

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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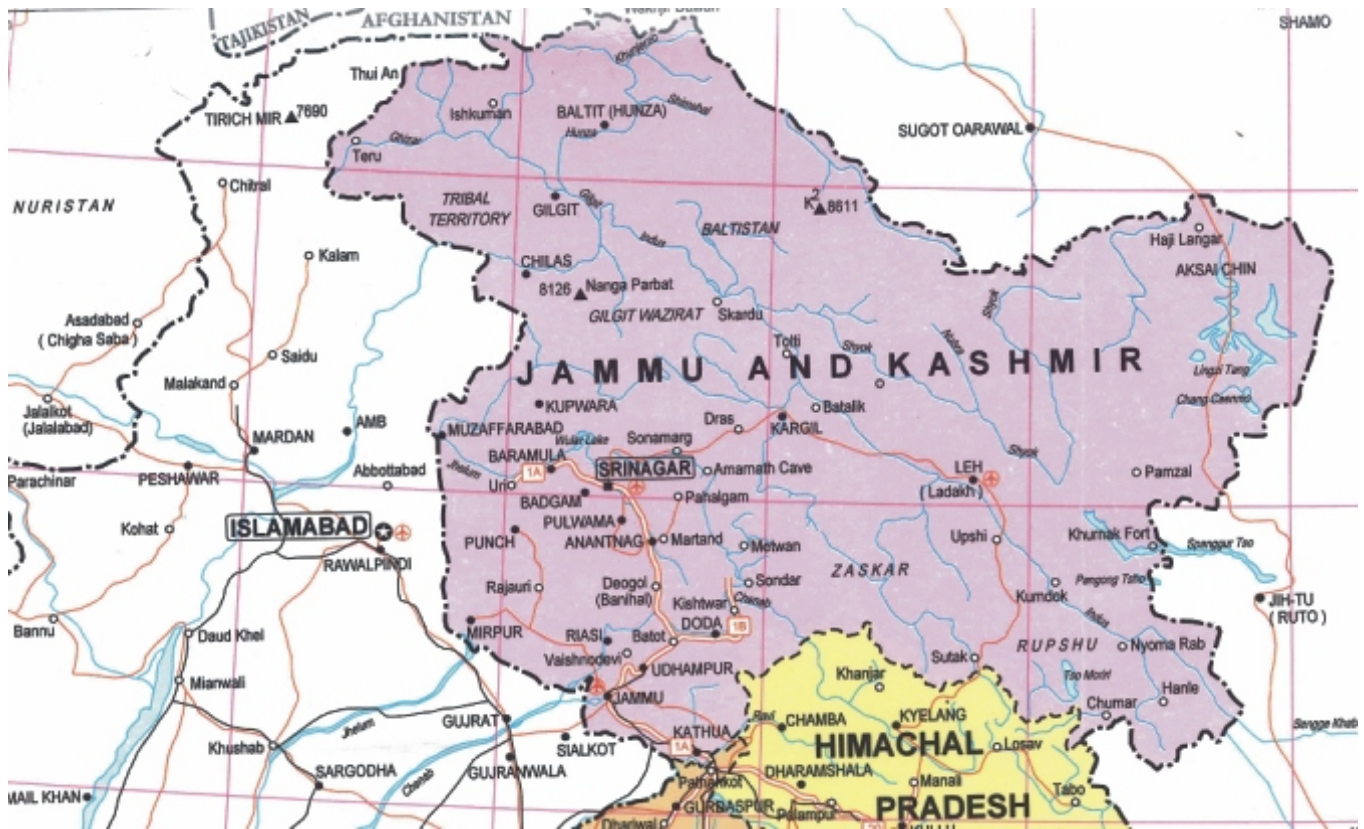
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

In a ghastly act of terrorism, at least 12 people including foreign tourists were killed at a base camp near Nanga Parbat in Gilgit Baltistan. Among the victims were five Ukrainians, three Chinese a Russian and a Pakistani national reportedly a cook. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has taken responsibility of the attack, which many consider as unprecedented in this region. The mountaineers were attacked while they were taking rest at their base camp near Diamer in Gilgit Baltistan. Gilgit Baltistan is home to high mountain ranges and has, therefore, attracted mountaineering expeditions from across the world, especially from Europe. The attackers were dressed in Gilgit Scouts uniform.

The Pakistan government was put on back foot in the aftermath as the incident was condemned internationally. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, expressed serious concerns on the killing of foreign tourists, urging the government of Pakistan to take concrete steps to nab the perpetrators and restore peace and stability in the region. Diplomats of countries like Ukraine, which lost five of its nationals, were, according to reports, under immense pressure to complete repatriation formalities for the deceased. France, on the other hand, condemned the incident and its embassy in Islamabad issued a statement offering condolences to the victims and urging authorities in Pakistan to bring to book the perpetrators of the attack.

The fact that three Chinese were amongst those killed in the attack further complicated the situation for the government of Pakistan. As a damage control measure, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met China's ambassador to Pakistan, Sun Weidong. There were official statements which seemed to reiterate that the terrorist attack would not impact the larger ties between China and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, after the PML-N took over the government in Islamabad, there were widespread speculations that the PPP-led government in both parts of PoK could be overthrown. The idea was floated by local members of the PML-N in PoK who saw the change of guard in Islamabad as an opportune moment to seize power. Later however, the top leadership of PML-N made it clear that it would not dislodge democratically elected governments in both parts of PoK.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Militants gun down nine foreign trekkers and guide at Nanga Parbat base camp”

India Today, June 23, 2013

PESHAWAR: Gunmen stormed a mountaineering base camp in northern Pakistan on June 23 and shot dead nine foreign trekkers and a Pakistani guide as they rested during an arduous climb up one of the world's tallest peaks, police stated. The night-time raid -- which killed five Ukrainians, three Chinese and a Russian -- was among the worst attacks on foreigners in Pakistan in a decade and underscored the growing reach of militants in a highland region once considered secure. Police stated a 15-member strong team of attackers wearing uniforms used by a local paramilitary force arrived at about 1 a.m. at a group of tents and ramshackle huts used by hikers scaling the flanks of the snow-covered 8,125-metre Nanga Parbat peak.

As the killing spree began, the intruders shot dead a Pakistani guard with the tourists and held other workers at gunpoint, a senior official from the northern Gilgit-Baltistan province stated. A Chinese climber managed to escape. "The gunmen held the staff hostage and then started killing foreign tourists and made their escape," the official stated.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/gunmen-storm-hotel-in-gilgit-of-pakistan-kill-10-tourists/1/284873.html>

“Hand in glove with militants' Gilgit-Baltistan could be next spot for US drone strikes, warns Pak lawmaker”

Business Standard, June 28, 2013

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) might become the next destination for US drone strikes, a Pakistani lawmaker has warned, saying that local people should detach themselves from militant outfits. Advocate Amjad Hussain, Chairman Standing Committee in G-B Council Hussain's comments

came a day after regional police chief in Gilgit revealed identities of those involved in the killing of 10 foreign tourists and their guide at the foot of Nanga Parbat, the second highest peak located in G-B's Diamer valley. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Usman Zakaria, while talking to the media in Gilgit stated that 10 of the 16 attackers were residents of Diamer valley and had received training from Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Hussain stated if locals did not shun their affiliation with the banned terrorist organization like TTP, it is highly likely that the region will become the next destination for drone strikes. Hussain, also a member of Pakistan People Party (PPP) and known for his candid views on issues, blamed the rise in militancy in G-B due to lack of political culture in the region, which has no representation in the National Assembly and the Senate.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/hand-in-glove-with-militants-gilgit-baltistan-could-be-next-spot-for-us-drone-strikes-warns-pak-lawmaker-113062800571_1.html

Farooq Yousaf, “Were the Taliban really behind the Gilgit-Baltistan tourist attack?”

The Express Tribune, June 27, 2013

“Pakistan suspends expeditions after tourist massacre” read the latest news headlines in Pakistan after one of the worst incidents in the country's tourism history where nine foreign tourists, and their Pakistani tour guide, were shot at point blank range by militants on the base camp of Nanga Parbat, in Gilgit-Baltistan region. The Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were also quick enough to claim responsibility for this high profile attack, stating that their faction, Junud-e-Hafsa, was the main perpetrator of the attack. According to them, the attack was in response to the drone strike that killed Waliur Rehman, an influential TTP leader. The moment TTP's statement came out, there remained

no doubt in everyone's mind as to who the major culprits behind the attack were. Be it the world media, the local media, social media, Facebook or Twitter, all the mediums had one thing in common, 'the Pakistani Taliban killed the foreign tourists.'

<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/17909/were-the-taliban-really-behind-the-gilgit-baltistan-tourist-attack/>

“Nanga Parbat attackers still at large despite identification”

The News, June 27, 2013

GILGIT: Despite the identification of attackers who killed foreign tourists in Nanga Parbat, terrorists are still at large five days after the unprecedented incident occurred in the peaceful area. IG Gilgit Baltistan, Usman Zakaria noted that the attackers were still hiding in the mountains, expressing the hope that the law enforcers would soon arrest them. "The culprits are within the territorial jurisdiction of Diamer and we will arrest them soon", he stated. He hoped that a local Jirga would help in arresting the terrorists. The IG stated that 30 to 40 suspects arrested during the raids had now been released after interrogation.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-107030-Nanga-Parbat-attackers-still-at-large-despite-identification>

“After foreign tourists killed in Pakistan, tourism industry faces precipice”

The Christian Science Monitor, June 25, 2013

When the Pakistani Taliban killed 10 foreign climbers at the base camp of Nanga Parbat, one of the world's highest peaks, on June 23, it shocked the climbing world - but it also imperiled the tourism industry that is the economic lifeline for the remote westernmost edge of the Himalayas. Five of the world's 14 highest peaks, known as the “eight-thousanders,” are found in Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistani-administered Kashmir. The peaks include K2, the second highest mountain in the world, and Nanga Parbat, the ninth highest. The towering peaks cut through the valleys of an area famed for its natural beauty, and attract hundreds of trekkers and climbers to the region each year. Gilgit-Baltistan had been largely considered beyond the reach of militant groups like the Pakistani Taliban, which

claimed responsibility for the attack. But, over the past decade, the climbing industry in the area has struggled as instability in the rest of Pakistan has kept all but the most adventurous tourists away.

<http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/20130625/after-foreign-tourists-killed-pakistan-tourism-industry-faces-precipice>

Shabbir Mir, “Religious harmony: Dousing the flames of sectarianism”

The Express Tribune, June 11, 2013

GILGIT: The Tabligh-i-Ijtima in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) provided an opportunity to bring Sunni and Shia sects closer in a manner the region has never witnessed before. On June 10, Maulana Tariq Jamil delivered a sermon in the central Shia mosque, preaching peace, tolerance and respect for each other's beliefs. Jamil is a well-known Deobandi preacher whose religious activities took root in Raiwind, Lahore. He is one of the few hundred scholars who reached Gilgit from various parts of Pakistan to participate in the Ijtima being held in Gilgit from June 9 to 11. Ijtima is a Sunni religious congregation held over a couple of days, where often hundreds of thousands gather to hear sermons. The one in Gilgit was organised under the banner of the Tabligh-i-Jamaat. “Differences in beliefs don't mean people should kill each other, Islam doesn't allow this,” stated Jamil in a speech delivered at the Central Imamia Mosque in Gilgit. He had been invited there by Shia clerics in a move clearly intended to reflect tolerance at some level.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/561499/religious-harmony-dousing-the-flames-of-sectarianism/>

“Dam dispute”

The News, June 4, 2013

Now is not the time to be getting into a squabble about power-generation projects. Pakistan is a country that is quite literally dying of power shortages, and to find that one of the future projects on which much hinges, the Diamer-Bhasha Dam (DBD) is endangered is bad news indeed. From the contents of a note circulated by the former chairman of Wapda, who is the current adviser to the minister of water and power on DBD, it appears that the

World Bank does not want the dam constructed by the Asian Development Bank, and that the Friends of Democratic Pakistan are stated to be willing to finance the project. This is a large spanner in some very considerable works. With the failure to get provincial consensus on the Kalabagh Dam, it was vital that the Diamer-Bhasha Dam got national support. This it did, with support by the provinces and the Council of Common Interests (CCI).

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-181760-Dam-dispute>

Aziz Ali Dad, “Power and periphery”

The News, June 6, 2013

The recent election season in Pakistan created a flurry of activity among those who subscribe to parties of various political persuasions. But Gilgit-Baltistan- because of its anomalous political setup within the polity of Pakistan - did not experience the sort of activities that are typical of election time. It is because of this different political status that any political development or change in the region does not affect the political dispensation at the national level.

However, change of power in the centre does create ripples in the stagnant political landscape of Gilgit-Baltistan. It is visible in the post-election euphoria and in the statements of PML-N leaders who soon after the May 11 elections started to demand that Pir Karam Ali Shah be removed as governor of Gilgit-Baltistan. Aggrandised by the success of their party in the centre, some PML-N leaders are even enjoining the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) to mend its way or get ready for dissolution. Feeling the heat, Chief Minister Mehdi Shah warned Nawaz Sharif against “meddling” in the affairs of the Gilgit-Baltistan government.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-182181-Power-and-periphery>

“Syed Yousuf Naseem nominated APHC-AJK Convener”

June 8, 2013

SRINAGAR: The Chairman of All Parties Hurriyet Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, nominated Hurriyet leader, Syed Yousuf Naseem, as Convener

of the APHC-AJK chapter, and asked him to perform all political and diplomatic activities of the Hurriyet Conference in Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq in a statement issued in Srinagar noted that the nomination of Syed Yousuf Naseem was unanimously decided during the last meeting of the Executive Council of the Hurriyet Conference.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2013/06/08/syed-yousuf-naseem-named-aphc-ajk-convener.html>

AH Rao, “Indian flag displayed at AJK institute's office”

The Nation, June 7, 2013

MIRPUR: For the first time in the 66-year history of Azad Jammu & Kashmir territory, the Indian national flag has been displayed along with the national flags of various other countries at the building of the state-run Kashmir Institute of Management in the capital city of Muzaffarabad. One wonders whether it is a deliberate attempt or an inadvertent act of the administration of the Kashmir Institute of Management, the government-funded body of management meant for research and training of the civil servants of the AJK government. It has brought the Indian 'Tiranga' to the liberated territory of Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

The KIM management, according to reports, claim themselves as a think tank which devises policies on various governance issues. According to the available information, the Kashmir Institute of Management has displayed, for permanently, the national flags of various foreign countries including India's in the premises of its building in Muzaffarabad without taking care of the sensitivity of Jammu & Kashmir state including AJK.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/07-Jun-2013/indian-flag-displayed-at-ajk-institute-s-office>

“Jubilant N lovers throng AJK streets”

The Nation, June 7, 2013

MIRPUR: The election of Nawaz Sharif as third-time prime minister was widely celebrated by the party supporters and common public as well across Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The supporters of Nawaz

Sharif thronged the streets in various AJK cities and towns to celebrate the election of Sharif as the prime minister with a thumping majority. Addressing the jubilant gathering at Allama Iqbal Road, Senior Vice President of AJK Chamber of Commerce & Industry Muhammad Mubeen Khan stated that the landslide victory of the PML-N under the dynamic leadership of the prime minister was in fact the advent of a new era of speedy progress and prosperity of Pakistan including Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/07-Jun-2013/jubilant-n-lovers-throng-ajk-streets>

“AJK govt introducing self-accountability system”

Pakistan Observer, June 7, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed stated that his government was introducing self-accountability system in the State, which would ensure the rule of law and help removing exploitation system and VIP culture in AJK. This he stated in a briefing to Under-Training Officers of Audit and Accounts on June 6. He stated that his government was making efforts to introduce a new culture of merit so that nobody could fall a prey to discrimination. Chaudhry Abdul Majeed stated that present government was working on a policy to provide basic facilities of life to the masses.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=209041>

“Skardu admin asked to vacate press club building”

Dawn, June 10, 2013

SKARDU: Local leaders of political parties and journalists on June 9 threatened to launch a protest movement across Gilgit-Baltistan if the district administration didn't withdraw 'occupation' of the Skardu Press Club building immediately. Addressing a joint news conference at the local press club, Syed Mazahar Hussian, representing all the political parties in the region, demanded of the federal and provincial governments to solve the issue. “Political parties' activists will start a campaign in support of local media men to press the

administration to vacate the press club. And if any untoward incident happens during the agitation, the government will be responsible for it,” he threatened.

<http://beta.dawn.com/news/1017243/skardu-admin-asked-to-vacate-press-club-building>

“Neglecting tourism: Scenic Sharda, Taubutt valleys losing domestic tourists”

The Express Tribune, June 9, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The failure of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) tourism department to promote tourism and associated services in scenic Sharda and Taubutt valleys has drawn flak from locals. These scenic tourist resorts, with natural attractions and huge tourism potential in Neelum Valley, could prove to be a boon for the locals, especially the unemployed youth, if its potential is tapped, locals noted.

Although tourism has great potential to become the mainstay of Kashmir's economy, the effort required to make it attractive for tourists was lacking, the locals further stated. Sharda, the heart of Neelum Valley and famous for freshwater streams, used to attract a large number of tourists every year, but due to lack of synergy on the part of the department concerned, the locality is fast losing its attraction even for domestic tourists.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/560818/neglecting-tourism-scenic-sharda-taubutt-valleys-losing-domestic-tourists/>

“Committee formed: Kashmiri refugees' issues to be solved soon”

The Express Tribune, June 12, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on June 11 constituted a three-member committee headed by the chief secretary of Azad Kashmir, Ilm Din Balu to address the issues of 1989 Kashmiri refugees settled in AJK. According to the sources, the AJK government has taken the Kashmiri refugees June 10 sit-in and rally in front of Central Press Club seriously and formed a body on the special instructions of Prime Minister, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed to straighten out their demands including the handing out of National Identity Cards (NICs) to the Kashmiri refugees who

migrated from Jammu and Kashmir in early 1990s. Sources further stated that Balu has moved a summary to the prime minister's secretariat for the endorsement to implement six per cent quota of Kashmiri refugees in government jobs in AJK. The committee also discussed the issue of monthly stipends (Gozara Allowance) and suggested the AJK government to write a letter to the federal government for the delivery of NICs and raise in the monthly stipend as both subjects are under the ambit of the central government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/561980/committee-formed-kashmiri-refugees-issues-to-be-solved-soon/>

“GB employees go on strike against cut in salary”

Dawn, June 13, 2013

GILGIT: Employees of various departments, including civil secretariat, on June 12 observed a pen down strike to demand revocation of a federal government notification withdrawing a special allowance paid to government workers in the region. The region's all employees association had given call for the strike. Routine work was suspended in all offices and people visiting these offices faced problems. The employees wore black ribbons on their hands. They had also displayed banners in the city inscribing their demand. The protesting workers noted that they would not join the duties till the notification was withdrawn. They declared the step a conspiracy against the employees of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://beta.dawn.com/news/1017912/gb-employees-go-on-strike-against-cut-in-salary>

Shabbir Mir, “Collecting debt?: No free lunch for G-B government employees”

The Express Tribune, June 12, 2013

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government employees boycotted their duties on June 12 after their special allowances were declared null from 2011 onwards. On the directives of the Ministry of Finance in Islamabad, the G-B finance department issued a notification on June 4, 2013 stating the special allowances given to G-B government employees were declared seized from 2011

onwards. The notification further asked concerned authorities to recover the amount paid after 2011 to employees belonging to the region. The decision is also applicable to pensioners. “This is sheer injustice and we will resist it at all levels,” stated G-B All Employees Association President, Bahadur Khan. The association, a representative body of local employees, gave the call for a strike which was simultaneously observed by 37,000 employees in the region's seven districts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/562363/collecting-debt-no-free-lunch-for-g-b-government-employees/>

Zubair Torwali, “The resentful”

The News, June 12, 2013

Two major issues affect the most vulnerable in the world today - globalisation and climate change. And among those who are vulnerable, the most affected are those who have been marginalised. Globalisation consumes the world's cultural diversity whereas climate change threatens biodiversity and natural resources, leaving vulnerable communities and nations at the mercy of natural disasters. Pakistan is among the worst victims of both these phenomena and here too marginalised communities bear most of the brunt. There seem to be layers of marginalisation in Pakistan. There are many who don't have any say in the political affairs of the country.

Most of them are indigenous to the land and dwell in the northern mountainous ranges. The land these communities inhabit is rich in cultural heritage as well as natural resources. In Pakistan these communities are the least known and least represented politically. Very few people know about the indigenous communities of Chitral, Dir, Swat, Indus Kohistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Having been cut off from unified power centres centuries ago, these communities have yet to assert their political rights.

Gilgit-Baltistan is a 'province' only in name; the same can be stated of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The so-called chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan and prime minister of AJK answer to certain federal under-secretaries. This is not much different from the 'colonial period' when political agents did this

duty. It may even be stated that at times the then English political agents or governors did better than their present counterparts.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-183217-The-resentful>

Waqas Naeem, “Trailblazer: In G-B, a legislator who champions women's rights”

The Express Tribune, June 14, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Bills on women's empowerment and the state of child rights in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) were passed by G-B's lawmakers, owing to the efforts of a female legislator from Gilgit. The G-B Assembly, in its 28th session that ended on May 27, passed two bills, one dealing with protection against sexual harassment of women at the workplace and another on safeguarding child rights. Both bills were introduced by Sadia Danish, adviser to the G-B chief minister for sports, culture, tourism and youth affairs.

“As a woman I felt I should pave the way for future women legislators to contribute meaningfully towards the development of G-B's women and improving their basic health and education,” Danish noted at the G-B House in Islamabad. She stated the anti-sexual harassment bill, passed on May 21, was adapted from the National Assembly's Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 in light of G-B's cultural norms.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/562905/trailblazer-in-g-b-a-legislator-who-champions-womens-rights/>

Imaduddin, “MoU to be signed between SC, AJK judiciary for enhancing cooperation”

Business Recorder, June 13, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry stated that an MoU would be signed between the Supreme Court of Pakistan and judiciary of AJK to enhance cooperation with each other. The Chief Justice was talking to a 21-member delegation of District Bar Association, Mirpur, Azad Kashmir headed by its President Sardar Ijaz Nazir and comprising other office bearers. He apprised the delegation that the Chief Justice of Azad Jammu & Kashmir desired to sign the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the

Pakistan's judiciary for coordination in the administration of justice.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/1-front-top-news/123670-'mou-to-be-signed-between-sc-ajk-judiciary-for-enhancing-cooperation'.html>

Parvez Jabri, “Govt announces 30 mega watt power house: Ibrahim”

Business Recorder, June 17, 2013

ASTORE: The federal government won the heart of the masses by announcing 30 mega watt power house for Gilgit Baltistan, stated Former Advisor to CM, Ibrahim Shanai on June 17. He stated the project will meet the energy shortage in the region. The project would also provide job opportunities to the unemployed, he added. He thanked the PML-N government for taking decision in favour of people of the area.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/industries-a-sectors/124064-govt-announces-30-mega-watt-power-house-ibrahim.html>

“PML-N calls for audit of AJK Council”

Dawn, June 16, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) chapter of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has demanded of its party's government in Islamabad to conduct special audit of the AJK Council to bring into open “rampant corruption in this institution at the hands of its in-charge federal ministers and bureaucrats.” The demand came from PML-N AJK chapter president, Raja Farooq Haider at a function held on June 15, to mark the joining of PML-N by Chaudhry Abdur Rasheed, a Muslim Conference leader from Neelum Valley, along with his companions. It was also addressed by PML-N AJK secretary general, Shah Ghulam Qadir. “We call upon Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Kashmir affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Birjees Tahir to conduct special performance audit of the AJK Council since 2006 to expose the plunder of our resources in this institution and bring the culprits to justice,” stated Mr Haider.

<http://beta.dawn.com/news/1018500/pml-n-calls-for-audit-of-ajk-council>

Shabbir Mir, “Joy and relief: Special allowance for G-B's govt employees restored”

The Express Tribune, June 16, 2013

GILGIT: Employees of Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) government ended the boycott of their duties on June 15 after Chief Minister Mehdi Shah announced the restoration of a 25% special allowance revoked earlier. “On the instructions of Mehdi Shah, G-B chief secretary has issued directives to concerned officials to restore the allowance,” stated a press release issued by the chief minister's office on June 14. “We will not allow injustice to be done to anybody,” Shah was quoted as saying in the handout. The much welcome announcement spread jubilation, as employees congratulated each other and offered sweets to celebrate.

“We are thankful the government took the case of poor employees seriously and on humanitarian grounds,” All Employees Association President, Bahadur Khan stated on June 15.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/563669/joy-and-relief-special-allowance-for-g-bs-govt-employees-restored/>

Qaiser Butt, “Bridging gaps: Efforts under way to mend PML-N-Muslim Conference ties”

The Express Tribune, June 15, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Efforts to remove differences between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) are reportedly under way. Highly informed sources have revealed a few diplomats from Muslim countries are trying to restore working relations between the two parties. The move has been confirmed by AJKMC president, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan. In an interview, the Kashmiri leader confirmed the development saying that his party believes in close working ties with PML-N “in the interest of Kashmir and Kashmiris”.

“An ideological understanding already exists between AJKMC and PML-N,” Attique pointed out. He added, however, saying that certain people in PML-N 'with vested interests' were constantly creating obstacles for mending the relationship between the two parties. The AJKMC president

refused to share any further details regarding mending efforts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/563462/bridging-gaps-efforts-under-way-to-mend-pml-n-muslim-conference-ties/>

“CJP to visit Muzaffarabad next month”

Pakistan Observer, June 19, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry would visit Muzaffarabad in August 2013 where he is likely to lay the foundation stone of the new building of Azad Kashmir (AJK) Supreme Court. Reception committees will be formed in next week, and it will be his first visit to Azad Kashmir during 5 years. On this occasion his address to the central bar is also expected.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=210256>

“Gilgit Baltistan: Activist Calls For End To Pakistani Occupation”

June 18, 2013

Mirza Abdul Salam, former Rawalpindi/Islamabad president of the Balawaristan National Student Organisation (BNSO), is now studying in Sydney. He is keen to do what he can to let the world know about the plight of his people in the remote nation of Gilgit Baltistan, which has been occupied by Pakistan since 1948. Before the independence and partition of India in 1947, Gilgit Baltistan was occupied by the British-supported feudal rulers of Kashmir. Bordering Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, and India, the area is claimed by both Pakistan and India. However, Salam noted the people of Balwaristan reject both these claims. “Gilgit Baltistan has a separate national identity. Gilgit Baltistan is not Kashmiri nor Pakistani. It was an independent state occupied by the Raja of Kashmir in the 19th century. “We are proud of the thousands-of-years-old civilisation of Baltistan. Our language, script, architecture, clothing, cuisine, festivals, dances and epic stories of Baltistan are unique.” Salam stated the United Nation allowed Pakistan to assume temporary control over Gilgit Baltistan. The UN stationed officials representing the UN Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan in both Gilgit and Skardu cities.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/16079>

“Money matters: AJK audit staff on strike”

The Express Tribune, June 18, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Hundreds of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Audit and Accounts Department employees staged a protest on June 17, demanding wage increments. They want the government of Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Council to increase their salaries by 10 to 15 per cent. Threatening to intensify the protest, Audit and Accounts Employees Welfare Association (AAEWA) President, Shabir Khalid Mirza stated that if the government failed to fulfil their demands, they would begin a pen down strike across AJK. He stated it is the duty of the Kashmir Council Secretary who controls the Audit and Accounts Department to issue a notification. “They are delaying it and making false promises,” Mirza stated while addressing the protesters. Mirza stated the pen down strike would end when the Kashmir Council issues a notification bringing the Audit and Accounts Employees of Azad Kashmir pay scale at par with Audit employees in other provinces then they would end the pen down strike.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/564557/money-matters-ajk-audit-staff-on-strike/>

“Prime Minister for early completion of Neelum-Jhelum Project”

Associated Press of Pakistan, June 20, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on June 19 directed the concerned authorities to expedite construction work on Rs274.882 billion Neelum-Jhelum Hydro-power Project and make it functional till 2014-15 to overcome the power shortage issue in the country. During his visit to the site of the project, the Prime Minister told the media men that the concerned authorities had sought time for the completion of project till 2016, conditional to availability of financial resources but he had declined and instead instructed them to accomplish it till 2014-15. He regretted that such projects were conceived in the past but were not given due attention as there had been vested interests but they would have to change such culture.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=239534&Itemid=1

“Sardar Abrar Rashid, Land dispute may hamper construction of Bhasha Dam”

The News, June 20, 2013

ABBOTTABAD: Another shadow of doubt is looming large over the future of the long delayed Diamer Bhasha Dam and it might help India to get this mega project declared as controversial and consequently delayed or eventually abandoned as New Delhi could pursue its case that the dam was being constructed in the 'disputed' territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. The shadow of doubt about the project is due to the dispute between Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the boundary and their claim of ownership of the area where power houses would be located and to get royalty of net hydel profit and much before that to seek compensation for the people who will be displaced from in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-184768-Land-dispute-may-hamper-construction-of>

Mushtaq Ghumman, “Diamer-Bhasha Dam: US closely working with World Bank, ADB: Olson”

Business Recorder, June 22, 2013

United States Ambassador to Pakistan, Richard Olson revealed on June 21 that the US is closely working with multilateral institutions, i.e. World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on financing of 4500 MW multipurpose Diamer-Bhasha Dam at an estimated cost of \$13 billion. Talking to a group of journalists in a roundtable organised to unveil details of US Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference June 25-26 in Dubai, the ambassador stated the US is conducting a financing feasibility study of Diamer-Bhasha Dam, seeking support from the private sector and pursuing multilateral financial institutions. Asked if the US will use its clout with multilateral institutions which have blocked Pakistan's efforts to seek funding by insisting that Pakistan must procure a no-objection certificate from India as a precondition, the Ambassador reiterated that the US supports the project and is closely working with the multilateral institutions on financing the project.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0/1201735/>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK minister refutes charges of extravagance”

Dawn, June 22, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: AJK minister for finance, Chaudhry Latif Akbar on June 21 shrugged off allegations that the government was committing prodigality in spite of fiscal constraints and ever increasing dependence on Pakistan. “I don't think there has been any incident of wastefulness over the last two years. How can one resort to extravagance when you have just Rs45 billion for recurring expenditures, most of which goes to the payment of salaries,” he maintained at the post budget press conference. The minister made this observation after he was asked that why his budget speech was devoid of even some symbolic measures for austerity in the wake of Muzaffarabad's ever increasing reliance on Islamabad for its fiscal needs. The finance minister recalled that previously the prime ministers would use helicopters frequently, but the incumbent Premier Chaudhry Abdul Majeed had rarely used a chopper and instead had always preferred to travel by road even to the remote hilly areas of the state.

<http://x.dawn.com/2013/06/22/ajk-minister-refutes-charges-of-extravagance/>

“Illegality: Appointment of 11 AJK advisers challenged”

The Express Tribune, June 22, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The appointment of 11 advisers in Azad Kashmir (AJK) have been challenged in a local court. A three-judge bench of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court has been formed to hear a petition challenging the appointments of nine advisers to Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and two advisers to President Sardar Yaqoob Khan. The petition has been filed by the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) local leaders - Shah Ghulam Qadir and Abdul Khaliq Wasi. The petitioners' lawyer Raja Sajjad contended that the appointments of the advisers had been made under Rules of Business of Article 6 while the AJK Interim Constitution 1974 does not allow such appointments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/566498/illegality-appointment-of-11-ajk-advisers-challenged/>

“Mangla Dam: AJK seeks 45 per cent royalty from Islamabad”

The Express Tribune, June 22, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Kashmir government has sought an increase in Mangla Dam royalty. AJK Finance Minister, Chaudhry Latif Akbar on June 21 asked the federal government to give 45 per cent royalty to Azad Jammu and Kashmir as it provides to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Addressing the post-budget news conference, the finance minister stated if the federal government accepts our demand then we would be in a position to present surplus budget. He stated Kashmir Council is not paying the share of taxes worth Rs1.50 billion to the AJK government.

Akbar stated the AJK government will announce a monetary policy for banks to facilitate the people who have more than Rs200 billion deposits in their branches across the disputed state. The minister asked the banks to introduce a scheme of small loans aimed at making the remote areas people economically sound and stable.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/566603/mangla-dam-ajk-seeks-45-per-cent-royalty-from-islamabad/>

“Verification of degrees: AJK assembly votes down PML-N resolution”

The Express Tribune, June 26, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Treasury members in Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on June 25 rejected a resolution presented by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) seeking verification of the educational degrees of all members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) and government employees. The resolution was presented by deputy opposition leader of PML-N, Tariq Farooq in the budget session of the assembly. More than 30 MLAs of ruling Pakistan Peoples Party raised their hands against the resolution. Besides 12 PML-N members, four members of Muslim Conference and a ruling party member Muhammad Hussain Sargala supported the resolution to check the educational documents of all government employees across AJK. According to government sources, more than 10 MLAs and hundreds of government employees have fake

educational degrees. Dozens of fake degree holders are serving in grades 16 to 19, sources added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/568394/verification-of-degrees-ajk-assembly-votes-down-pml-n-resolution/>

“Budget debate: PML-N comes down hard on AJK govt”

Dawn, June 24, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker and deputy leader of the opposition in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly, Chaudhry Tariq Farooq opened the debate on the AJK budget for 2013-14 on June 24. In his almost two-hour long debate, the fully prepared PML-N legislator took strong exception to what he stated 'bad governance, mal-administration, financial indiscipline and corruption' by the Pakistan Peoples Party-led government.

According to him, the most abused term in AJK over the past two years was 'good governance' whereas practically the situation was more than abysmal in every field of governance. He regretted that even any symbolic austerity measure had not been proposed in the budget which clearly reflected that the government did not have any intention to give up its practice of prodigality.

<http://x.dawn.com/2013/06/25/budget-debate-pml-n-comes-down-hard-on-ajk-govt/>

Zaheerul Hassan, “Terrorists’ Objectives: Killing 11 Tourists in Diamer”

June 23, 2013

Unidentified, armed terrorists have killed 10 foreign tourists and a Pakistani guide in Diamer area that is located in remote part of northern Pakistan. Another report revealed that the number of tourists dead in the incident counted 11, which included five Ukrainian, three Chinese, while one Russian and one Pakistani. A search and rescue operation has begun in the area. No group has yet claimed responsibility. Sources stated that attackers were wearing Gilgit Scouts uniform. The tourists were taking rest in the base camp of Nanga Parbat at Fairy Meadow, near Diamer of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The unprecedented attack in Pakistan's normally

peaceful Himalayan region is spotlighting the conspicuous increase in violence throughout the country; just weeks after a new civilian government took office vowing to quell militancy. The Himalaya Range in northern Pakistan offers five the highest peaks for the amazing climb in the world. Its peaks are a magnet for experienced mountaineers, often from Europe. President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Gilgit-Baltistan chief minister Syed Mehdi Shah promptly condemned the attack in an area of the far-flung north not previously associated with violence that plagues other parts of the country. In this regard Nawaz Sharif stated, "Such acts of cruelty and inhumanity would not be tolerated and every effort would be made to make Pakistan a safe place for tourists."

<http://kashmirwatch.com/opinions.php/2013/06/23/terrorists-8217-objectives-killing-11-tourists-in-diamer.html>

“Man arrested in AJK for making bomb threat to Geo News”

The News, June 27, 2013

KOTLI: Police on June 27 arrested a man for making a bomb threat to Geo News. According to the police, Yasir, 20, a resident of Qamroti village of Kotli in Azad Kashmir, made a telephone call to Geo News office, saying that he would blow up the TV's office with a bomb. The Bomb Disposal Squad had cleared the office following a search that lasted for several hours. The police traced the accused with the help of intelligence personnel and lodged an FIR against him under Telegraph Act.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-107003-Man-arrested-in-AJK-for-making-bomb-threat-to-Geo-News>

Waqas Naeem, “Journalists’ nadir: ‘Press-ing’ for freedom, newsmen of Skardu go unheard”

The Express Tribune, June 23, 2013

ISLAMABAD: In the high mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), the already-dismal state of press freedom might be touching a new and shameful low. For the past three weeks, Skardu's journalists have been protesting against what they claim to be the G-B government's crackdown on news reporters and media organisations who are trying to expose bad governance and corruption. At a protest camp set up

next to the city's famous martyrs' monument, the journalists recount horrific stories from the recent past, replete with allegations. According to them, district and G-B government authorities have harassed reporters and editors, booked journalists on false charges and even pressured national broadcast news outlets to fire reporters who are investigating the government's spending and performance.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/566994/journalists-nadir-pressing-for-freedom-newsmen-of-skardu-go-unheard/>

“AJK PM refutes corruption allegations”

Dawn, June 28, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on June 28 came down upon those hurling allegations of corruption at his government, saying that they could not digest his achievements over the last two years. “I am developing a new political culture where there is no room for regionalism, favouritism and exploitation... If corruption of a single penny is proven against me in any court of law, I am ready to face the gallows,” he stated, while winding up debate on AJK's budget for next fiscal year in the Legislative Assembly.

<http://x.dawn.com/2013/06/29/ajk-pm-refutes-corruption-allegations/>

“Nanga Parbat attack cannot dent Pak-China ties”

Pakistan Observer, June 29, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) General Manager Sheikh Fayyaz Ahmed on June 28 stated that PTDC has beefed up the security for its local and foreign tourists, after Nanga Parbat camp attack incident. Sheikh Fayyaz Ahmed stated that despite the unfortunate attack at Nanga Parbat base camp, an increase of more than 25 percent was witnessed by the fall of June 2013.

“Despite the negative media projection by the international media, PTDC achieved its targets to promote domestic tourism during the start of March to June”, Fayyaz added. He stated that PTDC has increased security at all resorts including Murree,

Galiyat, Ayubia, Kaghan, Swat Chitral, Kalash, Shandur and at all other valley resorts. He stated PTDC has re-launched summer tour packages and announced special rates for its hotels, motels and resorts situated in most attractive tourists place in the country.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=211139>

“Pre-budget press conference: Azad Kashmir minister seeks share in NFC award”

The Express Tribune, June 17, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Finance Minister, Chaudhry Latif Akbar on June 16 stated the government of Pakistan should open the doors of the National Finance Commission (NFC) award for the people of Azad Kashmir. “The state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir should get representation on the NFC Award,” Akbar stated in a pre-budget press conference. According to him, a share in NFC award will make AJK economically stable, he stated. The NFC award decides the distribution of financial resources, in the shape of pooled taxes by the centre to the provinces. The finance minister also demanded that the federal government give the water use charges of Mangla Dam to the people of AJK.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/564234/pre-budget-press-conference-azad-kashmir-minister-seeks-share-in-nfc-award/>

Shaiq Hussain, “Pakistan scrambles for damage control over GB attack”

Pakistan Today, June 24, 2013

ISLAMABAD: With Islamabad set to send one of its two top Foreign Ministry officials to Beijing on June 25 to assure the Chinese leadership about a thorough probe into the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) incident, the United States and China have offered Islamabad their support in investigation into July 23 killing of foreign tourists in Diamir district. The government will send either Sartaj Aziz, adviser to PM Nawaz Sharif on Foreign Affairs or Tariq Fatemi, special assistant to the prime minister on foreign affairs, to China and this government's emissary would leave on June 25, the diplomatic sources stated. The Pakistani envoy would convey

condolences from Pakistani leadership to the top Chinese leadership and extend firm assurance that stern action would be taken against the culprits and that all possible measures would be taken for the security of Chinese and other foreign nationals in Pakistan.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/06/24/news/national/pakistan-scrambles-for-damage-control-over-gb-attack/>

Tahir Khalil, “Chief Secretary, IGP suspension not acceptable, says GB CM”

The News, June 25, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Reacting to the suspension of Gilgit-Baltistan chief secretary and Inspector General of Police (IGP) by the federal government over the killing of nine tourists and a Pakistani national, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah on June 24 stated the action was not acceptable to him. Mehdi has sent a letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in which he pointed out a number of problems facing his government. He stated resources should be provided to him for establishing peace in the area. Mehdi stated despite being chief minister he did not have a helicopter to visit the site of bloodbath at Nanga Parbat base camp where the tourists were killed.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-23722-Chief-secretary-IGP-suspension-not-acceptable-says-GB-CM>

“National Assembly condemns Gilgit attack”

The Nation, June 23, 2013

The National Assembly on June 23 unanimously passed a resolution, condemning killing of foreign tourists at a tourists base camp in Nanga Parbat, Gilgit. The resolution was tabled by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Deputy Parliamentary Leader in the National Assembly, Shah Mehmood Qureshi. The resolution stated the attack on foreign tourists was aimed at tarnishing Pakistan's image in the world. It stated that the house was shocked over the killing of tourists at Fairy Meadows in Nanga Parbat.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/islamabad/23-Jun-2013/national-assembly-condemns-gilgit-attack>

Shabbir Mir, “Conspiracy: “Hidden hands”

involved in attack on foreign tourists”

The Express Tribune, June 23, 2013

GILGIT: The deadly attack on tourists near Nanga Parbat's base camp on June 23 drew strong condemnation from the public, with many urging the government to expose the “hidden hands” threatening the security of the region. In a pre-dawn attack, gunmen dressed as paramilitary forces killed nine foreign tourists in an unprecedented attack in Gilgit-Baltistan. At least three Chinese and five Ukrainian climbers were killed in the attack on the base camp, an unmanned area not previously associated with violence or militancy.

“We, the people of Diamer, condemn this heinous act against the innocent foreigners and demand a quick action against terrorists who might have entered the base camp either via Kashmir, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa or Diamer,” stated advocate Fidaullah, a former lawmaker in G-B legislative assembly. “We want authorities to monitor the routes leading into Diamer from Kashmir and Kaghan-Naran of K-P to stop infiltration of terrorists into this region,” stated Fidaullah who is a Pakistan Peoples Party leader.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/567264/conspiracy-hidden-hands-involved-in-attack-on-foreign-tourists/>

“Pakistani PM meets Chinese diplomat, expresses sorrow over victims of Gilgit attack”

June 29, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on June 29 met with China's Ambassador Sun Weidong and conveyed his condolences over the death of Chinese citizens, who were recently shot dead in Gilgit region. During the meeting, Sharif asserted that his country's friendship with China would remain the "cornerstone" of Pakistan's foreign policy, which had been a factor of peace and stability in the region, stated an official press statement.

Also, he expressed his deepest condolences to the Chinese government, people, and the effected families of the victims who were attacked in Gilgit, affirming that "the perpetrators of the tragic incident would be brought to justice." In addition,

the Premier noted that the Gwadar Port Project was the hallmark of Pak-China strategic partnership that would bring economic dividends for both Pakistan and China.

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2319667&language=en>

“3 Chinese tourists killed in Pakistan Xinhua”

China Daily, June 23, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Ten foreign tourists were shot dead by unknown gunmen in Pakistan's northern area of Gilgit in the wee hours of June 23, stated local police on June 24. Deputy Inspector General of Gilgit, Ali Sher, stated that the ten killed came from different countries including five from Ukraine, three from China and one from Russia with the tenth's nationality yet to be determined. He stated that the firing took place at about 12:30 am (local time) June 23 when unidentified gunmen opened fired at tourists living in a hotel at the foot of Nanga Parbat, the ninth highest mountain in the world. Most of the killed were mountaineers, police stated, adding that the hotel is located at a base camp of Nanga Parbat, in the Diamir area of Gilgit. An official from the Chinese Embassy to Pakistan, who asked to remain anonymous, told Xinhua that they have learned about the news and are contacting the concerned departments to know about more details.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-06/23/content_16647593.htm

“Sherpao resents plan to shelve Bhasha Dam project”

The News, June 1, 2013

PESHAWAR: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) chief, Aftab Sherpao on May 31 expressed apprehensions over the reported opposition to the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam by the World Bank and chairman of Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda). In a statement, he noted the government should come up with a clear stance to remove the confusion surrounding the mega

project. “The government must make it sure that the project is undertaken,” he stressed. He stated preference should be given to the construction of DBD, which would produce 4,500 megawatt electricity and store 80,00,000 acres of feet water, so that the power crisis could be overcome. He further stated the government should remove the hurdles hampering the undertaking of the project.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-181162-Sherpao-resents-plan-to-shelve-Bhasha-Dam-project>

Shabbir Mir, “Changing landscape?: PPP faces dilemma with coalition partners in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, June 5, 2013

GILGIT: In the aftermath of the May 11 elections and the emergence of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as the largest party at the centre, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is in a fix whether to retain its coalition partners in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Current PPP coalition partners include the JUI-F, PML-Q and Muttahida Qaumi Movement. PPP loyalists are advising G-B Chief Minister Mehdi Shah to give opportunities to his party leaders instead of coalition partners for the remaining one and half year of the current government's term.

If the PPP decides to continue partnering with the existing coalition, it is bound to face criticism from party workers. But if the PPP decides to end the coalition, its former allies will end up sitting on the opposition benches. A tough opposition such as this can further test the party's credibility, which has already been marred by allegations of corruption, misrule and nepotism. Recently, G-B Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig demanded an inquiry into the alleged corruption scams within his own government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/558911/changing-landscape-ppp-faces-dilemma-with-coalition-partners-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Economic Developments

“Fiscal deficit: Centre releases Rs5 billion additional amount to AJK govt”

The Express Tribune, June 7, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The federal government released an additional amount of Rs5 billion to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government to meet its fiscal deficit in the current financial year. Sources in the AJK finance department noted on June 6 that during the current financial year, over Rs1 billion had been incurred by five departments- agriculture, silkworm, industries, wildlife and fisheries - under the head of non-development expenditure including payment of salaries. Sources stated that the overall performance of these departments remained unsatisfactory despite receiving huge funds. “Embezzlement and misuse of funds in local government and forest departments also contributed to the fiscal deficit,” the sources stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/560030/fiscal-deficit-centre-releases-rs5-billion-additional-amount-to-ajk-govt/>

“WAPDA indicates Bhasha dam's building in 6 months”

The Frontier Post, June 11, 2013

LAHORE: The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) claimed to have arranged \$ 9 billion dollars required for construction of Bhasha dam. WAPDA officials stated that four billion dollar would be derived from Asian Development Bank, two billion out of US, \$1.50 billion at the guarantee of Ghazi Brotha Power House and \$ 1.50 billion would be received from Friends of Democratic Pakistan. Sources also claimed that recommendations with international companies regarding Dam, power house and tunnels would be finalized within 10

days and permanent work would be started within next six months. Officials are of the view that they had claimed Rs 30 billion from next fiscal year but the government has assured to provide Rs 25 billion for this purpose.

It is worthy of note that the Indian lobby in Washington has been actively campaigning against Diemer Bhasha Dam, asking the US and other lenders to link their assistance for the project with a no-objection certificate from New Delhi, which claims that the dam is located in the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/19116/>

“AJK govt presents budget of Rs 55 billion”

The Frontier Post, June 20, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu Kashmir Finance Minister, Chaudhry Lateef Akbar presented the budget for next fiscal year in the Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad. According to facts and figures, Rs 10.50 billion have been allocated for welfare projects while the remaining amount would be invested in other fields. For construction of roads, the AJK government has allocated Rs 4.72 billion which comprises 45 percent of total amount allocated for welfare funds. In order to overcome energy crisis, Rs 560 million would be invested on power projects while Rs 680 have been allocated for construction of small hydel projects. Apart from this, heavy amount of Rs 850 million has been allocated for Local Government and Rural Development projects, Rs 110 million for Tourism and Rs 800 million for Education. Environmentalism also has been given importance in the budget of AJK and Rs 20 million have been allocated for this purpose.

<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/21279/>

International Developments

“UN chief 'appalled' at terrorist attack on foreign mountaineers in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Associated Press of Pakistan, June 24, 2013

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is “appalled” at the killing of a group of foreign mountaineers in the area of Gilgit-Baltistan in northern Pakistan, and called on the Pakistani government to take immediate measures in order to bring the perpetrators to justice and to ensure security, his spokesperson stated on June 23. “The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by the mounting terrorist attacks and bombings in Pakistan, which in the past several weeks alone have claimed the lives of dozens of civilians,” the spokesman noted in a statement. “While reiterating the support of the United Nations to the Government of Pakistan in the face of terrorism and extremism, he urges it to take immediate measures to bring the perpetrators to justice and to ensure security.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=240218&Itemid=2

“France condemns attack on tourists”

Associated Press of Pakistan, June 25, 2013

ISLAMABAD: France on June 24 strongly condemned the attack against foreign tourists and their guide in Gilgit-Baltistan and urged action against the perpetrators. A statement issued from the French Embassy in Islamabad expressed condolences to the relatives of the victims. France also urged the Pakistani authorities to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of this attack.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=240260&Itemid=2

Iqbal Mirza, “Gilgit incident: Ukrainian diplomats facing tremendous pressure”

Business Recorder, June 27, 2013

Ukrainian diplomats in Pakistan are facing

tremendous pressure on account of recent unpleasant incident of ruthless and cruel murder of three Ukrainian mountaineers in the remote area of Northern Pakistan. Consul Olexander Melnikov from Embassy of Ukraine, Islamabad stated: “We had to complete various procedures for compliance on both sides for arranging the repatriation of dead bodies. In addition, we have also been able to establish contacts with the surviving mountaineers.”

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1203884/>

“Chinese survivor of Diامر attack speaks of ordeal”

The News, June 28, 2013

KUNMING: The survivor who escaped from the pre-dawn terrorist attack in Pakistan's northern Gilgit-Baltistan area held a press conference on June 27 in Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province. On the morning of June 23, a group of gunmen dressed as paramilitary police stormed a base camp for the 8,125-meter snow-covered Nanga Parbat peak, the ninth-highest mountain in the world, and shot dead two Chinese mountaineers, one Chinese American, five Ukrainians, one Russian and one Pakistani guide. AFP stated that the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. "They shot me and the bullet flew over my head. I had no consciousness at that time. After one second, I ran as quickly as possible and jumped into a trench 30 meters away from the camp, and escaped the dangerous situation. After 40 minutes, I sneaked back to the camp and found the satellite phone, and called the police after one hour," stated Zhang Jingchuan, survivor of the attack.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-107170-Nanga-Parbat-attack:-Chinese-surviour-speaks-of-ordeal>

Other Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit water shortage dries up agro activities”

The Express Tribune, June 23, 2013

GILGIT: The ongoing water shortage in Gilgit Town has hit the agricultural sector, dramatically decreasing the output of crops, vegetables and fruit trees. The water shortage began in the first week of June, when a flash flood swept away a major water channel in Kargah valley. This disconnected the water supply to the town, which is inhabited by nearly 50,000 people. The disruption initially caused a week-long drinking water shortage. Following temporary arrangements made by authorities, this issue was resolved to some extent. “My vegetables have dried up and it is getting harder to keep them alive with each passing day,” stated Zubair Ali, a small farmer in Gilgit. “It has been a month since the water channel dried out and nobody knows when the supply will be resumed.” The two main channels in Gilgit Town, Ajeeni Dalja and Khireeni Dalja, are the main source of irrigation in the town which gets its water from Kargah valley.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/566991/gilgit-water-shortage-dries-up-agro-activities/>

Shabbir Mir, “Ties that bind: Chinese cemetery to be renovated by October”

The Express Tribune, June 6, 2013

GILGIT: Chinese authorities are optimistic they will complete the renovation of a decades-old Chinese cemetery by October 2013. The renovation is being carried out to pay homage to Chinese labourers and engineers who lost their lives nearly 40 years ago during the construction of the Karakoram Highway (also referred to as the 'Friendship Highway') during 1966-76. The cemetery - locally known as 'China Yadgar'- is located in Danyor, nearly 10 kilometres from Gilgit River. The foundation stone for a renovated graveyard was laid by Chinese and Pakistani

officials in a ceremony on April 4. Chinese Embassy Consular, Zhang Lianyou and Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Speaker, Wazir Baig participated in the event. “We will hopefully finish work by October this year,” stated MA Guiming, an official of the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) which has undertaken the task of renovating the cemetery.

The Chinese cemetery over the years has been a place worth visiting. Close to the city, it has been somewhat a tourist attraction. Those who visit Gilgit to partake in its natural beauty will place 'China Yadgar' on their itinerary; most Chinese visitors who come to Gilgit-Baltistan go to the graves to pay homage. Some of the deceased workers' relatives have also visited the graveyard.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/559325/ties-that-bind-chinese-cemetery-to-be-renovated-by-october/>

Shabbir Mir, “Hopes for a home: Families displaced in Baseen, Dalnati shifted to tents”

The Express Tribune, June 16, 2013

GILGIT: Residents displaced by floods in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) are still waiting to be repatriated. In Baseen, at least 30 families have been living in tents since their houses were inundated by flood water. “There are problems everywhere. There is no drinking water, food or medicines,” stated Ziaullah, one of the displaced people, adding that they want to return to their homes as soon as possible. The displaced residents have appealed to non-governmental organisations to extend further help. Meanwhile, almost 72 families were shifted to tents and other makeshift accommodation arrangements in Dalnati village of Ghizer Valley after houses were swept away this week. In a bid to restore routine life in the village, Minister of Education and Law, Ali Madad Sher and Deputy Commissioner, Sibtain Ahmed supervised the relief activities themselves. Apart from food and other

necessities provided by the Red Crescent Society, the district administration also set up 90 tents, provided food packs, hygiene sets and kitchen utensils to the victims. A doctor is also available for free medical treatment round the clock.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/564096/hopes-for-a-home-families-displaced-in-baseen-dalnati-shifted-to-tents/>

Shabbir Mir, “Cut off: Around 20,000 people stranded in Phandar valley since a week”

The Express Tribune, June 18, 2013

GILGIT: A major road in Phandar valley, Ghizer District - submerged during recent floods in the area - has left some 20,000 people stranded in the remote valley since a week. The road sank on June 10 when flood water from Gilgit River inundated Sosat area, a few kilometres from Phandar valley, cutting off locals from the rest of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). “About half a kilometre of the road is under water and vehicles are unable to cross it,” stated Barkat, a resident of the valley. “As an alternative, people have to climb up a hill to reach the other side,” he stated, adding a small bridge in Sosat was also destroyed by the flood water. “It seems unlikely that water will recede in the coming days or an alternative road will be made by next month,” Barkat lamented. The suspension of traffic in the area has not only cut off residents of Phandar valley, but has also jeopardized the fate of the renowned Shandur Polo Tournament held between teams from Gilgit and Chitral in July every year.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/564565/cut-off-around-20000-people-stranded-in-phandar-valley-since-a-week/>

“Fading beauty: They paved paradise to put up a concrete house”

The Express Tribune, June 24, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The construction of traditional wooden houses in the far-flung areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has been declining as the popular choice of building material is now concrete. The age-old wooden architecture of the picturesque Neelum and Leepa valleys, where people used wood from pine trees to construct houses with scenic balconies and carved wooden windows, is now being replaced by iron, stone, cement and glass. The rows of wooden houses once

standing beneath the lush green mountains of Neelum Valley are getting shorter as people in these areas are using cement and iron to construct their homes.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/567421/fading-beauty-they-paved-paradise-to-put-up-a-concrete-house/>

“AJK-GB highway to reduce distance by 800 km”

Pakistan Observer, June 27, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the National Highway Authority, Hamid Ali Khan stated that the construction of highway between Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in difficult hilly region will reduce distance by 800 kilometres. On the directives of Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, the NHA is attaching priority to highway building schemes in Azad Kashmir and under construction Kohala-Muzaffarabad road will also be completed this year, he added.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=210987>

Tariq Naqash, “Neelum valley was home to vibrant civilisation, says scholar”

Dawn, June 27, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir's picturesque Neelum valley was home to a vibrant civilisation millenniums ago, exploration and documentation of some archaeological sites of the area have revealed. The exploration and documentation of the sites were initiated by Rukhsana Saiid, a PhD scholar from the Quaid-i-Azam University's Taxila Institute of Asian Civilisations (TIAC) under the supervision of renowned archaeologist Prof Dr Muhammad Ashraf Khan in October 2012. The latest detailed survey was conducted in the second week of June, during which some important sites were discovered and documented in the valley, she noted on June 26. Ms Saiid stated that due to its geographical location and accommodating habitat the valley attracted pilgrims, monks and travellers from as far as Korea in the east, Bengal in the southeast, Tibet and Central Asia in the northwest, being on the crossroads of Silk Route and its connecting routes.

<http://dawn.com/news/1021056/neelum-valley-was-home-to-vibrant-civilisation-says-scholar>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,180 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2.973 million (1998 population census), Male, 1.850 million; Female, 1.832 million

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Sardar Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

Ethnic Groups: Gujjars, Jats, Mughal, Rajputs, Sudhan, Awan, Qureshi, Pashtuns, Shins, Ladakhi, Baltis etc.

Religious Groups: Sunni, Ahlehadith, Shia, Nurbakhshi, Christians, Qadianis, Hindus

Languages: Punjabi, Hindko, Pahari, Kashmiri, Balti, Puriki, Shina

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Source: Azad Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www. www.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Kharmang and Shigar districts

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Diamer, Ghizer, Hunza-Nagar and Gilgit districts

Ethnic Groups: Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Tatar, Mon, Pashtun, Khowar, Dom, Gujjar, Rajput and Kashmiri

Religious Groups: Shia (Twelvers), Nurbakhshi (Twelvers), Ismaili, Sunni, and Ahlehadith

Languages: Shina, Balti, Wakhi, Khowar, Gujjari, Burushaski, Puriki, Kashmiri, Pashto

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly: Total 33 members (24 members directly elected)

Governor of G-B: Pir Karam Ali Shah

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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