

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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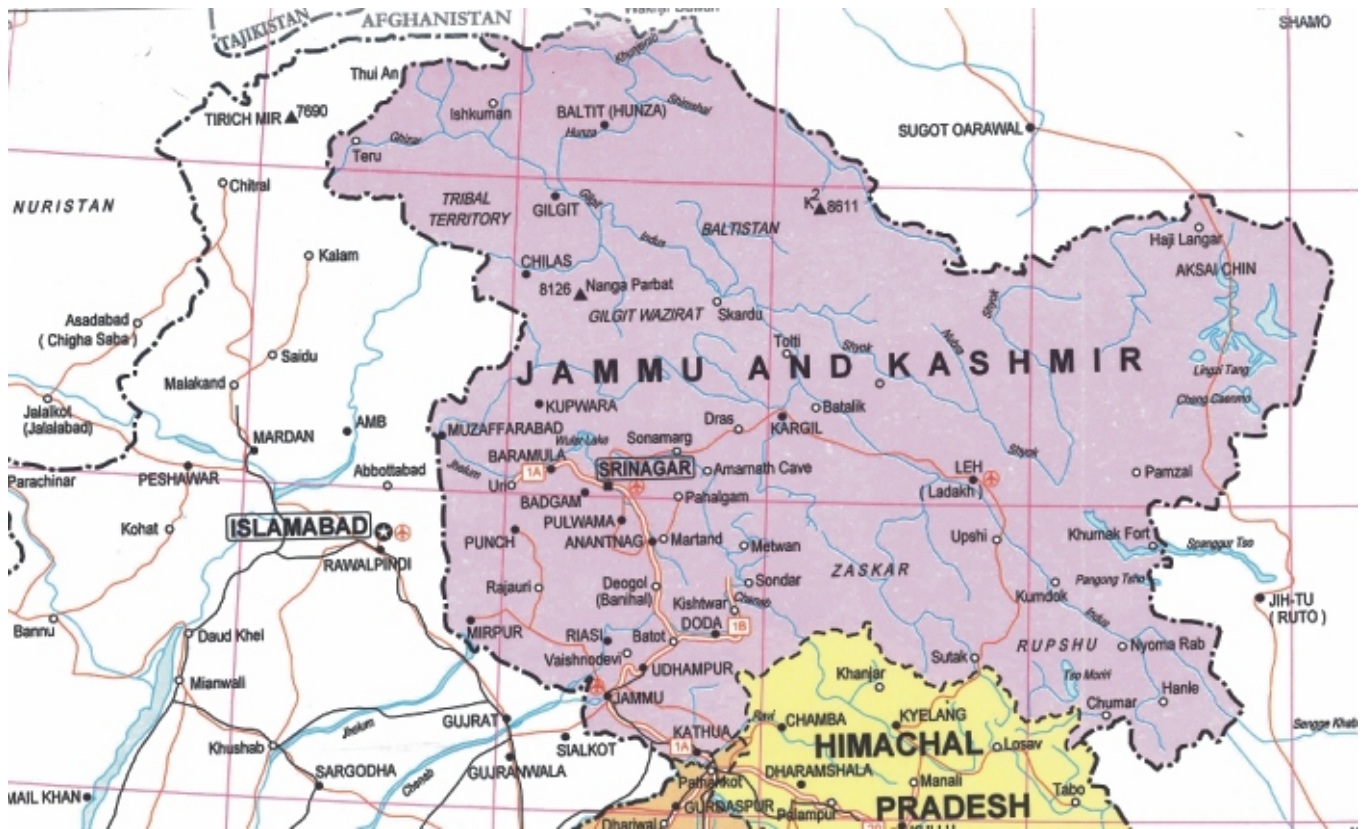
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Kargil-Skardu Road: Only Connect



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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

In view of the legislative assembly elections to be held in Gilgit Baltistan on June 8, 2015, the election commission is making all necessary arrangements for smooth conduct of polls. The second elections in the region will be held under the auspices of the Pakistan army. The demand to bring in the army to supervise the conduct of polls was first put forward by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Subsequently, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) also raised similar demand to call in the army for elections. As a result of the demand made by political parties and also based on the reports given by the respective returning officers, the election commission decided to hold the elections under the Pakistan army's supervision, especially in the sensitive constituencies.

On May 8, a tragic incident took place in the Naltar Valley in Gilgit Baltistan where in a helicopter crash the Norwegian Ambassador, Leif H Larsen, Ambassador of Philippines, Domingo D Lucenario Jr, wives of the Malaysian and Indonesian ambassadors and two Pakistan Army Majors were all dead. Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, Burhan Muhammad, who was severely injured in the crash later succumbed to his burn injuries in a hospital. Initial reports suggested the possibility of a terrorist attack. However, the Pakistan army later clarified that the crash occurred due to a technical fault and not otherwise. Taking a lesson from the tragic accident some countries from the west issued advisories to their diplomatic officials posted in Pakistan not to use helicopters etc. from the Pakistan army for travelling purposes.

In response to the ongoing debate on whether Gilgit Baltistan should be made a province of Pakistan, the president of the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob, noted that this was not possible until the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Women banned from taking part in polls in Pakistan's Gilgit Baltistan region”

Khaleej Times, May 1, 2015

ISLAMABAD: The Jirga (religious assembly) in Gilgit Baltistan -- an eight-hour drive from the Pakistan capital -- has banned women from taking part in the coming assembly elections slated for June 8. The Jirga -- a traditional assembly of leaders that takes decisions by consensus and according to the teachings of Islam -- in Darel valley on late April 30 barred the women of the area from contesting and voting in the forthcoming elections as was reported on May 1. All candidates from ruling and opposition parties in the region taking part in the elections have agreed to abide by the Jirga diktat, which stated that women's participation in elections is against the cultural tradition of the area and the religious teachings.

<http://www.khaleejtimes.com/article/20150501/ARTICLE/305019972/1028>

“Situation of women education in GB unsatisfactory”

The Nation, May 3, 2015

After the Dakar World Education Forum held in April 2000, “Education for All” has become the slogan for the education sector worldwide. Pakistan is the signatory of the international accord, universal primary education under the Education for All 2015 Frameworks. In this respect Pakistan has to achieve 100 percent primary school enrolment target till 2015 which seems impossible. Among developing and South Asian countries, Pakistan still remains a country with a momentous number of out of school children. UNICEF reports more than half of the primary school going age children (5-9) remain out of school.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/03-May-2015/situation-of-women-education-in-gb-unsatisfactory>

Meraj Alam, “56 leaders banned from contesting GB elections”

The Nation, May 3, 2015

GILGIT: Chief Election Commissioner Gilgit-Baltistan on May 2 imposed ban on 56 leaders of religious organizations from contesting the upcoming election of the region. An official noted that CEC has sent names of the 56 leaders to all seven districts and returning officers asking them to stop them from contesting the GB legislative Assembly elections. According to sources, these leaders belong to outfits including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Shia Tulaba Action Committee, Markazi Sabeel Organization Gilgit, Tanzeem-e-Nowjawan-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat, Anjuman Imamia Gilgit Baltistan, Muslim Students Organization, Tanzim-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jammata, Tehrik-e-Jaffria Pakistan, Tehreek-e-Islami and Khana Hikmat, Sepah Muhammad Pakistan SMP, Sepah Sahaba, Leshkar Touiba, Milat Islamia Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jangavi. Earlier, Ministry of Interior Gilgit Baltistan has banned 16 religious organizations asking law enforcement agencies to strictly monitor activities of these outfits. The ministry urged the CEC to stop these leaders from contesting elections as they belong to outfit organizations.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-May-2015/56-leaders-banned-from-contesting-gb-elections>

Qaiser Butt, “Déjà vu: Committee on G-B status dubbed a poll ploy”

The Express Tribune, May 4, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at a recent public meeting announced formation of a committee on the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). It is the fourth such committee in 35 years. The prime minister held out an assurance that the committee's recommendations will be implemented, but local political parties are

sceptical as they believe it is a ploy by the ruling PML-N to win the upcoming elections in the region.

All previous committees had failed to decide the matter. The first committee was constituted by the then prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in 1975, the second was formed by military dictator Gen Ziaul Haq during his rule, while the third, a subcommittee of the Senate Human Rights Committee, was unveiled during President Asif Ali Zardari's tenure.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/880453/deja-vu-committee-on-g-b-status-dubbed-a-poll-ploy/>

Mustafa Kamal, “Gilgit-Baltistan elections: The nth nail in the coffin of women equality”

The Express Tribune, May 4, 2015

Religion has deepened its roots into Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) once again, where the Legislative assembly elections are set to be held in June, 2015. The first symptom of this religiosity is the allegations against various party leaders for using mosques and imambargahs as launching platforms for their political activities. The second symptom is the current unanimous decision of a so-called jirga (local council) which bars women to vote, as it would put the religious, cultural and social honour of the region at stake according to a report by BBC Urdu.

<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/27519/gilgit-baltistan-elections-the-nth-nail-in-the-coffin-of-women-equality/>

Shabbir Mir, “Compromise reached: Jirga retracts 'decree' barring women's suffrage in G-B”

The Express Tribune, May 6, 2015

GILGIT: A controversial 'decree' barring women in Darel Valley from voting in legislative assembly elections in Gilgit-Baltistan was retracted on May 6. As a result, women will be allowed to vote for the very first time in Darel. The decision was taken on May 6 after Darel AC Samiullah Farooqi assured community elders that separate polling booths for women will be established where only women will be staffed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/882072/compromise-reached-jirga-retracts-decree-barring-womens-suffrage-in-g-b/>

“Mirpur all set to implement NAP”

The Nation, May 5, 2015

MIRPUR: Code of conduct has been finalised by the Mirpur divisional administration with the coordination of the national security institutions for the implementation of the National Action Plan in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, it was officially disclosed. Mirpur Division Commissioner. Raja Amjad Pervez Ali Khan. invited the cooperation of the people to the Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimbher districts and divisional administration to maintain peace and order through the implementation of the plan in letter and spirit.

He referred to the recent damaging of a portion of Mirpur-Kotli dual carriageway near Khaliqabad, passing through the periphery of Mangla Dam Lake. He also underlined that the Wapda's chairman has pledged to remove the faults left in the recent raising project of the dam by admitting the damaging/erosion of the portion of the highway caused due to the mistake of the concerned design engineer.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/05-May-2015/mirpur-all-set-to-implement-nap>

“AJK president-formed body on MUST stayed”

The Nation, May 4, 2015

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court has, on a writ petition filed by Mirpur University of Science & Technology Vice Chancellor, granted a stay order against the formation of a fact-finding committee to probe the appointments made against various vacant positions in the MUST. The learned court fixed May 9, 2015, as the next date of hearing of the case. Raja Muhammad Hanif Advocate appeared as counsel on behalf of MUST Dr Habib-ur-Rehman in the court.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-May-2015/ajk-president-formed-body-on-must-stayed>

“Voice raised for press freedom, journalists' protection”

The Nation, May 4, 2015

BAHAWALNAGAR/MIRPUR: The World Press Freedom Day was observed with the unanimous

demand for the grant of complete freedom to the press and protection of journalists around the globe in view of its importance and responsible role in building of a healthy society. In Bahawalnagar, the day was marked by the local journalists under the auspices of Bahawalnagar Press Club. The office-bearers and members of Bahawalnagar Press Club expressed solidarity with the families of the journalists who had sacrificed their precious lives in the line of their duty. The seminar was aimed at imparting journalistic values to the media men, and commemorating the sacrifices of the martyrs.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-May-2015/voice-raised-for-press-freedom-journalists-protection>

Peer Muhammad, “Multi-billion-dollar project: Work on 'changed' corridor route has begun: ANP”

The Express Tribune, May 4, 2015

ISLAMABAD: A senior leader of the Awami National Party (ANP) has expressed consternation about the much-trumpeted China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, saying the government is already moving towards implementation of the modified route from western to eastern side of the country. “We have learnt that the government has already started implementation on the project by diverting its route from the western to eastern side,” stated ANP leader Haji Mohammad Adeel. He further stated that they have strong reservations about the government's intention to change the original route, adding that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is also toeing the government line.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/880505/multi-billion-dollar-project-work-on-changed-corridor-route-has-begun-anp/>

“People of Gilgit Baltistan Struggling for their Rights”

ANI, May 5, 2015

The call of the people of Gilgit Baltistan has been going unheard for decades now. The continued denial of political rights by Pakistan in the region is fuelling dissatisfaction by the day. The people of Gilgit Baltistan have realized that Islamabad is taking them for a ride for years. From basic

amenities to the citizenship rights, everything has been taken back by the puppet regime from the locals of the region. Even the rich natural resources are being plundered by Pakistan, without paying any royalty to the locals. Gilgit Baltistan was a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan, which has illegally occupied it for over six decades, has been ruling it through proxies. While successive Pakistani government have always kept up the sham of championing "self-determination" for the people of Gilgit, it has continuously suppressed their rights denying them basic, constitutional and human rights.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/37070-people-of-gilgit-baltistan-struggling-for-their-rights.html>

Rajeev Srinivasan, “The existential threat to India posed by China's Pakistan gambit”

First Post, May 4, 2015

The late Samuel P Huntington put forth his seductively simple theory of the “clash of civilisations” some years ago. Although many criticised him, it does appear that there are several mutually antagonistic entities constantly in conflict with each other, shifting alliances and at war overtly or covertly. India has the unfortunate fate of being attacked simultaneously by three of these civilizational entities, while desperately trying to convince itself that it is friends with all of them. The latest manifestation is the Chinese initiative in Pakistan linking Kashgar in Chinese-held Sinkiang to Gwadar in Balochistan, via Pakistani-Occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The proposed \$46 billion project has a number of alarming and sinister implications, almost none of which is good for India.

<http://www.firstpost.com/world/existential-threat-india-posed-chinas-pakistan-gambit-2226726.html>

“Ahsan rules out change in PCEC route”

The Nation, May 6, 2015

SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ch Ahsan Iqbal stated that the Pak-China Economic Corridor (PCEC) would change the fate of Pakistan, and help restore the confidence of foreign investors. Addressing the party workers near Shakargarh-Narowal, he stated that it would pave the ways for massive Chinese companies'

investments in Pakistan. The federal minister strongly condemned the negative propaganda of the “anti-state” elements, saying that the objective of the negative propaganda was to create hurdles in the Pak-China Economic Corridor. He ruled out any possibility of change in its route. He stated that the nation was agreed to the present route and design of the project. He added that the route of the Pak-China Economic Corridor will pass through Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/06-May-2015/ahsan-rules-out-change-in-pcec-route>

“Zardari dissolves PPP set up in AJK”

Daily Times, May 25, 2015

MUZZAFARABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari, on May 25 dissolved the organisational set up in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The action from the party co-chairman was taken in the wake of flawed performance of the party in the scenic valley and PPP's defeat in Mirpur elections. Asif Zardari has, for the time being, appointed former AJK legislative assembly speaker Anwarul Haq as caretaker of the party. It is expected that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari is going to undertake the re-organisation of the party in AJK.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/25-May-2015/zardari-dissolves-ppp-set-up-in-ajk>

MA Mir, “Infighting in AJK?: Farooq Haider says Nawaz helping PPP”

The Express Tribune, May 27, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: On two occasions, Nawaz Sharif snatched the constitutional rights of AJK assembly members by stopping no-confidence motions against the PPP government in the region. This was stated by opposition leader and PML-N Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) chief Farooq Haider Khan at a press conference in Central Press Club on May 26. “Three times, PPP had voted in favour of the non-confidence motion to oust the three prime ministers between 2006 and 2011,” stated the AJK PML-N chief.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/892809/infighting-in-ajk-farooq->

[haider-says-nawaz-helping-ppp/](#)

Imaduddin, “Govt to continue funding for development of AJK: PM”

Business Recorder, May 27, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on May 27 stated the Federal Government would continue funding for development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), especially provision of basic necessities of life. He was talking to Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, who called on him at the PM House.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/243695-govt-to-continue-funding-for-development-of-ajk-pm.html>

“Mirpur-Kotli road Progress on rehabilitation work reviewed”

Business Recorder, May 31, 2015

A meeting to overview the progress of rehabilitation work of the Mirpur-Kotli Road near the Khaliqabad Chowk was held at the WAPDA House, under Chairmanship of the Additional Secretary, the Ministry of Water and Power at PWD Rest House Mirpur chairing it. The meeting looked into concerns by the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting also drew in Chief Secretary, AJK, Chief Engineering Adviser/Chairman Federal Flood Commission, Member (Sindh) IRSA, Member (Water) WAPDA, Member (Power) WAPDA, Technical Advisors to WAPDA Authority, Commissioners Mirpur Division and Mangla Dam Affairs, project authorities and technical experts/engineers from NESPAK and Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), AJK.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-economy/189/1191671/>

Meraj Alam, “Polls in G-B to be held under army supervision: CEC”

The Nation, May 24, 2015

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice (Retd) Syed Tahir Ali Shah stated that elections of G-B Legislative Assembly would be held under the supervision of

Pakistan Army. "Pak Army personnel will be deployed at polling stations of Gilgit, Diamer and other sensitive areas," he noted while addressing a press conference in Gilgit on May 23. The CEC stated the commission had decided to hold elections in Gilgit, Diamer and other sensitive areas under the supervision of Pak Army following the demand of political parties and recommendations of returning officers. He stated the conduct of free, fair and transparent polls would be ensured at all costs. Regarding arrangements, he stated, an important meeting would be held on May 25 with Force Commander and Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/24-May-2015/polls-in-g-b-to-be-held-under-army-supervision-cec>

“No one can stop women from voting: Imran Khan”

Khaleej Times, May 30, 2015

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on May 29 stated that no one can prevent women from exercising their right to vote. Addressing a rally in Khaplu Valley of Gilgit-Baltistan, the PTI chief stated he strongly disagrees with the policy in some areas where women are not allowed to vote. He stated only voting will empower their future. “All the women who are present here right now today I thank you and I tell you, go back and encourage other women to vote,” he stated. Imran stated his party is paying more attention to women's education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Local government system will also empower women in the society. Imran is visiting these areas to campaign for his party ahead of the June 8 Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly elections.

<http://www.khaleejtimes.com/article/20150530/ARTICLE/305309949/1028>

Shabbir Mir, “Rally in Ghanche: A criminal is made law minister, says Imran”

The Express Tribune, May 30, 2015

GILGIT: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf chief Imran Khan on May 29 reacting to the reinstatement of Rana Sanaullah stated a “criminal” has been made a law minister in Punjab. Rana Sanaullah took oath as the Punjab law minister on May 29 at the Governor

House Lahore after a joint investigation team (JIT) investigating Model Town incident gave him a clean-chit. “The biggest criminals of Punjab, like Rana Sanaullah, are being given ministries time and again,” Imran told a rally in Ghanche district of Baltistan. He stated there was no justice in Punjab.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/894612/rally-in-ghanche-a-criminal-is-made-law-minister-says-imran/>

Farooq Tariq, “Pakistan: Baba Jan contests election from jail”

May 25, 2015

Baba Jan, a federal committee member of the Awami Workers Party (AWP), is contesting the election for the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly seat (Hunza-6) from behind bars. He is in jail serving a life sentence handed down by an anti-terrorism court last year for raising his voice against police brutality and for the rights of Attabad disaster hit people. This is the first time in the history of Gilgit-Baltistan, a disputed territory administered by Pakistan that an election campaign has been run from prison. Elections for the 34-seat rubber-stamp assembly is going to be held on June 8, 2015. The provincial election commission's decision to allow him to contest the poll has surprised many and triggered an enthusiasm among the youth, who consider Baba Jan a symbol of resistance. Baba Jan and his group had boycotted the last general elections in 2009. The Pakistan People's Party won the seat but has lost most of its credibility during its five years in power because of corruption.

<http://links.org.au/node/4440>

Arslan Ashraf, “Gilgit-Baltistan Elections; Vote for a New Era”

Daily Times, May 27, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan, a region of eternal beauty and untold stories is one of the most beautiful regions of Pakistan. It has been divided in seven districts. Two are in Baltistan, four in Gilgit and the HunzaNagar District. The region borders with Afghanistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, China and Azad Kashmir and has approximately 1,000,000 of population spreading over 28,174 sq mi area. Gilgit-Baltistan elections have been scheduled on June 8, 2015 and

nomination papers have also been submitted by different political parties. Hunza, a district full of tourist attraction and beautiful people with literacy rate over 90% is also politically charged and people are anxiously waiting to practice their right of voting on June 8, 2015.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/blogs/27-May-2015/gilgit-baltistan-elections-vote-for-a-new-era>

Pierre Rousset, “International Solidarity campaign for Baba Jan relaunched”

May 27, 2015

We have been campaigning several years for the release of the ten “climate change prisoners” in Gilgit-Baltistan (north of Pakistan), the most prominent of them being Baba Jan. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, together with Shakrullah Baig, Iftikhar Hussain, Mahar Ali, Alleem Ullah, Irfan Ali, Rashid Minhas, Musa Baig, Sher Khan and Sher Ali. As it is often the case in Pakistan, these progressive activists were charged under anti-terrorist laws, while they never promoted any terrorist activities. This very heavy sentence raised a lot of protests in Pakistan and the Appellate Court (Supreme Court) of Gilgit-Baltistan eventually declared them non guilty in one case for which he were given a life sentence. Six of the ten were then released: Alleem Ullah, Irfan Ali, Rashid Minhas, Musa Baig, Sher Khan and Sher Ali.

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/>

Shabbir Mir, “Full speed ahead: PML-N announces manifesto for G-B polls”

The Express Tribune, May 28, 2015

GILGIT: Just as electioneering gains momentum in Gilgit-Baltistan, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has wasted no time in announcing its manifesto for the June 8 polls. In a ceremony held at the party's central secretariat in Gilgit, PML-N regional chief, Hafizur Rehman, distributed copies of the document amongst attendees on May 27. While others are still weighing options, seeing important leaders jump ship, PML-N is the first to announce its plans for G-B. “This is the difference between us and them,” Rehman told the gathering. “We seek support on the basis of our policy

declarations while others resort to sectarian and ethnic gimmicks to woo voters.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/893330/full-speed-ahead-pml-n-announces-manifesto-for-g-b-polls/>

“Questionable appointment: AJK top court gets ad-hoc judge”

The Express Tribune, May 26, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Masood A Sheikh has been appointed as ad-hoc judge of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Supreme Court. Chief Justice Muhammad Azam took oath from Sheikh in the AJK apex court building in Mirpur on May 25. SC judges - Justice Ibrahim Zai and Justice Raja Saeed Akram - and others were also present at the ceremony. Meanwhile, AJK Bar Council members boycotted the oath-taking ceremony as well as court proceedings to register their protest against the appointment of new judge on ad-hoc basis. They described it unconstitutional and against the merit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/892214/questionable-appointment-ajk-top-court-gets-ad-hoc-judge/>

Shabbir Mir, “Skardu electioneering: G-B people aren't a 'saleable commodity', says Imran”

The Express Tribune, May 29, 2015

The head of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan on May 28 reprimanded the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz for announcing development funds ahead of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) elections, saying people of the region are not a “saleable commodity”. “Mian sahib [Premier Nawaz] G-B is inhabited by humans, they aren't a saleable commodity like those in Ittefaq Foundry,” he told his party workers during an election rally in Skardu's Municipal Stadium on May 28.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/894055/skardu-electioneering-g-b-people-arent-a-saleable-commodity-says-imran/>

“Following suit: PPP unveils election manifesto”

The Express Tribune, May 29, 2015

GILGIT: A day after Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) presented a written election manifesto, Pakistan Peoples Party followed suit on May 28, promising a series of welfare projects for

the region. The election manifesto was presented to the media by former information minister, Qamar Zaman Kaira at Gilgit Press Club. “Whatever has been given to this region to date was given by PPP,” stated Karia, referring to the development and constitutional packages, including the governance order of 2009 which made G-B a de facto province. PPP leaders including Zamrud Khan, Afzal Nadim Chand and Nayyar Bukhari were also present on the occasion. Senior figures are in G-B in a bid to consolidate whatever is left of the party after mass defections.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/893819/following-suit-ppp-unveils-election-manifesto/>

Imaduddin, “Dar assures AJK PM to resolve Mangla Dam affectees issue”

Business Recorder, May 27 2015

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on May 27 assured Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) that the issue of Mangla Dam affected people will be resolved on emergency basis as soon as the requisite budget is approved. He directed WAPDA and IRSA authorities to visit AJK as soon as possible and hold meetings with the regional authorities and formulate a strategy to resolve their issues in the shortest possible time. Prime Minister AJK, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed met with Ishaq Dar on May 27 and discussed matters of mutual interests.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/1-front-top-news/243693-dar-assures-ajk-pm-to-resolve-mangla-dam-affectees-issue.html>

Roshan Mughal, “Refugees stage protest sit-in against AJK govt”

The Nation, May 30, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Kashmir refugees staged a protest sit-in on May 29 to press the government to meet their demands. Hundreds of refugees and mujahedeen from 13 camps set up in the surrounding of Muzaffarabad for the migrants of 1989, gathered in front of the press club holding large banners and placards painted with their demands were shouting anger against the AJK government for failing to live up to its promises of

resolving their problems. The refugees sat on the foot path in front of the press club and kept chanting slogans. The president of all 13 camps and representatives of refugees welfare organizations were present at the camp. The sit-in was organized by Jammu Kashmir Refugee Welfare Organization (JKRWO). Chairman pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ghazali, President JKRWO Muzamil Aslam, Gohar Kashmiri, Qari Bilal, Mushtaq-ul-Islam, Muhammad Usman, and Saddique Dawood were prominent among the protestors. Addressing the protestors, their leaders stated they will take every step to force the government to resolve their problems.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/30-May-2015/refugees-stage-protest-sit-in-against-ajk-govt>

Shabbir Mir, “Joining the chorus: PML-N asks G-B CEC for army supervision in all districts”

The Express Tribune, May 27, 2015

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan chapter of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has joined the chorus of voices asking the chief election commissioner to hold polls under the army's supervision in all districts. CEC Justice Tahir Ali Shah had recently stated help will be sought from the army to ensure security during polling in Gilgit and Diamer districts but a similar decision for other districts would be taken on the basis of need. However, while addressing a gathering in Gilgit on May 26, PML-N regional chief Hafizur Rehman stated the army support should not be limited to two districts and should be sought for all of them.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/892741/joining-the-chorus-pml-n-asks-g-b-cec-for-army-supervision-in-all-districts/>

“Sardar Abid inducted in AJK cabinet”

Dawn, May 26, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on May 25 inducted one more member in his cabinet, raising its strength to 24. The new inductee, Sardar Abid Hussain Abid, elected against a seat reserved for technocrats, would be administered oath at Kashmir House Islamabad on May 26 by acting AJK President Sardar Ghulam Sadiq Khan. He is

most likely to be given the portfolio of information, which is currently additionally held by Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1184303/sardar-abid-inducted-in-ajk-cabinet>

Shabbir Mir, “Placing restrictions: Five caretaker ministers banned from entering Astor”

The Express Tribune, May 26, 2015

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan election commission has banned the entry of five caretaker ministers in Astore Valley for violating the election code of conduct. “Some of the ministers are in the valley and have been asked to leave immediately,” an election commission official noted on May 25. “The decision was taken by District Returning Officer Ghulam Abbas after he received complaints from various sources.” According to the official, the ministers, who were not identified by their name, will not be able to visit the valley till June 8 when the elections take place.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/892254/placing-restrictions-five-caretaker-ministers-banned-from-entering-astore/>

Shabbir Mir, “No media mudslinging: Candidates asked to voice reservations about election process”

The Express Tribune, May 24, 2015

GILGIT: Chief Election Commissioner of Gilgit-Baltistan Tahir Shah issued a warning to candidates who had raised doubts about legislative assembly elections scheduled for June 8. Speaking to journalists at his office on May 23, the CEC stated many candidates had a series of reservations about the overall poll process and had made statements in the media in this regard. “I strongly advise these candidates to approach the election commission with their complaints,” Shah stated. “All they need to do is submit a written complaint and justify it with at least two forms of proof.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/891309/no-media-mudslinging-candidates-asked-to-voice-reservations-about-election-process/>

Hameed Shaheen, “Non-State parties will have

no role in Kashmir solution: Attique”

Kashmir Watch, May 24, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Ex-Premier AJK Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan cautioned Kashmiris that the non-State political platforms would have no role in efforts aimed at solving the Kashmir dispute; neither on this side nor on the other side of the Line of Control the non-State political parties will have any say in the solution of Kashmir issue as Kashmir dispute belongs to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, he clarified. Concluding on May 24 his weeklong tour of all districts of Azad Kashmir he told media that Muslim Conference whose president he himself is, exists in Jammu and Kashmir also. He stated that his platform is open for all citizens of the State irrespective of their political or religious affiliations.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/05/24/non-state-parties-will-have-no-role-in-kashmir-solution-attique.html>

“The Kotli project”

The News, May 23, 2015

The Chinese firm, building the Karote (Kotli) Hydropower Project, reportedly applied to Nepra for power tariff of over Rs10/kWh. The tariff appears to be very high when compared to the electricity produced by Mangla/Tarbela dams which is not above Rs2/kWh. If the tariff rate is confirmed then people, already overburdened by the ever-increasing power tariffs, should forget about cheap hydroelectricity in the future. Nepra needs to clarify the report. Incidentally, Karote on the Jhelum River falls in the jurisdiction of AJK and not in Punjab. The AJK government needs to take up this point in the interests of the people of Azad Kashmir.

Air-Cdre (r) Mohammad Yaqoob Khan

Rawalpindi

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-319683-The-Kotli-project>

“Gilgit-Baltistan and the New Great Game”

The News, May 17, 2015

The famous Silk Route has witnessed many

vicissitudes for more than two millennia. This route was disrupted many times because of political events engulfing the regions spanning from Ch'angan, modern day Sian to the Mediterranean region and Europe. However, trade on the Silk Route continued to flourish because its multiple arteries enabled traders to dodge political upheavals and geographic hurdles. During the twentieth century areas along the Silk Route witnessed redrawing of boundaries on the basis of modern nation-states.

<http://www.indiagazette.com/index.php/sid/232926859>

Meraj Alam, “G-B masses most deprived of rights, says Imran”

The Nation, May 18, 2015

GILGIT: Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairperson Imran Khan stated that people of Gilgit-Baltistan are the most deprived of their rights. "Change in Gilgit-Baltistan will come after general elections," he stated while addressing a public gathering at Lalik Jan Stadium, Gilgit on May 17 via telephone from Islamabad. The PTI chief stated that he would visit Gilgit very soon. He stated the two parties would continue looting the country, including G-B, if there was no PTI. "PTI is a new but a very strong political force in Gilgit-Baltistan," he added. He stated appointment of a non-local as governor is a clear violation of Article 101 (ii) of the constitution.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/18-May-2015/g-b-masses-most-deprived-of-rights-says-imran>

Imaduddin, “Govt taking steps to promote education in Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan: NA informed”

Business Recorder, May 18, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Hamid Hameed on May 18 told the National Assembly that the federal government was taking concrete steps to promote education in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. During Question Hour in the House, he stated that in the case of AJK being a special territory, the subject of education was already in the domain of Government of AJK. Hence, the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan was not

directly dealing with the subject of education relating to the AJK.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/273824-Imran-Khan-terms-PMs-Gilgit-visit-prepoll-riggi>

Imaduddin, “PM breaks ground for development projects in GB”

Business Recorder, April 14, 2015

GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on April 14 broke ground for various projects of power, health and infrastructural development to uplift the living standard of the residents. Among the projects, kicked off by the Prime Minister, included a cardiac hospital, 16-megawatt Naltar-3 Hydro Power Project, four PTV Rebroadcasting Stations and Juglot-Skardu road.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/politics-a-policy/242619-govt-taking-steps-to-promote-education-in-kashmir-gilgit-baltistan-na-informed.html>

Shabbir Mir, “A domino effect?: PTI G-B chapter's key wickets fall to PML-N”

The Express Tribune, May 19, 2015

GILGIT: With almost three weeks to go till legislative assembly elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan Tehreek-e Insaf (PTI) lost two key 'wickets' in the region as its president and senior vice-president joined Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on May 18. Abdul Latif and Mahmoodul Hasan announced the decision at a press conference in Gilgit and vowed to support PML-N. The meeting was attended by a large number of their supporters who also joined the party, as well as local PML-N leaders including the party's regional chief Hafizur Rehman.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/888435/a-domino-effect-pti-g-b-chapters-key-wickets-fall-to-pml-n/>

“272 Candidates to Contest Gilgit Biltistan LA Polls on June 8”

Daily Capital, May 20, 2015

In Gilgit-Baltistan, polling for the election of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) will be held on 8th of next month. Election Commission Gilgit-Baltistan has published final list of

contesting candidates against 24 seats of Legislative Assembly. 272 candidates will contest the Legislative Assembly election. Election Commission has allocated election symbols to the registered fourteen contesting political parties. Notification in this regard has been issued.

<http://dailycapital.pk/272-candidates-to-contest-gilgit-baltistan-la-polls-on-june-8/>

Shabbir Mir, “Displaced dreams: Uighur families have no place to call home in G-B”

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2015

GILGIT: For over six decades, Uighur families in Gilgit-Baltistan have grappled with an identity crisis for which there appears to be no closure in sight. Running from possible persecution during the Cultural Revolution in 1949 in China, over a 100 families fled from Xinjiang and settled in various parts of Pakistan, including G-B. The exodus continued till 1980 and kept presenting fresh challenges for the migrants and their host communities. Since they had left behind their homes and relatives, Uighur families tried to carve a space for themselves in their new surroundings. With time, they were able to call the region home. The migrants with their colourful traditional dresses were known as Kashgaris, from Kashgar, the administrative centre of Xinjiang. Gradually they made their way into hearts of locals the best way they knew through their stomachs. Manta (dumplings) and laghman (noodles with lamb stew) have now become a staple of the region's diet.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/889640/displaced-dreams-uighur-families-have-no-place-to-call-home-in-g-b/>

Shahzad Chaudhry, “Terror redux or an innovative mutation?”

The News, May 21, 2015

Terror redux or an innovative mutation? The Safoora killings were different. They targeted the rather pacifist and devoted Ismailis who have a significant presence in the two geographical extremities of Pakistan Karachi and the Gilgit-Baltistan. The Aga Khan, himself a French citizen with a more defined international presence, is followed as a religious head by thousands

belonging to the Ismaili variation of the Shia stream of Islam. The Aga Khan also contributes significantly in the development of the northern areas where many of his followers live, and has helped change the face of GB over the years.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-319292-Terror-redux-or-an-innovative-mutation>

Shoaib-ur-Rehman, “PM directs for quick start of work on Diamer-Bhasha Dam”

Business Recorder, May 22, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif May 22 directed that acquisition of land for Diamer-Bhasha Dam should be done by the 31 July 2015 to start the project of immense national importance. He directed that work should be started on this power project as soon as possible. Chairing 14th meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy at the PM House, the Prime Minister asked Chairman WAPDA to present complete project proposal with timelines in the next meeting of Cabinet Committee on Energy.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/1-front-top-news/243123-pm-directs-for-quick-start-of-work-on-diamer-bhasha-dam.html>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B polls: PPP, JUI-F accuse governor of meddling in electioneering”

The Express Tribune, May 23, 2015

GILGIT: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's active politicking in Gilgit-Baltistan has raised a few eyebrows in opposing camps. In separate press conferences held on May 22, both Pakistan Peoples Party and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl have broken their silence and lambasted G-B Governor Barjees Tahir and Kashmir Affairs and G-B Federal Secretary Shahid Baig for “preparing ground for a PML-N victory”. Talking at Gilgit Press Club, PPP's Jamil Ahmed, who is also a candidate for Gilgit BGLA-II, accused the aforementioned of pressing government officials into campaigning for Nawaz Sharif's men. PPP has lost several members of late to PML-N.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/890770/g-b-polls-ppp-jui-f-accuse-governor-of-meddling-in-electioneering/>

Shabbir Mir, “Shifting allegiances: PPP senior leader Islamuddin defects to PML-N”

The Express Tribune, May 16, 2015

GILGIT: Another leader of Pakistan Peoples Party in Gilgit-Baltistan has decided to join Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, making the latter's position stronger before the legislative elections scheduled for June 8. Islamuddin, a senior PPP leader, announced his decision during a news conference at Gilgit Press Club on May 16. The meeting was attended by a large number of his supporters who also joined the party and PML-N leaders, including the party's regional chief Hafizur Rehman. “I have decided to join PML-N in the larger interest of the people,” he stated. “I trust the party's leadership and have taken this decision after much thought and consultation with my family and supporters.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/887561/shifting-allegiances-ppp-senior-leader-islamuddin-defects-to-pml-n/>

Meraj Alam, “PTI holds power show for GB elections”

The Nation, May 17, 2015

GILGIT: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is going to hold a power show in Gilgit on May 17 to campaign for its party candidates for upcoming general elections in the region. PTI Chairman Imran Khan will address the public gathering at Lalik Jan Stadium in Gilgit. The party's local office bearers have sought a permit for the gathering at the venue. While speaking to a press conference in Gilgit Press Club on May 16, PTI central leader Chaudry Sarwar Khan, stated that PTI chief would spend all whole day in the region, campaigning and meeting party workers.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/17-May-2015/pti-holds-power-show-for-gb-elections>

“Gilgit's Issues Must Be Resolved in Gilgit, Not In Islamabad Pakistan”

May 18, 2015

GILGIT: The Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek -i- Insaf, Imran Khan, in his telephonic address on May 17 to a gathering in Gilgit stated that the issues of Gilgit must be resolved in Gilgit instead of Islamabad. Imran Khan further stated this kind of

approach was the real essence of democracy. According to a source, Imran Khan in his telephonic address to a gathering at Lalak Jan Stadium in Gilgit stated that Egypt would bear the consequences of Morsi's hanging like Pakistan bore after the death of Z.A Bhutto. He lamented that PTI did not believe in fake mandate and would come into power through genuine public mandate.

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2015/05/18/gilgits-issues-must-be-resolved-in-gilgit-not-in-islamabad/>

“The Naltar tragedy”

Pakistan Today, May 18, 2015

A heart-rending episode that saddened the hearts of everyone across the length and breadth of Pakistan. Ambassador of Philippines, Domingo D Lucenario Jr, Ambassador of Norway Leif H Larsen, wives of the Malaysian and Indonesian ambassadors and two Pakistan Army Majors flying the ill-fated MI-17 helicopter got killed in the tragic accident. Tour of the breath taking Naltar Valley, Gilgit by foreign diplomats has been a routine affair. Foreign tourists including high-profile diplomats have always been wooed by the awesome beauty of Naltar valley to frequent the place. The diplomats and their families who were aboard the MI-17 helicopter that crashed were on one such routine visit of Naltar Valley. It was reported that in all, there were 19 people in this particular helicopter out of which 12 were rescued. Seven people, including the two Pakistan Army pilots who were piloting the copter, lost their precious lives in this tragic incident. The Indonesian Ambassador is reported to be in critical condition as he has suffered 75 percent burns. The magnitude of the tragedy could have been far greater had the Army Public School, on the roof top of which the ill-fated MI-17 helicopter crashed on May 8, 2015, been open and the students were in attendance.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/05/18/comment/the-naltar-tragedy/>

Roshan Mughal, “PPP govt revolutionises education system in AJK”

The Nation, May 18, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Finance Minister Azad Jammu Kashmir Chaudhary Lateef Akbar stated the

PPP government has revolutionised education system of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He stated the incumbent PPP government established three medical colleges and universities in different areas of AJK. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of "Cloud 15 Olymad" programme organised by the Department of Software Engineering University of Azad Jammu Kashmir (UAJK), he stated the opportunities of modern and quality education, which are available for students at their doorsteps today, could not be imagined in the past.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/18-May-2015/ppp-govt-revolutionises-edu-system-in-ajk>

“PM for early completion of feasibility report”

The Nation, May 17, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif directed the concerned departments and officials to complete the feasibility report on linking Islamabad with capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir with rail link, the project he had announced during his visit to Muzaffarabad last year. An official in Prime Minister's Office informed that the prime minister has given clear-cut instructions to all the ministries and departments to complete the ongoing developmental projects in their stipulated timeframe. The prime minister wants to see all the projects in pipeline on ground at the earliest,” the official further informed.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/17-May-2015/pm-for-early-completion-of-feasibility-report>

Kamran Yousaf, “Naltar tragedy: New advisory issued for diplomats”

The Express Tribune, May 12, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Notwithstanding that the May 8 helicopter crash in Naltar Valley was an accident caused by a technical glitch, foreign diplomats posted in Islamabad are unlikely to use planes and helicopters provided by the Pakistan government. “Unfortunately, under a new advisory we may not get authorisation from our governments to travel on Pakistani planes or choppers anymore,” a Western diplomat noted. Ambassadors of Norway and the Philippines, wives of Indonesian and Malaysian envoys, two pilots and a crewmember were killed

when the Mi-17 helicopter of the Pakistan Army went down shortly before landing in Naltar Valley of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/884842/naltar-tragedy-new-advisory-issued-for-diplomats/>

Meraj Alam, “Banned outfits given 'free hand' in GB polls”

The Nation, May 14, 2015

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government failed to close doors on members of banned organization planning to contest upcoming elections. According to sources, all members of banned organizations were able to file their nominations papers for general elections of legislative assembly, as the ban imposed earlier wasn't effective. Official in Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) office further stated that provincial government cannot impose the ban on any political organization; it is the jurisdiction of federal government. However, political parties wishing to contest election are required to follow the code-of-conduct issued by CEC.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/14-May-2015/banned-outfits-given-free-hand-in-gb-polls>

“Demonstrations in GB against Karachi carnage”

Dawn, May 14, 2015

GILGIT: Demonstrations were held in various parts of Gilgit-Baltistan against Karachi carnage that left 43 people belonging to Ismaili community dead and 13 others injured on May 13. Markets in Gilgit and Hunza-Nagar districts remained closed in protest against the massacre. Traffic on main roads of Gilgit and Hunza-Nagar was also thin. A large number of people gathered at Ethad Chowk in Gilgit and demonstrated against the killings. The protesters chanted slogans against the killers and extremism.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1181899/demonstrations-in-gb-against-karachi-carnage>

“Hunza Valley Observed Complete Shutter Down”

May 14, 2015

HUNZA: A complete shutter down protest, in the

wake of Karachi bus firing incident, was observed in Hunza valley located in the Northern areas of Pakistan. Sources revealed that tens of thousands of people participated in the protest. The protestors chanted slogans against the government and demanded to arrest the perpetrators. According to sources, they complained about government's non-serious attitude and failure to protect minorities ranging from Hazara Balochistan to Gilgit Baltistan. The protestors also called upon Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif to take necessary steps and bring the culprits to trial.

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2015/05/14/hunza-valley-observed-complete-shutter-down/>

“Malala Fund: AJK govt, UNESCO to work for girls education”

The Express Tribune, May 14, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: The education department of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Unesco have agreed to promote girls education under the Malala Education Fund. This was decided in a meeting between AJK Education Secretary Abbas Khan and Unesco Country Director Vibeke Jensen on May 13. Unesco will initially launch the programme in Neelum Valley's Gurace, Hatain Bala's Banamula and Muzaffarabad's Kayimanja and Saadpura union councils (UCs).

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/886004/malala-fund-ajk-govt-unesco-to-work-for-girls-education/>

“India's opposition of Chinese investment in AJK denounced: AJK PM”

Kashmir Media Service, May 14, 2015

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, strongly condemned India's opposition of Chinese investment in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Chaudhry Abdul Majeed talking to media persons in Islamabad, stated that Pakistan, which was an important party in the Kashmir dispute, was providing moral, political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris' struggle. He welcomed the Chinese investment for mega development projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, adding that it would be increased with the passage of time. He stated that

the Chinese investment would bring prosperity in AJK.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2015/05/14/pm-condemns-indias-opposition-of-chinese-investment-in-ajk.html>

“Special Arrangements for Gilgit Baltistan Elections”

May 9, 2015

ISLAMABAD: The voter lists carrying pictures have been prepared for the elections of the legislative assembly of Gilgit Baltistan. Quality ink has also been arranged for the authentication of thumb impressions. The confirmation of votes would be made with the assistance of NADRA. The detailed security plan of over 1000 polling stations would be given by 7 district returning officers by next week. In the light of this security plan, the Election Commission would formally write applications to the security forces for seeking their help during the election process.

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2015/05/09/special-arrangements-for-gilgit-baltistan-elections/>

“GB can't become a province unless Kashmir resolved: AJK president”

The Nation, May 10, 2015

ISLAMABAD: AJK President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob stated that Gilgit-Baltistan cannot become a province of Pakistan till the resolution of the Kashmir issue. He stated this while talking to media persons on May 9. He asserted an amendment to the Constitution was a must to change the map of the country and make Gilgit-Baltistan a province. He went on to say no such change had so far been made and would not be made because it would affect the Kashmir cause.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/10-May-2015/gb-can-t-become-a-province-unless-kashmir-resolved-ajk-president>

“No reason to doubt army's version of Gilgit crash: US”

The Express Tribune, May 9, 2015

Ruling out speculations that the motive behind the Gilgit crash was terror-related, the United States State Department on May 8 backed the Pakistan army's claim that the helicopter crashed due to a

technical fault. “On the question of what happened, I believe the Pakistani air force has already stated something about this. They described it as a technical fault that they believe was responsible,” State Department spokesman Jeff Rathke stated at a press briefing in Washington.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/883579/no-reason-to-doubt-armys-version-of-gilgit-crash-us/>

“PM inspects GB power projects' status”

The Nation, May 6, 2015

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Water and Power, Khawaja Muhammad Asif called on Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on May 6. Member Central Executive Committee PML-N Gilgit-Baltistan Mr. Sultan Madad was also present during the meeting. The Prime Minister was apprised of the status of ongoing power generation projects in Gilgit-Baltistan. The Prime Minister directed that all efforts should be made to ensure that these projects are completed on time so that electricity shortfall in the country may be reduced.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/06-May-2015/pm-inspects-gb-power-projects-status>

Safdar Rasheed, “IRSA overrules order of AJK government”

Business Recorder, May 7, 2015

The Indus River System Authority overruled an administrative order by the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir imposing restriction on impounding the Mangla Reservoir beyond 1202 feet above the mean sea level and told the Water and Power Development Authority to fill the raised Mangla Dam to its maximum capacity of 1,242 ft level at all costs, considering the immense benefits for the agriculture sector and enhanced power generation in summer because of maximum water availability in the reservoir.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1183838/>

Economic Developments

“Majeed asks Dar to increase AJK annual budget allocation”

Daily Times, May 27, 2015

GILGIT: Prime Minister and Chairman Gilgit-Baltistan Council, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on April 14 approved the Council's fiscal budget for the year 2014-15 with a total outlay of Rs780.906 million. Chairing a meeting of the 8th Session of the GB Council, the Prime Minister also accorded approval to the Gilgit-Baltistan Council Protection of Pakistan (Adaptation) Bill, 2015 and Gilgit-Baltistan Council (Adaptation) of Laws Bill, 2015. Briefing the Prime Minister, Minister-in-Charge of GB Council Ch. Muhammad Birjees Tahir, lauded Rs47.2 billion special package for the uplift of the GB and stated that the people of the area also highly appreciated Rs45 million annual wheat subsidy granted by the PML-N government.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/27-May-2015/majeed-asks-dar-to-increase-ajk-annual-budget-allocation>

“AJK Earthquake: Development work couldn't start even after 10 years”

Dunya News, May 21, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Development work could not start in Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) even after 10 years of earthquake which destroyed many cities of AJK, stated the protesting residents of

Muzaffarabad on May 21. The demonstrators marched on foot from Muzaffarabad to Islamabad in order to protest against the negligence of the government about the rehabilitation of the AJK citizens. The residents protested in front of Central Press Club Islamabad. They further stated that some organizations from China and other countries came to AJK with development projects but they are still not able to complete the projects due to federal government's non-seriousness.

According to details, the federal government was partner in all the rehabilitation and development projects and it failed to pay 17 billion rupees of its share which became a hurdle in the way of foreign organizations. The demonstrators noted that the foreign companies are going back as they do not see any hope of getting the government's share.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/280432-AJK-Earthquake-Development-work-couldnt-start-ev>

International Developments

“EU delegation arrives in Muzaffarabad on two-day visit”

Dawn, May 5, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: A four-member team of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan arrived in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir capital on May 4 on a two-day visit. The team is led by acting Ambassador Stefano Gatto, First Secretary Political Quentin Weiler. On May 4, the team called on AJK Prime Minister, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, and discussed with him the political and economic situation in the territory, apart from the EU's programmes for community development.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1180015#comments>

“Sultan urges US to push for Kashmir resolution”

The Nation, May 11, 2015

NEW YORK: Former Azad Kashmir Prime Minister and a Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader, Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry urged the United States to step up efforts to persuade the two countries to settle the Kashmir conflict through tripartite and purposeful dialogue. Speaking at a largely-attended meeting organised by PTI and the Kashmiri community in Queens, a borough of New York City, he stated that peace in the region of South Asia would not be possible unless the Kashmir issue is resolved on the basis of UN resolutions and in accordance with wishes and will of the people.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/11-May-2015/sultan-urges-us-to-push-for-kashmir-resolution>

“Kashmir Dispute: Legacy of Great Britain: Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhary”

Kashmir Watch, May 7, 2015

SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA: “The United States Administration should persuade both

India and Pakistan to settle the Kashmir conflict through tripartite and purposeful dialogue.” This was stated by the former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader, Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry, while addressing a public gathering in Washington, D.C.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/05/07/kashmir-dispute-legacy-of-great-britain-barrister-sultan-mahmood-chaudhary.html>

“EU team vows to back trans-LoC contacts”

The Nation, May 9, 2015

MIRPUR: A European Union delegation reaffirmed its commitment to support people-to-people interaction and dialogue across the Line of Control. The team from the European Union to Pakistan led by acting EU Ambassador Stefano Gatto met with the representatives of local civil society members, educationists and businessmen in Muzaffarabad to share their views on the current situation in AJK and discuss possible ways forward to further strengthen cross-LoC people to people contacts. Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR) Executive Director Ershad Mahmud told reporters that the EU delegation reaffirmed its commitment to support the Kashmiris in this regard.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/09-May-2015/eu-team-vows-to-back-trans-loc-contacts>

Altaf Hameed Rao, “4 newly-elected British MPs belong to AJK”

The Nation, May 10, 2015

MIRPUR: Four of the ten newly-elected Pakistan-origin members of the House of Commons, lower house of British Parliament, belong to Mirpur district of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. According to a survey carried out on May 9, the newly-elected British MP from

Birmigham Mirza Khalid Mahmood of Labour Party, who retained the office, belongs to Dadayal town of Mirpur district. Similarly, newly-elected MP from Bradford Ms Naz Shah of Labor Party belongs to Chakswari, the parent constituency of incumbent AJK Prime Minister. The triumphant MP Naz Shah defeated her nearest rival George Galloway, chief of Respect Party. Likewise, the newly-elected MP from Bradford, Barrister Imran Hussain of Labor

Party belongs to adjoining village Pothi of Mirpur city. Whereas the newly-elected MP from Birmingham Shabana Mahmood of Labour Party belongs to Mangla, Mirpur (AJK).

<http://nation.com.pk/national/10-May-2015/4-newly-elected-british-mps-belong-to-ajk>

Other Developments

“Wapda to reconstruct stretch of Mirpur-Kotli dual carriageway”

The Nation, May 2, 2015

LAHORE: As a mark of goodwill gesture for the people of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K), WAPDA has decided to reconstruct the stretch of Mirpur-Kotli dual carriage way at Khaliqabad, which collapsed in November 2014. WAPDA will also take remedial measures for protection of the adjoining affected portion of the reservoir. It has also been decided that reconstruction of the road and remedial works will be completed by the end of July 2015. This decision was taken in a meeting of the Authority held at WAPDA House on April 30.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/02-May-2015/wapda-to-reconstruct-stretch-of-mirpur-kotli-dual-carriageway>

“Two-day Gilgit-Baltistan festival begins at LCCI”

Business Recorder, May 8, 2015

Two-day Gilgit-Baltistan festival started on May 7 at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) to showcase diverse cultural, heritage and tourism attractions of the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The festival jointly opened by Provincial Minister for Tourism, Culture and Youth Affairs, Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan and Chamber President, Ijaz Mumtaz. The festival shows flora and fauna of the Gilgit-Baltistan stalls of gemstones, woodcraft, agricultural products, tourism monuments, climbing wall, food court and live music from the mountains were a great attraction. Provincial Minister for Tourism Culture and Youth Affairs Ahmad Khan on the occasion stated that Punjab government is attempting to upgrade tourism sites and to promote activities and that all the segments of the economy are being given equal importance.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/1184149:two-day-gilgit-baltistan-festival-begins-at-lcci?date=2015-05-08>

Haider Ali Askary, “Kargil-Skardu Road: Only

Connect”

Greater Kashmir, May 23 2015

SRINAGAR: Derived from the local words khar and rkil that together means “center of all forts,” Kargil, the name itself denotes importance, is located at an equidistant from all other major places like Baltistan, Srinagar, Leh and Zanskar. Historical account of the region tells us that Kargil (Ladakh) was one of the major centers in the Central Asian trade. Ladakh was very well joined to the fabled “Silk Route”. The region, therefore, would host traders from all the surrounding areas. This remained until 1947. Prior to the partition of the subcontinent, Kargil, Leh and Baltistan constituted a kingdom called “Ladakh Wazarat”. Ever since the ceasefire was drawn up in 1949, the entire region remained a contested area between India and Pakistan. This resulted in fragmenting Ladakh and Baltistan into India and Pakistan respectively. Many families still trace their immediate ancestors on the other side of the Line of Control.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/opinion/story/187225.html>

Imtiaz Piracha, “A little out of the way-Azad Kashmir”

Kashmir Monitor, May 7, 2015

I could feel the difference as soon as I drove across the Kohala Bridge over the Jhelum River, and into Azad Kashmir. While the natural beauty of the terrain remained unchanged, the lack of infrastructure and the effects of a clear economic downturn were immediately visible. There were scores of vehicles and colourful umbrellas at the picnic-point on the Pakistani side, while the Azad Kashmir end had only a couple of modest structures that served as stopover facilities for mainly public buses and the occasional explorers like me.

<http://www.kashmirmonitor.in/news-a-little-out-of-the-way-%E2%80%94-azad-kashmir-83750.aspx>

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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