

# POK

## News Digest

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

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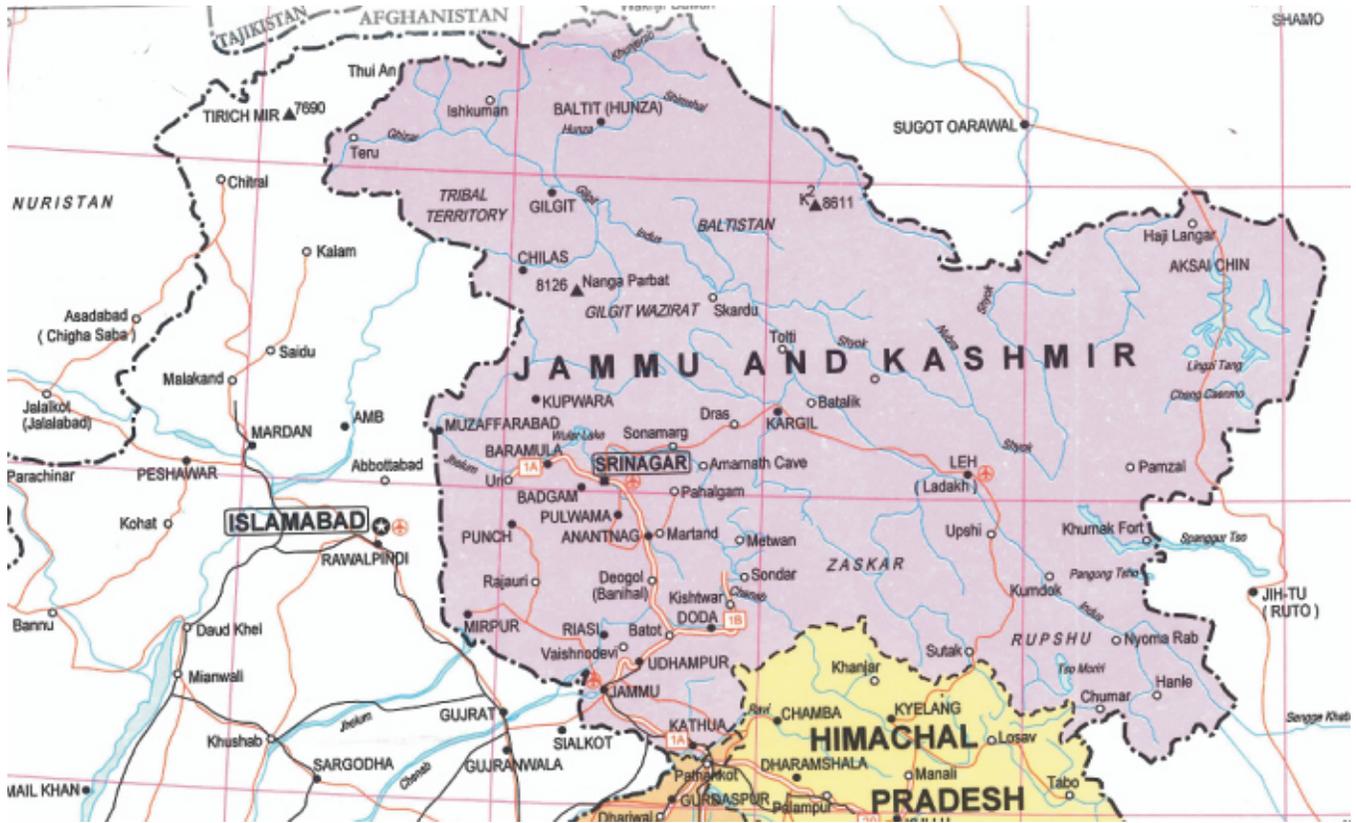
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## Jammu & Kashmir

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

## **In this Edition**

*In September 2015, footage of gross human rights violations in Pakistan occupied Kashmir were splashed across the Indian media. As evident from the news reports included in the current issue, the videos broadcasted on the news channels showed Pakistani authorities allegedly committing acts of violence against the common people in the region. Reports of Pakistan's highhandedness in PoK is not new. The latest series of video footages only underscores the fact that several such acts atrocities are committed on the hapless people living in PoK. The continuing political unrest in PoK was debated in the Indian media for a short while. However, since issues related to PoK do not find much traction within Indian media, reports of human rights violations and the ensuing debate on PoK, dissipated sooner than expected.*

*Reports in the current issue also discuss how Pakistan stands exposed on the condition of people living in PoK. The videos suggested that there is growing unrest in the PoK region, especially Gilgit Baltistan, and people are rising in opposition to Pakistan's highhandedness and illegal occupation in the region. While there is much debate on the human rights issue in Jammu and Kashmir, fed mostly by Pakistan's false propaganda against India, it is seldom that abysmal conditions prevailing in PoK are under some kind of scanner. In this regard, the media frenzy on PoK within India, even though short-lived, was a significant breakaway from the past. Here was an opportunity for India to turn focus on PoK and reiterate persuasively its claim on the region as part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. In the light of the fast changing geopolitical scenario, with China taking keen interest in building infrastructure projects across Pakistan via Gilgit Baltistan, it is imperative for India to revisit its policy on PoK and reinforce its claim on the region.*

**Priyanka Singh**

# Political Developments

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## **Anil Gupta, “The Dangerous Mountain Road”**

*Pioneer, October 1, 2015*

The Karakoram Highway in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir connects Abbottabad in Punjab to China's Xinjiang Province. It has obvious implications for India's security. New Delhi must respond by re-asserting its control on the Gilgit-Baltistan region. Karakoram Highway connects Abbottabad in Punjab (Pakistan) to Kashgar in the Xinjiang region of China across the Karakoram ranges. India has five mountain ranges which guard its northern frontier namely, the Karakoram Range, the Zaskar range, the Ladakh range, the Himalayan range and the Pir Panjal range. The northern most range of the mountain are the Karakoram mountains which also form the de facto border along which runs the Line of Actual Control. The Karakoram Highway is the highest paved strategic international road, which crosses the Karakoram ranges at Khunjerab Pass (15,397) and is presently a fair weather road. Karakoram Highway meanders through the Gilgit-Baltistan region (part of Jammu & Kashmir and presently in illegal occupation of Pakistan). Currently, work is in progress, to make it an all-weather road through construction of tunnels, widening of the road to thrice its present specification, construction of bridges and enhancing the load carrying capacity by three times. The highway initially was constructed jointly by Pakistan and China, but its upgradation is being undertaken by a Chinese company called China Bridge and Road Construction Company.

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/columnists/oped/the-dangerous-mountain-road.html>

## **“PIA directed to start flights between Skardu, Gilgit”**

*Dawn, October 1, 2015*

The Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court has

directed Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and Civil Aviation Authority (ACC) to start flight operations between Gilgit and Skardu airports on urgent basis. The court also served show case notice on two private airlines -- Shaheen Air and Airblue -- for not appearing for the hearing of suo motu notice taken by the court over not operating flights between Islamabad and Gilgit-Baltistan. During hearing of the case in Supreme Appellate Court registry branch Skardu on September 30, a division bench comprising Chief Judge Rana Muhammad Shamim and justice Raja Jalaludin observed that flight service between Gilgit and Skardu airports remained non-operational despite the directives of the court. The court showed annoyance over noncompliance of its order, issued earlier in 2015. The bench ordered PIA and ACC authorities to submit reply about flight service schedule between the two cities till next hearing. The manager of Skardu Airport and Civil Aviation Authority representative Obaidur Rehman Abbasi told the court that passengers were not available for flights between Skardu and Gilgit therefore PIA could not start air service.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1210124/pia-directed-to-start-flights-between-skardu-gilgit>

## **Pallavi Sengupta, “PoK unrest the beginning of a territorial war?”**

*One India, October 1, 2015*

What lay underneath ashes for centuries has finally emerged-the truth behind PoK. Pakistan's high claims about the residential status of the Kashmiris staying in PoK has come under the scanner after videos of atrocities have emerged. The recent protests in PoK where people have gathered in large numbers protesting against the Pakistani administration and demanding freedom. The videos may be exclusive to CNN-IBN, but the reality is universal. The very fact that PoK was enforced on

the people of Kashmir and what they are doing with the people is not hidden anymore. However, once divided, will the unrest in this region give rise to another territorial war? is something that needs speculation? Formation of the PoK, its history dates back to the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The British had left behind their suzerainty over princely states, that were allowed to choose any of the countries as their home or stay independent. This is where the territorial war began. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir wanted his state to remain independent, but was ridden by war cries from Poonch, Muzaffrabad and Mirpur. The region was proclaimed a provisional Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Rawalpindi on October 3, 1947. Then came the Pashtun tribals and unable to bear their military exigency, the Maharaja sought help from India. Following this, the Maharaja signed an Instrument of Accession by handing over defence, external affairs and communications to the Government of India in return for military aid and a promised referendum.

<http://www.oneindia.com/feature/is-pakistan-occupied-kashmir-unrest-the-beginning-of-a-territorial-war-1886396.html>

### **“Omar asks Pakistan to withdraw troops from Azad Kashmir first”**

*Kashmir Watch, October 2, 2015*

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah stated Pakistan was “fudging facts” regarding the UN resolutions on Kashmir as it was clear that it was supposed to first withdraw from all of the state, including the part occupied by it. “Will someone please remind Pakistan that as per these UNSC resolutions they were supposed to vacate ALL of J&K Ist,” he tweeted. Omar stated the sequence of UNSC resolution of 1948 was clear that Pakistan had to secure withdrawal of invaders from all of Jammu and Kashmir. “The sequence is very clear -first Pakistan secures withdrawal of invaders. #UNSC Res. 47 of 1948. Pak fudging facts,” he stated. Omar, the National Conference (NC) Working President, was referring to the statement made by Counsellor in Pakistan's Permanent Mission to the UN, Bilal Ahmad, in which he cited

various UN Security Council resolutions saying they call for an impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the world body in accordance with the will of the Kashmiris.

<http://kashmirwatch.com/news.php/2015/10/02/omar-asks-pakistan-to-withdraw-troops-from-azad-kashmir-first.html>

### **“People of Gilgit and Baltistan must be given equal legal rights as citizens of Pakistan”**

*Pakistan Today, October 2, 2015*

While speaking to an interactive session on 'Participatory Federalism and Citizens Empowerment' organized by Pakistan Study Group on Federalism at National Institute of Historical and Cultural Studies Qaud-e – Azam University, Islamabad, former member of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Council Dr Amjad Hussain Advocate stated that people of Gilgit and Baltistan must be given equal legal rights as citizens of Pakistan because depriving people of GB of their fundamental rights is worst kind of discrimination which must be redressed. In order to highlight the plight of people of Gilgit and Baltistan, he elaborated the fact that GB people could be employed in armed forces but they have no representation in National Assembly of Pakistan. Answering a question, he emphasized citizen participation in a democratic process to ensure the development, welfare and social progress of the country. According to him, currently there is not a single project reserved for GB out of 51 China Pak Economic Corridor. He expressed his views that lack of citizen participation and absence of protection of human rights poisons the relations of various communities which cause troubles and turmoil in the life of every citizen.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/10/02/national/people-of-gilgit-and-baltistan-must-be-given-equal-legal-rights-as-citizens-of-pakistan/>

### **Gurmeet Kanwal, “Pak Repression: Gilgit-Baltistan Residents Demand Balawaristan”**

*The Quint, October 3, 2015*

In keeping with the Modi doctrine, India continues to talk tough with Pakistan over Kashmir. Responding to Nawaz Sharif's four-point peace

initiative – demilitarisation of Kashmir, formalisation of ceasefire, affirmation of non-use of force and mutual withdrawal from Siachen – External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj told the UN General Assembly that only a single-point peace plan was needed, and that was for Pakistan to stop sponsoring terrorism. The emergence of videos showing the residents of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) being brutally beaten by the Pakistani security forces while protesting Pakistani occupation, provided an opportunity to India to call for Pakistan's withdrawal from PoK. Ever since it occupied PoK and the Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan), Pakistan has been ill-treating residents and denying them fundamental rights.

The perfidious employment of the hardy men of the Northern Light Infantry (NLI) as cannon fodder by the Pakistan army during the Kargil conflict still rankles in the minds of the people. Shortly before launching the ill-fated intrusions, the Pakistani army withdrew battalions from the Punjab, Baluch, Sindh and Frontier Force regiments from the LoC opposite Kargil district and replaced them with NLI battalions from the Northern Areas. Not only were the NLI soldiers considered expendable, the bodies of their dead comrades were moved at night to avoid publicity and they were not given ceremonial military funerals. A local leader noted that the authorities dumped our martyrs at our doors like logs of wood; they were mostly buried in the same civilian clothes in which they had left for the front line.

Residents of the Northern Areas also claimed that the wounded NLI soldiers were not provided with adequate medical attention. According to The Herald, “The anger of the people spilled into the streets of Hunza where activists of the Karakoram National Movement... openly raised slogans against the manner in which the Kargil operation was being handled. Trouble broke out in Skardu too when Al-Badr mercenaries forcibly tried to occupy a house to set up their office. The militants had to be ordered out of Skardu to appease the infuriated population.”

<http://www.thequint.com/opinion/2015/10/03/pak-repression-gilgit-baltistan-residents-demand-balawaristan>

## **“Quake-vulnerable Azad Kashmir areas see violation of building codes”**

*Daily Dunya, October 8, 2015*

Violation of building codes which were stressed after 2005 quake in Azad Kashmir continues as nearly 6,000 private and government installments have been repaired instead of abandonment. The government had provided specific designs and building codes for quake-vulnerable areas in Azad Kashmir. The designs permit two-storey buildings or less whereas the rule is being violated in Muzaffarabad City Development Authority's (CDA) precincts due to slackness of the system. The project aimed at building safer residential facilities for victims living in red zone areas has not been completed ten years after the deadly quake. The locals have built multi-storey buildings in quake-vulnerable areas while the administration is too busy to take notice of the matter.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/302873-Quakevulnerable-Azad-Kashmir-areas-see-violation->

## **“On way out, Manmohan gave Modi file on hush-hush Kashmir talks with Pakistan”**

*Pakistan Today, October 9, 2015*

Senior Indian diplomat says Pakistan, India were close to a deal on Kashmir in March 2007, before the lawyers movement started. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani military ruler General (r) Pervez Musharraf had hammered out a draft framework agreement on Jammu and Kashmir in secret talks, a senior Indian diplomat familiar with the negotiations noted. Files recording unsigned documents exchanged by the two sides were personally handed over to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by his predecessor at a May 27, 2014 meeting, the diplomat stated. The official spoke as former Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri is in New Delhi to release the Indian edition of his book, Neither a Hawk Nor a Dove — the first insider account of India-Pakistan secret diplomacy on Kashmir. The Indian negotiator stated the final draft of the framework agreement in fact spoke of a “consultative mechanism”, made up of elected representatives of the governments of

Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's Azad Kashmir, as well as officials of the two national governments. The consultative mechanism, he stated, was mandated to address regional “social and economic issues”, like tourism, religious pilgrimages, culture and trade.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/10/09/news/on-way-out-manmohan-gave-modi-file-on-hush-hush-kashmir-talks-with-pakistan-2/>

### **Gilbert Kolonko, “Unnecessary alarms”**

*The News, October 11, 2015*

After years of waiting, tourists are finally back in Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistanis are just starting to discover their own country during the three months of summer. Most hotels remain empty rest of the year. But there is a solution — a special Gilgit Baltistan visa for angrez (white men and women). There were only a handful of tourists in Karimabad in the summer of 2012 — mostly foreign backpackers who thought even Rs200 a room per night too expensive. This year after Eid-ul-Fitr, many domestic tourists from Punjab had to sleep in their cars or on the roadside — when even the Rs200 a room per night had been sold out at Rs6000 per night. But not all Hunza people change from angels to Murree-style businessmen overnight – a lot of travellers from Punjab noted that they got refuge at affordable rates or even for free in nearby villages. I am hopeful that the Karimabad people will find a compromise between humanity and the free-market next summer season.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/unnecessary-alarms/#.ViS6T9IrLGh>

### **“MQM chief Altaf Hussain sentenced twice life term by Gilgit court”**

*Daily Pakistan, October 13, 2015*

An anti-terrorism court in Gilgit has given twice life imprisonment to Muttahida Qaumi Movement chief Altaf Hussain besides imposing a fine Rs2.4 million on him. ATC judge Raja Sahabaz Khan announced the verdict on October 12 after the prosecutor told the court that the case against Altaf was registered for his hate speech against the army, national institutions and the integrity of the country. Earlier,

the court declared him a proclaimed offender and issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against him. The ATC judge announced the verdict after the exiled leader failed to appear in the court.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/mqm-chief-altaf-hussain-sentenced-twice-life-term-by-gilgit-court/>

### **“PWD bigwigs held over Rs 97.60m scam”**

*The Nation, October 13, 2015*

The AJK Accountability Bureau arrested two senior AJK PWD officers on the charges of embezzling Rs 97.60 million from the funds of a health project, sources stated. An AJK Accountability Bureau team headed by Director Investigation Sardar Musa Khan rounded up Executive Engineer Building Division Mazher Hussain and SDO Younis Shad from Mirpur for allegedly misappropriating the public money of Rs 97.60 million in with connivance of contractor Mian Muhammad Arif in the project of District Headquarters Hospital Palandri, the sources noted. Preliminary investigations into the alleged scam found the delivery of Rs250 million out of the total Rs 284.50 million DHQ Hospital projects, which is still under construction, following the inordinate delay in its completion within the stipulated time period, the sources added. Both the arrested officers were presently posted in Mirpur. The AJK AB team later took them to Muzaffarabad for further investigations. Social and political circles have appreciated AJK Accountability Bureau for nabbing the officials in the corruption charges.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/13-Oct-2015/pwd-bigwigs-held-over-rs97-60m-scam>

### **“PM reaffirms support for uplift of Gilgit Baltistan”**

*Daily Times, October 14, 2015*

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 13 stated that development and progress of Gilgit Baltistan was top priority of government. The prime minister expressed these views during his meeting with Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman, who called on him at the PM Office. He reaffirmed that the government would continue to extend its support for the uplift and progress of the social

sector of Gilgit Baltistan during the next five years. The chief minister also apprised Prime Minister Sharif about the pace of ongoing development projects in different parts of Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/14-Oct-2015/pm-reaffirms-support-for-uplift-of-gilgit-baltistan>

### **“Police all set to ensure peace in AJK”**

*The Nation, October 17, 2015*

A total of 3,180 police constables have been deputed at the requisite points across Azad Jammu & Kashmir to maintain complete peace and security during the month of Muharram, a police official stated. Addressing a news conference at the DIG Police offices complex, Inspector General of AJK Police Malik Khuda Buksh Awan noted, “An integrated security plan has been devised by AJK police to ensure maintaining the law and order during Muharramul Haram throughout AJK.” He stated, “The plan involves deployment of additional police force besides scouts and volunteers in all major cities and towns besides on all seven entry and exit points of Azad Jammu & Kashmir facing the neighbouring Punjab and the KPK provinces.” He added that SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for ensuring the complete security of the sensitive key installations across AJK has also been devised. “Ahead of the day of Ashura, 10th of Muharaamul Haraam, the security has been intensified across Azad Jammu & Kashmir to frustrate to maintain complete peace and tranquillity besides to frustrate any eventuality including any attempt of subversion and terrorism,” the AJK police chief stated. Malik Khuda Buksh Awan continued that over 3,100 police personnel will be posted at a total of 99 Imambargahs across AJK to maintain peace and order during the scheduled total of 1,286 Majalis.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/17-Oct-2015/police-all-set-to-ensure-peace-in-ajk>

### **“GB CEC suspends membership of 26 lawmakers”**

*The Nation, October 16, 2015*

Chief Election Commissioner Gilgit-Baltistan has suspended 26 members of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly, including Chief Minister

Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman, Speaker Fida Muhammad Nashad, Deputy Speaker Jafarullah and several ministers for failing to submit details of their assets. Chief Election Commissioner Gilgit-Baltistan Justice (Retd) Seyed Tahir Ali Shah issued orders to suspend the membership of the lawmakers who had not submitted details of their assets and liabilities to the commission within the stipulated time. The lawmakers will “cease to perform their functions till they submit the details of their assets,” the Chief election commissioner GB stated on October 15. He stated the lawmakers would be reinstated once they submitted the required information. According to the notification, the suspended parliamentarians include Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman speaker Fida Muhammad Nashad, Deputy Speaker Jafarullah, Senior Minister Muhammad Akbar Khan, Minister for Works Muhammad Iqbal, Minister for Excise & Taxation, Ferman Ali and Minister for Foods Haji Janbaz Khan. The ruling Pakistan Muslim leagu Nawaz (PML-N) topped the list of suspended lawmakers with 17 members. Islami Tehrik Pakistan (ITP) four members, Majlis Wahdat Muslimeem (MWM) two and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) each one member. One independent candidate was also included in the list of suspended lawmakers.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/16-Oct-2015/gb-cec-suspends-membership-of-26-lawmakers>

### **“Nap Helps Improve GB Law, Order: Hafeez”**

*Pakistan Observer, October 17, 2015*

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that the implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) has helped improve law and order situation in the province significantly. “Due to improved law and order, coupled with road infrastructure development, and better air services, more than 650000 tourists have visited Gilgit-Balitistan (GB) in last one year and three months. The number is the highest in the last 30 years,” he noted at a press conference held at the GB House. The chief minister stated currently the Gilgit-Baltistan was linked with the rest of the country by Karakorum Highway (KKH). Now highways such as Gilgit-Chitral Road, Shooter Pass Road, Skardu-

Muzaffarabad Road and Riakot-Babusar-Naran Kaghan Road would be constructed to reduce the reliance on the KKH, he further added. The road projects would cost some Rs 82 billion, he stated. Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman attributed the high inflow of tourists to the extensive coverage given to the area by both electronic and print media for the first time, highlighting its most fascinated and beautiful scenic vallies at domestic level as well as globally. He urged the media to support the GB government in its efforts for bringing the province at par with the developed areas of the country. He thanked Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for providing funds for the infrastructural development of the area.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=275967>

### **“Unauthorised cable TV channels shut down in Azad Kashmir”**

*Dawn, October 18, 2015*

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) administration stopped on October 17 transmissions of unauthorised cable television channels in the light of a decision made by a high-level official committee in connection with implementation of the National Action Plan on counter-terrorism. In a letter to the commissioner of Muzaffarabad division on October 17, the home department expressed displeasure over inaction regarding transmissions of cable TV channels despite a decision taken on June 3 by the apex committee headed by Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed. On 17 October, the commissioner issued strict orders to the three deputy commissioners of Muzaffarabad division to “immediately close unauthorised TV channels.” The commissioner noted he had directed the deputy commissioners of Muzaffarabad, Neelum and Hattian Bala districts on September 21 to close the TV channels operating without a licence. But no action was taken, which was a disregard to the decision of the apex committee and violation of the National Action Plan.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1213850/unauthorised-cable-tv-channels-shut-down-in-azad-kashmir>

### **“Nowhere in sight: Uighur families in G-B sans education funds”**

*The Express Tribune, October 20, 2015*

The education fund provided by China for Uighur families in Gilgit-Baltistan has not been distributed to the rightful beneficiaries for five months, raising some suspicion. According to insiders, the Chinese government provided Rs4.5million in 2015 to the G-B Chinese Overseas Association (G-BCOA). The latter is the representative body of over 100 Uighur families living in the region for decades. It is an effort by Beijing to support the education of its former citizens. The monetary support was first provided by China in 2010 through its embassy in Islamabad. Former Chinese residents still continue to receive assistance and it helps many families enrol their children to schools. “This money was supposed to be distributed among the families five months ago to enable them to pay tuition fee for school-going children,” a member of the Uighur community noted. “But that has not happened as there is the monopoly of a certain group in the G-BCOA,” he stated, requesting anonymity as this revelation could jeopardise his position in the community.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/975698/nowhere-in-sight-uighur-families-in-g-b-sans-education-funds/>

### **“GB CM lauds govt's dedication towards CPEC”**

*The Nation, October 21, 2015*

Gilgit Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman stated that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would prove game changer for the economy of this region. The chief minister stated this during a meeting with RCCI delegation at his office in Islamabad, informed RCCI spokesman Shakeel on October 20. According to him, the CM also appreciated the pace of work at this project. CM, while expressing his views on the infrastructure of Gilgit Baltistan, stated government was doing remarkable work to upgrade the infrastructure of this region and the completion of 7 km Tunnel Project in just 16 months was proof of federal government's dedication and sincerity

towards CPEC. He also welcomed the progress of tourism industry in GB that showed great acceleration in recent years. President RCCI Mian Humayun Parvez, during meeting with Chief Minister, appreciated the GB government progress to strengthen the economy and he also assured maximum support from business community to invest in the tourism and hotel industry in Gilgit Baltistan. RCCI senior vice president Saqib Rafiq and vice president Aqil Obaid were also present in the meeting.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/21-Oct-2015/gb-cm-lauds-govt-s-dedication-towards-cpec>

### **“Seven Kashmiri ministers likely to join PTI”**

*Daily Pakistan, October 21, 2015*

At least seven ministers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government are likely to join PTI following dissension in the ranks of Pakistan People's Party. The ministers are lobbying within the PPP-led government in AJK to persuade others to join PTI to contest upcoming election on its ticket. Two major parties Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz are expected to compete in upcoming general elections.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/seven-kashmiri-ministers-likely-to-join-pti/>

### **“Govt, not AJK Council, can appoint judges”**

*The Nation, October 22, 2015*

The Supreme Court of Azad Jammu & Kashmir has, in a reference filed by the AJK president seeking opinion of the apex court, stated that the government, not the AJK Council, is the authority to appoint the Chief Election Commissioner AJK. The apex court has observed that President of AJK shall appoint the Chief Election Commissioner of AJK on the advice of the government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. And the terms and conditions in respect of the office of the CEC of AJK shall be framed by the AJK Legislative Assembly, it decided. The full-bench of the learned apex court comprising Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan, Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Zia, Justice Raja Saeed Akram

Khan and Justice Masood Ahmed Sheikh, in their unanimous judgment acknowledged the competence of authority of the AJK Legislative Assembly regarding framing of terms and conditions in respect of the appointment of the AJK CEC. The reference had been filed by the president in exercise of his powers Under Section 46-A of the AJK Interim Act, 1974, about the advise for the appointment of Justice (r) Munir Ahmed Chaudhry, retired Judge of AJK High Court, as Chief Election Commissioner of Azad Jammu & Kashmir by the Chairman of AJK Council, for a period of one year and 17 days, the remaining period of his previous term of three years.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Oct-2015/govt-not-ajk-council-can-appoint-judges>

### **“Liberate PoK, Gilgit Baltistan: Panellists”**

*Web India, October 22, 2015*

The Centre should make concerted efforts to liberate Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan from Pakistan, stated panellists at a seminar organised. Speakers at a seminar organised by Jammu and Kashmir Unity Foundation (JKUF) on topic, 22nd Oct 1947 – “Pakistan Invasion Not Tribal Raid” unanimously raised a voice that time has come when Government of India should launch a concerted effort to liberate PoK, Gilgit and Baltistan. They stated that in resonance with each other that liberation of PoK, Gilgit and Baltistan entails nullifying the occupation of the area by Pakistan, adding that it also requires reversing the massive demographic invasion of that area from the Pakistani heartland. The speakers noted that there was a strong urge amongst the original inhabitants of Pok to seek liberation from Pakistani occupation. Their efforts and struggle requires an encouragement from the people of Jammu and Kashmir in India. It is also an imperative that Government of India extends unambiguous support diplomatically, politically and in any other way possible.

<http://news.webindia123.com/news/Articles/India/20151022/2708694.html>

## **Taimur Shamil, “Will Gilgit-Baltistan witness a peaceful Muharram this year?”**

*The Express Tribune, October 25, 2015*

As the Himalayan peaks witnessed their first snowfall, I was automatically reminded of my days in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). I turned towards the window overlooking the silhouette of mountains, and I wondered whether Gilgit will witness a peaceful Muharram in 2015. Gilgit, being the capital of the province, is home to a fair representation of all sects; Sunnis, Shias, Ismailis and Noor Bakhsis. During Muharram, streets are thronged with men, women and children making their way to various majalis and processions. “We climb the mountains around Gilgit valley to illuminate the name of Imam Hussain (RA), drawn out with candles,” stated a young Ali Madad. Attendance at offices remains thin during the days of mourning as more and more Shias throng to the Azaa daari. The processions make their way through the twisting streets of Gilgit city, with hundreds of mourners remembering the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (RA). Taazia (a replica of Imam Hussain's (RA) shrine) and Zuljinah (symbolic of the horse Imam Hussain (RA) rode into the Battle of Karbala) are brought out on the main procession and sabeels (milk and water stalls) line the way of the procession. “We arrange sabeels for the mourners and hope for God's mercy in return,” stated Muhammad Ali while mourners chanted their words. The mourners wear expressions of deep sorrow and heart wrenching grief. While mourners slowly move toward the city's biggest Imambargah, the Imamia Masjid, personnel of law enforcement agencies stand alert on rooftops and along the route of the procession, which prodded me to ask a policeman.

<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/29927/will-gilgit-baltistan-witness-a-peaceful-muharram-this-year/>

## **“Outstanding performance: Police officers to be rewarded”**

*The Express Tribune, October 26, 2015*

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government will confer medals and cash awards on 9 police

officers including two junior officials as an acknowledgment of their outstanding performance, official sources stated on October 25. AJK President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob will confer the medals and cash awards at a ceremony to be hosted at the Kashmir House in Islamabad on October 27, the sources stated. Officers nominated for the awards include Mirpur Division DIG Dr Khalid Mahmood Chauhan, Mirpur SSP Raja Irfan Salim, Muzaffarabad Headquarters DIG Sardar Gulfraz Khan, Mirpur Headquarters DSP Khawaja Abdul Qayyum, Bhimber Headquarters DSP Raja Nadim Arif, Bhimber Sub-Inspector (SI) Muhammad Sagheer (late), Bhimber SI Ashfaq Hussain and driver Allah Ditta of Bhimbher district police. The sources stated SSP Salim has been simultaneously nominated for the Quaid-e-Azam Police Medal and the President Police Medal while the rest have been nominated for the President Police Medal along with cash awards.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/979035/outstanding-performance-police-officers-to-be-rewarded/>

## **“GB governor announces relief package for quake victims”**

*Daily Times, October 28, 2015*

In order to rehabilitate the earthquake victims, Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Governor and Kashmir Affairs Minister Barjees Tahir on October 27 announced financial relief of Rs 500,000 for the martyred and Rs 150,000 for the injured. Acting on the directions of the Premier Nawaz Sharif, Tahir surveyed by air the earthquake affected regions, attended to the injured at DHQ hospitals in Chalas, Gakoach and Gilgit.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/28-Oct-2015/gb-governor-announces-relief-package-for-quake-victims>

## **“Hafeez Ur Rehman's Interview with Geo: whom did he represent?”**

*Dardistan Times, October 29, 2015*

The Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Mr. Hafiz Hafeez Ur Rehman appeared on GEO television for an interview with Saleem Safi. It was an opportunity for him to lay out the case of Gilgit-Baltistan on a larger scale with an impact. Did he

miss it? Controversies aside, GEO TV is one of the largest television networks in Pakistan. Politicians do not sit in front of camera without preparation. No political party would want trouble caused by an unprepared politician on a national television. Hafeez Ur Rehman must have been briefed and coached on what to say and what not to. His mentors in Islamabad not only have a political authority over him but people like Ahsan Iqbal will straighten every twist of Hafeez's tongue before he opens his mouth to utter something in front of Saleem Safi. Do you remember the interview between Talat Hussain and Nawaz Sharif and the way Ahsan Iqbal was trying to spoon-feed his party leader? Well, then how can you expect the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan to represent his people more than he represents Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistani establishment. We can just hope that he went on a solo drive. Even so, it looked a race for others. In the interview, Hafeez Ur Rehman told most lies with the famous sentence, Allah Ke Fazlu Karm Say, literally imitating Nawaz Sharif. What he and his party notables did not have control over were the questions that the people of the region ask and Salim Safi did a great justice with the questions.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/gilgit-baltistan/news/1116497804/hafiz-ur-rehman-s-interview-geo-jirga-saleem-safi>

### **Shabbir Mir, “Raising the pen: Social activist battles for women's education”**

*The Express Tribune, October 29, 2015*

Social activist Khan Muhammad Qureshi from Diamer Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan launched a campaign to educate girls in his area. Qureshi belongs to a valley where only 1% of the 0.1 million women are literate. According to Alif Ailaan's 2015 Pakistan District Education Rankings report, Diamer is ranked 95 out of 144 districts with a 46 score for gender parity. “Girls education is my dream, but I understand the overall situation is quite challenging,” Qureshi noted on October 28. “I hold the government more responsible than clerics or politicians,” he added. Qureshi is running his campaign through the Himalayan Conservation and Welfare Movement; a registered body. A report titled 'State of Children in Pakistan' released by

UNICEF stated that distance, culture and a bias against girls' education had a serious impact. The issue was particularly pronounced in Diamer.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/981733/raising-the-pen-social-activist-battles-for-womens-education/>

### **“Tourism in G-B experiences revival this year”**

*The Express Tribune, October 31, 2015*

Wider roads, an improved air service and better security have resulted in a tourism bonanza for Gilgit-Baltistan in the year 2015. Over half a million tourists have visited the northern areas of Pakistan. Tourists have taken any and every possible means of transportation to get to the lush green valleys with raging rivers and snow-capped peaks. Thousands of visitors flocked to some of the most popular destinations including Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Nagar, Ghanche, Astore, Diamer and Ghizer. Tourism in the region plummeted after a number of violent incidents took place around Gilgit and the surrounding valleys. Officials believe by improving communication infrastructure and upgrading facilities, more tourists are likely to visit the region in 2016. Already, over 90% tourists in G-B arrived by road over the majestic Karakoram Highway (KKH). The prime minister has directed the widening of roads between Gilgit and Skardu in addition to upgrading airports in the two cities on an immediate basis.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/982315/into-the-valley-tourism-in-g-b-experiences-revival-this-year/>

# Economic Developments

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## **“Cross LoC trade resumes on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route”**

*The Nation, October 14, 2015*

Cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route resumed on October 14 after remaining suspended for weeks. "The trade between the two sides of Kashmir on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road resumed on October 14 following authorities of Azad Kashmir lifted ban for illegal items," officials stated. 25 trucks carrying goods from Jammu and Kashmir crossed Chakoti-Orrri Peace Bridge and entered into Azad Kashmir while 7 trucks from this side of Kashmir entered into Indian occupied Kashmir. Azad Kashmir authorities suspended the cross-LoC trade after complains of trade of illegal items which were not included in trade items list agreed by both sides.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/14-Oct-2015/cross-loc-trade-resumes-on-srinagar-muzaffarabad-route>

## **“G-B govt to purchase wheat from local farmers”**

*The Express Tribune, October 2, 2015*

The Gilgit-Baltistan government has decided to purchase wheat from local farmers at lucrative rates and steer clear of buying the crop from Punjab. This was announced at a news conference at Gilgit Press Club on October 1. Speaking on the occasion, G-B Food Secretary Rai Manzoor, who spearheaded the move, stated the decision was made during a recent cabinet meeting chaired by G-B Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman. G-B has always purchased wheat from Punjab. The move will break the cast and establish a new trend in the purchase of wheat. "Overall, this is a revolutionary step as thousands of families directly linked with the agricultural sector will benefit from it," he stated. "The government plans to purchase one bag of 100 kilogramme of wheat for Rs4,200."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/965913/g-b-govt-to-purchase-wheat-from-local-farmers/>

## **“Projects worth Rs200b on the cards for G-B”**

*The Express Tribune, October 9, 2015*

Development projects worth Rs200 billion are being initiated in Gilgit-Baltistan, stated Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman. He was speaking to the media in Gilgit on October 8. "Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has shown a keen interest in ensuring the welfare of the people of G-B," stated Rahman. "Plans to establish a university in Baltistan, initiate a hydel power project at Hainzal and open schools in various districts serve as welcome proof of this commitment." According to the chief minister, 17 MWs of electricity will be added to the grid over the next 100 days. "Rescue 1122 services will be extended to other parts of the region," he further stated. "This will include Diamer and Ghanche." The chief minister added Nawaz has increased the G-B government's limit to approve development projects from Rs400 million to Rs750 million. "The decision was made during the PM's visit to Gilgit in September," (2015), he stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/969863/rapid-progress-projects-worth-rs200b-on-the-cards-for-g-b/>

## **“Gemstone business can generate good revenue”**

*The Nation, October 11, 2015*

Chairman Pakistan Gemstone and Minerals Association (PGMA) Gilgit Baltistan Muhammad Ali stated on October 10 that if the government will cooperate properly with the stockholders and businessmen of Gemstones then handsome revenue could be generated from the sector. He stated that most of the countries like Bangkok, Malaysia, Singapore did not impose any tax on the trade of gemstones and they are providing facilities of training of the traders also free of cost.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/11-Oct-2015/gemstone-business-can-generate-good-revenue>

### **“AJKCCI new body elected”**

*The Nation, October 12, 2015*

Sohaib Saeed Chaudhry has been elected unopposed as the president of the Azad Jammu Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry for one year. Similarly, Raja Khalid Mehmood and Kamal Mustafa were elected unopposed respectively as Senior Vice President and Vice President of the Chamber for the same period in the elections held on October 11. Newly elected Senior Vice President Raja Khalid Mehmood Khan retained the same office for the second term to serve the chamber. None of the rival candidates jumped to contest against the office bearers of the AJKCCI by the end of the stipulated date fixed for filing of the nomination papers for the elections to the AJKCCI, the sole prime forum of the local business community of Mirpur district. A conference was held to raise awareness about book reading. As chief guest, Deputy Inspector General Police Dr Khalid Chauhan was the Chief Guest delivered a speech.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/12-Oct-2015/ajkcci-new-body-elected>

### **Zeeshan Ghayur, “GB governor approves construction of Rs700m road”**

*Daily Times, October 14, 2015*

In order to facilitate the local inhabitants and meet business needs, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Governor and Kashmir Affairs Minister Barjees Tahir on October 13 approved the construction of a road, worth Rs 700 million, from Tangli Gala to Grapeta Par. Chairing a session on financial matters of the Executive Development Committee (EDC) in the federal capital, Tahir approved the construction of the aforementioned road and stated that the incumbent regime is making all efforts required for developing the GB region, adding that the road construction would be completed within 36 months. He stated that the population of 150,000 would benefit from the road, adding that the road would provide help in effective defence of the region and would also promote tourism. Tahir instructed the bureaucracy for keeping transparency in the matter and held that the quality of the road should be the best. He stated that the road construction would be

undertaken as per the weather conditions, adding that the road would remain effective through all climate conditions.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/14-Oct-2015/gb-governor-approves-construction-of-rs700m-road>

### **“Kalabagh Dam, six other water reservoirs being planned: Asif”**

*The News, October 14, 2015*

Federal Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Muhammad Asif told the Senate on October 13 that seven water reservoir projects, including the controversial Kalabagh Dam, were under consideration. In a written reply to a question by PML-N Senator Nuzhat Sadiq, the minister also stated that the detailed design and tender documents of the Kalabagh Dam had been completed since 1988 and the implementation/ construction work on the project could be started once a decision was taken by the government. He pointed out that four water projects, including the Pelar Dam, Papin Dam, Winder Dam and Garuk Dam, were ready for implementation. The minister noted that five projects were under implementation, namely Darawat dam, Nai Gaj Dam, Kurram Tangi Dam, Naulong Dam and Diamer Basha Dam. Asif conceded it was a fact that during the monsoon season, the unused quantum of water flowed to the sea because of water storage constraints and the average (1976-2015) quantum of water annually escaping to the sea was 29.30 million acre feet (MAF).

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40175-Kalabagh-Dam-six-other-water-reservoirs-being-planned-Asif>

### **“PTA announcement: Spectrum auction for AJK and G-B on December 4”**

*The Express Tribune, October 17, 2015*

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) announced that it will hold a spectrum auction of wireless local loop (WLL) licenses for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) and Gilgit Baltistan (G-B) regions on December 4. According to an Information Memorandum (IM) – a policy document for the auction on the PTA website – the telecom sector's regulatory body will award two

licences of 5Megahertz (MHz) each in the 1,900MHz band at a base price of Rs56 million, Rs12 million and Rs8 million for Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and northern areas, respectively. The 1,900 MHz band is used in both 2G and 4G technology. The PTA will also auction two 30MHz unpaired lots in 3.5GHz band at a base price of Rs8 million, Rs3.2 million and Rs3.2 million for Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and northern areas, respectively.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/974687/pta-announcement-spectrum-auction-for-ajk-and-g-b-on-december-4/>

### **“AJK Govt demands 200% increase in water user charges after raise in power tariff”**

*Pakistan Today, October 21, 2015*

Azad Jammu and Kashmir government demanded the federal government to increase water user charges from fifteen paisa per unit to forty five paisa per unit. The demand was made by the AJK Hydel Power department in a letter to NEPRA. This information was given to the Senate Standing Committee on Water and Power during its meeting

under the chairmanship of Iqbal Zafar Jhagra. The meeting was told that the AJK government has drawn the attention that despite increase in electricity tariff, rates for water usage have not been raised which is injustice to the government. Member of the Committee Senator Ijaz Dhamra strongly protested over not taking up the issue of Nandipur power plan by the committee. He demanded that it was an important matter and must be discussed by the committee. He stated he would submit a requisition to debate the issue. He also stated that HESCO in Thatta was sending extra bills to the consumers and the officials were sending bills while sitting in their offices instead on the spot checking of actual consumption. On a question by Senator Taj Haider, Secretary Water and Power told the committee that royalty and water user charges were being paid to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/10/21/national/ajk-govt-demands-200-increase-in-water-user-charges-after-raise-in-power-tariff/>

# International Developments

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## **Ijaz Kakakhel, “Japan helps GB farmers increase profits”**

*Daily Times, October 13, 2015*

With assistance of the Japanese government, the farmers' incomes in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) have increased, as they were trained to make value addition to their hard produce. The GB fruit growers were given proper training of their organic fruit products through good packaging and better marketing techniques. The Japanese government provided technical and financial support, which helped increase farmers' incomes. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been working on a four-year pilot project for "Promotion of Value Added Fruit Products in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)" in Pakistan since August 2012 in the target areas of Baltistan and Hunza-Nagar, the areas where around half of their products always went wasted before the project being implemented, stated JICA Senior Programme Officer Amir Bukhari in a press briefing arranged by the Japanese Embassy on October 12. He stated after introduction of marketing techniques, value addition, packaging and branding, the farmers' products are now getting good price without any waste. "Earlier, not only their production was low, but also yielded low price for their produce. Now, they are getting much better price and their incomes have increased several folds," Bukhari stated.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/13-Oct-2015/japan-helps-gb-farmers-increase-profits>

## **“Italy to provide €25 million for agricultural development in Gilgit Baltistan”**

*Daily Pakistan, October 17, 2015*

A delegation led by Director Development Cooperation, Embassy of Italy Dr Domenico Bruzzone called on Chief Secretary Gilgit-

Baltistan Tahir Hussain in Gilgit. During the meeting Dr Bruzzone assured Mr Hussain that government of Italy will invest €25 million in agricultural sector of Gilgit Baltistan. He also highlighted areas of potential technical collaborations and future interventions and expressed interest of Italian cooperation in the hydro projects in GB. The Chief Secretary welcomed delegation and appreciated contribution of Italian Government and people for support in Gilgit-Baltistan in various sectors.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/business/italy-to-provide-e25-million-for-agricultral-development-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

## **“Vice President European Parliament Concerned About Environment in Gilgit-Baltistan”**

*PRNews Wire, October 26, 2015*

In a letter written to the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Ryszard Czarnecki, Vice President, European Parliament highlighted his concerns about the Chinese Investment Projects in Gilgit-Baltistan, flouting environmental norms. In Gilgit-Baltistan, China is involved in the construction of large-scale dams, telecommunication development and mining activities. It is constructing highways and railroad systems between Xinjiang and the port cities of Karachi and Gawadar through Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Kashmir. This corridor will enable the flow of Iranian fuel northward into Xinjiang as well as Kazakh and Russian gas into Pakistan. Both the Chinese and Pakistani governments characterize these efforts as revolutionizing economic development of Pakistan. Despite these rosy claims, many such projects have led to increased insecurity and confrontations between Chinese developers and the locals in Gilgit-Baltistan. It has come to notice that there is a lot of resentment

among locals in the region of Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Kashmir over the perceived negative environmental impact. The companies assigned the job of managing and operating these heavy investment projects have not been tasked by the government to take care of environmental concerns. As part of the work, most goods are transported using vehicles that cause air pollution, and a huge human health cost has been incurred as a result of this project. The noise generated by machinery during construction of the project, and by vehicles responsible for transporting goods, is also a potential nuisance for people residing in the region. The locals have protested many times, but the Government of Pakistan has turned a deaf ear to their voices and arrested the activists. Therefore, the European Parliament should urgently look into the concerns of the citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/vice-president-european-parliament-concerned-about-environment-in-gilgit-baltistan-537121901.html>

### **“Alberto Cirio MEP Concerned About Chinese Army in Gilgit Baltistan”**

*PRNews, October 31, 2015*

Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Alberto Cirio released a letter to the media which was marked to Mr. Martin Schulz, President of

the European Parliament. China has embarked upon a series of investments in two of the prominent regions of Pakistan, mainly Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Kashmir. On the pretext of ensuring the safety of their workers, the Chinese have rapidly increased their military presence in the region. The presence of Chinese soldiers is also supposed to have a deterrent effect on possible challenges to Pakistani rule by the local population in both the provinces, which are seething with discontent against the Pakistani government. Chinese army personnel are present in Gilgit-Baltistan and are directly involved in creating a divide between Shia and Sunni. It is a threat not only to locals but for the entire region. Similarly, the presence of Chinese troops in Pakistan Administered Kashmir indicates a worrying alliance. It is an alliance that has the potential of threatening the stability of the region. The presence of Chinese troops in the Gilgit-Baltistan region also raised the question as to why Pakistan encourages the presence of Chinese soldiers, when it has always objected to the presence of Western forces on its territory and in its neighbourhood. The European Parliament should set up a mechanism to investigate the adverse efforts of the presence of the Chinese Military in Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/alberto-cirio-mep-concerned-about-chinese-army-in-gilgit-baltistan-537121901.html>

# Other Developments

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## **“Hashoo Foundation to promote culture, sectarian harmony”**

*The News, October 28, 2015*

Hashoo Foundation in collaboration with Centre for Culture and Development (CKU) has initiated a series of events from 31st July- 31st December, 2015, in Hunza, Gilgit and Chitral. The objective of these events is to help reduce the poverty and marginalisation of artisans and craftsmen/women by introducing them to means, skills and resources in effectively organizing themselves both socially and economically. In order to achieve the above-mentioned objective, 19 traditional festivals and one gala have been planned to revive and serve as a driver for cultural renewal and peace building. Out of which, festivals namely 'Hoper Festival (13th

September)', 'Two Day Traditional Cultural Show - Ghakuch Balla, District Ghizer (19th - 20th September)', 'Two Day Traditional Cultural Festival- Gupis, District Ghizer (3rd- 4th October)', Inauguration of a traditional music school- Aliabad (7th October), 'One Day Local Level Festival Binisik (13th October)and 'One Day Local Level Festival The mshaling (13th October)', have already been taken place. These festivals had all the cultural recipes one would love to see, which include traditional dances, shina and khower songs, folk comedy and folk dramas, traditional food stalls, women honey business group stalls and culinary art stalls.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-347983-Hashoo-Foundation-to-promote-culture-sectarian-harmony>

# 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,, 010)

## 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:** Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

**Chief Minister G-B:** Hafiz Hafiz-ur-Rehman

**Political Parties and Groups:** Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Sources: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk>, & website of the Balwaristan National Front, <http://www.balawaristan.net>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

**Disclaimer**

*PoK News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.*

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