

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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• Political Developments

Two-nation Theory as Important Today as in 1947: AJK President
Centre Blamed for Economic Woes of GB People
Protests in Muzaffarabad Against India-appointed Interlocutor's Visit to Held Kashmir
Deprived People of Gilgit-Baltistan Seek Their CPEC Share
AJK Offers Jobs to LoC Firing Victims
Kashmiris Hold Anti-Pak Protests Against Enforced Disappearances in PoK
GB People Continue Agitation Against Levy of Taxes
Pakistan Stops Bid to Include Diamer-Bhasha Dam in CPEC

• Economic Developments

\$36.45m IFAD Loan for Azad Jammu and Kashmir
Centre to Give Rs100b for Development of Province: GB CM

• International Developments

AJK President Vows to Continue Support for Kashmir Cause

• Other Developments

Gilgit Baltistan has Strategic Importance in CPEC Route

• Urdu Media

Gilgit-Baltistan's Demands Regarding CPEC Should be Considered
Ending Income Tax Policy not Good for the Region, Opposition Leader





Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Even as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is gradually rolling out, there is widespread skepticism amongst people of Gilgit Baltistan regarding their actual stakes in the multibillion connectivity project. Gilgit Baltistan region, which forms the sole land link between China and Pakistan, is still struggling to figure out its role and future potential vis a vis the project. A look at reports, some of which are included in the current issue, indicate a heightened sense of insecurity regarding Gilgit Baltistan's prospects as far as CPEC is concerned. There has been a growing demand to give due credit to the centrality of Gilgit Baltistan region in the broader scheme of things concerning CPEC. The region lacks a constitutional identity and since 1947, it has been ruled by political orders that are provisional in nature. Lack of political rights and a definitive constitutional identity has instilled a sense of deep pessimism amongst local population. Now with the CPEC coming up without any concrete roadmap for the region in terms of infrastructural and development projects, it appears to be further aggravating the frustration of the people in the region. Despite being of critical geographical significance to the China-Pakistan strategic partnership, the region is invariably neglected and, has therefore, caused heightened apprehensions across the local population. Meanwhile, Gilgit Baltistan legislators have also resisted Islamabad's undue interference in the affairs of the region.

Some of the reports included in this issue highlight how Pakistan is unrelentingly staging false propaganda against India on the Kashmir issue. This is part of a dubious manipulative attempt to malign India and falsely accuse it of committing human rights violations. While there is no material evidence to support Pakistan's unfounded claims towards indicting India, there is an urgent need for us to think in terms of formulating a calibrated approach to undermine such efforts made by Pakistan all around, including at international forums.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Altat Hamid Rao, “NJHP allocation up to Rs 5.23b”

Pakistan Observer, November 1, 2017

Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Lt Gen (Retired) Muzammil Hussain, along with Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) Chief Executive Officer, had a meeting with Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan to review the long awaited commissioning of 969-Megawatt Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project, it was officially stated on October 30. The AJK Prime Minister was briefed on the successful turnaround of the project highlighting that the project will add significant share of hydel electricity in the national grid of about five billion kilowatt hours (units) and revenue of Rs. 50 billion annually, WAPDA sources later told media. Significance of the Project in the context of Indus Water Treaty and Indian design of creating water shortage by illegal storage was discussed. AJK Prime Minister appreciated the pace of work as well as WAPDA’s support in all the community development programmes and emphasized that WAPDA and AJK Community Development Department should complete the ongoing project at a fast pace.

<https://pakobserver.net/njhp-allocation-rs-5-23b/>

“President urges investors to tap AJK potential”

The Nation, November 1, 2017

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan stated on October 31 that there were huge investment opportunities in AJK especially in the telecommunication sector. The president expressed these views in a meeting with a delegation of top officials from Telenor Pakistan as they called on him under the leadership of CEO and president of Telenor

Pakistan Irfan Wahab Khan, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Kamal Ahmad, Director Regulatory Affairs Abdul Mubeen and Director Public & Government Affairs Raza Zulfiqar. The delegation apprised the president that Telenor being the biggest European investor in Pakistan with an investment portfolio of over \$ 3.5 billion is the pioneer in mobile banking and currently holds the largest share in the mobile-banking sector in Pakistan. The president was informed that Telenor looks forward to diversifying its products and outreach to the users in AJK. They expressed their interest in extending similar services in Azad Jammu Kashmir. Universities in AJK will benefit greatly from industry-based liaison with leading organisations, allowing a platform for students in interacting with industry leaders, stated the president. He stated that the government was striving to provide access to quality education, introduce new development projects, especially in the infrastructure, health, energy production, mineral extraction and agriculture. The Mansehra-Muzaffarabad-Mirpur Expressway will help connect almost all the divisions of AJK and the newly planned Mirpur Industrial Zone-under the CPEC Project- with the main artery of the CPEC route, leading to the economic growth of the region, he further noted.

<https://nation.com.pk/01-Nov-2017/president-urges-investors-to-tap-ajk-potential>

“Refugees are our brethren, their settlement is our priority: PM AJK”

Pakistan Observer, November 1, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PM AJK) Raja Farooq Haider Khan chaired a meeting regarding resettlement and rehabilitation of Refugees based in Pakistan and Refugees since 1989 on October 31. It was decided in the meeting that work on provision of basic facilities including sewerage, link corridors and water supply should be started within a month in

refugee colonies. In this concern, a committee was also made headed by Minister Rehabilitation Nasir Dar; issues of fake state subjects, acquisition and allotment of land for graveyards and colonies ought to be resolved by this committee. Minister for food Syed Shaukat Shah and Member Assembly Ahmed Raza Qadri are also part of this rehabilitation committee. Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) Fayyaz Ahmed Abbasi, Secretary Local government, Commissioner Rehabilitation, DG local government and rural development including Project director also attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister stated, "Refugees of Indian occupied Kashmir are our brethren, they are sons of soil and their settlement should be in our priority." He reiterated that it is our responsibility to provide basic necessities to refugees and we will fulfil our commitment.

<https://pakobserver.net/refugees-brethren-settlement-priority-pm-ajk/>

"Govt focuses for new state policies: Farooq"

Pakistan Observer, November 1, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PM AJK) Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that Government of AJK is focused to plan new policies for the advancement of quality education; we are working for the establishment of strong justice system for public. Prime Minister expressed these views on condolence reference commemorated in remembrance of Ex- member legislative assembly Late Ch. Muhammad Abdullah on October 30. Prime Minister stated that Muhammad Abdullah served for the development of the region.

<https://pakobserver.net/govt-focuses-new-state-policies-farooq/>

Reema Shaukat, "GB: Unreachable Indian dream"

Pakistan Observer, November 1, 2017

It all started with PM Modi's open support for the people of Gilgit Baltistan. Yes Modi spoke about people of Pakistan and appeared so worried with a

thought that he can be a liberator. Such concerns were publicly made during Indian Independence Day speech of 2016, where he stated "The people of Balochistan, the people of Gilgit, the people of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir have thanked me in such a manner, from places that I have never been and never had a chance to meet, they have sent wishes to the people of India and thanked us. I am grateful to them." According to India, political culture is absent in GB and grievances can be seen from local newspapers. A similar strategy India tries to adopt for Balochistan where it says that people of Balochistan want to be independent and part of India. Neither people of Balochistan nor Gilgit-Baltistan have such sentiments of getting independent from Pakistan rather India backs separatist groups to disturb Pakistan's stability.

<https://pakobserver.net/gb-unreachable-indian-dream/>

"Timely completion of CPEC projects top priority of govt: AJK President"

Pakistan Observer, November 2, 2017

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan on November 2 stated that the governments of Azad Kashmir and Pakistan attached the highest importance to redress pending issues related to CPEC projects. While taking to Qin Quobin, CEO and Mr. NA Zuberi, COO, China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC) who called on him on November 2, the President stated that the issues related to timely payment for generated and supplied electricity, taxation and land acquisition were being resolved on a priority basis. Sardar Masood Khan stated that CTGC had brought about a breakthrough in hydropower generation by building a dam of the magnitude of 22500 MW in Three Gorges in China. The CTGC is now implementing various hydro-power projects in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. Qin Qoubin stated that the Karot Hydro-power (720 MW) and the Kohala Hydro-power Project will be completed by 2021 and 2024 respectively. "China Three Gorges Cooperation would meet all the timelines with speed and precision", noted Qoubin. The President thanked the cooperation and its leadership for its diligence and noted that the Karot and Kohala Power Projects will

accelerate the economic progress and produce spare electricity which would be contributed to Pakistan's National grid. Qin also stated that the cooperation would also move to work on another project namely the 640 MW Hydro-power project at Maal on River Jhelum.

<https://pakobserver.net/timely-completion-cpec-projects-top-priority-govt-ajk-president/>

“Establishment of new constituencies in State is inevitable, says PM AJK”

Pakistan Observer, November 3, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PM AJK) Raja Farooq Haider Khan declared to make new constituencies in Azad Kashmir after amendments in constitution besides declaring up gradation of Rawalakot Jail to Central Jail level and establishment of overseas investment board for Diaspora. These announcements were made by Prime Minister on his formal tour of different constituencies in Poonch division on November 2. Ministers of State Ch. Muhammad Aziz, Dr. Najeeb Naqi, Member AJK Council Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi, Sardar Sayyab Khalid and others accompanied the Prime Minister. While addressing public gatherings, Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that creation of new constituencies in Neelum, Kotli and Kahota including Rawalkot is inevitable. Talking on the tourism feature in Poonch division, Prime Minister stated, “Tourism corridor in Rawalakot will enhance attractions; Banjosa Lake would be interconnected to Manshera, Muzaffarabad to Mirpur (MMM) Express way.” Prime Minister reiterated that all necessary measures will be taken to boost tourism even during winters.

<https://pakobserver.net/establishment-new-constituencies-state-inevitable-says-pm-ajk/>

“We support Nawaz Sharif: Farooq”

Pakistan Observer, November 4, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that AJK government will form new constituencies on the basis of demographic situation. He also stated that we will not negotiate on

equal distribution of development funds in all constituencies. While addressing to massive public gathering as chief guest on November 3, Prime Minister stated that people of Poonch sacrificed for liberation and as a result, we are living in an independent territory. Ex. Minister AJK Sardar Tahir Anwar presided over the occasion. Meanwhile, Ministers of State Ch. Muhammad Aziz, Dr. Najeeb Naqi and other party leaders also addressed the gathering.

<https://pakobserver.net/support-nawaz-sharif-farooq/>

“CPEC promises prosperity, peace for GB people”

Dawn, November 4, 2017

Speakers at a conference on November 3 called for creating awareness among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan about the opportunities promised by the multibillion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project for them. They, however, expressed fear that smoke from traffic of CPEC passing through GB would destroy the natural environment of the region, and demanded redressal of the environmental degradation issues before operationalisation of the project. The conference titled ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor – Prospects and Opportunities for Gilgit-Baltistan, was held at the Karakoram International University's (KIU) main campus in Gilgit. It was organised by the Centre for Research on CPEC at the KIU, the Centre of Excellence on CPEC Islamabad and Pakistan Customs and Higher Education Commission. Speaking on the occasion, Hasan Dawood, Project Director CPEC Cell, noted nine economic zones were being established under CPEC in the country, adding Maqpoondas had been identified for establishing a CPEC economic zone in GB. “At Maqpoondas fruit processing, minerals cutting and polishing centres, iron and steel industries would be established, he also stated. Mr Dawood added by noting KKH expansion, building of Gilgit-Chitral road, and establishment of Phandar hydropower project in Ghizer, KIU hydropower project in Gilgit, Diamer-Bhasha Dam and China-Pakistan optical fiber project were being executed under CPEC. GB customs collector Ali Raza

stated time limit for clearing containers at Sust dry port should be decreased. He also demanded to keep the Khunjerab border open throughout the year. Rani Atiqa Ghazanfar, member of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly, stated that confusion and ambiguity prevailed among GB people, based on a narrative created by pessimists who were unable to see direct and indirect benefits of CPEC.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368327/cpec-promises-prosperity-peace-for-gb-people>

“Bhasha Dam preliminary work completed: Awais”

The Nation, November 4, 2017

Federal Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari was informed that preliminary work, on Bhasha Dam, including model village has been completed. Federal Minister for Power directed that all the issues which create impediments in the expeditious completion of the project would amicably be resolved so that the people of both areas KP and GB would be benefitted in the longer run. Awais Leghari expressed these views while chairing a meeting of the Committee to resolve the issues in the completion of Diamer Bhasha Dam project. Besides, Minister of Water Resources, Secretary Water resources, Secretary Power Division, Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other high officials also attended the meeting. During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given to Federal Minister Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari regarding the project. He was informed that preliminary work including model village has been completed. All stakeholders affirmed that no compromise will be made for the timely completion of this project as per the recommendations of Fact Findings Committee and they affirmed their commitment that every possible endeavours will be ensured for the completion of this productive project as it will flourish the agricultural and industrial needs of KP and Gilgit-Baltistan, in a purposeful manner, moreover, it will help to gratify the growing demands of energy in KP and GB.

<https://nation.com.pk/04-Nov-2017/bhasha-dam-preliminary-work-completed-awais>

“Two-nation theory as important today as in 1947: AJK president”

Pakistan Today, November 4, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan stated on November 4 that the two-nation theory is as important today as it was in 1947. Addressing a conference to celebrate works and contribution of Mujaddid Alf Sani, organised by Alami Idara Tanzeem-ul-Islam, the AJK president stated that Mujaddid Alf Sani had led the first wave of Islamic renaissance in South Asia, thus laying the foundation for the two-nation theory. He also noted the people of AJK were being punished by Indian zealots because of their adherence to the two-nation theory.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/11/04/two-nation-theory-as-important-today-as-in-1947-ajk-president/>

“Cross-LoC Kashmir trade to resume next week”

Pakistan Today, November 5, 2017

After remaining suspended for nearly four months, cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade between Indian Jammu & Kashmir and Azad Jammu and Kashmir via Poonch-Rawalkote road is expected to resume next week, a government official informed. The decision to resume the suspended travel and trade was taken at a meeting between officials of the two sides near the LoC on November 3, custodian of LoC trade (Poonch), Mohammad Tanveer told Kashmiri media. Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir have sought a meeting with their counterparts from Azad Kashmir to discuss the modalities for resumption of the cross-LoC travel and trade, which was disrupted due to cross-border shelling. While the bus service connecting the divided parts of Kashmir was suspended on July 10, the trade, which takes place four days a week beginning on November 7, also remains suspended since July 11. According to official figures, goods worth Rs 1,500 crore have been traded since the start of the facility in 2008.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/11/05/cross-loc-kashmir-trade-to-resume-next-week/>

“Centre blamed for economic woes of GB people”

Dawn, November 6, 2017

Speakers at a multiparty conference held Islamabad responsible for keeping the people of Gilgit-Baltistan economically backward for last seven decades. The conference organised by Astore Supreme Council, a local organisation, was titled ‘deprivation of GB people after seven decades of independence’. Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, GB chapter leader and former GB Supreme Appellate Court judge Syed Jaffar Shah stated that Islamabad was responsible for the sufferings of the GB people since the region got liberation seven decades ago. He claimed that not a single project had been identified under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project in GB. “We do not oppose the project, but only demand fair share in it and protection of our natural environment,” he stated. Anayatullah Shumali, a political leader, stated GB people had been struggling for their rights, but to no avail. Dr Ghulam Abbas, convener of Astore Supreme Council, stated GB lacked an independent judicial system. “Retired or judges on contract are appointed in GB higher courts, which is nowhere to be found in the country,” he lamented. He further stated Supreme Court of Pakistan had in 1999 granted the GB people all administrative, judicial and political rights till decision of the Kashmir dispute. However, the apex court’s directives have not been implemented to date.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368689/centre-blamed-for-economic-woes-of-gb-people>

“Protests in Muzaffarabad against India-appointed interlocutor’s visit to held Kashmir”

Dawn, November 6, 2017

Dozens of Kashmiri activists staged an anti-India rally in the capital of Azad Kashmir on November 6, as India’s special interlocutor for the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir arrived in Srinagar on a five-day visit “to hold talks with all the stakeholders”. The rally, which began from Burhan Wani Chowk and ended near Garhipan, was organised by Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu Kashmir (PHJK), an organisation

of post-1990 migrants from Jammu & Kashmir. “India should acknowledge Kashmir as a disputed territory and hold tripartite talks,” read a banner carried by the rally’s participants. The protesters in Muzaffarabad maintained that the appointment of a new interlocutor was a ploy to weaken the ongoing anti-India movement in Kashmir. Pakistan People’s Party leader Shaukat Javed Mir stated no one was disinclined to hold dialogue, provided that the process was meant to be result-oriented and included all three parties to the dispute.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368783>

MA Mir, “Bus service between two halves of Kashmir resumes after 4-month hiatus”

The Express Tribune, November 6, 2017

A bus service between two halves of the Himalayan state of Kashmir resumed on November 6 after a hiatus of four months – much to the joy of divided families. The bus service between Rawalakot, in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Poonch, in Indian Jammu and Kashmir, was suspended due to skirmishes between Pakistani and Indian border guards on the Line of Control (LoC). “The Rawalakot-Poonch cross-LoC bus service resumed on Monday (November 6),” Colonel (retd) Shahid, the travel and trade facilitation officer (TTFO), confirmed. Travel and Trade Authority (TATA) official Sardar Nayeem and other district administration officials saw off the bus. The cross-LoC Rawalkot-Poonch bus service was suspended on July 10 following repeated ceasefire violations. “Since then no bus had crossed the LoC,” Col (retd) Shahid noted.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1551403/3-bus-service-two-halves-kashmir-resumes-4-month-hiatus/>

“Deprived people of Gilgit-Baltistan seek their CPEC share”

Business Standard, November 7, 2017

The multi-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which has repeatedly been touted as the game

changer for the Pakistan economy by Islamabad, is in reality, a project being accomplished against the agonies and sufferings of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The CPEC, which traverses through the heart of disputed territory of Gilgit Baltistan, has a myriad of under construction projects and various others lined up in the territory of Gilgit Baltistan but the oppressive government of Pakistan has not given even an iota of share to the locals. Land was seized and an ample compensation amount was promised to the locals. However, they have not been provided even a penny till now. Malik Zafar, a local resident, stated, “We want all what we deserve; don’t we have kids? Don’t we want to secure our future? Are we not humans? Are we animals? They have been spreading lies. Tell me one region except Pakistan which is getting benefitted from the project. Interests of local people have not been taken into account. Whatever they have been doing is in their interest. Tell me one region of Gilgit- Baltistan which is getting benefit because of the (CPEC) project? They have given us nothing on Diامر Bhasha Dam project, we have not been given royalty in it. Our primary demand is that the region should be getting complete royalty in the project.” Reasonable voices have been muzzled by the high-handed measures of the government and rest of the common people have been deceived by making large claims through media channels.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/deprived-people-of-gilgit-baltistan-seek-their-cpec-share-117110700399_1.html

Iqbal Khan, “Indian interference in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Observer, November 7, 2017

After a humiliating setback in Doklam to disrupt One Belt One Road (OBOR), India has shifted its focus on impeding China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by fomenting unrest in Gilgit- Baltistan (GB). Importance of GB territory shot up in 1984 with the opening of the Karakoram Highway and this region’s population came to be more connected with mainland Pakistan. With the improvement in connectivity, local population availed opportunities of getting educated

in the rest of Pakistan. Improved connectivity also allowed broader socio-political development. Political parties of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir were able to setup local branches, and raise political awareness in the region. Root-taking by these political entities have played a laudable role in organizing a movement for democratic rights among the residents of GB. In 2016, first trade convoy under the CPEC banner moved from Kashgar to Gwadar. The trade convoy departed from Kashgar on October 29, and reached Gwadar on November 12. The CPEC is helping in integrating South Asia with Central Asia and offers ample opportunities for the people in these regions and the investors from all over the world. The prosperity of the people of Pakistan in general and wellbeing of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir runs counter to the Indian strategy.

<https://pakobserver.net/indian-interference-gilgit-baltistan/>

“NAB GB arrests four forest officials”

The Nation, November 8, 2017

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Gilgit-Baltistan on November 7 arrested four forest officials for their alleged involvement in corruption. According to a NAB official, the officials were accused of transporting illegally cut timber to other parts of the country in 2013 which caused over Rs225 million losses to the national exchequer. A local accountability court handed over the arrested officials to the NAB for a 14-day physical remand. Retired and serving forest officials are included among those arrested. According to their details, Zamarud Khan, a retired Gilgit conservator, Qadar Dan, a retired Diامر forest officer, Saleem Khan, divisional forest officer Astore, and Faridullah superintendent forest department Gilgit-Baltistan are among the arrested officials. They were booked in three different cases of illegally transporting cut timber during the timber policy 2013 and in this regard, interrogations were undertaken. It is expected that more officials and transporters may be arrested on the basis of further interrogation.

<https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2017/nab-gb-arrests-four-forest-officials>

“Tourism sector flourishing day by day in GB: CM Gilgit-Baltistan”

Such TV, November 8, 2017

Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted that due to prudent policies of the government, tourism sector is flourishing day by day in Gilgit-Baltistan. This he noted while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Tourism department stall that was set up in World Trade Market expo in London. He stated that due to durable peace in Area over fifteen lac national as well as international tourists visited Gilgit-Baltistan in the current seasons. Chief Minister Media cell reported that eight tour operators from Gilgit-Baltistan are participating in the three-day long expo. Pakistan’s High Commissioner based at London Syed Ibne Abbas, secretary tourism, Waqir Ali Khan and others participated.

<https://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan/item/62231-tourism-sector-flourishing-day-by-day-in-gb.html>

“Dialogue on Kashmir must be constructive: Masood Khan”

The Nation, November 9, 2017

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan on November 8 stated that the people and Government of Pakistan have always desired to engage in a constructive and meaningful dialogue for the amicable and peaceful resolution of all the outstanding issue including longstanding Kashmir issue. Speaker Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly called on him on November 8. The two leaders discussed various matters relating to legislation and administration in AJK. Sardar Masood noted that India through an impartial mediator must engage with Hurriyat leaders for the apt resolution of the dispute.

<https://nation.com.pk/09-Nov-2017/dialogue-on-kashmir-must-be-constructive-masood-khan>

“AJK a treasure trove of gems, minerals: Masood”

The Express Tribune, November 9, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is a treasure trove

of minerals and precious stones, stated that AJK President Sardar Masood Khan talking to Pakistan Stone Development Company (PSDC) CEO, Zahid Maqsood Sheikh who called on him on November 8. The president noted that in addition to the proven reserves of marble and granite other mineral resources include copper, gold, silver and coal, as well as precious stones like rubies, sapphire and tourmaline. However, it requires massive investment in infrastructure, modern machinery, training and craftsmanship to tap into the full potential of gems and mineral sector of AJK, he stated. “Geological surveys had indicated huge reserves of minerals and precious stones, but due to the lack of resources and indifferent planning in the past we have not been able to realise the full potential of these natural resources,” he also stated. Sheikh stated that PSDC was keen to partner with the Azad Kashmir Mineral and Industries Corporation, as well as other stakeholders for the development of the extractive industry in Azad Kashmir. “The emphasis”, he noted, “will be on local ownership.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1553435/1-ajk-treasure-trove-gems-minerals-masood/>

“AJK offers jobs to LoC firing victims”

The Express Tribune, November 11, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Farooq Haider on November 10 announced special quota for victims of LoC firing in different government departments. Talking to victims of Indian firing near LoC at Chari Kot Sector while visiting the area, he stated that heirs of martyrs of LoC firing, civilians as well as military personnel would be accommodated in government institutions on special quota. He also stated the compensation of heirs of martyrs and injured would also be increased and victims of LoC firing would be paid an amount for the construction of concrete bunkers for their safety, he added. He further stated that quality highways are being constructed in all 13 constituencies near LoC to facilitate the people of the area.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1555235/1-ajk-offers-jobs-loc-firing-victims/>

“Landowners may get compensation”

The Express Tribune, November 11, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Acting Chief Minister Akbar Taban stated on November 9 that the government will remove all concerns of land owners and pay them the required compensation before establishment of Economic Zone at Maqpoondas. Talking to the media people, the acting CM noted that the establishment of economic zone would help generate employment opportunities besides promoting industrialisation and business activities. Taban stated those owners whose land was required for the economic zone would be given proper compensation and all concerns and reservations of landless people would also be removed.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1555248/1-landowners-may-get-compensation/>

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit-Baltistan ignoring its education messiah”

The Express Tribune, November 12, 2017

They say someone does not officially exist till the government recognises them, even if there are thousands who have benefitted from their existence. Salima Begum is one such individual. Despite having received recognition from the brightest minds in her field, the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government seemingly has little interest in the teacher’s achievements. A resident of G-B, Salima was awarded a medal by the Global Teacher Prize platform on March 19 earlier this year for her outstanding contributions to the field of education in the region. She secured the medal after beating off stiff competition from 20,000 teachers from 179 countries around the world. Her achievement, however, came just days after G-B Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman gloated over his government’s performance, claiming that steps were being taken to encourage teachers to combat illiteracy in the region.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1556632/1-gilgit-baltistan-ignoring-education-messiah/>

“Kashmiris hold anti-Pak protests against enforced disappearances in PoK”

Outlook India, November 12, 2017

The United Kashmir People’s National Party (UKPNP) held a series of demonstrations and convention against the kidnapping of political activists from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). People held banners that noted: “Stop abductions and enforced disappearances in so-called Azad Kashmir,” and carried out a rally in Rawalpindi. They shouted slogans for freedom from Pakistan and also asked China to leave their occupied territory. A convention was also held at the Rawalpindi Press Club, wherein the speakers raised several issues concerning the people of PoK. In addition to this, a protest rally was organised in Muzaffarabad city of the PoK. People chanted anti-Pakistan slogans and demanded an end to forceful occupation of the PoK and Gilgit Baltistan. They also called for an immediate withdrawal of Pakistani forces from their territory as per the United Nations Security Council resolution. The residents of the PoK have been facing numerous issues as they allege they are treated as second-class citizens under the Pakistani occupation since 1947. In recent days, several incidents have been reported where the Pakistani security forces kidnapped and tortured the political activists, especially the youth, who raised a voice against the Pakistani occupation and exploitation of their natural resources.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/kashmiris-hold-antipak-protests-against-enforced-disappearances-in-pok/1186887>

Sabah, “Siraj criticises government’s Kashmir policy”

The News, November 13, 2017

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) ameer Senator Sirajul Haq stated that Kashmiris were laying down their lives for Pakistan, but the rulers had not framed a state policy on Kashmir so far. Addressing the 44th annual general body of the JI Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan, the JI chief noted Kashmiris had proved their psychological freedom by associating

themselves with the freedom struggle and soon they would win geographical freedom as well. Chief of the JI Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter, Dr Khalid Mehmud, chairman Muttahida Jihad Council, Syed Salahuddin, and Convener Hurriyat Conference, Ghulam Muhammad Safi also spoke on the occasion. Sirajul Haq noted every Pakistani ruler who had betrayed the Kashmiris could not escape an evil end. He also stated Kashmir was the jugular vein of Pakistan but the Kashmiris could not win freedom so far only due to weak policies of Islamabad. The JI chief noted that Pakistan was green only because of the rivers flowing from Kashmir. He stated that if this water was blocked, Punjab would turn into a desert and millions of people would be compelled to migrate again.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/243876-Siraj-criticises-governments-Kashmir-policy>

“GB people continue agitation against levy of taxes”

Dawn, November 14, 2017

Demonstrations against the federal government’s levy of taxes on the people of Gilgit-Baltistan without first determining the constitutional status of the region continued on November 13. Markets and business centres in major towns remained closed and attendance in private and government offices, educational institutions was thin because of non-availability of transport on roads. The business activity between Pakistan and China at the Sust dry port also remained suspended. Lawyers across the region boycotted courts in solidarity with the protesters who vowed to continue with the agitation till their demands were implemented. The protest call was given jointly by GB Markazi Anjuman-i-Tajran, lawyers and traders’ bodies, contractors, hotel and petrol pumps associations, and GB Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Demonstrations were staged in Gilgit, Diamer, Skardu and Ghizer districts participated by political and civil society activists and traders. The protesters were chanting slogans against the federal and the GB governments for imposing withholding, income and other taxes on local people without declaring GB as a constitutional part of

Pakistan. The protesters were holding banners and placards inscribed with slogans in favour of their demands. Speaking at a protest meeting, traders’ body president, Gilgit chapter, Mohammad Ibrahim, and others alleged that the federal and the GB governments had been deceiving the people.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370328>

Shahbaz Rana, “Pakistan stops bid to include Diamer-Bhasha Dam in CPEC”

The Express Tribune, November 15, 2017

Pakistan has withdrawn its request to include the \$14-billion Diamer-Bhasha Dam in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework after Beijing placed strict conditions including ownership of the project, noted Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman Muzammil Hussain on November 14. “Chinese conditions for financing the Diamer-Bhasha Dam were not doable and against our interests,” stated Hussain while briefing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on the status of the mega water and power project. He noted the Chinese conditions were about taking ownership of the project, operation and maintenance cost and securitisation of the Diamer-Bhasha project by pledging another operational dam. These conditions were unacceptable, therefore, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi approved a summary to finance the dam from the country’s own resources, he noted. The issue of excluding the Diamer-Bhasha Dam from the CPEC framework also featured in the Cabinet Committee on CPEC. The Wapda chairman and the water resources secretary informed the premier that the only way out was to fund the much-delayed project from domestic resources. The sixth meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) – the highest decision-making body of CPEC – had agreed to establish a mechanism to develop hydroelectric power projects along the northern side of the Indus River including the Diamer-Bhasha project, according to minutes of the deliberations.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1558475/2-pakistan-stops-bid-include-diamer-bhasha-dam-cpec/>

“AJK Supreme Court restores education package”

Dawn, November 15, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Supreme Court on November 14 restored an “education package” which was introduced by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government in 2015 but was shelved by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) after coming to power in 2016. In 2015, the PPP government had upgraded over 500 educational institutions — from primary schools to inter-colleges — appointing teachers and initiating classes. However, the PML-N government constituted a cabinet committee to “review” the package — a decision challenged by the PPP in the High Court. Before the committee could submit its report, the government de-notified the package, following which the PPP filed an amended petition in the High Court. Disposing of the petition, the court empowered the government to take decisions on upgrading of schools according to suitability. Both the government and the PPP filed separate appeals against the court’s decision and the Supreme Court restored the package in April 2017 on the grounds that the cabinet did not enjoy powers to undo something enacted by the legislature.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370593>

Jamil Nagri, “Gilgit-Baltistan protesters demand withdrawal of taxes”

Dawn, November 16, 2017

The Gilgit-Baltistan Council on November 16 assured protesters that the federal government accepted their demands regarding rollback of taxes and a notification will be issued soon. After receiving the assurance, protesters have called off the sit-in in Gilgit and Skardu till November 23. However, they warned that they will resume their march towards Islamabad if their demands are not implemented. The assurance came on the third day of protests against levy of taxes as life across Gilgit-Baltistan came to a standstill. The protestors — with full support from Pakistan

Peoples Party, Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf and religious organisations — have decried levy of taxes without the determination of constitutional status of the region. The protest call was given jointly by GB Markazi Anjuman-i-Tajran, Awami Action Committee (AAC), GB Bar Council, GB Chamber of Commerce and Industry and GB Transport Association. Thousands of people belonging to different political parties, civil society organisations and trade unions took part in the sit-ins at Skardu’s Yadgar Chowk and Gilgit’s Gadibagh. All educational, legal, trade and business activities have remained suspended in 10 districts of the GB region including Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Nagar, Ghizer, Diamer, Astore, Shigar, Ghanche, Kharmang, with many local and foreign tourists facing hardships due to the shutdown.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370780>

“AJK PM alarmed at 38pc power line losses”

The Nation, November 17, 2017

Expressing grave concern over the increased line losses in Azad Kashmir, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan on November 16 stated that 38 percent power line losses in the State is an alarming state of affairs. ‘We need to overcome the electricity line losses as the incumbent government has focused on the promotion of hydroelectric power generation and tourism sectors in the State’, the Prime Minister expressed these views while addressing a public gathering after laying down the foundation stone of 14.4 megawatt Hydel Power Project in Jheeng, about 30kms away from the State’s metropolis the other day. Minister for Industries Mrs Noreen Arif, MLA Ch Shehzad and other party leaders were also present on the occasion. Farooq Haider stated that more job opportunities can only be created by focusing on Tourism. “Royalty on water usage charges agreement is expected at Rs1.10 that will boost the economy of State and this revenue will be incurred on different development projects within the State.”

<https://nation.com.pk/17-Nov-2017/ajk-pm-alarmed-at-38pc-power-line-losses>

“G-B Tax Issue: Traders postpone strike till Nov 23”

The Express Tribune, November 17, 2017

The traders union and All Parties Core Committee on November 16 postponed strike till November 23 following assurance by the members of G-B government regarding cancellation of Income Tax Act 2012. On this, the traders’ body announced ending of three-day shutter-down strike. This was decided during a meeting attended by G-B Minister Dr Iqbal Khan, MLA Aurangzaib Advocate, G-B CM’s special assistant Farooq Mir and government spokesman Faizullah Faiz, while traders were represented by Ashraf Khan, Arman Shah, Sultan Ali Khan and Wazir Akhlaq.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1560589/1-g-b-tax-issue-traders-postpone-strike-till-nov-23/>

“Govt policies attract over 1.2m tourists in GB”

Pakistan Observer, November 18, 2017

Governor Gilgit Baltistan, Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan stated that Gilgit Baltistan was an ideal place for tourism where more than 1.2million foreign and domestic tourists came last year owing to better security and goal oriented policies of PML-N Government. The Governor expressed these views while talking to a delegation of Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage, Islamabad led by Principal Information Officer (PIO), Muhammad Salim Baig at Governor Secretariat. The Governor noted that the arrival of such a large number of tourists to Gilgit Baltistan has clearly reflected the return of complete peace to the province, which was possible due to fool proof security and enhanced economic policies of the PML-N Government. In Gilgit Baltistan, he noted, the media sector has made great progress and become very active. He stated GB Govt strongly believed in freedom of media imperative for strengthening of democracy and democratic institutions in the country. The Governor noted that journalism was the fourth pillar of the state and journalists’ role is like a bridge between the government and people pertaining to education and

dissemination information among citizens. Like other sectors, he stated, journalism sector was also growing fast in the province evident from publishing of daily, weekly and monthly newspapers through which people are getting timely information about the country, regional and international issues.

<https://pakobserver.net/govt-policies-attract-1-2m-tourists-gb/>

“IIC establishes Milli Rabta Council in Azad Kashmir”

Pakistan Today, November 18, 2017

Chief Justice of Azad Jammu Kashmir Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Zia on November 18 administered the oath of central and the district bodies of the Milli Rabta Council, established by the Islamic Ideology Council (IIC). Islamic scholars from different schools of thought have been included in the newly-established council to promote religious and mutual unity with consensus in the state. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Justice Zia stated that the Milli Rabta Council has been formed under the passion to avoid differences and negative propaganda. “There are two main classes in our society – the political leadership and the religious scholars and the path of the rest of the society goes along with their thoughts and actions. So unity between these two can change the map of the society in a few years,” he stated. He further stated that Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider and his team expressed interest in establishing the council with sincerity, good faith and spirit.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/11/18/iic-establishes-milli-rabta-council-in-azad-kashmir/>

“AJK premier meets chief ministers”

The News, November 22, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider discussed matters of mutual interest on 21 with chief ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan, at the federal capital. The AJK briefed the Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervaiz Khattak

and GB Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman about the projects of Azad Kashmir. He also attended the seventh special meeting regarding CPEC. They discussed the country's political situation and Kashmir movement, noted a press release.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/247145-ajk-premier-meets-chief-ministers>

“Pakistan urged to show AJK as a model territory”

Daily Times, November 22, 2017

London-based Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) President Dr Nazir Gilani, who specializes in the jurisprudence of UN resolutions and Kashmir conflict, and Association for the Rights of People of J&K Chairman & Council of Islamic Ideology of Pakistan (CII) member Justice (r) Syed Hussain Manzoor Gilani were the chief speakers at the event. Other participants included former Police IG Dr Shoaib Suddle, former ambassador Qazi Humayun, senior journalists Syed Faisal Shakeel, Tarique Siyal, Amaad Khaliq, renowned human rights activist Tahira Abdullah, Zahoor Ahmed Mir. High Court of Jammu and Kashmir Srinagar Advocate Sabzar Bashir and Foreign Office spokesperson Muhammad Faisal were also in attendance. CRSS was represented by Executive Director Imtiaz Gul, Beyond Boundaries Track 1.5/II Project Director Aized Ali and Director Communications and Strategy Zeeshan Salahuddin. Imtiaz Gul welcomed all participants and let the floor open for discussion after brief introductory remarks about the workshop and chief guests.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/144756/pakistan-urged-show-ajk-model-territory/>

“GBLA asks centre to raise exports issue with China”

Dawn, November 23, 2017

The Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly on November 23 demanded of the federal government to persuade Chinese government to allow increase in export items from Pakistan through Khunjerab

Pass. The demand was made through a resolution that stated that people of Gilgit-Baltistan feared that business between the two countries under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would not benefit them if the volume of business remained the same. “Pakistan imports many items from the neighbouring country through Khunjerab Pass while no item is allowed to be exported through this route,” noted the resolution. It further stated that federal government should arrange agreement between China government and Gilgit-Baltistan government for free trade. The resolution was presented by PPP member Imran Nadeem Shigri.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372573/gbla-asks-centre-to-raise-exports-issue-with-china>

Murtaza Ali Shah, “Kashmir President says India using Hindutva groups to target Jammu Muslims”

Geo TV, November 23, 2017

The President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan stated that Indian authorities are paying money to extremist Hindutva groups and militias such as RSS in Kashmir's Jammu areas to kill local Muslim Kashmiris. In an interview, the AJK President stated that India is victimising Muslims of Jammu region by using local militant organisations who are being funded heavily. Indian authorities have formed the so-called village defence committees of militants. Arms, ammunition, and cash is given to militants to target local Muslims. The AJK President Sardar Masood Khan noted that India has increased violation across the Line of Control. He also stated that India used to mainly target Kashmiris across the LoC only, but now its reign of terror has reached to Jammu where it is using Hindu militant groups.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/169012-kashmir-president-says-india-using-hindutva-groups-to-target-jammu-muslims>

“GB lawmakers deplore Islamabad's ‘monopoly’ over their region”

Dawn, November 23, 2017

Members from both the treasury and opposition in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly on

November 22 assailed the federal government's 'monopoly' over the affairs of GB. The GBLA unanimously passed a resolution demanding recruitment of locals on the vacant posts in GB Council's secretariat in Islamabad. It rejected the recent advertisement issued by GB Council secretariat seeking applications from candidates belonging to all areas of the country to fill the vacancies.

The resolution, tabled by Parliamentary Secretary Aurangzeb Khan, demanded re-advertisement of the posts. Speaking on the matter in the house, ruling PML-N lawmaker Mohammad Amin also pointed out to the fact that outsiders had also been appointed on the vacant posts in the GB House Islamabad. If GB people are not given job quota in the educational institutions in other provinces of the country, then why candidates from outside are recruited on the posts of GB Council, he asked.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372363>

Wadood Mushtaq, "Malicious reporting damaged Kashmir cause: Masood Khan"

Dawn, November 23, 2017

President of Azad Kashmir Sardar Masood Ahmed Khan stated that misreporting of an event in London caused huge damage towards Kashmir's movement of liberation as Indian lobby used false reporting for its propaganda against Kashmiris. Speaking at an event alongside British Pakistani parliamentarians, the Azad Kashmir President expressed disappointment over deliberate false reporting about a charity event in which he participated as a chief guest. A private television channel reported that "Azad Kashmir President attended a Bollywood dance event on the day sic Kashmiris were martyred in Indian occupation Kashmir".

The AJK President stated that the private channel broke all ethics of journalism and tried to sell "masala" for ratings which only pleased Indian lobby and disappointed Kashmiris everywhere in the world. "This was the worst form of yellow journalism. The channel lied throughout and twisted the story to suit

its agenda. I was attending a charity event which was held to raise funds for poor children in Azad Kashmir."

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/247954-malicious-reporting-damaged-kashmir-cause-masood-khan>

Khaleeq Kiani, "Govt set to launch Neelum-Jhelum power project despite Wapda's lack of planning"

Dawn, November 27, 2017

The government is ready to launch the Rs515 billion Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project in February 2018, even though the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) is far from completing its basic requirements. This has unnerved key government institutions directly or indirectly which fear that technically and legally ill-planned launch of a strategic project could lead to an embarrassing repeat of the Nandipur power project. Sources noted that the executing agency of the project — Wapda — had still not applied to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) for tariff setting — a process that will take at least one month. In fact, it has yet to be decided whether Wapda as an authority should apply for the tariff as an umbrella organisation of many other projects or the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project Company (NJC) — a special purpose vehicle (SPV) — should file the tariff petition. On top of that, Wapda and NJC have also not concluded or entered into talks with the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) for signing of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) — a prerequisite for sale of electricity from any plant and its payment by the power purchaser.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373102/govt-set-to-launch-neelum-jhelum-power-project-in-feb>

"Govt to set up industrial zone in GB: CM"

The Nation, November 28, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-Ur-Rehman stated on November 27 that the provincial

government will set up an industrial zone in the area. Talking to Radio Pakistan, Chief Minister noted the project has been approved and survey is in progress. He further stated that 300 million rupees are being spent on the project, which on completion will promote cottage industry and fruit processing units

in the area. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would have a positive impact on the country as it would transform Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) into an investment haven, he mentioned.

<https://nation.com.pk/28-Nov-2017/govt-to-set-up-industrial-zone-in-gb-cm>

Economic Developments

Amin Ahmad, “\$36.45m IFAD loan for Azad Jammu and Kashmir”

Dawn, November 19, 2017

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will launch next year during the second phase of community development programme in Azad Jammu and Kashmir with a financing of \$36.45 million, official sources stated on November 18. The six-year programme is aimed at improving the livelihoods and incomes of 250,000 rural, poor households with the institutionalisation of community-driven development within the government development framework. The project has been submitted for approval to the IFAD Executive Board which is meeting in Rome on December 11. The project will be executed by the AJK planning and development department in collaboration with IFAD. The IFAD loan will be highly concessional which also includes grant in the amount of \$2.91m. The government will contribute \$62.40m while beneficiary contributions will amount to \$3.60m and AJK’s own Rural Support Programme’s (AJKRSP) \$2.49m. The entry point for the second phase of the programme is to leverage the government’s commitment to fully institutionalise a decentralised and bottom-up local development process in AJK. This is based on the successful IFAD-funded AJK Community Development Programme pilot, which introduced the concept of community-driven development (CDD), resulting in the establishment of over 4,000 community, village and local support organisations, and in AJKRSP.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371404>

“Centre to give Rs100b for development of province: GB CM”

Pakistan Today, November 30, 2017

Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister (CM) Hafeezur Rehman stated on November 29 that the federal government would give Rs100 billion for development of the province. He also stated that around Rs100 billion was being earmarked for GB by the federal government. He noted that the volume of direct and indirect taxes had touched about Rs5 billion mark. He stated this during a meeting with Special Communications Organisation (SPO) Director General Major General Amir Azeem Bajwa, who called on him at the CM Secretariat. The Chief Minister noted that complete abolishment of Income Tax Petition Act 2012 was not in the interest of the area, adding that documentation was compulsory to bring corruption under control. He also stated that due to Income Tax Petition Act 2012, the members of the provincial assembly were declaring their assets, which was not the case in the past. The Chief Minister further stated that telecommunication companies were collecting taxes from people, adding that diverting tax money towards public welfare was only made possible after the enactment of the tax act. He further stated that mega projects of Pakistan Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have been started in which national and multi-national companies were taking active part. These companies were paying taxes in other provinces and they have to pay taxes here in Gilgit Baltistan as well, he added.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/11/30/centre-to-give-rs100b-for-development-of-province-gb-cm/>

International Developments

“AJK president vows to continue support for Kashmir cause”

Daily Times, November 25, 2017

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Masood Khan on November 24 vowed to continue struggle through peaceful ways on all fronts, including the media. Talking to the media about his visit to the United Kingdom, he noted that his visit to United Kingdom was productive and successful.

“People of the UK and other country’s authorities must press India to resolve the core issue of Kashmir amicably. The UK was told that they had responsibilities for resolving the issue of Kashmir,” he stated. During his stay in UK, the President also addressed students and faculty at the University of Lancaster, the sixth in the top ranking universities of the UK, on the topic Global Governance and World Peace.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/146985/ajk-president-vows-continue-support-kashmir-cause/>

Other Developments

Faizan Ali Warraich, “Gilgit Baltistan has strategic importance in CPEC route”

The Nation, November 2, 2017

In the facade of exoticisation of Gilgit Baltistan, people of GB have become irrelevant and nobody talks about their rights, it is high time to open a discourse on strategic importance of GB with respect to billion dollars China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The speaker noted this at a panel discussion organized by Rotaract Club of Forman Christian College Lahore on ‘Strategic Importance of Gilgit Baltistan in China Pakistan Economic Corridor’. A large number of students from various departments attended the session. The session was moderated by Haidar Buluk. On the occasion, a mesmerizing musical performance was staged before a jam packed hall. Number of students hailing from Gilgit Baltistan danced on the folklore tunes. Zaigham Abbas, an expert on Gilgit Baltistan Affairs, stated there is a mindset in GB about

a social discourse that is much fractured as there is no representation of GB people in Senate and Parliament of Pakistan. Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009 gave more powers to GB council. HRCP report of 2016 stated that there were 189 suicides in GB. This needs to be put out in open that out of 50 memorandums under CPEC none was about GB, he noted. There has been a Haq Malkiyat movement (people’s rights movement) and for three days Karakorum Highway was closed but this was not covered in the mainstream media, he concluded. Dr Yaqoob Bangash, Assistant Professor at the Department of History FC College noted that it was important to know the history of Gilgit Baltistan in order to understand the current strategic importance of GB region with respect to CPEC.

<https://nation.com.pk/02-Nov-2017/gilgit-baltistan-has-strategic-importance-in-cpec-route>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“G-B is not a part of Kashmir but part of a Kashmir issue, Hafeezur Rehman”

Daily Salaam, November 2, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister, Hafeezur Rehman stated that with CPEC becoming a reality, it could alter fortunes of the region particularly GB. Addressing a conference of PSDP projects, Hafeezur Rehman noted that much stress would be laid on completing hydro power projects on a timely basis. The road connectivity would be improved and special economic zones would create job opportunities also. On conditional identity, Hafeez noted that Gilgit-Baltistan was and will not be a part of Kashmir. However, the region is part of the larger Kashmir issue. The Chief Minister further noted that GB's forefathers, who fought for the land, willingly acceded to Pakistan and that his government is determined to integrate GB with Pakistan and optimize its interests by becoming a province.

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

“Gilgit-Baltistan's demands regarding CPEC should be considered”

Baad-e-Shimal, November 5, 2017

A conference was held at Karakoram International University (KIU) in collaboration with CPEC Centre Islamabad in order to assess the impact of CPEC on GB. Most of the speakers highlighted the importance of GB in China's OBOR initiative. People of the region are very optimistic and have high hopes pinned on CPEC. Most of them believe that it would provide an opportunity to fruit growers to import their production to the rest of the world. The government should give first priority to the local youth. With CPEC getting successful, the revenue from taxes is likely to go up tremendously and would help the national treasure. People, particularly unemployed

youth, have several aspirations attached with it. But unfortunately, an impression is given that there is not much for GB in CPEC. In comparison with other provinces, no mega project has been announced for GB. Many people believe that old uncompleted projects have been inducted into CPEC and no new projects have been approved for GB.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=11-05-2017&img=11-05-2017page-4-4

“People should not become part of conspiracy against CPEC”

Baad-e-Shimal, November 12, 2017

Federal Information Minister Ahsan Iqbal stated that people should not become part of the conspiracy against CPEC. He condemned opposition parties for exploiting the taxation issue in GB. People must not be misled and they should not lose hope. The taxation issue would be resolved soon, noted Ahsan. People have every right to protest against tax policies and government is with them but they must be patient. There are elements who do not want CPEC to be successful and people should not become part of any conspiracy, stated Ahsan Iqbal.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=11-17-2017&img=11-17-2017page-1-1

“Government should not hide truth”

Baad-e-Shimal, November 18, 2017

Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal might have persuaded few people regarding taxation policy but the truth will soon come out. People will realise how they are being deceived by the federal government. Gilgit-Baltistan should be ready for paying both taxes and wheat without subsidy. People may not like it but this is a reality. The previous governments have done the same. They deceive people by saying that

everything is fine in order to protect their position of power. Today, the situation is not different. The present government is stating that there is no problem and the taxation policy of previous government would be revoked. Instead of persuading people about the benefits of paying taxes, the government is playing politics on the issue. The federal government decided to impose taxes on GB. They may, however, postpone it for the time being. Sooner or later, they will come up with a new tax policy for the region. The withholding of tax policy is temporary. It seems unlikely that they are going to withhold taxes permanently.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=11-18-2017&img=11-18-2017page-4-4

“Ending Income Tax policy not good for the region, opposition leader”

Daily K2, November 25, 2017

Opposition leader, Captain (Retd) Mohammad Shafi, noted that it is imprudent to end the income tax policy.

Talking to media, Shafi stated that it is in the interest of the region that there should be an income tax policy. We do not want to impose tax on the people rather our intention is to impose tax on industrialists and big traders. Although we unanimously passed legislation in assembly regarding an income tax policy, what we want is a policy in an amended form. He further stated that Awami Action Committee is being exploited and may not support them. They should refrain from being a pawn in this game.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1511568000>

Fact Sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 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 Muhammad Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

Ethnic Groups: Gujjars, Jats, Mughal, Rajputs, Sudhan, Awan, Qureshi, Pashtuns, Shins, Ladakhi, Baltis etc.

Religious Groups: Sunni, Ahlehadith, Shia, Nurbakhshi, Christians, Qadianis, Hindus

Languages: Punjabi, Hindko, Pahari, Kashmiri, Balti, Puriki, Shina

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Source: Azad Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www. www.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Kharmang and Shigar districts

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Diamer, Ghizer, Hunza-Nagar and Gilgit districts

Ethnic Groups: Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Tatar, Mon, Pashtun, Khowar, Dom, Gujjar, Rajput and Kashmiri

Religious Groups: Shia (Twelvers), Nurbakhshi (Twelvers), Ismaili, Sunni, and Ahlehadith

Languages: Shina, Balti, Wakhi, Khowar, Gujjari, Burushaski, Puriki, Kashmiri, Pashto

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly: Total 33 members (24 members directly elected)

Governor of G-B: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

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

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan

National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan

National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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