

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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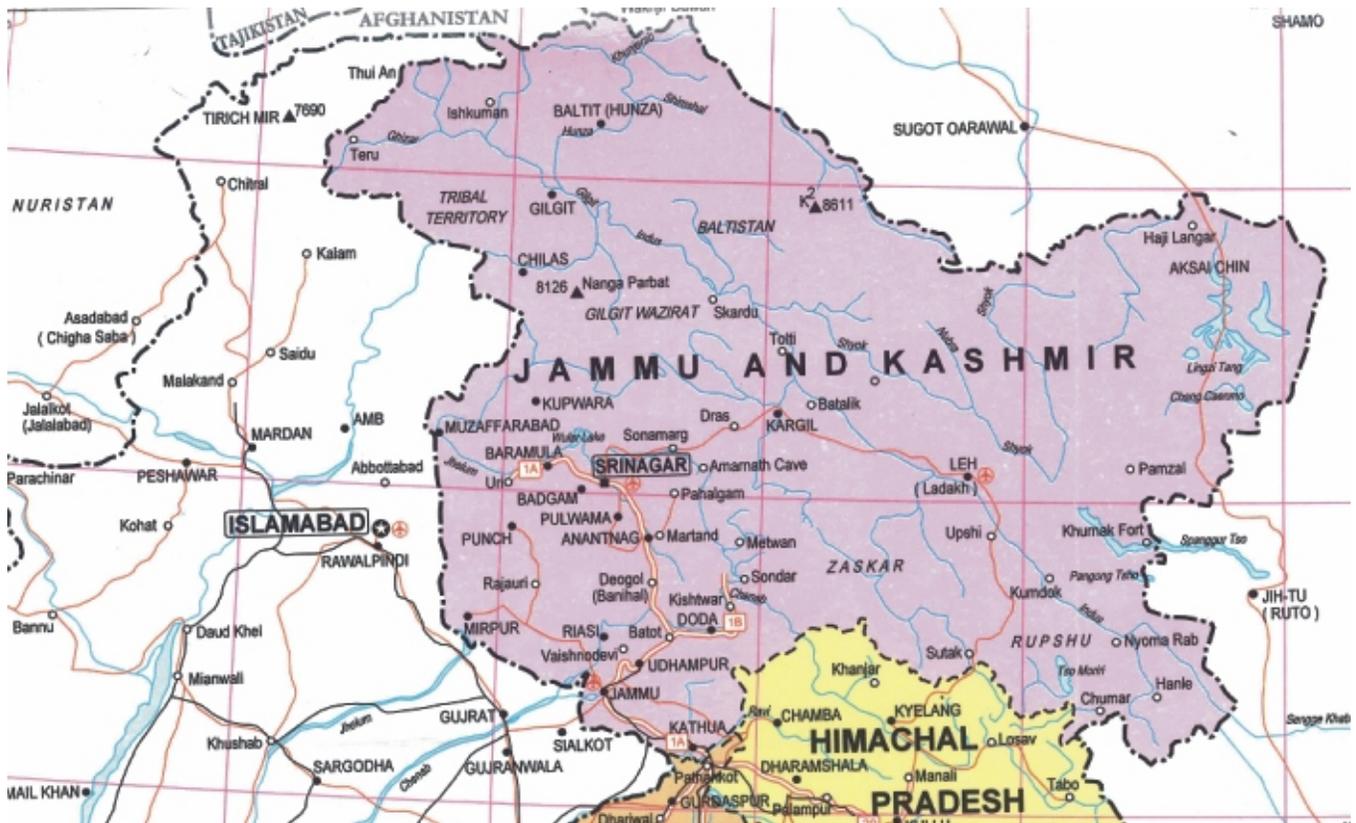
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

In May 2016, the Government of India introduced the Geospatial Information Regulation Bill which seeks to regulate the distribution and publication of geospatial data concerning India. The proposed bill involved depiction of India's geographical limits including the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir. The bill proposes to impose strict punishment by way of hefty fine/imprisonment on any person or agency that is found guilty of wrongfully illustrating India's geographical boundary, not adhering to the Survey of India map. Before it is finalized, the domestic legislation will be debated and is likely to take into account the views and suggestions from across the board. Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Kiran Rijju noted that it is an obligation on part of the Government of India to ensure that the geographical map of India is in adherence to the official map approved by the relevant authority. India's proposed Geospatial Bill 2016 induced a quick response from Pakistan. Reacting sharply to the proposed domestic legislation in India, Pakistan raised the issue at the United Nations (UN) by writing letters of protest to the UN General Secretary and President of the UN Security Council. This is despite the fact that Pakistan itself proposed a similar legislation "The Surveying and Mapping Act" back in May 2014.

Political parties in the so called 'AJK' are gearing up for the assembly elections to be held on July 21, 2016. The incumbent government led by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has unleashed an aggressive election campaign that is being spearheaded by Bilawal Bhutto. The PPP has persistently accused the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, of being soft on India. In this regard, Bilawal Bhutto accused Sharif of not meeting the aspirations of people vis a vis the Kashmir issue, as is indicated in a report included in the current issue. On the other side, Pakistan's Minister of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Chaudhry Barjees Tahir, who has been leading the PML-N's (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) campaign in the so called 'AJK' contravened PPP's allegation noting that the federal government led by Nawaz Sharif has raised the Kashmir issue globally. Tahir further noted that the PML-N-led federal government is committed to usher in development in the 'AJK' region. Notably, he promised more funds from the Kashmir Council and enhancement of funds of Council members.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Why silent on Kashmir? Bilawal to Sharif”

Greater Kashmir, May 1, 2016

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on April 30 accused Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of remaining silent on Kashmir issue for over last three years. Bhutto stated this addressing a rally in this southern city of Pakistan administered Kashmir, which was organized to kick start his party's election campaign ahead of general elections to the AJK Legislative Assembly.

“I Bilawal Bhutto Zardari assure the people of Kashmir and Azad Kashmir that PPP will never remain silent over the rights of Kashmiris. We are beside you and we will remain beside you in your each struggle,” he stated. He further noted that he did not have any fear to speak for the Kashmiris.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/pak-administered-kashmir/story/216285.html>

“PML-N Govt has Raised Kashmir Issue Globally: Barjees Tahir”

Radio Pakistan, May 1, 2016

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Chaudhry Barjees Tahir stated that only PML (N) can solve the problems of people of Azad Kashmir. In a statement, he noted that the PML-N government has raised the Kashmir issue globally and after getting elected in AJK and they will focus on the problems of the people.

He also stated that Kashmiri people are well aware and they will support the vision of Nawaz Sharif in coming elections. Barjees Tahir further stated we have ensured the grant of funds up to 80 percent from Kashmir Council and also tripled council members' funds.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/01-May-2016/pml-n-govt-has-raised-kashmir-issue-globally-barjees-tahir>

“IIC declares various AJK acts as Islamic”

The Nation, May 1, 2016

The 92st session of the Islamic Ideological Council (IIC) of Azad Jammu & Kashmir discussed and unanimously approved various acts declaring them in line with the Islamic laws. The 8-member IIC met at the AJK Supreme Court building with Chief Justice Azam Khan in the chair. These acts include Azad Jammu & Kashmir Census Act - 1959, the AJK Act - 1975 of minimum salaries of the non-skilled workers, the AJK Act- 1963 of the recovery of public dues, AJK Act-1971 of the cancellation of the state subject certificate of Jammu & Kashmir State. The meeting put AJK Auqaf Act 1960 and AJK Mutual-Benefit (Anjuman Imdad-e-Bahmi Act - 1967) pending to discuss in the next meeting of the AJK Ideological Council. Leading scholars representing different schools of thought reviewed the aforementioned issues and accorded many of them formal approval unanimously. Addressing the meeting, the chief justice eulogised the active role of the Islamic Ideological Council for providing due guidance to the state legislature for keeping the laws entirely in line with the Islamic teachings and laws.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-May-2016/iic-declares-various-ajk-acts-as-islamic>

“Official transport withdrawn from ministers, advisers, discretionary office holders”

Pakistan Observer, May 1, 2016

Against the backdrop of coming general elections in Azad Kashmir for 29-Assembly seats, the official vehicles under use of ministers, advisers, discretionary post holders have been withdrawn under the order of Chief Secretary to AJK government Mr Jalal Sikander Sultan Raja. The step has been taken, reports say, to ensure fair and influence-free elections in the territory. The withdrawn vehicles would be deposited in the

official vehicular pool under the management of the Secretary Planning. Formal official notification has been issued by the Services department. Till the new cabinet takes oath of their offices these vehicles would not be allotted to any official, the notification clarifies. Almost all political parties have been demanding holding of honest, fair and impartial general polls in Azad Kashmir. Reports further noted that at present over 100 luxury vehicles are in the run among ministers, advisers and other influential people. This time the AJK Assembly election would be a hotly contested exercise as the federal government ruling party PML-N's AJK chapter would be fighting the 'election gale' for the first time. Under the socio-politico barometer the AJK registered voters majority is gravitated always towards real power centre Islamabad.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/01/official-transport-withdrawn-from-ministers-advisers-discretionary-office-holders/>

“JKLF founder paid rich tributes”

The Nation, May 1, 2016

Ulema and Kashmiri leaders paid rich tributes to Amanullah Khan, an eminent elderly leader of Kashmir who passed away the other day. They stated that the Kashmiris acknowledge meritorious services of late Amanullah Khan for the Kashmir cause. He was founder leader of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). In a meeting at the AJK Regional Office of the UK-based Kashmiri human rights outfit - Kashmir Watch International, speakers paid glorious tributes to the departed Kashmiri leader. Speaking on the occasion, KWI Chairman Mir Sideeqe Khawaja, currently on visit to Azad Jammu Kashmir, stated that the life-time services of late Khan would always be remembered in the history of Kashmir. Khawaja stated adding that the late leader would always remain alive in the hearts of the People of Jammu & Kashmir State. He also stated meritorious services to Kashmir cause would always be remembered till the people of Jammu & Kashmir breathe their last. He also added that great services of the late leader would, indeed, prove to be the beacon for the coming generations.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-May-2016/jkLf-founder-paid-rich-tributes>

Prateek Joshi, “The never ending colonial legacy of Great Game”

Dardistan Times, May 1, 2016

For those inquisitive to know about Gilgit, British records of 19th century are the most valid sources. It is in this era when there was a serious attempt by the subcontinent's colonizers to understand this landscape, hitherto unknown to them. This phase is also known as the 'Great Game', a period of rivalry between the British and Russians to capture Central Asian territories. The lurking threat of a potential Russian invasion was compounded by the presence of Russian surveyors in Pamir by mid-19th Century. It was precisely at this point when Gilgit and its surrounding regions became an obsession among the British. Suddenly, Gilgit's elusive passes and valleys were imagined as the gateways through which Russians could invade anytime. Imaginations of the Gilgit frontier as a strategic gateway are reflected in the conferences of the Royal Geographic Society, London, which encouraged expeditions in the high Karakoram-Pamir belt to locate the secret passes. Captain Francis Younghusband (famous for crossing the Muztagh pass for the first time to enter India), the Durand Brothers, Viceroy of India Lord Curzon are some notable personalities who had their eyes set on Gilgit and lobbied with for an aggressive British policy to ensure the control of Gilgit never slipped into the hands of Russians. In fact, the British and the Russians reached on the brink of a war when rumour spread that Captain Younghusband was killed by the Russian army while surveying the territories of Hunza and Wakhan corridor in 1891.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/never-ending-colonial-legacy-great-game>

“Bilawal admitted PPP govt in AJK was corrupt: Kirmani”

The Express Tribune, May 1, 2016

Prime Minister's Special Assistant Dr Asif Kirmani on April 30 stated by committing to make no corruption in future in Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK), the Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto admitted that his party's government in AJK was until now busy in corruption. Referring to

Bilawal Bhutto's speech in Kotli, Kirmani noted that the PPP leader had not given any development programme for the AJK. It was the only Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership which thought of the people's prosperity and had a roadmap in that regard, he added. He also stated the popularity of PML-N in Azad Kashmir had got on Bilawal's nerves which was visible from his speech. His speech could not impress the AJK people as they had rejected the politics of criticism without any reason, he further added. The adviser stated the AJK people were dejected from the corrupt and incompetent PPP government. The upcoming elections would be an eye-opener for the PPP leadership who remained indulged in corrupt practices during its tenure rather than thinking about the welfare of people, he added. He also stated the PML-N would form the next government in AJK with the support of people.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094954/bilawal-admitted-ppp-govt-in-ajk-was-corrupt-kirmani/>

“Govt fast developing human resources: Majeed”

Pakistan Observer, May 2, 2016

The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Ch Abdul Majeed has stated that human resources were more important than capital resources and AJK has huge potential in human development sector. The government is striving for uplift of labourer's living standards. In his message on the World Labour Day on May 1, the AJK Premier stated that development of a country was impossible without the prosperity of labourers. “Labourers contribute the most to the national economy. Their prosperity and empowerment is vital for achieving the development goals,” Prime Minister noted. “Islam has declared labourers God's favourites,” the PM stated. Ch Majeed also stated that on Labour Day, there was need to renew the pledge that all-out support would be extended for the welfare of labourers and protection of their rights. He stated AJK's workforce had the potential to achieve the targets of development.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/02/govt-fast-developing-human-resources-majeed/>

“GBLA-6 by-polls: AWP to challenge rejection of Baba Jan's nomination papers”

The Express Tribune, May 2, 2016

Baba Jan and his Awami Workers Party (AWP) have resolved to challenge the returning officer's decision to reject his nomination papers for the GBLA-6 Hunza by-polls. At the same time, mainstream political parties expedited their campaigns ahead of the elections in a constituency that is the entry point of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The constituency is particularly important for ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz as it was earlier won by its candidate Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan. Mir was later appointed as Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, replacing Barjees Tahir. Jan's nomination papers were rejected by the returning officer on grounds that he had been convicted by a court and served a jail term. However, his party is set to file a case with the election tribunal against the decision. The process of awarding tickets for by-elections scheduled on May 28 has commenced. PML-N, Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf are also flexing their muscles to grab the seat that fell vacant in Hunza. Enraged over the rejection of Jan's papers, AWP activists have vowed to devise a strategy to at least not let PPP's Iqbal and PML-N's Salim win the polls.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095352/gbla-6-by-polls-awp-to-challenge-rejection-of-baba-jans-nomination-papers/>

“Youth drifting away from religion, Kashmir struggle: Sikander”

Kashmir Watch, May 2, 2016

Sardar Sikander Hayat Khan, ex-premier and senior leader of PML-N AJK stated that he passed through a long spell of bitter experiences for ten years and remained prime minister of the state for equal period. 'There is no substitute for freedom. World is achieving ever new economic development and we are going backward. It is shocking that today our youth are drifting themselves away from religion and Kashmir struggle', he noted this while inaugurating a private sector model college May 2. He counted as his big achievement the electrification of Azad Jammu and Kashmir during his tenure as premier. Everything is achievable

provided there is no let-up in any continuous struggle. I got education from Sukrali, a village, became premier, opposition leader and secretary general of Pakistan National Alliance. Whole world is moving towards bigger targets of achievements, but we as a nation are tracking backward, he added. Principal college Sardar M Akram Khan also stated that a good number of students of his college have got best positions of commissioned officers in Pakistan Army, Engineering and Medical sectors.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/youth-drifting-away-from-religion-kashmir-struggle-sikander/>

“Fair AJK polls would serve Kashmir cause”

Pakistan Observer, May 3, 2016

In a timely assurance, the Chief Election Commissioner of Azad Kashmir Justice Mustafa Mughal vowed to hold free, fair and transparent elections to 29-seat AJK Assembly. The election commissioner also voiced his concerns over volatile atmosphere created by political opponents in the run up to the elections, advising them not to follow negative course. While we are sure that the election commissioner would not be oblivious to the situation, we warn that such irritations also pollute peaceful atmosphere and send wrong signals across the line of control. Azad Kashmir is the base camp of legitimate freedom struggle of Kashmiri people and therefore it should have a transparent governance system. We urge concerned quarters to allow international observers as well as media persons to visit Azad Kashmir during the polls so that nobody could point fingers on the fairness of polls at a later stage. Free elections in Azad Kashmir will also send a strong signal to other side of the LoC that people in AJK are fully independent to exercise their right of franchise.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/03/fair-ajk-polls-would-serve-kashmir-cause/>

“No End to Woes of People in Gilgit Baltistan”

ANI News, May 3, 2016

Gilgit Baltistan is on the boil again. The decision of Pakistani government to impose fresh taxes has caused disappointment among the people who say it will only add to their sufferings. Miffed at their

demands not being heard by authorities, the imposition of taxes has only added to their woes. Local leaders and activists are now planning a massive protest against the government decision. Locals have always accused Pakistan of treating Gilgit-Baltistan as its colony. The people are subjected to harsh laws and those who try to raise their voice against the oppression are dealt with high handedness. Locals also allege that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor will not benefit the local population of the region. The region suffers from power crisis but still no CPEC power project has been announced for Gilgit Baltistan region. Gilgit-Baltistan was illegally occupied by Pakistan in 1947. In an effort to provide legal cover to the multi-billion dollar Chinese investment, the Pakistan government is even considering to elevate the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/52530-no-end-to-woes-of-people-in-gilgit-baltistan.html>

“90% land acquiring for Diamer-Bhasha Dam completed”

Dispatch News Desk, May 4, 2016

Ministerial Committee for Construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam on May 4 informed that around 90 percent land for the construction of dam had been acquired. The meeting was attended by Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Affairs Barjees Tahir, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, minister for Inter Provincial Coordination, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, minister for Overseas Pakistanis Pir Sadaruddin Shah Rashdi, Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman, chairman WAPDA Zafar Mehmood, federal secretary of Kashmir Affairs and Chief Secretary of Gilgit-Baltistan. The committee apprised that entire land of the dam for the storage of water had been acquired while instruction had been issued for obtaining of remaining 10 percent land. It was decided that the welfare, development, health and education projects initiated under confidence building measures in the area will be monitored by the Gilgit-Baltistan government. Wapda will provide re-acquired funds for the projects. It was also decided that the ministry of interior will be requested for the provision of

security at the site. The chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan informed the committee that Rs 10 billion had been saved during the procurement of land. The committee appreciated the performance of Gilgit Baltistan government.

<http://www.dnd.com.pk/90-land-acquiring-for-diamer-bhasha-dam-completed/110368>

“GOVT to Fulfil Responsibility of Holding Transparent General Polls: Majeed”

Radio Pakistan, May 4, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhary Abdul Majeed noted that his government will fulfil its responsibility in holding free, fair and transparent forthcoming general elections in Azad Kashmir. Talking to various public delegations in Muzaffarabad on May 4, he noted full facilitation is being extended to AJK Election Commission in holding the peaceful elections in the state. Referring to the development process in the state he noted that the present government has launched mega development projects for the socioeconomic uplift of the state. AJK Prime Minister further stated that his government has focused the development of far furlong rural areas of the state to provide necessities of life including education and health facilities to masses at their doorsteps.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/04-May-2016/govt-to-fulfil-responsibility-of-holding-transparent-general-polls-majeed>

“CPEC to include \$26bn Diamer, Dasu dams: Ahsan”

Daily Times, May 4, 2016

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Ahsan Iqbal stated that the Diamer-Bhasha and Dasu dams are a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Briefing a meeting of the special committee on CPEC, the minister noted that the dams would be built at a combined cost of \$26 billion. “Diamer-Bhasha and Dasu will be built at a cost of \$14 billion and \$12 billion, respectively.” He stated that energy projects worth \$11.3 billion and \$9.1 billion would be initiated in Sindh and Balochistan, respectively. The city of Gwadar will receive 300 megawatts of

power projects, he added. Ahsan further noted an airport built as per international standards was a part of the economic corridor project, adding that work on the western route is progressing rapidly. The meeting was informed that the Chinese government was keen to complete the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on time, and was taking measures in this regard. The meeting was attended by Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman and his Balochistan counterpart Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Senator Mushahid Hussain and other members of the committee.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/04-May-16/cpec-to-include-26bn-diamer-dasu-dams-ahsan>

“JUI-F leader accuses PPP of registering fake votes”

The News, May 5, 2016

The Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F-), Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter, on May 4 alleged that the PPP was involved in the registration of fake votes in LA-41, valley 6 constituency, comprising the entire Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. “We would not allow any non-Kashmiri to vote in the upcoming Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections in KP. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) should check pre-poll rigging taking place in name of registration of votes,” stated Mohammad Fiaz Solaria, deputy general secretary of JUI-F AJK. He stated that AJK Minister Bahaliat (Restoration) Abdul Majid Khan was involved in gross violation of laws. He further stated the minister in question got fake votes registered in LA-41, valley 6. He alleged that Abdul Majid embezzled huge funds meant for establishment of residential colonies for Kashmiri refugees in Mansehra, Shinkari, Mardan, Havelian, Swat and Peshawar.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/117608-JUI-F-leader-accuses-PPP-of-registering-fake-votes>

“Green signal: Election tribunal allows Baba Jan to contest by-polls”

The Express Tribune, May 5, 2016

An election tribunal in Gilgit-Baltistan turned down a returning officer's (RO) decision to bar progressive leader Baba Jan from contesting by-

elections for the GBLA-6 Hunza by-polls. The decision was taken on May 4 by judges of the election tribunal, including Justice Haq Nawaz and Justice Wazir Shakeel. It comes less than a week after Jan's lawyers challenged the RO's decision. Jan, who is a member of Awami Workers Party (AWP), is currently serving a jail term. After May 4 decision, he will now be able to contest the by-polls scheduled for May 28. His nomination papers were rejected by returning officer Shahen Shah earlier this week on grounds that he had been convicted by a court. The tribunal's decision has been hailed by AWP workers who have thrown their weight behind Jan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1097535/green-signal-election-tribunal-allows-baba-jan-to-contest-by-polls/>

“Government has asked China to cease its activities in Pakistan occupied Kashmir”

The Economic Times, May 5, 2016

The government on May 5 stated it has asked China to cease its activities in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and has raised its concern at the "highest level". In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh (Retd) stated that China is assisting Pakistan in the development of the so-called "China Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC). "Some of the proposed projects under CEPC are in PoK," he stated, adding that Pakistan has been in illegal occupation parts of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir since 1947. "Government has conveyed to the Chinese side, including at the highest level, its concerns about their activities in PoK and asked them to cease their activities," Singh noted.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/government-has-asked-china-to-cease-its-activities-in-pakistan-occupied-kashmir/articleshow/52131534.cms>

“AJK youth urge economic and social inclusion, empowerment”

Pakistan Observer, May 5, 2016

Around 170 young leaders representing diverse shade of socio-political divide of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) including refugees settled in Pakistan came together on May 4 to urge political

parties to include youth political and economic empowerment in their manifestos as a key public commitment ahead of the upcoming elections in AJK.

A policy dialogue, “Social & Economic Empowerment of Young People of Azad Jammu and Kashmir: Opportunities and Challenges” was organized by Center for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR), in collaboration with British Council to provide youth a platform to discuss their socio-economic challenges with the political leadership ahead of State Assembly elections due in June 2016. Key leaders of political parties and civil society representatives attended the dialogue.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/05/ajk-youth-urge-economic-and-social-inclusion-empowerment/>

Ume Ayman, “The electricity crisis in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, May 6, 2016

The biggest source of electricity generation in Gilgit-Baltistan is hydel power. Home to the giant soaring rivers and gigantic glaciers, the whole region is abundant in water for most part of the year. However, water is scarce in the rivers during winter. As a result, electricity generation comes to a halt and power outages persist for 15 to 18 hours a day. The main solutions for countering this crisis is to prepare a comprehensive policy on population control, introducing advanced electricity meters, constructing small water reservoirs and undertaking effective town planning.

It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that a comprehensive policy on population size and growth, fertility and family planning is introduced in the region. The structural issue of population explosion has to be controlled. Otherwise, any effort aimed to ameliorate the energy crisis will fail to hit the mark. The introduction of smart tamper-proof meters can curb fraud and misrepresentation by consumers. It will ensure that the Water and Power Department does not suffer huge losses incurred due to evasion in paying bills.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1097960/the-electricity-crisis-in-gilgit/>

“Bhasha dam victims want boundary dispute

resolved”

Dawn, May 6, 2016

The people affected by the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam blocked Karakoram Highway at Shatyal Kohistan to press the authorities to settle the boundary dispute between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. The protesters, led by Bhasha Dam Action Committee chairman Asadullah Qureshi, Maulvi Abdur Rehman and Niamat Khan, were hailing from Upper Kohistan, Harban, Shtyal, Bhasha, Sazeen, Somur, Shori and Basri Nala. They were chanting slogans against the governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Wapda. Speaking on the occasion, Asadullah Qureshi, Abdul Aziz, Haji Sher Ghazi, Rehmat, Zahir Shah and Khan Bahadar noted that they would not allow work on the dam project if the dispute was not resolved. They also stated that in February 2014 four persons were killed and seven others received injuries in a clash owing the dispute. They stated that more than two years passed but the dispute was still unresolved. They feared another bloody clash if the dispute was not resolved. The speakers alleged that Wapda officials had assured the landowners that payment of 1,500-kanal, acquired by the government at the first stage, would be made in accordance with the market price but they were still waiting for the payment.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256646>

“Kashmir council elections: parties reach out to MLAs”

Business Recorder, May 7, 2016

Different political parties started wooing Members of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly for Kashmir Council elections which are scheduled to be held on May 15. The outgoing AJK Assembly is mandated to elect four members for the Kashmir Council out of a total of six members. The four members of the Kashmir Council completed their five-year term on April 20, 2016. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission will release final list of the winning candidates on May 13. At the moment, a total of 15 candidates from different parties have been vying for the coveted four seats in

the council. The current ruling party of the AJK, Pakistan Peoples Party, has nominated 7 candidates, Pakistan Muslim League-N 5 candidates, Muslim Conference 2 candidates while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has nominated 1 candidate for the council. According to the party positions in 49-member AJK Legislative Assembly, the PPP should get three of its candidates elected for the Kashmir Council, but observers and critics noted that it will hardly be able to get its one member elected due to differences within the party.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/43723/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan's hydropower potential to resolve energy crisis”

The News, May 8, 2016

The country's apex trade body on May 6 stated the hydropower potential of Gilgit-Baltistan, estimated at 50,000 megawatts, can resolve chronic energy crisis and save billions of dollar currently spent on oil import for power generation. President Abdul Rauf Alam of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), in a statement, noted thermal energy is costly, while hydropower offers the cheapest source of energy for the long-term and permanent solution to the energy crisis. Alam was talking to Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman. FPCCI Vice President Johar Ali Raki and others were also present on the occasion. The FPCCI chief stated hydro energy is environment-friendly, low-cost and economically viable and it can save billions of dollars required to import fuel for power generation that results in costly agricultural and industrial production. The potential of run-of-the-river projects in Gilgit Baltistan is phenomenal. Total 7,400 megawatts can be generated at a power plant in Bunji with two additional projects of 2,000 megawatts each upstream from this location, he added. Alam stated the government, as well as the private sector, must exploit the enormous power production potential in GB, which can help us overcome the energy crisis as well as export electricity.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/118200-Gilgit-Baltistans-hydropower-potential-to-resolve-energy-crisis>

“PM Nawaz Taking Keen Interest in Resolution

of Kashmir Issue: Farooq”

Radio Pakistan, May 7, 2016

The PML-N President and Leader of the Opposition in AJK noted that Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is taking keen interest in the resolution of long standing Kashmir issue and development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing a public meeting in Muzaffarabad on May 7, he stated that on the direction of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif federal government has provided billion of rupees for the socioeconomic uplift of the state. Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that Pakistan stance over Kashmir has boosted the morale of Kashmiris from both sides of Line of Control.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/07-May-2016/pm-taking-interest-in-resolution-of-kashmir-issue-farooq>

“AJK politics to take soon a new turn: Attique”

Pakistan Observer, May 8, 2016

Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, ex-premier and president Muslim Conference, stated that politics was taking new turn in Azad Kashmir. Federal Ministers in their visit to that area use highly objectionable language in their speeches. Now we have started thinking that ministers tone and talk have prior approval of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, because the premier has not taken notice of uncivilized language of his ministers so far, Sardar Attique stated this while talking to workers of his party and mourners of Marhoom Amanullah Khan on May 6. He also regretted that Prime Minister of Pakistan during his recent visits to Kotli and Bagh has not uttered even a single word about Kashmir dispute. To us China is our neighbor, but India is a straight enemy. He referred to the visits of India by former presidents of Pakistan General Ziaul Haq and General Pervez Musharraf reminding that the both had opposed India on its own soil on the basis of Kashmir principles. Taking a note of the feelings of participants' Sardar Attique Khan noted that his party Muslim Conference would live on.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/08/ajk-politics-to-take-soon-a-new-turn-attique/>

“OIC special envoy leads delegation to Azad Kashmir”

Saudi Gazette, May 9, 2016

A high-level delegation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), led by Abdullah Al-Alim, assistant secretary general and special representative of the OIC secretary general on Jammu and Kashmir, left for Pakistan and Azad Kashmir on May 8. Senior officials of the OIC Secretariat and representatives of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) and Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) are also among the delegates. During the visit, the team will meet the leadership and senior government officials in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad. The delegation will also visit the Line of Control (LoC) and meet with the True Representatives of the Kashmiri People. The team will return on May 12. In connection with the upcoming visit, the Consul General of Pakistan, Shehryar Akbar Khan, called on Al-Alim recently. Akbar also stated that the visit demonstrates OIC's continued support and commitment to the Kashmir cause.

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/world/asia/oic-special-envoy-leads-delegation-azad-kashmir/>

Jamil Nagri, “Boundary dispute between GB, KP tribes intensifies”

Dawn, May 9, 2016

The boundary dispute at the site of Diامر-Bhasha dam between the residents of Diامر district of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has deepened with tribes on both sides refusing to budge from their positions. The Harban tribe of Kohistan and the Thor tribe of Diامر claim ownership of a piece of land spanning eight kilometres in Gandlo Nala area. People from both sides gathered on the road on May 8, warning the authorities concerned of dire consequences if a settlement of the dispute could not be worked out soon. Elders of the Thor tribe held a sit-in outside the deputy commissioner's office in Chilas against the Harban tribe, accusing it of harassing the GB residents to keep pressure on the government to

decide the matter in its favour. Over 20 elders of Thor and representatives of the Thor Youth Organisation took part in the protest.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257229/boundary-dispute-between-gb-kp-tribes-intensifies>

“Kohistan elders to meet PM over boundary issue”

The News, May 10, 2016

The elders of Kohistan district would meet the prime minister and chief minister for settlement of the boundary dispute between tribes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Member Provincial Assembly from Kohistan Abdul Sattar Khan noted on May 9 that Kohistanis had constituted a 15-member committee to hold talks with both federal and provincial governments and demand that the report of the one-man commission constituted to probe the issue be made public. Meanwhile, Kohistanis continued their daily token protest on the Karakoram Highway in Harban and Shital areas on the ninth consecutive day. They blocked the road for traffic for an hour to highlight their cause. The protesters demanded the federal government to make public the one-man boundary commission's report, which was filed following the 2014 clashes that resulted in the killing of three people.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/118725-Kohistan-elders-to-meet-PM-over-boundary-issue>

“PML-N to form next govt in AJK on majority electoral win: Naseeb Gardezi”

Pakistan Observer, May 10, 2016

PML-N Punjab's president and ex-presidential adviser Syed Nazeebullah Gardezi accused AJK government of free-for-all money loot and there seems 'no concept of governance' in AJK territory. Giving a media interview, he noted that the AJK PPP has 'sacrificed' its five year governance to utter corruption, favouritism, and misadministration. He paid tributes to Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif for raising the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir in the General Assembly session in the recent past. Gardezi dispelled difference in PML-N AJK, saying the party is fully united the leadership

of Raja Farooq Haider Khan

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/10/pml-n-to-form-next-govt-in-ajk-on-majority-electoral-win-naseeb-gardezi/>

“Candidature of PPP man challenged”

Dawn, May 10, 2016

A single-member bench of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) High Court on May 9 sought comments from the Election Commission by May 10 in a petition challenging the candidature of Amjad Jalil for the upcoming elections on 4 seats of the AJK Council. Mohammad Saghir Khan, a resident of Khaigala village in Rawalakot, in his petition contended that returning officer Mian Naemullah had accepted the candidature of Mr Jalil, a resident of Rihara village in Rawalakot, “in violation of law” because Mr Jalil's name did not figure in the electoral rolls. On the petitioner's application for a stay order, the bench, comprising Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja, noted comments should also be ascertained from the respondents about the application by May 10. Both Mr Khan and Mr Jalil have submitted their nomination papers as candidates of the ruling PPP.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257386/candidature-of-ppp-man-challenged>

Khaleeq Kiani, “Policy for mega hydropower projects finalised”

Dawn, May 11, 2016

Amid support for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-like Net Hydropower Profit (NHP) for Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and the tribal region, a new government policy seeks expeditious development of mega hydropower projects of about 24,200MW through public-private partnership with mostly Chinese companies. The draft Policy for Development of Mega Hydel Power Projects was finalised on May 10 at a consultative meeting attended by representatives of all the four provinces, AJK, GB, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) and the federal ministries of water and power, finance, planning. Wapda Chairman Zafar Mahmood while speaking to journalists after the meeting noted that the policy which took more than a year and half to be completed would now be

forwarded to the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet and the Council of Common Interests (CCI) for approval.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1257546/policy-for-mega-hydropower-projects-finalised>

Shabbir Mir, “Diabler residents threaten to halt dam construction”

The Express Tribune, May 11, 2016

Residents of Diabler have threatened to stop construction work on Diabler-Bhasha Dam if the long-standing conflict between Gilgit-Baltistan's Diabler and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Harban areas over a strip of land is not settled. “We will not allow work on the dam unless the boundary issue is settled,” Lambardar Bashir noted during a press conference in Gilgit on May 10. “The demarcation should be done under the supervision of the army.” The elders of Thore Valley accused Kohistan MPA Abdul Sattar of taking money from the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, for sabotaging the dam and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It was further stated that the strip of land belonged to the forefathers of people who are settled in Thore since long. They added commuting on the Karakoram Highway has become a nightmare due to the dispute. Therefore, they demanded police take action against those disrupting law and order.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1101296/disputed-diamer-residents-threaten-to-halt-dam-construction/>

Zafar Bhutta, “Foreign companies to take over Diabler Bhasha dam”

The Express Tribune, May 11, 2016

All provinces have agreed on a draft of the new hydroelectric power policy that calls for handing over mega projects of 24,200-megawatt capacity including the gigantic Diabler Bhasha dam to foreign companies, mainly Chinese firms, for their swift implementation. The consensus was reached after multilateral donors gave a poor response to requests for financing the power projects. The provinces, however, demanded that the projects should be returned to them after the expiry of lease contract. As part of the policy, private investors will be offered exemption from duties and taxes during construction phase of a project as well as income tax

holiday for the first five years of operation. However, major stakeholders in the hydroelectric power projects including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) have sought an increase in power tariff, like that allowed to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, in the new policy. This will increase their share in the net hydel profit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1100776/hydropower-policy-foreign-companies-to-take-over-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

“GOVT Taking Steps for Welfare of Masses in AJK: Abid”

Radio Pakistan, May 11, 2016

The AJK Information Minister Sardar Abid Hussain Abid stated that present government is taking tangible steps for the welfare of masses in Azad Kashmir. He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Water Filtration Plants in union councils Singola and Shamsabad in Rawalakot on May 11. Sardar Abid Hussain Abid noted that health, education and safe drinking water is the basic necessities of life for which government is striving hard to provide these to people of the state. He also stated installed water plants would not only serve the needs of the local people but would also provide potable water to the visitors in the area. He urged the public to take proper care and protection of these Water Filtration Plants as it is their national responsibility. Earlier, Project Director Local Government & Rural Health Department briefed the Information Minister about the functions of installed filtration plants. He added that 150 water filtration plants have been installed state wide so far.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/11-May-2016/govt-taking-steps-for-welfare-of-masses-in-ajk-abid>

“CM Convenes High Level Meeting in Gilgit on Monday”

Radio Pakistan, May 12, 2016

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman has convened a high level meeting in Gilgit on May 16. In the meeting, Secretaries of all departments were to participate and brief the Chief Minister about the utilization of development budget of the current financial year. Reports noted

that Chief Minister had already directed them to utilize the development budget transparently and avoid lapse of the funds.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/12-May-2016/cm-convenes-high-level-meeting-in-gilgit-on-monday>

“With impunity: G-B lacks officers to tackle complaints”

The Express Tribune, May 13, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan lacks a government official senior enough to investigate complaints against other top officials. National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Director General Zahir Shah shared these views while speaking to journalists at his office on May 12. “Not a single Grade-21 official is present in Gilgit-Baltistan to investigate complaints against secretaries of Grade-20,” Shah noted. He further stated the accountability system in G-B was weak and will improve with the passage of time. According to the DG, NAB was currently working on 23 complaints launched by the public against officials. He further stated 13 officials were arrested by the bureau from the region. He also stated that four cases have been sent to court, while the reference of two others will be filed in a day or two. Shah also stated the four men were involved in a high-profile case and had completed their jail terms. He added their properties would be sold off to compensate the aggrieved parties.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1102384/with-impunity-g-b-lacks-officers-to-tackle-complaints/>

“Islamabad is elder brother of Muzaffarabad: PTIMNA”

Pakistan Observer, May 14, 2016

Ali Mohammad Khan, member National Assembly of Pakistan stated that Islamabad was elder brother of Muzaffarabad, Kashmir is the lifeline of Pakistan, and during past 70 years Pakistan provided multi-billions rupees for development of Azad Kashmir and took full economic care of this region. But he regretted that Azad Kashmir rulers expended all those money grants on their own luxuries. Talking to a gathering after offering fateha for of retired Col Mohammad Naseem Khan, Mr Ali Mohammad Khan observed that those do not take care for the

improvement of the poor masses conditions do not deserve any claim to leadership.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/14/islamabad-is-elder-brother-of-muzaffarabad-pti-mna/>

“AJK CJ underscores bench-bar ties for speedy justice”

The Nation, May 14, 2016

Due mutual cooperation between the bench and bar is imperative for dispensation of speedy and inexpensive justice to the litigants, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan stated on May 13. “The bench and bar are part and parcel of the justice dispensation and is a prerequisite to ensure inexpensive and speedy justice in true spirit”, AJK CJ Azam Khan expressed while handing over SCR books (Period 1992-2015) to the President of Leepa Valley Tehsil Bar Association at a ceremony held in the AJK's capital city. Judge of the AJK Supreme Court - Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Zia, President Central Bar Association Raja Aftab and President District Hattayan Bar Association Aftab Tariq Mir also addressed the ceremony.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/14-May-2016/ajk-cj-underscores-bench-bar-ties-for-speedy-justice>

“AJK speaker rebukes Nawaz for 'silence' over Indian atrocities”

Daily Times, May 15, 2016

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly Speaker Sardar Ghulam Sadiq Khan has rebuked Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. While talking to party workers and media men at Hajeera, he noted, “The PML-N government has failed to come up to the expectations of Kashmiri people.” He urged the Pakistan government to adopt a “proactive policy” on Kashmir instead of “interference” in the AJK elections. He also stated that the resolution of Kashmir issue was essential for durable peace in the region and the tension between Pakistan and India could only be eased by finding some pragmatic solution to the Kashmir issue.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/15-May-16/ajk-speaker-rebukes-nawaz-for-silence-over-indian-atrocities>

“Officers rapped over poor edu in Mirpur”

The Nation, May 16, 2016

The AJK chief secretary expressed dismay over the poor performance of public sector educational institutions and sought a report on the issue within three days. Chief Secretary of Azad Government Jammu & Kashmir Jalal Sakandar Sultan issued these orders during a surprising visit to various educational institutions. The CS also addressed civil servants during his visit to Mirpur. Commissioner Raja Amjad Pervez Ali Khan briefed the chief secretary about the pace of various on-going development projects in Mirpur division. Addressing civil servants, the CS directed them to do their duties with devotion, follow discipline and rule of law, saying that no negligence in this regard would be tolerated.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/16-May-2016/officers-rapped-over-poor-edu-in-mirpur>

Arsalan Altaf, “Kashmir elections: Nationalists demand right to contest polls”

The Express Tribune, May 16, 2016

Leaders from a number of political parties of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on May 15 called for enabling nationalist parties to contest elections in the state by repealing laws that require them to sign an affidavit of allegiance to “the ideology of the state's accession to Pakistan”. They were speaking at a multi-party conference on “Election of AJK Assembly under Act 1974 and the Rights of People of AJK”, organised by the United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP) and the Awami Workers Party (AWP), on May 15. Representatives of various nationalist parties of the AJK emphasised the need for doing away with the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution Act, 1974, and electing a constituent assembly to make an independent constitution for the state. Sub-section II of Section VII of the act says, “No person or political party in Azad Jammu and Kashmir shall be permitted to propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to, the ideology of the state's accession to Pakistan.” They stated nationalist parties had been barred from the political process under this clause. They also denounced what they called undue interference by Islamabad in

matters of the state through the AJK Council and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1103962/kashmir-elections-nationalists-demand-right-to-contest-polls/>

Sheraz Rathore, “Panama leaks won't affect AJK polls, governance is real problem: Farooq Haider”

Daily Times, May 16, 2016

Opposition leader in AJK and president PML-N (AJK Chapter) Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated Panama gate scandal has nothing to do with AJK polls and governance is the real and basic problem. In an interview, Farooq Haider noted that the judiciary should take notice if corruption committed by making its decisions as base. The elections of AJK Council should be held through show of hand, he demanded. PML-N will award tickets for AJK legislative assembly polls on merit, he remarked. He held that Imran Khan was hurling abuses on Nawaz Sharif in Azad Kashmir. He has no perception about local problems of Azad Kashmir. PTI have such people within its cadres who are known for switching over to other parties, noted Farooq Haider, who is former prime minister of AJK. About Panama leaks, he stated these are not going to leave any impact on AJK elections.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/21-May-16/panama-leaks-wont-affect-ajk-polls-governance-is-real-problem-farooq-haider>

“Kohistan, Chilas elders agree to resume talks”

The News, May 16, 2016

The local elders, clerics and tribesmen from Thor village in Chilas in Gilgit-Baltistan reached Harban in Kohistan to settle the feud under the local customs on May 15. Talking to reporters, Deputy Commissioner Fazle Khaliq noted that it was a major breakthrough that the people of Kohistan suspended their sit-in at Karakoram Highway (KKH) and agreed to settle the issue with tribesmen from Thor village in Gilgit-Baltistan. The clerics, elders, local people including 20 women reached Harban from Thor along with cattle, the symbol of reconciliation in such critical issues, to settle the issue through local customs. The elders and clerics from Harban tribe accepted the arrival of Thor tribespeople and extended hospitality as a gesture of

goodwill and did not stage sit-in at the Karakoram Highway.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/120215-Kohistan-Chilas-elders-agree-to-resume-talks>

“Azad Kashmir not performing its role as base camp: Turabi”

Pakistan Observer, May 17, 2016

Amir Jamat Islami Azad Kashmir Allama Abdur Rashid Turabi bitterly criticised the AJK government for what he called its total failure in advancing the basic cause of Jammu and Kashmir. It is unfortunate that Azad Kashmir being the base camp of Kashmir's liberation movement is not delivering its due role, he stated this while addressing a one-day well attended Paigham-e-Shuhda Conference [Message of Martyrs Moot] on May 16. Hajira is hardly 13 miles away from the Line of Control. He stated that both the governments of Islamabad and Muzaffarabad are in fact an obstacle in the forward push of Kashmir struggle. The budget of the Kashmir Liberation Cell was meant for freedom cause and feeding the heirs of martyrs in the struggle, but the money is being spent on various types of luxuries by 'jiyalas'[enthusiasts].

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/17/azad-kashmir-not-performing-its-role-as-base-camp-turabi/>

“Jirga on boundary dispute remains inconclusive”

Pakistan Herald, May 17, 2016

The jirga of Harban and Thor tribes held in Kohistan to settle the boundary dispute between Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained inconclusive on the first day. The elders of Thor tribe of Chilas in Gilgit-Baltistan were received warmly on May 16 by elders of Harban tribe on their arrival at the jirga, which is expected to last for days. The participants of the jirga will try to resolve the issue in the light of local traditions and customs. “This jirga is being held with the backing of both Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments. If both the tribes come to a mutual settlement it would be acceptable to both the governments as maintaining peace at boundary is a

top priority,” Fazl-i-Khaliq, the deputy commissioner of Kohistan, noted before journalists. He stated that it was a hectic effort by both the governments to bring the elders of both tribes to the table of negotiations to settle issues between them for the lasting peace and prosperity of both regions.

<http://www.pakistanherald.com/news/10845/17-may-2016/jirga-on-boundary-dispute-remains-inconclusive>

“Pakistan upset with India's 'Kashmir maps bill”

World News Bulletin, May 18, 2016

Pakistan stated on May 17 that it is deeply concerned about India's efforts to pass a law that would punish anyone who draws a map of the country in a way that portrays Jammu Kashmir as disputed territory. “Pakistan expressed serious concerns to the UN Secretary General and the President of the UNSC, through letters by its Permanent Representative in New York, with regard to the Indian government's efforts to introduce a controversial 'Geospatial Information Regulation Bill' in the Indian Parliament,” Pakistan's foreign office stated. According to the bill, anyone who portrays Jammu Kashmir or even Azad Kashmir as disputed territory or as part of neighboring Pakistan could face a prison term of up to seven years and a fine of up to a whopping 1 billion Indian rupees (\$15 million). India has since rejected Pakistan's objection to the bill. “We will take suggestions and views of citizens, experts and various stakeholders before finalizing it,” Kiren Rijiju, India's Minister of State for Home Affairs, stated. “But it is the duty of the government to see that India's map is depicted properly.” The provision is part of the draft of the new Geospatial Information Regulation Bill planned to be brought to Parliament soon by the Indian government.

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/172849/pakistan-upset-with-indias-kashmir-maps-bill>

“Nawaz performs ground-breaking in Gilgit today”

The News, May 19, 2016

In yet another leap forward towards building the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) at a

faster pace, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will perform the ground-breaking ceremony of about 2,000 kilometer Pakistan-China Optical Fibre Cable in Gilgit on May 19. The construction of optical fibre cable would be an essential part of the CPEC and it would mark another important step towards completion of the project. It would link China with Gwadar through Islamabad. The army will be supervising the construction of the fibre cable. It would be completed with the most sophisticated material and provide the best service to the users. Some federal ministers will also accompany the prime minister. The prime minister will be visiting Gilgit with a hectic schedule, as he will also meet members of the Gilgit-Baltistan cabinet, members of legislative assembly and Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman. It would be his fourth visit to the GB ever since the establishment of the PML-N government in the GB. He has visited Gilgit-Baltistan six times in three years after assuming the charge of federal government.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/121075-Nawaz-performs-ground-breaking-in-Gilgit-today>

“Will give system in Kashmir where NAB is independent: Imran Khan”

Dunya News, May 19, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on May 18 stated after winning elections, his party will give a system in Azad Kashmir where National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is independent, as reported. Addressing the rally, PTI chief stated if came to power; his party will focus on devolution of power after ensuring independent accountability for all. Criticising the government, Imran Khan asked where did Rs 5000 billion loans go that the government took in 3 years. Mocking Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) leader Fazlur Rehman, Imran Khan noted that God has ridiculed the former in a way that whenever he mentions 'diesel', Fazlur Rehman's name comes up. PM Nawaz needs Fazlur Rehman to save the government, he stated, adding that this indicates PM is in trouble. The PTI chief noted change is not possible without participation of people. He asked how Nawaz Sharif will bring others' money back in country when his own wealth is not here. “Leaders

steal the wealth, illegally send it abroad and then lie in assembly,” he noted. Imran Khan further stated PM Nawaz told the tale of parrots thrice instead of coming clean.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/337501-Will-give-system-in-Kashmir-where-NAB-is-independe>

“Mirpur ignored by PPP in 2010 survey: Marvi”

The Nation, May 19, 2016

The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) chairperson stated that the new poverty survey would be transparent adding that Mirpur was ignored in the last survey conducted in 2010 by the PPP government while this time it would get its due share. She added BISP would put in hard efforts to make it the best in the world. She also stated that new poverty survey would employ the latest technology. “Desk Approach would be complemented by door to door survey. The survey teams would be accompanied by monitoring teams as well to ensure transparency and best international practices. All the loopholes of the last survey conducted in 2010 would be tackled in the upcoming survey,” she noted. She is visiting the pilot phase districts of new poverty survey to sensitise the masses on National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) update. In this connection, she visited Divisional Office BISP Mirpur, Nangi and New Mirpur City. Pilot phase of new poverty survey will start after Ramazan followed by national roll out in January 2017, she noted. She added that she is thankful to Prime Minister Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for entrusting her with the sacred responsibility of representing the poor.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/19-May-2016/mirpur-ignored-by-ppp-in-2010-survey-marvi>

“PM Wants to Make AJK Developed and Prosperous: Kirmani”

Radio Pakistan, May 22, 2016

Prime Minister's advisor on Political Affairs Dr Asif Kirmani stated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wants to make Azad Jammu and Kashmir a developed and prosperous area. In a statement on May 21, he stated consultation is being made with Head of PML-N Azad Kashmir Sardar Sikandar Hayat to award

Party tickets in upcoming election.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/22-May-2016/pm-wants-to-make-ajk-developed-and-prosperous-kirmani>

“The fate of Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily Times, May 23, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) central leadership has demanded that Gilgit-Baltistan be given the constitutional status of a full province. In a country in which the concerns of this 'autonomous' region seldom reach the public conscience, it is good that PTI has finally taken up this issue. Not only would this serve to silence those who blame the party of having singular focus on Punjab, but it would also help in bringing a marginalised issue onto the national stage. Few people are cognisant of the current status of Gilgit-Baltistan, and even fewer realise the historic injustice being done to the people of that region. Unfortunately, the state has considered strategic concerns more important than providing citizens their due rights. And the state needs to revise its policies if it wishes to make Pakistan a more inclusionary state. Gilgit-Baltistan received its official name in 2008 by the government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with the supposed logic being that its former name 'northern areas' led to people confusing it with the 'militant-infested' Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which in turn was damaging its tourist industry. Unfortunately, however, political concerns remained largely ignored, and this change in nomenclature did not include making the region a constitutional province.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/23-May-16/the-fate-of-gilgit-baltistan>

“Pakistan: Socialist environmentalist runs election campaign from jail”

Weekly Green Left, May 23, 2016

Candidate for the socialist Awami Workers Party (AWP) Baba Jan will contest a May 28 by-election for the assembly of the Pakistani-administered Himalayan territory of Gilgit-Baltistan from his jail cell. Baba Jan has been described as a climate justice prisoner. In 2010, his home town area in Hunza was devastated by climate change-induced floods and landslides. A protest movement

developed against the misappropriation of relief funds. Police responded with brutality and protesters were killed and arrested. As a result of his role in leading community resistance, Baba Jan has been in and out of jail since 2011. Since September 2014, he has been serving a life sentence. He was tried in an “Anti-Terrorist Court”. Routinely used to persecute progressive non-violent activists, such courts are rarely used against terrorists. Most terrorist groups in Pakistan have links with the security establishment. Despite this, considerable Western aid is given to Pakistan for “counter-terrorism”. Western aid for mitigation of the effects of climate change is non-existent. Baba Jan stood in the Hunza 6 electorate in Gilgit-Baltistan general elections in June 2015. He stood second behind a candidate from Pakistan's ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PM-N).

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/61810>

Hameed Shaheen, “AJK general elections in deepening doldrums”

Pakistan Observer, May 23, 2016

The constitutional 5-year tenure of the incumbent government in AJK lasts till last week of June 2016. Therefore those political quarters of the state who are demanding announcement of general election schedule are justified. The schedule is to be announced by the Chief Election Commissioner Mr Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal. It is a ground fact that all state political parties deem the Pakistan Muslim League-N AJK is a potent threat to their electoral position. Insiders say that the sitting government of Pakistan People's Party AJK in their inner mind of the minds want delay which they see as a spell of political gains. On this count, there runs an internal skirmish between AJK-PPP and AJK - PML-N which expresses bitterly in their public meetings levelling horrendous charges against each other. The somewhat outwardly sober looking AJK Jamaat Islami is neither in rush nor in suspense; her thinking is that whenever general elections in the state would be held, the party would contest all the 41 seats irrespective of the fact that the outcome of each constituency very much clear to them; Electoral force of the Jamaat cannot squeeze the political clout of all other parties. The ground

competitiveness edge of the Muslim Conference, being a state political party, at present seems short of tough electoral combat.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/23/ajk-general-elections-in-deepening-doldrums/>

“Imran Khan vows to resolve Kashmir issue”

The Express Tribune, May 23, 2016

PTI chairman Imran Khan vowed on May 23 to resolve the issue of Kashmir and raise voice for the rights of Kashmiris at every forum. “Kashmiris have rendered sacrifices that no one in this subcontinent has”. He was addressing a public gathering in Bagh, Azad Kashmir in build up to the general elections in AJK, set to take place on June 26. “Our premier, instead of raising voice [for Kashmiris], is busy in flourishing his business there.” He noted the Kashmir issue could be solved in a peaceful manner, which will benefit the entire subcontinent and eliminate poverty.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1108728/imran-khan-vows-resolve-kashmir-issue/>

“Two PPP ministers resign”

Pakistan Today, May 23, 2016

Two ministers of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the ruling party of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), resigned on May 23 over differences with the party leadership. The ministers who tendered their resignations included Abdul Majid Khan and Muhammad Hussain Sargala. They alleged the discriminatory attitude of PPP leadership as the reason behind their decision to quit. AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed stated that the two ministers were earlier suspended over violation of the party discipline. In upcoming general elections, party tickets will be given to other capable and eligible candidates, he noted.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/05/23/national/two-ppp-ministers-resign/>

Shabbir Mir, “GBLA-6 electioneering: PML-N launches by-poll campaign in G-B”

The Express Tribune, May 24, 2016

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz launched a full-scale election campaign for its

candidate, Saleem Khan, who is son of Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Mir Ghazanfar Ali. The winner of the by-election for GBLA-6, scheduled to be held on May 28, will take the seat vacated by Mir Ghazanfar after he was appointed G-B governor. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon reached Hunza on May 22 to expedite the campaign. Besides Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman, a campaign for the PML-N candidate Saleem Khan is also being carried out by the G-B governor and his spouse Rani Atika, a lawmaker in the G-B assembly. The PML-N team addressed rallies in Hunza and asked people to vote for the party if they wanted to see a developed Hunza. Rehman also inaugurated campaign offices at Aliabad and Murtazabad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1108820/gbla-6-electioneering-pml-n-launches-poll-campaign-g-b/>

“GOVT Implementing Schemes on Merit to Make System Transparent: CM”

Radio Pakistan, May 25, 2016

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman says the Government is strictly implementing development schemes on merit to make system transparent. He was talking to a delegation of Gilgit-Baltistan Contractors Association, called on him in Gilgit on May 25. He stated GB Government is introducing reforms in all fields aimed at to enhance performance of Govt departments and timely completion of on-going development schemes. He assured contractors for payment of their outstanding bills soon.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/25-May-2016/govt-implementing-on-merit-to-make-system-transparent-cm>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B police starts patrolling CPEC route”

The Express Tribune, May 26, 2016

The Gilgit-Baltistan police started patrolling Diamer district to ensure security as work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is under way. Muhammad Wakeel, a police inspector, noted before media on May 25, at least 10 police vehicles have been set aside for the purpose. “The SHOs and SDPOs in the valley will monitor the patrolling process under the supervision of SSP

Shoaib Khurram,” he noted. According to Wakeel, the officers who are patrolling the district have been adequately trained. He added they will be available round-the-clock to help people and respond to any eventualities. The decision comes two months after China donated 25 vehicles to G-B government as part of CPEC. The fleet of double cabin vehicles was received by G-B IGP Zafar Iqbal Awan on behalf of the regional government in Gilgit in March 2016.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1110572/g-b-police-starts-patrolling-cpec-route/>

“A later date: G-B apex court postpones Hunza by-polls”

The Express Tribune, May 26, 2016

By-elections for GBLA-6, Hunza have been postponed for three weeks. The polls were initially scheduled to take place on May 28. The decision was taken by Gilgit-Baltistan's Supreme Appellate Court on May 25. The region's apex court was hearing a petition against the decision to allow Awami Workers Party (AWP) leader Baba Jan to contest the by-elections. The petition was filed by Zafar Iqbal against an election tribunal's decision to allow the AWP leader to contest the polls. “The polling process has been delayed by the court for three weeks,” Baba Jan's counsel Nazir Ahmed informed the media. According to the counsel, Supreme Appellate Court Chief Judge Dr Rana Shamim ordered postponing the polls. “The decision was taken to complete the hearings of two pending criminal cases against Baba Jan,” Ahmed noted. The court will start hearing the cases from May 26 onwards. Jan is currently serving jail term. Jan's nomination papers were rejected by a returning officer (RO) on grounds that he had been convicted by a court.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1110512/late-date-g-b-apex-court-postpones-hunza-polls/>

“PTI announces manifesto for AJK polls”

Daily Times, May 26, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) chapter on May 25 announced its electoral manifesto vowing to make Azad Kashmir

as self-reliant through 74th constitutional reforms act. Addressing a press conference, former AJK Prime Minister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry, who is PTI AJK president, stated that special attention will be paid towards education, health and industrial sectors as the party has promised to establish a gas company in AJK. The manifesto stated that PTI, after coming into power, will establish a separate ministry to give equal representation to women in government jobs. Sultan stated that women would be given 33 percent representation in the Kashmir Assembly, adding that his party is committed to bringing transparency in the development schemes and believes in across the board accountability.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/26-May-16/pti-announces-manifesto-for-ajk-polls>

“MA Mir, AJK defaulters: Power connections of govt offices severed”

The News, May 28, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) electric department on May 27 severed power connections of several offices at the civil secretariat for failing to pay outstanding dues. Several government departments and offices in the civil secretariat owe around Rs420 million to the AJK electric department, noted an official. As part of the drive, power connection of the central police office, additional chief secretary, secretary finance, election commission offices, public health, accountability bureau and other offices were cut. According to the AJK electricity department, the accountability bureau owes Rs7 million, the public health department Rs146 million, the additional chief secretary office Rs102 million, the CPO Rs7.4 million, the finance department Rs7.4 million and the health secretariat Rs5 million.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1111638/ajk-defaulters-power-connections-govt-offices-severed/>

“Development of Azad Kashmir Govt's Top Priority: Rashid”

Radio Pakistan, May 28, 2016

Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid stated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif detonated atomic bomb despite immense international pressure. Talking to

workers convention in Muzaffarabad on the occasion of Yaum-e- Takbeer, he stated only brave leader can take courageous decisions. Information Minister stated Nawaz Sharif cannot be bribed or bowed. He also stated the Prime Minister made the decision to safeguard security and uphold prestige of the country.

Referring to the development of Azad Kashmir, the Information Minister stated that fast track development of Azad Kashmir is amongst the top priorities of the PML-N government. He also stated that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif laid special focus on power sector specially Neelum Jhelum Power project which will be completed in the next year and will start generating electricity. Pervaiz Rashid stated that during the last three years 300 billion rupees were provided to the present AJK government for the development of the state but regretted that such huge amount was not properly utilized for the development and welfare of masses in Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/28-May-2016/development-of-azad-kashmir-govt-s-top-priority-rashid>

“Sharif to face litmus test in Gilgit -Baltistan by-election”

Business Standard, May 30, 2016

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who finds himself increasingly isolated on the national scene in wake of the Panama Gate and American action against the Taliban, will now face an acid test in Gilgit -Baltistan which is set to vote in a by-election from Hunza on the border with Xinjiang province of North-western China. Sharif has, however, turned this self-inflicted wound into a routine by-election involving around 36,000 voters into a referendum on his Pakistan Muslim League Party (PML-N) by fielding a bank loan defaulter much against the wishes of local satraps. There are 24 candidates, including local hero Baba Jan who has been fighting for self-rule for Gilgit, in the fray for the Hunza seat. He has been languishing in jail for several months. The seat fell vacant following the resignation of Ghazanfar Ali Khan on his elevation as the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The by-election was originally scheduled to take place on May 28, but a division bench of the Supreme Appellate Court of Gilgit-Baltistan decided to delay the ballot for three weeks in order to complete the hearing of two pending criminal cases against Baba Jan. To the dismay of Pakistan authorities, Baba Jan has become the most popular candidate on social media in Gilgit-Baltistan.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/sharif-to-face-litmus-test-in-gilgit-baltistan-by-election-116053001113_1.html

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit-Baltistan: 'We will not let budget pass without lawmakers' input”

The Express Tribune, May 30, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan's annual budget will not be passed by the regional assembly if it lacks input from elected representatives. Leader of Opposition in G-B Legislative Assembly Shah Baig shared these views while speaking to journalists in Gilgit on May 29. Baig's remarks have surfaced days before the annual budget for financial year 2016-17 will be announced. The opposition leader's comment reflects the wishes of lawmakers who find themselves short-changed by the strong bureaucracy involved in preparing development schemes in the region. “The government must arrange a pre-budget session to account for the views of lawmakers,” he noted. Baig stated G-B Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman is subservient to the bureaucracy. According to the opposition leader, Rehman has preserved the interests of secretaries instead of the public.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1112617/gilgit-baltistan-will-not-let-budget-pass-without-lawmakers-input/>

“Army's supervision demanded for Hunza by-polls”

The Express Tribune, May 30, 2016

At least five candidates have demanded army supervision for the by-election in GBLA-6 Hunza, noting the government is involved in pre-poll rigging. They were speaking at Gilgit Press Club on May 29. The demand for army supervision was put forward by various candidates, including an independent candidate Colonel (retd) Obaidullah

Baig, PTI candidate Aziz Ahmad, Aam Aadmi Party's Dinar Khan, Nek Nam and Salman Abid. The candidates accused G-B Governor Mir Ghazanfar Ali and Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman of favouring Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz candidate Salim Khan, in the elections. "Only the army can ensure free and fair polls," Ahmad stated. The candidates also pressed the Election Commission of Pakistan to play its role in ensuring transparency in the by-election. Earlier, the leadership of Pakistan Peoples Party had asked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz not to meddle in the upcoming by-elections for GBLA-6 Hunza. On May 28, the Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court postponed the by-polls by another three weeks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1112626/armys-supervision-demanded-hunza-polls/>

"PPP to form next govt in AJK: Ashraf"

The Nation, May 30, 2016

Former Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf stated that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) will form the next government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Speaking at a news conference, Ashraf noted PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will address a mammoth rally in Mirpur on May 30. "The people of AJK voted for us before and they will vote again for us now. We will form the next government in AJK," he stated. Ashraf stated some ministers were using derogatory language against the PPP leadership which will not be tolerated. "Some ministers must mind their language. They are maligning the PPP leadership. We cannot allow this," he added. He stated the government had promised to end load-shedding in three months but three years had passed without any result.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/30-May-2016/ppp-to-form-next-govt-in-ajk-ashraf>

Rizwan Ahmed, "Gilgit-Baltistan's share"

The News, May 31, 2016

It is tragic that not a single project has been earmarked for Gilgit-Baltistan in the \$46 billion CPEC. All the money and projects have been shared among four provinces. It was claimed that Gilgit-Baltistan would be given \$980 million and two

economic zones would also be set up in the region. So far these have remained mere claims, and there has been no progress on the ground. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan are also patriotic Pakistanis. Being the gateway to the CPEC, Gilgit-Baltistan should be given the same status as Gwadar.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/124034-Gilgit-Baltistans-share>

Sajid Ali, "Pakistan: Gilgit-Baltistan by-election postponed due to mass support for jailed socialist"

Weekly Green Left, May 31, 2016

The voice from prison of Baba Jan, social activist and president of the Awami Workers Party (AWP) Gilgit-Baltistan, appears to be so frightening to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government of Pakistan that it is using state machinery against Baba Jan's latest election bid from prison. On May 25, the appellate Supreme Court of Gilgit-Baltistan postponed a by-election, which was supposed to be held three days later, by three weeks. The PML-N government, along with other mainstream political parties, are desperately trying to buy more time because of the massive support for Baba Jan in the by-election campaign for a seat in the assembly of the Pakistani-administered Himalayan territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. Every section of Gilgit-Baltistan society, including youth, women, leftists and human right activists, have been part of rallies in support of Baba Jan. Baba Jan has been in jail for more than three years on a life sentence on trumped up terrorism charges. His case was heard by a special anti-terrorism court in Gilgit, even though he has never been involved in any terrorist activities. His only crime was to raise his voice for the compensation by the Pakistani state for the people of the Hunza valley in 2011 devastating landslides which killed many people and left hundreds of families homeless.

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/61878>

Economic Developments

“Govt pledges facilities for industrial progress”

The Nation, May 15, 2016

AJK chief secretary Sikander Jalal Raja assured the entrepreneurs of the provision of facilities for speedy industrial progress in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Chairing a meeting of the state-run Industrial Development Board, the chief secretary appreciated the business community of AJK and assured his full support to address the issues related to taxation, electricity load shedding, industrial estate and the private-public partnership on various development projects. Secretary Industries Ghulam Bashir Mughal briefed the Chief Secretary about the current challenges faced by the Industry in AJK. The meeting was attended among others by President Chamber Ch Sohaib Saeed, officials of the Industrial Development Board, Col (r) Shiraz Ahmed and Ch Muhammad Saeed. The matters related to the emergence of a mega form/estate for livestock and related businesses were also discussed. Proposed easy financing from banks for SMEs was also discussed.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/15-May-2016/govt-pledges-facilities-for-industrial-progress>

Shabbir Mir, “No cash flow: Gilgit faces shortage of smaller denomination notes”

The Express Tribune, May 15, 2016

The Gilgit branch of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) has not received smaller denominations of currency notes since December 2015. This has created a dearth of cash flow in the markets and negatively impacted businesses in the region. Officials noted airlines have refused to transport boxes of cash. This is primarily because there is minimal space in aircrafts and the boxes tend to be bulky. As a result, smaller denominations are unavailable. NBP Gilgit Manager Sajjad Hussain noted that the last time they received change from

the head office was in December 2015. “This is because Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) does not transport the large number of cash boxes,” Hussain stated. He added they are thinking about alternative means of transportation to bring small denominations of currency to the region as soon as possible.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1103449/no-cash-flow-gilgit-faces-shortage-of-smaller-denomination-notes/>

“Chinese company urged to establish fruit processing units along CPEC”

Pakistan Observer, May 24, 2016

The Board of Investment (BoI) on May 23 urged the Chinese company, China Zhongde International Investment Group to invest in establishing fruit processing units along the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Gilgit Baltistan. “The major portion of fruits produced in Gilgit Baltistan goes waste due to lack of processing facilities,” Secretary BoI, Azhar Ali Chaudhry stated during a meeting with the six-member delegation of the company headed by its Chairman, Gaobing Zhao. Senator Talha Mehmood and senior management of the BoI were also present on the occasion. The Secretary noted that investment in fruit processing units would not only be beneficial for the people of Gilgit Baltistan but also a lucrative business for the company.

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/24/chinese-company-urged-to-establish-fruit-processing-units-along-cpec/>

International Developments

“Kashmiris protest in London against alleged Pak rights abuse”

Big News Network, May 14, 2016

Several Kashmiris gathered outside the Pakistan High Commission on May 13 to protest against alleged human rights violations in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), especially with regard to 2013 murder of Sardar Arif Shahid in Rawalpindi. Protesters carried banners with slogans against the Pakistani Army and the ISI, which they blamed for the killing. "We have gathered here in front of the Pakistan High Commission to protest against the brutal murder of Sardar Afif Shahid. We believe that Pakistan's intelligence agencies were behind his murder because he had always raised demand of an independent Kashmir," one of the protestors stated. "I have come here because I believe that we Kashmiris, whether we belong to valley or Ladakh or Gilgit Baltistan or so called Azad Kashmir, we are against this kind of terrorism. We demand that a judicial commission should be set up for probing the murder of Arif Shahid”.

<http://www.bignewsnetwork.com/news/244068921/kashmiri-s-protest-in-london-against-alleged-pak-rights-abuse>

“Kashmiri writer launches Europe-wide signature campaign against illegal annexation of Gilgit Baltistan and CPEC”

Big News Network, May 3, 2016

Junaid Qureshi, a Kashmiri writer, international human rights activist and a senior leader of the Jammu Kashmir Democratic Liberation Party (JKDLP), who is based in Srinagar, has initiated a Europe-wide signature campaign in various European cities to create awareness regarding the Kashmir issue in general and in particular vis-à-vis the proposed annexation of Gilgit-Baltistan by Pakistan and the "illegal construction" of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. In a statement issued, JKDLP leader, Junaid Qureshi noted that

"Pakistan's move to illegally annex Gilgit Baltistan, change the demographics of the actual Kashmir-issue and cement China's stake in this dispute are in response to concerns raised by Beijing. China cannot afford to invest billions of dollars on a road that passes through a disputed territory claimed both by India and Pakistan. The actions of Pakistan totally negate the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and their future while jeopardizing any kind of solution to this long standing conflict. If Pakistan imposes its sovereign writ over Gilgit-Baltistan, India will then have a political and moral right to fully integrate Jammu Kashmir into India, and scrap Article 370 of its constitution giving Jammu Kashmir a special status. This would pave way for further division of already divided Jammu Kashmir", he further stated.

<http://www.bignewsnetwork.com/news/243713069/kashmiri-writer-launches-europe-wide-signature-campaign-against-illegal-annexation-of-gilgit-baltistan-and-cpec>

“Pak-origin Brussels MP signs petition against illegal annexation of Gilgit Baltistan”

Hindustan Times, May 10, 2016

Brussels Capital Region lawmaker Dr Manzoor Zahoor Ellahi signed a petition extending his support in creating awareness regarding the proposed annexation of Gilgit Baltistan and the construction of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ellahi, a Pakistani-born lawmaker and a member of the Socialist Party of Belgium (Parti Socialiste), also happens to be the doctor of Pakistani embassy in Brussels. He signed the petition along with Motaher Chowdhury, the local councillor for Ixelles-Brussels. The Europe-wide signature campaign is being organized by Junaid Qureshi, a Kashmiri writer, international human rights activist and a senior leader of the Jammu Kashmir Democratic Liberation Party (JKDLP). In Brussels, the Signature Campaign was held on May 7 and 8. The organizer for Overseas Affairs of

United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP) based in Pakistani Administered Kashmir, Dr. Ishaq Khan, also visited the venue of the signature campaign to sign the petition and expressed his support. "We stand against all designs which divide our motherland further and we will not allow anyone to loot our resources. We stand against the division of Jammu and Kashmir, the proposed annexation of Gilgit Baltistan by Pakistan and the construction of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor which is being built without any say or consent from the people of Gilgit Baltistan," he noted. Meanwhile, Qureshi expressed his satisfaction regarding the progress of the Signature Campaign.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/world/pak-origin-brussels-mp-signs-petition-against-illegal-annexation-of-gilgit-baltistan/story-4xzivCiRVwFOk6Ow0hNN4O.html>

"Gilgit-Baltistan not free, activist tells U.S. Senators"

Business Standard, May 14, 2016

Suppression of the occupied region of Gilgit-Baltistan by Pakistan came up for discussion in an event sponsored by Senator Tim Kaine and a few other senators and held at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington D C. Senge Hasnan Sering an expatriate from Gilgit-Baltistan, now settled in the U.S. and director of the Gilgit-Baltistan National Congress, briefed the audience on the situation in his native place. While emphasising that the UNSC Resolution 47 declares Pakistan an occupier and aggressor in Gilgit-Baltistan he quoted a Freedom House report conclusion that Gilgit-Baltistan is not free. The 2015 report on World Freedom, according to Senge, has noted severe restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly and association in Gilgit-Baltistan. Journalists face persecution for speaking against the government and many local publications have been banned. Government curbs speech on subjects pertaining to the armed forces and judiciary. The police, the military, and the intelligence services enjoy impunity for indiscriminate and excessive use of force.

<http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/gilgit->

[baltistan-not-free-activist-tells-u-s-senators-116051400283_1.html](http://www.baltistan-not-free-activist-tells-u-s-senators-116051400283_1.html)

"Pak Kashmir committee lauds OIC role"

Saudi Gazette, May 25, 2016

The Kashmir Committee, Jeddah Chapter, met on May 23 at the Consulate General of Pakistan to discuss the latest visit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) delegation to Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Consul General, Shehryar Akbar Khan, shared details of the visit with the committee that was held from May 8-12, 2016. He informed the committee that the delegation called on the president of Pakistan, the adviser to the prime minister on foreign affairs and the minister for Kashmir affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan during the visit. The delegation also called on president and prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Muzaffarabad. The OIC delegation held meetings with the chairman and members of the Special Committee of the National Assembly on Kashmir and the representatives of All Parties Hurriyat Conference. The delegation also visited the Line of Control at Chakothi

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/saudi-arabia/pak-kashmir-committee-lauds-oic-role/>

"CPEC will have adverse effect on ecology in Gilgit: Kashmiri leaders"

Bihar Prabha, May 31, 2016

Kashmiri leaders and parties have often raised their voice in support of the cause of the people living in disputed territories of Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). A conference was held recently by Jammu Kashmir International People's Alliance (JKIPA) in Birmingham to discuss the impact of China Pakistan Economic Corridor or CPEC and the plight of the people living in the disputed territories of Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan administered Kashmir.

<http://news.biharprabha.com/2016/05/cpec-will-have-adverse-effect-on-ecology-in-gilgit-kashmiri-leaders/>

Other Developments

“GOVT Devising Strategy for Infrastructure Development in GB”

Radio Pakistan, May 22, 2016

In Gilgit Baltistan, a strategy is being worked out for infrastructure development on pattern of Punjab. According to Chief Minister Media Cell Gilgit Skardu Road, Cancer, Cardiac Hospitals, Gilgit Naltar expressway and Chilas Cadet College projects would be completed soon. It may be mentioned that Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz

Sharif had assured provision of required funds for these projects during his recent visit to Gilgit

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/22-May-2016/govt-devising-strategy-for-infrastructure-development-in-gb>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Royalty on Diamer Dam: A Good News But?”

Editorial, Bang-e-Sahar, May 2, 2016

In a recent interview with media Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafizur Rehman stated that the federal government has agreed to give 50 per cent of the royalty of the Diamer dam to Gilgit-Baltistan. He further stated that turbines of the water reservoir like in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) would also be installed in the Diamer section of Gilgit-Baltistan. Under the law, it is the powerhouse that entitle an area for the royalty of a water reservoir. But under a conspiracy, the power houses of the Diamer dam were being built in the territory of KP across the border to enable KP to get away the royalty even though the dam is being constructed in Gilgit-Baltistan. This is a ploy to deprive the people of Gilgit-Baltistan of the royalty after constructing the dam on their soil. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been up in arms against the arbitrary decision noting that as the dam was being built in Gilgit-Baltistan and had already uprooted hundreds of families in Diamer district. Instead of benefiting the locals giving away its royalty to KP is a travesty of justice.

Now it seems that the federal government has realized the fault and injustice and decided to give 50pc of the royalty to Gilgit-Baltistan. But it is still not enough as Gilgit-Baltistan is the rightful benefactor of the dam and the royalty. It is also need of the hour that before launching work on the project, the government of Gilgit-Baltistan should have entered into an agreement with Islamabad to ensure the rights of the local people. The reservoir is being built in a disputed area which is not a part of Pakistan. There are doubts on the promise of the federal government regarding the 50 percent royalty to Gilgit-Baltistan because nothing exists in writing. A few years ago, the PPP was in power and today it is the PML-N and tomorrow some other party would come to power. There should be written

document to ensure that the promise is delivered. Even if the 50 per cent is implemented, there is no surety that the money would be given to the area judiciously without any deduction. etc.

These days Islamabad is trying to make every project a part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and get funds from China but Beijing already said no to the proposal to make Diamer dam a part of the CPEC. However, the chief minister stated that he was trying to make the Naltar power project a part of the CPEC and there are also plans to include the Babusar road project in the CPEC. The federal government is focusing only on all the CPEC projects and for the purpose getting loans from China but it is not clear what would be the end result of the piling loans and how it would be repaid.

http://www.dailybangesahar.com/popup.php?r_date=05-02-2016&img=05-02-2016page-2-1

“Maintaining a State Writ is not only important but obligatory also”

Editorial, Daily Salaam, May 7, 2016

There are reports that the level of crime and violence has increased in Skardu. According to an investigative journalist, the black market for the stolen cars are thriving. Irony is that police of this region is double paid but they are sleeping on the matter. There is jungle law prevailing in Skardu, there is no law and order. On the condition of anonymity, one official noted before media that police knows everything about those who are involved in the crimes; rather they are part of this problem. In order to control the growing crime and violence in the Skardu, the writ of the state has to be maintained. That is possible only if law enforcement agencies play a decisive role. We cannot ignore the ground reality. Keeping the importance of the region in view, important decisions have to be taken.

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

“Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan wants to Create Sectarian Clashes”

Bang-e-Sahar, May 11, 2016

Pakistan People's Party leader of Gilgit-Baltistan, Amjad Advocate alleged the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan of misusing power and authority. He also alleged that the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan was using the government contracts as well as the National Action Plan to further his own political objectives and for political point scoring. Mr Amjad, who was also accompanied by PPP leaders Sadia Danish, Jamil Ahmed and others, also stated that the chief minister wanted to ignite sectarian fire in Gilgit-Baltistan. He also noted that declaring the October 13, 2005 incident as terrorism and sending the case to the military court was aimed at igniting the sectarian problem and sabotaging the peace of and sectarian harmony of the region. He further stated that the PML-N government was also including the names of its political opponents in the Fourth schedule of the anti-terrorism law and those who promised to vote for the PML-N were being excluded from the watch list. The PPP leaders also stated that the National Action Plan was being used for political purposes and if the practice continued the people would not accept any action taken under the NAP, which was introduced to stem the tide of terrorism and maintain peace in the country.

http://www.dailybangesahar.com/popup.php?r_date=05-11-2016&img=05-11-2016page-1-1

“Progress and Prosperity Impossible without Peace”

Editorial, Daily Badd-e-Shimal, May 12, 2016

District Commissioner of Ghanche formed a Peace Committee that will work for communal harmony in the district. The Committee is made up of 50 Ulemas from different sects. Ghanche district is known for its communal harmony. Different sects of people live here peacefully. Gilgit-Baltistan is endowed with natural resources, particularly of water resources. But still people do not have access to their basic needs. Every government has promised them a dream land before coming into power. After elections they do nothing except exploit our resources. They never tried to empower

the people. They never encouraged people to ask for their basic rights. Only they did were to exploit our resources. Every government in GB instead of utilizing local natural resources keep their eye on the federal budget. What they want is to get a share out of the federal budget for their personnel requirement. They also get benefited by dividing the people on sectarian grounds. Thank God, now peace and communal harmony has returned to the region. In order to secure our rights, we need to get united. In this regard, peace is a pre-requisite for unity.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=05-12-2016&img=05-12-2016page-4-4

“Tehreek-e-Huqooq Announced Its Agenda”

Daily Bang-e-Sahar, May 17, 2016

Tehreek-e- Tahfuzaat-e-Huqooq (Movement for the protection of the Rights) is a conglomeration activists belonging to different political, religious parties as well as the civil society. They came together to join hands to work for the rights of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. They gathered at the launch of a new grouping, called Tehreek-e-Huqooq Gilgit-Baltistan (Movement for the rights of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan) that launched its struggle with the resolve to work for the rights of the people regardless of the political or other differences. On this occasion, the central secretariat of the Tehreek was also opened in the Gilgit city. They stated that the utilization of Gilgit-Baltistan's natural resources for the development of the indigenous people, proper shares in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), quota in the educational institutions of the country for the students of Gilgit-Baltistan, the establishment of a powerful legislative assembly and the opening of Gilgit-Baltistan's old trade routes were the demands the local people have been calling for decades.

http://www.dailybangesahar.com/popup.php?r_date=05-17-2016&img=05-17-2016page-1-10

“Strong Gilgit-Baltistan: Prime Minister's Promise”

Editorial, Daily Salam, May 21, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif while addressing the

GB Legislative Assembly stated that the budgetary allocation for GB would be enhanced. He further stated that the federal and provincial governments are committed to make GB a strong and prosperous region. He also stated CPEC will bring prosperity to the region and help end extremism and terrorism. He further initiated a work on 820-km-long fibre optic link between Khunjerab and Rawalpindi in Gilgit. The \$44-million Pakistan-China Optical Fibre Cable will be laid down in two years by the Special Communication Organisation (SCO). The project is part of the Gwadar-to-Kashgar CPEC project that will also pass through Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). PM

Nawaz Sharif stated the project would be a milestone for information technology in the country, and called for extending its linkages to other CPEC areas. Prime Minister urged the youth to get ready for the challenges ahead and strive for excellence. He also stated that the objective of his government was to bring economic stability to the country, end poverty and generate employment. Earlier, the premier also inaugurated the CPEC patrol police headquarters in GB for which China has donated the vehicles.

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

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, 2010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2.973 million (1998 population census), Male, 1.850 million; Female, 1.832 million

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Sardar 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: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

Chief Minister G-B: Hafiz Hafiz-ur-Rehman

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Sources: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk>, & website of the Balwaristan National Front, <http://www.balawaristan.net>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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