

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh

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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

In the beginning of March 2013, there were widespread reports about India seeking information regarding several hydropower projects being build in PoK with the assistance of international donors and agencies. This was revealed in a letter sent by the foreign affairs Director General South Asia (dated November 28, 2012) to the Ministry of Water and Power in Islamabad. According to the details given in the letter, India had asked Pakistan to seek No Objection Certificate (NoC) for all such projects in PoK, a territory legally claimed as its integral part by India. India's strident objections came in the wake of reports on the proposed hydropower projects to be built in Shebratan and Chilas in Gilgit Baltistan.

Meanwhile, international funding agencies like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have been insisting Pakistan to seek NoC before they could commit funds to various projects in PoK. Pakistan has reacted rather strongly and refused to give in to any terms and conditions.

Within Gilgit Baltistan, there is prevalent fear of impending terrorist attacks. The security forces have been on high alert ever since there were warnings that militant groups have forayed into the region. As indicated in a couple of reports included in the current issue, the locals have become increasingly apprehensive. Their concerns have heightened after the recent incident of bomb explosion in Gilgit Baltistan and the twin blasts which took place in Karachi. According to the local media, certain extremist elements, for instance, the one led by Tariq Gidar have infiltrated into Gilgit Baltistan.

Two new districts have been formed in Baltistan- Shigar and Kharmang. This brings the total number of districts in Baltistan division to 4 and total districts in Gilgit Baltistan region to 9.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Khalid Mustafa, “India asks Pakistan to seek NoCs for projects in GB,AJK”

The News, March 3, 2013

ISLAMABAD: India has asked Pakistan to get no objection certificates (NoCs) from New Delhi for building all the hydropower projects being completed in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and AJK involving funding of international donor agencies. India has also asked Pakistan to provide detailed information about all hydropower projects being built in Gilgit-Baltistan with the funding of these international donors. This has been communicated to Pakistan in the latest correspondence in which India has again declared Gilgit-Baltistan as its integral part.

The World Bank currently believed to be under the influence of the Indians who occupy top slots, has already refused the funding for the most strategic project of the Diamer-Bhasha dam linking it with a NoC from India. The most revealing and perturbing disclosure is that this is the same bank that has leaked the information to New Delhi that Pakistan is building hydropower projects in Shebratan and Chilas in Gilgit-Baltistan, the correspondence reveals.

In a letter of the Foreign Affairs Director General South Asia of the Foreign Ministry written on November 28, 2012 to the Ministry of Water and Power, it has been revealed that India has sought detailed information about the hydropower projects being built in Gilgit-Baltistan as New Delhi is of the view that Pakistan needs its NoCs for building all kinds of hydropower projects in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK as the stated areas are 'integral parts of India'.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21335-India-asks-Pakistan-to-seek-NoCs-for-projects-in-GB-AJK>

Khalid Mustafa, “No more dictation, Pakistan

tells donors in plain words”

The News, March 4, 2013

ISLAMABAD: In a rare development, Pakistan has asked the major donors the World Bank, USTATED, the Asian Development Bank and others in plain words not to dictate to Pakistan which projects to launch. This happened in a meeting chaired by Dr Nadeem-ul Haq on February 12 in the Planning Commission on funding and implementation of the Diamer-Bhasha dam and Dasu dam, a senior official of the ministry of water and power who attended the meeting noted.

In the meeting, according to the official, deputy chairman Dr Haq stated that donors cannot dictate to Pakistan from now onwards and it is our prerogative to identify projects. The World Bank is telling Pakistan that it is ready to fund the Dasu hydropower project but not the Diamer-Bhasha dam on account of India claims that Gilgit-Baltistan, where the Bhasha dam will be constructed, is a disputed area. The bank is pushing Pakistan to abandon the Bhasha dam and is instead insisting to avail the credit line of Dasu dam.

Dr Haq, the official stated, came up with the bold stance and stated the donors cannot dictate to Pakistan on project priority. In the stated meeting, it was also felt that the USTATED and the World Bank also seemed involved in implementing their own agenda in Pakistan in terms of lending for the projects of their choice and sometimes coming up with their own projects.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21355-No-more-dictation-Pakistan-tells-donors-in-plain-words>

“Evolving relations between Pakistan controlled Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan”

March 26, 2013

WASHINGTON, DC: The opinion makers in

Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad-Kashmir (AJK) find themselves at odds in defining the relationship of Gilgit-Baltistan with the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

They also differ in views on how the lingering Kashmir dispute should be resolved. The majority of the people in Gilgit-Baltistan maintain that their forefathers liberated the region from the rulers of Kashmir in 1947 and subsequently declared allegiance with the newly created state of Pakistan. Therefore, they expect Pakistan to merge their region as its fifth province. However, there is a significant minority which promotes the idea of an independent republic. It points to the fact that UN resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir require Pakistan to withdraw from Gilgit-Baltistan and transfer control to local powers. It therefore maintains that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have the right to rule their land without any interference from Pakistan.

<http://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2013/03/26/evolving-relations-between-azad-kashmir-and-gilgit-baltistan/>

Jurgen Creutzmann MEP, “Pakistan's Manipulation of the status of Gilgit- Baltistan”

March 24, 2013

Gilgit- Baltistan is the northernmost geographical area of Pakistan occupied Kashmir. It was also known as the Northern Areas in Pakistan. It shares borders with Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor in the North, China in the East and Northeast, Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir to the Southeast and Azad Kashmir to the Southwest. Gilgit Baltistan is highly mountainous and covers an area of 72,971 km squared. It has a population of about a million people.

Gilgit Baltistan came into being by the merger of Ladakh Wazarat, Baltistan District and Gilgit Agency and the states of Nagar and Hunza. Both Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan make up the disputed region of Pakistan administered Kashmir, as per International organizations and the United Nations. In India, it is known simply as Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

In 1947 when erstwhile India was divided into the

two states of Pakistan and India, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was under the rule of Hindu Raja Hari Singh, even though the majority population was that of Muslims. Upon the division of India, Hari Singh kept his state of Jammu and Kashmir as an Independent state. It was neither a part of India nor Pakistan. But, Pakistan attacked his state with the help of the Western Muslim tribesmen in Kashmir and almost reached the current Kashmiri Capital of Srinagar. The Raja could not handle the onslaught and as per General Mountbatten's suggestion, asked for help from India. In return India asked the Raja to sign the Instrument of Accession, which made the whole territory of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir an Indian territory.

<http://www.neurope.eu/blog/pakistan-s-manipulation-status-gilgit-baltistan>

Shabbir Mir, “Security forces on high alert to avert terror attacks”

The Express Tribune, March 10, 2013

GILGIT: While senior police officers say they are cognisant of security threats and are taking measures to avert incidents of terrorism in towns and on the Karakoram Highway, people do not share their confidence. A wave of panic swept across Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) following warnings that militant groups had infiltrated the region. A roadside bomb that ripped through a pushcart earlier this week and injured two people was taken as a precursor.

“This seems to be a preview,” Muhammad Raza, a resident of Kashrote noted before the media soon after the blast. “God forbid we may see even worse in the days ahead as warnings have already been shared with the public through the media.” A day before the incident, the regional government had pointed out that incidents like the twin blasts in Karachi could not be ruled out in Gilgit. “There are chances of such incidents here. We urge people to remain alert and immediately report to the authorities if they find a suspicious bag or a person,” stated Home Secretary Faisal Zahoor during a meeting held in Gilgit. The information was reproduced in a section of G-B's Urdu press, which

also mentioned that a militant outfit headed by 'Tariq Gidar' had infiltrated G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/518504/security-forces-on-high-alert-to-avert-terror-attacks/>

Shahbaz Rana, Faizan Dawood, “Diامر Bhasha Dam: World Bank, not ADB, presses for seeking Indian NOC”

The Express Tribune, March 1, 2013

ISLAMABAD: A move by the Asian Development Bank to bring World Bank on board for co-financing Diامر Bhasha Dam backfired when the World Bank instead asked the ADB to first seek a no-objection certificate from India a condition that has derailed the project.

The ADB has so far faced criticism for asking for Indian NOC at the eleventh hour when Pakistan has already met agreed prerequisites. Background discussions with officials of multilateral lenders and Pakistani officials concerned revealed that it was actually the World Bank that set the condition of NOC and also asked the ADB to press for the same. The plan was to seek \$2.5 billion each from the ADB, Pakistan's largest creditor, and the World Bank, the second largest creditor.

“The ADB will never itself impose a condition that is tantamount to undermining sovereignty of the country and seems stupid,” stated an official requesting anonymity. He stated the ADB was trying to manage the situation and resisting World Bank pressure.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/514063/diامر-bhasha-dam-world-bank-not-adb-presses-for-seeking-indian-noc/>

Shabbir Mir, “No vote, no voice: G-B residents feel like wallflowers”

The Express Tribune, March 27, 2013

GILGIT: While the rest of the nation prepares for the upcoming general elections, nearly 1.5 million people in Gilgit-Baltistan sit on a metaphorical fence, watching the electoral process unfold from a distance. Despite being liberated from the Dogra Raj six decades ago, and the unconditional accession to Pakistan, the people of the region have

been barred from casting their votes in the National Assembly and the Senate since 1947.

Together with Azad Kashmir, G-B forms a part of the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, prompting Pakistan to put off calls for further integration on grounds that it may prejudice international obligations over the festering dispute. Although the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009, did bestow the region with a province-like status, it did not give G-B residents the right to vote outside their own territory.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/526981/no-vote-no-voice-g-b-residents-feel-like-wallflowers/>

Shabbir Mir, “Constitutional concerns: Car registration debate fuels wrangling over G-B status”

The Express Tribune, March 14, 2013

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly proceedings on March 13 were dominated by a debate on whether the residents of G-B were Pakistani citizens or not. The discussion started after Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) legislator Mirza Hussain spoke about the amnesty scheme offered by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for registering non custom paid (NCP) vehicles. Hussain stated residents of G-B must not be forced to have their NCP vehicles registered. “We are de facto Pakistani, this is something mentioned in the Governance Order 2009. Therefore, we shouldn't be forced to pay duty to get our cars registered. We aren't as such a constitutional province of Pakistan,” claimed Hussain.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawmaker Raziuddin Rizvi objected to Hussain's comments, saying residents of G-B were as much Pakistanis as anyone else and should avail the amnesty scheme. He asked Hussain to refrain from making such statements as they could have serious implications for the region in the long run. Sadia Danish, advisor on forests and wildlife, also questioned Hussain how he took the oath to become a lawmaker if he wasn't Pakistani.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/520343/constitutional-concerns-car-registration-debate-fuels-wrangling-over-g-b-status/>

“New Shiger district inaugurated”

Pakistan Observer, March 22, 2013

SKARDU: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah on March 21 inaugurated a new district 'Shiger' in Baltistan division. The ceremony was attended by elected representatives, political figures, provincial ministers and a large number of people. Speaking on the occasion, Mehdi Shah stated that the PPP federal government had sanctioned funds for administrative expenditures for new districts of Shiger and Kharmang in Baltistan division.

He stated during the five-year tenure of PPP government, GB was given top priority in all fields as many public welfare projects were completed. He congratulated the people on the creation of new district. Raja Azam Khan, GB minister, thanked the federal and the provincial governments for creating the new district. Kharmang district will be inaugurated on March 23 in Tolti, Kharmang.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=201206>

“Kharmang now GB district”

Pakistan Observer, March 24, 2013

SKARDU: Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Syed Mehdi Shah on March 23 inaugurated a new district Kharmang in District Head Quarters (DHQs) Tolti. According to the press release, Shah shed lights on the achievements of Pakistan Peoples Party's Federal and Provincial Government of GB. He stated, PPP provincial government will continue its developmental activities in future for the welfare and betterment of the people of GB. On the occasion, there were large number of public representatives, PPP office bearers, elites and people at the inaugural function.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=201427>

“Zardari to address AJK LA, Council”

The Nation, March 29, 2013

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari will soon visit Muzaffarabad and address the joint session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and AJK Council to reiterate government's policy

on Kashmir and the struggle of its people for their rights as well as to take stock of the situation in Kashmir.

The president stated this on March 28 when a delegation of Kashmiri leadership representing the entire political spectrum of AJK and the APHC, which called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr in the wake of hanging of Afzal Guru during which the delegation also invited the President to visit Muzaffarabad and address joint session of the assembly and council.

The delegation was led by Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and included among others President AJK Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan, Opposition Leader (President PML-N, AJK), Ch. Muhammad Yasin, Gen (Retd) Sardar M. Anwar Khan, Former President AJK Amanullah Khan, Supreme Head J&K Liberation Front, Abdul Rashid Turabi, Ameer Jama'at-i-Islami, Maulana Saeed Yousuf, Ameer JUI(F), Justice (Retd) Abdul Majid Malik, President J&K Liberation League, M. Tahir Khokhar, MQM, Mehmood Ahmed Sagir, APHC (Mir Waiz Group), Mr. Ghulam M. Safi, APHC(S. Ali Gillani Group), M. Rafique Daar, JKLF(Yasin Malik Group) and others.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/29-Mar-2013/zardari-to-address-ajk-la-council>

Shabbir Mir, “Angry exchange: Politicians from Baltistan defend G-B chief minister”

The Express Tribune, March 29, 2013

GILGIT: Politicians and lawmakers from Baltistan have jumped in to defend Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah, who has come under immense criticism for giving district status to two valleys belonging to the region he hails from.

Politicians from both Gilgit and Baltistan exchanged heated words over a statement made by G-B Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig, who declared the formation of two new districts in Baltistan illegal. Shigar and Kharmang valleys were given district status by Shah during a visit. The announcement triggered a sharp reaction in Gilgit,

(Retd) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso on March 27 stated that general elections were significant as they marked the first democratic transition from one elected civilian government to another. He was talking to Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Ch. Abdul Majeed, who called on him at the PM Secretariat in Islamabad to congratulate him on assumption of his office.

The AJK Prime Minister assured the caretaker Prime Minister of all cooperation and expressed the hope that the democratic process would be strengthened in the country with the holding of free, fair and impartial elections under his guidance.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?newsid=221533>

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit-Baltistan cabinet: Public hospitals to charge fee for services”

The Express Tribune, March 28, 2013

GILGIT: Resisting public pressure, the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government has decided to charge patients at government hospitals. The move is aimed at generating funds for hospitals and to ensure higher quality, stated G-B Information Minister, Ali Madad Sher. The government faced stiff resistance from the public when the fees were first introduced in February this year. However, due to the government's weak financial position, the cabinet decided to impose the fees in a meeting.

The revenue collected will be deposited in the national exchequer and a committee headed by medical superintendents in all government hospitals in G-B will be responsible for appropriating it, accordingly. As a result of the new fees, patients will be liable to pay Rs100 for ultrasound, Rs2, 250 for CT scans, and up to Rs300 for surgery.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/527424/gilgit-baltistan-cabinet-public-hospitals-to-charge-fee-for-services/>

“Route out of crisis: AJK contemplating privatisation of power sector”

The Express Tribune, March 27, 2013

MIRPUR: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government is contemplating to implement a proposal of phased transfer of power supply system

to the private sector to ensure power supply smoothly. Official sources stated on March 26 that the state's government intends to invite private sector for investment in the hydel power production sector.

Besides this, the government is also thinking on the proposal to hand over the electricity distribution system to the private sector. At the first leg of the plan, the power supply network in six sub divisions of the state are proposed to be transferred to the private sector, the sources revealed. Meanwhile, the public sector AJK electricity department had been directed by the government to accelerate recovery of arrears worth millions pending against various domestic, commercial and industrial consumers in AJK.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/526836/route-out-of-crisis-ajk-contemplating-privatisation-of-power-sector/>

Ijaz Kakakhel, “Earthquake likely to strike Bhasha Dam site”

Daily Times, March 27, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Senate's Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources was informed on March 26 that Zone-4, where some of the most important power generation projects were being constructed, was likely to be struck by earthquake and construction of any mega reservoirs upstream of Tarbela Dam may be destroyed if earthquake occurred in the future.

Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) Director General Dr Imran Ahmed Khan expressed these views. He opposed the construction of upstream mega projects like Diamer-Bhasha Dam, which is located in Zone-4, saying that it was vulnerable to severe earthquake. Senator Yousuf Baloch chaired the meeting.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\03\27\story_27-3-2013_pg5_9

“Education emergency: AJK leading in enrolment, lagging in quality”

The Express Tribune, March 26, 2013

While Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) boasts the highest literacy rate across Pakistan, it struggles to

provide quality education to its children. This was pointed out by Alif Ailaan education emergency campaign, as stated in a press release. According to official figures, the literacy rate in AJK is 72 percent (compared to 58 percent across Pakistan). Primary school enrolment is 95 percent for boys and 88 percent for girls which is higher than any other region of Pakistan. Together with this, the gap between the enrolment rates of boys and girls is much lower in AJK as compared to rest of Pakistan where wide gender disparities exist.

However, when compared to the figures released by the Pakistani government, there appears to be a discrepancy between statistics since official figures reveal that the primary level enrolment rate for AJK is only 65%, which is much lower than the figures quoted by the Government of AJK.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/526323/education-emergency-ajk-leading-in-enrolment-lagging-in-quality/>

“AJK prime minister calls on Mahenti”

The News, March 25, 2013

KARACHI: A delegation of political, religious and Hurriyat Conference leaders led by Prime Minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Chaudhary Abdul Majeed called on Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Chief Muhammad Hussain Mahenti during a visit to Idara-e-Noor Haq in Karachi on March 24.

The delegation comprised opposition leader in Kashmir Assembly Farooq Haider, Chief JI Azad Jammu Kashmir Abdur Rasheed Turrabi, Chief JUI-F Azad Jammu & Kashmir Maulana Saeed Yousuf, representative of All Pakistan Kashmir Muslim Conference, Sagheer Chughtai and Ghulam Muhammad Safi of Hurriyat.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-167209-AJK-prime-minister-calls-on-Mahenti>

“AJK prime minister arrives”

Pakistan Today, March 24, 2013

KARACHI: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed arrived in Karachi on March 24. Former prime minister of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan, former president of Azad Jammu and

Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Anwar Khan and other notables accompanied Abdul Majeed.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/03/24/city/karachi/ajk-prime-minister-arrives/#sthash.6nMnEhWi.dpuf>

“Gilgit-Baltistan: Education department reinstates 180 employees”

The Express Tribune, March 25, 2013

GILGIT: More than 180 employees of the education department sacked last week in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have been reinstated after the chief secretary termed the action illegal, officials stated on March 24. Most of the employees fired were government schoolteachers hired between 2009 and 2011 and were terminated without a show-cause notice, a move termed as a violation of law. “Chief Secretary Sajjad Hotiana asked the secretary of education to withdraw the notification of termination and serve the teachers with a show-cause notice first,” stated the official, requesting anonymity. The notification of termination was then revoked.

Earlier, a statement issued from Hotiana's office asked government officials to follow due procedure when making decisions on hiring and firing. No unilateral decision should be taken without giving the aggrieved party an opportunity to defend oneself, it read.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/525942/gilgit-baltistan-education-department-reinstates-180-employees/>

Shabbir Mir, “New boundaries: G-B chief minister accused of bias towards Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, March 25, 2013

GILGIT: A day after Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah awarded the status of district to another valley in Baltistan, opposition leaders asked Shah to do the same for valleys in Gilgit. They stated he was acting as if he is the CM of Baltistan alone. On March 23, Kharmang valley was given a district status, while the scenic Shigar valley was made a district two days prior to that.

“We have fulfilled our commitments with people in the past and will be carving out two more subdivisions in Baltistan,” Shah had stated in an address on March 23. G-B Assembly Opposition

Leader Janbaz Khan, however, demanded valleys of Darel-Tangir also be made districts since they are larger in size and have more representation in the assembly. "I am not against making districts in Baltistan but I want Shah to make decisions based on merit instead of pleasing his hometown," stated Khan. He added Yaseen, Gupis and Hunza valleys should also be made districts, adding there would be protests if people's demands are not met.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/525944/new-boundaries-g-b-chief-minister-accused-of-bias-towards-baltistan/>

"Pulls large crowd: PML-N vows to restore peace, harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan"

The Express Tribune, March 20, 2013

GILGIT: With general elections around the corner, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on March 19 flexed its political muscles in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) by pulling in a considerable crowd from all parts of the region. The rally, organised to mark the 10th death anniversary of Saifur Rehman, founding member of PML-N in the region, was large even by G-B standards, where politics is largely inspired by sectarian divides.

"Once we are in power, we will end sectarianism and bring justice to the masses," promised Hafizur Rehman, regional president of PML-N. "The crowd gathered testifies to the fact that the party is supported even in this remote part of the county," he told the gathering which, according to independent sources, was around 10,000 people strong. "One of our top priorities is to restore peace in the region," stated Fida Muhammad Nashad, a former chief executive (a position now equivalent to chief minister). Mohammad Saleem, district president of Astore, stated the party would work to bring normalcy back to the strife torn region by following the late Rehman's philosophy, who was murdered in 2003.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/523365/pulls-large-crowd-pml-n-vows-to-restore-peace-harmony-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

"At the 11th hour: Two judges appointed on last day of government"

The Express Tribune, March 18, 2013

GILGIT: On the last day of its tenure, the federal

government appointed Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B)'s law minister Wazir Shakil as a judge of the G-B Chief Court. Shakil, a revered personality in the area served the government as a minister for law, and water and power for three years before he was elevated to this position. Additionally, Justice Muhammad Alam, a judge in the lower court was also appointed as a chief court judge.

"A notification has been sent in this regard," informed officials of the law department on March 17. The positions had been lying vacant since the elevation of Justice Muzzaffar and Justice Jalaluddin to the Supreme Appellate Court.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/522361/at-the-11th-hour-two-judges-appointed-on-last-day-of-government/>

Dr. Javid Iqbal, "Power games in Karakorum"

March 17, 2013

"Kashmir's northern frontiers run in common with those of three countries, Afghanistan, the USSR and China. Security of Kashmir, which must depend on its internal tranquility and existence of stable government, is vital to security of India" Nehru's telegram to Clement Attlee on October, the 25th 1947 spills beans. The telegram should put curtains on the recent debate whether it was the Poonch rebellion on its own or insurgency aided and abetted by Pakistan that set-up 1947. It could be a debate with no end. The end result should weigh more in weighing geopolitical out fall. Nehru in the end did not get the northern front, he considered vital to security of India, holistically. While India got a stretch of it in Ladakh, in Pakistan's lap fell Gilgit and Baltistan by default.

Major William Brown was supposed to take orders from Brigadier Ghansara Singh Maharaja Hari Singh's Gilgit based governor. Brown discovered a secret plan amongst the troops in his command of declaring an independent republic of Gilgit-Astor. It had the backing of 75% of the scouts and he was in no position to dissuade them. Brown could not get Ghansara Singh talking to Mirs/Gilgit Rajas to ascertain their wish viz a viz accession to India, having heard of Maharaja's accession to India. Contrary to Ghansara Singh's passive approach,

Brown planned to turn pro-active. Apart from the forces in his own command, he could bank only on his deputy--captain Jack Matheson posted in Chilas. On the night of 31st, Brown put into operation a plan named 'Datta Khel'. Ghansara Singh was put under protective security and security cover provided to traders of minority community. Troops were made to swear loyalty, as the command decided to follow their inclination.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Mar/17/-power-games-in-karakorum-68.asp>

“After Palestine, Pakistan-controlled Gilgit-Baltistan demands UN observer status, Washington DC”

March 16, 2013

General Debate: Twenty Fourth Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Item 3: "Promotion of human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development". Statement by Senge Sering, delegate representing African Technical Association on March 9, 2013.

I thank you Mr. Chairman for this opportunity. African Technical Association remains a committed defender of courageous rights defenders who work at great personal risk to promote rights of others. ATA has a firm commitment to the protection and promotion of all human rights including the basic rights of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan continues to rule Gilgit Baltistan, a disputed region contested by India, as a colony. In 1974, Pakistani state violated UN resolutions by abrogating the State Subject Rule and causing large scale demographic change in Gilgit Baltistan. Many internationally banned organizations have since then established their stronghold in the disputed region, which thrive under state patronage and its members slaughter local Shias to keep them subservient. These terrorists are behind the killings of more than 100 Shias attacked near Chilas, Babusar and Kohistan in 2012. As of recent, seven citizens of Gilgit Baltistan were killed by anti-Shia group in Abbas town, Karachi. Pakistani judicial system has failed to provide justice and prosecute

Shia attackers as they live under the patronage of Pakistani secret services. As Gilgit Baltistan shares border with northern Afghanistan, the arrival of militants and their patrons in recent months indicate that Pakistan will use Gilgit Baltistan as a launch pad to advance strategic interests in Afghanistan and the fallout of these advances on local people and culture will be detrimental.

<http://www.expertclick.com/NRWire/Releasedetails.aspx?id=43477>

“Faulty procedure: Court restrains appointments to AJK Shariat Court”

The Express Tribune, March 16, 2013

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court on March 15 imposed restriction on appointment of judges to the Shariat Court. An AJK High Court bench in Muzaffarabad on March 15 directed the authorities not to make any appointments till the final decision on the case. The three-judge bench, headed by senior judge, Munir Ahmed Chaudhry with members, Justice Tabassum Aftab Alvi and Justice Sardar Abdul Hamid, issued the order on a petition challenging the induction of Justice Muhammad Mushtaq Chaudhry and Sardar Muhammad Shahzad to the Shariat Court recently. The bench, however, rejected the petitioner's plea that the two judges be restrained from performing duty.

Former president of Muzaffarabad Bar Association Sadaqat Hussain Raja, on March 14 filed a petition challenging the appointment of the two judges. The petitioner contended that under the Shariat Act, 1993, only AJK president has the power to make appointment to the Shariat Court. He maintained that the procedure for appointment of judges was contradictory to the basic human rights. It should be similar to that of appointment of a judge to the high court.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/521473/faulty-procedure-court-restrains-appointments-to-ajk-shariat-court/>

“Pakistan: Closure of the Association of Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE-Pakistan)”

March 11, 2013

The Observatory for the Protection of Human

Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Pakistan. The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources of the closure by the local Government of Gilgit-Baltistan of the Association of Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE-Pakistan), an NGO working on women and children's issues in Gilgit-Baltistan, Northern Pakistan.

According to the information received, on February 25, 2013, AGHE-Pakistan was closed down by the Home Secretary of Gilgit Baltistan with an order to stop all activities, including imparting education to girls, with immediate effect following a letter by the Home Department of Gilgit-Baltistan. The orders regarding the ban on all the activities of AGHE-Pakistan were issued to deputy commissioners and police officers of various districts and not communicated to the organization itself. The Home Department, which wrote the letter on February 25, 2013, is stated to have issued the order under pressure from Muslim extremist groups who threatened AGHE-Pakistan to stop working on women's rights and girls' education. The letter, which bore number SOH-11/2011, stated that AGHE-Pakistan was no longer a registered organization and required a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the economic division as well as from the Government of Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/pakistan/2013/03/d22174/>

“Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project heightens Zardari image: PMAJK”

Pakistan Observer, March 13, 2013

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has repeated the history set by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by inaugurating Pak-Iran gas pipeline project, stated Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhury Abdul Majeed on March 12. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, he stated the way Zulfikar Bhutto united the whole Muslim Ummah and made Pakistan a nuclear power, President Asif Ali Zardari is in the same way and after this decision

he emerged as a great leader of not only Pakistan but also of the entire Muslim Ummah. He stated the \$ 1.5 billion project would complete in 15 months and also help to contribute 2000 Mega Watt energy in the national grid. Majeed stated the government of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), by adopting the reconciliation policy, had not only developed cordial relations with neighbors but also with the west.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=199935>

“Condemning Violence: Skardu marchers protest Karachi bomb blasts”

The Express Tribune, March 6, 2013

GILGIT: Hundreds of protesters in Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, took to the streets on March 5 to condemn Karachi's twin blasts. Amongst the casualties, at least two killed and six injured were Baltistan residents. At the protest, speakers called for stern action against terrorists. The entire town of Skardu sported a deserted look, with shutters down and all schools, businesses and offices closed. The local government announced a day of mourning for the 49 blast victims.

These demonstrations took place just a day before the bodies of the Karachi blast victims those that were residents of G-B are to be dispatched to Skardu for burial.

“This is the worst form of democracy,” shouted a speaker at the rally. “All it has given us are corpses and increasing attacks on minorities, especially Shias.” Baltistan, once one of the most peaceful regions of the province, has dealt with unfortunate incidents since 2012. Many of the residents of this scenic area have fallen victim to the sectarian attacks targeting passengers in Kohistan, Babusar, Chilas and Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/516432/condemning-violence-skardu-marchers-protest-karachi-bomb-blasts/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan forms counter-terrorism unit”

March 7, 2013

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government March 6 announced that it had formed a counter-

terrorism unit to thwart any possible terrorism, the GB Home Department stated. The government formed the 90-member unit to face an increase in threats, the Home Department stated, adding it had received tips of a possible terrorist attack in Gilgit or Skardu. Terrorists might target an important installation with a bomb-laden vehicle, it stated. The Home Department decided to put security forces on alert and to check suspicious persons.

http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2013/03/07/newsbrief-16

“Firms submit consultancy for Diamer Bhasha Dam”

Daily Times, March 8, 2013

LAHORE: Three consortiums comprising 20 renowned international and local firms have submitted their proposals of consultancy services for construction design, construction supervision and contract administration of the Diamer Bhasha Dam Project. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) received this response from reputed firms belonging to Europe, America and China in the wake of its notice for Expression of Interest (EoI) for procurement of consultancy services for Diamer Bhasha Dam Project.

Federal government through WAPDA is implementing Diamer Bhasha Dam as a priority project. The project is of immense importance for socio-economic development of the country. On completion, the project will help store 8.1 million acre feet of water for agricultural and generate 4,500 megawatts electricity, contributing about 20 billion units of low-cost hydel electricity to the national grid every year.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\03\08\story_8-3-2013_pg5_3

“Tajikistan completes its link-road to Gwadar: Pakistan building Gilgit to Durrah Pass”

March 1, 2013

Trading is increasing between Dushambe and Islamabad. The Pakistani Ministry of commerce has announced that the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) will export 30,000 tons of sugar to Tajikistan

under a revised agreement. The new Tajik envoy to Islamabad, Sherali Jononov stated that Tajikistan was interested in Pakistan's Gwadar port, announcing that Tajikistan government had completed Pakistan-Tajikistan road link work of their side.

Tajikistan is Pakistan's neighbor and would actually touch Tajikistan except for the Wakhan Corridor which was artificially created by Britain to separate Pakistan from Tajikistan. The newly appointed Tajik ambassador Sherali Jononov talked about peace in Afghanistan. The Russian delegation in Islamabad has hinted at the expansion of the SCO. Jononov stated that Tajikistan was interested in the completion of the Pakistani port of Gwadar as it would prove the shortest way to trade with the international community. If Tajikistan has completed its part of the Pakistan-Tajikistan road link, and if Pakistan's Karakorum Highway, the key link is only miles away from a major Pakistani artery linking Gwadar to Kashgar, then it should be fairly simple to begin the trade by road.

There are several passes that connect Pakistan with Tajikistan most notably the Dorah Pass, the Broghol Pass from the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan, Shandur Top from Gilgit, and Lowari Top from Dir in Pakistan. Roads can connect through all these passes. The Forrah Pass has been picked to connecting Chitral to Tajikistan.

<http://rupeenews.com/2013/03/tajikistan-completes-its-link-road-to-gwader-pakistan-building-gilgit-to-durrah-pass/>

“Smeda to support SMEs in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, March 5, 2013

LAHORE: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Smeda) will extend full support to develop SMEs in Gilgit-Baltistan through exploitation of regional development potential of the province on fast track basis. This assurance was given by Ahmad Nawaz Sukhera, chief executive officer of Smeda in a meeting with Sajjad Saleem Hotiana, chief secretary Gilgit-Baltistan at Smeda head office on March 4. He stated that tourism, minerals, small hydel and horticulture sectors have a great potential to spur

economic development process in Gilgit-Baltistan. Sukhera expressed the hope that Smeda, by developing sectoral strategies for the province, would be able to create new SMEs. The SME development plan would also help fill the missing links in the value chain of the potential SME sectors of Gilgit-Baltistan, he added.

Earlier, Hotiana identified regional potentials for economic development by identifying tourism, minerals, horticulture and small hydel projects as the priority sectors in the region. He assured that Smeda teams, working on the SME development of his region, would be provided with the best possible collaboration and cooperation between Smeda and the local stakeholders of the SME sector.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-163404-Smeda-to-support-SMEs-in-Gilgit-Baltistan>

“Pakistan Army probes AJK 'torture' death”

Daily Times, March 1, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Pakistan Army is investigating the alleged torture of a youth that led to his death last week in Azad Kashmir, an official stated on February 28. Mohammed Ali Murtaza's family have accused the army of torture and claim the 26-year-old died while in its custody after going missing on February 17 near the LoC between Pakistan and India in the divided Kashmir region. The Pakistan Army has launched an inquiry to investigate the death but a senior military official, who requested anonymity, denied any army involvement in the incident.

“Murtaza went missing when he left his home in Kotli city to see his cousin in a village of Khoi Ratta sector at the Line of Control (LoC) with India,” Muhammad Amjad Chaudhry, a relative, noted. “Later on February 19, when we went to register a report, the administration chief handed over his body to us. Locals at the LoC told us that the army captured him from their village,” he stated. Another relative, Chaudhry Mehboob, stated that Murtaza died while in custody. “He died in the custody of army, he was tortured,” Mehboob further stated.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\03\01\story_1-3-2013_pg7_18

Peter Osborne, “Escaping Pakistan's poverty trap”

The Telegraph, March 4, 2013

Millions are working their way out of poverty in Pakistan thanks to one man's vision. We were on the road from Gilgit to Sost, in the far north of Pakistan, a journey that follows the Silk Route taken for millennia by merchants on the road to China. We passed the site of the battle of Nilt, where three Victoria Crosses were awarded after a desperate fight in 1891 between British forces and local tribes.

We reached a great gorge where, according to geologists, the subcontinent of India crashed into Asia, the catastrophic event that threw up the Karakoram mountain range through which we were travelling. Around us were glaciers and great snow-packed mountains of 25,000ft or more. The Karakoram mountains have still not settled. Three hours' drive north of Gilgit, the capital of Gilgit-Baltistan province, we reached the spot where in 2010 a mountain had collapsed into the Hunza river, destroying the road and creating an enormous lake.

Exactly 30 years ago, when General Zia-ul-Haq was in power in Pakistan, 79-year-old Shoaib Sultan Khan was commissioned by the Aga Khan to combat the endemic poverty and backwardness of Pakistan's northern areas. Khan, who was working in a Sri Lankan forest village when he was hired, had spent his life in development work. He was already convinced that democratic village institutions held the key to releasing the rural masses from poverty. He set up the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme to put his insights into practice.

Today Gilgit and Chitral are two fragile islands of stability in a part of the world given over to terrorism and war, in the surrounding tribal areas of Pakistan and in neighbouring Afghanistan. They alone have largely escaped the contagion. One of the most important reasons for this is Shoaib Sultan Khan.

In the areas where he has worked there are jobs, means of livelihood, reasons for hope. So in the course of our journey, I asked him to explain how he

set about transforming the lives of the people in these tough but incredibly beautiful areas.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/9897739/Escaping-Pakistans-poverty-trap.html>

Zafar Bhutta, “Diامر Bhasha Dam, Gwadar port in quake-prone zone”

The Express Tribune, March 27, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Two top projects of the country the gigantic but yet-to-be-built Diامر Bhasha Dam and the strategic Gwadar port are vulnerable and face a high risk of destruction as both are in the earthquake-prone zone. “We should not construct dams upstream of Tarbela Dam in Zone-4 where earthquake of a high magnitude of 9 can strike,” Geological Survey of Pakistan Chief Dr Imran

Ahmed Khan suggested during a briefing to the Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources, which met in Islamabad on March 26 under the chairmanship of Senator Muhammad Yousaf.

He stated some areas of Islamabad and Karachi also fell in Zone-4 where earthquake of a high magnitude could hit, adding the whole area of Gwadar port was also in this zone. The Singhar Housing Scheme of Gwadar was also covered by Zone-4. “We have submitted reports about the possibility of an earthquake to all relevant agencies,” he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/526826/diامر-bhasha-dam-gwadar-port-in-quake-prone-zone/>

Economic Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Trade route: New policy allows timber transport on Karakoram Highway”

The Express Tribune, March 12, 2013

GILGIT: The federal government has approved the timber policy for Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), which will allow the right to transport or dispose of timber along the Karakoram Highway, officials stated on March 11. A ban on transporting chopped timber had been imposed by the government since the early 1990s to discourage deforestation. Aftab Haider, advisor on forests and wildlife, stated previously the total timber in the valley was four million cubic feet (MMcf), of which two million cubic feet had

been cut legally and can now be exported. Another 2MMcf of illegally cut timber will only be allowed to be transported within Gilgit-Baltistan.

The G-B cabinet, following the establishment of a regional government in 2009, sent a timber policy to the federal government for approval by the prime minister. “We are happy the prime minister has honoured our summary,” stated Haider, adding that the lifting of the ban is a step forward towards economic prosperity not only in the Diamer valley, but also in G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/519286/trade-route-new-policy-allows-timber-transport-on-karakoram-highway/>

International Developments

“China occupying parts of Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan”

March 28, 2013

GENEVA: A Kashmiri leader has revealed that China is in occupation of parts of Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Aksai Chin, despite not being a party to any of these land ownership disputes. In an interview, Dr Shabir Choudhry, Head of Diplomatic Committee and senior leader of the Kashmir National Party (KNP), stated: “China also occupies part of Jammu and Kashmir state, some part of the Aksai Chin area and some areas of Gilgit Baltistan.”

“Despite that occupation, China is not a party in any dispute. Pakistan and pro-Pakistani Kashmiris are trying to make Beijing a party in these disputes. This will be totally disastrous,” he warned. Choudhry further stated that having more or less unrestricted access to these areas, Beijing has undertaken a major exploration drive to unearth precious minerals and stones, which it hopes to use for developing its missile technology.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/china-occupying-parts-of-kashmir-gilgit-baltistan_838284.html

“IIRO sends 15m relief items to AJK, GB”

Pakistan Observer, March 2, 2013

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) on March 1 sent 12 trucks loaded with various relief items worth over Rs 15 million to snow fall and torrential rain affectees of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The relief items including blankets, warm clothes, jackets, etc would be distributed among 7000 families of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Saudi Ambassador, Dr Abdul Aziz Bin Ibrahim al Ghudair was the chief guest.

Talking to media, the ambassador stated that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy brotherly relations. Saudi Arabia will continue helping the people of Pakistan. Both Pakistanis and Saudis are one nation of two countries. The trucks have been sent to Swat, Muzaffarabad, Battgram, Dhirkot, Gilgit, Swabi, Ayubia, Bagh, Ghadar, Dera Ismail Khan and two trucks to Jarid. Regional Director General Raabta Alime Islami Abda bin Muhammad Atin stated Saudi people and government want prosperous Pakistan.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=198310>

Other Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Shattered memories: Detained US citizen narrates her ordeal”

The Express Tribune, March 18, 2013

GILGIT: A US citizen of Pakistani origin, who visited Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) this week to capture the region's spectacular beauty on film, had no idea her love for nature would land her in a situation she never dreamed she would be in. Rubina Shaheen, a gynecologist who practices in Los Angeles, was arrested from a market in Gilgit on March 14 by policewomen for her 'suspicious behavior'. She was later cleared and allowed to leave after a brief detention and interrogation.

“They humiliated, manhandled and tortured me the entire time,” stated Shaheen, while narrating her ordeal to a group of journalists in the small room of her hotel. Pointing to a scar on her left arm, she stated she was forced to get into the police van. Shaheen stated her family was from Karachi, but had settled in the US. She stated her father was a grade-22 government official in the finance ministry.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/522347/shattered-memories-detained-us-citizen-narrates-her-ordeal/>

Shabbir Mir, “Load shedding: Energy forums to voice concerns in G-B”

The Express Tribune, March 31, 2013

GILGIT: In a bid to offer solutions for prolonged power outages in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), energy forums comprising experts and locals are being established in Gilgit, Ghizer and Skardu. The first of these forums was established in Gilgit on March 30 with members chosen from different walks of life to participate in higher level policy dialogues. The members were chosen during a round table conference organised by Sustainable Solutions under the Citizens Voice Project.

The conference was attended by two dozen participants including power experts, civil society activists, politicians and senior government officials.

Briefing the participants, project manager Aziz Ahmad stated, “More forums will be formed in Skardu and Ghizer in the coming days to raise the voices of the citizens in the energy policy of G-B.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/528944/load-shedding-energy-forums-to-voice-concerns-in-g-b/>

“Reconstruction of Kohala Dhirkot Road (By Letter)”

The Express Tribune, March 7, 2013

CHAMANKOT, AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Kohala Dhirkot Road of the Bagh district in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is an important road linking Muzaffarabad and Islamabad with the four districts of AJK, namely, Bagh, Poonch, Haveli and Sudhnoti. In 2006, the then prime minister of AJK, Sardar Ateeq Ahmad, ordered the widening of the road to meet the requirements of the area, keeping in view the increasing population. The government faced a vote of no-confidence, which resulted in the stopping of work on this road. It was further ignored by the two succeeding governments of Sardar Yaqoob Khan and Raja Farooq Haider.

When Chaudhry Abdul Majeed became the prime minister, he very kindly ordered work on the road to be restarted and allocated the necessary funds. Unfortunately, the people of the area could not see their dreams realised as the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority stopped the payment of dues to contractors, which has again resulted in the stopping of work on the road. The contractors have removed their machinery from the area. The condition of the road will soon deteriorate. It is requested that the

authorities concerned look into the matter and make arrangements to restart work on the road.

Syed Muzammil Hussain

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/516711/reconstruction-of-kohala-dhirkot-road/>

Altaf Hameed Rao, “Neelum Valley DC dies in AJK landslide”

The Nation, March 1, 2013

MIRPUR: Raja Saqib Munir Khan, the deputy commissioner of Neelum Valley district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, died in a landslide near Kamsar area, some five kilometer from the capital city of Muzaffarabad, on morning of February 28. The deputy commissioner was heading toward Athmuqam, the DHQ of Neelum Valley, on his official vehicle when it met with a mishap due to the

landslide, wounding him fatally. The DMG group officer and his driver were ferried to the Combined Military Hospital in Muzaffarabad, where doctors pronounced him as brought dead. Raja Saqib Munir was 34. Later, the body was flown to his native district Bhimber. He also worked as additional deputy commissioner (General) in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur. He also held the office of deputy commissioner (Rehabilitation), AJK government before being posted as deputy commissioner for Neelum Valley six months ago. Meanwhile, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir president and prime minister expressed profound grief and sorrow over the sudden and sad demise of Raja Muneer.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/01-Mar-2013/neelum-valley-dc-dies-in-ajk-landslide>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,180 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

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

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

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

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2.973 million (1998 population census), Male, 1.850 million; Female, 1.832 million

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Sardar Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

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

Governor of G-B: Pir Karam Ali Shah

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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