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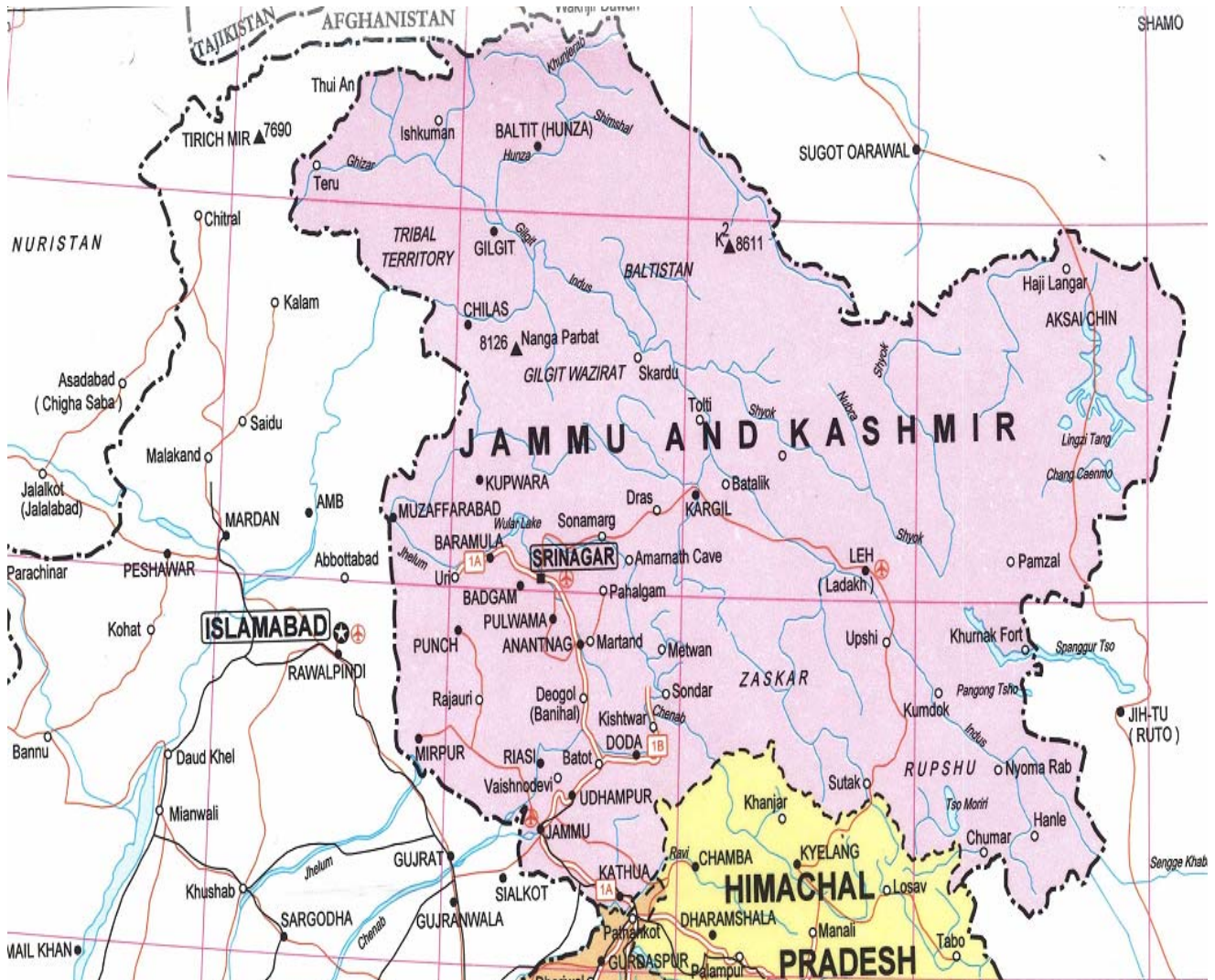
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

About this Issue

Pakistan seems to be on the verge of breakdown. The Taliban are barely 100 Km away from the federal capital of Islamabad. There is great deal of concern in the political leadership of the PoK on recent developments as is evident from reports included this issue.

The local leaders took active part in the demonstrations preceding the long march earlier during the month, so much so that the administration has to take precautionary measures to avert popular participation in the march. Subsequently, the restoration of Judiciary was welcomed all across PoK as a positive move towards justice and rule of law.

Discontentment continues to be prevalent in Gilgit Baltistan on various issues such as freedom of press, ideology and self determination. Gilgit Baltistan United Movement is one of the several groups which have played a significant role in voicing the concerns of common people in the region.

*The Issue also includes a commentary titled “**Time to rein in Zia's demons**” written by A. Vinod Kumar, Associate Fellow at IDSA. The article traces the political degeneration of Pakistan since the times of President Zia and also discusses the future politico-economic and security prospects of this country.*

Priyanka Singh

Commentary

Time to rein in Zia's demons

A. Vinod Kumar

Is Pakistan reaching breaking point? A glance over recent news reports would confirm these worst fears. According to available statistics, there were over 58 suicide attacks in Pakistan in 2008, notwithstanding the prolonged strife in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the sectarian clashes in Baluchistan and Sindh. In recent months, there was at least one suicide attack almost every week with a handful of them being major ones. Lahore itself saw two *fiyadeen* attacks within a month. But can the reference to number of terror attacks in an extremist-ridden country being cited as the primary indicator of a country's failure?

In the failed (or failing) state indexing process, Pakistan naturally qualifies to be at the top owing to deteriorating standards in almost all major indicators including political, economic and social. Despite the transition to a democratic system in February 2008, political structures and institutions have not just failed to perform, but is assumed to be on the verge of collapse. The volatility of the constitutional institutions, the constant intra- and inter-party power struggles at national and sub-national levels, the failure of the civilian government to consolidate in power and the pre-dominance of the military in national affairs - all confirm the 'failing state' theory. The long march of March 2009 to restore an erstwhile judiciary, which was supposed to be neutral, and the way in which it caused a national upheaval added to this degeneration. Though the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led government had salvaged the situation and restored some stability, the durability of such political reconciliation is strongly doubted. Above all, the Pakistan political establishment operates under a constant fear of an implosion and a prospective coup by the military, which would be keen to restore its erstwhile junta.

As the democratic dispensation struggles to consolidate, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), by now globally dreaded for its terror mentoring,

continues to have a free run in pursuing its agenda and unsettling the India-Pakistan peace process. Earlier attempts by the PPP government to rein in the agency proved futile. The Pakistani government's 26 July 2008 notification on shifting the ISI from the defence ministry to the interior ministry was quashed presumably under pressure from the Army. Similarly, the tribulations that emerged after the half-hearted declaration in November 2008 to close ISI's political wing and the ISI Chief's refusal to fulfill his Prime Minister's commitment of coming to India after the Mumbai attacks illustrated the deep schisms in Pakistan's governance system. President Zardari's confession that the ISI have done many mistakes in the past exemplified his intrepidity to take the spymasters head on, but also demonstrated the mighty struggle for control over the state between the civilian government and embedded interests in the Army and the ISI. In short, Pakistan's political system continues to be gripped by those long years of uncertainty, with civilian leaderships relying on the military to secure the country and restore order.

On the economic front too, Pakistan is in serious crises. It has missed its macroeconomic targets during the last fiscal year due to domestic turbulence and other external factors. Besides the galloping inflation rate touching around 15 percent, the GDP growth also fell to 5.8 percent, while the fiscal deficit surged to around 7 percent. This being the economic milieu, the deteriorating political and economic situation could further worsen the economic forecast for this year.

Such turbulences apart, the biggest crisis for the Pakistan state today is the creeping extremism in its society and its further pervasion threatening to unravel the state. The Taliban, which was a Pakistani creation to capture the Afghan hinterland, has been spreading its influence outside the NWFP to other parts of Pakistan with its eyes set on Islamabad, possibly through 'friendly' elements in Rawalpindi. That the Pakistani society is increasingly being re-radicalized after Pakistan's positioning as a frontline state in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), would act as a catalyst for embedding Talibanisation.

The Taliban bandwagon had already manipulated the schisms in strife-torn Baluchistan to spread its sway there, before moving on to exploit the sectarian faultlines in Sindh. Punjab, then, remains the last bastion, which it has already breached through repeated attacks in Lahore. On the other hand, a handful of pro-Taliban political groups had emerged in the last half-a-decade by exploiting the sentiments against Pakistan's participation in the GWOT. These groups, combined with the local monsters that the ISI has created in the form of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) for the proxy war against India, would further help in radicalizing the Pakistan polity. Even prominent political figures like Nawaz Sharif had backed extremist political entities to further his political interests as and when needed.

The moot question here is how the Pakistan state, of an under-powered civilian government and an ever-zealous military, would hold fort in Islamabad. The influence of the progressive and educated elite of Punjab seems to be eroding as political groups with extremist bent strengthen their grip over national affairs. A disturbing trend is the growing influence of a section of the hawkish elite, who had traditionally backed the ISI-agenda, and is now prodding the extremist elements among political groups and the military. This was particularly on display after the Mumbai attacks when some civil society groups and opinion makers tried to absolve the blame off the Pakistani state, by talking of a Hindu-Christian-Zionist conspiracy. It is this self-denial of the deep rot that is corrupting the Pakistani society and leading it to an extremist abyss.

The politico-social legacy of Pakistan's national identity has now turned a full circle. Being born off a two-nation theory as a separate nation for Muslims, Pakistan spearheaded the permeation of the Islamic identity in South Asia, most notably in Afghanistan – initially through the dogmatic and material assistance for the Mujahideen during the Soviet occupation and later by the raising the Taliban. The other part was the support for the Kashmiri insurgency which later transmuted into a full-fledged proxy war against India

,initiated after its humiliating defeat in the 1971 war. As this strategy juxtaposed into its foreign policy, the Pakistani soil had to host not just the ideological brethren in Kashmir and Afghanistan, but also anchor other nascent groups which later led the global jihad. Pakistan managed to balance all these cards with comfortable ease for long, thanks to the ill-conceived American approach towards terrorism.

However, this equation drastically changed after the 9/11 attacks when Pakistan was identified as the hub of Islamic fundamentalism, feeding not just the lifeline of global jihad but also nurturing the faculties for radicalizing Western societies. While Pakistan absorbed the subsequent international pressure by launching itself as frontline state in the GWOT, this role reversal caused an implosion and ascendancy of religious extremism. The same infrastructure which Pakistan nurtured to run its writ in Afghanistan and Kashmir metamorphosed into newer entities which are now more loyal to the ideology than the creator. To use a popular description, the Frankenstein monster that Pakistan created has now turned back to haunt the master.

The genesis of Pakistan's present crisis could be traced to the machinations of the late General Zia-ul-Haq, who unleashed a process of Islamisation in all walks of life. Zia's Islamisation gambit first targeted the Pakistani Army, which he wanted to keep under this complete control, and then diffused across the polity to the judiciary, educational and political institutions. This social engineering with an all-pervading effect later inflicted itself upon its national security structures that resulted in a spillover of Pakistan's radicalisation into the neighbourhood. Though Zia's agenda was to transform Pakistan into a theological state, he used this platform to promote Pakistan's interest in the neighbourhood.

After Zia's death, the ISI took over his cudgels to run insurgent movements in Afghanistan and Kashmir. While many of these elements continue to remain under ISI control, others evolved into independent entities like the al Qaeda and the Taliban, and forming the cerebra of the global Jihad. However, the agency

has at no point of time let off its stranglehold over the Kashmiri groups. Moreover, some 'rogue elements' in the ISI continue to influence the Taliban so much so as to derail the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan. Things have reached a point where Pakistan forces have dared to repel U.S. attacks.

As the Pakistani government struggles to run its writ over the state, the Taliban's ascendancy as a *de facto* state in the north-western frontier could facilitate its subsequent take over of Rawalpindi, if not Islamabad, implying that the first breakthrough could come through rouge elements in the Pakistani Army. This scenario and a possibility of Pakistan's disintegration, once considered as fiction, is now threatening to happen forcing U.S. security planners to think of contingency plans. President Obama pronouncement on Af-Pak being the most dangerous place in the world and his willingness to involve other regional players into his agenda highlights the concerns in Washington.

The reported circulation of a truncated map of Pakistan in Pentagon is evidence of the American security establishment's preparation for the worst scenario. A disintegrated Pakistan would undoubtedly be favorable to long-term Indian as well as American interests. But that would not be the case with a failing Pakistan, which would mount its costs of failure on India. However, unlike previous years, the ISI stands to lose this bargain as President Obama is now more worried on the prospect of extremists taking over a failing nuclear weapon state. On the other hand, having sensed the mistake of handing over Swat on a platter to the Taliban, the Zardari government would now have to tread carefully. But all this would depend on how the Army backs him, and more importantly on how it forces the ISI to abstain from subverting the government's actions. The agenda then for Washington and New Delhi should be to isolate the ISI and ensure a steadfast consolidation of Pakistan's civilian government, provided it manages to survive this onslaught.

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Political Developments

Shabbir Ahmed Mir, “Farzana Raja inaugurates BISP in NAs,” The News, March 23, 2009

GILGIT: The presence of Farzana Raja, the Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) incited members of Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) to come down hard on successive governments who they believe don't accommodate local people's viewpoint in the development and constitutional packages extended to them from time to time.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=168616)

“Pakistan needs to bring intelligence set up under control” Gilgit Baltistan Tribune, March 22, 2009

As democracy struggles to gain a foothold in Pakistan amid political turmoil and a financial crisis – an international research organisation has called on the government to bring the intelligence set up, particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), under civilian control, as “agencies are losing their support base and increasingly being targeted by terrorists”.

Carnegie Endowment's report – authored by Fredric Grare, a renowned South Asian expert – examines the connection between Pakistan's intelligence agencies and domestic politics. The report is based on the premise that controlling the intelligence agencies is one of many aspects of the broader democratisation issue.

(<http://gbtribune.blogspot.com/2009/03/pakistan-needs-to-bring-intelligence.html>)

“Gilgit Baltistan: Deteriorating Freedom of Press,” March 23, 2009

Statement released by the Gilgit Baltistan United Movement

Manzoor Hussain Parwana, Chairman GBUM (Gilgit Baltistan United Movement) urged President Asif Ali Zardari and the rest of the Pakistan and the rest

of the Pakistan government to make it one of their priorities to defend freedom of press in Gilgit Baltistan. Accompanied by representatives of Gilgit Baltistan United Movement on 20 March 2009 on the occasion of his attendance in the Court of Session judge, Parwana addressed the press at Skardu.

“The state of press freedom is getting worse in Gilgit Baltistan and it is the government's duty to reverse this disturbing trend,” Parwana said. “The country cannot continue to develop and progress towards democracy without a free and independent press. The president and his government must get fully involved in this issue and must take measures that give journalists more freedom to work.”

(<http://www.unpo.org/content/view/9393/254/>)

Shabbir Ahmed Mir, “Muzaffarabad migrants decry official apathy, Distribution of BISP forms through legislators sought,” The News, March 20, 2009

GILGIT: Northern Area Legislative Assembly (NALA) Speaker Malik Mohammad Miskeen urged the federal government to ensure distribution of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) forms in Northern Areas through public representatives.

In this connection, he sent a letter to the prime minister urging him to adopt a uniform procedure for distribution of Benazir Income Support Programme forms in Northern Areas. NALA speaker stated the government must extend this programme as early as possible keeping in view the prevailing poverty in the region where most of the people were living below poverty line.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=168118)

Sultan urges Sweden to help resolve Kashmir issue, The News, March 20, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister of Azad

Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry on March 19 urged Sweden to play its role in bringing about lasting peace in South Asia. "It is high time for the European Union to play an effective role in the resolution of Kashmir issue, paving way for sustainable peace in this part of the world," he said while talking to Swedish charge d' affaires, Jorgen Lind Strom in Islamabad.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=168120>)

"Divided we fall," Weekly Baang-e-Sahar, (Editorial), March 24-30, 2009

If the people of Gilgit-Baltistan get united by shunning all differences and prejudices what would be its outcome? This is a terse question but its answer is very long and heart-wrenching. When we sift through the history of Gilgit-Baltistan before the creation of Pakistan, we never find any incident of killing or for that matter an iota of hatred or discord among the people of different schools of thought and sects. This is despite the fact that the period before the partition of 1947 is generally called an era of slavery or subjugation. On the other hand, when we look at the very short history of 61 years after Pakistan came into being, we find that each and every part of the region is, unfortunately, bathed in the blood of innocent Sunnis and Shias. Though the Dogra Raj had nothing for the welfare of the masses, but one thing seems to be for sure that life was safe during that period. So in this sense, we can also say that the period of slavery in the Dogra Raj was better than today's freedom. It is also important to find out why the blessing of freedom has turned the beautiful land into a hell for its inhabitants. To answer this, we have to look around and study a number of factors which have been at work. The unfortunate land of Gilgit-Baltistan, which is a part of the Jammu and Kashmir, has been under the administrative control of Pakistan while a major part of Kashmir is in Indian territory. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been the worst sufferers in this war of interests between the two countries and for the last over 60 years they have been treated like animals.

(http://weeklybaang.blogspot.com/2009/03/weekly-baang-editorial-page-volume-02_22.html)

"Sharing our waters," The News, March 22, 2009

World Water Day marked on 22nd March around the world, focused this year on trans-boundary water. The issue is of immense significance to Pakistan, given the dispute over the use of water in its rivers that has continued with India since 1947. The past year saw bitter accusations of dam-construction activities. The Jehlum River, whose waters Pakistan has rights to under the 1965 Indus Water Basin Treaty, is among those affected. So too is the picturesque Neelum River that flows through the valley by the same name in Azad Kashmir.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=168463)

"Solidarity with the oppressed people of Pakistan," March 17, 2009

LONDON: there was a demonstration outside the UN Human Rights Council which was attended by people of Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan, Sind, Balochistan, Frontier Province Pakhtoon Khawa and Punjab on 12 March 2009. The demonstration was organised by Sardar Shaukat Kashmiri. Among those who spoke on this occasion included Senator Sana Ullah Baloch, Munawar Laghari, Col Wajhat Mirza, Nader Mirza, Shaukat Kashmiri, Mumtaz Khan, Nasir Aziz, Abbas Butt and Dr Shabir Choudhry.

A summary of Dr Shabir Choudhry's speech is as follows:

'Fiends and colleagues, right to assemble and right of expression are a fundamental human right. How unfortunate that in Islamic Republic of Pakistan these rights are curbed by the authorities which claim to be democratic and which claim to respect rule of law'.

(<http://silverscorpio.com/solidarity-with-the-oppressed-people-of-pakistan/>)

“Ex-AJK PM says political turmoil damaging Kashmir cause,” Daily Times, March 02, 2009

ISLAMABAD: The political turmoil in the country in the wake of the disqualification of the Sharif brothers from contesting elections will adversely affect the Kashmir cause, former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime minister Sultan Mehmood said on March 01. Speaking at a news conference, Mehmood said US President Barack Obama and the United Nations Secretary General vowed to play their role in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute but the political turmoil in Pakistan emanating from the Sharif brothers’ disqualification had put the issue on the back burner.

(http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C03%5C02%5Cstory_2-3-2009_pg7_15)

“Peace Conference in Gilgit,” Hunza Times, March 02, 2009

Peace conference Speakers at a national solidarity conference said the youth should make efforts for maintaining durable peace in the region. The conference was organised by Gilgit Youth Forum. Lawyers, social scientists and local politicians spoke on the occasion. Social worker and politician Nawaz Khan Naji was the chief guest. The speakers said the youth should come forward keeping in view the sensitivity of the hour and work for peace, love, tranquility and harmony in the region. They also urged the local administration to take stern action against those who vitiated the peaceful atmosphere of the area.

(<http://hunzetimes.wordpress.com/2009/03/02/peace-conference-in-gilgit/>)

“Gilgit Baltistan: Ideology Dissuaded,” March 12, 2009

Statement issued by Manzoor Hussain Parwana, Chairman, Gilgit Baltistan United Movement

KARACHI: Ideological terrorism is being promoted in Gilgit-Baltistan and if the students of the region

do not rise to defend the ideological boundaries of the region and defeat those who are hatching conspiracies against the nation then we will lose everything. These views were expressed by Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM) chairman Manzoor Hussain Parwana while speaking at a program organized by Balawaristan National Students Organization (BNSO) at the University of Karachi.

(<http://www.unpo.org/content/view/9347/254/>)

Mumtaz Alvi, “Crackdown on politicians to deepen crisis: Sultan,” The News, March 12, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister of Azad Kashmir, Barrister Sultan Mehmood on March 11 expressed his fear that the crackdown on politicians and lawyers will further deepen economic, political and security crisis. Briefing ambassadors and diplomats of 35 countries here at his residence, the chief of People’s Muslim League Jammu and Kashmir, called upon the visitors to support the forces striving for the judiciary’s independence, parliament’s supremacy and democracy.

PML-N Chairman Raja Muhammad Zafarul Haq and the Information Secretary Ahsan Iqbal were also invited to the activity, but owing to crackdown, they could not reach the venue, he said. The ex-premier believed that the disqualification of the Sharif brothers and the imposition of governor’s rule in the Punjab had further aggravated the multi-dimensional crisis Pakistan was facing today.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=166748)

“APHC AJK expresses concern over Lahore incident,” Kashmir News, March 04, 2009

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in a meeting convened by Syed Yousaf Nasim on March 09, strongly condemned the terrorist attack on Sri Lankan cricket team. The APHC meeting expressed anguish over the incident where several police personnel were killed

and members of Sri Lankan cricket team were injured. The participants of the meeting said that those involved in Lahore incident wanted to destabilize country and tarnish its image abroad.

(<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/aphc-ajk-expresses-concern-over-lahore-incident>)

“Save Gilgit-Baltistan from Pakistani Jackboots”

The wave of democracy, freedom and open societies sweeping the world today seems to be escaping the hilly terrains of Gilgit-Baltistan, situated to the north of Pakistan. It is ruled by Pakistan but does not belong to it. It is theoretically independent but practically under the jackboots of Pakistan. The principles of self-determination, freedom and popular will that are being forged by Pakistan are denied to the people of the so called Northern Areas, a geographical connotation invented deliberately to ignore the people and their history in this region, shut out from the rest of the world by the icy peaks of the Karakoram Range.

(<http://globalpoliticsnews.com/?p=163>)

Mumtaz Alvi, “Sultan slates governors’ rule,” March 02, 2009

ISLAMABAD: The Azad Kashmir People’s Muslim League (AKPML) on March 01 cautioned against Islamabad’s possible bid to destabilize the Azad Kashmir government, saying this would be fully resisted. Speaking at a news conference in Islamabad, former prime minister of Azad Kashmir and AKPML President, Barrister Sultan Mehmood said that his party would fully take part in the planned long march and the sit-in on March 12 and March 16, respectively.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=165221>)

Sayed Abid Hussain, “Pandemonium mars AJKCCI meeting,” The News, March 05, 2009

MIRPUR: Pandemonium broke loose at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Azad Jammu & Kashmir

Chambers of Commerce & Industry as speakers exchanged accusations. There was uproar the moment former President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry and ex-President AJKCCI Chaudhry Muhammad Saeed started accusing the former AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique of irregularities. Saeed accused the ex Premier Attique of manipulating the demarcation of Rs.1 billion worth of state land from Mirpur to Dhirkot in Poonch the ancestral area of Sardar Attique. “Obviously all this happened with the ulterior motives to benefit himself and his family,” Saeed alleged urging a probe into the matter.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=165659>)

Babar Dogar, “Nawaz decides to join hands with PPP,” The News, March 24, 2009

For the purpose, the resolution said, it would focus on the following objectives: strengthening the role of parliament through appropriate constitutional amendments, as part of the reconciliation process among various political parties; introduction of a new and transparent system for the appointment of judges; establishment of an autonomous and independent Election Commission; ensuring a free and vibrant media and open access to information through appropriate legislation; creation of an independent system of accountability; improving peaceful and friendly relations with India and Afghanistan; intensifying talks on Kashmir to find a durable solution, which is acceptable to the people of Kashmir; developing the Northern Areas by giving them special status; and enhancing the powers of the Northern Areas Legislative Council.

(http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=21106)

Hameed Shaheen, “CDR seminar for resolution of Kashmir dispute,” Pakistan Observer, March 05, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Organized by an Indian Punjab-based conflict resolution NGO, Center for Dialogue and Reconciliation, over 50 participants from “all

regions” of Jammu and Kashmir – AJK, Northern Areas, J&K and Ladakh – expressed their views that the “basic issue of Jammu and Kashmir with its multidimensional facets needs a resolution in accordance with the aspirations of the people of all sections and communities of the State. The peace process between Pakistan and India must resume immediately by reviving the bilateral dialogue and simultaneously initiating a dialogue with the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the resolution of the Kashmir issue”.

(<http://pakobserver.net/200903/05/news/topstories09.asp>)

Zulfiqar Ghuman, “Kaira to head Information Ministry,” Daily Times, March 15, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on March 14 named Qamaruz Zaman Kaira to head the Information Ministry after accepting the resignation of Sherry Rehman as federal minister for information. Kaira was earlier working as federal minister for Kashmir affairs and Northern Areas.

(http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C03%5C15%5Cstory_15-3-2009_pg7_12)

“Former AJK PM vows to take part in long march, sit-in,” The News, March 09, 2009

RAWALPINDI: Former prime minister of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad Atiq Khan, announced to fully take part in lawyers’ long march and planned sit-in here on March 09. Addressing a press conference in Rawalpindi, he said that federal government wanted to destroy the administrative structure of Azad Kashmir. He said that despite requisition moved by opposition, Speaker Azad Kashmir was not summoning the assembly’s session.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=70981>)

“Attique leads sit-in on BBS Road,” Daily Times, March 09, 2009

RAWALPINDI: Over 400 Muslim Conference (Attique Group) leaders, AJK Legislative Assembly

members and others on Sunday staged a sit-in on Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Road near Liaquat Chowk to express the government for restoring all sacked judges including chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and ending the governor’s rule in the Punjab. Former AJK Prime Minister, Sardar Attique led the sit-in, which lasted for one hour amid slogans against the president.

(http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C03%5C09%5Cstory_9-3-2009_pg11_12)

“Containers placed at Mangla dam to stop marchers,” The News, March 15, 2009

MIRPUR: Several containers were placed at Mangla dam in an attempt to stop the caravans of Azad Kashmir from participating in the long march and subsequent sit-in in Islamabad. All entry and exit points of the city were blocked to thwart the long march. The long queues of vehicles could be seen in the area. Besides, people carrying passports and visas were not allowed to go to the airport. On this occasion, lawyers and citizens chanted anti-government slogans in protest against such harsh measures.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=71617>)

“Right to self-determination cannot be equated with terrorism,” Pakistan News, March 17, 2009

LONDON: The Kashmir resistance movement cannot be by any stretch of imagination associated with the terrorism, as was stated during a seminar on “Human Rights and Terrorism.” The seminar was held in Geneva during the 10th session of the UN Human Rights Council at the weekend where Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Executive Director of the Kashmiri American Council and the delegate of IIFSO spoke.

(<http://newspakistan.net/right-to-self-determination-cannot-be-equated-with-terrorism-2009-17-03.php>)

Economic Developments

Abrar Lone, “Banking channels across LoC will make cross border trade viable: Traders,” Rising Kashmir, March 06, 2009

SRINAGAR: Demanding an end to the present barter system for carrying out trade across LoC, traders said that payment modalities should be worked out soon for the ongoing trade between Srinagar-Muzaffarabad. Traders say that the trade won't last long if banking channels are not established between the two parts. “This was a dream come true that India and Pakistan agreed to resume truck services between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. This would strengthen the trade ties between the two parts of Kashmir but the traders are not serious about carrying forward the trade,” said Chairman of Kashmir Kissan Forum, Ghulam Mustafa Masoodi. Masoodi further said that the valley traders are not sending their best produce to Muzaffarabad which is a sign of apathy on part of Kashmiri traders.

(http://www.risingkashmir.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=11163)

“Visitors down, trade up on cross-LoC route,” March 20, 2009

JAMMU: Even though the number of fresh visitors from occupied Kashmir to Azad Kashmir had considerably gone down, there was no let up in cross-LoC trade between the traders of Poonch and Rawlakote. Traders from Poonch exported items worth Rs 6, 55,948 to AJK from cross-LoC point of Chakan-Da-Bagh.

(<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/03/20/visitors-down-trade-up-on-cross-loc-route/>)

“40 millions to be spent on tube wells installation,” March 22, 2009

ISLAMGHAR: President, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Azad Kashmir, Chaudhry Abdul Hameed said Rs. 40 million would be spend to set up six tube wells in Islamghar to address the water shortage. He further said that another Rs. 1.8 millions would

be spent to build two-way road to connect Mirpur, Islamghar, Hameedabad colony, and Dhudial with each other.

(<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/03/22/40-millions-to-be-spent-on-tube-wells-installation/>)

“AJK traders welcome judges’ restoration,” The News, March 18, 2009

MIRPUR: People representing every walk of life in Azad Jammu and Kashmir welcomed the reinstatement of deposed judges including CJP Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. Welcoming the restoration of the deposed judges, renowned businessman and member Executive Committee AJK Chamber of Commerce and Industry Khalid Sharif said the decision on restoration of deposed judges truly reflects the aspirations of 160 million people of the country. Secretary General, Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran Raja Khalid Mahmood said the decision would encourage dispensation of speedy and inexpensive justice to the common man besides raising the image of an independent judiciary as well as the supremacy of law and justice.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=167743>)

“International Education Fund launched to assist Azad Kashmir school,” Associated Press of Pakistan, March 05, 2009

LONDON: International Education Fund was launched by a leading UK institute to provide teaching kits to a school for blind in Azad Kashmir. Students from the prestigious Imperial College would travel to Azad Kashmir later this summer to deliver computers, printers and other teaching material to Azad Kashmir Association of Blind which is running the school in Mirpur. The students during their two week stay will impart training to the pupils of the blind school as well to the teachers in handling the teaching tool kits.

(http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=70022&Itemid=2)

International Developments

Hannah Wooderson, “British ‘Peace Ambassador’ to visit turbulent Pakistan,” March 17, 2009

Recently-appointed “Ambassador for Peace” from the UK was slated to make an official visit to Pakistan. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Abdul Rashid would visit the troubled Asian Republic at a time of heightened political tensions. The official tour would also include visits to the Punjab and Azad Kashmir provinces, where the Lord Mayor will meet high-ranking dignitaries and speak at events promoting greater understanding of British culture and commerce.

(http://www.24dash.com/news/Local_Government/2009-03-17-British-Peace-Ambassador-to-visit-turbulent-Pakistan)

Kashmir delegation leaves for Geneva,” Associated Press of Pakistan, March 01, 2009

ISLAMABAD: A three-member delegation of Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) left for Geneva to participate in the proceedings of 10th session of UN Human Rights Council starting from March 2 to March 27 in Geneva. JKCHR delegation led by its Secretary General, Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani was to follow upon its written submissions made at the 9th session of the Council on the independence of judiciary and rule of law in Pakistan and on the question of independence of judiciary and rule of law in Azad Kashmir.

(http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=69579&Itemid=2)

Other Developments

“Universal Water Day observed in AJK,” The News, March 23, 2009

MIRPUR: World Water Day was observed across Azad Jammu and Kashmir reiterating resolve to perform individual and collective responsibility to save water besides encouraging sincere efforts at the national level for the establishment of more water reservoirs to meet the future needs of water for the speedy progress and prosperity of the country including Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Special ceremonies were held in various parts of AJK to observe the Universal Water Day.

(<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=168621>)

“AJK: Corruption allegations in German Funded project,” March 25, 2009

MUZAFFARABAD: German government funded “health infrastructure programme” in Azad Kashmir faced allegations of corruption. The 22 million euros project is aimed at reconstructing health facilities and providing medical equipment and technical training to health planners. Under the four-year programme which started in 2006, three health facilities are to be reconstructed in the quake hit areas of Azad Kashmir. These included Abass Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS) Muzaffarabad, District Hospital Bagh and Tehsil Hospital Kahutta in district Bagh. The project is being implemented through Ageg- an international consultancy firm in co-ordination with the health department of Azad Kashmir.

(http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1237910130&advie=&st_from=&act=15&var_news_val=new)

Hameed Shaheen, “AJK offers big tourism potential: Minister,” Pakistan Observer, March 22, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Mr Tahir Khokhar, AJK Minister for Tourism, Sports, Youth and Culture, has said that his ministry has opened picturesque spots and valleys in AJK for national tourism under a private sector Tourism Development Program. Minister Tahir Khokhar (MQM) said that under a private sector

(Other Developments continued after Abbreviations)

ABBREVIATIONS

AJKHEB	Azad Jammu and Kashmir Hydro Electric Board
AJK	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
APHC	All Parties Hurriyat Conference
BNF	Balawaristan National Front
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CDP	Community Development Programme
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
GBDA	Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance
GBUM	Gilgit Baltistan United Movement
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
JIAJK	Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Jammu & Kashmir
KAC	Kashmiri American Council
KKH	Karakoram Highway
KNM	Karakoram National Movement
LoC	Line of Control
NLI	Northern Light Infantry
NALA	Northern Areas Legislative Assembly
NAEDC	Northern Areas Executive Development Committee
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PoK	Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
POGB	Pakistan occupied Gilgit Baltistan
PPP	Pakistan Peoples’ Party
UJC	United Jihad Council
WAPDA	Water and Power Development Authority

water sports popularization initiative, auto-operative boats worth Rs.80 million for Mangla Lake have already been imported. The private investor is waiting for a go ahead signal, he added. "Top investors from Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala and Hyderabad have been invited to visit AJK to see themselves the potential of geo-scenic tourism in Azad Kashmir. Very soon the investors team from the Karachi-based Federal Chamber of Commerce and Industries would visit AJK on the invitation of my ministry", he explained while replying a question.

(<http://pakobserver.net/200903/22/news/business04.asp>)

"PGJDC starts courses," Daily Times, March 18, 2009

KARACHI: Pakistan Gems and Jewellery Development Company (PGJDC) arranged two training courses on Gemstone Faceting and Gemstone Carving at its GJTC in Gilgit. The objective of organizing training courses in Gilgit is to create much needed Gemstone Faceting and Gemstone Carving skills in local people as Pakistani Northern Areas are rich in minerals and precious and semi precious gemstones. Gemstone Faceting course was attended by 10 persons while another 10 persons including females are attending Gemstone Carving course.

(http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C03%5C18%5Cstory_18-3-2009_pg5_6)

"53 cross LoC as bus service resumes," March 14, 2009

SRINAGAR: Fifty three passengers crossed the Aman Sethu (Peace Bridge) on the Line of Control as Karvan-e-Aman bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad has been resumed. The bus service could not operate from March 5, two days after the terror attack in Lahore on Sri Lankan players, following request by the Pakistani authorities that they would not be able to send or receive any passenger because of some administrative problem.

Officials said 14 guests arrived in Srinagar from Muzaffarabad in the bus. They included ten male and four female who had come here to meet their relatives for the first time after their separation in 1947.

(<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/03/14/53-cross-loc-as-bus-service-resumes/>)

"Wheat for Azad Kashmir ordered"

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Salman Taseer directed to provide 10,000 metric tones of wheat to meet the food requirements of the people of Azad Kashmir. The Punjab governor, while presiding over the meeting of the senior officers of Food Department, said that on directive of President Asif Ali Zardari, the Punjab government decided to provide 10,000 tonnes of wheat to Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

(<http://www.geo.tv/3-7-2009/36764.htm>)

Iftikhar Gilani, "Carvan-e-Aman suspended on Pakistan's request," Daily Times, March 06, 2009

NEW DELHI: The Carvan-e-Aman, which travels between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad on a weekly basis, was suspended this week on Pakistan's request. An official spokesman said Pakistan authorities had informed their Indian counterparts on March 05 that they would not be able to send or receive any passengers on March 5 due to some administrative problems. The Jammu and Kashmir government had already brought the matter to the attention of the Indian External Affairs Ministry to take up the cancellation with its Pakistani counterpart. The bus would continue its service on March 12, the spokesman added. Earlier, officials had claimed the bus service was suspended for a week due to a landslide blocking the road at Chakoti.

(http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C03%5C06%5Cstory_6-3-2009_pg7_37)

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir-An Overview

Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), legitimately an integral part of the Indian Union is presently under Pakistan's control. Pakistan occupied the territory as a result of tribal invasion in 1947 engineered by the Pakistani army. It covers one-third of the total area of 86,023 square miles/ 222,236 square kilometers of the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The area under occupation comprises two administrative units: Mirpur- Muzaffarabad and Gilgit Baltistan referred as 'Azad Kashmir' and the 'Northern Areas' respectively by the government of Pakistan. Pakistan ceded a segment (2,700 sq miles) of this occupied territory lying to the north-east border of the Northern Areas known as the Trans Karakoram Tract to China in 1963.

“AZAD KASHMIR”

Pakistan envisaged the Azad Kashmir as a country with a President, a Prime Minister and a Legislature of its own according to the Karachi Agreement of April 28, 1949. These structures and the designations are only titular in nature as this invaded territory is neither a country nor even a province. Significant subjects such as defence, supposed 'foreign policy' of POK, rehabilitation of refugees and the overall control have been carefully placed under the discretion of the political establishment of Pakistan.

Area: 13,297 square km

Mirpur comprises 3 districts: *Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur*

Muzaffarabad is divided into five districts: *Bagh, Muzaffarabad, Neelum, Poonch, Sudhnati*

Population: 3,271,000 (1.685 million Male, 1.665 million Female)

Capital: Muzaffarabad

“President”: Raja Zulfikar Khan

“Prime Minister”: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan

“Azad Jammu and Kashmir” Council: Total 11 members- 6 from the government of AJK and 5 from the government of Pakistan. The AJK Council is headed by the President AJK.

Legislative Assembly: 49 seats

Tribal population: Awan, Abbasi, Ansari, Gilani, Gujar, Jarral, Jat, Qureshi, Malik, Mughal, Pashtuns, Rajput, Rachyals, Sudhan, Tarkhan

NORTHERN AREAS

The **Northern Areas** officially referred to by the government of Pakistan as the **Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA)**, is the northernmost political entity within the Pakistan occupied part of Kashmir and is a self governing unit under Pakistani control. The area is five times bigger to that of Azad Kashmir. The status of this region being unstated in the successive constitutions of Pakistan over the years, the people are denied basic socio-political and legal rights. The Northern Areas have no representation in the National Assembly and are governed by the Northern Areas Council headed by Minister of Kashmir and Northern Areas. A Judicial Commissioner exercises judicial powers in the absence of a High Court. The population mainly comprises Shia, Sunni and Ismaili Muslims. Ethnic groups include Baltees, Shinas, Vashkuns, Mughals, Kashmiris, Pathans, Ladhakhis and Turks.

Governor/ Commissioner: Imran Ali

“Chief Minister”: Irfan Ali and Shahid Hussain

Legislature: Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (29 seats)

Languages: Balti, Shina, Brushaski, Khawer, Wakhi, Turki, Tibeti, Pushto and Urdu

Area: 72,496 km

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: seven

Baltistan is divided into *Ghanche and Skardu*

Gilgit divided into *Astore, Diamer, Ghizar, Gilgit and Hunza Nagar*

Population: 1.5 million

Political groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, Balwaristan National Front (BNF) and Gilgit Baltistan United Action Forum for Self Rule, Gilgit Baltistan United Movement (GBUM).

Literacy rate: 14% male- 3.5% female

State of Infrastructure: No pipelines for water supply and no electricity supply for at least two thirds of the population in Northern Areas.

Disclaimer

PoK News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Northern Areas' 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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