

POK

News Digest

Volume 10 | Number 8 | August 2017

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh
Dr Yaqoob-ul Hassan

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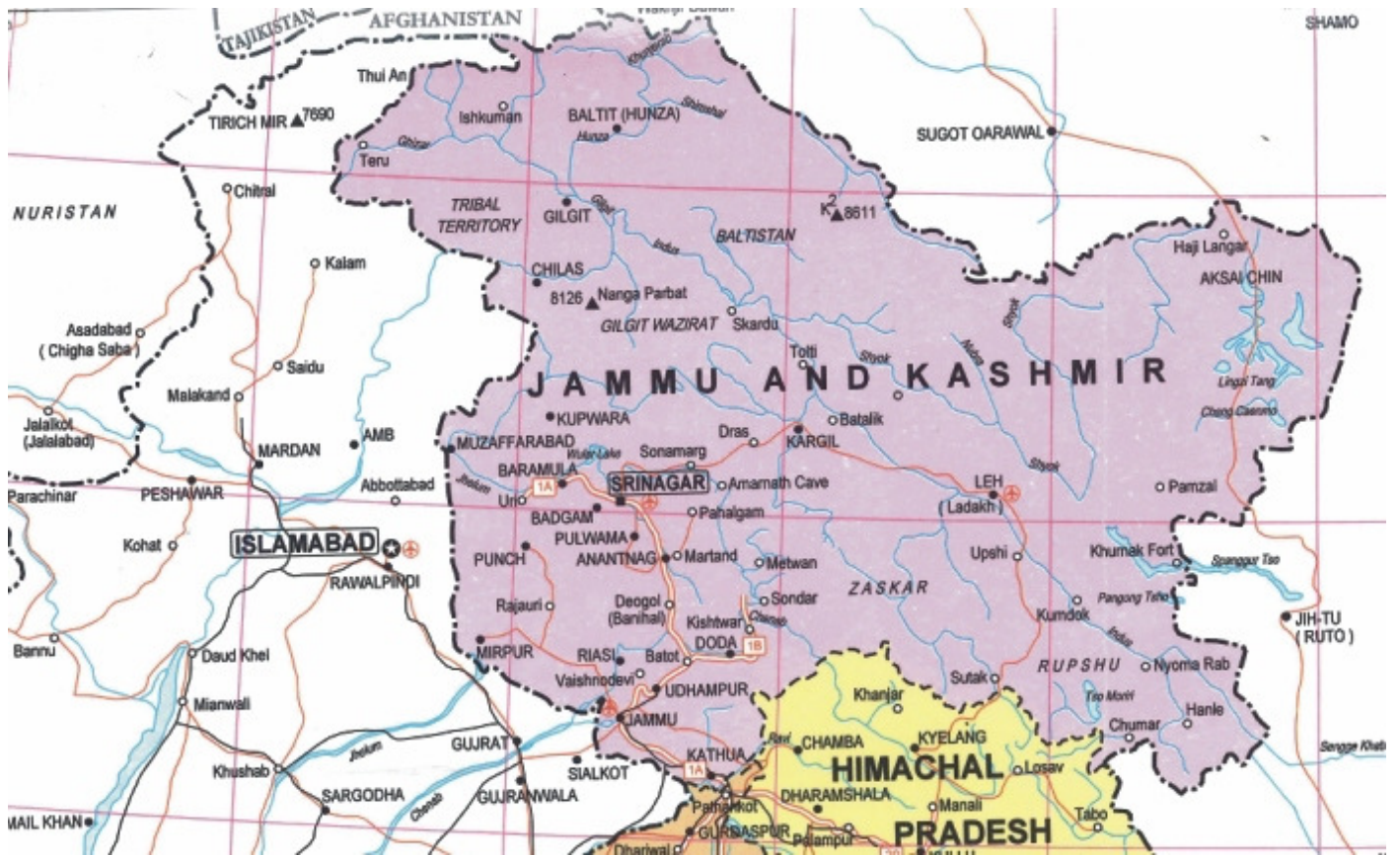
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No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010



Jammu & Kashmir

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The month of July 2017 was one of political tumult in Pakistan given the sitting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was forced to quit after a court found him guilty on corruption charges. The ensuing political uncertainty post Nawaz Sharif's ouster had its reverberations felt in PoK as well. The present governments in both parts of PoK are led by Nawaz Sharif's PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz). A set of reports in the current issue indicate how the leadership of both the so-called AJK and Gilgit Baltistan were hounded from all across when they tried to question the allegations on Nawaz Sharif. Raja Farooq Haider, the Prime Minister of the so-called AJK even went to the extent of saying that if conditions such as this prevail, then the so-called AJK may have to rethink its stance on annexation to Pakistan. He was speaking at a joint press conference in which the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan, Hafeez-ur- Rehman, was also present. In his remarks, the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan, Hafeez-ur-Rehman, noted that Nawaz Sharif's exit resulted from a planned conspiracy. Both leaders alluded to the economic revival of Pakistan under PML-N government and accorded Nawaz Sharif the credit for making the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a reality.

The reactions to the stand taken by the leadership from both parts of PoK drew sharp reactions. The very fact that they questioned the region's allegiance towards Pakistan was enough for political parties in opposition to ask them to apologize or tender resignations. While some accused them of treason, others implicated them of questioning the authority of honourable courts merely to defend their leader Nawaz Sharif. A string of stinging criticism against the PoK leadership exposes the critical fault lines in the dynamics shared between Pakistan and PoK. Such developments also put a big question mark on Pakistan's Kashmir policy. While Pakistan relentlessly harps on the principle of self-determination for people in Jammu and Kashmir, it denies the people of PoK the right to even question its illegitimate control on the region. It is important to note that all those holding public and political offices in PoK are made to sign a Bond of Allegiance- which means that those people will never question or challenge PoK's accession to Pakistan.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Fawad Maqsood, “CPEC to increase job opportunities, tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan: CM”

Business Recorder, July 1, 2017

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), projects would increase job opportunities and tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan areas. Road infrastructure, hotels, health and other facilities would help improve the living standard of the people of the area, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman stated while speaking to a private news channel. Appreciating Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s special interest, he noted that federal government increased the budget for the development of Gilgit-Baltistan areas. The CM further stated that the Engineering and Medical College besides two universities would be established to facilitate the students of Gilgit-Baltistan. To a question, he noted that many power projects including Dasu would be completed to meet the growing demand of electricity in the country. He also stated that a health center equipped with all required facilities including MRI machine would be inaugurated soon to facilitate the people of the area. To another question, he stated that a special police unit equipped with all necessary material was being established to further improve the security of G-B.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/07/01/356608/cpec-to-increase-job-opportunities-tourism-in-gilgit-baltistan-cm/>

“Salahuddin receives warm welcome in AJK capital”

Pakistan Today, July 1, 2017

Hizbul Mujahideen (HuM) supreme commander Syed Salahuddin stated the American decision to designate him as ‘global terrorist’ will not make any difference to the legitimate struggle he led for freedom in Jammu Kashmir. He was addressing a press conference on July 1 at the Central Press Club in the Azad Jammu Kashmir capital in reaction to

the US State Department’s announcement of designating him as a ‘Specially Designated Global Terrorist’ (SDGT). Earlier, the HuM chief received a warm welcome in Muzaffarabad and at many spots people showered rose petals on his vehicle. In his traditional appearance, he rose out of the sunroof of his vehicle and waved to the crowd and made victory signs. At the presser, Salahuddin termed the Donald Trump administration’s move as idiotic taken to please and satisfy Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi without any reason. He was designated as a ‘global terrorists’ hours ahead of Trump-Modi meeting.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/01/salahuddin-receives-warm-welcome-in-ajk-capital/>

“JI elects new emir for AJK and GB”

Dawn, July 1, 2017

Dr Khalid Mahmood was elected emir of Jamaat-i-Islami Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for a three-year term, it was announced on June 30. He replaced Abdul Rashid Turabi, the longest-serving emir (22 years) after the party that was launched in AJK and GB in July 1974, with an independent set-up having no administrative control by JI Pakistan. Mr Turabi is currently member of the AJK Legislative Assembly, against a special seat reserved for technocrats. Riffat Aziz is the second MLA from the JI. She was elected against a seat reserved for women, as a result of the JI’s alliance with the PML-N in July 2016 polls. Dr Mahmood, who has been practicing medicine in Rawalakot, was chosen for the slot by the party’s General Council, comprising around 1,500 members from AJK, GB and Pakistan-based Kashmiri refugees, from among a panel of three candidates who included the incumbent emir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1342505/ji-elects-new-emir-for-ajk-and-gb>

“PM allocates funds to construct state of the art Gilgit-Skardu road”

Pakistan Today, July 1, 2017

In a meeting between Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafeez-ur-Rehman and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad on July 1, matters related to the development of Gilgit Baltistan came under discussion. The Chief Minister hailed the Prime Minister’s efforts for increasing Gilgit-Baltistan budget besides giving approval to a huge amount for public sector development projects in the area. Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that the Prime Minister will visit Gilgit Baltistan on July 20 and lay the foundation stone of Gilgit-Skardu road expansion project. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman noted that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will bring jobs and promote tourism in the area. He stated road infrastructure, hotels, health and other facilities will also help improve the living standard of the people of the area. Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted that besides Engineering and Medical College, two universities will be established to facilitate the students of Gilgit-Baltistan. While answering a question he noted that the completion of power projects including Dasu will meet the growing demand of electricity in the country.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/01/pm-allocates-funds-to-construct-state-of-the-art-gilgit-skardu-road/>

“Widening, Construction Work of Jaglot Skardu Road to be Inaugurated This Month: Taban”

Radio Pakistan, July 2, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Senior Minister for Finance and Power, Haji Akbar Taban, noted that the widening and construction work of Jaglot Skardu road will be inaugurated in July 2017. It was reported that the road which is the life line of the people of four districts of Baltistan region would be completed with the cost of thirty-three billion rupees.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/02-Jul-2017/widening-construction-work-of-jaglot-skardu-road-to-be-inaugurated-this-month-taban>

Aamer A. Najmee, “Constitutional package”

Daily Times, July 2, 2017

Reports that a constitutional package for Gilgit-Baltistan is being given final touches by a high-powered committee constituted by the Prime Minister in Islamabad are indeed welcome. The committee has been given deadline for finalizing recommendations before July 20 when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is scheduled to visit Gilgit-Baltistan and announce the constitutional package for the region. The committee while finalizing its recommendations is also keeping in view the reforms which the PPP government had introduced- a provincial set up through the Gilgit-Baltistan Self-Governance Ordinance 2009 and try its best to improve on that. No details about recommendations being finalized are available but it is reported that various departments and subjects of Gilgit-Baltistan Council will be devolved to the legislative assembly to empower the region. Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Hafeezur Rehman had called on the PM in Islamabad and reminded him about the constitutional reforms package which his party promised before the last general election. It is also useful to note that during his upcoming visit to Gilgit-Baltistan, the prime minister besides announcing the constitutional reforms package will also inaugurate the long awaited Gilgit-Skardu Road project for which Frontier Works Organization has already been directed to make necessary arrangements. The project of widening of Skardu Road is estimated to cost Rs 33 billion which the federal government will bear.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/letters/03-Jul-17/constitutional-package>

“SPU of police being set up with 500 personnel in GB”

Radio Pakistan, July 3, 2017

In Gilgit-Baltistan, a Special Protection Unit of police is being set up with five hundred personnel to safeguard mega development projects. Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted that federal government will bear expenses of this unit.

He also stated that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is committed to put Gilgit Baltistan on fast track development and maintain durable peace in the region.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/03-Jul-2017/spu-of-police-being-set-up-with-500-personnel-in-gb>

Fawad Maqsood, “Hydroelectric sectors in AJK could be utilized to cope with energy crises: AJK PM”

Business Recorder, July 4, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that AJK has huge potential of massive investment in tourism and hydroelectric sectors which could be utilized to cope with the energy crises besides strengthening the socio-economic progress of the country including AJK. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of Chinese construction companies working on different hydroelectric projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the capital town of AJK on July 3. The prime minister stated the present government had adopted the policy of focusing on tourism and hydroelectricity projects to boost its economy. He also stated that AJK had huge potential in tourism, minerals, gems, precious stones and hydropower, adding as per the report of our own departments AJK had potential to generate more than 18,000 megawatt hydropower electricity. Raja Farooq Haider noted projects like Neelum Jhelum and Kohala would generate over 2000 MW of electricity. He further stated that investment in hydropower projects would get rich benefits. Maximum cooperation would be extended to all the investors who would be making investment in AJK, he added.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/07/04/357005/hydroelectric-sectors-in-ajk-could-be-utilized-to-cope-with-energy-crises-ajk-pm/>

Altaf Rao, “AJK protests denounce US decision”

The Nation, July 4, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir on July 3 banged with

full throated anti-US and anti-India slogans during protest rallies taken out in various towns and cities of the state to vehemently condemn the recent decision by US President of designating Hizbul Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin “as a global terrorist.” Participants of the protest rallies declared that Syed Salahuddin is not a terrorist. “Rather he is the hero of the people of Jammu & Kashmir who is fighting for the freedom of Jammu & Kashmir under the fold of the Hizbul Mujahideen”, they categorically remarked. The rallies called upon the United States to immediately withdraw its uncalled for, unjust and hostile executive order of, what they described, its imbalanced President Trump, designating the eminent Kashmir freedom movement leader Syed Salahuddin, head of Muttahida Jihad Council as a terrorist. They also called upon the US democrats and policymakers to influence the US President to immediately withdraw the decision - which he took, in haste, mere to appease his “customer Modi.” In Mirpur, AJK’s major city next to the State capital town of Muzaffarabad, the rally was jointly arranged by local branch of AJK Jamaat-e-Islami with the coordination of various social, political, religious and human rights organisations as well as representative forums of the people from all shades of public opinion. The rally passed through various city streets, chanting slogans. The participants of the rally were holding banners and placards inscribed with anti-American, anti-Indian and pro-freedom slogans. They also chanted slogans in favour of Syed Salahuddin and Hizbul Mujahideen.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Jul-2017/ajk-protests-denounce-us-decision>

“AJK focuses on power, tourism sectors”

The Nation, July 5, 2017

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that Pakistan could get rid of shortage of electricity if it taps the huge hydropower potential available in Azad Kashmir. “AJK has huge potential of massive investment in tourism and hydroelectric sectors which could be utilised to cope with the energy crisis besides strengthening the socioeconomic progress of the country including AJK,” Haider noted while talking

to a delegation of Chinese construction companies working on different hydroelectric projects under CPEC in the capital town of AJK. The prime minister noted that present government had adopted the policy of focusing on tourism and hydroelectricity to boost its economy. The people of AJK had rendered unmatched sacrifices for the stability of Pakistan's economy, he stated. He further stated that law and order situation in AJK is not an issue and this is the most attractive factor for investment. He stated that potential investor must explore investment potential of AJK. He also stated that AJK has huge potential in tourism, minerals, gems, precious stones and hydropower. He stated that AJK has potential to generate more than 18,000 megawatt hydropower. He stated that projects like Neelum Jhelum and Kohala would generate over 2,000 MW of electricity. He stated that investment in hydropower projects would produce rich results. He noted that maximum cooperation would be extended to all the investors who would be making investment in AJK. He further stated that organic farming has a very huge potential for investment because of the availability of hardworking human resource and with little crime rate in all the 10 districts of AJK.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/05-Jul-2017/ajk-focuses-on-power-tourism-sectors>

“Jamabandi to be launched in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, July 5, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman on July 4 directed the Gilgit commissioner and deputy commissioner to take appropriate measures for conducting Jamabandi (record rights of a village) in the city. Records of 16 to 18 villages in Gilgit are expected to be collected soon. Under the Jamabandi process, important data pertaining to rights and land record of villagers such as names of owners, the area of land, shares of owners and other rights. Rehman noted that the regional government will provide all the required resources and staff for smooth conduct of the Jamabandi process, an official statement noted on July 4. Jamabandi in different villages of Gilgit was last held in 2002. The move

comes in the wake of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being launched in the region.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1450424/jamabandi-launched-gilgit/>

Fawad Maqsood, “Kashmiris’ freedom is indigenous not externally-sponsored: Masood”

Business Recorder, July 5, 2017

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan stated that Pakistan is extending moral, diplomatic and political support to the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people in pursuance of the UN Security Council resolution. It is the obligation of the people of AJK and Pakistan to campaign for a political solution of Kashmir dispute.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/07/06/357521/kashmiris-freedom-is-indigenous-not-externally-sponsored-masood/>

“Efforts Underway to Attract Investors in GB: CM”

Radio Pakistan, July 6, 2017

Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted that efforts are underway to attract investors in Gilgit Baltistan. He was talking to vice Chairman Board of Investment Raja Nazeem-ul- Ameen who called on him in Gilgit. The CM noted Gilgit Baltistan has great potential for investment in mining, hydropower, and tourism sectors and Government will give special incentives to investors and cooperate with them.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/06-Jul-2017/efforts-underway-to-attract-investors-in-gb-cm>

“Wani paid rich tributes on martyrdom day”

The Nation, July 7, 2017

The Kashmir people paid glorious tributes to Burhan Wani. In Azad Jammu & Kashmir, massive public rallies, demonstrations and special prayers for Wani were held in all 10 district and tehsil headquarters including the capital city of Muzaffarabad. In Mirpur,

the major rally was taken out from district court premises. A large number of people including traders, political, social and human rights activists, lawyers, journalists, teachers, students and private and government servants attended the rally. Addressing the rally, speakers including Raja Tariq Mahmood, Masood Rathore, Bashir Shagoo, DBA President Shabeer Sharif Advocate, President APHC Mirpur Malik Muhammad Aslam, Raja Habib Ullah Khan and others paid rich tributes to Burhan Wani. They stated that the best way to pay tributes to Wani is to follow his footsteps till the struggle for freedom reaches its logical end. They also stated that ongoing indigenous struggle for freedom has reached the point of no return.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/09-Jul-2017/wani-paid-rich-tributes-on-martyrdom-day>

Meraj Alam, “GB lacks staff to check imported meat at China border”

The Nation, July 9, 2017

The trade volume under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is growing day-by-day in Gilgit-Baltistan while the residents of this strategic region are most likely affected by multiple diseases due to unchecked supply of food. According to an official, posted at Pak-China Border, “The situation is precarious as there is no animal quarantine department at the border in Pakistan side to check the imported food items.” Due to the absence of the relevant department, the imported food items go unchecked and cause multiple diseases in the area amongst people. The official noted although the Animal Quarantine Department is established in Gilgit but without any staff member. The rented office of the department in Gilgit often remained closed for work. A social activist in Gilgit noted that the office had turned into a ghost office as there is no staffer available, adding that a huge amount was being paid in terms of rent and other arrangements. According to the details, an Animal Quarantine office was established at Khunjerab Pass in 2016 under the project titled “Up-Gradation & Establishment of Animal Quarantine Stations in Pakistan”. However,

it remained dysfunctional till a consignment of green turtles was seized in 2012 while exporting to China.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/09-Jul-2017/gb-lacks-staff-to-check-imported-meat-at-china-border>

“CM Directs to Complete All Development Projects at Earliest”

Radio Pakistan, July 9, 2017

Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman gave directions to complete all development projects at the earliest in order to provide benefits to people. This he noted while presiding over a high level meeting held in Gilgit. Chief Minister on the occasion constituted a committee to strengthen coordination among Works Department, Local Bodies and Gilgit Development Authority. He also directed to make policy to enhance capacity building of all departments to consume budget which was increased one hundred percent in current fiscal year.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/09-Jul-2017/cm-directs-to-complete-all-development-projects-at-earliest>

Tariq Naqash, “Appointment of AJK medical college’s principal nullified”

Dawn, July 10, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court on July 8 nullified the appointment of the principal of the public sector AJK Medical College (AJKMC) Muzaffarabad, and directed the government to complete the process of selection of a new principal in accordance with the law, preferably in a couple of months. The judgement was issued by Justice Azhar Saleem Babar on a petition filed by Prof Dr Adnan Mehraj, head of the departments of surgery of the college and Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan (SKZN) Hospital, Muzaffarabad, few months ago. The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) approved the establishment of AJK Medical College on the recommendation of the federal government, on December 30, 2011 in pursuance of Section 11 of the PMDC Ordinance 1962, as adapted in AJK. As a result of the adaptation, the medical and dental

institutions regulations, 2012 (recognition, eligibility, criteria for enhancement in annual admission and accreditation standards) and regulations for the appointment of faculty, professional staff/examiners/principals/ deans/administrative staff in undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental institutions of Pakistan 2011 had also become applicable in AJK.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1344278/appointment-of-ajk-medical-colleges-principal-nullified>

“Gilgit Baltistan: PPP’S Javed Hussain Wins GBLA-4 by-election”

Such TV, July 10, 2017

Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) won the by-election for Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) constituency no. 4 in Hunza-Nagar, unofficial and unconfirmed results suggested on July 9. PPP’s Javed Hussain secured 6,888 votes, followed by Islami Tehreek Pakistan (ITP) nominee Muhammad Baqar, who bagged 6,051 votes. There are 18,505 registered voters in the constituency. The number of registered male voters is 10,018 and female voters 8,870 in the constituency. A total of 40 polling stations were set up in the constituency; 20 for men, 16 for women and four combined. The seat fell vacant in February 2017 after the demise of ITP’s Muhammad Ali Sheikh.

<http://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan/item/56541-gilgit-baltistan-ppp-s-javed-hussain-wins-gbla-4-by-election.html>

“Neelum Jhelum Project commissioned despite being in earthquake zone: Sherry”

The Nation, July 12, 2017

Senator Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Sherry Rehman tweeted that Neelum Jhelum dam has been commissioned and is under construction without geological survey despite being in earthquake zone. She stated this project as ‘sorry tale of increase debt on public via electricity tariffs’ and ‘shocking revelations about 5 Power Projects’, while attending Public Accounts Committee(PAC). This power

station is located in Azad Kashmir, 42 km in south of Muzaffarabad. It had been designed to reroute water from the Neelum River to a power station on a Jhelum river. Construction on the project began in 2008 after a Chinese association was awarded the construction contract in July 2007. The first generator is scheduled to be commissioned in July 2017 and the project is expected to be complete in December 2017. The project was proposed to begin in 2002 and be completed in 2008 but this time-frame experienced significant delays due to problems in meeting rising costs. Additionally, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake which devastated the region required a redesign of the project to obey the rules to more rigorous earthquake standards.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/12-Jul-2017/neelumjhelum-project-commissioned-despite-being-in-earthquake-zone-sherry>

“The Kashmir issue concerns the fate and political future of 20 million people: AJK President”

Pakistan Today, July 12, 2017

The Kashmir issue is not a pawn in the regional or international political chessboard but an issue concerning the fate and political future of 20 million people of Jammu and Kashmir, stated Sardar Masood Khan, President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He spoke these words while speaking at a seminar – Kashmir: a new Berlin Wall in South Asia – organised by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, at the European Parliament, and hosted by Member European Parliament Amjad Bashir. Several European MEPs, academics and representatives of civil society were present at the seminar. Sardar Masood Khan noted that the analogy with the Berlin Wall was metaphorical but the difference was stark. While the Berlin Wall, approximately as old as the Line of Control/ceasefire line, was erased but the LOC still divides the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The people of J&K and Azad Kashmir wanted to unite by exercising their right to self-determination through a plebiscite, as mandated by the United Nations.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/12/the-kashmir-issue-concerns-the-fate-and-political-future-of-20-million-people-ajk-president/>

Dr Sudhanshu Tripathi, “Why is PoK important for India?”

Daily Excelsior, July 13, 2017

Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) is a self-governing administrative unit of Pakistan which is passing through the worst phase of turmoil along with that in Gilgit-Baltistan too – a part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir – due to its possible conversion into Pakistan’s fifth province. And that has gained traction due to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative launched by China. While grim situations have had occurred earlier too in the Kashmir valley but the ongoing chaos being witnessed are as serious as the one that actually happened after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, which have already taken the toll of around 9000 injured and 100 dead. Though the restlessness among misguided youths of the state is not a new phenomenon as most of them are used to violence and terror, they very often take recourse to lawlessness and anarchy, like stone-pelting or attacking police, security forces and military in their illegal-immoral bid to protect terrorists and anti-national elements. Although the incorporation of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan’s territory may considerably undermine India’s claim on the region but it cannot altogether remove it, because irrespective of the unlawful incorporation India will continue to uphold its claim more vociferously on both parts of PoK as it has been doing since 1947. Though on the domestic front India’s policy on PoK has been dismissed as being inert and least assertive since the very beginning but that has been changed by PM Modi. While boldly raising issues concerning PoK, he (Modi) appears to have redrawn the rules of engagement. Lately, Gilgit-Baltistan has significantly been elevated into India’s strategic calculations due to the Chinese foray into the region. Undoubtedly, the Indian government should consider the complex issue in a holistic manner by learning from the past mistakes and take innovative and bold measures to solve this vexed issue. As an option Prime Minister Modi’s initiative of practicing a muscular foreign

policy not only as regards PoK – as was seen during the surgical strike in the PoK – may prove to be a milestone towards opening for more such actions to follow towards resolving all such pending complex issues towards their positive and lasting solution.

<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/why-is-pok-important-for-india/>

Ghulam Abbas, “Committee finalises proposals for GB people’s empowerment”

The Nation, July 14, 2017

The Committee constituted by the Prime Minister to formulate proposals for further empowerment of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan on July 13 finalised the proposals, a foreign ministry statement noted. Adviser to PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz chaired the meeting which was attended by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Law Minister Zahid Hamid, Minister for Kashmir and G-B Affairs Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Khawja Zaheer Ahmed, Chief Minister G-B Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman, Secretary Kashmir Affairs and G-B Pir Bakhsh Jamali and Chief Secretary G-B Kazim Niaz. “The Committee discussed and finalised several proposals and options for strengthening regional governance through delegation of administrative and financial powers to the government of Gilgit-Baltistan and for increasing financial resources to expand essential services for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan,” noted the statement. A separate statement by the foreign ministry on July 13 noted the Human Rights Committee reviews Pakistan’s initial report on the implementation of international covenant on civil and political rights. “The 18-member Human Rights Committee which monitors the implementation of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) reviewed Pakistan’s initial report on 11-12 July 2017 in Geneva,” the statement noted further.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/14-Jul-2017/committee-finalises-proposals-for-gb-people-s-empowerment>

“Plan to set up 46 SEZs along CPEC route”

The Nation, July 14, 2017

Board of Investment (BoI) Chairman Dr Miftah Ismail on July 13 stated that the government is planning to establish 46 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) alongside the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) route in the long run. “Nine zones have already been declared prioritised during the 6th JCC meeting held in December, 2016”, he noted at the concluding session of Pakistan China Industrial Cooperation dialogue. He further noted that Chinese companies are working on a number of projects relating to energy, railways and road infrastructure. During the session, two presentations were made by the representative of government of AJ&K and Gilgit-Baltistan. The representatives of AJ&K highlighted the potential of AJ&K in terms of water and mineral resources. The incentives being provided by the government of AJ&K to the foreign investors were also highlighted in the presentation. The potential of proposed Mirpur Zone in terms of its connectivity with highway, railway and airport as well as the expected industries to be parked in this zone based on local endowment was also deliberated through the presentation. Representative of Gilgit-Baltistan underscored the strategic location, scenic beauty and hospitality of the people Gilgit-Baltistan. He highlighted the mineral potential and locational advantages being gate way for Central, East and South Asia. He also apprised the house that this zone is situated exactly on the CPEC route which is the ancient Silk Route.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/14-Jul-2017/plan-to-set-up-46-sezs-along-cpec-route>

“Dispute resolution committees set up in Gilgit district”

The Express Tribune, July 15, 2017

The Gilgit district administration decided to setup committees at the village level to quickly resolve disputes. In this regard, locals who are of good reputation and hail from a good background would be included in the dispute resolution committees (DRCs). This was decided at a high-level meeting presided over

by the Gilgit Assistant Commissioner and Sub-Divisional Magistrate Naveed Ahmed on July 14. In the first phase, the committees at village level would be set up in a sub-division of Gilgit as a pilot before being extended to the rest of the district. A three-member committee has been setup with a mandate to form such committees in all villages within five days and report to the assistant commissioner. DRC members would be selected by locals in public meetings. It is expected that elders of high reputation would be chosen. All DRCs would meet on the 15th of every month.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1458327/dispute-resolution-committees-set-gilgit-district/>

“OIC Expresses Full Support to Kashmiris for Their Just Right to Self-Determination: Farooq”

Radio Pakistan, July 16, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has expressed its full diplomatic, political and moral support to the Kashmiris for their just right to self-determination. Talking to PML-N workers at Islamabad Airport on July 16, he stated the OIC has adopted a resolution in this regard. Raja Farooq Haider stated the Organization has also supported the stand of Pakistan on Kashmir. He also stated the OIC Contact Group in its recent meeting thoroughly debated on the prevailing situation in Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/16-Jul-2017/oic-expresses-full-support-to-kashmiris-for-their-just-right-to-self-determination-farooq>

“Govt Committed to Promote Tourism in GB: Fida”

Radio Pakistan, July 17, 2017

Minister Tourism Sports and Youth Affairs Fida Khan stated that Government is committed to promote tourism in Gilgit Baltistan. In an interview in Gilgit on July 17, he noted a tourist resort is being constructed in Attabad at a cost of five hundred

million rupees. Fida Khan also stated that two hundred huts would also be constructed in tourist resorts with financial support of Federal Government. He noted under Prime Minister youth investment scheme five to seven lakh rupees loans will be provided to five hundred youth for initiating business to facilitate tourists.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/17-Jul-2017/govt-committed-to-promote-tourism-in-gb-fida>

“AJK Govt Fully Supports All Decisions of Federal Cabinet: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, July 17, 2017

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider stated that parliamentary party of PML-N AJK has reposed full confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad, he noted AJK government fully supports all the decisions of federal cabinet. He also stated it would be better to wait for 2018- general elections instead of creating hurdles in smooth functioning of state. The AJK Prime Minister further stated it is high time to get united in the war against of terrorism.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/17-Jul-2017/ajk-govt-fully-supports-all-decisions-of-federal-cabinet-haider>

Lt Gen Pramod Grover (retd), “Dams Pakistan will build”

The Tribune, July 20, 2017

The Indus waters have for long been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan after the division of the drainage basin. The major portion did go to Pakistan but under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) regulations, India can use 20 per cent of the total discharge of this system. Therefore, although at a seminal advantage, Pakistan unfortunately has been unable to optimise it. Thus water is becoming an existential issue for Pakistan, with fast-depleting fresh water resources and endangering food security. Further, the storage capacity at the facilities

developed by Pakistan is a quarter (indicating a paltry 150 cubic metres per person) of the minimum requirement of 120 days. Further as per Lt Gen Muzamil Hussain, Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Pakistan wastes fresh water worth \$25 billion annually. The proposal includes the construction of (i) Bunji Hydro-power Project (7,100 MW) near Skardu in PoK, (ii) Diamer Bhasha Dam (4,500 MW) in PoK, (iii) Dasu Hydro-electric Project (4,320 MW), (iv) Patan Hydropower Project (2,200 MW) and Thakot Hydropower Project (4,000 MW). The proposal will effectively convert this huge river into a series of lakes. The proposal is based on the assumption that it will provide requisite water security to Pakistan, in addition to generation of hydropower. The terms and conditions of infrastructural development and operations are still not clear. Perhaps Pakistan is overlooking an important fact regarding the flow of the Indus. The river distinctly flows from an area of higher precipitation towards a drier zone in the plains of the Punjab and Sindh, where its flow becomes sluggish and highly braided. Further, the quantum of water from the tributaries, too, is consistently declining. This dire situation may have a direct impact on water availability from a river that is Pakistan’s lifeline. Ample proof is the highly reduced discharge into the Arabian Sea between 2001 and 2009. The proposed dams may also lead to the submergence of a major part of the Karakoram Highway, initiating displacement and relocation of millions of people who will perhaps lose their livelihood as the agricultural fields will no longer be replenished by deposition of fresh, fertile sediments.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/dams-pakistan-will-build/439651.html>

“Chinese Companies Playing Vital Role in Development of Pakistan, AJK: Masood”

Radio Pakistan, July 21, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan noted that Chinese companies are playing a significant role in the

development of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. Presiding over a briefing by a Chinese investment company in Muzaffarabad on July 21, he stated over 2400 megawatt three hydro power projects will overcome energy shortage in Pakistan. He noted that the Kohala and Karot hydropower projects are part of CPEC. Other hydro power projects, industrial zones and express way under CPEC will bring a new era of development in the state besides providing job opportunities to local people.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/21-Jul-2017/chinese-companies-playing-vital-role-in-development-of-pakistan-ajk-masood>

Dr Pervez Tahir, “Education spending in G-B”

The Express Tribune, July 21, 2017

Without being one in the constitutional sense, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has some trappings of a province. It presents and approves a budget in its own assembly. However, resources flow through the budget is allocated to the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, not as a share in the National Finance Commission. The budget for 2017-18 presented on June 14, 2017 has the total size of Rs54 billion, up 23.3% over the previous year’s budget of Rs43.8 billion. Out of this, Rs28.26 billion is the non-development budget, up by 11.4% from Rs25.4 billion earmarked in 2016. An amount of Rs18.3 billion is for development, compared to Rs13 billion in 2016-17. A federal subsidy of Rs7.8 billion is also, according to the finance minister, part of the development budget. Development expenditure on education has increased from Rs1 billion to Rs1.53 billion, a jump of 53%. However, this amount is only 8.4% of the total development budget. No break-up is available for allocations by functions. It is, therefore, not possible to have a clear idea of the distribution of resources at various levels of education. New school buildings, upgradation and provision of missing facilities are the main objects of expenditure. In 2016-17, there were 89 new and 72 ongoing schemes.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1462491/education-spending-g-b/>

“CPEC projects in AJK to be made environment-friendly”

The Express Tribune, July 23, 2017

Projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Azad Jammu and Kashmir will be made sustainable, both economically and environmentally, AJK President Sardar Masood Khan noted on July 22. “We need modern industrial infrastructure, but it should also be conceived and implemented with its environmental impact in mind,” the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) president added. He was addressing a seminar titled, Mainstreaming Environment in CPEC Projects – Special Economic Zone Mirpur, hosted by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Mirpur on July 22. President Masood noted AJK too stands to gain from the mega project, adding that at least four projects for AJK have been approved under CPEC – including Kohala and Karot Hydropower projects respectively in the Muzaffarabad and Kotli districts, the Quadruple M-Expressway from Mansehra to Muzaffarabad-Mirpur to Mangla and a special economic industrial zone to be set up in Mirpur.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1464411/cpec-projects-ajk-made-environment-friendly/>

“PML-N govt aims to make AJK hub of tourism: PM”

The Nation, July 24, 2017

Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif on July 4 stated that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government aims at making Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) the hub of tourism. “The federal government is focusing on infrastructure and tourism development at AJK which is manifested by two folds increase of federal funding for these sectors,” the PM noted while talking to Minister for Information and Tourism AJK, Mushtaq Minhas, in Islamabad. During the meeting, the minister briefed the premier regarding various development projects undertaken by the AJK

government. The prime minister further stated that PML-N will deliver on promises made with the people of AJK regarding improvements in education, health and social sectors.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/24-Jul-2017/pml-n-govt-aims-to-make-ajk-hub-of-tourism-pm>

Ghulam Abbas, “Petroleum crisis in GB affect thousands of tourists”

Pakistan Today, July 27, 2017

Thousands of tourists visiting Gilgit Baltistan have started facing a shortage of fuel in the area following the short supply from oil marketing firms and a rise in demand. The suspension of fuel supply from some marketing firms for the last three months has also added to the sufferings of the people in the area. According to sources, Admore Gas—an oil marketing firm—which retails refined petroleum products and lubricants across individual and commercial market segments, has suspended its supply to the area for the last three months, causing closure of petrol pumps in the three districts of GB. The customers of the company in Skardu, Astor and Gilgit are not only being deprived of the supply but they are also being penalized by the local administration for not ensuring availability of fuel in the summer season. A petrol pump owner in Skardu noted, “We are not only facing huge losses in terms of revenue but also facing legal and administrative actions for not maintaining reserves needed to ensure in case of any emergency,” adding that the oil supplying firm was making lame excuses for the disruption in supply for the last three months. The company, he noted, was not even giving a NoC so that the dealers could avail facilities of other firms.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/27/petroleum-crisis-in-gb-affect-thousands-of-tourists/>

“CPEC to transform entire region on path of rapid development: CM”

Radio Pakistan, July 27, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-

Rehman noted that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will transform the entire region on path of rapid development. Talking to a delegation in Gilgit on July 27, he noted India is conspiring to destabilize peace and stop development process in Gilgit-Baltistan. He asked the people to forge unity among their ranks to foil nefarious designs of the enemy. Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman paid tributes to Pak Army, law enforcement agencies and people for their concerted efforts to wipe out terrorism from the country.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/27-Jul-2017/cpec-to-transform-entire-region-on-path-of-rapid-development-cm>

“PTI celebrates Panama victory in AJK”

The Express Tribune, July 29, 2017

Dozens of PTI activists took out a rally to celebrate the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in Panama Leaks case to disqualify former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and others from holding public office. PTI Mirpur President, Ch Sideeque Advocate, Insaf Lawyers Forum President, Sardar Jamil Sadiq, Advocate and city President, Ch Mansha, led the rally which converged into a public meeting at Shaheed Chowk. Sweets were distributed to the PTI activists and others to express pleasure over the SC verdict, what the jubilant PTI workers termed, reached in the greater national interests. Addressing the rally, the speakers noted that the historical decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in Panama case is in fact the victory of democracy which, what they observed, was massively abused by the corrupt ruling elite in the national politics under the garb of the democracy. Meanwhile, AJ&K Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan attended a consultative meeting of Pakistan Muslim League-N to discuss the current political situation in the country especially in the backdrop of the verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, it was officially declared.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/29-Jul-2017/pti-celebrates-panama-victory-in-ajk>

Yousf Jameel, “Won’t allow closure of cross-LoC trade over allegations of terror funding: Mufti”

Asian Age, July 29, 2017

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti, on July 29 stated that Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) will not allow closure of cross-LoC trade. "There are many difficulties through the Wagah border; charas and ganja comes from there but no one talks about closing it. Just because a mistake happens on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, we should not talk about closing it. We will not allow that to happen," she noted while speaking at a rally held to mark the 18th foundation day of the PDP. On July 21, the Jammu and Kashmir police seized 66.5 kilograms of narcotics including heroine and brown sugar worth Rs. 300 crore from a truck which was part of the merchandise-laden convoy of lorries coming from Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) at the LoC Trade Facilitation Centre at Salamabad near Uri in Baramulla district. The narcotics had allegedly been concealed in "fake cavities specifically fabricated for this purpose in boxes purportedly to contain mercantile goods" in one of these. Following a complaint from India, the Pakistani authorities earlier this week asked for suspending the trade between the two sides. They also noted that an inquiry has been launched into the alleged misuse of facility.

<http://www.asianage.com/india/all-india/290717/wont-allow-closure-of-cross-loc-trade-over-allegations-of-terror-funding-mufti.html>

“We will think to which country to make annexation to: AJK PM”

The News, July 30, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider stated on July 29 that the AJK people would think now to which country they should make annexation to. He stated this while addressing a joint press conference with Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman. The AJK PM stated that once again the doctrine of necessity had been created. He further noted that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) would not allow the democratic process to derail. He also stated, "Despite serious reservations, the PML-N leadership has

implemented the Supreme Court (SC) judgment in the Panama Papers case." He stated, "The future of Kashmir is linked with Pakistan." Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman stated that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's disqualification was a rebellion and it was fixed. Addressing a joint press conference along with Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider, he noted that Nawaz Sharif's disqualification was an insult to the office of prime minister. He questioned the fairness of the trial as Nawaz Sharif was not given the right to appeal. He also stated, "The PML-N has put the country on the path of progress." He noted, "The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an epitome of tremendous endeavours by the PML-N government which translated the dreams of development into reality through practical efforts."

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/220060-We-will-think-to-which-country-to-make-annexation-to-AJK-PM>

Madhuri Adnal, “Gilgit-Baltistan locals protest against China and CPEC”

One India, July 30, 2017

Locals in Gilgit took to streets protesting against China & CPEC which passes through Gilgit, fearing it will create huge ecological imbalance. People got together and took out a march raising slogans reflecting an elevation in resentment over the situation. CPEC, a part of China's broader One-Belt-One-Road (OBOR) initiative, is widely hailed in Pakistan as a game-changer that is destined to bring considerable economic benefits.

<http://www.oneindia.com/international/gilgit-baltistan-locals-protest-against-china-cpec-2510075.html>

“Remarks of AJK premier, GB chief minister draw flak”

Dawn, July 31, 2017

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Pakistan People's Party leadership on July 30 criticised Gilgit-Baltistan Chief

Minister Hafeezur Rehman and AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider for what they called bringing into disrepute Pakistani institutions in a bid to defend the alleged corruption of ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Terming Mr Rehman and Mr Haider as traitors, the PTI and PPP leaders demanded registration of FIRs against them for their 'derogatory' remarks against judiciary and military. Speaking at a news conference in Gilgit Press Club, PTI GB chapter secretary general, Fatullah Khan, stated that GB chief minister and AJK prime minister had insulted the sentiments of the people of AJK and GB and their strong affiliation with Pakistan, its army and judiciary. "We strongly condemn the remarks of

AJK prime minister and GB chief minister, and ask them to tender an apology for such remarks," he noted. While addressing a press conference in Islamabad, the AJK premier noted that Kashmiris would have to rethink their stance whether or not to align with Pakistan, apparently angered over the disqualification of PM Nawaz Sharif by the Supreme Court. In his presser, also held in the federal capital, the GB chief minister noted that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's disqualification was a rebellion. "These remarks are unacceptable to us. Heads of both the regional governments have committed treason, for which they should be asked to leave their respective public offices," demanded Fatullah Khan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348675/remarks-of-ajk-premier-gb-chief-minister-draw-flak>

Economic Developments

“Need stressed to brand gemstones for effective marketing”

The Nation, July 5, 2017

Professor of Energy and Environment at University of Delaware, USA Saleem H Ali on July 4 stated that Pakistan should focus on branding its gemstones, being extracted from different potential areas, for their effective marketing in local as well as international markets. In a lecture on “How can minerals contribute to Pakistan’s development path,” arranged by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), he stated there was the need for proper branding of gemstones so that they could have absolute identity in world markets and buyers would have no confusion about their quality and originality. Gemstones like Emerald of Swat, Rubies of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Hunza-Ishkoman, Gilgit, Pink-Topaz of Katlang-Mardan, Aquamarine and Tourmaline of Gilgit and Chitral, Peridot of Kohistan and Pargasite of Hunza needs appropriate branding. These gems have beautiful attractive colours, excellent crystal clarity and a range of sizes as well as weight, meeting any international standard.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/05-Jul-2017/need-stressed-to-brand-gemstones-for-effective-marketing>

MA Mir, “Cross-LoC trade comes to a halt after Indian drug bust claim”

The Express Tribune, July 22, 2017

The trans-Line of Control (LoC) trade between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar came to a halt on July 21 after authorities in the J&K claimed recovery of a “large quantity of narcotics” from a truck from Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The narcotics were allegedly recovered in the valley at Trade Centre in Salamabad, Uri in Baramulla. While the J&K authorities provided

no evidence of the drugs recovery to authorities in AJK, they have impounded the truck and taken its driver into custody. There are also reports of a case having been registered against the driver. On July 21, 14 trucks from AJK crossed LoC from Chakothi village while 29 from J&K entered AJK.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1463630/cross-loc-trade-comes-halt-indian-drug-bust-claim/>

“AJK President inaugurates Faysal Bank branch at Muzaffarabad”

Kashmir Watch, July 27, 2017

Sardar Masood Khan, President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), on July 27 inaugurated the branch of Faysal Bank in Muzaffarabad. Faysal Bank already has branches in Mirpur, Chak Sawari and Dudyal. After inaugurating the Faysal Bank branch, the President stated that Azad Kashmir is conducive to private banking and private investment. It welcomes greater participation of private and public banks in the development of Azad Kashmir, especially in the sectors of infrastructure development, hydropower generation, and promotion of tourism, telecommunications, industry and agriculture. The Azad Kashmir government is taking all steps, the President stated, to enhance ease of doing business and in this context private banks are playing an important part. “We welcome participations of banks like Faysal Bank in the economic growth of Azad Kashmir because of their exposure, standing and clientele networks”, he noted The AJK President highlighted that after the launch of four projects under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor—Karot Hydropower Project, Kohala Hydropower Project, as well as proposed expressway from Mansehra to Muzaffarabad to Mirpur as well as an industrial zone in Mirpur—the role of the banking sector has increased, especially the private banking. He added

that the banking networks will facilitate supply chains, logistics chains, courier services and transportation.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/40462-2/>

“People call to revive trans-LoC trade, travel”

The Nation, July 30, 2017

The suspension of trade and Rawalakot-Poonch bus service across the Line of Control (LoC) for three straight weeks has sparked grave concerns among the traders and the divided families in Jammu Kashmir. The joint business community leaders from both the sides of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir stated that the cross-LoC trade has enormous symbolic value for the people of Jammu and Kashmir as it not only connects people but also provides livelihood to a large number of people living near the LoC. The traders engaged in cross-LoC trade urged the governments of Pakistan and India not to

politicise the trade and travel that are considered the major confidence-building measures (CBM) between India and Pakistan over Kashmir conflict. The cross-LoC trade from Teitrinote-Chakan-da-bagh trade point is suspended since last four weeks following the reported exchange of fire between Indian and Pakistani forces at the LoC in Poonch sector. Joint Federation of LoC Traders in Poonch President Sardar Kazeem Khan, Joint President Mr Pawan Anand, Secretary General Mr Rajeev Tandan from Jammu & Kashmir and Joint Secretary Sardar Insar Khan asked both Islamabad and New Delhi to resume trade and travel on a priority basis. According to Sardar Kazeem, cross-LoC trade is the only CBM survived and sustained in all odds even during the peak time of cross LoC hostilities.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/30-Jul-2017/people-call-to-revive-trans-loc-trade-travel>

International Developments

“AJK President Urges UK to Settle Kashmir Dispute”

Radio Pakistan, July 1, 2017

President Azad Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan urged the United Kingdom to play its role in resolving the longstanding Kashmir dispute. Addressing a function in Manchester on July 1, he also asked United Kingdom being a permanent member of the Security Council to help make the role of world body more effective and vigorous. He stated United Kingdom should take notice of massive human rights violations by Indian troops in held valley. Earlier, talking to the newly elected members of the House of Commons in Bradford, AJK President urged them to raise their voices for the fundamental rights of Kashmiris. Sardar Masood Khan lauded Pakistan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for their steadfast support for the cause of Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/01-Jul-2017/ajk-president-urges-uk-to-settle-kashmir-dispute>

“British MPs invited to visit AJK to observe freedom”

Pakistan Today, July 3, 2017

Azad Jammu Kashmir President Masood Khan invited British lawmakers especially members of the House of Commons to visit Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) to see how the Kashmiri people on this side of the Line of Control are enjoying freedom. Speaking to the newly elected members of the House of Commons, he urged the British lawmakers to raise the profile of Kashmir in the House of Commons and make it more responsive and vocal on the plight of Kashmiri people. In meetings with Tony Loyd, Jeff Smith, Liz McInnes, Afzal Khan, Yasmin Qureshi, Faisal Rashid, Jim McMohan, Angela Rayner and Debbie Abraham and MEP Wajid Khan, the Kashmiri president noted that the British

Parliament can play a role in exploring a peaceful solution of the Kashmir issue. He also stated that bipartisan consensus on Kashmir within the UK would help the cause of Kashmir immensely.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/03/british-mps-invited-to-visit-ajk-to-observe-freedom/>

Fawad Maqsood, “Kashmir neither a religious nor communal issue but a political one: Sardar Masood”

Business Recorder, July 3, 2017

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan, noted that Kashmir issue was not intractable as Indian propagandist project. Addressing a seminar on “Kashmir: Way Forward” held at the ongoing Bradford Literary Festival, Bradford city late on July 3, Masood Khan underlined that Kashmir was neither a religious nor a communal issue but a political issue awaiting a democratic verdict by the people of Kashmir about their political future. “The issue is about self-determination, first and foremost,” he stated adding that it should not be deliberately muddled by a “fog of complexity,” he added.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/07/03/356996/kashmir-neither-a-religious-nor-communal-issue-but-a-political-one-sardar-masood/>

“Spanish leaders stress early Kashmir solution”

The Nation, July 19, 2017

Three high-profile Spanish leaders separately called on AJK President Sardar Masood Khan in Spanish city of Barcelona on July 18. The leaders included Santi Rodriguez Serra, secretary general of the Popular Party; Juan Bautista Milian Querol, Spokesman of the Foreign Relations Committee of Catalan Parliament and Ms Merce Perea, member of

the National Assembly and Spokesperson of the Socialist Party in Spanish Congress. The three Spanish leaders expressed their dismay over inattention and non-engagement of the international community to address the core issues. Ms Perea noted that the prevalent situation was indeed tragic and needed attention of the parliamentarians who cared for universal protection of human rights. She also stated that the atrocities must come to an end and the international community should play effective role in this regard. The Spanish government and the Parliament, she noted, have always taken a strong position on human rights and supported implementation of the UN conventions, treaties and resolutions.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/19-Jul-2017/spanish-leaders-stress-early-kashmir-solution>

“Turkey Keen to Invest in Energy, Tourism and Other Sectors in GB”

Radio Pakistan, July 22, 2017

Turkey has shown interest to invest in energy, tourism and other sectors in Gilgit-Baltistan. This was stated by Turkish Ambassador in Pakistan at a meeting with Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman in Gilgit on July 22. The Ambassador stated his country also wants to open Turkish language centre at Karakoram International University Gilgit. The Chief Minister praised the Turkish government’s contribution for uplift of education sector.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/22-Jul-2017/turkey-evinced-keen-interest-to-invest-in-energy-tourism-and-other-sectors-in-gb>

Other Developments

Jamil Nagri, “Tourist spot in Gilgit-Baltistan claims 21 lives this summer”

Dawn, July 18, 2017

Babusar Pass, the road connecting Gilgit-Baltistan to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and leading to the most famous tourist attraction Babusar Top, has become a death trap for tourists who throng the area during the summer season. Thousands of foreign and local tourists visit the northern areas of the country every year as normalcy has returned to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa following back to back military operations in the region. During the last two days, at least five tourists lost their lives in road accidents, whereas, several others have sustained injuries. The road, which remains functional only six months a year due to heavy snowfall in the remaining months, has claimed 21 lives so far during the ongoing tourist season. Babusar Pass road remains open from the end of June to October every year, whereas the road

remains closed for the rest of year due to heavy snowfall. Local residents stated that accidents on Babusar Pass road have become a matter of routine. Farooqi, a resident of Chilas, the district headquarter of Diamer, put the blame on the road and the relevant authorities. He held the inappropriate design of the road and absence of a boundary wall along the road responsible for the accidents. The government authorities, however, put forth other causes of casualties. Diamer Deputy Commissioner Dildar Ahmed Malik stated district administration has been taking every possible measure to protect the tourists visiting these areas.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345704/tourist-spot-in-gilgit-baltistan-claims-21-lives-this-summer>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

Athar Masoodi, “Kashmir issue became an international issue with the American Ban”

Daily Mahasib, July 1, 2017

Despite the change of administration, the American foreign office always maintained that there is no change in the US policy on Kashmir. The US asked both countries to solve it amicably with dialogue. However, if both countries asked for mediation, the US could do that. By putting a 27 year old Kashmir based militant organization and its chief commander on the terrorist list, the US seems to have changed its policy in South Asia. At the same time, the US acknowledges the Kashmir dispute and is ready to offer support for the settlement of the dispute. This shows the contradiction in Trump’s policy. There is another argument- that the announcement by Trump administration is to woo India so that it would purchase more weapons from the US. In Azad Kashmir, J&K and Pakistan, this move is being seen as unjust for Kashmiris and done mainly to appease India. People are disappointed with this decision especially those who were hopeful of American efforts for the settlement of Kashmir issue.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=01-07-2017>

“A Good News has come from Iran”

Daily Mahasib, July 1, 2017

Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khomeini talked about atrocities in Kashmir twice in a short span of time. First, he voiced his concerns while delivering a sermon on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. During his address to judiciary, he also asked to formulate a legal position after reviewing the international laws on Kashmir and other global issues. Srinagar has welcomed the Iranian leader’s expression of concern and asked Iran to improve its relation with Pakistan. Iran used to be an open and

free supporter of Kashmir’s freedom. During the revolution, Iran’s official position of Kashmir was clear and loud. However, Iran’s proximity with India increased and it started distancing itself from Pakistan. Almost two decades passed like this and now the global and regional scene is yet again changing.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=05-07-2017>

Raja Shahzad Moazzam, “Annexation to Pakistan: need of hour”

Daily Dharti, July 2, 2017

History of Kashmir is several hundred years old. When India and Pakistan were not even on the map of world, the state Kashmir was there. Due to wrong policies of leaders from Sheikh Abdullah to contemporary leadership, Kashmiris have been treated as slaves and second class citizens. A mistake was committed in 1947 and since then mistakes have continued. Kashmiris consider Pakistan as a big brother and their target is to complete Pakistan. However, Pakistan is not doing what it could do for Kashmir. God forbid if Pakistan is not able to represent Kashmir due to fear of India or any other reason. Kashmiri people wants to bring in to the notice of UN and international community that right of self-determination must be given to Kashmiris.

http://www.dailydharti.ajk.com/sabaka_newspaper.php

Qasim Nasim, “CPEC is not suitable for GB”

Daily Salaam, July 5, 2017

The government is taking a position that CPEC is a commercial project and Gilgit-Baltistan is not fit for it. People of Gilgit-Baltistan will be right to say that it is forbidden for them to participate in CPEC. Chief Minister of GB Hafiz Hafeezur Rahman noted during

the budget session that they have reviewed the CPEC minutely and it appeared that CPEC is a commercial project and Gilgit-Baltistan is not fit for that. Thus commercial activity under CPEC is not possible for Gilgit-Baltistan. In past, the Chief Minister and other government officials claimed that Gilgit-Baltistan will be a gateway of CPEC and, hence, will be biggest beneficiary of the project. Further, Gilgit-Baltistan will have an economic zone. It had been the position of federal as well as the state government that Gilgit-Baltistan will get equal share in CPEC. Now after two years, the Chief Minister himself is saying that there is no relation between CPEC and Gilgit-Baltistan. The Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister is saying that CPEC is not suitable for Gilgit-Baltistan.

The change in stand is not sudden. It is due to a change of federal government's policy vis-à-vis Gilgit-Baltistan. This was the reason why the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan was not part of the prime minister's delegation to China. One of the senior officials also spelt out the same reason for not taking Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister to China. He also noted that the CPEC will be renamed as OBOR and Diamer Bhasha dam will be called only Bhasha Dam. The constitutional status is being fixed as per theory of necessity. Gilgit-Baltistan's legal status is clear and known to everyone. Detailed pre- independence history is available and after independence facts related to annexation to Pakistan is again crystal clear.

<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



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg

New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com