

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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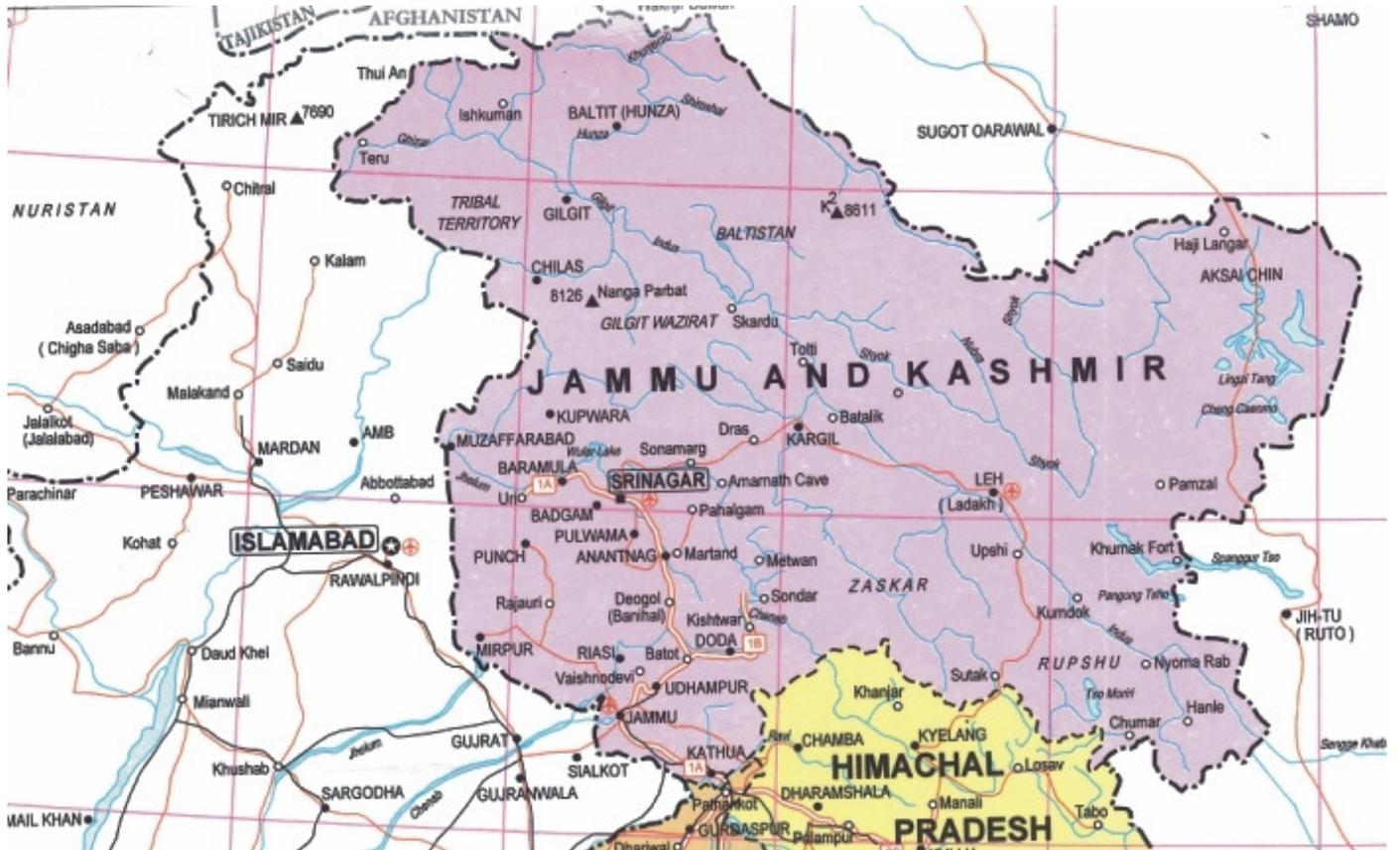
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

In a significant development, the Chinese authorities in Xinjiang arrested women married to men from Gilgit Baltistan region, while they were on a visit to their hometown in the Chinese province. These women are mostly married to traders from Gilgit Baltistan or such other people who happen to be engaged in similar activities between the two sides. As several reports note, these women were arrested as a result of a move initiated by the Chinese authorities against elements whom they suspected to be having links with extremist groups—those that could possibly have to do with forging terrorist activities in the restive Xinjiang province. As many as 50 Uighur women were arrested as part of this crackdown carried out by the Chinese authorities. Enraged by the baseless arrest of these women, the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the government of Pakistan to take appropriate measures in order to resolve the crisis. The resolution noted the salience of the Gilgit Baltistan region in the broader ties between China and Pakistan and the region's critical contribution towards developing trading ties between the two sides. Undoubtedly, it is hard to imagine the contours of China-Pakistan relations without Gilgit Baltistan which happens to be under Pakistan's illegitimate control since 1947. The arrest of innocent women has perplexed many and has caused considerable heartburn amongst people of the Gilgit Baltistan region.

The abovementioned incident exposes precarious fault lines in the bilateral understanding between China and Pakistan— one that is frequently embellished with adjectives such as “higher than mountains”, “sweeter than honey”, and so on and so forth. This only shows that beneath the cover of an abiding friendship between the two countries lies a deep sense of mistrust and suspicion. China is exceedingly cautious of religious extremism taking roots inside its territory. Hence, we may see more hardening of stance on China's part while dealing with similar issues particularly one that concerns preventing possible percolation of fundamentalist forces from Pakistan into Xinjiang via Gilgit Baltistan.

Untrue, propagandistic and rhetorical as they are, some reports have been included in the current issue to reiterate how Pakistan continues its spree of unleashing a malicious agenda against India on the Kashmir issue. As stated in several of our previous issues, while Pakistan's unrelenting propaganda on Kashmir need not be taken seriously, India must think in terms of a counter strategy to effectively contain this malicious propaganda on Kashmir that is being spread continuously in the western world at Pakistan's behest.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Water Filling Starts In Head Race Tunnel of Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project”

Urdu Point, March 1, 2018

The strategically important Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project, located in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, is all set to start electricity generation, as water filling in head race tunnel commenced on March 1. The head race tunnel is a component of 52 kilometer long water way system of the project that has been constructed underground in the high mountain areas to divert water from the water reservoir to the power house of the project, a press release noted. Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Power Company, a subsidiary of Pakistan’s Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) arranged a simple ceremony at the project site to celebrate the achievement of water filling in the head race tunnel of the project. WAPDA Chairman Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain (Retd) was the chief guest of the ceremony attended by the project authorities and representative of the consultants and the contractors. Annual benefits of the project have been estimated at Rs50 billion. He also stated that WAPDA is trying its best to award contracts for Mohmand Dam and Diamer Bhasha Dam within a year to supplement significantly towards existing water storage and hydropower generation capacities in the country.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/business/water-filling-starts-in-head-race-tunnel-of-n-270844.html>

“Sultan leads Kashmir rally against Indian aggression, LoC violation”

The News, March 1, 2018

Former premier of Azad Kashmir and President of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Kashmir chapter Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry on February 28

led a rally from the National Press Club to D-Chowk, where he delivered a speech to slam the government for its alleged inaction on Kashmir issue and Indian government’s ongoing aggression in Kashmir and across the Line of Control. He decried the Islamabad administration and the police for stopping them from proceeding to the Parliament House to express solidarity with the people of Kashmir. He vowed to again stage a similar rally and reach at the Parliament House. Sultan Mehmood claimed that he had organised protest demonstrations in New York, Washington, Paris and Germany and none had stopped them from doing so but in Islamabad, the police had erected obstacles to bar them from using their democratic right of protest. Clashes also erupted between the demonstrators and the police.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/287171-sultan-leads-kashmir-rally-against-indian-aggression-loc-violation>

“Three GB officials arrested for misuse of funds”

Dawn, March 1, 2018

The National Accountability Bureau on February 28 arrested three officials of Gilgit-Baltistan agriculture department for their alleged involvement in embezzlement of over Rs20 million through bogus bills and advertisements. NAB personnel arrested Nizamudin, GB deputy director agriculture, Sir Syed Ahmad, drawing and disbursing officer, and cashier Shah Zareen from Gilgit. The first investigation approved for reference is against Ismail Zafar, GB ex-conservator, Saleemullah Khan, former district forest officer, and Qadardan, former regional forest officer, for illegal cutting and transportation of timber from Makhley and Minar forests in GB. The second investigation approved is against Saleemullah Khan, former DFO Astore, Fareedullah Khan, former superintendent, and forest lessee Mohammad Iqbal regarding transportation of illegally cut timber from

Chilas forest division. The responsible officials of GB forest department have already been arrested and are presently in judicial custody.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392497>

“AJK to set up special unit for protection of foreigners: IG”

Pakistan Today, March 4, 2018

Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shoaib Dastgeer on March 3 stated that a special protection unit was being formed in AJK exclusively for the safety and security of the foreigners engaged in the ongoing and forthcoming mega development projects in power generation and other sectors under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He underlined that all the utensils for the force including machinery, uniform, shoes, etc. would now be purchased in the future after getting checked and approved by the labs to ensure their required high quality. To a question, Dastgeer noted that three to four hundred new recruits including cops and the ASIs respectively through the direct recruitment process and the AJK Public Service Commission were being added to the current 8300 personnel of the police force.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/03/04/ajk-to-set-up-special-unit-for-protection-of-foreigners-ig/>

Sumaira FH, “Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Performs Ground-breaking Of up Gradation of Rawalpindi Kahuta”

Urdu Point, March 3, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi performed the ground-breaking of the Rs12.5 billion four - lane Rawalpindi-Kahuta project on March 3, providing a fast link between the Federal Capital and Azad Jammu Kashmir. The Prime Minister was briefed by the DG National Highway Authority about the scope of the 28 km road and informed that construction on the strategically important link would begin soon and complete by May 2019. The road expansion starting from Kaak pul on the Islamabad Expressway would

include a 6 km long Bypass at Sihala and a 9 km Bypass at Kahuta, before linking with Azad Pattan road in Azad Jammu Kashmir. The project would provide shortest route for traffic between Rawalakot, Kotli and twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, would cut down on transportation costs, and reduce travel time, particularly for agricultural products and other perishable items. The commuters have been demanding up gradation of the existing two lane wide road, without any shoulder and was insufficient to accommodate the increasing traffic volume, leading to congestion and accidents. The Prime Minister was accompanied with Minister for Health Saira Afzal Tarrar, Minister of State for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister for CADD, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/prime-minister-shahid-khaqan-abbasi-performs-272679.html>

Faizan Hashmi, “Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman Constitutes Committee to Address Issues of Doctors”

Urdu Point, March 2, 2018

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman on March 2 constituted a committee under the headship of provincial law minister, Aurangzeb Advocate to resolve issues relating to regularization of contract doctors. The committee comprises Secretary Finance, Secretary Services and Secretary Health. The CM also directed the committee to compile a report of recommendations relating to regularization of doctors within a month and present it in the next meeting of the cabinet. Speaking on the occasion, the CM further stated that health sector is among the topmost priorities of the government and an incentive package has been introduced to address the shortage of doctors in the province. He also stated that government is committed to improve health delivery system and concerted efforts have been made to provide all the needed healthcare facilities to people.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/chief-minister-gilgit-baltistan-hafiz-hafeez-272085.html>

Fahad Shabbir, “No Wheat Shortage in Gilgit Baltistan: Civil Supply Department”

Urdu Point, March 2, 2018

Deputy Director Civil Supply Gilgit Baltistan Ikramullah Baig stated on March 2 that the government was taking effective measures to ensure adequate wheat supply and currently there was no wheat shortage in any district of Gilgit Baltistan. Talking to media-persons, the official stated the department had supplied enough wheat to the upper areas of different districts of Gilgit Baltistan before start of snowfall and now there was no issue in this regard. He also stated that wheat depots had been established at various main points of all the districts and supply was in progress to those points for onward distribution and people were being facilitated. He further stated that the department had always taken pain to facilitate the people especially those residing in far flung areas of Gilgit Baltistan.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/no-wheat-shortage-in-gilgit-baltistan-civil-271649.html>

Jamil Nagri, “Call for release of Chinese wives of GB men in Xinjiang”

Dawn, March 4, 2018

The Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) through a unanimous resolution called upon the federal government to take urgent steps for the release of over 50 Chinese wives of GB men detained in neighbouring Xinjiang province of China. Over 50 citizens of GB, most of them affiliated with import and export businesses between Pakistan and China, are married to Muslim women in Xinjiang province. The Chinese police have arrested these women. The resolution was tabled by lawmaker Bibi Salima during the ongoing GBLA session on March 2. GBLA Deputy Speaker Jaffarullah Khan noted that many of these women were arrested on suspicion of their links to religious extremist groups when the Chinese government launched a crackdown on elements involved in religiously-motivated acts of terrorism in Xinjiang province. It claims that Chinese workers and engineers working in the region have never

complained about local people and no untoward incident with Chinese citizens in GB has ever been reported. The resolution noted that the Pakistan-China relationship has become strong due to border trade between the two countries through GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1393081>

Meraj Alam, “PM to visit GB on Friday”

The Nation, March 5, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi will arrive in Gilgit on March 9 on a one-day visit. It will be the first visit of incumbent premier to Gilgit after assuming the office. Sources noted that the prime minister would inaugurate Gilgit-Skardu road expansion and repair project, Gilgit-Naltar road, 16 MWs hydropower project at Naltar and other mega projects for the region. The premier is also expected to announce constitutional reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan proposed by the high-level reform committee. The prime minister has also chaired meetings of the committee at least 3 times. Earlier, Chief Minister GB Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman, who is also member of the committee, stated that the reforms would be better than those made by Pakistan People’s Party government in 2009 when a provincial setup was introduced through Gilgit-Baltistan Self Governance Order 2009.

<https://nation.com.pk/05-Mar-2018/pm-to-visit-gb-on-friday>

“AJK Council’s abolition aims at progress: Haider”

The Nation, March 6, 2018

Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that AJK was not going to become a province of Pakistan rather the AJK government wants to strengthen bilateral relations through abolition of the AJK Council. He stated “Incumbent Government is engaged for the amendments in the AJK interim constitution - Act 1974 so that Legislative Assembly consisting of the elected representatives could become more powerful to serve the population of the state.” Speaking about the fate of Azad Jammu Kashmir Council, Prime Minister Haider also noted

that some people do not understand or they are unaware of the Council's authority. "Our role regarding Kashmir freedom movement, development of infrastructure, rights of people and vision of annexation with Pakistan remained remarkable" PM AJK added.

<https://nation.com.pk/06-Mar-2018/ajk-council-s-abolition-aims-at-progress-haider>

Fakhir Rizvi, "Azad Jammu And Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan Meets Federal Minister for Privatization Danyal Aziz"

Urdu Point, March 5, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan called on Federal Minister for Privatization Danyal Aziz in Jammu and Kashmir House on March 5. Both the leaders discussed the matters of mutual interest in the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister AJK Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan noted that the major victory of the Muslim League-Nawaz in the Senate elections shows trust on the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. He also stated the federal government fully supports the efforts to empower the State government. The AJK Minister for Works, Ch. Muhammad Aziz, and Minister for Information Mushtaq Minhas, were also present in the meeting.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/azad-jammu-and-kashmir-prime-minister-raja-mo-274449.html>

Sumaira FH, "Rs 2087.570m Being Spent In Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Communication Sector: Spokesman"

Urdu Point, March 5, 2018

The government of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) is paying special attention towards the transport and communication sectors in the region and huge amount is being spent to provide infrastructure in four districts of GB. He further stated that the schemes area related to construction of new roads, carpeting, widening of roads, conversion of small suspension bridges into

RCC bridges, reconstruction of roads damaged by the floods and conversion of steel bridges in RCC bridges in districts including Skardu, Ghanche, Shigar and Kharmang. During the current financial year, Rs 164.273 area being spent in Skardu, Rs 96.147 in Shigar, Rs 86.388 in Kharmang while Rs 93.351 in Ghanche district to provide best possible communication facilities to the people of GB. The spokesman noted the target schemes will be completed by the end of June 2018.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/rs-2087570m-being-spent-in-gilgit-baltistan-274004.html>

Umer Jamshaid, "Azad Jammu and Kashmir Law Makers Discuss Matters of Kashmiri Refugees"

Urdu Point, March 7, 2018

A delegation of members of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly belonging to Pakistan-based Jammu Kashmir refugees called on Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan and discussed the matters related to the Jammu & Kashmir refugees settled in other parts of the country. The Prime Minister assured the delegation that resources would be provided to settle the issues faced by the refugees. On the situation in Kashmir, the Prime Minister noted the people of Jammu and Kashmir had stood up against the armed forces, adding they chanted the slogan of Pakistan Zindabad and were facing the guns.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/azad-jammu-and-kashmir-law-makers-discuss-mat-276526.html>

"AJK starts computerizing land record"

Pakistan Observer, March 11, 2018

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider Khan on March 10 inaugurated the Computerized land Record Center at Tehsil Hattian Bala in Jhelum valley district. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister stated that computerization of land records will ease the masses by adopting modern techniques. He also stated that incumbent government is endeavouring for the provision of E-governance to construe the slogan of

Good Governance. The Prime Minister reiterated that the process of computerization will be extended up to 10 sub-divisions around the State and we want to update all land records which will facilitate the public and they will be able to get the copies of their land records without difficulty. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister directed the Department of Revenue and IT to complete this project before long.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-starts-computerizing-land-record/>

“Govt delivers more than expectations of people”

Pakistan Observer, March 11, 2018

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafeez Ur Rehman on March 10 stated that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Federal government and Gilgit Baltistan is performing according to the will of people and delivered more than the expectations of the people. He stated this while speaking after groundbreaking ceremony of Air Mix Gas project (LPG) for Gilgit city. The CM Hafeez stated that in the next phase other districts of GB will also get Air mix gas projects. Earlier, General Manager Sui Norther Gas limited, Ejaz Chaudhry, in his speech noted that the total cost of the project is 1.5 billion and it will complete within 10 months. He also stated that after its completion more than 30 thousands household consumers will take benefits for heating and cooking purpose.

<https://pakobserver.net/govt-delivers-expectations-people/>

“Tarbela Dam extension”

Pakistan Observer, March 12, 2018

Early harvest projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project are swiftly coming to fruition that in fact has greatly helped address the country’s energy woes. On March 10, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi inaugurated 1410 megawatt Tarbela 4th Extension hydropower project also completed under the mega corridor project. It is indeed another important milestone in terms of exploiting the immense hydropower potential and balancing energy mix of the country, thus providing cheap and affordable power to the

consumers. The job for WAPDA is not finished yet and it has to tread a long road to ensure water security of the country. Given water aggression by India and on the receding water storage capacity of both Tarbela and Mangla dams, it has become imperative that the country immediately starts work on upstream reservoirs, which will not only enhance water storage capacity but also slow down the process of sediment loads in Tarbela. While government is in the process of finalising a water policy, the document must envisage proper timelines for completion of mega dams such as Diamer Bhasha as any further delay in its construction will have serious consequences for economy and agriculture of the country. As Diamer Bhasha-like projects require mammoth funding, the government may approach friendly countries to get soft loans for their completion to ensure water security.

<https://pakobserver.net/tarbela-dam-extension/>

Shoaib Ur Rehman, “AJK focuses to generate over 6000 MW in next 15 years: Masood”

Business Recorder, March 11, 2018

“AJK owing to water resources is especially focusing on the production of renewable energy from its rivers and in the next 15 years will be able to produce over six-seven thousand megawatts of electricity”, President Masood expressed this during his comments on the eve of the inaugural ceremony of 1410 MW fourth extension hydropower project at Tarbela on March 10, AJK Presidential Secretariat sources noted on March 11. He expressed the hope that the project will substantially contribute towards addressing power issues by providing clean and renewable energy in the country. “Last year on 15th December, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, inaugurated the 147 MW Patrind hydropower project in Muzaffarabad. It is expected that soon he will also inaugurate the first phase of the 969 MW Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project situated close to the state capital of Muzaffarabad”, the sources underlined.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/03/11/404153/ajk-focuses-to-generate-over-6000-mw-in-next-15-years-masood/>

“AJK Observes 30th Death Anniversary of K.H.Khurshid”

Urdu Point, March 11, 2018

The 30th death anniversary of eminent Kashmir freedom struggle leader and former Azad Jammu & Kashmir president Khurshid Hassan Khurshid on March 11 was marked with solemnity and respect and renewal of the pledge to continue his mission to bring the Kashmir freedom movement to its logical end. Participants from across AJK and various parts of Pakistan visited the mazar and offered prayer for the departed soul and other martyrs of Jammu & Kashmir besides praying for the early success of Kashmir freedom struggle and for the solidarity, stability, prosperity and uplift of Pakistan.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-observes-30th-death-anniversary-of-khkh-280101.html>

Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, “UN official speaks of Kashmir crisis urgency”

The News, March 13, 2018

Conversation between a top UN official and a top Kashmiri leader was played out in front of more than 500 representatives of major international human rights organisations, where the top UN official issued his latest statement on the urgency of the crisis in Kashmir. The UNHRC will hold its next session in June 2018. Naqshbandi, who is the Convener of the APHC, the alliance of pro-freedom political parties in Indian Kashmir, stood in a packed hall, with over 200 global NGO representatives, and addressed the high commissioner on the situation in Indian Kashmir. For the first time in decades, Jammu and Kashmir has become a top agenda item in the policy statement of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/291525-un-official-speaks-of-kashmir-crisis-urgency>

“J&K, Gilgit-Baltistan integral parts of India, says Bhagwat”

The Tribune, March 16, 2018

Mohan Bhagwat, RSS chief, stated that Jammu,

Kashmir, Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan were an integral part of India. He stated this while inaugurating the Jammu Kashmir Ladakh Maha Utsav organised by Jammu Kashmir Study Centre (JKSC) in Nagpur. “We are one, and will always remain so. Entire India is our own and we all belong to India. It is essential that we carefully nurture and safeguard this sense of belonging,” he noted in the context of entire Jammu Kashmir, including those areas that are under occupation. Mizoram Governor Nirbhay Sharma, a former Army officer who was posted in Jammu and Kashmir for almost two decades, also shared his experiences on the issue. He expressed regret that young minds were being strategically brainwashed in Kashmir.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jammu-kashmir/j-k-gilgit-baltistan-integral-parts-of-india-says-bhagwat/558374.html>

Tariq Naqash, “Solidarity march in AJK today for Indian firing victims”

Dawn, March 16, 2018

The local administration in Kotli district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on March 15 imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code barring the holding of public meetings, a day ahead of a planned rally to express solidarity with the victims of ceasefire violations from across the Line of Control (LoC). “Political affiliations have become irrelevant along the LoC particularly because the mainstream parties have failed to play a role in alleviating their sufferings,” Mr Gillani claimed. He also stated that bar associations, traders, farmers and people from other walks of life had expressed gratitude to the JKLF for organising this much-needed event.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1395570/solidarity-march-in-ajk-today-for-indian-firing-victims>

“Civil society’s cooperation must to end nepotism: AJK PM”

Pakistan Observer, March 16, 2018

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PM AJK), Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan on March 15 stated that society co-operation was

essential for elimination of favouritism and nepotism and one must play vibrant role for justice and merit in the State. The prime minister expressed these views while talking to a public representative delegation late on March 14. He further stated that everyone had equal rights on the resources of the State, adding “We must end this discrimination between superior and inferior.” The prime minister voiced that constitutional amendments in AJK interim constitutional Act 1974 will empower the State’s elected government besides abolishment of the Kashmir Council, “constitutional amendments will steer the state’s economy towards revenue generation” PM AJK added. He lamented that unfortunately, personal development was preferred to public sector development and the basic needs of masses had been ignored in the past.

<https://pakobserver.net/civil-societys-cooperation-must-to-end-nepotism-ajk-pm/>

Altaf Hamid Rao, “Butt elected as member of AJKPF governing Body”

Pakistan Observer, March 16, 2018

Senior local journalist Arshad Mahmood Butt was on March 15 elected as member of the state-run institution of Welfare of Kashmiri journalist fraternity – Azad Jammu Kashmir Press Foundation (AJKPF) for the next two-year stipulated term. The triumphant Butt (Bureau Chief Daily Ausaaf in Mirpur District) secured 38 votes against his only rival candidate Abdul Aziz Shujah Jiraal who bagged 33 votes in the elections held at the local Divisional office of the Press Information Department of AJK Government on March 15. According to the Presiding Officer for the polls and Divisional Chief Information Office, Mirpur Division, Muhamamd Javed Malik, re-polling for the election to only member governing body of the AJK Press Foundation from Mirpur district was held on March 15. 71 out of a total of 75 of the registered voters (accredited journalists) from Mirpur district polled their votes to elect their member governing body of the Press Foundation. Three of the registered voters / accredited journalists were abroad.

<https://pakobserver.net/butt-elected-as-member-of-ajkpf-governing-body/>

April 2018

“AJK president lauds courage of citizens living along LoC”

Pakistan Today, March 17, 2018

AJK President Masood Khan visited the forward areas of Baghsar in Samahni Sector in Bhimber district adjacent to Line of Control (LoC) to assess the situation. The president was received by senior army officials including Brig Furqan Muazzam who briefed him on the current situation and cross-border violations seen over the last few months.

The president also visited the historical Baghsar Fort and was given an extensive briefing on the line of control visible from the premises of the fort. Masood stated that bunkers would soon be built for the protection of the citizens for which funds had been approved. He affirmed that the people and government of Azad Kashmir stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the brave army personnel defending the borders and areas adjoining the LoC. He lauded the committed and unwavering efforts of the Pakistan Army in its fight against terrorism and subversive elements attempting to destabilise our country.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/03/17/ajk-president-lauds-courage-of-citizens-living-along-loc/>

“JKLF holds peaceful protest march in Azad Kashmir against killings of Kashmiris on LoC”

Kashmir News Service, March 17, 2018

Chairman Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Muhammad Yasin Malik on March 17 stated that Kashmiris are being killed on ceasefire line (LoC) on daily basis but no one among the international community seems to bother. He stated that instead of playing as firefighters, United Nations should play the role of an arbitrator and push for an early resolution of the Kashmir issue. Aggression by Azad Kashmir police on peaceful rally against ceasefire line firings, in which many people have been injured, is most condemnable. JKLF chairman noted that our struggle for freedom is a long drawn struggle during which we have to keep our passion intact, show

maximum restraint and keep treading the path of truth and resistance.

<http://www.knskashmir.com/JKLF-holds-peaceful-protest-march-in-Azad-Kashmir-against-killings-of-Kashmiris-on-LoC-24698>

Tariq Naqash, “Many injured in clash during AJK ‘solidarity march’”

Dawn, March 17, 2018

Police resorted to tear gas shelling and firing into the air on March 16 after a clash with the participants of a “solidarity march” within the jurisdiction of Poonch district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, official sources and witnesses noted. There were reports that many participants and police personnel sustained injuries. It began from Tattapani in Kotli district, with a large number of people among its participants, and was supposed to conclude at Madarpur in Poonch district. However, officials had already indicated that they would not allow the march beyond a certain point in view of unrelenting firing from the Indian side. According to him, a public meeting was in progress in Sehar, where the march had almost concluded in view of the sensitivity of the situation. However, a handful of participants were adamant that the march should conclude in Madarpur, he noted, adding that police attacked that group, which triggered clash between the two sides.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1395822>

Fawad Maqsood, “GB CM lauds Punjab Govt support in development project”

Business Recorder, March 16, 2018

The Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman on March 16 lauded the support of Punjab Government and its Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif in development of Gilgit Baltistan besides providing the facilities of training to its employees in various training institutes. The CM directed the authorities concerned to identify a suitable area at City Park or Ghari Bagh for the public meeting in connection of death anniversary of Shaheed Aman (peace) Saifur

Rehman due in March 19 and make fool proof security arrangements, noted an official statement.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/03/16/405498/gb-cm-lauds-punjab-govt-support-in-development-project/>

Umer Jamshaid, “CPEC to Make Pakistan Industrial Hub of South Asia: Ahsan Iqbal”

Urdu Point, March 17, 2018

Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal on March 17 stated Pakistan would become an industrial hub of South Asia after the completion of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it would play an important role in the regional economic growth through connectivity by CPEC. The government had also held an all parties conference on the matter. Some elements, he added, were trying to sabotage the CPEC, which was recognised as a game changer not only for Pakistan but for the entire region also. Replying to a question, he noted Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan would become gateways of CPEC. Trade zones would be set up in the federal capital, all the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Federally Administered Tribal Areas, he added. He further stated that the Chinese and Pakistani companies would make large-scale investment in the trade zones, which would not only create new jobs, but also help transfer new technology to Pakistan.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/business/cpec-to-make-pakistan-industrial-hub-of-south-287249.html>

Fakhir Rizvi, “Gilgit-Baltistan to Play Key Role in CPEC; Chinese Development Experts Told”

Urdu Point, March 19, 2018

Secretary Planning and Development, Gilgit-Baltistan Babar Aman Babar on March 19 told a delegation of Chinese development experts that the region was blessed with huge natural resources and was capable of playing key role in CPEC. He was briefing the delegation about rich natural resources including water and the potential blessed with. The delegation comprising various investors and

engineers was told about the Special Economic Zone in detail. The Chinese delegation assured that Gilgit Baltistan will be benefitted vastly by CPEC. Both sides were agreed upon joint ventures in potential areas. It was further agreed that the two sides would work on Fruit, vegetables, herbs processing, packaging, storage and marketing in presentable form. The participants of the briefing decided to boost tourism sector and carry out joint ventures in minerals' sector as well as hydropower. Apart from Special Economic Zone development, there was complete agreement in views about transfer of technology.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/business/gilgit-baltistan-to-play-key-role-in-cpec-ch-288785.html>

Shahab Omer, “GB-KP royalty dispute delays Diamer-Bhasha dam”

Daily Times, March 20, 2018

A dispute over royalty and ownership of Diamer-Bhasha Dam, between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) governments has caused delay in the construction of Diamer Bhasha dam. To meet the grievances of both provinces, the government constituted a ‘Boundary Commission’ to avoid any further delays. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed their right over a part of land being used as the dam site and, thus, has demanded a royalty over it. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is of the view that the site for the power house of Diamer-Bhasha dam falls in its jurisdiction and, therefore, a handsome royalty must be paid to the government. A similar situation had previously arisen during the construction of the Kalabagh dam. Diamer-Bhasha Dam would generate 19 billion units of electricity per annum whereas it would pay a royalty of Rs.20 billion for use of land. The provinces of GB and KP have claimed that the dam is being built on their land. Both provinces have demanded the same royalty, making it an uphill task for the federal government to settle the dispute.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/217178/gb-kp-royalty-dispute-delays-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

“AJK terms CPEC a win-win project for Pak, China”

The Nation, March 20, 2018

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a win-win project for both Pakistan and China; and is a reflection of the strong relationship between the two friendly countries, noted Sardar Masood Khan, the president of Azad Jammu & Kashmir State. The AJK president made these remarks while addressing a seminar titled “CPEC and Azad Jammu Kashmir” organised by the University of Kotli in Kotli district of Mirpur division on March 19. The event was the part of a series of seminars to be held at public-sector universities of AJK to highlight the opportunities and the challenges of the CPEC. CPEC’s projects in AJK, he noted, would also help promote national and international investors to the region. He also stated that an economic revolution is unfolding in Azad Kashmir, led by the present government’s transformative initiatives towards building new roads, energy production, health, industry, agriculture, promotion of tourism and telecommunications.

<https://nation.com.pk/20-Mar-2018/ajk-terms-cpec-a-win-win-project-for-pak-china>

Fahad Shabbir, “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Instrumental in Economic Prosperity of the Region: Sardar Masood Khan”

Urdu Point, March 20, 2018

Azad Jammu & Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan on March 19 stated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was instrumental in economic prosperity of the region. The President made these remarks while addressing the one-day seminar on “CPEC and Azad Jammu Kashmir” organized by University of Kotli. The event was the part of a series of seminars to be held at public-sector universities of the state for highlighting the opportunities and challenges of the CPEC. The President noted that CPEC would generate thousands of new jobs in specialized fields like logistics, supply chain management, hydraulics, artificial intelligence and

other post-modern subjects. He urged the students to understand and adapt the upcoming challenges, especially in the ever-changing job market.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/business/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-cpec-instr-288423.html>

“GB youth to be given training for CPEC projects”

Dawn, March 20, 2018

The National Logistics Cell (NLC) established an Applied Technologies Institute (ATIN) in Gilgit in collaboration with the Gilgit-Baltistan government and the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA) in order to give the youth of GB the latest technical education so they can play their due role in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The institutes are affiliated with the National Training Bureau and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission. More than 5,000 students have been trained in these institutes.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1396443/gb-youth-to-be-given-training-for-cpec-projects>

Khaleeq Kiani, “10-fold rise sought in allocation for water sector projects”

Dawn, March 19, 2018

The Water Division sought an allocation of about Rs204 billion for projects under the 2018-19 Public Sector Development Programme — almost 10 times higher than the Rs22bn earmarked for the current fiscal year. A Planning Commission official noted that the ministries and divisions traditionally pitched higher funding requirements which were debated in detail during ‘priorities committee meetings’ of the ministries of finance and planning and the ministry concerned. He stated the meetings were tentatively scheduled for the last week of March 2018 where the water division would have to justify its demands for appropriation based on national priorities and the available resource envelope. However, projects of national importance will have to pass the scrutiny by the top leadership of the provinces and the federal government on merit during meetings of the Annual

Plan Coordination Committee comprising federal and provincial development ministers and the National Economic Council headed by the prime minister and comprising provincial chief ministers and the prime minister of Azad Kashmir and the chief executive of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1396179>

Shahbaz Rana, “After much delay Diamer-Bhasha dam wins approval”

The Express Tribune, March 20, 2018

Pakistan on March 19 approved the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam at an initial estimated cost of Rs625 billion. It will mostly be funded through local resources after international financial institutions and China showed reluctance to help the country build the reservoir. The project will contribute to the alleviation of acute water shortages in the Indus Basin Irrigation System caused by progressive siltation of existing reserves. After the completion of the dam, the storage capability of Pakistan will increase from 30 days to 48 days. The powerhouse, when completed, is expected to add 4,500 megawatts of electricity generation capacity.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1664431/2-much-delay-diamer-bhasha-dam-wins-approval/>

“BISP, EPI sign agreement for immunisation of beneficiaries in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily Times, March 22, 2018

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) on March 21 signed a landmark agreement for the immunisation of BISP beneficiaries in Gilgit Baltistan region. The partnership is expected to directly benefit 5,000 BISP beneficiaries and 9,000 children in four districts of GB. The beneficiaries will be immunised and incentivised for their participation under a new grant from the World Bank, amounting to \$3.5 million. The partnership will also lead to development and maintenance of the Management Information Systems (MIS) including the monitoring and reporting framework for the project. This includes

populating the MIS and maintaining beneficiary lists. It will also include electronically recorded required data for immunisation record. On the occasion, BISP Secretary Omar Hamid Khan stated that the initiative defines the multidimensional efforts being undertaken for supporting rural and poverty stricken communities. He also hoped that the new CCT programme will assist the government in achieving the global SDGs of health and provide immunisation to the communities who need it the most and reside in the farthest areas of the country.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/217982/bisp-epi-sign-agreement-for-immunisation-of-beneficiaries-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Fawad Maqsood, “India must allow world fact-finding missions in IOK: Masood Khan”

Business Recorder, March 21, 2018

President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Masood Khan stated on March 21 that India must allow access to the international fact-finding missions. The President made these remarks while addressing a special lecture on “Kashmir and the World”, organized by the Oxford and Cambridge Trust (OXBRIDGE) on March 21. The Lecture was attended by senior bureaucrats, members of the civil society, diplomats and academicians. He further stated that to raise the profile of the Kashmir issue, we must leverage the strengths of our Pakistani-Kashmiri diaspora in making inroads into the global civil society, parliamentary bodies and international organizations. Responding to a question from the audience, the President stated that Azad Kashmir is striving for good governance by ensuring accountability, transparency and meritocracy.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/03/21/406463/india-must-allow-world-fact-finding-missions-in-iok-masood-khan/>

Sadia Abbas, “AJK Govt. Focuses On Speedy Socioeconomic Development: Sardar Masood Khan”

Urdu Point, March 22, 2018

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar

Masood Khan stated that AJK state is on the cusp of socioeconomic development due to current government’s commitment and resolve towards good governance and development. This, he noted, includes the Korat Hydro Power Project (720 MW), Kohala Hydro Power Project (1124 MW), Mansehra to Mirpur Expressway and a state-of-the-art Industrial Zone in Mirpur. He also stated that work on these projects is at various stages of planning and implementation. The diplomats expressed their pleasure in visiting Azad Kashmir and informed that this trip has helped raise their awareness about the Kashmir issue and understanding governance and developmental priorities of the Azad Government.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/ajk-govt-focuses-on-speedy-socioeconomic-dev-291623.html>

“GB lawyers’ protest continues”

Dawn, March 23, 2018

The lawyers continued with protest across Gilgit-Baltistan by boycotting courts and staging a sit-in outside the GB chief court building in Gilgit. The call for protest was jointly given by the GB Bar Council, GB Supreme Appellate Court, chief court, and district bar associations of the region to claim provisional judicial rights for the region’s lawyers. The bar association’s president noted a local eligible lawyer should be appointed to the vacant post of the GB Supreme Appellate Court’s judge, which had been lying vacant for two years. He also stated that under Article 69 of the GB Empowerment and Self Governance Order, 2009, 60 per cent of the lawyers should be appointed to the GB chief court’s posts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1397040/gb-lawyers-protest-continues>

“Present govt has brought reforms in Education Department: AJK PM”

Pakistan Observer, March 25, 2018

Prime Minister (PM) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan stated that the present government has brought reforms in

the Department of Education, which has reduced the influence of politics in the Department. He was addressing the annual result ceremony of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Mirpur on March 24. Chairperson BISE Mirpur Mrs. Anjum Afshan Naqvi presented the annual progress report of the Board. The AJK Prime Minister lamented that the recent inductions through NTS has included 36 thousands aspirants but unfortunately only 6 thousand passed, adding that the reason of those 30 thousand failures is a poor education system which needs to be necessarily developed. He noted that in order to promote extra curriculum activities besides education in Azad Kashmir, educational institutions as well as playground will also be made for students to perform healthy activities. Moreover, Prime Minister noted that refresher courses are being started for teachers' training.

<https://pakobserver.net/present-govt-has-brought-reforms-in-education-department-ajk-pm/>

Imran Khan, “Apathy to suffering of Kashmiris on both sides”

The Express Tribune, March 24, 2018

Millions of Kashmiris, if not more, continue to suffer on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) because of the ongoing mortar shelling and firing by the Indian and Pakistani armed forces. Hundreds of them have been killed and injured after hostilities resumed on the LoC and some parts of the Working Boundary in and around Sialkot and Bhimber districts over one year ago in late 2016. Much to the joy and relief of LoC inhabitants, there had been a complete ceasefire, except small and isolated incidents, since November 2003. The current AJK government and the Pakistani establishment will have to listen to and respect different strands of political opinion of Kashmiris if they want to have credibility about their stance on Kashmir. Otherwise, they will end up further alienating the ordinary Kashmiris, pushing Kashmiri youth into more extreme politics.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1667808/6-apathy-suffering-kashmiris-sides/>

“India scared of Pakistan’s stability, prosperity: AJK president”

The Nation, March 27, 2018

President Sardar Masood Khan stated that India’s objection to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is unfounded, irrelevant and uncalled-for. “International conventions do not prohibit economic development or foreign investment in disputed areas,” the AJK president remarked during a meeting with Laura Schuurman, an illustrious researcher and writer on March 26. President Azad Kashmir stated that being the only sovereign window for the Kashmiri people, Pakistan has over the past 70 years kept the issue alive through its diplomatic and political support for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

<https://nation.com.pk/27-Mar-2018/india-scared-of-pakistan-stability-prosperity-ajk-president>

“AJK plans memorial of Jammu & Kashmir martyrs”

The Nation, March 28, 2018

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan announced the establishment of a memorial of the “Martyrs of Jammu and Kashmir” in New Secretariat Chatter in AJK’s capital town. In a statement issued on March 27, the prime minister directed all of the departments concerned to sketch a design of the monument within the next one month for onward submission to his office.

<https://nation.com.pk/28-Mar-2018/ajk-plans-memorial-of-jammu-kashmir-martyrs>

“Gilgit-Baltistan residents threaten to shut border with China”

New Indian Express, March 28, 2018

Threats of shutting down the China-Pakistan border were issued to China by residents of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) region in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, who allege that over 50 women, of Chinese origins, married to the G-B residents, have been detained by

Beijing without any charges against them. Urging the Chinese government to immediately release the families, including children of the G-B traders, an all party conference demanded to run the affairs of the Pakistan-China trade as per protocols agreed upon. According to a Pakistan daily, they demanded that those traders possessing border passes should be given access to interior China and the duration of border passes should be extended.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2018/mar/28/gilgit-baltistan-residents-threaten-to-shut-border-with-china-1793845.html>

Fahad Shabbir, “Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman Set-up Committee For Holding Of LB Election”

Urdu Point, March 28, 2018

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman on March 28 formed a high level committee led by Provincial Local Government Minister, Farman Ali, for smooth holding of local bodies' election in the province. The others members of the committee are provincial Minister for Law Aurangzaib Advocate, secretaries Local Government and Law besides members of the Home Department. This decision has been taken by the CM during a high level meeting regarding the LG election. He stated that requisite legislation would also be made if necessary for LG election, adding decision of holding election on party basis or otherwise would be taken after recommendations of the committee and with consultation of all political parties for which All Parties Conference (APC) would be convened.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/chief-minister-gilgit-baltistan-hafiz-hafeez-296634.html>

Umer Jamshaid, “Gilgit Baltistan Government Committed to Women Empowerment”

Urdu Point, March 29, 2018

Vice President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of the district Astore chapter, Alam Shah, stated on March 29 that the government was

committed to taking tangible measures for the socio-economic development of the womenfolk. As part of such efforts, the PML (N) leader told media that the government had initiated a number of projects for welfare of the underprivileged areas of the country including Gilgit Baltistan, adding utmost efforts were made to protect rights and ensure justice for the women of the area. He also stated that meeting would also take up issues regarding tourism sector which was hugely contributing to the exchequer.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan-government-committed-to-wome-297207.html>

“AJK to upgrade voter lists before elections”

The Nation, March 30, 2018

The Azad Jammu & Kashmir Election Commission announced that the AJK citizens having 18 years of age till 31st of March 2018 will be eligible to cast their vote in the forthcoming local bodies' elections. Secretary Election Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Ayaz Bashir, addressing a news conference stated that eligible persons can get themselves registered with the Election Commission as voters till April 30, 2018. He also mentioned that if a person is found registered as a voter in more than one wards, he would be awarded one month imprisonment along with a fine of Rs5,000. According to the electoral rules of AJK, voter lists used in general elections will be used for civic elections besides registration of new voters, he noted.

<https://nation.com.pk/30-Mar-2018/ajk-to-upgrade-voter-lists-before-elections>

Parvez Jabri, “Masood lauds nation’s role against terrorism”

Business Recorder, March 30, 2018

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Masood Khan stated that Pakistan has displayed zero tolerance for terrorism. Sardar Masood made these remarks while speaking at the concluding session of the ceremony of 13th National Integrated Counter Terrorism Course (NICTC) & FC KP Batch-5 held

at the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), Pabbi on March 29. Masood Khan noted that despite being the main victim of terrorism, Pakistan has achieved enormous success in fighting this menace and has been able to successfully dismantle terrorist sleeper cells and their communication networks.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/03/30/408240/masood-lauds-nations-role-against-terrorism/>

Masud Ahmad Khan, “The fate of the Gilgit Baltistan reforms”

Daily Times, March 30, 2018

The people of Gilgit Baltistan acceded to Pakistan unconditionally after liberating their area from Dogras on 1 November 1947. Immediately after the arrest of Governor Ghansara Singh, the Pakistan flag

was raised, and the Government of Pakistan was asked to take over the area. It is unique in the history of the world that the people of Gilgit Baltistan liberated their area without any foreign support and acceded to Pakistan. For the Government of Pakistan, Gilgit Baltistan is a disputed territory because of resolutions of United Nations Security Councils (UNSC) on Jammu and Kashmir. The popular demand in Gilgit Baltistan is a merger with Pakistan and Gilgit Baltistan becoming the fifth province of the country. The people of Gilgit Baltistan want their identity along with Pakistan. This can be done by giving GB the provisional status by taking all stakeholders on board and linking it with the final settlement of Kashmir issue. This would bring an end to the identity crisis faced by Gilgit Baltistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/221719/the-fate-of-the-gilgit-baltistan-reforms/>

Economic Developments

Fahad Shabbir, “Azad Jammu And Kashmir Development Working Party Approves Schemes Worth Rs. 2.87 Bln”

Urdu Point, March 6, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Development Working party (DWP) on March 6 approved developmental schemes worth Rs. 2.87 billion to be implemented during the next fiscal year budget. The DWP met under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Development, Syed Asif Shah and was attended by concerned secretaries and officials. Meeting discussed construction of Tehsil headquarter Hospital (THQ) at Thorar in district Poonch, construction of a Forest Complex at Tandali near Muzaffarabad, installation of solar street lights in district headquarters, construction of District Offices buildings at Kahuta (Haveli district) and a number of link roads in different areas.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/azad-jammu-and-kashmir-development-working-pa-275392.html>

Mohammad Ali, “Azad Jammu & Kashmir Development Working Party (AKDWP) Meets To Review 19 Mega Development Projects”

Urdu Point, March 7, 2018

Azad Jammu & Kashmir Development Working Party (AKDWP) reviewed Rs. 2.870 billion worth 19 mega development projects to be launched during ongoing fiscal year 2017-18. The Additional Chief Secretary (Dev.) chaired the 9th meeting of the approving forum of AJKDWP. The venerable representatives of the Federal Government, Finance Department along with the concerned Secretaries of the line departments and officers of P&DD participated in the meeting. The development schemes discussed by the august forum were appertaining to Health Forestry / Watershed, Home

Department, Local Government & Rural Development, Transport, Higher Education (Universities), Physical Planning & Housing, Development Authorities, Agriculture, Foreign Aided Projects, Communication & Works and Environment sectors.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/azad-jammu-kashmir-development-working-part-276200.html>

“AJK govt owes Rs11 billion to Gepco”

The Nation, March 16, 2018

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has been a chronic defaulter of Gepco for the last one decade as it owes Rs11 billion to the company. According to Gepco officials, the issue of electricity tariff was still unresolved between the AJK government and Pakistan’s Federal Ministry for Water and Power. Gepco has also issued recovery notice to the AJK government seeking early clearance of their outstanding dues amounting to Rs11 billion. It has become a great challenge for Gepco and even for the Pakistan’s Federal Ministry for Water and Power. Gepco officials noted that it was demanding Rs12.70 per unit rate of electricity from the AJK government, while the AJK government was insisting to pay the price of Rs2.52 per unit to Gepco. This big amount and tariff issue have been lying unpaid and unresolved for the last 10 years.

<https://nation.com.pk/16-Mar-2018/ajk-govt-owes-rs11-billion-to-gepco>

Faizan Hashmi, “Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GBCCI) President Nasir Hussain Raki Visits SCCI”

Urdu Point, March 20, 2018

Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GBCCI) President Nasir Hussain Raki stressed the

need for making collective efforts for promotion of strong mutual trade ties between Sialkot and Gilgit-Baltistan chambers. On this occasion, the senior SCCI officials gave a detailed briefing to GBCCI president about socio-economic and human development-oriented projects undertaken by Sialkot exporters on self-help basis.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gilgit-baltistan-chamber-of-commerce-and-indu-289657.html>

Fawad Maqsood, “AJK CDC approves 5 projects worth Rs4.444bn”

Business Recorder, March 21, 2018

The cabinet development committee (CDC) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir on March 21 approved 5 projects worth Rs 1.444 billion. Projects including

construction of Tehsil headquarter Hospital at Mang in Poonch district, water supply scheme, widening and up gradation of 25 kilometers roads in Mirpur city, reconditioning and up gradation of Trarkhal – Baloch road and Choota Gala to Poonch University road.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/03/21/406503/ajk-cdc-approves-5-projects-worth-rs4-444bn/>

International Developments

“Masood urges expats to speed up Kashmir cause”

The Nation, March 1, 2018

Azad Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan stated that the Pakistani and Kashmiri expats can play a pivotal role in highlighting the Kashmir issue at international forums like the parliaments of different countries. The president noted that the Pak-Kashmiri community in the United Kingdom has grown in numbers and successfully integrated into the social and political fabric of their countries of adoption. He further commended the Pakistanis and Kashmiris for winning the respect of the host countries by hard work, professionalism and commitment. He further stated it was highly encouraging to see that almost 12 MPs of Pakistani and Kashmiri origin are now part of the British Parliament. He noted that the MPs can effectively help raise the profile of the Kashmir issue through debates in the Parliament. The president encouraged investment in AJK by inviting entrepreneurs and business persons to Azad Kashmir. He also added that under the CPEC, a Specialized Industrial Zone in Mirpur will be established which will be connected to the main CPEC route via Mansehra-Mirpur Expressway. He later stated that the industrial zone would be the primary hub for economic activity in AJK.

<https://nation.com.pk/01-Mar-2018/masood-urges-expats-to-speed-up-kashmir-cause>

“All Parties Parliamentary Kashmir Group should represent sentiments of people - Dr Shabir Choudhry”

Business Standard, March 3, 2018

A Kashmiri writer and activist based in London, Dr. Shabir Choudhry, asked the All Parties Parliamentary Kashmir Group (APPG) to listen to the oppressed

people in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The chairman of South Asia Watch, Dr. Choudhry, noted, “When I learnt that APPG, for a change, wanted to investigate human rights abuses on the Pakistani side of the divide, I also wrote a letter to the Chairman of the APPG and requested him to provide me an opportunity to present my case before the group. I gave some details in the letter as to how Pakistani authorities and secret agencies curtailed my fundamental rights.” If the APPG sincerely wants to find out about human rights abuses and problems of the people of Gilgit Baltistan and so called Azad Kashmir, then they need to invite citizens of Jammu and Kashmir who aspire for united and independent Jammu and Kashmir. If they want to please certain quarters and satisfy their voters then they are already doing a good job, further stated Dr. Choudhry.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/all-parties-parliamentary-kashmir-group-should-represent-sentiments-of-people-dr-shabir-choudhry-118030300277_1.html

“World apprised of Indian atrocities in IHK”

The Nation, March 8, 2018

A high profile Kashmiri delegation called on Michel Frost, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, at Geneva on the side-line of 37th session of United Nations Human Rights Council. Led by Sardar Amjad Yousf Executive Director Kashmir Institute of International Relations, the delegation apprised him of the human rights in Jammu & Kashmir. The Kashmiri delegation briefed the Special Rapporteur about the situation of human rights defenders in Jammu and Kashmir where these defenders especially the journalists and lawyers are harassed, intimidated, and detained.

<https://nation.com.pk/08-Mar-2018/world-apprised-of-indian-atrocities-in-ihk>

Anil Giri, “Pak premier raises Kashmir, seeks to reset ties with Nepal”

Hindustan Times, March 7, 2018

The official reason for Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi’s visit to Nepal was to congratulate his counterpart KP Sharma Oli on the successful conclusion of elections. But Abbasi’s discussions with his interlocutors showed the visit was about much more. Abbasi made a concerted effort to give a new direction to Pakistan’s ties with Nepal during his two-day visit that ended on March 6, raising issues ranging from the holding of the much-delayed Saarc Summit to the situation in Kashmir, and plugging China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In an interview published in two national dailies, Abbasi also suggested Nepal could facilitate India-Pakistan talks. “Yes, the Saarc forum is available here. The third forum always helps whatever confidence-building measures or whatever other issues you want to deal with. Nepal has a unique sense of history as well and that can help facilitate those initiatives,” he noted when he was asked if Nepal could mediate between India and Pakistan.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/pakistan-pm-rakes-up-kashmir-issue-saarc-in-visit-to-nepal/story-Io2f7Yvb2u1KpeBKNsAcJI.html>

“‘Broker’ Pakistan now aspiring to sell Gilgit-Baltistan to China: EU expert”

Business Standard, March 11, 2018

A senior European researcher has accused Pakistan of making moves to sell the disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan to China in return for stacks of Renminbi (Chinese currency) and Yuan (basic unit of Chinese currency). Participating in the 37th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Senior Research Analyst at the European Foundation for South-Asian Studies Dušan Vejinovic stated on March 9, “While Pakistan manifests itself as a self-styled advocate of the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the factual situation is, that it remains an illegal occupier of Jammu and Kashmir, which

has deprived the people of their political and civil liberties.” Reminding the UNHRC that the U.N. resolutions of 1948 and 1949 had directed Pakistan to withdraw its troops from the state of Jammu and Kashmir by August 13, 1948, a perplexed Vejinovic asked what is preventing Islamabad from complying with a legally binding instruction issued more than 70 years ago. Jammu and Kashmir has been an area of contention for both India and Pakistan ever since the nations were formed in 1947 with three battles having been fought between the two neighbours over it.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/broker-pakistan-now-aspiring-to-sell-gilgit-baltistan-to-china-eu-expert-118031000188_1.html

“Kashmir Council EU lauded for raising Kashmir issue”

The Nation, March 26, 2018

Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan met Chairman Kashmir Council Europe (EU) Ali Raza Syed at his residence. During the meeting, struggle for highlighting Kashmir issue in Europe, especially efforts rendered by Kashmir Council EU and situation in Indian Kashmir came under discussion. Earlier, the Prime Minister was warmly welcomed on his arrival at the residence of Ali Raza Syed. On the occasion, both the leaders expressed great concerns over the severe situation in Indian Kashmir. Kashmir Council EU usually organise conferences, seminars and meetings in Europe in order to highlight the Kashmir issue. One million signature campaign on Kashmir is also going on in Europe. The Prime Minister assured that he would continue his cooperation with Kashmir Council Europe for highlighting the Kashmir issue in Europe.

<https://nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2018/kashmir-council-eu-lauded-for-raising-kashmir-issue>

Other Developments

“Glaciers melting in Gilgit-Baltistan due to CPEC project”

ANI News, March 4, 2018

Thirty-six glacial lakes in various valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan have been declared dangerous with seven of them posing a major threat to the people, stated a survey by Focus Pakistan, an NGO. Gilgit-Baltistan has been facing several environmental threats since the launch of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multi-billion dollar infrastructure and development-related project. Cutting of jungles, mountains and increase in heavy vehicular movement in the region poses a serious threat to glaciers. “In Shimshal Valley, there are three glaciers, out of which one is taking the shape of a lake. The lake is expanding rapidly which poses a threat to Hunza and the entire Gilgit Baltistan. No attention was paid to protect the environment since the CPEC project was launched. No survey has been done about the aftermath of this project as thousands of tankers are passing through the territory which directly affects the glaciers. The department is paying no attention,” noted a resident of Gilgit, Wajid Ali.

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/glaciers-melting-in-gilgit-baltistan-due-to-cpec-project201803040911020001/>

Mohammad Ali, “Gilgit-Baltistan Crossed Dangerous Level of Air Pollution”

Urdu Point, March 20, 2018

The Gilgit-Baltistan Environment Protection Agency reported increased trend of air pollution with the concentrations of Particular Matter (PM) and Nitrogen Oxide crossing dangerous level in the winter season. He informed that Gilgit-Baltistan had recently procured Air Quality Monitoring Station to check the levels of air pollutants in Gilgit city. Maximum concentrations were 101.52 and 38.8 /m³ one to one. NEQS of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are 150 and 35 /m³ for 24 hours. The average concentrations of NO and NO₂ were recorded to be 49.6 and 46.1 /m³ respectively for the month of January 2018. The safe limits defined by Pak-EPA are 10 and 80 /m³ for 24 hours for NO and NO₂.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/weather/gilgit-baltistan-crossed-dangerous-level-of-a-289259.html>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Preparation for new political reforms in GB”

Baad-e- Shimal, March 6, 2018

The Prime minister of Pakistan is visiting GB on March 9, 2018 where he will be announcing new political reforms for the region. It is expected that the prime minister may announce internal autonomy for GB and the government will implement the recommendations of the Sartaj Aziz committee. Several powers will be transferred from Islamabad to GB to make the judiciary, administration and the regional government empowered. However, there is no specification about the kind of political reforms. It is believed that no major news is expected regarding the constitutional rights. People from GB are demanding for mainstreaming GB and asking for representation in the Senate and the National Assembly since more than half a century. This brings disappointment in the new generations and provides external powers an opportunity to hatch conspiracy. One has to see how prime minister’s announcement satisfies the people.

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

“Jamate-Islami is asking to give GB the format of Kashmir government”

Baad-e- Shimal, March 6, 2018

At a public meeting held under the chairmanship of Jamate-Islami’s political committee, Maulana Abdus Sami urged the government of Pakistan that GB should be given a political setup like Azad Kashmir under the interim constitution, at least till the settlement of the Kashmir issue. This could fulfil the demand of the people of GB. Jamate-Islami has reviewed the current political situation of GB. People of GB can no longer be fooled in the name of packages. Thus, every organization should play its role, keeping in mind the interest of public, thereby

fix the direction towards future. Jamate-Islami has decided to contact other organizations in this regard.

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

“People will get nothing from Prime Minister’s visit: Amjad Advocate”

Daily K2, March 9, 2018

Pakistan People’s Party’s Gilgit-Baltistan President, Amjad Advocate, stated that people of Gilgit-Baltistan should not expect much from the prime minister’s visit. Rather they should be prepared for the new taxation bomb to be imploded soon by the prime minister. He will come with the new taxation bill that is going to put more burden on the poor people of the region. Therefore, it is need of the hour that FBR movement should get united against any eventuality. Although unlikely, but if the prime minister of Pakistan announces creation of new districts, we will appreciate and welcome that move.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1520553600>

Dr. Ezaz Ahsan, “GB, CPEC and Indian lies”

Baad-e- Shimal, March 20, 2018

Be it Indian rulers, institutions, or media, all are followers of Chanakyan philosophy. India is cheating the whole world by hypocrisy. However, the whole world knows this. India is indulging in aggression and brutalities from Kashmir to Assam. Space is squeezing for the minorities in India. But Indian media and rulers are busy spreading lies against Pakistan and defaming Pakistan in the whole world. The Indian government is spending money for hatching conspiracies and creating instability inside Pakistan. If the same amount is spent on its own citizen, then crores of Indian will not be suffering from hunger and poverty. India cannot abandon its

habit. India is pursuing a new policy targeting GB and Balochistan. It cannot digest that CPEC is getting successful. It is trying and will try to create unrest within GB to sabotage CPEC. The number of people who would be exploited or work for India in GB is almost nothing as compared in Balochistan. Now what India is doing is using few sold-out people from the GB who are living in the west to unleash propaganda. Indian media is using these people via social media to target CPEC, Pakistan and create an atmosphere of unrest within the region.

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

“Resolve to teach lesson at our time and venue”

Daily Mahasib, March 31, 2018

Talking to media persons, foreign office spokesperson, Dr. Faisal, stated that we will teach India a lesson at a pre-decided time and venue. Unusual increase in the number of cease fire

violations at the LoC and working boundary by India may invite some adventurism. New Delhi should not underestimate our strength. The above statement of foreign office is a reflection that relations between the two nuclear neighbours have reached at an all-time low. Though there never has been good relations at an ideal level, but Narendra Modi pushed the region to conflict and destruction for political gains and to increase his vote bank. Kashmir is behind all the conflicts. India instead of resolving the issue in the light of principals of justice, is declaring Kashmir as its integral part.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/e-paper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=31-03-2018>

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 edited and abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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