

POK News Digest

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh
Dr Yaqoob-ul Hassan

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No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010



Jammu & Kashmir

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The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being built through Gilgit Baltistan is emerging as a source of contention not only between India, Pakistan and China but is also causing considerable political ripples within Pakistan. Earlier, there was widespread controversy resulting from the raging tussle amongst provinces on the preferred route of CPEC inside Pakistan. Besides, there are lurking uncertainties in the so called AJK and Gilgit Baltistan on whether the two regions would get a fair share in the project. Such fears have reached serious proportions, especially in Gilgit Baltistan, mainly for two reasons: despite the fact that the corridor crosses through Gilgit Baltistan before it enters into Pakistan, there is local unrest on whether or not its geographical criticality to CPEC will accrue tangible benefits to the region. The contours of the role that Gilgit Baltistan region will play in the upcoming connectivity corridor and the infrastructure projects therein, is also not clear.

There are complexities concerning Gilgit Baltistan's undefined political status. Since 1947, Gilgit Baltistan has been ruled by a series of temporary political arrangements without it ever being a part either of Pakistan or its constitution. Gilgit Baltistan is neither independent nor a province of Pakistan. The continuing political ambiguity has marred development in the Gilgit Baltistan region for decades. There are palpable aspirations amongst locals for political rights and economic development. Since the announcement of CPEC in April 2015, people in Gilgit Baltistan have been anxious on their political ambivalences fearing they would be handed, yet again, a raw deal by the establishment in Pakistan. According to reports included in the current issue, reflection of such scepticism is being witnessed in the so called AJK as well. In the so called AJK, the political class in its own way is seen convincing the local people that they would not be deprived of their due share in the CPEC and that the project will usher in peace and development in the region.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Court tells govt to appoint physically challenged first”

The Express Tribune, January 1, 2017

In what could be a landmark ruling, a Gilgit court directed the government to ensure that people with disabilities, women and minorities are appointed before other staff is appointed in any government department. The decision was handed down by the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court in response to a petition filed by two physically challenged women, seeking implementation of the government quota for people with special needs. The petitioners, Syeda Salmi Khanum and Tehreen Rasheed were the first to move court for their rights. “The respondents are legally bound to make recruitments against posts in strict adherence to the policy of first appointing women and minorities,” read the order addressed to chief secretary and secretaries of various departments.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1280801/landmark-decision-court-tells-govt-appoint-physically-challenged-first/>

“CPEC to overcome Unemployment from GB: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, January 1, 2017

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project will speed up economic activity and overcome unemployment in Gilgit Baltistan. This was stated by Provincial Minister Excise and Taxation Haider Khan while addressing a ceremony held in Gilgit on January 1. He noted that provincial government is devising strategy to utilize the natural resources of Gilgit-Baltistan for development. Minister Excise and Taxation further stated government is giving special attention on development of tourism, energy and road infrastructure.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/01-Jan-2017/cpec-to-overcome-unemployment-from-gb-haider>

“Kashmir movement will continue till achieving independence: Sardar Attique”

Daily Times, January 2, 2017

The present wave of movement in Kashmir cannot be crushed easily and will continue till achieving independence. This was stated President, All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan while speaking to Kashmiri community at Sindh Boy Scout auditorium on January 1. International community should play their role in implementing the United Nations’ resolution as Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is planning resettling of Hindus in the held Kashmir, he stated, adding, making Gilgit-Baltistan a provincial unit have divided the mandate of Kashmiris. “Making Gilgit-Baltistan a provincial unit is also a conspiracy against Kashmiris,” he noted. “If the rulers are allowed to make their own wishes then they will make more provinces in Azad Kashmir, which will further divide the mandate of Kashmiris.” He claimed that divided National Conference in held Kashmir and Muslim Conference in Azad Kashmir is a conspiracy to further weaken the Kashmiris. The Kashmir policy of both of the democratic Governments of Pakistan has disappointed the Kashmiris as rulers have refused to follow Quaid Azam’s vision of Kashmir, he regretted. The policies of the governments of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) replicated one another’s without a change, he added.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/02-Jan-17/kashmir-movement-will-continue-till-achieving-independence-sardar-attique>

“Political spat: Opposition slams G-B govt over Diamer’s ghost schools”

The Express Tribune, January 2, 2017

The leader of opposition in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) assembly on January 1 raised questions over the

government's resolve to improve the state of women's education in Diamer valley. Shah Baig of Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) alleged that schools in the valley have turned into 'ghost schools'. "Schools in the valley are deserted and there is no one to look into this issue," noted Baig, who hails from the Diamer valley. "Those who are appointed as teachers have never visited their schools," he alleged, claiming that many other teachers had retired while never visiting their schools. "But what is interesting is that they are paid regularly." The valley has a population of over 200,000 with hardly 15 per cent of the men being educated while women's literacy rate is non-existent.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1281382/political-spat-opposition-slams-g-b-govt-diamers-ghost-schools/>

"Nisar for training of Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts on modern lines"

Pakistan Today, January 2, 2017

Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on January 2 stated that Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Scouts should be trained on modern lines enabling them to meet the new challenges in view of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). During a meeting with Director General Scouts Gilgit-Baltistan Brig Ejaz-ur-Rehman who called on him at Punjab House, the interior minister congratulated him for taking charge as DG Scouts. Chaudhry Nisar appreciated the efforts of Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts for maintaining law and order in GB and safeguarding the Northern borders. He further stated the history of scouts force was full of sacrifices and patriotism.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/01/02/nisar-for-training-of-gilgit-baltistan-scouts-on-modern-lines/>

"India may let in people from Gilgit-Baltistan"

The Tribune, January 3, 2017

The upcoming 14th edition of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) will be held in Bengaluru from January 7 to 9 2017. In a briefing to talk about the PBD event, the Ministry of External Affairs indicated that if

people from the Gilgit-Baltistan region applied to attend the event, India would allow them in. In the past too, people from this region have attended the PBD events. But India's nod to them is likely to cause a further strain in the already tense India-Pak relationship. "PBD is an open event and people from Indian territory, including PIOs and NRIs, can seek online registration," stated Dnyaneshwar M Mulay, Secretary (Overseas Indian Affairs) at the briefing. When asked whether people from PoK have applied for registration, he stated there was no such information. The idea behind this is to give a push to the government's policy that Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has himself raised the issue of Gilgit-Baltistan and PoK in his independence speech from the Red Fort and at an all-party meet. Both Modi and President Pranab Mukherjee will head to Bangalore to attend the PBD. The event will formally be inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi on January 8 and the valedictory session on January 9 will be addressed by President Mukherjee who will also confer Pravasi Bharatiya Samman to eminent overseas Indians.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/india-may-let-in-people-from-gilgit-baltistan/345210.html>

MA Mir, "Pre-election rigging? Inquiry committee finds irregular hiring in AJK LG&RD"

The Express Tribune, January 3, 2017

The Local Government and Rural Development (LG&RD) department of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir region hired extra sub-engineers in March 2016, just four months before general elections in the region. This was discovered by a two-member committee formed by the AJK government to look into irregular appointments in the department. According to the report, the LG&RD had advertised 14 posts for sub-engineers. Three weeks later, around 140 hopefuls from 10 districts of AJK had subsequently appeared for written exams for the post. Corresponding interviews were conducted the very same evening without short-listing candidates who had passed the exam. The committee in their report noted that Abu Bakar Muzammil, an assistant

engineer at LG&RD department – who was included in the selection team for technical review – used a pencil for marking the papers. Consequently, when the Muzammil compiled the results, he put his signatures in the column of the interview results instead of in the column of the written exam results hinting at alleged tampering. Moreover, together with interviews without short-listing, constituted violations of the stipulated regulations.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1282343/pre-election-rigging-inquiry-committee-finds-irregular-hiring-ajk-lgrd/>

Shabbir Mir, “Fallout spreads: Alleged ‘insult’ pits top G-B bureaucrats against CM”

The Express Tribune, January 4, 2017

A letter allegedly written by secretaries serving in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government against a statement by Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman has been making the rounds in the local media and online. The unsigned letter was written by “All ‘down’ officers” and titled, “Vilification of federal officers on GBLA floor”. The vernacular word for ‘down’ may refer to down-country – the provinces – but without proper context, it can also mean lower class. The letter voiced serious reservations over a statement CM Rehman allegedly made on the floor of G-B Legislative Assembly (GBLA) on December 16 regarding foreign tours. “The statement has hit very close to the heart of every officer and has generated a very adverse response from each and every officer down the ladder,” read the letter without specifying what exactly the chief minister noted.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1283741/fallout-spreads-alleged-insult-pits-top-g-b-bureaucrats-cm/>

Engr. Sh. Mushtaq Ahmed, “AJK’s incredible hydropower potential”

The Nation, January 4, 2017

Owing to its unmatched merits associated with hydropower generation over the other modes of power production, such as being efficient, economical, cheap, affordable, safe, sustainable, cost

effective, reliable, clean, green (no emissions of Green House Gases – GHGs) and above all having attainability of carbon credits from UN, Water is duly considered next to oil in its power generating potential. In this backdrop, the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) stands abundantly blessed and endowed with one of nature’s riches, water that is pulsating in its four rivers Jhelum (the most voluminous river of AJK), Neelum, Poonch and Kunhar in addition to numerous perennial nullahs, streams and brooks stretched along the territories of AJK. 114.4 MW of hydroelectricity being generated in AJK (Mangla power station 1000 MW, New Bong Escape 84 MW and Jagran-1 30.4 MW) is in the system through the national grid. Whereas her own demand in peak summer season is 350 MW. 17 macro hydropower projects mostly on run-of-river mode and a few on run-of-nullah mode of cumulative generation capacity 7566MW are in different phases of development and will offer a way out of crippling power outages when they become operational. It is, indeed, heartening to know that apart from macro hydropower projects, currently as much as 53 MW of electricity generated through 15 micro, mini and small hydropower stations is in the system and projects ranging from 50 KW (0.05 MW) to 49.5 MW are effectively in various implementation stages, from bankable feasibility studies to advance level of construction and further to commissioning mode.

<http://nation.com.pk/columns/04-Jan-2017/ajk-s-incredible-hydropower-potential>

Altaf Hameed Rao, “Mangla, Terbela dams’ working ‘comes to a halt”

The Nation, January 4, 2017

Azad Kashmir, where the largest reservoir of the country Mangla Dam is situated, has been suffering at least 12-hour a day loadshedding for many days as hydropower generation has almost come to a halt at Mangla, Terbela and Ghazi Barotha dams. The fall in power generation is due to a drastic slash in water level in the reservoirs following the complete lack of much-awaited rains on the upper reaches of the country, sources noted. “Yes, the power

distributing agencies including the AJK Electricity Department have to observe the forced loadshedding of electricity following an exceptional gap between demand and supply,” stated an official of the State Electricity Department on condition of anonymity. The state-run AJK Electricity Department is the power distribution agency in Azad Jammu & Kashmir which is assigned to manage the supply of power to the consumers across the AJK territory being the main consumer of various power distributing agencies including IESCO, GEPCO, PESCO operating in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. “We are legally bound to observe the loadshedding of power in Azad Jammu & Kashmir by strictly following the schedule imposed by Wapda,” the official stated. In Mangla Dam, the water level was reported to 1100.55 feet against the maximum conservation level of 1242 feet with live storage 0.630 million acre feet (MAF) on January 3. The minimum operating level of water in Mangla reservoir is 1,040 feet.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Jan-2017/mangla-terbeladams-working-comes-to-a-halt>

“Pakistan will continue to highlight Kashmir uprising, says Aziz”

Dawn, January 5, 2017

Pakistan will continue to highlight the ongoing uprising in India-held Kashmir. This was stated by Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, signalling the government’s determination to continue the policy of supporting the freedom movement in occupied Kashmir despite certain foreign policy challenges that have arisen because of it. “What initiative? Why any initiative? We would continue highlighting the Kashmir issue and the human rights violations there,” Mr Aziz noted while responding to a question about any new planning for engaging India after 2016 in which perpetually adverse relations with India touched new lows. Analysts say the dysfunctional relationship between Islamabad and New Delhi dipped to levels unprecedented in peace time. Not only did India commit worst ceasefire violations since the 2003 agreement and Indian military claimed to have conducted cross-border ‘surgical strikes’ against

alleged terrorist hideouts in Azad Kashmir, New Delhi also launched an extensive international campaign to malign and isolate Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1306540/pakistan-will-continue-to-highlight-kashmir-uprising-says-aziz>

“Feasibility report of newly included CPEC projects to be prepared soon: CM”

Radio Pakistan, January 5, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman says feasibility report of newly included CPEC projects will be prepared soon. This he noted while talking to media men in Gilgit. Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated a team of Chinese experts will visit Gilgit Baltistan and inspect projects sites. He also stated the project approved at JCC session in Beijing include Diامر Basha Dam, one hundred MW Karakoram University Hydel power and eighty MW Phander power project and establishment of an economic zone. He also stated that the CPEC projects in Gilgit-Baltistan after completion will usher an era of progress and development.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/05-Jan-2017/feasibility-report-of-newly-included-cpec-projects-to-be-prepared-soon-cm>

“AJK PM, Planning Minister Discuss Development Projects in Azad Kashmir”

Radio Pakistan, January 7, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan called on Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal in Islamabad on January 7. During the meeting, they discussed the ongoing development projects in Azad Kashmir. On this occasion, Ahsan Iqbal noted Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Road Project will connect the Azad Kashmir with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Planning Minister added that the federal government will ensure release of funds for completion of ongoing development projects in Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/07-Jan-2017/ajk-pm-planning-minister-discuss-development-projects-in-azad-kashmir>

“Pak govt plans 10-p/unit surcharge to cover Neelum-Jhelum project cost overruns”

Greater Kashmir, January 8, 2017

The government is expected to impose 10-paisa per unit surcharge for all electricity consumers for at least 18 months to finance cost overruns of Rs500 billion Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project and extend Rs3 per unit reduction in power tariff for industrial consumers for six months. A senior government stated that a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has been called on January 6 to approve two proposals moved by the Ministry of Water and Power following green signalled by the Prime Minister Office. The official stated the 10-paisa per unit surcharge was originally imposed in 2007 when the Neelum-Jhelum project cost was approved at Rs130bn with a sunset clause of Dec 31, 2015. It was envisaged that half of the financing would be generated through this surcharge on every unit of electricity sold to consumers in eight years. The cost of 969-megawatt run of the river project in Azad Kashmir kept on increasing with latest estimates at Rs500bn for targeted completion in 2018.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/business/story/238176.html>

Sarfraz Ali, “LB polls in AJK to be held in next few months: PM Farooq Haider”

Daily Pakistan, January 8, 2017

The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that the elections of local bodies in AJK would be held within few months. He was talking to the federal minister for Planning and Development and Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Ahsan Iqbal and later during the meeting with a delegation of his party workers on January 8. During the meeting, the on-going development projects in AJK, inclusion of AJK in CPEC, implementation on the projects approved by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his last visit to Muzaffarabad came up for discussion. Farooq Haider noted that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was taking

a keen interest in the development of AJK and his team was fully involved in realizing the vision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif into reality in Azad Kashmir, Farooq Haider stated. AJK Prime Minister also stated that development should be sighted on ground.

<https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/lb-polls-in-ajk-to-be-held-in-next-few-months-pm-farooq-haider/>

“Efforts underway for Promotion of Tourism in region: CM”

Radio Pakistan, January 8, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that efforts are underway for the promotion of tourism in the region. Talking to a delegation in Gilgit, he stated Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif approved Gilgit- Naltar Expressway road project. The project will be completed at a cost of three point five billion rupees in three years. He further stated that the Naltar valley is a fabulous tourist resort which attracts thousands of tourists every year.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/08-Jan-2017/efforts-underway-for-promotion-of-tourism-in-region-cm>

“GOVT Vows to Promote Agriculture Sector: Hafeez”

Radio Pakistan, January 9, 2017

Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted Government set up land reforms commission in Gilgit Baltistan to resolve land disputes. Talking to a delegation in Gilgit he noted the commission will address Chilmish Das land dispute. He further stated that Government initiated work under International Fund for Agriculture development project to promote Agriculture sector. He also stated thirteen billion rupees would be spent to convert fifty four thousand acre barren land into cultivable.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/09-Jan-2017/govt-vows-to-promote-agriculture-sector-hafeez>

“Several Countries keen to Finance Diamer-Bhasha Dam: Asif”

Radio Pakistan, January 9, 2017

Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Asif stated several countries have expressed interest to finance Diamer Bhasha Dam. Talking to the media persons in Islamabad on January 9, he stated land acquisition for the project has been completed. He also stated the project has been divided into two phases including water reservoir and the power house. He expressed the confidence that work on Diamer Bhasha Dam will start during the current year.

The Minister for Water and Power stated Neelum-Jhelum project will be made operational during the current year. Responding to a question, the Minister noted water policy will be taken to the council of common interests for approval. Earlier, an agreement regarding financial close of Suki Kinari hydropower project was signed at a ceremony. The project to be constructed on River Kunhar will help generate eight hundred and seventy megawatt electricity. It will be completed by 2022 at a cost of 1.80 billion rupees.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/09-Jan-2017/several-countries-expressed-interest-to-finance-diamer-basha-dam-asif>

“Census: Head count in AJK from April 29”

The Express Tribune, January 10, 2017

Census in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) will commence from April 29, officials stated on January 8. A decision to this effect was taken in a meeting chaired by AJK Chief Secretary Sikander Sultan Raja in the state’s capital.

A total of 2,800 mobile staff members would be deputed for holding the scheduled census across AJK, they noted. The staff would be provided with five-day training, conducted by the master trainers from January 23 in Muzaffarabad, the officials stated.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1288585/census-head-count-ajk-april-29/>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B reluctant to consider Indian plans of new border Routes”

The Express Tribune, January 10, 2017

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) seems reluctant to consider Indian government plans to open new routes across the Line of Control (LoC) to reconnect divided families in G-B and Indian Kashmir. According to media reports, Governor of J&K Narinder Nath Vohra recently told a joint sitting of the J&K legislature that the state government was considering opening four new routes this year – Gurez-Astore-Gilgit, Jammu-Sialkot, Chamb Jaurian–Mirpur and Nowshera-Mirpur. “Three other routes – Kargil-Skardu, Turtuk-Khapulu, and Titwal-Chilhan across the Neelum Valley were also being explored,” he was quoted as saying. The statement drew a lukewarm response in G-B. The G-B government spokesman Faizullah Faraq cast doubt over Indian plans, saying the multi-billion economic corridor project with China might be behind Indian efforts to reconnect with Pakistan through new routes. “In the past, when Pakistan asked India about opening new routes to reconnect divided families, they did not respond,” Faraq noted on January 9. “They even didn’t consider the request on humanitarian grounds. What is new for them now, except for CPEC,” he noted, referring to Indian interest in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which G-B serves as a gateway for.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1289732/indian-plans-g-b-reluctant-consider-new-border-routes/>

“GB going to become economic hub of Pakistan: Barjees”

Radio Pakistan, January 11, 2017

Minister of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Ch. Barjees Tahir stated that Gilgit Baltistan, a land of enormous minerals and resources, is going to become an economic hub of Pakistan. He expressed these views during his meeting with Governor of Gilgit Baltistan Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan, who called on him in Islamabad on January 11. The Minister stated that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is taking keen interest

in development of Gilgit Baltistan and he also gave approval to several mega development projects in GB in this regard. He noted that China Pakistan Economic Corridor Project has immense importance for development of Gilgit Baltistan and people of GB will accrue tremendous benefits from the project. During the meeting, they discussed overall political situation as well as ongoing developmental projects in GB.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/11-Jan-2017/gb-going-to-become-economic-hub-of-pakistan-barjees>

“Muzaffarabad-Mirpur expressway included in CPEC”

Greater Kashmir, January 11, 2017

Two industrial zones, one each in Bimber and Mirpur, and an expressway from Muzaffarabad to Mirpur have been included in the CPEC which will transform PaK's socio-economic landscape, noted President of PaK, Sardar Masood Khan. He was addressing participants at an event “Our Youth Our Future: Creating Spaces for Youth-centric and Youth-led Policy-making.” The event was organised by Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms in collaboration with the British Council, a statement noted. Around 200 young people from a cross-section of society shared their views at the event with the President and asked critical questions regarding the “uneven relationship” between Islamabad and Muzaffarabad, poor infrastructure, lack of quality education and health facilities in PaK. While highlighting their imminent role, the President advised the students and young people to achieve excellence in their respective fields, become active and vibrant civic actors and develop skills to use modern information communication Tools in a strategic and effective way

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/business/-muzaffarabad-mirpur-expressway-included-in-cpec/238434.html>

“Federal Govt Working Hard for AJK uplift: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, January 12, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated

the federal government under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is working hard for the development of Azad Kashmir. Addressing a news conference in Muzaffarabad on January 12, he noted China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which will greatly benefit the entire area. Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted the federal government has approved a development package worth one hundred twenty-five billion rupees for the uplift of roads network in Azad Kashmir under China Pakistan Economic Corridor. He also stated that the construction of Expressway from Lower Topa to Kohala, medical college in Poonch, Leepa Tunnel and extension of Muzaffarabad and Rawalkot Airports have also been approved.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/12-Jan-2017/federal-govt-working-hard-for-ajk-uplift-haider>

“Musharraf delayed Kashmir solution”

The Nation, January 12, 2017

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Barjees Tahir stated that the Kashmir issue was close to resolution when Pervez Musharraf first sent troops in Kargil and then put elected prime minister behind the bars. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the office of administrator Jammu and Kashmir State Property on January 11, he referred to missing the chance of resolution of the longstanding issue between neighbouring countries. He noted that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had raised the issue in the General Assembly four times. He also stated that the present regime had allocated huge development funds for Kashmir. Under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he noted, Kashmir would be connected with Gilgit-Baltistan through a tunnel. He stated that 1450-kilometre long roads would be constructed for the valley.

<http://nation.com.pk/13-Jan-2017/musharraf-delayed-kashmir-solution>

“Marvi inspects BISP payment points in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, January 14, 2017

The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon on January 14 visited

various payment points and beneficiary households at Skardu, Shigar and Khaplu to inspect proper functioning of payment. "BISP is fully committed to the timely release of full payments to beneficiaries by the banks, interact with the beneficiaries, and gain firsthand information regarding their satisfaction level with the service delivery and customer care," the BISP chairperson stated. Whether it is scorching heat or freezing winters, BISP is always present at the service of the vulnerable and poorest of the poor, she noted. Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly Speaker Fida Muhammad Nashad also accompanied the chairperson during her visit to Skardu, according to a news release issued. BISP recently released its quarterly payments worth Rs 25 billion in last week of December 2016.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/01/14/marvi-inspects-bisp-payment-points-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Murtaza Zishan, "Economic zone for GB"

Pakistan Observer, January 14, 2017

Right from the first day of launching of 46 billion dollars China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, it has been emphatically and quite categorically stated time and again even at the highest level of the Federal Government that the all regions and areas across Pakistan are going to reap the benefits accruing from different developmental activities under CPEC umbrella. As the time passes, more and more details are surfacing about sorts of developmental activities being undertaken under the aegis of CPEC, there and everywhere in Pakistan. It is good to note that among other regions and areas of the country, an economic zone is also going to be established in Gilgit-Baltistan region as well and this has not been mulled but approved in principle already by the Joint Coordination Committee on CPEC in its meeting held in Islamabad recently. All this surely augurs well for the industrialization and economic uplift of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan after Economic Zone is set up in due course. The Economic Zone, spread over 250 acres of land, will have scope for appreciable economic activities at a larger scale and is going to have industries for agriculture, livestock, minerals and handicrafts. While commending and

appreciating setting of the Economic Zone in Gilgit-Baltistan also along with other regions of the country, this is also to ask the political leaders particularly those opposed to the Federal Government that prior to criticizing CPEC they should first ascertain all details and refrain from criticizing CPEC in any manner as the CPEC is a national project of great importance for the people of all regions and areas of Pakistan and not of one or the other government.

<http://pakobserver.net/economic-zone-for-gb/>

Hussain Ahmad Siddiqui, "More of the same"

The News, January 16, 2017

The mega Diamer-Basha Dam project on the Indus River is again in the news. Sadly, ground-breaking ceremony of the multi-purpose project has been held twice, in April 2006 and again in October 2011, but the project could not take-off as yet primarily due to lack of political will on the part of successive governments. This has resulted in improper planning, mismanagement and non-availability of necessary funds for the project. After getting stalled for a decade, the project is being revived and, interestingly, another ground-breaking ceremony is now planned sometime before the end of this year. Ironically, the project has also been approved more than once by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC); on January 7, 2004 at \$6.4 billion project cost, on March 7, 2007 at revised cost \$8.5 billion, and again on November 6, 2008 at \$12.6 billion including the cost of compensation and resettlement of the affected local population. The PC-1 of the project was finally approved by the ECNEC on August 20, 2009 at a total cost of over Rs894 billion (\$12.6 billion at that time) including foreign exchange component of Rs313 billion, with the directive to implement the project on fast track. The huge cost over-run of the project over the years, without achieving any physical progress, is reflected in the revised cost estimate that has swelled already to \$13.96 billion.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/money-matters/179364-More-of-the-same>

Fawad Maqsood, “180 MW power generation project approved under CPEC for GB: CM”

Business Recorder, January 16, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman on January 16 stated that 180 Mega Watt(MW) power generation project was approved under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) exclusively for Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). He stated that the Diamer Basha Dam was included in CPEC which is one of the biggest project of about 4500 MW. He stated that this project was not only important for Gilgit- Baltistan but also for the whole country. Chief Minister GB stated that this project would also connect Gilgit-Baltistan with National Grid. He further stated that federal government has provided Rs.45 billion under Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for construction of Express Way to construct link road between Gilgit and Baltistan region. He noted that work has already started on the project and will be completed within three years. Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that another road of 400 kilometer will be constructed from Gilgit to Ghizer, Shandoor, Chitral, Dir and Peshawar.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/01/16/334849/>

Shabbir Mir, “Section 144 imposed in Gilgit to stop illegal construction”

The Express Tribune, January 16, 2017

In a bid to stop illegal construction on government land in different parts of Gilgit town, the local administration has imposed Section 144 and banned all sorts of construction, except those sponsored by the government itself. Violators are warned of facing up to three months in prison while the illegal structures built would be razed. Khalisa Sarkar (unoccupied and barren land) in different parts of Gilgit town have somewhat become a magnet for irregular constructions. These areas include near the university (north-west part of Gilgit town), near Kono Daas (northeast) and Chilmish Daas (an extension of Kono Daas also in the northeast of Gilgit town). “Sub-divisional magistrate Asghar Khan has banned the construction on Khalisa Sarkar under Section

144,” noted an official in the regional information department on January 15. “Structures made on that land, other than the ones built by the government, would be demolished,” the magistrate was quoted as saying. Under the law, the official stated, plantation and other activities such as blasting would also be prohibited on government land. The government claims that it owns the land, while locals have laid claim based on ancestral ownership.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1296102/govt-land-section-144-imposed-gilgit-stop-illegal-construction/>

“Masood Asks PSU to Prepare Skilled Manpower for CPEC”

Radio Pakistan, January 16, 2017

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan asked public sector universities (PSU) to prepare skilled manpower for China Pakistan Economic Corridor and foreign job opportunities. He was addressing the second convocation of Mirpur University of Science and Technology in Mirpur. Masood Khan stated Azad Kashmir will be linked with CPEC through Mansehra-Muzaffarabad-Mirpur-Mangla Motorway that will boost trade activities and create job opportunities in the area.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/16-Jan-2017/masood-asks-psu-to-prepare-skilled-manpower-for-cpec>

“Steps Being Taken For Good Governance in AJK: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, January 17, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that concrete measures are being taken for good governance, rule of law and merit in the state. Addressing the AJK Cabinet meeting in Muzaffarabad on January 17, he noted that all resources are being utilized to put the state on the path of progress and prosperity. AJK Prime Minister further stated that merit is being given top priority and a transparent recruitment system is being evolved. Earlier, AJK Cabinet approved a new teacher

recruitment policy in the state. According to policy minimum education for appointment of a primary teacher is graduation while MA, M.Ed for senior teachers.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/17-Jan-2017/steps-being-taken-for-good-governance-in-ajk-haider>

Sheeraz Rathore, “CM says GB is part of issue, not Kashmir”

Daily Times, January 18, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman on January 17 noted that the region is not part of Jammu & Kashmir but it is a part of the lingering dispute. “Gilgit-Baltistan is not part of Kashmir but it is part of the Kashmir conundrum. Granting maximum rights to the region and Azad Jammu Kashmir will be beneficial for the issue. The resolution for making GB a fifth province has been adopted in the local assembly with majority vote and I also back it,” he stated in an interview. The Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan stated as per the constitution, the Kashmir issue is affected if Article 1 is amended. He observed that the Kashmir issue has three units. One map has been agreed upon by combining Azad Kashmir, the Indian-held Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, he added. China has never stated anything with reference to the region so far. A border settlement was made during Ayub Khan’s regime, he added, “Certain areas had gone to them and some areas had come to us. It is mentioned in this settlement if the decision of the Kashmir issue comes wrong through plebiscite, then talks will be held afresh.”

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/18-Jan-17/cm-says-gb-is-part-of-issue-not-kashmir->

“Army assures Azad Jammu and Kashmir PM of preparedness for all types of threats”

Dawn, January 18, 2017

Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on January 18 met Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan at the General Headquarters (GHQ) to discuss the situation along the Line of Control, the Army’s media wing

noted in a statement. The Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor, stated in a tweet that the army chief had assured the AJK PM that the army is fully prepared to respond to “all types of threat from across”. Haider thanked General Bajwa for the military’s contributions in improving the security situation and facilitating development in AJK, particularly in the fields of education, health and communication infrastructure.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1309232/army-assures-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-pm-of-preparedness-for-all-types-of-threats>

“Gilgit-Baltistan police arrest 12 on charges of anti-state activities, Imtiaz Taj”

Dawn, January 18, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan police on January 18 announced the arrest of 12 members of the nationalist Balawaristan National Front (BNF) on charges of anti-state activities. GB’s Inspector General Police Zafar Iqbal Aiwan during a press briefing claimed the 12 arrested were trying to “promote an anti-national ideology” and had “played into the hands of foreign agencies”. “The BNF came into being in 1995. The head of the BNF, Abdul Hamid, is in Belgium and he has, while sitting there, built an international and domestic network,” the IGP noted. The GB police chief alleged that RAW had provided funding to the BNF, which police suspect of carrying out ‘terrorist activities’, and ‘sabotaging’ the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Diamer-Bhasha Dam. IGP Aiwan stated Rs300-350 million money trail was also uncovered which he stated was linked to the purchase of weapons and properties. “The money reached here through various clandestine means,” he claimed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1309225/gilgit-baltistan-police-arrest-12-on-charges-of-anti-state-activities>

“AJK govt gives in to lawyers’ demand”

The Nation, January 19, 2017

In response to recent protest by legal fraternity, the government removed the director the Estate

Management of Mirpur Development Authority (MDA), and made him officer on special duty (OSD). Imran Shaheen was made OSD in the Services and General Administration Department in Muzaffarabad for his alleged involvement in massive corruption, malpractices, irregularities and dereliction of duties besides indifferent attitude towards the common man. "Imran Shaheen is repatriated and attached with S & GAD," noted an official notification issued by the AJK government late January 17. "Nadeem Ahmed Janjua, , Deputy Secretary Home Department is transferred and posted against the post of Director Estate Management Authority, Mirpur Development Authority in place of Imran Shaheen," the notification added. Led by Mirpur District Bar Association President Raja Zulfiqar Ahmed, dozens of black coats had stormed his office on January 12. The District Bar Association had given dead line of two days to the AJK government of meeting its demands including the immediate removal of Imran Shaheen, Director Estate Management, MDA, from the office for alleged dereliction of duties besides indulging in massive corruption and malpractices through misusing his office.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/19-Jan-2017/ajk-govt-gives-in-to-lawyers-demand>

Sheraz Rathore, "Adviser to PM blackmailing AJK PM for ignoring nepotism"

Daily Times, January 19, 2017

Advisor to the Prime Minister Asif Sheraz Rathore started to blackmail the Azad Jammu and Kashmir PM for not appointing people of the advisor's choice. A forged case was registered against vice president of PML-N Azad Kashmir Sardar Tahir Anwar but after the issuance of notification of Zulfiqar Malick, the case was withdrawn. Earlier, Asif Kirmani tried to appoint his favourite people on the women's seats on prerogative appointments in Azad Kashmir government but Farooq Haider rebuffed this. Obvious examples of Asif Kirmani's blackmailing are Abdul Khaliq Wasi and Siddique Bandali, who were appointed as member Kashmir councils, and Zulfiqar Malick was appointed on the grade 20 in PM

secretariat. Press Secretary of PM AJK was of the view that Malick Zulfiqar was the central leader of PML-N AJK, as PM AJK had appointed him.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/20-Jan-17/adviser-to-pm-blackmailing-ajk-pm-for-ignoring-nepotism>

"Progress: AJK govt set to develop Hattian Bala"

The Express Tribune, January 19, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider stated on January 18 that concrete measures are being taken to develop far-flung areas of the state. Presiding over a meeting about Hattian Bala district in Muzaffarabad, he noted basic infrastructure of the district will be upgraded and sufficient funds will be provided for setting up health and education institutions. Calling Hattian Bala a gateway to Srinagar, he noted it will be developed on modern lines. The small town is an important link in Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road. Haider directed the authorities concerned to provide better facilities at District Headquarters Hospital Hattian to facilitate the people.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1299873/progress-ajk-govt-set-develop-hattian-bala/>

Shabbir Mir, "Agha Ziauddin's killer shot dead"

The Express Tribune, January 20, 2017

A man who was accused of killing noted Shia cleric Agha Ziauddin has been killed in a police encounter. Shakirullah Jan was among the four terrorists killed by the Counterterrorism Department (CTD) in an alleged encounter near Sheikhpura on January 18, a CTD spokesperson confirmed. Shakirullah Jan and Arifuddin escaped from Gilgit jail three years back after reportedly drugging the security personnel on duty. Jan, who was from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, had been under trial in an Anti-Terrorism Court in Gilgit for the January 2005 murder of Ziauddin. The assassination of the eminent cleric had led to the killing of nearly 20 people in the ensuing riots over the next few days. Besides Jan, among the dead was Asif Chotu, the leader of LeJ, who was nominated in

over 100 murder cases and had a bounty of Rs3 million on his head. Another killed in encounter was identified as Noorul Amin, while one dead terrorist has not been identified yet.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1301088/eye-eye-gha-ziauddins-killer-shot-dead/>

Zafar Malik, “GB administration harassing journalist”

Daily Times, January 20, 2017

Following the publication of news in Daily Times about the abuse of innocent girls by some ministers of Gilgit-Baltistan (G.B), the GB administration has allegedly started harassing the journalist Shabbir Siham. The journalist is reportedly being threatened with registration of a false case against him, arresting him and taking him to GB if he does not appear before a fact finding committee meeting. On the other hand the chairman Fact Finding Committee (FFC) home secretary, Ahsan Ullah Bhutta, has withdrawn the decision of holding meeting of this committee in Islamabad under the directives of the GB administration. The journalist was told by phone that he will have to come to Gilgit with evidence with reference to his news item at every cost and will have to appear before the FFC.

The journalist has refused to go to GB due to security concerns. However, assurance of cooperation from the journalist has been made if the FFC meeting is convened in Islamabad or a representative of the FFC is sent to Islamabad. Sources noted that the third meeting of the FFC was held in Gilgit on January 17 under the home secretary Gilgit and it was decided therein that the meeting of the FFC has been fixed on January 27 and this is the final date. If the journalist does not appear before it, then he would be arrested and presented before the committee. The journalist has collected more information about the GB scandal. The government is fearing if the statement is recorded under 164 or before a magistrate at the official level then it would create problems for the government.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/20-Jan-17/gb-administration-harassing-journalist>

“Mehbooba Mufti proposed creating trade corridor involving both IHK and Azad Kashmir”

Pakistan Tribune, January 20, 2017

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti pitched for creating a trade corridor between South Asia and Central Asia involving both India-held Kashmir and Azad Kashmir as its “nucleus”, reports stated on January 17. They noted that Ms Mufti proposed the idea on the lines of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Speaking in the disputed state’s Legislative Council, she noted such a corridor between the two emerging economic hotspots would help forge a new regional cooperation, energy transformation, trade and transit. The subcontinent was historically linked to Central Asia through Kashmir and “taking advantage of its geographical location, Jammu and Kashmir could become a nucleus towards forging a new economic alliance in the region”, Ms Mufti was quoted as saying while winding up the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on Governor’s Address. “The oil and gas resources of Central Asia are the nearest and most economical answers to South Asian energy needs and J&K can help foster energy cooperation in the region,” she stated. “This will create favourable conditions for Jammu and Kashmir to play its natural role of connecting the two emerging economic zones and lift itself out of political and economic fragility.” She stated: “Such an arrangement will supplement the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through this part of Kashmir.” The trans-Kashmir corridor, with diverse sub-corridors, Ms Mufti stated, “was symbolic of relative peace, prosperity, cross-cultural and ideological fertilisation and human security until late 1940s”. India’s overland connections with its northern neighbourhood got ruptured due to partition in 1947, she noted.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Mehbooba-Mufti-proposed-creating-trade-corridor-involving-both-IHK-and-Azad-Kashmir-278061.html>

“AJK PM approves health package for Azad Kashmir”

Pakistan Today, January 20, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider on January 20 approved much-needed health package for Azad Jammu and Kashmir to provide quality health facilities to the masses. The prime minister while chairing a high-level meeting at Kashmir House noted that this package would bring an end to health issues in the state. Under the health package, an emergency service is going to be started in 11 hospitals of the state from March 1, 2017. For emergency services, 330 new posts of doctors, nurses and other staff would be created besides the up-gradation of State Nursing School, Mirpur, and establishment of new nursing colleges in Muzaffarabad and Rawlakot in the next fiscal year. The meeting also approved 1156 new posts of doctors, nurses and paramedics for AJK to overcome the shortage of staff in the hospitals in general. To improve the standard of health services in private sector hospitals, a health regulatory authority would also be formed. The meeting approved to increase 1150 additional beds for hospitals in AJK. The PM also approved to establish a research and development center at Abbas Institute of Medical Sciences and to ensure the purchase and provision of standard quality medicines approval for formation of technical committee was also granted.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/01/20/ajk-pm-approves-health-package-for-azad-kashmir/>

“Rs6b Grant Allocated For Education Uplift: Nashad”

Radio Pakistan, January 20, 2017

Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly Fida Muhammad Nashad stated that Federal Government has allocated six billion rupees grant for uplift of education. He stated this while addressing a teachers training workshop held under the auspices of Central Asian Institute in Gilgit on January 20. He further stated that Higher Education Commission has released two billion rupees for the establishment of Baltistan University. The Speaker noted that one billion rupees for setting up of Engineering facility in Gilgit and Skardu campus of Karakorum International University was also released. Fida Nashad stated that out of 161 ongoing development projects fifty seven will be completed by the end of

this financial year at a cost of over one billion rupees.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/20-Jan-2017/rs6b-grant-allocated-for-education-uplift-nashad>

“Dar for development in AJK”

Daily Times, January 21, 2017

Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on January 21 noted that the Federal Government would continue to extend full support to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government for the socio-economic development of the area. The minister was talking to the AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan, who called on him. Matters related to development projects and AJK’s overall financial situation was discussed during the meeting. Raja Farooq Haider Khan apprised the Finance Minister of the development priorities and plans of the AJK Government. He also stressed on the need for inclusion of the AJK in foreign funded projects being implemented across the four provinces.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/21-Jan-17/dar-for-development-in-ajk>

Shabbir Mir, “CPEC security division: Retired army personnel to be hired”

The Express Tribune, January 22, 2017

To better protect the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through Gilgit-Baltistan, retired army personnel will be hired to provide security to the mega project, government officials stated on January 21. Moreover, plans for setting up a special police unit to provide security to CPEC projects is also under consideration. According to officials in the G-B chief minister’s secretariat, a decision on hiring retired army officers to protect CPEC was taken during a meeting between Special Security Division (SSD) Commander Major General Abid Rafique and G-B chief minister Hafeezur Rehman in Islamabad on January 21. “Work on this project [of hiring retired officers for CPEC security division] is underway,” Maj Gen Rafique informed the chief minister. The two also reviewed measures already taken by the regional government for

providing security to projects under CPEC in the region, trucks travelling on the Karakoram Highway and of the Chinese workers engaged in different development projects in the region.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1302829/cpec-security-division-retired-army-personnel-hired/>

“PM to announce political reforms package for GB”

Dawn, January 23, 2017

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would announce political reforms for Gilgit-Baltistan during his scheduled visit to the region on Feb 6. Talking to media persons in Skardu on January 22, GBLA Speaker Fida Mohammad Nashad stated the premier had formed a constitutional committee headed by his Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz to settle the constitutional status of the region. He noted that after consultations with relevant institutions and GB representatives, the committee had prepared a political reforms package and submitted it to the prime minister. GB people would soon get good news about their future status, he promised. Mr Nashad further noted that GB people had been deprived of constitutional rights for last six decades, adding they also had reservations about their share in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. He also stated that the federal government had been urged to declare GB as its constitutional province as GB people wished to become part of Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310179/pm-to-announce-political-reforms-package-for-gb>

Shabbir Mir, “Supreme Appellate Court: G-B lawyers demand appointment of local judge”

The Express Tribune, January 24, 2017

Lawyers in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) voiced concern over reports of the induction of a judge from outside the region in the Supreme Appellate Court (SAC). They claim an influential ruling party lawmaker has recommended the appointment. “We have credible information that an influential ruling party lawmaker from Mansehra is pushing for the appointment of his

‘near and dear one’ for the vacant post,” noted G-B High Court Bar Association President Malik Kifayat. Kifayat was referring to the SAC seat which fell vacant after Justice Shehbaz Ali died last year. “We will not let this happen as we have competent people to fill the post,” Kifayat told the media in Gilgit. Under the law, the regional government forwards a summary containing three names to the federal government, and the prime minister, as the competent authority, can appoint one. Kifayat stated there was a panic among the lawyers about the issue which he noted was previously discussed in lawyers’ bodies. He stated besides judges, induction of locals in other administrative posts in the judiciary is the right of locals.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1304622/supreme-appellate-court-g-b-lawyers-demand-appointment-local-judge/>

Amir Hussain, “Voices from Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily Times, January 29, 2017

The government faces a series of challenges in exercising its political writ in the remote regions of the country. But it seems to have no palpable plans to address the sense of deprivation, political exclusion and economic marginalisation that exist in these areas. There are a host of political problems which can easily be resolved with some effort and meagre resources by introducing an inclusive social policy framework to engage people as primary actors rather than isolating and incarcerating them. Unreconstructed postcolonial states like Pakistan – which inherited a plethora of debilitating issues – are still fraught with the problems of territorial nationalism with legal and political infrastructure of bifurcated citizenship. The British colonial masters adopted the political instrument of indirect rule which strengthened the customary law for natives but reserved the civil law for settlers only. This created a political dichotomy of locals and non-locals that continues till date through nationalistic movements which claim their indigenous right to land, economy and culture and see outsiders as the enemy of indigenous political identities.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/182495-Voices-from-Gilgit-Baltistan>

“GOVT to Facilitate Business Community to Enhance Investment In AJK: Farooq”

Radio Pakistan, January 30, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that the government has formulated a comprehensive policy to facilitate the business community for promotion of investment in Azad Kashmir. Talking to overseas Kashmiri investors in London on January 30, he further noted that the Board of Investment is being set up in Azad Kashmir to promote local as well as foreign investment. The Prime Minister stated there is great potential of investment in hydro power generation and tourism sectors in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the business community to take full advantage from the investment friendly policies of the government.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/30-Jan-2017/govt-to-facilitate-business-community-to-enhance-investment-in-ajk-farooq>

“AJK Govt Exploiting Water Resources to Overcome Power Crisis: Nisar”

Radio Pakistan, January 30, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government is encouraging public private partnership to exploit available water resources in the state to overcome power crisis. The AJK Minister for Power Raja Nisar Ahmad Khan noted that a working plan has been chalked out in this regard. He also stated that Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Korean government worth seven billion rupees in this regard would be inked soon.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/30-Jan-2017/ajk-govt-exploiting-water-resources-to-overcome-power-crisis-nisar>

Economic Developments

Fawad Maqsood, “Federal govt enhances AJK’s development budget to Rs 21bn: Farooq”

Business Recorder, January 1, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that the federal government increased development budget of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to Rs 21 billion from Rs 12 billion. Talking to media late on December 30, Raja Farooq Haider noted that Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif during his visit to Muzaffarabad on December 29 had in principle accepted a number of AJK government’s demands, including forming a high level constitutional reform committee to suggest amendments in the Interim AJK Constitution Act 1974, increasing development and non-development budget to overcome financial crisis, declaring AJK part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor, providing financial resources for the construction of 1450 kilometer long roads, construction of Lower Topa Muzaffarabad Expressway, upgradation of Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Road, construction of Shunter Nullah Tunnel under the CPEC and increase of AJK’s share in federal taxes. He further stated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also directed Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for release of Rs 2.20 billion to the AJK on account of its outstanding funds from Kashmir Council.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/01/01/333546>

“PM increased AJK development funds to Rs 21bn: Barjees”

Business Recorder, January 10, 2017

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir January 10 stated Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had approved increase in development funds of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) from Rs 11 billion to Rs 21 billion. Addressing a press conference, he stated the Pakistan

Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government would fulfil its promises made with the people of Kashmir during the election campaign. The PML-N won the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections with a heavy majority, he noted. Barjees stated the prime minister held four meetings with the AJK Prime Minister and his cabinet members and discussed the projects for Azad Kashmir in detail. The recent budget session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Muzaffarabad, continued for four hours and all development projects came under discussion, he added. The Prime Minister, he stated, wanted Kashmir to be a prosperous region and was keenly interested in its development projects. He stated the Prime Minister approved development projects, including Mangla-Mirpur-Muzaffarabad road and Shounter Valley project. The Prime Minister also expressed his intention to make AJK projects, including Lepa tunnel part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he added.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/01/10/334361>

“AJK Govt Allocates Rs970m for 1571 Projects”

Radio Pakistan, January 21, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir government has allocated nine hundred seventy million rupees for one thousand five hundred seventy-one projects of Community Infrastructure Programme. The approval was given at a meeting presided over by AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan in Islamabad. Under Community Infrastructure Programme, a number of projects related to provision of water supply schemes, construction of footpaths, additional rooms in educational institutions and construction of link roads will be completed.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/21-Jan-2017/ajk-govt-allocates-rs970m-for-1571-projects>

“AJK to get Rs9b hike in uplift budget”

The Nation, January 26, 2017

Acting Prime Minister Tariq Farooq disclosed on January 24 that the annual development budget of Azad Jammu & Kashmir is being increased from Rs12 billion to Rs21 billion following the upcoming implementation of the National Finance Commission Award. It will benefit AJK territory with due national financial resources for turning the liberated territory into a welfare state, he noted while addressing a press conference. He further noted that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would visit Mirpur next month to

announce the mega development financial package for the speedy progress and prosperity of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He pointed out that Prime Minister will announce some major development projects for the state during his forthcoming visit to the area. “The upcoming financial package by the government of Pakistan would be the manifestation of the pre-elections commitment made by the PML-N to the people of AJK,” he stated.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/26-Jan-2017/ajk-to-get-rs9b-hike-in-uplift-budget>

International Developments

“UK promises to raise Kashmir issue on international level”

The Nation, January 3, 2017

Member of British Parliament Mirza Khalid Mahmood pledged to raise Kashmir issue on every world forum on behalf of innocent Kashmiris. He was addressing a joint press conference with former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Barrister Sultan Mahmood in Islamabad. Barrister Sultan Mahmood appreciated the efforts Mirza Khalid Mahmood for raising Kashmir on every forum.

<http://nation.com.pk/international/03-Jan-2017/uk-promises-to-raise-kashmir-issue-on-international-level>

“AJK President welcomes Iran mediation offer”

The Nation, January 7, 2017

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir welcomed Iran's offer to mediate between India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir dispute. Talking to an Iranian news agency, President 'Masood Khan' noted that Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has shown interest in mediation between Pakistan and India and 'we welcome that.' Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, paying a visit to India, stated that Iran is willing to mediate between Pakistan and India over the issue of Kashmir if both sides ask Iran to do so. Masood Khan further stated that people of Pakistan and Kashmir have always been open to mediation as they have also accepted the mediation of the United Nations. "But it all depends on India's concurrence and so far, India has stated no to any type of mediation or third party role," he noted. He also stated Iran is a friend of Pakistan and there are very good relations between the two sides as they want peace and stability in the region. He stated, 'Kashmir historically has been doing trade with Iran and 'I think Kashmiris are keen to start this process all over again, but first

we have to be given our freedom. We also want to connect Pakistani Kashmir with China-Pakistan economic corridor, industrial zones that would be established and we would like to send the products we produce to the Iranian markets.'

<http://nation.com.pk/international/07-Jan-2017/ajk-president-welcomes-iran-mediation-offer>

“OIC delegation to visit AJK in March, also requesting visit to IHK: OIC SG”

Pakistan Today, January 20, 2017

The Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz met the OIC Secretary General Dr Yousef Al-Othaimi on January 19 on the sidelines of the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, in Kuala Lumpur. The OIC Secretary General informed the Adviser that under instructions from President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Turkey being the current Chairman of the OIC), a delegation of the OIC's Independent Human Rights Commission will be paying a visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir in March 2017. The OIC is also requesting India to allow the delegation to visit Indian Jammu and Kashmir. The Advisor also thanked the Secretary General for convening the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Foreign Ministers on the Rohingya issue. The Advisor invited the OIC Secretary-General to visit Pakistan.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/01/20/oic-delegation-to-visit-ajk-in-march-also-requesting-visit-to-ihk-oic-sg/>

“AJK PM begins weeklong UK visit”

The Nation, January 23, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider on January 22 left for United Kingdom (UK) for a weeklong tour to participate in a conference and join other activities related to highlighting Kashmir freedom movement.

Senior Minister Ch Tariq Farooq, Minister for Health, Planning & Development Dr Najeeb Naqi, Director General Prime Minister Secretariat Malik Zulfiqar, Saleem Chishti and other workers of Muslim League (N) saw off the prime minister at Benazir Bhutto International Airport. Senior Minister of AJK Ch Tariq Farooq will perform as acting Prime Minister during the visit.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/23-Jan-2017/ajk-pm-begins-weeklong-uk-visit>

“Pakistan must stop exploitation of Gilgit-Baltistan through CPEC, say Kashmiri groups”

DNA, January 31, 2017

Expressing serious concern about the construction of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), representatives of various Kashmiri groups have unanimously voiced out against the exploitation of the natural resources of Gilgit Baltistan by Pakistan and China. At a conference held under the banner of the Jammu and Kashmir International Peoples Alliance (JKIPA) on January 29 in Como, Italy, the various Kashmiri groups, including the United

Kashmir Peoples National Party and the Kashmir National Party passed a resolution to this effect. They declared that Jammu and Kashmir is one political entity and included areas of Gilgit Baltistan, the so-called Azad Kashmir, Jammu, Kashmir valley and Ladakh. The resolution also stated that the construction of mega projects and dams under the CPEC is a clear violation of international law and United Nations (UN) resolutions on Kashmir. In a reminder to the governments of China and Pakistan, the resolution further asserted that the CPEC would result in added pollution and serious environmental issues that would change the eco-system of the region with disastrous consequences for human and wild life.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-pakistan-must-stop-exploitation-of-gilgit-baltistan-through-cpec-say-kashmiri-groups-2302164>

Other Developments

“Gemstone industry needs attention to exploit potential”

Daily Times, January 16, 2017

Nature has bestowed Pakistan with vast reserves of mineral ores including many precious gemstones and the government can open new vistas in this industry by giving proper incentives to investors. Different varieties of minerals like peridot, aquamarine, and topaz in different colours of violet, pink, golden and champagne along with rubies, emeralds and rare-earth minerals like bastnaesite, xenotime, sphene and tourmaline make the country prominent in the mineral world. Northern and north-western parts of

the country, from where nearly all minerals which Pakistan is currently offering to the world market have been found so far, are shrouded by the three world-famous mountain ranges Hindukush, Himalayas, and Karakorum. According to official sources, 7 out of the 25 precious and semi-precious stones and mineral specimens have been intermittently exploited and marketed all over the world.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/16-Jan-17/gemstone-industry-needs-attention-to-exploit-potential>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“China Visit was Successful: CM”

Baad-e-Shimal, January 1, 2017

Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman while returning from China noted that his visit was very successful. According to Rehman, China has agreed to include Diamer-Basha Dam into CPEC. He further stated that work on the dam will get accelerated now. On the economic zones, the Chief Minister stated that 250 acre land has been acquired for two economic zones at Makpoon area. Commenting further on his visit Rehman stated that Pandera and KIU hydel projects would also be included into CPEC. An expressway would be constructed from Chitral to Gilgit and from Raikot to Thakot. These two lines would be also included into CPEC, stated Rehman.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=01-01-2017&img=01-01-2017page-1-1

“Feasibility Report for the Regional Grid Ready”

Baad-e-Shimal, January 3, 2017

A regional grid station will be established in GB. In this regard, a feasibility study was done and the report is also ready for this project. According to the official sources, this grid would be connected with the national grid. The cost for the project is 25 billion rupees. The centre would initially release 5 billion rupees for the current year. Once accomplished, it would address the energy crisis in both GB and the centre, noted the officials.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=01-03-2017&img=01-03-2017page-1-1

“Ghizer under threat from Terrorists”

Daily Salaam, January 4, 2017

In order to thwart terrorist attacks in Ghizer, the government has deployed more forces in the area.

Security and patrolling has been enhanced in the area. According to intelligence reports terrorists would target religious places. Terrorists have also warned the government of attacking important installations. Gilgit city is also under radar of terrorists. Therefore, the government does not want any security lapse there. Cordon and search operation were being conducted during midnight.

<http://www.dailysalam.com/index.php>

“Change in name of Diamer Basha Dam will disappoint people”

Baad-e-Shimal, January 7, 2017

In a meeting of Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) on CPEC in Beijing, it is believed that the government agreed to change the name of Diamer-Basha Dam. In order to counter India’s opposition on China’s investment in GB, JCC has decided to delete Diamer from the dam’s nomenclature and it would now be called Basha dam. Both Pakistan and China agreed to start work soon. There is no doubt that India is our enemy number one so they will always try to impede Pakistan’s development. India is constructing dams on Pakistani rivers. It is stopping water to flow into Pakistan. It dreams of turning Pakistan into a barren land. People of GB are more patriotic than people from other parts of Pakistan. It is proven that no one from Gilgit-Baltistan has ever been involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan. Rather at every occasion, people from GB have been at the forefront in the defence of Pakistan. When Pakistan decided to construct a dam at Chilas, no one objected. In fact, people assured the authorities of their support and help. But people did ask why Diamer dam was being named as Diamer-Basha Dam and why due rights were not given to the people. We did not let enemy forces exploit these fault lines also.

On the other hand people from the Diamer suffered a lot due to the construction of Diamer-Basha Dam.

Large number of people got dislocated. People want CPEC to be successful and wish the projects to be completed. The chief minister of GB tried his best to get as much as for the GB people from the CPEC. It is his efforts that GB has been included into CPEC and Diamer-Basha Dam has also been included into CPEC.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=01-07-2017&img=01-07-2017page-4-4

“323 billion for Azad Kashmir under CPEC”

Daily Mahasib, January 15, 2017

Pakistan Peoples Party during its rule did nothing for the region. They were busy in corruption. The PML-N is taking historical steps towards the development of AJK. But unfortunately, the PPP cannot digest these developments. What they want is to impede any development in the region by not allowing PML-N to complete projects in AJK. They are now in the process of making a Grand Alliance with other opposition parties against the ruling government. That move is not going to deter Raja Farooq Haider. He has full support from his members. The people are appreciating Prime Minister's work for the development. Raja Farooq Haider succeeded in getting Rs 323 billion for the region under CPEC. AJK will also get its share from it. Economic zones and infrastructure would be built under CPEC. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif agreed to give more funds and has also accepted to include AJK in CPEC. Nawaz Sharif has delivered what he promised earlier for the region.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=15-01-2017>

“The impression of CPEC would be felt in Srinagar too: Raja Farooq Haider”

Daily Mahasib, January 20, 2017

Raja Farooq Haider stated that he is so grateful to the Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif for taking special interest towards development of the AJK. He further stated that he is thankful to him for

his relentless efforts to include AJK into CPEC. While commenting on the CPEC, he stated it would prove a game changer for the region. He also revealed that Mang and Pathan hydro power projects will be included into CPEC. Two expressways would also be included into CPEC. The fibre optic cable will help the IT sector. These developments will change the fortune of AJK. This will also convey an impression in Kashmir that AJK is a part of Pakistan and has benefited from it.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=20-01-2017>

“Gilgit-Baltistan has been made a Province, Only to announce it now: Deputy Speaker”

Baad-e-Shimal, January 25, 2017

Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly GB, Jaferullah Khan stated that all formalities have been completed for making GB a province. He noted this in an interview with media. Everything has been done in this regard now, what remains is its official announcement. The Prime Minister of Pakistan would do that at an appropriate time. Kashmiris are no one to pressurise us on the issue, stated Jaferullah. The PML-N is delivering what it has promised during elections whereas the Chief Minister GB stated that there is need of amendment in the Constitution for making GB a province. He further stated that the committee under Sartaj Aziz has finalised and submitted its report to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Nawaz Sharif who is slated to visit GB sometime next month will announce it. People of the region should keep patience. GB will get constitutional rights during the PML-N rule only.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=01-25-2017&img=01-25-2017page-1-1

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

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 Muhammad Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 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: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

Chief Minister G-B: Hafiz Hafiz-ur-Rehman

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 to 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



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191
Website: www.idsa.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com