

POK

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News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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



Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

In this Edition

In the month of April, the local administration was preoccupied with the pandemic situation in GB and issues like hoarding of essential commodities, shortages of personal protective equipment (PPEs) for the paramedics, lack of coronavirus testing laboratories, medical staff and ventilators, and shortages of funds due to Pakistan not giving the region its share of aid received from the U.S., World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to fight COVID-19 grabbed the attention of the local media.

This month also the government of Pakistan approached the Supreme Court seeking its clearance to amend the "Government of Gilgit-Baltistan Order 2018" to conduct the upcoming general elections by adopting the Elections Act 2017 as well as setting up a caretaker government during the interregnum period. The apex Court granted the government permission to go ahead on April 28, and raised the issue of people of GB not enjoying fundamental rights like the people of Pakistan. The Chief Justice, heading a seven-judge bench said: "We don't understand why the people of GB cannot enjoy similar protection as guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan when they are totally connected with Pakistan as they carry the same passport and use the same currency?"

The dispute around the ownership of eight acres of land in the Dianer-Basha area between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) governments also came for discussion in the media. As the plan stands, the dam will be built in GB but the power station will be built up in an area that is claimed by KP. As per the rules, the location of the power-station will determine the royalty from the sale of electricity, hence the problem. The issue is a long outstanding one and has remained unresolved for last several years. Initially, this dispute was referred to a local Jirga (reconciliation committee) and the land was handed over to KP, but in official documents, the land continues to belong to GB. Even the post office and other government buildings in the area are still owned by the GB government. This whole issue is a reminder of Pakistani design not to let GB have the royalty which is being resented by the locals for a long time.

Coordinator, PoK Project

Political Developments

India's opposition to CPEC on shaky ground

Asia Times, Adnan Aamir, 01 April 2020

Speaking during Raisina Dialogue 2020 in January, Indian Naval Chief Admiral Karambir Singh claimed that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor impinges on India's sovereignty. ... There are two major reasons that drive the Indian opposition to the US\$50 billion CPEC initiative. The first reason is that the economic corridor passes through the Gilgit-Baltistan region in Pakistan, which was partly under the control of the state of Kashmir at the time of Partition (India claims the whole region). ... The second reason for India's opposition to CPEC is the fear that it is being used by China to counterbalance the economic growth of India.

<https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/indias-opposition-to-cpec-on-shaky-ground/>

Gilgit Baltistan Activist said - Pakistan's double standards on people of Ladakhi Buddhism

Sunriseread, 01 April 2020

In the 43rd session of the UNHRC in Geneva, Gilgit Baltistan political activist Senj H Sering said that Pakistan has created a prison-like situation for the locals of Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan should open the path towards Ladakh and Afghanistan, so that the people of Gilgit Baltistan can meet their families. It has been said that with this Buddhist people of Ladakh will be able to visit religious places. Senz H Sering asked the question, 'If Indian Sikhs are welcomed in Kartarpur in Pakistan, then why are the Ladakhi Buddhists being denied the same religious rights?' He told Pakistan that such a double standard, why?

<https://sunriseread.com/gilgit-baltistan-activist-said-pakistans-double-standards-on-people-of-ladakhi-buddhism/77675/>

Gilgit-Baltistan, KP, Balochistan lag behind in testing for coronavirus

ARY, 03 April 2020

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Hafeezur Rehman on April 3 said that they have a capacity to conduct 100 coronavirus tests in a day and had conducted tests of 1000 suspected patients till date, ARY NEWS reported. "We have a number of virus suspects in the region and the situation could become clear before us if we conduct 500 tests in a day," he said while talking during ARY NEWS programme 'Sawal Ye Hai' and added that they plan to increase their testing capacity to 300 in coming days. He said that currently they are only focusing on suspected cases and those who had arrived from abroad. "We have received 3000 testing kits from the federal government," the chief minister of the federally-administered region said adding that they had also purchased 2000 kits from China that would soon be delivered. We are currently in dire need of testing kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) to fight the virus in the region, he said.

<https://arynews.tv/en/coronavirus-gilgit-baltistan-kp-testing-capacity/>

Sultan M Hali, India objects to COVID-19 quarantine camps in AJK

Pakistan Observer, 03 April 2020

India, which is itself struck hard by the pandemic COVID-19, instead of attending to addressing the threat facing its own teeming millions, is indulging in petty politics. ***Its lawmakers are pointing out that India must castigate Pakistan for establishing Corona Virus quarantine camps in Azad Jammu Kashmir, where non-state residents i.e. from the rest of Pakistan are also being housed.*** It appeared that the extremist Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was acting with maturity when he invited the SAARC

leadership to combat the pandemic jointly. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a vain attempt by a leader riven with the venom of Hindutva to gain cheap popularity. To jettison differences and come together during an unprecedented calamity is appreciable and to share miseries is even better as these acts of human kindness work as a miracle but that soothes both physical and emotional pain. On the other hand, nothing can be more repugnant than an act that shows the narrow-mindedness of a neighbour which is hell-bent upon heaping miseries on the hapless population of Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) as well as the minorities of India, intentionally puts a people at unavoidable risk just for the comfort and safety of another ethnic entity.

<https://pakobserver.net/india-objects-to-covid-19-quarantine-campsin-ajk/>

New DIG GB region assumes office charge

Urdu Point, 04 April 2020

New Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police for Baltistan region Makhdoom Qaiser Bashir took over the charge of his office on April 4. The seat was vacant since long due to transfer of Riaz Nazir Ghara. Addressing the occasion, he stressed upon the police officers to serve the people with dedication and for protection the life and property of the general public which was the prime responsibility of the police. He said that lockdown instructions of the government would be implemented strictly to protect the general public from the dangerous coronavirus pandemic. Earlier he was briefed about overall administrative environment of the area, performance and problems of the police department and the region.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/new-dig-gb-region-assumes-office-charge-883584.html>

Opposition leader wants GB Assembly dissolved

Dawn, 09 April 2020

The opposition leader in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly has demanded dissolution of the house to utilise the ‘unnecessary’ expenditures for purchasing the much-needed ventilators and treating the Covid-

19 patients. Mohammad Shafi Khan insisted that the assembly had become dysfunctional and was burden on the exchequer, according to a press release issued here on April 8. Mr Shafi alleged that last year the annual budget of the region had been prepared at the Chief Minister’s House bypassing the elected members of the assembly, and claimed that the practice would be repeated this year too. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan should dissolve the assembly and form a caretaker government, which should prepare the upcoming budget and conduct the next elections. The GB Assembly completes its five-year term on June 24. The opposition leader said the local election commission had been rendered dysfunctional and the next elections were round the corner. He alleged that despite lockdown, GB works department officials held meetings to approve projects worth billions of rupees at the behest of chief minister Hafeezur Rehman during the last few months of his government.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1547721>

President Dr Arif Alvi visits Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 12 April 2020

President Dr Arif Alvi visited Gilgit and Skardu to review coronavirus situation in Gilgit-Baltistan. The president handed over 15,000 testing kits and personal protective equipment to the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. Chief Secretary Muhammad Khurram Agha briefed the president about measures taken against Corona Pandemic in Gilgit-Baltistan. President appreciated the efforts of the provincial government in curbing Coronavirus. Dr Arif Alvi assured to personally monitor the supply of essential items to Utility Stores in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/04/12/president-dr-arif-alvi-visits-gilgit-baltistan/>

Pakistan using quarantine excuse to lockup lawyers in Gilgit

Economic Times, 12 April 2020

Gilgit-Baltistan (PoK), Apr 12 (ANI): Coronavirus pandemic has worsened woes of people in Pakistan

occupied Kashmir (PoK). While speaking to ANI, a senior lawyer from Gilgit-Baltistan, Mohammad Bakar Mehdi said, “The current situation in Gilgit-Baltistan is worst. They have put one lawyer in quarantine due to coronavirus pandemic. But, his test was result negative and Pakistan government hasn’t released him yet and putting a lawyer inside quarantine is not the solution of any problem.” “I request Pakistan government to have a look towards the worst situation of Gilgit-Baltistan. They should facilitate everyone in this area as well,” he added.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pakistan-using-quarantine-excuse-to-lockup-lawyers-in-gilgit/videoshow/75105605.cms?from=mdr>

Coronavirus: Gilgit-Baltistan an Epicenter

UNPO, 13 April 2020

Lack of coronavirus testing laboratories, medical staff, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit Baltistan are causes of major concern, say political activists even as the pandemic is set to flare up in the region. Already, 215 positive coronavirus cases have been reported from Gilgit Baltistan whereas 34 infections from the deadly virus are reported in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The region, which has poor healthcare infrastructure is ill-equipped to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. Dr. Misfar Hasan, a political activist from Pakistan occupied Kashmir, told ANI, “There are many more issues arising, the doctors are there without protective equipment, there are no ventilators and no other support. A large population has been left at risk as there does not seem to be any strategy.” He added, “The same is the situation in Gilgit Baltistan as there are only a few ventilators and no trained doctors who can manage the seriously ill”. The region is under Pakistan’s illegal occupation since 1947 and during this difficult time, Islamabad has left them in the lurch. There are no reliable doctors and good hospitals in POK and Gilgit Baltistan. Sajjad Raja, Chairman of National Equality Party JKGBL said, “Hospitals there are only the referral centers. Patients who go to hospitals are just referred to Rawalpindi for treatment. According to

government statistics, the total population is over four million and there are only two ventilators in whole PoK”. He added, “Pakistan plunders trillions of rupees from PoK and Gilgit Baltistan - foreign exchange, electricity, waters, minerals, and forestry resources and in return, the total budget of PoK was only Rs 121.05 billion and Gilgit Baltistan was Rs 62.95 billion”. Political leaders from PoK and Gilgit Baltistan have accused Pakistan of not giving the region its share of aid received from the U.S., World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to fight COVID-19.

<https://unpo.org/article/21817>

Gilgit-Baltistan minister quits over failure to get lockdown eased

Dawn, 17 April 2020

Gilgit-Baltistan minister for works Dr Mohammad Iqbal announced his resignation here on Thursday over non-implementation of the government committee’s decision to relax lockdown in the region. Addressing a press conference at Gilgit Press Club, he accused the local bureaucracy of humiliating GB representatives by not implementing their decisions. Dr Iqbal said the GB cabinet committee, including six ministers and secretaries, had decided on Tuesday to relax the lockdown restrictions in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1549831>

Govt denies demanding funds for coronavirus testing from GB

The Nation, 18 April 2020

Sindh government on April 17 denied reports of demanding funds from Gilgit Baltistan government to conduct coronavirus tests of those hailing from the area. Responding to what he called a misunderstanding on his Twitter account, the spokesman of the Sindh Government Murtaza Wahab said that the Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah had personally spoken to Chief Minister GB Hafeezur Rehman regarding the issue which was based on some

misunderstanding. “It is the policy of the Sindh Government to test people free of cost and the same rule would apply to our friends from Gilgit Baltistan,” he said. It is pertinent to mention here that it was reported that Murad Ali Shah has asked the GB government to provide them with funds to conduct test of the region’s students staying in the province.

<https://nation.com.pk/18-Apr-2020/govt-denies-demanding-funds-for-coronavirus-testing-from-gb>

AJK govt approves ordinance against hoarding of essential commodities

The Express Tribune, 20 April 2020

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has approved an ordinance against hoarding of essential commodities amid outbreak of the novel coronavirus and vowed to take action against culprits in the region. The development comes two days after Prime Minister Imran Khan directed officials for seeking help from the country’s intelligence agencies to prevent smuggling, hoarding and profiteering. He stressed that a “tough action against this curse is essential to boost the national economy”. Currently, 49 cases of the contagious disease, Covid-19, have been reported in the mountainous region. However, nine patients have also been discharged from hospitals after full recovery. Sharing the details of the newly-introduced ordinance in Muzaffarabad on April 12, AJK Chief Secretary Mathar Niaz Rana said that the state government has promulgated a new law to fine and jail traders who hoard 30 essential food, medical items and creating their artificial shortage. He said Premier Imran and AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan paid immediate attention towards complaints about hoarding of edibles amid the lockdown and directed for the necessary legislation. “New ordinance contains a three-year sentence, summary trial and fine equal to 50 per cent of the value of seized items on the hoarders.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2202088/1-ajk-govt-approves-ordinance-hoarding-essential-commodities/>

US college to help set up heritage centre in Baltistan varsity

Dawn, 22 April 2020

The Boston Architectural College (BAC) and the University of Baltistan, Skardu, have agreed to jointly launch a US-funded academic partnership project for ‘cultural heritage management’ in Gilgit-Baltistan. Under the agreement, BAC will help the varsity establish its ‘cultural heritage centre’ in Skardu. The understanding about the partnership was reached during a 60-minute teleconference among the officials of the varsity, BAC, US Department of State and US Embassy the other day, according to a press release issued here on April 21. Both the institutions have agreed to collaborate in faculty and student exchanges for capacity building, curriculum development, field school development, preservation and documentation of cultural heritage of GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1551273>

GB court summons officials over shortage of PPEs in hospitals

Dawn, 22 April 2020

The Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court on April 21 took suo motu notice of shortage and provision of substandard personal protective equipments (PPEs) to the paramedics fighting the Covid-19 pandemic on the frontlines in the region. Chief Court Judge Justice Malik Haq Nawaz took the notice on a request the Gilgit-Baltistan Awareness Forum had uploaded on its social media page, pointing out that shortage of protective kits in the government hospitals had severely hampered the fight against coronavirus. The judge ordered the health secretary, the medical superintendent and the district health officer Gilgit to appear before the divisional bench on April 24 to explain their positions. The forum in the complaint had urged the court to turn the request into petition under section 561-A of CrPC. The complaint alleged that substandard PPEs had been provided to the

medical professionals in the City Hospital Gilgit, as a result they were falling prey to Covid-19. It pointed out that there was no trace of the medical equipment, including international standard masks and PPEs, the Chinese and the federal governments had provided recently to the regional government.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1551272>

Federal govt approaches SC to form caretaker set-up in G-B

Pamir Times, 26 April 2020

The federal government has approached the Supreme Court (SC) to seek permission for setting up of a caretaker government for holding upcoming general election in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). “It is respectfully prayed that the federal government may please be allowed necessary amendments in the government of Gilgit-Baltistan Order 2018 for the caretaker government and conduct of elections for Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly, inter alia to adopt the Election Act 2017, the rules and regulations made thereunder and to do all that is necessary to continue democratic political process/regime in the area in the interest of justice,” said the civil miscellaneous application (CMA) submitted in the top court.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/04/26/federal-govt-approaches-sc-to-form-caretaker-set-up-in-g-b/>

Mehtab Haider, Diamer-Bhasha Dam: KP, GB govts at loggerhead over piece of land

The News, 27 April 2020

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) governments are at loggerheads over owning of eight acres of piece of land because this area will determine royalty for having location of power stations of multi-billion dollars Diamer-Basha Dam. The power generation from Basha dam will determine share of royalty in favour of one of them— either for KP or GB— so it has become long outstanding issue between the two sides that remained unresolved for last several years. There had been lingering dispute over eight acres of land between KP and GB

authorities at time of partition. When this dispute erupted, both sides held Jirga (reconciliation committee) at local levels and this land was handed over to KP side but in official documents the land continued to belong to GB. Even the post office and other government buildings are still owned by the GB government. “Within this area of 8 acres, there will be power stations constructed for Basha dam so royalty out of it will be given on the basis of land ownership either to KP or GB so it has become lingering dispute between the two sides,” said the official sources.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/650335-diamer-bhasha-dam-kp-gb-govts-at-loggerhead-over-piece-of-land>

SC irked by delay in giving rights to GB citizens

Nasir Iqbal, Dawn, 29 April 2020

The Supreme Court on April 28 wondered why the citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan could not be accorded the same constitutional guarantees and protection as enjoyed by the people of Pakistan. “We don’t understand why the people of GB cannot enjoy similar protection as guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan when they are totally connected with Pakistan as they carry the same passport and use the same currency?” asked Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed. The chief justice was heading a seven-judge SC bench that had taken up a federal government application seeking to amend the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan Order 2018 to conduct the upcoming general elections by adopting the Elections Act 2017 as well as setting up a caretaker government during the interregnum period. The five-year term of the present GB government is due to expire in the last week of June this year and the next general elections will be held within 60 days. The apex court, however, issued a notice to the advocate general and the government of Gilgit-Baltistan for Thursday when it was told that the advocate general could not make it and was still stuck up at the airport.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1553094/sc-irked-by-delay-in-giving-rights-to-gb-citizens>

SC allows federal govt to set up interim government, conduct election through presidential order

Pamir Times, 30 April 2020

As the incumbent government in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is going to complete its five-year term on June 24, the Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday allowed the federal government to set up an interim government and conduct the next election through a presidential order as the existing law is silent for the same. ... Headed by the chief justice, the seven-judge bench of the SC had taken up a federal government's application to seek amendment in the Government of GB Order, 2018, to conduct the upcoming general election by adopting the Election Act, 2017, and subsequent rules and regulations, as well as setting up of the caretaker government during the interregnum period.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/04/30/supreme-court-allows-federal-govt-to-set-up-interim-government-and-conduct-election-through-presidential-order/>

Appointment of interim CM: GB advocate general submits reply in SC

Terence Sigamony, *Business Recorder*, 30 April 2020

The Advocate General of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Muhammad Iqbal has filed the reply in Supreme Court that the appointment of interim chief minister for the GB be made in accordance with Article 224-1A of the Constitution of Pakistan. A seven-member bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice

Gulzar Ahmed, on April 28 had directed the GB government and advocate general to submit replies on the federation petition and had adjourned the hearing until Thursday (April 30). He said if any amendment in the Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018, for the appointment of GB caretaker setup and election laws was inevitable then such proposed amendments might be considered with prior assent of the GB government and assembly, in the light of the Constitution of Pakistan, the Supreme Court judgment in the best interest of the region, and the State of Pakistan. The federation has filed a petition seeking to allow it making necessary amendments in the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018 for caretaker setup to conduct elections for the GB Assembly. It said since the subject 'Election in Gilgit-Baltistan' was not clearly enumerated in the GB Order 2018 (GB Order, 2018) or in Gilgit-Baltistan Reforms 2019, therefore, the federal government be permitted to make necessary amendment in the GB Order, 2018.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2020/04/30/593366/appointment-of-interim-cm-gb-advocate-general-submits-reply-in-sc/>

Economic Developments

Shahbaz Rana, World Bank increases Dasu project financing by \$700m

The Express Tribune, 02 April 2020

The World Bank has augmented its direct lending for the Dasu hydropower project to \$1.3 billion in an effort to take electricity to homes as the lender still sees a gap between power supply and demand in Pakistan despite installation of 11,000 megawatts of additional capacity in the past five years. The World Bank on March 31 approved \$700 million in additional financing for the Dasu project, according to a statement issued by the lender's local office. The additional financing will be used to complete the first phase of 2,160MW production capacity and cover the cost of construction of a 255-kilometre-long power transmission line from the project site to Islamabad. *The total project cost is \$4.1 billion and the World Bank had earlier given \$588.4 million for its construction, which has now been increased to \$1.3 billion.* The World Bank has also extended guarantees for acquiring another loan of \$460 million from commercial banks, which has increased its direct and indirect exposure to the project to \$1.75 billion. The project, launched in 2014, has faced significant delay due to a dispute over land-acquisition cost and is falling behind its completion deadline.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2189022/2-world-bank-increases-dasu-project-financing-700m/>

Raison d'etre of Jobs' Quota-III

Pamir Times, 12 April 2020

In the days of yore, each household of the GB's populace in addition to subsistence farming, tend cattle, sheep and goats in each valley as the fundamental means of the support system and as the scarce vegetation then would suffice the barest minimum needs of those communities not that large in size. *In the changed scenarios, the prospects*

alarmingly dwindled away obviously because of population explosion being out-of-step exerting pressure on the available resources of the region. ... It may become very well ascertainable from what has been stated earlier that GB's deprivations are majorly centered on and in a way, become ascribable to the variegated governance models all along in the past being the outcome of the ambiguous status in the constitutional context. Thus a people wholly bereft of constitutional dispensation and having been kept outside the purview of the for long 72 years at a stretch for the sake of Kashmir and the national interest are made sacrifices in the past, are making currently and to the same in future for Pakistan exhibit of an unquestionable patriotism undeniably entitling them to compatible acclaim and need of tribute.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/04/12/raison-detre-of-jobs-quota-iii/>

Terence J Sigamony , Diامر-Bhasha Dam: 'Lobbies' trying to wreak 'vengeance': Wapda chief

Business Recorder, 08 April 2020

The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) chairman on April 7 said that despite the coronavirus crisis, anti-dam lobbies and the IPPs-led foreign vested groups in Pakistan, they were now all gearing up for a 'crack' at Diامر-Bhasha Dam, which would commence in a few weeks. Talking to media persons, after holding a meeting with the Attorney General for Pakistan Khalid Jawed in his office in the Supreme Court premises, he said that despite coronavirus pandemic, 21 power plants were functioning round-the-clock to provide uninterrupted power supply to people. In view of the coronavirus employees are working in shifts. Wapda Chairman Lt Gen Muzzammil Hussein (retired), said; "After Mohmand Dam and Dasu projects, Pakistan was now

all gearing up for a crack at Diamer Bhasha Dam, which will commence in a few weeks despite corona crisis, anti-dam lobbies and IPPs-lead foreign vested groups, which have unleashed propaganda against the technical design of the dam.”

<https://www.brecorder.com/2020/04/10/588198/diamer-bhasha-dam-lobbies-trying-to-wreak-vengeance-wapda-chief/>

Briefing related to 3G And 4G Services in AJK & GB Given to IT Ministry

Technology Times, 13 April 2020

The senior management of all four telecom companies attended a meeting with the information technology secretary and discussed the need for enabling 3G and 4G services in “Azad” Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The telecom companies informed the IT secretary that the region had been digitally isolated due to a lack of priority and timely decisions. While residents of northern areas are deprived of internet connectivity in the absence of 3G and 4G services, authorities and telecommunication companies continue their blame game on enabling the internet in the region.

<https://www.technologytimes.pk/2020/04/13/briefing-3g-4g-ajk-gb-it-ministry/>

Tanveer Ahmad, AL&R of Diamer-Bhasha Dam project’s cost goes up

Business Recorder, 21 April 2020

The cost of “Acquisition of Land & Resettlement of Diamer-Bhasha Dam Project “ went up to Rs164.050 billion in 2nd revised PC-I against cost of Rs60.051 billion in original PC-I and Rs101.732 billion in 1st revised PC-I. According to position paper of the project presented in the last meeting of Central Development Working Party (CDWP), original PC-1 for Acquisition of Land & Resettlement (AL&R) of Diamer-Basha Dam Project was approved by ECNEC on 06-11-2008 at a cost of Rs60.00 billion. Cost of original PC-I was based on notification issued by Deputy Commissioner, Diamer, Chillas on January 24, 2008. However, project

affectees disagreed with compensation package and hence continued their protest at various levels, documents stated. Documents disclosed that different Committees were formed to find a solution. Finally, the Prime Minister of Pakistan constituted the Ministerial Committee on 23-12-2009 to resolve the issue of compensation package. After intensive discussion with the affectees and all other stakeholders a summary was forwarded to the Prime Minister of Pakistan soliciting his approval. The Prime Minister’s Secretariat informed the M/o KA&GB that the Prime Minister directed that the matter may be placed before the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC).

<https://www.brecorder.com/2020/04/21/591046/alr-of-diamer-bhasha-dam-projects-cost-goes-up/>

China starts building high-altitude airport on the Pamir Plateau

Pamir Times, 28 April 2020

A new airport began construction Sunday on the Pamir Plateau, northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which is expected to be the highest airport in the region after completion. The Taxkorgan Airport, located at 3,252 meters above sea level in Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County, involves a total investment of 1.63 billion yuan (about \$230 million). It will be the first super-high plateau airport in Xinjiang, according to the Xinjiang Airport Group. Super-high plateau airport is defined as an airport sitting at no less than 2,438 meters above sea level.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/04/28/china-starts-building-high-altitude-airport-on-the-pamir-plateau/>

Extracts From Urdu Media

Baltistan should get its share from the Assistance China has given

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, 01 April 2020

The General Secretary of the PTI in the Baltistan region, Yousaf Nambardar, has asked the PML-N government to equally treat Baltistan region by spending the share of assistance the government has received from China. He further said that the government should take all the necessary measures by providing testing kits and laboratory to the Baltistan. He criticized the recent statement of the Chief Minister Hafeez ur Rehman in which he declined to allow Tiger force (voluntary youth of the PTI) to work with the provincial government. According to Yousaf, the attitude of the Chief Minister has hurt the sentiments of the needy people. Yousaf appealed the youth to join the tiger force and help people at the time calamity.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=04-01-2020&img=04-01-2020page-1-1

Gilgit Baltistan faces laboratory crisis

Daily Salam, 04 April 2020

Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman has said that not testing kits but laboratories is an issue. **Only one laboratory is doing the tests in GB. He said that there is a difference between the kits imported from China and sent by the National Institute of Health (NIH).** He said that quarantine centers are operating outside the hospitals. The Chief Minister said that there should be one laboratory in Skardu and one in Gilgit.

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

Shortage of water and electricity has raised questions on the performance of the government

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, 05 April 2020

The Coronavirus has already taken eight lives and with 185 tested positive in Gilgit-Baltistan region. In the coming weeks according to experts, this figure is going to rise alarmingly in the region. Although, the government has already announced lockdown, and act 144 is imposed. Schools and other intuitions have been closed. Big machinery which work on electricity has stopped also. **This has put people in a tough situation. Since the lockdown, there is no electricity and water. People are finding it difficult to manage both lockdowns by staying inside and not going out to get water and other things.** When government officials were approached to comment on the issue they remained silent. This recklessness has antagonized people. Since last year's September, there is no electricity. The power authority has already got 9 crore rupees for maintenance and overhauling of the power sector. Power who that maybe should address the issue on war footings. And those who have plundered the resources should be brought to justice. Otherwise, people of the region will remain disempowered forever.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS0y&dt=MDQtMDUtMjAyMA==>

Hafeez ur Rehman is neither interested in serving people nor the development of the region

Daily Salaam, 20 April 2020

The former Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan and member of the central executive committee of the PPP, Sayed Mehdi Shah in a statement has said that Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman has never been

interested in serving people. According to Shah, he was saying it right from the beginning that Rehman's government is against any development in the region. He accused Rehman of handing over everything to bureaucracy. By doing this he is favoring himself and his uncles.

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

Don't cut the salaries of employees

Baad-e-Shimal, 23 April 2020

Awami Action Committee Gilgit Baltistan has requested the provincial government to not cut the salaries of government employees. ***The amount was used to distribute free ration to the families who face crisis because of the lockdown. The committee said that most of the employees are below the grade-15 and the high inflation is already creating problems in meeting their ends.*** The reaction was in response to the decision taken by the provincial government to cut five day salaries of the government employees and put the amount in the eth corona relief fund.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/?page=cGFnZS0y&dt=MDQtMjMtMjAyMA==>

Business affected because of the lockdown

Baad-e-Shimal, 26 April 2020

Like the other provinces of Pakistan, lockdown has been extended in Gilgit Baltistan to stop the spread of Coronavirus. Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman said that despite the fact that GB has less population, we have done more tests than other provinces. ***The Chief Minister said that GB does not get funds from the NFC award. The funds to GB come from the special grant of the federal government. He said that we have asked for two crore rupees to meet the increasing demand. He said that over 250 doctors in GB are working on contracts.*** We have asked the federal government to create 250 vacancies so that these doctors can be absorbed. The Chief Minister said that the provincial government and the Pakistan Army are working as a team to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/?page=cGFnZS0y&dt=MDQtMjMtMjAyMA==>

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/>)

Compiled and Edited by
Dr Ashok K Behuria (PoK Coordinator)
Dr Smruti S Pattanaik
Dr. Priyanka Singh
Dr Yaqoob ul Hassan
Dr Zainab Akhtar
Dr Nazir Ahmed Mir
Dr Mohammad Eisa

Disclaimer

PoK News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSa is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.

POK NEWS DIGEST



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg

New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com