

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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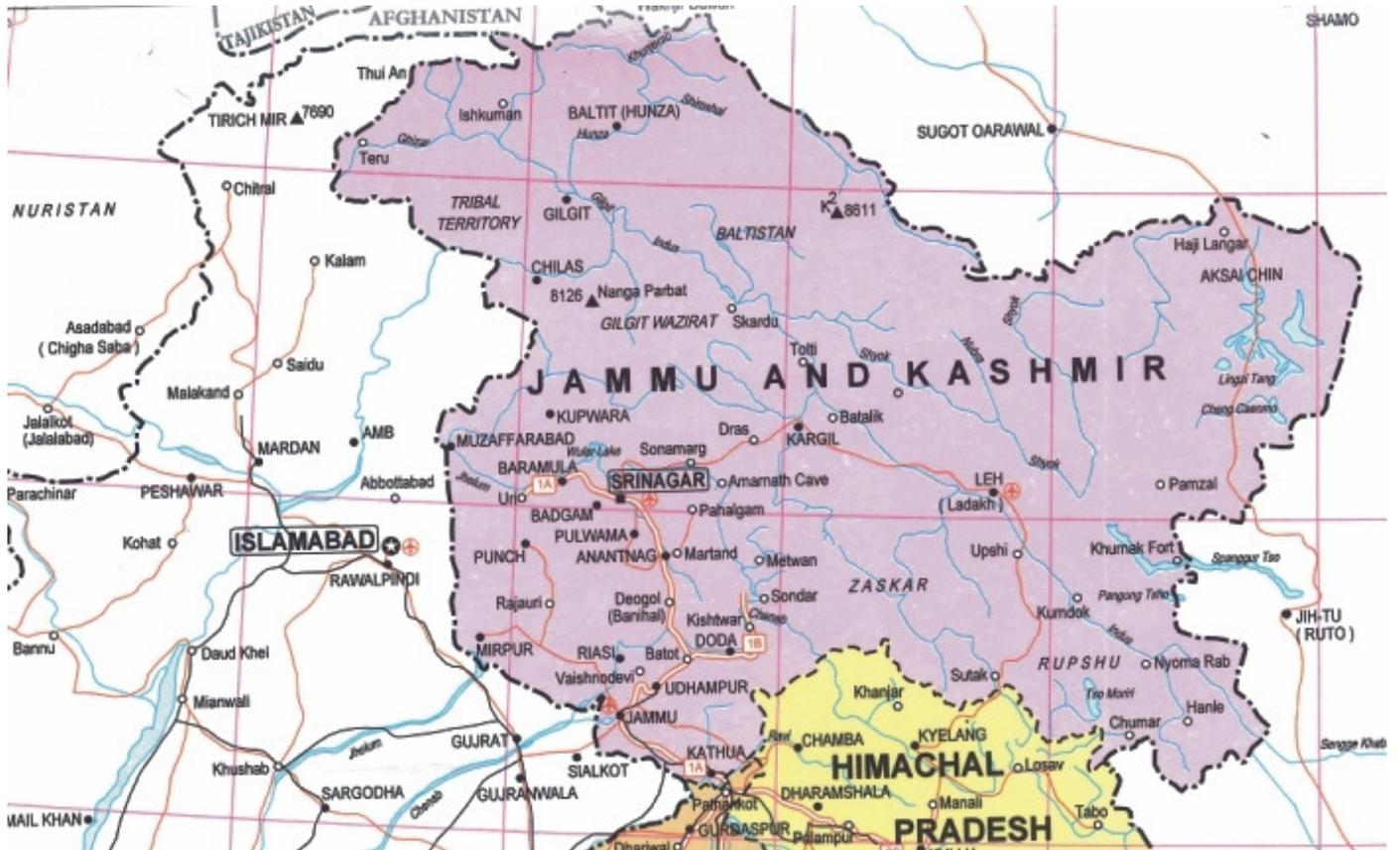
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Pakistan continues to be relentlessly pursuing its agenda to spread false propaganda against India on Kashmir. It appears from some of the reports included in the current issue that the appointees to the highest offices, especially in the case of the so-called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), such as the President and Prime Minister are specifically mandated to speak things against India. Hence, they are extensively engaged in peddling fallacious propaganda regarding developments in Jammu and Kashmir. Instead of raking up issues concerning basic rights and conditions of the people of the so-called AJK, political leaders from the region are found doing what could best be termed as rumour mongering regarding Jammu and Kashmir, its people and falsely portraying what India is doing or not doing there. Such acts are only a part of the concerted strategy pursued by Pakistan over decades in order to justify its unfounded and unwarranted claim on the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Howsoever, hollow and misleading Pakistan's propaganda on Jammu and Kashmir might be, India needs to think in terms of innovative, effective ways to counter it, especially at the international level. Off course, India cannot employ tactics similar to that of Pakistan. For instance, one way for India could be to remain focussed in trying and bringing to the attention of the world genuine cases of political atrocities committed by Pakistan against the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), especially Gilgit Baltistan. It is disheartening how the focus on the international community has been trained largely on the Jammu and Kashmir state in India while completely overlooking pressing issues inside PoK. Both regions within PoK- the so-called AJK and Gilgit Baltistan have been reeling under political deprivation. Cosmetic measures introduced as stop gap arrangements by the government of Pakistan have expectedly proved futile in politically empowering the people of the region. Weak political structures have been deliberately put in place in PoK to make the region and its people absolutely subservient to the government in Islamabad.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Hanif Samoon, “AJK president impressed by Thar coal project, community welfare model”

Dawn, April 1, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Mohammad Masood Khan along with senior officials of his secretariat and Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Chairman Dostain Jamaldini on March 31 visited Thar Coal Block-II project and described it as an “unmatched venture” which would soon prove to be the best public-private partnership model in Pakistan. GPA Planning and Development director general Muneer Baloch also accompanied Mr Jamaldini during the visit. Sardar Masood Khan noted that the Thar coal project would give a boost to the local and international investors upon its success. He stated the project had great potential to consolidate the investors’ confidence and bring in massive investments. He further stated that the SECMC development model was unmatched in Pakistan, adding that others should also replicate it as the local community was not only getting jobs but also education and health facilities.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1398744>

“AJK Inks Integrated Phased Plan for Speedy Progress”

Urdu Point, April 1, 2018

Under the upcoming gigantic 9th Special Economic Zone under CPEC project, the AJK government has reportedly started inking a broad-based phased plan for the speedy socio-economic development and uplift of tourism sector through the promotion of trade and tourism sectors in the state. Sources noted on April 1, that to materialize the idea of making AJK a most attractive hub of prospective tourism activities in South Asia, an international tourism conference is proposed to be organized in Mirpur in the near future. Sources further noted that the government was

determined to turn Mirpur into most attractive and model city of international repute. To materialise this dream into reality, the government intended to hold an international investment conference in Mirpur soon which, sources added, would indeed help promote foreign investment in trade and industrial sector in the area. Acceleration of business and economic activities in the area may lead to the overall socio-economic uplift and to raise the living standard of the common man in AJK, sources noted while referring to the priorities of the government.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-inks-integrated-phased-plan-for-speedy-pr-300433.html>

“Neelum-Jhelum ready for generation”

Pakistan Observer, April 2, 2018

At last, the much delayed but strategically important 969 MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydel power project is ready to provide inexpensive and environment friendly electricity to the national grid. The first unit of the project is reportedly ready to start supplying 470 MW of electricity to the national grid by April 13 while other units of the project will also become operational in the next few months. In fact in recent months, one has seen completion of much long delayed hydel projects including that of Golan Gol Hydel project in Chitral. Credit for this definitely goes to the incumbent Chairman WAPDA, Muzammil Hussain. Indeed the completion of these projects will further reduce dependence on expensive thermal power and help save foreign exchange amounting to millions of dollars. This really is a milestone and we expect that WAPDA will continue its efforts to further exploit the hydel potential in Azad Kashmir for the benefit of entire country. In fact it is time to kick start work on much delayed Diamer Bhasha dam and its completion be made a priority given the water scarcity the country is facing today and sedimentation of Tarbela and Mangla dams. As the government is all set to announce the country’s first ever water

policy, specific deadlines should be set in it for construction of Diامر Bhasha and other big dams. We will rather propose that the construction of dams should be put on the top list in terms of allocation of funds in the annual PSDPs till these get ready as after all it is a matter of overall economic well-being of the whole country.

<https://pakobserver.net/neelum-jhelum-ready-for-generation/>

Khalid Hasnain, “Diامر-Basha Dam: Over 14,000 acre land transferred to Wapda”

Dawn, April 2, 2018

Its location is 40 km downstream of Chilas, the district headquarters of Diامر in Gilgit Baltistan. It will displace 30,350 people living in 4,266 households of 32 villages, situated above the dam site on both left and right banks of River Indus. The land acquisition for the two of the total three proposed model villages and the piece of land along the disputed boundary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and GB is a major bottleneck in the way of execution of the project. Among three proposed villages, land (687 acres) for Harpan Das has already been acquired where Wapda has developed community infrastructure and is ready for allotment of plots to the affected people. Sagachal Das is about 80km away from the Chilas town. The site is communal land of inhabitants of Goharabad. Area of Sagachal Das is 526 acres (4207 Kanls). As the locals of Goharabad have refused to allow those affected downstream of Chilas settle in Sagachal Das model village, thus they (1,068 households) would be resettled at this site under the plan requiring 1,820 kanal for the development of infrastructure.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1398945>

Fahad Shabbir, “Work on Skardu-Gilgit Road to Complete in Two Years: Commissioner”

Urdu Point, April 3, 2018

Commissioner Baltistan, Hamza Salik on April 3 stated that work on the most important Gilgit-Skardu road was in full swing and that it would be completed during the next two years. This will expedite pace of economic development in the province. Senior

Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Haji Akbar Taban, would be member of the Commission to represent the people of Baltistan, he noted. After thorough discussions with relevant stakeholders and people of GB and ground realities, he noted the Commission would give its verdict for allotment of the barren lands.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/work-on-skardu-gilgit-road-to-complete-in-two-302461.html>

Fahad Shabbir, “Pakistan to Continue Extending Political, Moral and Diplomatic Support of Kashmiris: Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir”

Urdu Point, April 3, 2018

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir has stated Pakistan will continue to extend political, moral and diplomatic support for Kashmiris and will never leave them alone. Talking to PTV, he noted that the federal cabinet in its special meeting declared that Kashmir Solidarity Day would be observed on April 6 in support of the Kashmiri people.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/pakistan-to-continue-extending-political-mor-302868.html>

“PM reiterates support for Kashmir issue during AJK trip”

The Express Tribune, April 4, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on April 4 met representatives from Hurriyat Conference in Muzaffarabad during his visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation meeting the premier underscored that diplomatic efforts needed to be enhanced to sensitise the international community. The delegation that met with the premier included Ghulam Muhammad Shafi, Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, Syed Ejaz Rehmani, Shamim Shaal and Ishtiaq Hameed. The representatives thanked the prime minister for meeting them.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1677105/1-pm-assures-hurriyat-leaders-highlighting-kashmir-issue-international-forums/>

Parvez Jabri, “NA body recommends providing vehicle scanners to check LoC trade”

Business Recorder, April 6, 2018

The National Assembly’s Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan on April 5 recommended providing the vehicle scanners and other facilities to Travel and Trade Authority (TADA), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) for scrutinizing goods imported from the Indian Jammu and Kashmir. A meeting of the committee chaired by Malik Ibrar Ahmed was briefed about the workings and problems being faced by TADA in managing / checking cross-border trade between AJK and J&K. It was noted in the meeting that TADA was checking trucks of goods being imported from Jammu and Kashmir manually. The committee directed the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, to investigate illegal allotment of plots in housing scheme launched for Kashmiri refugees in Quetta and report such people involved in illegal allotment.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/04/06/409780/na-body-recommends-providing-vehicle-scanners-to-check-loc-trade/>

“Kashmir Solidarity Day being observed today”

The Nation, April 6, 2018

Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed across the country including Azad Jammu and Kashmir. A resolution was adopted in a special meeting of the federal cabinet in Islamabad on April 2 with Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in the chair.

<https://nation.com.pk/06-Apr-2018/kashmir-solidarity-day-being-observed-today>

Mohammad Ali, “Continuity of Political Process Vital For Elimination of Religious Extremism: Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman”

Urdu Point, April 6, 2018

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman on April 6 stated that continuity of political

process was imperative for complete elimination of religious extremism and sectarianism and called for joint efforts to maintain peace and interfaith harmony in the province. He noted the PPP regime had done nothing for development of Gilgit Baltistan besides neglecting the most important sector of education. Development budget had jumped to record Rs18 billion during PML-N government in GB and the province has achieved powers of approving of projects worth Rs1 billion by its own.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/continuity-of-political-process-vital-for-eli-306293.html>

“AJK political parties extend full support to IOK brethren”

Pakistan Observer, April 8, 2018

All political and religious parties as well as civil society in Azad Jammu and Kashmir have announced their full support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle. This was stated in a joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of an All Parties’ Conference on April 7. APC restated that struggle for Kashmir freedom movement will continue. The APC also admired the unflinching support of Government and people of Pakistan on Kashmir cause especially commemoration of 6th April as Solidarity Day with Kashmiris’ besides their moral political and diplomatic support.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-political-parties-extend-full-support-to-iok-brethren/>

Abdul Sattar, “The reaction in AJK”

The News, April 8, 2018

Anger had been simmering in Pakistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) over the alleged violations of the Line of Control (LoC) by India. Through the past week, thousands of Kashmiri and Pakistani political activists took to the streets of AJK to protest against Indian security forces including lawyers, religious leaders, politicians and even cricketers and celebrities. Pacifists in the two nuclear-armed countries fear that the tension along the LOC and turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir could escalate into

an armed conflict. Pakistan's foreign minister and many politicians in India have also warned about this possibility. Such a scenario would be catastrophic for the region because the two arch rivals are believed to have over 200 nuclear warheads, capable of generating over 10 million tonnes of smoke.

http://tns.thenews.com.pk/reaction-ajk/#.Wu_je-FPIU

“NHA plans to build 216 km Gilgit-Shandur road”

The Nation, April 7, 2018

National Highway Authority plans to build 216-kilometre Gilgit-Shandur road to provide an alternate route to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), reported Radio Pakistan. Official sources of NHA noted that the project would form part of Gilgit-Shandur-Chitral road for which feasibility study had been completed. The estimated cost of the project is 45 billion rupees. The official further noted new road would be an all-weather road and would also provide an alternative route to CPEC during the winter season when the Silk route is closed due to snowfall. After Lowari Tunnel, the new project will be another best possible route for travelling to the region and will save travel time as well.

<https://nation.com.pk/07-Apr-2018/nha-plans-to-build-216-km-gilgit-shandur-road>

“Gilgit Industrial Zone to be Made Functional Soon: Hafeez”

Urdu Point, April 8, 2018

Chief Minister (CM) Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that the first industrial zone in Gilgit will be made functional soon. Small industrial units in the city would be shifted to the industrial zone, he added. He also stated the country's enemies were hatching conspiracies against the CPEC project but those conspiracies would be foiled through excellent security measures. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would have a positive impact on the country as it would transform Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) into an investment haven, he added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gilgit-industrial-zone-to-be-made-functional-308423.html>

A Monthly Newsletter on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

“Hand military observers report to UNSC members”

The Express Tribune, April 9, 2018

Azad Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan stated that the reports prepared by the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) must be presented to all UN Security Council members. The APC was attended by former AJK Presidents Maj. Gen. (retd) Muhammad Anwar Khan and Raja Zulqarnain, PPP-P President in AJK Choudhry Latif Akbar, Jamaat-e-Islami MLA Abdur Rasheed Turabi, leaders from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Muslim Conference and Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam, leaders from All Parties Hurriyat Conference including Ghulam Muhammad Safi and Faiz Naqashbandi.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1680782/1-hand-military-observers-report-unsc-members/>

“Neelum-Jhelum project starts supplying electricity to national grid”

Pakistan Today, April 9, 2018

Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project started supplying electricity to the national grid on trial basis. The first unit started contributing 60 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the system on April 9 and would generate electricity to its full capacity of 242 MW in the next two days. Under the strategy, not only were the under-construction projects being completed in the shortest possible time but new projects were also being initiated in both water and hydropower sectors.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/04/09/neelum-jhelum-project-starts-supplying-electricity-to-national-grid/>

Mohammad Ali, “Govt Expedites Work on 65 Projects in Astore: Parliamentary Sec”

Urdu Point, April 11, 2018

Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Barkat Jamil stated that the government expedited work on 65 projects in the district to provide better facilities to

the province's people. Talking to party workers, he noted the work on about 65 projects in different sectors was in full swing and directives were issued for its timely completion without compromising on quality. Parashing power project is also being established, which after completion would change the destiny of people besides provision of inexpensive electricity to consumers, he noted. Efforts were underway to complete it by the end of this year, he added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/govt-expedites-work-on-65-projects-in-astore-311498.html>

“Kashmiris all set to mar Modi’s UK visit”

The Nation, April 12, 2018

People of Jammu & Kashmir including those settled in Britain and other European countries will stage mammoth protest demonstrations against India on the arrival of Indian Prime Minister Modi in London on April 18. AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated this on April 11 while addressing a public gathering in Dadayal Town of Mirpur district on April 11. Farooq Haider noted that he himself, flanked by his cabinet and other AJK Parliament members along with the Kashmiri Diaspora, will participate in the protest demonstration. Farooq Haider asserted that the introduction of National Testing Service (NTS), Public Service Commission, emergency service and financial discipline in the government departments were ample proof of the fair and transparent approach of the incumbent regime. He added that nobody could raise finger at his government after landmark achievements. He announced the construction of Dadayal-Sehensa Highway besides the upgradation of various state-run educational institutions in the sub division.

<https://nation.com.pk/12-Apr-2018/kashmiris-all-set-to-mar-modi-s-uk-visit>

“969MW AJK project opens today”

The Nation, April 13, 2018

The AJK-based 969 megawatt Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project will start contributing electricity

to the national grid after its inauguration. Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project, located in Muzaffarabad districts of AJK started providing electricity to the National Grid on April 9 on a trial basis. At the first leg of its operation, the project will generate electricity to its full capacity to the tune of 242 MW soon after its scheduled inauguration. 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, sources added.

<https://nation.com.pk/13-Apr-2018/969mw-ajk-project-opens-today>

“AJK to have numerous hydropower soon”

The Nation, April 14, 2018

AJK President Masood Khan disclosed that Azad Jammu Kashmir will have numerous electricity and water resources with the completion of 1124MW Kohala and 720MW Karot power projects in the near future. This, he added, will be followed by a cascade of projects including Gulpur, Azad Pattan, Mahl and Dudnial. The AJK president noted this while addressing the commissioning of 242MW first unit of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project in Muzaffarabad on April 13. The AJK president stated that Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project is an engineering and technological milestone for Pakistan which will contribute to sustainable energy production. He also stated that the inauguration of this mega project is a matter of great pride for both Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://nation.com.pk/14-Apr-2018/ajk-to-have-numerous-hydropower-soon>

“Neelum-Jhelum inaugurated”

Pakistan Observer, April 15, 2018

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on April 13 inaugurated the much-awaited Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project to inject 969 megawatt of electricity to the national grid as a historic milestone to meet country's growing power requirements. Indeed this project inaugurated

way back in 2009 faced long delays mainly due to the negligence of the previous government and credit definitely goes to the incumbent government which took the challenge of completing this strategically important project described as engineering marvel and new wonder of Pakistan with 90 percent of the plant being underground in the high mountainous areas. Given the effort put in by the Chinese consortium including China Gezhouba Group Company and China Machinery Engineering Company in this difficult project, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi very rightly described this project as a symbol of Pak-China friendship.

<https://pakobserver.net/neelum-jhelum-inaugurated/>

“Lawmakers want GB declared tax-free zone”

Dawn, April 14, 2018

A resolution tabled in Gilgit-Baltistan Legislation Assembly on April 13 demanded that the federal government declare GB as a tax-free zone on the pattern of Gwadar under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. The resolution was jointly moved by opposition members Kacho Imtiaz Haider and Javed Hussain. The resolution pointed out that Gwadar had been declared tax-free zone under CPEC and GB should also be given the same status so that poor residents of the region could get some financial benefits from the multibillion dollar project.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401555>

Khaleeq Kiani, “PM Abbasi inaugurates 969MW project in AJK”

Dawn, April 14, 2018

Terming it a historic moment in the provision of sustainable energy supply, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on April 13 inaugurated the Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The run-of-the-river power scheme is designed to divert water from the Neelum River to the power station on the Jhelum River and will produce 969MW of electricity.

The prime minister noted that the construction for the project was started in 2008 but, due to poor planning and a lack of funds, it continued to remain a major challenge. The PM added that in 2013 when the government was formed, the Neelum-Jhelum dam had only seen a progress of 10-12 per cent and several people advised the government to abandon the project altogether.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401525>

“8 new ministers inducted in AJK cabinet”

The Nation, April 15, 2018

As many as eight new members were inducted in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) cabinet on April 14. According to details, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider inducted eight new members into the cabinet. President Azad Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan administered oath to the newly inducted ministers at the Aiwan-e-Sadar in Muzaffarabad.

<https://nation.com.pk/15-Apr-2018/8-new-ministers-inducted-in-ajk-cabinet>

Masud Ahmed Khan, “The status of Gilgit Baltistan”

Daily Times, April 18, 2018

The US Defence Secretary, James Mattis, while appearing before Senate and House Armed Services Panel informed them that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through a disputed territory. Here it is important to look into the history of the so-called disputed status of Gilgit Baltistan (GB). The status of Gilgit Baltistan was kept disputed since both India and Pakistan went to the UN to conduct a plebiscite in the disputed Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan was also included in it hoping to get votes of people of Gilgit Baltistan in favour of Pakistan.

The people of GB demand that they should be declared constitutional citizens of Pakistan and GB be made the fifth province of Pakistan adding the term “provisional province” in the constitution of

Pakistan where status can be changed on the implementation of UN resolution. The only solution to the issue is that the people of GB should be given representation in the Parliament of Pakistan according to the population. GB must also be brought under the jurisdiction of the Pakistan Supreme Court. It is hoped that the present government will review the situation and ensure the implementation of the recommendation of committees constituted by the governments of GB and Pakistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/229481/the-status-of-gilgit-baltistan/>

Sadia Abbas, “Govt Committed to Socio-economic Development of GB: Minister”

Urdu Point, April 17, 2018

Information Minister Gilgit Baltistan Shams Mir has stated the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government was committed to providing all basic facilities of life to masses. He stated that the GB government was committed to providing all basic amenities of life to the masses, who reposed trust in the PML (N) leadership in the general elections. Before the rule of the PML (N), he added the country was facing different challenges while the situation improved as it came into power after winning the general election.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/govt-committed-to-socio-economic-development-317391.html>

“Work on KP-AJK motorway soon”

Dawn, April 19, 2018

Federal Religious Affairs Minister, Sardar Mohammad Yousuf, stated the construction of a motorway between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir will begin soon. “Work on the Mansehra-Muzaffarabad-Mirpur Motorway will begin soon. This project’s successful execution will tangibly benefit the people of Hazara division and Azad Jammu and Kashmir,” he noted on April 18.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1402391/work-on-kp-ajk-motorway-soon>

Fakhir Rizvi, “Azad Jammu and Kashmir Posses Huge Hydropower Generation Potential: Sardar Masood Khan”

Urdu Point, April 18, 2018

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan stated that Kashmir has over 8800 megawatts potential for hydropower generation on its watercourses. Talking to a Chinese delegation, he noted nearly 2,400 MW would be available towards the end of the year after the full utilization of the capacity of the Neelum-Jhelum Project. The Chinese delegation led by Qiu Jiangwei, Vice President Chongqing Water Turbine Works (CWTW) Company informed the President that their company is already working on projects in various parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and further expressed his interest in expanding their investment portfolio in the hydropower production sector in Azad Kashmir, noted a press release.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-posses-huge-hydropow-318824.html>

Fakhir Rizvi, “Shortage of Judges in Gilgit Baltistan Courts Adds to Masses’ Woes”

Urdu Point, April 19, 2018

General Secretary Supreme Appellate Court, Gilgit Baltistan Bar Johar Ali Advocate on April 19 underlined the need for expediting recruitment of judges on vacant positions in courts to provide prompt inexpensive justice to masses. He noted that inordinate delay in appointment of judges on vacant posts had put question mark upon the government’s efforts for mitigating masses’ woes. He warned that further delay would not be tolerated and the provincial government should take measures to appointing judges on positions lying vacant in the Supreme Appellate Court and Chief Court on merit basis. He also stated that cases of full bench nature had been piling up due to unavailability of required number of judges, which was against the Constitution and the Law of Land, he maintained.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/shortage-of-judges-in-gilgit-baltistan-courts-319762.html>

“German team, Wapda discuss AJK projects”

The Nation, April 20, 2018

A German delegation and the Wapda authorities discussed matters relating to financing of Wapda projects in water and hydropower sectors in the country. The four-member delegation of KfW - a German Financial Institution - headed by its recently appointed Division Chief (Infrastructure and Finance) for Pakistan Ms. Veronica Garcia called on Wapda Chairman Muzammil Hussain at the Wapda House. Speaking on the occasion, the chairman noted that Wapda holds a strong asset base, therefore, enjoys the trust of national and international financial institutions for arrangement of funds for its projects. During the year 2016 and 2017 alone, Wapda successfully arranged Rs100 billion from a consortium of the local banks for completing Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project. For Stage-I of Dasu Hydropower Project, financing was also secured to the tune of an unprecedented sum of Rs.144 billion from another consortium of the local banks, he added.

<https://nation.com.pk/20-Apr-2018/german-team-wapda-discuss-ajk-projects>

“Govt takes solid measures for GB’s development: Minister for Works GB”

Daily Times, April 21, 2018

Minister for Works Gilgit Baltistan, Dr Muhammad Iqbal, on April 20 stated that the government was pursuing a comprehensive development plan for socio-economic uplift of the region. Talking to journalists on the occasion of the inauguration ceremony of Park-link road, the GB minister noted that the Gilgit Baltistan did not progress over the last 70 years as it witnessed a number of development initiatives during the tenure of the present government. He also stated that work on Gilgit-Naltar road would soon be started; adding Astore road would be timely completed. He further stated that former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was taking keen interest in the development of Gilgit Baltistan. He also stated that supply from the 18 megawatt

Naltar power house which was damaged by landslide would soon be started, adding work on its rehabilitation had been sped up.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/230559/govt-takes-solid-measures-for-gbs-development-minister-for-works-gb/>

“PPP plans protest against proposed reforms in GB”

Dawn, April 22, 2018

The Pakistan Peoples Party local leadership on April 21 announced to take to the streets if the recommendations of the federal parliamentary committee for political reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan were implemented in the region. Addressing a press conference on April 21, PPP GB president Amjad Hussain Advocate noted that the parliamentary committee headed by Sartaj Aziz had forwarded recommendations to the federal government for approval for settling constitutional status of the region. PPP secretary information, Sadia Danish, stated that GB people had been struggling for representation in the Parliament of Pakistan and extension of the jurisdiction of Supreme Court to the region. She also asked if PML-N wanted to bring reforms in the region then it should declare GB as a constitutional part of Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1403163/ppp-plans-protest-against-proposed-reforms-in-gb>

“Terror groups flourishing in PoK: Activist”

Business Standard, April 22, 2018

Exiled Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) activist Nasir Aziz Khan has claimed that terror groups are flourishing in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Khan, a former spokesperson of the United Kashmir People’s National Party (UKPNP) further stated Pakistan is not ready to listen to Kashmiris living in PoK. The residents of PoK have alleged being treated as second-class citizens in territory under Pakistani occupation since 1947. PoK has a Prime Minister and a President, but is ruled by Islamabad. The Prime Minister of Pakistan is the chairman and chief

executive of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council that manages all affairs related to the PoK.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/terror-groups-flourishing-in-pok-activist-118042200126_1.html

“Pakistan and Kashmir are Inseparable: President AJK”

Urdu Point, April 23, 2018

Pakistan and Jammu & Kashmir State are inseparable and no power on earth can sever their ties as their hearts throb together”, stated AJK President Sardar Masood Khan on April 23. Addressing the concluding ceremony of the “Bagh Spring Festival” held at the Sardar Muhammad Hussain Khan Dharay Stadium in District Bagh, the President noted that the people of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir along with their brothers and sisters in Indian Kashmir are united in their struggle for freedom and the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris. The Spring Festival was jointly organized by Bagh’s Civil Administration and the 6 Azad Kashmir (AK) Brigade. Commissioner Poonch Division Abdul Hameed Mughal, Commander 6 AK Brigadier Amjad Iqbal and Deputy Commissioner Abdul Waheed Khan were also present at the ceremony.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/pakistan-and-kashmir-are-inseparable-preside-323718.html>

Sadia Abbas, “Acting AJK PM Meets Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan”

Urdu Point, April 23, 2018

Acting Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Choudhary Tariq Farooq on April 23 met Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez ur Rehman and exchanged views on matters of mutual interests. Talking on the occasion, the acting prime minister noted that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led government in AJK was determined to serve the people with good governance.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/acting-ajk-pm-meets-chief-minister-of-gilgit-323925.html>

Sumaira FH, “Deputy Speaker Legislative Assembly Gilgit Baltistan Jaffarullah Khan Lauds Pak-army’s Role”

Urdu Point, April 24, 2018

Deputy Speaker Legislative Assembly Gilgit Baltistan Jaffarullah Khan on April 24 appreciated the Pak-army, saying it played crucial role in rooting out terrorism and extremism from the country. Talking to members of Tanzeem-e-Lawahkeen Shuhuda, the Deputy Speaker stated Lalak Jan Saheed and other soldiers of the Pak-army were heroes of the nation and their sacrifices would always be remembered. He stated that Pak-Army had rendered matchless sacrifices to wipe out the menace of terrorism and extremism and ensured durable peace across the country including the Gilgit Baltistan. He also stated the entire nation was proud of the Lalak Jan Saheed (Nishan-e-Haider) who repelled many aggressive ventures by the enemy and imposed massive losses on them.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/deputy-speaker-legislative-assembly-gilgit-ba-324680.html>

“Kashmiris will attain their right to self-determination: Masood Khan”

Daily Times, April 26, 2018

Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir stated that Pakistan and Kashmir are inseparable and enjoy a symbiotic relationship that cannot be severed by any subversion or intimidation by India. The President made these remarks while talking to the participants of the National Security Workshop Baluchistan at Quetta on the topic, “Kashmir – its Genesis, Global Perspective and way forward”. The workshop is being jointly organized by the Pakistan Army’s Southern Military Command and National Defence University. The President stated that economic landscape of Baluchistan and whole of Pakistan is changing as we are passing through a phase of immense development. He further stated AJK is also on the cusp of an economic revolution and will be an asset to Pakistan. He noted

that the Government focusing on a three-point agenda which includes; firstly, accelerating the freedom struggle in IOK; secondly, striving for good governance by ensuring accountability, transparency and meritocracy; and thirdly, economic development. He stated, Azad Kashmir is on track towards economic prosperity and AJK's formal inclusion in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has assured 4 major projects for energy production, promotion of industry and road infrastructure. CPEC is an economic corridor connecting Gwadar to Khunjerab and will be instrumental in bringing the people of Pakistan even closer.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/232552/kashmiris-will-attain-their-right-to-self-determination-masood-khan/>

Farman Ali, "Army's telecom wing allowed 3G, 4G services trial run in GB"

Dawn, April 26, 2018

A court allowed the Special Communications Organisation (SCO) to operate 3G and 4G mobile services on a trial basis in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and

stayed the telecom regulatory body's decision to allow other private operators to launch the service in the mountainous region. A two-judge bench of the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court (GBCC) comprising Justice Haq Nawaz and Justice Muhammad Umar admitted a petition filed by the SCO, the telecommunication wing of the army, for hearing and issued notices to the respondents to submit their comments within a month. The petition was filed on April 18 under Article 71 of the GB Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009, challenging the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's (PTA) decision of issuing licences to cellular networks for launching 3G and 4G spectrum in the mountainous region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1403965>

Economic Developments

Sophia Siddiqui, “ECNEC okays Diamer Basha Dam”

Pakistan Observer, April 18, 2018

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council at its meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi approved the dam component of Diamer Basha dam at a total rationalized cost of Rs 474,000 million. The dam will have a 6.4 MAF live storage capacity and installed power capacity of 4500 megawatts. After completion, the project will increase national water storage capacity of Pakistan from thirty-eight days to forty-five days and will enhance life span of downstream reservoirs including Tarbela Dam. The ECNEC approved replacement of old and obsolete signal gear from Lodhran-Multan-Khanewal-Shahdara Bagh Main Line Section of Pakistan Railways at a cost of Rs 18,346.60 million. The scope of work of this project also includes remodeling of Yousafwala Railway station and upgradation of twenty four-unmanned railway level crossings into manned level crossings.

<https://pakobserver.net/ecnec-okays-diamer-basha-dam/>

“Federal budget 2018-19 at glance: Rs 29,876.617 million allocated for AJK projects”

Dispatch News Desk, April 27, 2018

The federal government has allocated Rs 29,876.617 million for executing new schemes and completing ongoing projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) during the financial year 2018-19 under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). According to budgetary document, Rs150 million for executing new projects included Rs 100 million for Establishment of Endowment Fund for Pakistan Red Crescent AJK; Rs 50 million for Improvement and Metalling of 13 km Link Road, Konkan Panjoor Gali, district Muzaffarabad. Rs 19,534 million allocated

for completing on going schemes in Gilgit-Baltistan Rs 19,534 million has been allocated for completing the ongoing schemes at Gilgit-Baltistan during financial year 2018-19 under the PSDP. The block allocations for Gilgit-Baltistan would be Rs 17,000 million.

<https://dnd.com.pk/federal-budget-2018-19-at-glance-rs-29876-617-million-allocated-for-ajk-projects/141647>

“People welcome budget”

Pakistan Observer, April 30, 2018

In Gilgit Baltistan, people belonging to various segment of life have welcomed the Federal budget proposals for the years 2018-19. Minister Works Gilgit Baltistan, Dr Muhammad Iqbal, stated a huge amount has been proposed for public sector development program which will put country on the path of rapid development. Commenting on budget, Minister Planning and Development Iqbal Hassan termed the budget as balanced and public friendly. Special Assistant to Chief Minister, Abid Baig, appreciated ten percent ad hoc relief to civil and military employees and fifty percent enhancement in house rent and ceiling.

<https://pakobserver.net/people-welcome-budget/>

International Developments

“Pakistan’s mission to UN is Kashmiri people’s voice at world body: Maleeha”

The Nation, April 7, 2018

The Pakistan Mission to the United Nations serves as the voice of the Kashmiri people at the world body, Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi told a large gathering of Kashmiri and Pakistani community leaders in New York. Speaking at a meeting held on April 6 at Pakistan House to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, Ambassador Lodhi stated that Pakistan is fighting the case of Kashmiri people at the international forum on the basis of irrefutable moral and legal grounds. Earlier, Pakistan Consul General in New York, Raja Ali Ejaz, also expressed Pakistan’s solidarity with the people of Kashmir and urged the audience to make contacts with American politicians, lawmakers and common citizens to apprise them of the deteriorating situation in Jammu and Kashmir

<https://nation.com.pk/07-Apr-2018/pakistan-s-mission-to-un-is-kashmiri-people-s-voice-at-world-body-maleeha>

“New UK law to help check money laundering: APMPL”

The Nation, April 9, 2018

All Pakistan Muslim League President, Dr Mohammad Amjad, welcomed the British government’s newly-introduced law (unexplained wealth order) to check the ill-gotten money inflow in the country and hoped that it would greatly contain money laundering. The APMPL president, discussed issues facing the Pakistani community in the UK, the Kashmir issue, money laundering and protection of women’s and children’s rights, with Ishrat Naz Shah, a Pakistani-origin local bodies’ head in the United Kingdom.

<https://nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2018/new-uk-law-to-help-check-money-laundering-apml>

Fahad Shabbir, “AJK Prime Minister Urges Kashmiri Expatriates to Highlight Plights of Kashmiris”

Urdu Point, April 24, 2018

Appreciating April 18 joint protest in London by different political parties of Kashmir, AJK PM stated there might be differences among the political leaders but on the Kashmir issue, all the leadership was united and there were no differences. Prime Minister Haider also eulogized the untiring efforts of the members of UK Parliament of Kashmiri origin especially of Lord Nazir, Afzal Khan for highlighting the plights of Kashmiri people within the Parliament and outside.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/ajk-prime-minister-urges-kashmiri-expatriates-325625.html>

Mohammad Ali, “Korea Provides Fund to Support Girls Education in Remote Areas of Pakistan”

Urdu Point, April 26, 2018

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and Government of Pakistan on April 26 signed a plan for operating a Korean funded “Girls’ Right to Education Programme” in Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh districts in South Punjab and Astore and Ganche in Gilgit-Baltistan. 3.4 million dollar funds of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) will support national capacity building to realize girls’ right to education in Pakistan’s Punjab province and Gilgit-Baltistan, through interventions targeting education officials, community leaders, teachers and parents, a press release issued noted on April 26.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/education/korea-provides-fund-to-support-girls-educatio-328334.html>

“AJK PM calls for national unity to fight grave challenges”

Pakistan Observer, April 27, 2018

Describing Pakistan as only ray of hope for struggling people of Jammu and Kashmir, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan underlined the need for national unity and cohesion to fight challenges confronting the nation. Speaking at a reception hosted in his honour by

Pakistan Muslim League- N UK chapter at London on April 25, he noted Pakistan is the greatest gift from Almighty Allah for which our forefathers laid sacrifices. It is now our responsibility to make conscious efforts for betterment of the country by demonstrating the same kind of spirit and unity to steer the country out of different challenges.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-pm-calls-for-national-unity-to-fight-grave-challenges/>

Other Developments

Altaf Hamid Rao, “Conference calls for adopting alternate energy resources”

Pakistan Observer, April 11, 2018

Power generation experts including seasoned academicians of global repute from various developed nations while addressing 1st 2-day International Conference on Power, Energy and Smart Grid at Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST) on April 9 strongly suggested the invention and innovation of inexpensive resources for the generation of electricity to combat the prevailing energy crises especially in the under-developing countries like Pakistan including Azad Jammu Kashmir through utilization of the huge available natural potential in the concerned areas. The AJK Power Minister Raja Nisar Ahmed, inaugurated the conference, first of its kind in Azad Jammu

Kashmir, hosted by the state-run Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST) with the coordination of Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, Pakistan Science Foundation and Laraib Energy Limited to discuss and devise mechanism, harmonious to the need of the modern era, to combat the growing energy crises in various parts of the world and with prime focus to successfully meet the future needs of the uninterrupted supply of electricity in the developing parts of a fast-expanding part of the world.

<https://pakobserver.net/conference-calls-for-adopting-alternate-energy-resources/>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“CPEC and Daimer Bhasha Dam will change Gilgit-Baltistan’s Destiny”

Baad-e-Shimal, April 5, 2018

Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan, Dr. Kazim Niyaz, stated that CPEC and Daimer Bhasha Dam will change the fortunes of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. He also stated that Daimer region is prone to natural calamities and in summer it gets flooded. That is why there is a need to establish disaster management setup in Daimer. Now with CPEC, the significance of KKH has increased greatly. Many development projects have been initiated in Gilgit-Baltistan- few have already been started and many more will come up. CPEC is game changer for the whole country and for Gilgit-Baltistan as well. It has the potential to end poverty and terrorism in the country. Daimer Bhasha Dam is the other project that has a great significance. Since 30 years, no big dam has been constructed resulting in wastage of water. Huge section of population is facing water crisis. The Daimer Bhasha Dam can lead to much development. Not only would G-B benefit from it, but Sindh also. The Dam would not only produce electricity but also be useful for irrigation purposes. During dry days, the stored water can be used to irrigate agricultural land.

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

Nambardar Mufti and Sannullah Inqalabi, “Political Parties and Their Future in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily Salaam, April 10, 2018

It is unfortunate that the political mind-set and culture of the political parties in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan suffer from lack of credibility. For instance, the fact that the party which rules at the centre comes

to power in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan as well. Politicians in both these regions never bothered to highlight the real issues of people. They are always ready to sacrifice the legitimate grievances of both these regions for their political masters at the centre. But things are changing and changing for the better. With advent of social media, people of these two regions are challenging the political mind-set of the politicians.

The political culture is changing fast. With so much hype around the CPEC and the world now keenly watching it, people in G-B are using social media to put pressure on politicians regarding various decision making. Every small issue is now being highlighted, political leaders can longer deceive the common people. It is unlikely that politicians would win elections relying merely on slogans. They are being closely monitored by the public now. They would be judged from their performance. Time has gone when politicians would win elections by exploiting sectarian differences. With religious harmony restored to the region, the literacy rate picking up, and the internet facility, the politicians are increasingly facing the heat now.

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

“If Government wants land, provide compensation”

Daily K2, April 18, 2018

The opposition leader in the G-B Assembly, Capt. (Retd) Mohammad Shafi Khan and Pakistan People’s Party leader, Amjad Advocate, noted that even an inch of land cannot be given to government. They noted that the land belongs to the people. If the government is keen to acquire land, it must provide appropriate compensation. Although the Land Reform Commission has been constituted, the government has no authority to forcefully grab land from the

people. These comments were made while addressing a public gathering in Chilas.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1524009600>

“Kashmir leadership and few other political players spoiled Gilgit-Baltistan’s chance of having constitutional status and autonomy”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, April 20, 2018

A renowned analyst and former IG Police, Afzal Ali Shagri, noted that a constitutional committee spearheaded by Sartaj Aziz recommended provincial autonomy to Gilgit-Baltistan, but unfortunately, the political leadership of Azad Kashmir along with other political players opposed the move. While talking to the media, Shagri stated that it is time to get united and raise voice- we cannot afford to remain silent. Gilgit-Baltistan is at a juncture of history where it can prove a watershed moment for the people of the region. We are in a situation where it is now and never, stated Shagri.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?dt=MDQtMjAtMjAxOA%3D%3D>

“Few paid people are creating conspiracy against Skardu Road”

Daily K2, April 30, 2018

The Public Accounts Committee Chairman, Capt (Retd.) Sikander, noted that few people who are on the payroll of RAW, CIA, and Mossad are trying hatch a conspiracy against the Skardu road. These people are trying to sabotage the construction by spreading propaganda against the project. Such elements are enemies of the people. People of the region should remain vigilant against these anti-state elements. He further noted that the provincial government is going to provide the compensation to the land acquired for the project. Every inch of land that belongs to people would be compensated. Those elements who are saying that the land would not be compensated and the government is out to acquire the land without compensation are in fact spreading lies.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1525046400>

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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