

POK

News Digest

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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

The popular protests against the withdrawal of subsidy on wheat in Gilgit Baltistan was a positive indication of people coming together for a common cause. Cutting across religious, ethnic and sectarian lines, the movement began in March-April 2014. This kind of show of unity is rather unique in the region owing to a strong sectarian divide, which has only exacerbated over the last couple of years. Reports included in the current issue capture how people united against the authorities and opposed the system which they felt was not being just to them. The peoples movement for restoring wheat subsidy in Gilgit Baltistan was led by the Awami Action Committee (AAC), an umbrella organization comprising several political parties and religious groups. The movement has been referred to in the media as a 'quiet revolution' and 'winds of change' in the region.

During May 2014, an important meeting of traders and officials from both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) took place at zero line in Chakan-da-Bagh, Poonch. During the meeting, traders, transporters and officials from both sides discussed pertinent issues and problems including delay in making payments. Both sides expressed happiness as they were able to discuss and sort out most of the issues that lay on the agenda. The meeting was part of the arrangement within which quarterly meetings were to be held between the two sides to deliberate on trade and travel related issues. However, this particular meeting was convened after a long gap of about a year. The next quarterly meeting is scheduled to be held in August 2014.

There are high hopes attached to the proposed Pakistan China economic corridor to be built across Gilgit Baltistan. It is noted that the corridor will not only give China a direct access to Pakistan, it will promote sectors of tourism, industry, agriculture and trade in the Gilgit Baltistan region.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Judiciary vs executive: Tension mitigates as G-B court accepts secretaries’ apology”

The Express Tribune, May 29, 2014

GILGIT: A court on May 28 accepted the unconditional apology of three secretaries of the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) administration and exempted them from appearing in court in handcuffs. The pardon settled the week-long row between the bureaucracy and the judiciary which had perturbed routine business in Gilgit. G-B Chief Court judges, Justice Muhammad Alam and Justice Wazir Shakeel, had issued non-bailable warrants against the secretaries of home, law and finance departments last week, and directed the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police to present them in handcuffs for failing to show up for proceedings. The warrant was issued after the secretaries were a no-show in a contempt of court notice issued earlier over the appointment of prosecutors in the government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/714646/judiciary-vs-executive-tension-mitigates-as-g-b-court-accepts-secretaries-apology/>

“AJK wants full PRCS cover”

The News, May 30, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan on May 30 stressed the need for Red Crescent cover all over AJK for effective response to disasters. Addressing the staff and volunteers of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) during his visit to PRCS headquarters, Sardar Yaqoob hoped that PRCS will further expand its cover to the underserved areas of AJK in the field of disaster response and health. “AJK is a disaster-prone area and there is a dire need of well-equipped set-up in the field of disaster management and health. At present, PRCS has two district branches in AJK and there is a requirement

to expand it to all the seven districts of AJK, Sardar Yaqoob stressed.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-252997-AJK-wants-full-PRCS-cover>

Shabbir Mir, “Easy access: G-B residents to get polio certificates in home districts”

The Express Tribune, May 30, 2014

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Ministry of Health and Population Welfare authorised district health officers (DHO) and medical superintends (MS) to issue polio vaccination certificates from their respective districts to individuals wishing to travel abroad. The decision has been taken in light of recommendations from the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization. The committee has made vaccination certificates compulsory for all travellers at international airports, informed a G-B health ministry official, Faqir Muhammad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/715174/easy-access-g-b-residents-to-get-polio-certificates-in-home-districts/>

Hameed Shaheen, “Kashmir perfect model of co-existence: Attique”

Kashmir Watch, May 30, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Ex-President of Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan noted that Jammu and Kashmir is the perfect social model of co-existence. For seven hundred years Kashmiris are living in the state which is a good model of mutual existence. He welcomed the visit to Pakistan by J&K Panther Party President Prof. Bhimsingh as a goodwill gesture from other side of LoC. Ex-President of AJK Raja Mohammad Zulkarnain Khan, ex-Minister Raja Yasin Khan, sitting member Kashmir Council, Sardar Saghir Chughtai and several intellectuals and social elite attended the luncheon hosted by Sardar Attique.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2014/05/30/kashmir->

Shabbir Mir, "Fresh threats: Interior ministry alerts G-B of possible terrorist attacks"

The Express Tribune, May 28, 2014

GILGIT: The Ministry of Interior sent a security alert to the government of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) warning that terrorists may target the region's Ismaili community and foreign tourists. "A terrorist organisation is planning to carry out a vehicle-borne suicide attack at a prominent venue in Gilgit," read a statement addressed to G-B's inspector general of police (IGP) and chief secretary. "The likely targets are the Ismaili community or foreigners staying in the city." The letter adds that the attack has been planned by an outfit based in Miranshah, North Waziristan with instructions to suspects in Gilgit to undertake the task.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/714017/fresh-threats-interior-ministry-alerts-g-b-of-possible-terrorist-attacks/>

Aamir Saeed, "Bunji Dam designed to produce 7,100 megawatts, National Assembly body told"

Business Recorder, May 28, 2014

A parliamentary panel was informed on May 27 that Water and Power Development Authority prepared a PC-I for Bunji Dam that could run 16 turbines and produce 7,100 megawatts of electricity on completion. Chairman WAPDA, Zafar Mahmood briefed the members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan about the ongoing work on Bhasha and Bunji Dams. PML-N MNA, Malik Abrar, chaired the committee meeting in the Parliament House wherein the chairman WAPDA stated that the Asian Development Bank and World Bank had not denied funding for the Bhasha Dam. Briefing the members about the Bunji Dam, the chairman stated that it transpired during designing of the Bunji Dam that it was located on a fault line. "We have to change location and designing of the project due to the fault," he stated.

Mahmood further noted that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar could talk to the World Bank for financing of the dam in September this year. "Redesigning of the dam would also affect around 140 kilometers of

Karakorum Highway," he stated. He also stated that WAPDA had been working to complete all prerequisites for possible financing of Bunji Dam with the World Bank and other international financial institutions. "If completed, the dam would be capable of running 16 turbines and produce 7,100 megawatts of electricity," he stated.

<http://www.brecorder.com/fuel-a-energy/193/1186703/>

"Non-acquisition of land delayed Bhasha Dam"

The Nation, May 28, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The WAPDA chairman stated that the construction of Bhasha Dam could not be initiated by 2010 due to the failure of authorities to acquire the land for the project, as there was dispute over the rate of compensation. He was replying to the queries of the members of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan on May 27. In the committee session, which was held under the chair of MNA, Malik Ibrar, the committee members came up with a series of questions mainly wanting to know the undue delay in start of work on the project. Chairman WAPDA also informed the members about the issues relating to the affectees of the project and the dispute on the compensation rate. Wapda chairman noted that both World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) would also be releasing funds for the construction of Daimer-Bhasha Dam.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/28-May-2014/non-acquisition-of-land-delayed-bhasha-dam>

"Strange priorities"

The News, May 27, 2014

This refers to the news story, 'Muzaffarabad to have rail link with Islamabad' (May 23), which stated that Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar, informed the AJK Prime Minister Ch Abdul Majid that the rail link would cost Rs60 billion. During the meeting Ch Majid highlighted the financial difficulties being faced by the AJK government due to which health and education staff could not be hired. It makes one wonder where the priority of the federal government lies. Would a poor, illiterate and sick person choose to have a rail link or would he prefer a

job, an education and good health instead? And from a technical point of view, would it be feasible to build a rail track through Murree Hills and AJK? Both areas are prone to landslides. It would cost more than Rs60 billion to build a rail track that would remain anchored to the mountain. For half the amount a good road could be built which would prove fruitful to many more people.

Syed Hussein El-Edroos

Islamabad

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-252465-Strange-priorities>

Zafar Ali, “Constitutional status of G-B in limbo”

The Express Tribune, May 27, 2014

It is a paradox that while some forces in the country are struggling to part ways with it, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have been begging and pleading for the last more than six decades to be assimilated as Pakistanis. They are told repeatedly by those at the helm of affairs to wait until the Kashmir dispute is settled. Though, historically, G-B remained under the rule of Maharaja Kashmir, before the locals staged an uprising in 1947 against Ghansara Singh, the last Dogra governor. In 1949, under the notorious Karachi Agreement, signed between the government of Pakistan and representatives of Azad Jammu & Kashmir in the absence of any representative from G-B, the Kashmiri leadership agreed and ratified administrative control of Pakistan over the region until the Kashmir issue was settled. Since then, the constitutional status of the region is in limbo.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/713640/constitutional-status-of-g-b-in-limbo/>

Majeed, “Ahsan Iqbal brainstorm AJK uplift”

The Nation, May 27, 2014

MIRPUR: AJK Prime Minister, Ch Abdul Majeed and Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Ahsen Iqbal took up matters regarding important development projects for AJK in the upcoming budget for 2014-15, official sources stated. The AJK Finance Minister, the Chief

Secretary, Finance Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary (development) and other officials of the Federal Ministry attended the meeting. They discussed the budget for fiscal year 2014-15 specifically increase in development budget and overdue development budget. Dr Asif Shah, Additional Chief Secretary Development informed the federal minister that the development budget needed to be increased to Rs18 billion for the coming financial year so that on-going schemes could be completed in time and essential projects could be implemented.

He revealed that no funds were released against special development package during the current fiscal year. He requested for allocation of an amount of Rs6 billion considering the next financial year as current one.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/27-May-2014/majeed-ahsan-iqbal-brainstorm-ajk-uplift>

“In support of judges: G-B lawyers to meet on June 2 to devise future strategy”

The Express Tribune, May 26, 2014

GILGIT: The region's lawyers decided to meet to devise a strategy to respond to the situation which emerged after a court issued non-bailable warrants against officials of the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) administration for not adhering to its orders. On May 21, the G-B Chief Court had issued non-bailable warrants against the secretaries of home, finance and law after they failed to show up in court over a contempt notice issued earlier regarding the case of appointment of 36 prosecutors in the government.

“The act of the secretaries is contemptuous, therefore we condemn it,” stated Shehbaz Khan, vice chairman of G-B Bar Council, on May 25. In a statement issued by Khan, an emergency meeting of representatives of the Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association, G-B High Court Bar Association and district bar associations of Gilgit, Skardu, Diamer, Ghizer, Ghanche, Astore and Hunza-Nagar was been called for June 2 to discuss the situation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/713020/in-support-of-judges-g-b-lawyers-to-meet-on-june-2-to-devise-future-strategy>

Khalid Mustafa, “PM orders land acquisition for Diamer-Bhasha dam”

The News, May 24, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister asked the relevant authorities to ensure the completion of the land acquisition process of Diamer-Bhasha dam by August, 2014, Chairman Water and Power and Development Authority (Wapda) noted on May 23. Zafar Mehmood stated the volume of allocation for this purpose will be decided in a meeting of the Annual Plan Coordination Committee (APCC) slated to meet on May 26.

Sources in the Finance Ministry and Planning Commission noted the APCC is likely to recommend Rs525 billion federal development budget for 2014-15 with 4.14 percent gross domestic product growth for the ongoing fiscal and projected growth of 5.1 percent for the next fiscal year. The recommendations need the approval of the National Economic Council.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-251803-PM-orders-land-acquisition--for-Diamer-Bhasha-dam>

“Defying court orders: Petition seeking suspension of secretaries' arrest warrants filed”

The Express Tribune, May 23, 2014

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) administration on May 22 filed a petition in the G-B Supreme Appellate Court seeking suspension of non-bailable arrest warrants issued by the Chief Court against three serving secretaries. The petition was moved in the region's apex court through Attorney General Asadullah Khan, who pleaded the arrest warrants be set aside. Chief Court Justice Muhammad Alam and Justice Wazir Shakeel summoned the secretaries of home, law and finance in the case of appointment of 36 prosecutors in the government. However, the secretaries avoided appearing before the bench over the weeks, provoking judges to issue contempt of court orders against them.

In an earlier hearing, the court ordered Gilgit Deputy Commissioner, Sibtain Ahmed and SP Ali Zia to produce the secretaries in handcuffs on May 21. The government officials graced the court but without restraints, following which the bench sent

them out of the court and directed the DC and SP to bring them back in handcuffs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/711677/defying-court-orders-petition-seeking-suspension-of-secretaries-arrest-warrants-filed/>

Zafar Bhutta, “Tariff row: Government warns to cut AJK's power supply”

The Express Tribune, May 22, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Tensions between the Centre and the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government over power tariff worsened on May 21 as the former warned to cut off the latter's electricity supply if the actual tariff was not paid. “We have informed the AJK government that it may face a power disconnection,” Ministry of Water and Power's Additional Secretary In-charge, Saifullah Chatha, informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Water and Power.

The federal government wants the AJK to pay the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) the determined tariff of Rs14.65 per unit. Chatha maintained that AJK's current applicable tariff was Rs14.65 per unit but it was not ready to pay more than Rs2.59 per unit, which was determined in 2010 the AJK government is currently charging local consumers Rs12 per unit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/711462/tariff-row-government-warns-to-cut-ajks-power-supply/>

“Clarification regarding WAPDA's domain”

The Nation, May 23, 2014

This refers to a photograph captioned “WAPDA linemen repair power cables without safety gear in Gilgit,” that was published in your paper on May 21. The caption of the photograph is erroneous in nature and contrary to the facts. It is explained that Gilgit-Baltistan has its own power department which is responsible for all matters related to electricity, including the maintenance and repair of its infrastructure, and the transmission and distribution in the areas falling under the administrative control of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. WAPDA has got nothing to do with it.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/letters/23-May-2014/clarification-regarding-wapda-s-domain>

“Financial issues facing AJK government to be resolved: Dar assures AJK Prime Minister”

Business Recorder, May 23, 2014

Chaudhry Abdul Majid, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir accompanied by Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Minister for Finance, AJK met with the Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar at Finance Ministry on May 22 and informed him about the financial issues which the AJK Government is currently facing. Chaudhry Abdul Majid stated that the AJK Government has maintained fiscal discipline to a maximum level.

He added that education and health facilities need to be financed after reconstruction of buildings by ERRA. He further stated that due to non-availability of funds, health and education staff cannot be appointed to these facilities. He also highlighted meagre resources of AJK for allocation to Public Sector Development Projects.

<http://www.brecorder.com/money-a-banking/198/1185225/>

Shabbir Mir, “Sectarian harmony: Two men pardon attackers in reconciliation ceremony”

The Express Tribune, May 23, 2014

GILGIT: Two men, who were critically injured in what was stated to be a sectarian attack in 2012 in Gilgit, have pardoned the men believed to be responsible for the shooting, setting a crucial precedence in sectarian harmony in the region. Shakir Rana and Naeem Akhtar made the announcement at a gathering held by elders from both Sunni and Shia communities on May 22 in Bargo, about 50 kilometres from Gilgit.

“From now on we will act like brothers and members of a family. I am quite sure this is the way for a more permanent solution to this menace (sectarian violence), at least in my village,” stated Shakir. While this may seem like a drop in the ocean, residents of their respective villages believe the gesture has opened a door to mutual trust and reconciliation between the two sects for generations to come.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/711824/sectarian-harmony-two-men-pardon-attackers-in-reconciliation-ceremony/>

Shabbir Mir, “Breaking barriers: First Chinese language centre opens in G-B”

The Express Tribune, May 22, 2014

Construction of Kashgar- Gwadar economic corridor would help Pakistan to earn billions of rupees every year through export of fruits and livestock to China and other neighbouring countries. The main strength of economy of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) depends largely on fruits and horticulture, and after the construction of the stated economic corridor, GB would be able to introduce locally produced items in international markets besides earning foreign exchange, stated Deputy Director Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP)-Gilgit, Sabz Ali Khan.

There is an increasing demand of fruits and vegetables in China it would be a great opportunity for GB to export local produce to big Chinese market. He stated efforts have to be made to improve the livelihood of the mountaineers in the years ahead, and added that one of the options available is to process the fruit locally to increase its shelf life and to add to its value, so that it may be transported economically.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/711379/breaking-barriers-first-chinese-language-centre-opens-in-g-b/>

“Awakening of Nation and Stability of Pakistan Conference bring Sunni and Shiites together”

May 19, 2014

“Awakening of Nation and Stability of Pakistan Conference,” in Skardu brought Sunni and Shia Muslims together and they vowed united struggle for full rights of people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen hosted the conference that was the largest- attended public meeting in the history of Gilgit-Baltistan. Sunni Bralevis, Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadees too joined Shia Muslims' public meeting for the first time in the history of the region.

Earlier, they had joined hands on a common platform for common agenda: restoration of wheat subsidy under the banner of Awami Action Committee. Allama Raja Nasir Abbas Jafari, secretary general of the MWM, asserted that he

would go door to door in all over Pakistan to rally mass support for the full constitutional rights of Gilgit-Baltistan. “Gilgit-Baltistan demonstrated unity and came out on streets for 12 days and they brought the usurpers of their rights to knees. Should people of Pakistan form similar united front, they too will get all their legitimate rights like people of Gilgit-Baltistan did,” he compared.

<http://www.abna.ir/english/service/central-asia-subcontinent/archive/2014/05/19/609755/story.html>

Mian Abrar, “Business community head says blockage of KKH has left hundreds of small traders and workers jobless”

Pakistan Today, May 18, 2014

Gilgit-Urumqi Business Forum President, Nazir Ahmed on May 18 urged the government to introduce tax concessions for the business community of Gilgit Baltistan because it was affected by the formation of Attabad Lake on Karakoram Highway (KKH), blocking trade activity between Pakistan and China.

In an interview, Ahmed stated that the business community had suffered heavily due to the lake. “Since this trade route was only bread and butter for local businessmen, its blockage has left hundreds of small traders, peasants and workers jobless,” stated Ahmed, adding that the government has not taken measures to help the small traders and peasants. He stated, “Many of our businessmen have become bankrupt due to the Attabad Lake problem while many are on the brink of a disaster.”

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/05/18/national/gb-business-community-urges-govt-for-tax-concessions/>

Shabbir Mir, “Demanding safety: Lawyers boycott courts in Gilgit over security concerns”

The Express Tribune, May 19, 2014

GILGIT: Lawyers have boycotted legal proceedings in Gilgit to protest the killing of a man at the premises of the city's court. The strike was called by the Gilgit High Court Bar Association after Tahir Ahmed was shot dead by gunmen near the entrance of the Chief Court on May 14. Ahmed was about to enter the court to attend a hearing. He was reportedly shot over a personal rivalry. The

police on duty arrested the assailants immediately, but the legal fraternity claimed the action was not enough to address their security concerns at the court's premises.

“This is unacceptable. We will continue to protest till proper security measures are put in place,” stated Gilgit High Court Bar Association President, Advocate Shafqat Wali. “We want foolproof security at the court's premises for the safety of lawyers and others,” Wali noted on May 18.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/710070/demanding-safety-lawyers-boycott-courts-in-gilgit-over-security-concerns/>

“Lack of funding reduced speed of development in Azad J&K: PEW”

May 19, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on May 18 stated lack of funding has reduced speed of development in Azad Jammu Kashmir. Almost all the sectors including health, education, infrastructure, tourism and industries continue to struggle which has added to unemployment and other issues, stated Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW. Talking to Arif Mughal, Advisor on Information to the Prime Minister of AJK, he stated that the privilege of getting quality education outside AJK is limited while those from the lower-middle class and poor families have little options.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal stated that there is over 8,000MW of hydro potential in AJK which is more than the entire national power deficit. He asked the authorities to use this clean source of electricity which will save billions of dollars in our staggering oil import bill.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?newsid=261378&catname=Business>

“Enquiry launched: What led to the downfall of Hussainabad Bridge?”

The Express Tribune, May 18, 2014

GILGIT: A team of experts has begun investigating into what led to the collapse of an under-construction RCC bridge in Hunza Valley of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Engineer Ali Muzaffar,

Superintendent Engineer Basharat and Hunza Assistant Commissioner Asim Raza were part of the investigation team formed on the directives of G-B Chief Secretary Sikandar Sultan Raja. Due for completion back in 2008, Hussainabad Bridge was supposed to connect Shinaki area of Hunza with Karakoram Highway (KKH). However, earlier this week it fell into the river along with the hope that Shinaki residents will finally be better connected to other areas. Shinaki area, which is just short of Hunza town, consists of three villages Hussainabad, Mayon and Khanabad with an approximate population of 10,000 people.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/709785/enquiry-launched-what-led-to-the-downfall-of-hussainabad-bridge/>

Shabbir Mir, “Uncertain future: Job insecurity plagues 340 contractual employees in G-B”

The Express Tribune, May 18, 2014

GILGIT: Khurshid Alam, 45, has served for more than 10 years in the Population Welfare department in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), but his service is yet to be regularised. “I get a meagre salary from my job,” stated Alam, who is the sole breadwinner in his family. “But I am fully aware that my future is not secure; neither is that of my children.” The lack of job opportunities in the private sector, coupled with an unfriendly business environment, convinced many residents of G-B to opt for government jobs.

Alam says contract employees in G-B are not interested if the government is short of funds or plagued by corruption or mismanagement. “What they do know is that life will be very tough without a job in this mountainous region of nearly 1.5 million people majority of whom are struggling on or below the poverty line,” he stated. Daily price hikes, he adds, do not help.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/709791/uncertain-future-job-insecurity-plagues-340-contractual-employees-in-g-b/>

“Sino-Pak interaction to boost ties: Mamnoon”

The News, May 16, 2014

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon stated that his interaction with the Chinese leadership on margins of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Shanghai

would help boost the existing strong and strategic bilateral partnership. Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Sun Weidong called on the president at the Presidency on May 15. Sino-Pak relations and president's forthcoming visit to China to attend the CICA conference were discussed during the visit.

Meanwhile, President Mamnoon stated that all possible steps were being taken for the socio-economic development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). President Mamnoon reiterated commitment of the government towards AJK development and welfare of people of the area. AJK President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan called on President Mamnoon Hussain at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on May 15. Overall situation in the AJK was discussed during the meeting.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-250429-President-to-attend-CICA-meeting>

“President vows to develop AJK”

Pakistan Today, May 15, 2014

President Mamnoon Hussain reiterated the government's commitment to developing Azad Jammu and Kashmir and stated all possible steps were being taken for the socio-economic development of AJK. The president during his meeting with Azad Jammu and Kashmir President, Sardar Yaqoob Khan, at the Presidency discussed overall situation in AJK and stressed the need for early completion of the various ongoing developmental projects in the area. He assured that the federal government would provide all possible assistance to the AJK Government in completion of development projects aimed at the welfare and uplift of the Kashmiris. Khan thanked the president for his keen interest in the development of AJK and progress and prosperity of Kashmir.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/05/15/city/islamabad/president-vows-to-develop-ajk/>

“Jamil Nagri, Guards appointed for Chinese engineers”

Dawn, May 16, 2014

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan police appointed personnel to the Karakoram Security Force for the protection of Chinese engineers and labourers

working on the Karakoram Highway expansion project in the region. Among them are 199 foot constables, 15 drivers and 10 wireless operators on contractual basis, an official of the GB police noted on May 15. The official stated a selection committee of the GB police had approved the appointment of 224 personnel to the KSF from among 700 applicants after test and interview. He stated the appointees were retired personnel of the Pakistan Army. The KSF was launched in 2008 to provide security to Chinese engineers and labourers working on the Karakoram Highway expansion project from Pakistan-China border to Riakot bridge in Diamer district of GB.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1106642/guards-appointed-for-chinese-engineers>

Muhammad Anis, “No controversial water reservoir to be built, says govt”

The News, May 16, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed by the government on May 15 that no water reservoir would be constructed without creating consensus among provinces. “The Kalabagh Dam is controversial and no such dam will be constructed without creating consensus,” Abid Sher Ali, while speaking on the floor of the House during the question hour, stated. The minister stated Rs25 billion have been released for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam adding the process of land acquisition was about to complete and the government wants to complete this project from its own resources. However, some donor agencies have also expressed their interest to finance this project. Abid Sher Ali noted that the prime minister would perform ground breaking of Diamer- Bhasha and Dasu Dams in November 2014, adding that the construction of hydel projects would extend the life span of Tarbela and Mangla dams. The minister of state noted that the government was giving top priority to the construction of dams to produce cheap electricity, adding that the first phase of Neelum- Jhelum Hydro Power Project will be completed by the end of next year, which would add 253MW of electricity to the national grid.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-250458-No-controversial-water-reservoir-to-be-built,-says-govt>

Hadi Aziz, “No 3G and 4G for Azad Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan”

May 13, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Authorities have confirmed that consumers living in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan will have to wait a bit more for 3G and 4G technology. Information Memorandum published for the 3G and 4G spectrum auction clearly stated that the licences are available for telecom operators to work in Pakistan, excluding Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

Information Memorandum read: “A License for spectrum awarded in the NGMSA provides exclusive use of the frequencies licensed to that Operator. The services permitted are governed by each specific License. The territorial extent of each License is the whole of Pakistan excluding Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB).”

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2014/05/13/no-3g-and-4g-for-azad-jammu-kashmir-and-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Committee to resolve teachers' issues”

Pakistan Observer, May 14, 2014

SKARDU: The provincial government of Gilgit-Baltistan formed a three-member parliamentary committee to resolve the issue faced by the teachers. This was stated by National Education Foundation (NEF) Supervisor, Rashid Mehmood, while talking to media persons on May 13. He stated the teachers have been on a strike in front of the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly demanding regularization of their services.

The committee has been tasked to discuss the demands of the SAP teachers with the National Education Foundation (NEF). A three-member committee comprises Minister Excise & Taxation Muhammad Nasir, Parliamentary Secretary, Muhammad Ayub and Fida Muhammad Nashad. The SAP schools were part of a World Bank Funded Programme started in the early 1990s.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=241457>

Mahesh Kaul, “Gilgit and the Great Game in the Himalayas”

Kashmir Times, May 11, 2014

State of Jammu and Kashmir has been the focal point of all activities that range from cultural to political. But it can be called the misfortune of the comprehensively rich geographical and historical entity that it has been used as the flash point of all intrigues that have brought miseries to the populace of the state in all times. The seed of the destabilization of the state was sown when the British imperialists happened to be the illegitimate overlords of this rich entity. The colonial rulers sponsored many expeditions and missions to gather information about the remote and extreme fringes of this state and its frontiers. As they knew if they have to rule India then they will have to strengthen their stronghold over the Himalayas. And it is in this context that they were interested in having their foothold in Gilgit- a small town in the centre of the Western Himalayas. While researching about the Northern Frontiers of India I came across a book titled “The Gilgit Game” by John Keay published by Oxford University Press in 1979. It is a well-established fact and well documented in history how Gilgit region of the Himalayan frontier became battle ground when India was witnessing the transfer of power and partition of the country at the same time. It was used as region where many intrigues were shaped to destabilise the state of Jammu and Kashmir and alter its boundaries besides fomenting trouble by communalising the situation by the British agents who were active in the area as early as 1830s and by 1870. They tightened their stronghold on it to suit their imperialist goals of violating the boundaries of the state and use it as a focal point to rule the subcontinent keeping in view the developing geopolitical interests of other emerging powers in the Himalayan frontier.

<http://www.kashmirtimes.in/newsdet.aspx?q=32114>

Shabbir Mir, “Day five: Despite hardships, protesting teachers refuse to give in”

The Express Tribune, May 11, 2014

GILGIT: The ongoing sit-in of community teachers

outside the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly (G-B) is taking a toll on protestors. A number of women have fainted over the past few days. More than 50 teachers, comprising mostly women, began their protest on May 6 expressing their frustration with the government's failure to regularise their schools operating under the Social Action Programme (SAP). They demand the same salaries as government instructors. Protestors claim they have not been paid for one year. G-B's education department set up community schools under SAP in 1994 with the promise to regularise them and bring them under the department within three years, provided their performance was satisfactory. Majority of the participants have left their families and travelled all the way from remote areas like Hunza-Nagar, Baltistan, Diamer and Ghizer.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/706776/day-five-despite-hardships-protesting-teachers-refuse-to-give-in/>

“Going to grass roots: LG system for G-B being mulled”

The Express Tribune, May 11, 2014

GILGIT: Consultations are in full swing to create legislation for establishing a local government system in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). The process started after a select committee, headed by Minister for Law, Ali Madad Sher, sought United Nation Development Programme's (UNDP) support in accordance with constitutional provisions. The consultations are being facilitated by the Gilgit-Baltistan Policy Institute (GBPI), a non-profit organisation that won a bid advertised by UNDP for independent organisations to assist the government's select committee a few months ago. “Under the proposed structures, district councils will be named district governments, which will be headed by district nazims and deputy nazims,” stated GBPI Director Programmes Altaf Hussain, while briefing a meeting held on May 10. In the last few days, members of various NGOs have held discussions with senior politicians from mainstream and regional parties, besides lawyers' bodies, to make recommendations for the law that will ultimately be tabled in the G-B Assembly for approval.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/706791/going-to-grass-roots-lg->

system-for-g-b-being-mulled/

Shabbir Mir, “Grave conditions: Absence of cardiac facilities in Gilgit-Baltistan a 'violation of human rights'”

The Express Tribune, May 12, 2014

GILGIT: A human rights watchdog has drawn Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah's attention towards the scarce cardiac care facilities in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), saying the death rate among cardiac patients has reached a dangerous level in recent years. “Of every five people aged 50 or above in G-B, at least one is a heart patient, which is highly alarming,” chief coordinator of the International Human Rights Observer's G-B chapter, Muhammad Farooq, claimed in a recent letter written to the CM. “There are many reasons behind the startling statistics but a lack of cardiac facilities in the region is the biggest one,” stated Farooq, putting the number of deaths in the region from cardiac arrest at 12 per day. With G-B's population having crossed 1.8 million, not a single cardiology unit exists in the whole region.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/707167/grave-conditions-absence-of-cardiac-facilities-in-gilgit-baltistan-a-violation-of-human-rights/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan traders close Sost Dry Port in protest”

Business Recorder, May 11, 2014

As a last resort, traders of Gilgit-Baltistan have closed the Pakistan-China border for any kind of exports and imports in a protest against unjustified taxes and unfriendly business approaches of central government. The Sost Dry Port, the only land route which links the two neighbouring countries for trade, has been closed for indefinite time as the protesters have announced the closure of business till their demands are met.

Javed Hussain, former president of Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber of Commerce stated that over 100 containers had been stuck at the port as a result of the strike. “Both imports and exports have been stopped across the border. The trade activities at the dry port were resumed last month after winter closure,” he added. The traders, he claimed, had been forced to take the ultimate step as central

government and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) were reluctant to reconsider its decision of a two days weekly closure of the border and taxation criteria made for the trade via Pak-China border.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-economy/189/1181696/>

“Claim they will not leave till govt gives them more than lip service”

The Express Tribune, May 9, 2014

GILGIT: 'We are here to stay' is the message the protesting teachers put across on day three of their sit-in after they pitched tents outside the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly gate. “We will not retreat till we get written orders from the government,” stated a teacher, while addressing fellow protesters on May 8. Joined by students, teachers from schools working under the Social Action Programme (SAP) pitched tents outside the assembly to camp overnight if necessary.

On May 7, lawmakers were forced to negotiate with the protesters, who had blocked the assembly's sole exit. Later teachers showed signs of ending the protest after MPAs assured them the G-B government would take up the issue of regularising SAP schools and paying teachers a fair salary with the centre.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/705974/claim-they-will-not-leave-till-govt-gives-them-more-than-lip-service/>

“Former AJK premier refutes patch-up deal with govt”

The Nation, May 8, 2014

MIRPUR: Former AJK Prime Minister, Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry categorically refuted the rumours that his certain associates were going to join the present government under any deal. “This is no truth in such rumours or reports about any sort of deal with the incumbent AJK regime comprising the PPP AJK and a couple of the coalition partners,” Sultan stated. “No decision about joining of the incumbent AJK administration at local or top-level has yet been taken.”

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/08-May-2014/former-ajk-premier-refutes-patch-up-deal-with-govt>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B chief minister ends alliance with PML-Q”

The Express Tribune, May 6, 2014

GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Mehdi Shah on May 6 announced the termination of an alliance with Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), terming its members as “snakes in the grass.” “PML-Q lawmakers are like 'snakes in the grass' who keep on attacking us despite enjoying privileges from the government,” stated the minister, who had been nominated for the position by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). After coming into power in 2010, PPP formed an alliance with PML-Q, JUI-F and MQM in G-B, under Asif Ali Zardari's policy of reconciliation, though it had gotten a two-third majority in the legislative assembly. The termination was triggered by allegations of corruption which were levelled by one of PML-Q's lawmakers, Mirza Hussain, during the 35th session of the G-B legislative assembly in Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/704830/g-b-chief-minister-ends-alliance-with-pml-q/>

Shabbir Mir, “Crisis averted: PML-Q to stay in G-B govt following chief minister's U-turn”

The Express Tribune, May 8, 2014

GILGIT: The “snakes in the grass” remain in the coalition government in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) as Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah on May 7 retracted his statement from a day earlier wherein he had announced the termination of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) alliance with Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q). PML-Q's Mirza Hussain had drawn the CM's wrath in the G-B Assembly after he termed the government and its ministers corrupt, saying they had plundered funds for the past four years. This had prompted the CM to berate Hussain for his attitude, calling PML-Q leaders “snakes in the grass”. The dramatic reunion took place at the chief minister's residence on May 6, when PML-Q members arrived there nine hours after Shah, speaking on the floor of the house, ruled out any rapprochement with them without first receiving an “unconditional written apology”. “Nothing of the sort happened,” stated

Hussain, when asked if he had tendered the apology. “I shook hands with the CM and others as usual, and had a cup of tea before leaving his house,” he added, saying he would never beg pardon for what he stated in the assembly.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/705475/crisis-averted-pml-q-to-stay-in-g-b-govt-following-chief-ministers-u-turn/>

“Allama Sajid Naqvi asks Pakistan Shia Ulema Council's local leaders to activate party in Gilgit-Baltistan”

May 14, 2014

Allama Sajid Naqvi, Chief of Pakistan Shia Ulema Council, asked his party's local leaders to activate the party in Gilgit-Baltistan in order to safeguard the rights of Shiites and rights of people. He issued these directives to his party's delegation from Gilgit who met him at the SUC's head office. Shaikh Shahadat Hashmi, SUC Gilgit chapter president led delegation comprised of Shaikh Sultan Sabri, Arif Hussain, Shaikh Shabbir Hakeemi, Shaikh Gulab Shakri and other members.

<http://www.abna.ir/english/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2014/05/14/608458/story.html>

“Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister terms PML-Q members as 'snakes in the grass'”

The Nation, May 6, 2014

GILGIT- Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Mehdi Shah today announced the termination of an alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), terming its members as “snakes in the grass.” “PML-Q lawmakers are like 'snakes in the grass' who keep on attacking us despite enjoying privileges from the government,” stated the minister. After coming into power in 2010, Pakistan Peoples Party formed an alliance with PML-Q, JUI-F and MQM in Gilgit-Baltistan, under Asif Ali Zardari's policy of reconciliation. “Enough is enough. I am taking this decision as party chief,” Shah stated while announcing the break up with the PML-Q that joined the coalition government led by PPP in 2011.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/06-May-2014/gilgit-baltistan-chief-minister-terms-pml-q-members-as-snakes-in-the-grass>

“Underpaid teachers: Community schoolteachers protest for their rights outside G-B Assembly”

The Express Tribune, May 7, 2014

GILGIT: More than a dozen teachers, mostly women, working at schools operating under the Social Action Programme (SAP) staged a sit-in outside the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly on May 6, demanding their institutions be regularised. “We are exhausted of this struggle,” stated Gulam Akbar, the president of SAP Teachers Association. G-B's education department set up community schools under the SAP in 1994 with the promise to regularise them and bring them under the department within three years, provided their performance was satisfactory. Almost two decades later, the system continues and at least 1,465 SAP teachers continue to earn a pittance compared to their public school counterparts. One protester stated he earned a salary of Rs4,000 a month.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/704979/underpaid-teachers-community-schoolteachers-protest-for-their-rights-outside-g-b-assembly/>

“Winds of change in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Business Standard, May 7, 2014

NEW DELHI: A change in the corridors of power in Islamabad is something that the deprived people of Gilgit-Baltistan dread. This is so because the resultant politics of witch-hunting negatively impacts their already very difficult existence. Recently, wheat subsidy to Gilgit-Baltistan was withdrawn by the Nawaz Sharif-led government, mainly out of pique, because the provincial government is of the opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP). That the people would face immense hardship is something that the present government has not considered at all! This sadistic move by the government may well turn out to be a boon for the people, since it brought in its wake a resistance movement of unprecedented proportions in the region that has been suppressed and subjugated for the last six-plus decades.

The Awami Action Committee (AAC); a recently constituted coalition of 20 odd political parties and

religious groups took the initiative to spearhead the protest from April, 15, 2014 onwards. The movement witnessed a hitherto unknown integration of the various communities for a common cause. People put aside their religious sentiments to sit together, march together and even pray together for their rights.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/winds-of-change-in-gilgit-baltistan-114050700957_1.html

“Lal Khan, Pakistan: A revolutionary movement in the heart of the Himalayas”

May 5, 2014

Over the past 2 months a mass protest movement has shaken Gilgit-Baltistan, a Pakistani region which borders China, India and Afghanistan. The movement initially started as a reaction to price increases caused by the removal of government wheat subsidies in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the movement rapidly turned in to civil disobedience with revolutionary characteristics. On April 15, an indefinite sit-in strike took place and continued for two weeks, showing unprecedented unity of groups from a wide range of political and religious backgrounds in protest against unemployment, inflation, power outages, ongoing national oppression and the removal of the longstanding wheat subsidy.

<http://www.marxist.com/gilgit-baltistan-revolutionary-movement-in-himalayas.htm>

Shabbir Mir, “Demanding answers: Development funds questioned in G-B Assembly”

The Express Tribune, May 6, 2014

GILGIT: A lawmaker in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly on May 5 questioned the utilisation of development funds, asking the government to give details of where the money had been spent. “Where are the tenders of schemes and projects approved during the past three years?” asked parliamentary secretary, Rahmat Khaliq of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) during the third day of the assembly proceedings. “There has been no work in any constituency since 2012 and we are entitled to know why.” G-B Chief Minister (CM) Mehdi Shah stated

the answer of Khaliq's question will be given in the in-camera session that was held soon after.

Earlier, Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) lawmaker Mirza Hussain asked the CM to take action against Secretary Services and Information Saad Khan for “making disgraceful comments” about the elected members of G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/704541/demanding-answers-development-funds-questioned-in-g-b-assembly/>

“Rehabilitation: AJK govt to construct houses for refugees”

The Express Tribune, May 5, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has purchased 320 kanals on Chakothi Road in Thota to construct houses for Kashmiri refugees. Around 730 families that migrated to AJK from Jammu & Kashmir in 1989 have been living in makeshift tents in Chela Bandi, Muzaffarabad since then. AJK Minister for Rehabilitation Abdul Majid Khan noted that Rs260 million would be spent on the housing scheme. He stated that the sum has been provided by the Kuwaiti government to help rehabilitate the refugees. “We will immediately purchase corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheets to provide them to the refugees living in the tents until the Thota Housing Scheme is completed,” the minister stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/704074/rehabilitation-ajk-govt-to-construct-houses-for-refugees/>

Shabbir Mir, “Neglecting G-B: PPP leader lashes out at party's central leadership”

The Express Tribune, May 5, 2014

GILGIT: A senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has predicted the downfall of his own party in the upcoming elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). The central leadership's dismal interest in the region's affairs will be the major factor behind PPP's forecasted loss, claimed Amjad Hussain, a member of the G-B Council. PPP attained a landslide victory in the November 2009 elections, getting more than two-thirds majority in the G-B Legislative Assembly. The party, however, opted to form a coalition government according to party co-

chairman and, then president, Asif Ali Zardari's policy of reconciliation. “The situation this time is the other way round,” G-B Council member Hussain noted on May 4. The council serves as the upper house and is chaired by the prime minister of Pakistan. Hussain's comments comes months before G-B's second elections under the 2009 governance order that upgraded the region's status, bringing it somewhat at par with the rest of the provinces.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/704183/neglecting-g-b-ppp-leader-lashes-out-at-party's-central-leadership/>

Shabbir Mir, “World Press Freedom Day: G-B journalists demand RTI law, security”

The Express Tribune, May 4, 2014

GILGIT: Journalists in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) marked World Press Freedom Day amid hopes of legislation upholding their rights and ensuring security. Speaking at a media workshop on May 3, Information Minister, Sadia Danish hinted at initiating the process of forming a Right to Information law in the G-B legislative assembly. “I will definitely work on it and will table the bill in the assembly, provided the house has jurisdiction to make laws on it,” stated the minister while addressing the workshop titled “The Right to Information, Law, Safety and Security of Journalists” in Gilgit.

The workshop was organised by an NGO, IRADA, as part of a Unesco project, and was facilitated by an Islamabad-based journalist, Aoun Sahi. “There are some subjects on which the G-B Council has powers to legislate. But I assure you if it falls in the G-B Assembly's domain we will certainly table a bill on it soon,” she added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/703773/world-press-freedom-day-g-b-journalists-demand-rti-law-security/>

“Fact-finding mission: Senate panel favours steps to empower G-B Assembly”

The Express Tribune, May 4, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights recommended the federal government to fully empower the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Legislative Assembly by amending the G-B

Empowerment and Self-Rule Order 2009. The committee, which embarked on a fact-finding tour of G-B from April 28 to 30, states that the bureaucracy enjoys more power than the elected representatives of the area. As such there is crucial need to transfer the powers from the bureaucracy to the elected legislative assembly to bring it at par with assemblies of the country's other provinces.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/703938/fact-finding-mission-senate-panel-favours-steps-to-empower-g-b-assembly/>

Shabbir Mir, “Youm-e-Shuhada in G-B: CM condemns army's media trial”

The Express Tribune, May 1, 2014

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Mehdi Shah on April 30 condemned Geo TV for running a vicious media campaign against the armed forces and stated money is the only thing that the owner of the channel holds dear. “Take them to Siachen glacier some day and they will realise what sacrifice is all about,” Mehdi Shah stated referring to the owners of Geo TV. He was addressing a ceremony to pay tribute to the soldiers who had sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. The 'Shuhada Tribute Ceremony' was held in FCNA Auditorium and was attended by force commander G-B Major Gen Hafiz Masroor Ahmed, relatives of the martyrs, and senior military and civil officers besides elected representatives of the G-B assembly.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/702647/youm-e-shuhada-in-g-b-cm-condemns-armys-media-trial/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan awakens”

The Express Tribune, May 1, 2014

GOJAL: Last month, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) experienced significant protests and sit-ins on the call of the Awami Action Committee (AAC), an alliance of several political and religious parties, demanding that the wheat subsidy for the administrative zone, which was withdrawn recently, be restored. After two weeks of a lengthy peaceful protest and sit-ins, the people's demands were finally fulfilled.

This demonstration, however, was significant for different reasons. It was interesting to note that not a single incident of violence was observed during the

protests even though the law and order situation of the administrative zone had been fragile for decades due to sectarian violence and clashes. This protest, hence, showed a different face of G-B. In these protests, people of different background, sects, ethnic and linguistic groups participated alongside each other. It was interesting to note that during the lengthy sit-ins, those belonging to different sects offered their prayers under a single imam. This was unique experience which many termed as a 'subsidy of peace' for G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/702859/gilgit-baltistan-awakens/>

Ahmad Ahmadani, “Setback for Pakistan as WB 'refuses' to fund Diamer-Bhasha”

Daily Times, May 3, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) Group has now approved a package of assistance worth \$1 billion to support Pakistan's economic reforms, besides giving it \$11 billion under a five-year Country Partnership Strategy. However, it has declined to finance the much-needed 4,500MW Diamer-Bhasha Dam during the next five years (2015-2019). The assistance package, which was approved by the WB Board of Directors on May 1, consists of two Development Policy Credits (DPCs) to support the Pakistani government's efforts to improve the power sector, and reinvigorate growth and investment for reducing poverty and creating shared prosperity. However, Pakistan faced a serious setback, as the WB's CPS 2015-2019 did not include financing of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam that has the capacity to produce 4,500MW electricity to bridge the widening demand and supply gap of electricity.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/03-May-2014/setback-for-pakistan-as-wb-refuses-to-fund-diamer-bhasha>

Economic Developments

Ishrat Butt, “Cross-LoC traders meet at zero line, Greater Kashmir”

May 21, 2014

POONCH: A meeting of cross-LoC traders was held on zero line in Chakan-da-Bagh area of Poonch. The quarterly meeting held after a gap of 13 months, discussed various issues relating to cross-LoC trade, particularly the issue of pending payments. Sources noted a total of 51 traders from Pakistani side and about thirty traders from this side participated in the meeting. Besides the traders, the LoC transporters also attended the meeting.

Officials from the Pakistan side who participated in the meeting comprised nine members led by Director General Trade, Wain and Deputy Commissioner Rawalakote, Fareed Choudhary. From this side the official delegation was led by custodian, Bashir Lone and Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Sajjad Khan. The meeting discussed various issues, primarily the one relating to clearance of accounts and liabilities.

The traders demanded that the number of trucks being used in trade be increased from 25 to 35 or 40 “as in the present season the cultivation of vegetables is high and extra transportation facilities are needed to ensure the trade of same.” The traders resolved to seek increase in the limit of currency a person is allowed to carry while travelling in cross-LoC bus. The next meeting will be held in August. Custodian Cross LoC Trade and Bus Service, Bashir Ahmed Lone stated the meeting remained successful and almost 60 per cent of the agenda items were resolved.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2014/May/21/cross-loc-traders-meet-at-zero-line-24.asp>

“Goods worth over Rs 2 crore traded across

LoC”

PTI, May 7, 2014

POONCH: Goods worth over Rs 2 crore were traded across the Line of Control (LoC) on May 7 between Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Jammu and Kashmir at Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing point, officials stated. As many as 25 trucks rolled out from the Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC) in J&K to PoK, they stated, adding, these trucks carried bags of banana and cumin worth Rs 1,02,85,020. From PoK, eight trucks carrying bags of apple, dry dates and almonds worth Rs 1,19,23,120 entered India, officials added. Officials from both sides monitored transportation of these goods twice during the day.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/jammu-and-kashmir/goods-worth-over-rs-2-crore-traded-across-loc-poonch_930428.html

“Goods worth over Rs 3 crore traded across LoC Poonch”

Business Standard, May 2, 2014

POONCH: Goods worth over Rs 3 crore were traded across the Line of Control (LoC) between Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Jammu and Kashmir at Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing point, officials stated. As many as 40 trucks rolled out from the Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC) J&K to PoK, they stated, adding, these trucks carried bags of banana, tamarind and chilly worth Rs 1,26,37,770. From PoK, 10 trucks carrying bags of apple, herbs, almonds and pomegranate worth Rs 2,28,28,125 entered India, officials added. Officials from both sides monitored transportation of these goods twice during the day.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/goods-worth-over-rs-3-crore-traded-across-loc-poonch-114050201321_1.html

International Developments

“China-Pak economic corridor to boost trade, tourism, industry: NHA Chairman”

Business Recorder, May 21, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Highway Authority (NHA), Shahid Ashraf Tarrar stated that Pakistan-China economic corridor will boost, trade tourism, industry and agriculture of the entire region. He expressed these view while talking to a representative delegation of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. He stated that

communications sector has been the top priority of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The delegation was given a detailed briefing on Raikot-Islamabad Highway. On this occasion, Member Planning NHA, Raja Noshewan, General Manager Design, Asim Ameen and other high officials were also present.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/173606-china-pak-economic-corridor-to-boost-trade-tourism-industry-nha-chairman.html>

Other Developments

Qadeer Tanoli, “Timber mafia destroying AJK forests”

The News, May 29, 2014

ISLAMABAD: There were days when even mentioning Kashmir somewhere was one and the same as that of recalling thick forests, waterfalls and other natural gorgeousness but things have changed now as timber mafia in connivance with the black sheep of the concerned department has endangered the remaining forests of the area. After partition of the subcontinent, AJK had 50 per cent of the area that was covered with variety of the forests which, according to some reports of the government, have been reduced to 10 per cent now.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-252854-Timber-mafia-destroying-AJK-forests>

“Communication facility: Neelum Valley gets cellphone service”

The Express Tribune, May 26, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Neelum Valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has been linked with other parts of the state and Pakistan through cellular service. The cell phone service being provided by the Special Communication Organisation (SCO) of the army will cover Athmuqam, Joorra, Kundalshahi and Kel of the valley near Line of Control.

The facility was inaugurated on May 25 by Sector Commander, Brigadier Ali Nadeem and AJK Minister for Education, Mian Abdul Waheed. Speaking on the occasion, Brigadier Nadeem promised that SCO will provide 3G and 4G technology to its users in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan if it won the bidding. He stated that before June 15, Mirpur, Shahkot, Changan and Duwarian areas of Neelum Valley will also get the mobile phone services.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/713100/communication-facility-neelum-valley-gets-cellphone-service/>

Saleem Shaikh and Sughra Tunio, “As mountain snow fails and glaciers melt, Pakistan faces water threats”

Thomson Reuters Foundation, May 23, 2014

GILGIT: Farmers in the valleys of northern Pakistan fear for the survival of their summer crops after a short winter of low snowfall altered the flow patterns of mountain streams, potentially robbing the farmers of water they rely on to irrigate their fields. Experts at the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and senior weather observers posted at stations in Pakistan's Upper Indus Basin (UIB) say last winter's snowfall in most of the valleys of the Gilgit-Balistan province was as much as 70 percent below as compared to previous years.

<http://www.trust.org/item/20140523110407-xj352/?source=gep>

Jamal Shahid, “An uphill struggle to make a living”

Dawn, May 5, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Though porters in Gilgit-Baltistan have seen some improvement in their economic conditions, there is still much to be done to provide them their rights. Since the region was opened to mountaineering expeditions about four decades ago, porters have been indispensable for the climbing missions to five of the world's highest peaks, located in the area. Their job descriptions are dangerous and their work is extreme. They carry the climbing gear, sometimes more than is prescribed under the law, prepare trekking/climbing routes, help expeditions fix ropes, and above all, take life-threatening risks so that others can fulfil their dreams of scaling the highest peaks. In a competitive struggle to survive, they keep working for wages that may be adequate at Rs4,500 per trip.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1104291/an-uphill-struggle-to-make-a-living>

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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