

# POK

## *News Digest*

**A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR**

**Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh**

### • **Political Developments**

Youth in Azad Kashmir Protest Against Oppression and Exploitation by Pakistan  
Special Force Being Set Up to Secure KKH  
Collective Call: G-B Shuts Down to Protest Wheat Subsidy Withdrawal  
Call for 'Grand Strike': G-B Crosses Sectarian Divide Over Wheat Subsidy  
Kohistan, G-B Border: Residents Stand Uneasy on Either Side of a Fragile Ceasefire  
Ultimatum: AJK Opposition Leader Asks PM to Dissolve Assembly  
Passing of the Baton: G-B Gears Up for Elections Next Year

### • **Economic Developments**

Goods Over Rs 99 Lakh Traded Across LoC  
MoU Signed: AJK Bank to Provide Loans to Farmers  
WB to Fund Dasu Dam But Quiet on Bhasha

### • **International Developments**

United States, WAPDA Sign Agreement to Rehabilitate Mangla Dam  
Healthcare: Germany Pledges Rs140m for Health Schemes

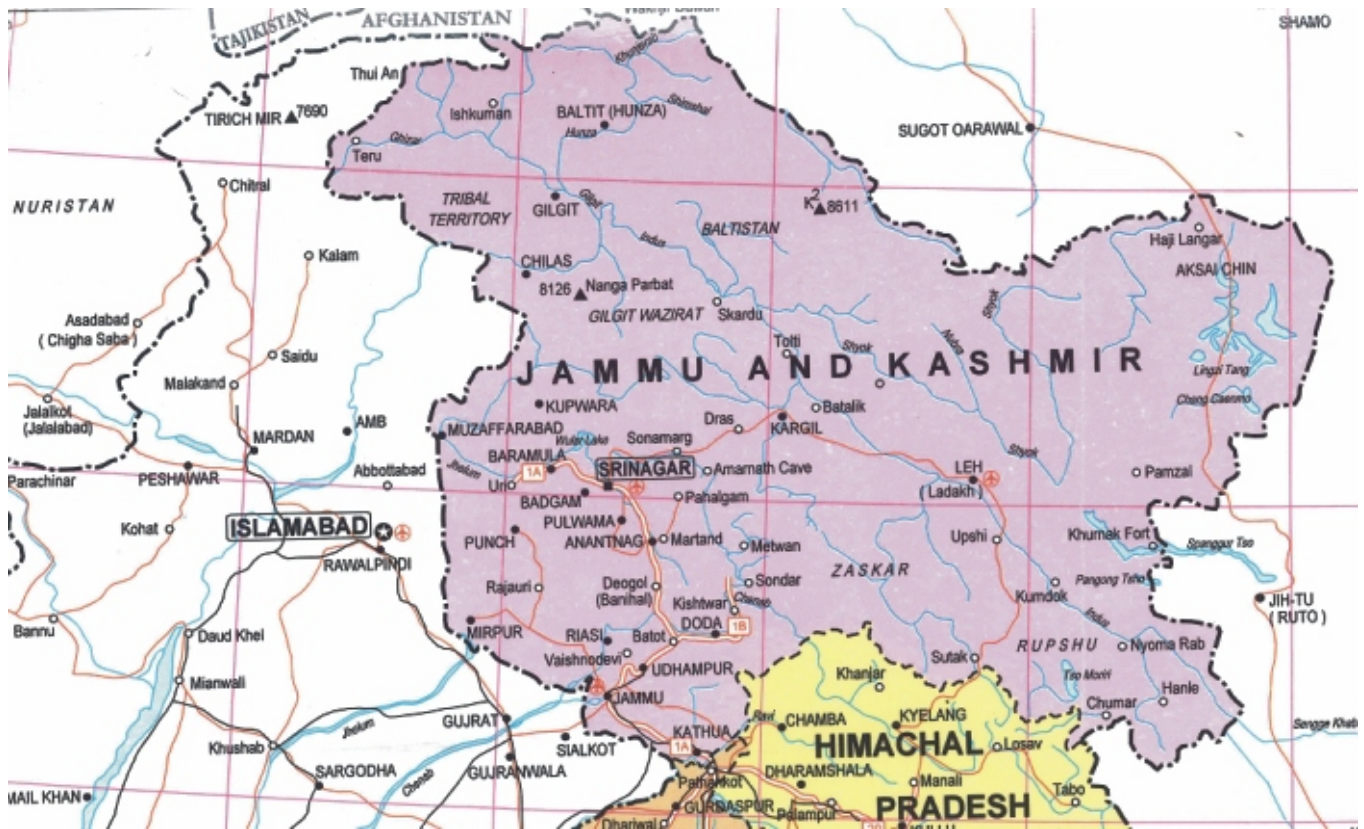
### • **Other Developments**

Pak-India Speakers Stress New Vigour for Peace  
Spring is Here: G-B Celebrates Spring With Navroze Festival



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## Jammu & Kashmir

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

## **In this Edition**

*The withdrawal of wheat subsidy from Gilgit Baltistan has met with stiff resistance at the local level. People have come out on the streets to protest against the decision of the government. A 40 kilogram bag of wheat earlier priced at Rs 530 is now selling at Rs 800. The steep rise in wheat price has caused considerable unrest amongst the local population. The subsidy plan was implemented by the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The protesters have taken to strike under the leadership of Awami Action Committee (AAC), a group formed to represent people's case before the government in this regard. The protest against the withdrawal of subsidy has seen widespread support cutting across communities and sects. Notably, the movement finds support amongst top clerics, nationalist groups and political parties in Gilgit Baltistan. Due to the strike, normal life in the region remained disrupted as very few people could attend schools and offices.*

*The land dispute between Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa severed when residents from both sides clashed with each other in a deadly shoot out. At least seven people were reported killed and about a dozen were injured in the incident. The police intervened to stop violence and restore law and order. A stretch of land approximately 8-10 kilometres long is disputed between Kohistan and the Diamer district. The piece of land has become lucrative after being demarcated as part of the site for the proposed Diamer Bhasha dam project. A day after the clash, tribal groups from both sides held a Jirga to adjudicate on the matter. The government of Pakistan has been blamed for not taking steps to resolve the lingering crisis between the two neighbouring regions.*

**Priyanka Singh**

# Political Developments

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## **“Youth in Azad Kashmir protest against oppression and exploitation by Pakistan”**

*ANI, March 17, 2014*

KOTLI/MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan's malicious strategy in Azad Kashmir has been well exposed, and Kashmiri youth in the region are holding protest rallies and demanding freedom. From Muzaffarabad to Kotli, Bagh to the Neelam Valley, anti-Pakistan protests are on the rise. The youths criticise Pakistan's strategy of calling the region 'Azad' or free Kashmir, while holding all key administrative posts. In recent years, Pakistan has pushed fundamentalist forces including the Taliban into Azad Kashmir, and has fuelled sectarian violence. A part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Azad Kashmir has been under Pakistani rule for over six decades now.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/21473-youth-in-azad-kashmir-protest-against-oppression-and-exploitation-by-pakistan.html>

## **Imran Mukhtar, “Special force being set up to secure KKH”**

*The Nation, March 7, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to secure an all important economic corridor stretching all the way from Kashghar and passing through Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the ruling functionaries at the Centre are all set to establish a special forces mandated with a counter-terrorism role at the Karakorum Highway. A force comprising 1500 personnel is being raised under the directives of Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs is working on the directions to finalize the hierarchy and service structure of the force, a senior government official noted on March 6. The force is being established keeping in view the volatile security situation of Gilgit Baltistan, especially after the Nanga Parbat incident and to provide secure environment to enhance trade with China.

Confirming this development, a top bureaucrat stated that modalities are being finalised to this effect. “The arrangements are being given final touches,” stated Federal Secretary for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Shahidullah Baig. He endorsed that the ministry was working on a plan to raise special force for the Gilgit Baltistan area for the security of Karakoram Highway. Earlier, the local police of Gilgit Baltistan is performing security duties along the Silk Route under the temporary arrangements and it keeps on patrolling along the highway day and night.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/islamabad/07-Mar-2014/special-force-being-set-up-to-secure-kkh>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Collective call: G-B shuts down to protest wheat subsidy withdrawal”**

*The Express Tribune, March 11, 2014*

GILGIT: The streets of Gilgi-Baltistan (G-B) wore a deserted look on March 10 as markets were shut down and roads were empty due to a strike by the Awami Action Committee (AAC). Attendance in educational institutions, and public and private offices also remained low. In an attempt to restore the wheat subsidy provided by the federal government for G-B, AAC had appealed to residents of G-B to observe a complete wheel-jam strike. AAC is an alliance of various groups and parties formed to pressure the government into accepting their demand of restoring the subsidy that was originally put in place by former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

“This has been the most successful strike in the history of G-B as all seven districts observed it and for that we are thankful to the people as we have made a unified demand to the government,” stated Ehsan Ali, chairman of the committee.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681246/collective-call-g-b-shuts-down-to-protest-wheat-subsidy-withdrawal/>

### **“Just this once: G-B enacts law to regularise contract employees”**

*The Express Tribune, March 12, 2014*

GILGIT: The legislative assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on March 11 enacted a special law to regularise nearly 180 contract employees of grade 1 onwards to grade 18.

The G-B Contract Employees Regularisation of Service Act 2014 was tabled by law minister, Ali Madad Sher on the second day of the 34th session, chaired by Deputy Speaker Jamil Ahmed. The house unanimously endorsed the act, which will be sent to governor for approval. “This is a one-time opportunity which this house is extending for the regularisation of these contract employees,” stated Ali Madad Sher, referring to the 180 employees inducted on a contractual basis during the past four to nine years in various departments. “But this will be applicable to those who fulfilled the required protocols during their induction.” Wheat on the mind: During the question-answer session, senior minister Muhammad Jaffer came down hard on the federal government for staggering the release of the wheat quota to G-B. “There is a shortage of wheat in G-B and I admit this. But this is because of the federal government which doesn't release our quota at once,” stated Jaffer, replying to Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid lawmaker Amina Ansari's question on the shortage in the region. Jaffer further added ration cards are being introduced in G-B these he contended will further create a shortage of wheat in the region.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681670/just-this-once-g-b-enacts-law-to-regularise-contract-employees/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Dubious appointments: G-B sacks 418 teachers following failure in re-interview”**

*The Express Tribune, March 12, 2014*

GILGIT: At least 418 teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) lost their jobs on March 11 after they failed to validate their induction in government service during a re-interview. On March 4, a committee comprising G-B Education Secretary Muhammad Nawaz Naseem and Services Secretary Saad Khan

re-interviewed as many as 734 government school teachers accused of being appointed through backchannels in the past three to four years.

According to a district government official, only 316 out of the 734 interviewed teachers managed to pass and were able to retain their jobs, while the rest are no longer government employees. The official who was aware of the results requested anonymity, saying he was not authorised to speak to the media. The committee that re-interviewed the teachers and verified their degrees found that 267 out of the 418 sacked teachers did not have the required qualifications for government service, shared the official. Similarly, 48 teachers lost their jobs because they did not show up for the second interview.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681665/dubious-appointments-g-b-sacks-418-teachers-following-failure-in-re-interview/>

### **“Following suit: Population welfare dept employees to be regularised”**

*The Express Tribune, March 13, 2014*

GILGIT: The lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) endorsed the recommendations of a committee that called for the regularisation of 345 employees of the regional Health and Population Welfare Department on March 12. After the 18th Amendment, employees of this department in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir have been regularised, therefore, we should also follow suit,” stated G-B Minister for Finance, Mohammad Ali Akhtar. Akhtar stated the assembly passed a resolution to this effect a year ago, based on which, a committee worked on it before presenting to the house. G-B Assembly Deputy Speaker, Jamil Ahmed added that the case would further be referred to the Chief Minister.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682089/following-suit-population-welfare-dept-employees-to-be-regularised/>

### **“Wheat subsidy protest: Protest committee's leader arrested”**

*The Express Tribune, March 13, 2014*

GILGIT: One of the leaders of the Awami Action Committee (AAC), Captain Shafi, was arrested in Gilgit on March 12. AAC, an alliance of various

groups and parties, formed to pressure the government to restore the subsidy on wheat. On the AAC's call, a complete shutter-down strike was observed across G-B, leaving roads and markets deserted. "Our strike was peaceful everywhere, but one of our leaders has still been arrested on false charges," stated a coordinator of the AAC, Wajahat Ali. A spokesperson of the deputy commissioner's office stated he did not know of the matter. A police official noted Shafi has been arrested under 'maintenance of public order'.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682078/wheat-subsidy-protest-protest-committees-leader-arrested/>

### **Shabbir Mir, "GIS based mapping for G-B villages"**

*The Express Tribune, March 13, 2014*

GILGIT: Chief Secretary Younus Dagha stated on March 12 that the government intends to start GIS based mapping of all villages in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). In a briefing to journalists on March 12, Dagha stated the mapping would help point out infrastructural lacking in every area of G-B. "One of the new initiatives is that we are going to conduct is GIS based mapping of all villages in G-B, which will tell us which villages lack infrastructure like hospitals and schools." As the markets in much of G-B closed on March 11 to protest the withdrawal of the wheat subsidy, the chief secretary hinted at bringing back ration cards to mitigate shortages.

"The data of every family is being collected from NADRA in this regards," stated Dagha. To minimise corruption and theft in food department, Dagha stated they were working on introducing "targeted subsidy" to better help the poor. Development works: Speaking about upcoming development works in G-B, Dagha spoke about projects which are due to be completed and others which will begin soon.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682290/gis-based-mapping-for-g-b-villages/>

### **"Financial crunch: Cash-strapped AJK govt can't pay salaries"**

*The Express Tribune, March 12, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Facing a financial crunch, the

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has crossed its overdraft limit by double the permissible amount, sources noted on March 11. According to sources in the finance department, "The Azad Kashmir government has so far borrowed Rs3.64 billion against its overdraft limit of Rs1.5 billion from the State Bank of Pakistan. The main chunk of Rs3 billion has been spent on non-developmental expenditure during the last three months.

The State Bank of Pakistan's Azad Kashmir branch has issued a circular to all financial institutions and banks across AJK to stop cashing government cheques till further orders, the sources stated. The AJK government has already spent Rs20 billion profit earned by various departments, the sources further added. Due to the financial crisis, the AJK government is not in a position to pay salaries for the month of March.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681531/financial-crunch-cash-strapped-ajk-govt-cant-pay-salaries/>

### **Shabbir Mir, "Wheat subsidy: 'Govt to be blamed for any trouble during today's strike'"**

*The Express Tribune, March 10, 2014*

GILGIT: If any untoward incident occurs during March 10 shutter-down strike in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), the regional government will be responsible for it, stated advocate Ehsan Ali, the chairman of the Awami Action Committee (AAC) on March 9. ACC, an alliance of 23 religious and political parties, has called for a region-wide strike on March 10 in an attempt to pressure the government to restore the subsidy on the wheat quota for G-B. "If there is any disturbance on the day of strike, it will be assumed the government is behind it," Ali told reporters in Gilgit on March 10. "We aren't begging for charity. We are struggling for our right," he stated, referring to the subsidy that was given by former premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in view of poverty in G-B.

The ACC chairman claimed the movement is backed by top clerics, nationalists and other parties and added the strike will continue till their demands are accepted. "We are hopeful there will be a complete strike in all parts of G-B tomorrow and the government will be forced to restore the subsidy under which a 40-kg bag of wheat cost Rs530 in the

local market till last year.” The bag now cost more than Rs800 in the local market.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/680888/wheat-subsidy-govt-to-be-blamed-for-any-trouble-during-todays-strike/>

### **“Precaution: Security at all AJK courts enhanced”**

*The Express Tribune, March 9, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Following the attack on the Islamabad district courts, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Supreme Court Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan presided over the meeting in Mirpur to enhance security around all courts in the state. It was decided that to enhance checking at the main entry points of the High Court (HC) and Supreme Court (SC), while special stickers with Mirpur Bar Association secretary general's emblem would be issued to practicing lawyers so that they may park in the court premises. The lawyers community and district administrations agreed to close all the main gates of the judicial complex and allow enhanced checking of all people including lawyers before entry. To ensure proper security arrangements stay in place, a sub-committee has been formed. The committee would be headed by the Mirpur deputy commissioner and will submit a report to CJ Khan within a week.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/680615/precaution-security-at-all-ajk-courts-enhanced/>

### **“AJK Food Security: 'No cut in supply of subsidised flour’”**

*The Express Tribune, March 9, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: A spokesman of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Food Department clarified that they have not stopped providing flour to the masses on subsidised rates, stated a press release issued on March 7. He asked the people to contact district food officers in their respective areas in case they are facing problems in getting subsidised flour. Meanwhile, presiding over a meeting at Kashmir House in Islamabad, AJK Chief Secretary Khizer Hayat Gondal claimed that there was no food shortage in the region. He stated, however, that contractors have not been supplying flour in some areas as they have not received

pending payments. The chief secretary has asked the finance department to release funds to pay the suppliers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/680621/ajk-food-security-no-cut-in-supply-of-subsidised-flour/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Call for 'grand strike': G-B crosses sectarian divide over wheat subsidy”**

*The Express Tribune, March 8, 2014*

GILGIT: The demand to restore the wheat subsidy in Gilgit Baltistan (G-B) has gained currency in the region with a “grand shutter-down strike” announced by the Awami Action Committee (ACC), a group of around 23 parties. It has also helped differing sects cross a tricky divide to come together for the region's common good. The ACC called for a complete shutter down strike in G-B on March 10 to press the government into accepting their demands. In view of G-B being under developed, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto introduced subsidised wheat for the region. The facility continued unabated for decades regardless of which party came into power but has recently been withdrawn by the authorities. A 40 kilogramme (kg) bag of wheat which used to cost Rs530 in 2013 now costs Rs840.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/680214/call-for-grand-strike-g-b-crosses-sectarian-divide-over-wheat-subsidy/>

### **“AJK crisis continues: Azad Kashmir govt removes its top lawyer”**

*The Express Tribune, March 7, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has removed its top lawyer after making the law secretary officer on special demand (OSD). Advocate General Ghazanfar Ali has been replaced with Mansoor Pervez, a notification issued by the Department of Law and Parliamentary Affairs noted on March 6. Official sources stated that Ali had refused to give any legal opinion on the ongoing row between the government and bureaucracy.

Earlier law secretary Idrees Tabassum was made OSD on March 3 for refusing to give any legal opinion against the chief secretary and Inspector General of Police (IGP). The government had

removed the CS and IGP and directed them to report to the Establishment Division in Islamabad but they rebuffed the order, putting the state government in embarrassment. The government had asked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to get back the Chief Secretary Khizer Hayat Gondal and IGP Malik Khuda Bakhsh Awan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/679850/ajk-crisis-continues-azad-kashmir-govt-removes-its-top-lawyer/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Kohistan, G-B border: Residents stand uneasy on either side of a fragile ceasefire”**

*The Express Tribune, March 4, 2014*

CHILAS: Even though a temporary ceasefire has been brokered between the warring sides of Kohistan and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) after deadly clashes, the row is far from over. The long-standing issue was triggered over a nearly 10-kilometre-long strip of land stretching on both sides of the Basari check post that separates Kohistan from G-B. The stretch is part of the area being demarcated for Diamer-Bhasha dam. In a bloody escalation, at least seven people were killed and nearly a dozen wounded in shootouts between the two sides that began on February 26 after villagers from Thor Valley in G-B's Diamer district claimed Kohistanis forcibly took away more than 400 goats grazing on the disputed land near the dam.

Though the warring tribesmen agreed on a 40-day ceasefire after they were requested by a jirga, the finality of the armistice is subject to solution of the issue within the stipulated time. “It's good that ceasefire has been brokered,” stated Bazid Khan, a resident of Chilas, Diamer Valley.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/678605/kohistan-g-b-border-residents-stand-uneasy-on-either-side-of-a-fragile-ceasefire/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Back channel hiring: Teachers re-interviewed to establish merit”**

*The Express Tribune, March 5, 2014*

GILGIT: Authorities in Skardu completed re-interviewing teachers who were believed to have been inducted through back channels in the past. The decision to redo the interviews was taken by Chief Secretary Younus Dagha and Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah after reports suggested more than

450 teachers had been appointed without fulfilling required protocols. A director education and his deputy were among those fired by the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government in 2014 after an enquiry proved them guilty. A committee comprising G-B Secretary Education Muhammad Nawaz Naseem and Secretary Services Saad Khan conducted the interviews. At least 23 teachers did not submit their credentials to the committee and did not turn up for the fresh round of interviews, noted those familiar with the matter.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/678912/back-channel-hiring-teachers-re-interviewed-to-establish-merit/>

### **Khaleeq Kiani, “Three companies bid for Kotli Hydropower Project”**

*Dawn, March 5, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: Three local and international firms on March 4 submitted technical bids for financing, engineering and construction of a 100 megawatts Kotli Hydropower Project in Azad Kashmir with an estimated cost of \$169 million. The bidding overseen by Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Mohammad Asif was organised by the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB). One of the investors S M Gardezi complained at the outset that while his company was bidding for the Kotli Hydropower Project, another hydropower project of 7MW being pursued for 12 years was facing hitches because of 'strange attitude of the Central Power Purchase Agency (CPPA)' despite repeated decisions at various forums including a few by the minister for water and power.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091045/three-companies-bid-for-kotli-hydropower-project>

### **“Ultimatum: AJK opposition leader asks PM to dissolve assembly”**

*The Express Tribune, March 3, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Opposition leader in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Raja Farooq Haider Khan on March 2 asked Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed to dissolve the assembly or face a no-confidence motion. Addressing a press conference at the Central Press Club, Haider, accompanied by Secretary General



PML-N Azad Kashmir Shah Ghulam Qadir, stated, "The PM has completely failed to deliver on his promises for more than two years and in June his government will complete its third year while nothing has been done for the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir." Alleging that the PM and his cabinet is a 'slave' to the PPP's Faryal Talpur, Haider stated Chaudhry Abdul Majeed is 'hoodwinking the people' by claiming that the Legislative Assembly-22 Sudhonati-Poonch VI by-election was rigged. Haider questioned how 187 Rangers personnel could have rigged the election in the presence of 3,000 policemen.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/678251/ultimatum-ajk-opposition-leader-asks-pm-to-dissolve-assembly/>

### **"AJK Secretary Industries leaves for New Delhi"**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, March 4, 2014*

MIRPUR: AJK Secretary for trade, Commerce and industries Akram Sohail on March 3 left for New Delhi as member of the Pakistani delegation to discuss the cross-LOC trade being exercised between Azad Jammu Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir with Indian authorities. According to official sources, the delegation will also discuss the matter for early release of the truck driver of AJK, recently arrested in the J&K during the cross-LoC trade on Muzaffarabad-Srinagar route. The formal meeting to discuss the issues will be held on March 4 between officials of Indian foreign ministry and Pakistani delegation.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=269323&Itemid=2](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=269323&Itemid=2)

### **Hameed Shaheen, "Srinagar detained AJK driver's release tops Pak-India talks"**

*March 3, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The Srinagar detained AJK truck driver Mr Mohammad Shafique Awan's release forms top point of Pakistan-India Working Groups talks opening in New Delhi on March 5. In a media interview, the Director General intra-Kashmir trade and travels Brig (Rtd) M Ismael stressed that there be no detention of any truck driver in future. "If someone is found violating the defaulting person be

repatriated to his native country". The DG did not disclose what else is in the Delhi dialogue agenda. Secretary Trade AJK Mr Akram Sohail also left for India.

In the year 2008 both Pakistan and India had agreed on opening intra-Kashmir trade during New York parleys between Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardar and Indian Premier Manmohan Singh. Since then the intra-Kashmir trade and travels are haltingly operative.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2014/03/03/srinagar-detained-ajk-driver-s-release-tops-pak-india-talks.html>

### **"AJK Public Service Commission"**

*The Nation, March 2, 2014*

The AJK Supreme Court dissolved the AJK Public Services Commission (PSC) after long proceedings. The appointment of the chairman and members of the commission is very crucial for the establishment now. Merit, transparency, competency and credibility must be maintained in the selection of this commission. Only then will this commission be able to maintain meritocracy in the recruitment of various jobs which are made through it. The dissolution has already taken up a lot of time. The new commission has to conduct competitive examination advertised by the previous commission. The candidates have been waiting for years for their examinations, especially for the post of assistant commissioner and section officers. They are confused by the long delay. Under these conditions they cannot prepare nor can they take up another job. The appointment process must be speedy so that the work in limbo can be carried out.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/letters/02-Mar-2014/ajk-public-service-commission>

### **"Territorial disputes: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa sending fact-finding team to Gilgit-Baltistan"**

*Business Recorder, March 1, 2014*

Senior Minister Siraj-ul-Haq on February 28 told the Provincial Assembly that the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government would send a high level delegation to Gilgit-Baltistan on March 1 for fact-finding mission and resolution of territorial disputes

between the people of two provinces. Responding to the points raised by the joint opposition, the senior minister stated they would try to present the report to legislators on March 3 and find out a dignified solution to the ongoing crisis among the people of Kohistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. The government has arranged a briefing for the parliamentary leaders on the worsening law-and-order situation on March 3.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1158091/>

### **“Contesting the law: G-B's apex court admits petition against services tribunal”**

*The Express Tribune, February 28, 2014*

GILGIT: The chief court of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has admitted a petition challenging recently made appointments in the G-B services tribunal. “Notices have been issued to the chief minister, governor and others for a regular hearing,” stated G-B Supreme Court Bar Association President Advocate Shahbaz Khan. “We have also challenged the ordinance that led to the appointments.” The petition was filed jointly by lawyer bodies, including the Supreme Court bar, High Court bar, Skardu district and Gilgit district bar associations, pleading reversal of the appointments and the ordinance. G-B Governor Pir Karam Ali issued an ordinance last week, establishing the first ever services tribunal in G-B. Through the ordinance, former bureaucrat Hafizur Rahman was made its chairman and two others district Judge Khurshid Alam and bureaucrat Fida Hussain were made its members.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/676949/contesting-the-law-g-bs-apex-court-admits-petition-against-services-tribunal/>

### **“PA demands commission to resolve territorial dispute between KP GP”**

*Daily Times, March 1, 2014*

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly on February 28 demanded formation of a commission to be headed by serving judge of Supreme Court to resolve a territorial dispute between KP and Gilgit-Baltistan province emerged after approval of Basha dam project. The issue was raised in the house by MPA Abdul Sattar Khan who belongs to Kohistan and stated an armed conflict is already in progress between two tribes of Kohistan and Daimer region

over the possession of eight-kilometre land. Abdul Sattar stated several people have fell victim to armed conflict in the region as thousands of armed men are sitting on both sides of the road and situation is very tense.

MPA Abdul Sattar also alleged that Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan issued a very negative statement over the dispute, which added fuel to fire and caused anguish among the people of Kohistan.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/01-Mar-2014/pa-demands-commission-to-resolve-territorial-dispute-between-kp-gb>

### **“United we stand: Parties join hands to protest removal of wheat subsidy”**

*The Express Tribune, March 1, 2014*

GILGIT: Political and religious parties from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) held a protest in Gilgit on February 28 against government's withdrawal of wheat subsidy. They also criticised the federal government for being unable to settle the boundary issue that led to bloodshed between residents of Diamer and K-P's Kohistan district. The rally took place at Garhi Bagh under the banner of Awami Action Committee (ACC) after Friday prayers and was attended by a large number of people. Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, Anjuman-e-Imamia, Shia Ulema Council, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl, among other parties, participated in the protest. Speakers condemned the withdrawal of the subsidy which former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had approved for the region. “We will be holding another rally next month,” stated Progressive Youth Front Chairman Baba Jan, adding they will be observing a shutter down strike on March 10 to press for their demands.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/677266/united-we-stand-parties-join-hands-to-protest-removal-of-wheat-subsidy/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “In protest: Lawyers announce boycott of services tribunal”**

*The Express Tribune, March 1, 2014*

GILGIT: Lawyers from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on February 28 announced a boycott of the G-B Services Tribunal, terming the appointment of its members illegal. G-B Supreme Court Bar

Association President Shahbaz Khan noted all lawyer bodies in G-B, including Young Lawyers Forum, G-B Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association and High Court Bar Association, took the decision jointly as they believe the appointments deprive lawyers of their rights.

Khan further stated the actual law enacted by assembly clearly mentioned that a high court judge or a senior lawyer could be appointed the chairman of the tribunal, but the provision was removed from the ordinance under which the current members were appointed. According to Khan, they will also hold a sit-in for three hours daily outside all lower and superior courts in the region as a token strike.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/677303/in-protest-lawyers-announce-boycott-of-services-tribunal/>

### **Tariq Naqash, “AJK premier fails to resolve issues in meeting with Sharif”**

*Dawn, March 1, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Efforts being made by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government to replace the chief secretary and inspector general of police came to nought after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif told AJK Premier Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on February 28 to wait for “improvement of situation with mutual accord”. A 30-minute meeting between Mr Sharif and Chaudhry Majeed was held on the latter's request at the PM House in Islamabad. Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan was also present at the meeting. Before flying to Islamabad from Muzaffarabad, the AJK premier presided over an informal session of the cabinet, which “endorsed all of his decisions, mainly the one about the chief secretary and IGP,” according to ministers Abdul Majid Khan and Syed Azhar Gillani. The cabinet members vowed that there would be no compromise on the “identity of state and authority of its chief executive,” they stated.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090257/ajk-premier-fails-to-resolve-issues-in-meeting-with-sharif>

### **“Jirga meets today as four killed in Kohistan clash”**

*The News, March 1, 2014*

MANSEHRA: The rival tribes agreed to hold jirga

today after three residents of Kohistan districts and one from Chilas in Diamer district were killed the previous day in an exchange of fire over the ownership of the disputed stretch of land claimed by both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the administration in Gilgit-Baltistan, officials stated on February 28. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Hazara Range, Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur stated the armed people came down from the mountains after the police rushed to the site of the violence and restored calm. He stated that after defusing the tension both the sides agreed to hold a jirga on March 1 to decide the future line of action and maintain the peace there until the Supreme Court decided the issue once and for all.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-235538-Jirga-meets-today-as-four-killed-in-Kohistan-clash>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Deadly shoot-outs: Seven killed as Gilgit-Kohistan boundary dispute turns bloody”**

*The Express Tribune, March 1, 2014*

KOHISTAN / GILGIT: The death toll from bloody clashes between residents of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa over a territorial border dispute has risen to seven with over a dozen more injured. The clashes erupted when residents from both regions took up arms against each other over a swath of land near the site of Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

The nearly 10-kilometre stretch of land on both sides of the Basari check post, which separates Kohistan from Gilgit-Baltistan, has long been a bone of contention between Diamer and Kohistan.

The disputed land is among the areas being demarcated for acquisition for the much-awaited Diamer-Bhasha dam project. “The total number of casualties is four,” Diamer Deputy Commissioner Shahbaz Bhatti noted. “But the situation is under control as warring groups have descended the mountains.” However, DPO Kohistan Akbar Ali Khan confirmed the death of three more people from his area.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/677499/deadly-shoot-outs-seven-killed-as-gilgit-kohistan-boundary-dispute-turns-bloody/>

## **“AJK Prime Minister urges early completion of 1,700 schools”**

*Business Recorder, March 29, 2014*

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majid stressed the need for early completion of under construction 1700 boys and girls schools in various districts of AJK so that students could take benefit of quality education at their door steps. He made these remarks in a meeting with ERRA Deputy Chairman Major General Muhammad Asif Azeem on March 28. AJK Prime Minister visited Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) headquarters and held detail meeting about the under construction projects in the state quake hit areas. During the meeting AJK Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the pace of work and appreciated the completion of various city development projects in Muzaffarabad, Bagh, Dhirkot and Rawalakot.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1167507/>

## **“LG polls: Court seeks replies from AJK top officials”**

*The Express Tribune, March 29, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Kashmir High Court on March 28 issued notices to top government officials for not conducting local bodies' elections in the state for the last over 20 years. The court directed the region's Chief Secretary Khyzer Hayat Gondal and Secretary Local Government Muhammad Sadiq Dar to submit their responses on the issue till May 7. The court issued the orders on a petition filed by senior lawyer Sajjad Ahmed Khan against the government for not conducting the local government (LG) elections since 1991 in the region.

The petitioner contended that holding LG elections after every four years is the constitutional requirement in every democratic state. Talking to the local media, Khan stated that for the last 23 years the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir have been deprived of this fundamental right to elect their local representatives which is injustice and violation of the constitution.

“Through the local bodies elections people elect their representatives at union council and wards

levels to get their basic problems solved,” he maintained.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688621/lg-polls-court-seeks-replies-from-ajk-top-officials/>

## **Tariq Naqash, “AJK's acting PM's decision to reinstate secretaries criticised”**

*Dawn, March 23, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: A cabinet member in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has taken strong exception to the withdrawal of Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed's orders by acting Premier Chaudhry Mohammad Yasin, maintaining that the move amounted to vindicating the allegations of opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) against the Peoples Party-led government. Abdul Majid Khan, minister for rehabilitation and population welfare, noted on March 22 that he had conveyed his reservations to all concerned, including the central leadership of Pakistan Peoples Party.

“The prime minister (Chaudhry Majeed) had got his orders endorsed from the cabinet as well as the parliamentary party. It's surprising that an individual has withdrawn them without any consultation with the cabinet or the parliamentary party,” he stated, referring to the acting premier. “If the withdrawal was inevitable, the acting prime minister should have referred the matter to the cabinet for a consensus decision,” he maintained.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095013/ajks-acting-pms-decision-to-reinstate-secretaries-criticised>

## **“Illegal appointment: Contempt notice issued to AJK assembly speaker”**

*The Express Tribune, March 26, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court (AJKHC) March 25 issued a contempt of court notice to assembly speaker for violating court order in an illegal appointment and promotion case. Chief Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal issued contempt notice to AJK Legislative Assembly (AJKLA) Speaker Ghulam Sadiq Khan for promoting his son and appointing his nephew in the assembly secretariat in violation of the court order. The judge asked the speaker, Chief Secretary

Khyzer Hayat Gondal, Deputy Opposition Leader Tariq Farooq, the Finance and Assembly Secretariat secretaries and 10 other persons to appear before the court on April 17.

The court observed that Sadiq has not submitted the copies of the orders of the promotion and appointment. The court issued the order on an application filed by Khwaja Atif Bashir against the speaker on November 19, 2013 challenging the illegal appointment and promotion. The chief justice had issued an order to maintain status quo.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/687209/illegal-appointment-contempt-notice-issued-to-ajk-assembly-speaker/>

### **Mushtaq Ghuman, “Government likely to lay railway line between Islamabad and Muzaffarabad”**

*Business Recorder, March 26, 2014*

Federal Government has reportedly decided to lay railway line from Islamabad to Muzaffarabad (Azad Jammu and Kashmir) via Murree aimed at promoting tourism and providing reliable route to Kashmiris. Though the details of the mega railway project are not yet available, it was hinted at during a recent meeting of Executive Committee of National Economic Council (EcneC) presided over by Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar. During the meeting, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was directed to share the design of Metro Bus Service (MBS) with the Ministry of Railways for their views/advice for making it consistent and compatible with the proposed rail link between Islamabad and Muzaffarabad via Murree.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-economy/189/1166107/>

### **“Up in arms: Kashmiri refugees want settlement”**

*The Express Tribune, March 25, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Kashmiri refugees on March 24 staged a protest demonstration seeking their permanent settlement and implementation of quota in jobs and admissions in professional colleges. The protesters threatened if their demands were not met within a month they will stage a protest demo in

front of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly for their rights and permanent settlement.

Over 35,000 people migrated from J&K in 1989 and are living in the Chela Bandi makeshift camp. The protesters blocked the Neelum Valley road for traffic and chanted slogans for their rights. Some of the refugee activists addressed the protesters.

“We have sacrificed everything for a noble cause and don't want to see our children crying for jobs, identity and residence,” Raja Izhar Khan, one of the speakers stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686742/up-in-arms-kashmiri-refugees-want-settlement/>

### **“Passing of the baton: G-B gears up for elections next year”**

*The Express Tribune, March 23, 2014*

GILGIT: Following the green light from Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Birjis Tahir, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) led G-B government is set to complete its five-year term, with plans to hold elections next year.

The decision was taken during a meeting chaired by the chief minister, PPP's Secretary Information, Rana Nazeem, noted on March 22, adding that elections would be held after the G-B Assembly's five-year term ends on December 11. During his latest visit to G-B, Tahir put the rumours to rest by denying that his government had any intention of holding early elections in October. “We respect the regional government's mandate,” stated the federal minister during a news conference held in Gilgit earlier this week, adding that the federal government had no issue with the December date.

To pre-empt any move towards early elections, the G-B Assembly prepared a resolution signed by various lawmakers, asking the federal government to desist from holding elections this year as it would be a violation of the Constitution. PPP's Ayub Shah read out the resolution in the assembly on March 13. “Any attempt to hold elections before that would be tantamount to breach of law,” he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686067/passing-of-the-baton-g-b-gears-up-for-elections-next-year/>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Health first: Govt snubs media reports on fatal outbreak”**

*The Express Tribune, March 23, 2014*

GILGIT: Panic gripped Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) after regional media reported that at least six children died within 24 hours in parts of Ghizer valley due to some infectious diseases. The government, however, maintains that there is no such thing and the media has its facts wrong. On March 13, the report was carried by regional Urdu dailies, including Baad-e-Shimal, Salam, Baang-e-Sahar and others, on their front page. The headline in Baad-e-Shimal read 'Six children died of various diseases within 24 hours in the upper parts of Ghizer Valley'. The text of the story quoted a former district council member of Ghizer, Khan Akbar Khan, claiming the cause was negligence of the government's health department and the Primary Healthcare Initiative.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686056/health-first-govt-snubs-media-reports-on-fatal-outbreak/>

## **Kamran Khan, “G-B versus K-P: Boundary dispute gushes towards Diamer-Bhasha Dam”**

*The Express Tribune, March 20, 2014*

PESHAWAR: The longstanding conflict between Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) over a strip of land lingers on, with the G-B Assembly recently passing a unanimous resolution against the K-P government for allegedly encroaching upon a proposed dam site. Meanwhile, the K-P government hopes the centre will be able to resolve the row as the 40-day ceasefire agreed upon by the warring sides in G-B and Kohistan on March 1 looms closer.

Ministry of Kashmir and G-B Affairs Secretary Shahidullah Baig noted the prime minister is likely to approve the ministry's summary for the formation of a three-member commission, which would include the minister for Kashmir and G-B affairs, minister for information and minister for water and power. Baig stated both K-P and G-B's claims on the land will be discussed by the commission which will prepare its recommendations in six months. The commission has recommended that it can only

sort out the dispute with the consent of the law and justice ministry and will thus also comprise retired judges from other provinces except K-P to keep neutrality. It will then furnish its recommendations to the law department for a permanent settlement of the row, added Baig.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684910/g-b-versus-k-p-boundary-dispute-gushes-towards-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

## **Saleem Pandit, “Gemstones recovered from POK-bound truck”**

*The Times of India, March 21, 2014*

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir police on March 20 recovered gemstones from a Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) bound truck at Salamabad in Uri. Cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade in gems and jewellery is not allowed. A police spokesman stated the driver of the truck, Nazir Ahmad Beigh, was asked to unload the items and his vehicle was stopped from going to the POK. LoC trade custodian Showkat Ahmad Mir stated the matter was not serious and as such the driver was not arrested. "We could not even register a case because it does not warrant any case since it was detected on this side of the LoC."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Gemstones-recovered-from-POK-bound-truck/articleshow/32388592.cms>

## **Khalid Mustafa, “Govt slashes Bhasha Dam funds worth Rs7.5 billion”**

*The News, March 21, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The government diverted Rs7.5 billion from Diamer-Bhasha Dam project to Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project, showing that Bhasha Dam is no more top priority project, senior officials noted on March 20. Knowing the fact that the per capita water availability in Pakistan has alarmingly dwindled to 964 cubic metres, which is critically less than the threshold value and can hamper the health and well-being, at the same time, severally impacting the economic development, the officials stated.

Soon after partition, the per capita per annum water availability in Pakistan stood at 5,650 cubic metres, which was more than three times the threshold

value of 1,700 cubic metres per person per annum, the officials stated. Keeping in view fast reduction in the water availability, the completion of Diamer-Bhasha Dam is a must, as it will not only provide 4,500MW but also ensure water storage of 6.4MAF that will increase the water availability in the country, the officials stated.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-239380-Govt-slashes-Bhasha-Dam-funds-worth-Rs7.5-billion>

### **“Wapda denies transfer of funds”**

*The News, March 22, 2014*

LAHORE: The spokesperson of the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) has refuted a news item appeared on March 22, wherein it was alleged that the government diverted Rs7.5 billion to Neelum Jhelum hydropower project from the funds allocated for Diamer Bhasha dam for the current fiscal year. He clarified no amount has been diverted to Neelum Jhelum from the funds allocated for Diamer Bhasha dam project for the fiscal 2013-14 and that the government is implementing the latter project on priority. The spokesperson noted that Rs17 billion was allocated for Diamer Bhasha Dam project in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for FY14. He stated the government released the whole amount to Wapda till mid of February 2014. Of the total amount, Rs14.5 billion has been transferred to Gilgit Baltistan for land acquisition, while the remaining Rs2.5 billion is yet to be transferred, he added.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-239546-Wapda-denies-transfer-of-funds>

### **“Transfer of top officials: AJK prime minister's orders challenged in court”**

*The Express Tribune, March 18, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on March 17 filed a petition in the high court against the state government for barring two top officials from performing their duties. The state government on February 23 had ordered the removal of the chief secretary and inspector general of police (IGP). AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed had accused them of calling in Rangers during a by-

election in the Legislative Assembly-22 Sudhnuti-Poonch constituency on February 22.

The petition was filed by Advocate Raja Hanif on behalf of opposition leader Raja Farooq Haider Khan. The chief of PML-N Azad Kashmir chapter, filed a petition to request the court to cancel all orders issued by Prime Minister Majeed issued from February 23 to March 10. Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed refused to get back the Chief Secretary Khizer Hayat Gondal and Inspector General of Police Malik Khuda Bakhsh Awan. In this connection, the prime minister had written a letter to the federal government that was turned down by the Establishment Division, stating that in compliance with the spirit of the 1949 Karachi Agreement, transfers and postings of officers on loan in the region is not the subject of the state government, the petition stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683998/transfer-of-top-officials-ajk-prime-ministers-orders-challenged-in-court/>

### **“Gilgit-Baltistan: New Trade Routes to Revive Development”**

*UNPO, March 19, 2014*

A recent bilateral meeting ended in an Indian proposal to open more trade routes, including the Kargil-Skardu road, which would boost trade and tourism activities in the region, consolidating the humanitarian and democratic aspirations of both India and the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement leaders have also called upon the Government of Pakistan to implement the proposal. "The people of Gilgit-Baltistan welcome the proposal by India to open the Kargil-Skardu road for trade purposes. This proposal is based on humanitarian, democratic norms and aspirations of the people on both sides of the divide". These views were expressed by Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM) chairman Manzoor Hussain Parwana and secretary general Ghulam Shahzad Agha. They were referring to a proposal by the Indian side during a bilateral meeting to open more trade routes including the Kargil-Skardu to facilitate the divided families meet each other and promote across-the-border trade. The GBUM leaders asked the government of Pakistan to take

immediate steps to implement the proposal. They stated it had been the longstanding demand of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan to open the old route in order to help the divided families interact with each other and promote trade activities in the region. They stated that it was a major breakthrough in the ongoing talks between the two countries.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/16960>

### **“AJK residents turn to water to solve power crisis”**

*Pakistan Today, March 15, 2014*

As Pakistan grapples with a crippling energy crisis, people in one corner of Azad Jammu and Kashmir have taken matters into their own hands, using small-scale turbines to generate electricity from streams and rivers. Pakistan is plagued by power cuts, lasting up to 22 hours a day in the blistering summer in parts of the country, blighting ordinary people's lives and hampering the economy. Government moves to tackle the problem have so far yielded little success and have largely focused on moving from expensive imported oil to cheaper coal. But in Kashmir's upper Neelum Valley- part of the disputed Himalayan territory known to locals as “Heaven on Earth” for its unspoiled beauty- hundreds of families have chosen a more environmentally friendly option, setting up small-scale hydro projects to produce electricity for a few hours a day.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/03/15/national/ajk-residents-turn-to-water-to-solve-power-crisis-2/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Over territory dispute: G-B lawmakers vow to stand with Diemer”**

*The Express Tribune, March 15, 2014*

GILGIT: In a rare display of solidarity, lawmakers from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) took an oath on March 14 “to support their brothers” in Diemer Valley who are fighting G-B's case against Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) over a controversial piece of land. The unprecedented unity was witnessed in the G-B Assembly during a meeting with a grand jirga from Diemer. The jirga, comprising at least two dozen representatives from all valleys of Diemer, came to Gilgit to seek support in wake of clashes between residents of Thor and Harban valleys that

led to deaths of seven people and injured several others. The nearly 10-kilometre stretch of land on both sides of the Basari check post, which separates Kohistan from G-B, has long been a bone of contention between Thor Valley, Diemer and Harban Nala, Kohistan. The disputed land is among the areas being demarcated for acquisition of the long-awaited Diemer-Bhasha Dam.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682967/over-territory-dispute-g-b-lawmakers-vow-to-stand-with-diemer/>

### **“Appointment of CEC: 'G-B lawmakers want to be consulted'”**

*The Express Tribune, March 15, 2014*

GILGIT: Lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) demanded on March 14 that the appointment of the chief election commissioner (CEC) in G-B should be made in consultation with the leader of the house and opposition and that elections are held only after the five-year term is completed. The demands were made through two separate resolutions tabled and passed with a majority in the session chaired by deputy speaker Jamil Ahmed. “After the 18th Amendment, the CEC's appointment should be made in due consultation with the leader of the house and opposition,” read one of the resolutions signed by various legislators. However, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Fida Nashad declined to support the resolution, saying the decision should be taken in light of the 2009 Governance Order as the 18th Amendment is not applicable to G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682958/appointment-of-cec-g-b-lawmakers-want-to-be-consulted/>



# Economic Developments

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## **“Goods over Rs 99 lakh traded across LoC”**

*Press Trust of India, March 25, 2014*

POONCH: Goods worth over Rs 99 lakh were traded from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) to Jammu and Kashmir along Line of Control (LoC) at Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing point in district Poonch, officials stated. As many as 25 trucks rolled out from the Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC) to PoK, they stated, adding, these trucks carried bags of banana and herbs worth Rs 56,76,195. From PoK, five truck carrying bags of herbs, dry dates and cloths worth Rs 43,20,360 entered India, they stated.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/goods-over-rs-99-lakh-traded-across-loc-114032501220\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/goods-over-rs-99-lakh-traded-across-loc-114032501220_1.html)

## **“LoC trade hits fresh deadlock”**

*The Nation, March 1, 2014*

SRINAGAR: Hours after it resumed after remaining suspended since January 17, the trade via Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route was again closed down as trucks from J&K returned without unloading their consignment in AJK. Sources claimed more than 22 trucks from J&K returned, declining “hectic” checking measures in other part of Kashmir. “By checking, the AJK authorities meant to unload entire truck load which would have resulted in damage to consignments. However, drivers objected to it and decided to return along with load,” an official stated based on the report by the drivers. Salamabad-Chakoti Traders Association claimed Azad Kashmir officials at Chakoti Checkpoint resorted to 'humiliating' frisking of the drives and their goods on the pretext of security measurement.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/01-Mar-2014/loc-trade-hits-fresh-deadlock>

## **“MoU signed: AJK bank to provide loans to farmers”**

*The Express Tribune, March 28, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (BoAJK) on March 27 signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the AJK agriculture and food department to provide small loans to farmers in rural areas. The agreement aimed at making the farmers economically strong and self-sufficient. According to the MoU, the BoAJK will provide interest-free loans to the farmers on a five-year term to promote dairy and poultry farming and animal husbandry in the upper and rural areas of the region.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688129/mou-signed>

## **Khalid Mustafa, “WB to fund Dasu Dam but quiet on Bhasha”**

*The News, March 18, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) assured that Pakistan will get its loans as per its share and this time the bank will extend \$1 billion for projects relating to infrastructure development and power supply enhancement. The stated amount will be in addition to the \$500 million the WB will extend for proposed Dasu hydropower project. This has been stated by Rachid Benmessaoud, Country Director, WB who met Finance Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on March 17. However, in the meeting neither Pakistan nor WB raised the issue of funding for Pakistan's most important project of Diamer-Bhasha dam showing that the proposed project has been put on the back burner, the official who was part of the meeting noted.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-238917-WB-to-fund-Dasu-Dam-but-quiet-on-Bhasha>

# International Developments

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## **“United States, WAPDA sign agreement to rehabilitate Mangla Dam”**

*Associated Press of Pakistan, March 8, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The United States and WAPDA have signed a \$ 72 million project implementation agreement to refurbish and upgrade the Mangla Dam, the largest reservoir of the country, located in the Mirpur district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). “The rehabilitation will improve the operating capacity of the hydroelectric plant at Mangla Dam by 90 megawatts (MW), enough electricity for about 119,000 Pakistani households and a total amount of \$150 million is slated for the project, with \$ 72 million allotted for this initial phase”, an official communique issued by WAPDA stated on March 7. USTATED Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb and the Chairman of Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Syed Raghieb Abbas Shah signed the agreement at the offices of Advanced Engineering Associates International (AEA I), USTATED's implementing partner, it stated. “The work at Mangla builds upon efforts begun by the U.S in the 1960s, when the U.S. government funded the construction of Mangla Dam. The United States understands that Pakistan is facing an energy crisis and we are committed to doing our part to alleviate it,” Gottlieb stated.

Under the agreement, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USTATED) will fund the refurbishment of two generators and the modernization of ancillary equipment of the power house at the dam. He stated the project is part of the Federal Government's strategy to add low-cost electricity to the national grid to mitigate power shortages in the country.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=270232&Itemid=2](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=270232&Itemid=2)

## **“Healthcare: Germany pledges Rs140m for health schemes”**

*The Express Tribune, March 28, 2014*

Germany has pledged Rs140 million for supporting social health protection schemes in Gilgit-Baltistan, stated a press release. German Development Bank (KfW) Pakistan Office Head, Dr Anna-Christine Janke, Gilgit-Baltistan Health Secretary, Ali Rizvi and Economic Affairs Division Joint Secretary, Ali Reza Bhutta, signed an agreement to this effect. “We are glad to be able to support social health protection in Gilgit-Baltistan. Healthcare remains one of our main fields of development cooperation,” Dr Janke stated. The five-year project totals an amount of Rs1.4 billion, 90 per cent of which will be utilised in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The overall goal of the programme is to improve the public health by providing a safety net and reducing out-of-pocket payments for health expenditures.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688144/healthcare-germany-pledges-rs140m-for-health-schemes/>

## **“Pakistan desires to promote trade with United States: Jilani”**

*March 28, 2014*

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's ambassador to the United States Jalil Abbas Jilani stated his country desires to promote trade with the United States. Talking to journalists in Washington, he noted the expanded ties in trade and investment would help speed up Pakistan's efforts towards economic development. Ambassador Jilani stated Pakistan wants American investment in energy sector and looking forward to Washington's support for big projects like Diamer Bhasha Dam.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?newsid=256686&catname=Business>

# Other Developments

## **Zahrah Nasir, “Expressway to oblivion”**

*The Nation, March 10, 2014*

It is almost bizarre how quickly over Rs 12 billion worth of work has worn out so completely and begun falling to pieces. This being Pakistan, however, few bother to pay attention to the dangerous and blatant shortcomings of corrupt contractors repeatedly getting away with seriously sub-standard work. This is now the case with the much acclaimed Murree Expressway which is becoming increasingly dangerous, and for once, the cause of all this mortal risk does not lie entirely with the lorry drivers. Construction of the Islamabad Murree Expressway which is eventually supposed to reach all the way to Muzaffarabad in Azad, Jammu and Kashmir, began with much fanfare back in September 1999 and was completed in May 2008 while in regular use by local residents since at least 2007. It did not officially open until the then Prime Minister, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, got around to performing an expensive opening ceremony at the end of August 2011. Since then, it has (quite literally) gone downhill with some stretches subsiding to a shocking degree. The Expressway has never, by any stretch of the imagination, offered travellers safe passage; fast perhaps, but never safe.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/10-Mar-2014/expressway-to-oblivion>

## **“Avalanche kills four Pakistani soldiers: military”**

*March 12, 2014*

At least four soldiers were killed when an avalanche struck a base camp in northern Pakistan, the military stated on March 12. The incident happened in the snow-covered Astore area which falls in the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, also claimed by India as part of the disputed Kashmir region. "At least 26 soldiers came under a huge snow slide on March 11

night near Astore. Despite extreme weather hazard, 22 soldiers were evacuated through heroic efforts while four soldiers embraced Shahadat (martyrdom)," the military stated in a statement. Snow slides in Astore and surrounding areas are common. At least 140 soldiers were buried two years ago by an avalanche at the high-altitude Gayari base. The base sits just below the Siachen Glacier, known as the "world's highest battlefield", where Pakistani and Indian troops have faced off in extreme conditions since the 1980s.

[http://www.thenewage.co.za/120827-1020-53-Avalanche\\_kills\\_four\\_Pakistani\\_soldiers\\_military](http://www.thenewage.co.za/120827-1020-53-Avalanche_kills_four_Pakistani_soldiers_military)

## **“Landslide near Kohala: Four days on, AJK remains cut off from Rawalpindi”**

*The Express Tribune, March 28, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Four days on, traffic between Rawalpindi and Muzaffarabad remained suspended on March 27 after a massive landslide blocked the road near Kohala. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) roads and communication department has failed to clear the damaged road near Kohala, some 30 kilometres ahead, leaving Muzaffarabad cut off from the rest of the country. The closure has left people in the area with no option but to ascend the high peaks in the area to get wherever they are going. "I had to walk for 70 minutes to reach Muzaffarabad. I don't know why the government is not using machines to remove the debris," stated Muhammad Hanif, a local. Another man, Haroon Raja, stated it was negligent of the authorities to leave the road blocked for so long. An elderly man, Zaman Khan, was carrying a bag of flour on his shoulder. He demanded that the government constructed an underpass in the landslide-prone area to properly address the problem.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688131/landslide-near-kohala-four-days-on-ajk-remains-cut-off-from-rawalpindi-ajk-bank-to-provide-loans-to-farmers/>

### **“Karakoram festival begins”**

*The News, March 29, 2014*

LAHORE: Three-day Karakoram Festival began on March 28 at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) to showcase diverse cultural, heritage and tourism attractions of Gilgit-Baltistan. The social, economic and environmental development (Seed) project under the framework of Pakistan-Italy Debt Swap Agreement in collaboration with the LCCI and Tourism Development Corporation Punjab organised the gala. Provincial Minister for Industries Chaudhry Muhammad Shafiq and LCCI President Engineer Sohail Lashari jointly inaugurated it.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-240819-Karakoram-festival-begins>

### **“SOS: The last standing trees”**

*The Frontier Post, March 29, 2014*

Mass scale deforestation especially in Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and Gilgit Baltistan appears to be the only main activity going with maximum pace. The respective Governments, it appears are either shareholders or surrendered to the famous timber mafia who have reduced the forest cover of our dear homeland from 18% to only 2.5% thus increasing several risks including landslides, flash floods and threatening wildlife habitat and glaciers. Total silence of authorities on such a huge national loss is beyond understanding. While traveling on KKH, you only see thousands and thousands of trees logged by the roadside. The terrible view of trees massacre starts from Kohistan District of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and continues up to the end of Diamer District in Gilgit Baltistan. Forests that were visible only a couple of years back have vanished. Same is the situation in Kaghan, Naran and Babusar valleys once famous for the thick forests and now been devoid of the precious national treasure. Deforestation has scaled up after the devolution and there is no check or control of authorities including the so called 'Conservator of Forests' who have been only acting as B team of the most powerful timber mafia.

<http://thefrontierpost.com/article/85455/SOS-The-last-standing-trees/>

### **“Pak-India speakers stress new vigour for peace”**

*The Nation, March 20, 2014*

MIRPUR: The participants of 'Delhi Dialogue' agreed that renewed vigour is required towards resuming the composite dialogues between Pakistan and India, according to a report from across the Line of Control. The dialogues brought together senior journalists, policy experts, academics, advocates, former military officials and diplomats from India and Pakistan to discuss a wide range of outstanding issues between both countries, the report stated. Entering its fourth year, the dialogue is part of an India-Pakistan Track II diplomacy initiative by the Jinnah Institute and the Centre for Dialogue and Reconstruction, which seeks to promote peace between the two neighbouring countries through constructive engagement and dialogue.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/20-Mar-2014/pak-india-speakers-stress-new-vigour-for-peace>

### **“Spring is here: G-B celebrates spring with Navroze festival”**

*The Express Tribune, March 22, 2014*

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) joined others around the world in celebrating the spring festival of Navroze on March 21. A Persian tradition that dates back 3,000 years, Navroze also ushers in the New Year for many and people commemorate this day by sowing plants and engaging in various community activities such as sports, dancing and feasting. To mark the end of the region's long winter, some families shaved the heads of their newborns. “This is a renewal and appreciation of age-old values of love, harmony and brotherhood,” stated Shakeel Khan, a resident of Ghizer Valley. In Baltistan, a traditional polo match was held between two teams at Skardu's grounds where food stalls were also set up for spectators.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/685661/spring-is-here-g-b-celebrates-spring-with-navroze-festival/>

# 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:** Pir Karam Ali Shah

**Chief Minister G-B:** Syed Mehdi Shah

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

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

**Disclaimer**

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

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