

POK

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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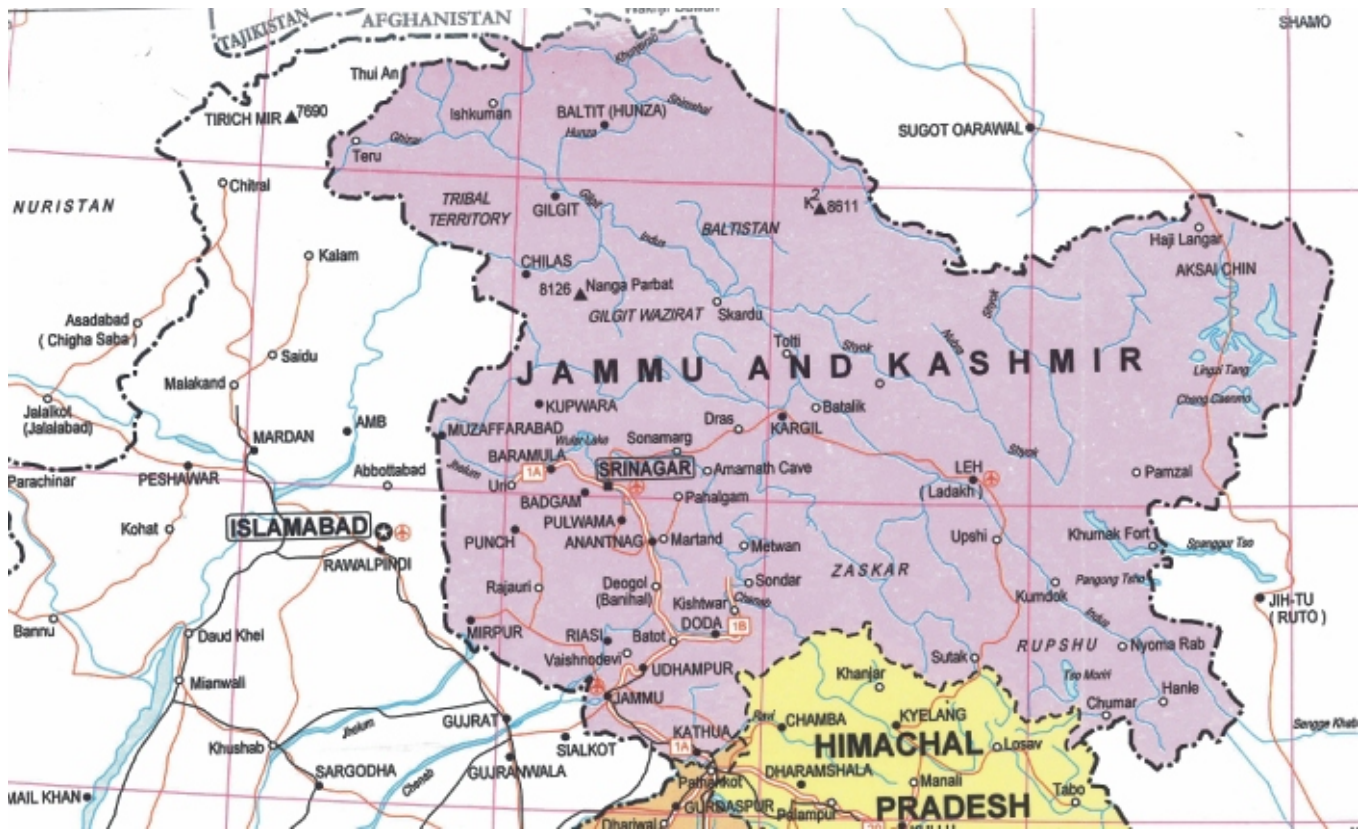
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Gilgit Baltistan region is bestowed with rich mineral resources. Recently, the mining sector has been mired in controversies regarding the ownership and decision making rights over the resources. The Gilgit Baltistan Council came up with a draft of Mining and Minerals Concession Rules that proposed to take away the licence issuing authority from the region and vest it in the secretary of the council based in Islamabad. Locals have perceived the draft bill as an attempt to deprive the region of its own resources and also as an attack on its autonomy. Across the spectrum in the region, it is believed that once the issuing authority is given to the government of Pakistan, there will be widespread corruption while giving out contracts for mining rights. Even the Gilgit Baltistan Metals, Minerals & Gems Association has opposed the move which they consider to be a colonial approach towards their rights. In this context, the Empowerment and Self Rule package 2009 has also come under scanner which gives Gilgit Baltistan somewhat autonomous status.

On July 4, several terrorists dressed in army fatigues attacked a police station at Dodishal in the Diamer district of Gilgit Baltistan. The police station is located in the proximity of the Karakorum Highway in the border area between Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The terrorists attacked the police men on duty and robbed them of their weapons, wireless telephone sets and their uniforms. The attackers accused the policemen of being puppet of the United States. In the aftermath of the incident, an operation was launched by the Pakistan army to nab the perpetrators in the Diamer valley.

The annual budget 2014-15 worth Rs62 billion was passed in the legislative assembly of the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, the imposition of income tax on Gilgit Baltistan has been challenged in the Chief Court of the region by a group of local traders and exporters citing the disputed status of the region as per the United Nations resolution.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“GB lawmakers reject draft law on minerals”

Dawn, July 14, 2014

GILGIT: The draft Mining and Minerals Concession Rules, 2014, prepared by the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, has been termed as an attempt to deprive the region of its control over its own mineral and natural resources. The draft would be tabled in the meeting of the GB Council for voting, which is scheduled to be held in Islamabad on July 21. According to the proposed draft, powers previously exercised by director mining and minerals, GB, as licence issuing authority, have been proposed to be transferred to the GB Council secretary, Islamabad.

The draft also proposes to take away powers of appellate forum from the GB chief secretary and entrust the same to the federal minister for Kashmir affairs and GB, who also happens to be the in-charge of GB Council. GB Council member, Amjad Hussain, noted that the draft Mining and Minerals Concession Rules, 2014, wasn't acceptable to the members of council from GB. We would vote against it during the upcoming council meeting, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1119064/gb-lawmakers-reject-draft-law-on-minerals>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B government deploys scouts in Ghizer Valley”

The Express Tribune, July 14, 2014

GILGIT: In a bid to prevent the infiltration of militants from Afghanistan via Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Chitral district, the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government decided to deploy G-B Scouts in Ghizer Valley's ravines. The decision was taken by the government after militants crossed into Pakistan from Afghanistan on July 12 and attacked a check post in Bajaur Agency. Three Pakistani security personnel, including a captain, were killed in the attack. Requesting anonymity, an official on July 13 noted that several high-ranking G-B officials

participated in the meeting, including law minister Ali Madad Sher and home secretary Attaur Rahman.

Measures taken to ensure law and order were reviewed and it was decided the on-duty scouts would be equipped with modern equipment, including wireless communication devices, binoculars and guns, enabling them to respond in a timely, effective manner if required.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/735290/g-b-government-deploys-scouts-in-ghizer-valley/>

Peer Muhammad, “Alienating Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, July 14, 2014

A few months ago, the PML-N government succeeded in bringing the much-awaited 3G and 4G spectrum in Pakistan. The technological advancement has been celebrated all over the country with many experts terming it to be a great achievement. However, internet users of some areas of Pakistan, particularly the youth in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir are much concerned over the fact that these new, faster internet services exclude their areas.

This discriminatory policy is only adding fuel to the fire: even before the new technology, these areas were met with slow and unreliable internet services. The youth in G-B are much concerned over this discriminatory attitude by the government, particularly by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/735349/alienating-gilgit-baltistan/>

Tariq Naqash, “Minister's attack on contract award disturbs AJK govt”

Dawn, July 14, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: A new controversy has surfaced in the ranks of Peoples Party led government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) following the award of a Rs7 billion contract of a

hydropower project, with senior minister Chaudhry Mohammad Yasin publicly questioning transparency of the process and Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed defending the decision.

On July 4, AJK Power Development Organisation's (PDO) authoritative board decided to award the contract of the 48-megawatt Jagran-II hydropower project in Neelum Valley to M/S China International Water and Electric Corporation (CWE), as they were considered the “responsive lowest bidder”.

Agence Française de Développement (AFD) pledged a €68 million loan for the project, while the PC-1 of the project was approved by Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) at a cost of Rs7 billion.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1119066/ministers-attack-on-contract-award-disturbs-ajk-govt>

Mushtaq Ghumman, “Foreign re-lent loans: ECC decides to treat GB at par with AJK”

Business Recorder, July 14, 2014

Economic Co-ordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has decided to treat Gilgit-Baltistan at par with AJ&K with regard to foreign re-lent loans aimed at facilitating approval of Asian Development Bank's loan for two small hydropower projects, official sources noted. The decision was taken on the request of Chief Minister Galgit-Baltistan who wrote a letter full of province's woes to Finance Minister, Senator Ishaq Dar, also the Chairman of the ECC.

Chief Minister, in his letter stated that the meeting for loan negotiation and its finalisation process with the ADB for two small hydropower projects (HPPs) of Gilgit Baltistan namely 26MW Shagharthang Skardu and 4MW Thack Chilas was convened on June 17, 2013 but was postponed due to the issue of relending and repayment of the loan by the GB government as per GoP policy for other provinces of Pakistan, as it was not included in the draft loan agreement earlier circulated for comments.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0/1201950/>

Akhilesh Pillalamarri, “Time for Pakistan to

Integrate Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Diplomat, July 12, 2014

As if Pakistan doesn't have enough problems in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and in Balochistan, it now faces unrest in the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. Gilgit-Baltistan is a mountainous territory in the Himalayas in the far northeast corner of Pakistan. It is home to 12 of the world's 30 tallest mountain peaks, including K2 and Nanga Parbat. Pakistan considers it to be of extreme strategic importance because it borders ally China and is home to the only land route between the two countries. This route is the breathtakingly beautiful Karakorum Highway, the highest paved international road in the world. The region is also quite distinct from the rest of Pakistan, and indeed the world, in terms of its people. While Gilgit is inhabited by various groups that are related to but distinct from Kashmiris, Baltistan is inhabited by the Balti, who are a Tibetan Muslim group. Additionally, the Burusho people of the Hunza Valley speak a language unrelated to any other in the world. Most of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are Shia Muslims, unlike the rest of Pakistan, which is mainly Sunni, making Gilgit-Baltistan the only majority Shia province or territory in Pakistan.

The remoteness and distinctiveness of Gilgit-Baltistan in relation to the rest of Pakistan fuel both a sense of uniqueness and aloofness from the problems that have engulfed the rest of the country. This, however, has started to change recently. In June 2013, the effects of the Taliban insurgency suddenly spilled over into the territory, when about a dozen heavily armed Pakistani Taliban militants executed 10 foreign mountain climbers, including a U.S. citizen, at the base of Nanga Parbat. The tourist industry, one of the major sources of revenue for the region, has all but collapsed since then.

<http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/time-for-pakistan-to-integrate-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Raikot-Islamabad highway's construction top priority: NHA”

Daily Times, July 13, 2014

ISLAMABAD: National Highway Authority

(NHA) will build 487 kilometers (km) Raikot-Islamabad Highway on priority as it forms part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This highway is also important because four new dams close to this highway namely Thakot, Pattan, Dasso and Diامر Bhasha have also been planned.

An NHA official stated these dams would help the country overcome its power shortage and the government was putting special emphasis on CPEC so that trade ties with China and Central States could be further strengthened and the region could witness rapid economic growth and prosperity. Raikot-Islamabad Highway will start off from Pak-China border and will connect to the existing Karakoram Highway and reach Islamabad and will be further extended to Gwadar in the near future. The realignment of the 24 km of the existing Karakoram Highway was also part of this project and this highway will be 2-lane from Khanjrab to Mansehra, 4-lane from Mansehra to Islamabad and 6-lane from Islamabad to Gwadar.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/13-Jul-2014/raikot-islamabad-highway-s-construction-top-priority-nha>

“Terrorists in army uniform storm police station in Diامر”

Dawn, July 5, 2014

GILGIT: Over three dozen suspected terrorists wearing Pak army uniform stormed a police station in Diامر district on July 4, tied the policemen with ropes and took away weapons, uniform, wireless sets, and other valuables from the cops. The Dodishal police station is situated a kilometer from the Karakoram Highway at the border of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan regions.

Police sources noted that 36 to 40 unidentified armed men wearing army uniform stormed the police station at about 1:30am on July 4. Sources further stated that only six police personnel were present at duty when the police station was attacked, adding that the assailants tied the personnel with ropes and thrashed some over resistance. The attackers took away 10 guns, three pistols, thousands of rounds, wireless telephone sets, police uniforms and other belongings of the police personnel. They took away weapons and other

valuables from them. sources stated that the attackers were speaking Urdu, Pashto and Shina languages and also accused the policemen of being the puppets of America. They stated that other police stations of Diامر district were informed after three hours of the incident.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1117218/terrorists-in-army-uniform-storm-police-station-in-diامر>

“Taliban-linked terrorists hiding in Diامر, says GB police chief, 2014”

Dawn, July 12, 2014

The Gilgit-Baltistan Inspector General of Police Mohammad Saleem Bhatti stated on July 11 that police had information that a group of terrorists linked to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan was present in Diامر district, and a search operation to arrest them had been intensified. Talking to reporters at his office, he stated that the group had kept contacts with the TTP in South and North Waziristan Agencies. He informed that two members of the group had taken shelter in North Waziristan Agency. Mr Bhatti further stated that Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts, Pak Army and police were jointly conducting search operation in Diامر. He added that the law enforcement agencies have arrested important terrorists involved in killing of nine foreign tourists at Nanga Parbat, last year, massacre of Shia passengers at Karakoram Highway and attack on Dodishal police station.

<http://www.abna.ir/english/service/central-asia-subcontinent/archive/2014/07/12/623311/story.html>

Shabbir Mir, “Tightening the noose: Army launches search operation in Diامر Valley”

The Express Tribune, July 9, 2014

GILGIT: The Pakistan Army launched a search operation in the mountains of Diامر Valley on July 8 in a bid to arrest terrorists who ransacked a police station in Darel recently. In a brazen attack on July 4, at least two dozen armed masked men, dressed in army uniforms, stormed a police station in Darel Valley of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and took away arms, ammunition and police uniforms. They tied up the policemen on duty and told them to abandon government service or face the consequences.

The search operation on July 8 took place in the Muspar Forest a thick woodland located between Batogah Nullah and Thak Nullah. Intelligence reports suggest the presence of terrorists there, stated a police official requesting anonymity. “There are reports that about five dozen army personnel are taking part in the search,” he stated.

Terrorists hiding in the forest could also be among those who killed foreign tourists and their investigators last year, he speculated. Residents of Chilas noted they saw at least five army helicopters hovering in the sky for a long time. “There is a continuous flight of helicopters above the town; I can count five helicopters,” stated Faizullah.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/732850/tightening-the-noose-army-launches-search-operation-in-diamer-valley/>

“AJK’s development projects likely to be completed by 2015”

July 10, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Earthquake Reconstruction Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) and Chinese construction company high delegation agreed and to gear-up their work to complete Rs. 34 billion cost 205 City Development Projects in Muzaffarabad, Bagh and Rawalakot, AJK. Chinese Five member high level delegation led by Chief Engineer Mr. Chen Xianming called on Deputy Chairman ERRA Maj. Gen. Muhammad Azeem Asif. Both sides discussed Chinese loan projects underway in three cities of AJK in detail. ERRA Deputy Chairman at the occasion highlighted various impediments including delay in various ongoing under construction projects.

It is pertinent to note that Chinese loan will be closed by 31st December 2015. During the interaction, Deputy Chairman ERRA stated that out of 205 so far Rs. five billion cost 16 projects have been completed. At the occasion City Development project DG city development, Zafar Wahla stated that 24 projects of water supply schemes, sewerage system, city government buildings, schools and community centers are near completion.

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2014/07/10/ajks-development-projects-likely-to-be-completed-by-2015/>

Shabbir Mir, “Voicing reservations: G-B gems association criticises proposed mining rules”

The Express Tribune, July 11, 2014

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Metals, Minerals & Gems Association has expressed reservations over the proposed Mining Concession Rules 2014, describing it an attempt to deprive people of their wealth. The Mining Concession Rules 2014 were reportedly formulated by the G-B Council, a body chaired by the prime minister, to regulate mining of minerals. The rules are to be tabled in the council for approval once finalised and vetted by experts. “The mining concession rules are anti-people and will fuel an uprising against the colonial policies of the Ministry of Kashmir and G-B Affairs,” stated the association's chairman, Shehbaz Khan. “We've discussed the proposed rules in the general body meeting and have rejected them as the rules make a mockery of the federal government's claim that the people of G-B have been given autonomy under the Empowerment & Self Governance Order, 2009,” Khan noted on July 10.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/733816/voicing-reservations-g-b-gems-association-criticises-proposed-mining-rules/>

“Travel curbs: Restrictions on Chinese engineers' movement”

The Express Tribune, July 10, 2014

GILGIT: Following threats from terrorists, movement of Chinese nationals has been restricted in Gilgit-Baltistan. “Free movement of Chinese nationals has been restricted for their own security,” Sadia Danish, Gilgit-Baltistan's Information Minister told reporters. The decision comes after terrorists issued threats to attack Chinese engineers working on different development projects in the region. In a letter, the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) had asked the G-B government to beef up security around projects which engaged Chinese engineers as terrorists planned to attack them. The letter stated that in a meeting recently held in Afghanistan, terrorists have decided to carry out attacks targeting Chinese engineers working on development projects in the

region. "They [Chinese] will be required to seek permission prior to leaving any place. They would be provided security and clearance," the regional information minister stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/733525/travel-curbs-restrictions-on-chinese-engineers-movement/>

"Levying of income tax challenged in GB court"

Dawn, July 8, 2014

GILGIT: The local importers and exporters association has challenged in the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court the imposition of income tax in the region by the GB Council. Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association president, Ehsan Ali filed a writ petition in the chief court on behalf of the importers and exporters body. The petitioner stated that imposition of income tax in the region was illegal as it violated the rules of Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, and the United Nation's resolutions on the status of the region. Ehsan Ali stated that GB was not the constitutional part of Pakistan, and imposing income tax in the region was against constitution of Pakistan and international laws. The GB council had decided to levy income tax in the region in 2012, and its implementation started from March 2014.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1117822/levying-of-income-tax-challenged-in-gb-court>

"Diامر elders want halt to operation"

Dawn, July 16, 2014

GILGIT: Elders and elected members from Diامر district have expressed reservations over the ongoing operation against suspected terrorists in the region and demanded halt to it. An official noted that a six member delegation comprising elders, religious leaders and elected representatives led by minister Basheer Ahmed Khan, met the Chief Minister Syed Mahdi Shah in CM House on July 15. The official stated the delegates informed the chief minister that the ongoing operation had created horrifying environment and disturbed routine life in Diامر. The elders, stated the official, assured that the local population was against terrorism and would hand over to the law enforcement agencies if they found any suspected element in their midst.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1119473/diامر-elders-want-halt-to-operation>

Shabbir Mir, "More displacement: Relief work in Darel Valley hindered by counteraction"

The Express Tribune, July 10, 2014

GILGIT: Villages hit by a flash food in Darel Valley on July 4 continue to suffer in the absence of relief as operations against militants take priority in the area, making it hard for aid workers to reach those affected. Floods triggered by heavy rains swept away 73 houses, and damaged another 102, leaving dozens of families homeless. Calamity hit the area soon after its police station was ransacked by militants, who tied up officials on duty and robbed them of uniforms and weapons. An operation spearheaded by the police and supported by the Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts followed and has acted as a roadblock for aid work in Darel, located more than 150 kilometres from Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/733347/more-displacement-relief-work-in-darel-valley-hindered-by-counteraction/>

"Dar chalks out Diامر-Bhasha Dam"

Business Recorder, July 8, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on issues related to financing of Diامر-Bhasha Dam at the Finance Ministry. WAPDA Chairman, Zafar Mahmood briefed the Finance Minister of the problems faced by private investors. In order to remove the obstacles and impediments, Zafar suggested fast track development of the projects under Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode.

The government of Pakistan may share some responsibilities with the private investors at development and execution stages, he added. He presented a complete framework featuring financial arrangements for mega power projects. The Minister for Water and Power stated that the Ministry was making efforts to enhance power generation in order to reduce the supply and demand gap. He emphasized on hydel led energy mix, capable of providing cheaper electricity to the public.

<http://www.brecorder.com/taxation/181/1200177/>

Shabbir Mir, “Mining concession Rules 2014: Why should Islamabad hold powers for G-B mining, asks Senator”

The Express Tribune, July 20, 2014

GILGIT: The proposed Mining Concession Rules 2014 has triggered a sharp reaction in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and outside the territory, with politicians and human rights activists saying it is an attempt to rob the region of its autonomy. The proposals are believed to say that the federal government's Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan will be issuing licences and permits instead of giving these powers to the local G-B government. This is creating fears that favourites will be given lucrative contracts.

The latest reaction against these proposed rules has come from Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Farhatullah Babar, who is also a member of the Senate Sub-Committee of Human Rights Committee on Gilgit-Baltistan, headed by Senator Raza Rabbani. The sub-committee is reviewing the G-B Empowerment and Governance Order 2009 with a view to improve the human rights situation in the area.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/738019/mining-concession-rules-2014-why-should-islamabad-hold-powers-for-g-b-mining-asks-senator/>

“Ministry accused of treating GB as colony”

Dawn, July 21, 2014

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan Bar Council has accused the federal ministry of Kashmir affairs of treating the region as a colony and ruling it through remote control. The bar council has written a letter to the Senate's Standing Committee on Human Rights, highlighting the deprivation of the people and asking it to press the federal government to give GB its constitutional status. The letter has been sent to the committee chairman Afrasiab Khattak. The letter states as the status of GB remained unclear due to unresolved Kashmir issue, saying that GB people didn't have the constitutional and political rights enjoyed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1120611/ministry-accused-of-treating-gb-as-colony>

“Pakistan to hold conference on Bhasha in US”

The News, July 19, 2014

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is gearing up its efforts to raise funds for the construction of the Diamer Bhasha Dam, and, for the purpose, the government is to hold an international conference with the cooperation of various US departments and USTATED in autumn. The event will coincide with the autumn meetings of the IMF and World Bank in October 2014. USTATED official Mark Karns noted that the idea to hold the conference was to “invite a range of potential fund sources representatives with some interest in South Asia and Pakistan and to have a wide ranging discussion on the project and investment issues.”

The Pakistan embassy would precede the event with a set of meetings with potential fund sources from the financial community. The idea to hold such a meeting was pitched last year by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. Since then the embassy has engaged itself with the USTATED to finalise a list of potential participants. The embassy has also proposed to hold the stated conference in New York during the annual United Nations General Assembly session in September so that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif could also attend the event. The proposal to change the venue still awaits a nod from Islamabad.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-262685-Pakistan-to-hold-conference-on-Bhasha-in-US>

Shabbir Mir, “Fuelling resentment: Nisar revokes parliamentary status of G-B, AJK lawmakers”

The Express Tribune, July 18, 2014

GILGIT: Minister for Interior Chaudhry Nisar Ali has revoked the parliamentary status of lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, depriving them of the perks enjoyed by their counterparts in the rest of the country. The decision was conveyed to the G-B government and lawmakers of the G-B Legislative Assembly and the G-B Council through a letter issued from the interior ministry earlier this month. The letter cites constitutional issues surrounding both the regions

of AJK and G-B. The move has cast doubts on the G-B Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009 which claimed G-B had been brought at par with other provinces with its own chief minister and governor running its affairs. Amjad Hussain, a member of the G-B Council, a forum which functions under the chair of the prime minister, stated, "After this letter, I am not entitled to an official passport meant for Pakistani parliamentarians. My official passport stands cancelled.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/737281/fueling-resentment-nisar-revokes-parliamentary-status-of-g-b-ajk-lawmakers/>

Mir Tariq, "Voices for opening Gurez-Gilgit route go shriller"

Greater Kashmir, July 17, 2014

CHORWAN (GUREZ): People in this village have decided to call on newly elected Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, if the state and central governments fail to open Gurez-Gilgit-Skardu road for trade. Urging the state and central governments to open this road to help improve local economy, the people stated "if need arises we will call on PM Narendra Modi in this regard."

The residents stated the road, once a part of Silk Road, was an essential link of trade between Kashmir and Central Asia. "The opening of this historical route will restore the lost glory of Gurez, Gilgit and Kashmir besides uplifting the socioeconomic condition of the area," they stated. "The road is closed at the end of Chorwan village where Army has setup a garrison and placed foot-mines to curtail movement of locals," they stated.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2014/Jul/18/voices-for-opening-gurez-gilgit-route-go-shriller-41.asp>

"Work starts on computerised electoral rolls in GB"

Dawn, July 18, 2014

GILGIT: The Election Commission of Gilgit-Baltistan in collaboration with the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) has kicked off preparation of computerised electoral rolls for upcoming Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative

Assembly (GBLA) elections. It will be the first time that GBLA elections would be conducted using computerised electoral rolls. An official of the Election Commission noted on July 17 that preparation of computerised electoral rolls had been started this week. He stated that the GB Election Commission and Nadra had signed a contract for preparation of the electoral rolls to be used in the upcoming elections.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1120014/work-starts-on-computerised-electoral-rolls-in-gb>

"AJK govt to cancel allotment of industrial plots"

The Nation, July 6, 2014

MIRPUR: AJK govt has decided to cancel the allotment of those industrial plots, where the allottees were not setting up industrial units at their allotted plots as per rules and regulations. The decision was taken in a high level meeting of the AJK Industrial department. AJK Industrial Department so far cancelled a number of allotment of such industrial plots which were not used for the required purpose by the allottees despite the expiry of the stipulated time frame. Sources disclosed that the authorities have also decided to cancel the allotment of all those industrial plots whom allottees have failed to take further steps for construction of their industrial units, since long, on the plots they had obtained for.

Department have also decided to make the allotment of plots to the fresh applicants who were seeking to establish the industrial units under the spirit to encourage the future investment in business sector, which would open new avenues of employment opportunities for the job seekers in the forthcoming industrial concerns, sources added.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/06-Jul-2014/ajk-govt-to-cancel-allotment-of-industrial-plots>

"Information Minister vows to support AJK government"

Dawn, July 5, 2014

ISLAMABAD- Information Minister, Pervaiz Rashid expressed his support for exploration of natural resources in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Whilst talking to AJK Prime Minister, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, Pervaiz Rashid stated utilization of natural resources will usher an era of progress and prosperity in Azad Kashmir. The two leaders also discussed issues pertaining to economic development in Azad Kashmir. Majeed urged the federal government to provide twenty billion rupees for completion of ongoing development projects in quake-hit areas of Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1117218/terrorists-in-army-uniform-storm-police-station-in-diamer>

Shabbir Mir, “Company politics: G-B Assembly speaker accused of assaulting Chinese staffer”

The Express Tribune, July 6, 2014

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig was accused on July 5 of breaking into the office of the deputy chairman of Pak-China Sost Port Company and assaulting a staff member. Wazir Baig was reportedly accompanied by G-B lawmaker Mutabiat Shah, Sost Dry Port Company Chairman Zafar Iqbal and 20 party workers when he forced his way into the office and slapped a female Chinese employee, alleged Gul Sher Khan, a spokesperson for Pak-China Sost Port Company. He stated the firm is a private limited company that has more than 150 employees on its payroll. Khan claimed the reason for making this mess was that Baig wanted his friend Zafar Iqbal to be elected to a senior post. “Baig and his team terrorised the whole office by breaking doors and beating the female employee. Therefore, they must be arrested and tried under anti-terror laws,” demanded the spokesperson.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/731658/company-politics-g-b-assembly-speaker-accused-of-assaulting-chinese-staffer/>

Manzoor Ali, “Mind your language: The tongues of K-P and G-B to remain 'regional'”

The Express Tribune, July 22, 2014

PESHAWAR: Two bills seeking to elevate regional languages to the status of national languages have been struck down by the National Assembly within the month of July. Five of the suggested languages are spoken across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B); the rejection of bills is a

cause for concern for local proponents of the legislation. The National Assembly (NA) Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights rejected Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Marvi Memon's bill on July 16. Memon's bill had recommended the substitution of Article 251 of the Constitution, which at present acknowledges only Urdu as the national language. Instead of just Urdu, Memon's bill had asked that Balochi, Balti, Barahvi, Punjabi, Pashto, Shina, Sindhi, Seraiki and Hindko also be included.

Earlier on July 1, the NA rejected Senator Haji Adeel's amendments for Article 251 of the Constitution. The Awami National Party leader's bill had asked to change the word 'language' in the heading to the plural, 'languages'. Haji Adeel had stated the article should mention the national languages of Pakistan as Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi and Seraiki. “Arrangements shall be made for their being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencement of the Act,” his bill had stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/738950/mind-your-language-the-tongues-of-k-p-and-g-b-to-remain-regional/>

“GB governance order needs to be revisited, says Rabbani”

Dawn, July 22, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The convener of a subcommittee of the Senate functional committee on human rights, Senator Raza Rabbani, on July 21 stated the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Governance Order 2009 needed to be revisited. Chairing the meeting of the subcommittee, Mr Rabbani stated steps should be taken to address the grievances of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. He asked the members of the committee and stakeholders to submit their recommendations in writing for improving the governance system in the region.

The meeting was held in-camera in which Senator Farhatullah Babar, Chief Minister GB Mehdi Shah, minister and secretaries of GB participated. A week ago, Senator Babar opposed the proposed mining and mineral concession policy for Gilgit-Baltistan, terming it an “assault” on the fundamental rights of the people there. Mr Babar stated giving powers of

issuing mining licences to the bureaucracy in Islamabad was a brazen attack on the local autonomy and assault on the fundamental rights of the people. He suggested improving human rights situation in the area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1120798/gb-governance-order-needs-to-be-revisited-says-rabbani>

Shabbir Mir, “Transfer of authorities: More power to G-B expected in next constitutional package”

The Express Tribune, July 24, 2014

GILGIT: As Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) inches closer to elections, legal experts in the federal government have worked out an improved version of the constitutional package to be implemented in G-B soon afterwards. “The next constitutional package will have more powers for the region than what the Empowerment and Self Governance Order of 2009 entailed,” stated an official privy to the development. He added proposals to convert the G-B legislative assembly into a constitutional assembly are also under consideration. The proposal to declare G-B a tax-free zone is being pondered upon, stated the official.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/740000/transfer-of-authorities-more-power-to-g-b-expected-in-next-constitutional-package/>

Tariq Naqash, “Joy in AJK as PCB awards it regional status”

Dawn, July 24, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has at last granted Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) the status of a separate region, much to the delight of cricketers and fans of the game. “It's a dream come true for us,” former general secretary of the now-defunct AJK Cricket Association Tanvir Mughal stated at a press conference on July 23. AJK's Director General (DG) Sports Mansoor Qadir Dar and AJK Sports Writers' Association president Saqib Abbasi, himself an active player, were also present on the occasion.

PCB appoints four interim regional bodies. Previously, AJK was treated as a unit of the Rawalpindi region which led to players from the

region getting scant opportunities to prove their talent at national level.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1121117/joy-in-ajk-as-pcb-awards-it-regional-status>

“Lobby' opposing power projects in GB, claims CM”

Dawn, July 4, 2014

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah alleged that a 'lobby' led by federal secretary Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan is opposing the ongoing foreign-funded power projects in GB, including the 26MW Shagarthang Hydropower Project. He was speaking at a press conference in Skardu on July 3. He stated that the many mega projects, including 26MW Shagarthang Hydropower Project, were being funded by foreign donor agencies like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and European Investment Bank. He stated that the recent move was a deliberate attempt of the lobby for cancellation of the Shagarthang power project while citing the reason that ADB had withdrawn its commitment of funding the mega project. Mr Shah stated that the ADB had clarified that it was committed to funding the approved project.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1116998/lobby-opposing-power-projects-in-gb-claims-cm>

“Diamer-Bhasha Dam: Committee formed for early land requisition”

Daily Times, July 4, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Ch Muhammad Barjees Tahir constituted a committee to make recommendation for early land requisition for Diamer-Bhasha Dam on July 3. The committee comprises Chief Secretary GB, Secretary Water and Power and chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). This committee will come up with its recommendations within 15 days.

Chairing a high level meeting regarding the land acquisition for strategically important Diamer-Bhasha Dam he showed his dissatisfaction over the land acquisition process. He stated Diamer-Bhasha

Dam was not only vital to end ongoing energy crisis but also important for water storage and food security of the country. Due to lack of interest of WAPDA, land acquisition process was not completed till date.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/04-Jul-2014/diamer-bhasha-dam-committee-formed-for-early-land-requisition>

“By-election: PPP candidate wins AJK women's seat”

The Express Tribune, July 2, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Shamshad Aziz was elected to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly on June 30 on a Pakistan People's Party (PPP) ticket. Shamshad, who got elected on reserved seat for women, is wife of former close aide of former President General (retired) Musharraf, General (retd) Muhammad Aziz. The seat fell vacant after Dr Fozai Ashraf belonging to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) resigned due to personal reasons on May 6. The polling started at 10am in the legislative assembly and continued till 3pm. Shamshad secured 25 votes, while All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) candidate Summya Sajjad bagged only four votes. PML-N Azad Kashmir President and Leader of the Opposition, Raja Farooq Haider Khan alleged that the present assembly was imposed by the then federal government through the money meant for Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/729768/by-election-ppp-candidate-wins-ajk-womens-seat/>

Yassir Rasheed, “Construction of mosque creates tensions in AJK village”

Dawn, July 2, 2014

SUDHNOUTI: The deputy commissioner of the Plandri district of AJK has been accused of causing unrest among the people by allowing the construction of a mosque on a disputed land in a remote village. A two-member inquiry team deputed by the district administration about two months ago had declared the piece of land as the property of the government boys' middle school in the Qillan village. The committee had

recommended the demolition of the mosque terming it an encroachment on the official land. The report of the committee also stated that the construction of the mosque had created tensions among the villagers. The villagers stated a local court had also stayed any construction on the land. Besides, they stated, the district mufti had given a verdict against the construction of the mosque on the disputed land.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1116437/construction-of-mosque-creates-tensions-in-ajk-village>

“Chinese-American was target of mountain massacre”

Gulf Times, July, 2014

GILGIT: The massacre of 10 foreign climbers on Pakistan's “Killer Mountain” a year ago came after a failed attempt to capture a Chinese-American to use him as a high-value bargaining chip, officials and militant sources have stated. The June 22 attack at the base camp for the 8,126-metre Nanga Parbat, Pakistan's second-highest mountain nicknamed for its treacherous terrain was the deadliest assault on foreigners in the troubled nuclear-armed country for a decade. Through interviews with multiple officials, militants and negotiators assigned to bring the culprits out of hiding, AFP has been able to piece together a picture of the events surrounding the slaughter and its aftermath.

One year on, with tourism in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region still suffering, most of the 10 suspects implicated in the attack are still at large, while sources close to the investigation have cast doubt on the guilt of some of those arrested. The victims were identified as three Ukrainians, two Chinese including Chinese-American Chen Honglu two Slovaks, one Lithuanian and one Nepalese as well as a Pakistani guide. But dual national Chen was the prime target, according to militant sources.

<http://www.gulf-times.com/pakistan/186/details/398790/chinese-american-was-target-of-mountain-massacre>

“Governor GB signs in to law Contract Employees Regularization Bill-2014”

Pakistan Observer, July 25, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Pir

Syed Karam Ali Shah has signed the Contract Employees Regularization Bill-2014 which was passed by Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. After promulgation of the bill, services of thousands of contract employees (BS-1 to BS-18) would be regularized who have been working in various departments of Gilgit-Baltistan for the last five and more years.

The bill was moved by treasury member and law minister Mr. Ali Madad Sher which was twice returned by Governor Gilgit-Baltistan for amendments but again it was passed without incorporating the changes proposed by Governor on June 26, 2014, noted a statement issued by the Governor Secretariat. Speaking on occasion of the signing ceremony, the Governor GB stated that it is essential for the legislatures to give due care to matters of public interest and bills focusing parochial interests should be discouraged.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=248072>

“Jagran hydel project: AJK law dept opinion favours winning bidder”

The Express Tribune, July 28, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Law Department of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) submitted a legal opinion in favour of the contract for the 48 megawatt Jagran Phase II hydel power project to China Water and Electricity (CWE) Construction Company against another bidder, Sinohydro-HRLJV. AJK Senior Minister and Power Development Organisation (PDO) In-charge Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen had challenged the contract while writing a dissent note to the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir against the CWE.

The Law Department termed the dissent note “a mixture of legal, technical and commercial issues”. The Law Department's legal opinion further stated that the contents fully cover the legal aspects involved during decision making. “It is necessary to discuss different relevant clauses of the Credit Facility Agreement executed between the Government of Pakistan and Agence Francaise Development (AFD) on July 6, 2013 for financing of Jagran Phase-II Hydel Power Project. According

to the agreement, the borrower has undertaken that each procurement to be financed by the CFA shall be submitted to the lender for its written non-objection,” the Law Department's legal opinion reads.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/741902/jagran-hydel-project-ajk-law-dept-opinion-favours-winning-bidder/>

Mahesh Kaul, “J&K history Turtuk Unveiled a must read”

The Express Tribune, July 28, 2014

Jammu & Kashmir has the distinction of being blessed with varied topography, vegetation, climate, culture and people. The Frontier areas of the State had importance for the strategic reasons for the rulers of the State and when the State acceded to India in the backdrop of the partition of India, it assumed political prominence for different reasons. The imperial British overlords and the communal forces, which enjoyed their patronage, were hell bent to destabilise the State. It suited them to maintain their foothold and stranglehold over the Northern Frontier. Dogra rulers who defined the geographical and political boundaries of Jammu & Kashmir in terms of viable administrative purpose kept a keen eye on the ethnic tribes that inhabited Gilgit and Baltistan. Their cultures, traditions and lifestyles needed to be understood in order to govern the people.

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

Shabbir Mir, “Financial assistance: Legislation sought to provide compensation to victims of terrorism”

The Express Tribune, July 27, 2014

GILGIT: Activists are pushing lawmakers in Gilgit-Baltistan to enact laws to streamline the mechanism of providing financial assistance to victims of terrorism. “There are no laws at the moment. It is at the discretion of the government to decide who to pay and how much to pay,” stated Bilal Hussain, a coordinator at Institute of Social and Policy Science (I-SAPS). I-SAPS is an Islamabad-based NGO that has drafted the bill and shared it with lawmakers recently as part of a consultation process to seek

their feedback. It will be tabled in the G-B legislative assembly in the coming days. “The government shall, by notification, establish the civilian victims fund within the Provincial Consolidation Fund for timely payment of grants to civilian victims. The government shall ensure availability of sufficient amount in the civilian victims fund in order to discharge its obligations under the Act,” read the draft of the bill.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/741405/financial-assistance-legislation-sought-to-provide-compensation-to-victims-of-terrorism/>

Zafar Bhutta, “Over Rs400m scam uncovered in AJK hydropower project”

The Express Tribune, July 26, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The minister in charge of Power Development Organisation (PDO), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has alleged that the organisation's managing director extended favour to a Chinese company in the award of multi-billion-dollar 48-megawatt Jaggran-2 hydropower project. The minister in charge, Chaudhry Mohammad Yasin, stated he had received information that the managing director was involved in committing professional dishonesty by taking sides and supporting a particular group. “The MD is also guilty of clash of interest by renting his home to consultants for personal benefits,” he stated.

PDO Managing Director Muhammad Mushtaq stated the matter was with the board of directors which would take a decision. He refused to comment further. According to available documents, a multi-million-rupee scam came to light in the award of foreign-funded 48MW Jaggran-2 hydropower project to a selected Chinese firm by the PDO in violation of Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/741014/over-rs400m-scam-uncovered-in-ajk-hydropower-project/>

“Government issues notice to AJK government to pay outstanding electricity bills immediately”

The Nation, July 24, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has issued notice to AJK government for payment of Rs 37.85 billion on account of outstanding electricity bills. According to sources, ministry of water and power has issued a notice to AJK government whereby directive has been issued for immediate delivery of payments over Rs 37 billion. AJK government has been directed strictly to pay outstanding dues on account of electricity bills as soon as possible.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/24-Jul-2014/government-issues-notice-to-ajk-government-to-pay-outstanding-electricity-bills-immediately>

“Ailing and corrupt education sector in Gilgit Baltistan”

ANI, July 29, 2014

Though corruption is rampant in almost every government department in Gilgit-Baltistan, the education sector is the worst affected. This pitiable department has been playing in the hands of some notorious government officials and political figures for more than a decade. Hundreds of thousands of teachers have been inducted illegally in this period, among those majority has either fake degrees or they are under/over-age to meet the government's criteria.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery8/26189-ailing-and-corrupt-education-sector-in-gilgit-baltistan.html>

Economic Developments

“Attracting investors: AJK adopts new lease policy for hydel power projects”

The Express Tribune, July 8, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Power Development Organisation (PDO) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) that monitors and executes power generation projects in the region has introduced a land lease policy on the pattern of Punjab to attract investors to set up hydel projects in the state to deal with the worsening energy crisis, sources noted. Land in AJK is acquired under a lease policy issued by the Board of Revenue. The policy applies to the establishment of private industry excepting the hydel sector, but the facilities extended to investors for hydel projects under the Power Policy 2002 are not included.

Sources revealed that at a recent PDO board meeting in Kashmir House, Islamabad, chaired by PDO Chairman and AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, PDO Minister Chaudhry Yaseen who is also a board member, discussed a lease policy for setting up hydel power projects, which was not on the agenda. In AJK, the price for government and private land is much higher than in Punjab and other provinces. This is impeding the development of new hydel power projects in the private sector, stated Yaseen, according to sources.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/732402/attracting-investors-ajk-adopts-new-lease-policy-for-hydel-power-projects/>

“Toiletries raw material: duty concession to AJK importers withdrawn”

Business Recorder, July 8, 2014

The Federal Board of Revenue has withdrawn concessionary rate of customs duty allowed to the importers-cum-manufacturers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) on the import of raw materials and input used in the production of

toilet and laundry soaps. Sources noted on July 7 that the FBR has amended SRO.599(I)/2008 dated June 11, 2008 through SRO.580(I)2014 pertaining to the imports made by the importers-cum-manufacturer of (AJ&K). The 10 percent concessionary rate of duty has been abolished on the import of raw materials ie palm stearin, Coconut Crude Oil and Crude Palm Kernel Oil used in the manufacture of toilet soaps. Moreover, the rate of duty has also been increased from 10 to 15 percent on the items enlisted in the stated SRO meant for AJK industries.

<http://www.brecorder.com/taxation/181/1200177/>

“India objects to multiple permits to traders Trade visits to AJK”

The Nation, July 20, 2014

MIRPUR: Citing security reasons, Jammu & Kashmir's Home Department objected to issuing multiple permits to J&K traders for their visits to markets in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, noted a report. Quoting officials in Srinagar, the report underlined that the proposal was opposed by the India's Criminal Investigation Department which has conveyed 'objections' to the Home Department in Srinagar on the ground that 'it would risk the security'.

The report continued that the objections have also been brought to the notice of Industries and Commerce Department of J&K. According to the report, the objections came as the infrastructure at the cross-LoC points in both Kashmir and Jammu regions. The report further stated that the J&K “authorities” were considering for a long time the possibility of setting up full-body truck scanners to ensure the manual checking of the items being traded between the two sides.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/20-Jul-2014/india-objects-to-multiple-permits-to-ihk-traders>

“AJK assembly unanimously passes 2014-15 budget”

Dawn, July 1, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: After a week-long debate, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly unanimously passed its budget for fiscal years 2014-15, worth Rs62 billion, on June 30. Expressing gratitude and felicitations to the opposition and treasury benches for their unanimous approval, Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed vowed to come up to the expectations of the house and implement all of his announcements.

“The consensus, seriousness and sincerity of AJK's political and parliamentary leadership on national issues will send a positive message across the state and elsewhere in the world. It also reflects the sagacity with which AJK leadership is advancing the political process,” he stated. Stating that the budget had been prepared in accordance with Peoples Party's manifesto, he proudly stated that instead of putting the burden of taxes on the citizens, the government had paid attention towards welfare.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1116234/ajk-assembly-unanimously-passes-2014-15-budget>

“Azad Jammu and Kashmir: Zakat Council passes Rs380m budget”

The Express Tribune, July 19, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Zakat Council on July 18 approved a Rs380 million budget for the financial year 2014-15. The 40th budget session of the council was presided over by Zakat Council Chairman Tariq Saeed. The council allocated Rs154 million for the needy, Rs1 million for financial assistance to students, Rs50 million for religious seminaries, Rs12.5 million for hospitals, Rs0.7 million for the handicapped, Rs6 million for dowry for orphan girls and Rs2.5 million for scholarships for poor students studying at various professional colleges. The

session was also attended by secretaries of the local government, religious affairs, finance and zakat departments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/737657/azad-jammu-and-kashmir-zakat-council-passes-rs380m-budget-islama/>

“Energy woes: AJK starts work on power project”

The Express Tribune, July 6, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: To overcome the rising energy crisis in the country, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Power Development Organization (PDO) has awarded the contract of a 48 megawatt Jagran phase-II Hydel power project to a Chinese company. The project will be completed in 40 months. The Jagran phase II will be completed with the financial assistance of the AFD's 68 million euros soft loan. The contract is awarded to China Water and Electricity (CWE) which will jointly with Sachal Engineering Company, a leading construction company of Pakistan. The project will be constructed at nullah Jagran, a tributary of River Neelum in Kundal Shahi Neelum Valley some 80 kilometres from Muzaffarabad. The project will also provide around 600 job openings in the region.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/731816/energy-woes-ajk-starts-work-on-power-project/>

International Developments

“US to help raise funds for IDPs, Diamer Bhasha dam”

Dawn, July 12, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The United States would work with the United Nations to mobilise international community for raising funds and aid for internally displaced persons of North Waziristan and help organise an investor conference for the Diamer Bhasha dam. This was conveyed to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar by Ambassador Elizabeth Jones, Principal Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, US Department of State, during a meeting on July 11. Know more: US says it is ready to help IDPs. “Ambassador Jones stated that the United States would work with the UN and the international community to mobilise funds and aid for IDPs,” noted an official statement issued by the ministry of finance. The ambassador stated the US would cooperate with Pakistan for development of areas affected by the army operation in order to resettle the IDPs.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1118719/us-to-help-raise-funds-for-idps-diamer-bhasha-dam>

“Pak-China international rail project gets commissioned”

The Nation, June 30, 2014

BEIJING: A research study regarding an international railway project linking Pakistan with China's Xinjiang province through Azad Jammu and Kashmir has been commissioned by China. The rail link funded primarily by China would connect Xinjiang's western city Kashgar to the Gwadar deep sea port of Pakistan, stated state-run China Daily while quoting the director of Xinjiang's regional development and reform commission, Zhang Chunlin on the subject. "The 1,800-km China-Pakistan railway is planned to also pass through Pakistan's capital of Islamabad and Karachi," Zhang had stated at the two-day International Seminar on the Silk Road Economic Belt being held in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/30-Jun-2014/pak-china-international-rail-project-gets-commission>

Other Developments

“Lights out: Traders protest against prolonged outages”

The Express Tribune, July 13, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: Traders of Madina Market, the city's commercial hub, took out a protest rally against what they termed unscheduled load-shedding on July 11. The protesters, who had assembled on the call of the traders joint committee, shouted slogans against the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) and the electricity department of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government.

“AJK generates more than 1,200 megawatts (MW) of electricity while our need is only 300MW. Yet we are not even supplied that amount, which is a grave injustice to us,” stated the committee's president Raja Razzaq Khan. Terming 12 to 15 hours of power outages in Ramzan unacceptable for residents, he threatened that in case Wapda failed to end unscheduled load-shedding within 72 hours in the region, they will besiege grid stations and stage a sit-in in front of the AJK Prime Minister's Secretariat till their demands are met.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/734933/lights-out-traders-protest-against-prolonged-outages/>

“Mangla Dam water level on the rise”

The Nation, July 18, 2014

MIRPUR: The water level in Mangla Dam rose to the level of 1210.70 feet against the highest level of 1242.00 feet, official sources noted on July 17. The country's largest reservoir Mangla Dam with water to the maximum level may help meet energy and irrigation needs. Following rapid melting of glaciers as well as heavy rains at the upper reaches of the Himalayan state of Jammu & Kashmir State, the water level in the reservoir is being raised swiftly and it reached to the level of 1210.70 feet against the highest level of 1242.00 feet. “The dead

level of water in the dam is 1040.00 feet and it is being constantly raised,” the sources noted. The water level was raised by over 170 feet against the stipulated dead level. “The reservoir is being currently filled with the water for future usage for irrigation purpose and to boost power generation,” they stated.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/18-Jul-2014/mangla-dam-water-level-on-the-rise>

Shabbir Mir & Qamar Zaman, “Double whammy: Floods wreak havoc in Darel Valley of G-B”

The Express Tribune, July 6, 2014

ISLAMABAD / GILGIT: Flash floods triggered by rain have swept away homes, farm animals and orchards in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B)'s Darel Valley, leaving many families homeless. The floods hit villages in the picturesque valley on July 4, an hour after armed men stormed the police station, tied up police personnel and looted arms and ammunition. According to sources, the situation is quite disturbing.

“The gushing water swept away 73 houses, partially damaged another 102 houses and displaced cattle in the valley,” Tahir Rana, programme manager at Al-Khidmat Foundation noted. The charity organisation sent its teams to the valley to assess the damage and organise relief efforts. The flood, triggered by heavy rainfall, was followed by an earthquake which measured 5.3 on the Richter scale that struck the region about 1:45am. “At least six houses have been washed away by the flood while 35 others have been partially damaged,” stated Umar Khan, a resident of the Chilas town. He added that hundreds of livestock, roads and fruit trees had also been damaged.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/731786/double-whammy-floods-wreak-havoc-in-darel-valley-of-g-b/>

Shabbir Mir, “Real-time data: Highest Met station installed at K2 base camp”

The Express Tribune, July 2, 2014

GILGIT: “In the last 24 hours, the temperature at the K2 Base camp fluctuated between -1 and 6.9 degrees centigrade; wind flow at 13km/h. It is relatively hot at the K2 base camp, wind is strong and relative humidity low: 27% minimum, 75% maximum. This is the first data received in real time from K2.” Thanks to a meteorological station set up at the base camp of Pakistan's highest peak in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), scientists can now monitor changes in weather in real time.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/729748/real-time-data-highest-met-station-installed-at-k2-base-camp/>

“Lok Virsa explores culture of Gilgit-Baltistan”

Dawn, July 1, 2014

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) carried out an extensive research fieldwork in Gilgit-Baltistan to document and promote its indigenous folk culture and craft heritage. Executive Director Lok Virsa Shahera Shahid stated that in pursuance of Lok Virsa Ordinance promulgated by the government of Pakistan in 2002, the major responsibility assigned to the institute was research, collection, documentation, preservation and dissemination of Pakistan's traditional culture. It includes both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, noted a press release issued on June 30.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1116205/lok-virsa-explores-culture-of-gilgit-baltistan>

Shabbir Mir, “Looming danger: Melting glaciers heighten flood risks in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Nation, June 16, 2014

GILGIT: Soaring temperatures have intensified melting of glaciers in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), leading to flooding of tributaries and rivers. Houses located alongside Gilgit River from Gilgit town up to Baseen area are under a threat of flooding in coming days as the volume of water continues to increase. According to the meteorological

department, the highest temperature recorded in Gilgit was 42 degrees centigrade on June 30 and dry weather is expected to prevail in coming days.

Pakistan has the largest collection of glaciers in the world among countries outside the North and South Pole regions. These glaciers are heavily-concentrated in the three great mountain ranges of Karakoram, Himalaya and Hindukush, situated in the northern parts of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. “There are chances that water will get into our homes if conditions remain the same,” stated Khursheed Ahmed, a resident of Gilgit whose house is at the bank of Gilgit River. “But we are monitoring the situation closely since the last 24 hours,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/729348/looming-danger-melting-glaciers-heighten-flood-risks-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Medicinal herbs: Two arrested for smuggling in AJK”

The Express Tribune, July 26, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) forest department officials foiled a bid to smuggle medicinal herb in Pataykha, some 20 kilometres from Muzaffarabad on July 24. Four alleged smugglers were arrested with a medicinal herb, known locally as Tripattra, en route from Neelum Valley to Muzaffarabad. The herb reportedly fetches millions of rupees when sold in the black market. District Forest Officer (DFO) Khawaja Manzoor revealed that authorities received a tip that a consignment of the lucrative herb was being smuggled from Kel, Neelum Valley to Muzaffarabad in private buses. A forest department team intercepted the buses at Pataykha and found the banned herb hidden in special containers inside the vehicles, stated Manzoor.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/740896/medicinal-herbs-two-arrested-for-smuggling-in-ajk/>

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.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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