

POK News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh &
Dr Yaqoob-ul Hassan

• Political Developments

- Gilgit-Baltistan is Pivotal to CPEC, Says Mushahid
- Provincial Status for GB to Imperil Kashmir Cause
- JKLF Opens Office in Gilgit-Baltistan
- Gilgit-Baltistan will Remain Part of Disputed JK, Pak Envoy Tells Mirwaiz
- Pakistan Army to Establish HQ in Diamer District to Ensure CPEC Security
- Justice Mustafa Mughal Takes Oath as Azad Kashmir CEC

• Economic Developments

- AJ&K Agree to Raise Power Tariff
- Kashmir Traders Meet on LoC
- Import, Export Hub: 15 Traders' Bank Accounts Frozen at Sost Branch

• International Developments

- US Tacitly Supporting Chinese Investments in PoK, Gwadar Port: Sources
- International Seminar and Photographic Exhibition to Mark Kashmir Solidarity Day in Sri Lanka

• Other Developments

- Biodiversity Action Plan: AJK Govt, Power Company to Manage Mahaseer Park

• Urdu Media

- Too Early to Say Whether Gilgit-Baltistan will Become a Fifth Province
- CPEC Matter of Life and Death for the People of the Region: Mehdi Shah





Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

The much anticipated China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) worth \$ 46 billion is being referred to as a game changing project that will resurrect the dwindling economic situation of Pakistan. The massive connectivity project will cross through Gilgit Baltistan, part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir, and the only land link between the all-weather allies-China and Pakistan. Since the announcement of the CPEC project, there has been animated debate within Pakistan on the probable route it would take-eastern, western or central and in each case who could be the actual beneficiaries. Simultaneously, there is an emerging concern within Gilgit Baltistan on what the CPEC has in store for the region. The overall lack of transparency in the project allocations within the CPEC and the failure of the Pakistan government to provide a clear road map to Gilgit Baltistan vis a vis the CPEC, has been a source of rising concern amongst local people. Such apprehensions have been voiced by the local political leadership of the region as indicated in reports included in the current issue. Also included in the current issue are reports that show how the Pakistani leadership at the federal level is trying to tide over such concerns by noting that Gilgit Baltistan is crucial to the upcoming strategic connectivity corridor.

Despite such assurance given by Pakistan towards Gilgit Baltistan's criticality to the CPEC, fact remains that apart from announcing a couple of special economic zone (SEZs) in the region as part of the CPEC (that too after considerable political pressure was applied from the region), nothing concrete has been finalized yet as far as big ticket projects are concerned. People in Gilgit Baltistan are increasingly becoming wary of the reality that the lack of constitutional and a definite political status will potentially deprive them of benefits accruing from the CPEC.

As noted, being the only land link between China and Pakistan, the CPEC could not be conceived without crossing through Gilgit Baltistan territory. Even before the CPEC came into being, Gilgit Baltistan continued to serve as the vital link on which the Sino- Pakistan strategic partnership thrived over several decades.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

M A Mir, “AJK premier slaps civic agency official”

The Express Tribune, February 1, 2016

In a bizarre yet telling incident of the strained relationship between the bureaucracy and the executive, the prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Chaudhry Abdul Majeed reportedly slapped an officer of the Mirpur Development Authority (MDA) for his alleged failure to address public complaints, only to call him back to his office and offer an apology when the official threatened to expose the premier and his sons for their alleged corruption. The incident that took place at the PM's residence in Mirpur on January 30 could best be described as an apparent patch-up of convenience between a bureaucrat who has failed to deliver and an executive running short of ideas. Official sources and an eyewitness noted that the rebuke saw the MDA officer threaten the prime minister of spilling the beans about him and his sons' involvement in the affairs of the civic agency and alleged wrongdoings during the last four-and-a-half years. The sources further stated that the MDA Estate Officer Imran Shaheen tried his best to give clarifications but in response he received a slap from the prime minister in the presence of other officers at the meeting.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1037866/knee-jerk-fix-ajk-premier-slaps-civic-agency-official/>

“Gilgit-Baltistan is pivotal to CPEC, says Mushahid”

The Nation, February 1, 2016

A 19-member delegation of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly led by Speaker Fida Nashad met Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Parliamentary Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) at Parliament House on February 1. The Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly members representing five political parties from both the ruling and opposition parties requested the

meeting to have their perspective on CPEC. According to press release, in the 2 hours meeting which included a lunch hosted by Senator Mushahid Hussain for the visiting members of the GB Assembly, Senator Mushahid Hussain underlined that the CPEC was a national, strategic project spanning 15 years and this project is above any person, parties, province or even government and all the provinces and regions for Pakistan would benefit through CPEC. Referring to the important role of Gilgit-Baltistan in the context of Pakistan-China relations, Senator Mushahid Hussain assured the GB Assembly members that Gilgit-Baltistan is very much part of the CPEC because Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway into Pakistan for China from its province of Xinjiang. He stated that Gilgit-Baltistan was not just of strategic importance but it had tremendous economic potential for the whole region and he stated that the hydro power resources of Gilgit-Baltistan as well as infrastructure, tourism can change the face of the region as well as Pakistan as a whole. He also stated that Gilgit-Baltistan provides connectivity not only to China but it also provides connectivity to Central Asia through Tajikistan.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Feb-2016/gilgit-baltistan-is-pivotal-to-cpec-says-mushahid>

Zia Ur Rehman, “Kashmir polls fever starts gripping parties in Karachi”

The News, February 3, 2016

Political parties become active for two AJK Legislative Assembly seats reserved for Kashmiris living in Sindh. At his office in Quaidabad, Sardar Mufti Naseer Ahmed, a Kashmiri political activist associated with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, is busy gathering the data of his community members living in the area. For the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections expected in May or July 2016, political parties' Karachi chapters have become active in the city's

Kashmiri-populated neighbourhoods to win the two seats there reserved for the community members and refugees living in Sindh. The LA-30 (Jammu-I) is a constituency reserved for Kashmiris belonging to AJK and it comprises Sindh and five divisions of Punjab. In the 2011 elections, there were 68,000 votes in the LA-30. Around 35,000 of them were in Karachi, noted some Kashmiri leaders in the city. In the last polls held in July 2011, Muttahida Qaumi Movement candidate Tahir Khokhar secured the LA-30 seat by begging 30,620 votes, defeating PML-N's Abdul Rasheed Mirza, who received 18,301 votes. The LA-36 (Kashmir Valley I) is a constituency reserved for Kashmiris from Jammu and Kashmir who had migrated in the 1940s and 1950s. There are 6,200 voters, including over 4,000 in Karachi, while the rest are in Quetta and the rural districts of Sindh. MQM candidate Saleem Butt had won that seat in 2011 by bagging 4,633 votes.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/95700-Kashmir-polls-fever-starts-gripping-parties-in-Karachi>

“Rental power case: Remand of former AJK president's son extended”

The Express Tribune, February 3, 2016

An accountability court extended on February 2, physical custody remand of the son of former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) president for six days to the national anti-graft body. Raja Babar Ali Zulqarnain will remain in the custody of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Judge Nisar Baig extended the remand after NAB officials produced him before the court. Zulqarnain was arrested on January 21 from the premises of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) following the dismissal of his bail application in connection with the rental power project case. According to the anti-corruption body, Zulqarnain, who is also an elected member of the AJK legislative assembly, made the contractual arrangement between the federal government and a private company for electricity supply through a ship-mounted power facility. Zulqarnain was appointed to act as the local representative for the Karkey Karadeniz Elektrik Uretim a Turkish company which set up a power plant onboard a ship berthed at the Karachi port to provide electricity to the national grid and logistical

support to the visiting representatives of the company.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1039083/rental-power-case-remand-of-former-ajk-presidents-son-extended/>

“Provincial status for GB to imperil Kashmir cause”

The Nation, February 3, 2016

Former AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed asked the Pakistan government not to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth province of Pakistan, stating that the proposed move would weaken the Kashmir Cause at the international level. He was talking to the different delegations at the office of Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights (PCSWHR) during his two-day visit to Sialkot. PCSWHR Chairman Ejaz Noori was also present on the occasion. Sardar Attique Ahmed also stressed a need for promoting true and strong democracy in both Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Pakistan. He stated that the strong democracy could help take up the Kashmir dispute at the international forums effectively. He also urged the UN to ensure early implementation of its resolutions for the peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. He noted the Kashmir Issue has reached near its peaceful amicable solution as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Feb-2016/provincial-status-for-gb-to-imperil-kashmir-cause>

“Protests on KKH in Abbottabad banned”

The News, February 3, 2016

The district administration decided to declare strategic Karakoram Highway (KKH) limits in the city as 'Red Zone' for holding protests and designated a space at the Jinnah Park for all such meetings. This was decided at a review meeting of traffic management convened in the Deputy Commissioner's Office on February 2. Abbottabad Deputy Commissioner Khalid Mehmood presided over the meeting. The deputy commissioner confirmed the decision to the media and stated a notification would be issued soon. The official noted the strategic highway in Hazara Division

linking it with Gilgit-Baltistan is a lifeline for the upcoming China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. “We have initiated regular consultative meetings with all the stakeholders including elected representatives, line departments, lawyers, journalists, traders and general public in the last six months to overcome different problems facing the city,” he added.

He also added that the traffic management plan, shifting of van and Suzuki stands inside the city other issues were discussed in length and decisions taken with the consultation of all the stakeholders. He further stated different roads in TMA & Cantonment areas were cleared for smooth flow of traffic and parking places were identified in the city.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/95715-Protests-on-KKH-in-Abbottabad-banned>

Shabbir Mir, “Convoy system along KKH ends”

The Express Tribune, February 3, 2016

The convoy system on Karakoram Highway (KKH) was finally scrapped on February 2, putting an end to the travel woes of passengers who frequently take the route. Under the system, which existed since 2012, 50 to 100 vehicles were required to move in groups from Gilgit-Baltistan's Diamer district till Besham, Shangla in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The convoy was escorted by K-P's law-enforcement agencies.

“The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary in Peshawar on February 2,” Usman Ahmad, the DC of Diamer, noted. “It was taken in light of recommendations put forward during a two-day apex committee meeting held in December, 2015.” The decision to end the convoy system would come into effect on February 3. The convoy system created countless challenges for passengers including prolonging their journey. The decision to scrap the arrangement has been hailed by a large number of residents. “Thank God, [the convoy system] has finally ended,” stated Mujeeb Khan, a resident of Chilas.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1038992/convoy-system-along-kkh-ends/>

“NPC to hold all-parties Kashmir conference tomorrow”

Radio Pakistan, February 3, 2016

The Nazriya Pakistan Council (NPC) would hold all-parties Kashmir conference on February 4 in Islamabad. Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Muhammad Barjees Tahir and President of Azad, Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan would attend the conference. Chairman All-Parties Hurriyat Conference Mirwaiz Umer Farooq will address the conference on telephone. National Kashmir Solidarity Day conference will also be held in Islamabad on February 4. The conference will pay homage to Kashmiri martyrs and express unity with struggling people of occupied Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/82452/1>

“JKLF opens office in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Kashmir Reader, February 4, 2016

Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leader, Amanullah Khan, on February 3 opened a party office in Gilgit-Baltistan, administered by Pakistan. The office is situated in Dar Plaza, Gilgit, the party noted in a statement issued. The JKLF zonal president Dr Tawqeer Geelani and party convener for Gilgit-Baltistan Saif ud Din Bhat were among the leaders who participated in the inaugural ceremony, it stated. “The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have always been ignored by the rulers. JKLF, as a sole representative organisation of all Jammu Kashmir regions, will keep striving for the rights of the people,” the statement quoted JKLF's supreme leader, Amanullah Khan, as saying.

<http://kashmirreader.com/2016/02/jklf-opens-office-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Naveed Jamal, Shabbir Hussain, “Pakistan incomplete without Kashmir: political leaders”

The Express Tribune, February 4, 2016

The political leaders of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on February 3 called for finding a solution to the longstanding Kashmir dispute in light of the UN resolutions as they stated Pakistan is incomplete without Kashmir. They also reiterated their resolve to raise voice at international forums to

ensure the Kashmiris get their right to self-determination. This resolve was made during 'Kashmir Solidarity Seminar' held under the auspices of Express Media Group. The seminar was attended by Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq, AJK's former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed, Senator Lt Gen (retd) Abdul Qayum Khan, PTI MNA Ali Muhammad Khan and AJK minister Abdul Majid Khan. Addressing the seminar, Pervaiz Rashid stated all the nations of the world and the UN accept that the Kashmir issue should be resolved according to the aspirations of the people of the disputed state. "This reality has also been accepted by India's political leadership which was compelled to visit Lahore. They [the Indian leadership] have expressed their willingness to find a logical solution of the problem," he noted. Rashid stated that in the past the two neighbouring countries came very close to the resolution of the lingering dispute multiple times but always some unseen powers struck at the last moment and succeeded in sabotaging the whole initiative.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1040006/pakistan-incomplete-without-kashmir-political-leaders/>

"We stand with people of Kashmir: Imran Khan"

Kashmir Reader, February 4, 2016

While addressing a gathering at newly opened Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secretariat in Azad Kashmir, its Chairman, Imran Khan has stated that his party is with people of Kashmir. "We stand in solidarity with Kashmiri people and for their rights and freedom," he noted. Khan stated that his party will take full part in the coming General Elections. Khan urged that Election Commission should be neutral "because without that elections cannot be transparent." He further claimed that Nawaz League cannot win without rigging. "The ruling party has a history of rigging and not contesting elections fairly." The General Elections in Azad Kashmir are going to be held on June 26, 2016. All prominent Pakistani political parties are contesting the elections. PTI has emerged as a new political force in the region after gaining support of former

Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhary.

<http://kashmirreader.com/2016/02/we-stand-with-people-of-kashmir-imran-khan/>

Tariq Naqash, "Kashmir a litmus test of leaders' foresight: Sharif"

Dawn, February 6, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif described the Kashmir issue as a litmus test of the political foresight of Indian and Pakistani leadership and expressed the hope that dialogue would be held soon to resolve the lingering dispute. Addressing a joint sitting of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly and the AJK Council, especially convened on February 5 to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, he stated there was a big question mark on the goodwill, prestige and authority of the United Nations because of the Kashmir issue. Though the speech did carry implied notes of caution for India, Mr Sharif by and large adopted a soft and reconciliatory tone. Kashmiri people are demanding nothing but what was pledged to them by the United Nations. The United Nations has to tell the world why it has failed to implement its own resolutions. "This question is not just linked to the Kashmir issue or Pakistan-India dispute, but to the goodwill, prestige and authority of the world body," he noted. Mr Sharif stated Kashmir had been yearning for peace since 1947 and the situation warranted a new thinking in South Asia. History is once again asking the leadership in India and Pakistan that what they will leave behind for the coming generations peace or hostilities?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1237773>

Abid Bashir, "Gilgit-Baltistan will remain part of disputed JK, Pak envoy tells Mirwaiz"

Greater Kashmir, February 9, 2016

The Hurriyat Conference (M) chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on February 7 stated Pakistan has not changed its stand on Gilgit-Baltistan and the region shall continue to remain a part of disputed Jammu and Kashmir. "I met Abdul Basit, the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi, and had a detailed discussion on a series of issues including reports that Gilgit-Baltistan is being merged with Pakistan.

The Pakistan High Commissioner clarified to me that there is no change in Islamabad's policy on the issue and that Gilgit-Baltistan would continue to remain the fifth region of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir," Mirwaiz noted soon after his meeting with Basit. Pertinently, JKLF chief Muhammad Yasin Malik and Hurriyat Conference (G) chairman Syed Ali Geelani had written letters to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif seeking clarification on media reports suggesting that Gilgit-Baltistan is being merged with Pakistan. The separatist leaders asserted that if Pakistan would merge the region, New Delhi will have a justification to claim Kashmir as its "integral part."

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/front-page/gilgit-baltistan-will-remain-part-of-disputed-jk-pak-envoy-tells-mirwaiz/208966.html>

"Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen leader sent to jail"

The Express Tribune, February 9, 2016

An anti-terrorism court judge in Gilgit sent a regional Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen leader to prison on February 9. MWM Gilgit-Baltistan General Secretary Allama Sheikh Nayyar Abbas was sent to prison on judicial remand. He appeared before the anti-terrorism court on his own. He was accused of treason and had been at large for the past 10 months. He was also declared a proclaimed offender by the court.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1043376/majlis-wahdat-e-muslimeen-leader-sent-jail/>

"Crackdown on Media in Gilgit"

ANI, February 9, 2016

Journalists in Gilgit Baltistan are often victims of atrocities by the Pakistan Security Agencies. Besides facing impediments while reporting the government misrule, journalists often face brutality at the hands of the police. Media persons in Gilgit recently held a protest rally to condemn the police atrocities on one of their colleagues. Khalid Hussain, a senior reporter of a private Pakistani news channel, was beaten mercilessly by the police over a minor issue. He suffered severe injuries and was hospitalized. The journalists demand stringent action against the police personnel. Many in the

media fraternity claim that they are often victims of the anger of authorities for reporting against corruption, malpractice and bringing to light the plight of the people of Gilgit Baltistan. Even owners of media organizations succumb to government pressure and victimize their own journalists, they allege. Many state that Journalism in Gilgit Baltistan is not for those who are honest and who want to report against the malpractice of the administration. Journalists who work in tandem with authorities are treated well. But the lives of independent journalists who report Pakistan government's misrule in the region are miserable. Nevertheless, these journalists continue to risk their lives and report about the ground realities of the region occupied by Pakistan for decades.

<http://www.aninews.in/videogallery9/49170-crackdown-on-media-in-gilgit.html>

"Pak minister says 'Sharif will unite divided families of Kashmir'"

The Siasat, February 9, 2016

Pakistan's Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid stated that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will unite the divided families of Kashmir. He was addressing a PML-N workers convention in the Palandri town of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Rashid stated that Sharif will bring prosperity not only in the country, but also in the region. The information minister expressed confidence about the PML-N winning the upcoming AJK legislative assembly polls, as reported. Rashid informed that the last PPP government had miserably failed to provide relief to Pakistanis and likewise its AJK government had also failed to deliver. The minister added that the federal government had released Rs300 billion to the AJK government during last four and a half years.

<http://www.siasat.com/news/pak-minister-says-sharif-will-unite-divided-families-kashmir-914299/>

"PM working to change fate of Azad Kashmir: Kirmani"

The News, February 10, 2016

Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Political Affairs Dr Syed Asif Saeed Kirmani announced the

plan to link Islamabad-Murree-Muzaffarabad through Railways. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has made up his mind for the project. In a statement after visiting Azad Kashmir and holding huge workers convention of ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) at Palandri Dr Asif Kirmani stated that Nawaz has been working on various projects for converting Azad Kashmir into a model tourist area which would change the fate of Azad Kashmir. He lauded the services of his party's workers for making the convention a great success and stated that it is acknowledgement of the vision of Prime Minister Nawaz and workers hard-work. He also stated that party tickets for upcoming polls in Azad Kashmir would be made by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after consulting the parliamentary board as he is also President of the PML-N. The board would be constituted at an appropriate time, he stated.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/97215-PM-working-to-change-fate-of-Azad-Kashmir-Kirmani>

“Disorder prevails as Imran inaugurates PTI Azad Kashmir office”

Dunya News, February 11, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has on February 11 demanded deployment of army personnel in Kashmir and Punjab during Azad Kashmir elections. He stated that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) does not know how to contest an election without rigging. He also inaugurated PTI Azad Kashmir Secretariat in Shah Jamal Lahore amid disorder and fighting of the workers, reports noted. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Imran Khan stated that PTI will contest the election with full preparation. He also stated that measures will have to be adopted in order to make the elections fair and transparent. “We'll have to prevent rigging in Azad Kashmir and Punjab because we spend half the time stopping PML-N from rigging”, noted Imran. PTI Chairman further stated that his party completely supported Kashmir cause and that Kashmiris must get the right to self-determination. Earlier when Imran Khan arrived at the ceremony, disorder prevailed over the event as workers pushed each other to somehow climb the stage. The party leaders pleaded before the workers

to make way for the leadership and also asked for guards' help.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/322306-Disorder-prevails-as-Imran-inaugurates-PTI-Azad-Ka>

M A Mir, “Under pressure: AJK poll body gets new chief”

The Express Tribune, February 12, 2016

Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal was appointed new chief election commissioner of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) through a notification. The ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) gave in to the wishes of the local apex court on February 11, following a contempt notice issued by the apex court of the region. A notification was issued by the AJK's Ministry of Law, Justice, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights hours before the deadline set by the region's highest court. The AJK Supreme Court issued contempt of court notice to the state's government for non-appointment of chief election commissioner. The AJK government, following court notice, issued the notification of appointment of the AJK High Court Chief Justice Mughal as the chief election commissioner. The general elections in AJK are likely to be held in June 2016. “The president of AJK on the advice of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council is pleased to appoint Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal as chief election commissioner. In addition to his duties as such for a term of three years or till his retirement whichever is earlier,” reads the notification. The notification shall take effect from date CEC takes oath of office. It is pertinent to mention here that AJKSC on February 9 took strong exception to non-implementation of its judgment of January 25, 2016 on the appointment of CEC, directing for personal appearance of AJK law minister and chief secretary.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1045227/under-pressure-ajk-poll-body-gets-new-chief/>

“Terrorist bid foiled in Azad Kashmir College”

Aaj News, February 13, 2016

A big terrorist bid has been foiled in Bagh area of Azad Kashmir by defusing two bombs found in a private college. Sources stated the bombs were planted in a classroom of the college. On seeing the suspicious bag after entering the class in the

morning, the students wailed. The administration called it a day and informed right away to police. “The bomb disposal squad reached on the spot after several hours due to non-availability of the facility in Bagh. The BDS took timely action to save lives. A large number of army and police remained present in the meanwhile,” noted the sources.

<http://aaj.tv/2016/02/terrorist-bid-foiled-in-azad-kashmir-college/>

Manzoor Ali, “Hiring of 1,300 men proposed for Karakoram Patrolling Force”

Dawn, February 14, 2016

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police proposed the recruitment of 1,300 personnel for the Karakoram Patrolling Force to guard the Karakoram Highway portion passing through the province. The force was launched earlier this month, February 1, with 200 personnel hired on contractual basis. According to the relevant officials, the police department, keeping in view the sensitivity of the situation, sent a summary to the provincial government on February 8, 2016, on the creation of the KPF, a new permanent force. They noted the KPF would guard the 390km long stretch of the KKH, which passed through six districts of the province from Haripur to Kohistan and connected it with Gilgit-Baltistan. The available summary notes that the KKH route's strategic importance could not be denied in the backdrop of the current economic and security situation and that both cargo and passenger vehicles moving to and from Gilgit-Baltistan used the highway. It stated the highway was used for hauling supplies to the deployment of the armed forces in the country's northern areas. The summary also stated the same route would also carry immense importance due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project related hydropower projects.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239413/hiring-of-1300-men-proposed-for-karakoram-patrolling-force>

Shabbir Mir, “Bullying tactic? Man allegedly harassed for his role in ‘anti-tax movement’”

The Express Tribune, February 14, 2016

A supporter of the “anti-tax movement” alleged administration officials in Hunza Valley are harassing him to give up his struggle against the

withdrawal of the tax rebate. Speaking to the media on February 14, Ikramullah Baig, a resident of Hunza and supporter of Awami Workers Party (AWP) leader Baba Jan, stated a naib tehsildar, paid a visit to his shop recently. “He threatened me to show him the banner inscribed with anti-state slogans,” Ikramullah noted. “I assured him that we did not have such material and are not against the state. However, the officials did not listen to me. He ransacked my shop and stated he would find the banner himself.” He added, “While he was searching through the shop, a group of politicians, who were also present at the shop, objected to his actions.” According to Ikramullah, the official did not have a search warrant. “When he was asked if he had a search warrant, the naib tehsildar noted he had the authority to search the premises without a warrant,” he stated

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1046362/bullying-tactic-man-allegedly-harassed-for-his-role-in-anti-tax-movement/>

“PPP, PML-N activists clash in Azad Kashmir”

The News, February 14, 2016

A Pakistan People's Party (PPP) jiayala was killed in a clash with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) activists in the Nakayal area of Kotli district in Azad Jammu and Kashmir during an election campaign on February 14. The deceased was identified as Munshi Khan. Duty Officer Police Control Room Kotli confirmed the death of the political worker. Workers of the two political groups came face to face raising slogans. Their verbal brawl then turned into a bloody fight as they started pelting stones and other objects on one another. As a result, Munshi Khan was killed on the spot while ten others were injured. Police resorted to aerial firing, teargas shelling and baton charge to disperse the clashing groups. The injured were rushed to Nakyal and District Hospital Kotli where 4 of them were reported to be in a critical condition. Pakistan Army troops were called to the area to control the situation. A judicial commission has also been established to probe the incident. Chief Secretary of AJK Sikandar Sultan Raja has also taken serious note of the unpleasant incident and directed Commissioner Mirpur Division to hold an inquiry and report to the CS office in the next 24

hours and take every possible step to maintain the law and order situation. The chief secretary also directed deputy commissioner Kotli to take every possible step to maintain law and order. He stated that nobody will be allowed to take the law into their own hands. Meanwhile, the PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned the armed attack on the PPP workers convention in Nakial.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/98244-PPP-PML-N-activists-clash-in-Azad-Kashmir#>

“Islamabad tells AJK PM to quit”

Daily Times, February 15, 2016

Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr Asif Kirmani on February 15 asked Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed to step down for his failure to protect life and property of the people. “The AJK government has completely failed to deliver while corruption is rampant in all state departments. Therefore, Chaudhry Chaudhry Abdul Majeed should quit his office immediately,” he stated at a press conference. Referring to a clash between the workers of PML-N and PPP, he noted it was a condemnable incident which had taken a precious life. The AJK prime minister, he alleged, was in Nakyal and giving directions to his party activists during their clash with the PML-N workers. The incident, he stated, showed ulterior motives of Chaudhry Abdul Majeed. He distorted the facts and conveyed wrong information to the PPP leadership. PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto should better depute some sane person to get correct information about the incident, he added. Kirmani further stated the participants of PPP youth rally while passing through Nikyal Bazaar first chanted 'indecent and vulgar' slogans against the PML-N leadership and then started attacking shops and business outlets of PML-N workers. The PML-N workers reacted in self-defence and a clash erupted, resulting into loss of a precious life, which was highly regrettable and condemnable, he added. The advisor alleged that the AJK police also abetted with the attackers. A crackdown was launched against the PML-N workers and their houses were raided by the police who also harassed their women and children, he

stated. The AJK police, he regretted, even did not register a first information report (FIR) on the complaint of PML-N workers who were either injured or their shops and property were damaged.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/15-Feb-2016/islamabad-tells-ajk-pm-to-quit>

Abdul Majeed “Did Not Deliver Anything for Welfare of AJK: Barjees”

Business Recorder, February 16, 2016

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Chaudhry Barjees Tahir on February 16 alleged that Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Ch. Abdul Majeed did not deliver anything for the welfare of AJK during his five years of tenure. The Federal government provided massive funds to the AJK government as compared to last Pakistan People's Party government, he noted while talking to a news channel. He urged the AJK Prime Minister to avoid using derogatory language against Federal Ministers. The minister stated Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) was doing positive politics in the country. Barjees Tahir expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious live during clashes between workers of two political parties in AJK. He also asked Adul Majeed to constitute a judicial commission on the incident to investigate the matter as the maintenance of law and order situation in AJK was responsibility of AJK government.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/pakistan/278822-abdul-majeed-did-not-deliver-anything-for-welfare-of-ajk-barjees.html>

Tariq Naqash, “Faryal warns PML-N against converting AJK into political battlefield”

Dawn, February 17, 2016

After three days of war of words and protests and demonstrations by their activists, the ruling PPP and the opposition PML-N in Azad Kashmir spent a quiet day on February 16. But it appeared to be a lull before the storm. While MNA Faryal Talpur of the PPP reiterated the allegations levelled by her party against federal ministers, the PML-N decided at a meeting in Islamabad that its AJK chapter would deal with the matter, instead of federal ministers.

Ms Talpur, who has been calling the shots in AJK since the formation of the PPP government in July 2011, made the allegations during a visit to Naara village in Nakial to offer condolences to the family of Chaudhry Munshi who had died during a clash between workers of the two parties on February 13. She accused PML-N workers of killing a committed PPP worker and injuring scores of others and warned federal ministers against converting AJK into a political battlefield. She also stated that the federal ministers who had used foul language against Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed must apologise. When contacted, Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, PML-N's legislator and the party's senior vice-president, noted the PPP was trying to exploit the Kashmir card the way it had been using the Sindh card. "In doing so they are least bothered about its damage to national interests."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1240047/faryal-warns-pml-n-against-converting-ajk-into-political-battlefield>

"AJK PM lodges protest with NA speaker"

The Nation, February 17, 2016

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir has lodged his protest with the speaker National Assembly over, what he termed, violation of sanctity of the shrine of late Kashmiri leader, Quaid-e-Millat Ch Ghulam Abbas in the area of Faizabad some weeks back. AJK PM Ch Abdul Majid in a letter to the speaker drew latter's attention towards the incident and sought remedial measures. The letter noted that after sunset on January 23, 2016, CDA officials and Rawalpindi police along with local administration stormed into the shrine and demolished the gate along with the arch while trespassing the premises and violating the sanctity of the tomb. "Next day, I went to the shrine along with former AJK PM Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, leadership of All Parties Hurriyat Conference and other leaders of AJK political parties and reinstalled the gate and other installations. But the CDA along with Rawalpindi police repeated the incident late night on the same day by demolishing the arch and gate, and violated the sanctity of the shrine," the PM noted in the letter. The AJK PM stated that the late Kashmiri leader was the founding member of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and

supreme head of Azad Kashmir Liberation Movement. He was champion of Jammu and Kashmir State's accession to Pakistan and after death in 1967 he was buried in then Rawalpindi according to his own will, as he had earnestly believed in integral relationship of Pakistan and state of Jammu and Kashmir, the letter added. He also stated since 1967, the land of the shrine remained undisputed and the premises was demarcated with the gate along with arch intact.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/17-Feb-2016/ajk-pm-lodges-protest-with-na-speaker>

D. J Mathal, "Gilgit-Baltistan: Dangers of decisions without public consent"

Dardistan Times, February 17, 2016

Pakistani rulers have always adopted a policy of rule, pass time and go back about Gilgit-Baltistan. Irrespective of the form of government, democracy, dictatorship, military or civilian, there has been no change in the policy of Pakistan about the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. Sitting in cozy rooms, wearing three-piece suit or Sherwani, why any rulers in Islamabad would damn care about the masses living among the rugged mountains over six hundreds kilometers away from the capital of Pakistan. Over the last 68 years, the basic social, constitutional and human rights of the people of the area were so rampantly violated that they have been limited to fighting with their petty day to day issues unable to attend to other matters around the world. In the days of this slavery, the indigenous people of Gilgit-Baltistan neither could preserve their own unique culture and neither traditions nor they can maintain their identity in the world. None of the successive rulers of Pakistan ever bothered to take notice of the human rights violations and injustices meted out to these human-loving and peaceful people. They never took any tangible step to improve the life standards of the people in the region. The officers sent from Islamabad to administer the area worked as a viceroy and never took note of the plight of the locals and their rights violations. Anyone raising voice for their rights in Gilgit-Baltistan has always been treated as traitor and treated as such. At the local level, the situation is so pathetic that the citizens neither have the basic

facilities of education nor healthcare.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/articles/gilgit-baltistan-dangers-decisions-without-public-consent>

Shabbir Mir, “Pakistan Army to establish HQ in Diamer district to ensure CPEC security”

The Express Tribune, February 18, 2016

The Gilgit-Baltistan government decided to allocate a substantial piece of land to Pakistan Army in Diamer district so that it can set up headquarters and ensure security for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The site is situated in Thak Das, a barren piece of land near Chilas, where a brigade will be stationed. Speaking on the issue, Diamer Deputy Commissioner Usman Ahmad stated, “The army will make its headquarters in Thak Das; this will help provide security to CPEC installations.” Another official noted the army will soon take over the land formally and start work immediately so it can assume responsibilities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1049121/cpec-security-pak-army-to-establish-hq-in-thak-das/>

“Farooq demands independent EC in AJK”

The Nation, February 19, 2016

Leader of the Opposition in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider demanded for an independent Election Commission in AJK for holding transparent elections. He also demanded to appoint Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) immediately and stated the AJK government wanted to conduct elections on 11 years old and bogus voter's lists as Pakistan People's Party had won the elections in 2011 on such lists. He also stated the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz AJK had demanded scrutiny of the voter's lists but the AJK government did not want the election commission to do the job as it had not provided funds to it (commission) while having sufficient finances in the treasury. He further stated the AJK Prime Minister had used abusive language against PML-N Federal Ministers which was published in various sections of the press. Raja Farooq Haider stated the AJK government was scared of the unity showed by all the other political parties against it. He stated the AJK Pakistan People's Party ministers

had tabled a no-confidence resolution against their party's prime minister, but Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif came to his rescue.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/19-Feb-2016/farooq-demands-independent-ec-in-ajk>

“Justice Mustafa Mughal takes oath as Azad Kashmir CEC”

Dunya News, February 19, 2016

High Court Chief Justice Mustafa Mughal on February 19 took the oath as Azad Kashmir Chief Election Commissioner. Although his appointment has brought the 18-month dispute regarding the appointment of the election commissioner but due to very little time left in the elections, the completion of the election preparations is being considered a challenge, reports noted. Talking to media after taking the oath, CEC noted that he accepted the position as a challenge and will soon issue the code of conduct after calling a meeting of all the political parties. On the other hand, political opponents believe that since the new CEC has taken the oath, the prospects for the general election in Azad Kashmir are bright now but making all the arrangements in such little time is a massive challenge. Azad Kashmir assembly is completing its constitutional term on July 26, 2016, and it is must for the new assembly to take oath before the end of this term. Otherwise, a constitutional crisis may erupt.

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/323720-Justice-Mustafa-Mughal-takes-oath-as-Azad-Kashmir>

Tariq Naqash, “Musharraf accuses PML-N govt of putting Kashmir on the back burner”

Greater Kashmir, February 20, 2016

Former military ruler General (retired) Pervez Musharraf on February 19 accused PML-N government of compromising national security and putting Kashmir issue on the back burner for personal interests. “Kashmir is running in my veins and I have always given preference to this cause. Unless this issue is resolved, we cannot make progress in relations and talks with India,” he stated, in his telephonic address from Karachi to his All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) workers. The

APML workers' assemblage was held and was attended by party's central secretary general Muhammad Amjad Chaudhary and other leaders. "The present rulers have side-lined Kashmir issue and they are hoodwinking the people into believing that relations with India are being improved through trade," Musharraf stated. Contrarily, he stated, no soldier could forget Kashmir. "Pakistan army and Pervez Musharraf will never let Kashmiris down as we both love you." Claiming that Kashmir was nearing settlement "for the first time in history" in his rule, he dismissed criticism by some quarters that he had sabotaged this cause.

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/pak-administered-kashmir/story/209896.html>

"Majeed Asks Centre to Rein in Federal Ministers"

Pakistan Observer, February 20, 2016

Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Ch Abdul Majeed stated that the solution of Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir is inevitable for peace in the region. Talking to various delegations at PM house on February 19 he also stated that his government was fully committed to serve poor people in Azad Kashmir. He paid glowing tribute to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for sacrificing her life for the country and nation, and vowed to safeguard the democracy and national interests. He further stated only the PPP had sacrificed lives to fight terror and no one could threaten them into silence. He stated that PPP welcomed the peace process between Pakistan and India. He also hoped that the peace process will continue without any hurdles. PM stated that he had urged the federal government to keep a check on ministers, especially Minister for Kashmir Affairs who "wants to destroy peace in AJK".

<http://pakobserver.net/2016/02/20/majeed-asks-centre-to-rein-in-federal-ministers/>

"AJK chief secretary rejects PTI leader's allegations"

Business Recorder, February 21, 2016

Chief Secretary Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sikandar Sultan Raja on February 20 categorically

rejected the allegations levelled against him by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Sultan Mehmood that he was hand-picked by the federal government to manipulate the upcoming elections in the valley. He further stated that the allegations levelled against him by PTI AJK leader are a white lie, adding he was appointed as chief secretary AJK completely on merit after his predecessor Sq Leader Abid Ali Khan was retired after reaching the age of superannuation. About the allegations of manipulating the 2015 elections in Gilgit-Baltistan during his stint as chief secretary, he stated that GB elections took place on June 9, 2015 while he was posted out on April 7, 2015. "After his [former chief secretary] retirement, I was posted there so nobody was removed to post me on this position. I was transferred from the post of Chief Secretary Gilgit Baltistan on April 7, 2015 and elections were held on June 8, 2015, which shows I was posted out well before the election date," he added. He also clarified that he was posted out as chief secretary Gilgit-Baltistan on his own request, against which almost all the political parties, including PTI protested that he should have stayed there unless the elections were held. He also strongly reacted to the allegations that he was hand-picked by federal government for being the son-in-law of Saeed Mehdi, a former principal secretary to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, noting he was a strong believer in meritocracy.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/18399/>

"No delays': Majeed vows to hold AJK polls on due date"

The Express Tribune, February 22, 2016

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on February 21 laid to rest speculation that polls in the territory will be delayed, insisting that the exercise will be held on time without even an hour's lapse. "People making a hue and cry that the present government is not ready to hold elections on time should keep quiet," he told a news conference at the PM House. The AJK PM stated that his government was determined to hold the Legislative Assembly elections by July 26. He stated the AJK government was consulting NADRA for preparing computerised voters' lists to ensure

free, fair and transparent polls. Updated electoral lists will give voting rights to thousands of youth, he noted. To a question, Majeed, who also heads the ruling PPP AJK chapter, stated that they have closed all the doors to steal the mandate of the people of Azad Kashmir, claiming that PPP will win the general elections on the basis of performance and progress.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1051796/no-delays-majeed-vows-to-hold-ajk-polls-on-due-date/>

“Karakorum Highway: Path to riches for China, Pakistan”

The Nation, February 22, 2016

Karakorum Highway project will transform Pakistan and generate handsome returns on Chinese investment. The improvement of the Karakorum Highway of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has greatly boosted transportation of farm produce and tourism in the north of Pakistan, stated top executives of China Communications Construction Company Ltd or CCCC that has aided the road's renovation. The highway, which used to be open for only four months every year, now runs through the whole year. "The improved road has enhanced the economic ties between China and Pakistan. It is a road leading to abundant wealth and prosperity for the Pakistani people," stated Sun Ziyu, vice-president of CCCC, a major Chinese State-owned enterprise principally engaged in the design and construction of transportation infrastructure. "A smooth road plays an important role in China's investment in agriculture, infrastructure and energy in Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a key hub along the Belt and Road Initiative since it connects the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," noted Sun.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Feb-2016/karakorum-highway-path-to-riches-for-china-pakistan>

“NA Body on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan to Meet”

Business Recorder, February 22, 2016

National Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan will meet on

February 23. The meeting will be chaired by Malik Abrar Ahmed and other members of the committee. According to the committee notification, the meeting will confirm the minutes of the 17 last meeting on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan and it would focus on the budgetary proposals relating to (PSDP) and its attached departments for the next financial year 2016-17.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/politics-a-policy/280014-na-body-on-kashmir-affairs-and-gilgit-baltistan-to-meet-tuesday.html>

Shabbir Mir, “Looking for a cut: Anti-tax movement calls for region wide transport strike”

The Express Tribune, February 22, 2016

An alliance of political, religious and nationalist organisations called for a transport strike on February 24 in Gilgit-Baltistan in protest against the withdrawal of tax rebates in the region. The strike call was given by anti-tax movement on February 21. The movement's convener, Wajahat Ali noted, "The strike will be held on Wednesday across the region." He added, "This has been decided in a general body meeting held earlier." Ali stated, "All shops and business activities will remain closed, and no transport will be allowed on the roads to give a strong message to the government against its decision." When contacted, Adviser to G-B Chief Minister Farooq Mir stated, "No new taxes have been imposed. The government just implemented the orders given by G-B Council." Earlier, contractor's association president, Firdous Ahmed, told journalists current rate of taxation was not acceptable. According to Ahmed, the taxes were a form of "financial murder" for locals who have no representation in Parliament.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1051641/looking-for-a-cut-anti-tax-movement-calls-for-region-wide-transport-strike/>

Shabbir Mir, “Gilgit, Kashmir and the identity crisis”

The Express Tribune, February 23, 2016

The question whether Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of Kashmir has shaped the politics of the landlocked region for years. The mainstream political parties aside, the nationalists and the religious parties have

also been found grappling with the identity issue in one way or another. At least two developments in the recent past have caused this issue to flare up. The first is the news that the government might be mulling over a change in the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan to alleviate Beijing's concerns over building a section of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through the disputed area. The second is the fierce opposition by leaders in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and from across the Line of Control over the possible integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan. Sardar Mohammad Yaqoob Khan, President of AJK, went a step ahead, warning that the integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan would be more disastrous than the dismemberment of the country in 1971. While the AJK Assembly passed a resolution to dissuade the federal government from making Gilgit-Baltistan a separate province, prominent Kashmiri leaders in Jammu & Kashmir did not lag far behind, asking Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif not to give Delhi an excuse to integrate Jammu & Kashmir with India.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1052901/gilgit-kashmir-and-the-identity-crisis/>

Khawja Daud, “PM Nawaz to launch National Health Card Scheme in Azad Kashmir”

Daily Pakistan, February 23, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will leave for Azad Kahsmir on one-day visit on 25 February to launch National Health Card Scheme. The prime minister will address a ceremony at Medical College hall in Muzaffarabad. Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Yaqoob Khan, Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, PML-N President Raja Farooq Haider and others will welcome the premier at Muzaffarabad airport. PM Nawaz will be accompanied by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Pervaiz Rashid, Minister for Kashmir Affairs Barjees Tahir, State Minister Saira Afzal Tarar and other senior officials. The PM's visit comes after a week of tension between Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan People's Party simmering in Azad Jammu and Kashmir after killing of a PPP worker in a clash between the workers of two parties in Kotli. Sources noted that

PM Nawaz will hold meetings with Azad Kashmir leadership to cool off both sides.

<http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/pm-nawaz-to-launch-national-health-card-scheme-in-azad-kashmir/>

“PTI to launch AJK election campaign”

Business Recorder, February 24, 2016

Former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf organiser has announced that the party is launching an Azad Kashmir election campaign with the slogan "badal do Kashmir" by today (24 February). Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar believes the governing party might rob people's votes. He says the public is tired of the governing party and its politics and claimed his party after coming to power would get the Kashmir issue resolved. He spoke to a delegation led by senior party Vice-President Faisal Manzoor at his home where the former disclosed that the party head, Imran Khan, would address a workers' rally in Kotli, Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/19486/>

Shabbir Mir, “Opposition leaders decry delay in work on Gilgit-Skardu Road”

The Express Tribune, February 24, 2016

Opposition lawmakers slammed the delay in improving Gilgit-Skardu Road, which is the only route connecting Baltistan with Gilgit and rest of the country. These concerns were raised during the first day of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly on February 23. “There are reports tenders for upgradation have been cancelled,” Imran Nadeem, the lone Pakistan Peoples Party lawmaker in the assembly, stated during the session chaired by Speaker Fida Muhammad Nashad. Nadeem, who is from Baltistan, stated the federal government was not interested in issues faced by the people of his area. “The prime minister himself inaugurated the road-improvement project many times but it's a mystery why work doesn't actually start.” Nadeem stated either National Highway Authority cheated the PM or the latter was cheating the people of Baltistan. Later Nadeem walked out in protest, taking others with him. However, they returned after requests from the treasury bench. “The road is

of strategic importance,” stated Rizwan Ali of Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1053089/cutting-off-baltistan-opposition-leaders-decry-delay-in-work-on-gilgit-skardu-road/>

“Imran Khan announces to make new Azad Kashmir”

The Nation, February 24, 2016

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, on February 24, announced to make a new Azad Kashmir following the new makeover of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). According to details, the captain raised the slogan of new Azad Kashmir after that of new KP and new Pakistan. He lamented that how can those reaching assemblies by rigging be honest. Government despite privatizing institutions should address administrative issues in them, he stated. After new Pakistan and KP now comes new Azad Kashmir, captain created a new slogan. During his address to procession in Kotli, Imran Khan also directed his ire on opponents. He stated that, we shall make a new Azad Kashmir. Imran Khan noted that rigging is part Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, PML (N) blood. He also stated how can the ones those who win elections through unfair means, be honest. Progress was impossible unless local body election system came in the country. Otherwise, there will be no progress.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/24-Feb-2016/imran-khan-announces-to-make-new-azad-kashmir>

“AJK polls will be held under army supervision: CEC”

Pakistan Today, February 27, 2016

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal stated that the upcoming general elections in Azad Kashmir will be held under supervision of Pakistan Army to ensure transparency and fairness. Addressing a news conference on February 26, Mughal stated the commission had decided to get prepared new voters lists by its own employees rather than using NADRA due to constraint of resources. These electoral rolls would be completed between March 5 and March 20, he added.

According to the election commissioner, every citizen attaining the age of 18 on March 20 will be enrolled as voter and the vote shall be registered only on permanent address of the voter to avoid double registration. Mughal also stated there should be a ban on big rallies and public gatherings during the election campaign to minimise expenditures of candidates, adding that they had been barred from carrying out rallies at the time of filling of the nomination papers.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/02/27/national/ajk-polls-will-be-held-under-army-supervision-cec/>

“Protesters condemn victimization of Kashmiri students in IHK”

Aaj News, February 28, 2016

Like rest of AJK, people in Mirpur division observed protest day on February 27 to mark resentment against registration of sedition charges against of the students of Jawahar Lal Nehru University in New Delhi, who recently raised slogans against the hanging of Afzal Guru. The mass anti-India rallies followed by the protest demonstrations by the people of all walks of life in all small and major towns and cities in Mirpur division including Mirpur city, Bhimber and Kotli. Hundreds of people from all walks of life thronged the streets morning to join the protest rallies to mark the resentment day. Addressing protest rally at the District Court Premises in Mirpur speakers including Muslim Conference leader Shakoor Mughal, JI leader Tanveer Ahmed Ghazi and others strongly condemned the booking of the Kashmiri students in sedition charges in Jammu & Kashmir.

<http://aaj.tv/2016/02/protesters-condemn-victimization-of-kashmiri-students-in-ihk/>

Shabbir Mir, “Ownership quandary: Land allocated for CPEC without consent, says PPP leader”

The Express Tribune, February 28, 2016

Pakistan People's Party regional president Amjad Hussain stated land worth billions belonging to residents of Gilgit-Baltistan has been allocated for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. “This is illegal,” added Hussain. He also expressed these

views at a gathering held in connection with the death anniversary of a local journalist, Raja Hussain Khan, at Gilgit Press Club on February 27. "This is illegal and an injustice with locals as their land has been allocated for CPEC without their consent." Hussain stated 6,000 kanals of land has been earmarked in Diamer and other parts of G-B for CPEC. Its market price stands at more than Rs60 billion, noted Hussain. He also added, "Under the law, land belonging to locals cannot be taken away without compensating them." He further added, "It is a travesty of justice that residents are not paid a single penny for their land."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1055651/ownership-quandary-land-allocated-for-cpec-without-consent-says-ppp-leader/>

Dr Syed Nazir Gilani, "A viable Kashmir Policy?"

The Nation, February 29, 2016

One may wish to concur with the view that 'Pakistan lacks viable Kashmir Policy' in the interests of four Kashmiris distributed under three administrations at Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit and the fourth a strong diaspora spread all over the world. A good Kashmir policy is in the interests of peace and progress in India and Pakistan and the region as well. Currently, the common people of Jammu and Kashmir have to endure a burden of five Governments (three Kashmir and 2 of India and Pakistan) and need to reconcile their lives according to five constitutions as well. There is a huge interference in their lives from surveillance agencies and almost every single individual in Jammu & Kashmir is indexed for a security clearance. A clue how the Indian intelligence remains overwhelming in Jammu & Kashmir has been confirmed by former RAW chief A. S. Dulat in his book at page 205 titled "Kashmir The Vajpayee Years". He writes: "The IB had a sinister reputation in the Kashmiri mind. Part of it was because since Independence, the IB had basically been running Kashmir, advising the home minister on whatever happened there". In general it would be fair to say

that Pakistani academics partly perform their duty and partly perpetuate an ignorance of an undeclared Government policy on Kashmir. The first and foremost question that arises as a common priority is whether Pakistan has a Kashmir policy.

<http://nation.com.pk/columns/29-Feb-2016/a-viable-kashmir-policy/>

Shabbir Mir, "JKLF leader censures giving G-B constitutional status"

The Express Tribune, February 29, 2016

Amanullah Khan, the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) 82-year-old leader, stated making Gilgit-Baltistan a constitutional part of Pakistan would be "catastrophic for the country." In an interview, Amanullah stated, "If G-B does become part of Pakistan, it will be synonymous to committing suicide." The legendary politician's comments are vital against the backdrop of Pakistan's attempts at changing the status of G-B in light of recommendations from a high-powered committee formed on the directives of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. "The disputed status of G-B is accepted by three forces India, Pakistan and the United Nations, and any unilateral change in its status and position will be tantamount to insulting the sacrifices rendered by many over the decades," he noted.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1056106/jklf-leader-censures-giving-g-b-constitutional-status/>

Economic Developments

“Government, AJ&K agree to raise power tariff”

Business Recorder, February 8, 2016

Federal government and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) have agreed in principle to increase power tariff by 123.5 per cent from Rs 2.59 per unit to Rs 5.79 per unit in lieu of increase in Water Usage Charges from Rs 0.15 per unit to Rs 0.425 per unit to be effective from July 1, 2015, sources close to Secretary Electricity, AJ&K noted. AJ&K owes an outstanding amount of Rs 60 billion to power Distribution Companies (Discos) since long as Muzaffarabad is not paying a single penny in this regard. Secretary Electricity AJ&K, Fayyaz Ali Abbasi, in a letter to the federal government has cited the minutes of a meeting held on December 23, 2015. According to him, the draft minutes were shared with the Prime Minister of AJ&K who has accorded approval for the following: (i) The power tariff for AJ&K will be Rs 5.79 per unit from July 1, 2015 till next tariff determination; (ii) the issue of arrears will be taken up with the Ministry of Water and Power and Finance Division separately; and (iii) section 2.3 & 2.3.1 of the draft trio-partite agreement hydropower project will be replaced as "the Wapda shall pay to the AJ&K Net Hydel Proceeds/ Water Use Charges/ royalty from Neelum Jhelum Power Project with effect from the Commercial Operational Date (COD) of the project at Rs 0.425/ KWh provided that Wapda shall also be liable to pay any upward enhancement approval in case of KPK or other provinces of Pakistan in future". AJ&K has also communicated to the federal government that Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for Jagran-1 HPP will be signed with the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) and tariff approval from National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) will be obtained.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0/14222/>

MA Mir, “Kashmir traders meet on LoC”

The Express Tribune, February 11, 2016

Traders in the divided Kashmir valley seemed more interested in exchange of goods than exchange of fire between Pakistan and Indian forces, as they demanded more pints of trade on the Line of Control (LoC). Following a gap of one year, businesspeople from Jammu & Kashmir and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) braved freezing temperatures and light rain to meet halfway on Chakoti Bridge on February 10 to discuss trans-LoC trade and travel, sources noted before the media. Traders from both sides of Kashmir appealed to the government of Pakistan and India to open more crossing points on LoC to facilitate travel and trade. According to the sources the 10-member team of AJK traders was headed by DG Travel and Trade Authority (TATA) Brig (retd) Imtiaz Wain while the eight-member delegation of Jammu & Kashmir arrived under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Baramulla. After a two hour meeting, the traders jointly released a charter of demand that was made available to the media. The charter, among other demands seeks, more trade routes on LoC, multiple entry permits for traders, lifting of ban on items such as pulses and herbs, inclusion of more items in the trade list, daily bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar and tourists' visit on both sides of LoC.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1044649/kashmir-traders-meet-on-loc/>

Shabbir Mir, “Import, export hub: 15 traders' bank accounts frozen at Sost branch”

The Express Tribune, February 10, 2016

The bank accounts of at least 15 traders were frozen for their alleged involvement in the embezzlement of Rs220 million at a branch of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) in Gilgit-Baltistan. “Their accounts will remain frozen until the enquiry comes to a

close," an insider privy to the development noted on February 9. "A letter to the bank has been dispatched." The traders were accused of working with two bank officers to embezzle the amount from an NBP branch in Sost village, the last town of G-B's Gojal Valley on Karakoram Highway before the China border. "The traders are being investigated by a National Accountability Bureau official," he added, adding the traders include members from G-B Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The scam was unearthed in January 2016 after a manager and two other officials of the bank were arrested by NAB for embezzling millions and causing a loss to the national exchequer. Over Rs10 million have so far been recovered from them during investigations. According to officials familiar with the matter, Sost town is a business hub as the dry port is located there and bank officers regularly deal with traders involved in export and import with China.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1043399/import-export-hub-15-traders-bank-accounts-frozen-at-sost-branch/>

"Fruit-processing plants: Jatoi assures Gilgit-Baltistan government of assistance"

Business Recorder, February 13, 2016

Minister for Industries and Production Ghulam Murtaza Khan Jatoi has stated that Industries Ministry will extend all possible help to Gilgit-Baltistan's government in installation of fruit processing plants for poverty alleviation. Talking to Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Mir Ghazanfar, Industries Minister stated that his Ministry and its companies like Furniture Pakistan, gems and jewellery and Smeda would make best efforts for industrial development of Gilgit-Baltistan. The Governor noted that in GB unemployment ratio was very high, adding tourism was the only industry and as such there was vital need of industries in Gilgit-Baltistan. Ghulam Murtaza Khan Jatoi assured the Governor that the MoI&P would facilitate GB in development of industrial sector especially gems and jewellery, furniture, installation of fruit pulps factories and opening of utility stores in northern areas of Pakistan. The Minister further stated that for the development of small and medium enterprises, MoI&P's attached organisation 'Ahan' would expand its programme "Aik Hunar Aik

Nagar" to northern areas to focus on neglected sectors of hand-crafted products. "Ahan will promote their products in local and international markets to create employment opportunities in the area and for increasing income," he added.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/16107/>

"Government to extend 3G, 4G facility to GB & AJK"

Business Recorder, February 13, 2016

The federal government decided to extend the 3G and 4G internet facility to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) in the on-going calendar year (2016). Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir stated that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif issued special directives for the early launch of 3G/4G services in the areas. The launch of 3G/4G internet facility in the two regions was discussed during a high-level meeting held three days ago which was also attended by the Director General Special Communication Organisation (SCO). For further deliberations and providing necessary facilities before the launch of 3G/4G services, they were slated to meet on February 18, the minister added. The minister stated that Planning Commission approved the PC-1 "replacement of GSM Network of AJ&K" worth Rs 1,450 million, and the required money would be issued soon. Barjees Tahir further stated it had been decided to meet other finances requirement for upgrading the network and other equipment from the Universal Service Fund (USF) of AJK&GB. Owing to the absence of modern internet facilities in the AJK and GB, people of the two regions could not develop their skills in different sectors, especially education and health.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-stories/0/16043/>

M A Mir, "AJK bank seeks scheduled status"

The Express Tribune, February 21, 2016

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir agreed to sign a memorandum to extend state bank's supervisory role of Bank of AJK. This was decided between the

delegations of SBP and Bank of AJK during their meeting in Karachi on February 19. A three-member delegation of bank of AJK met the state bank delegation to discuss the scheduled status of the bank which would enable the bank to provide banking services with more flexibility. SBP Governor Ashraf Wathra nominated a focal person to coordinate with Federal Ministry of Finance, AJK government, AJK Council and the BoAJK for streamlining the legal, operational and capital requirements the bank needs to meet to get the scheduled status. The AJK delegation also briefed the governor of SBP on the various issues faced by the other commercial banks in AJK. The governor promised to address these issues and grant the scheduled status to BoAJK on a priority basis. Finance Minister AJK and chairman bank of AJK, Latif Akbar led the delegation from AJK while the managing director of the bank of AJK, Fazalur Rehman, and its board member, Muhammad Saeed were part of the delegation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1051226/ajk-bank-seeks-scheduled-status/>

“ERRA completes 9982 projects in 2005 quake affected areas”

Radio Pakistan, February 22, 2016

The Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) completed nine thousand nine hundred and eighty two projects in earthquake 2005 affected areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After earthquake 2005, ERRA was tasked to construct fourteen thousand five hundred and twelve damaged infrastructure projects in AJK and KP. Besides, the Authority supervised reconstruction of six hundred thousand seismically safe residential houses in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It also imparted disaster risk reduction training to sixty-six different institutions and departments. During the tenure of the present Government, ERRA completed four hundred and sixty-eight projects.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/82857/1>

“CPEC to raise investment in GB”

The News, February 19, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Governor Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan on February 18 stated the region's huge investment potential has increased with the upcoming China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He was addressing the members of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). He also stated that Gilgit-Baltistan had huge potential in trade with China, tourism, minerals, gems, precious stones and hydro power. He noted as per the report of GIZ and Wapda, GB has potential to generate more than 40,000MW hydropower. He added that a single project, Bunji Tunnel can generate 7,100MW of electricity. Khan further stated investment in hydropower projects would get rich benefits.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/99246-CPEC-to-raise-investment-in-GB>

“FPCCI for observer status to Kashmir in ECO”

Dawn, February 23, 2016

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) asked the government to give Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) observer status in the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) along the same lines as Northern Cyprus. In a statement issued on February 22, FPCCI President Abdul Rauf Alam stated Northern Cyprus was granted observer status in ECO on the recommendation of Turkey which was supported by ECO member countries. He stated that Northern Cyprus is an autonomous entity in Turkey, almost similar to AJK. “I strongly feel that Kashmiri business community and enterprises should be facilitated on this international platform,” stated Mr Alam, who is also the head of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI). The observer status for AJK was aimed at boosting economic cooperation and bringing prosperity to the region, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241253/fpcci-for-observer-status-to-kashmir-in-eco>

International Developments

Anchal Vohra, “US tacitly supporting Chinese investments in PoK, Gwadar port: Sources”

IbnLive, February 23, 2016

The United States is tacitly supporting Chinese investments in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and even those at Gwadar port, say sources. The revelation comes at a time when the Barack Obama administration has decided on selling eight F-16s to Pakistan ignoring India's displeasure. US envoy to India Richard Varma stated that the Chinese investment in Gilgit Baltistan region needs to be watched carefully. "I know the Chinese investment in the region has been a source of disagreement and contention. I think we have to watch this carefully. The fact is that at least in Afghanistan for example, lot of investment in infrastructure and energy and health is needed. So civilian investment is welcome." "I understand the concern about the transport corridor and I understand the concern about other elements of that cooperation that could cause security risks. We are watching both very carefully," he added. Meanwhile, in a move that is bound to raise hackles in India, Pakistan is working on raising the constitutional status of its occupied Gilgit-Baltistan to address China's concerns over the \$46-billion economic corridor through the strategic region. The strategic region in the north provides the only vital link with China. It is also on the key route of the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), linking western China to southern Pakistan's Gwadar Port with a network of roads, highways, railways and investment parks.

<http://www.ibnlive.com/news/world/us-tacitly-supporting-chinese-investments-in-pok-gwadar-port-sources-1206597.html>

“International seminar and photographic exhibition to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day in Sri Lanka”

Colombo Page, February 3, 2016

The High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka

will mark Kashmir Solidarity Day by holding an International Seminar on the genesis and way forward of the Kashmir Issue in Colombo on 5th February 2016. Several High profile Sri Lankan and Pakistani experts will present papers on various dimensions of Kashmir issue. The Seminar will be followed by a photographic exhibition on Kashmir. The day (February 5th) has been observed in Pakistan since 1990 to pay homage to Kashmiri martyrs and highlight the plight for their birth right to self-determination, promised to them by the international community under the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Feb03_1454505074CH.php

“UN should protect people of Gilgit-Baltistan, prevent imposition of Urdu by Pakistan, says Gilgit leader”

DNA, February 27, 2016

In a letter to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, Abdul Hamid Khan, the Chairman of the Balwaristan National Front (BNF) claimed that the Government of Pakistan is doing its utmost to destroy the traditional local identity of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan by imposing the Urdu language which is spoken by only eight percent of the country's population. The continued use of Urdu as the language of instruction has contributed to political tensions in Pakistan, he stated. Maintaining that 72,000 square kilometres of Gilgit-Pakistan was currently under Pakistan's illegal occupation; Khan stated this was a blatant violation of UNCIP resolutions of April 28, 1949. He accused Islamabad of fabricating a fraudulent non-inclusive agreement on April 28, 1949, on the very day when UNCIP had asked Pakistan to withdraw its forces from this disputed part.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-un-should-protect-people-of-gilgit-baltistan-prevent-imposition-of-urdu-by-pakistan-says-gilgit-leader-2183007>

Other Developments

“Gilgit “Biodiversity action plan: AJK govt, Power Company to manage Mahaseer Park”

The Express Tribune, February 25, 2016

The government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and a private power company joined hands to jointly manage the Mahaseer National Park. Mira Power Co Ltd a subsidiary of Korea South-East Power (KOSEP) Company developing the 102-MW Gulpur Hydro Power Project signed a landmark agreement with the AJK government for implementation of a biodiversity action plan (BAP) for Mahaseer National Park. Under the agreement, the company will provide supplemental funds for

protection of the park and for construction of a hatchery for the Mahaseer fish in Murli Nullah near Kotli. The AJK Forests and Wildlife Department will carry out protection of the park that covers an area of over 100 kilometres along the Poonch River with the support from an independent organisation funded by the KOSEP. The Korean company will also engage a firm for monitoring and evaluation of the initiative, and to measure the extent to which BAP objectives are achieved.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1053855/biodiversity-action-plan-ajk-govt-power-company-to-manage-mahaseer-park/>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Too early to say Whether Gilgit-Baltistan will become a Fifth Province”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, February 3, 2016

A senior leader of the ruling PLM-N of Gilgit-Baltistan stated that Kashmir issue would not be let affected while resolving the identity issue of Gilgit-Baltistan. He further stated that: “one thing we are sure that Azad Kashmir set up will not be given. It is in our manifesto to give Gilgit-Baltistan a constitutional status”.

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

“Ignoring Gilgit-Baltistan in CPEC will be having deleterious consequences”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, February 3, 2016

In an interview to the media, the provincial minister for information and broadcasting, Ibrahim Sani stated that Gilgit-Baltistan shares borders with five countries. Whereas AJK with only two countries. Therefore, it is Gilgit-Baltistan that has a great geo-strategic significance than 'AJK'. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have sacrificed a lot for the people of Kashmir. The CPEC is crossing through Gilgit Baltistan, and therefore, the people of the region should get the benefit. Ghanche, Jaglot, and Ghizer should also be included in the CPEC plan. Most of the political parties and people are on the same page as far as the CPEC is concerned. People want to get an equal share. Islamabad cannot afford to ignore Gilgit Baltistan. Without taking the people of GB into confidence, the CPEC will not be a success.

<http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/?page=cGFnZS0x&dt=MDItMDctMjAxNg>

“Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan has approved the number of developmental projects”

Daily Salaam, February 7, 2016

Hafeezur Rehman approved work on the

construction of two mega hydroelectric power projects in Skardu and Kuchwara. A sum of Rs. 230.190 million have been granted for the projects. The Chief Minister also announced the plan of equipping and training the police so that law and order could be maintained in the region. Underscoring the importance of the CPEC, the Chief Minister noted that maintaining law and order is pivotal for the success of the economic corridor.

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

“Opposition misleading the people”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, February 15, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister stated that opposition is misleading the people. CPEC and work on Skardu road is a long-term project and will be completed in 2030. The cost of these projects is Rs. 44 billion. Briefing the media, Chief Minister noted that his government will make sure that the Jaglot-Skardu road plan will be approved in 2016 and Rs. 12 billion of developmental budget will be spent timely. Criticising the opposition, Chief Minister noted that the opposition party, particularly the top leadership of PPP, should refrain from misleading the people on the CPEC, wheat subsidy and the up gradation of the Skardu road. He further stated politics over dead bodies should be stopped.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=02-15-2016&img=02-15-2016page-1-1

“CPEC matter of Life and Death for the People of the Region: Mehdi Shah”

Daily Bang-e- Sahar, February 18, 2016

Mehdi Shah, a member of PPP executive committee stated that the CPEC, Gilgit Baltistan's constitutional status, Khalsa Sarkar and the construction of the Skardu road are quite important and have become a matter of life and death for the people of the region. While talking to the media,

Shah stated that all these issues were linked with the economic development of Gilgit-Baltistan and any party trying to compromise on these projects would not be spared. He also stated that the PPP was a name of democracy and struggle that has rendered sacrifices for the promotion of democracy. The founder of the PPP is accredited with introducing democracy in the country and creating awareness amongst people of their rights. Unfortunately, however, the supporters of dictators are now lecturing the people on democracy, he regretted. He also stated that the PPP founder abolished the FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulations) in Gilgit-Baltistan and got rid the people of the tyrannical system of Jagirdari. He also added that the PML-N should tell the nation about what it did in the country during the three tenures in government. He further stated that the chief minister's stance at a press conference about the Skardu road was a bid to mislead the masses. However, Mehdi Shah acknowledged that Governor Ghazanfar Ali Khan was sincerely making efforts using his personal links and influence to kick start the vital project.

http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=02-18-2016&img=02-18-2016page-1-1

“We won't let state to snatch our land by force”

Daily Bang-e-sahar; February 20, 2016

Pakistan People's Party Gilgit-Baltistan President Amjad Advocate criticised both provincial and the central government for snatching the land of the people by force. Castigating Pakistan, he noted that Pakistan took away billions of rupees from the Sost post every year in terms of different taxes and duties. On the other hand, the rivers flowing from Gilgit-Baltistan are watering the agricultural land of Pakistan while the land in Gilgit-Baltistan remains barren due to unavailability of water and the barren land are now being occupied under the so-called Khalsa Sarkar law. "This land is not a fief of anybody's dad or their uncle, it is the property of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and would and should be utilized for their benefits," he added. For long, it has been the demand of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan that the State Subject Rule should be implemented in Gilgit-Baltistan in order to protect the rights of the people on their land and avoid settlement of outsiders in the region. Under the rule, outsiders

could not own landed property in the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the law enacted by the former Dogra rulers has been kept aside. As a result, thousands of people from different parts of the country, especially Punjab and KP, have now purchased land in Gilgit-Baltistan and settled there. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan are of the view that under a conspiracy, the successive governments in Islamabad have facilitated the settlement of outsiders in Gilgit-Baltistan in order to change the demography and turn the indigenous people into a minority thereby prolonging their illegal rule in the region.

http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=01-20-2016&img=02-20-2016page-1-2

“Weak policy and leadership main hurdles in constitutional status”

Baad-e-Shimal, February 28, 2016

Granting constitutional status to Gilgit-Baltistan is getting tough. The weak political leadership and lack of vision is making it difficult to resolve the identity crisis. Situation has reached to a level where even centre is pronouncing that the region does not belong to Pakistan. That tells us how far the centre is serious in granting a constitutional status to Gilgit Baltistan. The current setup under which Chief Minister and Governor is working has many defects. If it is not possible to give a constitutional status or making Gilgit Baltistan the fifth province, at least there should be efforts to amend the existing governance order and make the legislative assembly powerful enough. Keeping the significance of the geo-strategic location of the area in view, it is up to Pakistan now to take a decision. A committee headed by Sartaj Aziz must have done its homework. All the political parties of the region are on the same page. They want to see Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth province of Pakistan. Work on many big projects in Gilgit-Baltistan is underway. In future due to lack of clear legal status, these projects may fall in legal complications. People of the region have sacrificed a lot in the past. Thus, it is right time to give them a representation in the National Assembly and the Senate.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=02-28-2016&img=02-28-2016page-4-4

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)

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Volume 9

Number 3

March 2016

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.

POK NEWS DIGEST



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsain.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com