

POK

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News Digest

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Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

In this Edition

The local angst against political and administrative interference in the affairs of GB came to the fore with President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Syed Qalbe Hassan expressing his concern over the delay in issuance of advice for the permanent appointment of chief justices of the Supreme Court and High Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) by the prime minister of Pakistan. Despite the changes made in the AJK interim Constitution, the prime minister continues to retain exclusive powers to approve the recommendations forwarded to him by the AJK president.

The caretaker government was appointed under CM-ship of Mir Afzal Khan who was administered oath of office by Governor Raja Jalal at the Governors House. The election is scheduled to be held on 18 August 2020 for 24 Assembly constituencies covering all districts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

There were reports of deterioration of physical and mental condition of the youth from Hunza incarcerated in prison. They were activists arrested for raising local issues and highlighting the highhandedness of the government. Relatives of these incarcerated youth and members of the Aseeran-e-Hunza Rihayi Committee (Committee for Acquittal of the Incarcerated Youth of Hunza) deplored the position of the Pakistan government when they in a press conference in Adilabad that while Pakistan has been raising slogans for the release of leaders of Kashmir, it is a pity that they are turning a blind eye to the fact that the youth of Hunza and political activists in GB are being held in prison on false charges.

There were reports of a tripartite agreement worth \$2.4 billion among China Three Gorges Corporation, a subsidiary of China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC), the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) for implementing the 1,124-megawatt Kohala hydroelectric power project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework. The project aims at providing more than five billion units of clean and low-cost electricity annually to consumers in Pakistan and AJK. This is one of the largest investments of an independent power producer (IPP) in Pakistan and AJK.

In the vernacular media, people are raising the issue of autonomy of GB and arguing that people of GB are being deprived of basic rights while as per the UN resolutions, neither India nor Pakistan have any rights on the resources and land of Jammu and Kashmir. They belong to local people. People of GB also say that there is a contradiction in the way Pakistan is approaching the region: whenever they discuss K2, CPEC, KKH, and the resources in the area, then GB is considered part of Pakistan, but when the people of GB seek constitutional rights and their fundamental freedoms, they are charged with anti-terror act.

There is a recognition in PoK that the Modi-Sarkar would focus so much on developing Jammu and Kashmir in next five years that the people of “Azad” Kashmir would aspire to be part of India.

Coordinator, PoK Project

Political Developments

AJK govt enforces smart lockdown for 15 days

Dawn, 03 June 2020

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government on Tuesday announced *enforcement of “smart lockdown” for 15 days from Wednesday, as one Covid-19 patient died in Mirpur and 13 more positive cases emerged in different parts of the territory, pushing the tally of affected persons to 277.* Sharing salient features of the smart lockdown from a four page official notification, minister for information technology Dr Mustafa Bashir Abbasi told reporters that ban on tourists would stay until next decision. He said shops and businesses would open from “Fajr to Maghrib” five days a week but there would be complete lockdown on Tuesdays and Fridays.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1560934>

PM Imran asked to issue advice for appointment of CJs of AJK SC, HC

Dawn, 10 June 2020

President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Syed Qalbe Hassan has expressed concern over the delay in issuance of advice for the permanent appointment of chief justices of the Supreme Court and High Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) by the prime minister of Pakistan. The prime minister is the chairman of the Kashmir Council and the sole authority to accord approval to the summaries forwarded by the AJK president three months ago, the SCBA president said in a statement issued here on Tuesday. He alleged that the Kashmir Council chairman had failed to discharge the constitutional legal formality, which resulted in the heartburning of the legal fraternity of Pakistan as well as Azad Jammu and Kashmir. ... *The SCBA president said the prime minister, being chairman of the Kashmir Council, was the sole*

authority to issue advice for permanent appointment of the chief justices of the Supreme Court and High Court of AJK. He urged the prime minister to issue advice for these appointments to the AJK president who, according to the Constitution, is the appointing authority.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1562509>

Gilgit-Baltistan’s caretaker Chief Minister sworn in

Pamir Times, 24 June 2020

Mir Afzal Khan sworn in as caretaker CM Gilgit Baltistan and was given oath by Governor Raja Jalal at Governors House. The former CM Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman during an interview to this channel expressed his happiness on the development and informed that his name was among the list provided in the way of suggestion by the PML-N. He added “we hope this care taker government will play its role in organizing a free and fair election in GB”. He expressed his displeasure on the part of the government that in the *name of consultation they just received a phone call, there was no proper process to bring in the care taker government and also stressed that the new cabinet should be formed by the care taker government and there should not be back door entry or attempt by government to place their own people in the cabinet.*

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/06/25/gilgit-baltistans-caretaker-chief-minister-sworn-in/>

Elections in Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 28 June 2020

Dr. Arif Alvi, the President of Pakistan, has said that polls for Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly will be held on August 18, 2020, according to a statement issued by the Presidency. The Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly has

24 constituency covering all districts. 9 technocrat and special seats are also part of the assembly.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/06/27/elections-in-gilgit-baltistan-to-be-held-on-august-18-president-arif-alvi/>

Poll in GB

Dawn, June 29, 2020

President Dr Arif Alvi has approved the election schedule for the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. According to the federal Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, polls will be held on Aug 18 this year. Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ali Ameen Gandapur said in a statement that holding of free and fair elections is the main priority of the government and expressed the hope that the caretaker chief minister would fulfil his duty in the best manner. ***He said conducting the elections during the Covid-19 outbreak was a challenge, adding that standard operating procedures would be strictly implemented during campaigns and on polling day. He said law and order would be maintained to ensure peaceful elections in Gilgit-Baltistan.***

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1565874/elections-for-gb-legislative-assembly-set-for-aug-18>

Two “Indian spies” arrested in Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 12 June 2020

Gilgit Police has taken custody of two “Indian Spies” caught from the border area by security forces. Addressing a hurriedly called press conference, SSP Raja Mirza Hussain presented the alleged spies in front of the media. The two individuals, identified as Noor Muhammad Wani and Feroze Lone, have said that they had to enter Pakistan after being coerced by Indian army’s officers. The arrested ‘spies’ have said that they are residents of Achora village located in Gurez Tehsil of Bandipur district in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/06/12/video-two-indian-spies-arrested-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Incarcerated activist from Hunza has made three suicide attempts in prison

Pamir Times, 16 June 2020

Relatives of the incarcerated youth of Hunza and members of the Aseeran-e-Hunza Rihayi Committee (Committee for Acquittal of the Incarcerated Youth of Hunza) said while addressing a press conference in Aliabad that while Pakistan is raising slogans for the release of Kashmir’s detained leaders, the youth of Hunza, including political leaders, are being held in prison on false charges. The speakers at the conference said many youth in jails have developed physical and mental health conditions. One activists languishing in jail, Salman Karim has made three suicide attempts. He is still denied bail. The speakers alleged that the imprisoned activists are denied medical and mental health support.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/06/16/incarcerated-activist-from-hunza-has-made-three-suicide-attempts-in-prison/>

“Honor Killing”: Man and teenage girl shot dead in Upper Chitral

Pamir Times, 20 June 2020

A man, 23, and a teenage girl, 18, have been shot dead in the Upper Chitral district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. The couple was allegedly shot dead while they were sitting together near a cropped field in the Lot Oveer village. Police suspects relatives of the deceased girls, who were reportedly reluctant in registering a First Information Report (FIR), of either being involved in the crime, or covering it up. Police has recovered empty bullet casings from the scene and handed over the bodies to the families after medico-legal examination. No arrests have been made so far.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/06/20/honor-killing-man-and-teenage-girl-shot-dead-in-upper-chitral/>

Economic Developments

Deal worth \$2.4b signed for Kohala power project

The Express Tribune, 02 June 2020

A tripartite agreement has been finalized between China Three Gorges Corporation, the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) for implementing the 1,124-megawatt Kohala hydroelectric power project in AJK under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework. The project is aimed at annually providing more than five billion units of clean and low-cost electricity for consumers in Pakistan and AJK. This marks one of the largest investments of \$2.4 billion in an independent power producer (IPP) in Pakistan and AJK.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2233400/2-deal-worth-2-4b-signed-kohala-power-project/>

Tourism in AJK suffers due to Covid pandemic

S.A. Haidri, Daily Times, 14 June 2020

Tourism in Azad Jammu and Kashmir suffered immense loss amid COVID-19 this summer. Many tourists operators besides public transport companies are unable to fulfil their expenses. One of the tourists operator MD Mughal said, “As being resident of Neelum Valley, we wait for summers every year and these are few months of our earning but this year we haven’t seen a single tourist as all tourist spots are closed due to coronavirus.” Another tourists’ vehicle operator Shahid Malik said that our vehicles are standing on their stops since long and it is really hard to pay salaries to drivers and other staffers of the last 3 months. Similarly, hotel and restaurant owners are facing the same issues due to closure of tourists’ spots in AJK. Many tourists are observed coming back from AJK as the tourists’ points are closed and the roads

leading to these points are also closed on the entry points of AJK.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/626561/tourism-in-ajk-suffers-due-to-covid-pandemic/>

\$2.4bn tripartite agreement signed for Kohala Hydel Power Project

Dawn, 26 June 2020

A tripartite agreement was signed here Thursday between a Chinese company and the governments of Pakistan and China for construction of 1,124 megawatt Kohala Hydropower Project costing \$2.4 billion. The signing ceremony, held at PM Office, was witnessed by Prime Minister Imran Khan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider, federal cabinet members, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Yao Jing, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) authority, Chairman Lt. Gen. (R) Asim Saleem Bajwa and representatives of Chinese company. It is the largest power sector investment of \$2.4 billion in a single Independent Power Producer (IPP). Kohala Hydropower Project, being built on Jhelum River in Azad Kashmir under CPEC, has been awarded to Kohala Hydropower Company Ltd (KHCL), which is a subsidiary of China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC).

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/631931/2-4bn-tripartite-agreement-signed-for-kohala-hydel-power-project/>

Extracts From Urdu Media

Gilgit-Baltistan, UNCIP and Pakistan

Mujib-ul Hsan, *Daily Salam*, 04 June 2020

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), earlier known as the Northern areas, is under Pakistan's administrative control. A large area of Kashmir is under India's control. ***GB can be called the UN's area. There are resolutions to prove that: 13 August 1948 resolution and 5 January 1949 resolution. Therefore, the current role of Pakistan in GB is in violation of the UN resolutions. Pakistan had agreed to the UN resolution 28 April 1949, UNCIP that it would remove its army from the occupied areas.***

Though the people of GB consider themselves Pakistani, Islamabad does not accept them. On the other hand, India has included GB in its constitution. ***GB is deprived of basic rights. Whenever there are talks of K2, CPEC, KKH, and the resources in the area, then it is considered part of Pakistan. But when the locals seek constitutional rights and human rights, they are charged with anti-terror act.*** According to the UN resolutions, neither India nor Pakistan have any rights on the resources and land of Jammu and Kashmir. They belong to local people. The people of GB are patriots. They just want their rights from Pakistan.

<https://www.dailysalam.com/inde>

Regional countries unhappy with India

Editorial, *Daily Salam*, 12 June 2020

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that Pakistan can defend itself. ***He said that Pakistan is a peace loving country. We are actively engaged in the peace process of Afghanistan.*** India is involved in human rights violations in Kashmir. It is facing a resistance movement from Kashmiri against India's brutalities. ***Qureshi said that all regional countries are unhappy with India. He asked Indian***

Prime Minister and Home Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah to tell the world what is happening in Ladakh? Why isn't India responding to China? He said that India acted irrationally in the disputed area. The foreign minister said that India thinks Pakistan is a soft target. That is not the case. He said that many researchers are saying that the irrational lockdown by the Modi-sarkar has destroyed India.

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

India should attract people of "Azad" Kashmir to join it,

Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 16 June 2020

Defence Minister of India Rajnath Singh said in a rally in Jammu that India is not a weak country. It would never compromise on its borders. He said that talks were on with China to resolve the border dispute. He also said that there was a time when Pakistan had international support for its stance on the Kashmir issue. But now the situation has changed and only few countries buy Pakistan's narrative on Kashmir. ***He claimed that Modi-Sarkar would focus so much on developing Jammu and Kashmir in next five years that the people of "Azad" Kashmir would aspire to be part of India.***

Lies, hypocrisy and cunningness are embedded in the DNA of Indian political and military leadership and the media as well. New Delhi has adopted a cruel policy towards the minorities and the Kashmiris. All Hurriyat leaders of Kashmir are under arrest. India has put 8 lakh soldiers in Kashmir to control a population 80 lakh. When it comes to fight China, they take to fight, as was evident during the recent skirmishes.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee had claimed that "Kashmir issue will be resolved according to Kashmiriyat, *Insaniyat* (humanitarianism) and *Jumhooriyat* (democracy)".

It was meant to deceive the world. He never kept his words. *Now, India has changed the constitutional status of Kashmir with the intention to change the demography of the state. According to the reports of various human rights groups, serious human rights violations take place in the valley.* New Delhi has even arrested its puppets in Kashmir. If India is so confident of its policies then it should let the Kashmiris decide what they want. If they want to

stay with India then why is India delaying the process? In reality, Kashmiris do not want to stay with India. It is true that some Muslim countries are supporting India. Those countries should be ashamed of themselves.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2020-06-16/page-4/detail-11>

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: Bage, 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, Khovar, 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

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.

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