

POK

News Digest

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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Dr Yaqoob-ul Hassan

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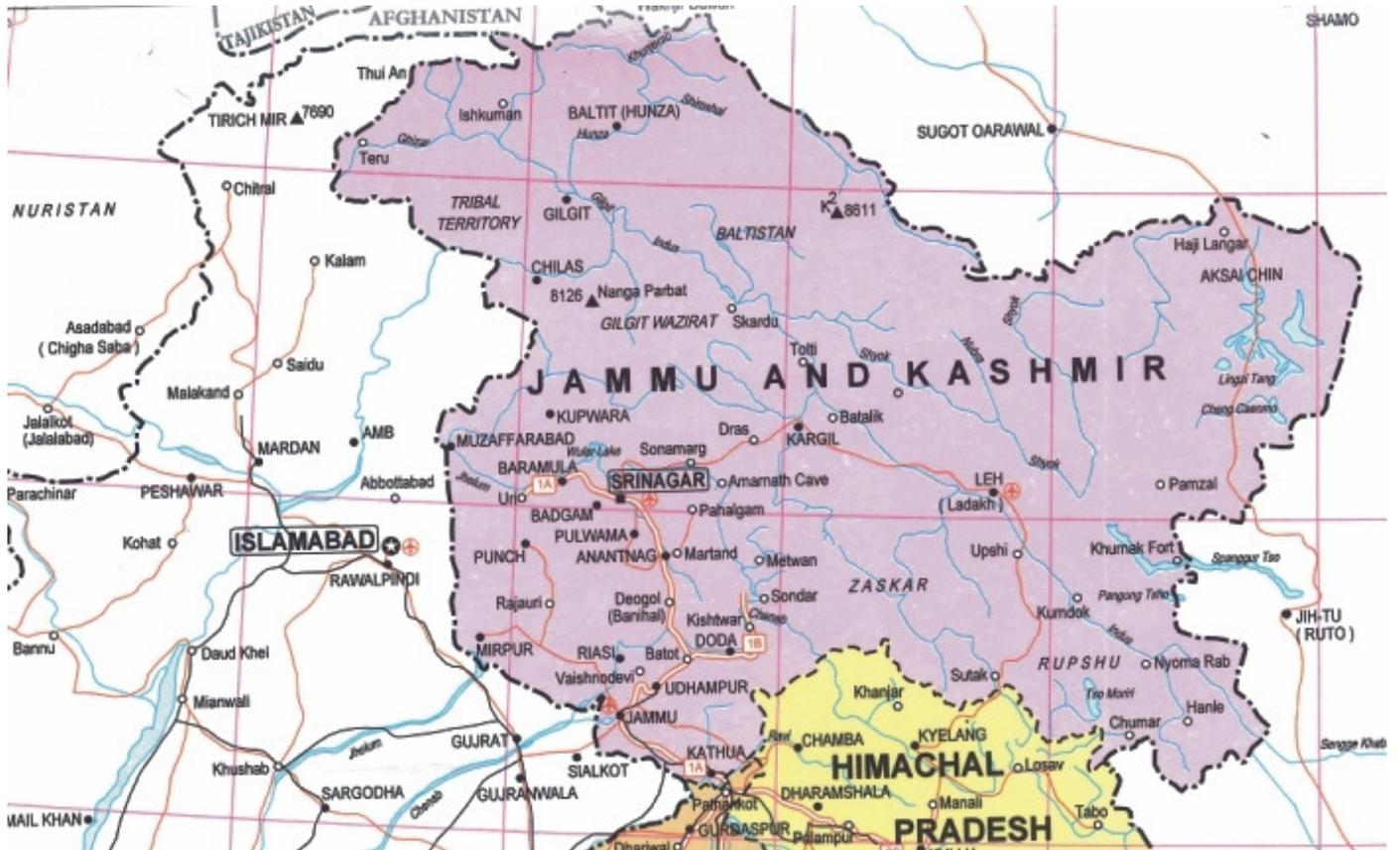
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Anti-development People are Busy in Conspiracy



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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Responding to the crisis situation that arose in the Gilgit Baltistan region owing to incessant protests being carried out against imposition of direct taxes, the government of Pakistan decided to withhold the decision for the time being. As has been stated earlier, the taxation issue has been attached to the ambiguity in Gilgit Baltistan's political status. There has been growing disillusionment and anguish amongst people in the region due to continued denial of fundamental political rights for over seven decades. The imposition of taxes in Gilgit Baltistan has, therefore, added fuel to the fire and people have strongly resented the move. The Government of Pakistan is quite reticent to grant a full provincial status to the region. This is so because the region is linked to the broader Kashmir issue. Altering its political status in a conclusive way runs the risk of compromising Pakistan's wider strategic objectives vis India on the Kashmir issue. The inordinate delay by Pakistan government in taking a decision on Gilgit Baltistan's provincial status reflects its dilemma over the issue. On one hand, there is simmering unrest in the region demanding political rights that could potentially snowball into a rebellion of a bigger proportion, while on the other (perhaps more significant fear) is the issue whether incorporating Gilgit Baltistan as a province will undermine Pakistan's strategy on the Kashmir issue.

Meanwhile, the government of Jammu and Kashmir led by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has made a positive move by proposing that more trade routes be opened along the Line of Control (LoC). According to a report included in the current issue, the state government has expressed its consent to the Government of India about opening up at least seven additional routes along the LoC. It is proposed that similar to the Jammu sector and the Kashmir sector, trade routes must also be opened up at LoC points between J&K and the Gilgit Baltistan region.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Unjust taxes”

The News, January 2, 2018

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan are fighting for justice and are protesting against the imposition of taxes. Their arguments are sound and logical. The region is deprived of a provincial status and its residents do not enjoy the rights of full citizens. Without granting full citizenship to the people, the imposition of taxes will be qualified as an unjust move. For the past couple of weeks, the region of Gilgit-Baltistan has been a theatre of continual protests against the efforts of the federal government to impose new taxes on its people. Given that the region continues to remain deprived of the status of a full province, and lacks representation in parliament, the taxes in question amount to taxation without representation. The argument of the government that since it undertakes developmental projects for the region, it possesses the right to impose taxes is flimsy and unreasonable. The latest ten-day-long protest by the people of GB should be enough to clear any doubt about the sentiments of the people about such taxes. The region deserves the status of a full province, and must be given representation in the Senate and the National Assembly.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/263227-unjust-taxes>

Amir Wasim, “More suicide bombings in 2017 than previous two years”

Dawn, January 1, 2018

Two militant attacks were reported from Azad Jammu and Kashmir in which one civilian died and five were injured. Three violent militant activities of low intensity were reported from Islamabad in which one person lost his life. No violent militant activity was reported from Gilgit-Baltistan region. Security forces

conducted at least four actions in Azad Kashmir in which 12 suspected militants were arrested. Fourteen suspected militants were arrested from Gilgit-Baltistan region in two security forces’ actions while four suspects were arrested in three actions in Islamabad.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380001>

Shabbir Mir, “Unfair Tax imposition in G-B”

The Express Tribune, January 2, 2018

Strike after strike is shaping up the politics in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). In the freezing temperatures, the business community backed by various religious and political parties has been up in arms about the taxes imposed one after another by successive governments over the past decade. While people in this ‘constitutionally ambiguous’ — as it still awaits provincial recognition — region have been paying indirect taxes for decades, it was the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) that first introduced direct taxation in 2012 through an act called the Gilgit-Baltistan Council Income Tax (Adaptation) Act of 2012. The current government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), however, seems inclined to levy more taxes on the people in an attempt to derive maximum benefits out of the investments that are likely to make its way once the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is functional. If we have a look at the available statistics, people of G-B pay indirect taxes worth Rs5 billion while about Rs3 billion are levied as income tax. The total revenue being collected from G-B is, however, about Rs10 billion annually, compared to an annual budget of about Rs50 billion which the region receives from the federal government. But at the same time the two-month long strike that now has been postponed after the G-B government issued a notification withdrawing different local taxes, has essentially

pushed the government on the back foot. However, the legal experts and general public in G-B are convinced that the region cannot be taxed directly by the government because people of the region are not a provincial part of the country and was only given a 'provincial status' by the previous PPP government.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1598123/6-unfair-tax-imposition-g-b/>

Sattar Khan, "Skepticism in Gilgit-Baltistan over China-Pakistan Economic Corridor"

Deutsche Welle, January 3, 2018

Gilgit-Baltistan is Pakistan's northernmost administrative territory that borders the Pakistan-administered Kashmir to the south, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to the west, Afghanistan to the north, China's Xinjiang region to the east and northeast, and the India-administered Kashmir to the southeast. In 2009, former Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari granted limited autonomy to the region. Gilgit-Baltistan is a disputed territory and a gateway to the massive, multibillion-dollar worth China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of Beijing's international Belt and Road initiative (BRI). CPEC projects in the area have raised concerns among the locals. The Pakistani government asserts that CPEC is an economic game-changer and will bring prosperity to all parts of the country, including Gilgit-Baltistan. But the people of this area, most of whom are Shiite unlike the majority of Pakistanis who are Sunni Muslims, take such claims with a pinch of salt. They fear that these projects would not only trigger an ecological disaster, a demographic shift and land grabbing, but also threaten their unique culture. "The Chinese are known for implementing development projects without caring much about environmental issues," Farman Ali, a political activist from Upper Hunza in Gilgit-Baltistan, told DW. "Over 70,000 trucks will pass through this region daily, emitting a large amount of carbon. The government will also lay railway tracks in this mountainous area by building a number of tunnels. This will likely cause landslides and disturb the region's ecological balance," Ali stated. Amir

Hussain, a political analyst from the Lower Hunza part of the region, spurns the federal government's employment assurance. "The Chinese bring their own manpower wherever they go. For CPEC, they are likely to bring seven million Chinese workers to Pakistan. Around 400,000 of them will be working in Gilgit-Baltistan. How will the locals get jobs?" Hussain questioned.

<http://www.dw.com/en/skepticism-in-gilgit-baltistan-over-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/a-42010956>

Ghulam Abbas, "Government refuses to make GB fifth province"

Pakistan Today, January 3, 2018

Despite much deliberation that has consumed an entire year, the government has failed to reach a consensus of making Gilgit Baltistan (GB) the fifth province of the country and has instead opted to maintain the special provincial status accorded to the region. Though final recommendations of a constitutional committee, formed by the prime minister, proposed granting GB the status of a special province with representations in the National Assembly and Senate, besides giving it share in the National Finance Commission (NFC), the National Economic Council (NEC), the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) and others, but the stakeholders could not approve the same due to objection on the part of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). All the stakeholders of this issue had, however, agreed on other reforms like giving more legislative power to the provincial assembly and authorities in light of the 18th amendment. "Excluding the posts of president and prime minister, almost the same setup that is being followed in AJK will be copied in GB," sources noted. A special meeting of Prime Minister (PM) Shahid Khaqan Abbasi with all the stakeholders was held at PM Secretariat on January 3, which was also attended by Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider, Federal Minister of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Barjees Tahir, Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Law, Barrister Zafarullah Khan, Planning Commission

Deputy Chairman Sartaj Aziz, Military Operations (DGMO) director general and other officials. The meeting decided to give legal cover to Gilgit Baltistan Self-Governance and Empowerment Ordinance, 2009, through the parliament. As per the decision, the GB Self-Governance and Empowerment Ordinance, 2009, would be replaced by the GB Interim Constitutional Act, 2018, to be enacted by the parliament of Pakistan.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/03/government-refuses-to-make-gb-fifth-province/>

Happymoon Jacob, “Behind the ‘enemy’ line: the borders of J&K”

The Hindu, January 4, 2018

The closer you get to the border in J&K, the greater the yearning for an end to ceasefire violations “Why do you want to visit our side of the Line of Control (LoC)?” a senior Pakistan army officer asked me. My request to go on a field trip to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir with the Pakistan army for research on ceasefire violations along the India-Pakistan border was still being reviewed by the higher echelons of the Pakistan Army in Rawalpindi when this question was posed to me. He wanted to know the source of my interest (or ‘angle’). I am not sure if he was convinced by my reply about my hope that my research would contribute to bilateral peace, but an invitation came through a few weeks later. On the other side Murree was under a thick blanket of snow on a cold December morning at the headquarters of General Officer Commanding of Pakistan Army’s 12 Division. There was a great deal of politeness around, probably camouflaging the disquiet at having someone over from the ‘enemy’ country. For an army that has been conditioned to view India as its existential enemy, this was to be expected. The rest of the ‘field visit’ consisted of visits to Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK, and the headquarters of 1-AK brigade which is deployed along the LoC facing Indian troops, the headquarters of 2-AK Brigade in Rawalakot, and finally the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. On day three, we drove down to Rawalpindi from Rawalakot and entered what is normally off-limits for most civilians, most certainly

an Indian, the ‘sanctum sanctorum’ of the Pakistan Army, its heavily guarded General Headquarters.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/behind-the-enemy-line/article22360673.ece>

Jamil Nagri, “PM accepts one of GB people’s demands”

Dawn, January 5, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who heads the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Council as its chairman, has issued directive for suspending the GB Income Adaptation Act, 2012 — the major demand of the region’s people protesting for over two weeks against the levy of taxes on them without giving constitutional rights to the region. According to a press release issued by the GB chief minister’s media coordinator on January 4, the prime minister issued the directive while presiding over a parliamentary committee formed to make recommendations for bringing political reforms in GB which could provide it a constitutional status. The Prime Minister House has so far not issued a notification for the suspension of GB Income Adaptation Act, 2012. Held in Islamabad on January 5 the meeting was attended by GB Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider, federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Barjees Tahir, Minister for Law Zaffarullah Khan and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Sartaj Aziz, who is also chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on GB Political Reforms.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380881>

“Census result delaying local bodies poll in AJK”

Pakistan Observer, January 5, 2018

Much awaited census results are delaying local bodies elections in Azad Kashmir after which government has decided to appoint office bearers of ruling party as administrators of local bodies like Municipal corporations, District and Tehsil councils and town committee, stated Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan. Haider told reporters on January 4 that his government was

committed to holding local bodies' poll in October 2017 but legal complications pulled it to delay then as delimitations and voter lists could not be updated due to unavailability of census result being prepared at federal bureau of statistics. He also stated that the government was sincere to hold local bodies' poll last year as this was the only way to solve people problems at their door step through transfer of power at local level but unfortunately had to postpone it due to legal complications. He further stated party workers had been appointed as administrators of the local bodies on temporary basis to run the affairs and elections would be held as soon as census result is available. He stated the country's future was linked with democracy and all the political forces should respect democratic norms so that the system could not be derailed adding that in the circumstances of political turmoil and with destabilized system, the country will be unable to confront the conspiracies of the enemies.

<https://pakobserver.net/census-result-delaying-local-bodies-poll-ajk/>

“UN reminded of its resolutions on Kashmir”

The Nation, January 5, 2018

The Kashmiris living along both sides of the Line of Control and rest of the world will observe the Right to Self-Determination Day on January 5 with the renewed pledge to continue their struggle for freedom. In Azad Jammu Kashmir, public rallies, special gatherings and processions in all nine district headquarters of the liberated territory will be the hallmark of the day. Special meetings will highlight the importance of early grant of the right to self-determination to the people being suppressed by India since over last 70 years, an AJK government spokesman noted. Speakers in the meetings will reiterate the Kashmiris' just and principled stance before the world that they (Jammu Kashmir people) would continue their struggle for their right to self-determination till the achievement of the ultimate goal. They will particularly highlight the reality with the earnest demand for early grant of right of self-determination to Kashmiris without further delay. The day reiterates the long cherished demand of the

Kashmiris that they be granted their birth right to decide about their destiny under the spirit of the internationally-acknowledged UN resolutions, passed by the Security Council of the world body on January 5, 1949.

<https://nation.com.pk/05-Jan-2018/un-reminded-of-its-resolutions-on-kashmir>

Sana Jamal, “Gilgit-Baltistan protests called-off after two weeks”

Gulf News, January 5, 2018

The two-week protest in freezing weather by thousands of people of Gilgit-Baltistan against taxes was called off on January 5 evening following a notification by the government to halt tax collection. According to the notification, the Department of Inland Revenue Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and all withholding tax agents have been directed not to collect tax until amendments have been made in the Income Adaptation Act, 2012 by Gilgit-Baltistan Council. The business community of GB, backed by various religious and political parties, continued to protest in all 10 districts of GB, the biggest one in Skardu, for two weeks for taxes levied on them without giving constitutional rights to the region. Markets and business centres remained closed during the two-week protest in almost all 10 districts, while public transport remained off the main roads. “We are calling off the protest for now after the Government directive to halt the tax collection as it was one of our major demands” Fida Hussain, vice-chairman Awami Action Committee, noted. “But the government notification is ambiguous. It refers to tax break until amendment in the act which means that the taxes might be reintroduced any time soon,” Hussain explained his concern. The government has decided to hold further dialogues with the community leaders of GB to resolve their issues and avoid future protests. However, the issue goes beyond taxation. “One of our major concerns is peace and stability in the region with [the] provision of basic rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan” Hussain added.

<http://gulfnnews.com/news/asia/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan-protests-called-off-after-two-weeks-1.2152312>

“After Gilgit, PoK residents oppose illegal taxation”

ANI News, January 5, 2018

Days after Islamabad rolled back its decision to impose taxes on the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan, the people in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) are gearing up to start an agitation against federal taxes. PoK, which Pakistan refers to as ‘Azad Kashmir’, is under illegal occupation of Pakistan who has no constitutional right to impose any tax. However, the people in PoK have been paying taxes for decades. Waqar Kazmi, an advocate, noted, “We pay taxes on everything; sales tax, every product has sales tax and various other taxes go to Kashmir Council. It does not provide even ten percent of it. If they return our taxes our government can run properly. They have created a parallel government. The minister of Kashmir Council has at least twenty cars, some are owned by his family members and some by his relatives. The tax that we pay, from our hard earned money, we do not get benefit out of it, Kashmir Council eats it away.” The people in PoK have suffered due to this unlawful tax regime. Kazmi further noted, “We have to ask for (our own resources), we should not be asking for it. We have our own resources to develop ourselves. We should have the ownership of these resources to develop. With these resources we can develop our region and benefit our people.” Recently, a massive campaign was launched against illegal taxation in Gilgit Baltistan, which forced the government to roll back its decision.

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/after-gilgit-pok-residents-oppose-illegal-taxation201801051704400002/>

“China building bunkers, military infrastructure for Pakistan along border with India”

Zee News, January 6, 2018

As the presence of Chinese soldiers on Pakistani soil continues to grow, Islamabad is taking Beijing’s help to rapidly ramp up its military infrastructure along its border with India along Rajasthan. Infrastructure works done for the Pakistani Army by the Chinese

include the upgrade of a forward airbase, more than 350 stone bunkers, border outposts and road network. There are visuals that suggest at least 350 stone bunkers have already been built on the sly. The construction sites have been camouflaged to reduce their visibility. The construction activity has also not been formally conveyed to the Indian side by the Pakistani security forces at their regular flag meetings. The expansion of the road network, along with bunkers and canals in the border areas underscores Pakistan’s paranoia over preventing a crushing conventional rout at the hands of Indian forces in the event of war. Pakistan’s Khairpur air force base has seen an uptick in the presence of Chinese troops over the past few months. The upgrade and expansion works at Khairpur, combined with the three other airstrips that are being built close to the India border. Pakistan has stated the airstrips and other infrastructure are meant to make it easier for the Chinese to transport the oil, natural gas and other mineral resources. The rationale provided says shipping the resources through Karachi is inconvenient due to congestion and distance. The Khairpur air force base is just 25 km from the border with India. China’s infrastructure benevolence towards Pakistan in the region comes over speculation that Chinese companies have discovered significant oil deposits along the border in the Sindh Province. Part of the justification for the rising presence of Chinese security personnel on Pakistani soil has centred around the threats to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Chinese citizens working on the projects. A number of attacks have been targeted at Chinese workers.

<http://zeenews.india.com/world/china-building-bunkers-military-infrastructure-for-pakistan-along-border-with-india-2072345.html>

“APHC-AJK holds seminar on Kashmir in Islamabad”

Pakistan Observer, January 6, 2018

A seminar was held under the auspices of the All Parties Hurriyet Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter (APHC-AJK) in Islamabad, today, to mark the passing of a resolution on Kashmir by

the UN on this day in 1949. The resolution has called for settling the Kashmir dispute by giving the Kashmiris their inalienable right to self-determination. The speakers on the occasion highlighted the importance of the UN resolutions on Kashmir and stated that the January 5, 1949 resolution of the World Body provided base to the Kashmiris' struggle as it had acknowledged the right to self-determination of Kashmiri people. The speakers deplored that the UN resolutions could not be implemented so far and the Kashmir dispute remained unresolved despite the passage of seven decades due to the intransigence of India. They stated that India had converted the entire Kashmir into a big prison where all basic freedoms of the people had been usurped. They also stated that during the last year activists and youth were booked under draconian law, Public Safety Act. The speakers also stated that the worst kinds of Indian brutalities have failed to subdue the Kashmiris' liberation sentiment and they were determined to take their ongoing freedom movement to its logical conclusion at all costs.

<https://pakobserver.net/aphc-ajk-holds-seminar-kashmir-islamabad/>

“Not holding LB elections irks people in AJK”

Online News, January 7, 2018

As local body elections were not held in Azad Kashmir for last 15 years, general public, political workers of ruling party and opposition are in the grip of irritation. According to details the leadership of PML (N) has been making pledges to hold local body elections for the last one year but nothing has been implemented so far. They also stated that present government has failed to fulfill its promises. They have appointed their own people as administrators in the local bodies. Sources further noted that Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan from the very outset has expressed his desire to hold local body elections. But his own cabinet is the main hurdle in his way. The sources further stated that members of constituent assembly are feared of the local body elections that after the election they will then be less important and the development funds

will in the custody of local body members at the very grass root level. It is recalled that Supreme Court Azad Kashmir has issued contempt of court notices to Prime Minister and Chief Secretary of Azad Kashmir for delaying the local body elections. For the last 15 years the local body elections could not be held in Azad Kashmir. In fiscal year 2017-18, Rs. 500 million have been earmarked for holding local body elections in Azad Kashmir. The present government is also reluctant like the previous ones to hold local body elections.

http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/index.php?page=newsdetail&news_id=11157

“India accuses Pakistan of instigating youths in IHK”

Pakistan Today, January 7, 2018

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh accused that terror infrastructure in Pakistan continued to exist and the neighbouring country was leaving no stone unturned to instigate the youths of Jammu and Kashmir against India. He also asked India's top police brass to take strong action in cases of riots and desecration of religious places. Addressing the annual conference of the DGPs and IGP's in Tekanpur, Singh noted terror infrastructure in the form of training camps, launch pads and communication stations continued to exist in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. He also stated the neighbouring country was leaving no stone unturned to provide all help, including financial, to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and that youths of the state were being instigated against India, sources noted. Singh stated Pakistan's encouragement to the separatist anti-India sentiment in Jammu and Kashmir often led to law and order problems. The home minister further stated the violence perpetrated by Naxals had come down to a great extent and assured that the government would encourage surrender policy for Naxals in the coming days.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/07/india-accuses-pakistan-of-instigating-youths-in-ihk/>

“Nawaz fulfilled all promises: AJK PM”

The Nation, January 8, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider on January 7 claimed that Nawaz Sharif has fulfilled all promises he had made with Pakistani nation. “The nation will never forgive those who intercepted the ways of progress by engineering conspiracies against the PML-N government,” Raja Farooq Haider declared while addressing a public gathering at Jahanabad on January 7. The AJK premier recalled that after a landslide victory in the 2013 general elections, Nawaz Sharif told him (Haider) that with this electoral victory of his party, his (Nawaz) responsibilities had increased manifold. He also stated that Nawaz Sharif did not say that he would eliminate electricity load shedding in six months rather he had stated that energy crisis would be overcome within four years. “The common man can observe there is no load shedding in the country now,” he asserted. He urged the nation to remember the faces which levelled false allegations and made false promises because they are the foes of progress and prosperity of the country.

<https://nation.com.pk/08-Jan-2018/nawaz-fulfilled-all-promises-ajk-pm>

Fawad Maqsood, “Senate body summons privatisation commission, Etisalat to opine regarding SCO operations in GB”

Business Recorder, January 9, 2018

Senate Sub-Committee on Delegated Legislation on January 8 summoned Privatization Commission and Etisalat to explain their position in next meeting regarding expansion of the area of Special Communication Organization’s (SCO) operations in Gilgit Baltistan and other parts of the country. The meeting was chaired by Senator Advocate Muhammad Daud Khan Achkzai and attended by Senator Kalsoom Parveen and Attorney General of Pakistan, officials from Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunications and Law Division. The official of Ministry of Law and Attorney

General of Pakistan agreed to extend the service of SCO in Gilgit- Baltistan and other parts of the country. An official from Law Ministry and Attorney General of Pakistan in its opinion noted in light of Competition ACT 2010, SCO have right to award license for operations across the country. However, the Ministry of IT & Telecommunication opposed and requested the committee to look into matter as it involved international commitments and stakes of the entire telecom sector.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/01/09/391465/senate-body-summons-privatisation-commission-etisalat-to-opine-regarding-sco-operations-in-gb/>

M.A Mir, “AJK journalists must work towards promotion of Kashmir cause: Midhat Shahzad”

The Express Tribune, January 9, 2018

Secretary Information, Tourism and Information Technology of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Midhat Shahzad on January 8 stated that besides keeping people updated about daily happenings, journalists must also work for positive image building of the country and AJK. Midhat Shahzad expressed these views while talking to senior journalists after assuming charge as Secretary Information. We have to work hard to promote tourism both in North and South regions of AJK. We must aim to provide job opportunities to the unemployed, educated youth in private sector. We have spectacular tourism destinations from Bhimber to Taubut and Kotli to Bagh that must be promoted during the whole year,” Shahzad noted. She further stated that AJK has ideal locations and tourism destinations to promote winter tourism in Mirpur Division. In summer, Neelum Valley, Rawalakot, Bagh and Chikar are full of natural beauty to attract much more visitors of the country, she remarked. “Journalists living in AJK have different duties as compared to the rest of the country. They must work for the national integration and the promotion of Kashmir cause.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1604092/1-ajk-journalists-must-work-towards-promotion-kashmir-cause-midhat-shahzad/>

“CPEC: A game changer for Pakistan, but disastrous for Gilgit-Baltistan”

Economic Times, January 9, 2018

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPECBSE -4.45 %), a multi-billion dollar infrastructure and development-related project, has generated euphoria in Pakistan, but in Gilgit-Baltistan, a disputed region, local residents have environmental, demographic and sectarian concerns. According to a report published by Germany's Deutsche Welle broadcasting, local activists fear these projects would not only trigger an ecological disaster, a demographic shift and encourage land grabbing, but also threaten their unique culture. “The Chinese are known for implementing development projects without caring much about environmental issues,” Farman Ali, a political activist from Upper Hunza in Gilgit-Baltistan, noted. Islamabad claims the project would create employment opportunities for some 1.8 million people in Gilgit-Baltistan. The locals, however, are not ready to buy this claim. Despite having one of the highest literacy rates in Pakistan, youth in Gilgit-Baltistan are desperately looking for jobs. Hussain questioned, “The Chinese bring their own manpower wherever they go. For CPEC, they are likely to bring seven million Chinese workers to Pakistan. Around 400,000 of them will be working in Gilgit-Baltistan. How will the locals get jobs?” Forget about the jobs; the locals are actually losing their livelihood because of this project. Small manufacturers and shop owners are suffering as a result of the Chinese goods flooding the market. The government has also cancelled the licenses for local miners. Mining in the areas is being handed over to the Chinese,” Hussain stated. Hussain also noted the government has allocated around 500 acres of land for a special economic zone in the Maqpoon Das area. “These lands have been taken over in the name of CPEC projects. In addition, the army is planning to build checkpoints to provide security to CPEC projects. For that reason, they are planning to relocate people from Hunza and Nagar districts, which are located close to the Chinese border,” Hussain claimed.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/cpec-a-game-changer-for-pakistan-but-disastrous-for-gilgit-baltistan/articleshow/62428748.cms>

Fawad Maqsood, “Masood, Haider express concern over deteriorating situation in IOK”

Business Recorder, January 11, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan and Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan expressed grave concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in Kashmir. The concern was expressed during a meeting on January 10, in which the two leaders discussed the situation in Kashmir and ongoing development activities in Azad Kashmir. Raja Farooq Haider Khan also informed the AJK President about the steps being taken for development of various sectors in Azad Kashmir.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/01/11/392046/masood-haider-express-concern-over-deteriorating-human-rights-situation-in-iok/>

“POK president rebuked for years of misrule in the region”

Outlook, January 10, 2018

Nushrat Qureshi, a political activist hailing from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), has unequivocally lambasted PoK President Masood Khan, for decades of complicity of top politicians in the subjugation of the region. Addressing an event in Karachi, she not only denounced the repressive measures of Islamabad to keep the region marginalised, but also lashed out at local authorities, who in order to gain some political patronage and money, have been working at the behest of Islamabad. Nushrat reminded the audience of a perpetual political conspiracy being played out by Pakistan to keep PoK under its illegal occupation. “The part of Kashmir we live in is called ‘Azad Kashmir’, so called ‘Azad’ or Free. I am saying this with great disappointment that this particular word has become an ugly blot for Independence. You can see the freedom of PoK in Act 74. Our Prime Minister is working under the lent officers appointed by Islamabad. Our Supreme Court is under the lent officer”, Nushrat stated. “Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir are divided with an aim

to give space to political parties of Pakistan. This is a deliberate attempt by Pakistan to continue its hold on the region illegally. The demography of the region has been changed by Islamabad,” she added.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/pok-president-rebuked-for-years-of-misrule-in-region/1226803>

“Bilawal appoints PPP office-bearers in KP, AJK”

The Nation, January 12, 2018

Pakistan People’s Party Chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on January 11 nominated office-bearers for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu Kashmir chapters of the party. For PPP Labour Bureau Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he approved the names of M Aslam Adil as President, Baz Muhamad Khan as General Secretary and Lal Badshah as Information Secretary, noted a statement by PPP. For PPP, Doctor Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the name of Dr Nisar Khan was approved for President, Dr Dawood Khan as General Secretary and Dr Faheem Khan as the Information Secretary. For PPP Minority Wing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Naseeb Chand was appointed as the President, Yasir Bhatti as General Secretary and Arif Masih as the Information Secretary. For PPP Cultural Wing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khwaja Yawar Naseer was appointed as the President, Tahir Abbas as the General Secretary and Mansoor Zafar as Information Secretary. For People’s Youth Organisation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Malik Amjad was approved as the President, Sami Khan as the General Secretary and Hanif Khan as the Information Secretary. For People’s Student Federation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rashid Afridi was named as the President, Riaz Yousafzai as the General Secretary and Inamullah Dawoodzai as the Information Secretary. Bilawal also appointed office-bearers for Mirpur Division and three districts of AJK.

<https://nation.com.pk/12-Jan-2018/bilawal-appoints-ppp-office-bearers-in-kp-ajk>

“Several projects approved for GB”

Dawn, January 11, 2018

The Gilgit-Baltistan Working Development Party

(GBWDP) approved projects worth Rs2.99 billion for the region. The decision was taken at a meeting of the body chaired by GB Chief Secretary Dr Kazim Niaz, according to a press release issued on January 10. A project worth Rs100 million was approved for combating natural disasters in the region. This project would be completed by the GB home department. The meeting also approved projects in various sectors, including education, social welfare, power and health. It approved two schemes to be completed with a cost of Rs240 million in culture and tourism sectors. A project costing Rs100 million was approved in social welfare sector, a scheme worth Rs100 million was approved for education sector. The meeting approved key projects for departments of home, social welfare, education and energy with special focus on improving socio-economic conditions of masses. The GBWDP decided to forward five mega projects worth Rs2 billion to the higher forum for approval.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1382235>

Fawad Maqsood, “PIA to start special charter flights for Gilgit-Baltistan”

Business Recorder, January 15, 2018

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has planned to start special charter flights for Gilgit-Baltistan to provide better and safe travelling facilities to the tourists. According to a report, PIA Chief Executive Officer Musharraf Rasool while talking to Senior Minister of Gilgit Baltistan Akbar Taban in Skardu stated special charter flights will help boost tourism, business and economic activities in the region.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/01/15/393050/pia-to-start-special-charter-flights-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Masood stresses students’ role for Kashmir cause”

The Nation, January 16, 2018

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan emphasised a need for greater collaboration between students ‘ bodies to highlight the Kashmir issue at the national and international levels. Talking to various

delegations in the State's metropolis, the president condemned the use of force by the Indian forces in J&K. He added the students must use traditional and modern communication mediums to raise the issue and help the Kashmiris attain their just right to self-determination in the true spirit of the United Nations resolutions. During a meeting, AJK Member Legislative Assembly, Chaudhry Shehzad Mahmood apprised him of various development and construction projects initiated in Muzaffarabad. The President stressed that early completion of the projects be ensured in order to facilitate the general public. He also proposed making Pir-Chinasi attraction for tourists coming from other regions by providing modern facilities and quality lodging. In another meeting, a delegation headed by Raja Aftab Ahmad, Nazim Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba AJK and Gilgit Baltistan met with the president and informed him of various issues and matters concerning students of the region. The President also urged that coordination between the students of AJK and Gilgit Baltistan needed to be enhanced so that their relevant issues are appropriately highlighted. He added that scholarships will be introduced for deserving students in Azad Kashmir.

<https://nation.com.pk/16-Jan-2018/masood-stresses-students-role-for-kashmir-cause>

Khaleeq Kiani, "AJK seeks centre's support for completion of 2,000MW hydropower projects"

Dawn, January 16, 2018

Perturbed over policy shifts, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government has sought the centre's support for completion and materialisation of the 2,000MW hydropower projects and encourage private investment in the region. The federal government announced recently that it would no more guarantee purchase of electricity from small renewable energy sources based on upfront tariff and would hold competitive bidding for inducting future power generation capacity. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh provinces have already protested over the announcement even though the new policy is yet to be formally approved or old policy cancelled by any

competent forum. A senior government official noted that AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan had written a letter to Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari to take steps for removal of obstacles hampering completion of ongoing and future hydropower projects in the AJK region. Mr Haider is reported to have offered every possible support for strengthening cooperation between the AJK and the federal government on different matters of mutual interest, particularly the development of hydropower projects. He also stated the development of hydropower resources of the AJK was a priority sector and several projects having different installed capacities were under implementation across the AJK region, both in public and private sector which had played a vital role in harnessing the development of energy resources in the country. The AJK prime minister further stated that hydropower projects of 232MW were currently in commercial operation through private investment while another 102MW Gulpur project was under construction and would soon assimilate into the national energy portfolio. In addition, two hydropower projects of 1,864 megawatts (Karot and Kohala) capacity were in the process of development under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383179>

Parvez Jabri, "Projects worth Rs100bn being completed in GB: Dr Iqbal"

Business Recorder, January 18, 2018

Provincial Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Dr Muhammad Iqbal on January 17 stated projects worth Rs. 100 billion were being completed for improving the living standard of masses of this beautiful part of the region. Focus was given to expand road network, construction of bridges and hotels, he stated. Gilgit-Baltistan was rich in natural resources, while 50,000 megawatt electricity could be produced by utilizing the potential of the area, he added. Commenting on China Pakistan Economic Corridor projects, he noted the CPEC would bring revolution for the people of the country. Under the CPEC, many projects including power were being completed to meet the

demand of the country, he stated. To a question, he stated Gilgit-Baltistan could earn a huge amount through tourism and for this, focus had been given to improve the road, bridges and hotels infrastructure. To another question, he noted completion of road projects would help reduce the distance besides saving the precious time of people traveling from Gilgit to Islamabad.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/01/18/393740/projects-worth-rs100bn-being-completed-in-gb-dr-iqbal/>

“Haider assures property owners to abolish dual tax”

Pakistan Observer, January 19, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider assured property owners on January 16 to abolish dual property tax imposed by previous government to meet the expenditures of an education package it announced to upgrade educational institutions. A delegation from city comprising former Minister and PTI leader Khwaja Farooq called on him at his office and demanded to abolish unjustified tax imposed on property owners. The Prime Minister informed the delegation that a committee headed by Minister Finance, Dr. Najeeb Naqi, had been constituted to look in to the matter. Haider stated the tax was imposed by previous government during its last days to shift the onus on coming government to meet education package expenditures which he withdrew after coming into power but was restored by the apex court. He also stated that the government would require additional resources to implement court’s order regarding education package but he was considering alternate measures to give relief to property owners and meet the expenditures from other sources.

<https://pakobserver.net/haider-assures-property-owners-abolish-dual-tax/>

Mudabbir Akhund, “Taxation and politics in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily Times, January 22, 2018

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan lack fundamental rights like the right to elect their representatives to the national Parliament and the right to have a say in using their own natural resources. Though the arbitrary administrative control of Pakistan over GB is not only welcomed by the locals, with passing time they have also showed their loyalty by sacrificing lives in the name of Pakistan. However, even these sacrifices could not buy them citizenship rights from Islamabad. Citizenship rights became important in the modern world with the emergence of the idea of nation-states. Not having citizenship rights, the people of GB lack any anchoring into the national foundations of Pakistan and have been rendered vulnerable as well as suspicious in the eyes of many in the rest of Pakistan. This is the reason why students from GB at education institutes in other parts of the country complain of being ‘alienated’ and ‘otherised’ while interacting with administrative forces like the police and other law enforcement agencies. The political orphanage of GB is undeniably linked to the Kashmir dispute, and it is understood that Pakistan can never see GB detached from it, which in other words mean that people of GB will be able to exercise their fundamental rights only once the Kashmir dispute is resolved. But there has been zero progress on that front even after 70 years of Partition. Importantly, the question of getting basic rights through self-determination has been a quite irrelevant question for the people of GB, until recently. In the last few decades, GB has undergone massive socio-economic changes, and its society has opened up to the rest of the world. Resultantly, a vast middle-class has appeared with its own prejudices and apolitical character.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/186162/taxation-politics-gilgit-baltistan/>

“JK govt proposes opening 7 more LoC trade points, 2 meeting points”

India Today, January 24, 2018

The Jammu and Kashmir government proposed opening seven additional trade routes and two meeting points across the LoC and International Border in Jammu and Kashmir, the J&K government

headed by Mehbooba Mufti stated. The state government has conveyed its agreement to the Government of India for opening seven additional trade routes across the LoC and International Border in Jammu and Kashmir, J&K's Minister for Industries, Chander Parkash Ganga, noted while replying to the discussion on Demand for Grants of the Industries and Commerce Department in the State Assembly. He stated the new routes proposed for trade include Jammu- Sialkot, Chhamb-Jourian to Mirpur, Gurez-Astore-Gilgit, Jhangar (Nowshera)-Mirpur and Kotli, Turtuk-Khapulu, Kargil- Skardu and Titwal-Chilhan (Across Neelam Valley). He also stated that besides two meeting points namely Hundurman on Kargil-Skardu route and a suitable point at Turtuk-Khapulu route are proposed by the state government. Regarding the cross-LoC trade, the minister noted that construction of infrastructure at both the Trade Facilitation Centres - Chakkan-Da-Bagh, Poonch and Salamabad, Uri with an estimated cost of Rs 10.41 crore and Rs 10.73 crore, respectively under Phase-II has been initiated. He further stated that the cross LoC trade of goods has been going on for the past nine years and this barter system of trade has recorded an import worth about Rs 3,091.14 crore and export worth about Rs 3,411.50 crore since inception. He also stated a list of 21 more tradable items for inclusion in the Agreed List of Tradable items for cross-LoC trade has been submitted to the Government of India for taking up with Pakistan. He further stated that the introduction of banking system for LoC trade has also been taken up with the Government of India.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/pti-feed/story/jk-govt-proposes-opening-7-more-loc-trade-points-2-meeting-1153550-2018-01-24>

Muhammad Asad Chaudhry, “NA worried over GB being depicted as part of India”

Daily Times, January 26, 2018

Lawmakers in the National Assembly on January 25 voiced concern over the depiction of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as part of India instead of Pakistan in Google and other internationally recognised maps. Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Shahryar Afridi initiated the debate on the issue and stated that Pakistani students and researchers were forced to use maps showing Gilgit-Baltistan as Indian Territory. “If India has no right to show Gilgit-Baltistan as its territory, then what action has our Foreign Office taken so far to address the issue?” he asked. Responding to the concerns, Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Abdul Qadir Baloch, stated that anti-Pakistan elements were behind such issues. He explained that the United Nations was the final authority to decide the geographical boundaries of the countries. “We are responsible if such things happen in the maps of United Nations. However, if the same is being depicting by private firms, then I cannot say anything except that we should be more vigilant,” he noted. Chief whip of PTI Shireen Mazari also criticised the Survey of Pakistan for not providing up to date maps on its website. “If India can pursue Google and other search engines to show Gilgit-Baltistan as its part, then why cannot we contact them?” she asked.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/188844/na-worried-gb-depicted-part-india/>

“Resolution of Kashmir dispute crucial for regional peace: China”

Pakistan Today, January 24, 2018

China says it will continue supporting Pakistan on Kashmir dispute as a resolution of the issue is crucial for regional peace and security. This was noted by Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing while talking to Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Muhammad Barjees Tahir, in Islamabad on January 24. The minister expressed his gratitude over long-standing support of China to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The minister also highlighted the ever-increasing ceasefire violations by the Indian forces on Line of Control and stated that Indian acts of violence in the region are a great threat to the regional peace and security. The meeting also discussed the ongoing development projects being carried out with the Chinese cooperation. The Ambassador noted China will continue its cooperation with Pakistan in all fields, as well as

cooperate in small roads and hospitals project for the well-being of the people, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan. He also stated Chinese people and government own their deep relations with Pakistan and want to see Pakistan as a prosperous and developed country. Barjees Tahir further stated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is a game changer that will further strengthen the bilateral economic, cultural and political relations between both countries.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/24/resolution-of-kashmir-dispute-crucial-for-regional-peace-china/>

“At Davos, Pak says Kashmir among causes of a fractured world”

Greater Kashmir, January 26, 2018

Pakistan has stated Kashmir and Rohingya issues are among the “causes of a fractured world” being witnessed today and they also need to be discussed at the international level. Addressing a press conference along with his several cabinet colleagues who were there for the World Economic Forum (WEF), Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi stated that his country expects relationships to remain strong with China as well as the US. He, however, acknowledged that the relationship with China has improved in recent past due to projects like Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In reply to a question, Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated, “Kashmir and Rohingya are also among the causes of fractured world and they also need (to be) addressed at international level.” His comments were in reference to the theme of this year’s WEF annual meeting – ‘Creating a shared future in a fractured world.’ Asked whether Pakistan was feeling the warmth of friendship from the East or the West, Abbasi observed, “For our country warmth has been blowing from both East and from the West and we hope it continues to blow from both sides. We have excellent relationships with China and with the US also.” He stated the relationship with China has further strengthened with BRI and CPEC. Asif stated these relationships have been there since the birth of

the country. The Chinese initiatives in a region that is politically and otherwise fractured is something that shows and manifests China’s commitment to strive for a shared future, the foreign minister noted. He also noted that Pakistan has praised China’s BRI and President Xi Jinping’s vision at every platform in Davos. “We would like our friends to view their relationship with Pakistan as an independent relationship and not through the prism of a third country. I am referring to our relationship with the US and they have (been) in the last few years viewing the relationship through the prism of Afghanistan,” Asif noted.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/front-page/at-davos-pak-says-kashmir-among-causes-of-a-fractured-world/273584.html>

Arsalan Haider, “Women march against arrest of Pakhtun, Baloch, Saraiki and Gilgiti Students”

Daily Times, January 26, 2018

Female students belonging to different educational institutions held protest at Charring Cross area against arrest of Pakhtun, Baloch, Saraiki and Gilgiti students from the University of Punjab. The females students chanted slogans against Islami Jamiat i Taliba (IJT), Punjab Government and administration of the Punjab University. Protestors were carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans. They demanded the government to release Baloch, Saraiki and other students who were arrested in wake of violence at PU between IJT and Baloch students. Human rights activists including Saeeda Diep joined the protest. Mohiba Ahmad, a student of the Government College University (GCU) stated that ‘our Pakhtun and Baloch brothers are being arrested by government for raising their voices’. She noted that the matter was no longer PU-bound as GCU students belonging to Gilgit and Balochistan had also been arrested. “Campuses were the only safe space we had but due to violence, especially ethnic, we are losing this safe space,” she noted.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/189099/lahore-women-march-arrest-baloch-saraiki-gilgiti-students/>

“AJK PM terms Indian democracy a deception”

Pakistan Today, January 26, 2018

The Prime Minister (PM) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Raja Farooq Haider stated that Indian democracy is a gimmick to deceive the international community. Talking to a delegation of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) AJK chapter, who called on him at prime minister secretariat on January 26. He noted that Indian leadership presents a cosmetic democratic face to the world. He asked the international community, international human rights organisations and European Union to send their delegations to Indian held Kashmir so that they could witness the ground realities.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/26/ajk-pm-terms-indian-democracy-a-deception/>

“APHC-AJK stages anti-India demo in Islamabad”

Kashmir Media Service, January 26, 2018

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter held a peaceful protest outside the Indian High Commission in Islamabad, to mark the Indian Republic Day as Black Day. Addressing the demonstrations, the speakers stated that India could not weaken the freedom sentiment of the Kashmiri people. They stated that durable peace in the region was impossible without settlement of the Kashmir dispute and the Kashmiris would continue their struggle till they achieved their right to self-determination.

<https://kmsnews.org/news/2018/01/26/aphc-ajk-stages-anti-india-demo-in-islamabad/>

Shoaib Ur Rehman, “CPEC to revolutionize economic landscape of Pakistan, AJK: Masood”

Business Recorder, January 29, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan January 29 stated the Gawadar Port would be the gateway for the economic development of Pakistan and the region. The AJK President, in a

statement issued on the occasion of the International Gwadar Expo 2018, noted that under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan would enter a new phase of economic development and become a key player in the economic transformation of the region. Under the initiative, he stated, the vision of One Belt One road would become a reality which would help establish Pakistan’s economic linkages with the Central Asian states. The AJK President thanked the Chinese companies and government for prioritizing development projects in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. He also stated that Azad Kashmir had now become a formal part of the CPEC, and major development projects had been earmarked for completion. Under the auspices of CPEC Kohala Hydropower Project, Karot Hydropower Project were under different phases of completion and planning. A state of the art industrial zone would be established in Mirpur, which would be connected to the main CPEC route at Mansehra through an expressway. The expressway would connect major districts of Azad Kashmir with Pakistan helping provide modern connectivity and logistical support to industries within Azad Kashmir, he added. The President invited investors to explore avenues in the developing economic landscape of Azad Kashmir, which had rich deposits of minerals.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/01/29/395965/cpec-to-revolutionize-economic-landscape-of-pakistan-ajk-masood/>

“Nawaz to attend Kashmir Solidarity Day event in AJK”

Pakistan Today, January 31, 2018

Former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will attend a mega event in capital of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) on the occasion of the Kashmir Solidarity Day, celebrated each year on February 5. This was announced by Minister for Social Welfare and Industries Noreen Arif while talking to different delegations in Kutla, a scenic village near the capital city. The Kashmiri minister noted that people from her constituency would set a new record through their massive participation in the gathering. She also stated that her constituency had significant historical background since the establishment of the Pakistan

Muslim League-N in the state. “People in Kutla are the soldiers of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif who will play their starring role for the success of public gathering on the day,” she noted. “Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is the most popular leader among the masses of the state and every single individual wants to have a glimpse of their leader,” she stated, adding that thousands of people were expected in the public gathering.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/31/nawaz-to-attend-kashmir-solidarity-day-event-in-ajk/>

Economic Developments

“AJK has huge potential for investment: President AJK”

Pakistan Observer, January 18, 2018

Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, stated that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a priority for private sector corporations and 2% of their net profits should be allocated for social welfare projects, especially poverty alleviation, skill development, health, and hygiene, and setting up programs for providing safe and clean water. The President made these remarks as the Chief Guest at the inaugural session of the 10th International Corporate Social Responsibility Summit organized by the National Forum for Environment and Health in Islamabad. Azad Kashmir, he noted, has numerous fledgling small and medium-sized industries producing a wide variety of end products. The event was attended by CEOs of leading public and private corporations, academicians, members of the civil society and media representatives. President AJK noted that CSR activities should be a strategic response to the challenges faced by the people in a society and not an act of charity or philanthropy. He also stated that such activities are an essential part of overall economic growth and development in order to end poverty and ensure dignity and opportunity to the people of the country.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-huge-potential-investment-president-ajk/>

“AJK moves to encourage investment, seeks input”

The Express Tribune, January 19, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Minister for Industries Noreen Arif noted that the government has decided to draw up an integrated industrial plan in coordination with the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AJKCCI) to

encourage and promote local and foreign investment in trade and the industrial sector. “The plan also involves attractive investment in the industrial sector by UK-based Kashmiri expatriates in AJK besides reviving the sick industrial units in the existing industrial estates in Mirpur division,” she noted while addressing members of the AJKCCI. The minister also noted that one of the nine proposed Special Economic Zones would be established in Mirpur under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as sanctioned by the authorities so far. She stated the government was taking all possible steps for the early revival of sick industrial units in Mirpur and Bhimber. The government has focused to promote industrial activities in Mirpur and Bhimber districts under the spirit to provide more job opportunities to the unemployed, skilled and unskilled persons, he added. Speaking on this occasion, AJKCCI President Murtaza Ahmed, stated that his chamber has already forwarded some recommendations to the AJK government to devise a strategy for the early revival of over 80 sick industrial units located in Mirpur and Bhimber districts. He further stated that in the light of various proposals the government has assured to encourage and boost foreign investment in the trade and industrial sector in AJK and colossal funds have already been placed in the 2017-18 AJK budget. Ahmed stated that massive potential was available for launching investments in hydel power generation, mineral and tourism sector in AJK.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1612251/2-ajk-moves-encourage-investment-seeks-input/>

“CPEC offering vast opportunities to foreign investors in AJK: Masood”

Pakistan Observer, January 20, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan stated that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is offering vast opportunities to foreign investors in the state.

According to Radio Pakistan, he noted that matters relating to promotion of foreign investment, steps for development of tourism and opportunities for higher education in the state came under discussion. The President also stated that new roads, rest houses, parks and tourist facilitation centers would be constructed under mega Tourism Corridor Project in the state. He further stated that after having made progress in the quantitative goals, now Azad Kashmir is trying to promote compatibility between the emerging market trends and the curricula and various disciplines being taught. “We need modern industrial infrastructure, but it should also be conceived and implemented with its environmental impact in mind,” AJK president added.

<https://pakobserver.net/cpec-offering-vast-opportunities-foreign-investors-ajk-masood/>

Nasir Jamal, “New govt to finalise next NFC award”

Dawn, January 28, 2018

The federal government and provinces have agreed to defer the ‘suspended’ deliberations on tax resource division between them under the new National Finance Commission (NFC) until after next election, but decided to continue work to update technical or sectoral studies in the meanwhile. The decision was

made during a meeting of the federal and provincial finance secretaries held in Islamabad on January 24, officials noted. “These reports were presented during the second and last NFC meeting held in November 2016. But the federal government was not satisfied with them,” an official who requested anonymity noted. These reports will provide a basis and data for discussions on the next award. The NFC negotiations broke off after the second meeting of the commission where Islamabad has asked the provinces to earmark upfront 7percent from the federal divisible tax pool before its vertical division between the federation and provinces: 3percent for security of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and war-on-terror, and 4pc for development expenditure in Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and FATA. Unwilling to concede to the federal demand on their share from the divisible tax pool, the provinces had sought time to firm up their response because it would significantly cut the size of the pie available for vertical division.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1385662/new-govt-to-finalise-next-nfc-award>

International Developments

Syed Mussarat Khalil, “APHC convener meets with community leaders, media”

Saudi Gazette, January 1, 2018

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) convener Syed Faiz Naqshbandi met with local representatives of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and media persons at the residence of Raja Pervez, coordinator to Masood Khan, president AJK and leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Saudi Arabia. Naqshbandi was an active member for Kashmir liberation movement. He took part in Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly elections in 1987 on the platform of Muslim United Front (MUF) from Hazratbal constituency. He was visiting Saudi Arabia on the invitation of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to take part in a photo exhibition and seminar titled “Kashmir continues to bleed” at the OIC secretariat. The event was organized by the Pakistan Consulate General in coordination of the OIC. Naqshbandi called on international community and the OIC, in particular, to play its role so that the Kashmiri people can exercise their right to self-determination. He expressed his gratitude to the OIC for taking sincere efforts to solve the issue of Kashmir according to the UN resolutions.

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/525217/SAUDI-ARABIA/APHC-convener-meets-with-community-leaders-media>

“Clashes erupt as British Lord Nazir calls for Azad Kashmir on R-Day”

The Tribune, January 27, 2018

Clashes erupted outside the Indian High Commission in London on January 26 evening as Lord Nazir Ahmed, a pro-Pakistan peer in the House of Lords, attempted to hold a “black day” protest, which was vehemently countered by many Indian and British groups. The Pakistan-backed ‘black day’ campaign, coincided with India’s Republic Day and took place outside the Indian High Commission in the heart of Central London. Hundreds of demonstrators led by Lord Nazir called for independence for Kashmir as well as for Khalistan. They were met by an equal number of counter-protesters and soon scuffles broke out, leading to police intervention. The counter-protesters questioned Lord Nazir on how he was making a mockery of the British system by openly playing Pakistan’s game. Lord Nazir is a highly controversial figure with a string of scandals, including a conviction for dangerous driving and being ousted from the Labour Party for his anti-Semitic views as well as his perceived sympathy towards radical Islamists.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jammu-kashmir/clashes-erupt-as-british-lord-nazir-calls-for-azad-kashmir-on-r-day/534545.html>

Other Developments

Iftikhar Gilani, “Supreme Court in PoK intervenes to save Sharda temple”

DNA India, January 31, 2018

Even as hostilities along borders continue, the Supreme Court of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) converted a letter it received from a Delhi-based Kashmiri Pandit Ravinder Pandita into a petition and directed its government to protect the most revered Hindu shrine Sharda Peeth in Neelum Valley across Karnah tehsil of Kupwara district. Chief Justice Chaudhary Muhammad Ibrahim Zia issued directions to take steps to protect the abandoned temple and also trace other temples and gurdwaras to put them in heritage list for preservation. Justice Zia received a letter from Pandita, who is also the founder of Save Sharda Committee, in the last week of December 2017. Taking cognizance of the letter, the court issued notices to the government and asked the Registrar to inform Pandita. “In case failure on the part of state functionaries in carrying out of the judgments, you may approach this court for redress of your grievances (sic),” Registrar Supreme Court Riaz

Ahmad wrote to the Save Sharda Committee. Kashmiri Pandits remain highly devoted towards this ancient temple. The place was also once a celebrated centre of learning in the subcontinent like Nalanda and Taxila. The native script of Kashmiri language, Sarada, is also named after the deity of this temple Sharada Devi. The committee is seeking protection of Sharda Peeth and other Hindu temples and also seeks permission to restart pilgrimage to this site, like that of Amarnath pilgrimage. The PoK apex court also urged Kashmiri Pandits to approach the authorities concerned in India and Pakistan and authorities in PoK for restarting the pilgrimage. After the first India-Pakistan war on Kashmir in 1947-48, the areas of Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley and Gilgit-Baltistan came under the control of Pakistan. While Gilgit-Baltistan is now a separate entity, the rest of areas were merged into PoK, which has headquarters in Muzaffarabad.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-supreme-court-in-pok-intervenes-to-save-sharda-temple-2579826>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Recommendation of constitutional committee: both sides hopeful for resolution of issues”

Daily Salam, January 1, 2018

The Committee headed by Malik Abrar has finalized all the three demands of Peoples Action Committee and Traders Union and sent them to the Prime Minister for final approval. The good part is that steps to solve were taken without any delay from the state and federal government. The above mentioned committee recorded the participation of heads of trade unions and Peoples Action Committee. They presented their demands before committee and those demands were later finalized during the meetings of GB Council. Peoples Action Committee and trade unions both are happy that their issues will be solved permanently after notifications are being issued from the Prime Minister’s office. However, the Tax Adaptation Act 2012 will be revoked and a new act that is acceptable to all will be implemented and, henceforth, taxation process will be pursued in the light of that act. Chairman Standing Committee of GB Council, Asharaf Sada, stated that his government believes in resolving the issues by dialogue and talks. That is why a solution acceptable to everyone was found. It is imperative that every stake holder of society should play his role, be it member of assembly, or a daily wager. Now that the constitutional committee has finalized the report, it is hoped that tax issue will be solved and normal daily life will be restored in Gilgit Baltistan.

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

“Interest of R&W in GB and Balochistan”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, January 5, 2018

Pakistan starts from GB and ends in Balochistan.

Both areas are rich in minerals and natural resources. In past, Balochistan used to be an important state of Pakistan due to its contribution to the national economy. This was the reason why India wanted to destabilize the region from day one and invested heavily in secret services through R&W. Employment opportunities of central government were closed for unemployed youth. Local leaderships also promoted their own interest of chieftdom instead of fighting for employment and rights of Baloch youth. As a result, Baloch people lived under two-fold deprivation- one from the local leadership and the second from the federal government. Ruling class, diplomats and establishment did not take notice of the situation. Law and order conditions inhibited development and prosperity of the region. On the other hand, GB was eyed by India due to its vast resources, geographical location and as a disputed land being part of Kashmir. Youth in the region live with the feeling of deprivation because of neglect by ruling elites. They lived with a sense of inferiority complex. Now with the changing geopolitical conditions and launch of CPEC, the significance of GB and Balochistan has increased many fold as compared to past. Due to CPEC, Indian projects are increasing and R&W is taking interest more than what it used to take in past. To foil the CPEC, R&W has established a special desk under the name of Desk for GBCPEC and Dakhan and this desk is headed by a former Major General. The head office is located in Lodhi Road, New Delhi. This desk allocated \$269 million in 2014 and now for 2017-18, it increased the amount to \$ 500 million. This amount will be used to destabilize GB and Balochistan. Politicians, religious leaderships, journalists and influential people of civil society will be benefitting from this covertly.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=01-05-2018&img=01-05-2018page-4-4

“Anti-development people are busy in conspiracy”

Daily Salam, January 20, 2018

Amjad Advocate and 4 gangs were black listed by people. This gang was a defaulter and, therefore, put GB in the defaulter category. Now, they want to misguide people to fulfil their ambitions. This gang fears that accountability process may send them behind the bars. Due to this fear made, they lost their mind and they started conspiring against development work.

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

Amjad Hussain, “Region should be set up in line with occupied Kashmir: Advocate”

Daily K2, January 27, 2018

Though J&K is disputed under UN resolutions, India has made it an autonomous state and it is represented in its Parliament as well. People in GB are disappointed from the position of the federal government in Pakistan. Leaving the region in a limbo situation is equal to ridiculing the freedom fighters. If GB is disputed, then it must be given similar status as that of J&K. As India made J&K an independent state under article 370, GB must also be given constitutional protection through an amendment in Article 1.

<http://paper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1517011200>

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 abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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