

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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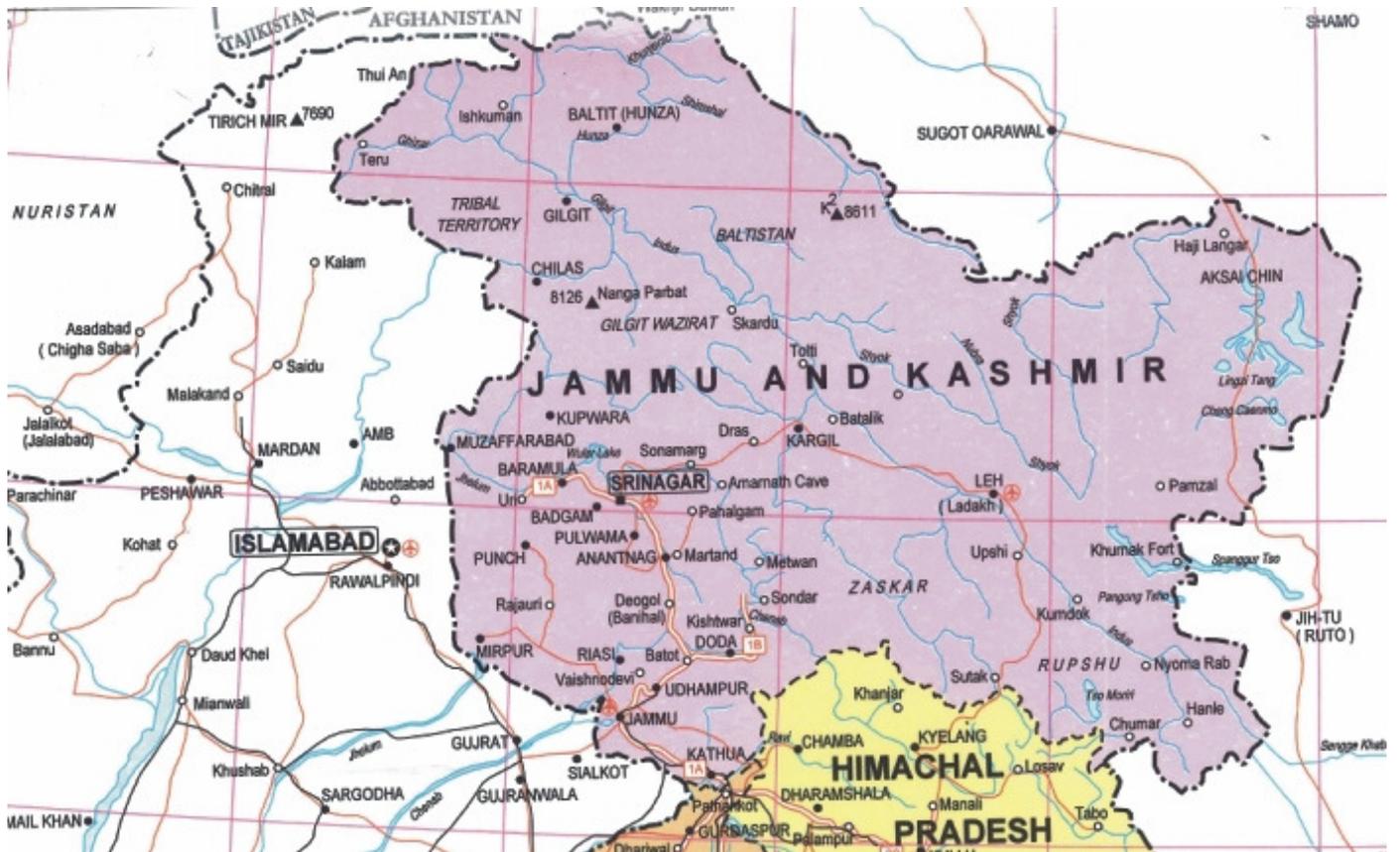
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Jammu & Kashmir

In this Edition

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has seized attention of the world community in view of the sheer scale and scope of the project. CPEC is projected as something that would serve as a panacea of all that ails Pakistan's economy and its distressing state of energy security. CPEC crosses the strategically crucial region of Gilgit Baltistan before spreading out in parts of Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan (part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir and, therefore, claimed by India) is the only land link between China and Pakistan. Despite its critical role in terms of geography and access, Gilgit Baltistan has yet not been accorded any significant project under CPEC scheme. Due to abject neglect on CPEC, the angst among the local population in Gilgit Baltistan has been building over a period of time. As certain reports in the current issue indicate, protests have been undertaken in the region to register dissent not only against the government of Pakistan but, more importantly, against China. People in the region feel betrayed that their land has been acquired but they are yet to receive any compensation for the same by the government of Pakistan. Not long ago, in the wake of rising unrest amongst locals vis a vis CPEC, it was announced that at least two special economic zones (SEZs) will be built in Gilgit Baltistan. However, with the passage of time, prospects for the Gilgit Baltistan region on CPEC are becoming blurry and this has hugely exacerbated apprehensions amongst the people.

Similarly, local people carried out protests in Gilgit Baltistan against Pakistan government's decision to sell vast tracts of land to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA). It is alleged that large swathes of land in Gilgit have been sold to these Pakistan state agencies at very cheap rates, in what is being termed as a "sell-out" by Pakistan. The justification provided by Pakistan government for selling out the land in Gilgit Baltistan region is that this is being done especially to help the upcoming CPEC that will cut across the region before reaching out to several parts of Pakistan.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Protests erupt in Gilgit-Baltistan against China, CPEC”

DNA, August 1, 2017

People in Gilgit-Baltistan on July 30 came out onto the streets protesting against China and the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which passes through the region. They were protesting against the project as they fear it would create a huge ecological imbalance. A large number of people in the region have been displaced as their houses have been demolished and farm lands acquired for the CPEC project. The local residents of Gilgit-Baltistan claim that the government has not compensated them for their lands as promised. It has been 8-10 years since we have been waiting for the compensation. We have lost animal shelters and shops but nothing has been compensated. Local officials are also not working properly. We have lost 500-600 trees and two-three kanal (unit) of land has been damaged. We have reminded them several times, but concrete action has not been taken, a local resident of Gilgit-Baltistan noted. Though Gilgit-Baltistan plays a key role in the CPEC project and all roads and pipelines crossing into China from Pakistan will run through this mountainous region, not a single Special Economic Zone is being set up to support the local residents.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-protests-erupt-in-gilgit-baltistan-against-china-cpec-2518975>

“PTDC gets possession of Satpara motel”

The News, August 1, 2017

The possession of the PTDC Motel, Satpara was restored to the PTDC in pursuance of the orders passed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. According to official spokesman, Mukhtar Ali, Acting Manager, PTDC, the success was achieved due to the statesmanship, prudence and untiring efforts of Ch.

Abdul Ghafoor, managing director, PTDC. PTDC Motel Satpara is situated at Skardu comprising of 12 rooms, reception & lobby, kitchen & pantry and servant quarters on the area of 30 kanals. The Supreme Appellate Court took the suo moto action in the matter. The possession of the property was handed over to the Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts and criminal proceedings were initiated against the MD PTDC and Manager PTDC Motel Satpara. The MD PTDC took the initiative and filed petition in the Honourable Supreme Court of Pakistan under Article 184(3) of the Constitution of Pakistan for setting aside the orders passed by the Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit-Baltistan. The three-member bench headed by the Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan admitted the petition for regular hearing and notices were issued.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/220438-PTDC-gets-possession-of-Satpara-motel>

“Pakistan ‘indebted’ for China’s support on Kashmir issue, NSG: Army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa”

The Economic Times, August 1, 2017

Pakistan is “indebted” to its all-weather ally China for its “unflinching support” to it on the Kashmir issue, the expansion of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa stated. Describing China and Pakistan as “important strategic players in the region,” Gen. Bajwa, who was the chief guest at a reception in Rawalpindi yesterday hosted by the Chinese Embassy, noted, their bilateral ties have jointly benefitted both countries. “It is a relationship based on mutual trust, respect, understanding and cooperation. In fact, this friendship is flourishing with every passing day, which encompasses every aspect of our life,” he stated at a function to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of China’s People’s

Liberation Army (PLA). He noted that both China and Pakistan are faced with similar challenges and opportunities. Both countries have assumed shared responsibility towards stability in the region and prosperity of their people, he further stated.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-indebted-for-chinas-support-on-kashmir-issue-nsg-army-chief-qamar-javed-bajwa/articleshow/59865479.cms>

“Implementation of Green Pakistan project completed in region: GB minister”

The Nation, August 1, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan’s Forest and Wildlife Minister Muhammad Imran stated that Green Pakistan project has been fully implemented in the region. He also stated, “Federal government has released Rs 270 million as first installment out of seven hundred million rupees allocated for the project. Under the project, protective bond is also being constructed to stop land erosion in different districts to save forest.” He noted while talking to Radio Pakistan, “Under the project plantation is being carried out in nine hundred kanal lands across Gilgit-Baltistan.”

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Aug-2017/implementation-of-green-pakistan-project-fully-complete-in-the-region>

“Pakistan incomplete sans Kashmir: Masood”

The Nation, August 2, 2017

Ghazi-i-Millat Sardar Ibrahim Khan was a hero for the people of Jammu and Kashmir as, in his political career, he led Azad Kashmir to freedom and liberation from the rule of the Maharaja and later led Kashmir’s struggle for the right to self-determination. These remarks were made by Sardar Masood Khan, the president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, on the occasion of the 14th death anniversary of State of Azad Kashmir’s founding President. Paying tributes to Sardar Ibrahim, Masood Khan noted that if Sardar Ibrahim had not played his heroic and decisive role in 1947-48, there would have been no Azad Kashmir; and if Azad Kashmir had not been liberated, the issue

of Kashmir would have died for all the times, as was the case with regard to Hyderabad and Junagarh. Sardar Ibrahim, he noted, is remembered and revered as “Quaid-e-Azam Sani” because of his high ideas, strong commitment and principled politics.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Aug-2017/pakistan-incomplete-sans-kashmir-masood>

“Nawaz was on way to divide Kashmir: Barrister Sultan”

The News, August 3, 2017

Former AJK prime minister and PTI’s president of Azad Kashmir chapter Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry alleged on August 2 that ex-premier Nawaz Sharif was on his way to division of Kashmir. Speaking at a news conference, he went on to charge that after his disqualification, he entrusted this ploy to AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider for which, massive money was used to bring him to power in that region.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/220976-Nawaz-was-on-way-to-divide-Kashmir-Barrister-Sultan>

“AJK president calls Mehbooba Mufti ‘facilitator’ in murder of Kashmiris”

Kashmir Watch, August 3, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan called the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Mehbooba Mufti a “facilitator” in the murder of “innocent Kashmiris” and noted she should resign if she cannot put an end to the atrocities, reported a news agency. Khan was addressing media along with British Parliamentarians who are in Islamabad. The AJK president further stated the British parliamentarians are playing an important role in highlighting the Kashmir dispute. He also stated particularly the Labour party is at the forefront and has expressed commitment to play its role in resolution of the lingering Kashmir dispute.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/40577-2/>

“AJK ruling party reposes confidence in Nawaz”

The Nation, August 5, 2017

The ruling party in AJK and its central organisation in the state on August 4 reposed full confidence in the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and Raja Farooq Haider Khan, appreciating the services of the party's patron-in-chief for “what they described” speedy progress and prosperity of the country. The extraordinary meeting of the ruling party of AJK was held at Kashmir House on August 4 with Raja Farooq Haider in the chair. The meeting passed various resolutions expressing confidence in Nawaz Sharif's leadership and vowed to continue its support for the party's supreme leader. The meeting showed reservations over the judgement in Panama case. “The party would continue to stand by its leader in the challenging time and he would certainly emerge victorious,” the meeting maintained. A committee led by AJK Minister for Information Raja Mushtaq Minhas was formed for finalising arrangements for participation in procession of Nawaz Sharif's from Islamabad to Lahore scheduled for August 6.

<http://nation.com.pk/multan/05-Aug-2017/ajk-ruling-party-reposes-confidence-in-nawaz>

“AJK Prime Minister has Thanked the Federal Government for Hundred Percent Increase in Azad Kashmir Budget”

Radio Pakistan, August 6, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan pledged to provide all basic facilities of life to every village of the state in the next four years. Talking to different delegations in Islamabad on August 6, he thanked government of Pakistan for hundred percent increase in development budget of Azad Kashmir. He also stated people will soon witness the results of the twenty-two billion rupees development budget.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/06-Aug-2017/ajk-prime-minister-has-thanked-the-federal-government-for-hundred-percent-increase-in-azad-kashmir-budget>

Tariq Naqash, “PTI submits resolution against AJK Prime Minister”

Dawn, August 7, 2017

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) submitted on August 4 a resolution to the secretariat of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly, which accused Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider of violating his oath of office and hurting the cause of Kashmiris by making a “highly controversial statement” on the future course of the Kashmiris. “During his press conference on July 30 Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider made a statement that severely damaged Kashmir cause and clearly diverged from the 70-year-long stance of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan, in sheer violation of the Constitution and his oath of office,” read the resolution that was signed by PTI lawmakers Abdul Majid Khan and Deevan Ghulam Mohyuddin.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1349699/pti-submits-resolution-against-ajk-pm>

“GOVT Determined for Socio-Economic Uplift of GB: PM”

Radio Pakistan, August 7, 2017

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi stated the government is determined for socio-economic uplift of Gilgit-Baltistan. Talking to Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman in Islamabad, the Chief Minister congratulated Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on being elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan and extended invitation to the Prime Minister for visiting Gilgit Baltistan. He also apprised the Prime Minister on the status of various ongoing development projects related to Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/07-Aug-2017/govt-determined-for-socio-economic-uplift-of-gb-pm>

“Kashmir solution a must for durable peace between Pakistan, India: Asif”

Samaa TV, August 8, 2017

Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on

August 7 stated that peace between India and Pakistan would be possible only through finding a durable solution to the Kashmir dispute. “Pakistan is ready to explore a solution through diplomacy,” he noted during a meeting with Azad Jammu and Kashmir president Sardar Masood Khan, according to a press statement from AJK Presidency. The Foreign Minister further stated that Pakistan would maintain and step up its moral, diplomatic and political support to the people of Kashmir, and work with the international community.

<https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2017/08/kashmir-solution-a-must-for-durable-peace-between-pakistan-india-asif/>

Ghulam Abbas, “Nawaz delayed visit empties pockets of GB party leaders”

Pakistan Today, August 8, 2017

The change in schedule of former prime minister’s visit to Lahore added sufferings of lawmakers and workers of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) who gathered in Islamabad to show solidarity with their party leader Nawaz Sharif. The ousted leader wants to garner public support after court ruling in Panama case through public rallies. Unprecedented and ugly scenes were witnessed at GB House in Islamabad on August 5 when a brawl broke out between a provincial minister and GB Council member over non-availability of room for the party workers invited to attend Nawaz Sharif’s rally to Lahore. The incident, according to insiders, happened when Imran Wakeel, Forest Minister, reached the House located at F5/1 Islamabad with a group of party workers and demanded rooms from Ashraf Sada, GB Council Member, who was supervising the arrangement for those coming to attend the event on August 9. Ashraf informed the minister that as the house was fully occupied by the workers arrived earlier; the new arrivals could be accommodated in hotels or private rest houses.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/08/08/nawaz-delayed-visit-empties-pockets-of-gb-party-leaders/>

“Shoaib Dastgir new IGP AJK”

The Nation, August 9, 2017

The federal government August 8 appointed Shoaib Dastgir, a grade-21 officer of the Police Service of Pakistan, as Inspector General Police of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The post was lying vacant after the transfer of outgoing IGP AJK Bashir Ahmed who has been appointed as Director General Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

According to the Establishment Division’s notification, “Shoaib Dastgir, a BS-21 officer of PSP Presently posted under the Punjab government, is transferred and posted as Inspector General of Police Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, in his own pay and scale, with immediate effect and until further orders.” Sources noted that a summary of senior officers including A.D. Khawja and Amjad Saleemi and Dastgir was moved a few days back. The Prime Minister approved the name of Dastgir to fill the slot.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/09-Aug-2017/shoaib-dastgir-new-igp-ajk>

“Govt taking concrete steps for rehabilitation of floods affectees: CM Gilgit Baltistan”

Radio Pakistan, August 9, 2017

Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated the government is taking concrete steps for rehabilitation of floods affectees. In a statement issued in Gilgit on August 9, he directed the concerned authorities to pay six lac rupees as compensation to each head of family and five lac to owner of land who died during the recent floods. The Chief Minister also announced giving government job to each heir of those died in the floods.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/09-Aug-2017/govt-taking-concrete-steps-for-rehabilitation-of-floods-affectees-cm-gilgit-baltistan>

“People of Gilgit-Baltistan demand release of jailed political activist Hasnain Ramal”

Outlook, August 9, 2017

Several organisations, including the Gilgit Baltistan Thinkers Forum (GBTF) strongly condemned the arrest of Hasnain Ramal, a social media and political activist from the Hunza valley in Gilgit Baltistan. Hasnain, who was raising his voice for the granting of political and economic rights of the people of Gilgit Baltistan, was arrested under Schedule 4 of Pakistan’s Anti-Terrorism Act. Raising concern over the arrest of an activist from Gilgit Baltistan under Pakistan rule, the GBTF statement noted, “GBTF strongly condemn the unlawful arrest of Hasnain Ramal, a brave social media and political activist, under Pakistani Draconian laws in Gilgit Baltistan.” He was one of the moving spirits of Gilgit Baltistan Awami Action Committee and a staunch supporter and worker of Gilgit Baltistan Awami Action Tehreek. Hasnain was running a social media campaign against Pakistan’s forceful occupation of Gilgit Baltistan.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/people-of-gilgitbaltistan-demand-release-of-jailed-political-activist-hasnain-ramal/1119662>

“UNDP Resident coordinator calls on AJK President Masood Khan”

Kashmir Watch, August 9, 2017

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and Resident representative for UNDP for Pakistan Mr. Neel Boney held talks with AJK president Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan at President House on August 8. Both leaders exchanged views regarding the food security in Azad Kashmir, disaster management, social welfare, good governance, upholding of merit, transparency, self-sufficiency in energy sector, improvement in education system, infrastructure, protection of forest and wildlife, health facilities, tourism, hydropower generation, telecommunication and employment in Azad Kashmir came under discussion. The AJK President stated that the similarity is being witnessed in the

priorities of AJK government and the UN programs to a large extent and he welcomed the UN development coordinators and stakeholders in Azad Kashmir.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/40645-2/>

“Mangla Dam almost filled to its capacity”

The Nation, August 10, 2017

The water level in the Mangla Dam on August 9 rose to the level of 1,231.35 feet against maximum conservation level of 1242 feet, live storage capacity of 6.573 MAF, official sources noted. Sources noted on August 9 that the inflow of Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was recorded 27,600 cusecs with the outflows of 10,000 cusecs of water from the reservoir located in Mirpur district of Azad Jammu Kashmir.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/10-Aug-2017/mangla-dam-almost-filled-to-its-capacity>

“Senior journalist Shahi questions Pakistan’s double standard with regard to Gilgit rights”

Deccan Chronicle, August 11, 2017

Days after police in the Hunza region of Gilgit-Baltistan arrested popular social media activist Hasnain Ramal for highlighting rights violations in region through his posts, a senior journalist of Gilgit-Baltistan has charged the Pakistan Government for pursuing double standards on matters of policy. Journalist Sher Nadir Shahi stated, this arrest of Ramal is nothing new as anybody who exposes Pakistan and its dummy government has to face the wrath of the ruling government. He stated that terrorist like Hafiz Saeed is making new political parties to enhance terrorist activities where peaceful activists are being jailed.

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/videos/news/senior-journalist-shahi-questions-pakistanrsquos-double-standard-with-regard-to-gilgit-rights.html>

“Pakistan: Social media activist arrested for flagging rights violations in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Business Standard, August 11, 2017

The Police in Gilgit-Baltistan’s Hunza region have confirmed the arrest this week of a well-known social media activist for posting material that they stated was in violation of the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Cyber Crime Act 2016. A report quoted credible sources as saying that Hasnain Ramal had been detained by the local law enforcement authorities for being very vocal in highlighting public issues related to Gilgit-Baltistan on social media. Ramal, police stated, was detained for raising political, national and basic human rights’ issues of Gilgit-Baltistan on social media. The daily quoted Ehsan Ali, an advocate and president of the Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association (SACBA), as saying that Ramal had been questioned by a joint investigation team (JIT) for his social media posts and was produced before a court on August 9. Earlier, Ramal’s name was put on Schedule 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, but on the intervention of Ehsan Ali, the issue was resolved. The Police also stated that he was also at the forefront of a movement launched by the Awami Action Movement for the restoration of subsidy on wheat and other essential items that were withdrawn four years ago by the PML-N government.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/pakistan-social-media-activist-arrested-for-flagging-rights-violations-in-gilgit-baltistan-117081100225_1.html

“Hurdles in Diemer-Bhasha Dam be removed, says PM”

The News, August 12, 2017

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on August 11 directed the Ministry of Water Resources to remove all the impediments in the way of the Diemer-Basha Dam project. He also directed the Ministry of Water Resources to focus on all the ongoing development projects and ensure their timely completion. Chairing a meeting on Wapda affairs at the PM Office, he noted the new Ministry of Water Resources had been constituted for better resolution of issues. He further

stated that the matter of water security was neglected in the past, while the entire focus was on power generation. He also stated the present government had taken the lead to initiate mega water projects as water was the backbone of economy.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/223135-Hurdles-in-Diameer-Bhasha-Dam-be-removed-says-PM>

“Exploitation in PoK by Pakistan political parties should end: PoK politician Dr Misfar Hassan Khan”

Financial Express, August 12, 2017

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) politician Dr Misfar Hassan Khan stated that the loot and exploitation being done by political parties of Pakistan in PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan needs to be stopped. “I want to convey my message to Pakistan’s political parties who have opened their shops in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, they need to be closed down. The exploitation of the region should be stopped now,” Dr Misfar Hassan Khan, President, Jammu Kashmir Liberation League Europe noted at a conference organised by Kashmiri leaders belonging to Jammu Kashmir National Independence Alliance in Leeds. The Kashmiri leaders supported PoK Prime Minister Farooq Haider’s statement against Pakistani occupation during the conference and asserted that Islamabad cannot keep the region enslaved under its illegal rule.

<http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/exploitation-in-pok-by-pakistan-political-parties-should-end-dr-misfar-hassan-khan/805566/>

“JKNF blasts move to change IHK demography”

The Nation, August 13, 2017

The Jammu & Kashmir National Front (JKNF) lambasted the Indian authorities’ move in Kashmir to abrogate Article 35-A of the Indian Constitution so as to change the state’s demography. Veteran Kashmiri human rights activist and senior vice chairman of JKNF Altaf Hussain Wani noted that New Delhi’s nefarious design behind the move was to change the demographic complexion of J&K. The

JKNF leader noted that the abrogation of article has been Modi government's top priority. Repealing of the article, he noted, was also included by BJP in its election manifesto in 2014, which he stated reflected the party's intent to alter the demography of the state. Since the BJP has miserably failed in seeking constitutional amendment, Wani stated that the ruling party was now using Indian judiciary as a tool to scrap article 35-A of the Indian constitution, which grants protection to state subject laws that had already been defined under the Maharaja's rule and notified in 1927 and 1932, Wani underlined.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/13-Aug-2017/jknf-blasts-move-to-change-ihk-demography>

“APHC AJK holds protest outside Indian HC”

Pakistan Observer, August 14, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter of the All Parties Hurriyet Conference staged a protest demonstration outside Indian High Commission in Islamabad to mark India's Independence Day as black day.

<http://pakobserver.net/aphc-ajk-holds-protest-outside-indian-hc/>

“Pakistan Will Continue Support to Kashmiris to Resolve Kashmir Issue: Barjees”

Radio Pakistan, August 15, 2017

Minister for Kashmir Affairs Chaudhry Barjees Tahir noted that Pakistan will continue its political, diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiris to resolve the Kashmir issue according to their aspirations. He was talking to a delegation of Azad Kashmir Council led by President AJK Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan in Islamabad on August 15. He also stated that the PML-N government has effectively highlighted Kashmir issue on international fora including the United Nations. The Minister noted that Pakistan will continue its policies and vision for a prosperous and developed Kashmir and speedily complete the ongoing projects in Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/15-Aug-2017/pakistan-will-continue-support-to-kashmiris-to-resolve-kashmir-issue-barjees>

September 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed, Tariq Naqash, “Support for Kashmir freedom struggle reaffirmed”

Dawn, August 15, 2017

Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Bajwa on August 14 reaffirmed support for Kashmir's freedom struggle. Speaking to troops on the Line of Control (LoC) on Independence Day, Gen Bajwa noted: “We will always stand with them in their just struggle against repression.” The army chief had on August 13 night hoisted the largest and tallest flag in South Asia at the Wagah border crossing, where he recalled the sacrifices of the martyrs and vowed to foil the enemies' conspiracies against the country. Pakistan has always diplomatically, politically and morally supported the Kashmir movement. Ever since last year, Pakistan has been highlighting the atrocities being committed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351633/support-for-kashmir-freedom-struggle-reaffirmed>

“E-Governance System being Introduced in Gilgit-Baltistan: Hafeez”

Radio Pakistan, August 15, 2017

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafeez-ur-Rehman says E-governance system is being introduced in Gilgit-Baltistan to improve performance of government departments and facilitate masses. In a statement, he noted that the government has planned to set up a separate IT department. He also stated that official record is being computerized besides strengthening bio-metric attendance to ensure presence of government employees in their offices.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/15-Aug-2017/e-governance-system-being-introduced-in-gilgit-baltistan-hafeez>

“CM Gilgit-Baltistan Approves Widening of Momin Abad-Altit Road”

Radio Pakistan, August 17, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman gave approval to widening of road from Momin Abad to Altit Fort in District Hunza. The

project will be completed at a cost of 153 million rupees. The Chief Minister has also endorsed the summary of 18.3 billion rupees development budget of Gilgit-Baltistan allocated for the current financial year

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/17-Aug-2017/cm-gilgit-baltistan-approves-widening-of-momin-abad-altit-road>

“AJK PM Expresses Concern over US Decision of Blacklisting Hizbul Mujahideen”

Radio Pakistan, August 18, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister, Raja Farooq Haider Khan expressed concern over the US decision of blacklisting Hurriyat Organization Hizbul Mujahideen. In a statement in Muzaffarabad on August 18, he noted that by banning Hizbul Mujahideen, the United States is violating UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir. He also stated that Hizbul Mujahideen is indigenous organization representing sentiments and aspirations of Kashmiri people on both sides of the Line of Control. He appealed to the members of international human rights organizations to visit the valley.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/18-Aug-2017/ajk-pm-expresses-concern-over-us-decision-of-blacklisting-hizbul-mujahideen>

“Government Taking Concrete Steps to Promote Tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan: Ahsan”

Radio Pakistan, August 18, 2017

Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal noted that the government is taking concrete steps to promote tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan. Talking to Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman in Islamabad on August 17, he stated that Gilgit-Baltistan and its highways have central importance with reference to China- Pakistan Economic Corridor. He stated elimination of VIP culture from public organizations is top priority of the government.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/17-Aug-2017/government-taking-concrete-steps-to-promote-tourism-in-gilgit-baltistan-ahsan>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK prime minister summoned to explain ‘anti-Pakistan’ remarks”

Dawn, August 18, 2017

Six separate notices were issued to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider by the AJK Legislative Assembly’s Secretariat on August 18 asking him to appear before the Speaker of the AJK Assembly on August 28 to explain comments he made on July 29. The notices were issued after opposition leaders filed references demanding Farooq’s resignation for saying that he will have to have to “reconsider” if he wanted to “annex his fate with Pakistan” following the ouster of PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif from the prime minister’s office. Haider belongs to the same party as Sharif. “A reference has been submitted to the Legislative Assembly Speaker by Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, Leader of the Opposition, under Section 25(2) of the AJK Interim Constitution Act, read with Section 5(2) of the AJK Legislative Assembly (Election) Ordinance 1970.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352350/ajk-prime-minister-summoned-to-explain-anti-pakistan-remarks>

“PPP reference against PM, AJK”

Pakistan Observer, August 19, 2017

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan expressed concern over filing of reference against Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Farooq Haider by PPP. In a statement, he noted the attitude of PPP was not only regrettable but also condemnable. Raja Farooq Haider has not migrated to Pakistan or Azad Kashmir from abroad and his entire life is before Pakistanis and Kashmiris. He is a patriot who spent his whole life supporting annexation of Azad Kashmir with Pakistan and this stance of Raja is known to all. It is unfortunate that despite categorical clarification by the AJK Prime Minister some elements and circles are still agitating on the issue and obviously their objective is to malign and harm him politically. There is deplorable tendency of labelling political opponents as traitors, which serves no purpose but to undermine

national unity and solidarity and in this case the cause of Kashmiri people.

<http://pakobserver.net/ppp-reference-pm-ajk/>

“Gilgit locals continue to vehemently oppose land grabbing by Pak ISI”

DNA, August 20, 2017

Residents of Gilgit in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), took to the streets to protest against thousands of acres of land worth billions being illegally acquired by the Pakistan army and the Pakistani government in their region. Thousands of acres of land worth billions illegally allotted to Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA) shows ample testimony to the fact that how state owned and non-state owned land is being sold to the Pakistan army at throwaway prices, Ghulan Shah, a local leader in Gilgit. He further stated this is not merely a paper of land allotment, but a document exposing the duplicitous and diabolical nature of the Pakistani establishment. Shah noted that the state government has acquired 3,000 kanal of land. The other news being heard is that 20,000 kanal of land has been acquired in a nearby village and this all has been happening at the pretext of CPEC. A similar situation is prevailing in another village Minaaur too. Although 800-900 Kanal of land was already given by our village, still 300 Kanal has been given for the firing range.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-gilgit-locals-continue-to-vehemently-oppose-land-grabbing-by-pak-isi-2535758>

“India conspiring to change demography of Kashmir: AJK PM”

The Nation, August 20, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted on August 20 that India is conspiring to change the demography of Kashmir by allotting property to people who are not residents of the state. In an interview, he noted that this issue is being taken up at all international forums. He reiterated that federal government and people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir will continue to extend moral,

diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiris for their just right to self-determination.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/20-Aug-2017/india-conspiring-to-change-demography-of-kashmir-ajk-pm>

“GB CM inaugurates Skardu bypass road”

Pakistan Observer, August 21, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister (CM) Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman inaugurated the Skardu bypass road that would connect Gamba and Nathorgo and will be completed with an estimated cost of Rs 300million. The people of Shakarmang Khaplu would also benefit from this road. The CM was briefed by the senior officials of Communication and Works Department about the salient features of the project. He was told that a 30 kilometres highway and two new bridges would also be completed. The CM also stated that the provision of quality infrastructure was the top priority of his government as roads and bridges would help to expedite the pace of economic development. He directed the officials to construct the road by adopting all the latest techniques and ensure its timely completion without compromising the quality of work. He has also directed the authorities concerned to prepare a comprehensive plan for the assessment of damages and losses caused by the floods, besides repair and rehabilitation of all the flood-affected areas for providing relief to the masses.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/08/21/gb-cm-inaugurates-skardu-bypass-road/>

“Religious schools in AJK asked to follow new rules”

Dawn, August 21, 2017

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) asked seminaries in the region to follow the new procedure to register their institutes, otherwise the registration shall be repealed and they could face closure. Religious Affairs Secretary Nazeerul Hassan Gilani stated that the new law was enacted to implement the National Action Plan (NAP) in the region to curb terrorism. He explained that data

regarding mosques and seminaries in AJK had been collected as a mandatory measure under NAP. According to Mr Gilani, religious institutions were being asked to adopt standard procedures provided in the new law or face closure. He also stated that the department of religious affairs was successfully implementing NAP in the area to curb terrorism. He added that nobody would be allowed to violate the law.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352886/religious-schools-in-ajk-asked-to-follow-new-rules>

Zubair Torwali, “CPEC in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, August 22, 2017

Passu is a beautiful village about 150 kilometres on the Karakorum Highway from the town of Gilgit. It is at the mouth of the 57 kilometre-long world’s fifth longest glacier, Batura. This beautiful village is surrounded by peaks that look like cones and are called Passu Cones or Passu Cathedral. Passu is famous all over the world because of the features described above. But at the beginning of this month, Passu attracted attention for another reason. A good number of intellectuals and researchers from Gilgit-Baltistan gathered in the village for two days to analyse the impacts of CPEC on the ecology, sociology, cultural diversity, economy and political status of the region which is rightly described by linguist O’Leary “as a mountainous area where the Hindu Kush, the Himalayas and the Karakorams form a knot” and “a land of geographic and ethnic diversity, one of the most multilingual places on the face of the earth.” The Aga Khan Rural Support Program organised a formal gathering of researchers and public intellectuals of the region to discuss whether Gilgit-Baltistan is ready to exploit and sustain, or repackage, the forthcoming changes on its culture, economy, politics, ethnic and religious diversity, etc. in the wake of CPEC.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/225069-CPEC-in-Gilgit-Baltistan>

“Gilgit-Baltistan sell-out by Pak”

Daily Excelsior, August 23, 2017

Large scale protests have been registered in entire Gilgit Baltistan region against Pakistan for transferring thousands of kanals of land in Gilgit to Pakistan intelligence agency ISI and Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA). More than 20,000 kanals of land in Jandali area of Gilgit are for sale to these two agencies on throw away prices and the intentions are much larger than what meets the eye. Local political parties have stated that this is the continuation of the process of changing the demographic complexion of the Northern Areas. A similar situation is prevailing in another village Minaur too. Although 800-900 kanals of land was taken away from the villagers, still 300 kanals more have been taken for the firing range. Local people say that the land has not been occupied by covert tricks, but by blatant hooliganism. All this is being done under the pretext of facilitating the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Pakistan is committing several violations by adopting the policy of grabbing Gilgit land. Firstly, it is violation of the State Subject law to which the political leaders of Gilgit have alluded. Those who will be settled on the transferred land will be Pakistan nationals. Secondly, Gilgit Baltistan is actually part of the original State of Jammu and Kashmir. Under UNSC resolutions, no demographic change will be brought about till final settlement of the dispute. Reports are that proper fencing of the land acquired by the Pakistan military has been done. In order to appease the Chinese and assist them in completing their dream CPEC project, people were threatened, beaten and were forced to make a compromise with the Pakistan establishment.

<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/gilgit-baltistan-sell-out-by-pak/>

“Work on Grid Station at Sehnsa Kotli to start during this year: AJK PM”

Radio Pakistan, August 23, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan announced to give status of sub-division to Sarsawa and Tattapani in district Kotli to

facilitate people of the areas. Talking to members of AJK Assembly and senior leader of PML-N Raja Naseer Khan in Islamabad on August 23, he noted work on projects relating to communication, clean drinking water, health, education and power supply is speedily underway in all ten districts of Azad Kashmir under Prime Minister Infrastructure Development Program. Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that the work on a grid station at Sehnsa Kotli will start during this year.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/23-Aug-2017/work-on-grid-station-at-sehnsa-kotli-to-start-during-this-year-ajk-pm>

“Unemployment still high in region: AJK president”

Daily Times, August 23, 2017

Despite efforts to raise the literacy rate, unemployment in the region is still very high, Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan noted on August 22. He stated this while talking to United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan Neil Buhne. According to the official statement, Neil Buhne visited Kashmir to meet senior government officials and discuss development priorities in the region. During the meeting, they discussed the challenges and opportunities facing the UN development initiatives in Pakistan and explored avenues to further strengthen the partnership between the government of Pakistan and UN on key issues such as education, nutrition, employment, disaster-risk reduction, food security, health amongst others. President Sardar Masood noted that there were challenges related to diminishing donor assistance after the 2005 earthquake and continuing risks from naturally induced disasters. He also stated that there were various opportunities that the government was focusing on which included ongoing development schemes, hydropower projects, skill development of educated youth and tourism.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/119631/unemployment-still-high-in-region-ajk-president/>

“Expats tasked to shake world powers’ conscience for Kashmir solution”

The Nation, August 24, 2017

The AJK president stressed a need for more vibrant role of the Pakistani and Kashmiri expatriates and the world power like the United Nations for early settlement to the much-delayed Kashmir issue. AJK President Sardar Masood Khan called upon them to lend all of their energy for highlighting the Kashmir cause to muster the maximum sympathies of the external world towards the early solution to the lingering conflict. The president expressed these views while addressing a seminar titled ‘Role of Kashmiri Diaspora for Project of Kashmir Cause’ hosted by Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Cell with the collaboration of the state-run Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST) and the UK-based Jammu & Kashmir Self Determination Movement EU, at the main campus of the MUST. The seminar was managed to interact with the visiting British parliamentary delegation consisting of MPs Yasmin Qureshi, Graham Jones, Faisal Rasheed and Mohammad Yasin, as well as Raja Najabat, the chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Self-determination Movement EU.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/24-Aug-2017/expats-tasked-to-shake-world-powers-conscience-for-kashmir-solution>

Shoaib ur Rehman, “Govt attaches great importance to socio-economic uplift of Gilgit-Baltistan: Mamnoon”

Business Recorder, August 25, 2017

President Mamnoon Hussain on August 24 noted that the government attached great importance to the development and socio- economic uplift of Gilgit-Baltistan. The President stated this while talking to Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafiz-ur-Rehman and the cabinet members of Gilgit-Baltistan who called on him on August 24. The president noted that early and timely implementation of the projects under CPEC was top priority of the government, adding that these projects would stimulate the economic growth of entire country, especially this region. The President appreciated the remarkable work done by the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan in the education, health and infrastructure development

sectors. He also assured his complete and all out support in this regard. The President pointed out that although more than a million tourists visited Gilgit-Baltistan this year, there was a need to attract more foreign tourists. He also lauded the efforts of the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan to maintain law and order which was a key to the development of tourism sector in GB. He underscored that the events like recently held Jeep Rally in Skardu would further boost tourism in the region and therefore, such events should be held on regular basis.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/08/25/366571/govt-attaches-great-importance-to-socio-economic-uplift-of-gilgit-baltistan-mamnoon/>

“Kohala Hydropower Project to Help Overcome Power Crisis in Country, AJK: Masood”

Radio Pakistan, August 25, 2017

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan noted that new network of roads and completion of mega hydro power projects will open a new era of progress and prosperity in the country. Talking to member of Legislative Assembly Raja Abdul Qayyum in Islamabad on August 25, he noted completion of projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor will also provide job opportunities to local population of Azad Kashmir as well. Sardar Masood Khan also stated that the 1124 MW Kohala Hydropower Project will help overcome power crisis in the country and Azad Kashmir. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir President further stated that some international players conspiring against the Corridor project will not succeed in their nefarious designs. On this occasion, Raja Abdul Qayyum lauded vibrant role of President Masood Khan for highlighting Kashmir issue on international fora.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/25-Aug-2017/kohala-hydropower-project-to-help-overcome-power-crisis-in-country-ajk-masood>

“Moot participants deny report on Kashmir”

The Nation, August 25, 2017

The participants of Kashmir Conference held in Dubai have categorically denied the reports published

in a section of the media which accused the participants from Kashmir of accepting the Indian stance on the Kashmir issue. They stated that the participants of Dubai Moot had declared Kashmir a political issue required to be settled. “The participants of the conference were of the unanimous view that the settlement of Kashmir issue is possible only through dialogue,” they noted in the statement. They had unanimously demanded the revival of the ceasefire on the Line of Control in order to reduce the miseries of the Kashmiris. The participants made it clear in the joint statement that no joint communiqué of the conference was released at the conclusion of the moot, which is being made the source for issuing the statements of criticism without any justification and the act of the critics is absolutely based on ill intention, they remarked.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/25-Aug-2017/moot-participants-deny-report-on-kashmir>

Parvez Jabri, “Punjab government provides Rs1.5bn aid to AJK”

Business Recorder, August 26, 2017

The government of Punjab provided Rs 1.5 billion as aid to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government for the betterment of its education sector. Minister education Barrister Iftikhar Gilani told that the amount would be spent to improve the quality of education in the area and providing soft loans to needy students to carry on their higher studies. He also stated that the literacy rate in AJK was high as compared to other parts of the country but the quality of education was very poor to meet the standards and compete at national level. He stated the government was facing scarcity of resources to allocate more funds in education sector to improve quality and meet the requirements. “This amount would be a gift for us from the Punjab government,” he noted. He lauded the generous efforts of Punjab government to include the area and people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to its progress and prosperity agenda and expressed gratitude.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/08/26/366861/punjab-government-provides-rs1-5bn-aid-to-ajk/>

“Census 2017: AJK population rises to over 4m”

The Nation, August 27, 2017

The population of Azad Jammu & Kashmir has rose to over 4.45 million, against 2.9 million numbered in the population census of 1998, AJK Census Commissioner Raja Tariq Mahmood informed. The AJK census commissioner noted on August 26 evening that the state’s population has rose to a total of 40,45366 persons (both genders), which was determined in the recently-conducted population census 2017. Previously the AJK population was 29,72501 persons according to the census -1998. Unveiling district-wise breakup of all 10 district of AJK, Raja Tariq Mahmood stated that according to the Population Census 2017, the number of persons in Muzaffarabad district were registered as 650,370, Neelum valley district (1 lakh, 91 thousand and 251), Hattiyani (Jhelum Valley) district (2 lakh, 30 thousand and 529), Bhimbher district (4 lakh, 20 thousand and 624), Mirpur District (4 lakh, 56 thousand and 200), Kotli district 774,194; Bagh district 371,919; Sudhanoti (Palandri) District 297,584); Poonch District 5,571 and Haveili district 152,124. In population Census 1998, the district-wise population of AJK was registered as under: - Muzaffarabad district (4,53975), Neelum valley district (125,712)), Hattiyani (Jhelum Valley) district (166,064), Bhimbher district (301,633), Mirpur District (333,482), Kotli district (563,094), Bagh district (281,721); Sudhanoti (Palandri) District (224,091); Poonch District (411,035) and Haveili district (111,694). Further details will be unveiled later on, the Census Commissioner stated.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/27-Aug-2017/census-2017-ajk-population-rises-to-over-4m>

“AJK Assembly Adopts Resolution Condemning US Decision to Blacklist Hizbul Mujahideen”

Radio Pakistan, August 28, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in its session in Muzaffarabad on August 28, adopted a unanimous resolution condemning US decision of

blacklisting Hizbul Mujahideen. The resolution was tabled by Member of Legislative Assembly Abdul Rasheed Turabi. The resolution noted that Hizbul Mujahideen is an indigenous organization representing sentiments and aspirations of Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination. The UN Charter has mandated the Kashmiris to struggle for the independence movement through political and diplomatic fronts. The resolution also condemned US decision terming Syed Sallahudin as terrorist. The resolution stated the US State Department has adopted a dual policy regarding terrorism. The House demanded of the US government to revise its decision about sanctions on Hizbul Mujahideen and play a decisive role in bringing durable peace in South Asia.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/28-Aug-2017/president-ajk-convenes-special-session-of-ajk-legislative-assembly-in-muzaffarabad-today>

“GBLA Passes Resolution Condemning Statement of Trump against Pakistan”

Radio Pakistan, August 29, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) passed a unanimous resolution condemning the statement of US President against Pakistan. In its 20th session with Speaker Fida Muhammad Nashad in the chair in Gilgit on August 29, Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly also demanded US President to revisit its policies on Pakistan. The resolution was presented in the House by Jafarullah Khan and Rizwan Ali. In another resolution, the House lauded President Mamnoon Hussain who announced for establishment of Women University in GB and also accept all demands of the Vice Chancellor of Karakoram International University. The Assembly also passed a privilege motion presented by Parliamentary Secretary Aurangzeb Khan and demanded Government to pay one month additional salary as announced by Finance Minister to some departments for preparing budget .

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/29-Aug-2017/gb-la-meets-in-gilgit-on-tuesday>

“Disqualification reference against AJK PM dismissed”

The Nation, August 29, 2017

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Shah Ghulam Qadir on August 28 dismissed a reference of disqualification against Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan after duly hearing the parties. Opposition leader in legislative Assembly Ch. Muhammad Yasin and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan had filed two references against him (Mr. Haider) seeking his disqualification from the legislative Assembly seat under section 25 sub

section 2 of interim constitution 1974 read with section 5 of election ordinance 1970. In the references, they sought disqualification of Mr. Haider from the legislative Assembly seat on the ground that he allegedly made remarks against Kashmir’s nexus with Pakistan which they stated was a violation of his oath. The speaker in his verdict noted that Mr. Haider submitted an affidavit reaffirming his commitment with the ideology of Kashmir’s accession with Pakistan and the allegation was lacking substantial evidence, hence, references were dismissed.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/29-Aug-2017/disqualification-reference-against-ajk-pm-dismissed>

Economic Developments

“Gilgit-Baltistan plans 34.5MW plant”

The News, August 1, 2017

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) decided to establish a 34.5 megawatt (MW) project with the assistance of federal government to overcome the ongoing power crisis, as reported on July 31. “The plant will be built in Harpe village at cost of Rs9522.801 million for which the federal government will provide funds from Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP),” noted Naseem Hussain, superintending engineer Public Works Department.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/220341-Gilgit-Baltistan-plans-345MW-plant>

Tariq Naqash, “Intra-Kashmir trade to resume on 8th”

Dawn, August 4, 2017

Pakistani and Indian officials decided on August 3 to resume intra-Kashmir trade from August 8. The decision was taken after a two-hour-long meeting on the Kaman bridge, which marks the divide in the Chakothi-Uri sector, some 60 kilometres south of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Intra-Kashmir trade suffered a blow on July 21 after New Delhi alleged that a truck carrying goods from AJK to the India-held state had brought “a huge quantity of heroin”. As many as 14 trucks from AJK and 29 from J&K had transported goods through the Chakothi-Uri crossing point under the barter trade system to the other side that day. Officials from both sides of LoC meet at Kaman Bridge However, Indian authorities alleged that police had seized 300 packets of heroin from one of the trucks from AJK. The heroin was hidden in boxes purportedly containing textile goods, the Indian side alleged. The consignment, reportedly booked by one Anjum Zaman in Azad Kashmir, was meant for Kuloo Suppliers and addressed to Gul Ayazudin Gouhar at Fruit Mandi,

Parimpora, Srinagar. The driver of the truck, identified as Syed Yousuf Shah, a resident of Charwaya village near Muzaffarabad, was arrested. Under the standard operating procedure of the intra-Kashmir trade, empty trucks are required to return to their respective side by 5pm, but vehicles were stranded on opposite sides till 1:30am that night. While the authorities in Azad Kashmir sent all 29 trucks back, the authorities in J&K sent back all but one of the 14 trucks.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1349510/intra-kashmir-trade-to-resume-on-8th>

Parvez Jabri, “Gilgit Baltistan to get LPG Air Mix plant”

Business Recorder, August 7, 2017

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on August 7 noted a Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Air Mix plant would be established in Gilgit Baltistan to benefit 10,000 energy consumers. In a meeting with Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman at the PM Office, the Prime Minister noted the LPG plant would significantly reduce usage of forest wood. The Prime Minister also stated that the government was determined for the socio-economic uplift of Gilgit Baltistan and would continue to extend all out support. The Chief Minister congratulated the Prime Minister on assuming his office and extended him invitation to visit Gilgit Baltistan. He also apprised the Prime Minister on the status of various ongoing development projects in Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/08/07/363575/gilgit-baltistan-to-get-lpg-air-mix-plant/>

“AJKCCI inks integrated industrial up lift plan”

Pakistan Observer, August 8, 2017

An integrated industrial plan has been inked by the AJK Chamber of Commerce & industry with the

coordination of AJK government to encourage and promote local and foreign investment in trade and industrial sector especially by the UK-based Kashmiri expatriates in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. President of AJK Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sohaib Saeed noted on August 4 that the chamber has already moved recommendations to the AJK government by devising a strategy for early revival of over 70 sick Industrial units located in Mirpur and Bhimber districts.

<http://pakobserver.net/ajkcci-inks-integrated-industrial-lift-plan/>

Tariq Naqash, “Intra-Kashmir trucks stranded due to protest”

Dawn, August 23, 2017

Despite a resumption of trade activities between the divided parts of Kashmir through Chakothei-Uri crossing point since August 9, the authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) have been unable to transport mercantile goods to the downstream markets. The authorities feared vandalism at the hands of relatives of the drivers detained in J&K over alleged drug trafficking. The relatives, along with the union of truck drivers, staged a protest and threatened to hurl bottle bombs on the trucks “daring to drive through their area” towards the markets in Punjab. Earlier, trade was suspended on July 21 after India alleged it recovered 66.5kg heroin from one of the 14 trucks arriving from AJK. The truck was seized and its driver Yousuf Shah was arrested by the Indian authorities. However, after an understanding between the two sides, the barter trade was resumed on August 8 and trucks from Jammu & Kashmir were regularly bringing goods on the designated days while a few vehicles from AJK also ferried goods to the opposite side after August 17. The AJK authorities were now facing another problem—transportation of goods unloaded at Chakothei to the downstream markets.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353282/intra-kashmir-trucks-stranded-due-to-protest>

“AJK Cabinet Development Committee Approves 11 Development Projects”

Radio Pakistan, August 25, 2017

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee in its meeting in Muzaffarabad on August 25 approved eleven development projects costing about two billion rupees. Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan presided over the meeting. The projects approved by the Cabinet related to Communication and Works, Physical Planning and Housing, Power, Development Department Rawalakot, PM Infrastructure Development Program, Local Government, Agriculture and Small Industries Corporation. Addressing the meeting, Raja Farooq Haider Khan thanked the federal government to enhance development budget of Azad Kashmir to 22 billion rupees.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/25-Aug-2017/ajk-cabinet-development-committee-approves-11-development-projects>

International Developments

“Third party mediation in Kashmir indispensable: Dr Fai”

The Nation, August 3, 2017

World Kashmir Awareness Forum Secretary General Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai on August 2 stated that third party intervention and mediation in Kashmir is indispensable. Dr Fai, who met with the representatives of various political parties of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Brooklyn, New York, noted Kashmir conflict is not a border quarrel between India and Pakistan, or a fight between Hindus and Muslims and neither a struggle between theocracy and secularism. “It is primarily about the 20 million Kashmiri people, their human rights and right to self-determination under international law and still binding United Nations Security Council resolutions, he added. Reiterating that the conflict needs a third party intervention, Dr Fai noted Pakistan and India have negotiated for more than half a century without result. “All the flowery declarations from Tashkent, Simla, Lahore and other scores of summits have proven sound and fury signifying nothing. To persist in the same course after 70 years of dismal failure conjures up many adjectives, but none are flattering to the cerebral faculty,” he added. The best candidates, Fai suggested, for outside intervention and mediation seem the United States or the United Nations, as in Northern Ireland, East Timor, the Middle East peace process, and Bosnia.

<http://nation.com.pk/featured/03-Aug-2017/third-party-mediation-in-kashmir-indispensable-dr-fai>

“Impact of CPEC discussed by exiled Kashmiri leaders”

Business Standard, August 5, 2017

Exiled Kashmiri leaders and human rights activists recently held a seminar in Birmingham to discuss the plight of people living in Pakistan-administered

Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. They also denounced the construction of the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project in the region. They claimed it was an attempt by China to stake a greater claim in the disputed territory of Gilgit Baltistan. Shaukat Ali Kashmir, Chairman, UKPNP, stated, “The people of Pakistani Kashmir had to travel to such remote parts of the territory, whose names they have never heard of in search for jobs. I feel it is a deeply sad and disturbed state of affairs in Pakistani Kashmir that people have to endure.” Locals believe that China will be the real beneficiary of the multi-billion dollar project and exploit the rich resources of the region. The leaders also highlighted the suffering endured by the people living in Pakistan’s illegally occupied territories.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/impact-of-cpec-discussed-by-exiled-kashmiri-leaders-117080500972_1.html

“EU, British MPs for early resolution of Kashmir issue”

Pakistan Today, August 7, 2017

Andrew Gwynne and Wajid Khan, members of the British and European Parliaments respectively called for early grant of the right of self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir to decide their destiny in line with the spirit of the internationally-acknowledged norms and commitments. Speaking at a reception hosted by a central Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader from the Youth Wing in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Malick Sohail Awan on August 7, Andrew Gwynne, belonging to the opposition Labour Party, emphasised for the immediate grant of justice to the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir through the early peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue under the spirit of the international norms and commitments.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/08/07/eu-british-mps-for-early-resolution-of-kashmir-issue/>

“Pak-South Korea relations hit as Seoul refuses to invest in PoK projects”

Business Standard, August 9, 2017

Pakistan has been trying to aggressively seek investments from international financial institutions and countries, including South Korea, in energy and other infrastructure projects, especially in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, both parts of undivided Jammu and Kashmir and claimed by India as its territory. While South Korea had earlier shown interest, it is now reluctant to invest in these regions of Pakistan. This disinclination is on account of a better international and South Korean understanding of the disputed nature of this region, and the legal complexities that any investment in Gilgit Baltistan and ‘Azad Kashmir,’ would entail. Not only are these two areas disputed, they are also not formally a part of Pakistan’s Constitution, thereby leaving a large number of questions unanswered, including the citizenship of persons residing in GB and ‘Azad Kashmir’. Further, after the announcement of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and India’s categorical objection to it on the grounds that Pakistan and China could not agree to construct an economic corridor that passed through Indian territory, currently occupied by Pakistan, doubts have been raised among investors about the economic feasibility of projects in the disputed area.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/pak-south-korea-relations-hit-as-seoul-refuses-to-invest-in-pok-projects-117081000150_1.html

“Three Gorges South Asia Team meets AJK President”

Kashmir Watch, August 15, 2017

A delegation from China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Limited (CSAIL), a subsidiary of China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC) called upon Sardar Masood Khan, President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to apprise him on the ongoing hydro-electric projects in AJK. The delegation comprised of Mr. Qin Quobin, CEO and Mr. NA Zuberi, COO. Details on the developments relating to the Kohala and Korat

Hydropower Projects were extensively discussed. The President expressed his desire for the early completion of the two projects which, he noted, would highly benefit both the people of AJK and Pakistan. He further assured that the AJK will facilitate CTGC for the timely completion of the projects. Mr. Qin informed that the CTGC endeavours to provide electricity from the two projects at competitive tariffs which will help provide affordable electricity to the masses. He also assured that CTGC will actively engage in Corporate Social Responsibility activities by training permanent staff from the locals, creating auxiliary jobs, uplift of local schools, health units and construction of necessary infrastructure. Provisionally acquired land for construction purposes of the projects will also be developed and returned, after the completion of the projects, to AJK.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/40744-2/>

“US blacklists Kashmir’s Hizbul Mujahideen”

Daily Times, August 17, 2017

The United States added the Kashmiri group Hizbul-Mujahideen to its blacklist of terrorist organizations on August 16. The US authorities had already designated the group’s leader, Syed Salahuddin, a ‘global terrorist’, but he still operates in Azad Kashmir, where his group has strong support. The State Department designation bans US citizens and residents from dealing with the group and any assets found to belong to the Hizbul-Mujahideen in areas under US jurisdiction will be frozen. “Today’s action notifies the US public and the international community that HM is a terrorist organization,” the department noted.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/120504/us-blacklists-kashmir-hizbul-mujahideen/>

“Expats tasked to shake world powers’ conscience for Kashmir solution”

The Nation, August 24, 2017

The AJK president stressed a need for more vibrant role of the Pakistani and Kashmiri expatriates and the world power like the United Nations for early

settlement to the much-delayed Kashmir issue. AJK President Sardar Masood Khan called upon them to lend all of their energy for highlighting the Kashmir cause to muster the maximum sympathies of the external world towards the early solution to the lingering conflict. The president expressed these views while addressing a seminar titled 'Role of Kashmiri Diaspora for Project of Kashmir Cause' hosted by Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Cell with the collaboration of the state-run Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST) and the UK-based Jammu & Kashmir Self Determination Movement

EU, at the main campus of the MUST. The seminar was managed to interact with the visiting British parliamentary delegation consisting of MPs Yasmin Qureshi, Graham Jones, Faisal Rasheed and Mohammad Yasin, as well as Raja Najabat, the chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Self-determination Movement EU.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/24-Aug-2017/expats-tasked-to-shake-world-powers-conscience-for-kashmir-solution>

Other Developments

“Locals to get NOC before climbing peaks in Hunza”

Dawn, August 8, 2017

The Hunza district administration on August 7 required the local expedition teams to obtain No Objection Certificate before undertaking any attempt to climb peaks in the region, causing concerns among the people involved in the tourism industry. Mirza Ali, who along with his sister Samina Baig, the first women mountaineer in Pakistan, are running a training programme to encourage women

mountaineers, and promote tourism industry in Gilgit-Baltistan. It was for the first time that the locals were required to obtain NOC before undertaking the expeditions, which was unjustified. So far, he noted only foreigners were required to obtain permit for climbing the peaks 6,500 feet above the sea level in the region, and locals were exempted from the restriction. He also stated since there was no awareness about climbing in Pakistan, so there were no sponsors for such events.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350297>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Special condition of Gilgit Baltistan cannot bear political instability”

Daily Baad-e- Shimal, August 1, 2017

Similar to the whole of country, political temperature in Gilgit Baltistan is on the rise. The state president of PPP, Amjad Haussain, accused chief minister Hafizur Rahman of attempting to disturb peace in Pakistan. He is wanted under Schedule 4. He could be behind bars once he loses power. We are collecting evidence on graft. Amjad Advocate predicted that before 2020, important personalities in the current regime including several government officers will land in jail. Former Deputy Speaker and Senior Vice President PPP Jameel Ahmad noted that Hafizur Rahman and prime minister of Azad Kashmir should be impeached and tried for planning a mutiny. The duo has put the security of country on limbo and have deviated from their oath. Gilgit Baltistan is under global conspiracy because of CPEC. Enemy powers are hell bent to spread chaos, anarchism and political instability in order to fulfil their heinous aims. Enemy powers especially India has started propaganda that Gilgit Baltistan people are not going to get anything out of CPEC.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=08-01-2017&img=08-01-2017page-4-4

“Will not tolerate vilifying of Kashmiris: Farooq Haider”

Daily Mahasib, August 1, 2017

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan stated that he cannot tolerate the humiliation of people of the state. I have already expressed my reservation on disqualification of ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif. My press conference was quoted out of context and an impression was given that I hold some other ideology about the annexation of Jammu and

Kashmir to Pakistan. I believe in Qaid-e- Azam’s Pakistan.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=1&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=01-08-2017>

“Storm in tea cup”

Daily Mahasib, August 1, 2017

We have requested the rulers of both areas and opposition to abstain from the ongoing power struggle in the country. The same day Raja Farooq Haider Khan and Hafiz Hafiz Rahman held a press conference in Islamabad’s Kashmir house. The part of press conference which created a storm was: “Is this the Pakistan of Allama Iqbal and Qaid-e- Azam. As a Kashmiri I have to rethink which country to annex with.” When his statement appeared in newspaper, loyalists to the ruling class started urging to invoke a case of mutiny against him. The AJK Prime minister expressed his relationship with Pakistan and rejected the statement. Imran Khan and Shaikh Rashid’s comments were low and inappropriate. Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan are 12th players in national politics. Though, both cannot remain irrelevant and unaffected with national politics. However, it is not necessary to wash every dirty cloth of Islamabad in Neelum River. Leaders of Azad Kashmir should take in to account their responsibility, sensitivity of the area and distinctive constitutional character, collectively.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=01-08-2017>

“Base Camp for Kashmir solution, Govt will take political leadership in to confidence: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir”

Daily Dharti, August 8, 2017

Kashmiris are original and real partner to the Kashmir issue. If Kashmiris raise their issue before the world,

then the world will listen to them. This was the address by the prime minister of Azad government of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He also stated that it is necessary to play a role of base camp government after taking the entire political leadership into confidence and counter India's propaganda.

<http://www.dailydhartiak.com/viewd.php?stder=6789&stry=6789&std=2616&idr=utryetw&ghf=iuyrte6>

“Pakistan should unilaterally declare Kashmir Independent”

Daily Dharti, August 15, 2017

President of Pakistan Pakhtoon Khawah Milli party, Mahmood Khan Achakzai is famous for his unique theories and life styles. In an interview to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), he suggested that for a permanent solution of the Kashmir issue, Pakistan should propose that it wants to free Kashmir. He was saying that if Pakistan cannot withdraw then how India could. Whose claim is it that Kashmir is an integral part of it as per the constitution? Pakistan always has have a stand that Kashmiris should be given right of self-determination. His statement sparked a debate that the time has come that we should not ignore facts and these issues must be

debated. Pakistan's political parties consider Kashmiris as burden. While Kashmiris always worked as a soldiers without salary for Pakistan. There is only way to solve the Kashmir issue- both India and Pakistan should conduct referendum according to the UN resolution.

http://www.dailydhartiak.com/sabaka_newspaper.php

Mahmood Khan, “Achakzai is wrong”

Daily Jasarat, August 21, 2017

Achakzai stated on the floor of assembly that Pakistan will not be Pakistan till parliament becomes powerful. In an interview to BBC he noted, “Pakistan should propose to free Kashmir and it should take the initiative to free it first.” He was pushed further that will India be ready to free its part of Kashmir. He replied that it may not but we will be saved. He further stated why we do not initiate new steps in Kashmir issue to free Kashmir. He further stated that: “we are insisting on referendum, blaming each other, while the poor are dying. We have to improve our relations with neighbours.”

<http://epaper.jasarat.com/2017/08/21/karachi/co-409>

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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