

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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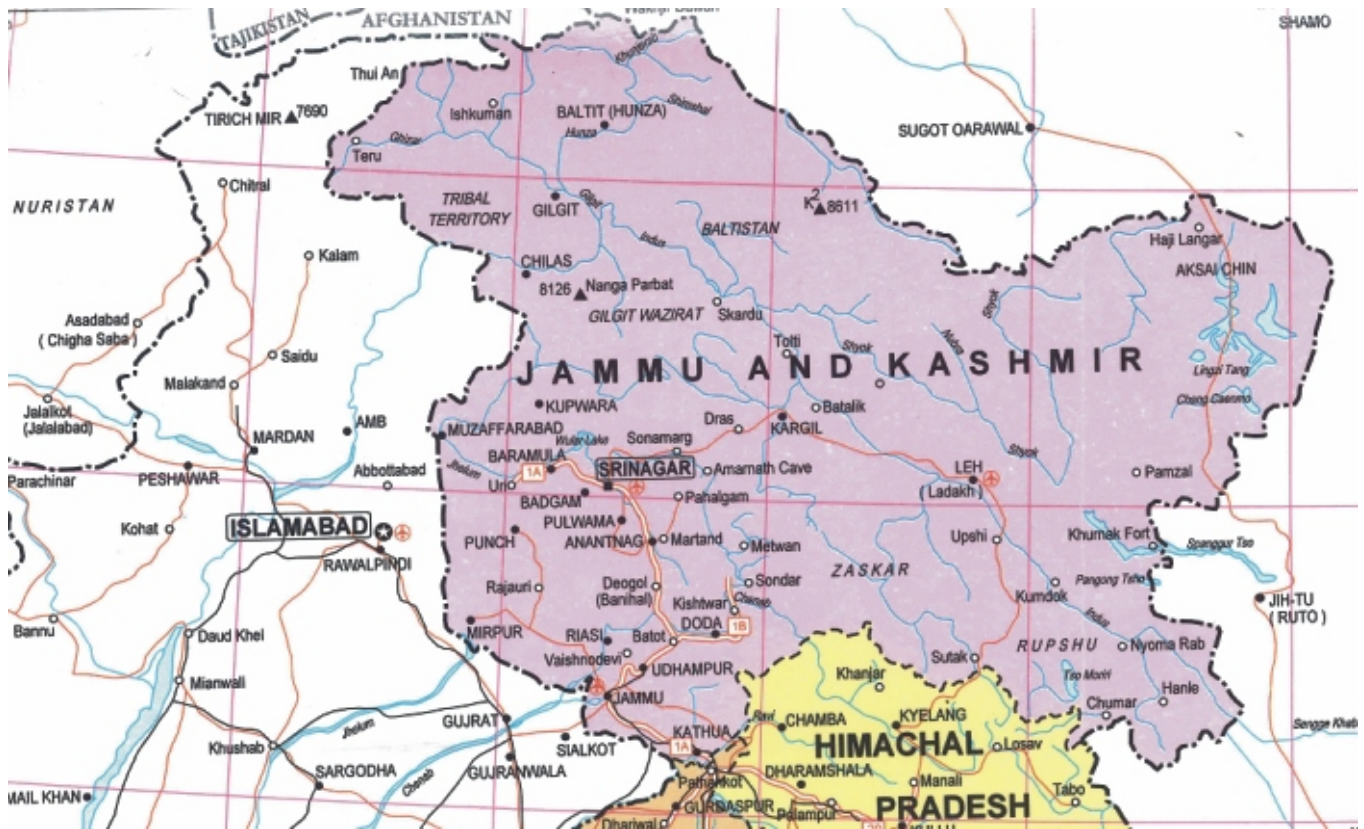
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Under the Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and Self Rule order, the first ever elections were held in the region in 2009. The PPP (Pakistan's Peoples Party) led government in Gilgit Baltistan completed its term in December 2014. However, fresh elections could not be held and there was a debate whether a care taker set could be installed in Gilgit Baltistan. Notably, under the self-rule order, there is no provision for a care taker set up. Setting up a caretaker government in the region would require an amendment in the order. The Prime Minister of Pakistan who heads the all-powerful Gilgit Baltistan Council is authorized to make amendments in the order. However, there is a view that such powers of amendments should instead be vested in the local assembly of Gilgit Baltistan, who could act in accordance with specific legislative requirements.

An anti-terror court on Gilgit Baltistan passed a judgement on Pakistan's well known Geo Tv owner and others charging them of blasphemy. The channel aired a show which allegedly hurt religious sentiments. The judgement spurred a bitter controversy regarding freedom of press and expression. However, the judgment is not likely to be implemented as the orders of the court of Gilgit Baltistan do not apply in Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan is not a part of Pakistan's constitution- neither is it a province nor independent. The Gilgit Baltistan court judgment in many ways underscores this political ambiguity further.

Meanwhile, in an effort to help out Pakistan, the United States Agency for International Development extended the deadline for bids on the Diamer Bhasha dam project. Earlier, bids were invited for financial advisory services and technical engineering review for the proposed mega project.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, “In session: G-B lawmakers demand diplomatic passports”

The Express Tribune, November 10, 2014

The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) legislative assembly on November 10 unanimously passed a resolution demanding diplomatic passports for lawmakers. The resolution was read out by treasury bench lawmaker Abdul Hameed during the first day of the current session chaired by speaker Wazir Baig. Earlier, Rehmat Khaliq of JUI-F raised the issue of vacancies in various departments of the G-B government, saying several posts had not been filled for years. “We want to know why nearly 4,500 vacant posts have not been filled as yet,” he questioned. Upon this, Chief Minister Mehdi Shah stated eligible candidates would be recruited against the vacant posts within a week as a decision to this effect had already been taken in the cabinet meeting, which was attended by the chief secretary, among others. Amina Ansari of the PML-Q drew the attention of the house to a resolution that sought powers for the assembly to make amendments to the G-B Governance Order 2009. The resolution was passed around two years ago.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/788753/in-session-g-b-lawmakers-demand-diplomatic-passports/>

Peer Muhammad, “GBLA elections: Summary forwarded to PM for election commissioner's appointment”

The Express Tribune, November 20, 2014

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) may get its first chief election commissioner soon as a summary in this regard has been sent to the prime minister by the Kashmir Affairs Ministry. This was stated by Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and G-B Chaudhry Barjis Tahir. Though the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) completes its five-year term on December 12, neither has an election

commissioner has been nominated by the government, nor has any other mechanism been devised to form a caretaker government prior to the elections. The minister stated that the G-B governor had sent a summary to the ministry seeking the appointment of a provincial election commissioner. “We have already forwarded the summary to the prime minister, who is the competent authority to make the appointment,” stated Tahir. The minister stated that appointment of a provincial chief election commissioner would be a step forward as, according to him, the voter list has already been prepared.

Under the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Rule Order, there is no provision for forming a caretaker setup in the area to hold fresh elections. The minister, however, stated that the federal government will look to the recommendations of the GBLA on whether “to amend the 2009 order or follow the tradition of the federal and provinces by forming a caretaker setup.” “The prime minister is competent authority to amend the Order 2009 and if the regional government wants any amendment, we will welcome it,” stated the minister. “We want to shift this amendment power from the federal government to the GBLA in the future and empower the local leadership to amending the rules according to their needs.” “If the two leaders fail to bring a consensus candidate, the prime minister will be the final authority to appoint the caretaker chief minister,” he stated. “Our priority is to hold elections in G-B at the earliest,” he further stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/793912/gbla-elections-summary-forwarded-to-pm-for-election-commissioners-appointment/>

“Youth of GB staged protest against the contractual vacancies in GB”

The Dardistan Times, November 24, 2014

Gilgit-Baltistan Postgraduate Association and Voice of Youth, GB staged a protest against the GB

Contract Employees Regulation Act 2014 at D-Chowk Islamabad on November 23. The protesters stated that they were demanding for a fair and square path for recruitment on such vacancies instead of regularizing the contractual employees. They stated that those who had been working as contract employees, were recruited irrespective for any merit or proper competitive test. Through the protest demonstration, they demanded for a proper recruitment through the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) and they also requested the President of Pakistan, Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of Supreme Court to nullify the act that was passed by the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) on regularizing the contractual employees on grade 16, 17 and 18. The protesters had held cards and posters written “Na-manzoor Kala Qanoon Na-manzoor” “Adhoc-ism Na-manzoor” and “Recruit via FPSC” etc.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/News/1036688235/youth-gb-staged-protest-against-contractual-vacancies-gb>

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit-Skardu Road: 'Measures needed for safer travel'”

The Express Tribune, November 26, 2014

A committee mandated to recommend measures to improve Gilgit-Skardu Road has asked the route be made safe and landslide-free before January, a time of heavy snowfall. “The repair work should start at once and be completed before the snowfall season arrives in January,” stated Senior Minister Muhammad Jaffar, who heads the eight-member committee formed by Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Mehdi Shah. The committee was formed by the chief minister this year after his efforts to widen the 270-kilometre Gilgit-Skardu Road were reportedly rejected by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan. The committee's report has also called for the construction of safety walls along the road to prevent vehicles from falling into the river which flows parallel to it. Similarly, construction of support walls has been suggested on roads likely to be affected by landslides. The 270-kilometre road passing through the towering Himalayan mountain range is narrow and dilapidated, causing problems for travellers. The rate of accidents on Gilgit-Skardu Road is higher as

compared with the rest of Gilgit-Baltistan. Shah, who is a resident of Skardu, has been trying to get the road widened in his stint as chief minister but the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan is reported to have rejected the proposal. The rejection irked Shah who accused employees of the ministry of blocking the project. “There are some secretaries who are playing against the interest of G-B,” stated Shah referring to the road issue. According to a senior official in the ministry, the proposal was put on the backburner because it could result in wasting money.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/797721/gilgit-skardu-road-measures-needed-for-safer-travel/>

Ahmad Noorani, “Gilgit courts have no jurisdiction in Pakistan, say experts”

The News, November 27, 2014

Eminent legal experts and jurists say that the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) courts have no jurisdiction outside that area and any issue relating to broadcast of any content on the electronic media could only be dealt by Pemra. Akram Sheikh, an eminent legal expert, noted that no court of Gilgit-Baltistan had the jurisdiction whatsoever outside the region of Gilgit-Baltistan and it cannot proceed against a citizen of Pakistan who is protected under Article 4 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. “Not only this, the proceeding against Mir Shakil-ur dubious and wrong as Geo Television is run by a company, not individual, and laws provide very clear process to proceed against a company,” Akram Sheikh stated adding “No criminal proceedings could be initiated against top management or even CEO of a company, and top management could only be proceeded for any civil liability.” Akram Shiekh clarified that Pakistan's Supreme Court has jurisdiction over these areas. The lawyers' community was taken aback by proceedings in a Gilgit court, which awarded 26-year imprisonment to the accused without even hearing them. Top legal minds stated that direct involvement of a person, facing charges of forcibly dragging 10 people out of the bus and killing them ruthlessly on sectarian grounds, in this case proves who is behind killing of thousands of Pakistanis. They stated it has proved who is playing the dirty game of killing innocent people in the name of religion. Justice Wajih stated

that jurisdiction of the courts in Gilgit-Baltistan is confined to those regions only. He stated efforts were made to make Gilgit-Baltistan a province during the tenure of PPP government but it could not be done, as it was not possible constitutionally.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34370-Gilgit-courts-have-no-jurisdiction-in-Pakistan-say-experts>

Shamil Shams, “Activists decry Pakistan's Geo TV sentence”

Deutsche Welle (DW), November 27, 2014

An anti-terrorism court has sentenced the head of Pakistan's Geo TV to 26 years in prison for airing a "blasphemous" show. Activists say the courts are being used by the security establishment to muzzle press freedom. On November 25, an anti-terror court in the semi-autonomous Gilgit-Baltistan region sentenced the owner of Pakistan's biggest private TV channel Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman to 26 years in prison for telecasting a "blasphemous" show. Veena Malik, a Pakistani actress and the host of the morning program, along with two guests on the show, were also convicted. The reality TV show broadcast a devotional song about the wedding of prophet Muhammad's daughter. The Gilgit court also ordered the four people to pay a fine of 1.3 million Pakistani rupees (13,000 USD), sell their properties and surrender their passports. "The malicious acts of the proclaimed offenders ignited the sentiments of all the Muslims of the country and hurt the feelings, which cannot be taken lightly and there is need to strictly curb such tendency," the ruling stated. The verdict is unlikely to be implemented because the orders of the Gilgit-Baltistan courts do not apply to the rest of the country. Observers, however, say the decision is damaging for the press freedom in the Islamic country due to its symbolic nature.

<http://www.dw.de/activists-decry-pakistans-geo-tv-sentence/a-18092681>

“Mir Shakil verdict: Geo TV refuses to admit GB part of Pakistan”

Ary News, November 28, 2014

Geo Tv after a court verdict against its owner Mir Shakilur Rehman, once again resorted to anti-Pakistan policy, which has darkened the shadows of

suspicious over its policies, ARY News reported. The media house following a court verdict against its owner, is insisting to declare Gilgit-Baltistan out of Pakistan. It says that the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) courts are not entitled to announcing verdict against a Pakistani citizen, while a GB court back in 2010 has given the verdict that the region is part of Pakistan. Here the question is if the Geo Tv or Mir Shakil had an objection over the court verdict, why did not they laid forth their stance during the hearing. The media house has once again raised points that could misguide national as well as international narrative about Pakistan and its territorial bounds, so that hostile states could get a chance to speak venom against Pakistan.

<http://arynews.tv/en/mir-shakil-verdict-geo-tv-declines-admit-gb-part-pakistan/>

“GB court verdict threat to press freedom”

Dawn, November 29, 2014

The president of the Council of Pakistan News-paper Editors (CPNE), Mujibur Rehman Shami, and the president of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Hameed Haroon, have, in a joint statement, expressed dismay at what they called unlawful conviction of Mir Shakeel ur Rehman, the Editor-in-Chief of the Jang-Geo media group and associated media persons, by an anti-terrorism court in Gilgit-Baltistan. They stated that the conviction was incompatible with press freedoms enshrined in Article 19 of the Constitution and that the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment & Self-Governance) Order, 2009 under which the judicature of that territory had been set up, was violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed to all Pakistani citizens in the Constitution. They stated: “The unlawful conviction of media persons in Gilgit-Baltistan constitutes a major threat to the existence of a free press throughout the country.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1147640/gb-court-verdict-threat-to-press-freedom>

Muhammad Sadaqat, “Hazara motorway ground breaking: Sit-ins and roadblocks are impeding progress, says PM”

The Express Tribune, November 30, 2014

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on November 29

heaped scorn at the sit-ins staged by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), calling them roadblocks in the way of progress and prosperity and inimical to the interests of the country. He pointed out that a railway track would be constructed from Islamabad to Muzaffarabad, link the Hazara motorway to Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad through tunnels that would usher in a new era of real development in the country especially in Hazara division. Nawaz also stated that when he came to Havelian during the election campaign he promised to allocate a chunk of development funds for Hazara which he fulfilled by laying the foundation stone of Hazara motorway project. He announced the early reconstruction of 1,000 schools in the earthquake-hit districts as well as provision of Sui gas to areas still deprived of it in Hazara.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/799505/hazara-motorway-ground-breaking-sit-ins-and-roadblocks-are-impeding-progress-says-pm/>

“Barjees directs GB authorities to resolve Diamer Bhasha Dam effectees problems”

Associated Press of Pakistan, November 25, 2014

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir on November 25 directed the Chief Secretary, GB to negotiate with the effectees of Diamer Bhasha Dam for land acquisition, resettlement and present its report within fifteen days.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=312563&Itemid=2

“More electricity generated, added to national grid in November”

Business Recorder, November 25, 2014

The hydel power stations operated by the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) have generated more electricity to the National Grid during November so far as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Likewise, the hydel power generation is set to increase during upcoming December 2014 and January 2015 as well. This increased generation is due to better hydrological conditions particularly in relation to Mangla Reservoir and efficient operation and

maintenance of hydel power stations. According to available data, contribution of additional hydel electricity to the national grid has ranged between 500 and 650 MW on an average for the current month so far as compared to corresponding period of last year.

The hydel power generation capacity of WAPDA stands at about 7000 MW - about one third of the total installed capacity in the country. WAPDA is executing a least-cost energy generation plan on priority basis with a view to improving the ratio of hydel electricity in the National Grid. The under-construction projects include 969-MW Neelum-Jhelum, 106-MW Golen Gol, 1410-MW Tarbela 4th Extension, 2160-MW Dasu Stage-I and 4500-MW Diamer Bhasha Dam. It is pertinent to mention that the 7100-MW Bunji hydropower project is ready for construction whereas studies for 1320-MW Tarbela 5th Extension are also being conducted and the project will be taken up simultaneously with Tarbela 4th Extension. Hydel is the cheapest, cleanest and environment-friendly source of power generation. Pakistan's energy mix is heavily tilted in favour of costly sources of power generation.

<http://www.brecorder.com/fuel-a-energy/193/1245341/>

Shujaiddin Qureshi, “Why big projects take so long?”

The News, November 9, 2014

The government is unable to start big power projects, including key hydro and thermal power projects like Diamer-Bhasha dam. Mounting circular debt is a major problem in the power sector despite its initial reduction to some extent after payment of an amount of Rs480 billion by the federal government in July 2013. But the circular debt amount has further piled up and it is hovering around Rs300 billion these days. Under the National Power Policy 2013, the government envisages “the generation of inexpensive and affordable electricity for domestic, commercial, and industrial use by using indigenous resources, such as coal (Thar coal) and hydel.” The government has to push for completion of the projects.

Lack of foreign investment is the main cause of delays in the completion of projects. The federal government has recently held an international investment conference in the US to attract investment for this 4,500MW mega hydropower project, Diamer-Bhasha dam, but foreign investors are still reluctant to come at this stage. “We need to mobilize local investment for initial work on Bhasha dam and this can be generated by floating Pakistan Power bonds or increasing public sector budget for the power projects under Public Sector Development,” says former managing director, PEPCO. With a capacity of 4,500 MW, the Diamer-Bhasha Dam needs an investment of \$12.6 billion. Initially, Rs100 billion can be allocated for this project. When initial work is done, the foreign investors will certainly come and international financial institutions will then offer finances for purchase of machinery and equipment.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/why-are-big-power-projects-taking-long/#.VRg5YEvfJuY>

“PM woos German investors”

Dawn, November 11, 2014

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on November 10 invited German entrepreneurs to invest in Pakistan and participate in its privatisation process, assuring it will be transparent and strictly in accordance with the international best practices. He stated Pakistan would like to expand FDI (foreign direct investment) in energy, infrastructure development, food, pharmaceutical, chemicals, engineering, agriculture and agro-based industry, mining, and oil and gas exploration. “At the same time, we have embarked on a massive programme of power generation, from all available sources, including hydro, coal, solar and wind,” he added. Among hydel projects, Nawaz Sharif mentioned the two most important ones the 4,500MW Diamer Bhasha Dam and 4,320MW Dasu power project.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1143611/pm-woos-german-investors>

Shabbir Mir, “One of us’: G-B lawyers threaten poll boycott”

The Express Tribune, November, 13, 2014

Lawmakers in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have

threatened to boycott polls scheduled for next year if a non-local is appointed as the chief election commissioner (CEC) in the region. “We may boycott elections if the election commissioner is an ‘imported’ one,” Law Minister Ali Madad Sher noted at the legislative assembly’s premises on November 13. “We firmly believe that the person should be from G-B as we have competent people for the job,” he stated. His remarks came a day after the G-B legislative assembly passed a similar resolution that called for the appointment of a CEC from the region. On November 12, lawmakers in the assembly rejected the idea that a CEC appointed by the federal government may conduct G-B’s elections next year. Chief Minister Mehdi Shah, while talking to reporters on November 13, stated he would write a letter to the federal government to inform it about reservations voiced by lawmakers over the possible appointment of a non-local CEC. The government, which will complete its five-year term on December 10, 2014, has already announced it would hold elections under the biometric system to ensure transparency.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/790697/one-of-us-g-b-lawmakers-threaten-poll-boycott/>

Stephen Mayhew, “Pakistan’s Gilgit-Baltistan region to use biometric voter identification in upcoming elections”

Biometric Update.Com, November 14, 2014

Gilgit-Baltistan, the northernmost administrative territory of Pakistan, has decided to implement a biometrics system to cut down on voter fraud in the upcoming Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly elections. According to a report, Mehdi Shah, G-B’s first Chief Minister, asked the chief secretary and election commissioner to make arrangements to ensure the new system is ready for the next election. His government has also held meetings with officials from the National Database and Registration Authority (or “NADRA”) to ensure the project has adequate funding. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, an opposing political party, has claimed that poll fraud led to the election of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party. The Election Commission of Gilgit-Baltistan and Nadra had previously announced that computerised electoral rolls would

be used in the GBLA elections. Prior to the 2013 national elections, NADRA had been instructed to issue computerized national identity cards (or “CNICs”) all unregistered citizens to ensure all eligible voters would be able to vote in the country's upcoming elections.

<http://www.biometricupdate.com/201411/pakistans-gilgit-baltistan-region-to-use-biometric-voter-identification-in-upcoming-elections>

Shabbir Mir, “Voice of dissent: 'Where is the empowerment promised?’”

The Express Tribune, November 21, 2014

Lawyers in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on November 21 urged the Pakistan Army to fill the vacuum left by civilian governments and guarantee constitutional rights to the people of the region. “It is about time the army steps in to provide fundamental human and constitutional rights to the people of G-B,” Advocate Shehbaz Khan, vice president of G-B Bar Council, noted before journalists at the Gilgit Press Club. The Bar Council's executive committee chairman Mir Akhlaq and chairman of the standing finance committee Javed Iqbal were also present on the occasion. Khan stated the G-B assembly had passed a law in 2010 regarding the appointment of a chief election commissioner. However, this was recently written off by an order issued by a secretary in the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs. “This is not the empowerment we were promised,” he stated. According to Khan, the orders issued from time to time by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs regarding G-B are unconstitutional and also contravene Rule 20 of the Rules of Business 1973. He insisted lawyers would challenge these orders in the Islamabad High Court. Speaking on the occasion, he stated there was widespread support among the people of G-B for the region to be granted provincial status. “I wonder if we must act like Baloch separatists for the rulers to address our grievances,” Akhlaq stated. The demands have been raised a month before the G-B government completes its five year term. After the government bows out on December 10, a caretaker government will take its place till elections are held next year.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/794992/voice-of-dissent-where-is-the-empowerment-we-were-promised/>

Nisar Ahmad Khan, “KP-GB tension over disputed territory eases”

Dawn, November 1, 2014

The tension between tribesmen from Kohistan and those from Chilas has eased over the disputed territory of Harban located on the border of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan as the two sides showed willingness to settle the dispute peacefully through a jirga led by former Kohistan MNA Mehboobullah Jan. Deputy inspector general of police, Hazara range Akhtar Hayyat Khan Gandapur appreciated the jirga for making efforts to defuse the tension. He, however, stated the control of disputed territory would stay with the Frontier Constabulary and Rangers until the matter was settled by a commission formed by the federal government. The jirga met elders from Harban Bhasha in Kohistan and from Thor in Chilas to defuse the tension. In February 2014, five people were killed when Harban and Thor tribesmen exchanged fire over the territory to which Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan governments lay a claim. Tension has been prevailing in the area since then.

[http://www.dawn.com/news/1141786/kp-gb-tension-over-disputed-territory-eases?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+\(Dawn+News\)](http://www.dawn.com/news/1141786/kp-gb-tension-over-disputed-territory-eases?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+(Dawn+News))

Shabbir Mir, “Matter of Credibility: Masajid board members refuse to retract resignations”

The Express Tribune, November 3, 2014

Shia members of the Masajid Board, who quit earlier this week, have turned down the Gilgit-Baltistan government's request to withdraw their resignations, saying they want their suggestions implemented first. Ten of the 20-member body of the board resigned earlier this week, complaining their suggestions to maintain sectarian harmony were overlooked by the government. The resignations have raised a serious question over the effectiveness of the Masajid Board a body that played a crucial role in restoring peace after sectarian riots left more than 70 people dead in the region during 2011-12. The board, with 10 members each from the Shia and Sunni sects, was

responsible for implementing a code of conduct which allowed for the reopening of two mosques sealed in the aftermath of the violence. The code barred prayer leaders of both central mosques in Gilgit from maligning each other's beliefs and using harsh language against the other sect's revered personalities. The government has, however, acknowledged the role of the board and assured it of supporting its work in future.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/785213/matter-of-credibility-masajid-board-members-refuse-to-retract-resignations/>

Ali Ashraf Khan, "Refreshing our faulty memory: Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir go hand in hand"

The Express Tribune blog, November 5, 2014

One of the main and often forgotten blunders of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), during their different stints in power, is the sell-out of the hopes and aspirations of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. This is a historical fact, though the PPP tries to hide it as they are hiding other blunders as well, counting on the short memory of the public. But not all is forgotten and especially not forgiven; some of us do remember what happened in the past. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan had liberated themselves from the clutches of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir in 1948, declared accession to Pakistan at that time and in return the federal government sent Sardar Alam Khan as the first political agent to Gilgit with an APA for Baltistan. This decision to attach Gilgit-Baltistan to the newly founded state of Pakistan was accepted and became a part of the Karachi Agreement, that was later signed in 1949 between the then president of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim and Chaudry Ghulam Abbas, and the government of Pakistan, under Liaquat Ali Khan. But one wonders why Pakistan never honoured this commitment. Gilgit-Baltistan has strategic importance due to adjoining borders with Pakistan's Azad Kashmir in the southwest, the Pakistani province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the west, the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan in the northwest, the Xinjiang Uyghur of China in the north and northeast, and of Jammu and Kashmir in the southeast. It was in 1974 that Mr Bhutto, during the first International Jurist conference, asked me to

meet the PPP secretary general, Dr Mubashar Hasan, and help to pave way for empowerment of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and particularly for the refugees of Kargil/Ladakh, living in different cities of Pakistan. All preparations were made accordingly but when the new status for Gilgit-Baltistan was to be announced, Bhutto's special assistant, M Yusuf Buch who also hailed from Srinagar, advised him not to empower the people of the northern areas till the resolution of the Kashmir issue through a plebiscite. Bhutto took the easy road and went along with that.

During his 1975 visit to Gilgit-Baltistan, he constituted a 23 member PPP committee of Gilgit-Baltistan, in the prime minister's house at Rawalpindi, where Colonel Hassan Khan, who was designated as a senior vice president, objected to the composition of the committee saying that it is representing the informers of the Gilgit administration more than the political people. Colonel Hassan Khan, the hero of the Gilgit freedom struggle, was arrested by Bhutto's administration and later released on the imposition of martial law in 1977.

Then came blunder after blunder. During Ziaul Haq's days, a committee under the then establishment secretary, Ijlal Hyder Zaidi, was formed to suggest constitutional reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan. After months of long deliberation, efforts were being made by the two powerful lobbies from KPK and Punjab to get the Gilgit-Baltistan territory attached administratively with either of the two. Two local senior officers, Wazir Farman Ali and Abdul Wahid, serving in the federal government and who got a chance to be heard, resented the moves of resident commissioner, Mr Inyatullah Khan and Mr Iftikhar. Ijlal Hyder Zaidi got convinced and refrained from doing the same. Then as a result of non-party elections, when Mr Junejo became prime minister, observer status was granted to two gentlemen, one each from Gilgit and Baltistan in the federal parliament, which continued till 1995-6.

<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/24619/refreshing-our-faulty-memory-gilgit-baltistan-and-kashmir-go-hand-in-hand/>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B CM slams federal govt's apathy over civil rights”

The Express Tribune, November 23, 2014

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Mehdi Shah has leveled strong criticism against the federal government's apathy on granting constitutional rights to the region, blaming it for the area's stunted development. According to a press release issued on November 23, Shah lauded the sacrifices made for the county by the people of G-B over the last six decades. “I can rightly say that our sacrifices have not been acknowledged,” he stated. In 1947, G-B was annexed and unconditionally offered to Pakistan after being liberated from Dogra Raj. However, the widespread attention given to the Kashmir issue left its status undefined and deprived the people of G-B from representation in Parliament. “Whenever elections take place in G-B, all major political party heads show up in Gilgit to conduct campaigns,” Shah stated. “However, they have always remained silent when it comes to granting constitutional rights to the region.” The chief minister held the constitutional status responsible for backwardness in the region, stated the press release. He insisted that if the people of G-B had been allowed to vote for parliament, the rulers would have adopted a completely different approach to them. According to the press release, Shah also advised the government to opt for Kalabagh Dam if it is not interested in the Diamer-Bhasha Dam. Demands for constitutional rights for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have intensified with elections around the corner.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/796046/g-b-cm-slams-federal-govts-apaty-over-civil-rights/>

Jamil Nagri, “Gilgit court hands 26 years' jail to Geo TV owner”

Dawn, November 26, 2014

GILGIT: An anti-terrorism court has sentenced the owner of the Jang-Geo group Mir Shakeelur Rehman, host of Geo TV's morning show Shaista Lodhi, actress Veena Malik and her husband Malik Asad to 26-year imprisonment and a fine of Rs1.3 million each for hurting religious sentiments of

people in the show. Announcing the verdict on November 25, ATC judge Raja Shahbaz ordered inspectors general of police of Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to arrest the convicts and execute his order. The court also asked the commissioners of Karachi and Rawalpindi and the deputy commissioner of Islamabad to sell the property of the four 'proclaimed offenders' under Section 19(10) of the Anti-Terrorism Act in case of disobedience. On May 26 this year, Himayatullah Khan, senior vice president of the Gilgit-Baltistan chapter of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, had lodged an FIR with the Baseen police station saying the show had defiled Ahle Bait by playing a contemptuous Qawwali in its morning show. According to the judgment, the competent authority had constituted a joint investigation team (JIT) on June 6 on a request made by the DIG. After completion of the JIT investigation, the case was submitted before the ATC on September 1.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1146959>

M.A. Mir, “It's time to get serious about climate change”

The Express Tribune, November 1, 2014

Sixty-seven years ago, 47 per cent of the land in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was covered by forests, including tracts of virgin forest land in Neelum Valley. Now, the area has been whittled down to just 12 per cent, as deforestation, landslides and sewage water have swept through the region and destroyed the green belt. “In the upper areas of AJK, where there is no liquefied petroleum gas facility, people are cutting the trees to use the wood for fuel in cooking and heating,” explained Secretary Forest Farhat Ali Mir. As the trees are used to build homes and the timber smuggled, unabated deforestation in Neelum and Leepa Valleys have led to increased landslides and flash floods, environmental experts say. Environmental researchers say the government must crack down on timber smuggling here and the use of wood for construction by locals. Additionally, the three main rivers the Jhelum, Neelum and Poonch in AJK are being increasingly used to discharge sewage water

in the areas of Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Hatain Bala and Neelum.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/784256/its-time-to-get-serious-about-climate-change-2/>

“AJK welcomes cut in oil prices”

The Nation, November 2, 2014

The people of AJK from all walks of life including business fraternity expressed joy and satisfaction over the government of Pakistan decision regarding reduction in the prices of petroleum products. The jubilant people termed it a remarkable step by the incumbent PML-N regime towards providing maximum relief to the masses. Welcoming the decision, former president FPCCI and AJKCCI, Chaudhry Muhammad Saeed stated that the exceptional reduction in prices of petroleum products would lead to a decrease in dearness in all sectors of life. Saeed, also Central Secretary Finance of the PML-N AJK Chapter, expressed the hope that it would directly provide relief to the common man in shape if decline in the prices of daily-use items. He continued that public transport fares would reduce as a result of the reduction in the POL prices. Regarding its positive impact on trade and industrial sector, the former FPCCI president stated it would, indeed, give an impetus to the progress of industrial sector in AJK as the cost of production would be reduced due to the cut in the prices of the petroleum products. Saeed suggested that since the federal government had performed its duty to provide relief to the masses, it was now enjoined upon the provincial governments of all the four provinces as well as the AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan to take appropriate steps for ensuring delivery of due relief to the masses through overcoming price hike and reduction in fares of public transport.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Nov-2014/ajk-welcomes-cut-in-oil-prices>

“Protest against 'discrimination' in preparation of list of flood-affected people”

Dawn, November 2, 2014

People poured onto the streets of Forward Kahuta, the headquarters of the disadvantaged Haveli

district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), on November 1 to protest against the alleged delay and discrimination in preparation of lists of the people affected by the flash floods and torrential rains in their area for compensation. The demonstration was held on the call of Chaudhry Mohammad Aziz, senior vice president of opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in AJK, who was Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) and minister in the previous two governments of Muslim Conference. Located along the Line of Control (LoC), Haveli district, it may be recalled, had suffered worst losses in flash floods and torrential rains that hit the whole of AJK in September 2014. According to official record, 21 people were killed in the district and more than 60,000 affected due to complete damage to 1,202 houses and 35 shops. As many as 7,486 houses were partial damaged. Loss of crops was estimated at Rs80 million. In mid-October, the AJK government had declared the district 'calamity hit area'. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Forward Kahuta on September 11 and according to Mr Aziz had directed the administration to prepare and dispatch details of losses and affected persons to the federal government within 15 days.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1141953/protest-against-discrimination-in-preparation-of-list-of-flood-affected-people>

Khaleeq Kiani, “Govt. puts squeeze on uplift funds to save money for international commitments”

Dawn, November 10, 2014

The government has put a tight squeeze on public sector development funds to create a substantial cushion for meeting international commitments on fiscal control in case of a shortfall in revenue collection. In the first four months (July-October) of the current fiscal year, the government disbursed Rs99.8 billion for the Public Sector Development Programme which accounts for 19 per cent of the total annual allocation of Rs525bn. And no fund has been made available to the agencies concerned for achieving the Millennium Development Goals of meeting basic human requirements like food, health and education, despite an allocation of Rs12.5bn

having made for the purpose. Disbursements for Azad Kashmir and FATA were lower than last year, although AJK received higher funds under the monthly and quarterly disbursement schedule. AJK received about 35pc of its annual share in four months while FATA received less than 19pc. Major projects in Azad Kashmir got Rs4.2bn in the first four months, compared to Rs4.7bn during the same period last year. About Rs4.2bn was provided to Gilgit-Baltistan in four months against Rs4.05bn during the same period last year. Safron, including FATA, received Rs3.6bn against Rs5.16bn.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1143463/govt-puts-squeez-on-uplift-funds-to-save-money-for-meeting-international-commitments>

“Minister's brother shoots rivals”

Dawn, November 10, 2014

Tension gripped the town of Samahni in Bhimber, the southernmost district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on November 9 after the brother of AJK minister shot and wounded a young man in Samahni Bazaar. Official sources noted that Chaudhry Mazhar Iqbal, who is the brother of revenue minister Chaudhry Ali Shan Soni, shot Raja Sohaib Habib at about 11:30 am after a brief altercation. The bullet pierced through the lower abdomen of the victim, who was taken to the District Headquarter Hospital in Mirpur, which is a two-hour drive. Due to excessive bleeding, his condition was reported to be critical. The accused, who was allegedly riding an official car, fled from the scene and has not yet been arrested. The victim is an office bearer of MSF, Pakistan Muslim League-N's student wing.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1143479/ministers-brother-shoots-rival>

Peer Muhammad, “The Monsoon floods: Damage to infrastructure estimated at Rs 15 billion”

The Express Tribune, November 17, 2014

The recent monsoon floods have largely affected community infrastructure in Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir where more than 5,000 community development schemes have been damaged costing over Rs15 billion to the national

exchequer, a Recovery Needs Assessment and Action Framework 2014-16 report stated on November 16. The report was jointly prepared after the floods by teams led by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and United Nations Development Programme, and including experts from UN humanitarian branches FAO, ILO, UN-Habitat and World Food Programme. The recent monsoon floods have largely affected community infrastructure in Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir where more than 5,000 community development schemes have been damaged costing over Rs15 billion to the national exchequer, a Recovery Needs Assessment and Action Framework 2014-16 report stated on November 16. The report was jointly prepared after the floods by teams led by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and United Nations Development Programme, and including experts from UN humanitarian branches FAO, ILO, UN-Habitat and World Food Programme.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/792406/monsoon-floods-damage-to-infrastructure-estimated-at-rs15-billion/>

Parvez Jabri, “Prime Minister inaugurates 26 development projects of Rs3.71 bn in AJK”

Business Recorder, November 20, 2014

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on November 20 inaugurated 26 development projects of education, health and basic infrastructure worth Rs3.71 billion in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The Prime Minister was visiting AJK to address the 50th session of AJK Council where he also distributed cheques to financially assist the quake-hit people of Azad Kashmir. Chairman Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority briefed the Prime Minister about the ongoing projects in the quake-hit areas of the AJK. The Prime Minister was apprised that 16 colleges have been constructed in various AJK districts with the cooperation from Kuwaiti government. Five projects of basic infrastructure have been executed with the Chinese assistance. Moreover, the construction of five high schools has also been completed in the area with the cooperation of federal government.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/205973->

prime-minister-inaugurates-26-development-projects-of-rs371bn-in-ajk.html

“ERRA completes 40,000 rain water harvesting systems in AJK, KP”

The Nation, November 24, 2014

Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) has successfully completed 40,000 rain harvesting schemes in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a cost of Rs 550 million. Project Director Syed Zaheer Hussain Gardeizi submitted project completion details in recently held weekly progress meeting chaired by Deputy Chairman ERRA Maj Gen Azeem Asif at ERRA headquarters. Sharing the details in the meeting Syed Zaheer Gardeizi stated that October 8, 2005 earthquake not only killed thousands of people but also damaged houses, infrastructure including 4700 water supply schemes, stated a press release. He stated that ERRA water and sanitation directorate reconstructed and rehabilitated all damaged water and sanitation schemes well in time benefiting more than 2.7 million people of AJK and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa earthquake affected areas. He stated rainwater harvesting project was completed in 20 union councils of earthquake affected districts and installed 40,000 systems at vulnerable houses and public buildings.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/24-Nov-2014/erra-completes-40-000-rain-harvesting-systems-in-ajk-kp>

“Stressing education: AJK gets first women university”

The Express Tribune, November 27, 2014

The first women university of Azad Jammu and Kashmir was inaugurated in Bagh on November 26 by the region's President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan. While addressing the inaugural function of the university, the AJK president stated in future classrooms would be the only battlefields and nations that concentrate on quality education will rule the world. AJK Health Minister Sardar Qamar Zaman, while addressing students, stated establishing a women university in Bagh was his dream which was fulfilled by the president.

[http://tribune.com.pk/story/797900/stressing-education-ajk-](http://tribune.com.pk/story/797900/stressing-education-ajk-gets-first-women-university/)

[gets-first-women-university/](http://tribune.com.pk/story/797900/stressing-education-ajk-gets-first-women-university/)

“Uplift projects: Secretaries allocated districts to monitor performance”

The Express Tribune, November 28, 2014

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has 'allocated' districts among secretaries to monitor development projects and departmental performance. The secretaries have been asked to submit monthly progress reports to the chief secretary, according to a document available. According to the document, each secretary will visit their allocated district to monitor both physical and financial progress of the uplift projects and also determine any reasons for delays. “Each secretary will also visit the line departments to check the presence of employees, their quantity and quality of work, services being provided by them to the public and the complaints being registered,” the official document noted. The document says that the secretaries will carry out their monthly tours by spending two days in the districts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/798914/uplift-projects-secretaries-allocated-districts-to-monitor-performance/>

“Mangla authorities blame AJK Highways Dept for mishap”

The Nation, November 29, 2014

The Wapda authorities at Mangla have held the AJK Highways Department entirely responsible of the sinking of a portion of dual carriageway section of Mirpur-Kotli Highway near Khaliqabad village here. The Wapda claimed that the highway department neither consult, nor sought any formal 'No Objection Certificate' while expanding the highway to the dual carriageway from Mirpur city to Khaliqabad cross. It is to be recalled that a big portion of the recently-constructed dual carriageway portion of Mirpur-Kotli Highway from F/3 (Part-1) to Khaliqabad, passing through the left bank of Mangla dam lake, was suddenly washed away on November 27 reportedly following seepage of water from the recently-raised Mangla dam's reservoir. Meanwhile, the Wapda experts including consultants November 28 visited the affected site of the Mirpur-Kotli Highway to ascertain causes of the sinking of the big portion of

the road. The AJK Prime Minister had also reportedly summoned a special meeting during his visit to Mirpur on November 28 at his local residence to discuss and review the causes of the collapse of a portion of the newly-constructed dual carriageway of Mirpur-Kotli Road.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/29-Nov-2014/mangla-authorities-blame-ajk-highways-dept-for-mishap>

Saeed Ahmed “PRCS distributes food packs amongst floodlit families”

The News, November 2, 2014

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has distributed another consignment of food packs among 3,500 flood-hit families in Punjab, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. PRCS Director Operations Ghulam Muhammad Awan informed a coordination meeting that 15,000 affected in the nine union councils of Jhang, Sialkot and Multan have been provided with rice, cooking oil, pulses, wheat flour and other items. Awan further stated eight hundred families in Bagh, Poonch and Haveli areas of the AJK and two hundred families residing in different areas of Gilgit-Baltistan were also served. People are suffering from multiple problems as they cope with the financial pressures caused directly and indirectly by the floods, he stated, adding that they need more relief items and necessary medical care. Lauding the efforts of PRCS staff and volunteers in Punjab, AJK and GB, he vowed that we will continue to help the flood-hit communities until they are fully rehabilitated.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-281914-PRCS-distributes-food-packs-among-flood-hit-families>

“Azad Kashmir observes 'black day'”

ANI, November 3, 2014

MUZAFFARABAD/ GENEVA: October 22, 1947 - the day when Pakistani Pashtun tribes invaded the Kashmir Valley and created mayhem, is remembered as "Black Day". Kashmiris across the world use the day to protest the invasion of their homeland by Pakistan. In Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir, a large number of nationalists gathered to raise their voices against illegal occupation by recalling the brutality of Pakistani troops. Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan were a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was captured by the Pakistani Army disguised as tribesmen. At the Kishan-Ganga Bridge in Kotli, Kashmiri protesters lit candles as a tribute to those killed during the tribal invasion of 1947. They shouted slogans against Pakistan for illegally occupying their territory. Pakistan claims to champion the cause of Kashmiris, but ignores their plight in so-called Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/29809-azad-kashmir-observes-039-black-day-039-.html>

Economic Developments

“Rs. 99.821 billion released for development projects”

Pakistan Today, November 9, 2014

The government has released over Rs 99.821 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for various projects against total allocations of Rs 525 billion for the fiscal year 2014-15. The government released Rs 4,212.482 million for AJK (Block and other projects) out of its allocations of Rs 12,127.410 million, Rs 4,227 million for Gilgit-Baltistan (Block and other projects) out of its total allocations of Rs 9,230 million and Rs 3,619 million for SAFRON/FATA out of its Rs 19100 million. Rs 1,354 million have been released for Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) out of its total allocations of Rs 5,000 million. The Planning Commission of Pakistan has been following a proper mechanism for the release of funds. The commission releases 20 per cent of funds in first quarter (July-September), 20 per cent in second quarter (October-December), 30 per cent third quarter (January-March) and 30 per cent in fourth quarter (April-June).

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/11/09/business/rs-99-821-billion-released-for-development-projects/>

“KPK, GB Chambers join United Business Group”

Daily Times, November 22, 2014

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chambers of commerce, Haripur, Gilgit-Baltistan and Dera Ismael Khan Chambers along with the trade associations, have

joined United Business Group (UBG) and announced to support Iftikhar Ali Malik in the annual elections of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI). Representatives of these chambers, associations along with Pakistan Gemstones and Mineral Association and All Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association, held meeting with United Business Group Chairman Iftikhar Ali Malik and announced their un-conditional support in the elections of FPCCI. They were of the view that United Business Group under the leadership of Iftikhar Ali Malik and SM Muneer will revive the dignity of FPCCI and would make it a truly trade representative body. They stated that FPCCI is the apex trade body of Pakistan, but during the last years it has not played its due role. It has failed to represent Pakistan at the international forum and has not made any efforts to promote regional trade with the neighbouring countries. They demanded that FPCCI should play its role in the promotion of trade activities in and outside the country and must solve the issues of business community. They also highlighted the corruption, dictatorship and one family rule in the FPCCI for the last 20 years.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/22-Nov-2014/kpk-gb-chambers-join-united-business-group>

International Developments

“U.S. extends financial adviser call for Pakistan's 4,500-MW Diامر Bhasha hydro project”

Hydroworld, October 31, 2014

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USTATED) has extended the deadline for bids to provide financial advisory services to the government of Pakistan for the proposed 4,500-MW Diامر Bhasha hydroelectric project on the Indus River. Bids now are due November 6. USTATED previously called for bids by October 27. It also called for bids by November 17 to perform a technical engineering review and upgrade of plans for Diامر Bhasha. The agency awarded a contract in September to MWH Global to perform an environmental and social impact assessment of Diامر Bhasha (also spelled Basha). USTATED announced in October it has pledged US\$200 million toward development of the project. Pakistan recruited firms in 2009 for design, construction supervision, and contract administration of Diامر 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. USTATED/Pakistan now seeks bids for financial advisory services in regard to financing Diامر Bhasha. Work is to include development of a financing strategy for the project, assistance in financing decision making and financial closure, and development of a computer-based financial model for the project. The work is expected to require one year at a cost of US\$2.5 million to US\$2.9 million.

<http://www.hydroworld.com/articles/2014/10/u-s-extends-financial-adviser-call-for-pakistan-s-4-500-mw-diامر-bhasha-hydro-project.html>

“UNESCO has called for entries for its Asia-

Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation”

The Express Tribune, November 26, 2014

“Submissions are now being accepted for the 2015 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation,” stated a press release issued from UNESCO Bangkok's Culture Unit on November 26. The deadline for receipt of submission is March 31, 2015, it added. According to the press release, the award recognises the efforts of private individuals and organisations that have successfully restored or conserved heritage sites. “It highlights the importance of the conservation process and recognises social impact and community in restoration projects,” the press release reads. This year, heritage sites which are over 50 years old and have been completed within the last 10 years will be eligible for consideration in the conservation category. The press release stated conservation works on houses, commercial and institutional buildings, historic towns and villages, archaeological heritage sites and cultural landscapes are eligible for entry. Since the award was established in 2000, UNESCO has received 562 entries from 24 countries. Moreover, efforts made to restore heritage sites in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have also been recognised by UNESCO. In 2013, Khaplu Palace in Baltistan won the Award of Distinction in UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/797752/conservation-unesco-invites-entries-for-heritage-awards/>

Murtaza Ali Shah, “Birmingham police force PPP to cancel meeting”

The News, November 16, 2014

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was forced to cancel a major rally at the last minute after the police told the organisers that it could not allow

PPP leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to attend the rally over serious security concerns. PPP leaders, led by Azad Kashmir leaders including Chaudhary Abdul Majeed and Chaudhary Yaseen, had campaigned for well over two weeks day and night across the UK in communities originally from Azad Kashmir to host Bilawal Bhutto in the second largest city of Britain but on November 15 the police took control of the hall and its outer gates where the rally was supposed to be held and shut off the entrance. The West Midlands Police confirmed that “in the last 48 hours, we received information which raised concerns over the safety of the event” and “these concerns were discussed with the venue and the organisers, who have since decided the meeting will go ahead as planned but without two of the original speakers.”

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34125-Birmingham-police-force-PPP-to-cancel-meeting>

“Japan donates \$100,000 for flood victims”

Daily Times, November 8, 2014

Japan has decided to provide \$100,000 (approximately Rs 12 million) to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent Societies (IFRC) to support those affected by the recent floods in Punjab, Azad Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Although two months have passed since the floods, the immediate needs of the affected people have not yet been met sufficiently. Japan's grant, in response to the IFRC's call for support, is expected to be used for procurement and distribution of 1,500 food packs (61kg each) by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) for the most deserving 1,500 families (about 10,500 individuals). While expressing his concern about serious damage in the flood-affected areas, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Hiroshi Inomata hoped that this humanitarian assistance would help in improving the living conditions of the affected people. He also recalled with gratitude Pakistan's kind support to Japan at the time of the great East Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and reiterated Japan's commitment to stand together with Pakistani people in times of difficulties.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/08-Nov-2014/japan-donates-100-000-for-flood-victims>

Other Developments

“Trophying hunt of Markhor to cost \$60,000”

Dawn, November 6, 2014

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan wildlife management board has announced licence fee for trophy hunting programme, 2014-15 for foreign and local hunters. Hunting permits for twelve markhors, 50 ibexes and eight blue sheep would be auctioned in the current month. The hunting season begins in November and ends in April, every year. The meeting fixed fee for international hunters at US dollar 60,000 for markhor, \$8,000 for blue sheep, and \$3,200 for ibex. For local hunters, licence fee was fixed at \$60,000 for markhor, \$11,000 for blue sheep, and \$10 for Ibex. It was also decided that the GB government would give 80 per cent of the proceeds to the respective local communities and the rest of 20 per cent would go to the government exchequer.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1142632/trophy-hunting-of-markhor-to-cost-60000>

“Road to Chitral Village restored after four years”

Dawn, November 6, 2014

The remote Sarghuz village near Mastuj town has been reconnected with rest of the district after four years as a jeepable suspension bridge destroyed by boulders has been rehabilitated. The Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) rebuilt the bridge at a cost of Rs5 million under its program for economic advancement and community empowerment (Peace) project. The local elders stated that the villagers, including women and children, had staged a hunger strike to press the government to rehabilitate the bridge, but to no avail. They lauded the SRSP for coming to their rescue and reconstructing the bridge. They stated that the people had to walk for two hours to reach Mastuj town to catch a vehicle for other parts of the district. They stated that the bridge also provided a short-cut

to the Laspur valley and onwards to Gilgit-Baltistan through Shandur Pass.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1142648/road-link-to-chitral-village-restored-after-four-years>

Shabbir Mir, “In a pickle: Grocery prices remain unaltered in Gilgit”

The Express Tribune, November 8, 2014

Though fuel prices have been slashed by the government, the benefit is yet to trickle down to the people in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Most of commodities are transported to G-B from Rawalpindi via the Karakoram Highway since the local food industry is not sufficient for subsistence. Prices double by the time the goods reach G-B, due to transportation costs based on the 600km journey. Altaf Hussain, a vegetable and fruit vendor, said retailers cannot reduce prices on their own. “We buy from fruit and vegetable markets and the prices there are still unchanged,” he added. Hussain said a dozen bananas cost him Rs70 which he sells at Rs85. Meanwhile in Rawalpindi, the same would cost a shopkeeper Rs50 at most, he explained. “The matter should be investigated seriously,” said G-B Minister for Minerals Muhammad Naseer. “We will take the issue up and ensure the relief is passed on to G-B,” he noted.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/787465/in-a-pickle-grocery-prices-remain-unaltered-in-gilgit/>

“GB highlands receive snowfall”

Dawn, November 8, 2014

Hilly areas in Gilgit-Baltistan on November 7 received first snowfall of the year, causing severe cold. Nadeem Shigri, a resident of Skardu, noted that usually harsh winter started in the region after November, but this year the weather turned extremely cold early. He stated that Skardu and adjoining areas had already received first snowfall

of the season, adding that local people faced difficulties as temperature dropped to as low as minus 12 to 14 centigrade in the winter season. GB director food, Momin Jan, noted that the department would dispatch basic commodities of life, including wheat, to the snow-bound areas in Skardu, Astore and Hunza-Nagar districts. He stated that Gultori, Manimarg, Kamari, Kashi, Franchat, Follok, Ginyar, and Hispar Nagar villages remained cut off from rest of the region during the winter months due to heavy snowfall from December to April as approach roads to these hamlets got blocked due to snow.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1143095/gb-highlands-receive-snowfall>

“MUST gets highest ratings”

The Nation, November 17, 2014

Mirpur University of Science & Technology has grabbed place among world-class varsities after clinching the highest 'W' rating status from the Higher Education Commission. The varsity won the laurel by jumping from the lowest 'Z' ranking status by securing 87.5 marks from the previous 31.4 marks following revolutionary progress, the varsity attained through the delivery of quality education. It had fully qualified the criteria set by the HEC, the regulatory authority in Pakistan responsible for maintaining the standard of the varsities in line with the international standard.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/17-Nov-2014/must-gets-highest-rating>

“Clearing Away: Anti-encroachment drive in Mirpur”

The Express Tribune, November 18, 2014

Authorities have announced to start a campaign against encroachments in Mirpur district in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Officials say in the first leg of the drive, the authorities will take the land of irrigation department back from illegal occupation of the land mafia. A meeting of the divisional authorities also decided to remove all encroachments at either side of the canals passing through Chachian, Jatlan, Pindi Saberwaal. The land was meant for the green belt and the road.

Officials stated removal of encroachments was necessary before widening the roads along the canals.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/792663/clearing-away-anti-encroachment-drive-in-mirpur/>

“Professionals, students from several nations attend THAAP Conference”

Daily Times, November 10, 2014

The third day of the conference “Culture, Art & Architecture of the Marginalized & the Poor” organized by THAAP in collaboration with University of Engineering and Technology and Higher Education Commission, Islamabad on November 9 was well attended by both professionals and the students as scholars, teachers and experts from Bangladesh, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, India, UAE, UK, USA and from various cities of Pakistan presented their research papers. A paper was presented by Muhammad Taseer Hussain titled Shaqq-An Archetypal House of Baltistan. The paper focused on the preservation and documentation of one of the traditional residential Architectural styles of Baltistan, locally known as Shaqq. It examined the original designs along with the changes caused by the influences of modernism and its impact on Baltistan (Balti) architecture and Baltistan (Balti) building traditions, in an attempt to preserve the wilting traditional architecture of Baltistan.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/punjab/10-Nov-2014/professionals-students-from-several-nations-attend-thaap-conference>

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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