

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh
Dr Yaqoob-ul Hassan & Ashish Shukla

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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

After being postponed for nearly six months, elections for the Gilgit Baltistan assembly were finally held on June 8, 2015. Confirming to the pre-electoral predictions, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was able to secure a majority in the assembly by winning 14 seats amongst the 22 directly elected ones. Amidst rising scepticism that the elections could be rigged, the process was held under close supervision of the Pakistan army and imposition of section 144. Hafeez Ur Rehman was nominated as the next chief minister of the region by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif. The previous government led by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was defeated and this time around the party was literally wiped out in the region. India expressed its protest to the elections noting that this was a futile exercise imposed by Pakistan on a region which legally belongs to India being a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier in 2009, India had also raised serious objections to the enforcement of the Empowerment and self-rule package in Gilgit Baltistan.

Energy crisis in Pakistan has become a major challenge and the country is frantically looking at possible solutions to contain the growing problem. In this regard, the Diamer Bhasha dam, to be built in Gilgit Baltistan (power houses to be located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) which has been mired in several controversies is perceived as the panacea of Pakistan's energy deficit. The most important challenge that the Diamer Bhasha dam project is facing is the dearth of finances. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are reluctant to provide funding owing various issues- such as the location of the dam project in a disputed region and the sheer scale of the budget which after several revisions stands somewhere near \$ 14 billion. With plans underway to come up with a massive economic corridor to be built across Pakistan through Gilgit Baltistan with huge Chinese investment of approximately \$ 46 billion, there is a view that the Diamer Bhasha dam should be absorbed in the said project. Several reports in the current issue reflect growing concerns whether the Diamer Bhasha dam project is going to meet a fate similar to the Kalabagh dam that got shelved due to inter provincial disagreement.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Basha should be made a part of CPEC: Shakil Durrani, former Wapda Chairman”

Business Recorder, June 1, 2015

Shakil Durrani has been Chief Commissioner Northern Areas, Chief Secretary of Azad Kashmir and Government of the then NWFP to Chairman Railways and Chairman Wapda (2007-2012). He has also been Advisor for Ministry of Water & Power's Diamer Basha Dam project. In an interview, Durrani talked about Basha dam and related power sector affairs. Below are edited transcripts:

BRR: You have been actively advocating for Diamer-Basha dam. Can you share some of the context behind it?

SD: Aside from the fact that we need cheap power, which Basha can provide, we also have to realise that Tarbela dam has a very serious siltation problem; one-third of Tarbela's reservoir capacity is gone. Every day, half a million tons of silt goes into Tarbela. Two hundred million tons of silt that goes into Tarbela ever year; Wapda's reservoir maintenance is standard but the problem is that nowhere in the world is there a proven way of removing the inert silt that accumulates in Tarbela lake. But if Basha dam is built then Tarbela storage life is increased by 35-50 years.

BRR: So then why has Basha been on the back burner for so long?

SD: In 2002, when General Musharraf wanted to start work on Basha, he was told there was no study on the dam. It took six years to complete the studies. When it was approved and by the time I joined Wapda in 2007, and the Kalabagh experience was before us, I started acquiring the land quickly. However, the Asian Development Bank, which had committed a number of times to be the lead donor, had more or less backed out whereas the World Bank had backed out earlier - and the cost of

building Basha escalated from \$11 billion to \$14 billion because of the delay.

After five years of engagement, the ADB just moved away and said it's too large project and that we need the World Bank to team up with us. But we said, 'you know that the World Bank said a long time back that they will not fund the Diamer Basha. How do you expect them to do it now?' The World Bank, having come to the conclusion that they cannot be a part of Basha because of their own reasons, tried to make sure that Basha should not be built. They said you should do Dasu; Dasu is down the river 4300 MW. Basha is 4500 but Dasu stores no water.

<http://www.brecorder.com/company-news/235/1191927/>

“CPEC project will bring economic revolution: CMGB”

Radio Pak, June 27, 2015

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman has stated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project will bring an economic revolution and change the life standard of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. In an interview held in Gilgit on June 27, he stated that his government is committed to provide basic necessities of life to the people at their door steps. The Chief Minister stated efforts would continue for promoting harmony in the area.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/70491/2>

“PML-N emerges as single largest party in GB polls”

Dawn, June 17, 2015

The Gilgit-Baltistan Election Commission on June 16 issued the results of 23 out of 24 constituencies of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. The result of GBLA-17, Diamer, has been withheld till completion of an inquiry. Polling in three polling stations of the constituency had been suspended after a clash between JUI-F and PML-N candidates.

According to the results, PML-N has emerged as the single largest party winning 15 seats. It has also won the support of an independent. Islami Tehreek Pakistan and Majlis Wahdat Muslimeen and independents have won two seats each while PTI, PPP and JUI-F secured one seat each.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1188703/pml-n-emerges-as-single-largest-party-in-gb-polls>

“June 8 Gilgit-Baltistan polls were unfair: Abdul Hamid Khan”

Zee News, June 19, 2015

The June 8 elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, a disputed territory occupied by Pakistan, were unfair and unconstitutional, stated exiled nationalist leader and chairman of Balawaristan National Front (BNF) Abdul Hamid Khan. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ruling PML-N won 14 of the 24 seats, which were contested by 272 candidates of various parties in the elections. The BNF chief claimed that Gilgit-Baltistan is neither a part of Pakistan constitutionally, nor, does it have its own constitution. It means the whole process of electing the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly was unconstitutional and illegal. "Whenever there was an election in PoK, people close to the government in Islamabad are selected, not elected. It is an election only in name, and a drama of a vote is played out.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/june-8-gilgit-baltistan-polls-were-unfair-abdul-hamid-khan_1616340.html

“Rigorous Rigging”

The Nation, June 22, 2015

Speaking at a news conference on 21 June, PTI's central organiser Jahangir Tareen stated that PML-N had made its victory possible through rigging with the help of the federal government and its representatives. Of course the PTI alleged that the victory of PML-N in recent elections in Gilgit-Baltistan was a result of massive rigging, this much was expected. And even if they are right, what should happen now? More tribunals? More re-elections. Rigging is a beast that nobody can seem to put down and the Election Commission has emerged to be the most useless and fallible institution of our times. In the case of Gilgit-

Baltistan the PML-N started with appointing its own governor months before the election and appointed 10 ministers supportive of PML-N (instead of the usual 5-6 ministers). It managed to appoint an Election Commissioner of its own choosing and announced a Rs 7 billion development package after the announcement of the election schedule. These were enough reasons for the PTI and the PPP to cry foul and there is nothing free or fair about such elections. But then the PTI decided to fight fire with fire (and still suffered losses to the PML-N juggernaut).

<http://nation.com.pk/editorials/22-Jun-2015/rigorous-rigging>

“Hafeez-ur-Rehman nominated as CM Gilgit-Baltistan”

Pakistan Today, June 23, 2015

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif nominated Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman as Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan where the ruling PML-N has grabbed 12 out of 24 seats of the region's Legislative Assembly, as reports noted. Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman will take oath of his office on June 26 at a ceremony that will be attended by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and other high-ups. Rehman vowed to fast track development of region like Punjab, expressing desire of Chief Minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif's patronage.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/06/23/national/hafeez-ur-rehman-nominated-as-cm-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK not disputed territories but part of Pak: Finance Minister”

Business Standard, June 24, 2015

Pakistani Finance Minister Ishaq Dar stated that Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) are not disputed territories but a "part of Pakistan". The minister's statement came in response to India's objections to the planned China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on the ground that its route passed through "a disputed territory in Pakistan-controlled part of Jammu and Kashmir State". Dar, citing the expected economic benefits of the corridor as a "game-changer" in the region, angrily exclaimed ""what disputed territory". China has pledged an investment of \$46 billion for a mega

project to link Pakistan's Gwadar port with Kashgar in China's north-western autonomous region of Xinjiang that will pass through the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/gilgit-baltistan-ajk-not-disputed-territories-but-part-of-pak-finance-minister-115062400258_1.html

“Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir are part of our country, says Pakistan minister”

Times of India, June 24, 2015

Amid India's objections to the \$46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project passing through PoK, Pakistan has claimed that Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir were its part and not disputed territories. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, speaking in the National Assembly on June 23 about India's objection to the corridor, stated Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir were part of Pakistan and not disputed territories.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/gilgit-baltistan-kashmir-are-part-of-our-country-says-pakistan-minister/articleshow/47800283.cms>

“33 members of G-B Assembly take oath”

The Express Tribune, June 25, 2015

Speaker Wazir Baig administered the oath to 33 newly-elected members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly on June 24. The new lawmakers, including 22 representatives of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, were sworn in during an oath-taking ceremony. The session was attended by members of the caretaker government, judiciary and the G-B chief election commissioner. Fida Nashad and Jafarullah have been nominated as the speaker and deputy speaker respectively. Baig will hand over charge to them on June 25.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/909186/maiden-session-33-members-of-g-b-assembly-take-oath/>

“Resolution of Kashmiri refugees' problems stressed”

Kashmir Media Service, June 2, 2015

ISLAMABAD: The AJK chapters of the forum led by Syed Ali Gilani and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference during their separate meetings stressed

the need for resolution of the problems being faced by Kashmiri refugees. The meetings were presided over by the Conveners, Ghulam Muhammad Safi and Syed Yousuf Naseem. The leaders praised the sacrifices of the refugees for the Kashmir cause.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2015/06/02/resolution-of-kashmiri-refugees-problems-stressed.html>

“Army to be deployed during Gilgit-Baltistan elections”

Duniya News, June 1, 2015

Pakistan army will be deployed in 24 electoral constituencies during Gilgit-Baltistan's legislative assembly elections. The election commissioner Gilgit-Baltistan Justice (retd.) Syed Muhammad Tahir Ali Shah noted that district administration has deployed eight units of Pakistan Army comprising of 5500 officials who will perform their duties from June 4 to June 15. He also stated that district magistrate will convey special orders to the army in which presiding officers' will have powers inside the polling station and the army will have control of the area outside the polling station.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/282167-Army-to-be-deployed-during-GilgitBaltistan-electi>

“Pakistan forcibly occupying GB: India”

The Nation, June 2, 2015

India today flagged its objections to elections being held in Gilgit-Baltistan, which forms a part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and termed the move as an attempt to camouflage the 'forcible and illegal' occupation of the region. "The entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, which includes the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan, is an integral part of India. The election in Gilgit-Baltistan on June 8, under the so called Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Government Order, is an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its forcible and illegal occupation of the regions. We are concerned by the continued efforts by Pakistan to deny the people of the region their political rights and the efforts being made to absorb these territories," Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Vikas Swarup noted before media.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Jun-2015/pakistan-forcibly-occupying-gb-india>

Rizwan Shehzad, “Infringement of rights: Another petition filed against Gilgit-Baltistan elections”

The Express Tribune, June 5, 2015

Another petition has been filed in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking suspension of the June 8 elections for the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA). The petition was filed by All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) chief coordinator Ahmed Raza Khan Kasuri on June 4 requesting the court to declare the notification for holding GBLA elections unlawful.

He maintained that the notification issued under the provision of impugned statutory regulatory order (SROs) and executive orders were violation of the Supreme Court orders.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/897873/infringement-of-rights-another-petition-filed-against-gilgit-baltistan-elections/>

Shabbir Mir, “No moving back: Baba Jan eyes G-B assembly seat from behind bars”

The Express Tribune, June 5, 2015

He might be in jail for allegedly instigating a mob to resort to violence in Hunza Valley in 2011, but it is the mob now that is actively campaigning for Baba Jan to win a slot in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. Although Jan, the vice president of Awami Workers Party (AWP), is behind bars serving a life sentence, he is contesting the polls. And AWP activists are rallying throughout the region to muster support for their leader's campaign. Jan has been allowed by the Election Commission of Pakistan to stand for the elections scheduled for June 8.

Jan is contesting the polls for GBLA 6, a constituency in Gilgit where he is facing political giants like Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Mir Ghazanfar, Pakistan Peoples Party's Zafar Iqbal and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Izhar Hunzai. The support from locals aside, AWP members from other parts of the country have also moved to Hunza to play their role for his success. “We are witnessing incredible support from the youth,” said AWP Lahore chapter President Asim Sajjad. According to

the residents of Hunza, more than 50 supporters from Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and other cities of the country have flocked to the valley to convince the public to vote for Jan. “The fact that Jan is incarcerated is what is adding to sympathies towards him,” noted Sajjad who is among the many members of the leftist party who have come to Gilgit-Baltistan to mobilise the public to vote for their leader. “The public rally of AWP in Gulmit was as good as that of PTI chief Imran Khan in the same area.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/898511/no-moving-back-baba-jan-eyes-g-b-assembly-seat-from-behind-bars/>

“Ahead of G-B Polls: Army deployed, Section 144 imposed”

The Express Tribune, June 7, 2015

Army troops have been deployed in all districts of Gilgit-Baltistan for maintenance of peace and security during upcoming election. According to an ISPR issued on June 6, troops have been requisitioned by Election Commission of Pakistan and civil administration. Meanwhile, the home department of Gilgit-Baltistan has imposed section 144 across the province in view of security situation for the general elections to be held on June 8.

The section will remain in force till June 20. Public rallies, illegal use of loudspeakers, display of weapons and areal firing have been banned across the region. The home department instructed political parties and public that indiscriminate action would be taken against violators of section 144.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/899250/ahead-of-g-b-polls-army-deployed-section-144-imposed/>

Shahzad Anwar, “Gilgit-Baltistan elections: Announcement of new districts raises questions”

The Express Tribune, June 7, 2015

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's announcement to create four new districts in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has become a point of contention among political parties in the state. The prime minister had announced the creation of new districts and several other projects for the region during his visit to Gilgit on April 14, a few weeks before the Gilgit-Baltistan

Legislative Assembly (GBLA) elections, scheduled for June 8. According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Hunza-Nagar district would be bifurcated into two districts Hunza and Nagar. The other two new districts are Shigar and Kharmang, both in Baltistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/899174/gilgit-baltistan-elections-announcement-of-new-districts-raises-questions/>

“Farman Ali Baltistani & Jamil Nagri, PML-N outshines rivals in GB polls”

Dawn, June 9, 2015

The PML-N was ahead of other parties in the initial unofficial results of the elections for the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly held on June 8. According to unofficial results received till midnight, it had won seven of the 24 GBLA seats, Majlis-i-Wah-datul Muslimeen (MWM) four and PPP one.

Former GB chief minister Syed Mehdi Shah of the PPP lost the GBLA-7 (Skardu-1) seat where PTI's Raja Jalal Huss-ain Maqpoon was leading with 3,219 votes with PML-N's Haji Akber Taban having secured 3,166 till midnight.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1187025>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B's 'terrible troika': Rigging allegations hurled at RO, DC and PML-N candidate”

The Express Tribune, June 11, 2015

A Jamaat-e-Islami candidate and an independent election hopeful accused Diامر Deputy Commissioner Usman Ahmed and returning officer Sohail Ahmed of manipulating GBLA 16 results in favour of PML-N candidate Janbaaz Khan. This was one of the rare accusations of rigging during the Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly elections which were held under army supervision. PML-N had emerged as the leading party with 12 seats. “There is a 'troika' of the DC, RO and Khan,” Abdul Aziz, an independent candidate, told journalists in Gilgit. JI candidate Attaullah also attended the same news conference at the Gilgit Press Club.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/901446/g-bs-terrible-troika-rigging-allegations-hurled-at-ro-dc-and-pml-n-candidate/>

Farhan Bokhari, “Setback for religious parties in GB polls”

Dawn, June 13, 2015

The prospect of yet another political victory for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) should not surprise the government's critics looking at the outcome of elections for a new provincial administration in Gilgit-Baltistan. According to unofficial results the PML-N won 15 of the 24 seats in elections. According to unofficial results the PML-N won 15 of the 24 seats in elections for the GB Legislative Assembly held on June 8. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) whose claim to victory in the region has indeed been the decision of granting the status of a province to Gilgit-Baltistan albeit a half-baked one found itself bearing the brunt of popular resentment. With just one successful winner in the 24-member provincial legislature, the PPP indeed fell from grace significantly.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1187932>

“Bhim pitches for trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir”

Greater Kashmir, June 29, 2015

National Panthers Party (NPP) Chief Patron, Prof Bhim Singh, called for 'reorganization' of the state, terming it as 'the only way to end decades old conflict in J&K.' As per a party statement, while addressing media persons at Goverdhan (UP) on June 28 Singh stated “the State needs to be reorganized with the formation of Jammu Pradesh, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh-Baltistan (states)”.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/jammu/story/190610.html>

Shabbir Mir, “New CM has a vision for Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, June 30, 2015

The new chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) already has a comprehensive plan in mind to transform the lives of nearly 1.5 million people inhabiting the mountainous region: create jobs, end power outages, provide education and eradicate corruption.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/912070/in-the-saddle-new-cm->

Farooq Tariq, “On the campaign trail for Baba Jan, International View Point”

June 1, 2015

It was one of most fascinating days of Baba Jan's election campaign. We started from Gilgit to join the main rally that would start from Ali Abad, in Hunza valley. We were a handful of comrades when the rally started, however within half an hour, we were over 100 on motorbikes and few cars. When we arrived at the meeting point to join the other rallies from different areas of the constituency, we saw hundreds of cars, tractors and motorcycles full of youth chanting slogans, "your life my life Baba Jan, Baba Jan, struggle to continue". We turned into a very narrow lane along river Hunza. On one side mountains and on the other side deep down the river Hunza.

The width was just enough for a car to pass through. It was very scary. Baba Jan had called from jail to one of his comrade to say that I should be taken care of properly and not allowed to drive a car on these narrow lanes. A local comrade took over our car. Several times, we have to get off the car to let it pass safely without any load on wooden bridges while crossing the river going to the opposite side. The wooden bridges were shaky, no support in the sides, and I was surprised how dangerously the villagers of this most scenic valley of Hunza are living. There were fruit plants like cherries, very red, when we arrived in the first village Ihsan Abad. The whole village was outside welcoming us.

<http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4061>

“CPEC to bring development for GB: Kirmani”

Radio Pakistan, June 1, 2015

Political Secretary to PM says PM Nawaz Sharif is determined to turn GB into a best tourist attraction place. Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr. Asif Kirmani stated China-Pakistan economic Corridor (CPEC) will bring development and prosperity for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

In a statement, he noted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is determined to turn Gilgit-Baltistan into a

best tourist attraction place. He stated PML-N will emerge victorious in elections in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/76911/1>

“MWM, ITP agree in principle over seat adjustment”

The Express Tribune, June 2, 2015

Influential Shia cleric Agha Rahat Hussain Al-Hussaini managed to broker a deal between Islami Tehreek Pakistan and Majlis-e-Wahdatul Muslimeen ahead of the Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly elections. Addressing a ceremony on May 31, Rahat stated it is high time like-minded groups unite for “the greater good”. “If a party leader asks his candidate to step down in the larger interest, he should obey,” Gilgit Central Imamia Mosque's prayer leader stated. “Those who defy the word of scholars will not remain in our ranks,” he stated. ITP chief Allama Sajid Naqvi, MWM chief Allama Nasir Abbas, former chairman senate Nayyar Hussain Bukhari and former senator Faisal Raza Abidi also spoke on the occasion.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/895863/mwm-itp-agree-in-principle-over-seat-adjustment/>

“Golden opportunity: 'G-B polls a test for PML-N to dispel 2013 rigging accusations'”

The Express Tribune, June 2, 2015

Legislative elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) are a test for the federal government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz to dispel the impression that it came to power in 2013 because of rigging, stated Opposition Leader in National Assembly Khursheed Shah on May 31. Addressing the media in Gilgit city, Shah, a Pakistan Peoples Party leader, stated PML-N has a golden opportunity to prove there was no rigging in the general elections. He was referring to the protests held last year by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Pakistan Awami Tehreek in the federal capital for nearly two months, accusing the ruling party of rigging and demanding a judicial probe. According to Shah, PML-N could prove its accusers wrong by holding free and fair elections in G-B. “There are reports that Governor Barjees Tahir is directing government officials to level the playing field for PML-N before G-B

elections. But no party will remain silent if the reports are proved genuine,” stated Shah who flew to Gilgit from Islamabad for the second time in two weeks to campaign for his party ahead of polls.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/895873/golden-opportunity-g-b-polls-a-test-for-pml-n-to-dispel-2013-rigging-accusations/>

“India slams Pak over Gilgit-Baltistan polls, terms it an attempt to camouflage illegal occupation”

Zee News, June 2, 2015

India has strongly opposed the conduct of elections in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. Addressing a press conference on June 2, ministry of external affairs spokesperson, Vikas Swarup stated, “Election in Gilgit-Baltistan on June 8 is an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its forcible and illegal occupation of the regions.” “India's position is very clear, the entire J&K state which includes Gilgit-Baltistan, is an integral part of India,” he stated, adding, “We are concerned at continued effort of denying people of region their political rights and the efforts being made to absorb these territories (Gilgit-Baltistan).” “The fact that a Federal Minister of Pakistan is also the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, speaks for itself,” he stated. Activists like Senge Hasnan Sering, the president of 'Institute of Gilgit Baltistan Studies' have been asserting that many people in "lawlessness" Gilgit-Baltistan would opt for India if a plebiscite were to be held. "There are certainly ample number of Indian sympathiser in Gilgit-Baltistan who, if plebiscite is carried out, would like to go with India, but before that India needs to pay much attention that even UN has failed to pay,” Sering noted.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-slams-pak-over-gilgit-baltistan-polls-terms-it-an-attempt-to-camouflage-illegal-occupation_1606038.html

“Private TV broadcast banned in AJK”

The Nation, June 3, 2015

The AJK government imposed a ban on the broadcast of Geo TV all over the valley for an indefinite period for displaying wrong map of Pakistan excluding Jammu & Kashmir state, it was officially announced. Government spokesperson

and Director Press Information Department, Raja Azher Iqbal told the media that the government had imposed a ban on its transmission for displaying the wrong map of Pakistan excluding Jammu & Kashmir state in one of its programme of current affairs. “This irresponsible and hostile act of Geo TV is absolutely against the national interests,” the DPR AJK stated, adding that by showing the wrong map of Pakistan without the Jammu and Kashmir state, in its programme, Geo TV has badly hurt the feelings of the people of Jammu & Kashmir living either side of the Line of Control and rest of the world. He noted that the people always considered themselves the invincible part of Pakistan.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Jun-2015/private-tv-broadcast-banned-in-ajk>

“Civil society out to save MUST against 'machinations'”

The Nation, June, 3, 2015

Experts including seasoned icons of Mirpur's civil society, representing diverse segments of society expressed their firm determination to maintaining and protect sanctity of the only premier public-sector Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST) in all circumstances. The civil society elders including former Chairman Mirpur Development Authority and now the central PTI AJK leader Ch Muhammad Sideeque, former AJK Supreme Court Bar Association president Mirza Zaffar Hussain, PTI Lawyers Forum leader Sardar Jamil Sadiq, former Deputy Administrator Mirpur Municipal Corporation Ch Amjad Hussain and others while talking to newsmen, strongly condemned the alleged disgracing of the MUST Registrar office at the Secretariat of the varsity allegedly by a raiding party of the AJK Ehtesab (Accountability) Bureau led by a Deputy Director Investigation. They stated that they were not against a transparent inquiry into the appointments made in the MUST against various vacant positions. “But the way the MUST Registrar was allegedly humiliated by the AJK Ehtesab Bureau Team in his office was highly condemnable act”, they declared.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Jun-2015/civil-society-out-to-save-must-against-machinations>

“Gilgit Baltistan: Petition Filed against GBLA Election”

UNPO, June 5, 2015

The chief coordinator of All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court requesting the court to declare the notification for holding elections of the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) unlawful. The elections are scheduled to take place on 8 June 2015. The petition was filed by All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) chief coordinator Ahmed Raza Khan Kasuri on June 4 requesting the court to declare the notification for holding GBLA elections unlawful. He maintained that the notification issued under the provision of impugned statutory regulatory order (SROs) and executive orders were violation of the Supreme Court orders. The government has no constitutional and legal authority to issue any such executive orders, adopt and enforce the ordinary and special laws in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), appoint chief minister, chief election commissioner to hold elections and thus rule the people of the area in the colonial way, he stated.

<http://unpo.org/article/18273>

“Imran vows to grant more autonomy to GB”

The News, June 5, 2015

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan on June 4 vowed to grant more regional autonomy to Gilgit-Baltistan which, he stated, had been neglected by the government. “The development work that should have been done in this area by the government was instead done by Agha Khan,” he stated. “The time will come when people will long for getting employment opportunities in Hunza,” he stated, adding that it was the duty of the federal government to help the people affected by the Attaabad Lake. Criticising his political opponents, Imran stated the PTI would put an end to the partnership between Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari, which he stated was only meant to take turns to govern. He stated though a decision on the Pak-China Economic Corridor had been taken, economic zones along this route were yet to be built

and the PTI would give Gilgit-Baltistan its due share in this context.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37868-Imran-vows-to-grant-more-autonomy-to-GB>

“IHC issues notice to secy on plea against GB polls”

The Nation, June 6, 2015

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) June 5 issued notices to federation and secretary ministry of Kashmir Affairs in a petition of All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) which had moved the court to halt the upcoming elections for Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly scheduled for June 8. A single bench of IHC comprising Justice Athar Minallah also directed the respondents to submit their reply in this matter within two weeks. The court issued these directions on the petition of APML Chief Coordinator Ahmed Raza Kasuri who had prayed to the court to stop the forthcoming elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as he contended that in 2009, the GB had been given the status of de facto province. He also maintained that Supreme Court of Pakistan has also given verdict in Al-Jahad Trust case that the masses of GB are also Pakistani citizens. Therefore, he requested the court that GB should be given the status of fifth province of the country and SRO issued regarding elections may be declared as null and void. Earlier, former GB Minister Muhammad Ali Akhtar has also moved the similar petition and a single bench of IHC comprising Justice Athar Minallah has sought the legal opinion from Attorney General of Pakistan in this matter.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/06-Jun-2015/ihc-issues-notice-to-secy-on-plea-against-gb-polls>

“Government bans non-governmental organisation in FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, June 22, 2015

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan banned all non-governmental organisation in Fata, Gilgit-Baltistan and other declared security zones. Chaudhry Nisar stated that, Interior Ministry will monitor the non-governmental organisation and all security clearance will be issued to them from Interior Ministry. According to details, Prime

Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharid taken the decision after the report submitted by a committee headed by Special Assistant to PM, Syed Tariq Fatemi. Nisar stated that all foreign and local NGOs will have to registers within six months otherwise they have to leave Pakistan. "Government will encourage self-regulatory system," he added. He stated that, 40 percent NGOs in the country are not registered and there is no data base of these organisation. Earlier, Government of Pakistan banned a Bangladesh-based non-governmental organization (NGO) on the allegations of working against the country.

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2015/06/22/government-bans-non-governmental-organisation-in-fata-and-gilgit-baltistan/>

Shaukat Qadir, "Why is India piqued at the China-Pakistan corridor?"

The National, June 15, 2015

Media reports this month suggested that India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi had told the Chinese during a recent visit to Beijing that the China-Pakistan economic corridor was "unacceptable" to Delhi. On the face of it, the statement seems quite ridiculous. By what right could India object to an agreement between two sovereign countries to utilize their territories for commerce? But, there was more to the statement than meets the eye. All of this is true but back to history. The Gilgit-Baltistan revolt of November 1947 was led by a serving British officer, Major William Brown. Then commander of the Gilgit Scouts, he was left in post by the British even after they handed the territory back to the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Maj Brown is still hailed as a liberator by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The view from Islamabad would have it that Gilgit-Baltistan's revolt and accession to Pakistan was entirely indigenous, unlike in Kashmir and the two issues should not be linked. It also seems clear that the revolt, after the British returned Gilgit-Baltistan was not merely a desire to accede to Pakistan. Perhaps the people found it unacceptable to be part of a princely state once again. That the revolt was led by a serving British officer who had spent some years in this region, might even imply a semi-official acceptance by the

British government of Gilgit-Baltistan's decision to go with Pakistan. But even if it doesn't, the revolt certainly implies Maj Brown's personal support for an uprising that he felt had popular support. Going by this argument, India's pique over the new China-Pakistan economic corridor is called into question.

<http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/why-is-india-piqued-at-the-china-pakistan-corridor>

"PPP ex-ministers involved in Bhasha land scandal: Sher"

The Nation, June 16, 2015

State Minister for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali alleged that some ministers of the former PPP government were involved in corruption of billions of rupees in the project of Diamer-Bhasha Dam. Addressing a news conference at Lesco head office on June 15, the outspoken PML-N leader from Faisalabad however avoided mentioning names of the "corrupt ministers" involved in the scandal despite repeated requests from the journalists. "The Prime Minister has formed a committee to investigate the matter. We'll move the NAB in this connection once the committee announces its finding," he vowed. Giving short detail, he stated that some former ministers had purchased land in the area at lower cost prior to the project (Diamer-Bhasha) and then sold out the same land to the government at higher rates. "It was a white-collar crime. They (ministers) broke all records of corruption and sold the land at cost even higher than the land in DHA," he elaborated while revealing the intensity of the scandal.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/16-Jun-2015/ppp-ex-ministers-involved-in-bhasha-land-scandal-sher>

"PM Nawaz meets PML-N delegation from GB"

Dawn, June 17, 2015

A delegation of PML-N Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) office called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at Prime Minister House. The Prime Minister congratulated Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Chaudhry Barjees Tahir for the peaceful Legislative Assembly elections conducted in the area. Premier Nawaz Sharif stated that the GB government must work for promoting harmony across sectarian and political

lines and perform functions with transparency based only on merit, as envisioned in the manifesto of the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N). He stated the provision of basic necessities of life to people living in all areas of GB is a priority of the PML-N government. He assured that all the resources of GB shall be spent on the welfare of the people of GB. Matters relating to formation of the government in GB also came under discussion. The Prime Minister directed that important matters aimed at providing maximum benefit to the people of the area must be prioritised and implemented with strict timelines. The federal government would provide all necessary help in this regard, he stated.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1188738/pm-meets-gb-delegation>

“Provision of basic necessities to masses top priority: PM”

Radio Pakistan, June 17, 2015

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif says provision of basic necessities of life to the people of Gilgit- Baltistan is priority of the government. Talking to a delegation of PML-N Gilgit-Baltistan office bearers in Islamabad on June 17, he assured that all resources of the province will be utilized for welfare of the local people. Matters relating to formation of government in Gilgit-Baltistan also came under discussion during the meeting. The Prime Minister stated the new Gilgit-Baltistan government must work for promoting harmony across sectarian and political lines and perform functions with transparency-based only on merit, as envisioned in the PML-N manifesto. Members of the delegation apprised the Prime Minister that people of Gilgit-Baltistan are happy over China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project which will transform the area by creating increased job opportunities and bring prosperity to the people. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif gave away a cheque of five million rupees to a Pakistani mountaineer, Hassan Sadpara in recognition of his services for the promotion of mountaineering in the country.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/77302/1>

“PML-N emerges as single largest party in GB polls”

Dawn, June 17, 2015

The Gilgit-Baltistan Election Commission on June 16 issued the results of 23 out of 24 constituencies of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. The result of GBLA-17, Diamer, has been withheld till completion of an inquiry. Polling in three polling stations of the constituency had been suspended after a clash between JUI-F and PML-N candidates. According to the results, PML-N has emerged as the single largest party winning 15 seats. It has also won the support of an independent. Islami Tehreek Pakistan and Majlis Wahdat Muslimeen and independents have won two seats each while PTI, PPP and JUI-F secured one seat each. PML-N candidate Jaffrullah was declared winner from GBLA-1 constituency, Hafiz-ur-Rehman GBLA-2, Dr Mohammad Iqbal GBLA-3, Mir Ghazanfer Ali Khan GBLA-6, Mohammad Akbar Khan GBLA-7, Haji Fida Mohammad Nashad GBLA-9, Iqbal Hassan GBLA-11, Farman Ali GBLA-13, Barkat Jamil GBLA-14, Janbaz Khan GBLA-16, Mohammad Wakeel GBLA-18, Mohammad Ibrahim Sanai GBLA-22, Ghulam Hussain GBLA-23 and Mohammad Shafique from GBLA-24, respectively. Likewise, two independent candidates Fida Khan and Nawaz Khan Naji were declared winners from GBLA-20, and GBLA-19, respectively.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1188703/pml-n-emerges-as-single-largest-party-in-gb-polls>

Raja Muhammad Atif Azad, “Water woes and energy policies”

The Express Tribune, June 17, 2015

Earlier this year, Khawaja Asif, the minister for water and power, warned that Pakistan can become water-starved over the next six to seven years. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already described Pakistan as one of the most water-stressed countries, with 1,000 cubic metres available per person per year. Having dropped five-fold since 1947, this availability matches that of drought-stricken Ethiopia. Given poor water management, a

national predilection towards extravagance, the highest population growth rate in South Asia, and a largely agrarian economy, the impending disaster is quite evident. Water is also politically volatile. Domestically, it courts controversy as a shared resource; internationally it can ignite an already-hostile neighbourhood: neighbouring India has been accused of constricting Pakistan's water supply and thus indulging in 'water terrorism'. Under these circumstances, Pakistan should have declared a water emergency. However, it hardly appears to be bothered. Even the foreseeable energy development has only a small share of hydel projects. Consider the CPEC, for example: out of \$34 billion reserved for the energy infrastructure, only \$3.3 billion goes to hydel projects that generate 1,570MW together as against a short-fall of 6,000MW, while about \$25 billion will fund the projects based on imported fuel and LNG.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/904693/water-woes-and-energy-policies/>

“CPEC to create new job opportunities in country: Ahsan”

Radio Pakistan, June 18, 2015

Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has stated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will create new job opportunities in the country. Addressing National workshop to achieve objectives of CPEC in Islamabad on June 18, he stated the academia should provide relevant education to the students so that they can meet the challenges. The Minister stated the work on missing links of Gwadar to Quetta motorway is under way which will be completed by the end of 2016. He stated work on Khunjab to Kashghar, and route to Kashghar to Ratto Derro is also part of CPEC. The Minister stated government is targeting 10400 MW of additional electricity generation in the 1st phase. He stated Diamer Bhasha Dam will bring prosperity in the region. Ahsan Iqbal stated many international media outlets are highlighting the image of growing economy of the county. He stated now Pakistan media should also focus on highlighting positive achievements of the government. Different people from all sector of academia took part in the

workshop and presented their suggestions to make economic corridor more effective.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/77336/1>

“Construction work on Bhasha Dam yet to start”

The Nation, June 18, 2015

You can either call it inefficiency or negligence but despite the two ground-breaking ceremonies of Diamer-Bhasha dam by the successive governments, developmental work on the life-saving project could not be started. The planning commission in a note has asked the government, instead of working on just one point agenda of land acquisition, the government should start work on the 4500MW hydropower Diamer-Bhasha from multiple directions, which included land acquisition, excavation, dam and construction of power stations, an official noted. “Once you start work simultaneously on all these phases, you'll see there will be line of investors,” the official maintained adding that currently, due to its disputed nature, no lender is ready to fund the project. Although the Bhasha dam ground-breaking ceremonies were held twice by two different chief executives, first by General Musharraf and then by premier Yousuf Raza Gilani, the authorities have failed to move an inch from the land acquisition, the official confirmed.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/18-Jun-2015/construction-work-on-bhasha-dam-yet-to-start>

“As expected, Muslim League captures power in Gilgit-Baltistan elections”

newKerala.com, June 19, 2015

As expected, the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif has captured power in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly elections held in the region under Army supervision. Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) was created through a Presidential order in 2009. It has a total 33 members, 24 members elected directly and six women and three technocrats elected indirectly through party list proportional representation system. Out of the 24 directly elected seats results

have been declared in 23. The result of GBLA-17 will be declared after completion of enquiry as polling in three booths had been suspended following a clash between Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F)-(JUI-F) and PML-N. The Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) has secured 14 seats out of 23. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) received a big jolt as it won only one seat. While Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and JUI-F won one seat each, Majlis-i-Wahadat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) - a predominantly Shia political party and Islami Tehreek Party (Sunni Party) secured two seats each. Two independents were also elected - one of them joined the PML-N thus raising its tally to 15.

<http://www.newkerala.com/news/2015/fullnews-75792.html>

“June 8 Gilgit-Baltistan polls were unfair: Abdul Hamid Khan”

newKerala.com, June 19, 2015

The June 8 elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, a disputed territory occupied by Pakistan, were unfair and unconstitutional, stated exiled nationalist leader and chairman of Balawaristan National Front (BNF) Abdul Hamid Khan. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ruling PML-N won 14 of the 24 seats, which were contested by 272 candidates of various parties in the elections. The BNF chief claimed that Gilgit-Baltistan is neither a part of Pakistan constitutionally, nor, does it have its own constitution. It means the whole process of electing the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly was unconstitutional and illegal. "Whenever there was an election in PoK, people close to the government in Islamabad are selected, not elected. It is an election only in name, and a drama of a vote is played out. The same has happened in Gilgit Baltistan also. Just to show the world, they brought people from outside to show it was fair, but it was not. The indigenous people and parties there are not allowed to participate in the polls. You should charge them with sedition and terrorism, stated Khan. The Balawaristan National Front, the sole representative nationalist political party of two million people of Gilgit Baltistan, boycotted the June 8 elections by calling the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly a puppet forum with no

powers. It stated all powers rest with the Ministry of Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs.

<http://www.newkerala.com/news/2015/fullnews-75794.html>

“POK is an unfinished agenda of Partition”

New Delhi Times, June 20, 2015

Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif in a recent address to students reiterated Pakistan's longstanding position on Kashmir describing it as 'an unfinished agenda of Partition'. Terming J & K & Pakistan as inseparable, he called for a plebiscite as per Kashmiri people's aspirations in the light of United Nation's resolution on Kashmir. The viewpoint is a reflection of Pakistani elite's six decade long Kashmir obsession which has earned the country three wars and seamless international infamy over promotion of terrorism. India must reiterate its claim on Pak Occupied Kashmir to remind the international community that dispute is not about Kashmir valley but also those areas under Pakistan occupation-Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Aksai Chin-Greater Kashmir in short. Countries occupying Greater Kashmir must vacate the areas for promotion of democratic values to sustain multicultural societies which constitute the spice of living in today's world. Bangladesh is already put on the road to tolerance, development and prosperity. Similar peace and prosperity will usher in Gilgit-Baltistan region once it is freed from the evil clutches of Pakistan. And that will complete the unfinished agenda of partition.

<http://www.newdelhitimes.com/pok-is-an-unfinished-agenda-of-partition123/>

“PASSCO releases 125,000 wheat bags for GB”

Radio Pakistan, June 20, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan Caretaker Minister says wheat to be transported within a week for onward distribution among people. PASSCO (Pakistan Agricultural Storage & Services Corporation Ltd) has released one hundred twenty-five thousand bags of wheat for Gilgit-Baltistan. Gilgit-Baltistan Caretaker Minister for Food, Abdul Jehan while talking to media in Gilgit stated the wheat will be transported to Gilgit-Baltistan within a week for onward

distribution among people. The Minister stated the allocated amount for wheat in the federal budget for next financial year will be shifted to Gilgit-Baltistan government next month. He stated the amount will be used to purchase wheat directly instead of PASSCO.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/77372/1>

“Rs 52b allocated for Dasu Hydropower Project”

Radio Pakistan, June 21, 2015

Govt will invest Rs 248 bn on different power projects to overcome energy shortage during next financial year. The Government is focusing on developing additional resources of energy to overcome energy shortage in the country. For this purpose, it will invest 248 billion rupees on different power projects during the next financial year. According to official sources, fifty-two billion rupees have been allocated for Stage 1 of Dasu Hydropower Project which will produce 2160 MW of electricity; twenty-one billion rupees have been earmarked for land acquisition and construction of Lot one to five for Diamer-Bhasha Dam and Hydropower Project.

Eleven billion rupees will be spent on Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project having a capacity of 969 MW, eleven billion rupees on Tarbela-IV Extension Hydropower Project with a capacity of 1410 MW and five billion rupees have been set aside for up-gradation of Guddu Power Project having a capacity of 747 MW of highly.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/77393/1>

“Committee decides to expedite land acquisition for Diamer-Bhasha Dam”

Radio News Pakistan, June 22, 2015

Ministerial Committee on Diamer Bhasha Dam has decided to expedite the process for acquisition of land for the reservoir and make payments to the affected people in a transparent manner. A meeting was held in Islamabad chaired by Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ch. Barjees Tahir. Briefing the meeting, Chief Secretary GB stated that a fool proof system has been evolved with the cooperation of NADRA and SUPARCO for

acquisition of land transparently. The Ministerial Committee also reviewed progress on construction of a hospital and a cadet college in the area.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/77427/1>

“Economic incentives for biodiversity conservation devised”

Daily Times, June 22, 2015

The Ministry of Climate Change is implementing a project to promote biodiversity conservation and strengthening existing conservation with innovative market-based mechanism. The project, “Mountains and Market Biodiversity and Business in Northern Pakistan”, develops community and institutional capacity for certified production of biodiversity-friendly non-timber forest products in northern Pakistan. It also stimulates market demand for these products, thereby, creating new economic incentives for conservation. Sources at the Ministry stated the Provincial Forest Department, Wildlife Departments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) are the implementation partners while the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is providing the funding. The sources further noted that the project area spreads across the Hindukush, Karakorum and Western Himalayan mountain ranges in northern Pakistan, which is rich in global biodiversity. Many globally threatened species, from the snow leopard and lynx to highly endangered woolly flying squirrel, are still found there.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/22-Jun-2015/economic-incentives-for-biodiversity-conservation-devised>

“Great game: Polls in Pakistani Kashmir smooth way for epic China pipeline”

The Christian Science Monitor, June 23, 2015

Pakistan's disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region, located above India's Kashmir Valley and the site of a bitter war between India and Pakistan in the late 1990s, is today ground zero for a pending China pipeline to the Indian Ocean a \$46 billion project that represents Pakistan's largest-ever foreign investment. It was also the site of elections earlier in June 2015 that saw Prime Minister Nawaz

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League take a majority in the 24-seat assembly. Pakistan says the election results will provide the necessary stability to keep the pipeline deal on track. But for India, both the elections and the pipeline corridor have aroused suspicion about a region that has become a linchpin in a China-Pakistan alliance often regarded as hedge against India.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2015/0623/Great-game-Polls-in-Pakistani-Kashmir-smooth-way-for-epic-China-pipeline>

“GB LA reserved seats elections today”

The Nation, June 23, 2015

Elections for reserved seats for women & technocrats in the GB assembly would be held today. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is set to hold the maiden elections to six reserved (women) seats and three technocrats seats of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. Total of 34 candidates for 6 reserved (women) seats and 22 candidates for 3 technocrats are in the elections. Returning officers Rahim Gull noted that the Chief Election Commissioner will announce the result and all parties regional heads would also present on the occasion. He stated that 4 seats of women and 2 technocrats will get PML-N and MWM & ITP will get remaining one seat each and one party would get one technocrats seat by toss for each party. Election of speaker and deputy speaker will be held on 25 June Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will visit Gilgit and announce the new cabinet of GB and will attend oath-taking ceremony of new CM and cabinet members.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/23-Jun-2015/gb-la-reserved-seats-elections-today>

“Promoting tourism: G-B govt eases travel restrictions for foreign tourists”

The Express Tribune, June 23, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan government eased restrictions for foreign tourists wishing to visit the region. “Foreigners who have obtained a valid visa will now be allowed to visit G-B,” an official in the G-B home department noted. “However, there are some restricted areas, including the 10-mile strip along

the Line of Control and 30 miles along the International Border which they will not be permitted to go to,” he added. The region has been deemed unsuitable for foreign tourists since 2013 when gunmen clad in paramilitary uniforms stormed the Nanga Parbat base camp and shot dead nine mountaineers along with their Pakistani guide. The attack shocked the world and damaged the country's adventure tourism industry. Following the attack, the government placed restrictions on free movement of tourists in the region as they were unable to provide every tourist with security. However, an official stated the government has decided to change its policy in order to facilitate tourists who previously required permission to visit any part of the region. “Such restrictions discouraged tourism in G-B,” he further stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/908454/promoting-tourism-g-b-govt-eases-travel-restrictions-for-foreign-tourists/>

Dr Raja Muhammad Atif Azad, “Roadmap to hunger”

The News, June 23, 2015

Pakistan is among the 36 most water-stressed countries. The per capita annual water availability of around 1,000 cubic meters rivals that of drought-stricken Ethiopia. By 2025, the Tarbela Dam will lose half its capacity to sedimentation and the demand-supply gap will be 83 million acres feet. With corruption and mismanagement, by 2037, the availability will touch rock bottom at only around 700 cubic meters. The Kalabagh dam has become controversial while there are no lenders to finance our biggest hydel proposal the Diamer-Bhasha dam. Instead, the biggest forthcoming energy investment, to the tune of \$25 billion, is in imported fossil fuel. After floods comes drought. We had 28.7 million undernourished people in 1992; we now have around 41.4 million. Out of the 129 countries that FAO monitored for halving their undernourished population by 2015, we belong to the minority that failed. Are we charting a roadmap to thirst and hunger? Finally, consider a militancy-infested, nuclear neighbourhood that is largely agrarian: a water-crisis is simply unaffordable. A senior bureaucrat in the Punjab government privately revealed that if people realise the situation they will

give away a day's meal to a water-secure future. Yet all talk is about the emerging infrastructure, which is wonderful, no doubt. However, shiny roads in deserts also make for perfect mirages.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-325141-Roadmap-to-hunger>

“Azad Kashmir, GB still without 3G / 4G services”

Daily Pakistan Global, June 26, 2015

Citizens over 150 cities of the country have been enjoying 3G and 4G services but on the other hand people of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit and Baltistan are still waiting for high-speed wireless broadband services to debut in the hilly stations of AJK and G&B. Even after one year of auction in Pakistan, Azad Kashmir is yet to experience 3G and 4G

services, and like in various other situations, we don't have a name to blame for this delay. According to 3G and 4G license terms, operators were allowed to rollout their 3G and 4G networks in whole of Pakistan, except AJK and G&B. From the looks it appears that AJK and G&B won't be able to see 3G and 4G networks for a long time, apparently just because there is not much money involved in the auction and there are other things that can give the government and PTA more visibility than enabling AJK and G&B with 3G and 4G networks.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/technology/azad-kashmir-gb-still-without-3g-4g-services-289/>

Economic Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit-Baltistan unveils Rs31.92b budget”

The Express Tribune, June 28, 2015

The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) budget for fiscal year 2015-16 with a total outlay of over Rs31.921 billion was presented on June 28. Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rahman presented the budget during the budgetary session of the legislative assembly, chaired by Speaker Fida Muhammad Naushad. With the formation of the G-B cabinet yet to be completed, the chief minister presented the budget himself after the speaker allowed him to do so. In the budget, Rs21.984 billion has been allocated for non-development expenditures while Rs9.937 billion for development expenditures.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/911344/gilgit-baltistan-unveils-rs31-92b-budget/>

“Rs11b allocation for Neelum-Jhelum project insufficient: Experts”

The Nation, June 9, 2015

Government has allocated Rs 11 billion for the 969MW Neelum Jhelum project in budget 2015-16, but experts believe that more funding is required to complete the project on time. “Rs11 billion is just token money and has been allocated to keep the project alive, to justify its existence, this money would go to the account of Wapda”, stated an official. We need Rs59 billion loan, while Wapda has to give us Rs41 billion, out of which Rs5 billion we have already received, he added. In recent budget the federal government allocated Rs 287 billion for the ongoing and new projects of power sector. In hydel projects, a total sum of Rs 105379 million has been allocated, out of which major chunk of money has been devoted for Diamer Bhasha Dam project, Dasu hydro power project, Neelum Jehlum hydro power project and Tarbela fourth extension hydro power project. We require

Rs6 billion per month to continue with the infrastructure related work and we have been provided money by Wapda, on monthly basis, sometimes the payments are late, and every month we went through an uncertainty, he further noted. In time completion of the ongoing hydel projects is crucial to meet the growing demands of the energy starved country.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/09-Jun-2015/rs11b-allocation-for-neelum-jhelum-project-insufficient-experts>

“Govt allocates Rs 31 billion for water projects”

Radio Pakistan, June 14, 2015

15 billion rupees have been allocated for land acquisition for Diamer-Bhasha Dam during fiscal year 2015-16. The Government in its development plan is focusing on water sector and will invest thirty-one billion rupees on different projects in various parts of the country during the next financial year. According to official sources, fifteen billion rupees have been allocated for land acquisition for Diamer-Bhasha Dam during the year and kept a provision of six billion rupees for construction of lot one out of three. Diamer-Bhasha Dam which will store 4.7 million acre feet of water and generate electricity of 4500 MW will be future lifeline of the country. In addition, another important hydropower project is Dasu, which will have the capacity to generate 2160 MW. The Government is committed to make these two dams a reality and preparatory works has already started. Water projects in Baluchistan are the second most important focus of water sector investments comprising construction of delay action dams, flood dispersal structures, canals and small storage dams. Main focus will be on the existing projects that can be completed within the next one or years. In this regard, work is in advanced stages on projects such as Kachhi Canal, Naulong Storage Dam, extension of Pat Feeder Canal to Dera Bugti and ShadiKaur Dam.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/77222/1>

International Developments

“USTATED awards contract for Diamer Bhasha hydroelectric plant technical reviews”

Hydroworld.com, June 6, 2015

The U.S. Agency for International Development has awarded a US\$5.9 million contract to Mott MacDonald Inc. to perform a technical engineering review and upgrade plans for Pakistan's proposed 4,500-MW Diamer Bhasha hydropower project. USTATED most recently sought bids for the work in October 2014 for work that includes technical assessments, review and upgrades of the engineering design, cost estimates and documentation. USTATED has pledged \$200 million toward development of Diamer Basha, with funds to be used for assessment of environmental and social effects of the proposed project as well as preparation of a financial package. The project is to include a 272-meter-tall roller-compacted-concrete dam, two diversion tunnels, two underground powerhouses of 2,250 MW each, a permanent access bridge, and hydro-mechanical and steel structural equipment. The plant is to be located on the Indus River.

<http://www.hydroworld.com/articles/2015/06/ustated-awards-contract-for-diamer-bhasha-hydroelectric-plant-technical-reviews.html>

“Human rights issues in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir raised at UN”

The Financial Express, June 25, 2015

At the ongoing 29th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the exiled Kashmiri leaders sought the Council's attention towards deteriorating human rights situation in the region. Nasir Aziz Khan, the spokesperson of United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP), during his intervention stated that the people of Pakistan administrated Kashmir still live in a

pathetic condition and don't have any freedom to exercise their fundamental rights. “Exploitation of natural resources in Gilgit-Baltistan and so-called Azad Kashmir has deprived the natives of the region from their own natural wealth. Pakistan is involved in plundering of natural resources of region without the consultation of local population. Islamabad is constructing mega dams, proposed China Pakistan Economic Corridor project which runs across our region before it enters Pakistan. Mega projects in a disputed territory of Kashmir are a clear violation of international laws and UNCIP resolutions on Kashmir,” he added.

The nationalist leaders from Pakistan administered Kashmir allege that Islamabad has been exploiting vast resources from the region whereas the indigenous people are living a miserable life. “In 1960s, Pakistan constructed Mangla Dam in Mirpur, Kashmir. Pakistan had agreed to provide free electricity to natives and pay royalty to the AJK (Azad Jammu and Kashmir) for the use of the water and electricity generated by the dam. But this commitment never saw the light of the day,” stated Nasir. “Kashmiris are denied royalty because Islamabad says Kashmir is not a province of Pakistan and royalty is only paid to provinces. Mangla Dam produces 1300 megawatts and our daily need is only 330 megawatts. But the region has been facing electricity shortage or load shedding for over 18-20 hours a day,” he further added.

<http://www.financialexpress.com/article/miscellaneous/human-rights-issues-in-gilgit-baltistan-pakistan-occupied-kashmir-raised-at-un/89859/>

Other Developments

“Are watermills in AJK a solution to energy crisis?”

Reuters, June 2, 2015

MUZAFFARABAD: Arshad Rashid thinks he has an answer to his country's energy shortages. For a few hours a day, a few days a month, the villager in Katahi, about 50 kilometres outside of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir, grinds maize and wheat with a watermill. But he sees untapped potential in his century-old mud-and-stone mill, which sits idle most of the time. He wants to use it to generate free, clean electricity. Arshad, 38, is one of hundreds of millers in Pakistan who make a living using watermills, or “jandar”, built along brooks and streams.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Jun-2015/are-watermills-in-ajk-a-solution-to-energy-crisis>

“Neelum-Jhelum hydel project explosion kills 4”

Samaa TV, June 1, 2015

An explosion in the tunnel of Neelum-Jhelum Hydroelectric Project (NJHEP) has left at least four people dead and several more injured. “The

explosion occurred during the operation of a tunnel boring machine,” sources noted. According to sources, most of the the casualties were labourers working in the tunnel; however two Chinese engineers were also among the injured. The victims were being shifted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH). NJHEP is located in the vicinity Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir. It envisages the diversion of Neelum river water through a tunnel out -falling into Jhelum River. The intake Neelum Jhelum is at Nauseri 41 Km East of Muzaffarabad. The powerhouse will be constructed at Chatter Kalas, 22 Km South of Muzaffarabad. After passing through the turbines the water will be released into Jhelum River about 4 Km South of Chatter Kalas. Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Project has installed capacity of 969 megawatts. The Project will produce 5.15 Billion units of electricity annually.

<http://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2015/06/neelum-jhelum-hydel-project-tunnel-blast-kills-4/>

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: Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir

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

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

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

Disclaimer

PoK News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred 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.

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg

New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com