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POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Yaqoob-ul Hassan
& Sanya Saroha

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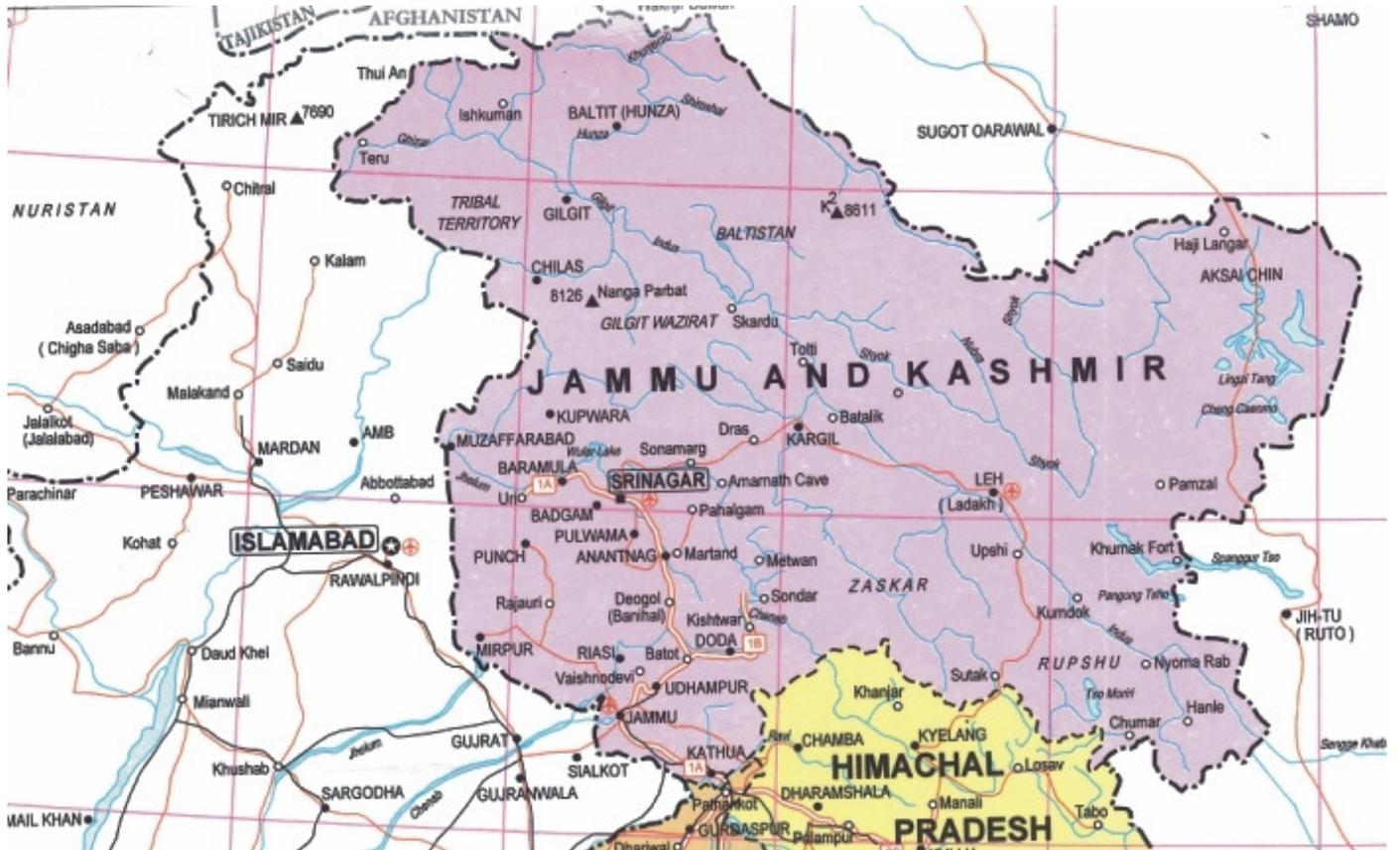
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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES
रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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



Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Since June 2013 when members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) killed nine foreign tourists at the base camp of Nanga Parbat, Gilgit-Baltistan was relatively safer than the other parts of Pakistan. But the recent incidents, in which many girl schools were burnt, indicated the re-emergence of the terrorist threat in the region. The other part of the region, so-called “Azad Kashmir” also saw the anti-Ahmadi protests, after the Pakistan Supreme Court acquitted Asia Bibi in the long-pending blasphemy case. If extremism and terrorism return back to the region, not only will it affect the social fabric of the society but the highly hyped CPEC project will come under the lens of terrorists.

The current issue also contains stories about how Pakistan and PoK based leadership are unceasingly trying to internationalize the Kashmir issue at every forum.

Yaqoob ul Hassan

Political Developments

Zeeshan Aziz, “Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Govt Clarifies CS’s Visit to China”

Urdu Point, November 1, 2018

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government on November 1 contradicted a news item published in local newspaper regarding the visit of Chief Secretary (CS) GB, Babar Hayat Tarar to China, has clarified that the CS’s visit to China was a routine official visit that was organised by the Federal and Chinese governments. During the visit, the CS was accompanied by GB cabinet ministers, MLAs and representatives from Pakistan Army. The delegation during visit to Changyang signed further expansion of MOUs of cooperation in different sectors.

During the visit, matters relating to border security and further enhancing cooperation in health, education, trade and agriculture sectors were also discussed.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan-gb-govt-clarifies-css-vis-470450.html>

“President AJK lauds independent report by British All-Party Parliamentary Kashmir Group”

TNS, November 1, 2018

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan has lauded an independent report on Human rights in Jammu and Kashmir launched at the House of Commons by The All-Party Parliamentary Kashmir Group. The Group recommends repeal of the black laws in ‘IOK’, calls for investigations into the unmarked mass graves discovered in ‘IOK’ in order to establish the identity of the victims, asks the Government of India to immediately ban the use of the pellet shotguns, asks that India must open its prisons to international inspection, and urges India and Pakistan to work to resume regularized visa-regulated civilian travel

across the Line of Control and reunite separated families.

<https://tns.world/president-ajk-lauds-independent-report-by-british-all-party-parliamentary-kashmir-group/>

“India objects Pak-China Bus Service via PoK”

The Policy Times, November 1, 2018

India has raised strong objections over Pakistan-China proposed bus services which will run through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The External Affairs Ministry has criticized the move, terming it as a “violation of India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”. India maintains that PoK is Indian Territory.

Responding to media queries, MEA spokesman Raveesh Kumar said: “we have lodged strong protests with China and Pakistan on the proposed bus service”. Mr. Kumar said It has been India’s consistent and well-known position that the “so-called China-Pakistan ‘Boundary Agreement’ of 1963 is illegal and invalid, and has never been recognized by the Government of India”.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) service will be launched on November 3. According to Radio Pakistan, the bus route will be from Lahore to Kashgar in China. The service will run four days a week from Lahore to Tashkurgan.

<http://thepolicytimes.com/india-objects-pak-china-bus-service-via-pok/>

“APPGK report reflects human rights violations in held valley: Masood”

The Nation, November 02, 2018

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan has lauded an independent report on “Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir” launched at the House of Commons by the

All Parties Parliamentary Group on Kashmir (APPKG). Speaking at the ceremony, attended by more than 30 Members of Parliament and Lords representing all major political parties, the AJK president said, “This is a potent moment. The British Parliament has broken its silence over an issue that concerns the fate and political future of 20 million Kashmiris who have been striving for the attainment of their right to self-determination for the past 71 years”.

The President informed the lords and MPs, who attended the ceremony, that Azad Kashmir with the help of the armed forces of Pakistan was bearing the burden of 40,000 refugees without the assistance of an international agency like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

<https://nation.com.pk/02-Nov-2018/appgk-report-reflects-human-rights-violations-in-held-valley-masood>

“China, Pak justify bus service via PoK after red-flagging by India”

Daily News & Analysis, November 02, 2018

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang on November 1 defended the bus service and said it has nothing to do with the territorial dispute and will not change its “principled stance” on the Kashmir issue, India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) lodged strong protests with both China and Pakistan. The bus service is being launched on November 3. Pakistan rejected the protest, citing the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. A statement issued by Pakistan Foreign Office accused India of raising frivolous issues.

The bus will travel through PoK’s Gilgit-Baltistan region, which is part of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan and China don’t share a border and its only link to China is through PoK, which shares border with China as well as with Afghanistan. The 30-hour trip will take passengers Chilas, Gilgit, Sost, Khunjerab Pass. The passengers have been asked to book their seats at least a week before travel while the one-way ticket from Lahore to Kaghar have been priced at Pakistani Rs 13,000 per seat.

<https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-china-pak-justify-bus-service-via-pok-after-red-flagging-by-india-2681838>

“AJK announces holiday at edu institutes”

The Nation, November 02, 2018

All the private and public sector educational institutions will remain closed for next two days in Mirpur and other parts of the AJK due to continued suspension of the routes leading to the major cities of AJK. The routes’ blockage has hit the business activity in the state. National newspapers appearing from Lahore and Islamabad could not reach AJK on November 1 due to suspension of the transport since October 31 morning.

The protestors, belonging to various sects of the Muslims, raised slogans against the decision besides delivering speeches demanding immediate withdrawal of the verdict by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. They vowed to continue the protest demonstrations across the AJK till the acceptance of their demand. They expressed complete solidarity with the country-wide protests against the SC verdict across Pakistan. Addressing a protest rally at central Shaheed Chowk in Mirpur on November 1, speakers including leading Ulema and Muslim religious scholars announced to observe black day on November 2 in Mirpur district and other parts of the AJK against the acquittal of blasphemy accused Aasia Bibi by the apex court of the country.

<https://nation.com.pk/02-Nov-2018/ajk-announces-holiday-at-edu-institutes>

Farhan Zahid, “Recent Wave of Terrorism in Pakistan’s Gilgit-Baltistan Region”

The Jamestown Foundation, November 2, 2018
(oped)

The most significant terrorist incident in the region took place in June 2013, when members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) killed nine foreign tourists (hikers from the United States, China, Slovakia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Nepal), their guide and chef (Express Tribune, June 23, 2013). The hikers

were at the base camp of Nanga Parbat Mountain when the terrorists attacked. The incident was disastrous for Pakistan's tourism industry, which suffered significantly after the incident. Just two months after the attack, the team investigating the case was ambushed in Chilas town. The district superintendent of police and two military officers were killed.

The re-surfacing of Islamist terrorism in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan, which benefits from tourism in the region. The region is in close proximity to the restive Chinese Xinjiang Autonomous Region and also borders the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. The region is overwhelmingly Shia and has experienced sectarian strife in the past that militants might attempt to exploit. The recent growth of Islamist militancy in the region is a cautionary sign. According to one estimate, a total of 1,500 girls' schools have been burned down or blown up by Islamist terrorists during the last 10 years (Nation, August 4). Tribal areas of Pakistan—including in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and Gilgit-Baltistan—have experienced burnings of girls' schools in the past, and often times such incidents have preceded a broader, full-fledged Islamist insurgency.

<https://jamestown.org/program/recent-wave-of-terrorism-in-pakistans-gilgit-baltistan-region/>

“Pakistan-France friendly relations getting stronger with passage of time: Gandapur”

Pakistan Today, November 2, 2018

During the meeting, bilateral relations between the two countries with particular reference to the social and economic development of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB) were discussed. He said that the government intended to develop new tourist resorts, roads and recreational activities to attract more tourists to the area. He informed that the visa policy, security and rescue related services for foreign tourists, expeditions, trekkers and mountaineers were also being improved.

Underlining the importance of foreign investment in these sectors, the minister said that the government would encourage the establishment of industries and relevant technology in GB's mining sector.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/11/02/pakistan-france-friendly-relations-pakistan-france-friendly-relations-getting-stronger-with-passage-of-time-gandapurgetting-stronger-with-passage-of-time-minister/>

“AJK bigwigs review 1st fiscal quarter's performance”

The Nation, November 3, 2018

Expressing dismay over the prolong inordinate delay in payment of official advertisements published in the national and state print media, pending against various departments of AJK government, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan on November 2 directed all the Secretaries to ensure payment of departmental advertisements within next 15 days to all concerned newspapers, pending against the government functionaries. The AJK PM also directed removal of the obstacles as soon as possible for supply of potable water to the residents of Mirpur. He said that AJK government achieved its developmental targets better than the four provinces of the country. However, he said the departments need to pay more heed to the quality. Shah said that funds amounting to Rs4 billion and Rs400 million were released in the first quarter out of which 78 percent have been incurred. Same amount was issued for the second quarter. He said funds amounting to Rs5 billion in development mode are still available in the accounts. Farooq Haider asked the ministers and secretaries to compile a report after reviewing pace of development and monitoring of development projects which should also be forwarded to Prime Minister Secretariat. He said Fruit Development Programme was being re-launched in AJK while special attention was being paid to social and productive sector in Annual Development Programme..

<https://nation.com.pk/03-Nov-2018/ajk-bigwigs-review-1st-fiscal-quarter-s-performance>

“Six new ministers inducted in AJK cabinet”

Dunya News, November 3, 2018

The new ministers inducted in the Azad Kashmir cabinet include Chaudhry Shahzad, Mustafa Bashir, Ahmad Raza Qadri, Raja Siddique, Chaudhry Ismail and Farooq Tahir. Prime Minister AJK Raja Farooq Haider Khan, ministers, members of the assembly, Chief Secretary, Heads of departments PML-N leaders and workers and people belonging to different walks of life attended the ceremony.

<https://dunyaews.tv/en/Pakistan/465005-Six-new-ministers-inducted-in-AJK-cabinet>

“CPEC-BRI to foster collaboration, bring nations closer: AJK president”

Daily Times, November 4, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan while speaking at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London, has said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a hugely beneficial project for Pakistan, China and potentially other countries of the region, was on track and would be completed with success.

To start with, the volume of Chinese debt (\$ 6 billion) is relatively small in the overall volume of Pakistani debt. The interest rates, he said, included the range of zero percent, concessional loans, preferential buyer’s loans and commercial credit lines, with a long repayment period. Pakistan as a solvent country would repay its debts, he said. Pakistan or other countries participating in the BRI do not fear that Chinese heavy investments would lead to the export of Chinese political model. China has demonstrated over the years that it abides by the principles of respect for the sovereignty and political independence of other nations, as well as non-interference in their internal affair.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/318238/cpec-bri-to-foster-collaboration-bring-nations-closer-ajk-president/>

“Bilawal Appoints Office Bearers in Gilgit Baltistan”

The Urdu Point, November 5, 2018

Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has appointed following office bearers of Peoples Youth Organization and Peoples Students Federation Gilgit-Baltistan with immediate effect.

Peoples Youth Organization Gilgit-Baltistan: Bashir Ahmed khan (Skardu) President, Imtiaz Hussain Umeed (Gilgit) General Secretary, Barkat Ali (Gilgit) Additional General Secretary, Asalan Shah (Diamer) Deputy General Secretary, Waqar Ahmed Maya (Ghizer) Senior Vice President, Tehseen ullah (Diamer) Vice President, Iqdar Ali (Gilgit) Vice President, Irfan Ali (Astor) Vice President, Shahid Hussain (Hunza Gojal) Information Secretary, Murtaza (Nagar) Deputy Information Secretary and Walayat khan (Ghizer) Coordination Secretary, says a press release. Peoples Students Federation Gilgit-Baltistan: Baseer Hassan (Gilgit) President, Ahmed Nabi (Diamer) General Secretary, Amir Hussain Baltistan Senior Vice President and Mehboob Ali Ghizer Information secretary.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/bilawal-appoints-office-bearers-in-gilgit-bal-472836.html>

“Govt initiates programme to protect hilly areas of KP, GB”

ARY News, November 5, 2018

An official statement in Peshawar on November 4 said under the programme four billion rupees would be spent on the installation of an early warning system to monitor the movement of glaciers in 15 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Similarly, digital sensors would also be established on the rivers to monitor the flood situation.

<https://arynews.tv/en/govt-initiates-programme-to-protect-hilly-areas-of-kp-gb/>

“Sardar Khalid Ibrahim passes away in Islamabad”

Kashmir Media Service, November 4, 2018

Renowned politician from Azad Jammu and Kashmir and member of AJK Legislative Assembly, Sardar Khalid Ibrahim Khan passed away at a hospital in Islamabad, this morning. He had suffered brain hemorrhage, yesterday.

Sardar Khalid Ibrahim Khan was the son of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's founding President, Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan. He was also the President of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Party.

<https://kmsnews.org/news/2018/11/04/sardar-khalid-ibrahim-passes-away-in-islamabad/>

“Kashmir Week begins at EU parliament today”

The Nation, November 5, 2018

The Kashmir Council EU (KC-EU) will launch the 11th annual week-long event on Kashmir titled; “Kashmir EU-Week” on November 5 - today - at European Parliament in Brussels, says a message released to the media on November 4 night.

They informed media that the Kashmir EU-Week's programmes comprising international conferences, seminars, debates, workshops, video casting of a documentary and a photos and a handicraft exhibition on Kashmir would be held from 5th to 11th November at EU parliament in capital city of Belgium but the exhibition will be continued from 12th to 18 November at EU parliament in Strasburg, France. Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan will participate as a chief guest in the events. The reports containing latest facts and figures on the situation existed in the Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) would also be presented during the EU-Week.

<https://nation.com.pk/05-Nov-2018/kashmir-week-begins-at-eu-parliament-today>

Ghulam Abbas, “Thor tribe requests SC to give prescription rights in boundary case”

Dawn, November 5, 2018

As the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan is hearing the case related to the boundary dispute between Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the residents of GB's area, Thor, have requested the superior court to consider their rights and claim over the disputed land. The disputed territory measuring almost six kilometres and located alongside the Karakoram Highway on the KP-GB border was previously controlled by the federal government through the Frontier Constabulary (FC). The FC soldiers were deployed there after four tribesmen, three from Harban tribe and one from Thor were killed in an exchange of fire in 2014. The territorial dispute has become a major hurdle to the execution of the 4500MW Diamer-Basha hydropower power project.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/11/05/gbs-thor-tribe-demands-prescription-rights-in-boundary-dispute-case/>

Sumaira FH, “Inspector General Of Police Gilgit-Baltistan, Sanaullah Abbasi Urges Masses To Join Hands For Durable Peace In Area”

Urdu Point, November 6, 2018

He appreciated the role of local ‘Jirga’ in supplementing efforts for ensuring durable peace in Diamer by extending help in arresting the accused wanted to police in the recent terror acts. He urged the area people to identify black sheep in their ranks added that facilitators of the terrorism would not be forgiven.

He said quality education was being promoted in the district by providing more access to the citizens including girls to get education and play role for their society's prosperity.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/inspector-general-of-police-gilgit-baltistan-473879.html>

“CPEC, climate change threaten GB’s natural resources”

Dawn, November 6, 2018

Speakers at a consultative workshop here on November 5 cautioned that owing to climate change and mega projects being launched under the CPEC the natural resources of Gilgit-Baltistan were under threat. Dr Mahjabeen, an adviser of HBS, expressed fear that if local communities did not play role in sustainable management of their natural resources, private sector would penetrate in the area and start plunder their rights.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1443944>

“Pakistani courts cannot take up Azad Kashmir cases: IHC”

The Express Tribune, November 7, 2018

A division bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has annulled an over two-year old decision of a single bench regarding the appointment of a Grade-20 officer as member Inland Revenue Department of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council. As per the verdict, according to Azad Kashmir Interim Act 1974, IHC or any other court of the country (Pakistan) does not have the authority to listen to any appeal against the decision of the Kashmir Council chairman, and only the Azad Kashmir High Court is the concerned institution for the plaintiff.

In the decision, the judge directed the Kashmir Council chairman, who is the Prime Minister of Pakistan, to issue appointment letters and termed the IHC as a suitable forum for hearing the plea.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1842152/1-pakistani-courts-cannot-take-azad-kashmir-cases-ihc/>

“Police arrest eight NGO workers in Mirpur with ties to terror financing”

bdnews24, November 8, 2018

The police raided a Mirpur neighbourhood on November 7 night and arrested the members of the

NGO, Small Kindness Bangladesh.

“The group has been collecting money from Pakistan and other countries to finance the militant groups JMB and Ansar Al Islam. They wanted to intensify the terror activities in Chattogram area,” Deputy Commissioner Mahibul Islam said. Most of the arrestees were involved in Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Chhatra Shibir, said Mahibul without naming the arrestees.

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2018/11/08/police-arrest-eight-ngo-workers-in-mirpur-with-ties-to-terror-financing>

“GB governor asks Centre to replace CS”

The Nation, November 9, 2018

Newly-appointed Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Raja Maqbool Maqpoon has requested the federal government to replace GB Chief Secretary Babar Hayat Tarar who transferred principal secretary to the governor, The Nation has learnt reliably. He said that several opposition members of GB Legislative Assembly had lodged complaints against the chief secretary’s attitude and demanded his removal from the post. He mentioned that Tarar had served in Punjab and PM office during the PML-N government and had good links with PML-N top leadership, therefore, was ignoring the governor’s orders.

The federal government had appointed Tarar as chief secretary GB few days before general elections 2018. Tarar is a grade-21 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) group.

<https://nation.com.pk/09-Nov-2018/gb-governor-asks-centre-to-replace-cs>

“LoC traders from PaK urge Pakistan president, PM to save barter trade”

Greater Kashmir, November 11, 2018

According to them, despite their meetings with several government functionaries, including Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan and Federal Kashmir affairs minister Ali Amin Gandapur, on the issue, there had not been

any change in the “belligerent attitude” of the customs department.

A group of intra-Kashmir traders has called upon President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan to direct the authorities concerned to work out a permanent solution to their longstanding problem in the face of confiscation of their goods they bring to the Pakistani markets under barter system.

The traders said, “One of the popular slogans across the LoC was Kashmir ki mandi, Rawalpindi (Rawalpindi is the market of Kashmir), but the treatment being meted out to their goods in Pakistan is disheartening them as they have pooled their lifelong savings in this activity.” The traders called upon the president and premier to direct the authorities concerned to officially notify specific point(s) for collection of custom duty on the merchandise arriving from across the LoC, “if at all it was unavoidable.”

<https://greaterkashmir.com/news/business/loc-traders-from-pak-urge-pakistan-president-pm-to-save-barter-trade/302660.html>

Sarah Iftikhar / Haneeah Jawed, “Sukuk can be floated for funding Diamer-Bhasha dam”

The Express Tribune, November 12, 2018

Over the previous more than a decade, more than 100 Sukuk (Islamic bonds) have been issued in Pakistan with the first in 2006. These add up to around Rs1.16 trillion worth of Sukuk issued over these years. Government issuances have overwhelmed the Sukuk showcase, with Rs865 billion worth of bonds being issued by the government of Pakistan and around Rs150 billion by open area substances. Over the similar period, corporate Sukuk issues were at around Rs170 billion.

In 2012, Sukuk issuances for infrastructure projects rose 140.2% year-on-year (YoY) to \$27.81 billion. In the year, 21.2% of global Sukuk were related to infrastructure. Malaysia had the highest number of such issuances followed by Saudi Arabia. Pakistan, Indonesia, Kuwait and Brunei are some other notable countries that have floated infrastructure Sukuk.

Keeping in view the current water crisis that Pakistan faces, one of the critical challenges that needs to be addressed is the financing of Diamer-Bhasha dam. Until now, Rs4.693 billion has been collected in the Supreme Court’s dam fund but this constitutes a very small portion of the Rs1,900 billion required to complete the project.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1845372/2-sukuk-can-floated-funding-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

“Pakistan govt constitutes panel to review legal status of disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region”

Times Now, November 15, 2018

The Pakistan government on November 15 constituted a committee to review the legal status of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which India considers a part of Jammu and Kashmir. Known as the Northern Areas, Pakistan plans to announce Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province, a move that is being vehemently opposed by India.

The apex court had given the instructions while hearing 32 identical petitions concerning the constitutional status of the disputed territory. The main constitutional petition was filed by the Gilgit-Baltistan Bar Council through its vice-chairman Javed Ahmed.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/pakistan-govt-constitutes-panel-to-review-legal-status-of-disputed-gilgit-baltistan-region/314880>

“Bilawal to visit GB on 17th”

Dawn, November 15, 2018

Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is scheduled to arrive in Gilgit-Baltistan on a five-day visit from Nov 17.

PPP GB president Amjad Hussain Advocate alleged that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government in the region had distributed Rs15 million among 15 families in GB from the government exchequer.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1445619>

“JUI-F chief decides to reorganise JTI”

Pakistan Today, November 15, 2018

The central committee of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) in its meeting held under the chairmanship of Maulana Fazalur Rehman has dissolved the bodies of Jamiat Tulaba-e-Islam (JTI) and decided to commence new membership campaign of Jamiat Tulaba-e-Islam. JUI-F Central Executive Committee tasked Hidayatullah Pirzada to nominate organizers of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam from all the four provinces, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, FATA, and Islamabad.

All the conveners have been asked to nominate conveners for districts in their respective provinces and a report thereof may be forwarded to the center.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/11/17/jui-f-chief-decides-to-reorganise-jti/>

“PoK Activists Allege China-Pak Trade Corridor A Pro-Military Project”

NDTV, November 18, 2018

The UKPNP with “regional political powers and regional governments are also demanding that they should use their influence to stop Pakistan from creating such a hostile environment after China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is not a pro-people project,” said Jamil Maqsood, UKPNP’s former central secretary of foreign affairs. “We are of the view that the project is pro-military and it has a strategic interest. It is not directed towards developing local people...”

“The party leadership also expressed their concern that the government of Pakistan is violating state subject rule in Rawalakot, Kotli, Bagh, Neelum, Muzaffarabad and other areas and allocating land to its retired army-men, bureaucrats and businessmen,” Mr Maqsood said.

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/pakistan-occupied-kashmir-activists-allege-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-a-pro-military-project-1949224>

“Diemer Bhasha Dam project in G-B draws widespread criticism”

Business Standard, November 22, 2018

Demanding immediate arrangements for resettlement, Diemer Basha Dam Affected People Committee president, Attaullah called a press conference in Gilgit Press Club in the illegally occupied territory of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Addressing the press conference, he lambasted Pakistan’s Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) officials of designing a ploy to disentitle Gilgit-Baltistan public of any compensation. “The promises that were made earlier must be fulfilled,” Attaullah declared, adding, “a lot of money has been involved in this. They (Government) are pushing us to outskirts. They say they will provide us plots. We cumulatively rejected their proposal. More than 30 representatives from affected villages are present here. We do not want to go from here. We do not want to go out of Diemer. We want to live in Gilgit-Baltistan. The agreement that was done should be followed.” Uncertainty and apprehensions are looming large among the public in Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan’s Diemer Basha Dam project has not only ravaged the natural resources of the illegally occupied territory but also left a large number of homeless and poverty-stricken.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/diemer-bhasha-dam-project-in-g-b-draws-widespread-criticism-118112200942_1.html

“Resistance mounting against Pakistan’s illegal occupation of PoK, Gilgit”

Business Standard, November 27, 2018

Activists of Jammu Kashmir National Independence Alliance (JKNIA) took to the streets of London to demand an end to the decades-long subjugation and economic depredation of the illegally occupied regions of Gilgit Baltistan and PoK. The protest came at a time when Pakistan’s Chief Justice Saqib Nisar was seeking donations for the construction of Diemer

Bhasha dam - a mega project set to displace thousands of locals of Gilgit Baltistan— subsequently pushing them into a state of abject poverty.

The protesters were carrying placards saying ‘No to Diamer Dam’ and ‘Abolish terrorist charges against human rights activists in Gilgit Baltistan’. They also demanded Islamabad establishment to keep its hands off the resources of the occupied region.

<https://www.business-standard.com/multimedia/video-gallery/general/resistance-mounting-against-pakistan-s-illegal-occupation-of-pok-gilgit-74907.htm>

“In a deviation from past, Chinese state media depicts entire Jammu and Kashmir as part of India”

Times Now, November 28, 2018

What points towards a possible change-of-stance, Chinese state television CGTN, on November 23, showed Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) as a part of the original map- as has been demanded by India for years.

While reporting the terror attack on Chinese consulate on November 23, state-run CGTN displayed the images showing J&K as an Indian state- in line with India’s stated policy- thus marking a shift from China’s longstanding portrayal of Kashmir. While there was no clarity on whether the representation was being carried out as a deliberate move or an aberration by the state media.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/in-a-deviation-from-past-chinese-state-media-depicts-entire-jammu-and-kashmir-as-part-of-india/322075>

Zaheer Ali Khan, “Report reveals corruption worth billions in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan 3G, 4G licences”

Samaa, November 28, 2018

The 2017-18 audit report shows that a total loss of Rs74 billion has been incurred due to the Pakistan

Telecommunication Authority’s negligence.

The damning audit report also revealed that alongside the loss of Rs62 billion for licencing, a further Rs12 billion loss was incurred due to the violation of telecom policies while providing 4G frequencies.

<https://www.samaa.tv/news/2018/11/report-reveals-corruption-worth-billions-in-azad-kashmir-and-gilgit-baltistan-3g-4g-licences/>

Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, “Provincial status for Gilgit-Baltistan put on hold”

The News, November 30, 2018

The Federal Cabinet on November 29 deferred decision on giving Gilgit-Balochistan the status of province and decided to hold further deliberations in this regard. The cabinet which met here at the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) with Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair discussed several important issues.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/399910-provincial-status-for-gilgit-baltistan-put-on-hold>

Economic Developments

Umer Jamshaid, “GB Government Harbors No Plan To Sell Off NATCO: Chief Minister (CM) Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman”

Urdu Point, November 6, 2018

Chief Minister (CM) Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman said on November 6 the government had no plan to sell off Northern Areas Transport Corporation (NATCO) to tide over its economic woes. Replying to a question by Opposition Leader of the House Capt (R) Muhammad Shafi Khan in Legislative Assembly, the chief minister said the Corporation was being restructured by inducting more buses to make it economically vibrant entity.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gb-government-harbors-no-plan-to-sell-off-nat-473928.html>

Ghulam Abbas, “ECNEC approves installation of power plant to facilitate Diamer-Bhasha Dam, Profit”

Pakistan Today, November 14, 2018

The new plant, which would cost Rs5 billion, would be installed in Diamer area to provide electricity to machines, offices and other installations of the dam project, sources said. The proposal for constructing a power plant was earlier given by the Ministry of Water Resources. Subsequently, ECNEC approved to include Tangir Hydropower (15MW) in the Diamer-Basha Dam project. The committee has

approved the revised cost of the entire project of Diamer-Bhasha Dam at Rs479.686 billion. The main objective of the project is to construct a 500kV transmission network to provide interconnection facilities for evacuation of electricity from the abovementioned projects being constructed under CPEC. The meeting also discussed and approved the Balochistan Water Resource Development Project (Zhob and Mula river basins) at a cost of Rs16,453.40 million. The project will provide sufficient relief to the districts of Muslim Bagh, Qila Saifullah, Zhob, Khuzdar, Jhal Magsi and part of Kalat.

<https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/11/14/ecnec-approves-installation-of-power-plant-to-facilitate-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

“Over Rs7.8 billion collected for dam fund”

The Express Tribune, November 19, 2018

The chief justice will embark on a visit to the United Kingdom from November 20 to raise funds for the construction of the dams. The top judge will attend five fund-raising events in London and Manchester.

PM Imran on September 7 lauded CJP Nisar’s efforts for the collection of funds for the construction of the reservoirs by stating that, “the Chief Justice has done something which should have been done by the country’s politicians”.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1850333/1-rs7-8-billion-collected-dam-fund/>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Under 2018 Order, G-B is at par with other provinces: Chief Minister”

Daily Salaam, November 5, 2018

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman said that the Sartaj Aziz Committee Report did mention about amendment to the 258 article, a setup for Provisional Province and also the representation in the Senate and National Assembly. While commenting further, Hafeezur Rehman said that depends on the federal government to give what recommendations it can provide to the Supreme Court.

Moreover, Chief Minister also took dig at the PTI led government at centre for cutting the development budget. According to Hafeezur Rehman, budget for many development projects have been reduced to zero by the PTI government. Even 2 billion rupees have been also cut from the G-B’s development budget, said Chief Minister.

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

“First Medical College will be constructed next year in Gilgit-Baltistan: Force Commander”

Daily K2, November 11, 2018

Forces Commander Maj. Gen. Ahsan Mahmood in a public gathering at Gilgit said that next year Pakistan army will build first medical college in Gilgit-Baltistan. After Gilgit, we will build second college in Skardu region. Maj. Gen further said that people of Gilgit and Pakistan are like heart and head. Army is ready to work with media to foil any conspiracy from the enemies; said Maj. Gen. He made these statements in a talk with the media people at Gilgit.

<http://www.epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1541894400>

“Will provide recommendations in the ambit of UN resolutions”

Daily Salaam, November 20, 2019

In its first meeting, the recently created new committee regarding Gilgit-Baltistan Constitutional Status headed by the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at Islamabad. In the meeting Gandapur said that it is in the national interest to give all legal rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. He further said that all the constitutional rights would be given to the region within the framework of UN resolutions on the Kashmir. According to minister, the PTI government believes in basic democracy and his party which is ruling both at centre and in KP has done it. His party, the PTI has made KP a role model for providing democratic rights at the local level.

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

“A Powerful Show from the PPP in G-B”

Baad-e-Shimal, November 20, 2018

PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto has said G-B will get all constitutional rights once PPP comes into power. While addressing a gathering, Bilawal said that the PMLN government in G-B is reaping the benefits of the constitutional provisions provided by the PPP but at the same time they are trying to bring back the FCR laws. Taking dig at the provincial government, PPP chairman said that the PMLN rulers are recruiting people in police from the proscribed organisations. He further said that the people of the region should get the benefits of the CPEC.

It is true that whenever, PPP was in power, G-B got constitutional rights. The 2009 Order is one example which PPP gave to region. The 2009 Order gave people of the region a political identity. People of the region also supported PPP rulers but unfortunately

the last rule of the PPP led government in G-B was catastrophic. They failed to provide security to the people. Since 2013, the overall security situation in the country particularly in the G-B has improved. The credit should be given to the PMLN government.

Next elections will determine which political party will win the elections but PPP is trying to improve

its image in the region. The recent political gathering is indicating that PPP has a chance to come in the power again in G-B. It was a huge and very successful one.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=11-20-2018&img=11-20-2018page-4-4

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.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 edited and 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