

POK

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News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

In this Edition

This issue of the PoK digest contains the election campaigns of major political parties including the religious political parties have also nominated their candidates even though they have not traditionally fared well. This election also brought forth several problems that the people of the GB were facing which was highlighted by the political parties. The region has remained economically backward. In spite of GB being gateway to the CPEC, the province has not benefitted from this project. There is regular load shedding which affects the life of the people. Many also debated the political future of GB. There was a lot of speculation regarding the constitutional status of GB. Whether it will become a full-fledged province at par with other provinces or would continue to be ruled by Islamabad. Many lamented that in spite of GB's decision to merge with Pakistan their political fate hang in balance and they do not enjoy equal rights.

Coordinator, PoK Project

Political Developments

Pakistan tells India it has no locus standi on G-B

The Express Tribune, 03 November 2020

Pakistan categorically rejects India's Ministry of External Affairs' irresponsible and unwarranted statement regarding Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). **India has no locus standi whatsoever on the issue – legal, moral or historical. Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry said that for more than 73 years, India had been in illegal and forcible occupation of parts of Jammu and Kashmir.** He further said, "Regurgitation of false and fabricated claims by India can neither change the facts nor divert attention from India's illegal actions and continuing humanitarian crisis resulting from the perpetration of the worst human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)," it said. Chaudhry said, administrative, political and economic reforms were a long-standing demand of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, adding that the envisaged provisional reforms reflected the aspirations of the indigenous populace of the region.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2270743/pakistan-tells-india-it-has-no-locus-standi-on-g-b>

AJK PM seeks joint strategy for resolution of Kashmir issue

Daily Times, 6 November 2020

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan has invited all the political leadership of Azad Kashmir and APHC to formulate a unanimous strategy for upholding the sanctity and respect for the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing foundation stone laying ceremony of renowned Kashmiri leader, Choudhary Ghulam Abbas's tomb in Rawalpindi on Thursday, he said Pakistan is a matter of faith for the Kashmiri

people. They have linked their destiny with Pakistan by adopting a historical resolution before the inception of Pakistan. He urged the people to demonstrate complete unity and extend their full support and encourage the Kashmiris struggling for their internationally recognized right to self-determination.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/685796/ajk-pm-seeks-joint-strategy-for-resolution-of-kashmir-issue/>

The future status of Gilgit-Baltistan

Sartaj Aziz, The Nation, 03 November 2020

In September 2020, as the time for GB elections approached, **someone in the government suddenly realized that a formal announcement to give provisional status of a province to GB could be of considerable advantage to the ruling party in these elections. In desperation, they requested the Army Chief to convene a meeting of party leaders and persuade them to cooperate in this task.** At this meeting with the Army Chief, both the main opposition parties expressed their support for granting provisional status of a province to GB but they also emphasised that the required legislative and other steps for this purpose should be taken after the GB elections, scheduled for November 15, 2020.

<https://nation.com.pk/03-Nov-2020/the-future-status-of-gilgit-baltistan>

Gilgit Baltistan elections

Khalid Mahmood Rasool, The Nation, 13 November 2020

"This is an election of Gilgit Baltistan but nobody is talking about its issues, pains and miseries emanating from a disputed identity. Political parties are having a series of election rallies only to amplify

their rhetoric as if rallies are being held in the rest of Pakistan. Crowds are chanting to voice party slogans but, believe me sir, people and issues of GB remain voiceless”, said a resident of GB. GB has been a victim of its own history. The people of GB have been waiting and demanding for the integration of Gilgit-Baltistan as a province of Pakistan ever since its accession to Pakistan. “Their demand is based on the original offer of unconditional accession to Pakistan after the liberation of the region as a result of an armed revolt led by the locals against the occupiers of Jammu & Kashmir. This offer was never accepted by Pakistan which oddly continued to consider it a disputed area.”

<https://nation.com.pk/13-Nov-2020/gilgit-baltistan-elections>

Opposition narrative of anarchy rejected: governor

Daily Times, 18 November 2020

Governor of Punjab Chaudhry Sarwar during a meeting with the Provincial Minister for Energy Dr. Akhtar Malik and others at Governor’s House Lahore said that the people of Gilgit have rejected the opposition’s narrative of anarchy and corruption. Opposition should accept election results instead of threatening protests in Gilgit-Baltistan as people have decided in favor of the government and against the opposition.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/690410/opp-narrative-of-anarchy-rejected-in-gb-polls-governor/>

Self-Determination Rally against Indian Occupation in Kashmir

S A Haidri, Daily Times, 19 November 2020

A sit-in protest was organized under the aegis of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir and International Forum for Justice and Human Rights against Indian oppression, barbarism and demand for right to self-determination from the United Nations. *A large number of citizens on Thursday participated*

in the anti-India protest sit-ins and the right to self-determination rally. People in the protest were chanting slogans for freedom. “Go Modi Go Back & Go India Go Back” we’re among the main slogans. ... “These cruel actions of India have posed a serious threat to the Muslim identity of the state.” they added. The speakers said that a dark cloud is hovering over the unity, identity and future of the state. In these most difficult circumstances, the citizens of Azad Kashmir cannot remain silent.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/691146/self-determination-rally-against-indian-occupation-in-kashmir/>

Protests in GB

Editorial, The Express Tribune, 25 November 2020

The PTI faces allegations as well as the wrath of the losing parties not just over the 2018 general elections but also the one recently conducted in Gilgit-Baltistan. *A violent post-poll protest in an otherwise crime-free zone of G-B is a serious cause for concern. A large number of protesters, belonging to PPP, gathered outside the G-B Election Commissioner’s Office and chanted slogans against the government and the election commissioner for “not carrying out a promised forensic audit” concerning one of the 24 election constituencies. They also set ablaze a government office and three government vehicles and blocked a major road by lighting a bonfire. ... Regardless of the protest being justified or not, the debate here is: what stops us from having an election whose results are acceptable to all contesting parties? Why can’t we carry out meaningful election reform, enabling us to put the rigging allegations to rest? Why in neighbouring India, are election results accepted with open heart by all, and why not here? If he is really serious, a truly autonomous election commission could be the starting point.*

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2273436/protests-in-g-b>

Baba Jan's release is a victory for the people: AWP

Daily Times, 28 November 2020

Awami Workers Party hails the release of Baba Jan, Aleem Khan, Iftikhar Karbalai, Shakoорullah Baig and all other political prisoners of GB as a victory for the people and for all forces of resistance. In a joint statement, the AWP congratulated the people of Hunza and Gilgit-Baltistan who bravely fought for their freedom and all progressive, left and resistance forces who continued to speak out against this injustice all these years.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/694963/baba-jans-release-is-a-victory-for-the-people-awp/>

Economic Developments

AJK engineers' strike enters 7th day

Dawn, 06 November 2020

A pen-down strike by professional engineers, registered with the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) and working in the public sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), entered seventh day on Thursday for provision of 'technical allowance' on the pattern of the provinces in Pakistan. The striking employees made it clear that they would not resume their responsibilities on the basis of any "hollow verbal assurance" but a proper notification in accordance with the commitment of Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1588842/ajk-engineers-strike-enters-7th-day>

Why Gilgit-Baltistan is about to become a geostrategic jewel once again

Rias Akbar & Yawar Abbas, The Express Tribune, 09 November 2020

G-B also provides Pakistan with a gateway into Central Asia. Plans are afoot for the construction of a road between G-B and Tajikistan. Central Asian

countries are Pakistan's historic allies, and their rich natural resources are needed by Pakistan. They in turn are keen to access the Arabia Sea. *China's interests associated with G-B are clear cut. It has economic, strategic, and prestige interests attached with G-B. China's multipurpose venture CPEC the Belt Road Initiative's flagship (now pilot project) – enters Pakistan through G-B. CPEC is an investment of more than \$60 billion, and China's strategic alliance with Pakistan is based on its need to find an alternative short overland route to the Middle East and beyond to evade potential problems in the disputes of the South China Sea. China's search for overcoming its strategic bottlenecks in the Strait of Malacca continue to make G-B a vitally important region.* China also needs G-B to foster deeper ties with Pakistan to use it as a counterweight against India in South Asia.

<https://tribune.com.pk/article/97215/why-gilgit-baltistan-is-about-to-become-a-geostrategic-jewel-once-again-part-2>

Extracts From Urdu Media

Interim Province

Editorial, Baad-e-Shimal, 01 November 2020

A rally was organized to make GB a provisional province. People from different walks of life attended the rally. **Addressing the rally, son of a Kargil war hero, Tariq Lalak Jan, observed that people are frustrated they have not been given the rights enshrined in the constitution for the last seventy years. Therefore the government of Pakistan must immediately declare GB as province in the interim.**

People were hopeful that the PM would give us good news about making GB an interim province before the election as he promised while speaking to a private TV channel. But with the passage of time, this matter is going to be shelved. **After the inauguration of CPEC and GB being the gateway of CPEC, it has emerged as an important region. Whenever GB's provincial rights are recognised, Kashmiri ('AJK') leadership becomes active.** Let us see when the Centre decides in this regard and what.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/e-paper/?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MTEtMDEtMjAyMA==>

PM announces to make GB a province

Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 03 November 2020

Prime Minister Imran Khan while speaking at a rally on 1 November to mark the 73th National Day of the region said that Gilgit Baltistan (GB) would be made a province of Pakistan. **He said the decision has been taken while keeping the UN resolutions on Kashmir in mind. Imran said that GB Scouts had sacrificed a lot to get GB free.**

Like Jammu and Ladakh, "Azad" Kashmir and GB were part of Kashmir at the time of the partition. The areas which wanted to join Pakistan revolted against the India's decision to enter in Kashmir and attacked

Kashmir in the name of freedom. India landed its force in Kashmir (27 October) and took the matter to the UN. **Over the time India has consolidated its control over Kashmir. It has started making claims on the areas that are under China's and Pakistan's administration. On 5 August 2019, India took a radical step and revoked constitutionally guaranteed special status of Kashmir to change the demography of the Muslim majority state and annexed Ladakh fully into India. China rejected the change made to Ladakh (es rooz [5 August 2019] apne ayeen mei majood Kashmir ki khoo-seesi darjeh khatam kar ke es elaqey mei akseryeti Muslim abadi ko aqileeyat mei badlney ki saazish ki aur Ladakh ko Bharat mei zam kar diya. Ladakh mei China ne es tabdeeli ko tasleem karne se inkaar kar diya).** **What is happening in the LAC is because of the changes made in Kashmir by India.**

Pro-Pakistani movement is as strong in "occupied" Kashmir as is the freedom movement against India. India has divided "occupied" Kashmir into two territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. On the other side, "Azad" Kashmir retains the same status and GB is being made an autonomous province according to the wishes of local population. The latter cannot be compared to India's decision of 5 August 2019 in any case.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-11-03/page-8/detail-3>

GB election, how religious parties are doing?

Aashiq Faraz, Daily Salam, 05 November 2020

There are several religious political parties that participate in elections. Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam are prominent among these religious parties. **There are other organizations which work as a pressure groups but don't take part in elections, which include Nifaze-e-fiqh-e-Jafria,**

Tahreek-e-Islami, Sunni Ittehad Council, Wahdatul Muslelen, Labbaik Ya Rasolallah, etc.

As far as GB is concerned since 1994 to 2015 religious political parties have not been able to achieve any visible victory. In 2009 election only one seat went to them, however, in 2015 they succeeded to win five seats. Around 4% of votes were casted in their favour. Wahdat-e-Islami and Tahreek Fiqh Jafrai ran a strong election campaign in 2015. Still they managed to win only two seats each. Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat Ulama-e- Islam, and Tahirul Qadri's organization could not even win a single seat.

This time also Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam, Tahreek-e- Islami, and Wahdatul Muslemen nominated their candidates for several constituencies. Jamiat Ulama-e- Islam candidates will fight from the Deyamar region while Jamaat-e-Islami would contest from Ustawar and Gilgit region. Tahreek-i- Islami is fighting from Skardu and Gilgit. Wahdatul Muslemen will fight Skurdo and Nagar and allied with PTI at other seats. Central leaders of these religious organisations have not come for electioneering until now. On the other hand, Imams who lead Friday and daily prayers of both the central mosques of GB distanced themselves from supporting any party.

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

Election campaign intensified

Editorial, Daily Baad-e-Shimal, 09 November 2020

The election campaign has intensified in GB. **Central leaders of all major parties are on a visit to GB and held corner meetings and public rallies. A huge gathering of people could be seen in all the three major parties' rallies. This election is going to be different and unique in the election history of GB.** There has been a tradition in GB and Azad Kashmir that the ruling party at center wins the election. Federal Minister Ali Amin Gandapur criticised the opposition parties for not keeping up with their promise of making GB a province. **He said that these**

parties feared India. Only Imran Khan is bold who decided to make GB a province. He also promised to abolish Khalisa Sarkar law and people will be given land ownership rights. Gandapur also said that every year, the government will construct 30 km of roads in Skardu.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/news/11-09-2020/pages/11-09-2020page-4.gif>

Constitutional election in a constitution-less land

Ibn-e- Mirza Qmrah, Daily Baad-e-Shimal, 14 November 2020

Political activities are at the peak this time. Even local traditions and cultures are endangered now. The earlier electioneering here used to be limited to two to three political parties which was an affair of a week or two. But this time noise, slogans, public gatherings started months ago, in a way that forced birds to leave their nests.

However, real constitutional, political, and legal democracy is missing from GB. **People of GB after freeing GB from the Dogras remained independent for several days and later joined Pakistan. They were so sincere that they joined without any preconditions. But the irony is that people of the GB are deprived of their constitutional rights.** Separatist movements are going in different parts of the country and the world. Yet people of GB mobilised support to join with Pakistan. Unconstitutional elections are happening here for the last 30 to 35 years. These elections are called legislative assembly election. This legislative assembly does not have any status. The election in GB is unique as in these elections they are not electing any national assembly member or prime minister. Despite all the deprivations people of GB consider themselves as Pakistanis and observe all national days like 23rd march, 14 August, etc.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/news/11-14-2020/pages/11-14-2020page-4.gif>

What will happen to the promises made in GB?

Editorial, Daily Dunya, 17 November 2020

It appears from the election results that PTI with its nine members may be able to form the next government in Gilgit-Baltistan. ***One issue that would be keenly followed is the constitutional status of GB: what would be its constitutional status in the future? In a rally Prime Minister Imran Khan had said that GB would be given provincial status.***

It is to be seen whether GB is made a province. And if it is, would the rights of GB be at par with other provinces? Would it be ruled from Islamabad, or it would be like KP and Punjab? What would be the rights of GB in the distribution of the resources as stipulated in the National Finance Commission? Would the GB government continue to remain under the Kashmir Affairs and GB ministry? Will the future status of GB be different from “Azad” Kashmir? What kind of amendments are required in the constitution of Pakistan for meeting these requirements? The people of GB have trusted the promises made by PTI. How would the PTI keep its promises is to be seen.

https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2020-11-17&edition=LHR&id=5403022_21597624

Protest against load shedding

Editorial, Daily Baad-e-Shimal, 30 November 2020

People in GB are facing power cuts during the winter season while on the other hand load-shedding comes to zero in another part of the country during winter. ***People of GB face double torture. Load-shedding is carried out here on the excuse of lack of water in rivers.*** People came out of their homes and protested against load-shedding in the area. Governments in the past has never paid attention to resolve the load-shedding issue which is causing an immense disturbance for the people living here. Protesters demanded if proper action is not taken to address load-shedding then the protest will be intensified. Protestors disbursed when Maulana Sultan Raees talked to them to raise the issue with the power department.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/eaper/?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MTEtMzAtMjAyMA==>

Extracts From Electronic Media

PML-N is rejected in GB because of its anti-establishment narrative

View Point with Imran Yaqub Khan & Zafar Hilaly, GNN, 15 November 2020

In this episode the host discuss the GB elections with the two analysts. The main points are as below: Some important questions were raised in this programme. First will the opposition parties (PDM) accept the election results of GB elections? Have the people of GB rejected the narrative of the PML-N? Second, the PML-N is lagging behind in the elections. Most of its electables were taken/lured away by the PTI and are fighting elections on PTI tickets. The people are mostly loyal to the person and not to the party and hence PTI got maximum votes. PML-N has rejected the election results. Hafiz Ur Rehman, ex CM of GB and other PML-N leaders have given this statement underlining that the election was rigged. Third, both the analysts pointed out that if the PTI would have done rigorous campaigning like the PPP, it would have won by majority (13 seats). Fourth, also when it comes to GB elections, whichever party rules the center has traditionally won the GB elections as they know that their issues will be resolved by the center. Fifth, analysts like Imran Ayub underlined that it was a peaceful election and the large voter turnout is an answer to the pro-Indian elements. Sixth, Zafar Hilaly pointed out that there will be a psychological impact of the GB results on Pakistan. If PTI loses it will mean that PDM has an impact and vice versa. ***He underlined that the people of GB are the most patriotic and have rejected PML-N and JUI because of their anti-establishment narrative.***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Hpbpn6KiFs>

PDM rejects GB election results

Kal Tak with Javed Chaudhry, Express News, 17 November 2020

After the GB election results, keeping in mind the upcoming Senate election and also elections in ‘AJK’, PM Imran Khan announced some electoral reforms that his government will bring in the coming months. ***He listed the need to bring three important changes, first electronic voting, second a system for overseas Pakistanis to vote and third show of hands in senate voting so as to reduce corruption. He underlined for this a constitutional amendment is needed.*** Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) held meeting on 17 November in Islamabad under the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman. The opposition through the PDM platform has rejected the results of GB terming it as the reply to the 2018 rigged elections and also the electoral reforms. Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman announced that their *Jalsas* will continue as per schedule. In this episode the host asks: if there is a situation where both opposition and government are not ready to budge from their positions, how will it shape the politics in the coming days?

Guests of this episode are Tariq Fazal Chaudary, PML-N, Dr. Romesh Kumar, PTI & Naz Baloch of PPP. ***Dr. Romesh Kumar argued that the opposition should sit with the government to talk about terms of reference to bring changes in the electoral laws and cancel the PDM protests in view of the new wave of corona virus spreading in the country.*** He pointed out that the PDM has till now arranged three *Jalsas* in the country but could not bring down the government. ***Tariq Fazal Chaudhary pointed out that the PTI government has closed the door of dialogue.*** He argued that the government has kept

some leaders in the Parliament and Special Assistants to PM (SAPM) just to criticize and bad mouth the opposition. He said that electronic voting is the biggest fraud and the PML-N was never in favour of this kind of electoral reform. ***Naz Baloch questioned if the PTI wanted to bring electoral reforms why they waited for two years? Parliament under the PTI has performed the worst in these two years and the economy has touched a new low. She asked what happened to the charter of economy that the government talked about in the beginning of its tenure?*** In GB the fact is that the PTI government was not able to get a simple majority is a message that the people do not trust them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apG-IUR7yKc>

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: 2017 Census: 4,045,367 (Male: 1,980,794; Female: 2,064,421)

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Divisions: 3

Districts: 10

Sub Divisions (Tehsils): 32

Constituencies in AJK: 29

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 Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 41

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: <https://pnda.jk.gov.pk/statyearbook.php?page=AJK%20at%20a%20Glance> accessed November 2020)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 1.4 million (2017 census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Fourteen

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Shigar, Kharmang, Rondu

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Ghizer, Diamer, Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Darel, Tangir, Yaseen

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: 33 (3 reserved for technocrats and 6 for woman)

Governor of G-B: Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon

Chief Minister G-B: Khalid Khurshid Khan

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: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/06/17/gb-notifies-four-more-districts-total-number-of-districts-now-14/>)

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Disclaimer

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