of superior court judges only with the consultation of the chief court and the Gilgit-Baltistan governor, warning that any step against the procedure would be challenged in court.

G-B HCBA Vice President Shakoor Khan expressed his concern on February 7 over the recent attempt by G-B bureaucrats who sent a summary to fill the two vacant lucrative posts of the G-B chief court without following due procedure.

He cited that under Article 69 of Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Rule, 2009, the chief secretary and the chief minister have no legal role in the appointment of superior court judges. But he regretted that the bureaucracy has prepared a panel of lawyers and judges and even had conducted interviews of them, bypassing the set criteria.

Earlier, G-B Chief Secretary Younus Dagha had denied that any summary had been prepared or a panel of lawyers was formed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/669422/appointing-superior-court-judges-gilgit-baltistan-lawyers-warn-of-boycott-if-judges-not-hired-legally/>

“Pothoharis holds demo to get Mangla Dam water share”

Pakistan Observer, February 7, 2014

Kallar Syedan-Leader of the PML-N and social activist Jahangir Akhtar on February 6 stated people of Pothohar have a right on the water user charges of the Mangla Dam. According to a press release, he stated “We will continue protest unless our half share is accepted and the funds are utilised properly for the development of underdeveloped areas of the region.” Speaking to a protest rally held at Sar Soha Shah, Union Council Samot, Kallar Syedan, Jahangir Akhtar stated that all of the funds generated through water user charges cannot be provided to Azad Kashmir as river Jhelum is between AJK and Kallar Syedan.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=232781>

“Force of 1500 personnel being constituted to protect Karakoram Highway: Barjees”

Associated Press of Pakistan, February 7, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Ch. Muhammad Barjees Tahir on February 6 stated a strong force of 1500 personnel is being constituted to ensure protection of Karakoram Highway. He stated paper work has already been completed while recruitment will be conducted on merit. He was talking to a delegation of Ulema, who called on him under the leadership of Senator Prof. Sajid Mir to discuss law and order situation in GB region. The Minister stated training to this force will be provided by Pakistan Army. He stated protection of human lives is the highest priority of government and added that serious steps are being taken to counter sectarianism in the GB. Barjees Tahir further stated Ulema Board has been constituted to maintain law and order situation in GB adding that besides, the government has embarked upon several measures to counter

corruption which are bearing fruits. Senator Sajid Mir informed the Minister about the welfare projects being run by Jamaat-i-Ahal-i-Hadees in Gilgit-Baltistan and ensured his party's full support in order to maintain law and order situation.

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=264754&Itemid=1

“MUST ASA Executive Council gets new members”

The Nation, February 7, 2014

MIRPUR: The Academic Staff Association of Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST) approved the names of senior academicians Dr Tahir Aslam, Dr Zahoor Ahmed, Dr Syed Hassan Mujtaba and Nasim Akhtar for their induction as member of the Executive Council of the MUST ASA. MUST ASA spokesperson Prof Tausif noted that the ASA meeting, chaired by Prof Asif Butt, took stock of the issues related to academic staff of the varsity during the course of performance of their professional duties. The meeting unanimously resolved to secure and safeguard due rights of the teaching staff of the varsity.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/07-Feb-2014/must-asa-executive-council-gets-new-members>

Hasan Khan, “Gilgit-Baltistan enhances northern areas security, February 7, 2014”

Central Asia Online, February 7, 2014

Reports of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) intentions of attacking Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) have caused the territorial government to beef up security. “The Interior Ministry officially informed GB that the Pakistani Taliban can strike the region,” a senior GB administration official was quoted as stating. “The Interior Ministry has warned of suicide bombings and attacks on tourists in the region.” Insurgents in June 2013 caused widespread panic when they stormed the Nanga Parbat base camp for mountaineers, killing 10 foreigners and one local guide. The massacre devastated tourism, a mainstay of the local economy. In response to the latest threats, Pakistan is taking action. “All-out [security] measures have been taken [and] strict vigilance is

being observed at all entry and exit points,” GB Information Minister Sadia Danish noted.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/07022014-gilgit-baltistan-enhances-northern-areas-security/>

Peer Muhammad / Tariq Masood, “Diamer-Bhasha construction: Giving a dam comes at a price for G-B locals”

The Express Tribune, February 6, 2014

ISLAMABAD: “We are ceding our ancestral land, our homes, our culture and everything for the country,” stated Asadullah, a shopkeeper in Chilas, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). “But the reward isn't what we expected.” As the construction of the mega Diamer-Bhasha Dam is about to get under way, people whose homes are destined to go under huge swathes of water have some major apprehensions. “Just look at the compensation issue. There is considerable delay and we've lost a sufficient amount to inflation,” explained Asadullah. Participants of a discussion forum held recently in Islamabad pointed out that the environmental and economic impact assessments for the project have either not been carried out or have not been shared with the stakeholders. Compensation for the displaced people is not timely either.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/668194/diamer-bhasha-construction-giving-a-dam-comes-at-a-price-for-g-b-locals/>

“Indo-Pak border bus service resumes after two weeks”

Pakistan Tribune, February 4, 2014

SRINAGAR: The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service resumed on February 3 after remaining suspended for two weeks following a deadlock over the arrest of a driver from Azad Kashmir on alleged drug trafficking charges. The bus from Indian side, carrying 28 passengers reached Kaman Post - the zero point on Line of Control in Uri sector of Baramulla district - shortly before Noon, officials stated. They stated the passengers including 10 AJK residents, who returned home after visiting their relatives in the Valley, and 18 Indian citizens headed for their relatives' homes in AJK.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Indo-Pak-border-bus-service-resumes-after-two-weeks-266592.html>

Shabbir Mir, “Judgment day: G-B on its way to cleanse away corrupt employees”

The Express Tribune, February 5, 2014

GILGIT: The works department in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has decided to re-conduct tests and interviews for the contract staff working in grade 12 or above. Only those who pass the test will be given permanent jobs while the rest will be sacked. “This way we will be able to settle the issue of employee regularisation,” Minister for Works Bashir Ahmed Khan stated on February 4, a day after the decision was taken in a meeting attended by Minister for Water and Power Didar Ali.

A test and interview will decide the fate of nearly 7,000 staff employed in the public works department on contract, majority of whom got in on references. According to the minister of works, the staff qualifying test might be made mandatory for other government departments as well.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/667584/judgment-day-g-b-on-its-way-to-cleanse-away-corrupt-employees/>

“Study suggests ways to settle Kashmir issue”

The Nation, February 2, 2014

MIRPUR: A study titled 'Institutionalizing Confidence Building Measures on Kashmir' was launched at a ceremony held in the capital city by the Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad and the Kashmir Initiative Group.

Co-authored by Dr Shaheen Akhtar and Zafar Choudhry, the study has been brought out by the Kashmir Initiative Group, a trans-Line of Control body, in collaboration with Conciliation Resources. Discussing the efficacy of confidence building measures, speaker from Jammu, Zafar Choudhry held that such measures alone can create an environment for peaceful and lasting solution to the Kashmir issue.

“The key concern at present is that the ownership of these measures is yet to be accepted by the Kashmiris as the principal party to the conflict,” he observed.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/02-Feb-2014/study-suggests-ways-to-settle-kashmir-issue>

Peer Muhammad, “This seat's free: Candidates vying for G-B judges' slots”

The Express Tribune, February 3, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Gilgit-Baltistan Bar Council warned of resistance as they say due process is not being followed in the appointment at two key posts in the superior judiciary in the G-B Chief Court. Sources state certain lobbies are actively campaigning for their candidates while the Chief Secretary Secretariat has formed an eight-member panel of lawyers and judges of the lower judiciary to elevate them to the Chief Court. Interviews have also been conducted by the secretariat. Some members of the province's legislative assembly and the GB Council are also in the running for the two vacant slots.

Advocate Shakoor Khan, Vice President of the GB High Court Bar Council noted that the High Court Bar will resist any appointment made without following regulations. He added that there are no objections to two judges from the session court who have been interviewed by the chief secretary's office but the Council has strong reservations over some lawyers being vetted for the vacant positions. Many experienced lawyers from the province, practising in the Lahore and Sindh High Courts, were not considered, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/666837/this-seats-free-candidates-vying-for-g-b-judges-slots/>

Ajmal Hussain, “Behaviour dynamics and sectarian violence”

The Nation, February 3, 2014,

The vacuum of sectarian violence is contentiously penetrating in almost all over the Muslim nations. Today, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Bahrain, Lebanon are the major victims of this fatal crime. This prevalent 'divide and rule' strategy imposed by “Secret Society” has claimed so many innocent lives across Muslim nations. The brutal phenomenon is rapidly bouncing back in Pakistan and people of Gilgit Baltistan have also been battered by this irredeemable dilemma. According to South Asian Tourism Portal (SATP) almost 8,000 innocent people have been died in sectarian violence so far. The region Gilgit-Baltistan, which is supposed to be

hub of Foreign Direct Investment because of its strategic location, has now become quagmire and risky region on the stump of investors. As a result of this, GB is stepping back instead of moving ahead towards prosperity and development.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/03-Feb-2014/behaviour-dynamics-and-sectarian-violence>

Tariq Naqash, “Truckers threaten to disrupt Kashmir bus service”

Dawn, February 1, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: An association of truckers has threatened to disrupt bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar until their 49 colleagues, stuck up in Jammu & Kashmir since January 17 due to a standoff on intra-Kashmir trade, are allowed to return home along with their vehicles. Members of the Jhelum Valley Goods Transport Union held a protest sit-in outside the Chinari Press Club on January 31, a day after officials from AJK and J&K decided at a meeting to resume trans-LoC travel from both crossing points from February 3. Chinari is situated around 10km ahead of the Chakothi-Uri crossing point, from where 49 trucks from AJK and 27 from J&K had ferried goods to the opposite sides on January 17.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1084162/truckers-threaten-to-disrupt-kashmir-bus-service>

Shabbir Mir, “Close call: Agriculture department official escapes attempt on life”

The Express Tribune, February 1, 2014

GILGIT: A senior government official escaped an attempt on his life when gunmen ambushed his vehicle in Gilgit on January 31. The research director of Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) agriculture department, Dr Fazal Rahman, was en route to his office when unidentified armed men shot at his vehicle. Rahman remained unhurt in the attack, however, his driver was injured. The incident occurred outside the agriculture office near Karakoram International University.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/665933/close-call-agriculture-department-official-escapes-attempt-on-life/>

Economic Developments

“Petroleum reserves position declared 'unsatisfactory' in Gilgit-Baltistan”

February 26, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on February 26 called for increasing petroleum storage capacity in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to avoid any future problems. Expressing concern over the current situation, it called for boosting GB petroleum storage capacity by 400 per cent which can help masses as well as armed forces in case of an emergency. Talking to a group of businessmen from Gilgit-Baltistan, Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW stated that closure of main road leading to GB has become order of the day due to landsliding and law and order issues. The situation results in scarcity of fuel and profiteering by certain elements which can be avoided by improving local fuel storage, he stated.

<http://www.thenewstribe.com/2014/02/26/petroleum-reserves-position-declared-unsatisfactory-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Trade resumes across LoC”

The Express Tribune, February 13, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Travel and Trade Authority (Tata) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the authorities of Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on February 12 agreed to release truck drivers stranded on both sides of the LoC except one driver who was accused of smuggling drugs. Following the decision, 48 trucks from Azad Jammu and Kashmir have reached Chakothi while 27 trucks from Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir crossed the LoC from Chakothi, some 60 kilometres from Muzaffarabad. Official sources stated the decision to release all the drivers across the Line of Control was jointly taken by Islamabad and

New Delhi on a humanitarian basis. The driver held back will be presented in the criminal court in Srinagar. Sources added that authorities in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir had accepted in a meeting with Tata officials that the driver is innocent and, following formal court proceedings, he will be released soon after.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/671104/trade-resumes-across-loc/>

“Cross-LoC trade faces another hurdle”

The Nation, February 27, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Cross-Line of Control trade on Muzaffarabad-Srinagar route resumed on February 26 after remaining suspended for 41 days but it is feared to be closed again soon as another controversy surfaced when officials at Chakoti Trade Centre put the condition of unloading the goods trucks for checking. The Trade Centre Chakoti administration put the condition that all the goods trucks will be fully unloaded and checked and loaded again for further travel after the checking. However, the traders refused to accept this new condition arguing that it will spoil their goods and cause them financial damages. Due to this controversy, 22 trucks coming from Occupied Kashmir and four trucks from Azad Kashmir went back from the Line of Control in protest and did not travel to the other side.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/27-Feb-2014/cross-loc-trade-faces-another-hurdle>

Tariq Butt, “AJK hydropower project hits snags”

The News, February 25, 2014

ISLAMABAD: While the nation groans under agonizing power shortages, a French-funded electricity generation project has become the victim of government apathy. The award bid for

the project has now landed in Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's office with a request to ensure transparency in the award of the work. Located in the Neelum Valley (AJK), the Jagran-II hydropower project, when completed, would produce 48MW of power in a mountainous and deprived region, documents available with The News revealed. The French agency, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), has earmarked 68 million Euros for the project and one million Euros for engineering services. It envisaged work on the project to kick off in 2012 to complete in 2016.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-234658-AJK-hydropower-project-hits-snags>

Tariq Naqash, “All but one of 76 stranded truck drivers freed”

Dawn, February 13, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: All but one of the 76 truck drivers who had been stuck on opposite sides of the Line of Control (LoC) since January 17 following a row over alleged drug trafficking from Azad Kashmir returned to their respective sides along with their vehicles on February 12, officials stated. On January 17, 49 trucks from AJK and 27 from J&K ferried goods to opposite directions. However, after India alleged that it had seized 114 packets of heroin from one of the consignments and arrested the driver concerned, all 76 trucks got stuck on opposite sides. The crossings took place between 5:45 pm and 7:15 pm through the Chakothi-Uri point under a decision taken by the foreign ministries of India and Pakistan, they added.

On Jan 17, 49 trucks from AJK and 27 from India-held Kashmir ferried goods to opposite directions. However, after India alleged that it had seized 114 packets of heroin from one of the consignments and arrested the driver concerned, Mohammad Shafique, all 76 trucks got stuck on opposite sides. Due to the standoff, not only trade but travel from both crossing points also came to a halt. The trans-LoC travel recommenced on February 3, but deadlock on trade could not end because AJK authorities

wanted the return of all 49 drivers, including Mr Shafique, who they believed was not guilty.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1086629/all-but-one-of-76-stranded-truck-drivers-freed>

“AJK hydropower potential yet to be surveyed: WB report”

Dawn, February 16, 2014

ISLAMABAD: While the government is in the process of initiating major projects in the power sector, the potential of 6,000 megawatts (MW) hydropower in Azad Kashmir roughly equivalent to the entire national power deficit has not yet been surveyed, revealed a World Bank report. The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir Consultations Report' released by the World Bank says that in terms of priorities, there are over 8,000MW of hydro potential in AJK, out of which 6,000MW has not yet been surveyed. “This will be 'clean' source and not a drain on the foreign reserves,” the report comments. There are eight small potential hydropower projects proposed by the AJK government for funding that can be completed in the short-term and brought on the grid with private sector support, according to the report.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1087347/ajk-hydropower-potential-yet-to-be-surveyed-wb-report>

Parvez Jabri, “Rs15.148bn disbursed for construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam during current FY, Senate told”

Business Recorder, February 12, 2014

ISLAMABAD: A sum of Rs15.148 billion has been disbursed for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam during the current financial year, State Minister for Water and Power Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali noted in the Senate on February 12. Responding to the questions of Senators, he stated a sum of Rs14.500 billion been disbursed for land acquisition and Rs0.648 billion for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/157519-rs15148bn-disbursed-for-construction-of-diamer-bhasha-dam-during-current-fy-senate-told.html>

International Developments

Abdul Rasheed Azad, “Education, health and development sectors: China pledges to complete \$353 million projects in quake-hit AJ&K”

Business Recorder, February 16, 2014

The government of China has pledged to complete 37 projects in education, urban development, health and infrastructure sectors, costing \$353 million equivalent to Rs 34.594 billion in earthquake-hit areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K). This was stated by Director General Urban Development, Earthquake Reconstruction Rehabilitation Authority (Erra), Brigadier Zafar Wahla (Retd),

adding that the authority had completed 9,580 out of 14,513 projects and was committed to complete rest of on-going urban development projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and AJ&K earthquake-hit areas on priority basis.

Wahla, while briefing the media person who visited the Muzaffarabad city to observe Erra's different completed projects, stated 10 mega projects had been completed while rest of 37 were under construction on fast track basis. He added that 12 more mega and small projects would be launched in a couple of months.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1153882/>

Other Developments

“Silk Route Festival opens new avenues of trade and cultural exchange”

The Express Tribune, February 26, 2014

GILGIT: Work to divert the flow of the Indus River has been initiated in a bid to salvage the remaining parts of Hoto village in Gilgit-Baltistan from soil erosion. Hoto is 20 metres above the Indus River, alongside the main road connecting Gilgit with Skardu. Flooding during the last summer season swept away many dwellings built on the eroding land of the village. “Excavators are at work to divert the course of the river,” Skardu government official Ali Mohammad noted on February 25. “In addition, sites vulnerable to soil erosion will be filled with boulders.” Communities living in the village reportedly welcomed the initiative, and assured full support to the authorities for timely completion of the project.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/676037/preventive-measures-indus-being-diverted-to-save-hoto-village/>

“Greater collaboration: G-B, Chitral writers seek PAL support”

The Express Tribune, February 25, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters is contemplating to set up its regional offices in Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to address problems of writers of these regions and facilitate them in publishing their works. “The languages being spoken in the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Chitral should be called national languages and it is the responsibility of Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) to promote them.” This was stated before a delegation of writers and poets from the mountain regions. They were in Islamabad to participate in a two-day “Cultural Festival for Peace and Pluralism” organised by the Initiative for the Preservation and Promotion of Pamiri Arts and Culture (IPPAC) in

collaboration with Capital Development Authority at the CDA Open Air Theatre which ended on February 23.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/675687/greater-collaboration-g-b-chitral-writers-look-for-pal-support/>

“Islamabad witnessed the grandeur of Gilgit-Baltistan Cultural and Musical Show”

Dardistan Times, February 24, 2014

Under the auspices of the Initiative for the Protection of Pamiri Arts and Culture (IPPAC) and Capital Development Authority (CDA), a two-day mega event of cultural and musical show in order to observe the International Mother Language Day took place here in Islamabad at Lok Virsa Open Air Theater on February 22 and 23. The theme of this cultural-cum-musical show was “Culture for Peace and Pluralism.” Hundreds of culture and music lovers from Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral attended the event with full enthusiasm and zeal. Jan Ali, the legendary artist of Gilgit-Baltistan along with other well-known musicians and artists won the hearts of the audience with the winsome performance.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/News/1752386980/islamabad-witnessed-grandeur-gilgit-baltistan-cultural-and-musical>

“Miacher Valley: And the slopes keep cracking from side to side”

Dardistan Times, February 27, 2014

GILGIT: Cracks in the slopes of Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Miacher valley have widened in a week's time. This is a new development giving rise to fears of an imminent disaster. Located about 70 kilometres from Gilgit, the mountain slopes in Miacher Valley are laden with cracks that seem ready to give way. Failure of the slopes is expected to block Hunza River and drown many adjacent settlements in its wake. “The cracks are about 50 to 250 metres in length in the lower strata of the rocks

and have shown an abrupt increase of two to three inches in the last week,” stated Mujahid Ali Shah, a professor at Karakoram International University. Shah, a landscape ecologist trained from the University of Greifswald, has warned of a disaster 10 times worse than the one that struck Attabad four years ago and killed 19 people.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/News/1731159068/miacher-valley-and-slopes-keep-cracking-side-side>

“Pride in Sochi”

The News, February 23, 2014

In sport, sometimes the story of an underdog makes for much better reading than the story of a champion. That's the case with a teenager from a remote area in Gilgit-Baltistan who last week became only the second Pakistani to feature at a Winter Olympics. It was in Sochi, the Russian city currently hosting the most expensive Olympics of all time that Muhammad Karim held aloft the Pakistani flag and made an entire nation proud. Most of his compatriots weren't even aware that there was an athlete called Muhammad Karim or a global event going on in Russia called the Winter Olympics.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-234360-Pride-in-Sochi>

Shoaib-ur-Rehman Siddiqui, “Snowfall record broken in Astore”

Business Recorder, February 20, 2014

ASTORE: Snow continued to fall in Astore including all the districts of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region which has broken the 60 years record. The fresh snowfall spell started on February 19 in Astore and the roads were blocked for every kind of traffic. The roads between different villages of Astore were also blocked owing to the land slides. The severe cold weather has led to the shortage of eatables and other goods specially petrol, diesel and kerosene oil. The rates of wood have also increased.

The people have called upon the authorities concerned to take stern action against the price hikers. The power supply remained suspended due to snowfall and rain. Executive Engineer Water and

Power Karim Khan noted that electricity supply would be restored in Astore within 24 hours.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/158864-snowfall-record-broken-in-astore.html>

“LCCI signs MoU with SEED project”

Pakistan Observer, February 18, 2014

LAHORE: The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry on February 17 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Social, Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) project under the framework of the Pakistan Italian Debt-for-Development Swap Agreement (PIDSA), for the promotion of domestic and international tourism and trekking expeditions to the different parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, especially to the K-2 and surrounding areas and the Central Karakorum National Park (CKNP).

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=233909>

Shabbir Mir, “Cracking Miacher: NDMA says residents have nothing to fear”

The Express Tribune, February 13, 2014

GILGIT: As ecologists fear a natural disaster if the cracked slopes in Miacher Valley give way, the chairman of the National Disaster Management Association (NDMA) says there is nothing to worry about. Maj Gen Saeed Aleem claimed the widening cracks in the slopes of Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Miacher Valley do not pose as an immediate threat to the residents. “The situation is not grave enough to threaten the residents in Miacher Valley nor does the situation warrant enforcement of emergency,” read a press release issued after the chairman's meeting with G-B Chief Secretary Younus Dagher. Located about 70 kilometres from Gilgit, the slopes of Miacher are developing dangerous cracks. It is feared if these widen further, a disaster far bigger than the one that struck Attabad four years ago, killing 19 people, could follow.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/670969/cracking-miacher-ndma-says-residents-have-nothing-to-fear/>

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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