

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh

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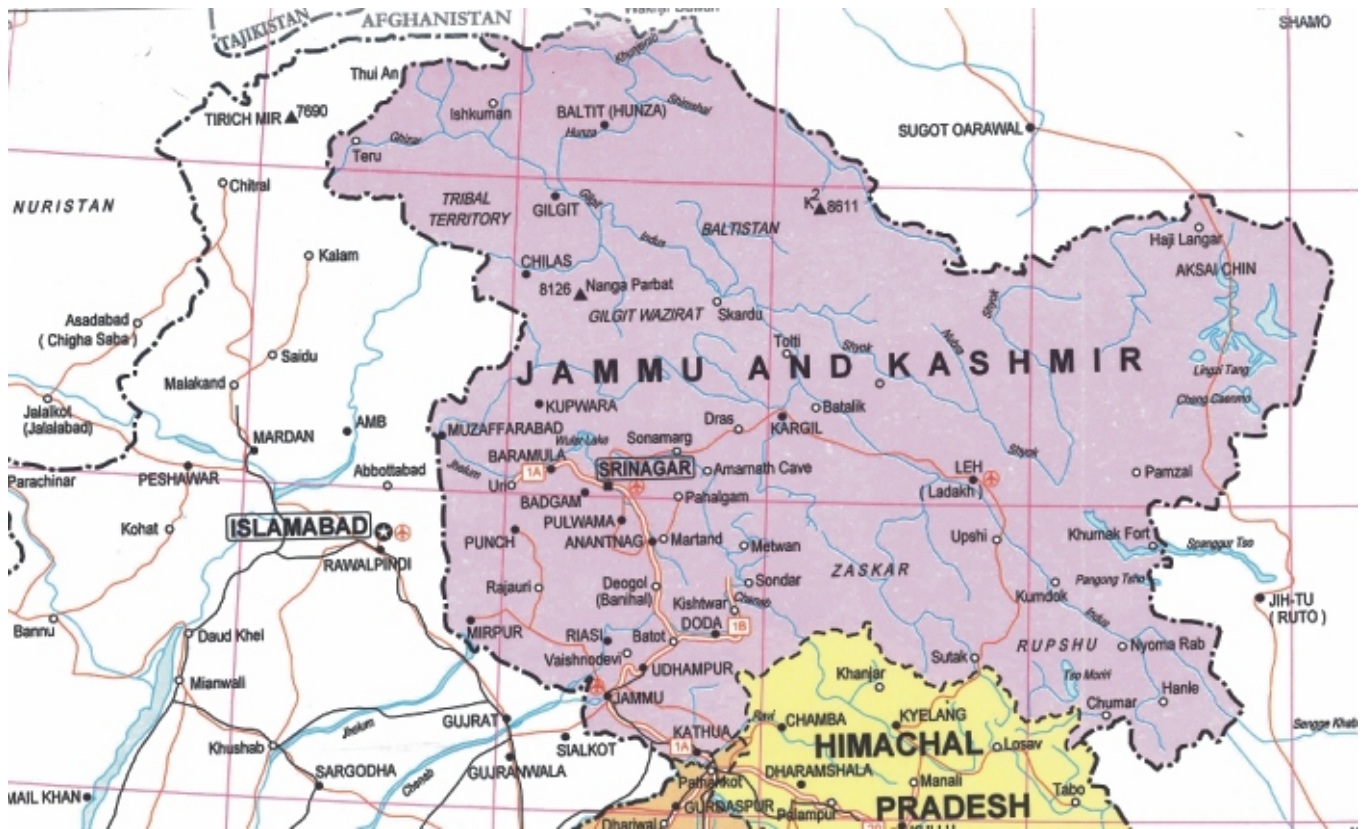
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

There were reports that few international consortiums have applied for providing consultancy services to the Diamer Bhasha dam project in Gilgit Baltistan. The consortiums are led by a company each from the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. They have submitted their proposals for conducting supervision of the project and administering the dam construction and other such work. The government of Gilgit Baltistan reportedly received a sum of Rs 3.5 billion from the WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority) for completion of land acquisition process. Meanwhile, the Finance Minister of Pakistan, Ishaq Dar, yet again reiterated that the government is keen to work simultaneously on both the Diamer Bhasha dam in Gilgit Baltistan and the Dasu project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

By-elections were held for two vacant assembly seats- Skardu and Ghanche in Gilgit Baltistan on October 6. Both seats were won by PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) candidates. The victory indicates the party is slowly gaining ground in the region where the government is currently led by the PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party). The next elections in Gilgit Baltistan are due towards the end of 2014.

Meanwhile, the Silk Route festival in Gilgit Baltistan was held in the last week of October 2013. The festival took place after a gap of 13 years especially to promote tourism industry in the region. Tourism sector was hit badly due to the June 2013 incident in which terrorists killed foreign tourists at a base camp near Nanga Parbat. Delegates from over 15 countries visited Gilgit Baltistan to participate in the event which was simultaneously held in 3 places- Gilgit, Hunza and Gojal.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Moment of truth: Looking inwards, GBLA speaker admits failure”

The Express Tribune, October 22, 2013

GILGIT: In an acknowledgment of under performance uncharacteristic of most politicians, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig stated they “wasted” their four years in government. “It was a golden opportunity. We could have done so much, but we have failed our people,” stated the lawmaker introspectively, now that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to which he belongs nears the end of its tenure.

“We are now short of time to do anything substantial as elections in G-B are due by the end of 2014,” he noted on October 21.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/620628/moment-of-truth-looking-inwards-gbla-speaker-admits-failure/>

Zahid Baig, “AJK government offered help to revive seed laboratories”

Business Recorder, October 20, 2013

Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department offered the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to help it revive two seed laboratories situated in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur for strengthening the seed production system in this area which at present are non-functional. Sources in the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department noted on October 19 that two seed production laboratories were established in AJK under 'Seed strengthening project', which were later handed over to the AJK government.

Nevertheless, the AJK government could not sustain these facilities and they were closed down in 2010. 'There is no seed production system in the AJK and its agriculture sector fully depends on

getting seed from outside its territory. Not even one kilogram of seed of any crop is produced there and it is a matter of concern for the authorities, sources added.

They stated that the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department Director General Syed Nasir Ali Shah at a recent seminar in Muzaffarabad had offered the AJK government to help it revive these laboratories. These laboratories could prove helpful in production of wheat, potatoes and other vegetables seed while it can also be used for fruit plant certifications.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1242769/>

Peerzada Ashiq, “Kashmir separatists' opinion divided on border clashes, Hindustan Times”

Hindustan Times, October 21, 2013

SRINAGAR: Moderates and hardliner separatist leaders are a divided lot when it comes to provide a solution to the increasing tension between India and Pakistan along the border areas in state.

While moderates are asking both countries to sit and talk, hardliners accuse India of preparing for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's "invasion". "Major brunt of border tensions is to be borne by people of Kashmir living across the divided border. Apart from losing their lives and property, the inhabitants have to migrate in view of these tensions," a spokesman of the moderate Hurriyat, headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq stated.

The Hurriyat urged the leadership of both countries “to take bold steps by initiating a dialogue process”. Meanwhile, the moderate Hurriyat reiterated its support for a “meaningful tripartite dialogue between all stakeholders”.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Srinagar/Kashmir-separatists-opinion-divided-on-border-clashes/Article1-1138006.aspx>

“Stressing education: University in Mirpur soon says AJK PM”

The Express Tribune, October 21, 2013

MIRPUR: The Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) government is committed to promoting education and will establish a world-class Islamic university at Khari Shareef in Mirpur. This was stated by AJK Prime Minister Abdul Majeed while speaking at a reception hosted in Channi Raiki village in Bhimbher district on October 20. The Prime Minister stated his government has established three universities and five colleges of higher education, including three medical colleges in the public sector since coming into power. Majeed further announced the establishment of a government girls degree college in Panjairi, two high schools each for boys and girls in Channi Raiki village and construction of a link road between Channi Raiki and the Mirpur-Bhimbher road.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/620090/stressing-education-university-in-mirpur-soon-says-ajk-pm/>

“MHA denies working on proposal to create LS seats for PoK”

Business Standard, October 15, 2013

NEW DELHI: The Home Ministry today denied reports it was working on a proposal to create Lok Sabha seats in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on the lines of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, saying no such plan was under its consideration. "It is hereby clarified that there is no such proposal under consideration of the Ministry of Home Affairs," Ministry spokesperson K S Dhatwalia stated in a statement, referring to media reports in this regard.

The report had stated Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde was reviewing the proposal, which involves amending Article 81 of the Constitution. It was suggested in the news report that the proposal was being worked out on the lines of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, where 24 seats are reserved for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir but are vacant as the territory is in Pakistan's control.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/mha-denies-working-on-proposal-to-create-ls-seats-for-pok-113101500764_1.html

“Government will construct Dasu, Bhasha dams simultaneously: Dar”

Business Recorder, October 12, 2013

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar stated that Pakistan's introduction of key reforms and measures to fix the national economy have bolstered international confidence as top world institutions have expressed their willingness to partner in the country's development. Senator Dar, who is leading a Pakistani team of economic managers to the IMF-World Bank meetings, was upbeat after holding a series of discussions with leaders of financial institutions and his counterparts from several countries on October 10. "At each forum our efforts have been appreciated and now the world financial institutions acknowledged a seriousness on part of the government led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif towards addressing long-delayed issues and pulling the country out of its economic woes", he noted after meeting with Managing Director of the World Bank.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1241571/>

“Not a single person returned under rehabilitation policy: J&K”

The Times of India, October 6, 2013

SRINAGAR: Not a single person has returned from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) under the rehabilitation policy for former militants since the policy was announced three years ago, the Jammu and Kashmir government stated. "Due to some inexplicable reasons, no individual has returned from Pak/PoK to the state through the routes identified under the policy so far. Therefore, the benefit of the policy could not be extended to any of the individuals," chief minister Omar Abdullah stated in a written reply to question in the state assembly on October 5. Leader of opposition Mehbooba Mufti had asked the government to provide details of the number of youths who have returned from Pakistan under the rehabilitation policy announced in 2010 and the benefits provided to them.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-10-06/india/42763361_1_rehabilitation-policy-jammu-and-kashmir-government-omar-abdullah

“Senate body recommends to PM for approval of summary to purchase automatic weapons for FC”

South Asian News Agency

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on Interior Affairs has recommended to the Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif to approve the pending summary pertaining to purchase of latest automatic weapons for the frontier constabulary (FC) and more recruitment of 'Jawans. The meeting Senate Standing Committee on Interior Affairs chaired by Senator Talha Mehmood was held at the Parliament House in Islamabad. The committee directed Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan for preparing draft for making law regarding the scouts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The committee was informed that no arms were purchased for the FC during the two years and committee was also informed that the same group was involved in the terrorist incidents in Nagabarat and Babusar and seven members of the group have so far been arrested. The committee directed the interior ministry for in-camera briefing, in view of the involvement of the foreign hands in the terrorist incidents.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/senate-body-recommends-to-pm-for-approval-of-summary-to-purchase-automatic-weapons-for-fc/>

“Employees suspend power supply in GB over pay issue”

Dawn, October 11, 2013

GILGIT: The employees of Water and Power Department on October 10 suspended electricity to the entire Gilgit-Baltistan to protest against non-payment of their salaries according to regular pay scales. Official sources stated that about 4,300 temporary employees working on fixed pay of Rs 4,000 a month were regularised and it was pledged that from July 2013 they would be paid full pay.

They further noted that earlier the WPD Employees Association took up the matter with the senior management who had assured them that their demand would be fulfilled. They stated that several deadlines were issued by the association, but no one

heeded to its demand. “We were left with no option but to go on strike. If our demand goes unfulfilled we will observe strike for an indefinite period,” stated Abdul Haleem, a protesting employee. He stated that it was their right to get full pay as per notification issued by the Gilgit-Baltistan government. “With the meagre amount of Rs 4,000 it is not possible to make both ends meet,” stated Munawar Khan, a lineman.

<http://dawn.com/news/1048943/employees-suspend-power-supply-in-gb-over-pay-issue>

“PM felicitates newly-elected MLAs of Gilgit Baltistan”

October 9, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on October 9 felicitated the newly-elected Members Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Gilgit Baltistan Assembly, Haji Fida Muhammad Nashad and Sultan Ali, on their election to provincial legislature from the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) platform. It is pertinent to mention that by-elections for two vacated seats of Gilgit Baltistan Assembly were held on October 6, 2013 in which PML-N candidates managed to win both seats. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the newly-elected MLAs would come up to the trust people have reposed in them.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=244162&Itemid=1

Shabbir Mir, “Voicing discontent: Nursing staff holds protest, demand regularisation of services”

The Express Tribune, October 2, 2013

GILGIT: Scores of nurses held a protest rally in Gilgit town on October 1 and demanded regularisation of their services. The protest coincided with the launch of an anti-polio drive in the region. On September 30, nursing staff in seven districts of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) had announced they would be boycotting the drive. As a result, more than 70 nurses, most of them women, took part in the rally to pressurise the government into accepting their demands. Protesters held banners and placards demanding an end to 'the injustice

against nursing staff and passed through the main roads of Gilgit city before staging a sit-in outside the chief minister's office and the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly building. They chanted slogans against the government and demanded their services be regularised.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/612126/voicing-discontent-nursing-staff-holds-protest-demand-regularisation-of-services/>

“Culprits of Nanga Parbat incident nabbed and will soon be brought to justice soon: Barjees”

South Asian News Agency

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir has stated the culprits of Nanga Parbat incident have been apprehended and will soon be brought to justice. Talking to Radio Pakistan, he stated that Nanga Parbat incident had badly tarnished Pakistan's image in tourism industry across the world. Barjees Tahir stated that keeping in view the recent investment initiatives taken by Chinese government in Gilgit-Baltistan, the government will provide security to attract more firms to invest in Pakistan. He stated Pakistan and China are working in forming joint security force to ensure the security of Chinese workforce busy in various development projects in Pakistan.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/culprits-of-nanga-parbat-incident-nabbed-and-will-soon-be-brought-to-justice-soon-barjees/>

“Barjees assures mountaineers safe travel, climbing activities in GB”

Associated Press of Pakistan, October 1, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Chaudhry Barjees Tahir on October 1 assured the international mountaineers and tourists of all possible measures for their safe and secure travel and climbing activities in GB. “In June this year an unfortunate incident of terrorist attack occurred at the Diamer Base Camp of Nanga Parbat. As Minister Incharge of Gilgit-Baltistan, I take this opportunity to assure the international mountaineering community that the Government of Pakistan is ensuring all possible measures for their safety,” he stated while addressing the concluding

session of a two-day general council meeting of the Union of Asian Alpine Association (UAAA).

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=242632&Itemid=1

Shabbir Mir, “A paradise lost: Nanga Parbat massacre tarnishes tourism”

The Express Tribune, September 30, 2013

GILGIT: Although 17 foreign mountaineering and 87 trekking groups have visited Baltistan in 2013 many left in the aftermath of the deadly attack at the foot of the second highest peak in Pakistan. Baltistan is home to K-2 and several other peaks. Ten foreign trekkers and their Pakistani guide were killed in an unprecedented attack in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) when militants wearing army uniforms attacked the Nanga Parbat base camp on June 22.

Tourist economies: According to information compiled by the tourism department in Skardu, Baltistan's headquarters, the total number of tourists who visited the town during 2013 year is 12,329. Germans topped the list with 88 tourists, followed by Spain and Japan with 60 and 40 respectively.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/611672/a-paradise-lost-nanga-parbat-massacre-tarnishes-tourism/>

“Call for lifting ban on mining in GB”

Dawn, September 30, 2013

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan mineral association on September 30 demanded lifting of ban on mining and transfer of the management of the mineral department. The association's chairman Mohammad Ali Zarin told a press conference in Gilgit that top officials of the mineral department were main hindrance in development of the sector.

He threatened to boycott the upcoming international silk route festival if their demands were not met. Mr Zarin was flanked by other office-bearers of the association. He stated the Central Board of Revenue and National Trade Policy didn't oppose movement of precious stones inside the country, but the local mineral department was opposed to it. “Instead of extending support to traders associated with the mineral sector the authorities are pushing them against the wall,” he

stated. Mr Zarin stated over 900 traders were being victimised by mineral department management, destroying them financially. “There is no ban on mining throughout the country thus, the same should be lifted in Gilgit-Baltistan,” he stated.

<http://dawn.com/news/1046468/call-for-lifting-ban-on-mining-in-gb>

Shabbir Mir, “Al-Jehad Trust case: G-B bar association demands implementation of apex court's orders”

The Express Tribune, October 2, 2013

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association on October 2 passed a resolution demanding the implementation of a Supreme Court judgment in the Al-Jehad Trust case. In the May 1999 judgment of the Al-Jehad Trust vs Federation case, the apex court directed the federal government to ensure the constitutional rights of G-B's residents within the next six months.

“The existing governance order called 'Empowerment and Self Governance Order, 2009' is in violation of the Supreme Court's directives as it has curtailed powers previously delegated under the Governance Order, 1994,” stated Advocate Shehbaz Khan who chaired the meeting of the bar association. Held in the bar room, the meeting was also attended by office bearers and executive committee members. Participants noted under the Governance Order 1994, the regional government had powers over revenue-generating resources of G-B, including forests and minerals among others. They claimed that under the current setup, these powers have been taken from the elected representatives and assigned to the G-B Council, which is headed by the prime minister. The council comprises 12 members, including six from G-B and six from the federal government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/612561/al-jehad-trust-case-g-b-bar-association-demands-implementation-of-apex-courts-orders/>

“Diamer Bhasha Dam project likely to get pace”

Pakistan Observer, October 4, 2013

LAHORE: Work on 4500 Megawatt power Diamer Bhasha Dam project is likely to get pace as three

consortiums have come forward to provide their services. According to reports, three global consortiums have filed their consultancy proposals to Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). The consortiums including AECOM of the United States, Mott Mac Donald Limited of the United Kingdom and Lahmeyer of Germany submitted their proposals regarding construction, supervision and contract of the project. With multidimensional benefits expected from Diamer Bhasha Dam Project, it would benefit the country in getting water for agricultural purposes, mitigating floods and hydel power in general.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=220042>

“Ajk Government: Employees' data being computerised”

The Express Tribune, October 5, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The data of Azad Jammu and Kashmir government employees is being computerised, an official noted on October 4. The process aims at updating and issuing the final list of employees, Secretary Services and General Administration Chaudhry Munir Ahmed stated. The secretary stated a proforma has been issued to be filled by all the government servants of the secretariat group. The proforma, he added, is also available on the official website www.snga.ajk.gov.pk

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/613591/ajk-government-employees-data-being-computerised/>

Farooq Ahmed Khan, “Terror alert triggers operation in Chilas; two 'high-profile terrorists' arrested”

Dawn, October 5, 2013

GILGIT: Security forces launched a massive operation against anti-peace elements in Chilas after receiving a tip-off about the presence of two high-profile terrorists in the remote northern town on October 5. The two terrorists were arrested after forces cordoned off the entire town in a major operation, they claimed. “We have arrested two high-profile terrorists who were directly involved in the terror incident of the Nanga Parbat in which ten foreign climbers were killed,” stated a senior police

official requesting not to be named. Gunmen had shot dead nine foreign mountaineers and their tour guide at the 4,200-meter base camp of Nanga Parbat, the country's second highest peak on June 23, 2013. The attack was claimed by a small militant group stated to be affiliated with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Police stated on October 5 that some phone calls were intercepted which disclosed the location of the terrorists and the entire area was cordoned off and a search operation was launched.

<http://dawn.com/news/1047647/terror-alert-triggers-operation-in-chilas-two-high-profile-terrorists-arrested>

“Polling in Skardu, Ghanchay by-polls begins”

The News, October 6, 2013

SKARDU: Polling in the by-polls for two seats of Gilgit Baltistan Assembly GBLA-9 Skardu-3 and GBLA-23 Ghanche-2 began on October 6 morning. Pakistan People's party (PPP) member had vacated the Skardu seat, but there was no candidate of the ruling party now. Polling for both the seats of Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly took place. The number of voters in GBLA-9 Skardu-3 stands at 23,614. Eight polling stations out of 55 have been declared sensitive. This seat was vacated after the resignation of PPP's minister Shakil Ahmad on becoming the Judge, however, there is no candidate of the ruling party now. Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)'s Haji Fida Mohammad Nashad and independent candidate Syed Abbas Mosvi are contesting for this seat.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-121307-Polling-in-Skardu,-Ghanchay-by-polls-begins->

Shabbir Mir, “Nanga Parbat attack: Chilas operation called off after disappointing results”

The Express Tribune, October 7, 2013

GILGIT: Security forces on reported on October 6 temporarily called off the targeted operation in Chilas town after it failed to achieve the 'desired results'. An operation was launched on October 4 and 5 in Shaheen Koat and Takia in Chilas town after intelligence reports suggested the presence of at least two suspected to be behind the murder of 10 foreign tourists and one local guide at the foot of Nanga Parbat. On June 23, 2013, gunmen donning

Gilgit Scout uniforms shot dead 10 foreigners and their Pakistani guide near the base camp of Nanga Parbat, the country's second highest peak. The recent operation was launched after the police intercepted phone calls which revealed the location of the two suspected terrorists as well as a potential terror plot targeting the area. Intelligence revealed suspects had entered Chilas town via Kohistan.

“Although 16 people were taken into custody, none of them were behind the attack,” a police official stated regarding the results of the operation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/614517/nanga-parbat-attack-chilas-operation-called-off-after-disappointing-results/>

“Corruption: GB legislator unearths fraud in security vehicles”

Dardistan Times, October 7, 2013

GILGIT: Provincial minister for Excise and Taxation Naseer Khan disclosed that contractors supplying private vehicles to government in Gilgit-Baltistan are earning through unfair means. He claimed that the vehicles provided are smuggled and Non Custom Paid (NCP). Talking to media he stated that contractors have been deceiving the provincial government by providing NCP vehicles for the use of internal security. As per the terms and conditions of the contract, they were supposed to provide legal and registered vehicles.

“Contractors are receiving the rent according to the tender of legal and registered vehicles while the rented vehicles are NCP. The rent of NCP vehicles is much lower than the registered vehicles” he stated. He vowed to take strict action against the contractors who were involved in the fraud. One would wonder as what mechanism was in mind to check illegal vehicles if it was constituted in the contract, that NCP vehicles are no-no. How that mechanism was bypassed?

http://www.dardistantimes.com/content/vehicles12-non-custom-paid-gilgit2?qt-feature_artilces=0

Shabbir Mir, “Taking over: PML-N sweeps by-polls in Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, October 8, 2013

GILGIT: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N) swept the by-elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), claiming both G-B legislative assembly seats contested in the polls held on October 6. Two seats in the Baltistan region G-BLA 9 Skardu-3 and G-BLA 23 Ghanche-2 were rendered vacant this year after former law minister Wazir Shakeel became a judge and Maulana Abdul passed away. According to unofficial results, Fida Nashad of PML-N won the polls in G-BLA 9 Skardu-3 by securing 8,391 votes, followed by All Pakistan Muslim League's (APML) Abbas Mosavi, who bagged 2,528 votes.

The total number of registered voters was 231,669 in the constituency, whereas turnover stood at 50%. Polling was held in 55 polling stations in the constituency.

Interestingly, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) did not field its candidate for G-BLA 9 Skardu-3, which was once considered to be a stronghold of the party. Skardu is also the hometown of Chief Minister Mehdi Shah, who is the president of PPP's G-B chapter.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/614905/taking-over-pml-n-sweeps-by-polls-in-baltistan/>

“APHC AJK remembers 2005 quake devastations”

Kashmir News, October 8, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter on the anniversary of devastating 2005 earthquake has praised the role of the people of Pakistan, army and NGOs for extending all-out support to the victims in Azad Kashmir and Abbottabad. The APHC-AJK at a meeting presided over by its Convener, Syed Yousuf Naseem, in Islamabad termed the devastations by the earthquake as a great tragedy.

The APHC AJK chapter appealed to the Governments of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to take necessary steps for the rehabilitation of the quake victims, particularly the refugees who were still living in tentage villages in Kamsar and Kotli, Azad Kashmir. The meeting was attended among others by Mehmood Ahmad Saghar, Shaikh Muhammad

Yaqoob, Nissar Mirza, Manzoor-ul-Haq Butt, Tufail Altaf Butt, Abdul Majeed Malik, Altaf Hussain Wani, Muzaffar Hussain Shah, Khadim Hussain, Shaikh Abdul Mateen, Syed Abdullah Gilani and Muhammad Shafi Dar.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2013/10/08/aphc-ajk-remembers-2005-quake-devastations.html>

“Govt ready to work on Diamer-Basha Dam without waiting for foreign assistance: Ishaq Dar”

Associated Press of Pakistan, October 9, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar stated on October 8 that the government would construct Diamer-Bhasha Dam at all cost from its resources and would not wait for any foreign assistance. “It is the decision of Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif that the government will kick off the 4500 MW hydro power project without waiting for the World Bank's funding which is expected to be released after two years”, he stated in an interview to a news channel. Senator Ishaq Dar stated that the government is committed to completing both Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha hydro power projects and it will not step back from any of the project. He stated that for Dasu Dam project, the World Bank would provide a loan of US \$700 million and work on this 4320 MW hydro power project would be started in March, 2014.

With respect to recent increase in power tariff, the Minister stated that National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) and Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) both have regulatory powers and the government respects their decisions. “But the NEPRA had recommended the government to increase power tariffs on the consumers who are using more than 100 electricity units. But the Prime Minister was not ready to put burden on the lower middle class of the country”, he stated.

The minister stated on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, it was decided that power rates should be increased only for the consumers who are using over 200 units, which means that about 66%

people of the country were exempted from the increase in electricity.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=244030&Itemid=1

“Rebuilding almost complete: AJK PM”

Dawn, October 9, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed claimed on October 8 that his government had succeeded in completing reconstruction and rehabilitation work in the earthquake-affected areas “to a great extent after removing obstacles”.

But the All Parties Conference, an alliance of local parties, rejected his claim and decided to march on Islamabad after Eidul Azha to 'reclaim' Rs55 billion which it stated had been donated by the international community to the government of Pakistan for reconstruction in the quake-hit region. Talking to reporters, Mr Majeed claimed that unavailability of funds was an obstacle to the execution of ongoing schemes, “but it has now been removed by our government”.

<http://dawn.com/news/1048487/rebuilding-almost-complete-ajk-pm>

“Awaiting remuneration: Teachers hold sit-in, demand overdue salaries”

The Express Tribune, October 8, 2013

GILGIT: At least 183 school teachers held a protest in Gilgit on October 8 over non-payment of dues. At about 9.00am, men and women assembled outside the office of the chief secretary to stage a sit-in. After some time, they moved the protest to outside the Chief Minister's House and demanded payment of their salaries.

Sporting banners in their hands, the protesters refused to budge till their demands were accepted. Demonstrators included those sacked in May by the education department, which termed their appointments illegal saying the recruitments from 2010 to 2013 were made without formal tests or interviews. However, the teachers later filed a petition in the Supreme Appellate Court of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and were reinstated within the

month. But though the teachers have won the legal battle, they have not received their salaries for the past 10 months.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/615264/awaiting-remuneration-teachers-hold-sit-in-demand-overdue-salaries/>

“PM felicitates newly-elected MLAs of Gilgit Baltistan”

Associated Press of Pakistan, October 10, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on October 9 felicitated the newly-elected Members Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Gilgit Baltistan Assembly, Haji Fida Muhammad Nashad and Sultan Ali, on their election to provincial legislature from the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) platform. It is pertinent to mention that by-elections for two vacated seats of Gilgit Baltistan Assembly were held on October 6, 2013 in which PML-N candidates managed to win both seats. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the newly-elected MLAs would come up to the trust people have reposed in them.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=244162&Itemid=1

“JK People observe Oct 22 as Black Day, condemn Pak aggression”

October 22, 2013

JAMMU: The Jammu Kashmir Unity Foundation today organized a seminar on the topic “Invasion or Tribal Raid-1947” to observe Black Day on October 22, (The Day Pakistan Attacked the Jammu and Kashmir State in 1947). A number of prominent speakers including Balwant Singh Mankotia, president JK National Panthers Party and MLA, Hukum Chand Sharma, Secretary Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee, Sohail Kazmi, Secretary General, Press Club of Jammu, Anwar Choudhary, prominent Gujjar leader, Rajiv Chuni, President SOS, an organization of POK Refugees, Ajaat Jamwal, convenor, Jammu and Kashmir Unity Foundation and Dr. Ajay Chrungoo, Chairman Panun Kashmir spoke on the occasion.

All the speakers were unanimous in the view that 22 October 1947, the day Pakistan invaded Jammu and Kashmir along with the tribesmen, was one of the

Blackest Day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. All of them emphasized the need of remembering this day as the Day when Jammu and Kashmir was pushed into state of instability and perpetual war.

<http://groundreport.com/jk-people-observe-oct-22-as-black-daycondemn-pak-aggression/>

Shabbir Mir, “Heated session: As new MPAs take oath, G-B lawmakers continue to play tug-of-war”

The Express Tribune, October 23, 2013

GILGIT: Two newly-elected MPAs from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) were sworn in on October 22 as Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly proceedings kicked off amidst debates and criticism of policies. Speaker Wazir Baig administered the oath to Fida Mohammad Nashad and Sultan Ali, the two candidates who won the by-elections held in Baltistan in October. In a speech after taking oath, Nashad vowed to strengthen G-B's ties with the federal government in a bid to draw the prime minister's attention towards the region.

“I am ready to play my role in this regard.” Nashad was the former deputy chief executive of G-B, a status equivalent to that of the chief minister. How green is my valley on a point of order, Mirza Hussain, a Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) lawmaker from Nagar Valley, launched a strong protest over the exclusion of the valley in the upcoming silk route festival.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/621085/heated-session-as-new-mpas-take-oath-g-b-lawmakers-continue-to-play-tug-of-war/>

“GB CM lauds IUB VC's role”

The Nation, October 23, 2013

BAHAWALPUR: Gilgit/Baltistan Chief Minister, Syed Mehdi Ali Shah appreciated IUB/GSCWU Bahawalpur Vice-Chancellor Dr Muhammad Mukhtar for his hospitality towards students of Gilgit/Baltistan, especially on Eidul Azha. He remarked that the kind steps were of high importance towards promoting solidarity, brotherhood, harmony, peace and unity among the people of Pakistan and expressed gratitude to the

IUB/GSCWU VC for providing a good chance to students of Gilgit/Baltistan to celebrate Eid in a happy atmosphere far from their homes.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/23-Oct-2013/gb-cm-lauds-iub-vc-s-role>

“China-Pakistan military ties strengthened by optical cable system”

October 23, 2013

The incorporation of Pakistan into its Trans-Asia-Europe Optical Cable System will give Beijing access to the Pakistani military communications network. Telecom experts have been dispatched to inspect Sost and Khunjarab in the upper Hunza area of Gilgit Baltistan as a possible site for the network, according to Karachi-based Radio Pakistan. The new network will be used to connect Rawalpindi, where the country's military headquarters are located, and Gilgit Baltistan including the areas in the disputed Kashmir region held by Pakistan.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20131023000014&cid=1101>

Shabbir Mir, “Assembly session: GBLA debates over non-customs paid vehicles”

The Express Tribune, October 24, 2013

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) legislative assembly speaker on October 23 asked treasury benches to update the house on whether non-customs paid (NCP) vehicles have been regularised after the payment of customs duty. Wazir Baig's remarks came after lawmakers complained that the fate of NCP vehicles hangs in the balance despite paying customs duties.

“A court in Islamabad has declared the federal government's amnesty scheme, under which duties have been paid, to be illegal,” Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) legislator Shireen Fatima stated during the assembly's second day of proceedings. Mirza Hussain and Amina Ansari of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid stated NCP vehicles couldn't be driven out of G-B despite paying a huge duty, since their legal status is still ambiguous.

Baig directed Excise and Taxation Minister

Muhammad Naseer to arrange a briefing for the legislators on the issue, with complete details of total revenue collected from G-B and where the amount is deposited.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/621615/assembly-session-gbla-debates-over-non-customs-paid-vehicles/>

Anil Raina, “Four ex-militants seeking rehab in India detained while returning to Pak”

Mumbai Mirror, October 25, 2013

The families had crossed the border as part of a rehabilitation programme to curb militancy. Twenty-three people, including 13 children, were detained by the army in Keran sector of Jammu and Kashmir on October 23 for trying to cross over the border into Pakistan. The 23 arrested -- comprising six families -- include 4 ex-militants who had over the past few years come from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) and surrendered before J&K police.

Around 300 former militants had returned to J&K illegally through Nepal, along with their families, in the past three years. After surrendering, these militants tried to come under a rehabilitation programme set up by the J&K government and the Indian Army. However, as they had returned illegally, they are not eligible to be part of the programme. This has caused these families a lot of hardships, due to which they chose to cross the border on October 23.

<http://www.mumbaimirror.com/news/india/Four-ex-militants-seeking-rehab-in-India-detained-while-returning-to-Pak/articleshow/24676886.cms>

“Minister for paying PTDC workers all dues”

The Nation, October 24, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination Mian Riaz Husain Pirzada has stated that the liabilities and legal dues of PTDC employees should be paid before their transfer to provinces along with management of PTDC properties. He stated this while chairing the 78th meeting of Board of Directors of PTDC. The agenda of the meeting included the appointment of Secretary/Director of PTDC Board, review of the progress on decisions, PTDC in the post-transfer scenario till winding up of the company,

consideration and approval of the appointment of Legal Advisor for PTDC, joint venture of PTDC properties/facilities located in ICT, issues relating to the Lahore-Delhi Bus Service, setting up of Pakistan Tourism Board and regularization of contract/daily wages employees under the establishment Division's notification.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/24-Oct-2013/minister-for-paying-ptdc-workers-all-dues>

Usman Manzoor, “AJK PM faces Rs5 bn investment scam”

The News, October 30, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir belonging to Pakistan People's Party has been engulfed in a mega scam amounting Rs5 billion by personally allowing a fake investment company to operate in AJK. He did so despite clear warning from the Securities Exchange and Commission of Pakistan and superior judiciary of AJK not to allow such companies to loot the hard earned money of the people.

Documents reveal that the AJK PM Chaudhry Abdul Majeed personally allowed and ordered the Industries Department to register a company Ms Nexus Online Pvt Limited. This company attracted the people by offering attractive profits and by now some 525 applications have been registered against the company of depriving people of Rs1.88 billion.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-26362-AJK-PM-faces-Rs5-bn-investment-scam>

Hamid Mir, “Consensus in Geo programme 'Jeeney Do Kashmir Ko’”

The News, October 28, 2013

RAWALPINDI: Dialogue is the only way to resolve the Kashmir issue and there will be no war because of tension on the LoC. These views were expressed by leaders of Pakistan, AJK and Jammu & Kashmir while answering the questions of Hamid Mir, the host of Geo News' special transmission “Jeeney Do Kashmir Ko”. Those who took part in the transmission were MQM's Farooq Sattar, PTI's Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Ch Birjees Tahir, AJK Prime Minister Ch Abdul

Majeed, AJK JI Amir Abdul Rashid Turabi, J&K Liberation Front leader, Yasin Malik, leader of the Hurriyat Conference, Mir Waiz Umer Farooq, as well as the former foreign secretary of India, Salman Haider from New Delhi.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-26306-Kashmir-issue-can-be-solved-only-through-dialogue>

Shabbir Mir, “Seniority sidelined: 'Federal govt's junior officials given key posts in G-B'”

The Express Tribune, October 31, 2013

GILGIT: Lawmakers on October 30 voiced concerns over the posting of federal government's junior officials to key posts across Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). The issue was raised through a resolution during the proceedings of the G-B Legislative Assembly. “Federal government's junior officials are posted in G-B at top positions, bypassing senior officials from the area,” stated Mirza Hussain of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), who moved the resolution that was unanimously passed by the house.

“This should stop now as it creates unrest among local officials and may ultimately trigger a Balochistan-like situation in G-B,” stated Hussain, a resident of Hunza-Nagar Valley. He also termed it a violation of the G-B Empowerment and Self-Governance Order (2009), under which G-B's political status was brought at par with a province. The lawmaker stated it was greatly unjust to deprive G-B officials from their promotions to the next grade.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/624913/seniority-sidelined-federal-govts-junior-officials-given-key-posts-in-g-b/>

“Police arrest 18 over Nanga Parbat massacre”

The News, October 31, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Police in Gilgit-Baltistan stated on October 31 that they have arrested 18 suspects over the killing of 10 foreign climbers in the Himalayas in June, but warned that others remain at large. The June 22 attack was the deadliest assault on foreigners in Pakistan for a decade and was claimed by a purported new faction of Pakistan's umbrella Taliban movement, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Police in the northern districts of Gilgit and Diamer in the Gilgit-Baltistan region stated they have arrested 18 suspects on suspicion of planning and carrying out the attack. The officer leading the investigation stated only four of those held are believed to have been directly involved in the killings at the foot of Pakistan's second highest mountain Nanga Parbat. “We have arrested four culprits who shot the tourists at Nanga Parbat base camp while seven are still at large,” Muhammad Naveed noted. The victims of the attack, carried out by men in police uniforms, were identified as one American with dual Chinese citizenship, three Ukrainians, two other Chinese, two Slovaks, one Lithuanian and one Nepalese. A Pakistani guide was also killed.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-124616-Police-arrest-18-over-Nanga-Parbat-massacre>

Economic Developments

Tariq Naqash, “LoC trade to resume from 8th”

Dawn, October 4, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: After remaining suspended for more than a month, intra-Kashmir trade from the Chakothe-Uri crossing point will resume on October 8, a meeting between the two sides decided on October 3. AJK Trade and Travel Authority (Tata) Director General, Brig (retd) Muhammad Ismail and Baramullah Deputy Commissioner Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad represented their respective sides at the two-hour-long meeting at the Peace Bridge, which marks the Line of Control in Chakothe Sector.

On August 29, Indian authorities had returned two trucks of fresh fruit (mangoes) from their side, maintaining that in accordance with a notification by India's Central Board of Excise and Customs they could not accept products which belonged to Pakistan instead of AJK. Traders of the Jammu & Kashmir went on a strike against the decision on September 3, saying the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the barter trade had no mention of the origin of the mutually agreed tradable goods.

<http://dawn.com/news/1047337/loc-trade-to-resume-from-8th>

“Barjees terms telecommunication companies tax evaders”

Associated Press of Pakistan, October 11, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Ch. Barjees Tahir October 11 stated that most of the telecommunication companies are tax evaders as they are earning in millions but not paying actual tax. According to a press release issued here, the minister during briefing in the ministry of

Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan stated that no steps had been taken in last five years to increase tax collection. Commissioner income tax Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) told the minister that telecommunication companies are paying Rs.120 million tax per month. Barjees urged the commissioner income tax AJK for improvement in tax collection for the development. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council officers also presented budget proposals in the meeting.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=244492&Itemid=2

“AJKCCI for steps to revive industry”

The Nation, October 4, 2013

MIRPUR: Expressing grave concern over the reported impasse in the process of industrialization in AJ&K mainly due to the lack of requisite infrastructure and poor policies of the institutions concerned, the business fraternity of AJK demanded effective measures to revive these functionaries to ensure survival of industrial sector in the region. The local business community, through their main representative forum - the AJK Chamber of Commerce and Industry have demanded immediate grant of attractive incentives to ensure true industrial progress in the state particularly through the revival of about 90 of the sick industrial units in the industrial areas of Mirpur and Bhimbher districts.

Alarming indication to the fast deteriorating situation of industrial sector in AJK was given by the speakers in the annual general meeting of the AJKCCI held in Mirpur - wherein the newly-elected office-bearers took oath of their offices for 2013-14. Speakers including the newly-elected AJKCCI President Ch Azeem Mushtaq, former Presidents including Zulfiqar Abbasi, Ch

Muhammad Saeed, Mian Khalid Rafiq and Raja Muhammad Jamil as well as executive committee members Sohail Shujah Mujahid, Ch Khalid Hussain, Raja Khalid Mahmood, Election Commissioner Khawaja Zaffar Iqbal, Secretary Ch Muhammad Shafique and others stated that the industrial estates in Mirpur and Bhimbher had turned into graveyards of the industries because of the lack of basic infrastructural facilities.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/04-Oct-2013/ajkcci-for-steps-to-revive-industry>

“Diامر Bhasha Dam economy's lifeline”

Pakistan Observer, October 28, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Diامر Bhasha Dam project is a “life-line” for the national economy, which would help meet country's future agricultural and power requirements. An official of the ministry of water and power stated the Dam had three important objectives, which include flood-mitigation, power generation and storage of water. He stated the dam on River Indus would enhance life of the Tarbela Dam by over 35 years. Answering another question, he stated the gigantic project would generate 4,500 MW of electricity and store over 8 million acre feet (MAF) of water to meet the country's growing power and irrigation needs.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=221961>

“Rs3.5 bn released for Bhasha Dam land acquisition”

The News, October 31, 2013

GILGIT: The government of Gilgit-Baltistan received an amount of Rs3.5 billion which would be disbursed on land acquisition for the construction of Diامر-Bhasha Dam. This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner of Diامر, Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti on October 30. He stated that the amount had been transferred to the accounts of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and soon the amount would be transferred to the accounts of the district magistrate. The official stated that once the amount was transferred, the papers for payment shall be completed and within 45 days payment shall be made.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-211329-Rs3.5-bn-released-for-Bhasha-Dam-land-acquisition>

International Developments

Senge Sering, “China's Interests in Shaksgam Valley”

October 10, 2013

To date, China occupies more than 20,000 square kilometers of Gilgit-Baltistan covering Shaksgam, Raskam and Aghil valleys. Chinese nationals are once again in the newspapers of Gilgit-Baltistan, this time for smuggling heavy precious metals and gems out of the region. Similar reports also appeared last year when they tried to smuggle uranium, gold and copper from Gilgit-Baltistan. The Chinese model of mineral exploration fails to support Gilgit-Baltistan's economy since the corporations do not provide jobs to the locals and deny a share in the revenue to the resource-owners.

To make the situation worse, the Pakistani regime has placed a ten-year ban on local businesses involved in gem extraction and trade. Undue concessions to the international corporations and ban on the locals affect the economic well-being of tens of thousands of people. Pakistani regimes are notoriously famous for bending over backwards to facilitate China's involvement in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.sharnoffsglobalviews.com/china-shaksgam-valley-191/>

“Promoting education: Canadian envoy reaffirms support to Pakistan, AJK”

The Express Tribune, October 2, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Canadian government has pledged to complete the construction of 37 school buildings at a cost of Rs2 billion in earthquake-hit areas of Garhi Dupatta and Hattian in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) by the end of this year. This was stated by Canadian High Commissioner Greg Giokas while addressing the handing-over ceremony of five schools in Lawasi, Garhi Dupatta, some 30

kilometres from Gilgit on October 1. He handed over five school buildings to AJK Minister for Works, Chaudhry Rashid. Giokas stated the constructions of the buildings that were damaged during the devastating 2005 earthquake, was ample proof of strong relations between Canada, Pakistan and AJK. “We will continue to support the governments of Pakistan and AJK for the promotion of education,” the envoy stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/612136/promoting-education-canadian-envoy-reaffirms-support-to-pakistan-ajk/>

“Foreign investment: Turkey to work for Pak infrastructure development”

The Express Tribune, October 9, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 9 stated that Pakistan offers various investment opportunities with ideal economic returns for foreign investors. Nawaz while talking to the Turkish delegation, led by Vice Chairman NUROL Group, Orguz Carmikli which called on him, stated that Pakistan's priority sectors for investment include hydel and coal power projects, Karachi-Lahore Motorway and infrastructure development. The prime minister stated Pakistan faces power shortages and the government was committed to mitigate the same by exploiting innovative and cheap energy resources. Carmikli expressed his company's readiness to invest in Gaddani Power Park, Diamer Bhasha Dam and Karachi-Lahore motorway.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/615847/foreign-investment-turkey-to-work-for-pak-infrastructure-development/>

“Int'l consortiums submit proposals for Bhasha Dam consultancy services”

Associated Press of Pakistan, October 3, 2013

LAHORE: Three world renowned consortiums

have submitted their proposals to Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) for consultancy services for main works of the 4500-MW Diamer Bhasha Dam Project. The pre-qualified consortiums led by AECOM of the United States of America, Mott Mac Donald Limited of the United Kingdom and Lahmeyer of Germany put forward their proposals for construction, supervision and contract administration, stated a WAPDA spokesman on October 2. Construction of Diamer Bhasha Dam is the top priority of the present government, he stated, adding that proposals for consultancy services mark a step forward for construction of the project.

It may be pertinent to add here that after assuming office, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif took keen and personal interest in accelerating the pace of work on Diamer Bhasha Dam Project, which reflects his commitment to harness water and hydropower resources for development of the agro-based economy and generation of low-cost hydel electricity to provide relief to the common man. It is foresight of the Prime Minister and his Government to mitigate future scarcity of water and electricity in the country. In view of its immense significance for water storage, flood mitigation and electricity generation, the Government through Ministry of Water and Power, and WAPDA is implementing Diamer Bhasha Dam as a priority project. The commitment of present Government vis-à-vis construction of Diamer Bhasha Dam Project can be gauged from the fact that it has allocated Rs 25 billion in the current fiscal year for the core project.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=243013&Itemid=2

“US hands over hospital to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir govt”

Business Standard, October 24, 2013

The US today handed over a new hospital to the government in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, as a part of its 2005 earthquake reconstruction assistance. The Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital in Dhirkot was inaugurated by

USTATED Pakistan Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb and Sardar Qamar Zaman, PoK's Minister of Health, the US Embassy noted in a statement. "The handover of the hospital marked the completion of the United States 2005 earthquake reconstruction assistance under which 77 buildings with a funding of USD 137 million were reconstructed in Bagh, AJK and Mansehra district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa," it added. The hospital will serve 200 patients daily and is the largest health facility serving over 80,000 people from surrounding areas. The hospital is built to be earthquake-resistant.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/us-hands-over-hospital-to-pakistan-occupied-kashmir-govt-113102401245_1.html

Shabbir Mir, “Silk Route Festival: Ukrainian ambassador pays first visit to G-B after Nanga Parbat tragedy”

The Express Tribune, October 29, 2013

HUNZA: After five of his Ukrainian compatriots were brutally murdered alongside five other trekkers at Nanga Parbat, Ukrainian Ambassador Volodymyr Lakomov became the first official from his country to visit Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). Lakomov arrived in Gilgit on October 27 with 14 other foreign delegates to participate in the Silk Route Festival. After partaking in festivities on October 28, Lakomov found the people of G-B to be “most hospitable” and Hunza residents “amazing dancers”. “I saw the young and the old dancing to the tunes. It was really an amazing performance. Let me say it's really good to be here with them,” shared the ambassador at the end of a folk dance performance at the historic Altit Fort in Hunza Valley.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/623828/silk-route-festival-ukrainian-ambassador-pays-first-visit-to-g-b-after-nanga-parbat-tragedy/>

Other Developments

Shabbir Mir, “Trophy hunting programme: G-B sets \$70,000 as hunting fee for markhors”

The Express Tribune, October 21, 2013

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government announced the licence fee for this year's hunting season with Pakistan's national animal Markhor topping the list at \$70,000. According to an official of the G-B Wildlife and Environment Department, Sajjad Haider, permits will be auctioned on November 11 in Gilgit and the hunting season will continue till April 2014. A quota of four markhors, eight blue sheep and six ibexes has been fixed this season.

The rate for hunting blue sheep is fixed at \$12,000. The cost for hunting ibex varies, with international hunters having to pay \$3,000 for a permit. Pakistani hunters, however, can purchase a licence for almost half that amount, Rs150,000, while the same is available for a G-B hunter at Rs60,000.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/620132/trophy-hunting-programme-g-b-sets-70000-as-hunting-fee-for-markhors/>

“Earthquake jolts part of KP, GB”

Daily Times, October 22, 2013

PESHAWAR: An earthquake of moderate intensity jolted parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Gilgit-Baltistan in the wee hours of October 21 but no loss of life or infrastructure was reported. According to meteorological department, tremors measuring 5.7 on Richter scale were felt in Swat, Mardan, adjoining areas and in district Ghizer of Gilgit-Baltistan. People of the areas were sleeping at the time when tremors struck. They rushed out of their homes in panic. Met office stated the epicentre of earthquake was in Eastern Kashmir in Shaksgham Valley.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\10\22\story_22-10-2013_pg7_3

Rinchan Ali Mirza, “Survivor, Baltistan style”

The Express Tribune, October 20, 2013

If you lived in a region which was not only home to the longest glacier outside the Polar regions and the highest number of mountains over 8,000 meters, you would need to know more than a few techniques for survival. Indeed, for the Baltis, or people of Baltistan, living in the heart of the mighty Karakoram Range means that life is a constant struggle for survival against the vicissitudes of nature. The British explorer GT Vigne, who visited the region between 1835 and 1838, wrote about their harsh lives. They were “unusually thin and careworn” and lived on the scanty fare of a mountaineer, which consists chiefly of bread made from grains, and apricots dried in the sun.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/618549/survivor-baltistan-style/>

Shabbir Mir, “Eid security plan: Traffic on Babusar Road suspended for security”

The Express Tribune, October 14, 2013

GILGIT: Traffic between Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Rawalpindi via Babusar Road was been suspended ahead of Eidul Azha for security reasons, officials stated on October 13. “The decision has been taken after mutual consultation between the provincial government of G-B and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P),” stated Shehzad Hassan, an official of the G-B Information Department, though he did not specify the nature of threat, if any. At the same time, the official stated, security on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) has also been intensified to ensure the safe return of G-B residents who work outside the region. As Eidul Azha comes closer, traffic jams on KKH and Babusar Road have increased as people are returning home to celebrate the festival with their families. Currently, passenger buses travelling on KKH are also being escorted by police and paramilitary troops in parts of G-B and K-P to avert

any unfortunate incident. “It has been decided that vehicles will not be allowed to cross the area between Babusar top and Naran-Kaghan,” stated the official, referring to the area where last year armed men affiliated with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had killed about 20 passengers who were coming to G-B from Rawalpindi.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/617682/eid-security-plan-traffic-on-babusar-road-suspended-for-security/>

“Negligence: Over 30 students injured in two road accidents”

The Express Tribune, October 5, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: At least 32 students, including five girls, were injured in two road accidents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on October 4. Police officials noted that five girl students of a local college were among 18 school children injured on October 4 when a wagon they were travelling in fell into a deep ravine near Akbari Bridge in Kotli District, 200 kilometres from Muzaffarabad. The injured students were shifted to the district headquarters hospital, Kotli, where doctors stated six students were in critical condition. The other 12 students who received minor injuries were discharged after providing initial medical aid. The injured students while recording their statements told the police that the driver lost control over the steering of the vehicle while negotiating a sharp curve near the bridge as he was talking to someone on the cell phone.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/613626/negligence-over-30-students-injured-in-two-road-accidents/>

Shabbir Mir, “Caught in the crossfire: Cardiology centre in Gilgit falls to sectarian dispute”

The Express Tribune, October 27, 2013

GILGIT: Regional Health Minister Gulbar Khan has sought support from politicians to ensure work on Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) first cardiology centre begins immediately. The construction of the proposed cardiology facility could not start earlier due to a sectarian dispute over its location since the past decade. “Both Shias and Sunnis wanted it to be constructed in their areas,” Khan stated on October 26.

“That's something we need to sort out with the help of political representatives so that construction can begin,” he noted. If a cardiology centre is built in Gilgit, it will be the first in the entire region. Presently, patients suffering from heart diseases have to be referred to Islamabad for treatment. The minister warned patients would continue to suffer if consensus between the two communities is not reached. Khan had also raised the issue in the G-B assembly after lawmakers demanded an explanation about the delay in construction.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/623041/caught-in-the-crossfire-cardiology-centre-in-gilgit-falls-to-sectarian-dispute/>

Shabbir Mir, “Fostering ties: Silk Route Festival takes off as foreign delegates arrive”

The Express Tribune, October 28, 2013

GILGIT: Foreign delegates from 15 countries landed in Gilgit on October 27 on the first day of Silk Route Festival. The three-day festival is being held after 13 years in G-B, a region which recently witnessed the Nanga Parbat massacre in which 10 foreign climbers were killed. Named after the ancient Silk Route, which formed the first bridge between the East and West and was a source of trade between the ancient empires of China, India, Persia and Rome, the event is aimed at reviving tourism in the region. Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Governor Pir Karam Ali Shah inaugurated the event at the Karakoram International University (KIU). Dignitaries from 15 countries, including Ukraine, Korea, and Syria, were flown in from Islamabad. They will travel to Hunza and Gojal on October 28 to partake in the rest of the events.

“G-B has much to offer to the rest of the world and its potential can be utilised by making investments in the region,” stated the governor. He also spoke of G-B's history, calling it a melting pot of influences from Kashmir, Central Asia and China where five ethnic groups speak five different languages with 36 dialects.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/623419/fostering-ties-silk-route-festival-takes-off-as-foreign-delegates-arrive/>

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

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

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

Population: 2.973 million (1998 population census), Male, 1.850 million; Female, 1.832 million

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Kashmir (Muzaffarabad Division) comprises of 3 districts: Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Neelum, Hattian

Jammu (Mirpur Division) comprising of 5 districts: Bhimber, Kotli, Mirpur, Sudhnati/Pallandari and Rawalakot/Poonch, Haveli

President: Sardar Yaqoob Khan

Prime Minister: Chaudhry Abdul Majeed

AJK Council: Total 12 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49

Ethnic Groups: Gujjars, Jats, Mughal, Rajputs, Sudhan, Awan, Qureshi, Pashtuns, Shins, Ladakhi, Baltis etc.

Religious Groups: Sunni, Ahlehadith, Shia, Nurbakhshi, Christians, Qadianis, Hindus

Languages: Punjabi, Hindko, Pahari, Kashmiri, Balti, Puriki, Shina

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

(Source: Azad Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www. www.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ghanche, Skardu, Kharmang and Shigar districts

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Diamer, Ghizer, Hunza-Nagar and Gilgit districts

Ethnic Groups: Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Tatar, Mon, Pashtun, Khowar, Dom, Gujjar, Rajput and Kashmiri

Religious Groups: Shia (Twelvers), Nurbakhshi (Twelvers), Ismaili, Sunni, and Ahlehadith

Languages: Shina, Balti, Wakhi, Khowar, Gujjari, Burushaski, Puriki, Kashmiri, Pashto

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly: Total 33 members (24 members directly elected)

Governor of G-B: Pir Karam Ali Shah

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah

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

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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