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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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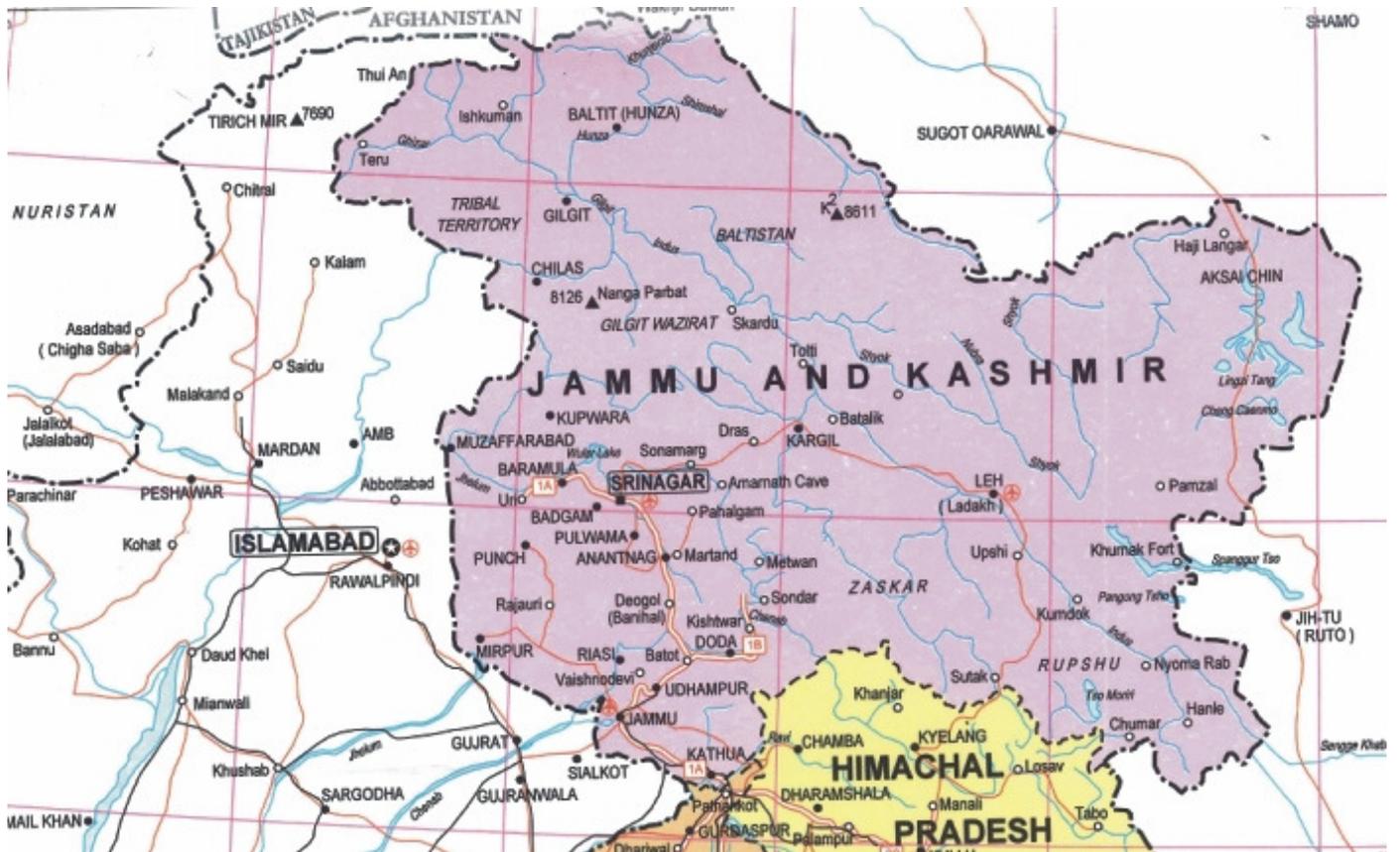
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Jammu & Kashmir

In this Edition

Months after Pakistan government's cogitating on granting Gilgit Baltistan a constitutional status, there is still no concrete outcome that would spell the future course of the region. Unlike the so-called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) which is ruled under an interim constitution since 1974, Gilgit Baltistan continues to reel under political disenfranchisement and abject state apathy. Over a period of time, a section in Gilgit Baltistan has presented its demand to be declared as a province of Pakistan. However, due to the region's link to the larger Kashmir issue, such demands have been put aside. A committee was set up under Sartaj Aziz to suggest measures that would seek to politically empower the region without really undermining Pakistan's stand on Kashmir.

In the past few months, there were also reports whether a provisional provincial status for Gilgit Baltistan is in the offing. However, it appears that the government of Pakistan is not willing to take a risk with its Kashmir strategy. In view of stiff resistance that the proposal to make Gilgit Baltistan a province was meted out to by the political leadership of the so-called AJK and the separatist constituency in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan appeared compelled to rethink its plan on Gilgit Baltistan. Pakistan seems to be weighing the pros and cons of politically absorbing Gilgit Baltistan. The inordinate delay in arriving at a decision on the issue (as reports in the current issue discuss) indicates that for the moment, the cons far outweigh the pros as far as formalising the political status of the region is concerned.

As a few reports in this issue highlight, Pakistan is pursuing a concerted strategy to malign India especially in wake of the situation arising after the killing of Hizbul Mujahidin terrorist, Burhan Wani, in July 2016. This is something which Pakistan has been doing over decades and such tactics have largely failed on all counts. However, India, at some point, must think in terms of unleashing an aggressive counter strategy that could not only puncture false claims made by Pakistan but also serve to bolster India's position on the Kashmir issue especially at the international stage.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“GOVT Implementing Plan to Enhance Forest Covered Area: CM”

Radio Pakistan, September 1, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted that the Government is implementing a plan to enhance Forest covered area. Presiding over a briefing by Forest Department and World Wildlife Fund Pakistan in Gilgit, he directed to identify the areas where plantation would be initiated. Chief Minister was informed that one lac and eighteen thousand saplings have been planted in 90 acre land under green Pakistan program in Gilgit Baltistan so far.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/01-Sep-2017/govt-implementing-plan-to-enhance-forest-covered-area-cm>

“India has almost lost Held Kashmir too: Haider”

The Nation, September 1, 2017

Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that Kashmiris wanted to be part of Pakistan and there was no second option. “Kashmiris can never even think of anything but merger with Pakistan,” he added. “No one should doubt our intention. We have been in the struggle to be part of Pakistan for the last 70 years”, he noted. He stated our country Pakistan has been confronted with many challenges since the last few years but the nation has boldly faced them through its unshakable resolve. He also stated that after India started realising the fact that Kashmir is going out of its clutches, it started conspiring to change the demographics of Kashmir. The prime minister further noted his government would take steps regarding Kashmir’s current situation in consultation with the government of Pakistan. Haider strongly condemned the recent statement of US President Donald Trump praising Indian role in Afghanistan. He noted that

Pakistan, not India had sacrificed thousands of civilians and security personnel during the war against the terror.

<http://nation.com.pk/01-Sep-2017/india-has-almost-lost-held-kashmir-too-haider>

“JuD chief Abdul Rehman Makki warns Pakistan Govt against interfering in Jihad for ‘Azad Kashmir”

News Nation, September 5, 2017

Terrorist organisation Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Abdul Rehman Makki on September 4 made inflammatory comments against India in a public meeting in Lahore, Pakistan. “Today soldiers are ready to give life for the cause of ‘Azad Kashmir’... what government could not do in 70 years, Jihaad will solve that problem now. The terrorist organisation head also warned Pakistan administration against crackdown on its operations, “We told the rulers not to mess with ‘jihaad’, for it is run by the God, those who try to interfere in holy war are pushed away by the God,” JuD chief noted at public meeting. Earlier on September 1, Makki vowed to intensify “Jihad” against Jammu and Kashmir in India. He made these remarks in a speech at the “Shohda-e-Kashmir” conference held at Al-Daawa Model School in Lahore. The event was held to observe the “martyrdom” of militant Abu Waleed Mohammad, who was killed in Bandipora on March 3, 2017 by Indian security forces. JuD chief Abdul Rehman Makki is brother-in-law of Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed and was recently given charge of the terrorist organisation after Saeed was put under the house arrest by Pakistan’s Punjab government.

<http://www.newsnation.in/india-news/jud-chief-abdul-rehman-makki-warns-pakistan-govt-against-interfering-in-jihad-for-azad-kashmir-article-181220.html>

Sardar Sikander, “Haider hails resolution on Kashmir cause”

The Express Tribune, September 5, 2017

As cross-border firings continue across the Line of Control, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government welcomed a recent resolution passed by Parliament in Islamabad which put its weight behind the Kashmir cause. In a statement issued on September 4, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider noted that under the present circumstances, when the Kashmir movement in the Himalayan territory was passing through a critical phase, Kashmiris had welcomed the resolution. He added that the Pakistani armed forces will never compromise on Kashmir. Reacting to the resolution, Haider appreciated how all political parties had banded together to pass the resolution. “There are 22 million people behind this resolution and after passing it, a strong message has been conveyed by the Pakistani nation to the people of Kashmir,” Haider noted.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1498061/haider-hails-resolution-kashmir-cause/>

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit’s British cemetery: a local monument to the Great Game”

Dawn, September 6, 2017

Sitting under the shade of trees, Ghulam Ali stares at the graves around him. These are, perhaps, his last days working as the caretaker of this old graveyard and although he has already retired from the job, he continues to work as a volunteer till the government appoints his replacement. There are at least 18 graves in what is now called the British cemetery. Situated in the heart of Gilgit city — the capital of mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) which featured prominently in the historical narrative of the imperialist Great Game — the significance of this final resting place of British military personnel, foreign explorers, trekkers and mountaineers who lost their lives thousands of miles away from home is lost on many of the locals. The period of Hayward’s arrival in the region is stated to coincide with the height of imperial expansion by the two competing

empires of Russia and Britain. It is when Russia, which had hitherto confined itself to the north, began expanding towards the south when the space between the areas occupied by the two empires began shrinking rapidly. It is during this time that clandestine agents and explorers were sent to this unknown area of the world full of ‘lawless’ tribes and ‘murderous despotic’ rulers, amid some of the most formidable and challenging terrains on earth. “The cemetery is a historic place with a wealth of knowledge, but strangely it is not an attraction for locals,” says Sherbaz Ali Barcha, a well-known historian from Gilgit. Barcha believes that the government should accord the cemetery due attention and promote it as a possible tourist spot. The cemetery was last renovated in 2002 with financial support from the UK and the GB governments. They had funded the construction of pathways, gravestones and a boundary wall for its protection.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1355924/gilgits-british-cemetery-a-local-monument-to-the-great-game>

“Muslims in Myanmar Facing Growing Persecution: Barjees”

Radio Pakistan, September 6, 2017

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Barjees Tahir stated that Muslims all over the world are facing severe human rights violations and atrocities by the hands of occupying forces. In a statement in Islamabad on September 6, he noted that Muslims in Myanmar are facing growing persecution. The Minister urged the international community and world bodies including United Nations and OIC to put pressure on Myanmar to stop ethnic cleansing of the Muslims.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/06-Sep-2017/muslims-in-myanmar-facing-growing-persecution-barjees>

“Construction Work of RCC Bridge in Skardu Underway”

Radio Pakistan, September 6, 2017

Construction work of Gilgit-Baltistan longest RCC bridge at Chumak, Skardu is in progress at a cost of

750 million rupees. On September 5, the Minister for Works Gilgit-Baltistan Dr. Muhammad Iqbal noted the project will be completed in April 2018. He also stated that the 276 meter long bridge will connect Skardu with Chumak reducing travel distance to Shigar district.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/05-Sep-2017/construction-work-of-rcc-bridge-in-skardu-underway>

“AJK terms Pak armed forces world’s best”

The Nation, September 7, 2017

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan on September 6 stated that in the last 52 years, the valiant armed forces of Pakistan have become the strongest in the world. “Because of their strategic, conventional strength and thorough professional grounding of personnel, the armed forces of Pakistan have become guarantors of Pakistan’s security,” the AJK President noted while addressing a ceremony hosted in the AJK’s metropolis Muzaffarabad - to mark the Defense Day. He expressed full solidarity with the families of the martyrs and noted that it is the collective responsibility of the entire nation to invest in the future of the martyrs’ families. Today, he noted, thousands of soldiers from Azad Kashmir are part of Armed Forces of Pakistan and defending Pakistan on all fronts. He thanked the armed forces of Pakistan for defending the Azad Kashmir territory by safeguarding the LOC round the clock. He also congratulated the armed forces in the recent successes in the operation of Ruddul Fasaad.

<http://nation.com.pk/07-Sep-2017/ajk-terms-pak-armed-forces-world-s-best>

“Prioritise Kashmir resolution instead of abusing Pakistan: Gen Bajwa to India”

Kashmir Narrator, September 7, 2017

Pakistan’s Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa asked India to stop “insulting Pakistan” and resolve the Kashmir issue through political and diplomatic means. “India should realise that the peaceful struggle of hundreds of thousands of youth in Kashmir does not need interference from Pakistan or Azad Jammu

and Kashmir. It is in India’s favour that they prioritise political and diplomatic solutions for sustainable resolution of the Kashmir issue instead of insulting Pakistan and using force against Kashmiris,” General Bajwa noted while paying tribute to “the martyrs of the 1965 war” on Pakistan’s 52nd Defence Day at General Headquarters on September 6. “Pakistan is a responsible nation. We did not bring nuclear weapons to South Asia. And even now these weapons are simply a guarantee of peace in answer to a neighbouring country which is high on power. It is this country which has brought unconventional war to the South Asian region,” he noted.

<http://kashmirnarrator.com/prioritise-kashmir-resolution-instead-abusing-pakistan-gen-bajwa-india/>

“AJK Legislative Assembly to Meet on Sep 14”

Radio Pakistan, September 7, 2017

The AJK President Masood Khan convened the special session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad on 14th of September. Sources in the AJK Legislative Assembly noted that more draft bills are being approved in the upcoming session of the Assembly.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/07-Sep-2017/ajk-legislative-assembly-to-meet-on-sep-14>

“GB govt makes winter food plan”

Dawn, September 8, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan food minister Mohammad Shafiq on September 7 stated that the government had made a plan to ensure food availability in snowbound areas during the winter season. “We’re ensuring food availability in the snowbound areas ahead of the winter season. The transportation of wheat from Rawalpindi has been expedited,” he noted in a statement. The minister also stated that 15 to 20 trucks transported wheat to Gilgit-Baltistan daily. Gultori, Manimarg, Kamari, Kashi, Franchat, Follok, Ginyar and Hispar Nagar villages remain cut off from the rest of the region during the winter season due to heavy snowfall from December to April as approach roads to these hamlets are blocked due to snow. The

minister also stated that the government's target was to dispatch food items to the people of snowbound areas for one year before the blockade of link roads. He further stated that wheat to be dispatched to the villages was stocked in government stores and that the food department would dispatch basic commodities of life, especially wheat, to snowbound areas. Tanveer Ahmad, a social worker of Minimarg village in Astore district, stated snowfall and freezing weather in the far-flung areas during the winter season added to the misery of the local residents.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1356372/gb-govt-makes-winter-food-plan>

“AJK premier for including Kashmiris in Pak delegation to UN”

The Nation, September 8, 2017

Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan noted during his visit to The Nation and Nawa-i-Waqt offices on September 8. “Whenever the plebiscite would be conducted the majority of Kashmiris are going to vote in favour of Pakistan. Even Hindus of Kashmir also favour Pakistan as for them Sialkot and Lahore are near in comparison to Delhi, Gujarat and Bombay,” he maintained. The prime minister noted that AJK government in November 2017 will brief European Union about the Kashmir situation.

<http://nation.com.pk/08-Sep-2017/ajk-premier-for-including-kashmiris-in-pak-delegation-to-un>

“AJK PM meets Maryam: ‘NA-120 will decide fate of national politics’”

Pakistan Today, September 8, 2017

Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq stated that the results of NA-120 by-polls will decide the fate of Pakistan's politics. He called on Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) NA-120 campaign in-charge Maryam Nawaz on September 8. Farooq stated that Kashmiris stand with Nawaz Sharif and “my presence here testifies this notion”. Maryam Nawaz thanked him for the support and stated that people of Kashmir have always stood

by the party and their active participation in the campaign is appreciated. Kashmiri living within Lahore and even from Kashmir have come to the constituency to show support for PML-N's cause. Senator Asif Kirmani, Senator Saleem Zia, State Minister Nasir Dar, Mushtaq Minhas, Kashmir council member Abdul Khaliq Wasi and others were present on the occasion.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/09/08/ajk-pm-meets-maryam-na-120-will-decide-fate-of-national-politics/>

“Govt decides to introduce goods processing system to bolster trade: CM”

Pakistan Observer, September 9, 2017

Chief Minister (CM) Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman on September 8 stated the government has decided to introduce a modern processing system for different goods in order to promote trade and business activities in the province. He stated the government was taking comprehensive measures for introduction of a processing system so that the overall production capacity of the province could be increased. The CM disclosed this while talking to officers of Customs Department led by Member Customs Zahir Khokhar who called on him on September 8. “As we all know the importance of GB has further enhanced after CPEC and there was a need for a comprehensive policy and planning to take full advantage of this multi-faceted project on which work was already in progress,” he remarked. While appreciating the performance of Officers of Customs department at Sost Dry-Port, the CM underlined the need of modernization and effectiveness of customs system in light of CPEC for which comprehensive system fully equipped with latest tracking system was being introduced. Gilgit-Chitral-Chakdara Expressway has been included in CPEC and work on it would be started soon aimed to provide best communication facilities to the people of GB and KP. The government was spending Rs 100 billion on different road projects in GB and work on Gilgit-Skardu Road costing Rs 33 billion was being started to open up remote areas for investment.

<http://pakobserver.net/govt-decides-introduce-goods-processing-system-bolster-trade-cm/>

“Work on Gilgit-Skardu road hailed”

Pakistan Observer, September 9, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman stated September 7 that his government was all set to fulfil yet another promise by starting work on gigantic Gilgit-Skardu road costing Rs 33 billion to provide better communication facilities to people of the area. He stated that one battalion of Engineering has reached to Gilgit to initiate construction work on Gilgit-Skardu road that after completion would change destiny of people, noted a statement. ‘Those elements, who were talking that this mega project would never be materialized, shoulder now either resign from politics or tender apology from people,’ he noted. He also stated that the propagandist elements, who were making hue and cry that work on Gilgit-Skardu road would never be started and that Chief Minister GB was not taking interest in this gigantic project, were now hiding faces from masses as propaganda of these elements was proved totally wrong. The Chief Minister stated PML-N has strongly believed in practical works rather than hallow slogans and over 70 percent promises made with electorates were fulfilled before starting of the third year of his government. He also stated that political opponents have completely failed to fulfil their promises despite remaining in power for five years both in GB and Federation. He noted PML-N has created no problems for political opponents by allowing them to fulfil their promises and elections manifesto.

<https://pakobserver.net/work-gilgit-skardu-road-hailed/>

“Long-delayed reconstruction of Gilgit-Skardu Road begins”

Dawn, September 9, 2017

The long-delayed reconstruction and widening of the 170-kilometre strategically important Gilgit-Skardu Road has finally been started. The Rs33-billion project has been awarded to Frontier Works Organisation (FWO). A convoy of trucks, carrying heavy machinery and other equipment has arrived in

Skardu. Official sources noted that formal work on the project had been started. According to official documents, the federal finance ministry has also released Rs8.6 million initially for the project. The only route for the residents of Baltistan division to access other parts of the country has been in bad condition for years. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had announced to initiate the project during his visits to the region. Successive governments have promised to rebuild the road, but when in power, they ignored the promises made with the voters. The initiation of work on the artery has been hailed not only by the people but also the GB chief minister and members of the ruling PML-N.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1356578>

“AJK vows to redress Kashmiri expats’ woes”

The Nation, September 9, 2017

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan on September 8 stated that a high level commission would soon be constituted for the immediate redressal of property, identity and legal issues faced by the overseas Kashmiris. The AJK President disclosed this while talking to a delegation of overseas Kashmiris who called on him at the President Secretariat under the leadership of Raja Najabat Hussain, the chairman of Europe-based Jammu and Kashmir Self-Determination Movement. Various issues of the welfare of overseas Kashmiris, their contributions and the ongoing situation in J&K were discussed in the meeting. The president stated, “Overseas Kashmiris have made great strides and now active members in the communities of their adopted countries. They have always been productively contributing in the political, economic and social spheres in those countries.” Masood acknowledged the positive and dynamic role played by the Kashmiris living abroad in highlighting the Kashmir issue at various forums. “The Kashmiris abroad”, he noted, “are our ambassadors and by their active participation in local and national politics they have displayed their acumen in being model democratic citizens.”

<http://nation.com.pk/09-Sep-2017/ajk-vows-to-redress-kashmiri-expats-woes>

“PPIB, AJK sign deal to set up micro-hydropower projects”

The Express Tribune, September 9, 2017

The Private Power Infrastructure Board (PPIB) and the government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir have signed a facilitation agreement for cooperation and facilitation in setting up private hydropower projects of under 50MW and related infrastructure. The ceremony, held on September 8, was signed by PPIB MD Shah Jahan Mirza and government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Secretary (Electricity/PDO) Malik Israr Ahmed. Through this arrangement, a tripartite Letter of support (LoS) will be issued to the projects sponsors/companies and PPIB will facilitate them in establishing of private power projects and related infrastructure under the provisions of power generation Policy 2015. This initiative will attract and encourage potential investors in developing small to medium sized hydropower projects in AJK, which will further augment generation capabilities. The PPIB is already processing 11 medium to large-sized hydropower projects in AJK with a cumulative capacity of 4,739MW out of which three projects of 969MW are under construction after achievement of financial close. Two projects of 1,764MW are expected to achieve financial closing soon and others are at different stages and moving forward satisfactorily.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1501382/ppib-ajk-sign-deal-set-micro-hydropower-projects/>

“Problem of electricity shortage to be overcome soon: GB Governor”

Pakistan Observer, September 9, 2017

Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Mir Ghazanfar Ali noted that problem of the shortage of electricity in Hunza District would end after the completion of mega Hydel Power Project at Attabad. He noted that the power shortage has also affected the tourism sector as well and now approval has been given for the Attabad Hydel Power Project that brings prosperity in the area besides help improving the overall living standard of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. This he

noted soon after attending the briefing during his visit to Masgar Power Project. The Governor was also accompanied with Member Legislative Assembly Rani Atiqa Ghazanfar. XEN Sher Abbas while briefing the governor about Masgar Power Project is nearing to completion and from October 5, the Power Project will start electricity to upper Hunza. He stated work is continued on laying of transmission line between Masgar Gala Nadarchi to Ali Abad Hunza. Soon after the completion of the transmission line the Masgar Power Project would start electricity to central part of Hunza as well, the XEN Sher Abbas added. He informed the Governor that after such project, the load shedding would reach to a minimum level. It would certainly bring a new era to Gilgit-Baltistan after the completion of all ongoing power project, the Governor GB was quoted as noting. The Governor on this occasion directed the Works Department to complete the ongoing work on early basis on Masgar road melting so that to ensure good facilities to the people. The Governor also met the labourers working on the ongoing projects and appreciated their dedication and commitment.

<https://pakobserver.net/problem-electricity-shortage-overcome-soon-gb-governor/>

“AJK PM calls on Punjab governor”

The News, September 12, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Raja Farooq Haider called on Punjab Governor Rafique Rajwana on September 11. The meeting held at the Governor’s House discussed current political situation of the country, violence against Muslims in Burma, Kashmir and Palestine. The governor on the occasion condemned the wave of brutality against innocent Muslim population of Myanmar and noted that Pakistan would continue to raise voice over it at every forum. Raja Farooq Haider on the occasion lauded the efforts of Pakistani government due to which Kashmir issue attained global attention. He also hailed Pakistani government for extending support to Kashmiris.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/229356-AJK-PM-calls-on-Punjab-governor>

Ghulam Abbas, “PM restores parliamentary committee on constitutional reforms in GB”

Pakistan Today, September 13, 2017

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi restored the federal parliamentary committee on constitutional reforms in Gilgit Baltistan, which was dissolved after the disqualification of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by the Supreme Court in Panama case. Committee Chairman Sartaj Aziz, who is also the Planning Commission deputy chairman, stated the prime minister has re-notified the committee for making it functional. He informed that the committee has already prepared its recommendations regarding constitutional status of Gilgit Baltistan. The recommendations will be presented to Prime Minister Khaqan Abbasi by the committee next week, he noted, adding the committee had completed its work on last July 29. However, the meeting was not held due to the dissolution of the cabinet and committee constituted by former prime minister followed by the Supreme Court’s historic judgment on July 28 in Panama Case. Aziz noted a meeting of the committee would be held next week during which it would present the recommendation to the PM. He further stated that the PM would present the recommendations in Cabinet meeting for approval. Responding to a question regarding consultations with Gilgit Baltistan’s regional stakeholders, Sartaj Aziz stated the committee had consulted all the major stakeholders on recommendations. He however, stated the committee has not yet made the recommendations public.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/09/13/pm-restores-parliamentary-committee-on-constitutional-reforms-in-gb/>

“CPEC to Put Gilgit-Baltistan on Path of Rapid Development: Barjees”

Radio Pakistan, September 13, 2017

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Muhammad Barjees Tahir noted that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project will put Gilgit-Baltistan on the path of rapid development. Addressing inaugural ceremony of the camp office

of Gilgit-Baltistan Council in Gilgit on September 13, he noted Diamer Bhasha Dam and Gilgit Chitral mega road projects would be constructed under CPEC. He stated that work on Gilgit-Skardu road project has also been initiated. The Minister further stated that development projects approved by the former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for the uplift of Gilgit Baltistan will be fully implemented and the area would be made economic tiger of Pakistan. He also stated that Prime Minister Shah Khaqan Abbasi has set up a Constitutional Reforms Committee for Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/13-Sep-2017/cpec-to-put-gilgit-baltistan-on-path-of-rapid-development-barjees>

“Academy planned for GB languages’ protection”

The News, September 15, 2017

Lok Virsa has planned to establish an academy to preserve the languages of Gilgit-Baltistan. This was disclosed by Lok Virsa executive director Dr Fouzia Saeed while addressing the First Literary Festival of Gilgit-Baltistan. Dr Fouzia stated the promotion of regional languages would strengthen national solidarity and harmony. “We must feel proud for being a multi-lingual nation and love our literature and culture. We need to strive for safeguarding our regional languages considering them a beauty of Pakistan. “Language dies when people think that speaking mother language is inferior or develop a sense of inferiority and Lok Virsa is committed to the cause of promoting linguistic and cultural diversity of Pakistan,” she noted. GB chief secretary Kazim Niaz stated that languages and literature provided impressive medium of expression to common people and this allows the members of different communities to come closer. He added that Pakistani languages possess treasure trove of literature and folklore and represents the cultural plurality of the country. Later, a short documentary about revival of Lok Virsa was screened getting tremendous response of the audience.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/229994-Academy-planned-for-GB-languages-protection>

“Linkages: Tourism corridor planned in AJK”

The Express Tribune, September 15, 2017

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is planning to construct a state-of-the-art 108km-long tourism corridor with an aim to improve road infrastructure for boosting tourism in the region. AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan told renowned investor in tourism sector Malik Khalid in a meeting that the proposed tourism corridor would link different tourist sites and districts including Muzaffarabad, Sudhan Gali, Lasdana, Toli Peer, Banjosa and others through a two-way road. Besides this, the Islamabad-Lohar Tupa Expressway will be extended to Muzaffarabad while another highway from Mansehra to Mangla linking Muzaffarabad, Sudhonoti, Kotli and Mirpur districts is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1506666/linkages-tourism-corridor-planned-ajk/>

“New Vacancies to be Created in Gilgit-Baltistan: Ishaq Dar”

Such TV, September 15, 2017

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar noted new vacancies will be created to regularize service of social action plan school teachers in Gilgit Baltistan. He gave this assurance while talking to Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-Ur -Rehman in Islamabad. On the occasion, the Chief Minister apprised the Finance Minister about the problems being confronted by teachers' community.

<http://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan/item/60013-new-vacancies-to-be-created-in-gilgit-baltistan-ishaq-dar.html>

“AJKAB nabs ex-PWD officer for corruption”

The Nation, September 16, 2017

Azad Jammu & Kashmir Accountability Bureau (AJKAB) arrested Javed Iqbal Durrani, a retired deputy director of Central Design Office of PWD, for causing massive loss to the national exchequer through power abuse. Durrani has been shifted to the

Safe House of AJK Ehtesab (Accountability) Bureau in Mirpur for further investigation into a reference filed in the AJK Accountability Bureau, a spokesperson of the Bureau noted. According to the press note, Javed Iqbal Durrani has been arrested for indulging in corruption through misusing his powers being deputy director of the Central Design Office in Muzaffarabad in the AJK Government sponsored project of Kashmir Centre in Lahore. He is accused of making the payment of Rs1.05 million unlawfully to the consultant firm of the project - thus causing the loss to the public exchequer. The Bureau has already arrested two retired chief engineers of the AJK Public Works Department including Sheikh Shujaat Jalil Ahmed and Ch Illayas in the famous corruption case of Kashmir Centre Lahore's construction project. The ex-chief engineers are presently imprisoned in Central Jail Mirpur since March 2017 following the trial in AJK Ehtesab Court of Mirpur.

<http://nation.com.pk/16-Sep-2017/ajkab-nabs-ex-pwd-officer-for-corruption>

“Preparation of Feasibility Report to Set up an Economic Zone under CPEC in Progress in GB”

Radio Pakistan, September 15, 2017

In Gilgit Baltistan, preparation of feasibility report to set up an economic zone under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is in progress. Official sources noted that the government has acquired two hundred and fifty acres of land at Maqpoon Das in Gilgit for the project. The sources further noted that the government also acquired one hundred and sixty acres land in Minawar Gilgit for establishment of industrial zone.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/16-Sep-2017/preparation-of-feasibility-report-to-set-up-an-economic-zone-under-cpec-in-progress-in-gb>

“First-ever Women University in GB soon”

The Nation, September 18, 2017

The first-ever women university of international standard would be established in Gilgit Baltistan soon

to help female students of the region pursue higher education without any hurdles, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman noted. Addressing a seminar at Karakoram University, the Chief Minister stated that the universities have an important role in character-building of students besides leading them to better employment opportunities. Lauding the role of Karakoram University for organising the seminar, he further stated that this university has mandated to work as a Think Tank to guide the people of the region on various local social and other issues. He also urged the teachers that character-building of the students should be their mission, adding they should support every student to acquire higher education.

<http://nation.com.pk/18-Sep-2017/first-ever-women-university-in-gb-soon>

Abdullah Niazi. “ASWJ, MWM clerics barred from entering Gilgit during Muharram”

Pakistan Today, September 19, 2017

The Gilgit district administration banned nine clerics from entering the territory during the sacred month of Muharram. According to details, the move was made in an attempt to assure the maintenance of law and order. The news was initially reported by local Gilgit newspaper *The Pamir Times*. Meanwhile, local police have tightened security measures as the holy month approaches the country. Three members of the banned sectarian outfit Ahle Sunnat Wal Jammah, Ahmad Ludhianvi Aurangzeb Farooqi, and Azam Muaviya have been barred from entering Gilgit. Meanwhile, Raja Nasir Abbas, Sheikh Ejaz Baltistani and Amin Shaheedi of the Shiite Majlis Majlis Wahdat-e Muslimeen have also been refused entry into the region in the month of Muharram. Other than these six clerics, Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi and Arif Wahidi of the Islami Tehreek as well as Ilyas Ghumman of the MDM have all been similarly sanctioned. According to notifications, the seasonal bans have been implemented under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) law. The clerics in question are all controversial personalities and their presence in the area could cause sectarian tension and antagonism. It is pertinent to note that the banned

clerics are from both sects so that religious leaders may not be able to manipulate public sentiment at sensitive times such as Muharram.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/09/19/aswj-mwm-clerics-barred-from-entering-gilgit-during-muharram/>

Tariq Naqash, “Five held after heroin seized from IHK-bound consignment”

Dawn, September 20, 2017

Authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) arrested on September 19 five people associated with intra-Kashmir trade for alleged attempt to smuggle drugs to India-held Kashmir from the Chakothi-Uri crossing point. According to retired Major Tahir Kazmi, Trade Facilitation Officer (TFO) at the Chakothi terminal, they grew suspicious during the manual scanning of a truck, and finally seized 352 packets of heroin, weighing 51.7kg. The contraband item was concealed in two of the 22 rolls, he stated. Mr Kazmi noted that after the recovery of heroin from the first roll, he instantly called his seniors, retired Brig Tahir Hameed Mallick and retired Col Shahid, Director General and Director, respectively, of Cross-LoC Travel and Trade Authority, as well as Deputy Commissioner Abdul Hameed Kiani and Senior Superintendent of Police Riaz Haider Bukhari of Jhelum valley district to the terminal and the ensuing developments took place in their presence. According to him, apparently the mercantile goods were dispatched by one Sajjad Ahmed Zargar aka Majid Kashmiri from Rawalpindi, but he did not himself accompany the vehicle to Chakothi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358827/five-held-after-heroin-seized-from-ihk-bound-consignment>

“Balawaristan National Front writes to UN, appeals to take control over Gilgit-Baltistan”

Catch News, September 20, 2017

Highlighting the atrocities of Pakistan on the people of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, Abdul Hamid Khan, the chairman of the Balawaristan National Front (BNF), on 20 September wrote to the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, urging to take

control over the disputed region. Khan, in his letter, stated that Pakistan has turned the region into a ‘Nazi-style Torture Camp’, where the people have been deprived from their basic right to speech and justice and the one seeking them are put behind the bars by the Pakistani forces without any trail. “The BNF appeals to the UN and the UNSC to take control over this disputed region, or, at least, ask Pakistan to give the cases of the political workers and other activists to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or any other impartial court for a fair trial,” read the letter written by Khan. Khan wrote that the people of the Gilgit-Baltistan region are witnessing a ‘New Definition of Terrorism’ in which they are being falsely framed under the controversial anti-terrorist act. Elaborating the situation, Khan wrote that the real terrorists, killing innocent people and creating violence in the region, are left free and have not been brought to justice to the day. “Political activists, religious persons and students of Pakistan occupied Gilgit-Baltistan (PoGB), who do not comply with occupation regime’s dictation have been framed under the controversial anti-terrorist act and Schedule 4,” read the letter.

<http://www.catchnews.com/world-news/balawaristan-national-front-writes-to-un-appeals-to-take-control-over-gilgit-baltistan-82282.html>

“BISP role in poverty alleviation discussed”

The Nation, September 22, 2017

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon called on AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider on September 21 and discussed the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey and the role of BISP in AJK. Currently, the organisational coverage of BISP in AJK spreads over three divisions Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Poonch. In these divisions, there are 30 offices providing services to its 106,193 BISP beneficiaries. Briefing the PM, Marvi Memon stated that the support of the AJK government would be pivotal for successful completion and absolute coverage of AJK population in NSER survey. She stated half million of people live near Line of Control (LoC) under volatile security situation. She stated the new survey is technology enabled that would address the

deficiencies of the previous survey of 2010-11 and make BISP the top social safety network worldwide in terms of targeting and selection. Farooq Haider further noted that AJK government would fully support and facilitate the NSER survey teams keeping in view the difficult terrain and security situation of the area. He congratulated her for winning prestigious international awards. He also stated that by winning British Speaker’s Democracy Award and French National Order of Merit, she has brought honour to the country. The PM appreciated her concern for the Shuhada of cross LoC firing and thanked her for visiting their homes for condolence. The BISP chairperson apprised the PM on the expansion of BISP Waseela-e-Taleem (WeT) to two more districts Neelum and Haveli in AJK. She also stated that enrolment process that would start in March 2018 is expected to enrol 10,374 children in Neelum and 16,442 in Haveli. Currently, 40,220 children are enrolled in AJK under WeT that includes 13,339 children in Bagh, 19,140 in Kotli and 7,741 children in Mirpur, she noted.

<http://nation.com.pk/22-Sep-2017/bisp-role-in-poverty-alleviation-discussed>

“CM Gilgit-Baltistan directs to restart work on road metaling project in Skardu”

Such TV, September 21, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman directed the concerned authorities to restart work on road metaling project in Skardu. Taking notice of delay of re-carpeting of the road stated Government has released funds for repair and re-carpeting of roads in Skardu.

<http://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan/item/60205-cm-gilgit-baltistan-directs-to-restart-work-on-road-metaling-project-in-skardu.html>

“Gilgit-Skardu Road Expansion Project to be Completed in Next 3 Years: CM”

Radio Pakistan, September 22, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted that Gilgit-Skardu road expansion

project costing 33 billion rupees would be completed in the next three years. Talking to media men in Islamabad, he noted Federal Government has released 860 million rupees for the project in the current month. He also stated that material for construction of five delta bridges has been imported from abroad which will be transported to Gilgit within a month. He further stated that the mega project after completion will put Baltistan division on path of rapid development and generate economic activity.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/22-Sep-2017/gilgit-skardu-road-expansion-project-to-be-completed-in-next-3-years-cm>

“China races to finish Karot Hydropower project earlier”

The Express Tribune, September 22, 2017

China is racing to complete the Karot Hydropower Project located on the Jhelum River at the boundary between Punjab and Azad Kashmir ahead of schedule. “Construction on the power station is set to finish nine months ahead of its December 2021 completion date,” as reported on September 21. The shortened construction period suggested the project has gained understanding, support and trust from local authorities and the people. The Karot project’s installed capacity is 720 megawatts. By financing the project, China can gain experience that may help future efforts by China to invest in the region. According to a report, three major hydropower projects, including the Karot station, have been included in the CPEC. It noted that those projects “are being executed at a fast pace in Azad Kashmir to provide cost-effective electricity to the people”.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1512829/china-races-finish-karot-hydropower-project-earlier/>

“Bringing peace back to Gilgit Baltistan”

Dunya News, September 23, 2017

The CPEC Patrolling Police stays alert all day long for the security of Gilgit Baltistan’s 439km long highways project. The police force other than

fulfilling its basic duties including quick response action to natural disasters and emergency situations, also attend to tourists for any sort of help. China had gifted Pakistan 25 vehicles for the CPEC Patrolling Police. Currently 300 personnel are part of the police force. According to Ghulam ud Din, Superintendent Karakoram Security Force, terrorism and other notorious activities have been put to an end. “Neither will anyone’s cell phone be snatched, nor would anyone lose anything. The route is completely safe,” he noted. Over the past few years, Gilgit has been quite unfortunate in terms of the security situation. With the imposition of curfews on a daily basis and loss of hundreds of innocent lives, the valley lost its colour. But that no longer is the case. “Our first priority after we came to power was the law and order situation of the province. We have completed a state-of-the-art safe city project in Gilgit within a short span of six months, which is the country’s third largest safe city project after Lahore and Islamabad,” noted Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman. He further noted that the government has invested more than 1 billion rupees in the province’s police department. A significant increase in the number of tourists every day is a proof that peace now prevails in the province of Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/406597->

“Work on 16 MW Naltar phase-III Hydel power project in full swing”

Radio Pakistan, September 23, 2017

In Gilgit, work on sixteen megawatt capacity Naltar Phase-III hydel power project is in full swing. Heavy Mechanical Complex Taxila is executing the Project through a Chinese construction firm. The project will be completed under Public Sector Development Program at a cost of 2.90 billion rupees in next three years. It will provide electricity to Gilgit and suburbs and help end load shedding during winter.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/23-Sep-2017/work-on-16-mw-naltar-phase-iii-hydel-power-project-in-full-swing>

“98 percent land compensation of Diamer Bhasha dam paid to affected people”

Radio Pakistan, September 23, 2017

WAPDA Chairman Muzamil Hussain noted that ninety-eight percent land compensation of Diamer Bhasha Dam has been paid to the affected people. He was briefing a meeting chaired by Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman in Islamabad. The WAPDA Chairman noted that work on Harpo hydro-power project will begin by the end of 2017. The meeting discussed Diamer Bhasha and Satpara dams and other projects being implemented by WAPDA.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/23-Sep-2017/98-percent-land-compensation-of-diamer-bahsha-dam-paid-to-affected-people>

MA Mir, “PPP launches anti-Musharraf protest in AJK”

The Express Tribune, September 24, 2017

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter (AJK) on September 23 took to the streets to stage a protest against former President Pervez Musharraf for accusing Asif Ali Zardari of murdering Benazir Bhutto. The anti-Musharraf protest was led by President PPP AJK chapter Chaudhry Latif Akbar from Centre Press Club to Burhan Wani Chowk. Besides, the workers of PPP and good number of Peoples Students Federation (PSF) and Peoples Youth Organisation (PYO) members were also present in the protest. The angry workers of PPP were shouting full throated anti-Musharraf and pro-Zardari slogans. While addressing the protesters, President PPP AJK Akbar noted that Benazir was assassinated in Musharraf’s era when he was the President of Pakistan.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1514669/ppp-launches-anti-musharraf-protest-ajk/>

“LG polls in GB to be held next year”

Dawn, September 24, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman on

September 23 announced that local bodies elections would be held in the region before June 2018. Owing technical and legal complications, holding of local government elections in GB remained difficult for many years, but the new census had removed such hurdles, Mr Rehman noted, according to a press release issued by the Chief Minister House. It stated that the chief minister along with senior minister Akbar Taban met various delegations in Islamabad. He claimed that the PML-N-led government was fulfilling the promises it had made with the people of GB. “The federal government released funds for establishment of Baltistan University in Skardu; PC-1 has been approved for establishment of Nawaz Sharif Medical College in the region; besides the central government has approved setting up of Karakoram International University’s campuses in Diamer and Ghizer districts,” the chief minister noted.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359676>

MA Mir, “Application-based governance comes to AJK”

The Express Tribune, September 25, 2017

In a region which has yet to properly get 3-G and 4-G internet, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government have devised a mobile-application based system to monitor the progress of development programmes. Implemented for the Prime Minister Community Infrastructure Development Programme (PMCIDP), the Local Government and Rural Development (LG&RD) Secretary Dr Mahmood ul Hassan noted that WhatsApp groups and Android-based applications were generated to monitor the programme in the ten districts of the region. The groups include project leaders and other staffers which share progress on programmes from work orders to the completion of schemes – everything is shared with pictures. All of this is monitored by the LG&RD secretary.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1515346/application-based-governance-comes-ajk/>

Zafar Bhutta, “AJK wants govt’s approval for awarding road projects to FWO”

The Express Tribune, September 25, 2017

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is urging the federal government to relax rules for awarding two road projects to Frontier Works Organisation without undertaking a bidding process, sources noted on September 25. The two projects, worth over Rs1.6 billion, are situated near the Line of Control (LoC) with India and were approved by Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecneec) in June 2014. Problems in awarding contracts, due to close proximity with the LoC, have stalled progress on the projects for more than two years since private contractors are reluctant to make bids. Earlier, the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir tried to start an open bidding process award, but without any positive response, the sources further stated. Ministry of Kashmir affairs and Gilgit Baltistan had requested the federal government to allow the awarding of the contracts to FWO on a single source base. Sources also stated that the board of Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) in its meeting held on July 14, 2015 considered the case and recommended a one-time exemption of Public Procurement Rules 2004.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1516190/ajk-wants-govts-approval-awarding-road-projects-fwo/>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK schoolteacher booked for selling, possessing firearms”

Dawn, September 25, 2017

A school teacher in Azad Jammu and Kashmir’s Kotli district was booked under the Arms Act after police recovered a large cache of firearms from his residence near the Line of Control (LoC), an official noted on September 25. Muhammad Ejaz, a junior teacher in a state-run school, was involved in the sale of arms and ammunition in Jandrot village of tehsil Nakyal for quite some time, noted Superintendent of Police (SP) Chaudhry Zulqarnain Sarfraz. “On receipt of reliable information that he has stashed sizeable

quantity of weapons at his residence, a police team conducted a raid on September 24, night after obtaining a search warrant from the local sub-divisional magistrate,” he noted. The team recovered six AK-47 assault rifles (Kalashnikovs), two 12-bore repeaters resembling Kalashnikov rifles, one 223-bore gun, five MP5s, 30-bore guns, seven 30-bore pistols, one 9mm pistol, 41 magazines of different bores, 2,367 bullets of different bores and one dagger. The SP noted that the accused would also provide weapons on rent for wedding ceremonies. He added that it would be premature to say if the accused was linked to any outlawed militant group or worked for any enemy country. “Apparently he was involved in this illicit business for the sake of money,” the SP stated. He also stated that further details would come to fore upon completion of interrogation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359979>

“PTI calls for release of parliamentary report on GB”

The News, September 27, 2017

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) called for immediate release of the report of the parliamentary committee headed by Sartaj Aziz on Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). PTI Central Secretary General Jahangir Tareen stated that people of Gilgit-Baltistan should be given due share in the benefit of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. The PTI, he noted, wants to play its vital role in the uplift of the deprived region. The PTI Secretary General earlier chaired a meeting of party’s local organisation and discussed different organisational, legal, political and administrative affairs of the GB. At press conference after the meeting, along with GB leaders, he noted, “PTI wants to formally put its proposals on the status of Gilgit-Baltistan; however, we want that the report compiled by parliamentary committee headed by Sartaj Aziz should be released for knowledge of the nation and public scrutiny.” He also stated that federal government should pay special attention to the uplift of GB by investing more in establishing academic institutions and empower youth with better education and skills. He also stated that the governance structure

of the GB should also be considered for reforms so that it caters to the needs of the region.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/232843-PTI-calls-for-release-of-parliamentary-report-on-GB>

“G-B Council unveils budget for current fiscal”

The Express Tribune, September 28, 2017

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Birjees Tahir presented G-B Council’s budget for the current fiscal year worth over Rs2 billion. The outlay was presented during the first meeting of the budget session of GB Council held in Islamabad on September 26. Council’s Vice Chairman and Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Ghazanfar Ali chaired the meeting. Total revenue has been estimated at about Rs2.4 billion of which about Rs2 billion will come from tax receipts. The budget estimates total expenditure of about Rs2.2 billion out of which over Rs725 million have been allocated for development projects. Speaking on the occasion, Tahir stated that Rs32 billion are being spent on the construction of Gilgit-Skardu Road. He also stated that besides this, billions of rupees were also being spent under Public Sector Development Programme and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for the development of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1517970/g-b-council-unveils-budget-current-fiscal/>

“FCNA, chief secretary review security for Gilgit during Muharram”

The Express Tribune, September 28, 2017

Force Commander Northern Areas (FCNA) Major General Saqib Mehmood Malik and Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Dr Kazim Niaz visited Safe City Project where they reviewed the security arrangements made for peaceful observance of Muharram. G-B IGP Sabir Ahmed briefed them about the security plan chalked out for Muharram, traffic plans and monitoring of mourning processions through CCTVs and drone cameras. It was told that mobile service would be suspended besides imposition of ban on pillion riding on Ashura day for security reasons. Moreover, Karakoram Highway would also be closed for traffic on Muharram. FCNA and chief secretary also inspected CCTV Control Room from where Gilgit City would be monitored through 256 cameras.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1517987/fcna-chief-secretary-review-security-gilgit-muharram/>

Economic Developments

“TDAP prioritising value addition in fruits”

The Express Tribune, September 5, 2017

The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is focusing on value addition and enhancement of the supply chain for promoting agricultural trade and increasing exports, a senior official of the commerce ministry noted on September 4. “We are committed to promoting and branding of fruits from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), Swat and Azad Jammu and Kashmir and value addition of dates from south Punjab and Sindh for the facilitation of growers and traders,” the official noted. The ministry will also

establish cold storages in Gilgit-Baltistan and Swat for increasing the shelf life of apricots, peaches and persimmon. “We have organised exhibitions involving diplomats and international organisations for the promotion of fruits of Swat and G-B.” The official stated that TDAP was working with international organisations including the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Centre for the Promotion of Imports (CPI) in developing countries for branding and enhancing value addition in agro-trade in these areas.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1497917/dap-prioritising-value-addition-fruits/>

International Developments

“Turkey Plays Historical Role in Relief, Rehabilitation in Quake Hit Areas of AJK: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, September 4, 2017

The Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider noted Turkey has played a historical role in relief and rehabilitation in quake hit areas of the state. He was talking to Vice President of Turkish Red Crescent and Adviser to Mayor of Istanbul Municipality Mr Ismail Hakki TURUNÇ at Prime Minister House in Muzaffarabad on September 3. Speaking on the occasion, Ismail Hakki TURUNÇ further stated that Pakistan has always supported Turkey and extended full cooperation to it in every field of life.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/04-Sep-2017/turkey-plays-historical-role-in-relief-rehabilitation-in-quake-hit-areas-of-ajk-haider>

“OIC consistently extends diplomatic support to Kashmir cause: Masood”,

Pakistan Observer, September 14, 2017

While addressing a full house of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir meeting on the sidelines of the UN General assembly meeting in New York, the President Sardar Masood Khan thanked OIC Secretary General, H. E. Yousef Al-Othaimen and the member countries for their steadfast and committed support to the just cause of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for their right to self-determination. He stated that since OIC’s first resolution on the Kashmir issued in 1990, every year, the Organization has passed resolutions on Kashmir and incorporating its decisions on Kashmir in its ministerial and Summit

communiqués. “In the past three decades, no other international body has so consistently and so courageously extended diplomatic support to the Kashmiris” noted the President.

<http://pakobserver.net/oic-consistently-extends-diplomatic-support-kashmir-cause-masood/>

Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, “Two Kashmir reps, Venezuelan FM discuss IHK issue in UN”

The News, September 16, 2017

The international powers’ representatives at the United Nations in Geneva witnessed an interesting moment during the 36th session of UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) when the top diplomat from Venezuela and representatives from Azad and Indian-Held Kashmir met in front of the full glare of international community. The foreign minister of Venezuela stole the show during the Council session. Young and dynamic Jorge Arreaza walked into the hall to defend his country in the face of criticism by the UN on how his government was handling the opposition and constitutional reforms. As he left, he ran into Sardar Amjad Youssef Khan from Azad Kashmir, and Syed Faiz Naqshbandi from Srinagar. Khan and Naqshbandi are attending the UNHRC session as part of a Kashmir delegation, lobbying the world on the situation in the region. “Foreign Minister Arreaza was gracious. He met us and gave us a few minutes from his schedule to discuss Kashmir,” Naqshbandi noted.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/230323-Two-Kashmir-reps-Venezuelan-FM-discuss-IHK-issue-in-UN>

Other Developments

Shabbir Mir, “For the poor in GB, cardiac treatment spells crippling financial strain”

Dawn, September 18, 2017

Farid Khan been confined to his small house in the Konodas area of Gilgit town for quite some time. Following a major heart surgery in Islamabad recently, the 63-year-old trader who would spend between 12 and 14 hours at his shop now shuns most outdoor activities, choosing instead to remain indoors. “But it’s not because of my health,” noted Khan. “My treatment had inflicted a financial crisis and sucked all of my resources.” Acting on a local doctor’s advice after suffering a minor heart attack, Khan underwent heart surgery at a private hospital in Islamabad. “For us, the closest we can get to better

health facilities is Rawalpindi or Islamabad — 600km away from home,” he explains. Khan is not the first person from the Gilgit-Baltistan region to seek treatment outside GB owing to a lack of angioplasty, angiography and bypass facilities, not to mention a shortage of qualified doctors. It seems strange that GB — inhabited by 1.5 million people in an area spread over 72,971 square kilometres — doesn’t have a single cardiac unit. Shut inside his three-room single-storey house, Khan now worries about how he could afford to pay for the health and education of his family of six. He has no solution in mind at this point.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358385>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Gilgit Baltistan is a sensitive area: we are watching people with wrong intentions: Force Commander”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, September 3, 2017

Gilgit Baltistan is part of Pakistan. We will eliminate people with bad intentions as and where required. Young generation ought to focus on progress and development and avoid negative people. Force Commander Gilgit Baltistan stated that Gilgit Baltistan is not only part of Pakistan but it is also a sensitive region. Suspected individuals and groups with ill intentions are under close watch and we will combat them when and where required.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=09-03-2017&img=09-03-2017page-1-1

“The issue of constitutional status should be solved as per people’s desire”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, September 5, 2017

Former IG police Afzal Ali Shukri stated that the people of Gilgit Baltistan have been waiting for constitutional status for the last seventy years. Time is ripe now for the same. It should be given the complete status of constitutional state along with representation in National Assembly, Senate, NFC, IRSA, and other financial institutions. If there is any compulsion because of the Kashmir issue, then it should be given an adhoc constitutional status till the plebiscite. Observer status was given during the Zia regime. People at large do not recognize these symbolic things. Will the Sartaj Aziz led committee give some results. It needs to be understood. It is true that people of Gilgit and Baltistan have been waiting eagerly for constitutional rights for last seven decades. But no sincerity was shown at the central level. Whenever demands were raised for same by

the people, federal government tried to buy time and offered certain packages for the region.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MDktMDMtMjAxNw>

“Job creation is government’s responsibility”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, September 6, 2017

The state government should take steps for creation of job opportunities. Unemployment is increasing day by day, while government is not initiating moves for creation of jobs. Everyone is looking for government employment or tenders. There is no two opinions about it. But it is government’s primary responsibility to get people free from this idea. The tragedy is that everyone from clerk to ruling class is involved in tender. Several members of assembly are participating in tenders now with different names. Likewise government employees are also obtaining several tenders. Now the question arises that how to correct the current scenario. There is much nepotism prevalent in the system. One could imagine how several members of assembly and their relatives were starving before coming to power. Now their living standards are completely changed. One can guess the level of transparency in the system. The picture is almost same in the employment sector.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MDktMDYtMjAxNw>

“National highways are in straitened circumstances”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, September 10, 2017

National highways are in straitened circumstances. Despite that a huge amount from national treasury is going for repairing the connecting roads and national highways, they look like ruins. No one in the

administration pays any attention to this. The government should seek the help from the international community and experts about how to address the issue. Last couple of months many road accidents were reported in the national media too. If federal government is serious of connecting Gilgit-Baltistan with the rest of the country, it should urgently start thinking about the ways and means of expanding, repairing and providing safety measures for the roads.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS0y&dt=MDktMTUtMjAxNw>

“Constitutional Issue still progressing despite Chief Minister’s Opposition: Amjad Advocate”

Daily K2, September 16, 2017

For constitutional status, the state agencies are working steadily. If their recommendations are accepted and implemented, Gilgit-Baltistan would soon get its legal right of constitutional status. We will support any setup that is beneficial for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. According to Advocate, Chief Minister Hafeez ur Rehman is not showing interest in the issue. His rift with Mir Saleem is a clear indication that PML-N is playing politics on the issue.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1505520000>

“Development in Gilgit-Baltistan is good for everyone”

Daily Salaam, September 28, 2017

According to media reports, the number of tourists visiting Gilgit-Baltistan in the current year has gone up. It is a good sign. It shows peace and stability has finally returned to the region. The government is also saying that work is being done on merit. But at the same time, many news reports are suggesting that there is rift in the PML-N government. Many members of the party are deliberately creating hurdles in the development process of the Gilgit-Baltistan. If true, that would be having deleterious impact on the region in general and the country in particular. To see CPEC successful, along with peace and stability, development should happen in the region. Otherwise, it may create dismay amongst people. In this regard, the government should take a serious note. Its members should refrain from talking in different tones. Development in Gilgit-Baltistan is as good for the government as it is for the people.

<https://www.dailysalam.com/index.php>

Fact Sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

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

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

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

Prime Minister: Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 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.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: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

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

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan

National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan

National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

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

Disclaimer

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