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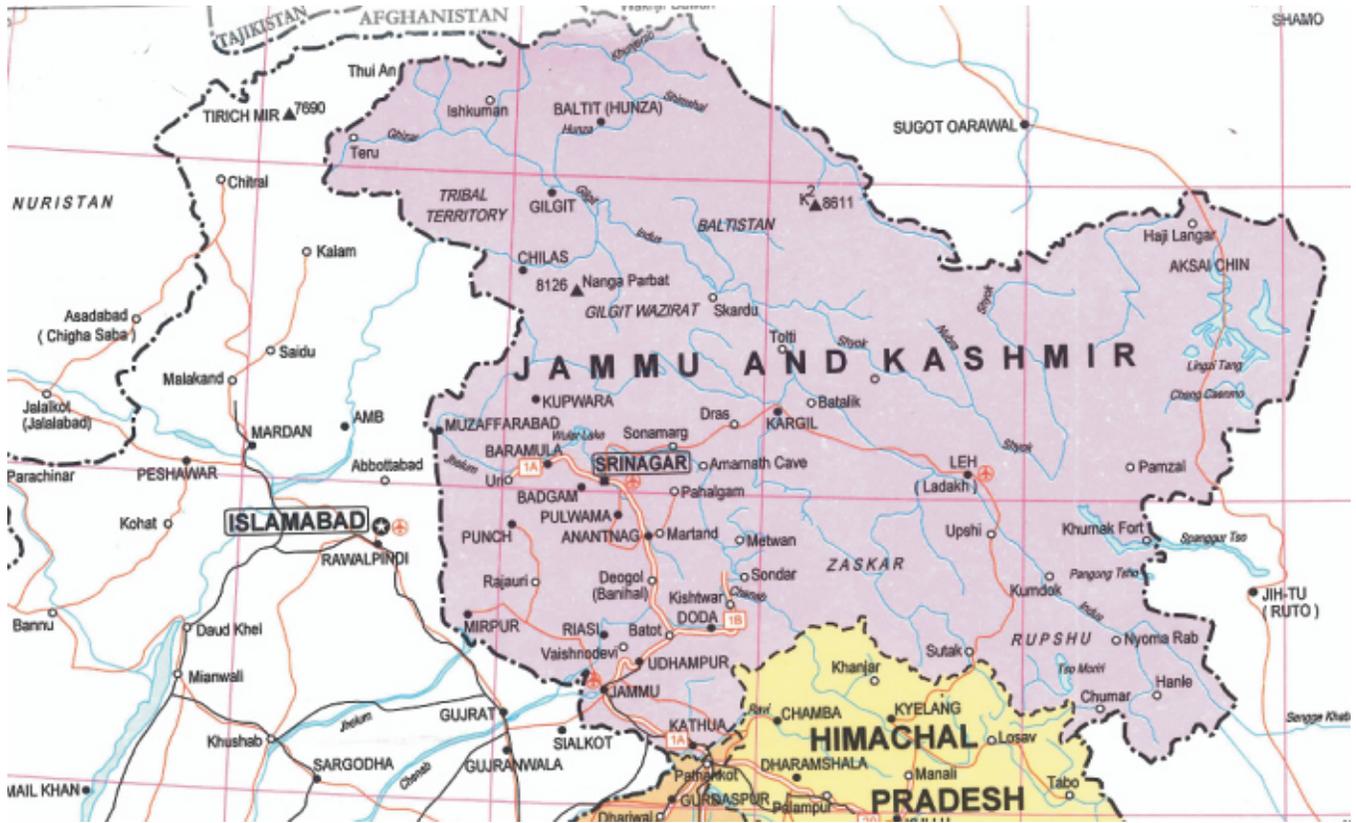
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Gilgit Baltistan: Need to Build on Environmental Successes



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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

The current issue is dominated by the economic developments taking place inside PoK. Pakistan is keen to tap the resources available in PoK and therefore directing efforts to develop it into an industrial and investment hub. Pakistan's intent is reflected in one the reports included in this issue which describes the demand to set up investment centers in AJK to facilitate local and foreign investment. It is felt that lack of banking channels and facilities in AJK have held back the development of the industrial sector in the region and there is need to encourage more financial institutions to promote the economic sector in PoK. These views were expressed in a seminar held in Mirpur, organized by the State Bank of Pakistan in collaboration with certain banks.

There was uncertainty over the schedule of general elections in AJK. Initially May 25, 2011 was tentatively decided to be the date of elections. Later however, the Election Commission in AJK announced the elections would be held anytime between last week of June and first week of July, 2011. There was some controversy hovering early dissolution of the Legislative Assembly in the AJK for having early elections.

On the cross LoC trade between J&K and PoK, both India and Pakistan are trying to arrive at a certain understanding on the number of truck passing across so as to ensure security and make management of trucks efficient and quick. Notably, the huge number of trucks passing through LoC (ever since October 2008) has complicated the security formality which as it is a time consuming process.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Elections in AJK likely on May 25

The Nation, March 1, 2011

ISLAMABAD: The general elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir are likely to be held on May 25 and the governments of Pakistan, AJK and political parties have reportedly reached an informal understanding in this regard. Informed political sources stated that a formal announcement regarding May 25 as date for holding general elections in AJK was yet to be made but the top government functionaries had already chosen the aforementioned date for this purpose.

The conduct of early elections through dissolution of AJK Legislative Assembly had been a subject of controversy in the AJK political circles. In August 2010, senior PML-N AJK leader and former AJK Prime Minister, Raja Farooq Haider accused AJK PM Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan of mulling over dissolving the AJK Legislative Assembly to hold early elections. A move, Farooq alleged, aimed at adversely affecting the PML-N by denying it the time to prepare for general elections. In addition, former Speaker AJK LA, Shah Ghulam Qadir, had accused the AJK PM of planning to dissolve the AJK LA and hold early polls in order to abolish AJK's administrative character and make it Pakistan's province on de facto patterns the way Gilgit-Baltistan was declared province.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/01-Mar-2011/Elections-in-AJK-likely-on-May-25>

Tariq Naqash, Polls after last week of June: PAK EC

March 16, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Administered Kashmir Election Commission in Muzaffarabad on March 15 retracted its earlier statement on the

forthcoming general election to the Legislative Assembly, stating the polls could only be held between the “last week of June and first week of July.”

Earlier in February, the EC had said that general election could be held anytime between May 23 and July 9 and that it would be ready to announce the election schedule after April 15.

According to section 22 (4) of the PaK's Interim Constitution, “General election to the Assembly shall be held within a period of 60 days immediately preceding the day on which the term of the Assembly is due to expire, unless the Assembly has been sooner dissolved, and the result of the election shall be declared not later than 14 days before that day.”

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Mar/16/polls-after-last-week-of-june-pak-ec-35.asp>

Tourism promotion in GB not govt priority

Dawn, March 1, 2011

ISLAMABAD: The northern areas of Pakistan are like canvases that portray the joy and contentment bestowed by the inexhaustible beauty of nature's boundless forms. But the beautiful valleys miss their admirers who once used to visit in great numbers to watch and bask in the glory of nature. That is because tourism has failed to reach its full potential in Gilgit-Baltistan, conceded experts associated with the industry in the Ministry of Tourism as well as those in Parliament. Experts in the tourism industry pointed fingers at the government for mismanagement of policies despite the fact that tourism was the largest industry in Gilgit and all the way to Hunza and beyond.

“It's just not government's priority,” noted Senator Pervaiz Rashid, who is member of the Senate standing committee on culture and tourism, citing

his reason for the held-back growth. Tourism could play a key role in the region's future economy, he stated, adding: "But the industry needs stronger, clearer support from the government to reach its full potential. And that we fear does not seem coming".

<http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/28/tourism-promotion-in-gb-not-govt-priority.html>

Pakistan building colony for Chinese in PoK

March 2, 2011

In an indication of Beijing's strengthening ties with Islamabad, Pakistan is constructing a colony of about 20 buildings for Chinese workers in Chattar area of occupied Kashmir's Muzaffarabad district. The construction, confirmation of which came ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Beijing visit in April for a meeting to welcome South Africa into the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) group, will ensure a permanent footprint for China very close to India. Sources stated the settlement was being built on approximately four acres for Chinese workers involved in construction activities in the region.

Last year, New Delhi had objected to reported presence of 11,000 People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China personnel in the strategic Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The ministry of external affairs stated it would seek independent verification of PLA soldiers working on a project in the region which would give China rail and road access to the Gulf to transport cargo and oil.

Other reported construction activities in the region include extension of the Karakoram highway to link China's Xinjiang autonomous province with Pakistan, dams and expressways. Experts in New Delhi stated by increasing presence in the Gilgit-Baltistan area, China was adding to the strategic threats in Leh-Kargil. They noted this would necessitate greater attention to development of infrastructure in the sector and a review of New Delhi's interactions with the nationalist elements in Xinjiang and Gilgit-Baltistan.

http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_pakistan-building-colony-for-chinese-in-pok_1514307

April 2011

Federal government will continue to help GB people: Watoo

March 2, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Pir Karam Ali Shah and Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah called on Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & GB, Mian Manzoor Ahmad Watoo in Islamabad on March 2. Chairman PAC and member GB Council, Muhammad Ibrahim, Professor Saleem, Member GB Council and Mulana AttUallah Shahab were also present during the meeting.

The federal minister stated that federal government will continue to help the GB people and government. The credit of establishing autonomous government in GB, providing constitutional right and establishing GB council goes to President Asif Ali Zardari and PM Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Watoo added.

The minister noted that federal government believes in transferring powers so that local representatives of the people could work for the welfare of the people. He also said that recruitment for the GB Council will be on the basis of merit and people of GB would be given preference. Furthermore, he stated that his ministry would fully cooperate with GB government. Governor GB and CM GB thanked the federal minister and stated that GB people and government are grateful to the federal government for giving them constitutional rights.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=175851>

Bhasha Dam security: GB govt to induct 600 scouts

Dawn, March 5, 2011

GILGIT: The federal government would induct 600 personnel in the Northern Area Scouts to provide foolproof security to the workers during the construction of Diامر-Bhasha Dam. A statement issued by the chief minister secretariat on March 4 disclosed the decision was taken at a meeting between chief minister GB and chairman Wapda in

Islamabad. Wapda chairman informed Syed Mehdi Shah that 600 scouts would be appointed to safeguard the engineers and labourers to be engaged with construction work on Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

The Wapda chief also assured of upgrading the district headquarters hospitals of Chilas, Skardu, and Gilgit and setting up a state-of-the-art public school in Skardu. The statement noted that Wapda also promised to release within 15 days Rs2.20 billion in respect of land compensation to the landowners.

PEACE IN GB: Members of the Parliamentary Committee of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly on March 4 met the top religious scholars of Gilgit and appealed to them to play their role in establishing peace in the area, which has witnessed sectarian violence, official sources stated.

<http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/05/bhasha-dam-security-gb-govt-to-induct-600-scouts.html>

Development of Kashmir priority of govt: Gilani

Daily Times, March 5, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on March 4 stated that development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was a priority of the Pakistan People's Party-led (PPP) government and funds for projects will be provided to the AJK government. He made these comments during a meeting with AJK President, Raja Zulqarnain Khan, at the PM's House. The PM assured the AJK president that the funds for reconstruction and rehabilitation projects of flood-ravaged areas, especially in the health and education sectors, would soon be released. ns and projects do not fall in this category.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\05\story_5-3-2011_pg7_29

AJK PM opens party's Sindh chapter

Dawn, March 6, 2011

KARACHI: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan who was on a brief visit to Karachi and was addressing an open council session of his party's the AJK Muslim Conference Sindh chapter on March 5.

Referring to the Kashmir issue, he noted the need for its peaceful solution was being talked about at world forums which were quite encouraging. To support his argument, Sardar Atique recalled some recent events held at such forums. He particularly mentioned a recently held "hearing on Kashmir" session of the European Parliament, representing 27 industrial developed countries. At the session, he informed, Pakistan was represented by its ambassador, Abbas Jilani, and India by Ashok Mehta while he was invited to represent Kashmir.

<http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/06/ajk-pm-opens-partys-sindh-chapter.html>

GB Governor, CM's appointment violation of UN charters

The Nation, March 7, 2011

ISLAMABAD: The appointment of governor and chief minister in Gilgit-Baltistan is the violation of United Nations resolutions and both these slots should be replaced by president and prime minister. Senior leader Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter Raja Farooq Haider stated this while sharing his views on political affairs during a conversation. He stated that the presence of governor and CM in GB gave the impression that GB was part of Pakistan while it was a separate territory and Pakistan's government needed to abolish both these slots. "The GB is a separate territory and it should be headed by President Zardari and Prime Minister Gilani," he suggested.

<http://nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/07-Mar-2011/GB-Governor-CMs-appointment-violation-of-UN-charters>

Workshop on UK-Pakistan protocol held

The News, March 19, 2011

A two-day workshop of family judges was organised by the Struggle for Change (Sach), in collaboration with the British High Commission on March 15 and 16 at Mirpur, AJK. The objective of the workshop was to raise awareness and augment capacity of the lower court judges on the UK-Pakistan protocol on children's matters as well as

their abduction, as noted in a press release.

The workshop was inaugurated by AJK High Court Chief Justice Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal. He emphasised on the need for identification on the issue of international child abduction in the AJK. He welcomed the holding of such informative workshops. After formal inauguration, the workshop started with the speech of Justice (r) Manzoor Hussain Gillani. He gave the overview of the protocol and described the problem in the perspective of the AJK. The closing of the workshop was done by the judge of the AJK Supreme Court, Justice Azam Khan. He appreciated the initiative taken by Sach in collaboration with the British High Commission. He said that about 700,000 immigrants from the AJK are settled in the UK. That's why they are facing the problem more than Pakistan.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=36942&Cat=6&dt=3/19/2011>

Shabbir Mir, Contemptuous comments: G-B institutes first-ever blasphemy case

The Express Tribune, March 27, 2011

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan joined the league of Pakistan's other self-righteous areas after the region's first-ever blasphemy case was registered against a man who allegedly passed "contemptuous comments against the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh)". "A case has been registered under the blasphemy law against Yaqoob, son of Taifur Shah," Sultan Azam, the superintendent police noted outside the city police station where hundreds of protesters blocked the main road, calling for punishing the alleged accused. Without being specific, a police official said that the man was not a Christian. Abdur Rauf, a resident of Kondas in Gilgit, had submitted an application with the city police station in the evening stating he was a witness to the crime.

Yaqoob is said to be a resident of Ghizer Valley, which is about 75 kilometers from Gilgit. SP Azam stated that the man had been arrested and police had started an investigation into the case. The incident

was reported in Kondodas and the news spread like wildfire. Hundreds of people gathered outside the police station, calling for the man's immediate arrest. As the crowd grew larger, shopkeepers closed their shops in anticipation of violence. The crowd, however, dispersed peacefully after police registered a case under the sections 295, 296, 298, 500, 506 of the Pakistan Penal Code (blasphemy law).

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/138332/contemptuous-comments-g-b-institutes-first-ever-blasphemy-case/>

JKLF wants Gilgit-Baltistan merged with AJK

The News, March 11, 2011

LONDON: Sardar Muhammad Saghir Khan Advocate, Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), stated that the right to decide the future status of the state entirely rests with the people of Jammu and Kashmir and this rights must be respected by all stakeholders.

This is the first visit of any senior JKLF leader to Britain after the party's leadership was expelled from the country following Indian diplomat Ravindra Mhatre's murder case in February 1984 in Birmingham. Saghir Khan said he was pleased to be in Britain where the JKLF was once a strong organisational unit but faced defections and split after Amanullah Khan was expelled from Britain. Speaking at a press conference in London organised by JKLF's London unit, Khan stated that since 1947 the people of Kashmir have struggled against forced division and occupation of their motherland. "Since 1947, 17 million people of Jammu and Kashmir, remain denied of this basic right-the right to choose and the right to freedom. The entire state of Jammu and Kashmir remains divided with a heavy military deployment on both sides of the Line of Control," he noted. He asked the government of Pakistan to undo the damage by uniting Gilgit Baltistan with the AJK territory, to form a truly independent and democratic revolutionary government that would be an independent voice to advocate for the freedom and reunification of the entire state and would also address the day to day needs of the citizens of the unified Gilgit Baltistan and AJK regions.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=35635&Cat=2&dt=3/11/2011>

Ministry seeks waiver for 1,100MW Kohala hydropower project

The News, March 27, 2011

The Ministry of Water and Power is seeking a waiver from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet for the execution of 1,100MW Kohala Hydropower project through private sector under Power Generation Policy 2002, as stated in a summary. The draft summary seeks a waiver to the requirement of solicitation through advertisement as the project was awarded to CWE, a private company, pursuant to an MoU duly approved by the Cabinet.

The ECC, while reviewing the implementation status of the decisions made in its March 1 meeting, desired the case to be brought before it, if there were some hurdles. In the light of this, the Ministry has submitted the case before ECC for implementation of the project in private sector.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, on October 15, 2010, considered a summary by Ministry of Water and Power for development of 1,100 MW project in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The ECC constituted a committee comprising Minister for Water and Power, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources, Secretary Finance, Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Secretary Water and Power and Managing Director of Private Power Infrastructure Board (PPIB).

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=38066&Cat=3&dt=3/26/2011>

Roshan Mughal, Hydroelectric power: WAPDA alleges rules were flouted in award of contract

The Express Tribune, March 31, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan and China are trapped in a deadlock over the construction of the 1,100 megawatts (MW) Kohala Hydropower Project on the Jhelum River in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) due to Wapda's intransigence.

The contract was awarded to a Chinese construction company, China International Water and Electric Corporation (CWE). Wapda accuses decision makers of violating Pakistan Power Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules and neglecting to ensure transparency and circumventing international competitive bidding (ICB). However, if the Chinese company agrees to its demands, Wapda is ready to bypass these rules and play the game.

Wapda has now raised several contentious issues about the project which were not discussed earlier at any level. Wapda now wants to execute the whole project itself or alternatively, become a partner with 51 per cent share in a joint venture with the Chinese.

Wapda had signed an MoU with the CWE for the construction of the project in 2008, reveal documents made available by sources close to the federal Ministry of Water and Power. The Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) issued a Letter of Interest to CWE and waived procedural formalities.

The CWE updated the feasibility study originally commissioned by Wapda and made a commitment to pay the audited cost. CWE is a multibillion group which owns some 30,000 MW of hydropower capacity including three dams.

The federal government has offered the Chinese company to either construct the project as a contractor or on the basis of Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (Boot). Surprisingly, the CWE opted for the long-term and riskier Boot option under which the project would be handed over to the AJK government after 30 years.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/140177/hydroelectric-power-wapda-alleges-rules-were-flouted-in-award-of-contract/>

Mehdi Shah's Vote Treating and Electoral Fraud in Ghizar

Dardistan Times, March 28, 2011

GILGIT: The Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan has announced to pour 100 million rupees into Ghizar-1 constituency of Gilgit-Baltistan. The

announcement was made during a public address in Ishqamen 3 days before the by-election on March 30. The CM, in his public address even did not leave it secret that there is a link between his announcements and the oncoming election.

“My announcements should not be taken for pre-poll point scoring. However, it should be clear that If the Chief Minister of Punjab can announce pre-poll packages, so can I. I have a right to do so”, Mehdi Shah stated. He made a number of promises, during his visit, including: entry level jobs to local people, separate seat in GBLA for Gupis and Ishqamen, 4000 new employment opportunities, up gradation of schools, reconstruction of Hayum Bridge etc.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/mehdhi-shah2%E2%80%99s-vote-treating33-and-electoral-fraud-ghizar4>

Govt made many achievements in past three years: Kaira

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 24, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Secretary Information, Qamar Zaman Kaira on March 24 stated that PPP government made many great achievements including reforms in the Constitution during the past three years. Speaking on a private news channel, he noted that government has tried to take provinces onboard on all matters due to which it announced Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan package, Gilgit-Baltistan package, restored sacked employees and gave incentives to agriculture sector. Owing to the government policies, the country is now exporting 2.5 million tons wheat, instead of importing it and has achieved the highest export target, he stated.

Kaira further stated that present government was making all out efforts for the socio-economic uplift of the country. He noted that the institutions were confronting numerous problems in the past but the PPP government after coming into power made earnest efforts to strengthen national institutions.

http://app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=134677&Itemid=2

India extends stay period for AJK visitors

Pakistan Observer

SRINAGAR: Indian government has increased the stay period for the visitors of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to Jammu & Kashmir. The decision was taken to encourage more people to people contact across the Line of Control (LoC), a news channel reported. India has decided to increase the stay period for the persons visiting Jammu & Kashmir from PoK for six months with multiple entries. The validity of the entry permit has also been extended to six weeks from four weeks.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=83310>

Nawaz Khan Naji is arrested days before election in Ghizar District of Gilgit-Baltistan

Dardistan Times, March 23, 2011

CHHER QILA: The by-election in Ghizar was postponed on March 14 by Election Commission (EC) of Gilgit-Baltistan and was rescheduled to be held on April 30, 2011. Law and order situation and cold weather was, then, held responsible for the delay. That schedule is now changed as the Chief Court has declared the Election Commission's decision null and void.

The new election schedule is, now, for March 30. In the meanwhile, Nawaz Khan Naji has been arrested in an alleged fight with a junior police official in Chher Qila. The fight is said to be a verbal assault on the part of Naji. However, the bureaucrats of Ghizar District with the help of Gilgit Wazarat did not miss the opportunity to entangle him before election.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/nawaz-khan-naji-arrested-election-ghizar44-district-gilgit-baltistan22>

Tariq Naqash, PML-N warns Govt about 'unrest' in PaK

March 23, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz on March 22 reiterated its warning to the Federal government about “unrest and law and order problem” in Pakistan occupied Kashmir if

the alleged interference by federal ministers in the region did not stop.

“Let it be very clear that if the federal ministers did not stop meddling in our region we will block their entry and if that leads to unrest and law and order problems we will not be responsible for it,” said Raja Farooq Haider, chief organizer of PML-N AJK chapter at a press conference Muzaffarabad.

Haider, who is also a former PoK premier, noted: “The election drama of 2006 cannot be repeated in 2011. We have to and we will stop it,” he asserted. He called upon the mainstream Pakistani media to give more space to PoK so that the people of Pakistan could know the circumstances election was being held in this sensitive region.

“All we want, earnestly, is that Pakistan should not blot its copybook by interfering in PoK election like India did in Jammu and Kashmir,” he stated. The PML-N, he further stated, was preparing its suggestions and recommendations to be submitted to the election commission for free and fair polls. Haider noted PoK was not a constitutional but de facto part of Pakistan and under the UNCIP resolutions Islamabad was responsible to ensure good governance in this region.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Mar/23/pml-n-warns-govt-about-unrest-in-pak-40.asp>

Tariq Naqash, Kashmiri refugees reject 'surrender policy'

March 13, 2011

MUZAFFARABAD: While rejecting India's “surrender policy,” representatives of Kashmiri refugees in Muzaffarabad on March 13 vowed to continue the struggle, both militarily and politically.

“Kashmiri refugees will play their role in the movement by extending full support not only to the pro-freedom political leadership but also the militant leadership,” stated a resolution adopted at their 'roundtable conference.'

Held in the hall of press club, the conference was attended prominent refugee leaders, including the presidents of 11 major refugee camps in Muzaffarabad.

Participants rejected the surrender policy offered by India to the Pakistan occupied Kashmir based Kashmiri refugees and former militants and said they would continue the struggle till they get their right to self determination. “We won't accept any option or decision that betrays the blood of 500,000 Kashmiris. Instead the freedom movement will enjoy our moral, political and physical support,” the resolution stated.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Mar/14/kashmiri-refugees-reject-surrender-policy--67.asp>

Shabbir Mir, Gilgit-Baltistan: PAC chief removed from post

The Express Tribune, March 14, 2011

GILGIT: A legislator who threatened to blow up the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) has been removed from his post after he refused to publicly apologise. Raziuddin, an independent lawmaker, who was appointed chairman of the public accounts committee (PAC) last year, was removed from his post after PAC members Bashir Ahmed, Yasmeen Nazar, Sheikh Nisar and Mutabiat Shah submitted a letter to the speaker, expressing no-confidence in the chairman after his threat.

“The committee has been dissolved with immediate effect after a majority of its members expressed no-confidence in the chairman through a letter,” the speaker of the legislative assembly stated on March 12.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/132268/gilgit-baltistan-pac-chief-removed-from-post/>

Shabbir Mir, G-B Cabinet: Ministers unhappy with vacancy allocations

The Express Tribune, March 13, 2011

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan cabinet ministers on March 12 complained that they were ignored in the allocation of seats under various vacancies, accusing the bureaucracy of being behind what they say is a 'conspiracy'.

“The education minister was particular upset over being kept in dark in the allocation of people on

vacancies in the education sector in his district Ghizer,” stated a source. More than 2,500 vacancies in various Gilgit-Baltistan departments have been announced recently, the recruitment for which is likely to take place by June 2011.

The ministers however said that they were humiliated as the bureaucracy did not consult them before making a distribution plan of the vacancies. They accused the bureaucracy of weakening the political setup in Gilgit-Baltistan. “We have to go back to our constituencies after all. What will we tell our people?” Haji Gulbar, minister Health and Zakat said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/131887/g-b-cabinet-ministers-unhappy-with-vacancy-allocations/>

Shaukat Ali Shah hopes PML (N) AJK will win election with overwhelming majority

ISLAMABAD: The central leader of PML (N) AJK and party convener of all six refugees' seats of legislative assembly from Pakistan constituency Syed Shaukat Ali Shah has hoped that PML (N) AJK would win the election with overwhelming majority in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

While presiding a meeting at Rawalpindi, which took the review of the mass contact drive in Valley - V, he said that the reorganization and new member making campaign of the party has been launched in the constituencies of Kashmiri refugees settled in Pakistan. He said that a separate committee for each Muhajir constituency has been formed. All the committees would meet soon to speed up the mass contact and reorganization campaign as the elections of AJK legislative assembly are expected to be held in June or July this year.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=176473>

Murtaza Ali Shah, Musharraf better than PPP, says Lord Nazire

The News, March 15, 2011

LONDON: A fierce critic of former military-backed President Pervez Musharraf stated the unchecked corruption under current government is reminding

Pakistanis of Pervez Musharraf's era when overseas Pakistanis were not harassed and asked for bribes at Pakistani airports. Lord Ahmed said, while speaking at an event, where Inspector General Police Azad Kashmir Dr Tariq Khokhar also spoke about the measures he was taking in Azad Kashmir to rid police of the scourge of corruption. “Otherwise, this government should have no business with billions of dollars in foreign exchange sent by overseas Pakistanis.” Dr Tariq Khokhar told the community members that the government of Pakistan had doubled the salaries of the police force in Azad Kashmir and it had a visible impact on the reduction of the crimes rate.

He said after Pakistan injected the AJK police with cash, the performance of the local police had been very good. Khokhar was worried that some areas of Azad Kashmir were being used by al-Qaeda and Taliban linked militants for recruitment to carry out terrorist acts. He said some madrassahs in two AJK districts were currently under watch and assured that actions will be taken against the miscreants. He earnest efforts to strengthen national institutions.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=36281&Cat=2&dt=3/15/2011>

Economic Developments

Banks, financial institutions role urged for survival of AJK's economy

Pakistan Observer, March 4, 2011

MIRPUR: “The existing industrial estates in Azad Jammu & Kashmir have turned into the graveyards of industries because of the lack of interest and cooperation by the scheduled banks and the national financial institutions towards the existing and intending local entrepreneurs vis-à-vis delivery of required financial assistance in form of advances and easy-term loans to the aspirant business fraternity”, stated Zulfiqar Abbasi, leading AJK businessman and President Jammu & Kashmir Joint Chambers of Commerce & Industry. Abbasi expressed these views while addressing a seminar on Role of State Bank and Banking sector in Business Expansion in AJK' in Mirpur on March 4. The day-long seminar was arranged by the State Bank of Pakistan and the National Bank of Pakistan with the collaboration of other scheduled banks.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=79258>

AJK businesses lack support from financial institutions

The News, March 8, 2011

MIRPUR: The unwillingness of banks and financial institutions to give advances and easy-term loans to manufacturing units has hit hard the local industrial estates, said Zulfiqar Abbasi, President Jammu and Kashmir Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry (JKJCCI) on March 7.

He was addressing a seminar on the 'Role of State Bank and Banking Sector in Business Expansion in AJK'. The day-long seminar was arranged by the State Bank of Pakistan and National Bank of Pakistan in collaboration with other banks. The objective of the event was to raise awareness among intending entrepreneurs and unemployed

educated youngsters about financial products. Abbasi urged banks and financial institutions to devise effective policies to accelerate the progress of AJK, which he noted was suffering because of their hostile attitude towards the local business fraternity.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=34894&Cat=3&dt=3/8/2011>

Call for Establishment of Investment Centers in AJK

Pakistan Observer, March 10, 2011

MIRPUR: Former President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) Ch. Muhammad Saeed called for early establishment of Investment Centres (ICs) in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) to encourage the local and foreign investment in trade and industrial sector. He noted the government of Pakistan had already set up ICs in all four provinces of the country, similar center was required to be established in AJK to avail the potential available for the speedy industrialization of the liberated territory. He urged upon the AJK government to initiate immediate solid measures for the promotion and uplift of the Industrial sector in AJK.

He urged upon the AJK government to initiate immediate solid measures for the promotion and uplift of the Industrial sector in AJK. The former FPCCI President emphasized the need of the performance of due role by the commercial banks and the financial institutions to ensure the acceleration of business activities in AJK.

The pending matters relating to the industrial progress of AJK be expedited positively without further delay if the authorities were sincere to bring about the industrial revolution in AJK, he urged. The eminent Kashmiri business community stalwart also called for the representation of AJK in

the Export Development Fund Board (EDFB) of the federal government in order to encourage the country's exports, particularly for Britain and other European countries.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=80299>

Telenor to invest in hydropower generation in AJK

March 10, 2011

ISLAMABAD: Tele communication group Telenor would invest in hydro power generation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and provide the internship to the educated youth there. In addition Telenor would extent its communication network to Nelum Valley and other far flung area of AJK. A meeting was held in Islamabad on March 10 between AJK Minister for Information ,Environment and Overseas Kashmiris Mehmood Riaz and the country head of Telenor(Corporate Sector) Amir Izhar-ul-Haq. On the occasion, the prospects of hydro power generation was discussed and many areas in AJK were pointed out where the possibility of hydro power generation was present.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=176213>

GB to be made heaven for investors

Daily Times, March 18, 2011

The Gilgit Baltistan (GB) province has all the opportunities to become an investment heaven for the investors. The present government is evolving new policies to facilitate both the local and foreign investments in this regard, Chief Minister GB Syed Mehdi Shah stated.

Talking with Chairman Board of Investment Saleem H Mandviwalla, he noted the present government had given a serious concentration to the power generation, infrastructure development, education and health to alleviate the sufferings of the people that had been facing multiple problems for the last many decades. He stated an era of development had been started in GB with serious work on Bhasha Dam, detailed engineering of Monji Dam and in the shape of expansion of Karakorum Highway. He noted apart from tourism,

mining and food preservation, the area has a very huge potential for cement and herbal sectors therefore the business community should come forward to explore these opportunities. He informed the present government had given a development package to the area with a view to facilitate the investors and all measures were being taken to turn the area an investment hub. Chairman BOI stated South Korean investors were interested in power generation and this investment could overcome the shortfall of 80MW of the region. We need to develop the roads and infrastructure in the region and investors are already keen to invest in construction of all weather airports in Gilgit and Skardu, he added. He said BOI was working to evolving a tax free policy for investors very soon and assured cooperation to all the investors who would be making investment in GB.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\17\story_17-3-2011_pg5_2

Hydropower projects in Gilgit-Baltistan

Daily Times, March 18, 2011

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide an assistance of \$35 million for exploring energy potential of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). “ADB has a planned assistance of \$35 million for development of two mini hydropower projects included in its 2011 assistance pipeline for Pakistan,” the bank's country director, Pakistan resident mission Rune Stroem stated at a launching ceremony of economic report on GB on March 17. He stated these energy-oriented initiatives included 26 MW Shigar thang project and 4 MW projects of Chilas.

Stressing collective efforts for GB's uplift, he noted” GB is important not just to elevate living standards and create economic opportunities for its local people. It is equally critical in furthering Pakistan's own economic prospects and ensuring water and energy security for the country.”

The country director further noted the GB had important location which was the gateway to Pakistan's regional cooperation and trade route with China and eventually with the Central Asian countries.He underlined the need for working out a

policy taking all stakeholders on board to ensure more investments for the GB as it could transform into an attractive transit hub, catalyzing greater regional trade cooperation and economic integration.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\18\story_18-3-2011_pg5_4

GB economic report advocates private sector led growth infrastructure investment

Business Recorder, March 18, 2011

The Gilgit Baltistan Economic Report was launched on March 17, advocating private sector-led growth, improvement in public service delivery and exploiting the potential through infrastructure investments. The 202-page report titled 'Gilgit Baltistan Economic Report-Broadening the Transformation' has been jointly prepared by the government of Gilgit- Baltistan, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB). The report is aimed to help better understand the development process of Gilgit Baltistan and propose policy actions to help increase economic growth, reduce poverty and improve social outcomes.

The report highlights the challenges and obstacles that are hampering the economic growth of the area, however, at the other side provides hope for the prosperity if these challenges are tackled and addressed timely. The report was launched at a ceremony that was presided over by Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah while among others, Chief Secretary Gilgit Baltistan, Saifullah Chatha, ADB Country Director, Rune Stroem, WB Acting Country Director, Raja Rehan Arshad, CEO, Agha Khan Foundation Pakistan, Karim Ali Bhai were also present on the occasion.

Despite the fact that the growth and development face several obstacles, the progress in many areas have been described as remarkable in the report which adds that improvements will hinge on addressing some of these issues and responding effectively to attenuate adverse impacts where possible.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/business-a->

[economy/7425-gb-economic-report-advocates-private-sector-led-growth-infrastructure-investment.html](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\18\story_18-3-2011_pg5_4)

Gilgit-Baltistan to be made attractive for Investors

Pakistan Times

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Board of Investment Saleem H. Mandviwalla had a meeting with Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah in Islamabad, in which both the sides vowed to make the area attractive for Investors. On the occasion the Chief Minister GB Syed Mehdi Shah stated that the region has all opportunities to become an investment hub and the present government is evolving new policies to facilitate both the local and foreign investments.

He emphasized that unlike the past, the present government had given a serious concentration to the power generation, infrastructure development, education and health to alleviate the sufferings of the people that had been facing multiple problems for the last many decades.

He noted that an era of development had been started in Gilgit-Baltistan with serious work on Bhasha Dam, detailed engineering of Monji Dam and in the shape of expansion of Karakorum Highway. He further noted that apart from Tourism, Mining, Food preservation, the area has a very huge potential for Cement and Herbal sectors therefore the business community should come forward to explore these opportunities that offer a huge revenues.

<http://www.pakistantimes.net/pt/detail.php?newsId=20043>

Limit number of trucks in cross-LoC trade further: Army

March 14, 2011

SRINAGAR: Over a month after Pakistani authorities requested their Indian counterparts to limit the cross-LoC trade on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road to 100 trucks a day, the army has asked the civil administration to further reduce the number in view of security concerns.

“They (army) have asked us to limit the number of

trucks due to security concerns as they have to check goods in all the trucks coming from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) which is a time consuming process," deputy commissioner Baramulla Bashir Ahmad Bhat stated.

However, an army spokesperson noted the force has not fixed any specific number for the trucks crossing over the PoK but has requested that it should be within manageable limits. "We have only requested for keeping the number of trucks within the manageable limits in view of security concerns," army spokesperson Colonel V Sood stated. He noted the aim of restricting the number of trucks was to conduct the trade within the time limit set for it.

The cross-LoC trade between the divided parts of Kashmir, which is held every Tuesday and Wednesday has been growing in volume and value and so far goods worth nearly Rs800 crore have been exchanged since it was started on October 21, 2008. The army's "request" to the civil administration comes a month after a similar request from authorities in PoK.

On February 10, the authorities from other side of the LoC had requested their Indian counterparts to limit the number of trucks crossing over to PoK just 50 per day.

http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_limit-number-of-trucks-in-cross-loc-trade-further-army_1519847

International Developments

JKCHR reminds UNHRC of UN mechanism on Kashmir

Pakistan Observer, March 4, 2011

LONDON: Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) has reminded the 16th Session of UN Human Rights Council that sovereignty of a nation confers responsibility to ensure protection of human beings from want, from war, and from repression and that “When that responsibility is not discharged, the international community is morally obliged to consider its duty to act in the service of human protection”, a message from Geneva, Switzerland stated.

JKCHR in its written statement under agenda item 3 on “Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development” received by the UN Secretary General and circulated in accordance with ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 at the current Session of HRC in Geneva has reminded the HRC of the manner the two sovereign States India and Pakistan and the member nations of United Nations have taken upon a trust obligation in regard to the fundamental rights, habitat and people of Kashmir. United Nations has a mechanism on ascertaining the free will of the people under a mechanism structured by the United Nations. A non-implementation of the agreed mechanism in all the three parts of the State namely Jammu and Kashmir, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit and Baltistan has continued to distribute the people and territory, defined in article 4 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution. JKCHR Statement adds that “People have been through a massive violation of human rights from early 1990. In fact the numerical deficit in the population of Kashmir caused by the death of a generation has killed the right of self-determination. the twin of Italy's Cortina city in August 2010.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=79097>

Japan grants US\$ 103,713 for improvement of Water Supply, Sanitation in Muzaffarabad

March 10, 2011

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has provided grant assistance of US \$103,713 (approx. Rs. 8.6million) to the ASTAFADA, a non-governmental organization, for the Improvement of Water Supply and Sanitation System in Muzaffarabad, AJK. The agreement for the project was signed on March 10, at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Islamabad, between Mr. Chihiro Atsumi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and Mr. Muti-ur-Rehman, President of the ASTAFADA.

The grant will be utilized for laying down the pipe lines and constructing four water tanks with ten distribution points to supply safe drinking water to the project area that was badly affected in the 2005 earthquake. The project will also provide sanitation facilities for schools and other public places to improve the hygiene conditions

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=176200>

UN commission asked to assess rights situation in Baltistan

March 23, 2011

WASHINGTON: The UN Human Rights Commission has been asked to send a special rapporteur to visit Gilgit and Baltistan areas to assess human rights situation by a European Parliamentarian. Jurgen Creutzmann, who is the chairperson of the Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan in the European Parliament, has also asked the European parliamentarians to assess the impact of closure of Line of Control on the people of the area. The parliamentarian made the demand at a conference in Geneva organised by the Washington-based Institute for Gilgit Baltistan, where speakers noted

that Gilgit Baltistan areas of Pakistan occupied Kashmir, now carved into Northern territories remained under heavy censorship and brutal oppression. Though the Pakistani regime has promulgating ad-hoc presidential ordinances like Gilgit-Baltistan Self-governance and Empowerment Ordinance of 2009 and Balochistan Reconciliation Ordinance of 2009, Islamabad continues to enjoy veto right over decisions pertaining to financial and judicial matters, he stated. Senge Sering, of the Institute for Gilgit Baltistan requested the international rights organisations to pay attention to the genuine needs and interests of the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan and pressure Pakistan to withdraw security forces and grant the "natives of these regions absolute right over their land and resources". Mumtaz Khan, executive director of International Center for Peace & Democracy stated that all the decisions pertaining to Pakistan occupied Kashmir are made in Islamabad and even the Kashmiri president and prime minister are denied a say in decisions pertaining to resource exploitation and revenue distribution. He called Kashmir Council "a political tool of Islamabad to enforce veto power over the decisions of local judicial, political, economic and financial institutions" and demanded its immediate abolishment.

<http://news.in.msn.com/international/article.aspx?cp-documentid=5062549>

Kashmir police chief sets up complaint cell for UK citizens

The News, March 14, 2011

LONDON: Dr Tarik Khokhar, Inspector General Police Azad Kashmir, announced the setting up of an Overseas Police Complaint Cell for British Pakistanis, who are originally from Azad Kashmir. Dr Khokhar, who is on an official visit to the UK on the invitation of the Home Office and Metropolitan Police, has met members of Kashmiri and Pakistani communities in various cities of the UK to have first-hand knowledge of their grievances against the police administration in Azad Kashmir. It is estimated that well over 700,000 British citizens come from Azad Kashmir. Every year tens of thousands of visits take place between Pakistan and UK, and expatriate Pakistanis are a huge source of strength to Pakistan and its economy, stated Dr Khokhar while addressing a large number of Pakistanis in London. Dr Khokhar informed the audience that he was fully aware of the problems faced by expatriate Pakistanis including cases of kidnap for ransom, police high-handedness, lack of response, tribal-oriented litigation and targeting of the overseas Pakistanis by the criminal gangs including some rotten eggs from within the police service.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=36084&Cat=2&dt=3/14/2011>

Other Developments

Small earthquake jolts northwest Pakistan

Daily Times, March 13, 2011

KARACHI: A light earthquake of magnitude 4.8 jolted northwest parts of the country near the border with Afghanistan on March 11 but there were no immediate reports of casualties, an official stated. The quake struck at 4:32pm with its epicentre in the Hindu Kush mountain range, chief meteorologist Muhammad Riaz noted. Tremors were felt in several cities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its capital, Peshawar, he stated. The quake hit a few hours after a devastating 8.9-magnitude earthquake hit Japan on March 11 and triggered tsunami alerts across the Pacific Ocean. Pakistan was hit by a 7.6-magnitude earthquake on October 8, 2005, that killed more than 73,000 people and left about 3.5 million homeless, mainly in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Housing colony and settle the affected people on time.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\12\story_12-3-2011_pg7_13

Gilgit Baltistan: Need to Build on Environmental Successes

March 14, 2011

Initiatives to protect the population of snow leopards in the region have proven successful as illegal hunting is targeted by local police but bigger questions regarding dam construction remain.

Initiatives taken some couple of years back in Bunji, a small town some 50 km away from Gilgit, to help increase population of endangered snow leopard have started showing tremendous results as local people claim that population of this fascinating specie has almost doubled in this particular area.

Though no radio collar study has been carried out in this area due to lack of resources but eleven local persons have so far claimed that they have succeeded in looking snow leopards from a close distance in last two months.

The wildlife experts on the basis of statements given by eyewitnesses were of the view that the population of snow leopards in the area has increased up 50 to 60 as compared to nearly 30 some years back.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/12382>

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 5,130 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: Raja Zulqarnain Khan

Prime Minister: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan

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: Seven

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche and Skardu 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 Council: 24 members directly elected

Governor of G-B: Wazir Baig (officiating)

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah of Skardu district.

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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