

# POK

## *News Digest*

**A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR**

**Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh**

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## Jammu & Kashmir

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

## **In this Edition**

*Gilgit Baltistan will undergo general elections towards the end of this year as the previous Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) led government will be completing its 5 year term in December 2014. Elections were held for the first time in 2009 under the then newly introduced Empowerment and Self-governance package, which apart from other provisions, restored the original nomenclature of the Gilgit Baltistan region (till then referred to as the Northern Areas by the government of Pakistan). Meanwhile, a constitutional issue has been detected and highlighted by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief in Gilgit Baltistan, Hafeezur Rahman. The PML-N chief in the region has raised the issue regarding absence of any provision for an interim set up to facilitate impartial conduct of elections in the Empowerment and Self-governance Order 2009. The PML-N wants the chief minister to undertake necessary step to introduce amendments in the system so as to ensure a fair and free electoral process.*

*To study the possibilities of the proposed economic corridor between China and Pakistan via Gilgit Baltistan, China has commissioned preliminary assessment study and allocated funds to facilitate the research. The proposed economic corridor is noted to connect the restive Xinjiang province of China with Gilgit Baltistan and extend up to the Gwadar port in Balochistan, built with Chinese assistance. A railway line is to be constructed as part of the economic corridor that will link China with Pakistani cities of Karachi and Islamabad.*

*Meanwhile, the annual budgets of both parts of PoK were introduced in the month of June. While AJK government introduced its budget worth Rs 62 billion, a Rs 27.64 billion budget was introduced in the legislative assembly of Gilgit Baltistan.*

**Priyanka Singh**

# Political Developments

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## **“AJK govt chalks out tourism promotion plan”**

*The Nation, June 29, 2014*

MIRPUR: AJK govt chalked out an integrated phased plan for the speedy promotion of tourism with private sector. The requisite funds have been allocated in this regard in the new fiscal year 2014-15 annual budget of the state. “Since bright potential along with conducive atmosphere is available for the uplift and promotion of the tourism industry in AJK, the state govt has reportedly invited the national and multi-national entrepreneurs in the private sector to launch the projects of tourist resorts and rest houses in various tourism-oriented picturesque spots in AJK - full of natural beauty including Neelam and Leepa vallies as well as other mountainous resorts.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/29-Jun-2014/ajk-govt-chalks-out-tourism-promotion-plan>

## **“Over 700 sign petition to empower AJKLA”**

*The Nation, June 29, 2014*

MIRPUR: The Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR) AJK, a civil society organization, started an online petition calling on the governments of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to amend AJK constitution commonly known as Act 1974 and empower AJK Legislative Assembly by drastically reducing Kashmir Council's administrative and financial authority to ensure democratic and transparent governance.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/29-Jun-2014/over-700-sign-petition-to-empower-ajkla>

## **Khalid Hasnain, “Land issues confront dam”**

*Dawn, June 27, 2014*

LAHORE: The pace of work on Diامر-Bhasha Dam defies the government commitment to pursue the project with speed. The dam necessitated the acquisition of thousands of acres of land owned by

the state and individuals. Private owners are now demanding payment of penalties against delays in purchase of their land and while the authorities have been able to secure large stretches of state land in Gilgit-Baltistan, the transfer of state land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is pending. A Wapda document states that state land measuring 989 acres in KP is to be transferred for the project, but the province says it is quite unaware of such a requirement. “The ministry of water and power or Wapda has not approached us over the matter,” stated Waqar Ayub, a member of KP's Board of Revenue.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1115346/land-issues-confront-dam>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Looking inwards: G-B lawmaker apologises for ineffective stint”**

*The Express Tribune, June 27, 2014*

GILGIT: For Rehmat Khaliq of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly session of June 26 was one of introspection. “Let me acknowledge my failure to deliver and my failure to keep the promises I made to my people,” Khaliq stated on the floor of the house as the incumbent legislature passed its fifth and final annual budget worth over Rs27 billion with a majority. Lawmaker Khaliq is a senior member of the JUI-F which is a coalition partner of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in G-B. “I have failed my people and I apologise for that,” he stated during the assembly session chaired by Speaker Wazir Baig. Khaliq's regret stems from the sparse development work carried out in the region by G-B's lawmakers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/727555/looking-inwards-g-b-lawmaker-apologises-for-ineffective-stint/>

## **“AJK SC allows six MLAs to become party”**

*The Nation, June 27, 2014*

MIRPUR: The AJK Supreme Court accepted an application of six sitting AJK MLAs, allowing them

to become party in a petition appeal filed by Sardar Gul-e-Khandan vs Chief Election Commissioner and others in 2011. In the interim orders, AJK SC full bench comprising Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan, Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Zia and Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan, while accepting the application, observed “after perusal of record and hearing the counsel for the parties, we are of the view that we have already arrayed the AJK Legislative Assembly as party in the line of respondents. The applicants are elected members of the Azad Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly on the seats reserved for Kashmiri refugees settled in Pakistan”.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/27-Jun-2014/ajk-sc-allows-six-mlas-to-become-party>

### **Tariq Naqash, “AJK finance dept gives in to pressure from lawmakers”**

*Dawn, June 26, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) finance department on June 25 reluctantly agreed to add Rs14.5 million in the budget estimates of AJK Legislative Assembly for 2014-15 to meet the recently enhanced perks and privileges of lawmakers, which are higher than those of the provincial assembly members in the Punjab. However, since Speaker Sardar Ghulam Sadiq and majority of legislators from both sides were adamant that the finance department should also include 72 posts of assembly secretariat in next year's budget, the latter had to give in to the intense pressure late night, thus paving the way for an end to the 'deadlock'.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1115203/ajk-finance-dept-gives-in-to-pressure-from-lawmakers>

### **Tariq Naqash, “Opposition, treasury join hands to criticise finance department”**

*Dawn, June 25, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The opposition and treasury benches in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly were on the same page on June 24 on the issue of their personal benefits, as the house met to initiate debate on the 2014-15 budget. Apparently, the 'common concern' was the sanctity

of the assembly and alleged supremacy of the finance department over the legislature, after it was pointed out by one legislator that no funds had been proposed in the fiscal document in accordance with a recent unanimously enacted law, envisaging raise in the pensions of Legislative Assembly Members (MLAs). The lawmakers from both sides stated the “deliberate omissions” were tantamount to disregarding the sanctity of the august house and warned the 'lent officers' a term for the officers posted in AJK by the central government - to avoid behaving like 'viceroys' and (thus) denting the ideological bonds between AJK and Pakistan.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1115010/opposition-treasury-join-hands-to-criticise-finance-department>

### **“PM's fee reimbursement scheme launched in AJK”**

*June 24, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister's Fee Reimbursement Scheme has been launched in Azad Kashmir. Chairperson Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the scheme by distributing cheques among the deserving students at a ceremony in Muzaffarabad on June 24. Under the scheme an amount of 85 million rupees will be reimbursed to three thousand and three hundred students of Azad Kashmir. Speaking on the occasion, Maryam Nawaz stated Azad Kashmir has share in all youth-related schemes of the Prime Minister.

<http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/226579-PMs-fee-reimbursement-scheme-launched-in-AJK>

### **Shabbir Mir, “NWA operation: G-B beefs up security to avoid infiltration of militants”**

*The Express Tribune, June 24, 2014*

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government claimed security has been increased along all routes leading to G-B to stop infiltration of militants fleeing operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan. “In view of the operation in the tribal areas, we have deployed additional forces along Karakoram Highway and other routes to foil terrorism plots and infiltration of militants,” home secretary Attaur Rahman told reporters at the Gilgit Press Club, after

the oath taking ceremony of newly-elected members of the press club. “Geographically, North Waziristan is too far from G-B and internally displaced persons (IDP) coming here for refuge is not likely,” stated Rahman when asked if the G-B government would accommodate IDPs if they made their way into Diamer district, which shares its boundary with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's (K-P) Kohistan district.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/725953/nwa-operation-g-b-beefs-up-security-to-avoid-infiltration-of-militants/>

### **“Geo cameraman ousted from AJK budget session”**

*The News, June 21, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: A Geo cameraman was ousted from the budget session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly on June 20. Information and Broadcasting Secretary Dr Shehla Waqar told the cameraman that Geo was not allowed to cover the session. Geo Bureau Chief, Muhammad Arif stated that no one was barred from work in the Jammu & Kashmir. He asked why such treatment was meted out to Geo in AJK.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-257322-Geo-cameraman-ousted-from-AJK-budget-session>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Untapped territory: 'Tsunami' continues to bypass Gilgit”**

*The Express Tribune, June 23, 2014*

GILGIT: As 'aggressive opposition' of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) stirs politics in the country's plains, the situation is reversed when it comes to the politics of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Even though PTI Chairman Imran Khan visits G-B's scenic valleys, including Astore, Naltar and Skardu during the summer, he has never undertaken an official visit to organise his party in the region. Apart from the PTI chief, none of the party's senior leadership has visited G-B, leaving PTI cold in the remote region with no need for any sort of healthy opposition. As elections are due anytime from October to early 2014 the present legislative assembly's term is near completion chances of a 'tsunami' in the region are next to nothing.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/725543/untapped-territory->

[tsunami-continues-to-bypass-gilgit/](http://tribune.com.pk/story/725543/untapped-territory-tsunami-continues-to-bypass-gilgit/)

### **“Democratic transition: Constitutional crisis looms over G-B”**

*The Express Tribune, June 19, 2014*

GILGIT: A constitutional crisis looms over Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) with no provision for an interim government to supervise elections in the G-B Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009. This was pointed out by the regional chief of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Hafeezur Rahman during a news conference on June 18. Under the self-governance order of 2009, G-B's government will complete its tenure on December 10 while the chief minister's reign will end on December 12.

“A constitutional crisis is looming large but the rulers haven't realized this,” stated the PML-N leader. “The order is silent about the caretaker set-up. So if a new government does not take over by then, there will be no one to govern the region after that.” Rahman urged the chief minister to make amendments if he wanted to hold elections next year or a neutral set-up to supervise the polls. Climatic considerations will also play a part in determining the election schedule. The regional leadership of PML-N has turned on the pressure to hold the polls by October, ahead of the harsh winters. This has evoked a strong reaction from the ruling party and its allies.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/723827/democratic-transition-constitutional-crisis-looms-over-g-b/>

### **Tariq Naqash, “AJK govt passes law to give legal cover to president, PM's advisers”**

*Dawn, June 19, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly on June 18 approved, with majority vote, a bill giving 'legal cover' to advisers to the region's president and the prime minister. The one-day session was convened by the government only to enact the bill, namely 'The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Advisers (Appointment, Salaries, Allowance and Privileges) Act, 2014', allegedly to frustrate a writ petition filed by two Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders

in June last year against the 'unlawful' appointments of advisers in AJK with ministerial status.

Pertinently, the AJK's Interim Constitution Act 1974 has no mention of advisers of the president or the prime minister, except for a plebiscite adviser. However, this position was created by adding section 6-A in the Rules of Business 1985. Since then, successive governments have been appointing advisers with a ministerial status.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1113694/ajk-govt-passes-law-to-give-legal-cover-to-president-pms-advisers>

### **“Azad Jammu and Kashmir supports operation Zarb-e-Azb”**

*The Nation, June 18, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly in its session in Muzaffarabad today fully supported Armed Forces operation against terrorists in North Waziristan Agency. Speaker of the Assembly Sardar Ghulam Sadiq Khan presided. The House unanimously passed a resolution saying that the operation is against the terrorists who are a threat to the entity, security and solidarity of Pakistan.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/18-Jun-2014/azad-jammu-and-kashmir-supports-operation-zarb-e-azb>

### **“Love thy neighbour: Initiative launched to re-establish ties between G-B, AJK”**

*The Express Tribune, June 18, 2014*

GILGIT: An initiative has been launched to re-establish ties between Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). G-B's relationship with AJK slumped after it was tied with Islamabad instead of Kashmir following independence.

The disconnect fuelled mistrust among residents, deepening the divide further with time. Over the years, G-B and AJK, which are part of the larger Kashmir conflict, remained at odds. G-B's relationship with the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir remained undefined as a result, with some terming G-B a part of Kashmir and others disagreeing. “G-B is part of Kashmir and denying it is tantamount to belying history,” stated Shaukat Ali,

a resident of Gilgit who also runs Rajput Welfare Organisation, at a workshop on June 17.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/723307/love-thy-neighbour-initiative-launched-to-re-establish-ties-between-g-b-ajk/>

### **“PML-N's only woman lawmaker resigns from AJK assembly”**

*Dawn, June 14, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The lone PML-N woman lawmaker in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Dr Fouzia Ashraf, has resigned from the legislative assembly (LA) citing “personal reasons”. Ashraf, a Lahore-based medical practitioner, faxed her resignation to LA Speaker Sardar Ghulam Sadiq on June 13 it carried the date June 6, 2014. LA Secretary Chaudhry Basharat Hussain noted that Ms Ashraf had told him over the phone that she had dispatched the original copy by surface mail a few days ago. “The moment we receive the handwritten resignation, we will notify it instantly,” he stated

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1112670/pml-ns-only-woman-lawmaker-resigns-from-ajk-assembly>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Show of support: G-B Assembly asks centre to take action against terrorists”**

*The Express Tribune, June 14, 2014*

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) legislators on June 13 unanimously passed a resolution in the assembly condemning the recent incidents of terrorism in the country. The resolution was tabled by Fida Nashad of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) and Wazir Hasan of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) during the sixth day of proceedings of the legislative assembly's 36th session, chaired by Speaker Wazir Baig. “We condemn the terrorist attacks in the strongest possible terms and ask the federal government to restore peace by hook or by crook,” stated Nashad, reading out the resolution.

The resolution paid tribute to civilians and security personnel who lost their lives in the attack at Karachi airport's old terminal and the Shia pilgrims in Taftan. The resolution also condemned the killing of two brothers from Baltistan in Karachi recently and demanded compensation for their families.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/721406/show-of-support-g-b-assembly-asks-centre-to-take-action-against-terrorists/>

## **“Who calls the shots?: Non-implementation of CM Mehdi Shah's orders challenged”**

*The Express Tribune, June 13, 2014*

GILGIT: A petition was filed in the apex court of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), seeking implementation of the decision taken by the chief minister (CM) in 2013 to carve out two new districts in the region. CM Mehdi Shah announced to give the status of a district to Shigar and Kharmang valleys of Baltistan in March 2013, raising the number of districts in the region from seven to nine. The announcement, however, was not acted upon as the bureaucracy raised objections in relation to the powers of a CM to do so under the governance order of 2009. The delay has now raised questions over who is the de facto head of the region the CM or chief secretary something also pointed out by the human rights commission of senators who visited G-B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/720974/who-calls-the-shots-non-implementation-of-cm-mehdi-shahs-orders-challenged/>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Tug-of-war: PML-N pushes for fall polls as G-B CM plans spring elections”**

*The Express Tribune, June 16, 2014*

GILGIT: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has turned on the pressure to hold elections early in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). These efforts are sharply in contrast to the resolution passed by the G-B Assembly two months ago which stated that elections will be held after December 10, 2014 the date the current government will complete its five-year term. “Given the tough weather conditions of G-B, you can't hold elections after October and winter only eases up following April or May,” the regional chief of PML-N, Hafeezur Rahman, noted on June 15.

“We have started dialogue with other parties to get their consent to hold elections by the end of October,” stated Rahman, who met Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif last week in Islamabad to get a go-ahead for the G-B elections. The PM has reportedly given him the green signal to implement his poll plans.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/722287/tug-of-war-pml-n-pushes-for-fall-polls-as-g-b-cm-plans-spring-elections/>

## **“Jirga fails to solve KP-GB boundary dispute”**

*Dawn, June 12, 2014*

GILGIT: The boundary dispute between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan remains unresolved as a jirga formed for the purpose has failed to break the impasse despite meeting several times during the last three months. The jirga comprising elders from Harban valley of Kohistan in KP and Thore valley of Diamer district of GB was formed after a clash at the disputed place, which claimed lives of five people and injured 15 others. The clash also led to deployment of Rangers and police at the eight kilometer stretch of the disputed territory at Gandlo Nala between Harban and Thore valleys by the federal government till settlement of the dispute.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1112225/jirga-fails-to-solve-kp-gb-boundary-dispute>

## **Imran Ali Kundi, “Senate body recommends CCI approval for PCEC route change”**

*The Nation, June 12, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: Showing serious concerns over the change of route of Pak-China Economic Corridor, the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue on June 11 recommended seeking approval from Council of Common Interests (CCI) for the diversion of the route. Senator Ilyas Bilour of Awami National Party voiced reservation over the change of Pak-China Economic Corridor (PCEC) route. On his recommendation, the Senate's body recommended the National Assembly to include it in the Finance Bill that government must seek approval from CCI on it. The senator stated that government has omitted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan from the original plan of PCEC and included Sindh and Punjab, reason best known to the government.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/12-Jun-2014/senate-body-recommends-cci-approval-for-pcec-route-change>

## **“PTI's executive council in AJK reconstituted”**

*Dawn, June 12, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Secretary-General Jahangir Khan Tareen, at the

behest of the Organising Committee of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), reconstituted the PTI Executive Council in AJK for an initial period of six months.

According to a notification issued on June 11, the decision to reconstitute the council was taken during a recent meeting of the AJK organising committee. Dr Lutfur Rehman, who was representing the Muzaffarabad division of the organising committee, has been made president of the council, while Sardar Ibrar Javed has been appointed senior vice-president.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1112206/ptis-executive-council-in-ajk-reconstituted>

### **“Lawlessness: Policeman among two shot dead in AJK”**

*The Express Tribune, June 12, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: A policeman was killed and another injured by unidentified gunmen in Kiyani Mohalla in Chelabandi, on the outskirts of Muzaffarabad. The police team had gone to the area to arrest the alleged killers of Zubair Shah, who was shot dead earlier near the Chelabandi forest check post over a family dispute, the police stated. Following the murder, the police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation to arrest the killers. When a police party reached Kiyani Mohalla to nab the suspected killers, it came under fire by unknown gunmen. Head Constable Waheed Ahmad died en route to Ayub Medical Complex, Abbottabad. The other injured policeman, Imran Ali, was admitted to Shaikh Kahlifa Bin Zayad Al Nahyan Hospital.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/720662/lawlessness-policeman-among-two-shot-dead-in-ajk/>

### **“Plight: Kashmiri refugees decry 'shoddy work' on housing scheme”**

*The Express Tribune, June 12, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Kashmir refugees on June 11 staged a protest demonstration in front of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (AJKLA) against delays in increase of monthly stipend and the alleged shoddy construction work on a housing scheme in the Thota area. The protesters accused top Azad Jammu and Kashmir

(AJK) government officials of getting kickbacks from the contractor of the foreign-funded Model Housing Project to allow him to carry out the construction work in violation of the standards approved by the donors. The 200-house Model Housing Project was being carried out with the financial help of the International Islamic Charitable Organisation of Kuwait. According to the protesters, the construction company was supposed to construct separate and semi-houses, but it was constructing attached houses with 20 houses under one roof without proper ventilation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/720511/plight-kashmiri-refugees-decry-shoddy-work-on-housing-scheme/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Divide and educate: G-B lawmakers oppose co-education at KIU”**

*The Express Tribune, June 11, 2014*

GILGIT: Lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) criticised the co-education system in place at the Karakoram International University (KIU) during June 10 assembly session, and termed it against the cultural and religious values of G-B. Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) lawmaker Mirza Hussain raised the issue, triggering a debate in the 36th G-B Assembly session chaired by Speaker Wazir Baig, and earning appreciation from his peers. The lawmaker from Hunza-Nagar district stated he had thought about raising the issue on the assembly floor many times in the past four years but could not do so. “It is neither ethically nor religiously permissible for us to allow young women to study with namehrams. In the recent past, unethical activities have been observed because of this,” stated Hussain. The Hunza-Nagar representative went on to offer a financial contribution for the construction of a separate KIU campus for women from the development funds allocated to him, if the government considers the option.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/720005/divide-and-educate-g-b-lawmakers-oppose-co-education-at-kiu/>

### **“Preparation for forthcoming GB elections put on fast track’: Secretary General, PTI”**

*Dardistan Times, June 10, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to put the preparation for

the forthcoming elections on fast track and boost up the party activities in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) GB Party leadership called on the Secretary General, Jahangir Khan on June 10 to discuss various issues pertaining to the upcoming electioneering campaign in the region.

The GB party leadership group presented by, convener PTI GB, Hasmat Ullah Khan, General Secretary PTI GB, Ali Murad Khan, District President PTI, Farooq Ahmed and other party workers were present in the meeting in which it was decided that the preparation for the upcoming GB election would be put on fast track to achieve maximum results.

While evaluating the preparations for the elections, Secretary General appreciated the performance shown by the party workers and the senior team in strengthening the party activities and spreading the message of PTI in the nook and corner of Gilgit-Baltistan. “We are quite optimistic that under your leadership and with your endless efforts, PTI will win the Gilgit-Baltistan elections 2014” stated Jahangir Khan Tareen while receiving comprehensive briefing on the preparations.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/featured/News/1392542725/preparation-forthcoming-gb-elections-put-fast-track-secretary-general-pti>

### **“10 days given to submit mechanism for uplift of telecom sector in AJK, GB”**

*Pakistan Observer, June 9, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology & Telecom and Ministry of Kashmir Affairs have given the nod to constitute a committee for submission of mechanism report to ensure uplift of telecom sector in AJK and Gilgit Baltistan.

In a meeting between Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Ch. Muhammad Barjees Tahir, the State Minister for IT Anusha Rahman, the issues of infrastructure development of IT and Telecom in under-served and un-served areas of AJK and GB were discussed. It was decided to constitute a committee comprising of officials from Ministry of IT & Telecom, Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and GB, Universal Service Fund

Company and PTA to submit a report within 10 days for the formulation of mechanism in this regard.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=243860>

### **Sana Altaf, “AJK demands devolution of powers”**

*Kashmir Times, June 6, 2014*

SRINAGAR: The civil society of Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK), officially named by Pakistan as 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)', has demanded devolving and transfer of the executive, legislative and financial powers of the “Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council to Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and the government of AJ&K to establish its character as a responsive, representative, accountable and participatory democracy”. In this regard, Center for Peace, Development and Reforms of Azad Jammu and Kashmir initiated an online petition on Change .org, an initiative taken by Ershad Mahmud, academician and activist from PAK.

The petition is directed to the Government of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir; Chaudhary Abdul Majeed- Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Ch. Muhammad Barjees Tahir- Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan. The petition is a revelation of growing disenchantment in PAK with the politics of excessive controls by Islamabad and a yearning for greater autonomy in their socio-economic and political affairs.

<http://www.kashmirtimes.in/newsdet.aspx?q=33131>

### **Shabbir Mir, “To be taken to task: G-B Assembly condemns police attack on Ismaili leader”**

*The Express Tribune, June 7, 2014*

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly on June 6 unanimously condemned the attack on the president of the Ismaili Regional Council by a police official, which has triggered protests across the region. Colonel (Retd) Ubaidullah Baig sustained injuries on his head on June 5 after he was allegedly hit by a police constable. Baig was reportedly trying to refrain police from demolishing a boundary wall of a graveyard in Zulfiqar colony

when he was attacked. Followers of the Ismaili sect protested and blocked roads in Gilgit, Ghizer and Hunza-Nagar valleys, demanding the arrest and punishment of the culprit.

“Is this the reward for increasing salaries of police?” Fida Nashad of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) asked during the question hour on the third day of the G-B Assembly proceedings chaired by speaker Wazir Baig. “Instead of improving law and order, they themselves are creating a situation of lawlessness,” stated Nashad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/718432/to-be-taken-to-task-g-b-assembly-condemns-police-attack-on-ismaili-leader/>

### **“Rs 55 billion allocated for Diamer Bhasha Dam: Ishaq Dar”**

*The Express Tribune, June 9, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar stated that fifty five billion rupees have been allocated for the construction of Diamer Bhasha dam in the next financial year. Speaking at a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance in Islamabad today, he stated the federal government has granted subsidy of billions of rupees to the electricity consumers during the last five years. He further stated that provinces were authorized to generate electricity on their own.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/718432/to-be-taken-to-task-g-b-assembly-condemns-police-attack-on-ismaili-leader/>

### **“PaK Supreme Court issues notice to political parties”**

*GK News Network, June 9 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) issued notices to all the political parties of the territory seeking their response to decide the fate of 12 seats reserved for Kashmiri refugees in the PaK Legislative Assembly.

The court admitted the appeal of Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) PaK Secretary General Shah Ghulam Qadir against the PaK High Court order of November 2013. The PaK High Court on November 29, 2013 had directed the Election Commission to reject the papers of Shah Ghulam Qadir as his wife was not a registered voter of the Neelum Valley

constituency, where Qadir had lost the contest by a few hundred votes in 2011 polls against Pakistan Peoples Party candidate Mian Abdul Wahid.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2014/Jun/9/pak-supreme-court-issues-notice-to-political-parties-4.asp>

### **“Foreign NGOs spying on Azad Kashmir' Gul calls PM's India tour 'disappointing'”**

*Daily Times, June 5, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Former Inter-Services Intelligence director general Hamid Gul stated that the recent visit of Nawaz Sharif to India was quite disappointing and asked the prime minister to adopt a strict Kashmir policy during his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

Addressing the ex-servicemen society at the Central Press Club on June 5, the former intelligence chief stated that foreign agencies (NGOs) were merely spying on Muzaffarabad instead of doing anything constructive in Azad Jammu Kashmir. He also outlined future plans by his son Abdullah Gul for forming a platform for youth, after seven years of continuous research and hectic efforts.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/05-Jun-2014/foreign-ngos-spying-on-ajk>

### **“With 'controversial' changes: G-B Assembly passes amended services tribunal law”**

*The Express Tribune, June 6, 2014*

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Legislative Assembly on June 5 passed the controversial Amended Services Tribunal Law, 2014 amid opposition by some lawmakers. The assembly passed the original services tribunal law two years ago after which G-B Governor Pir Karam Ali Shah signed it on February 21, 2014, officially establishing the first services tribunal of G-B. Through an ordinance, former bureaucrat Hafizur Rahman was made the tribunal's chairman while district judge Khurshid Alam and another former bureaucrat Fida Hussain were made members.

However, the governor referred the law to the assembly on June 5 suggesting that certain amendments be made. The changes suggested by the governor include changing the age limit for the tribunal's members. Before the session, lawyers

distributed a hand-written request to lawmakers asking them not to endorse the amendments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/717966/with-controversial-changes-g-b-assembly-passes-amended-services-tribunal-law/>

### **“At last: G-B approves salary for doctors equal to centre's”**

*The Express Tribune, June 6, 2014*

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government approved the federal government's salary package for doctors and other paramedical staff in G-B, accepting their long-standing demand.

The announcement was made through a notification issued by the regional finance department on June 4, mentioning that the decision will be retroactively in effect from January, 2014. Health allowance and increment in pay will be given to doctors of BPS-17 and above along with nurses of BPS-16 and above of the G-B health department, stated the dispatch. “With it, pay of doctors will increase by at least 35%,” stated a doctor, adding up to 250 doctors and 30 nurses will benefit from the decision.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/717935/at-last-g-b-approves-salary-for-doctors-equal-to-centres/>

### **“Talking politics: G-B lawmakers deride speaker's 'powerlessness'”**

*The Express Tribune, June 5, 2014*

GILGIT: As the pre-budget session began in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Legislative Assembly on June 4, lawmakers lamented their lack of power, especially in matters pertaining to budgetary preparations, and lashed out at the speaker over his 'lack of authority'.

The debate in the assembly's 36th session was triggered by Ayub Shah of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) who claimed lawmakers were unable to completely utilise last year's funds due to bureaucratic hurdles. This resulted in the lapse of a large amount of money meant for the region's development.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/717504/talking-politics-g-b-lawmakers-deride-speakers-powerlessness/>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Free and fair: Absence of poll**

### **chief raises credibility concerns in G-B”**

*The Express Tribune, June 5, 2014*

GILGIT: The absence of a chief election commissioner in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) has halted the process of computerised electoral lists, raising suspicion over fairness of the upcoming polls in the region. “The process will not move ahead unless a chief election commissioner is appointed in G-B,” stated an official at the G-B Assembly Secretariat. General elections will be held in G-B in December or early next year following the completion of the assembly's five-year term. However, the credibility of the polls will be under question if elections are held without computerised electoral lists. The previous elections of 2009, which were won by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), were marred by allegations of rigging as the electoral list was prepared in just two weeks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/717503/free-and-fair-absence-of-poll-chief-raises-credibility-concerns-in-g-b/>

### **Tayyab Baloch, “Will this New Route Improve Pakistan and China's Economy?”**

*June 4, 2014*

Experts, government officials and locals have high hopes for a new Pakistan-China Economic Corridor to bring prosperity and security to the region. A 40-year old local trader Muhammad Ali Rocky was extremely tired but he still had to cover a long distance in a boat towards his hometown through the artificially formed Attabad Lake carrying China-made electronic goods, some 144 km from Gilgit, capital of Gilgit-Baltistan. On his way back to his homeland Gilgit, he purchases some accessories from China to sell them out in Pakistan. He is afraid of rowing in Attabad Lake because the traders have faced problems due to closure of trade posts in northern areas. Muhammad had a fear whether he would be lucky enough to cross the Attabad Lake safely or would have to face a loss. He was recalling the past days when Silk Road, also named Karakoram Highway (KKH), was smooth before massive landslide in January 2010 blocked Hunza River.

<http://www.sharnoffsglobalviews.com/pakistan-china-economy-315/>

## **“Gilgit-Baltistan: Successful Protests Lead to Subsidies”**

*UNPO, June 3, 2014*

Due to the Awami Action Committees demonstration, the Prime Minister of Pakistan allowed subsidies on wheat, minerals and electricity for the region. Gilgit-Baltistan remains a point of dispute between India and Pakistan. Awami Action Committee's (ACC) forceful demonstration for 22 days, yielded Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif before the people's unity in Gilgit-Baltistan, to accept charter of nine point demands which included restoration of subsidized wheat, mineral and electricity for the region.

It was opening of the end game for the change through collective action and cooperation to press ahead for constitutional status and human rights for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Giving details of emerging scenario in the region, Manzoor Hussain Parwana, Chairman, Gilgit-Baltistan United Front noted, “exhibiting the unity strength has generated hope of the people to get their genuine demands accepted”.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/17197>

## **“GB teachers hold demos, demand service structure”**

*Dawn, June 6, 2014*

GILGIT: Demanding service structure and clear rules for their promotion, hundreds of male and female teachers of government schools staged demonstrations in the seven district headquarters of Gilgit Baltistan and announced boycott of classes across the region till June 10. The GB Teachers Association had given the call for protest. The teachers, who had also brought their students on roads, stated that if their demands were not accepted they would continue their protests. The protesters also blocked the main roads of Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza Nagar, Ghizar, Diamer and Ghancha besides the Karakoram Highway. Because of the protests traffic remained suspended between GB and rest of the country.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1110903/gb-teachers-hold-demos-demand-service-structure>

## **“Gilgit-Baltistan residents call for 3G, 4G telecom facilities”**

*June 3, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been left high and dry as the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has not allowed launch of 3G and 4G telecom facilities in the region. According to the licence description available on the PTA website, mobile companies have been asked not to provide Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AK) the next generation mobile service (NGMS), as PTA considers the two regions outside of Pakistan.

PTA's licence description for different NGMS modes states that the licensee is to establish, maintain and operate the licensed system and to provide NGMS in Pakistan, excluding AJK and GB. It states that licensee shall provide NGMS, including the mandatory services, throughout Pakistan except AJK and GB. It further says that the license does not authorise the provision of telecommunication services in AJK and GB. The decision has attracted criticism by the GB people, particularly students, of PTA.

<http://www.omantribune.com/index.php?page=news&id=168971&heading=Pakistan>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Ultimatum: AAC warns govt of agitation if corruption not rooted out”**

*The Express Tribune, June 2, 2014*

GILGIT: The Awami Action Committee (AAC) stated it will foil the government's attempts to undo the decisions taken by former Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) chief secretary Younus Dagha against corruption and corrupt officials in the region.

Dagha, who was replaced by Sikandar Sultan Raja in April 2014 after serving as the region's top administrator for around nine months, had initiated enquiries against corrupt elements in various government departments. As a result, nearly 700 employees who were appointed after allegedly bypassing protocols over the years were sacked and those responsible for their hiring were suspended. The purging of government officials in G-B who

were appointed under dubious circumstances, however, was disliked by the rulers and resulted in Dagha's reposting.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/716185/ultimatum-aac-warns-govt-of-agitation-if-corruption-not-rooted-out/>

### **“Strange priorities”**

*Daily Times, June 1, 2014*

This refers to the news story, 'Muzaffarabad to have rail link with Islamabad', which says that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar informed the AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majid that the rail link would cost Rs 60 billion. During the meeting Chaudhry Majid highlighted the financial difficulties being faced by the AJK government due to which health and education staff could not be hired.

It makes one wonder where the priority of the federal government lies. Would a poor, illiterate and sick person choose to have a rail link or would he prefer a job, an education and good health instead? And from a technical point of view, would it be feasible to build a rail track through Murree Hills and AJK? Both areas are prone to landslides. It would cost more than Rs 60 billion to build a rail track that would remain anchored to the mountain. For half the amount a good road could be built which would prove fruitful to many more people.

Syed Hussein El-Edroos

Islamabad

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/letters/01-Jun-2014/strange-priorities>

### **“PAKISTAN: Five students were expelled and four were suspended for demanding the accreditation of their faculty, Asian Human Rights Commission”**

*June 1, 2014*

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) received information that five students have been expelled and four students have been suspended from the faculty of Veterinary and Animal Sciences of 'the University of Poonch, RawalaKot' Azad

Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Pakistan, for demanding the accreditation of their faculty. From the nine expelled and suspended students eight were in their 9th semester and about to graduate, and one female student was in her 7th semester. Every year the Pakistan Veterinary Medical Council (PVMC) issues circulars warning that University of Poonch, Azad Kashmir (AJK) is running illegal degree courses for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree and it has not been accredited with the PVMC. However, the University of Poonch, in contravention to the instructions of PVMC, opens admissions to the faculty every year.

<http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAC-081-2014>

### **“Lax enforcement: Civic bodies' negligence led to damage in AJK floods says NDMA chief”**

*The Express Tribune, June 2, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Encroachment and poor town planning led to the damage caused by flash floods in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). This was stated by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Chairman Major General Muhammad Saeed Aleem during a briefing arranged by Azad Jammu and Kashmir State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), where secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners, senior military officials and representatives of NGOs were present.

Noting that people had built houses in the middle of Gojra and Tariqabad stream, he criticised the Muzaffarabad Development Authority for allowing this to happen. “It is the duty of the district administration to keep checks on dangerous constructions around streams and landslide prone areas”, he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/716333/lax-enforcement-civic-bodies-negligence-led-to-damage-in-ajk-floods-says-ndma-chief/>

# Economic Developments

## **“Allocating funds: G-B announces Rs27.64b budget for 2014-15”**

*The Express Tribune, June 24, 2014*

GILGIT: An annual budget of Rs27.64 billion for fiscal year 2014-15 was presented in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Legislative Assembly on June 23. Minister for Finance Mohammad Ali Akhtar delivered the budget speech in the assembly session chaired by G-B Assembly Speaker Wazir. The session was also attended by Chief Minister Mehdi Shah. It was the fifth budget under the governance of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The government has earmarked Rs9.6 billion for the development sector while Rs18 billion has been set aside for non-development expenditures: an increase of Rs3 billion since the last budget. The health and education sectors received Rs810m each.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/725956/allocating-funds-g-b-announces-rs27-64b-budget-for-2014-15/>

## **“AJK government unveils Rs62 billion tax-free budget”**

*The Express Tribune, June 21, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Finance Minister Chaudhry Latif Akbar unveiled on June 20 a tax-free budget of Rs62 billion in the legislative assembly for the year 2014-15. Members of the opposition and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) boycotted the day's session.

The government earmarked Rs10.5 billion for the development sector while Rs51.5 billion has been set aside for non-development expenditures, showing an increase of Rs3 billion in this regard. The minister justified the increase, saying it would be spent on the 10 per cent raise in salaries of serving and retired government employees. Additionally, Rs10.5 billion has

been earmarked for 21 government departments while Rs200 million is set aside for foreign aided projects.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/724839/ajk-government-unveils-rs62-billion-tax-free-budget/>

## **“AJK unveils Rs10.5bn ADP for 2014-15”**

*Dawn, June 21, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has earmarked Rs10.5 billion for next fiscal year's Annual Development Programme (ADP), which included a foreign assistance of Rs500 million. Presenting a deficit budget with total outlay of Rs62bn for 2014-15 in the Legislative Assembly on June 20, AJK Finance Minister Chaudhry Latif Akbar stated the lion's share of development spending amounting to Rs6.5bn (62pc) was allocated for infrastructure related projects, followed by Rs2.2bn (21pc) for productive sector, Rs1.6bn (16pc) for social sector and just Rs107 million (1pc) for foreign aided projects.

Further elaborating, he stated Rs4.8bn was earmarked for transport and communication, Rs850m for local government and rural development, Rs705m for physical planning and housing, Rs150m for development authorities and Rs110m for rehabilitation/resettlement.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1114126/ajk-unveils-rs105bn-adp-for-2014-15>

## **“PSDP-2014-15: Over Rs97b allocated for various projects in G-B”**

*The Express Tribune, June 9, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has made a total allocation of over Rs97 billion including a block allocation of over Rs9 billion for various development and non-development projects in Gilgit-Baltistan under the Public

Sector Development Programme for the financial year 2014-15. According to budget documents, Rs9.23 billion has been earmarked for projects being initiated under the Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Division (KAGBD). For the construction of 26MW hydro power project at Shaghartang in Baltistan, Rs100 million has been earmarked. The project was approved on November 11, 2011 with an estimated cost of Rs4.85 billion.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/719282/psdp-2014-15-over-rs97b-allocated-for-various-projects-in-g-b/>

### **Parvez Jabri, “AJK financial experts appreciated budget”**

*Business Recorder, June 4, 2014*

MIRPUR: Independent financial experts, economists as well as observers from diverse segments of the civil society in AJK have welcomed Rs3.936 trillion federal budgets for the new fiscal year 2014-15, announced on June 3, describing it balanced and a strong source to boost socio-economic conditions of Pakistan. "This is a pro-business and peoples-friendly balanced and broad-based budget inked by the PML (N) government", observed Zulfiqar Abbasi, ex-President AJKCCI and the Jammu & Kashmir Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry noted on June 4.

<http://www.brecorder.com/budget/budget-2014-15/budget-news/176249-ajk-financial-experts-appreciated-budget.html>

### **“Rs.21357.41mn earmarked in PSDP-2014-15 for Kashmir Affairs & GB”**

*Business Recorder, June 3, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The government has allocated Rs. 21357.41 million for various ongoing and new development projects for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan under Public Sector Development Programme for 2014-15. According to the official budgetary document, Rs 12127.41 million for Kashmir Affairs and Rs 9230 million for Gilgit Baltistan have been earmarked for the ongoing schemes. The ongoing schemes of Kashmir Affairs include Rs 10500 million for Azad & Jammu Kashmir (Block Allocation), Rs 500 million for 48 MW Jagran Hydro Power Project AJK, Rs 350 million for Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme Mirpur City and Hamlets.

<http://www.brecorder.com/budget/budget-2014-15/budget-news/176085.html>

# International Developments

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## **“China launches study to build rail link to Pakistan”**

*June 29, 2014*

BEIJING: China has reportedly commissioned a “preliminary research study” to build an international rail link connecting its border province of Xinjiang to Pakistan through Azad Kashmir (AJK). China has allocated funds for preliminary research on building an international railway connecting its westernmost city of Kashgar in Xinjiang with Pakistan's deep-sea Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea, state-run China Daily quoted the director of Xinjiang's regional development and reform commission, Zhang Chunlin as saying today. “The 1,800-km China-Pakistan railway is planned to also pass through Pakistan's capital of Islamabad and Karachi,” Mr Zhang stated at the two-day International Seminar on the Silk Road Economic Belt being held in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital. “Although the cost of constructing the railway is expected to be high due to the hostile environment and complicated geographic conditions, the study of the project has already started,” Mr Zhang stated apparently referring to recurring attacks carried out by extremist groups in Pakistan.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?newsid=265066&catname=World>

## **“U.S. seeks environmental study of Pakistan's 4,500-MW Diamer Bhasha hydro project”**

*Business Recorder, May 21, 2014*

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Agency for International Development (USTATED) seeks bids to perform an environmental and social impact assessment of Pakistan's proposed 4,500-MW Diamer Bhasha hydroelectric project on the Indus River. Questions may be submitted until June 17, with bids due July 7. It was reported last

year that the World Bank and Asian Development Bank agreed to help finance construction of Diamer Bhasha. USTATED took comments in May on a draft statement of work for the environmental and social impact assessment.

Pakistan recruited firms in 2009 for design, construction supervision, and contract administration of Diamer Bhasha, which includes a 272-meter-tall roller-compacted-concrete dam, two diversion tunnels, two underground powerhouses of 2,250 MW each, a permanent access bridge, and hydro-mechanical and steel structural equipment.

<http://www.hydroworld.com/articles/2014/06/u-s-seeks-environmental-study-of-pakistan-s-4-500-mw-diamer-bhasha-hydro-project.html>

## **“AJK minister visits KCEU in Brussels”**

*Kashmir News, June 6, 2014*

BRUSSELS: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Minister for Tourism and Civil Security, Abul Salam Butt, met the Chairman Kashmir Council European Union (KCEU), Ali Raza Syed, in Brussels, the capital of Belgium. The Minister, who is on a visit to Europe, was specially invited to Brussels by members of Pakistani and Kashmiri communities. He particularly met the Chairman of KCEU and discussed situation of Kashmir with him. Abdul Salam also visited the Kashmir's Documentation and Resource Centre in Brussels where he was briefed by Ali Raza Syed about the objectives of the centre. They also discussed situation in the region particularly in Jammu & Kashmir after election of Narendra Modi as new Prime Minister of India.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2014/06/06/ajk-minister-visits-kceu-in-brussels.html>

# Other Developments

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## **“Shandur Polo Festival pulls crowds despite odds”**

*The News, June 29, 2014*

PESHAWAR: Despite all odds, the Shandur Polo Festival succeeded in attracting thousands of visitors to enjoy a variety of festivities at the highest polo ground in the world.

Though the Shandur Polo Festival is celebrated every year from July 7-9, this year the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government decided to hold the festival a few days before the scheduled date due to the advent of Ramazan. The three-day event was celebrated from June 20-23. Though the event was a success, the boycott of the polo tournament by Gilgit-Baltistan deprived the visitors of the usual fun and excitement by watching the traditional rivals-Chitral and Gilgit- in action against each other. Gilgit- Baltistan government had raised the issue of the ownership of Shandur and accused Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of occupying it.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-258801-Shandur-Polo-Festival-pulls-crowds-despite-odds>

## **Zofeen Ebrahim, “A 400-year-old fort undergoes a major facelift, and in the process, an impoverished town gets much-needed opportunities”**

*June 27, 2014*

SHIGAR: Adeel Ammacha, 29, knows the 17th century Shigar Fort like the back of his hand. Growing up, young Ammacha spent his summer vacations exploring every nook and cranny of “the Fort on Rock,” located in the Shigar Valley in the Pakistan-administered part of Kashmir known as the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

“We didn't live in the fort, as it was in ruins, but my father had built a summer house for us in one of the gardens,” he stated. Surrounded by snow-capped

peaks, arid mountains and desert, and with the mighty Indus River passing through, it was an idyllic setting for the family's summers away from their home in Islamabad. The fort was still being used as recently as the 1950s by Ammacha's father, Raja Muhammad Ali Shah. Then it stood abandoned and neglected until 1999, when Ammacha's father decided to donate it to the people of Baltistan.

<http://www.mintpressnews.com/pakistans-shigar-fort-from-shambles-to-chic-sustainability/193097/>

## **Shabbir Mir, “Heritage: Lok Virsa to document G-B's indigenous folk culture”**

*The Express Tribune, June 25, 2014*

GILGIT: Lok Virsa sent a team of professionals to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) to document and preserve its indigenous folk culture. The initiative has been launched by the new management headed by Shahera Shahid of the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, popularly known as Lok Virsa. Based in the federal capital, Lok Virsa focuses on research, collection, documentation, preservation and dissemination of Pakistan's traditional culture, including tangible and intangible heritage.

“The purpose of the mission (in G-B) is to document and preserve indigenous folk culture with special reference to the authentication of existing craftspeople, besides exploring new talent of artisans in various craft areas,” Lok Virsa Deputy Director Anwaarul Haq noted on June 24. “We have done interviews in Gilgit and Skardu and have made audio and video documentation to showcase skills of traditional practitioners,” stated Haq, who is also part of the team. The remaining districts, including Ghanche, Hunza-Nagar, Diamer and Astor, will be covered by June 28.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/726435/heritage-lok-virsa-to-document-g-bs-indigenous-folk-culture/>

### **“Promoting Persian: Shah Hamadan Chair set up at AJK varsity”**

*The Express Tribune, June 24, 2014*

MUZAFFARABAD: Iranian Cultural Attaché Taqi Sadeqi inaugurated the Shah Hamadan Chair in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) University city campus on June 23 aimed at promoting Persian language and literature in the region. Sadeqi stated that Persian had remained the language of the region, so the people of Pakistan and Kashmir should not treat it like an alien language. The diplomat stated that Persian had remained a language of communication in the region for hundreds of years. The establishment of the Shah Hamadan Chair in AJK University will help cement brotherly relations between the two countries. He stated that Tehran would provide scholarships to Kashmiri students for pursuing Mphil and PhD degrees at Iranian universities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/726085/promoting-persian-shah-hamadan-chair-set-up-at-ajk-varsity/>

### **“Speakers stress enhanced AJK-GB ties”**

*The Nation, June 23, 2014*

MIRPUR: A two-day conference concluded in Gilgit with unanimous resolve to make concerted efforts for the promotion of socio-economic and cultural ties between AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Titled “Reviving and strengthening trade, cultural and social ties between AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan”, the conference was hosted by a local civil society organisation. It was participated by the civil society representatives and politicians. Information Minister Sadia Danish was the chief guest at the concluding session. GB Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker Jamil Ahmed, GDWO's permanent representative Tasleem Akhter, GB Chamber of Commerce & Industry Vice President Aiman Shah, AJK Council Member Sardar Sagheer Ahmed, Ershad Mahmud, Syed Waqas Ali, Atia Anwar, Mir Adnan Mahmood, Muhammad Aqeel and Khalid Ahmed were also present.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/23-Jun-2014/speakers-stress-enhanced-ajk-gb-ties>

### **“Going green: Use of biodegradable bags urged”**

*The Express Tribune, June 22, 2014*

MIRPUR: Environmentalists have urged people to use biodegradable products and discourage non-biodegradable shopping bags to ensure a pollution-free environment. Speaking at a seminar on June 21, they stated plastic shopping bags can lie or float around for decades, polluting the environment. “This form of pollution can be controlled by using the recently introduced d2w oxo-biodegradable plastic,” Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Director General Chaudhry Abdul Qayyum stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/725287/going-green-use-of-biodegradable-bags-urged/>

### **Farhan Zaheer, “Strawberry plants: Born in the US, raised in Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*The Express Tribune, June 23, 2014*

KARACHI: Contrary to what you may have started believing the story is not about militancy or insurgency. It is about something red though. Pakistanis will get a taste of Californian strawberries and that too in the luxury of their own backyard as a local company has invested in importing plants from the US. The aim, however, does not end here and goes higher as the company, which is growing these strawberries in the fields of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), also intends to export the high-value fruit to regional markets.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/725469/strawberry-plants-born-in-the-us-raised-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

### **Shabbir Mir & Aurangzeb Haneef, “Local threads: Saving embroidery one stitch at a time in Hunza”**

*The Express Tribune, June 19, 2014*

GILGIT: The continued existence of the traditional art of embroidery in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) can be attributed to people like 79-year-old Shukrat Bibi who has dedicated her life to conserving the craft. Bibi's nimble fingers took to the art of stitching at the tender age of 10. The resident of Karimabad town of Hunza Valley had learnt from the best her

mother. Over the next seven decades, the artisan passed on the skill as she trained hundreds of women and helped them become financially independent or providers for their families.

In 1992, she was awarded the prestigious Presidential Pride of Performance Award for keeping the delicate art of do sutti karhai alive in the region. “The needlework I do today is all because of my mother who taught me,” Bibi expresses her gratitude.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/723812/local-threads-saving-embroidery-one-stitch-at-a-time-in-hunza/>

### **“Neelum-Jhelum power project work in full swing”**

*The Nation, June 16, 2014*

MIRPUR: Development work on Neelum-jhelum Hydro Power Project is in full swing and it would be completed by the end of year 2016 at estimated cost of Rs.274.882 billion. 969-MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydroelectric Project of vital national importance being constructed in Muzaffarabad district of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, official sources stated. First unit for generation of power by the mega project will be completed by December 2015, official sources noted. They added that entire project would be ready to generate stipulated volume of electricity by the end of year 2016.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/16-Jun-2014/neelum-jhelum-power-project-work-in-full-swing>

### **“First GB mountaineering expedition to K2 send off”**

*Pakistan Observer, June 16, 2014*

SKARDU: The first eight mountaineers of the Gilgit-Batistan received overwhelming reception from the local authorities, tourist organizations and the foreign mountaineers at the send-off ceremony of the first ever Pakistani expedition to summit the K2 peak. The ceremony was arranged by the Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP) and the Gilgit-Baltistan Tourism department with the

support of the Ev-K2-CNR at a local hotel on June 13. Minister Shaikh Nisar Hussain Sarbaaz was the chief guest on the occasion.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=244545>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Sustainable development goals: Environmentalists stress significance of mountain preservation”**

*The Express Tribune, June 12, 2014*

GILGIT: Environmental experts have voiced concern over lack of importance given to mountains in the global sustainable development goals (SDG) and urged negotiators and governments to urgently raise the issue at the upcoming session of the open working group on SDGs in New York. One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 United Nations (UN) conference on sustainable development was member states agreeing to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs which will build on the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post-2015 development agenda. Rio+20 took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012 twenty years after the landmark 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/720492/sustainable-development-goals-environmentalists-stress-significance-of-mountain-preservation/>

# Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Total area of Jammu and Kashmir	222,236 sq kms
Area of under illegal Pakistani occupation (PoK = AJK + Gilgit Baltistan)	78114 sq kilometres
Area of J&K under Chinese occupation <i>Area ceded to China by Pakistan</i>	42,685 sq kms 5,180 sq kms
Together Pak-China	120,799 sq kms
Area with India	101437 sq kms

**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 Yaqoob Khan

**Prime Minister:** Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

**AJK Council:** Total 12 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. 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:** Pir Karam Ali Shah

**Chief Minister G-B:** Syed Mehdi Shah

**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 as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.*

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