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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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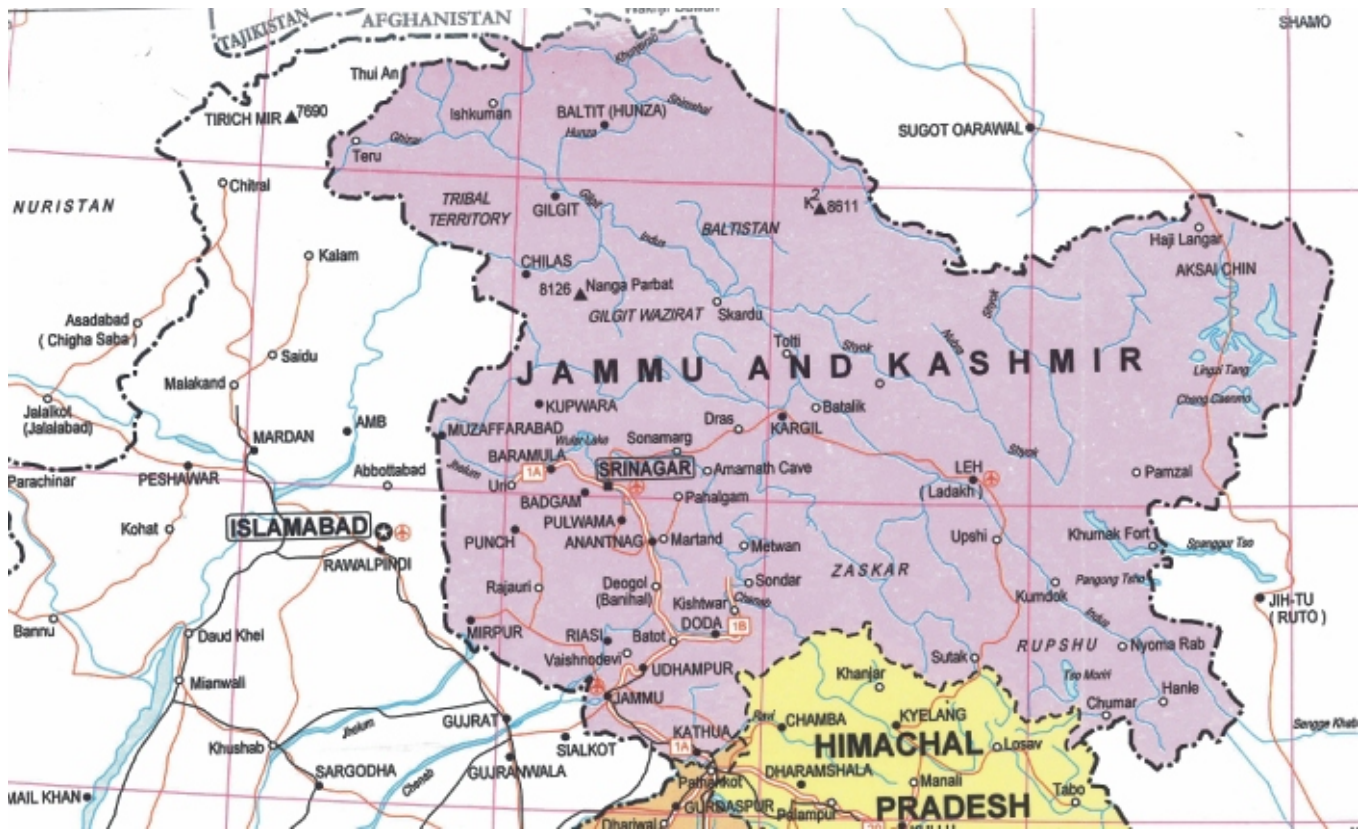
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Soon after the promulgation of the Empowerment and Self Governance Order in 2009, the first ever elections in Gilgit Baltistan region were held. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) won the 2009 elections and formed the government that recently completed its five year term in December 2014. Ideally, the next elections should have been held in November or December 2014 but this was not the case. The holding of elections was postponed earlier to March 2015 and now are tentatively scheduled to be held in the month of May or June. Within the Empowerment Order, there was no provision of a care taker government. Therefore, an amendment was initiated to install a care taker set up in the region till the next elections are held. Amidst controversy, a care taker set up was put in place with the former chairman of the Karakoram Cooperative Bank, Sher Jahan Mir, as the Chief Minister.

There is growing demand in Gilgit Baltistan to lift the ban on mining activity. Mining was banned in the region few years back and this has rendered number of people associated with the sector unemployed. A prominent leader from the PPP, Imran Nadeem, voiced the concerns of the people demanding that the ban on mining activity be revoked. According to one of the reports included in the current issue, Nadeem also alleged that despite the ban, licenses had been issued to non-locals and outside firms.

The so called Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution to oppose Gilgit Baltistan's demand of a provincial status. Tabling the resolution before the house, the Finance Minister of the so called AJK, Latif Akbar, noted that such a demand would harm the larger Kashmir cause. Change in the political status of Gilgit Baltistan (also part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir), would amount to weakening of the overall position on Kashmir issue, the legislators argued. Besides, the Kashmir Action Committee (KAC) also rejected the idea that Gilgit Baltistan should be converted into a province of Pakistan as it could dilute their position on Kashmir.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, “In the meantime: G-B all set for interim cabinet of technocrats”

The Express Tribune, December 27, 2014

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) is all set to introduce a non-political interim government to ensure free and fair elections are held next year. Speaking in Darel Valley, G-B Interim Chief Minister Sher Jehan Mir stated on December 26 that cabinet members would be free of political affiliations. He added they would be selected once the amended governance order is made available to him. One of the recent critics of a 'technocratic government' was former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf president Javed Hashmi. He managed to trigger a debate over whether the Constitution of Pakistan had any provision for such a set up. Hashmi raised his voice against a technocratic government when PTI Chairman Imran Khan demanded it replace Nawaz Sharif's regime. When Khan took his words back, Hashmi returned to PTI, only to leave it for good a while later. Former deputy speaker of the G-B legislative assembly Jamil Ahmed stated the interim government is bound to hold elections within 90 days. “This has been made possible through a recent amendment made in the Governance Order 2009,” Ahmed told reporters on December 26. “Previously, the interim government had a 60-day period to hold elections. That has been increased to 90 days,” he stated. The caretaker chief minister assured that elections would be held within 90 days once some problems with the computerised electoral lists were resolved.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/812726/in-the-meantime-g-b-all-set-for-interim-cabinet-of-technocrats/>

“GB govt asked to lift ban on mining”

Dawn, December 30, 2014

Pakistan People's Party leader Imran Nadeem stated that thousands of poor people associated with the mineral sector have become jobless following the

ban on issuance of licence and movement of precious stones from GB to other parts of the country. Speaking at a press conference in Skardu on December 29, he stated that there was no ban on mining throughout the country, but it was slapped in GB, which was injustice with the people. He demanded that the ban should be lifted forthwith. “There is no clear mining policy of the region; while local people are not being given mineral licences non-local companies are getting the same without any trouble,” he observed. He stated that top officials of the GB mineral department were main hindrance to the development of the sector. “The ban was imposed six years ago, but during that period non-local people are being issued mineral licences on the intervention of the federal bureaucracy and influential people,” he alleged. Mr Nadeem stated that preparing the mining policy for the region was the task of the GB Council, but it had failed to do so. He warned that if the government didn't solve the issue the people would take to the streets. When contacted, GB Council member Wazir Ebadat noted that the council had prepared the mining policy, which would be approved by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as being chairman of the GB Council in the upcoming session of the council on January 5.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1154016/gb-govt-asked-to-lift-ban-on-mining>

“Dar seeks WB's support on energy, Diamer Bhasha Dam construction”

Pakistan Today, December 5, 2014

Welcoming the delegation, Minister Finance Minister Ishaq Dar thanked the World Bank for approving Country Partnership Strategy (CPS 2015-19) which is aligned with the government's economic development agenda/priorities transforming the energy sector; supporting private sector development, reaching out to the vulnerable/poor; and leveraging regional markets.

He also appreciated the Bank for approving financing of CASA-1000 and Dasu Hydro Power Projects for Pakistan, which will help reduce electricity shortages and play a vital role in economic growth of the country. The minister acknowledged Bank's support of US\$1 billion for Development Policy Credits for fiscally sustainable and inclusive growth and Pakistan's first power sector reform development policy financing. The minister stated Pakistan looked to WB's support on energy sector development and construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/12/05/business/dar-seeks-wbs-support-on-energy-diamer-bhasha-dam-construction/>

“United front: Kohistan elders bar villagers from blocking KKH”

The Express Tribune, December 22, 2014

Elders of Kohistan on December 22 barred villagers across the district from blocking Karakoram Highway (KKH) without taking local elders on board or without any solid reason. This was decided at a grand jirga of tribal elders from different tribes of Kohistan in Dasu. Participants of the jirga discussed in detail complaints of the people related to power supply, payment of compensation against land acquired for the Dasu Hydro Power Project, employment quota and the Diamer Bhasha Dam issue. After a long debate, local elders announced that they would reserve all powers to take decisions on these matters, as per the customs of the people of Kohistan. “No villager or group will be allowed to block the KKH without first consulting elders,” stated Malik Saeed Ameer, one of the jirga's participants. He added all members agreed that the powers to take decisions need to rest with the jirga while any aggrieved individual or group having a complaint against a government department would directly approach senior district officials of the department concerned.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/810714/united-front-kohistan-elders-bar-villagers-from-blocking-kkh/>

“Economic Corridor to benefit Balochistan a lot”

The Nation, December 26, 2014

President Manmoon Hussain December 25 stated

the government had launched a decisive action to root out all types of terrorism from the country in the wake of the Peshawar school blast. Addressing a public gathering at the occasion of the birth anniversary celebrations of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he termed Quaid-e-Azam's personality a source of inspiration to steer the country out of the current crises. He was sure about the complete victory of the nation in its war against terrorism and stated the present government's prudent policies would put the country back on track of progress and prosperity.

Highlighting the government's efforts for economic development of the country, the President stated 4,000-kilometer-long Gwadar-Kashgar Road would serve as an economic corridor, which would cast far better impact not only on the economy of the country but also on the entire region. “This project will greatly benefit the people of Balochistan as well,” he stated and added no decision would be made against the interests of the people of the province. About the efforts to overcome the energy crisis in the country, the President stated work on Dasu Dam would be completed within six years which would generate about 4,000MW of power after completion. “Feasibility and financial resources for Diamer-Bhasha Dam have also been arranged and work on the project will soon be launched. This project will not only generate 4,500MW of power but will also have the capacity to store a huge quantity of water,” he stated and added about 16,000MW would be added to the national grid by 2018 with the government efforts.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/26-Dec-2014/economic-corridor-to-benefit-balochistan-a-lot>

“PM approves Rs 8 billion for schools' construction in quake hit areas of KPK AJK”

The Nation, December 2, 2014

The Prime Minister has approved eight billion rupees for the construction of schools in the earthquake hit areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir, according to state media. One thousand schools will be constructed in the quake hit areas under Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA). These schools will be constructed in Shangla, Battagram,

Abbottabad, Mansehra and AJK. The construction of these will be completed in one year. The Prime Minister stated they will make Roshan KPK along with Roshan Pakistan. He stated our attention is towards development of the country. He further noted the Government will give a stable and prosperous Pakistan to the nation in 2018.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Dec-2014/pm-approves-rs-8-billion-for-schools-construction-in-quake-hit-areas-of-kpk-ajk>

Syed Abid Hussain Shah, “Gilgit court can't take up matter that happened outside GB: ex-CJAJK HC”

The News, December 4, 2014

The judgment by the Anti-Terrorist Court in Gilgit/Baltistan sentencing the Editor in-Chief of the Jang Media Group Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, anchor Dr Shaista Lodhi, actor Veena Malik, and her spouse Assad Khatak to 26 years of imprisonment in absentia, has no legal standing and territorial jurisdiction since Gilgit/Baltistan is not a constitutional part of Pakistan.”

This was observed by veteran Kashmiri jurist, legal expert and former chief justice of the Azad Jammu & Kashmir High Court Justice (Retd) Abdul Majeed Malik. In an interview on December 2, the retired chief justice of AJK HC stated that the judgment by a session judge of Gilgit/Baltistan has created a new controversy on the constitutional and legal status of G-B. “Primarily G-B is the historic and geographical part of Jammu & Kashmir state as accepted by Pakistan in the United Nations and its acknowledgement by the UN resolutions on Kashmir issue,” The retired CJ of AJK HC stated, “it is quite clear that legally the stated court has no jurisdiction to lay its hands on such a matter which was not committed within the territorial limits of Gilgit-Baltistan. The matter has gained enough publicity on account of entertainment of the matter without jurisdiction and particularly recording grave conviction for an offense against the convicts without providing any opportunity of hearing and defense of alleged accused persons, he stated. “Nevertheless the issue of judgment by the G-B court shall have a serious legal affect on the legal

and political relationship between G-B and Pakistan”, Justice (Retd) Malik observed.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34502-Gilgit-court-cant-take-up-matter-that-happened-outside-GB-ex-CJ-AJK-HC>

Mian Arshad, “Two power projects of 75 MW for AJK approved”

Pakistan Observer, December 5, 2014

The Federal Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) on December 4. ECNEC considered and approved two energy generation projects with the combined capacity of 75 MW on a proposal moved by Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and GB. The 40 MW Dowarian Hydro Power Project and 35MW Nagdar Hydropower project will be located in district Neelum, AJK and will be executed and operated by AJK Hydroelectric Board. The first project has total cost of Rs.5973.390 million and will be completed in 3 years. It is expected that the project shall generate annual income of 1258.95 million after its completion. The Hydropower project will be connected by laying 45km, 132 kv transmission line from Dowarian to 35 MW Nagdar hydro power project. The second one has the total cost of 6845.055 million rupees which will be completed in 4 years and shall yield annual income of Rs 1076 million after its completion. Both these projects will generate electricity on economic rates for the uplift of the area.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=257670>

Parvez Jabri, “Rehabilitation of Mangla Dam affectees top priority: Barjees Tahir”

Business Recorder, December 5, 2014

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir stated on December 5 that the government would leave no stone unturned for the complete rehabilitation and resettlement of Mangla Dam raising project affectees. Talking to Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, the minister stated that resettlement of Mangla Dam affected families was the top most

priority of the government. He stated that the Committee for Implementation of Compensation Package, Mangla Dam Raising Project would meet on December 11 to review the progress for rehabilitation of Dam affectees. He stated work on different mega projects announced by Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for Azad Kashmir would soon begin. The AJK premier on the occasion talked in detail about resettlement of affected families, provision of water and gas to Mirpur city. The minister assured to resolve all the issues of affected families.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/208960-rehabilitation-of-mangla-dam-affectees-top-priority-barjees-tahir.html>

Mohammad Asghar, “Newly-recruited prison staff get military training”

Dawn, December 6, 2014

The Punjab government has decided to give military training to 4,000 newly recruited prison security staff. In fact, a batch of 1,000 personnel have already started receiving training from Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regiment at Mansar Camp army training centre. Besides 1,000 jail wardens, the newly recruited 28 assistant superintendents of prison will also be trained by the military trainers. During the training period, each personnel will get Rs 16,000 allowance per month, and the Punjab government has allocated Rs92 million in this regard. During three month training, the prison staff members will get commando and sharp shooting training. They will also be trained in dealing with terrorist attack.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1149133/newly-recruited-prison-staff-to-get-military-training>

Imaduddin, “Majeed, Dar discuss AJK development projects”

Business Recorder, December 8, 2014

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed paid a courtesy call on Finance Minister Ishaq Dar December 8 and discussed matters pertaining to development projects in the AJK. Ishaq Dar on the occasion reiterated the government's resolve to provide all-out support for economic progress in the AJK. The

minister also praised the programmes being undertaken by the AJK government for public welfare. The AJK Prime Minister acknowledged the keen interest evinced by the Pakistan government in the development works initiated in AJK. Advisor Finance Division, Rana Assad Amin and other officials of the ministry were also present in the meeting.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/1-front-top-news/209623-majeed-dar-discuss-ajk-development-projects.html>

“Balochistan unrest: Tablighi Jamaat members kidnapped”

The Express Tribune, December 9, 2014

Three members of the Tablighi Jamaat have been kidnapped by armed men from Wazirani area of Chhattar in Naseerabad district on December 8. The kidnapped preachers belong to Azad Jammu and Kashmir. “Saleem Kashmiri, Nasir Kashmiri and Sohail Ahmed Kashmiri had come to Chhattar from AJK for preaching when armed men took them away,” a senior police officer in Chhattar confirmed. Police and security forces have launched a search in the area to ensure the safe recovery of the kidnapped men. Chhattar town shares a border with militancy-hit Bugti Tribal Territory where insurgents often attack security forces and gas pipelines.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/803962/balochistan-unrest-tablighi-jamaat-members-kidnapped/>

Usman Manzoor, “Govt decides to wind up Erra”

The News, December 11, 2014

The government has decided to wind up the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (Erra), which has become a white elephant over the past few years. Available documents noted that a committee of the Cabinet Secretariat has formulated the blueprint to disband Erra and a report in this regard will be presented to the prime minister soon. In the minutes of the meeting held to abolish Erra, it has been mentioned that all the projects which are ongoing and are scheduled to be completed before December 2015 will continue to be undertaken by Erra and will be fully funded while the residual portfolio of the

ongoing projects will be transferred to the respective governments of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir with funding commitment from the Government of Pakistan. The workforce of Erra may be adjusted in the National Disaster Management Authority. The Erra was formed in the wake of the devastating earthquake that hit the AJK and KP and other parts of Pakistan on October 8, 2005.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34621-Govt-decides-to-wind-up-Erra>

Imaduddin, “Khawaja Asif for exploring AJK's hydel potential”

Business Recorder, December 11, 2014

Federal Minister for Water and Power, Khawaja Muhammad Asif December 11 urged the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government to explore its huge hydel potential to attain self-sufficiency in power generation. In a meeting with AJK, Prime Minister, Chaudhry Abdul Majid at Ministry of Water and Power, Khawaja Asif stated that there were ample opportunities available on run of the river hydel generation capacity in the territory which could add positively in the government's efforts to combat power shortage in the country. The Minister reiterated the government's resolve to provide all technical assistance to the AJK Government for launching of small hydel power projects. Highlighting the importance of small hydel projects, the Minister stated that it would not only generate energy but also open vistas for economic activities including job opportunities for the people of the area. He assured that present gap between demand and supply of power in AJK would be minimized. He also assured that the Ministry would sort out all electricity related issues of AJK in consultation with all stake holders on priority.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/210259-khawaja-asif-for-exploring-ajks-hydel-potential.html>

“Pakistan to respond positively if India takes lead: Nawaz”

The News, December 12, 2014

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated on December 11 that Pakistan would give a positive response if

India took the lead in resuming the stalled dialogue process. Nawaz Sharif assured the AJK government of making the valley a load shedding-free zone. He also promised to announce a health package for the AJK, settling the tariff issues and addressing the concerns of people affected by the Mangla Dam. Nawaz Sharif also asserted that all the issues of the AJK would be resolved on priority basis. Chaudhry Abdul Majeed raised the issue of extended and unscheduled power suspension in AJK and asked the federal government to give the administrative powers of the allocated 350MW of electricity to the AJK government, so that it could manage unhindered provision of power to all the districts of the state. The AJK prime minister emphasised the implementation of electricity allotted quota, operationalization of Tararkhal-Azadpattan and Mangla-Kolti transmission lines and bringing the water user charges of Neelum Jhelum project at par with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Nawaz Sharif affirmed that all the funds would be released while lifting the ban of Pakistan Finance Division, along with an unhindered provision of power to AJK. Later, in a high-level meeting, the federal government decided to declare AJK as a load shedding-free zone with an assurance of providing the state with the required 350MW of electricity, equalling to KP the water user charges of Neelum-Jhelum project and giving AJK administrative powers of the allotted electricity.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34636-Pakistan-to-respond-positively-if-India-takes-lead-Nawaz>

“Denting Kashmir cause: AJK condemns G-B move to seek provincial status”

The Express Tribune, December 12, 2014

Both the treasury and opposition benches in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly unanimously rejected on December 11 the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly's resolution seeking to become province of Pakistan. If Gilgit-Baltistan becomes a province of Pakistan, it would be counterproductive for the Kashmir cause, the AJK assembly echoed. Both Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir are parts of a disputed territory and the people have to decide their fate under the UN resolutions, the AJK Finance Minister Latif Akbar

stated moving a verbal resolution to condemn the G-B assembly initiative. “We demand the G-B assembly to take back the resolution to make the area a province of Pakistan. Both G-B and AJK are not constitutionally parts of Pakistan,” Akbar stated. In this connection both the AJK Supreme Court and High Court have ruled that before the final settlement of the whole state of Jammu and Kashmir neither G-B nor AJK can be made province of Pakistan, he elaborated. Deputy Opposition Leader Tariq Farooq stated they were not expecting G-B to seek provincial status. “The people of AJK had voiced concerns when the former Pakistani government announced a chief minister and governor for G-B,” Farooq stated. “The elected representatives of G-B should not take steps that will create problems for the people in future,” he added. Fearing the breakup with AJK, Inqalabi became apologetic for ignoring the people of G-B in development and progress. “Although our (AJK) leadership had not given the G-B people their due rights, we should forget the past and work together for better future,” he stated. Inqalabi stated that before making G-B a province, it will be necessary to amend the constitution of Pakistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/805645/denting-kashmir-cause-ajk-condemns-g-b-move-to-seek-provincial-status/>

Tariq Naqash, “Three-day mourning in AJK”

Dawn, December 17, 2014

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed condemned the bloodbath in a Peshawar school and announced three-day mourning in the state. “This is the most abhorrent and excruciating of all acts of terrorism Pakistan has so far gone through at the hands of people inimical to this nation,” he noted in a statement on December 16. “Pakistan is going through the most testing times of its history which warrant for standing by the armed forces and security related institutions like a solid wall instead of dissensions and sit-ins,” he stated. He stated terrorists had no association with any religion and they were simply the enemies of Pakistan and its people. The AJK prime minister announced Rs100,000 each for the families of those who died and Rs50,000 each for the injured.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1151366/three-day-mourning-in-ajk>

“AJK: Crackdown on illegal refugees”

The Express Tribune, December 19, 2014

In the wake of the Peshawar school attack, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) police on December 18 launched a crackdown on illegal Afghan refugees. “On the directive of the Inspector General of Police, we have launched an operation against illegal Afghans and around 80 people have been taken into custody in district Bagh and 40 in tehsil Dehirkot,” stated Senior Superintendent of Police Bagh Riaz Abbasi. He stated that the operation will continue against illegal foreigners as special teams have been formed in various areas of district Bagh. Meanwhile, police in Muzaffarabad also launched an operation against illegal Afghans and made several arrests.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/809179/ajk-crackdown-on-illegal-refugees/>

“MDA sets up one-window centre to facilitate public”

The Nation, December 22, 2014

The Mirpur Development Authority has set up a one-window facilitation centre at its central office to ensure delivery of quick services to the masses. The fully equipped and computerized state-of-the-art one-window centre started functioning after it was formally inaugurated by newly-inducted MDA Director General Raja Amjad Pervez Ali Khan at a ceremony held at the MDA complex. The ceremony was largely attended by the city elite including senior journalists and lawyers, government officials and the employees of the MDA. Highlighting salient features of the Center, Deputy Director Anti-Encroachment stated that after assuming charge of office, the MDA DG decided to introduce series of reforms in the authority to ensure vibrant role of the MDA in providing swift services to the masses.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Dec-2014/mda-sets-up-one-window-centre-to-facilitate-public>

“KAC opposes province's status call for GB”

The Nation, December 23, 2014

The working committee of the Kashmir Action Committee says the UN secretary general's mediation offer for an amicable settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India is a

welcome gesture that must be accepted by both the countries. At a meeting held under the chairmanship of Justice (r) Sharif Hussain Bokhari, the committee requested the leadership of Gilgit-Baltistan to desist from demanding province's status for the area. The status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, including Gilgit-Baltistan, is yet to be determined by the Kashmiri people in the light of the UN resolutions, stated the KAC statement issued after the meeting. The committee supported the December 11 AJK Legislative Assembly resolution that GB assembly's call for a province's status to Gilgit-Baltistan was unconstitutional and unwise.

<http://nation.com.pk/laohore/23-Dec-2014/kac-opposes-province-s-status-call-for-gb>

“1,170 AJK signatories for amending constitution”

The Nation, December 23, 2014

As many as 1,170 people representing all segments of the society have signed a petition seeking early amendments in the interim constitution of Azad Jammu & Kashmir to ensure more empowerment of AJK government. A civil society organisation namely Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms started the online petition calling on the governments of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to amend AJK Constitution commonly known as Act 1974 and empower AJK Legislative Assembly by drastically reducing AJK Council's administrative and financial authority to ensure democratic and transparent governance. CPDR Executive Director Ershad Mahmud stated that signatories had signed the petition within two weeks. The signatories include leading Kashmiri politicians, writers, journalists, academics, businessmen and students living in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan, Europe, United States and even in Australia. Prominent among the signatories included PML-N AJK President and leader of opposition in AJK Legislative Assembly and former Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan, AJK PML-N Secretary General Shah Ghulam Qadir, Deputy Opposition leader, and many others.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/23-Dec-2014/1-170-ajk-signatories-for-amending-constitution>

“Four including Chinese killed in AJK dam accident”

Dunya News, December 24, 2014

Four people including a Chinese engineer were killed December 24 when a wall collapsed at a construction site for a major dam project in Azad Kashmir, officials stated. The accident happened at the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project intake site 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Muzaffarabad, the capital of the Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir. "Four workers including a Chinese engineer were killed when a wall collapsed," Sayed Asif Gardezi, a local administration official noted. He further stated a Chinese engineer and two other Pakistani workers were injured but they were out of danger. The incident was confirmed by local rescue officials. China is one of Pakistan's main allies and there are thousands of Chinese engineers and other workers in Pakistan helping on infrastructure projects including nuclear power plants, dams and roads. Last month Beijing promised Islamabad investment worth \$42 billion over the coming years, much of it focused on the energy sector where Pakistan suffers chronic and economically damaging shortages. Industrial safety standards in Pakistan are poor and fatal accidents are common.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/251704-Four-including-Chinese-killed-in-AJK-dam-accident>

“AJK shuttering collapse: Compensation for victims announced”

The Express Tribune, December 27, 2014

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on December 26 announced Rs 0.4 million compensation each for families of the victims who had died during the collapse a wall and shattering of the under construction Neelum Jehlum Hydroelectric Project (NJHP) in Nowseri. The prime minister made the announcement during a visit to the NJHP site, some 40 kilometres away from the capital city, where a Chinese engineer and three local labourers had died, when the wall and shuttering of one unit of the project came crashing down on December 24. Majeed stated that the NJHP was a national project and the people who lost their lives during work were

national heroes. The AJK premier further stated that everyone working on the NJHP was really contributing to Pakistan's progress and history will remember their sacrifices in golden words. Work on the strategic 969 megawatts project is progressing at a fast pace and some of its units are expected to be operational late next year.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/812877/ajk-shuttering-collapse-compensation-for-victims-announced/>

“Religious scholar, JI AJK leader Prof Turabi passes away”

Kashmir Media Service, December 28, 2014

Renowned Islamic scholar and Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Jammu and Kashmir's senior leader, Professor Aleefuddin Turabi died after protracted illness in Islamabad. Professor Aleefuddin Turabi was an eminent Arabic scholar, writer and teacher. Professor Turabi had a great contribution to Kashmir's liberation struggle, and had a hundreds of articles and books in Urdu and Arabic to his credit to promote the Kashmir cause in and outside Pakistan, particularly in the Arabic world. The JI AJK leader was a cardiac patient and had been restricted to the bed for the past some years, but he kept on writing magazines, articles and books on the Kashmir cause. Thousands of people attended his funeral prayers, held in Islamabad.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2014/12/28/religious-scholar-ji-ajk-leader-prof-turabi-passes-away.html>

“Maintaining harmony: Misuse of loudspeakers banned in AJK”

The Express Tribune, December 31, 2014

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has banned the use of loudspeakers in the mosques for making speeches. According to a notification issued on December 29, loudspeakers in the mosque can only be used for azaan and jumma sermon in Arabic. The government has directed the district administrations to strictly enforce the regulation. The notification further states that anyone found using loudspeakers for other than the two purposes would be arrested. The decision was taken at a meeting on December 29, which was chaired by AJK Chief Secretary Abid Ali. The notification

warns deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, and SHOs of being made officers on special duty if amplifiers are misused in their jurisdiction. Several political, religious and social organisations of AJK have welcomed the decision, saying it would help maintain peace and harmony.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/814788/maintaining-harmony-misuse-of-loudspeakers-banned-in-ajk/>

Niat Wali, “G-B's legal status”

The Express Tribune, December 2, 2014

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), formerly known as Northern Areas of Pakistan, is a gateway to China from Pakistan and South Asian countries. If we look at history, we will see that its geographic importance has always made it vulnerable, be it during the British rule in India or during the Soviet invasion. More than 1.5 million inhabitants of G-B consist of those from different clans. However, there is no strict narrative of history, which can explain the lineage of the people of G-B. This region consists of seven districts namely Gilgit, Ghizer, Hunza/Nagar, Astore, Diamer, Skardu and Ganche. The G-B legislative assembly runs the affairs of the region, which consists of 15 members, all elected from G-B, while the command and control system is still under the Kashmir Affairs Division. Known all over the world for its highest mountain peaks K-2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum I and II, and numerous other peaks, G-B attracts thousands of tourists and mountaineers each year. Its unique landscape is divided into different beautiful valleys and has been declared a heaven on earth and a great source of attraction for tourists for a long time. But unfortunately, this region does not seem to have a political identity of its own.

It is interesting to note that the map of Pakistan shows these regions as part of Pakistan, but despite that, G-B has no political representation in the country. The region barely has representation in the National Assembly. When compared with other tribal areas on the outskirts of K-P, this is sheer injustice. The area is ruled under the Constitution of Pakistan, yet, the people have no right to vote.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/800756/g-bs-legal-status/>

Jamil Nagri, “Term of GB assembly ends on 10th”

Dawn, December 3, 2014

The term of the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) legislative assembly is going to end on December 10 and the federal government has not yet made amendment in the GB Empowerment and Self Governance Order, 2009, which could pave the way for the setting up of a caretaker government. According to sources, GB Governor Peer Karam Ali Shah will host a farewell dinner for members of the outgoing assembly on December 8. An official of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan noted that the situation was confusing because the existing governance law of GB did not provide any provision for the setting up of a caretaker government. The official stated according to the 2009 governance order powers for its amendment rests with the president of Pakistan. He further stated the prime minister was competent authority to take action in this regard. For resolving the issue the ministry had sent a summary to the Prime Minister's Office, recommending amendment in the GB governance law which would pave the way for the setting up of a caretaker government, he added. The official stated it had been recommended that amendment should be made in the governance law to allow the incumbent chief minister and the leader of the opposition in the legislative assembly to nominate with mutual understanding a caretaker chief minister. And if the two leaders failed to develop consensus, the prime minister should have final authority, he added. He stated a caretaker set-up was necessary for avoiding a political crisis in the region.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1148437/term-of-gb-assembly-ends-on-10th>

“Prime Minister lauds services of Aga Khan”

Business Recorder, December 5, 2014

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on December 4 lauded services of Prince Karim Aga Khan across the world, particularly for the people of Pakistan in education and health sectors and socio-economic uplift of the poor. The PM also noted with appreciation the continuous support of the Aga

Khan Development Network and Aga Khan Foundation in taking lead in a number of important social sector projects, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan. He expressed these views during a meeting with Prince Karim Aga Khan and assured him that the government would continue to work with the Aga Khan Foundation for alleviation of poverty and completion of other social welfare and economic activities. The government is keen to exploit the economic potential of Gilgit-Baltistan especially the energy and natural resources for the prosperity of the local residents and the entire Pakistan, he added. Both sides agreed to work together for making small hydro-power projects in northern areas to provide electricity to rural areas. Aga Khan expressed his desire to create linkages between Aga Khan's universities in Central Asia and Karakoram University in GB. He appreciated government's efforts for the socio-economic development of the people and assured that various projects being undertaken by the Aga Khan foundation for the socio-economic uplift of the people of GB would be vigorously pursued. He also lauded government's support to the Aga Khan Network.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1248511/>

Shabbir Mir, “Disaster management: G-B to raise 100,000 volunteers”

The Express Tribune, December 5, 2014

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Karakoram International University (KIU) on December 5 signed an agreement to raise a force of 100,000 volunteers in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). “The agreement has been signed following the directives of President Mamnoon Hussain,” stated PRCS Gilgit spokesperson Safdar Khan, adding the force will carry out disaster management and rescue operations during natural disasters. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by PRCS provincial secretary Noorulain and KIU volunteers' convener Professor Manzoor Ali on the International Volunteer Day at KIU. “PRCS has decided to extend the campaign to other areas of the country and increase the number of volunteers to five million by 2016,” stated Noorulain while addressing the ceremony. She added the campaign

will help channel the efforts of those who wish to become active participants of the society. Noorulain stated educational institutions including the University of Punjab (UoP), Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOP), Roots School System have already been looped in and invitations to other leading schools, colleges and universities are on the cards. The PRCS provincial secretary stated that KIU volunteers will be provided basic training on emergency response, first aid, disaster management and humanitarian efforts in order to equip them with the necessary skills and expertise.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/802437/disaster-management-g-b-to-raise-100000-volunteers/>

“Radio Pakistan aims to reach out to KP, Gilgit-Baltistan with new project”

Pakistan Today, December 6, 2014

Radio Pakistan has formally launched programmes from its new medium-wave digital transmitter set up with the technical and financial assistance of Japan. Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal, Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid and Japanese Ambassador Hiroshi Inomata jointly inaugurated the newly-installed medium-wave transmitter of 500 kilowatts power in Islamabad. Speaking on the occasion, the Japanese diplomat stated that radio is still a major source of information, particularly in remote areas. He noted that rehabilitation of medium-wave network will enable Radio Pakistan to reach out to maximum people in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/12/05/city/islamabad/radio-pakistan-aims-to-reach-out-to-kp-gilgit-baltistan-with-new-project/>

Shabbir Mir, “Two (many) cooks in G-B: 'CM, opposition agree over candidate for caretaker setup”

The Express Tribune, December 7, 2014

A deal has reportedly been struck under the table between Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah and opposition leader Janbaz Khan to nominate a 'suitable candidate' as caretaker CM for when the government completes its term. Shah, who will step down on December 10,

supposedly passed over most of his party members when choosing the person to replace him as the caretaker chief minister. The interim set-up will be announced by the federal government in a day or two after recommendations from the CM and the opposition leader. “Instead of consulting his close aides, he relied heavily on the opposition leader for the appointment of a caretaker CM,” an insider noted on December 7. “The candidate could be someone who assured him he would 'go soft' in Shah's home constituency during elections,” stated the chief minister's close aide. Analysts believed the chief minister was apparently doing this to embarrass PML-N regional chief Hafeezur Rahman and form cracks in the ranks of the opposition party, which could be a real threat in the coming elections. The leader of the opposition always had an easy relationship with the Mehdi Shah government, which was time and again accused of corruption in several departments during its five-year tenure, stated Wali. “Khan often sided with Shah on issues his regional chief criticised in the past.” The G-B government will step down on December 10 after completing its five-year term. An interim set-up will be announced by the federal government to hold elections in 2015.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/803245/two-many-cooks-in-g-b-cm-opposition-agree-over-candidate-for-caretaker-setup/>

Shabbir Mir, “Tick tock: 24 hours left before uncertainty reigns in G-B”

The Express Tribune, December 8, 2014

The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) legislative assembly met on the first day of the last session on December as clouds of uncertainty loom over the future of the region. The G-B government's five-year term is set to end on December 10 but very little is known about if and how an interim set-up can take over. The federal government's silence over the lack of a provision in the G-B Empowerment and Self-governance Order 2009 for a temporary system to run state affairs is steadily adding to suspicions of a possible constitutional breakdown. “We are being kept in the dark about our future. I suggest the chief minister dissolve the assembly and announce a date for elections,” Khaliq stated during the first day of the forty-first session chaired by Speaker Wazir

Baig. Mirza Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) stated the G-B Governance Order allows the governor to reappoint the existing CM for a certain period but Mehdi Shah will have to take a fresh oath. The interpretation was rejected by law minister Ali Madad Sher, who stated the governance order does not require the swearing in. "It can be done without any fresh oath."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/803648/tick-tock-24-hours-left-before-uncertainty-reigns-in-g-b/>

"Travel ban on KKH at night-time"

Dawn, December 9, 2014

The Gilgit-Baltistan government on December 8 banned travel on the Karakoram Highway on the stretch passing through Koshistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at night-time after militant threats of attacks on passengers. Sources noted that Kohistan administration, in a letter two days ago, had informed the GB government of the militant threat. In the letter, the GB administration was asked to warn its people against travel on the 200 kilometer stretch of KKH in Kohistan area from 8pm to 4am as there was threat of terrorist attack on GB passengers. The Kohistan administration admitted it had no means to provide security to GB passengers on the road during night-time. When contacted, SP Skardu Ali Raza stated that after receiving the warning, the GB police had imposed ban on travel on the KKH at night. In view of the ban, the regional transport companies have been given new schedule.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1149751/travel-ban-on-kkh-at-night-time>

"Denting Kashmir cause: AJK condemns G-B move to seek provincial status"

The Express Tribune, December 12, 2014

Both the treasury and opposition benches in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly unanimously rejected on December 11 the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly's resolution seeking to become province of Pakistan. If Gilgit-Baltistan becomes a province of Pakistan, it would be counterproductive for the Kashmir cause, the AJK assembly echoed. Both Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir are parts of a disputed territory and the

people have to decide their fate under the UN resolutions, the AJK Finance Minister Latif Akbar stated moving a verbal resolution to condemn the G-B assembly initiative. "We demand the G-B assembly to take back the resolution to make the area a province of Pakistan. Both G-B and AJK are not constitutionally parts of Pakistan," Akbar stated. In this connection both the AJK Supreme Court and High Court have ruled that before the final settlement of the whole state of Jammu and Kashmir neither G-B nor AJK can be made province of Pakistan, he elaborated. Deputy Opposition Leader Tariq Farooq stated they were not expecting G-B to seek provincial status.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/805645/denting-kashmir-cause-ajk-condemns-g-b-move-to-see-provincial-status/>

"Sher Jahan Mir takes Oath as the Caretaker Chief Minister GB"

The Dardistan Times, December 12, 2014

Sher Jahan Mir, the prominent banker of Gilgit Baltistan took oath as the caretaker Chief Minister GB on December 12. The swearing in ceremony took place at the governor house and the Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Pir Karam Ali Shah administered the oath. Dignitaries including former CM Syed Mehdi Shah and former members of GBLA along with officials from different organizations attended the ceremony. According to a notification, Barjis Tahir, the Minister Kashmir and GB had earlier sent Sher Jahan Mir's name to the Prime Minister after consultation with Syed Mehdi Shah, the then CM and Haji Janbaz Khan, leader of the opposition in GBLA. Sher Jahan Mir will hold this position as long as the elections in GB are conducted for GBLA. It's to be mentioned that he has been heading Karakoram Cooperative Bank Limited (KCBL) for long as the CEO/General Manager.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/News/761997049/sher-jahan-mir-takes-oath-caretaker-chief-minister-gb>

Shabbir Mir, "Officer on deck: G-B appoints first ever woman SP"

The Express Tribune, December 13, 2014

In Gilgit-Baltistan, the right man for the job is a woman. Tahira Yasub became the first woman

superintendent in the region. She was given her ranks by the inspector general and former chief minister Mehdi Shah in a ceremony on December 11. "I am thankful to the government," Yasub noted during a brief chat on December 12. A graduate in international relations from Karakoram International University, she has been selected twice to represent Pakistan in UN peacekeeping missions. In December 2011, she was promoted to the rank of traffic deputy superintendent police (DSP), again becoming the first woman to hold the position in Gilgit-Baltistan. As DSP, Yasub's responsibilities included streamlining the flow of traffic in the congested city of Gilgita daunting task as traffic violations are a norm. However, she performed her duties with poise and even introduced an effective car parking system.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/805962/officer-on-deck-g-b-appoints-first-ever-woman-sp/>

"PTI to challenge Gilgit-Baltistan CEC appointment"

Dunya News, December 13, 2014

PTI leader Ghulam Sarwar stated on December 13 that Justice Retired Tahir Ali Shah is closely associated with the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PMLN). PTI's leader Ghulam Sarwar Khan would challenge the decision of the appointment of Gilgit-Baltistan's CEC. According to Ghulam Sarwar, Tahir Ali Shah is associated with PML-N. The petition against Tahir Ali Shah would be filed under Article 184. Ghulam Sarwar has claimed to have the photographs of Tahir Ali's presence in PML-N's meetings. The photographs and documents regarding Tahir Ali's ties with PML-N will be provided with the petition. Ghulam Sarwar also remarked that appointment of desired people on high posts won't improve the election process.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/249831-PTI-to-challenge-GilgitBaltistan-CEC-appointment->

Shabbir Mir, "Stepping into the fray: Ex-NATCO MD Zafar Iqbal to join politics"

The Express Tribune, December 15, 2014

Renowned bureaucrat and former managing director of government-sponsored Northern Areas

Transport Corporation (Natco), Zafar Iqbal, announced his ambition to step into active politics on December 15. Observers believe Iqbal's long tenure at Natco and the fact that he transformed it into a profitable company added to his credibility. Zafar Iqbal was one of the candidates for the slot of interim chief minister after the G-B government completed its five-year tenure on December 10. Ultimately, it was Sher Jehan Mir, a renowned banker, who took office and will remain caretaker CM till elections, likely to be held in April 2015.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/807185/stepping-into-the-fray-ex-natco-md-zafar-iqbal-to-join-politics/>

Shabbir Mir, "Setting the record straight: PML-N distances itself from G-B CEC"

The Express Tribune, December 17, 2014

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has distanced itself from the appointment of Justice (ret'd) Tahir Ali Shah as Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B)'s chief election commissioner (CEC). Earlier, on December 12, stakeholders, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), challenged the appointment of the G-B's chief election commissioner (CEC) in the Supreme Court. PTI MPA Ghulam Sarwar insisted Shah was an unsuitable candidate for the job because he is closely associated with the PML-N. Speaking to journalists in Gilgit on December 16, the party's regional chief Hafeezur Rahman insisted Shah had not been appointed solely on the PML-N's recommendations. "The decision was taken on the recommendations of the G-B Assembly," Rahman added, referring to the previous assembly which was dominated by Pakistan Peoples Party lawmakers. According to the regional chief, Shah had not only been associated with the PML-N. On the contrary, he had also been a member of Pakistan Muslim League- Quaid (PML-Q) during former president Pervez Musharraf's government. "Shah is a reasonable candidate for many reasons," stated Rahman. "He is an honest official who belongs to G-B." Rahman pressed the federal government to increase the number of ministers in the caretaker set-up from three to seven. "We have suggested this to federal government in order to ensure representation of every district in the interim set-up," the PML-N's regional chief stated. Rahman

also voiced concern over suggestions by politicians that elections should be held in September 2015. He insisted the ideal time for G-B elections is either April or May.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/807844/setting-the-record-straight-pml-n-distances-itself-from-g-b-cec/>

“GB teachers continue their protest for service structure”

Dawn, December 17, 2014

Over 200 schoolteachers, mostly females, of the Social Action Programme (SAP) from the seven districts of Gilgit-Baltistan have been staging a sit-in at Gadibagh here since November 18 to demand regularisation of service and payment of the withheld salaries. Gulaam Akbar, the SAP teachers' association president, told Dawn that hundreds of teachers, mostly females along with the children, had been protesting for their rights since November 18. He stated that the PPP-led regional government during its five-year tenure didn't resolve their problems despite making promises. Mr Akbar stated that many teachers and their children had to be hospitalised as their condition deteriorated during the protest due to the cold weather. On November 17, the Gilgit police arrested 15 SAP teachers, and later freed them on bail for blocking roads in the city.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1151388/gb-teachers-continue-their-protest-for-service-structure>

Shabbir Mir, “Red alert: Security beefed up in sensitive parts of G-B”

The Express Tribune, December 20, 2014

Security has been beefed up in sensitive areas of Gilgit-Baltistan in the wake of the attack on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar. According to a statement issued from the office of the chief minister on December 19 night, strict measures have been taken in view of the precarious situation following the barbaric attack. The security situation has been further exacerbated by the execution of terrorists on death row in Faisalabad, the statement read. “The measures have been taken to avoid an untoward incident in the region,” it added. Chief Minister House, Governor House and Secretariat are among the sensitive places where security has been tightened. According to a security official,

security agencies have warned that militants may carry out similar attacks on other educational institutions in the country. “For this reason, the government has asked us to increase security in the region,” noted the official. Most schools have been closed for winter vacations from December 15. Moreover, security has been enhanced at schools, including Army Public School Gilgit, where examinations are under way.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/809860/red-alert-security-beefed-up-in-sensitive-parts-of-g-b/>

Jamil Nagri, “Sound bytes: 'The GB Council failed to play due role'”

Dawn, December 9, 2014

The term of the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) legislative assembly that came into existence under the GB Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009 introduced during the Pakistan People's Party government of former Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and President Asif Ali Zardari is ending on December 10. GB Council member, Amjad Hussain, of the PPP spoke about the flaws in the 2009 order and what is seen as excessive interference of the federal government in GB matters. Here are the excerpts from the conversation.

Q. Looking back, do you think the GB Assembly and the GB Council were able to do the kind of legislative business they were meant to achieve?

A. I think so. The GB Assembly during its five-year tenure passed and implemented 40 acts. The assembly through legislation restored law and order, determined the role of ulema and created sectarian harmony in Gilgit. Moreover, the approval of the Gilgit-Baltistan Local Government Act, 2014 on August 18 is the best example of assembly legislation.

However, the GB Council could not play its due role. According to GB law, tourism, minerals, power generation, forest and trade with foreign countries are council subjects. The regional elected assembly cannot make laws on the stated subjects. This is discrimination against the region as it has not been given the right to legislate on its natural resources.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1149680/sound-bytes-the-gb-council-failed-to-play-due-role>

Economic Developments

“Agriculture loans: AJK bank gets Rs4 million for loan scheme”

The Express Tribune, December 16, 2014

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on December 15 released another instalment of Rs4 million to Azad Jammu and Kashmir Bank (AJKB) aimed at providing mark-up free loan to farmers. The bank has already received Rs8 million for the loan scheme. “It is our priority to encourage the farmers to cultivate more crops and boost livestock,” stated AJK Agriculture Minister Bazil Ali Naqvi. The minister stated that over 80 per cent population of the region lived in rural and promotion of agriculture was vital to empower them financially. He stated promotion of the agriculture sector was a priority for the government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/807232/agriculture-loans-ajk-bank-gets-rs4-million-for-loan-scheme/>

Shahbaz Rana, “ECNEC decision: 10 projects worth Rs157b approved”

The Express Tribune, December 5, 2014

A high-level meeting, chaired by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on December 4, has approved 10 mega development projects costing Rs157 billion including procurement of vessels and construction of metro bus in Karachi with a modified design. The uplift schemes were cleared by Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC), which will allow the executing agencies to commence civil works on the projects. Some of the schemes are of strategic nature including construction of Islamabad-Raikot Section highway phase-I at a cost of Rs95.4 billion. The 120-kilometre-long road is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The ECNEC approved two energy generation projects with the combined capacity of 75MW on a proposal moved by Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan. The proposal by Pakistan Audit Department on a Project

for Improvement of Financial Reporting and Auditing (PIFRA) Phase II, 2nd revised project was approved by the ECNEC. The project has an estimated cost of Rs10.4 billion including foreign loan of Rs8.9 billion.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/802089/ecnec-decision-10-projects-worth-rs157b-approved/>

Parvez Jabri, “DDWP approves over Rs709mn for development projects”

Business Recorder, December 12, 2014

The Departmental Development Working Party (DDWP) has approved rupees over 709 million for development projects in Gilgit-Baltistan. The meeting was held in Gilgit, Chief Secretary Skindar Sultan Raja who is also Chairman of the DDWP presided over, reported Radio Pakistan. The approved schemes include police officers residential quarters in Hunza, costing rupees over 118 million, purchase of vehicles for home department more than 177 million, repairing of bridges in Baltistan 102 million. The road widening project from Hamayon to Sarmo Baltistan rupees costing 150 million was also sanctioned.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/210387-ddwp-approves-over-rs709mn-for-development-projects.html>

International Developments

Ananth Krishnan, “China says PoK region 'part of Pakistan', raises eyebrows”

India Today, December 3, 2014

A Chinese statement on December 2 describing the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) as "Pakistan's" has raised eyebrows, even as China goes ahead with an ambitious economic corridor through the contested territory despite Indian concerns. Authorities in China's far-western Xinjiang region on December 2 announced the closure of the strategically-significant Khunjerab Pass, which links Xinjiang and PoK, for the winter season. The announcement issued by China's State-run and official Xinhua news agency described the pass as "a strategic point on the Karakoram highway which links China's Xinjiang with Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region".

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/china-statement-says-pok-region-part-of-pakistan-raising-eyebrows/1/404982.html>

Nidhi Razdan, “China's State-Run News Agency Calls PoK Region 'Pakistan'”

NDTV News, December 3, 2014

China's official news agency, Xinhua, referred to a part of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) as "Pakistan", a move that is likely to provoke a strong reaction from India. In a story released on December 2, Xinhua, which is state-run, described the "Khunjerab Pass on the China-Pakistan border" as a strategic point "which links China's Xinjiang with Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region." Four years ago, a similar statement by the Chinese government led to an official protest by India, forcing Beijing to withdraw it. India considers Gilgit-Baltistan a part of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. China has stated that it will not take sides in the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan.

<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/chinas-state-run-news-agency-calls-pok-region-pakistan-707937>

Other Developments

“ERRA to construct 1,000 schools damaged in quake: deputy chairman”

The News, December 4, 2014

The Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) would reconstruct 1,000 schools in the 2005-quake affected areas, the Deputy Chairman of the Authority, Major-General Azeem Asif, stated on December 3. He stated 500 schools would be rebuilt in the disaster-hit areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while 500 reconstructed in different localities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He stated the federal government had directed the ERRA to complete the project in one year, and the authority had the capacity to achieve the task on time.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34495-ERRA-to-reconstruct-1000-schools-damaged-in-quake-deputy-chairman>

“Demonstration in AJK: Hundreds protest against load shedding”

The Express Tribune, December 16, 2014

People in Muzaffarabad took out to streets on December 15 to protest against what they stated unannounced load-shedding in the city. The protesters shouted slogans against Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Electricity Department. “AJK generates more than 1,200 megawatts of electricity but does not get 300 megawatts to meet its requirements,” stated Zahid Amin Kashif, who addressed the protesters. He blamed WAPDA for this “injustice”. He claimed that the authorities were carrying out 10-12 hours load-shedding in cities and more than 15 hours in the rural areas. He further stated the load-shedding had affected the business activities in AJK. The protesters blocked Abbottabad Road and the police had to fire teargas to disperse them. It was the second protest in a week time against power cuts in the AJK capital.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/807311/demonstration-in-ajk-hundreds-protest-against-loadshedding/>

“ERRA orders projects' timely completion”

The Nation, December 31, 2014

The Earthquake Reconstruction Rehabilitation Authority has directed the project managers and the contractors to complete all the under-construction projects in Muzaffarabad, Bagh and Rawalakot districts by December 30, 2015. In a meeting held at ERRA Headquarters on December 30, Deputy Chairman Maj-Gen Muhammad Azeem Asif made it clear that time extension would be given for the projects' completion, and directed them to make arrangements for the competition of projects with the stipulated period. He expressed satisfaction over the projects completed by end of December 2014 and gave approval for the next year working schedule of projects.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/31-Dec-2014/erra-orders-projects-timely-completion>

Shabbir Mir, “Inaccessible: Baltistan cut off from the country as part of Alam Bridge collapses”

The Express Tribune, December 7, 2014

A major portion of the only bridge linking Baltistan region to Gilgit and the rest of the country has partially collapsed, suspending traffic on the route for the second consecutive day on December 7. The strategic Alam Bridge sustained damage on December 4 evening when a heavily loaded truck was passing over it. The truck was heading to Rawalpindi from Skardu when it got stuck in the middle of the bridge, leaving the driver and his colleague in a precarious situation. The two men reportedly jumped off the vehicle to save their lives and made it safely across the bridge. Later, the truck was removed with the help of engineers from the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) which is

responsible for the bridge's maintenance.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/802814/inaccessible-baltistan-cut-off-from-the-country-as-part-of-alam-bridge-collapses/>

“Anti-polio drive in Gilgit-Baltistan begins tomorrow”

Samaa, December 7, 2014

The 5th round of three-day national immunization campaign against polio will begin in Gilgit-Baltistan on December 7. During the campaign 113,000 children up to five years will be administered polio drops in all seven districts, Radio Pakistan reported. Control rooms are also being set up in all districts to monitor the drive. In Gilgit, an awareness rally about polio would be organized on December 7 in Konoday Gilgit in which people of the area and students will participate.

<http://www.samaa.tv/health/07-Dec-2014/anti-polio-drive-in-gilgit-baltistan-begins-tomorrow>

Shabbir Mir, “Accreditation: Water testing lab at KIU gets EPA certification”

The Express Tribune, December 23, 2014

The Water Quality Testing Laboratory (WQTL) at Karakoram International University (KIU) has become the first laboratory in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) to obtain an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certification. The facility was established in 2013 as part of the Italian government's project Social Economic Environment Development (SEED). It was funded by Ev-K2-CNR, a non-profit organisation that aims to promote scientific and technological research in mountainous regions. “The news is very promising,” stated Gilgit EPA Assistant Director Khadim Hussain on December 23.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/811195/accreditation-water-testing-lab-at-kiu-gets-epa-certification/>

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.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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