

POK

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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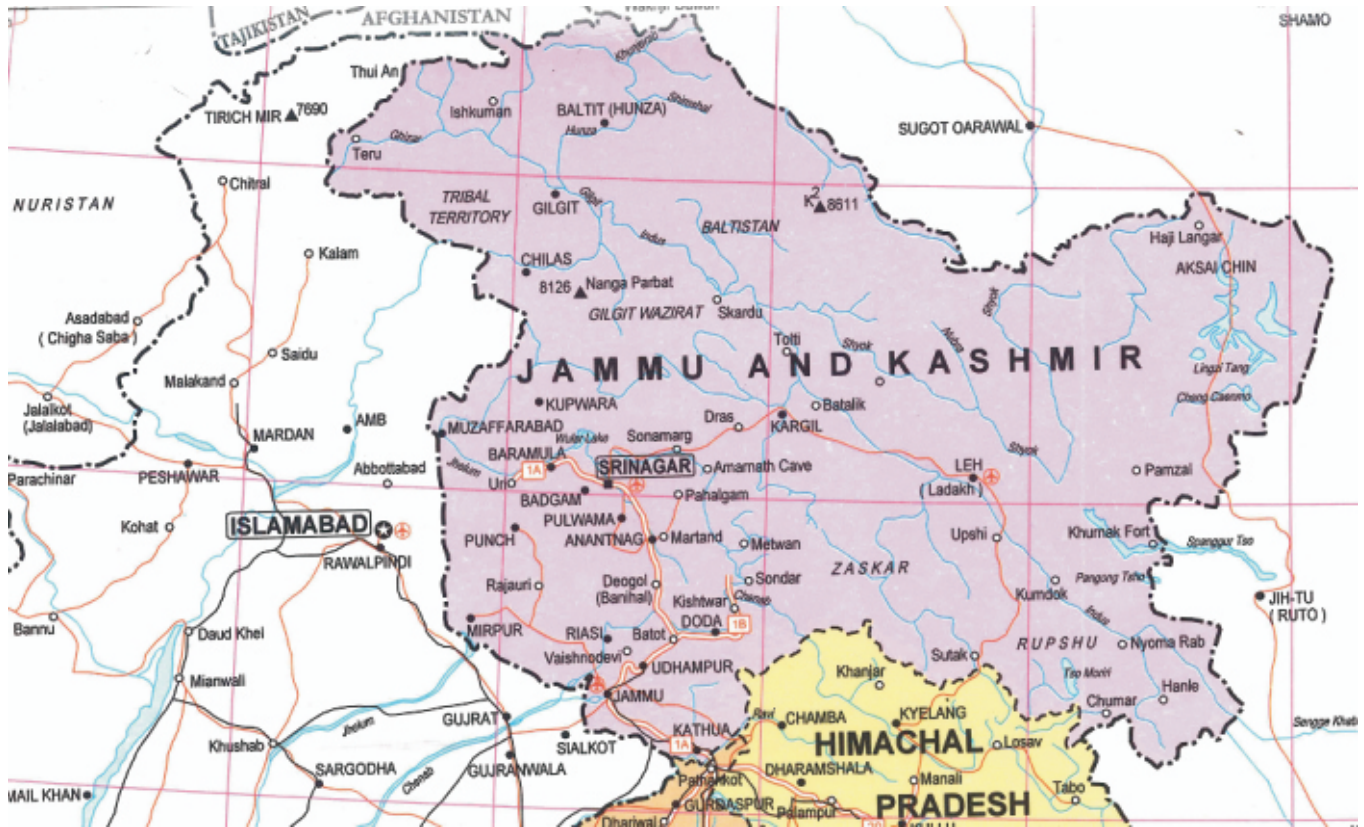
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Under a new political dispensation led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), there has been a lot of debate on how the government of Pakistan is determined to uphold its promise of bringing comprehensive development in Gilgit Baltistan. The newly elected Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan, Hafeez ur Rehman, met Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, in Islamabad. During this meeting, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif noted that all promises rolled out during the electoral campaign shall be fulfilled. Apart from political misgivings, the region has not witnessed much development despite being blessed with wealth of natural resources including minerals. There is dire need to improve the socio-economic profile of the region by investing in sectors of health, education and infrastructure. Since his party is now in power in Gilgit Baltistan, Prime Minister Sharif expressed commitment towards bringing about all round development in the entire region.

As evident from certain reports included in the current issue, there is much resistance from the so called 'AJK' on the proposal to merge Gilgit Baltistan as a province of Pakistan. The demand for a constitutional status has gained added traction in the wake of the proposed China Pakistan Economic Corridor to be built through Gilgit Baltistan. Based on apprehensions that amalgamation of Gilgit Baltistan will compromise Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue, there is growing resentment in the 'AJK' on such a possibility. Apart from 'AJK', serious reservations have been raised domestically from several quarters regarding Pakistan's efforts towards integrating Gilgit Baltistan. Keeping in view sheer sensitivity of the issue, the government of Pakistan has assigned a committee to deliberate on it and chalk out an amicable solution to the complex political problem.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“New CM focuses on his vision for Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, June 30, 2015

Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has a comprehensive strategy in mind to transform the 1.5 million people in GB-creating jobs, ending power outages, and providing education. Hafeezur Rahman was appointed the chief minister of the region after his party – the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) – swept the June 8 polls, winning 22 of the total 33 seats in the legislative assembly. Hafeez has remained loyal to the PML-N all these years, especially through the reign of General (retired) Pervez Musharraf, when most of his colleagues had defected to other parties. “I think commitment and loyalty is what is missing in Pakistani politics,” he noted. “We need to introduce it to ensure real democracy in the country”, he further noted.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/06/30/national/new-cm-focuses-on-his-vision-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

“GB people are equal stakeholders in longstanding Kashmir issue: AJK president”

Kashmir Watch, July 1, 2015

The PoK President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan on July 1 stated that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are equal stakeholders in the longstanding issue of Jammu and Kashmir. In a telephonic conversation with newly elected Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman on July 1, PoK President felicitated him for assuming office of Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan and stated that people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan would have to equally participate in the referendum under United Nation Security Council's relevant resolution on Kashmir. Sardar Yaqoob Khan stated state government has increased the

quota for GB students in AJK Medical colleges and universities and presently more than 500 students belonging to Gilgit-Baltistan are studying in the various educational institutions in Azad Kashmir. Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan stated that had invited the former Chief Minister GB in his oath taking ceremony of AJK President and also visited Gilgit-Baltistan to increase mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. On the occasion, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman noted that people of Gilgit-Baltistan have great respect for him as he has raised voice for the right of people of GB at all available forums.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/07/01/gb-people-are-equal-stakeholders-in-longstanding-kashmir-issue-ajk-president.html>

“Transmission tower: AJK govt refuses to issue clearance certificate to Iesco”

The Express Tribune, July 1, 2015

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government refused to issue no-objection certificate (NOC) to the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco) to set up a 132KV transmission tower in Mirpur. Iesco sought permission to set up the tower at Landative, Mirpur, for supplying electricity to its consumers but the AJK Wildlife and Fisheries Department objected to the location. The transmission lines were supposed to pass through Mirpur Zoo and the captive breeding centre for indigenous wildlife. “The 132 KV transmission line at Rajjar Mirpur is being constructed under a programme of the Asian Development Bank and the tower foundation had been concreted. The high voltage transmission line from both sides was also completed except tower 11 that falls in the Mirpur Zoo, where the ground clearance of the transmission line is approximately 42 feet and there is no danger to animals and their

cages,” stated an Iesco document submitted to the AJK government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/912523/transmission-tower-ajk-govt-refuses-to-issue-clearance-certificate-to-iesco/>

“ITP, MWM at loggerheads in G-B Assembly”

The Express Tribune, July 5, 2015

Even though an opposition leader has already been appointed, opposition parties are still embroiled in a tug of war over who will lead the opposition in the newly-formed Gilgit-Baltistan legislative Assembly. According to insiders, Islami Tehreek Pakistan (ITP) and Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) are vying for the coveted post. ITP has staked a claim to lead the opposition as it is the second largest party with four members in the assembly. However, MWM and other parties believe ITP should not be given the opportunity as it is much too close to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led government in the region to be trusted.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/914931/in-the-house-ity-mwm-at-loggerheads-in-g-b-assembly/>

“Human Rights Violations Go Unabated in Gilgit Baltistan”

ANI, July 7, 2015

As Human Rights violations go unabated in Pakistan's occupied region of Gilgit-Baltistan, the perpetrators go scot-free due to faulty judicial system in the region. There has been no end to human rights violations by Pakistani security agencies in Gilgit-Baltistan. The perpetrators often go unpunished due to lack of an effective judicial system. The region has a separate court system. Under Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009, Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court was established with a chief justice and two other judges. But they are appointed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. As the appointments of the judges for these courts are allegedly done on political consideration, their decisions are often politically motivated. Security agencies often resort to harsh measures to prevent journalists from reporting cases of gross violations of human rights. The police act as a mute spectator to the killings of

innocent civilians. The non-state actors, backed by the Inter-Services Intelligence, often target and persecute the Shia community. But the police choose to remain silent.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/39786-human-rights-violations-go-unabated-in-gilgit-baltistan.html>

“Govt committed to provide better health services to masses: AJK President”

Kashmir Watch, July 7, 2015

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan stated that all possible steps would be taken to provide better health care facilities to masses in the state. He was addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of 150 bedded additional building at Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan Hospital/CMH Rawalakot at a cost of seven hundred million rupees. AJK President lauded the humanitarian services of the owners of Gulf Empires Sardar Shabbir and Zareen Khan and urged the people to follow their footprints to serve the fellow human beings. He stated that additional building with SKBZ Hospital/CMH Rawalakot would greatly serve the indoor/outdoor patients of the hospital and would provide them better treatment facilities. Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob stated that it was his dream to see the establishment of medical colleges and universities in Azad Kashmir which could come true in present government tenure. He further stated that present government has significantly contributed in the development of the state which provides better medical, educational and other infrastructure related facilities to the masses in the state. He noted that construction of the additional building would start after the Eid ul Fitar and government would provide the requisite staff to the hospital. AJK Minister Information Sardar Abid Hussain Abid, Minister Social Welfare Farzana Yaqoob, Director General Health Sardar Mehmood Khan, Commandant/Medical Superintend CMH Rawalakot Brigadier Asif and others also addressed the ceremony.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/07/07/govt-committed-to-provide-better-health-services-to-masses-ajk-president.html>

“ERRA meeting reviews ongoing projects in AJK, KP”

Daily Times, July 8, 2015

The Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) completed 24 more important projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) despite paucity of funds. In a marathon monthly project review meeting, different ongoing projects in AJK and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were discussed in detail. The meeting was presided over by ERRA Deputy Chairman Maj Gen Muhammad Azeem Asif. In the meeting, the State Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority AJK (SERRA) director general (DG), the Pakhtunkhwa Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (PERRA) DG, the projects directors, ERRA officials and NESPAK representatives participated. While appreciating the progress, the ERRA deputy chairman stated even in the face of resource constraints, the authority is committed to completing ongoing projects, especially those related to educational institutes, health and infrastructure on priority basis. He directed all project directors to complete the ongoing projects by removing impediments through amicable solutions.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/08-Jul-2015/erra-meeting-reviews-ongoing-projects-in-ajk-kp>

“NEPRA told to bring power produced in GB, AJK under its control”

Daily Times, July 7, 2015

The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat on July 6 asked National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to devise a strategy to bring electricity being generated in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and AJK under its ambit. While briefing the committee on the role, responsibilities and function of the authority NEPRA Chairman Brig (retd) Tariq Saddozai stated that the electricity being generated in GB and AJK did not come under the ambit of NEPRA. On this the committee which met under the chair of Senator Muhammad Talha Mehmod recommended devising a policy to bring electricity being generated in GB and AJK under its ambit. He stated that to expedite tariff determination, upfront tariffs have been announced

by the authority for different technologies to facilitate investors to build structure and operate plan in their given package.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/08-Jul-2015/nepra-told-to-bring-power-produced-in-gb-ajk-under-its-control>

“Upgradation under CPEC to Start This Year: Saad”

Pakistan Observer, July 8, 2015

The Senate, was informed that process of up-grading Main Line-I (MLI) from Karachi to Peshawar under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would start in the current year. “The project also includes up-gradation of Taxila Havelian section and construction of new dry port at Havelian. Pakistan Railways is rehabilitating the existing track from Karachi to Lodhran through Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP)” Federal Minister for Railways informed the House while answering the questions in 'Question Hour'. He further stated that Mandra-Chakwal Bhaun Section was closed for traffic on 01-07-1991 being commercially nonviable and the track was dismantled during the period 1998-2009. He added that eleven railway stations on the stated railway route had become redundant and buildings of these railway stations were in dilapidated condition, resultantly railway land on Mandra-Chakwal-Bhaun section was under encroachment. To a question about maintenance of track infrastructure, Khawaja Saad Rafique stated that Pakistan Railways had initiated a pilot project for track mechanization which was expected to produce improved operational maintenance. “To facilitate customers Pakistan Railway is up grading eleven (11) major stations providing basic passenger amenities as well as to facilitate freight traffic improvement of dry ports and terminal facilities is also being carried out”

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=267695>

“G-B govt joins hands with SUPARCO”

The Express Tribune, July 8, 2015

The Gilgit-Baltistan government signed an agreement with Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) and Water and

Power Development Authority on July 7 to ensure transparency in the acquisition of land for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam — the largest infrastructure project in Pakistan since the construction of the Tarbela Dam in 1974. “Suparco will use data from various satellites to cross-check and verify the information of land acquisition submitted by revenue officers (patwaris/tehsidars),” Diamer DC Usman Ahmed noted. The agreement makes G-B government the first in the country to seek the services of Suparco in a multi-billion power project that would produce 4,500 megawatts of hydroelectric power in the coming years.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/916591/diamer-bhasha-project-g-b-govt-joins-hands-with-suparco/>

“Don't merge Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan”

Times of India, July 9, 2015

Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed has warned Islamabad against any attempt to convert Gilgit-Baltistan into a federal province. “Gilgit-Baltistan is part and parcel of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Any attempt to merge it into Pakistan will deal a fatal blow to our stand in the light of UN resolutions envisaging right to self-determination for the Kashmiris,” Majeed noted at a press conference in Muzffarabad. Earlier, some Kashmiri leaders have expressed concern over alleged moves to convert Gilgit-Baltistan into the fifth province of Pakistan. “I warn PML-N led federal government of Pakistan to alter its resolve, otherwise there may be hard reaction from our side”. PM PoK explained.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/Dont-merge-Gilgit-Baltistan-into-Pakistan/articleshow/48001651.cms>

“Former president of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum passes away”

The News Tribe, July 10, 2015

The former President of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan passed away in Abbottabad on July 8. According to sources, former president had been suffering from a serious lung condition for the few years before his death. Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan was also the supreme leader of “Muslim Conference” in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

and was also very active member of Pakistan Independence movement.

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2015/07/10/former-president-of-azad-kashmir-sardar-abdul-qayyum-passes-away/>

“AJK deputy commissioner suspended for defying govt orders”

Pakistan Today, July 11, 2015

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir government has suspended Mirza Arshad Jiraal, the Deputy Commissioner of Bhimbher, on the charges of defying orders of the government, it was officially declared. “The AJK Prime Minister, Ch. Abdul Majeed suspended Mirza Arshad Jiraal, former DC Bhimbher for disobeying the recent government orders of his transfer from Bhimber to Bagh district,” an official statement issued on July 11 by the AJK prime minister's office stated. “The formal official notification about suspension of the Mirza Arshad Jiraal has also been issued by the AJK Services and General Administration Department,” the official statement noted. It may be mentioned that the AJK government had, the other day, posted Ch. Amjad Iqbal, Collector Mangla Dam Affairs as Deputy Commissioner Bhimber replacing Mirza Arshad Jiraal with his posting as Deputy Commissioner Bagh District with immediate effect. But instead of obeying the government orders of his transfer and new posting, Mirza Arshad Jiraal allegedly refused to leave the office of the DC Bhimber.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/07/11/city/ajk-deputy-commissioner-suspended-for-defying-govt-orders/>

“First things first: Education, health and electricity focus of first 100 days of G-B govt”

The Express Tribune, July 12, 2015

Now that a cabinet has been announced for the region, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman is looking to put important matters in place. The CM has set a deadline for secretaries to submit targets, which are to be achieved in the first 100 days of the government. “The secretaries have been asked to identify the targets, which can be delivered in the first 100 days by July 13,” an official of the CM's Secretariat stated on July 11. A day earlier, the CM chaired the first cabinet meeting

of the newly elected government. “The chief minister has asked the secretaries to set realistic targets to reduce the duration of outages, ensure availability of drinking water and repair dilapidated roads,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/919160/first-things-first-education-health-and-electricity-focus-of-first-100-days-of-g-b-govt/>

“AJK leaders' remarks criticised by GB parties”

Pakistan Today July 12, 2015

The government and opposition parties of Gilgit-Baltistan have criticised the president and prime minister of AJK for opposing provincial status grant to GB, according to sources. They claimed that the statements issued by AJK leaders hurt the sentiments of GB people, who had been deprived of their basic rights under the existing system. Addressing a press conference at the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly secretariat on July 12 after the first meeting of the new cabinet, GB Information Minister Ibrahim Sanai stated the region had historically been part of Pakistan. He claimed that AJK had acquired independence with the support of GB people but instead of being grateful to them, the AJK leaders were hatching conspiracies against them.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/07/12/national/ajk-leaders-remarks-criticised-by-gb-parties/>

“AJK PM welcomes Sartaj Aziz's statement”

The Nation, July 14, 2015

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Abdul Majeed welcomed the recent statement of Advisor to Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz that no dialogue process will take place with India without addressing the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. While talking to various delegations on July 14 he stated that unequivocal stand of Pakistan government on Kashmir has not only boosted the moral of Kashmiri people. Majeed stated that Pakistan has been a peace loving nation and desires peaceful settlement of Kashmir issue through meaningful dialogue with India.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/14-Jul-2015/ajk-pm-welcomes-sartaj-aziz-s-statement>

“GBUM Chairman Denounces Provisional Constitutional Province”

UNPO, July 13, 2015

Manzoor Parwana, Chairman of the Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM), has recently spoken against the Pakistani Government's will to make Gilgit Baltistan a Provisional Constitutional Province (PCP). According to the leader, this denomination is just a way to hide the fact that the Government has not handed over the local administration to the people living in the area. Gilgit Baltistan remains to this day the only Pakistani area not represented in the National Assembly nor at the Senate and with no assembly of its own to discuss and vote its laws. All of the Government of Pakistan's steps and proposals to make Gilgit Baltistan a “Provisional Constitutional Province (PCP)” and bring constitutional packages for the region are unlawful and hold no ground at all, as the region does not fall under Pakistan's constitution of 1973. This was stated by the Chairman of the Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM), Manzoor Parwana, while reacting over the proposal of Islamabad to deal with the affairs of Gilgit-Baltistan as Provisional Constitutional Province.

<http://unpo.org/article/18369>

“PM criticised for lax attitude”

Pakistan Today, July 13, 2015

The eighty-fourth anniversary of Kashmir Martyrs Day was observed across Pakistan on July 13 where Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was the centre of criticism by Ministers in PoK Government, Kashmiri leaders based in Pakistan, and human rights defenders, for his latest U-turn on Kashmir. Pakistan's largest pro-Kashmir youth lobbying group, Youth Forum for Kashmir (YFK) organised a round table in Islamabad, titled 'Kashmir Martyrs Day: Freedom Under Attack'. Minister of Social Development and Hasan al-Banna, Ms. Farzana Yaqoob, who is the Islamabad-based representative of APHC stated that Prime Minister's failure to support Kashmir compels Kashmiris to look up to Pakistan Army as the guardian of Kashmir cause. Ms. Yaqoob stated both Kashmiris

and Pakistanis are disappointed after Nawaz Sharif's failure to stand up for Kashmir at the SCO Summit, and his government's failure to declare an official period of mourning after the death of the founder of Kashmir freedom movement late Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan. "What Nawaz Sharif did is not a surprise. It was expected," Yaqoob stated, addressing youth activists and Kashmir lobbyists. "Kashmir is an asset for Pakistan, not a burden. Kashmiris are not causing pain to anyone, they are under pain themselves."

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/07/13/city/kashmir-martyrs-day-pm-criticised-for-lax-attitude/>

"Ershad Ahmad, An unending project"

The News, July 19, 2015

Recently, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Saudi Fund for Development came to rescue the 969MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project by releasing \$433 million funding, which was almost coming to a halt due to shortage of funds. The Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project is located in the Muzaffarabad district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and is being built on the run-of-the river by a Chinese consortium since late 2008. The powerhouse is being connected with the national grid through a 48-km long tunnel, 22-Km South of Muzaffarabad and close to the main road leading to Islamabad. The water will be released into the Jhelum River after passing through the turbines that may cause environmental problems for the citizens of Muzaffarabad and adjacent areas. It was estimated that the project would be completed by the end of 2016. However, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited the project site in June 2013 and directed the authorities to expedite the construction work. He desired that at least one of its units should be made operational by mid-2015. However, in a recent briefing to the National Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Development, Chairman Water and Power Development Authority Zafar Mahmood stated that so far only 78 per cent of the total work has been completed, while Rs135.4 billion have been spent on the project. It shows that the deadline has once again been changed.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/an-unending-project/#.VhdmkeyqHx>

"Pakistan's sedition sweep in Gilgit-Baltistan"

Yahoo News, July 20, 2015

The Pakistani government appears to be cracking down on dissent in Gilgit-Baltistan, a mountainous region of vital importance to Pakistan's alliance with China. Since October 2014, more than 50 activists have been charged with sedition for calling for greater self-rule in the region, which is controlled by Pakistan but claimed by India. Gilgit-Baltistan, which borders China, Afghanistan, and Kashmir, has not been granted full constitutional status by Islamabad - meaning that it is not an official province, and that its residents cannot vote in national elections. Chinese President Xi Jinping was given a red-carpet welcome when he visited Pakistan in April 2015. The two countries signed a series of memoranda to build highways, power plants, gas pipelines, and an expansion of the port of Gwadar on the Indian Ocean, which Beijing hopes will become a major outlet for its burgeoning manufacturing industry. China is expected to pour more than \$46bn into the projects, which are the largest foreign investment that cash-strapped Pakistan has ever seen. Islamabad and Beijing have had a military alliance since the 1960s, when the countries' armies built the Karakoram Highway connecting China's western Xinjiang province with Gilgit-Baltistan, which was called the Northern Areas until 2009.

<https://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/pakistans-sedition-sweep-gilgit-baltistan-062854742.html>

"No objection on opening Kargil-Skardu road: India"

Daily Times, July 27, 2015

Indian Army has no objection to opening Kargil-Skardu road and the Indian government will also have no objection on this historic route between Ladakh and strategically important Gilgit Baltistan, an Indian newspaper quoted Lt General DS Hooda – commander of army's northern command – as saying. According to a report of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, the road from Skardu to Kargil via Srinagar is almost a stretch of 1,700km while at the same time Skardu is a 173km or a five to six hours drive from Kargil. At present, the entire

route is suitable for four wheeled vehicles and may need some widening for a small stretch of about half a kilometre near the Line of Control, the report further stated. Talking to journalists, Lt Gen Hooda stated that the Indian Army was ready to face any 'challenge' in Kargil, as now there was a full-fledged army division instead of a unit. He pointed out that the young people have now slowly again started picking up the gun. So the establishment has to look at the issues of alienation and employment to counter the trend, he suggested. The military commander expressed concern over local youth joining 'militancy' but stated the numbers were not alarming. Last year, according to Indian intelligence figures, about 60 local youth – mostly from south Kashmir – joined militant ranks. “This year, about 30-35 was the figure that we have,” he stated, adding the number is not that large that it will transform the security situation in the J&K state.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/27-Jul-2015/no-objection-on-opening-kargil-skardu-road-indian-army>

“Judicial Commission's report a victory of democracy: Hafeez”

Radio Pakistan, July 24, 2015

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafeez-ur-Rehman termed judicial commission report as victory of Democracy in the country. In a statement in Gilgit on July 24, he stated that Judicial Commission rejected all allegations of anti-democratic forces who want to destabilise the country. Congratulating the Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif he stated the commission report has endorsed the mandate of the people given to PML-N in the previous elections.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/78102/1>

“Despite court order: AJK government yet to appoint CEC”

The Express Tribune, July 27, 2015

Despite orders of the Supreme Court and the High Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the AJK government has yet to appoint the chief election commissioner (CEC) in the wake of the local body's election. Sources stated the government and opposition had failed to reach consensus in this

regard, therefore appointment of the CEC was still pending. “The AJK High Court has ordered the government to hold local bodies polls on August 6. Only 11 days are left, while the government has yet to complete the basic work including the preparation of electoral rolls,” the source noted. “Since retirement of Chaudhry Munir, the post of the CEC is lying vacant due to government negligence,” the sources further added. The AJK government had earlier challenged the verdict of high court in the AJK Supreme Court but the apex court maintained the order of the lower court. The Supreme Court also issued an order to hold the LG election on August 6.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/926975/despite-court-order-ajk-government-yet-to-appoint-cec/>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B CM visits property in Pindi, assesses for development”

The Express Tribune, July 7, 2015

An unattended property of the Gilgit–Baltistan (G-B) government in Rawalpindi has attracted the attention of the new chief minister. The land owned by G-B government is located at College Road in Rawalpindi, with a total area of 35,000 square feet. The resource-starved region of G-B annually spends millions on office rent, and on the perks and privileges of chief minister and governor. Any opportunity for revenue generation would be expected to be tapped and exploited. However, it seems, not in the case of the Pindi property. “This is the first instance a chief minister has enquired about this property,” an official in the Chief Minister's office in Islamabad stated July 6. CM Hafiz Hafeezur Rahman is the first chief minister in the last seven decades to visit the place, added the official.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/916102/not-to-waste-g-b-cm-visits-property-in-pindi-assesses-for-development/>

“Control over power generation in G-B, AJK Senate panel asks Nepra to devise policy”

Business Recorder, July 8, 2015

The Senate standing committee on Cabinet Secretariat July 7 asked National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to devise a policy

to bring electricity generation in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir under its control. The committee met on July 7 with Senator Talha Mehmood in the chair to devise a policy to bring power generation in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir under NEPRA. NEPRA chairman Brigadier Tariq Sadozai (Retd) briefed the committee about the role, responsibilities and functions of the NEPRA. He stated for expediting tariff determination, upfront tariffs have been announced by the authority. He stated that applicants desirous for upfront tariff are being given approvals within 10 days contrary to the eight months period indicated in the tariff standards and procedure rules 1998.

<http://www.brecorder.com/fuel-a-energy/193/1205202/>

“Govt to spend Rs 31 billion for different water projects”

Daily Pakistan, July 11, 2015

The government will spend about thirty one billion rupees for different water related projects in various parts of the country during the current financial year. According to official sources, priority is being given to the construction of Diamer Bhasha and Dasu dams. The government has already provided fifteen billion rupees for land acquisition for 4500 megawatt Diamer Bhasha dam. The sources noted the government plans to build small dams in Balochistan. This year work on Basool Dam in Gwadar will be started while work is in advanced stages on projects such as Kachi canal and Naulang storage dam. In Punjab, the government is planning to start work on construction of Ghabir Dam in Chakwal while in Sindh work will be started on Makhi Farash Link Canal project. Similarly, numerous schemes of lining of water courses will be undertaken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Punjab provinces to reduce water wastage.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/business/govt-to-spend-rs-31-billion-for-different-water-projects-345/>

“PM should ask Pakistan to vacate Gilgit-Baltistan: Bhim Singh”

Nyooz, July 14, 2015

“Firstly, Pakistan should explain why it attacked J&K in 1947? How Pakistan grabbed Gilgit-

Baltistan comprising 28,000 sq. miles after the declaration of ceasefire in utter violation of UN Resolution?” the statement read. What was the locus of Pakistan to sell Indian Territory in Karakoram, he asked. National Panthers Party (NPP) chief patron, Prof Bhim Singh has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ask Pakistan to vacate Gilgit-Baltistan areas, presently under control of the neighbouring nation. In a statement issued on July 2014, the NPP supremo asked Prime Minister Modi to invite Prime Minister of Pakistan to talk on J&K “straight and without mincing words”.

ncing words”.

<http://www.nyooz.com/jammu/150463/pm-should-ask-pakistan-to-vacate-gilgitbaltistan-bhim-singh>

“PoK PM Slams Sharif and Warns him against Merging Gilgit in Pakistan as a Fifth Province”

ANI, July 14, 2015

There is widespread speculation that Pakistan is coming up with a move to make Gilgit Baltistan a federal province of Pakistan, Prime Minister of PoK has come down very hardly on Pakistani leadership and have warned of dire consequences in case Pakistan makes any such controversial move, locals are also angry and worried about these speculations. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed warned Islamabad against any attempt to convert Gilgit-Baltistan into a federal province. He stated "Gilgit-Baltistan is part and parcel of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Any attempt to merge it into Pakistan will deal a fatal blow to our stand in the light of UN resolutions envisaging right to self-determination for the Kashmiris," Majeed was quoted as saying in Muzaffarabad.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/40085-pok-pm-slams-sharif-and-warns-him-against-merging-gilgit-in-pakistan-as-a-fifth-province.html>

Ershad Mahmud, “An unending project”

The News, July 19, 2015

Recently, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Saudi Fund for Development came to rescue the 969MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project by

releasing \$433 million funding, which was almost coming to a halt due to shortage of funds. The Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project is located in the Muzaffarabad district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and is being built on the run-of-the river by a Chinese consortium since late 2008. The powerhouse is being connected with the national grid through a 48-km long tunnel, 22-Km South of Muzaffarabad and close to the main road leading to Islamabad. The water will be released into the Jhelum river after passing through the turbines that may cause environmental problems for the citizens of Muzaffarabad and adjacent areas.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/an-unending-project/#.VcSGEXGqpBc>

“Authorities implicating Firdous Shah in false case: DPM”

Kashmir Media Service, July 20, 2015

The Information Secretary of Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapters of Syed Ali Gilani's forum and the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Political Movement (DPM) leader, Advocate Pervez Ahmad Shah stated that the puppet regime wants to implicate the DPM Chairman, Firdous Ahmad Shah, in Mumbai attacks to prevent him from playing an active role in the ongoing Kashmir liberation movement. Pervez Ahmad Shah in a statement issued in Islamabad stated that such cheap tactics by the authorities could not suppress the Kashmiris' resolve to continue the struggle. He termed the action against Firdous Ahmad Shah as frustration of the authorities and stated that the DPM was consulting legal experts to take legal action against the baseless allegations levelled on the DPM Chairman.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2015/07/20/authorities-implicating-firdous-shah-in-false-case-dpm.html>

Mohammad Ashraf, “Splitting Jammu & Kashmir”

Countercurrents, July 23, 2015

There has been lot of resentment in Pakistan Administered Kashmir regarding the alleged attempt by the Pakistan Government to incorporate Gilgit-Baltistan formerly called the Northern Areas

as a full-fledged province of Pakistan. In fact the Prime Minister of the so called Azad Kashmir has warned Pakistan about such a move. It is beside the point that the people and the Government of so called Azad Kashmir never bothered about the condition of the people of the former Northern Areas. In fact, those people have themselves been agitating for a full-fledged provincial status as at present they are virtually living as a colony of Pakistan notwithstanding the fact that they were sometime back given some regional autonomy.

<http://www.countercurrents.org/ashraf230715.htm>

Shabbir Mir, “Three new districts notified in G-B”

The Express Tribune, July 26, 2015

The federal government has announced the formation of three new districts in Gilgit-Baltistan. The decision was made public through a notification shared by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan on July 24. According to the notification, Hunza-Nagar district will be bifurcated into two separate districts – Hunza and Nagar. “Kharmand and Shigar are the other two districts in the region,” read the notification. Following the move, the number of districts in G-B has increased from 7 to 10. The federal government's decision marks a long struggle to obtain the status of a district for valleys in the region. A similar announcement was made by former chief minister Mehdi Shah during his visit to Kharmand Valley in March 2013. However, the development did not materialise as an amendment had to be inserted into the G-B Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009.

At the time, legal experts said the amendment could only be implemented by the federal government. Furthermore, former speaker Wazir Baig opposed Shah's decision, saying he did not have the authority to make such an announcement. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had announced the creation of the new districts during his visit to Gilgit in April 2015, two months before legislative assembly elections were held in the region. The announcement generated a mixed response. At first, the decision sent a wave of jubilation across the region.

However, it became a major point of contention. Some parties criticised Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz of using the announcement as a means of political point-scoring to guarantee its victory in the June 8 legislative assembly elections.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/926380/dividing-governance-three-new-districts-notified-in-g-b/>

“10,600 MW expected to national grid by 2017: NA told”

Aaj TV, July 28, 2015

Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar on July 28 apprised the National Assembly that the government has launched various power projects to add 10600 MW electricity to the national grid by 2017. Replying to a point raised by MNA Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, the minister stated that major portion of Chinese investment was being made in power sector. Out of \$ 46 billion, as many as \$ 34 billion was being invested in power generation projects like Tarbela 4th, Tarbela 5th, Port Qasim, Gaddani and Neelum Jhelum projects were included. He stated there was a gap of 4500 MW between demand and supply of electricity that cannot be bridged within a year or two. He stated that the government since its inception devised a concrete strategy to overcome the menace of load-shedding.

<http://www.aaj.tv/2015/07/10600-mw-expected-to-national-grid-by-2017-na-told/>

“Non-bailable arrest warrant issued for Altaf in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Herald, July 29, 2015

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Chief Altaf Hussain on July 29. The development comes as a result of multiple First Information Reports (FIRs) that were registered in the province against the MQM chief. ATC-1 of GB was holding a hearing on the case. The FIRs were registered under sections related to treason and rebellion against the state of Pakistan. A total of nine FIRs were registered by concerned citizens of GB. Earlier this week, a three-member bench of the Lahore High Court (LHC)

was constituted to assess the maintainability of a case against MQM chief for his earlier remarks about the Pakistan Army.

<http://www.pakistanherald.com/news/6846/29-july-2015/non-bailable-arrest-warrant-issued-for-altaf-in-gilgit-baltistan>

“Govt committed to implement its reform agenda in state: AJK PM”

Kashmir Watch, July 2, 2015

The AJK Prime Minister Choudhry Abdul Majeed expressed his resolve that state government would fully implement its development and reform agenda in AJK. Talking to AJK Minister for Health Sardar Qammar Zaman he stated that government through health package would provide better health services to people living in far flung areas of Azad Kashmir. He stated that government is spending huge amount on Health Package which would not only upgrade the health infrastructure in AJK but also provide modern mobile health squared in remote areas of the state. Chaudhry Abdul Majeed stated that his government has focused the health, education and infrastructure development sectors to provide better health, educational and communication services to masses in the state. He stated that government would leave no stone unturned to provide basic necessities of life to masses at their doorsteps. AJK Premier further stated that his government has initiated number of mega development projects in the state which is a record in the development history of AJK.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/07/02/govt-committed-to-implement-its-reform-agenda-in-state-ajk-pm.html>

“Promises made to GB people to be fulfilled: PM”

The News, July 3, 2015

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif assured the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) that the federal government would fulfil each and every commitment in letter and spirit that was made with them during the election campaign. The assurance was given by him on July 3 during his meeting with the newly-elected Chief Minister GB Hafiz

Hafeezur Rehman who called on him at the PM House. He has come to the federal capital for the first time after his election. Governor GB Chaudhry Barjees Tahir, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Political Affairs Dr Syed Asif Saeed Kirmani and Secretary to the PM Aslam Javaid were also present on the occasion. The prime minister maintained that the mandate given by the people of the GB to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) requires that steps be taken on priority basis to improve the standard of living of the people with special reference to important social sectors like health, education and infrastructure development. The sources stated that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif noted that backwardness of Gilgit-Baltistan would be removed by taking solid steps for progress and development of the area. He stated the GB government should make sure that people of the area get corruption-free good governance.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38380-Promises-made-to-GB-people-to-be-fulfilled-PM>

“In next three years: HEC plans five new universities, 36 campuses”

The Express Tribune, July 3, 2015

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) plans to set up five new universities and 36 campuses besides upgrading nine existing into fully-fledged universities campuses across the country. The move aims at enhanced coverage of higher education at the district level. The ambitious plan, which integrates the government's vision of maximum area coverage in terms of higher education at district and province levels, will materialise in the next

three years, HEC documents outlined. The move comes on the heels of consistent demand by parliamentarians especially by the Senate Standing Committee on Education, which has been urging the government to establish universities and campuses in every district to promote higher education. Currently, there are 171 public and private sector universities and 88 sub-campuses in the country. Of these universities and campuses, Punjab has 57, Sindh 51, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 29, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) 18, Balochistan eight, Azad Jammu and Kashmir seven and Gilgit-Baltistan has two (one university and a campus).

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/913877/in-next-three-years-hec-plans-five-new-universities-36-campuses/>

“Six finalised to become GB ministers”

The Nation, July 5, 2015

Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), the party with greater number of members in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly, on July 4 finalised six names for the slot of provincial ministers. After the holy month of Ramazan, the cabinet would be extended and it would comprise of 12 ministers and five advisors. According to sources, GB Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir and Chief Minister GB Hafeezur Rehman have finalised six names initially including Haji Jan Baz, Dr Iqbal, Ibrahim Sanai, Ferman Ali, Haji Muhammad Wakeel and Rani Atiqah to be included in GB cabinet. The Governor GB will issue the notification in this regard on July 6. The oath-taking ceremony for these ministers will be held on July 8.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/05-Jul-2015/six-finalised-to-become-gb-ministers>

Economic Developments

“Infrastructure: ADB approves \$220m for flood-hit Punjab and AJK”

The Express Tribune, July 1, 2015

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will give \$220 million to Pakistan in the country's attempt to rebuild and upgrade roads, bridges and other high-priority infrastructure in Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir areas damaged by the 2014 floods. The Board of Directors of the Manila-based lending agency approved the loan on June 30, according to a hand-out issued by the bank's local office. The project will be carried out over three years with an

expected completion date of June 2018. The floods in September 2014 displaced over 2.5 million people across 44 districts, and damaged more than 445,000 hectares of agricultural land, causing severe hardship to about a quarter of a million farmers. A flood assessment report in 2014 estimated recovery needs at around \$440 million, including \$56 million for building resilience of the affected population and their productive assets, noted the ADB.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/912628/infrastructure-adb-approves-220m-for-flood-hit-punjab-and-ajk/>

International Developments

“Mideast lenders halt \$433m loan for Neelum-Jhelum power project: report”

Pakistan Today, July 2, 2015

Financiers from the Middle East have stopped a planned loan of \$433 million to fund the strategically important 969-megawatt Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project following the surge in cost estimate to \$4.21 billion, a report in the local media stated on July 1. According to a media report, the project cost had jumped to \$2.74 billion from \$1.8 billion during the rule of the PPP government but it had now jumped to \$4.21 billion. Pakistan had kicked off work on the Neelum-Jhelum River in AJK to secure water supplies but India also developed the Kishanganga hydroelectric power project on the river, which led to a legal battle between the two countries in the International Court of Arbitration. The disclosure about the loan being denied by the Middle East lenders was made to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy on June 18, stated the report. Earlier, the project had to be finished by October 2015, but the deadline has now been revised to November 30, 2016. Financial close of the project has not yet been achieved.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/07/02/national/mideast-lenders-halt-433m-loan-for-neelum-jhelum-power-project-report/>

“China offers \$50 billion for hydroelectric projects in Pakistan”

The Economic Times, July 3, 2015

China's state-run power company, Three Gorges Corporation (CTG), is keen to participate in a financing consortium to fund up to \$50 billion of hydroelectric power projects in Pakistan, a media report stated. This disclosure was made at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy on June 18. The CTG expressed interest in financing projects in Pakistan in conjunction with the International Finance Corporation, a World Bank subsidiary. "The offer comes on top of the \$46 billion in financing for power and transportation infrastructure being provided by the Chinese government and Chinese banks to Pakistan for the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," the paper reported.

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-07-03/news/64068259_1_china-pakistan-economic-corridor-ctg-power-outages

Other Developments

“Relief operation continuing in Skardu, Ghanche districts”

Samaa TV, July 23, 2015

Rescue and relief operation is continuing at fast pace in Skardu and Ghanche districts of Baltistan region after the heavy rains caused massive flooding and mud sliding in the area. Provincial Minister for Education and Information Haji Muhammad Ibrahim Sanai is supervising the relief and rehabilitation work in the affected areas. Talking to media on July 23, he stated effective

measures were being taken to restore roads, bridges, power houses, irrigation channels in all parts of the two districts. Deputy Commissioner Ghanche Tariq Hussain is also visiting the affected areas to provide shelters and other essential items to the affected people. A special meeting was held in Skardu under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Baltistan, Muhammad Afsar. The meeting directed the concerned department to restore the affected infrastructure in both district at the earliest.

<http://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2015/07/relief-operation-continuing-in-sakardu-ghanche-districts/>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,180 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

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,, 010)

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 Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 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. 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: Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir

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 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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