# POK Volume News Digest

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(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

## In this Edition

This issue of POK Monthly Digest contains news about the Sartaj Aziz Commission Report which was welcomed by the people of GB. However, the government's attempt to impose the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Order 2020 was rejected. The members of the GB Assembly emphasized that their fate cannot be linked to the Kashmir issue as autonomy remains an important political issue. GB continues to be deprived of rights enjoyed by other provinces in Pakistan. The Government and Opposition in GB unequivocally opposed the Order. Six legislators even threatened to resign over the imposition of this Order. Meanwhile, the AJK Assembly added four more constituencies as a result of the delimitation of Legislative Assembly seats. Power shortage is a continuing problem in GB as it witnessed load-shedding for long hours. The AJK PML-N government has passed the Accountability Bureau (Sixth Amendment) Act, 2020 which was rejected by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The NAB GB also initiated investigations into alleged corruption of Pakistani Customs officials at the Sost dry port amounting to billions of rupees. The AJK President has been criticised for buying three highend luxury vehicles spending 55 million rupees, while common Kashmiris suffered.

Coordinator, PoK Project

# **Political Developments**

#### **Status of Azad Kashmir**

#### Pakistan Observer, February 1, 2020

Foreign Office (FO) has categorically rejected rumours that the government intend to merge Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) region with mainland Pakistan. Clarifying that there was no such proposal under consideration, FO spokesperson, Aisha Farooqui, also quashed reports of any change in the status of Gilgit-Baltistan. There have been speculations about change in the status of Azad Kashmir and even AJK Prime Minister, Farooq Haider, was reported to have remarked that he is the last Prime Minister of the liberated territory. Such rumours are very damaging as these could mean that like India, Pakistan too has annexed Azad Kashmir, thereby tacitly agreeing to the status quo. Pakistan's principled stand is that the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to India was neither final nor legal; and the people of the state should decide through a plebiscite whether they should accede to India or Pakistan. Successive governments in Pakistan have consistently reiterated a constitutional clause, which states "When the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir decide to accede to Pakistan. the relationship between Pakistan and the State shall be determined in accordance with the wishes of the people of that State." Some experts believe Azad Kashmir is neither a sovereign state nor a province of Pakistan but rather a 'local authority' with responsibility over the area assigned to it under the ceasefire agreement. Pakistan would not and should not change this status until a final resolution of the longstanding conflict is found. In fact, there have been demands for greater and even full provincial status for Gilgit-Baltistan, which is considered by AJK as part of the region, but these demands are not being met for any negative implications for Pakistan's stand on the Kashmir issue. Indian decision to change the status of Occupied Kashmir is being agitated by Kashmiris and Pakistan is championing their just cause for the realization of their right to selfdetermination. Change in the status of AJK would surely harm Pakistan's case and, therefore, such ideas should not be entertained. However, there is definitely is a need to grant more autonomy to Azad Kashmir.

https://pakobserver.net/status-of-azad-kashmir/

#### **Government and Opposition reject Order 2020**

#### Daily Baad-e-Shimal, February 1, 2020

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Opposition have come together to oppose the Order 2020. The G-B Assembly members also lend their support to the Sartaj Aziz Committee Report. In a press briefing, the members of the Assembly stated that governments are coming and going, promises were made, committees were formed, recommendations were formulated but then sometimes they are telling us that we are part UNSC resolutions and are part of larger Kashmir issue. People of G-B are deprived of their rights.

Separatist movements are there everywhere in the world. But G-B is the only place where people are fighting to get integrated. This comment was made by Fida Nashid. Another member, Dr. Iqbal, said that they will wait for another order then they will decide the future course of their activities. We have attached no hopes with the rulers, said Captain Shafi. After India's abrogation of 370, there is no excuse left with the government not to provide constitutional identity said Major Amin.

We reject this trend of passing one Order after another. We curse all those political parties who don't support any Bill that disregards the rights of G-B people, said Nawaz Naji. All the members of the Assembly called for the implementation of the Sartaj Aziz Committee report.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r\_date=02-01-2020&img=02-01-2020page-1-1

#### Parliamentary parties reject proposed GB Order-2020

#### The News, February 8, 2020

The Members of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly have demanded that the government should accept its special status as neither the Constitution of Pakistan nor the United Nations' charter prescribed any rights to the people of the region. Representatives of various parliamentary parties also rejected the proposed GB Order-2020. Speaking at a press conference, the representatives of GB said the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly does not have constitutional status and they have no rights to take decision. They said the region had no representation in the National Assembly. The federal cabinet is creating trouble to present their issues in the National Assembly. It would not be a good omen for Pakistan if such concerns expressed by GB reached its peak. The members of the assembly warned the authorities to take notice prior to the outcry of people if such a situation continued. They demanded the authority to accept the region as disputed as per the Supreme Court of Pakistan's verdict and the charter of the UN. They asked for the provision of their fundamental rights as per other controversial regions. The members of the assembly warned that if the issue was not resolved, they would file a contempt of court plea in the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the people of Gilgit-Baltistan would start a long march towards Islamabad. Speaker of GB Assembly Fida Muhammad Nashad, Leader of the Opposition Capt. (retd) Shafi, and Minister for Development Dr Iqbal convened the press conference.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/610589-parliamentary-parties-reject-proposed-gb-order-2020

# Shabbir Mir, Six G-B lawmakers threaten to resign over governance order

#### The Express Tribune, February 8, 2020

Six parliamentarians on February 7 threatened to resign from the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly in case the federal government tries to introduce

changes to the governance order in violation of the Supreme Court ruling. The development is seen as an effort to pre-empt the Centre's reported move of introducing 'the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order, 2020' by bringing in slight changes in the governance order 2018-19. The 'warning' was issued by the lawmakers from both sides of the aisle – including Speaker Fida Nashad, Minister for Works Dr Muhammad Iqbal, Opposition Leader Muhammad Shafi, PPP lawmaker Javed Hussain, Sikandar Ali and Imtiaz Haider - while addressing a joint news conference at the National Press Club in Islamabad. "We will resign in protest as we can't be run through ad hoc orders in sheer disregard to the Supreme Court orders," said the minister while referring to the apex court's larger bench judgement of 2019. The verdict ordered the federal government to grant rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Iqbal said frustration ran deep into the minds of the younger generation of G-B for being given a cold shoulder from the Centre, adding that they have been venting their anger through the social media. He asked the federal government to take stock of the situation before "it boils over". Speaker Fida Nashad said: "We are the citizens of Pakistan and, therefore, our representation is a must in parliament." He said the people of G-B after getting independence from Dogras joined Pakistan unconditionally but regretted that their sacrifices were not honoured.

https:/tribune.com.pk/story/2152833/1-six-g-b-lawmakers-threaten-resign-governance-order

#### Mohmad Ali, and Members of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Suffer Heart Attacks due to Pressures from the Voter: Deputy Speaker

#### Urdu Point, February 10, 2020

Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Deputy Speaker, Muhammad Jafar Ullah, has said that the three sitting MLAs had suffered heart attacks due to unnecessary pressures from the voters. Deputy Speaker said this while speaking at an event in memory of provincial minister late Muhammad Shafiq. Muhammad Jafar Ullah said every voter in GB pressurizing elected

members for government jobs and other personal works. People in Gilgit Baltistan are not interested in collective projects and benefits, he claimed.

https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/members-of-gilgit-baltistan-assembly-suffer-h-834286.html

# **Umer Jamshaid, AJK Assembly Gets Four More Constituencies, Delimitation Announced**

#### Urdu Point, February 15, 2020

Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and Chief Election commissioner Justice (R) Abdul Rasheed Sulehria has announced final list of delimitations of Legislative Assembly seats after inclusion of four new constituencies raising the strength to 45 directly elected members for the coming general elections, expected to be held next year. According to a notification issued on February 15 by the Election Commission office, two new constituencies have been created for Muzaffarabad division while one each for Mirpur and Poonch division on the basis of population formula as provided in 13th amendment to the AJK's interim constitution act 1974. District Neelum previously comprised one constituency has been divided into two constituencies, one comprising on Tehsil Sharda and other on Tehsil Athmagam, a new constituency has been created in Hatian district of Muzaffarabad division comprising Chinari and Chokothi towns and adjourning rural villages which were earlier part of Leepa Valley constituency.

https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/ajk-assembly-gets-four-more-constituencies-d-839394.html

#### **G-B's grievances**

#### The Express Tribune, February 15, 2020

Last year many mainstream political parties introduced bills for the creation of new provinces in Pakistan. At the national level the creation of new provinces is an issue which can be discussed and deliberated on at any time but the already existing issue of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has always been on the back burner. Those in power have always treated

G-B as an orphan child. Granting constitutional rights to G-B is of importance. However, those demanding these rights are now languishing in jails. Draconian laws are used to silence dissenting views. Today, the harsh reality is that G-B does not have any representation in the National Assembly or the Senate. The G-B legislative assembly is impotent much like the GB council. The decentralisation of power never took place in any real sense as the subjects under the G-B legislative assembly are of least importance.

https://tribune.com.pk/letter/2156992/6-g%20bsgrievances

## DAY-LONG LOAD-SHEDDING BECOMES COMMON IN GILGIT BALTISTAN

#### Such News, February 16, 2020

The historical power crisis in Gilgit-Baltistan is heading toward dark winter, as the day long power breakdown becomes common in most part of the region. The residents of different districts of GB expressed concern in an interview with local media outlets. They said that districts in the mountain region are always hit by longest power cut for 22- hours continuously. "This is big joke with the people of Gilgit Baltistan which should be stopped for now". They said "For last two or three weeks neither thermal generator is running nor hydel power houses are producing electricity". People are experiencing severe and worst load shedding. A resident of Hunza told the Pakistan observer that thermal generator is available but distribution of electricity is unfair.

https://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan/item/93969-day-long-load-shedding-becomes-common-in-gilgit-baltistan.html

#### Umer Jamshaid, Amendment In Accountability Bureau Act By AJK PML-N Led Govt Has Made It A Spineless Body: Barrister Sultan

#### Urdu Point, February 22, 2020

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PTI-AJK) on February 22 categorically rejected the amendments made in the Accountability Bureau Act by the incumbent PML-N led AJK government. The AJK government has passed the Accountability Bureau (Sixth Amendment) Act, 2020, "drastically changing the accountability law which made it a spineless body." These views were expressed by former Prime Minister and President of PTI AJK Chief, Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry in response to a notification issued by the government of AJK. The notification on the amendment of the Act was issued without getting it signed by the AJK President Sardar Masood Khan. He called the amendment to the Accountability Act a mala fide attempt to protect the present ruling politicians and the blue-eyed officials from accountability, which was a cruel and irresponsible act and is against the public interest.

https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/amendment-in-accountability-bureau-act-by-ajk-844484.html

#### NAB to probe 'corruption' at Sost dry port

#### Dawn, February 26, 2020

The National Accountability Bureau, Gilgit-Baltistan chapter, has prepared a detailed report to initiate investigations into alleged corruption of Pakistan Custom officials at the Sost dry port amounting to billions of rupees. Sources said that Rs2.8 billion were

collected as customs duties during 2018, and Rs6.7 billion in 2019, which was the highest revenue collection in the history of Sost dry port. They said the difference of Rs3.9 billion in revenue collection in the two years prompted the NAB investigation. The custom officials deployed at the dry port during 2018 were accused of embezzling billions of rupees, the sources said, adding the NAB officials had submitted the report to their headquarters for approval for an investigation. The sources said the customs officials committed large-scale mis-declarations on description and value of imported goods from China. They said the NAB had also details of smuggling of banned items from China into Pakistan through Khunjerab Pass during 2018.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1536659/nab-to-probe-corruption-at-sost-dry-port

# **Economic Developments**

# **Govt Confirms Timely Completion of Gilgit- Naltar Road Project**

#### Bol News, February 9, 2020

Gilgit-Naltar road project is being constructed in Gilgit Baltistan at a cost of over two billion rupees. According to the details, Director of National Logistic Cell Gilgit Baltistan, Muhammad Iqbal, the project will be completed well in time, hopefully. Earlier in December, Government was launching Yak breeding project in Gilgit-Baltistan to overcome beef shortage. A briefing session in this regard was held in the Governor House, Gilgit. According to the details, the Project Director of Live Stock department Gilgit-Baltistan gave detailed briefing to the Governor Raja Jalal Hussain Magpoon. Governor said high altitude and hilly pastures in Gilgit-Baltistan are feasible place for yak breeding. Yak is an iconic symbol of Tibet and high altitude regions. More than 22m domestic yaks provide food — both meat and milk — transport, shelter and fuel for Tibetians and others.

https://www.bolnews.com/pakistan/2020/02/govt-confirms-timely-completion-of-gilgit-naltar-road-project/

# Mohmmad Ashfaq, KP, GB likely to lose Rs5.4 billion funds over slow utilisation

#### Dawn, February 10, 2020

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan governments are likely to lose Rs 5.4 billion (\$35 million) grant meant for reducing climate change-induced disaster and glacier lake outburst floods due to slow utilisation of funds, according to officials of different departments. "The Green Climate Fund, the donor agency of the project, has communicated to the government of Pakistan that it can withdraw the pledged funds if the federal ministry of climate change does not accelerate utilisation of funds in the designated areas of KP and GB," officials in three provincial departments including agriculture,

environment and relief, rehabilitation and settlement department told *Dawn*. Officials said that plan for climate change-induced disaster and flooding due to glacier lake outburst was approved in 2017 by the federal ministry for climate change. The GCF had pledged Rs5.7 billion (\$37 million) through United Nation Development Programme.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1533538/kp-gb-likely-to-lose-rs54-billion-funds-over-slow-utilisation

## Zulfiqar Ali, AJK Govt's race for luxurious vehicles

#### Kashmir Watch, February 13, 2020

As life-size posters of Hurriyat leaders, martyrs & pellet gun victims in Kashmir go up all over the country to show how much we care for Kashmir in this most difficult hour of their history. Those who represent Kashmiris in Pakistan continue to stick to their reckless selfish ways. Following in the footsteps of the prime minister of Azad Kashmir, the AJK President has also given in to his personal greed by ordering the purchase of three new vehicles, worth 55 million rupees. These include a Toyota Landcruiser V8 worth 46 million, a 1.8cc Toyota Grandey worth 6 million and a Revo worth 4 million. This is despite the fact that many luxurious vehicles that are already in his use. Last year, AJK prime minister ordered the purchase of a Toyota Landcruiser V8 despite the fact that he was using a topline luxury Mercedez Benz.

https://kashmirwatch.com/ajk-govts-race-for-luxurious-vehicles/

# Samina Sabir, CPEC and Azad Kashmir: Prospects and Potential

#### Daily Times, February 14, 2020

China has made enormous and substantial economic development in the last 35 years due to changes in

governance structure, open policies and economic reforms. Since 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping initiated infrastructural development project to revive the ancient Silk Road, now referred to as the new Silk Road. This consists of two parts: the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road. Later on, this project was unanimously given the name "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)." Furthermore, a special economic zone was allocated in Mirpur, Azad Kashmir, but it has not yet commenced. Certain prerequisites should be met before the start of SEZ, which includes land acquisition, uninterrupted supply of electricity and gas, water supply scheme and highway or motorway facilities. It is disappointing that the aforementioned

prerequisite has not yet been fulfilled. This reflects a lack of interest of the government and shortage of small, medium and long-term plans on the part of Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms. Now, the CPEC authority has been established and is operational. People of Azad Kashmir hope a prompt response from the CPEC authority to start SEZ in Mirpur, Azad Kashmir. Last but not least, we should learn from the developmental experiences of China, how to set the target and achieve in the given time.

https://dailytimes.com.pk/557512/cpec-and-azad-kashmir-prospects-and-potential/

## **Extracts From Urdu Media**

#### Orders will not solve issues

#### Daily Baad-e-Shimal, February 20, 2020

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly has rejected the 2020 Order and said issuing and running G-B by Orders should stop now. Orders don't provide autonomy. Our first and last destiny is Pakistan. All the political parties of the region participated in the Assembly discussion. According to Aurangzeb Advocate, G-B should be made a provisional province of Pakistan. This will neither impact Kashmir dispute nor would it affect Kashmir's cause. The Supreme Court's decision should be accepted and implemented in its true spirit. We are ready to support PTI in its fight to get G-B provisional provincial status. G-B has not been made party to the case that is placed before the Supreme Court. We still went to the Court and asked for the implementation of the Sartaj Aziz Committee report. The G-B Assembly has shown confidence in the Sartaj Aziz Committee's recommendations.

On constitutional status, all the political parties of the G-B are on the same page. They are not in the mood to accept any package less than a constitutional identity. They have made it clear that this time no package or order would be accepted. The political parties and their support for this one cause are extraordinary. It has never happened in the past.

h t t p : // w w w . d a i l y b a a d e s h i m a l . c o m / ?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MDItMjAtMjAyMA==

#### **Preparations Done for the 2020 Order**

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, February 26, 2020

The federal government has again discussed the G-B 2020 Order and the federal cabinet has also approved it after deliberations. According to sources, the cabinet has discussed all the aspects of the 2020 Order. During the deliberation, no cabinet member had raised any objection. However, all the opposition political parties including religious parties have out rightly rejected the 2020 Order. The federal government has decided to end the 2018 Order and replace it with the new one.

 $http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r\_date=02-26-2020\&img=02-26-2020page-1-1$ 

## Fact Sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

#### Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

**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:** 2017 Census: 4,045,367 (Male:

1,980,794; Female: 2,064,421)

Capital: Muzaffarabad

**Divisions:** 3

Districts: 10

**Sub Divisions (Tehsils)**: 32

Constituencies in AJK: 29

**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 Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Farooq Haider Khan

**AJK Council:** Total 17 members

**AJK Legislative Assembly:** Total seats are 41

**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: https://pndajk.gov.pk/statyearbook.php?page=AJK%20at%20a%20Glance accessed November 2020)

#### Gilgit-Baltistan

**Area:** 72,496 sq. kilometers

**Population:** 1.4 million (2017 census)

Capital: Gilgit

**Districts:** Fourteen

**Baltistan** Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Shigar, Kharmang, Rondu

**Gilgit** Region is divided into Astore, Ghizer, Diamer, Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Darel, Tangir, Yaseen

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:** 33 (3 reserved for technocrats and 6 for woman)

Governor of G-B: Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon

Chief Minister G-B: Khalid Khurshid Khan

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: https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/06/17/gb-notifies-four-more-districts-total-number-of-districts-now-14/

#### A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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Compiled and Edited by
Dr Ashok K Behuria (PoK Coordinator)
Dr Smruti S Pattanaik
Dr. Priyanka Singh
Dr Yaqoob ul Hassan
Dr Zainab Akhtar
Dr Nazir Ahmed Mir
Dr Mohammad Eisa

#### **Disclaimer**

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

# POK NEWS DIGEST



#### MANOHAR PARRIKAR 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