

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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• Political Developments

- Road to Recognition: Provisional Constitutional Status Demanded for G-B
- The Case of Chitral and GB
- Two AJK Shariat Court Judges Removed
- Fighting Words: PPP Wants Military Courts in G-B
- Committee for Determination of GB's Constitutional Status still in Process of Formation
- AJK PM Demands Altaf's Treason Trial
- AJK Assembly Adopts 9 Resolutions to Condemn Altaf's Statements
- PC Opposes Bhasha Dam's 2nd Feasibility Sans Funds Pledge
- Chinese Company Offered Eight Projects

• Economic Developments

- Rs 47 Billion Allocated for AJK, GB Under PSDP

• International Developments

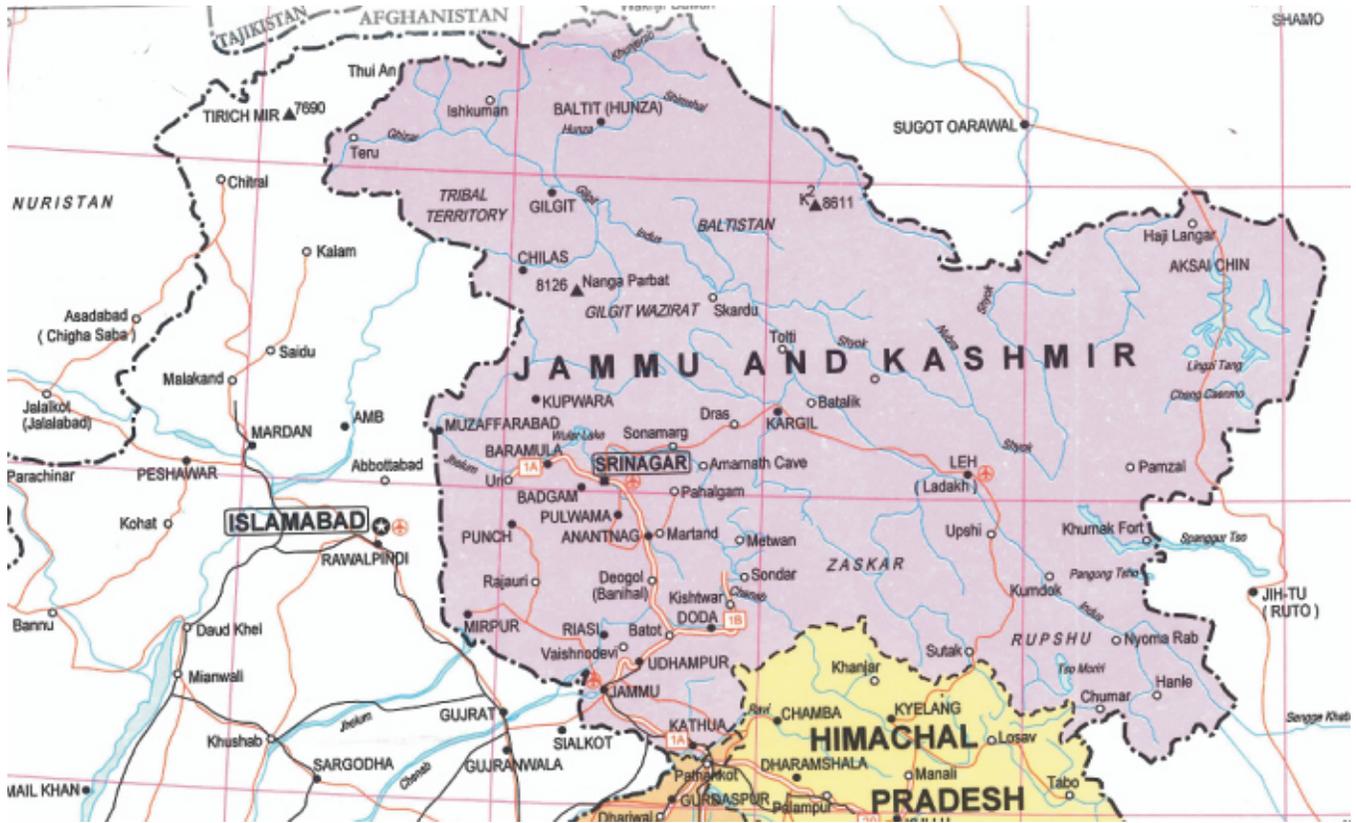
- Dialogue Only Way to Resolve Kashmir Issue, Says Dr Fai

• Other Developments

- Intra-Kashmir Journalists Workshop Concludes



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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Of late, Pakistan has been contemplating on converting Gilgit Baltistan into a province. There are several drivers propelling Pakistan's thinking in this direction, most important being the growing discontent amongst the local people on continued political deprivation for decades. Since the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is going to be built through the region, there are rising concerns in large section of the locals whether they would get a share in the benefits accruing from the proposed network project worth billions. On several occasions in past, Gilgit Baltistan has been deprived of a rightful economic share citing lack of a definite constitutional status. In the wake of the CPEC, being hailed as a dream project that would transform the economic fortune of Pakistan, there is a growing sense of wariness amongst local population on the possibility whether lack of a political status would yet again deprive them of a share in the proceeds flowing from the mega project. The common opinion is somewhat divided on the provincial issue- there are widespread concerns whether incorporating Gilgit Baltistan as a full-fledged province of Pakistan would undermine their position on the broader Kashmir issue. Cognizant of such repercussions, a section is of the opinion that a provisional provincial status be given to the region instead of full integration of Gilgit Baltistan, as indicated in some of the reports included in the current issue.

The leader of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Altaf Hussain, has stirred controversy in the so called 'AJK' by allegedly criticizing the Pakistan army. Severely censuring Hussain's statement, the 'AJK' legislative assembly adopted at least 9 resolutions demanding that he be prosecuted for high treason. Some members in the 'AJK' assembly also demanded that the MQM be banned or else its leaders abandon their ties with Altaf Hussain who is based in London in the United Kingdom.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“US should help settle Kashmir dispute, Kashmiris woes”

Kashmir Watch, August 30, 2015

Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, ex-premier of AJK and President of Muslim Conference, urged visiting US National Security Adviser Ms Susan Elizabeth Rice for use of her good offices to help settle the Kashmir dispute and Kashmiri people's woes they are facing for past over 67 years because of the unsettled Kashmir issue in the region. In a statement on August 30, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan stated that the United States was friend of both Pakistan and India and is in an active friendly position to augment efforts for the settlement of Kashmir dispute which has put entire South Asia in state of danger. He appealed to the world community to raise their voice in the coming UN General Assembly session for the implementation of UN Security Council's Kashmir resolutions pending since January 1948. UN roadmap on Kashmir has already been accepted by both Pakistan and India and there should not be any hitch to implement them for the sake of Asian and world peace. He reminded that during 2011 official visit to India, President Barack Obama stressed on the settlement of Kashmir dispute.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/08/30/us-should-help-settle-kashmir-dispute-kashmiris-woes.html>

Yasir Masood, “A turbulent territory”

The Nation, August 27, 2015

The landscape of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has held the minds with peace and transformed the harshest environmental realities into a canvas of serenity and calmness. Heaven is in existence on earth, but unexplored by sight and untouched with the recognition. This is the truest explanation of what the best of nature has to offer to the earth. The region that is blessed with such diversities has been

unambiguous about their association with Pakistan. It is argued that their inhabitant's legitimate demands have not been intentionally acknowledged yet. In continuing with their lingering hopes, the people of the region continue to accept the political policies presented to them as they consider themselves citizens of Pakistan. But their reality is thwarted. A history of events has unfolded which speaks volumes about their battles against Dogras, massive trials and tribulations in accession to Pakistan and their cascading of pessimism on being treated as an adjunct of the Frontier province. Enforced governments in the name of the Kashmir cause have burdened further chaos on them.

<http://nation.com.pk/columns/27-Aug-2015/a-turbulent-territory>

“Road to recognition: Provisional constitutional status demanded for G-B”

The Express Tribune, August 30, 2015

The legal fraternity of Gilgit-Baltistan has called for a provisional constitutional status for the region. On August 29, G-B Bar Council Vice President, Shehbaz Khan, stated the conclusion has been reached after “hectic deliberations”. “The ruling will allow representation from G-B in both the upper and lower houses of Pakistan,” he stated. Shehbaz added the proposal was the outcome of a two-day moot arranged by the Lawyers Action Committee – a forum consisting legal practitioners from the Supreme Appellate Court bar and other local associations of lawyers. “This will not harm Pakistan's position on Kashmir and at the same time ensure the voice of G-B is heard,” he stated. The bar council office-bearer further noted that another option is to grant G-B a status similar to that of Azad Kashmir.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/947265/road-to-recognition-provisional-constitutional-status-demanded-for-g-b/>

Taqi Akhunzada, “The case of Chitral and GB”

The News, August 2, 2015

Chitral and its neighbouring districts in KPK are experiencing the effects of the second most devastating floods, after the 2010 floods. Big to medium-sized boulders carried by the gushing river have caused huge damage. The newly installed government of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) is facing challenges in the shape of floods hardly a month after assuming power. GB Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman in his recent visit to the affected areas stated that an estimated Rs700 million will be required to restore the infrastructure damaged by the floods, while it would take two months to evaluate the total loss caused by the disaster. GB usually gets two types of flood, one due to the massive flow of water in rivers, particularly River Indus, and two due to glacier lake outburst flood (GLOF) because of erosion, build-up of water pressure, an avalanche of rock or volcanic eruption. In the last five decades, the temperature around Karakorum and its adjacent areas has increased by 0.50 degree Celsius per decade. And that is why cold climate is not too severe in the area. So far, the floods have claimed 30 lives in GB and 2 in Chitral. Mostly fruits trees, standing crop and cultivated land have been damaged.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/floods-in-chitral-and-gilgit-baltistan/#.VgulteyqpHw>

Noreen Haider, “Flood disaster: Gilgit-Baltistan is crying out for help”

The Nation, August 5, 2015

Gilgit Baltistan is not only rich in natural beauty but also a land of great opportunity. It is indeed one of the most naturally endowed places in the world and rich in so much amazing resources yet it is very unfortunate that the GB has never been given its due share of development and has always been exploited by the various governments in Pakistan. The region has long remained deprived and so many generations have passed on without seeing any real change for the better there. The Karakorum Highway was indeed a major development project in Gilgit and it did have a remarkable effect in

joining the region to rest of Pakistan but even that cannot be called as development for the whole region. Except for some urban areas most of Gilgit Baltistan is largely underdeveloped and the people are still a long way from getting any civil amenities of any kind. The population is naturally scattered as is the case in most mountainous regions and people dwell in remote areas where they continue to live in their ancient habitat. The subsequent governments have been unwilling or incapacitated to do much for bringing prosperity to the people of this beautiful region.

<http://nation.com.pk/blogs/05-Aug-2015/flood-disaster-gilgit-baltistan-is-crying-out-for-help>

“Parting ways: MQM G-B leader resigns”

The Express Tribune, August 6, 2015

Muttahida Qaumi Movement Gilgit-Baltistan leader Sayid Abid Iqbal resigned from the party. Talking to the media at the press club on August 5, Iqbal stated he announced the resignation over party chief Altaf Hussain's recent speech. “His recent statements against the armed forces prove he is working for the enemies,” he added. He urged all patriots within MQM to part ways with the party. A resident of Chilas town, Iqbal is stated to be the first MQM ticketholder from the region. He won the party its first seat from Shigar Valley of Baltistan during the 2009 Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly elections. He was serving as the Diamer zonal in-charge of the party. On July 29, an anti-terrorism court in Gilgit issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Hussain for using derogatory language against Pakistan Army and the paramilitary forces. The decision was announced by judge Raja Shabab of ATC-I. The court became the first in the country to issue warrants for the MQM supremo.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/932881/parting-ways-mqm-g-b-leader-resigns/>

Tariq Naqash, “Two AJK Shariat Court judges removed”

The Dawn, August 9, 2015

Two judges of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Shariat Court stood removed on August 8 after a full bench of the AJK High Court set aside the piece of

law under which they were appointed in March 2015. Appointment of Sardar Mohammad Shehzad Khan and Mushtaq Ahmed Janjua as Shariat Court judges was challenged in the high court by advocates Sardar Javed Naz and Sardar Tahir Anwar Khan on April 27. The petitioners named the AJK government, its law department, Legislative Assembly and both appointees as respondents. The AJK Shariat Court is not a constitutional court but was established in 1993 through subordinate legislation under the AJK Shariat Court Act to hear appeals about matters pertaining to family disputes, murder cases and all other Islamic penal offences. Appointment of Shariat Court judges, whose perks and privileges are equivalent to those of high court judges, was sole prerogative of the AJK government, unlike judges of the high and supreme courts who are first required to be recommended by chief justices. However, in September 2014, the AJK Supreme Court declared a section of the Shariat Court Act, 1993, ultra vires of the AJK Constitution, and resultantly all appointments of judges in Shariat Court made under that law were declared void.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1199390/two-ajk-shariat-court-judges-removed>

“Gilgit-Baltistan's status”

The Express Tribune, August 18, 2015

Pakistan celebrated its 69th Independence Day with traditional zeal and zest. Most of the people from the region extended their good wishes to the Pakistani nation, but at the same time, stated that they were inhabitants of a 'lawless state'. There was one quite succinct comment: “K2, Rakaposhi, Nanga Parbat, Deosai and Shandur plateau belong to Pakistan, except the people of this region.” People are confused and in a complicated situation over the discordant views and statements of lawmakers of the country about the status of Gilgit-Baltistan. Some politicians opine that it is an integral part of the Kashmir issue while some deny any link with it. When the leadership or political bigwigs visit Gilgit-Baltistan, they assure the inhabitants that they will fulfil their demands regarding constitutional rights, and likewise, their tone alters at once when they visit Kashmir. The

time has come that this calibrated policy to engage the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir be shunned and proactive measures be taken to rectify the grievances of the people.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/939689/gilgit-baltistans-status/>

“Pakistan raises Kashmir issue at UNSC, again!”

Kashmir Watch, August 19, 2015

Kashmir remains a serious flashpoint in Asia threatening peace and prosperity of South Asia for years now. Pakistan does not ask for revival of Jammu Kashmir as a sovereign nation but just wants entire Kashmir to itself. Islamabad off and on asks India to resolve the Kashmir “dispute” without giving any details. Upping the ante on another front before the NSA-level talks, Pakistan has once again raised the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council, seeking mediation from the world body and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to resolve the issue. However, as usual, has refused to specify as to how to resolve. Pakistan never stated revive the old Jammu Kashmir by withdrawing their respective forces from Jammu Kashmir and Azad Kashmir. If Pakistan wants Indian to hand over Kashmir to it, the issue can never be solved. After all, Jammu Kashmir had never been a part of either India or Pakistan. But today, while Indian occupies Jammu and parts of Kashmir, Islamabad has also internalized a part of Kashmir as part of Pakistan constitutionally and created Azad Kashmir out of the parts of Kashmir it got from India.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/08/19/pakistan-raises-kashmir-issue-at-unscc-again.html>

“Kashmiris and PPP are inseparable, Bilawal Bhutto tells AJK president”

Daily Times, August 22, 2015

Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has stated that Kashmiris and the PPP are inseparable, and the people of Kashmir have always elected the PPP whenever free and fair elections are held. He was talking to Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, who called on him at Bilawal House on August 21. President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan

discussed with the PPP chairman the upcoming elections and invited him to visit Azad Jammu and Kashmir to meet the Kashmiri people. The two leaders also discussed the situation in Azad Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari assured him that he would visit AJK very soon. He stated that the PPP had the same policy about Kashmir that was initiated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto. He stated that the PPP also accords respect to the Hurriyat leaders of Jammu and Kashmir and appreciates their peaceful struggle for the right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/sindh/22-Aug-2015/kashmiris-and-ppp-are-inseparable-bilawal-bhutto-tells-ajk-president>

“Novel idea: G-B govt to buy back guns from locals”

The Express Tribune, August 24, 2015

In a bid to rid Gilgit-Baltistan of weapons, the government has decided to purchase all the guns from the people. G-B Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman's novel idea will soon be implemented, stated a CM House spokesperson on August 23. Traders of illegal arms in the region have minted hefty sums amid the sectarian conflict that has escalated over the years. “The arms will be purchased from residents on reasonable rates to ensure they spend the money on other necessities,” stated the spokesperson. “The move doesn't just stop at buying back guns. There will be scanners installed at exit and entry points of G-B to check vehicles for weapons in order to curtail smuggling. Around 150 CCTV cameras will also be installed at different places.” A modern tracking system will be implemented to ensure illegal weapons do not enter the region again. In an attempt to get traders and local notables on board, the government has urged them to pitch in and help purchase weapons and equipment. “Traders have agreed to donate close to 100 cameras,” the spokesperson added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/943515/novel-idea-g-b-govt-to-buy-back-guns-from-locals/>

“The persecuted Chinese Muslims find home and identity in Pakistan”

Daily Pakistan, August 21, 2015

Since 1949 thousands of Uighur Muslims left China and the thriving trading town of Kashgar to settle down in Gilgit. The Muslim community of Xinjiang province of China were forced to leave as they were the victims of cultural and religious oppression in the country, reported BBC. Insa Khan was only a few years old when she left Xinjiang with her family to travel to Pakistan. She is now 71 years old and has spent most of her life living in Gilgit. As a Muslim, she has religious freedom. And due to strong ties between China and Pakistan, she can also visit relatives in the autonomous Chinese province of Xinjiang. China says its development projects have brought prosperity to Xinjiang's big cities. However, development in Xinjiang is under government control and ownership, and Uighur Muslims point to numerous restrictions that prevent them from celebrating their Muslim culture and rituals.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/the-persecuted-chinese-muslims-find-home-and-identity-in-pakistan-493/>

“Fighting words: PPP wants military courts in G-B”

The Express Tribune, August 23, 2015

Peoples Party has pressed the federal government to establish military courts in Gilgit-Baltistan as part of the National Action Plan (NAP). “The government should not delay establishing military courts in the region since everyone is on board with the idea,” former deputy speaker Jamil Ahmed noted before the media in Gilgit on August 22. “A delay in establishing military courts in the region will delay the implementation of NAP,” he stated. Speaking on the occasion, PPP leader and former G-B council member Amjad Hussain shed light on the incumbent government's performance in the region. “The G-B government is corrupt,” he stated. “Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has propagated an anti-corruption rhetoric in the region to divert attention from its own fraudulent practices.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/943036/fighting-words-ppp-wants-military-courts-in-g-b/>

“Committee for determination of GB's constitutional status still in process of formation”

The Nation, August 25, 2015

The proposed committee for determination of constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan is still in the process of formation and any headway can be made on this count following the constitution of this committee. This was stated by Foreign Office (FO) spokesman Qazi Khalil Ullah while talking to media on August 25. He stated that the proposed committee, led by the national security advisor Sartaj Aziz, has not been formed so far and it is in the phase of formation. A private broadcasting company had sent questions to foreign office spokesman asking about the progress by proposed committee in connection with determination of the constitutional status of Gilgit and Baltistan. Qazi Khalil Ullah informed about further progress in this regard. It may be mentioned that Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif had stated in his address during his visit to Gilgit Baltistan that a committee has been constituted under Sartaj Aziz to determine the constitutional status of Gilgit Baltistan which will present its report after reviewing all the aspects.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/25-Aug-2015/committee-for-determination-of-gb-s-constitutional-status-still-in-process-of-formation>

Roshan Mughal, “AJK PM demands Altaf's treason trial”

The Nation, August 6, 2015

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on August 5 has demanded of the government to try Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) Chief Altaf Hussain for treason. “Enough is enough, he (Altaf) is a traitor, he is shouting against Pakistan on the behest of a foreign country,” Majeed stated this while addressing a ceremony in Muzaffarabad. He stated that Altaf Hussain was passing derogatory statements against the country and national institutions on the behest of enemies of Pakistan. “Foreign powers are using MQM chief to fan violence in Karachi and defame Pakistan's Armed Forces which are struggling hard to purge the port city of terrorists and criminals,” he

stated. He stated that Pakistan was passing through difficult times as its enemies are conspiring to destabilise the country. “The enemies do not want Pakistan to become economically stable and want to sabotage mega projects like China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar Port and Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline,” he stated. An international conspiracy is being hatched to destabilise the country,” he added. He demanded of Adviser to Prime Minister on foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz to take up the Kashmir issue with Indian leadership boldly during his visit to New Delhi and should not budge an inch from its principled stance. “We will give every sacrifice for the solidarity and security of the country and will stand shoulder to shoulder with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leadership for the cause of Kashmir,” he further stated. He stated Kashmiri leaders on both sides of the divide are on one page after the martyrdom of Afzal Guru and will remain united till liberation of AJK from the Indian subjugation. Minister of Education Mian Abdul Maheed, Minister Electricity Faisal Rathore, and Secretary Electricity Fayyaz Ali Abbasi also addressed the ceremony.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/06-Aug-2015/ajk-pm-demands-altaf-s-treason-trial>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK assembly adopts 9 resolutions to condemn Altaf's statements”

The Dawn, August 7, 2015

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted nine resolutions on August 6 moved by legislators of the ruling PPP and the opposition PML-N and Muslim Conference to condemn statements recently made by Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain against the army. The two MQM lawmakers boycotted the proceedings after the party's parliamentary leader Mohammad Tahir Khokhar was not allowed to speak on the issue by Speaker Sardar Ghulam Sadiq. They criticised Mr Hussain for “damaging the identity and prestige of the country and maligning institution responsible for national safety”, and demanded exemplary punishment to him under charges of high treason. They urged the AJK government to ban the MQM unless its members dissociated themselves from

their London-based leader. They urged the media to stop giving coverage to the elements “playing into the hands of anti-Pakistan forces”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1198887/ajk-assembly-adopts-9-resolutions-to-condemn-altafs-statements>

Roshan Mughal, “Kashmir freedom to be won through pen: Sardar Yaqoob”

The Nation, August 3, 2015

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Yaqoob Khan stated the new generation will fight through pen instead of gun to liberate their homeland. He stated this during inaugural ceremony of the Jhelum Valley campus of the University of Jammu and Kashmir (UJ&K) at Hattian Bala near the Line of Control. President AJK announced to build university with the funding of Japan, Korea and China on the site of centuries-old Buddhist University in Sharda, Neelum valley.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Aug-2015/kashmir-freedom-to-be-won-through-pen-sardar-yaqoob>

“Kashmiri leader paid tributes on death anniversary”

The Nation, August 4, 2015

Rich tributes were paid to renowned Kashmiri leader and founder of Jammu & Kashmir People's National Party Barrister Qurban Ali at his third death anniversary in acknowledgement of his lifetime services to the Kashmir cause and to secure and safeguard the rights of the suppressed classes of the society. The ceremony was hosted by Raja Zulfiqar Ahmed Advocate, the central secretary general of JK PNP, while Justice (r) Abdul Majeed Mallick, ex-chief justice of AJK High Court and President of Jammu & Kashmir Liberation League and JK PNP Central President Sardar Sagheer Ahmed Advocate also attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, speakers paid rich tributes to Barrister Qurban and vowed that fight for the emancipation of the people of the J&K state will continue through the achievement of their legitimate right to self-determination and the early success of Kashmir freedom struggle.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Aug-2015/kashmiri-leader-paid-tributes-on-death-anniversary>

“Minister urges media to highlight Kashmir cause”

The Nation, August 5, 2015

AJK Minister for Information Sardar Abid Hussain stated that the Kashmir freedom movement has reached a decisive turn, and urged the media to affectively highlight the importance of early settlement of the Kashmir issue through the grant of right to self-determination to the Kashmiris. The minister was speaking at a reception hosted in his honour by Kashmir Press Club Vice President Zafeer Baba. Abid continued that the required funds to the tune of millions of rupees were released by the AJK government through the departments concerned to the AJK PID for the disbursement of advertisement bills to the media. The much-awaited amounts of the advertisement bills lying pending with various AJK government and semi-government functionaries will be paid through the Press Information Department of AJK government to the national and the AJK state print media,” he told the gathering. The ceremony was also addressed among others by Director PID AJK Raja Azher Iqbal, Kashmir Press Club Mirpur President Altaf Hamid Rao, KPC ex-president Syed Abid Hussain Shah and Kashmir Press Club Bhimber President Jamil Shafi. The speakers highlighted the problems being faced by the local media men and the suggestion to address the longstanding issues to ensure making the local media vibrant for the promotion of Kashmir cause and for the betterment of the local population.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/05-Aug-2015/minister-urges-media-to-highlight-kashmir-cause>

“Regional Elections in GB 77% transparent”

The Nation, August 4, 2015

According to a poll conducted by Gilani Research Foundation; only 53% of the respondents had heard about the regional elections in Gilgit Baltistan, while 77% believed that these when conducted were transparent. According to press statement issued on August 4, a nationally representative sample of adult men and women, from across the four provinces was chosen and asked whether they had heard about the regional elections recently held

in Gilgit Baltistan where Pakistan Muslim League (N) had gained victory. 53% of the respondents stated Yes, 46% of the respondents did not know anything regarding this while 1% of the respondents were indifferent. Respondents who had heard about these elections were further asked, "In your opinion, to what extent were the recent elections in Gilgit Baltistan transparent and fair?" 38% of the respondents stated that they were very transparent, 39% stated that they were somewhat transparent, 13% stated that they were little transparent and 10% stated that they were not transparent at a

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Aug-2015/regional-elections-in-gb-77-transparent-survey>

“Legislators demand GB as a ‘province of Pakistan’”

Pakistan Today, August 12, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly on August 11 adopted a unanimous resolution demanding of the federal government to declare GB as the constitutional province of Pakistan, according to local media sources. The resolution was tabled by Pakistan People's Party member Imran Nadeem Shigri, and Islami Tehreek-i-Pakistan's Captain (r) Mohammad Shafi. The resolution noted that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan won freedom from Dogora Raj and joined Pakistan without any condition in 1948. Since then GB has been deprived of basic rights, particularly constitutional rights, stated the resolution as reports noted. It demanded that GB be given representation in the National Assembly and Senate till solution of the Kashmir issue in light of the United Nations resolutions.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/08/12/national/legislators-demand-gb-as-a-province-of-pakistan/>

Shabbir Mir, “Security challenges loom large on Karakoram Highway”

The Express Tribune, August 25, 2015

The region's jugular vein – the Karakoram Highway – has in the recent past witnessed a spate of organised terror attacks. With the challenges surfacing once again, those who frequent the road quite often have an issue to confront. In view of fresh threats and intelligence information, the

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government recently made it compulsory for transport companies to have private guards on board before setting foot on the highway. The road that connects China with the rest of the country through Gilgit-Baltistan, passes majorly through Kohistan district where terrorists clad in military outfits have attacked passenger buses in the past. “When the K-P police check buses for security arrangements at check posts in Kohistan, they allow them to go as they see uniformed men inside,” stated a bus terminal official in Gilgit. Sources went on to say the bus owners even hire guns from dealers. “In reality these guns aren't worth tuppence. If trained terrorists cross the path of these buses, only divine help can save the defenceless passengers.” One of the most gruesome attacks in the recent past was when militants dressed in army uniforms, dragged 16 men out of the buses in Kohistan and shot them dead. The outlawed militant group Jundallah had claimed responsibility for the brutality.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/944107/dangerous-roads-security-challenges-loom-large-on-karakoram-highway>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B to have its own department to counter terrorism”

The Express Tribune, August 28, 2015

Keeping in mind the volatile law and order situation and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's initiation, the government has decided to set up the counter-terrorism department in Gilgit-Baltistan. “The initiative is aimed at dealing militants with an iron fist,” an official of the G-B Chief Minister Secretariat stated on August 27. He stated the Crime Investigation Department will be merged with the new force. “It was important because mega projects like the CPEC will pass through the region,” he added. The official stated the CTD will be headed by AIGP Tanveerul Hasan. Hasan's appointment has formally been notified by G-B police chief Captain (ret'd) Zafar Awan in light of the CM's directives. Department staffers will be trained and provided with modern facilities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/946196/fighting-militancy-g-b-to-have-its-own-department-to-counter-terrorism/>

“Hurriyat delegation calls on Bilawal Bhutto, lauds PPP's support on Kashmir”

Daily Times, August 28, 2015

A 20-member delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) led by Ghulam Muhammad Safi along with Azad Jammu Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Yaqub and Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majid on August 27 called on Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto at the Zardari House. Azad Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq, Senior Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, Finance Minister Chaudhry Latif Akbar were also present along with former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf, PPP leaders Faryal Talpur, Sherry Rehman and Jamil Soomro.

Speaking to the delegation, Bilawal stated that his party believes that the people of Jammu Kashmir were a key to a final settlement of the decades-old issue and that PPP stands by them in their just struggle. He stated that the resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of the people was also a key to peace in the region. He stated that it was also the PPP vision to take South Asia on to the path of peace and prosperity with respect and honour. “This path is through confidence building, conflict management and creation of a trading bloc of nations to improve the living conditions of all people of South Asia,” he added.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/28-Aug-2015/hurriyat-delegation-calls-on-bilawal-bhutto-lauds-ppp-support-on-kashmir>“

“Punjab will help Gilgit-Baltistan revamp healthcare”

The Express Tribune, August 29, 2015

Advisor to Chief Minister on Health Khawaja Salman Rafique stated on August 28 that the Punjab government would extend full cooperation to the government of Gilgit-Baltistan in revamping health services there. He stated the Health Department would prepare a programme for capacity-building of medical staff in Gilgit-Baltistan. He stated the governor and the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan

had recently met Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and sought cooperation in health sector. He was talking to newsmen after a meeting with Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Secretary Tahir Husain. He further stated a list of medical equipment, missing facilities and need for trained human resources was being prepared to assess the status of health services in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/946817/cooperation-punjab-will-help-gilgit-baltistan-revamp-healthcare/>

“Bumpy roads: G-B CM slaps ban on Iranian coal tar”

The Express Tribune, August 19, 2015

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman has banned the use of imported coal tar for the construction and repair of roads in the region. The Iranian material is smuggled into the country at cheaper rates and is readily available as the ideal choice for private contractors. However, the substandard material is not durable and the patched up roads fall apart soon. “This practice should be stopped immediately,” Rahman stated during his visit to the under-construction Choongi-Public Chowk Road on August 18. “Only material produced by Attock Refinery Limited should be used.” The CM also directed works department officials to ensure their presence and constant supervision of the repair work. “We aren't going to compromise on these things,” Rahman stated. “This is the only reason why the people voted us into power.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/940446/bumpy-roads-g-b-cm-slaps-ban-on-iranian-coal-tar/>

“Govt issues notification for special economic zones in GB”

The News, August, 21, 2015

Given the concerns by various quarters, the federal government has at last issued a notification to set up special economic zones in Gilgit-Baltistan under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project to improve socio-economic conditions of the people living in this strategically important region. The notification issued by the Ministry of Planning and Development directed the Minerals and Industries

Department of Gilgit-Baltistan to identify potential sites for establishment of special economic zones. Sources noted that the Minerals and Industries Department of GB has immediately directed the concerned officials to launch an immediate survey and identify sites where work on establishment of special economic zones can be initiated in coordination with the federal government. It is pertinent to mention that the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on 12th of August to urge the federal government to set up two economic zones in the region. The sources stated the Chinese officials have asked the Pakistani counterparts to select those sites for special economic zones where provision of steel, light industries, garments and others are available sufficiently in order to meet requirements of mass scale industrialisation.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-335450-Govt-issues-notification-for-special-economic-zones-in-GB>

Mushtaq Paracha, “CM asks federal govt to start work on Diamer-Bhasha dam”

The News, August 8, 2015

Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pervez Khattak on August 7 urged the federal government to launch construction work on Diamer-Bhasha and other small dams to protect the province from floods in the future. Speaking at a public meeting in Bara Banda Union Council, he stated the construction of the dams would help reduce risk of floods in the changing climate and help overcome energy crisis. Provincial Minister for Excise and Taxation Mian Jamshiduddin Kakakhel and other local party leaders and office-bearers were present on the occasion. About 39 councillors-elect announced joining the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). The chief minister urged the federal government to give the province its share in the Chinese investment in the country and launch mega uplift projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He stated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led provincial government had allocated Rs10 billion in the budget for the fiscal 2015-16 to build the embankments along the Kabul and other rivers to protect the affected areas from floods. The chief minister stated that building embankments along

the rivers had been started. “The work will be completed in two years,” he added. Pervez Khattak stated that his government would construct of small dams to help prevent floods. He stated the provincial government had launched a tree plantation campaign across the province to prevent land erosion and tackle the threat of floods.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-333045-CM-asks-federal-govt-to-start-work-on-D>

“Humayun Iqbal, The Kalabagh lobby”

The News, August 12, 2015

This refers to the letter, 'The Kalabagh mantra' (August 7) by Imtiaz Ali Qazilbash. The letter is full of contradictions. At one place the writer says that the country's hydro potential of 100,000MW should be tapped while at the same time he opposes the construction of a reservoir of 4,000MG at a place that is the only feasible site available for constructing a dam. The writer has advocated the Diamer-Bhasha and Munda dams but failed to tell us why the Diamer-Bhasha Dam has not been built since its inauguration in 2006. The reason is that not a single donor is ready to fund the project due to several reasons including seismological issues. Work on the Munda Dam was started in the Musharraf era by an American firm which later ran away because the area was prone to flash floods. Cheap electricity can be generated due to the best flow of water available at Kalabagh. The dam can be built at one-third the cost of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam. In addition, it can save Sindh and southern Punjab from flooding every year. People should now realise the importance of the Kalabagh Dam.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-11-333660-The-Kalabagh-lobby>

Fawad Yousafzai, “PC opposes Bhasha Dam's 2nd feasibility sans funds pledge”

The Nation, August 20, 2015

The Planning Commission has opposed the idea of conducting second feasibility of the Bhasha Dam, without the prior commitment of funding for the project from the lenders, saying it is waste of time and will further increase the estimated cost of the project. “Yes the government has consulted the

Planning Commission regarding the second feasibility of the Bhasha Hydropower project, by the USTATED, and the commission has stated no to the idea,” an official source noted. If the USTATED or any other lender can make a commitment for funding of the project, it is well and good, otherwise doing feasibility is nothing but just a futile exercise which will cause delay in the implementation of the project for another couple of years and will escalate its total cost, the source informed. Earlier the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had made a commitment and then backtracked from it but this time the commitment should not be verbal, the official added. If they want they can review the already completed feasibility study and can make the desired changes to it, as it can be done in three to four months' time, while the new feasibility needs at least 24 to 36 months' time, the source further added. The official stated the pre-feasibility study of the project had been completed few years back by a well reputed international firm but the US wanted the feasibility study of international standards and parameters.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/20-Aug-2015/pc-opposes-bhasha-dam-s-2nd-feasibility-sans-funds-pledge>

“Chinese company offered eight projects”

Business Recorder, August 26, 2015

Pakistan has initially offered around 8 hydel power projects on upper Indus to the Chinese firm Three Gorges Corporation which established the world's largest dam in China. These projects were identified in preliminary talks held with a delegation of

Chinese energy Company, Three Gorges Corporation (TGC), led by Qin guo Bin, Chief Executive, which called on Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Asif on August 25. CTG owns and operates the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric power plant with a capacity of 22,500 megawatts. During the meeting, projects like Diamer-Bhasha, Bunji, Thakot, Muda and other hydropower projects were identified with the combined capacity of 35,000MW hydel generation. Official familiar with the development stated that senior officials of Ministry of Water and Power were on a visit to China to hold energy talks and a detailed meeting would be held on August 28. The Chinese government-owned CTG expressed an interest in financing projects in Pakistan in conjunction with the International Finance Corporation, a World Bank subsidiary. The offer is in addition to the \$46 billion financing for power and transportation infrastructure being provided by the Chinese government and Chinese banks to Pakistan for the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to studies conducted by the Water and Power Development Authority, Pakistan has an identified potential of producing up to 60,000 MW of hydroelectric power, of which 40,000 MW is located in a region called the Indus Cascade, which begins in Skardu in Gilgit-Baltistan and runs through to Tarbela, the site of Pakistan's biggest dam, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Of this, only 6919 MW has been tapped so far.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0/1220606/>

Economic Developments

“Rs 47 billion allocated for AJK, GB under PSDP”

Radio Pakistan, August 28, 2015

A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan was held under the chairmanship of Senator Sajid Mir at Parliament House in Islamabad. Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir informed the Committee that 47 billion rupees have been allocated for Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-

Baltistan under Public Sector Development Programme. He stated that PC-1 is ready for Rawalpindi to Muzaffarabad motorway and a railway line and Kail to Gilgit- Baltistan roads. Replying to a question about Azad Kashmir Projects, he stated Prime Minister has allocated five hundred million rupees for Azad Kashmir development projects and one hundred and fifty million rupees for Gilgit Baltistan flood hit areas.

<http://radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/78928/1#>

International Developments

“Dialogue only way to resolve Kashmir issue, says Dr Fai”

Daily Times, August 28, 2015

World Kashmir Awareness Secretary General Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai has stated that the Kashmiris firmly believe that the only way to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to the Jammu Kashmir. Addressing a gathering here, he stated that there could be no solution to the Kashmir issue without the participation of the Kashmiri leadership in any process to settle it. He reiterated that it was a fact that Jammu Kashmir was not the integral part of any member state of the United Nations. “In this regard, we appreciate the statement of Peter R Lavoy, special assistant to US President Barack Obama on South Asian Affairs (Pakistan and India) to address these issues together. I expect that they

probably will,” Dr Fai quoted the aide statement. Dr Fai emphasised that the time has come for the world powers especially the United States to recognise the people of Jammu Kashmir as the central party to the issue. During the function, a 'million march' was also announced. The march will take place on October 25, 2015 in front of the United Nations in New York. The 'million march' will help the efforts of the Kashmiri expatriates to educate policymakers regarding the current situation in the disputed state and to focus attention on efforts to bring Pakistan, India and Kashmiri leadership to the negotiating table to explore all possible options to settle the issue once and for all.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/28-Aug-2015/dialogue-only-way-to-resolve-kashmir-issue-says-dr-fai>

Other Developments

“Intra-Kashmir journalists workshop concludes”

The News, August 22, 2015

After the conclusion of a two-day intra-Kashmir journalists workshop at Islamabad Club in which a group of 29 journalists from Kashmir valley and Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) participated, several recommendations were agreed upon by consensus over issues relating to them on the two sides of the Line of Control (LoC) and finding ways and means for removing the existing barriers between them.

The journalists also formed a joint four-member group which would be responsible for content sharing among different media organisations and also a joint working group of the journalists from the two sides. The workshop, a first of its kind, jointly organised by Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and Centre for Peace Development and Reforms (CPDR), recommended a 12-point agenda.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-335671-Intra-Kashmir-journalists-workshop-concludes>

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,, 010)

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.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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