

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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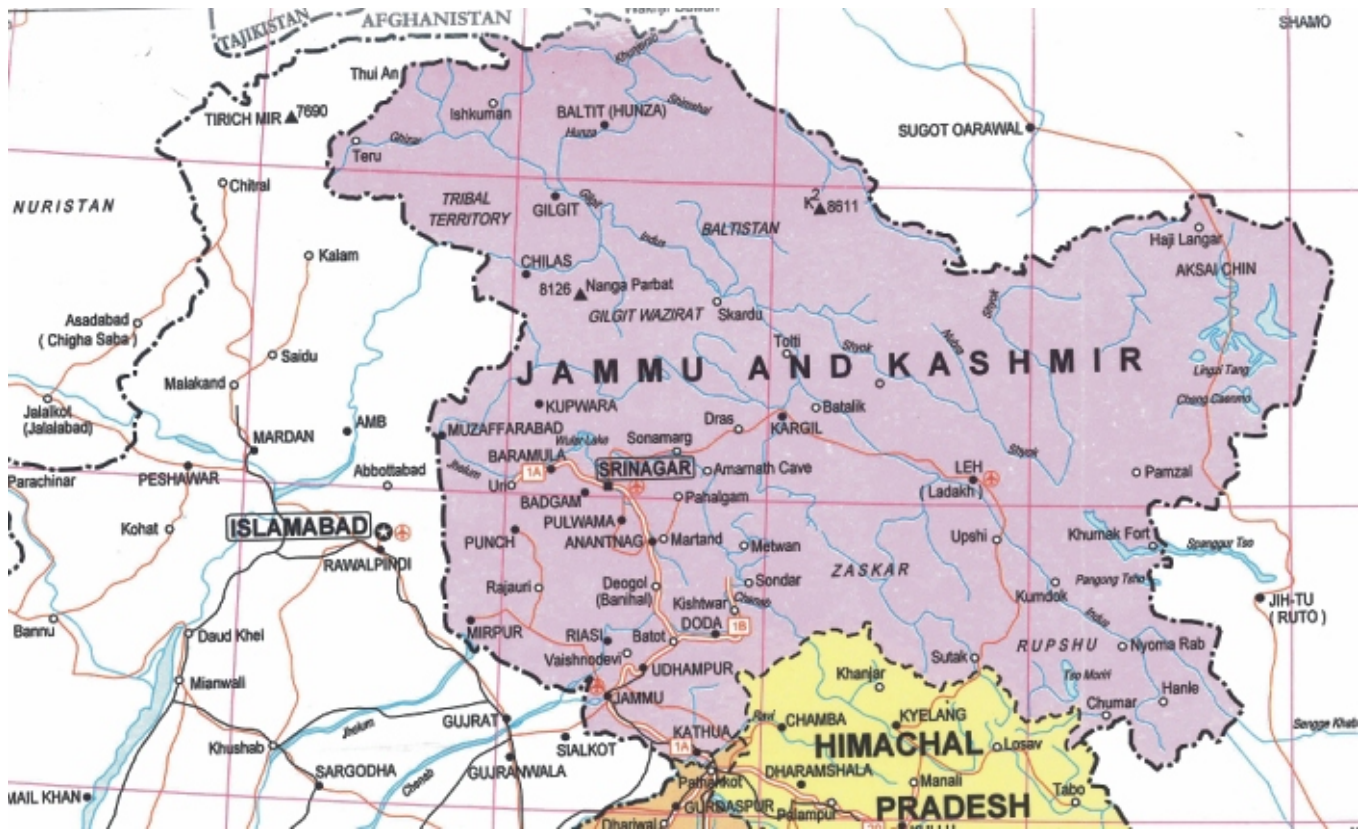
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

There is great deal of political churning taking place inside Pakistan regarding the proposal on converting Gilgit Baltistan into Pakistan's fifth province. The proposal to upgrade Gilgit Baltistan as a province has been on the anvil for quite some time. However, it has gained considerable traction in the wake of the recently unveiled China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), crucial part of which is slated to cross through Gilgit Baltistan territory before unfolding in Pakistan. On a careful examination of the reportage dealing with Gilgit Baltistan's proposed provincial status, it is seen that China is mentioned perceivably as one of the most crucial driver. Despite the fact that China has in past engaged in several projects in Pakistan occupied Kashmir-both in the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, the sheer magnitude of the \$ 46 billion CPEC project is seen as the source of Chinese apprehension regarding Gilgit Baltistan's undefined political and constitutional status.

Politics on the proposal towards Gilgit Baltistan's provincial status has been heating up ever since. Owing the overall sensitivity of the Kashmir issue and the high stakes of the various quarters within Pakistan in it, there is no consensus on the provincial issue in near sight. There is bitter opposition on the proposal from the so called 'AJK' and, therefore, the government of the region decided to register formal protest against any such move. A resolution opposing the bid to absorb Gilgit Baltistan into Pakistan was tabled and discussed in the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly. Leadership in the 'AJK' believe that Gilgit Baltistan is a part of the larger Kashmir problem and its political amalgamation into Pakistan would weaken and undermine their long-held position on the issue.

The debate around the proposed provincial status for Gilgit Baltistan has yet again witnessed drawing up of clear divisions between several stakeholders. While some believe that Gilgit Baltistan has been unnecessarily dragged into the Kashmir controversy, a majority within Pakistan, including the state, has on more than often unequivocally pronounced that Gilgit Baltistan is indeed an inseparable part of the broader Kashmir problem. In this regard, Pakistan's reluctance to bestow a constitutional status to the region for nearly seven decades underscores the proposition regarding its disputed character.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Federal govt meddling in Kashmir affairs, says AJK PM Abdul Majeed”

Pakistan Today, January 1, 2016

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on December 30 stated that the federal government is intervening in Kashmir affairs, while the Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir has no knowledge of the affairs of the region and should be replaced with a more able person. Addressing a press conference in Kashmir House on December 30, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed stated that not a single word was spoken by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) during the All Parties Conference (APC), adding that Kashmir is not a part of 1973 Constitution. He further noted that the budget of AJK government is Rs 10 billion for the last 18 years and then we have been asked to give calculations.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/12/31/national/federal-govt-meddling-in-kashmir-affairs-says-ajk-pm-abdul-majeed/>

“IAF honey-trapper could be from Azad Kashmir”

The Nation, January 1, 2016

Sleuths zeroed in on the identity of McNaught Damini, the "pretty woman" who the airman Ranjith KK was talking dirty with for the past several months, even as the arrested IAF employee told the police that he had given details of operation Inderdhanush - an India-UK joint bi-lateral exercise held in the United Kingdom in July 2015 - to the undercover agent. Top intelligence sources stated McNaught is likely a woman fidayeen belonging to a Jammu & Kashmir-based terrorist group. The group is head-quartered in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. An analysis of McNaught's dialect and accent - she had long voice chats on Whatsapp and via Skype with Ranjith - and information regarding the geo-satellite positions of

the number she was using, as well as the internet protocol addresses from which she was operating her Facebook account, led military intelligence sleuths to narrow down their search to the POK-based outfit. This source-based information adds a twist to the tale: McNaught is no more limited to espionage but related to terrorism. However, joint commissioner (crime) Ravindra Yadav refused to either confirm or deny this.

<http://nation.com.pk/international/31-Dec-2015/iaf-honey-trapper-could-be-from-azad-kashmir-toi>

“Bilawal Cites Elimination of Terrorism a Top Priority”

Business Recorder, January 1, 2016

Chairman, Pakistan People's Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari citing elimination of terrorism from across the country an urgent national priority has sought implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) in Gilgit-Baltistan too. Talking to the newly-elected office bearers of PPP in Gilgit-Baltistan, that led by its local president, Amjad Hussain Azhar, called on him at Bilawal House December 31, he stated NAP must be implemented in true letter and spirit. The PPP delegation from Gilgit - Baltistan (GB) briefed the PPP Chairman about party's new organization and invited him to visit the areas and meet the workers personally for mobilization of the party cadres. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari exhorted the new body to carry the message of the party to the people of GB and assure that the PPP would continue the struggle for their constitutional rights as per the vision of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari. The delegation also informed the PPP Chairman about the law and order situation in GB stressed for more rigorous implementation of the plan. The PPP delegation from GB also included its General Secretary Engineer Ismail, Jameel Ahmed Senior Vice President, Imran Nadeem and Sadia Danish.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/270603->

Shabbir Mir, “Reforming regions: G-B closer than ever to securing constitutional rights”

The Express Tribune, January 1, 2016

More than 58 years after independence, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) finally looks set to get significant constitutional rights for the region. A reforms committee formed on the instructions of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is working closely with legal experts to devise a roadmap for a region which has remained out of mainstream politics due to the larger Kashmir issue. Adviser to PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz is heading the committee which has met thrice in Islamabad over the months and discussed ways to address the issue in a manner that does not affect Pakistan's position on the Kashmir dispute. An insider privy to the developments stated, “The new package will make G-B a provisional constitutional province of the country till the Kashmir matter is settled.” This means G-B will have representation in the Parliament and other important forums,” noted the official, requesting anonymity. “The reforms will be announced by the prime minister himself as a way of thanking the people for voting his party into power in the June 8, 2015 elections.” G-B achieved independence from Dogra Raj as a result of an indigenous movement in 1947 and opted to join Pakistan unconditionally. Though the region was annexed with Pakistan, its fate was intertwined with Kashmir, which it was a part of before Partition. As a result, people have remained deprived of constitutional rights. Advisor to G-B CM Abid Baig stated people of G-B will get “good news” soon. “The committee under Sartaj Aziz is working diligently and will ensure maximum constitutional rights are given to G-B,” Baig added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1019908/reforming-regions-g-b-closer-than-ever-to-securing-constitutional-rights/>

Shabbir Mir, “Security concerns: Passengers spend night in Chilas after convoy blocked on KKH”

The Express Tribune, January 2, 2016

Hundreds of passengers from Gilgit-Baltistan spent the night in Chilas, near contested land, after

Kohistan police refused to allow buses to travel on Karakoram Highway (KKH) due to security threats. A large number of passengers were on their way to Rawalpindi from various parts of G-B on December 31 when Kohistan police stopped a convoy of over 30 buses at Harban. They were informed they would not be allowed to travel due to security threats in Kohistan. Many buses were forced to return and passengers spent the night at Chilas, the last town in G-B before Kohistan on the KKH. The convoy left for Rawalpindi on December 31. On December 30, landowners in Kohistan continued their protest for the eleventh consecutive day over delays in making the Basri Boundary Commission Report public. “Passengers were infuriated [when the convoys were stopped at Harban] as they did not want to spend the night in the wilderness under extreme weather conditions,” a passenger noted. “This led to a brawl and then police resorted to aerial firing to disperse the passengers. For me, this is a form of humiliation and [a violation of] human rights.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1019936/security-concerns-passengers-spend-night-in-chilas-after-convoy-blocked-on-kkh/>

Tariq Naqash, “PM appoints official after rejecting names proposed by AJK govt”

Dawn, January 3, 2016

Rejecting the names proposed by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government for the office of its chief secretary, the federal government on January 2 transferred and posted Muhammad Jalal Sikandar Sultan, a BS-21 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service, as the new head of AJK's administrative machinery. According to a Cabinet/Establishment Division notification, Mr Sultan will assume the charge of his new post on January 5, a day after the retirement of his predecessor Abid Ali Khan on attaining the age of superannuation. Well-placed official sources noted that on December 30, AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed had sent names of three officers Mohammad Jamil (Agriculture Secretary in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Alam Din Bullo (Principal Secretary to Sindh Chief Minister) and Akbar Hussain Durrani (Home Secretary in Balochistan) to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for posting of any of them as the new AJK

chief secretary. However, the sources further stated, the prime minister's office did not pick anyone from the panel, maintaining that the appointment of AJK chief secretary was to be made by the government of Pakistan in accordance with the procedure laid down in clause 8 of the Karachi Agreement of 1949.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1230414/pm-appoints-official-after-rejecting-names-proposed-by-ajk-govt>

“Land management: AJK to launch electronic land records”

The Express Tribune, January 3, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir government has begun maintaining land records through a computerised system to keep track of land data in the region. Initially, the AJK Information Technology Board (AJK ITB) started training six patwaris (land revenue officers) of the region to update land records through computerised systems. Locals have appreciated the move, and stated computerised land records will end the exploitation and malpractices typically associated with patwaris. AJKITB Director-General Sarwar Gondal stated that following the computerised system, the fard (land record) will be issued within 30 minutes, while transfer of ownership will take no more than 50 minutes. The DG elaborated that the ownership of the land will now be claimed through biometric data records, and will end the practice of fraud and fake documentation in the land and revenue department.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1020988/land-management-ajk-to-launch-electronic-land-records/>

“AJK chief secretary: Sultan takes charge tomorrow”

The Express Tribune, January 4, 2016

The federal government posted Muhammad Jalal Sakindar Sultan BS-21 officer of the Cabinet Division as Chief Secretary (CS) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The new CS will assume the charge on January 5 while the present Chief Secretary Abid Ali will complete his civil services career on January 4. The new chief secretary will play an important role as AJK's head of administration in the forthcoming general elections

to be held in June 2016 in the region. The new AJK chief secretary is considered to be close to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and is also the son-in-law of former principal secretary Saeed Mehdi. Secretary General Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Finance Minister Latif Akbar stated that the government of AJK has not received any official order of the new CS so far.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1021449/ajk-chief-secretary-sultan-takes-charge-tomorrow/>

“Gilgit Baltistan: A Jehadi Training Centre”

New Delhi Times, January 4, 2016

In recent years, terror camps have been mushrooming in the region of Gilgit Baltistan. The political dynamics and Gilgit-Baltistan's shared borders with China's Xinjiang Province, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and the Indian region of Ladakh are the important factors behind the agenda of putting the region on the terror map of the world. The rugged mountainous terrain and sparse population of Gilgit-Baltistan is conducive to the staging of militant infiltration into India, control over Gilgit-Baltistan also allows critical access to the minerals and resources of the region as well as trans-Asian trade between Pakistan, China, and Central Asia. This access to financing has been one of the major causes behind the growth of terror network in the region. In the last two years, the Taliban has been involved in sporadic attacks in Gilgit-Baltistan, killing dozens, including local minorities, military officials, and tourists. The group has also attacked and bombed local girls' schools to show its opposition to female education. Terror camps which were being running here openly with the active support of the Pakistani Army have bred hundreds of Sunni jihads of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) who are running loose now all across Gilgit Baltistan, killing Shia Muslims. The easy availability of arms in the area, including AK-47 assault rifles and rocket launchers, is another reason for the mushrooming terror networks. Despite scores of checkpoints, arms and narcotics flow unabated into the region. The setting up of training camps for the jihadis to fight for the 'independence' of Kashmir has made Gilgit-Baltistan a place where

weapons can easily be purchased. Islamabad has turned the whole region into a military depot, which could explode anytime. Many local Sunnis, who had fought against the erstwhile Soviet Union as mujahideen (holy warriors) in Afghanistan, returned home after the Soviet withdrawal in the late 1980s, now have joined the anti-Shia sectarian groups. The presence of militant groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) in the area have transformed it into a hub of anti-Shia extremism.

<http://www.newdelhitimes.com/gilgit-baltistan-a-jehadi-training-centre123/>

“Gilani-led AJK forum denounces Masarrat's detention”

Kashmir Media Service, January 4, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter of the forum patronized by the Hurriyet leader, Syed Ali Gilani, stated that without the participation of Kashmiri representatives all rounds of talks between Pakistan and India have failed, so far. The forum at a meeting chaired by its Convener, Ghulam Muhammad Safi in Islamabad discussed situation in Kashmir and Pakistan-India talks. The leaders stated that the inclusion of Kashmiri leadership in talks was imperative for restoration of peace in South Asia. The participants of the meeting expressed serious concern over the continued illegal detention of senior Hurriyat leader, Masarrat Aalam Butt, and demanded his immediate release. They denounced the prejudicial policies of Indian policymakers, saying that Masarrat Aalam Butt was being subjected to political vendetta. The leaders further stated that arrest of Masarrat Aalam Butt under black law, Public Safety Act, was illegal and immoral, and called upon human rights organizations to take notice of the Indian tactics to prolong the detention of senior Hurriyat leader.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2016/01/04/gilani-led-ajk-forum-denounces-masarrats-detention.html>

Peer Muhammad, “PPP voices concern over neglecting Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, January 6, 2016

Following the hard-line stance of Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) chapter has planned to go to court for ignoring the region in the multibillion-dollar project. Talking to the media, PPP G-B Chapter President Amjad Hussain stated G-B has no voice in decision-making forums at the federal level because of which the region has been neglected in the CPEC. “The PPP will soon call an All Parties Conference (APC) in Gilgit and consequently approach the Supreme Appellate Court against the federal government for neglecting the area as far as its due share in the project is concerned,” he noted. He mentioned that despite tremendous potential of hydroelectric power in G-B, not a single project has been earmarked for the region under the CPEC.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1022564/cpec-ppp-voices-concern-over-neglecting-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Under the wing: G-B lawmakers to receive legislative training”

The Express Tribune, January 7, 2016

Lawmakers from Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly will be provided training in parliamentary affairs in Islamabad. The training will be conducted by Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) and is expected to take place in the last week of January 2016. An official privy to the development told the media, “This training will be conducted in two parts. Legislative Assembly Speaker Fida Muhammad Nashad is coordinating the training with PIPS in Islamabad.” According to a press release issued from the speaker's office, Nashad held a meeting with Rashid Zaka, a PIPS executive director. “It has been agreed the training will be organised in the last week of this month,” the document quoted him as saying.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1023229/under-the-wing-g-b-lawmakers-to-receive-legislative-training/>

“Pakistan Mulls Status Upgrade for Gilgit-Baltistan Region”

The Newsweek, January 7, 2016

Pakistan is mulling upgrading the constitutional status of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which is also

claimed by India, in a bid to provide legal cover to a multi-billion-dollar Chinese investment plan, officials stated on January 6. The move could signal a historic shift in Pakistan's position on the future of the wider Kashmir region, observers have stated, dealing another potential blow to fragile peace talk efforts that received a boost after India Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Lahore in December 2015. The proposal would see the mountainous region mentioned by name for the first time in Pakistan's Constitution, bringing it one step closer to being fully absorbed as an additional province. Islamabad has historically insisted the parts of Kashmir it controls are semi-autonomous and has not formally integrated them into the country, in line with its position that a referendum should be carried out across the whole of the region. Sajjad ul Haq, spokesman for the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman, noted: "A high level committee formed by the prime minister is working on the issue; you will hear good news soon." Rehman, who arrived in Islamabad on January 6, was working on the finishing touches to the agreement, a senior official noted, adding the document could be unveiled "in a few days". In addition to being named in the Constitution, Gilgit-Baltistan would also send two lawmakers to sit in Parliament though they would be given observer status only. A third top government official from Gilgit-Baltistan stated the move was in response to concerns raised by Beijing about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, an ambitious \$46 billion infrastructure plan set to link China's Kashgar city to the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea.

<http://newsweekpakistan.com/pakistan-mulls-status-upgrade-for-gilgit-baltistan-region/>

Yaqoob Bangash, "Gilgit-Baltistan-part of Pakistan by choice"

The Express Tribune, January 9, 2016

Over the last couple of days, news has surfaced that the government might be mulling a change in the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan. This is a really welcome move and is long overdue. In fact, the present status of the region stems from a skewed understanding of what happened in the aftermath of

the transfer of power in the Indian empire in August 1947, as well as a lack of knowledge of the region. On the issue of what happened even in Gilgit Wazarat in the aftermath of the transfer of power, it is clear that the entire population was pro-Pakistan and had no intention of either remaining a part of Kashmir or joining India. The British ended the lease on August 1, 1947 and the Kashmir government had sent in its governor to Gilgit town but the populace as well as the Gilgit scouts - the main paramilitary force in the region - were unhappy with the move. The commandant of the Gilgit Scouts at that time was the young Major Brown, who helped by his assistant, Captain Matheison, planned a coup in favour of Pakistan if things became unmanageable. Then, as the news of the alleged accession of Kashmir to India reached Gilgit in late October 1947, Major Brown launched a coup on the night of October 31/November 1, 1947, arrested the Kashmir-appointed governor, secured the treasury, protected the minorities, and then sent a cable to the premier of the then NWFP, asking the Pakistani government to take over.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1024253/gilgit-baltistan-part-of-pakistan-by-choice/>

"India irked over Pak's move on Gilgit"

Deccan Herald, January 8, 2016

A new irritant has suddenly emerged in India's ties with Pakistan, at a time when terror attacks at Pathankot in Punjab already cast a shadow over New Delhi's peace initiative with its neighbour. This time, it is about a territory of Kashmir, which Islamabad, prodded by Beijing, is set to formally declare a part of Pakistan, ostensibly for legitimising China's role in developing infrastructure in the region. New Delhi is set to protest Islamabad's move to elevate the status of Gilgit-Baltistan a region in the parts of Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan. Islamabad is set to formally recognize Gilgit-Baltistan as its territory in the Constitution of Pakistan. Reports from Islamabad indicated that the constitutional recognition of Gilgit Baltistan would bring the mountainous region one step closer to being formally absorbed as a province of Pakistan. Sources noted that New Delhi had taken note of

Islamabad's move to recognize Gilgit-Baltistan in the Constitution of Pakistan in order to give a semblance of legitimacy to its occupation over parts of Kashmir.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/522067/india-irked-over-paks-move.html>

“Gilgit-Baltistan issue may worsen India-Pakistan ties”

The Statesman, January 8, 2016

Amid tension in India-Pakistan ties following the Pathankot terror attack, another factor could add to the unease in ties a reported move by Islamabad to upgrade the constitutional status of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which India claims as part of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir and an integral part of India. The reported proposal to include Gilgit-Baltistan, a mountainous area of Jammu and Kashmir occupied by Pakistan, for the first time in Pakistan's Constitution would bring the area a step closer to being fully absorbed as an additional province. The move reportedly comes on the insistence of China which has voiced concern over constructing the mega \$46-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that would pass through the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region. The CPEC, to which India has voiced its strong objection, plans to link China's Kashgar city in Xinjiang province to the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in June 2015 had termed the CPEC project “unacceptable” for passing through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. In the Gilgit Baltistan segment, the CPEC project design is set to include a major expansion of the Karakoram Highway, establishing industrial parks in special economic zones, constructing hydropower projects, railway line and road building. The project also entails building hydropower projects and motorways and highways in what Pakistan calls Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Besides being named in the Constitution, Gilgit-Baltistan is set to send two lawmakers to sit in the Pakistan Parliament though they would be given observer status, according to reports.

<http://www.thestatesman.com/news/latest-headlines/gilgit-baltistan-issue-may-worsen-india-pakistan-ties/115301.html>

“Kashmir cause: AJK govt opposes provincial status for Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, January 10, 2016

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) decided to lodge a protest against any attempt to convert Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) into a province of Pakistan. Treasury members tabled a resolution against the proposed provincial status for G-B in the AJK Legislative Assembly Secretariat on January 9. The assembly members will debate the resolution in the session scheduled for January 12. AJK Minister for Rehabilitation Abdul Majid Khan stated that making G-B the fifth province of Pakistan will dent the Kashmir cause. “Giving provincial status to G-B will serve the interests of the enemies of Jammu and Kashmir and will therefore be counterproductive,” he further stated. AJK Minister for Finance, Planning and Development Chaudhry Latif Akbar endorsed Majid. “G-B is part and parcel of the state of Jammu and Kashmir,” he told a news conference at the AJK Prime Minister's House. “Any attempt to merge it into Pakistan will deal a fatal blow to our stance in the light of the UN resolutions envisaging the right to self-determination for the Kashmiris,” he also stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1024938/kashmir-cause-ajk-govt-opposes-provincial-status-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B seminaries to come under close scrutiny”

The Express Tribune, January 10, 2016

In a bid to root out extremism and maintain peace, the Gilgit-Baltistan government has decided to audit financial matters of seminaries operating in the region. The initiative is aimed at implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) which is devised to curb terrorist activities from Pakistan. Insiders noted that the decision was taken at a high-level meeting held in G-B on January 9. A government official requesting anonymity stated, “There are 162 registered madrassas in the region which have been receiving financial assistance from various sources over the years.” He stated, “Accounts of these seminaries will be audited to make sure funding isn't spent on terrorist activities.” Security

agencies have listed at least 50 clerics as a “threat to the region's peace”. “The government is thinking of listing those clerics under schedule 4 [of the anti-terrorism act],” stated another official. In addition, the government has also decided to issue notices to clerics involved in hate speech. There are certain clerics who have recently been found delivering speeches especially at Friday sermons which could escalate sectarianism among the public.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1024785/keeping-watch-g-b-seminaries-to-come-under-close-scrutiny/>

Inder Malhotra, “Rear view: Difficulty of coming together”

The Indian Express, January 11, 2016

Just after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's famous and spontaneous visit to Lahore on the birthday of his Pakistani opposite number, Nawaz Sharif, television showcased a Sangh Parivar stalwart's view that the road to Akhand Bharat was open. One can react to this dangerous delusion whichever way one likes laugh derisively or weep but I think it necessary to recall and recount an instructive event in the subcontinent's history that took place half a century ago. Most of the younger generation is unlikely to be aware of it. In May 1964, a startling but not provocative idea of a confederation of India, Pakistan and Kashmir was discussed at the highest level. The talks took place between Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah with Nehru's full backing and President Ayub Khan of Pakistan, who welcomed Kashmir's tallest leader to Rawalpindi. The Sheikh's view that this was the best solution to the vexed Kashmir issue was discussed by the two leaders at length and, as should have been expected, rejected by Ayub emphatically.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/rear-view-difficulty-of-coming-together/>

Afzal A. Shigri, “No space for GB on CPEC table”

Dawn, January 11, 2016

Standing as a reincarnation of the historical old silk route, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is defined as a game changer. China has pledged to invest \$46 billion in a highway network from Khunjerab to Gwadar, energy projects and the

establishment of economic zones. The stated policy of the Pakistan government is to spread the benefits of this investment through the equitable distribution of resources and projects to all provinces. Curiously, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is seldom mentioned in these statements by government functionaries. CPEC projects were actually initiated with the construction of the Gwadar Port by the Chinese and the upgradation of the Karakorum Highway (KKH) entering Pakistan through GB. It all began when KKH was built in the late '60s and '70s along the Gilgit and Indus rivers. Thousands of Chinese crossed into Pakistan to build the road. It was a daunting task to take up this massive project manually with very limited machinery. However, the Chinese and their Pakistani counterparts blasted their way through sheer hard rock walls, shifting gravel and mountains to carve a road, popularly known as the eighth wonder of the world. It was indeed a feat of engineering and the courage of thousands of men who lost their life while forging this road is commendable. The local population was apprehensive of this massive ingress and its impact on their daily lives. The government allayed their fears by telling them that this road would open GB to the world, bring prosperity to the area and new jobs for the youth. Highly patriotic, the people of GB welcomed this development.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1232094/no-space-for-gb-on-cpec-table>

“Mitigating sufferings of Kashmiris priority of Nawaz Sharif: Pervaiz”

Samaa TV, January 11, 2016

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage Senator Pervaiz Rashid stated progress and prosperity of Kashmir was part of manifesto of PML-N and mitigating sufferings of the Kashmiri people was priority of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Addressing a workers convention of Pakistan Muslim League (N), AJK in Bhimber, he stated Kashmiris had suffered for a long time and now was the time to put an end to their agony. He stated the PML-N when voted to power would better contest the case of Kashmiris at the international forum. “We will win the case of Kashmiris and peace under the leadership of PM

Nawaz Sharif,” he added. He stated Nawaz Sharif persuaded the world as the resolution of Kashmir issue was essential for regional peace which in turn was imperative for world peace. He stated Nawaz Sharif was working to resolve the Kashmir issue as an advocate of the Kashmiri people. He urged people to strengthen hands of Nawaz Sharif by voting PML-N to power in AJK so that he could be better equipped and empowered to fight the case for Kashmiris at international fora. The minister stated message of youth of Azad Kashmir was to bring in Pakistan Muslim League (N) and send off the government of PPP in the next election. “We accepted results of the 2011 despite our reservations,” he recalled. He further stated the latest speech of AJK Prime Minister had drowned the prospects of PPP in the next election. Pervaiz Rashid noted PML-N had adopted a principle that it would accept the mandate of the people, adding PPP was given free hand to work in Azad Kashmir and no interference was made in their matters of governance. The PML-N did not interfere in the working of the PPP government and did not create any hurdle, he maintained. The PPP government was corrupt, inefficient and did not govern well and now people would hold it accountable for its misdeeds, he added.

<http://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2016/01/mitigating-sufferings-of-kashmiris-priority-of-nawaz-sharif-pervaiz/>

“Yasin Malik opposes Gilgit-Baltistan merger with Pakistan”

The Economic Times, January 12, 2016

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, a proponent of the idea of independent J&K, cautioned Pakistan against changing the status of Gilgit Baltistan, claiming it will adversely affect the future of millions of Kashmiris. JKLF chairman, Yasin Malik, wrote a letter to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, stating that if the country imposes its 'sovereign writ over Gilgit Baltistan, India will then have a political and moral right to integrate Kashmir with it.'

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-01-12/news/69704987_1_yasin-malik-kashmir-liberation-front-kashmiris

Ashiq Husain Bhat, “Gilgit-Baltistan Conundrum”

Rising Kashmir, January 12, 2016

The Pakistan government recently revealed their plan to execute constitutional changes vis-a-vis the status of Gilgit and Baltistan. This measure is likely to produce disastrous consequences for the people of former princely state of Kashmir especially for the people of Kashmir valley because Gilgit and Baltistan are part of the internationally disputed territory and need to be settled in accordance with the resolutions and recommendations put forth by United Nations mediators on Kashmir dispute from time to time. Gilgit and Baltistan were historically parts of Kashmir state cobbled together in 1846 by British intrigue and Dogra perfidy against erstwhile Lahore Sikh State. Gilgit became part of Kashmir Province of Lahore Sikh State in late 1843 when Governor Sheikh Gulam Mohiuddin sent a large body of Lahore troops under Nathu Shah of Gujranwala at the invitation of Karim Khan, the brother of the ruler of Gilgit whom Gaur Abdur Rehman, Raja of Yasin, had displaced. Nathu Shah ousted Gaur Rehman from Gilgit and set up a Sikh garrison there. Gilgit became part of Kashmir State towards the end of 1846 when Nathu Shah changed allegiance from Lahore to Srinagar although the trans-Indus region of Gilgit was not included in the Kashmir territories fraudulently snatched by the British from Lahore Sikh State and transferred to Dogra Gulab Singh through March 16 Treaty of Amritsar which laid down the limited of these territories as being “situated to the eastward of river Indus and westward of river Ravee (p.414 History of the Sikhs J D Cunningham).” In 1852 Gaur Rehman of Yasin once again descended down upon Gilgit, annihilated Gulab Singh's army to a man, and forced the latter to the cis-Indus region where Bunji became the chief Dogra garrison in the area. Maharaja Ranbir Singh brought the trans-Indus Gilgit, as also other mountain principalities of the region, under his sway during 1860s.

<http://risingkashmir.in/news/gilgitbaltistan-conundrum/>

MA Mir, “Acting chief election commissioner: AJK court declares appointment beyond powers”

The Express Tribune, January 13, 2016

The High Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on January 12 declared the appointment of the acting chief election commissioner (ACEC) by President Sardar Yaqoob as ultra vires [beyond powers]. The appointment was made through an amended ordinance. The judgment came after a four-judge larger bench headed by senior AJK High Court judge Justice Tabasum Aftab Alvi. Other members of the bench included Justice Jahandad Khan, Justice Azhar Saleem Babar and Justice Muhammad Sheraz Kiyani. The petition was filed by the AJK chapter of the PML-N. Members of legislative assembly Tariq Farooq and Najeem Naqi, through their lawyer Raja Muhammad Hanif, filed the petition. The larger bench asked the AJK government to send a panel of three candidates for nomination of CEC to the Kashmir Council within a week. The AJK government had appointed Chief Justice High Court (HC) Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal as ACEC on Dec 22, 2015. The appointment was challenged by the PML-N the next day on December 23.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1026390/acting-chief-election-commissioner-ajk-court-declares-appointment-beyond-powers/>

“Altering Gilgit-Baltistan status a move to 'gift' Ladakh to India: ISL”

Greater Kashmir, January 13, 2016

By altering the status of Gilgit-Baltistan, the government of Pakistan is clearing the road for “gifting Ladakh to India”, the Islamic Students League chairman Shakeel Ahmad Bakshi stated on January 12. “Before the division of State of Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Leh-Kargil and Gurez were united province of the erstwhile State. First Gurez was separated from the province to turn Muslims of Ladakh into a minority on sectarian lines. Now, by altering the status of Gilgit-Baltistan, a road is being cleared to 'gift' Ladakh fully to India,” he noted in a statement. “Altering the status

of Gilgit-Baltistan, which is rich in culture and heritage and loaded with huge natural resources with vast tourism potential and famous for International Silk Route, amounts to depriving people of Jammu Kashmir of their political, cultural and economic rights,” Bakhshi stated. He stated: “To fiddle with this status is like creating Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council which will ultimately lead to union territory status for Ladakh.”

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/altering-gilgit-baltistan-status-a-move-to-gift-ladakh-to-india-isl/206808.html>

Sameer Yasir, “Why Pakistan is unlikely to change present status of Gilgit-Baltistan region”

Firstpost, January 13, 2016

Despite pressure from the Chinese government, Pakistan is unlikely to change the constitutional status of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which is also claimed by India as part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The reason is that it would encourage PoK to demand the same status and it will put India and Pakistan on a fresh collision course. Previously, people in Pakistan were apprehensive about giving GB the full province status, as it would become the only province with Shia majority, while all other provinces are Sunni majority. Despite the still influential locals like Mirs and Rajas (similar to Nawab rulers, or Maharaja's) executing instruments of accession, which are still pending acceptance, it is unlikely that the Pakistani state would accord GB a provisional status. Gilgit-Baltistan region is neither a province of Pakistan nor part of the federation. It is a part of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir, which was divided between India and Pakistan, and is directly ruled from Islamabad, although it does not enjoy the constitutional status similar to, for example, the Punjab province, which has representatives in the Pakistan Parliament. Reports of Pakistani establishment toying with idea of changing the constitutional of GB came nine months after Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif signed the CPEC agreement with Chinese premier Xi Jinping that would shorten Chinese's road to Middle East and Central Asia by around 12,070 km and also

bring an economic windfall in the form of oil and markets.

<http://www.firstpost.com/world/why-pakistan-is-unlikely-to-change-present-status-of-gilgit-baltistan-region-2582786.html>

Basharat Masood, “Hurriyat chairman Geelani slams Pakistan plan to make Gilgit fifth province”

The Indian Express, January 14, 2016

Pakistan government's plan to make Gilgit-Baltistan the fifth province of the country has drawn criticism from Hurriyat chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Calling Gilgit-Baltistan an integral part of J&K, he termed the plan a “violation of the UN resolutions” on Kashmir. He also called it a “betrayal” of Kashmir by Pakistan. “The entire state of J&K, falling on both sides of the ceasefire line, is a disputed territory... There is no constitutional or moral justification for deciding on any part of the territory without consent of its people. This is also a clear violation of UN resolutions on Kashmir,” he stated January 13. While insisting that he was not opposed to economic development, he stated creating trade routes at the cost of rights, wishes and sacrifices of Kashmiri nation was an injustice and against the traditional and national Kashmir policy of Pakistan. “Until a referendum is held in the entire state under the supervision of the UN, no separate decision will be taken about this part... It will be a betrayal with the Kashmiri people and their sacrifices.” On the proposal of developing trade and travel relationship between Pakistan, Iran, China and Central Asian countries, he stated that until these countries mutually solved their political issues through talks, there was a feeble chance of development in their trade and travel relations.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/hurriyat-chairman-syed-ali-shah-geelani-slams-pakistan-plan-to-make-gilgit-baltistan-fifth-province/>

“India's stance on Gilgit-Baltistan crystal clear: MEA”

Business Standard, January 14, 2016

Making India's stand very clear, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on January 14 stated the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral

part of the country. MEA official spokesperson Vikas Swarup, responding to a question regarding reports that Pakistan is making Gilgit-Baltistan its province, stated the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir which includes areas currently under Pakistan occupation is an integral part of the Union of India. “We have seen various media reports stating that various options are under consideration regarding the political status of Gilgit-Baltistan, India's position is crystal clear on this,” Swarup noted during a media briefing. “Our concerns regarding exploitation of resources and implementation of economic projects in PoK which includes Gilgit-Baltistan are well-known and have been shared with the countries and organisations concerned,” he added. Despite pressure from the Chinese government, Pakistan is unlikely to change the constitutional status of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which is also claimed by India as part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. Gilgit-Baltistan region is a part of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir, which was divided between India and Pakistan.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/india-stance-on-gilgit-baltistan-crystal-clear-mea-116011400884_1.html

“National Health Programme being launched in AJK from February”

Radio Pakistan, January 14, 2016

Prime Minister National Health Programme (NHP) is being launched in Azad Jammu and Kashmir from February 2016. Addressing a news conference in Muzaffarabad on January 14 Minister of State for National Health Service Saira Afzal Tarar stated one hundred and fifty thousand deserving families would be provided free health care facilities under this programme. She further stated public and private hospitals have been included in the National Health Programme wherefrom deserving people would receive free treatment through health cards. Saira Afzal Tarar stated after Islamabad this programme is being launched in Muzaffarabad and Kotli in Azad Kashmir and would be extended to other districts of the state. Responding to a question, she stated all the provinces would be included in the programme on equal terms and healthcare facilities would be improved on district level under the

programme which will help coordinating the primary healthcare.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/72186/2>

Shabbir Mir, “Constitutional status: Shutter-down strike over taxing Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, January 15, 2016

Shutters were down and the breaks were on in Gilgit-Baltistan on January 14 in protest against the imposition of tax on income and other commodities in the region. The call for a strike was announced by the G-B Contractors Association over an increase in taxes from 3% to 7.5% which was a result of the G-B government's withdrawal of a rebate on income and other tax applicable in the region. Strike was endorsed by traders, nationalist, political and religious parties. Locals stated reaching markets and offices in Gilgit was difficult as public transport remained suspended in Skardu, Ghanche, Astore and Diamer valleys. The protesters call it the “anti-tax movement” after other stakeholders also joined the struggle. Riaz Ali, a resident of Gilgit, stated members of the anti-tax movement forcefully closed shops and stopped traffic in parts of the town. Periodic protests have been going on for the past few weeks; the G-B government withdrew a rebate which resulted in an increase in taxes from 3% to 7.5%. The rebate had been put in place due to the region's ambiguous constitutional status. Given that the disputed constitutional status of the region has not changed, protesters refused to comply with the new order, stated another contractor.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1027660/constitutional-status-shutter-down-strike-over-taxing-gilgit-baltistan/>

“PPP govt failed to address problems of people of AJK: Kirmani”

Radio Pakistan, January 15, 2016

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Dr Asif Kirmani stated Pakistan People's Party government failed to address problems of the people of Azad Kashmir during the last five years. In a statement on January 14, he stated Pakistan Muslim League (N) after winning elections in Azad Kashmir, will start development projects in all districts of the territory.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/81945/1>

Aziz-Ud-Din Ahmad, “Status of Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, January 16, 2016

The reports about the government mulling a provincial status for Gilgit-Baltistan have evoked a strong response from the AJK assembly and a section of freedom fighters in Indian controlled Kashmir. For over sixty years the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been denied fundamental rights including an elected administration, independent judiciary and rights provided by the constitution to the people of Pakistan. Islamabad would have happily continued to maintain the status quo. It transpires now that the region's present status as a disputed territory is seen as a hurdle in the way of foreign investment. That makes a big difference for the policy makers. At the time of the Partition the region had been a remote and nearly inaccessible part of the Dogra-ruled state of Kashmir. It was forcibly made a part of Kashmir by the British and sold to the Dogra ruler Gulab Singh in 1846. Earlier Gilgit-Baltistan had comprised a number of feuding principalities which, despite internecine warfare, had common trade and people to people contact on account of geographical contiguity. It was in 1842 that one of the local chieftains sought the help of a Sikh army from Kashmir against his opponent. The area soon came under British control who then ceded it to the Kashmir state under the Treaty of Amritsar. Gilgit-Baltistan had remained a part of Kashmir state for only a century. There was little trade between the region and Kashmir and even less people to people interaction. Besides distances, the language barrier was another divisive factor. The languages spoken by the vast majority in Gilgit-Baltistan included Shina, Burushaski, Khowar, Wakhi and Balti while those living in Jammu and Kashmir spoke Kashmiri, Gojri, Pahari and Hindko.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/01/16/comment/status-of-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Hurriyat (G) to boycott Kashmir conference in Pak capital over invitation to pro-India politicians”

Greater Kashmir, January 16, 2016

Hurriyat (G) on January 16 decided to boycott the

proposed conference on Kashmir called by the president of Pakistan-administered Kashmir in which some pro-India politicians have also been invited. "The members in the meeting (held at Hyderpora under the chair of Agha Hassan Al-Safvi Al-Mosvi) unanimously ruled out the participation of Hurriyat Conference in the stated conference in Pakistan in which the pro-Indian politicians are also among the invitees," noted a statement issued by the amalgam. "At the end of the meeting, the advisory council members of Hurriyat Conference informed Geelani about the stated meeting after which chairman Hurriyat in his response stated that the invitation to the pro-Indian politicians by the responsible heads of the Base Camp of our freedom movement (Azad Kashmir) is very unfortunate and sorrowful." Geelani, the statement noted, rued that the pro-Indian politicians are always finding reasons to "blackmail our freedom struggle and befool the common people of Kashmir." "Geelani sahab stated that the pro-Indian political parties or the politicians are equally responsible for the crimes, atrocities and the oppression committed by the Indian occupational forces upon the unarmed and innocent people of occupied Kashmir," the statement added.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/story/207095.html>

Fahad Shah, "Why both sides of the Line of Control oppose provincial status for Gilgit and Baltistan in Pakistan"

Scroll. In, January 16, 2016

Pakistan government's proposed move to grant provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan, a part of the pre-Partition princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, in Pakistan's control since 1947, has led to sudden focus on a part of the disputed and divided state between India and Pakistan that doesn't receive much attention otherwise. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a development project, for which China has invested \$46 billion, passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, and is seen as a major boost in Pakistan's economy. The fate of this region's people, consistently ignored since 1947, is clearly at stake. Any constitutional change in the region's status will affect not only them but the

larger Kashmir dispute as well, which is at the heart of the geopolitical ambitions of three powerful countries India, China and Pakistan. The controversy is likely to spillover to the Indian side of the divided state as well, as can be seen from the strong opposition of the separatists based in the Kashmir valley, to the proposal. For Kashmiri nationalists, therefore, supporting the rights of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan becomes more important than ever.

<http://scroll.in/article/806496/ipl-no-chennai-super-kings-but-the-whistles-will-not-be-silenced>

Shabbir Mir, "Smooth sailing: K-P, G-B governments agree to end convoy system"

The Express Tribune, January 17, 2016

The travel woes of passengers will come to an end as the Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa governments agreed to do away with the infamous convoy system on the Karakoram Highway. The system requires 50 to 100 vehicles to move in groups from G-B's Diamer district till Besham in Shangla while being escorted by K-P law-enforcement agencies. The decision to end the painful system, which has existed since 2012, was taken at a two-day apex committee meeting of G-B and K-P officials in Peshawar. Chief Ministers of both the regions and K-P Governor Sardar Mehtab Ahmad Khan were among those present. K-P Corps Commander Hidayatur Rahman and other senior officials were also in attendance. "The convoy system will end from February 1 onwards," a senior government official Farooq Ahmed noted. "This was decided at the apex committee meeting." According to an official statement, it was also decided that a Quick Response Force of 300 policemen will be formed to increase patrolling on the KKH in Hazara Division of K-P. These officials will also be provided with 20 vehicles.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1028758/smooth-sailing-k-p-g-b-governments-agree-to-end-convoy-system/>

Shabbir Mir, "Starting devolution: G-B govt set to implement amended LG act"

The News, January 17, 2016

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Finance Minister

Chaudhry Latif Akbar warned that they would stage a protest demonstration in front of Legislative Assembly on January 19 if Barjees Tahir, Minister for Kashmir Affairs, was not terminated. Addressing a press conference on January 16, Latif Akbar stated that Barjees Tahir has tried his best to create differences and conflicts between the government of AJK and federal government which were foiled by AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed with courage and patience. He alleged that Barjees Tahir was bringing funds of Kashmir Council illegally in Kashmir and its accountability should be held. He further stated presently a state within the state was being created in Kashmir Council and AJK which is unacceptable. He demanded termination of the minister for Kashmir Affairs and urged Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to take notice of the illegal measures taken by the minister. The AJK finance minister also expressed concern over the inappropriate language used against the president and PM of AJK in public meetings and election rallies.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/91733-AJK-finance-minister-seeks-removal-of-minister-for-Kashmir-affairs>

“Nowshera-Mirpur link”

Daily Excelsior, January 17, 2016

In 2008, India and Pakistan agreed to open two cross-LoC links in J&K as part of confidence building measure. It was the demand of people on both sides to open the link so that divided families could be facilitated to meet and remain in touch. Obviously, a human problem, the two Governments agreed on the modalities and the Uri-Salamabad in Kashmir and Chakan-da-Bagh link in Poonch were established. Along with that, trading facilities were also allowed under various conditions and with certain criteria. People on either side started coming and going across these links. Of course, there have been some hiccups, which the two sides discussed and resolved and an atmosphere of cordiality has been established. There is realization on both sides that more cross-LoC links should be explored and established so that the fundamental principal of people to people interaction receives boosting. Already the matter of connecting Kargil with

Skardu is under consideration of the authorities. More recently there is thinking in political circles that the Nowshera Mirpur link should also be considered for opening. It is learnt that the Home Ministry has asked the State Government to submit a survey report of Nowshera-Jhangarh-Mirpur link across the LoC. This link will facilitate shortest journey for the people of Rajouri and Reasi districts intending to visit Mirpur and vice versa. Families from Jammu, Rajouri and parts of Reasi who intend to visit PoK to see their relatives on that side, are made to go to Poonch first and then to Chakkan-da-Bagh to reach Hajira or Rawalakote in PoK for their further journey to Mirpur, Kotli or Muzaffarabad. The Poonch LoC point is far away from their native places. By opening this new route for trade and travel, the people from these three-four districts and also the traders from Jammu and Rajouri on this side and Mirpur and Kotli on that side will be benefitted in big way.

<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/nowshera-mirpur-link/>

“Barjees, Pervaiz to address PML-N AJK Worker's Convention”

Business Recorder, January 17, 2016

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir, Minister for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage Senator Pervaiz Rashid and Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr Asif Kirmani will address a PML-N AJK workers' convention at Kotli on January 18. According to a press release, leaders of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), including former AJK president Sardar Sikandar Hayat, Raja Farooq Haider and others would also address the convention.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/front-top/273379-barjees-pervaiz-to-address-pml-n-ajk-workers-convention-on-monday.html>

Shabbir Mir, “Graffiti welcoming Islamic State seen in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, January 18, 2016

Graffiti welcoming Islamic State (IS) was seen in at least two places in Gilgit, stirring panic among locals and law-enforcement agencies. “At least two

walls were painted with slogans welcoming IS in Gilgit,” a resident stated on January 17, a day after the graffiti was found spray-painted in Amphari area of Gilgit. “Nobody knows who did this; people saw it in the morning and reported to the police,” noted the local. The wall-chalking was removed by authorities immediately after it came to their notice, but finding such graffiti in Gilgit perturbed residents who believed it could be the work of someone aiming to create unrest in the region. G-B has previously seen violence triggered by sectarianism. “There is no place for such an organisation in the region, but unfortunately there are some elements who might want such a group,” Abdul Gafoor, another resident, stated, referring to the IS which is also known by its Arabic acronym Da'ish. The graffiti also gave authorities in G-B a reason to scramble in worry. “This is to create panic in the region, [or so] it seems to be at least for now,” a security official noted. He added it could be the work of people affiliated with certain banned outfits who were involved in terrorist activities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029474/uncertainty-graffiti-welcoming-is-seen-in-gilgit/>

MA Mir, “AJK govt spells out five-point charter of demands”

The Express Tribune, January 18, 2016

Spelling out a five-point charter of demands (CoD), the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government asked the federal government to sack the Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir. The CoD, signed by 18 AJK ministers, was sent to the federal government on January 17, sources noted. The AJK government has a long charge sheet against the federal minister for Kashmir affairs. Barjees Tahir used abusive language against AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed during recent public rallies at Bhimber and Mirpur, reads the CoD. At one rally, he called Majeed a 'Pahari Bakra' (wild buck), and at another he called him a Bakri (nanny-goat). “The use of such abusive language will have a negative impact on the brotherly relations between Kashmiri and Pakistani people,” stated the CoD. “For this very reason, we demand Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif immediately replace the federal minister for Kashmir affairs Barjees Tahir.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029572/azad-kashmir-vs-federal-govt-ajk-govt-spells-out-five-point-charter-of-demands/>

Shabbir Mir, “A rare opportunity for Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, January 18, 2016

Like other parts of the country, Gilgit-Baltistan has also been plagued by the 'CPEC fever' these days. While the project is still in its infancy and details surrounding it continue to be sorted out, it seems that the opposition parties feel duty-bound to pass a comment on it on a daily basis, painting a bleak picture for the region with respect to its share in this \$46 billion project, which many say is the most ambitious foreign investment scheme ever launched by any government anywhere in the world. Besides other factors, the undefined constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in adding fuel to fire. As a gateway to the project, the region will offer more than 400km of its land to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that will link Gwadar port to China's north-western autonomous region of Xinjiang via a vast network of highways and railways. There are no two opinions about giving Gilgit-Baltistan its due share in the project. After all, people of this region have rendered immense sacrifices to become a part of the country. Regrettably, what it has received in exchange for these sacrifices is decades-long deprivation in terms of constitutional rights, thanks to the larger issue of Kashmir. Now what do we really mean by the term 'due share' in the CPEC? If we go by the opposition parties' definition, this seems to be a total shift of authority from the federal government to Gilgit-Baltistan in matters pertaining to the project. This daydreaming must be done away with. Such a wish list is found in other provinces too, especially in Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), where politicians think they are indispensable for the corridor. For political gains, such a stance may be acceptable, but we can safely assume that such wishes are not going to see the light of day.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029953/a-rare-oppurtunity-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

“AJK lawmakers protest in front of Parliament House”

Dunya News, January 19, 2016

Lawmakers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government protested in front of Parliament House Islamabad on January 19. Protestors demanded the federal government to sack Minister of Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir, as reports noted. According to the details, Prime Minister (PM) AJK Chaudhary Abdul Majeed led the protest against the Minister of Kashmir Affairs. The protesting lawmakers also accused the federal government of using funds of Kashmir Council for pre-poll rigging. Abdul Majeed demanded the federal government to release funds of the Kashmir Council without any further delay. He stated that their funds are being distributed among federation's favourite people in AJK that is insult of the PM elected by the mandate of people. Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal ensured redress of AJK government's grievances and stated that government will set up a committee on this issue. The three-member committee will be consisting on opposition leader Khurshid Shah, federal minister Ahsan Iqbal and finance minister AJK Chaudhry Latif Akbar. The protest ended after the dialogue with Ahsan Iqbal.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/318463-Islamabad-AJK-lawmakers-protest-in-front-of-Parli>

Asif Ali Ashraf, “An alternative solution for the Status of Gilgit Baltistan”

Dardistan Times, January 20, 2016

The constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan has become a hot topic in the media at the start of 2016. National media has been discussing the topic in their talk shows for the last few weeks. Some media outlets even invited panel members from India too. All of sudden, why the constitutional status of Gilgit Baltistan has become an important topic of discussion while it was overlooked altogether for the last 68 years. One would also wonder why Pakistan as federation seems to show interest, more than ever, in resolving the issue. Reports also suggest that China, apparently has been pushing Pakistan to ease the resentments of the people of Gilgit Baltistan ahead of the CPEC implementation

A large percentage of the indigenous, but not well informed, people of Gilgit Baltistan seem to be under the mistaken impression that GB is being given its overdue constitutional rights on the special demand of China, and so the government of China is praised in this regard. It is also necessary to ask the question what has prompted China to be so interested about the constitutional rights of the two million marginalized and disenfranchised people of GB -- after having remained silent for almost seven decades. The sudden demand itself would appear not to be sympathy with GB, but rather a strategic demand to decorate the CPEC with legality and legitimacy. China is avoiding endorsement or repudiation of any position regarding the disputed nature of GB. On the other hand, the CM of GB and his cronies seem bent on doing nothing but give the “everything is okay” report to the Federal authority.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/alternative-solution-stauts-gilgit-baltistan>

“Azad Kashmir-based militant warns Pakistan against crackdown on Jaish”

Geo TV, January 21, 2016

The Pakistan-based chief of a militant alliance fighting for an end to Indian rule in divided Kashmir openly condemned on January 20 a crackdown by the Pakistan government against another group blamed by India for an attack on an air base. Syed Salahuddin, the Chairman of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an alliance of militant groups based in Azad Kashmir, had claimed responsibility for the assault in Pathankot on January 2, 2016. The claim of responsibility was met with sceptical response among India's security establishment, which blames another group called Jaish-e-Muhammed. Pakistan arrested the head of Jaish-e-Mohammed as well as several other leaders of the group and shut down offices and seminaries linked to the outfit. “We are at a loss to understand whether they (the Pakistan government) are concerned about the interests of the country that feeds them or that of its enemy?” Salahuddin told a news conference, referring to the government's crackdown. “Pakistan is not only an advocate but also a party to the longstanding Kashmir dispute and, therefore, the Pakistani people, government and media should

play the role of a patron rather than of an adversary,” he stated. Salahuddin's public comments could cause further tensions between the two nuclear armed rivals, with New Delhi accusing Islamabad of tolerating groups openly hostile to India. He spoke at the Press Club in Muzaffarabad and the police outside the club made no move to arrest him. Following the attack on the Indian air base, the United Jihad Council warned that their attacks “can engulf all of India” if the issue of Kashmir's divided rule is not resolved.

<http://www.geo.tv/latest/100474-Azad-Kashmir-based-militant-warns-Pakistan-against-crackdown-on-Jaish>

“11,318 Afghans deported from Mirpur”

The Nation, January 21, 2016

Under National Action Plan, the local law enforcers deported 11,318 Afghan refugees from the jurisdiction of Mirpur district by December 31, 2015, and also rounded up 105 others for illegally living and doing business there, the police stated. SSP Mirpur Raja Irfan Salim noted on January 20 that a total of 2,052 persons were rounded up in Mirpur District during last five days Under Section 55 / 109 in the wake of the daily combing operation to unearth and nab the criminals involved in various crimes. “The indefinite combing operation, launched from January 16, 2016, would continue till the entire district is made clean of such unscrupulous elements / criminals,” he added. The SSP further stated that the district police also deported a total of 11,318 unregistered Afghan refugees from the jurisdiction of Mirpur district by December 31, 2015. “A total of 12398 Afghan nationals were found residing in Mirpur district during the operation clean up under the NAP”, the SSP stated adding that these included 6015 registered and 6383 un-registered Afghan Nationals. Unveiling the breakup of the operational clean up under the NAP conducted by the District Administration including police with the coordination of other law-enforcement agencies across the district, the SSP stated that a total of 40 cases have been registered. Eight persons were booked for delivering hate speeches, one person was booked for possessing hate material, 28

persons were arrested for missing the loudspeaker in a total of 13 cases registered in various police stations across the district.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/21-Jan-2016/11-318-afghans-deported-from-mirpur>

“AJK Bar Council to challenge Shariat Court law”

Pakistan Herald, January 22, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Bar Council, the apex body of AJK lawyers, is likely to challenge a recently amended piece of law about the territory's 'controversial' Shariat Court. The AJK Shariat Court (Amendment) Act 2016 is not only in violation of the Bar Council resolution of October 2015, but also of the AJK Supreme Court judgment delivered on the issue in September 2014, asserted Raja Amjad Ali Khan, body's vice chairperson, noted on January 21. The AJK Assembly approved the amended law with majority vote, along with many other bills, notwithstanding serious concerns by main opposition PML-N. The Bar Council was of the opinion that the Shariat Court, established through subordinate legislation in 1993, should be dissolved altogether and the powers vested in it should be restored in the High Court. “We had been constantly asking the government to do away with this parallel judicial system, but to no avail,” Mr Khan stated, declaring that the “arbitrary legislation” had left the bar council with no choice but to call it into question at the appropriate forum. On other issues, the vice-chairman stated that the bar council was in complete agreement that the quota for appointment of non-judicial employees as civil judges was unfair and should be abolished forthwith, as it amounted to weakening the institution of judiciary. “Without enrolment in the Bar Council, law degree does not carry any professional value and, therefore, elevation of clerical employees as civil judges merely on the basis of a law degree is synonymous with infringement on the right of competent and duly enrolled professional lawyers,” he further stated.

<http://www.pakistanherald.com/article/9233/22-january-2016/ajk-bar-council-to-challenge-shariat-court-law>

Rizwan Shahzad, “Rental power project case: NAB arrests son of former AJK president”

The Express Tribune, January 22, 2016

Former Azad Jammu & Kashmir president's son Raja Babar Ali Zulqarnain was arrested on January 21 from the premises of the Islamabad High Court following the dismissal of his bail application in the rental power project case. A division bench comprising Justices Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui and Mohsin Akhtar Kayani dismissed his pre-arrest bail application as well as another petition that sought restraining the National Accountability Bureau from 'harassing and humiliating' him by issuing call-up notices. Following the dismissal, NAB officials took him in custody from the IHC. According to the anti-graft body, Zulqarnain, who is also an elected member of the AJK Legislative Assembly, made the contractual arrangement between the federal government and the company for electricity supply through ship-mounted power facility. He was appointed to act as a local representative for the Karkey Karadeniz Elektrik Uretim- a Turkish company which set up a power plant on board a ship berthed at the Karachi port- to provide electricity to the national grid and logistical support to the visiting representatives of the company.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1032063/rental-power-project-case-nab-arrests-son-of-former-ajk-president/>

Ershad Mahmad, “Gilgit-Baltistan: A province or not”

The News, January 24, 2016

The undefined status of Gilgit-Baltistan has always unnerved Islamabad. The recently concluded China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offers the possibility to absorb Gilgit-Baltistan in the larger national polity by making it a formal province of Pakistan. A committee led by prime minister's adviser, Sartaj Aziz, has conducted several rounds of consultations with major stakeholders, including Hafizur Rehman, the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan. However, it is largely believed the leadership of Kashmir has been intentionally kept out of the entire consultative process. This move has generated anxiety and reaction across the Line of Control (LoC). Even political actors who champion

the cause of Pakistan in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad have warned the Centre against separating Gilgit-Baltistan from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed a unanimous resolution, demanding all constitutional and economic rights to Gilgit-Baltistan without declaring it a formal province. Historically, Pakistan has consistently maintained that Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir. However, the strategic location of this region, particularly the 1300-km long Karakoram Highway (KKH), does not only run through the Gilgit region but also happens to be the sole land route connecting Pakistan with China and Central Asian states.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/gilgit-baltistan-province/#.Vw3J0tR97Gg>

“Rights or taxes: G-B's youth activists demand constitutional status”

The Express Tribune, January 25, 2016

Youth from various parts of Gilgit-Baltistan held a demonstration on January 24 in Gilgit and demanded constitutional rights for the region as well as its due share in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The demonstration was attended by dozens of young people at Gilgit Press Club. Speakers raised their voice for the rights for a region excluded from mainstream politics for the past seven decades. The protesters were holding placards and banners inscribed with slogans demanding G-B's representation in forums like the NFC award and Parliament. Similar protests were held at press clubs in Islamabad, Karachi and other cities. “Give us our rights or forget about taxes,” a student leader noted while addressing the gathering. “G-B should be declared the fifth province of the country without further delay.” The activist stated people of the region are major stakeholders, but are not taken on board in projects like the CPEC.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1033506/rights-or-taxes-g-bs-youth-activists-demand-constitutional-status/>

“APHC-AJK (G) holds reception in honour of Devinder Singh”

Kashmir Media Service, January 26, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter of the All

Parties Hurriyat Conference (G) organized a function in the honour of the Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Social Peace Forum (JKSPF), a constituent of the APHC (G), Devinder Singh, in Islamabad. Devinder Singh is on a visit to Pakistan. The function was presided over by the APHC-AJK (G) Convener, Ghulam Muhammad Safi. Addressing on the occasion, Devinder Singh stated that Jammu and Kashmir was a political dispute, and it had nothing to do with a particular set or religion. He stated that people of Kashmir had never been against Pakistan-India talks, but bilateral talks had always been an exercise in futility, so far. The JKSPF chairman stated that Indian army and police had arrested hundreds innocent youth, and put them in jails. He called upon international human rights organizations to play their role for the release of the illegally detained youth. The Hurriyat leaders on the occasion stated, the Jammu and Kashmir Social Peace Forum is representative body of non-Muslim brethren of occupied Kashmir. They stated that India was trying in vain to give sectarian colour to the freedom struggle of Kashmir.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2016/01/26/aphc-ajk-g-holds-reception-in-honour-of-devinder-singh.html>

Hamid Khan Wazir, “AJK elections: Imran Khan forms committee to award tickets”

Pakistan Today, January 26, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman PTI Imran Khan constituted a powerful four-member committee tasked with awarding tickets to potential candidates for the upcoming general elections in Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK). Sources noted that the four-member committee included Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Siafullah Niazi, Ghulam Sarwar and Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry. The Azad Kashmir chapter of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is an emerging political force especially with the joining of the party by former AJK Prime Minister Barrister Sultan Mehmood. In the 48-member incumbent AJK Assembly, PTI only has 1 seat which is held by Barrister Sultan Mehmood. AJKPP has 29 seats, PML-N has 11, the Muslim Conference has 5 seats, MQM has 2, Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan 1, while the rest are held by independents. PTI hopes to present a tough

challenge to the rival political parties, but PML-N is also not taking the elections lightly as several of its sitting ministers have visited the area and held public gatherings in recent days. The PTI chairman and other senior party leaders have yet to hold any public gatherings, but the party's central leaders have hinted that Imran Khan would address public gatherings in AJK in the coming days. The PTI chairman during his press conference along with PTI Chief Election Commissioner Tasneem Noorani on January 15 announced the dissolution of all PTI bodies except in AJK and Balochistan due to upcoming intra-party polls slated to be held by April 25. Sources noted that keeping in view the last experience of holding intra-party polls just before the May 11 general elections, the party decided not to repeat the same mistake and did not dissolve the party's AJK bodies as the elections are around the corner. Sources further noted that the intra-party polls will be held in AJK after the general elections.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/01/26/city/islamabad/ajk-elections-imran-khan-forms-committee-to-award-tickets/>

“SC rejects pleas seeking SAC judges retirement age revision”

The Nation, January 27, 2016

Applications seeking extension in retirement age of Supreme Appellate Court of Gilgit Baltistan judges at par with the judges of Supreme Court of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir was dismissed on January 26. A three-member Supreme Court bench headed by Justice Mian Saqib Nisar after hearing the arguments of two judges of Gilgit Baltistan dismissed the petition. The judge stated this is not the case of violation of fundamental rights. Justice Muzzafar Ali and Justice Jalal-ud-Din of Supreme Appellate Court of Gilgit Baltistan had filed the constitutional petition under Article 184(3) of Constitution. Justice Raja Jalal-ud-Din, who is the judge of Supreme Appellate Court of GB since January 28, 2013, will retire on February 8, 2016 at the age of 62 years and 3 months, while Justice Muzzafar Ali would retire at the age of 61 years. The petitioners noted the appointment and terms and conditions of judges in Gilgit Baltistan have to be brought at par with the appointments in Supreme

Court of Pakistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir to ensure security of tenure and complete independence of the judiciary in Gilgit Baltistan. “The retiring age of the judges of the GB Supreme Appellate Court should also be made that of the judges of Supreme Court of Pakistan and AJK.” The distinction between the retiring age of GB and SC Pakistan and AJK is discriminatory and violation of the basic structure of 1973 Constitution as well as international norms of the independence of judiciary, the lawyer argued.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/27-Jan-2016/sc-rejects-pleas-seeking-sac-judges-retirement-age-revision>

“NAB officer tortured in Azad Kashmir”

Samaa TV, January 27, 2016

A senior official of the anti-graft National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was allegedly tortured in Mirpur, Azad Kashmir on January 26 when a NAB team raided the residence of former AJK president Raja Zulqarnain. It was reported that NAB team raided the residence in connection with investigations of rental power scandal. Former AJK president is being investigated for Rs128 million corruption references while his son is already under custody of the NAB. Assistant Director NAB Asghar Khan was tortured by security guards posted at the residence. Sardar Abid, AJK Information Minister, stated that NAB has no jurisdiction in Azad Kashmir, which has its own anti-graft laws. He further stated that the raid was carried out without any permission. But a NAB spokesman maintained that the raid was conducted in accordance with the law, adding AJK government was also informed prior to the raid.

<http://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2016/01/nab-officer-tortured-in-azad-kashmir/>

Shabbir Mir, “Remember us? Eight years on, Gojal residents remain unpaid for KKH land”

The Express Tribune, January 28, 2016

Eight years may have passed, but the residents of Gojal in Hunza district have yet to be compensated for the land they sacrificed so the Karakoram Highway (KKH) could be expanded. “This is sheer injustice on part of the government,” Muhammad

Kamran, a resident noted on January 27. “The authorities must realise our hardships as we lost our property so long ago.” The realignment and revamp of KKH started from Gojal in 2007 and was completed till Raikot Bridge in Diamer district over the next few years. The people who lost their lands in Gojal have not been compensated and do not think they will be paid in the near future.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1035243/remember-us-eight-years-on-gojal-residents-remain-unpaid-for-kkh-land/>

“Govt Working Earnestly To Settle Administrative Status of Gilgit-Baltistan: President”

Business Recorder, January 28, 2016

President Mamnoon Hussain January 27 stated that the government was working earnestly to settle the administrative status of Gilgit-Baltistan according to the aspirations of people and without changing its principled stance on Kashmir. The President noted this while talking to a delegation of political leadership and civil society members of Gilgit Baltistan at the Aiwan-e-Sadar. Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir, Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman, Speaker, Deputy Speaker and members of Legislative Assembly of Gilgit- Baltistan, representatives of civil society and senior officials were also present during the meeting. The President noted the federal government was mulling over various legal aspects to resolve the problems of Gilgit- Baltistan and to bring it at par with other developed areas of the country. He further stated it would resolve the issues of the area and enable the people to improve the standard of living. The President stated that in order to achieve national progress it was imperative that the provincial governments improve their governance and initiate development projects to serve the people. The President also stated that Gilgit Baltistan would greatly benefit from the Economic Corridor and urged the people to support the government in completion of this project of national importance. The President asserted that there was no change in the route of the Economic Corridor and added there should be no ambiguity in

this regard. He also stated that upon completion the Diamer Bhasha Dam would also benefit the people of Gilgit Baltistan. The President noted that the government was working on many development projects for progress and prosperity in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/front-top/275913-govt-working-earnestly-to-settle-administrative-status-of-gilgit-baltistan-president.html>

“Pak has no right on Gilgit-Baltistan: BJP”

Scoop News, January 29, 2016

Stating that Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of Pak occupied areas of Jammu & Kashmir and the party stands by 1994 unanimous resolution of Parliament, BJP State Spokesperson Arun Kumar Gupta, noted that Pakistan has no right on Gilgit-Baltistan. Addressing a press conference at party headquarters along with BJP leaders Ghulam Haider and Haji Mohd. Ibrahim from Turtuk and Nubra, Arun Gupta stated that PoJK has been under illegal occupation of Pakistan and all the areas falling under PoJK too are illegally occupied by it. As Gilgit-Baltistan is also part of PoJK, hence, Pakistan has no legal right to use it for any purpose. He stated that the party stands by 1994 unanimous resolution of the Indian Parliament which pledges to work for getting PoJK freed from Pakistan. He further declared that the BJP will not allow Pakistan to tinker with the areas of PoJK, including Gilgit-Baltistan. Ghulam Haider also stated that the people of Ladakh, who has common culture with Gilgit-Baltistan, have been apprehending that Pakistan may bifurcate this province into Gilgit and Baltistan to pave way for China to extend rail line into the territory of PoJK. He noted that it is not acceptable and need to be opposed tooth and nail. Haji Mohd. Ibrahim stated that the only issue pending between India and Pakistan is to get vacated the PoJK areas and the people of Ladakh stand united to achieve this.

<http://www.scoopnews.in/det.aspx?q=53896>

Muhammad Anis, “CM expects 1 million tourists to turn up in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, January 30, 2016

Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur

Rehman stated that following policies adopted by the PML-N Government, over one million domestic and foreign tourists are expected to turn up in the northern areas of the country during next tourism season. Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman stated that he believed in reflecting soft image of the country through promotion of tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan which offers tremendous tourist places and diversified culture. He pointed out that during the last summer season, the inflow of domestic tourists increased from 50,000 to 500,000 which was a record. “Now we expect to receive around one million tourists, this year,” he added. The GB chief minister maintained that the law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan was exemplary, which provides suitable environment for tourism. “As per Global Peace Index, GB region has been declared as 100 per cent peaceful region,” he stated. He pointed out that the northern areas carry religion, cultural and language diversity, which never turns into a disaster. In order to promote tourism in GB, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman noted that the government was focusing on development of road infrastructure. He stated that in addition to existing road network including Karakorum Highway and Babusar Road, the federal government plans to take up Rs82 billion project of road link passing through Shauntar Pass from Muzaffarabad to Gilgit. The government had hired Chinese consultants to carry out feasibility study of the mega project, which if found feasible would be completed in three to four years.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/94849-CM-expects-1-million-tourists-to-turn-up-in-Gilgit-Baltistan>

“High security alert sounded in GB depts.”

The Nation, January 30, 2016

The Interior Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) sent a security alert to the all departments of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) with the caution that threats is coming in from militant circles. “There are complaints from the concerned quarters that the GB police deployed at Governor Secretariat and House, CM Secretariat and House and Civil Secretariat is not on duty. Security arrangements may be ensured at any cost,” reads the statement which has been addressed to G-B IGP. He also added that security of important buildings, including Governor

Secretariat and House, CM Secretariat and House and civil Secretariat, DHQ hospital, airports, prisons, government offices, schools and colleges should be reviewed and enhanced. In the light of the Interior Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) letter to all departments and security department, the department has also urged the police chief to take fool proof security measures in Gilgit and elsewhere in the region to thwart any terror activity. Following the alert, security has been tightened in the city with law enforcement agencies checking people entering the region. "We are keeping a close watch on the situation and the security plan for the region is being revisited daily," noted spokesman of GB police Mobarak Jan on January 29. He further stated security has also been beefed up along the Karakoram Highway (KKH) to ensure safe passage.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/30-Jan-2016/high-security-alert-sounded-in-gb-depts>

Riyaz Wani, "The Multiplayer Game Of Gilgit-Baltistan"

Tehelka, January 30, 2016

Kashmiri separatists are up in arms again and this time against Pakistan: The reason is Islamabad's proposed move to give provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan. On January 12, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) supremo Yasin Malik wrote a letter to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urging him not to change the status of the occupied J&K territory as it would adversely affect the nature of Kashmir dispute. Islamabad's urgency to recast the region's constitutional relationship with the country is traced to the \$46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project and China's alleged insistence for a legal cover to its investment through a disputed region. More so, when Gilgit-Baltistan has to serve as the gateway for the multi-billion dollar project. China is building industrial parks, hydropower projects, railway lines and roads in the region. Besides, the project also involves the

expansion of the Karakoram Highway connecting China's restive Xinjiang region with GilgitBaltistan. This gives Beijing unfettered and fast road and rail access to the Gulf region. Once the railway line and the motorway passing through Gilgit Baltistan and the other Pakistan provinces are completed, Chinese cargo which takes 16-25 days to reach Gulf will take just 48 hours after being transported through Chinese-built Pakistani naval bases at Gwadar, Pasni and Ormara.

<http://www.tehelka.com/2016/01/the-multiplayer-game-of-gilgit-baltistan/>

Economic Developments

“No Wheat Shortage in Gilgit-Baltistan: Senate Told”

Business Recorder, January 20, 2016

Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bossan stated January 20 that as many as 122570 tons of wheat had been provided to Gilgit Baltistan and there was no shortage of flour in the area. Replying to a calling attention notice given by Senator Mian Muhammad Attiq Shaikh, the minister stated in the Upper House that federal government had allocated quota of 1,50000 tons of wheat to Gilgit Baltistan each year, adding if the Gilgit Baltistan required more wheat than its quota, the commodity would be provided to it. He also stated that Secretary Food Gilgit Baltistan informed that few days before there was a flour shortage in the area, but now shortage had been overcome. Meanwhile, Abdul Qayyum presented the report of Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistan and Human Resource Development on the bill to further amend the minimum wages for unskilled workers ordinance.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/business-a-economy/274209-no-wheat-shortage-in-gilgit-baltistan-senate-told.html>

“Govt releases Rs 3.3 bln for AJK development”

Aaj News, January 26, 2016

The federal government released Rs3.3 billion for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government under annual development programme. “The federal

government was supposed to release 70 percent amount of the total released two months earlier,” sources noted. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir government allocated Rs11.5 billion for annual development program in the current fiscal year's budget.

<http://aaj.tv/2016/01/govt-releases-rs-3-3-bln-for-ajk-development/>

“CPEC will put Gilgit-Baltistan on path of development: Hafeez”

Radio Pakistan, January 31, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated China Pakistan Economic Corridor will put Gilgit Baltistan on path of development and progress. Talking to media in Gilgit, he stated two economic zones would be set up in Gilgit out of which land for one zone has been identified. Chief Minister who stated Gilgit-Baltistan Government would spend twelve billion rupees against development budget of which thirty five percent has been utilized so far.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/82347/1>

International Developments

“China downplays reports of concerns over \$46 billion CPEC's PoK stretch”

The Economic Times, January 12, 2016

China downplayed reports about its reservations over the PoK stretch of the USD 46 billion economic corridor it has planned with Pakistan, saying the project would not affect the positions held by the parties to the Kashmir dispute. "The ownership of the Kashmir region is an issue between India and Pakistan left over from history and should be resolved through dialogues and consultations between the two sides," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei told a media briefing.

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-01-12/news/69704726_1_china-and-pakistan-important-consensus-chinese-foreign-ministry

Baseer Ahmad, “Saudi govt pledges rebuilding Pakistani earthquake-hit structure”

Taj News, January 28, 2016

Saudi government would continue help in rebuilding educational, health, social sector and other facilities in earthquake hit areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The commitment was reiterated by Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) headed by Chief Engineer Abdullah M Al-Shoaibi at the occasion of three projects inauguration in Rawalakot and Bagh, stated a message received. The SFD chief engineer along three members also attended briefing to get details of SFD under construction projects in Azad Kashmir. During the inauguration ceremony held at judicial complex, project officials briefed the Saudi Fund for Development and other participants in details. SFD official Syed Yasir Gillani stated that judicial complex building and facilities are remarkable. He also added the project was

completed with a cost of Rs 152.842 million. He further stated that in the complex, 13 court rooms, 91 rooms for multiple uses, two library halls, two bar rooms, one conference hall are add more facilities in the disbursement of justice to the needy.

<http://aaj.tv/2016/01/saudi-government-pledges-rebuilding-structure-destroyed-in-earthquake/>

“CTGC will construct the US\$2.4 billion 1,100-MW Kohala hydroelectric project in Pakistan”

Hydro World, January 7, 2016

China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC) announced on January 7, it will develop the planned 1,100-MW Kohala hydropower project, a run-of-river scheme that will be built on the Jhelum River in Azad-Jammu-Kashmir (AJK). Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WPDA) owns the project, scheduled for commissioning in 2023. AJK is a self-governing administrative division of Pakistan west of the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 2014, Pakistan's National Transmission and Dispatch Co. and China International Water and Electric Corp. (CWE) -- a subsidiary of CTGC -- finalized a 30-year tariff at 7.9 cents per unit and estimate the project will cost about US\$2.4 billion. The Kohala hydroelectric scheme will have a gravity, roller-compacted-concrete dam on the upper branch of the Jhelum, 40 km from Muzaffarabad.

The powerhouse, on the lower branch of the Jhelum near Barasala, will house four 275-MW Pelton turbines. CWE is required to construct the project on a build, own, operate and transfer basis. In 2014, local published reports stated the average tariff for the first 12 years was set at 8.9 cents per unit and during the following 18 years would be 5.1 cents per unit. The average tariff for the 30-year life of the project is 7.9 cents per unit. The tariff ensures 17 per

cent return on equity on internal rate of return basis. The project is expected to earn carbon credit from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for clean energy development under the Kyoto protocol. CTGC further stated the Kohala project is its largest investment in the Pakistani hydropower market. The project is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a 3,000-km-long network of roads, railways and energy

infrastructure to assist development in Pakistan and boost growth for the Chinese-border economy. WPDA issued a supporting letter for the project.

<http://www.hydroworld.com/articles/2016/01/ctgc-will-construct-the-us-2-4-billion-1-100-mw-kohala-hydroelectric-project-in-pakistan.html>

Other Developments

“Gilgit Baltistan Faces Ecological Imbalances”

Bihar Praba, January 26, 2016

Deforestation in Gilgit Baltistan is causing environmental changes that are threatening the lives and property of people in the region. Glaciers in the region are melting rapidly due to the depletion of forests and the collapse of the ecosystem. As a result, the threat of flood looms large in the region. Deforestation in Gilgit Baltistan is causing environmental changes that are threatening the lives and property of people in the region. Glaciers in the region are melting rapidly due to the depletion of forests and the collapse of the ecosystem. As a result, the threat of flood looms large in the region. The timber mafia, which is very active in the region, is making the situation worse. Today, people of Gilgit

Baltistan are in a no win situation. Due to scarcity of economical and affordable fuel in the region, they are forced to survive on the timber available here, to warm up their homes during the harsh winters. With no proper policy in place to curb deforestation and with successive governments paying little attention to the pressing problems, the locals have to face the hazardous consequences. This in turn is causing environmental changes that are threatening the lives and properties of the locals.

<http://news.biharprabha.com/2016/01/gilgit-baltistan-faces-ecological-imbances/>

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: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

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

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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