

POK

News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Compiled & Edited by Dr Priyanka Singh

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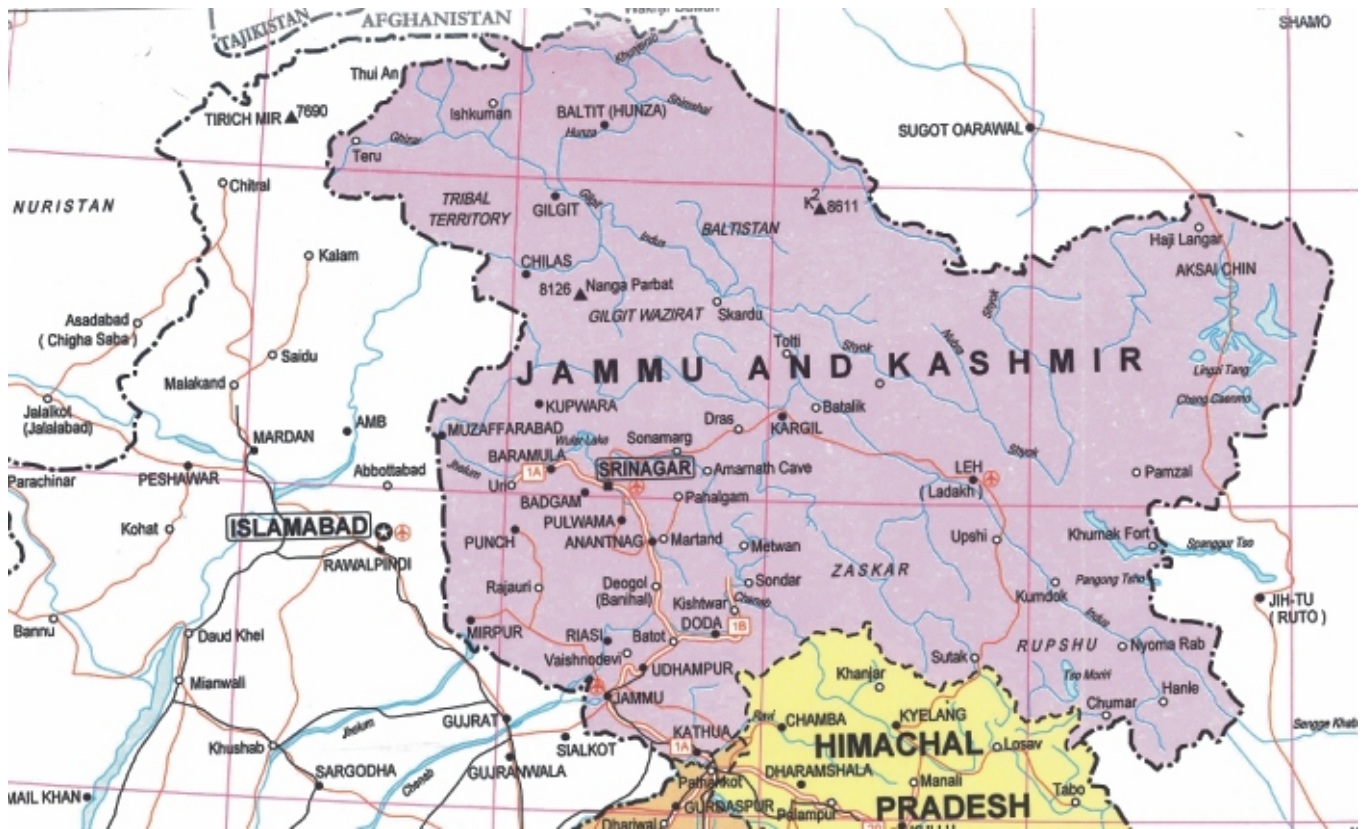
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**No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010**



Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

The recently held elections in Pakistan has once again unleashed a debate on the constitutionally and identity of PoK, which neither participated in the elections nor its people got an opportunity to vote in it. Both the so called AJK and Gilgit Baltistan do not have representation in the Pakistan Parliament. In the wake of elections, a section of people has urged that relations between Islamabad and the so called AJK need to be revisited and redefined. They have demanded basic political rights which include empowerment and representation in the federal assembly of Pakistan.

PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) 's victory in the elections has raised a great deal of apprehension in PoK as both AJK and Gilgit Baltistan currently have PPP-led governments. A leader of the local chapter of PML-N in PoK sent out signals, as reports suggest, that the government in the region could be overthrown. Later, PML-N chief and the newly elected prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, dismissed such claims. However, the search has begun to replace the governor of Gilgit Baltistan, Pir Karam Ali Shah, who took charge after the demise of the previous incumbent, Dr Shama Khalid, in September 2010. It is noted that PML-N is eyeing the top post in Gilgit Baltistan.

Meanwhile, the blueprint of the Bunji dam in Gilgit Baltistan, to be built with Chinese assistance, is complete. The proposed site of the dam is located in an area legally claimed by India. Therefore, in 2009, when the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Bunji dam, a 7, 100 megawatt project was signed between Pakistan's Ministry of Water and Power and Three Gorges Project Corporation of China, India raised serious objections on the issue.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“Blueprints of Bunji Dam complete”

The Express Tribune, May 7, 2013

LAHORE: On May 6, the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) announced that it has completed detailed engineering design and tender documents of the 7,100-megawatt (MW) Bunji Hydropower Project, and will soon initiate the process to undertake construction of one of the largest dams in Pakistan. Pakistan and China signed a memorandum of understanding for the Bunji Dam in 2009. The accord was signed between the Ministry of Water and Power and Three Gorges Project Corporation of China.

Wapda Chairman, Syed Raghieb Abbas Shah broke this news in a meeting with Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Secretary, Sajjad Saleem Hotiana, while discussing various Wapda projects located in the province. Speaking on the occasion, Shah stated that mega-dams such as Bunji and Diamer-Bhasha will not only help stabilise the economy but also help usher a new era of social and economic development in G-B. He also praised the G-B government's cooperation in implementing Wapda projects in the region. “Wapda will fulfil all its commitments during the construction of the projects in the province and resettlement of the displaced,” stated Shah.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/545248/blueprints-of-bunji-dam-complete/>

Shabbir Mir, “Counter-reaction: Mainstream parties shun reservations over self-governance order”

The Express Tribune, May 9, 2013

GILGIT: Leaders of mainstream political parties in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) shunned the reservations of religious parties against the G-B Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009, claiming the fault lies with the rulers and not the system itself. “There is

nothing written against any sect in the legislation, so we will not support any struggle on sectarian lines,” stated Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) regional head Hafizur Rahman on May 8. Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Ahle Sunnat Waljamat (ASWJ) on May 7 observed a 'token strike' in parts of G-B against the 2009 legislation, asking authorities to revoke it and amalgamate G-B with Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). They alleged the order and the chief minister were both biased and favoured a particular sect.

Some nationalist parties also joined the protest, carrying banners and convening rallies in valleys, including Ghizer and Diamer. The government shut down all educational institutions, markets, cellular services and the Karakoram Highway due to the protest as a precautionary measure on May 7.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/546273/counter-reaction-mainstream-parties-shun-reservations-over-self-governance-order/>

Shabbir Mir, “Acting with caution: G-B politicians stay away from party campaigns”

The Express Tribune, May 5, 2013

GILGIT: With politicians under attack and threats looming large, most politicians from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) have refrained from attending ongoing election campaigns of their respective parties. In the past, several delegations from Gilgit, Skardu and other valleys of G-B used to participate in rallies, standing alongside their leaders and supporting their cause. However, recent threats have put the brakes on the trend.

“I don't think our presence in the cities will make any difference to our leadership,” stated G-B Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig, who is also a local leader of Pakistan Peoples Party. “There are threats from extremists so it's better if we stay here,” he noted while speaking to journalists at the Gilgit Press Club on May 3. Although Chief Minister

Mehdi Shah is in Islamabad, the rest of the lawmakers including Governor Pir Karam have stayed back in G-B. In the 33-member G-B Assembly, 18 are members of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party while the rest are affiliated with other mainstream parties.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/544499/acting-with-caution-g-b-politicians-stay-away-from-party-campaigns/>

B. Raman, “China Manoeuvres Against India's Possible Use of Gilgit-Baltistan Card”

May 1, 2013

China, which had never openly questioned the Indian estimate of the length of the common border before, is now unilaterally seeking to exclude from consideration during the border talks, the dispute between India and China over the Chinese occupation of a large territory in the Ladakh sector of J&K.

“In fact, it is seeking to question India's locus standi to discuss with China the border in the J&K area in view of Pakistan's claims to this area. It is trying to bring in Pakistan as an interested party in so far as the border talks regarding the western sector are concerned. “It wants to change the format of the border talks in order to keep it confined bilaterally to the eastern and middle sectors and expand it to a trilateral issue involving India, China and Pakistan in the western sector. “The exclusion of the border in the J&K sector from its estimate of the total length of the border is another indication that it does not recognise India's claims of sovereignty over J&K.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/01052013-china-manoevres-against-indias-possible-use-of-gilgit-baltistan-card-analysis/>

Shabbir Mir, “Gaining sympathy: Support for Musharraf escalates in Skardu”

The Express Tribune, May 2, 2013

GILGIT: Since the arrest of former president General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, his supporters in Skardu have escalated their campaigns in his favour. The retired general faces three cases since he returned to Pakistan in March after four years of

self-imposed exile. Musharraf's party, the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) held four demonstrations in the town during the past two weeks, protesting against his 'illegal detention' with another one held on May 1. In an attempt to ban political meetings, the local administration has imposed Section 144. “We know the government is trying to restrain us from holding rallies but we will do it anyway,” stated Manzoor Yoltar, the chief organiser of AMPL, a day after the Peshawar High Court imposed a lifetime ban on Musharraf to contest elections.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/543100/gaining-sympathy-support-for-musharraf-escalates-in-skardu/>

“G-B timber movement: Ministry chops up logging policy”

The Express Tribune, May 6, 2013

ISLAMABAD: While conveying the reservations of environmentalists on the recently notified timber movement policy, the Ministry of Climate Change has forwarded a summary to the Cabinet Division secretary to revoke the policy. The policy, which was notified by the G-B Council and approved by former prime minister, Raja Pervez Ashraf on his final day in office, allows for the transportation of around four million cubic feet (cft) of timber from Diامر in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) to others parts of the country.

Environmentalists fear the policy will lead to rapid deforestation in Diامر. In the absence of strict and scientific mechanisms to monitor the illegal felling of timber, environmentalists say forest contractors will cut down more trees illegally to replace those already transported. In an April 2013 meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, the ministry's secretary Muhammad Ali Gardezi stated that he would request the cabinet secretary to reverse the policy, citing the concerns of environmentalists and the risk presented to Pakistan's international commitments on deforestation.

A ministry official requesting anonymity confirmed that the summary had been forwarded to the cabinet secretary and a reply from the Cabinet Division was

expected soon. Meanwhile, civil society organisations in Islamabad such as the Sustainable Development Partnership Institute (SDPI), Akhtar Hameed Khan Resource Centre (AHKRC) and the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation (HWF) have been campaigning against the harmful effects of the timber movement policy.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/544916/g-b-timber-movement-ministry-chops-up-logging-policy/>

“I.B.M. powers Pakistan's first hydropower plant”

May 6, 2013

I.B.M. has been selected by utility Tenaga Nasional Bhd Remaco to operate Pakistan's first-ever private sector hydropower plant. The 84-megawatt New Bong Hydroelectric Power Complex, which started commercial operation just this March, will replace 135,000 tons of imported oil and save Pakistan around \$100 million in fuel costs annually.

Located on the Jhelum River in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the hydroelectric project will help Pakistan meet its growing energy needs by adding an estimated 540 gigawatt -hours of energy to the national grid, as well as enhance the water power generation capacity of independent power producers in the country by 40 percent. According to the Petroleum Institute of Pakistan, electricity demand across the country is escalating along with its rising population. The total power generation capacity of Pakistan currently stands at 23,538 megawatts, with energy consumption seen as growing 80 percent in the last 15 years. The country's electricity demand will increase to around 40,000 MW by 2020, estimated the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority.

<http://www.ecoseed.org/renewables/water-power/16436-i-b-m-powers-pakistan-s-first-hydropower-plant>

“Court reinstates 183 sacked teachers”

Pakistan Observer, May 5, 2013

GILGIT: The Chief Court of Gilgit Baltistan reinstated services of 183 teachers on May 3, who were dismissed a month before by the higher authorities of Education Department. Sources stated that on March 14 senior authorities dismissed

183 teachers declaring their appointment illegal and without fulfillment of laid down procedure. The terminated teachers filed a writ petition in the Chief Court seeking relief.

Meanwhile, on March 23, the Chief Secretary, Sajjad Salim Hottiana withdrew the orders of Secretary Education and stated rules for termination of services were not adopted. The Chief Court while disposing off the petition stated that since the Chief Secretary has withdrawn notification of termination which was issued by Secretary Education, there is no justification to hear this petition.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=205784>

“PPP leaders in Gilgit Baltistan in search of new camps”

Dardistan Times, May 20, 2013

Rifts in the ranks of Pakistan People's Party GB chapter are emerging and many leaders have started consultation with their close friends to shift their loyalties, for surveys and exit poll results are indicating that the popularity of Pakistan People's Party is rapidly receding and the popularity graph of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan Tehrik Insaf is going up. According to media reports, some important leaders have established contacts with the provincial leadership of PML (N) and PTI to inform that they would leave PPP after May 11.

The most important among them is Deputy Speaker Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA), Jamil Ahmed who seems to secure his career in the new Political scene. Sources noted that he has already established links with PML (N). A report published in a local Daily K2 stated that Jamil Ahmed not only has established good relation with PML (N) but he is also supporting the party in its election campaign in Hazara Division by providing different resources.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/News/37872525/ppp-leaders-gilgit-baltistan-search-new-camps>

“Power protesters thrashed in Mirpur AJK”

South Asian News Agency, May 27, 2013

MIRPUR: Police thrashed the participants of a march protesting against worsening power crisis in

Azad Kashmir's Mirpur on May 27. The people of Mirpur observed complete strike and kept business centers closed against the unannounced and prolonged load shedding. Police resorted to baton charge against the protesters injuring scores of people tormented by 20 hours power shut down daily. Meanwhile, WAPDA after the protest declared Mirpur exempted from the power load shedding. A notification has also been issued to this effect.

Thousands of protesters staged march towards Mangla Power house against unannounced and prolonged load shedding in Mirpur. The police stopped the protesters four kilometers away from the Mangla Power house and started baton charge; meanwhile the protesters also pelted stones on the police personnel. Many police personnel and protesters were injured as a result of the clash.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/power-protesters-thrashed-in-mirpur-ajk/>

“Neelum Jhelum project: China to provide \$448m for stepping up work”

The Express Tribune, May 28, 2013

LAHORE: Exim Bank of China will provide Pakistan \$448 million for the strategically important 969-megawatt Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project and an agreement in this connection has been signed between the two sides. “This agreement is a significant development in efforts to secure financial resources for (completing) the remaining work on under-construction Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project,” stated a press release issued by the Water and Power Development Authority on May 27. The Neelum Jhelum project, being constructed on the Neelum River in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, will not only produce low-cost hydroelectric power to ease electricity shortages in the country, but will also establish priority rights over water. India is also constructing a dam upstream of Neelum Jhelum project to complete it first and win rights over water.

Wapda stated that in view of the project's significance, it was making all possible efforts to remain within the timeframe and complete the

project by 2016. At present, according to Wapda, construction work on all sites is going on satisfactorily. Of the tunnels stretching over 67 km, 34.24 km (51%) have so far been dug, while excavation of an underground power house stands at 75.24% and transformers hall at 96.33%.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/555669/neelum-jhelum-project-china-to-provide-448m-for-stepping-up-work/>

“Irsa reduces water releases from Mangla Dam”

Business Recorder, May 28, 2013

The Indus River System Authority on May 27 reduced water releases from the Mangla Dam to the minimum level of 25,000 cusecs to fill the upgraded reservoir to the maximum level of 1,242 ft during next three months. Punjab Irrigation canal regulator engineer M H Siddiqui noted that the current flow in the river Jhelum was 77,000 cusecs out of which 52,000 cusecs water was being retained in the dam while 25,000 cusecs water was released for hydel power generation and irrigation of Kharif crops in Punjab. He further stated presently 383,000 cusecs water was running in the four live rivers of the country: Indus 149,200 cusecs, river Kabul 106,000 cusecs, Jhelum 77,000 cusecs and river Chenab 53,000 cusecs. Siddiqui noted since the Kabul river was significantly contributing to the water economy of the country, Irsa was retaining nearly 70,000 cusecs water in Tarbela Dam and stored 0.8 MAF water in the reservoir during past week.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/1190061/>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B assembly congratulates PML-N for poll win”

The Express Tribune, May 28, 2013

GILGIT: On the fourth day of the first Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) assembly session after polls, speaker Wazir Baig congratulated the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and winning parties and hoped the incoming government of “would strengthen the process of accountability in the G-B region.” Baig made these comments after Nawaz Khan Naji, one of the three opposition members in the assembly, felicitated the Nawaz government hoped it would pay attention to

reinforcing the National Accountability Bureau in G-B.

The outspoken Naji has time and again accused the government of patronising corruption in G-B. In the last meeting held on May 23, Naji had a fierce argument with the treasury benches after he defended the opposition leader Janbanz Khan who had earlier termed the cabinet members “dacoits” for their alleged massive corruption during the past three years. “At the same time we expect that the Nawaz government will not opt for any unconstitutional act against the assembly,” Naji added.

During the session, Amina Ansari, a PML-Q legislator from Skardu, inquired into the promise of making Gilgit and Skardu airports 'all weather'. The central leadership of PPP, including Yousaf Raza Gilani, during election campaigns, had promised to make the two airports all-weather, a status that could ensure uninterrupted flights between the two regions even during rainy days.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/555233/g-b-assembly-congratulates-pml-n-for-poll-win/>

Peer Muhammad, “Changing faces: Governor GB to be replaced”

The Express Tribune, May 28, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The race for the prized governorship of the country's alpine region of Gilgit Baltistan is in full swing, with aspirants jockeying for position as the incumbent Governor, Pir Karam Ali Shah is likely to be replaced soon after the new setup is installed in Islamabad. Shah, who was selected to be governor by the former Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government, assumed office in 2012 after the tragic demise of Dr Shama Khalid, the first Gilgit Baltistan governor.

The Gilgit Baltistan chapter of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) has recommended to its central party leadership the immediate replacement of Shah. Party affiliation and Shah's inability to meet the expectations of the region's people have been cited as the primary reasons for the change and PML-N leadership has agreed to materialise this suggestion after consultations. According to

sources, the party central leadership had offered the position to PML-N chief coordinator in Gilgit Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman. However Rehman, who has been with the party for over 13 years and remained loyal during turbulent times, has declined the offer citing the non-partisan nature of the office. With Rehman's refusal to give up his political activities, frontrunners in the race for the governorship now include former deputy chief executive of Gilgit Baltistan Mir Ghazanfar, former speaker legislative assembly, Malik Maskeen, senior PML-N leader, Sultan Madad and Dr Anjum.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/555332/changing-faces-governor-gb-to-be-replaced/>

Shahzad Raza, “MoIT tops the list of 'secret fund' distributors”

Dawn, May 27, 2013

ISLAMABAD: It was not the ministry of defense or foreign affairs or interior. The ministry that handled the highest amount of secret funds since 2009 was the Ministry of Information Technology (MoIT). Surprising but true: the MoIT consumed more than Rs3 billion since 2009 under the head of a secret fund, an Auditor General report revealed. The report read, in the fiscal year of 2009-10, that MoIT was allocated Rs 1.329 billion of secret funds in the federal budget.

Official sources stated the MoIT was engaged in some concealed projects in Azad Jammu & Kashmir and the purpose of the secret fund was to fulfill the financial requirements without getting into the limelight. A Supreme Court bench comprising Justice Jawad S Khawja and Justice Khilji Arif is hearing petitions challenging the use of secret fund by the ministry of information.

<http://beta.dawn.com/news/1014181/moit-tops-the-list-of-secret-fund-distributors>

“All possible measures adopted to provide relief to masses: PM”

Associated Press of Pakistan, May 24, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah met with Prime Minister Justice (Retd) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso on May 24 and

briefed him about the overall situation in Gilgit-Baltistan. The Chief Minister congratulated the Prime Minister on the recently conducted general elections in the country and stated that all political parties and groups participated in the elections which reflect their faith in the democratic process. Talking to Syed Mehdi Shah, Prime Minister Khoso stated the caretaker government has taken all possible steps to provide maximum relief to the masses. During the meeting, Mehdi Shah briefed the Prime Minister on the overall situation including the financial allocation to Gilgit-Baltistan. He also briefed the Prime Minister on development projects being executed for the well-being of the people.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235988&Itemid=1

“Infrastructure: Ministry reiterates importance of Diامر Bhasha Dam”

The Express Tribune, May 25, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Diامر Bhasha Dam project is a “life-line” for national economy which would help meet country's future agricultural and power requirements, stated officials of the Ministry of Water and Power. Talking to the press on May 24, an official of the ministry stated that the Diامر Basha Dam had three important objectives including flood mitigation, power generation and water storage for agriculture. In response to a question, he stated the dam which will be built on the Indus River will generate 4,500 megawatts of electricity annually and enhance the life of Tarbela Dam, which is located downstream of the Diامر Bhasha dam, by over 35 years.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/554028/infrastructure-ministry-reiterates-importance-of-diامر-bhasha-dam/>

Ansar Abbasi, “World Bank trying to make Bhasha Dam controversial”

The News, May 31, 2013

ISLAMABAD: After Kalabagh, the smooth and early construction of the promised Diامر-Bhasha Dam (DBD), which would produce 4,500MW electricity and store 8,000,000 acres feet of water, is being endangered both by the World Bank and the

present chairman of Wapda. An official note recently circulated by former chairman Wapda and presently adviser to the Ministry of Water and Power on DBD, Shakil Durrani, to all concerned reveals that the World Bank does not want the construction of the dam though the ADB and Friends of Democratic Pakistan are willing to finance the project.

“It is unfortunate that the World Bank is creating a controversy that might result in further delaying a project (DBD) which was unanimously endorsed by the Council of Common Interests and has a national consensus behind it,” the adviser stated. The official note, which has been sent to the deputy chairman Planning Commission, secretary water and power, chairman Wapda and others reflects not only on the World Bank reservations on the Bhasha Dam but also discloses how in a high-level meeting the chairman Wapda recently preferred Dasu to Bhasha.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-23197-World-Bank-trying-to-make-Bhasha-Dam-controversial>

Peer Muhammad, “Emerging row: GB governor removal may raise constitutional issues”

The Express Tribune, May 31, 2013

ISLAMABAD: A constitutional issue seems to have emerged regarding the procedure for the removal of the governor of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), as the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order-2009 is totally silent in this regard. The question is: should President Asif Zardari follow the recommendation of the upcoming prime minister and replace the PPP-affiliated governor of the GB territory with a PML-N nominee? The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leadership in GB was lobbying for removing GB Governor, Pir Karam Ali Shah, who was appointed by President Zardari and belongs to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). In all four provinces of Pakistan, the governor is appointed and removed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister, but GB is not a province but rather a self-governing territory.

Article-20(1) of the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order-2009, says “There shall be a Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, who shall be

appointed by the president of Pakistan on the advice of the prime minister of Pakistan.” The law does not however lay out the procedure for his removal from office. Article-20(2) of the GB governance order also says, “The Governor shall hold office during the pleasure of the president and shall be entitled to such salary, allowances and privileges as the president may determine.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/556879/emerging-row-gb-governor-removal-may-raise-constitutional-issues/>

Kashif Abbasi, “Nawaz not keen on overthrowing PPP govts in GB, AJK”

Pakistan Today, May 30, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Contrary to the wishes of party chapters concerned, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has decided not to dislodge Pakistan People's Party-led governments in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. Sources in PML-N stated in categorical words that the leadership had conveyed their message to AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan that Centre would not support any un-constitutional move for dislodging the stated elected governments.

Earlier, it was expected that after formation of government in Centre, the PML-N government with the support of other opposition parties would bring down the PPP-led governments in AJK and GB. However, sources in PML-N stated Nawaz Sharif told concerned party chapters not to make haste in bringing down elected governments. The sources further stated the PML-N leadership was of the view that in case other opposition party brought no confidence motions against the stated governments, the PML-N could think over it, but so far the PML-N was not interested in overthrowing governments.

Of the total 41 seats of Legislative Assembly of Azad Kashmir, PML-N holds 14. But Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry group with seven seats and Muslim Conference with five seats are in favour of tabling a no-confidence motion against the AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/30/news/national/nawaz-not-keen-on-overthrowing-ppp-govts-in-gb-ajk/>

“AJK cabinet meeting: Workers' wages raised to Rs9,000”

The Express Tribune, May 31, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has raised the minimum wages of unskilled workers from Rs7,000 to Rs9,000 per month. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting which was presided over by Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed on May 30. Minister of Education for Colleges Matloob Inqilabi and the Minister for Food Javed Bhudanvi briefed the media about the cabinet meeting decisions. They stated the cabinet has also approved the big city status for Kotli and Palandhri with the establishment of two information technology (IT) universities. The cabinet also discussed the blasphemy issue reported a couple of weeks ago, saying there was no such issue except a “bid to harm Pakistan-China relations.”

The ministers stated the cabinet had decided to double the house rent of ministers from Rs25,000 to Rs 55,000. “The cabinet also approved the Azad Kashmir Privatisation Commission Ordinance enabling government to use the all open government land in different districts of Azad Kashmir,” the ministers added. The ministers stated the AJK government is committed to rehabilitate the Kashmiri refugees who crossed the Line of Control (LoC) in 1990s. They would be given National Identity Cards (NICs) to get the benefits equal to the citizen of Azad Kashmir to live normal life wherever they want to live in AJK and Pakistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/556769/ajk-cabinet-meeting-workers-wages-raised-to-rs9000/>

“Blasphemy' incident: Chinese companies resume work after brief halt”

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Chinese companies on May 19 resumed work on several reconstruction projects in earthquake-hit areas of Muzaffarabad after a brief halt following an alleged blasphemy incident. The incident, which was reportedly the result of anti-Chinese sentiments in the city, occurred on May 17 near the Chinese camp. Locals claimed that a global

conspiracy was being hatched in the city to dent friendly relations shared by Pakistan and China. They called on the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government to investigate the incident and bring those who were behind this 'plot' to book.

AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majid, while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the Central Press Club's newly elected body, reiterated the close ties shared by both countries, adding that both he and his people were keenly awaiting the arrival of the Chinese premier. "We will never let China down. The people of AJK have great respect for their Chinese counterparts, whose efforts in bringing smiles back onto the faces of our earthquake victims will never be forgotten," stated Majid.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/552124/blasphemy-incident-chinese-companies-resume-work-after-brief-halt/>

"Repeated Summons: Ad warns of court action against assembly speaker"

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2013

GILGIT: A civil court issued an advertisement requesting Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Assembly Speaker, Wazir Baig to appear before the court and respond to a case filed against him. The ad, issued by civil court judge Justice Luqman Hakeen, claims Baig did not appear before the court despite being repeatedly summoned for a hearing into a petition filed by Balawaristan National Front (BNF) Chairman, Mohammad Rafiq against him. Baig had accused BNF members of receiving secret funds from 'foreign masters' in 2012 after a US delegation met them during a visit to Gilgit. Following the accusation, BNF approached the court against the speaker. In the ad, the court has warned Baig of taking unilateral action if he fails to show up.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/552029/repeated-summons-ad-warns-of-court-action-against-assembly-speaker/>

Shabbir Mir, "Not a fan: G-B chief minister dubs former secretary Hotiana a 'Facebook hero'"

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2013

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister, Mehdi Shah, on May 20 accused former chief secretary Sajjad Hotiana of being a "Facebook

hero", claiming the latter tried to instigate lawmakers against him. "He tried to turn my colleagues against me and also tried to incite me against them by saying they were corrupt," Shah stated in the G-B Assembly, referring to Hotiana who was recently transferred on the former's complaints.

The CM's comments came after lawmaker Nawaz Naji criticised the government for failing to keep a check on bureaucracy, saying the real power rests with bureaucrats and not elected representatives. "Hotiana alone availed hundreds of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) tickets and no one sought any explanation from him," claimed Naji.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/552027/not-a-fan-g-b-chief-minister-dubs-former-secretary-hotiana-a-facebook-hero/>

Shabbir Mir, "On top of the world: Zardari lauds, G-B legislators ignore mountaineers Baig, Ali"

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2013

GILGIT / LAHORE: May 20 was a day of opposite reactions: While President Asif Ali Zardari congratulated Samina Baig and her brother Mirza Ali, the two young mountaineers who successfully scaled the world's highest peak, lawmakers in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly session remained strangely mum over the achievement. In a statement released by the President's Secretariat on May 20, President Zardari stated Baig made the entire nation proud by becoming the first Pakistani woman to climb Everest. He lauded her determination and stated that their achievement represented the potential of the youth to rise in every field, especially women, to fully realise their capabilities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/552212/on-top-of-the-world-zardari-lauds-g-b-legislators-ignore-mountaineers-baig-ali/>

"Chinese held in AJK over Quran desecration"

The Nation, May 19, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: A Chinese man working on an energy project in Azad Kashmir was being held on May 18 after hundreds of protesters attacked his company offices over the alleged desecration of Holy Quran, officials stated. Lee Ping,

administration manager of a Chinese consortium building the Neelum Jhelum Hydropower project, was accused by co-Pakistani workers of throwing the Quran on the ground. "We have taken Ping into protective custody after protests erupted in the company when Pakistani labourers saw him throwing the belongings of a Pakistani worker including the Quran," Sardar Gulfraz, a senior police official noted.

Lee Ping was moving the belongings of a Pakistani doctor after he had refused to vacate his room for relocation. "Doctor Sajid had a dispute with the company management about the relocation of his room. He refused to vacate the room and Ping threw out all his belongings in anger," stated local police official, Raja Anser Shahzad.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/19-May-2013/chinese-held-in-ajk-over-quran-desecration>

Shabbir Mir, "Shaky ground: Alliance with JUI-F in centre worries PML-N leaders in G-B"

The Express Tribune, May 19, 2013

GILGIT: The alliance between Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) at the center has discomforted the regional leadership of PML-N in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). The JUI-F has been the coalition partner of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the G-B government for the past three years, with JUI-F leader and health minister Haji Gulbar defending Chief Minister Mehdi Shah on every front.

Similarly, Maulana Attaullah Shahab, a member of the G-B Council, remained advisor to former prime ministers Yousaf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervaiz Ashraf for almost three years and availed every opportunity to bash PML-N on corruption and lawlessness. Though the PML-N chief in G-B, Hafizur Rahman, remains marred by the bitter memories of JUI-F's regional leaders, he must respect the agreement reached between the two parties in the centre.

If he defies the agreement, he runs the risk of losing credibility among the party's central leadership. "It's a really tricky situation now," stated Nafees

Ahmad, a political analyst in Gilgit. "Rahman has to either convince the Sharif brothers to withdraw from the agreement with the JUI-F or just forget the past," he added. Following PML-N's victory on Election Day, Rahman triggered a regional debate after expressing his desire to replace the G-B governor with a party candidate. Many parties, with the JUI-F in the forefront, opposed his idea.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/551243/shaky-ground-alliance-with-jui-f-in-centre-worries-pml-n-leaders-in-g-b/>

"Majeed felicitates PML(N) on victory"

Associated Press of Pakistan, May 18, 2013

MIRPUR Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Abdul Majeed felicitated Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) on its thumping victory in the general elections. In a message to the leadership of the triumphant PML (N), he stated that he and his government respected the mandate of PML (N). He assured the PML (N) leadership that the government of AJK would extend all its cooperation to newly elected government on the developmental issues in AJK.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235514&Itemid=2

"Constitutional rights: Polls rekindle hope for empowerment in AJK"

The Express Tribune, May 18, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The recent elections in Pakistan have once again rekindled the hope for empowerment among the people of Azad Kashmir and reignited the debate among the political parties for review of relations between Muzaffarabad and Islamabad. Opposition parties and constitutional experts in the disputed territory have reiterated their demand for more powers and representation in Pakistani parliament.

The existing relationship between Muzaffarabad and Islamabad needs to be revisited and changed. This was the consensus view expressed by speakers at a book launching ceremony in Muzaffarabad on May 16. "Islamabad should open the doors of its parliament to the people of Kashmir empowering them at national level," Justice (ret'd) Manzoor

Hussain Gilani, a noted jurist and constitutional expert, stated while speaking at the launching ceremony of his book “Rozan-i-Khayal”. The book is a compilation of columns Justice Gilani contributed to national and regional newspapers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/550814/constitutional-rights-polls-rekindle-hope-for-empowerment-in-ajk/>

Arif Shahid, “Pakistani secret agency behind murder of prominent Kashmiri leader”

May 14, 2013

WASHINGTON DC: On May 14, 2013 Sardar Arif Shahid, a great leader of Pakistan controlled Kashmir, who also held the chair of Jammu & Kashmir National Liberation Conference (JKNL) and All Parties National Alliance (APNA) was murdered in Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. The political leadership of Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir are accusing Pakistani secret agencies for this cold blooded murder. He was shot dead from close range in front of his house on Adiyala Road in Rawalpindi. It is reported that a car carrying the assailant arrived in front of his house exactly at the time when he was leaving his home in his vehicle. The assailants blocked his way and fired gun shots at him. Mr. Shahid died on the spot while the assailants escaped from the scene and remain at large.

<http://www.expertclick.com/NRWire/Releasedetails.aspx?id=44249>

“Illegality: Induction of 403 prayer leaders declared void”

The Express Tribune, May 15, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday declared illegal the appointment of 403 prayer leaders in government schools in Bagh District. The appointments of the clerics in 403 government primary schools across Bagh District were made on August 6, 2011 by District Education Officer (DEO) in violation of merit and rules. A single-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Muhammad Azam Khan directed the secretary, education, Mr Sadiq Dar, to suspend all the clerics who were appointed by District Education Officer, Raja Roshan Jowhar illegally.

He was hearing identical petitions challenging the appointments of these prayer leaders. Chief justice Khan directed the official to initiate an inquiry into the matter and submit a detailed report in the apex court as soon as possible.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/549369/illegality-induction-of-403-prayer-leaders-declared-void/>

“Humanitarian services: PRCS celebrates 150 years of Red Cross activism”

The Express Tribune, May 16, 2013

GILGIT: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on May 15 celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, highlighting the dedication of its volunteers in championing humanitarian action. Volunteers, G-B government officials, non-governmental organisations and civil society activists participated in the ceremony held on May 15. The event was sponsored by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) through the PRCS headquarters in Islamabad. “We are celebrating this event in recognition of our selfless and dedicated volunteers who have rendered extraordinary services in the most vulnerable areas during war and peace,” stated G-B PRCS Chairman Asif Hussain.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/549870/humanitarian-services-prcs-celebrates-150-years-of-red-cross-activism/>

“Shabbir Mir, The race begins: PML-N leaders eye Gilgit-Baltistan governor slot”

The Express Tribune, May 16, 2013

GILGIT: A change in the government at the centre has brought forth many aspirants for the slot of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) governor after regional chief of the victorious Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) hinted at sending the incumbent governor packing. Hafizur Rahman expressed his desire to replace the existing governor with one from PML-N a day after his party emerged as the largest force in the May 11 polls. The shift of power at the centre is bound to affect G-B's government as it is dependent on the federal government for funds and budget. Presently, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is the ruling

party in G-B, with Mehdi Shah as the chief minister and Pir Karam Ali Shah as the governor.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/549871/the-race-begins-pml-n-leaders-eye-gilgit-baltistan-governor-slot/>

“Workers celebrate PML-N's victory”

Pakistan Observer, May 15, 2013

MIRPUR: The workers and supporters of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz across Azad Jammu & Kashmir on May 14 celebrated the landslide victory of PML-N in the general election. A large number of the jubilant workers gathered at central public places in the major cities and towns across the AJK including Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimber, Rawalakot, Hattiyani, Bagh, Samani, Haveili, Palandri and celebrated the victory. They distributed sweets among each other to mark the triumph of the party with a clear-cut majority.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=206853>

Muhammad Hasnain, “Pakistan's elections and Gilgit Baltistan”

Dardistan Times, May 12, 2013

As every individual is hyper busy to vote and the political parties make their way to lead election. The unfortunate people do not have the right to vote even. Let this be lit upon if they are subjected to cast vote then who are those representatives which they will select, because there is no representative in National Assembly as well as provincial Assembly.

Where is the basic right of Gilgit Baltistan? Who is going to be nominated for next five years to inform about the necessities of the region? Who will govern the territory? Who will be the representative of this terrain? while everyone is fighting for their right who is going to fight for the rights of Gilgit Baltistan in Provincial Assembly or National Assembly or even in federal Administration. I should say that it is high time the prestigious people look into the matter and take initiatives by making the people access to the assemblies so that they may pledge for leveling up their standards as well as the facilitate the opportunity of co operating and coordinating in the development of the state.

<http://www.dardistantimes.com/Opinion/1358801271/pakistan-elections-and-gilgit-baltistan>

Zafar Bhutta, “Raising finance: Govt firms up financing plan for Diamer Bhasha Dam”

The Express Tribune, May 14, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government has prepared a \$12.5 billion funding programme for Diamer Bhasha Dam with resources coming from internal and external sources including the Asian Development Bank, the United States and Islamic Development Bank.

Unfurling the financing plan, sources noted that the government had finalised an arrangement with the ADB that will result in a loan of \$4 billion for Diamer Bhasha Dam. The ADB has also given the assurance that it will provide more if the need arises.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/548756/raising-finance-govt-firms-up-financing-plan-for-diamer-bhasha-dam/>

Shabbir Mir, “Power politics: PML-N G-B chief de facto chief minister?”

The Express Tribune, May 14, 2013

GILGIT: The president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) chapter, Hafizur Rehman seems to have become the de facto chief minister (CM) following his party's landslide victory in the general polls. Currently, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is the ruling party in G-B's coalition government, with Mehdi Shah as the CM and Pir Karam Ali Shah as governor.

A change at the centre is bound to affect the government of G-B because it is dependent on the federal government for funds and its budget.

The PML-N's office in Gilgit was seen flooded by people from all walks of life coming to congratulate Rehman on his party's success for the second consecutive day after the unofficial results were announced. Apart from the general public, Rehman is reportedly being greeted by his political opponents, ruling parties' lawmakers and bureaucrats alike. CM Mehdi Shah also called Rehman to congratulate him.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/548797/power-politics-pml-n-g-b-chief-de-facto-chief-minister/>

Waqas Ahmed Khan, “String of pearls vs Sectarianism”

Pakistan Observer, May 14, 2013

Pakistan is facing economic crisis. Pakistan needs different measures to re boost its economy. In such conditions every single chance should be availed. Gwadar port provides a good opportunity through which our economy can benefit. China is the second largest economy of world, it can be very beneficial for Pakistan to provide transit to China's good. Gwadar port linkage transportation route is Karakoram highway (KKH).

A major portion of KKH is in Gilgit and only way to connect the city to other parts of country. Therefore the security conditions of Gilgit must be ensured. For more than two decades people of Gilgit are facing sectarian violence and some recent sectarian killings in Chilas and Lulusar raised the questions about the security of KKH. Another dimension should be kept in mind while considering sectarian violence in Gilgit, that on several occasions, former interior minister had mentioned evidence of external force in the region.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=206676>

“Gilgit Baltistan: Observing Elections From the Sideline”

UNPO, May 10, 2013

With the Pakistani elections scheduled for 11 May, residents of Gilgit-Baltistan, who are not entitled to vote in the election, will be closely monitoring the event in order to gauge what effect the results will have on their region. Gilgit-Baltistan might be the last thing on the minds of Pakistan's election-contesting parties none of them have included these far-flung northern areas in their manifestos but its more politically inclined residents are keeping a close eye on who gets to form a government in Islamabad come May 11.

“Our fate-politically, economically, legally remains in the hands of Islamabad, thanks to the quirks and tragedies of history,” says Tahir Hussain, a Skardu resident. “We might have nothing to say we will not be voting but the next election will

matter. The new government in Islamabad could help enshrine, or remove, our rights.”

While the rest of the country goes to the polls, the two million-strong population in this northern mountain range will have nothing to say when it comes to deciding who gets to sit in power in Islamabad. Its marginalisation from Pakistani politics is nothing new. In 1948, when this area acceded to Pakistan, it was promised constitutional recognition by the Pakistani state. Instead, Pakistan linked Gilgit-Baltistan to Jammu and Kashmir, hoping to ensure a favourable vote for the latter to accede to the newly formed Muslim nation in case a United Nations-promised plebiscite, meant to clarify whether Jammu & Kashmir belonged to India or Pakistan, took place. “The people of the region have since been bearing the brunt of this flawed policy and resultantly, the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan has been in limbo,” stated Syed Ansar Hussain, a resident of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.unpo.org/article/15888>

“World Bank creates controversy to have Bhasha Dam project dropped”

Pakistan Today, May 31, 2013

The construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam (DBD), which would produce 4,500MW electricity and store 8,000,000 acres feet of water has been put in jeopardy by the World Bank and the present chairman of WAPDA, who prefer Dasu dam over DBD. An official note recently circulated by former chairman WAPDA and presently adviser to the Ministry of Water and Power on DBD, Shakil Durrani, to all concerned reveals that the World Bank does not want the construction of the dam though the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Friends of Democratic Pakistan are willing to finance the project. “It is unfortunate that the World Bank is creating a controversy that might result in further delaying a project (DBD) which was unanimously endorsed by the Council of Common Interests and has a national consensus behind it,” the adviser stated.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/31/news/national/world-bank-creates-controversy-to-have-bhasha-dam-project-dropped/>

“Freed from charge: Chinese worker cleared of blasphemy”

The Express Tribune, May 31, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir on May 30 cleared a Chinese man accused of committing blasphemy by desecrating Quran, officials stated.

Lee Ping, the administration manager of a Chinese consortium building a major hydropower project, was accused on May 17 of throwing the Holy Quran on the ground, prompting hundreds of workers to attack his company offices. Police took Lee into protective custody at a secret location after protests erupted at the company offices near Muzaffarabad, but on May 30 he was cleared.

“Police investigation has cleared the Chinese worker of desecration of Holy Quran charges,” cabinet minister Matloob Inqalabi noted before media. “No such incident of desecration of Holy Quran happened there,” he stated, adding that action would be taken against the people involved in the violence.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/556909/freed-from-charge-chinese-worker-cleared-of-blasphemy/>

Shabbir Mir, “Switching sides: PML-N draws G-B's veteran politicians into its fold”

The Express Tribune, May 10, 2013

GILGIT: Anticipating a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) victory on Election Day, at least a dozen regional politicians from various parties have recently defected to the party in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). The newest PML-N members were recruited on May 9 when Haji Qurban, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Nagar Valley president, and Jan Alam, a politician from Hunza, announced they would be joining the party's ranks along with their supporters.

The announcement was made in a ceremony held at a local hotel, which was attended by senior leaders of the PML-N including regional chief Hafizur Rahman. Welcoming the new arrivals, Rahman hoped the party would sweep the elections. Last week, Malik Miskeen, a senior member of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) from

Diامر valley, also joined the party taking with him hundreds of his supporters and friends. Miskeen, a notable politician, was the speaker of the G-B Assembly during the government of ex-president Pervez Musharraf the man responsible for sending PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif packing.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/546688/switching-sides-pml-n-draws-g-bs-veteran-politicians-into-its-fold/>

Hamid Alvi, “Diامر-Bhasha Dam: cover up for lies”

The Nation, May 10, 2013

The most intriguing part about the campaign against Kalabagh Dam has been to publicise that a dam much bigger than Kalabagh could be built on Indus at a site called Diامر Bhasha located 197 miles upstream on Tarbela. The dam was billed as a monumental structure, largest of its kind, and capable of resolving all the existing energy and irrigation problems. This fact cannot be ignored. Neither can be ignored the other vital factors, such as building cost, very difficult access to the site from Punjab, no availability of foodstuff in the vicinity of the dam area, as well as the non-availability of trained personnel in the northern areas where the dam will be located. As regards, the building cost of the proposed Bhasha Dam it is estimated to be \$14 billion. Compare it with \$352 million cost of Mangla Dam and about \$800 million of Tarbela Dam. The latter does not include the cost incurred by the continuing repair work in the tunnel area.

The extremely difficult access has to be a 200-mile long road that, considering the rocky terrain around the dam sites, will cost substantial additional funds. Transporting heavy equipment from some point on the national highway or the motorway to Bhasha would be a monumental job.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/columns/10-May-2013/diامر-bhasha-dam-cover-up-for-lies>

Economic Developments

“Development budget: AJK goes ahead with projects”

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee (AJKDC) approved 39 development projects worth Rs17.518 billion. The approval was accorded in Muzaffarabad on May 20 in a meeting presided over by Azad Jammu and Kashmir Premier, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed. In education sector, two projects amounting Rs590 million have been allocated for the establishment of Cadet College at Muzaffarabad

and construction of multi-storey complex with Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Mirpur.

About Rs341.082 million have been given for a project in transportation sector with providing interest free loans for 1500 vehicle and rickshaws for self-employment. For hydel generation, two projects have been accorded approval with an allocation of Rs1.313 billion. Projects in physical planning and housing sector were provided with Rs611.403 million for three projects.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/552048/development-budget-ajk-goes-ahead-with-projects/>

International Developments

“Marist College & Gilgit-Baltistan Inst. host HH Dalai Lama in DC”

May 24, 2013

WASHINGTON DC: His Holiness was in Washington D.C. on the invitation of the University of Maryland. Sensing his interest in meeting the Muslims of America, the Marist College of New York and Washington based Institute for Gilgit Baltistan Studies co-hosted a lecture on inter-faith harmony on May 7, 2013 which was addressed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The participants belonged to different interfaith NGOs situated in Washington D.C. We also ensured that all sects of Islam, like Shias, Sunnis, Sufis, Alevis, Ahmadis and Ismailies were represented in that room.

His Holiness spoke about promoting humanity and showed concern about the growing gap between the rich and the poor. He stressed on having compassion for people of other faiths. He called himself a son of India because India nourishes his body and mind through the food he consumes and the knowledge he receives from the Nalanda scriptures. His Holiness was presented with a framed picture and a DVD movie.

<http://www.expertclick.com/NRWire/Releasedetails.aspx?id=44389>

“USTATED donates pre-fabricated house to AJK Women Varsity”

Pakistan Observer, May 25, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The United States Government through U.S. Agency for International Development (USTATED) donated a pre-fabricated building to the newly announced first-ever women university in Bagh city of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on May 24. Continuing with its commitment to the

advancement of education in Pakistan, USTATED has denoted a prefabricated building while Government of AJK intends to start 4-6 departments in this newly chartered university from September 2013. This prefabricated building will be used to house the university until the new permanent building is completed by the AJK government. “U.S. government puts a lot of emphasis on advancement of education at all levels in Pakistan. Donation of this prefabricated building for immediate start of the first women university in Azad Jammu and Kashmir is another proof of this commitment”, stated Catherine M. Moore, Deputy Mission Director, USTATED Pakistan.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=207830>

Arif Shahid, “KNP condemns Killing of Kashmiri leader”

Business Standard, May 17, 2013

LONDON: Condemning the brutal murder of Kashmiri nationalist leader Arif Shahid on May 13, the Kashmir National Party (KNP) observed a five-day long hunger strike outside Pakistani High Commission in London from May 20. Shahid, who led the All Parties National Alliance (APNA), was killed by unidentified men outside his home in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

In a press release, Dr. Shabir Choudhry of the KNP stated, "He spoke for the oppressed and victimized people of Jammu and Kashmir, and strongly advocated for rights of the people of Gilgit Baltistan as well. He was elected the Chairman of All Parties National Alliance which opposed the Pakistani occupation of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan; and wanted closer ties between people of these two regions".

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/knp-condemns-killing-of-kashmiri-leader-arif-shahid-113051700208_1.html

Other Developments

“GB upper areas roads blocked due to mudslides”

Pakistan Observer, May 27, 2013

ASTORE: The upper areas of Gilgit-Baltistan remained cut off from the rest of province on May 26 as all the roads leading to the areas were blocked due to mudsliding and heavy snowfall. Torrential rain continued for the last two days in all the districts of GB. The Astore-Highway was blocked due to landsliding. The fruit crops have also been affected in the region. When contacted, officials of the People's Works Department stated the rehabilitation work on roads could not be started till the rain stopped.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=208009>

Waqas Naeem, “On guard: Glacial flooding: preparing against imminent threat”

The Express Tribune, May 27, 2013

ISLAMABAD: Two early warning systems are expected to help vulnerable communities in northern areas reduce the risk of flooding from glacial lakes this summer. These are: increase in weather monitoring stations and awareness-raising activities. These steps are part of the ongoing Pakistan Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) project being implemented by the Ministry of Climate Change with technical support from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). In 2008, a lake at the Gulkin Glacier in Upper Hunza burst three times in two months, flooding the nearby village and destroying around 50 houses. The Korambar Glacier near Iskhoman Valley and the Buni Gole Glacier near Chitral generated GLOFs in 2010 and 2012, causing damages to agricultural land and settlements on each occasion.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/554766/on-guard-glacial-flooding-preparing-against-imminent-threat/>

Syed Mohammad Ali, “Need to curb deforestation”

The Express Tribune, May 30, 2013

Despite the significance of forests in helping preserve biodiversity, combating climate change and supporting people's livelihoods, Pakistan has not paid much heed to protecting its forest cover since independence, which has resultantly been depleting at alarming rates. Recent government estimates admit that the existing forest cover is insufficient. However, the official claims of forest cover (of around 4.5 per cent) are refuted by other estimates, which claim that this forest cover is no more than two per cent of the country's land mass. Considering the pace of deforestation, if the cutting of trees continues unchecked, Pakistan is likely to lose most of its forest within the next three or four decades as per assessments by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. Yet, relevant state authorities have been unable to curb deforestation in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

One of the major reasons for the decreasing forest cover is the absence of a comprehensive forestry policy. The attitude of politicians has also not shown much foresight. The chief minister of Punjab created quite a stir during his last stint due to a proposal to hand over forestry department land to agricultural graduates to undertake farming. Another controversial timber movement policy for Diamer district in Gilgit-Baltistan was approved by the outgoing prime minister, just a day before his term expired, which allowed the transportation of around four million cubic feet of timber from Diamer to other parts of Pakistan. Previously, the timber movement was restricted within Gilgit-Baltistan, as a measure to curb deforestation. Environmentalists and civil society representatives fear the movement is likely to increase illegal

logging because of weak enforcement and monitoring mechanisms. Even the newly-formed Ministry of Climate Change has opposed this policy and seems in favour of its reversal.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/556535/need-to-curb-deforestation/>

“Conference on linguists: South Asian languages fading out: experts”

The Express Tribune, May 17, 2013

MUZAFFARABAD: Of the 72 South Asian languages, only seven are still going strong in Pakistan. These include Kashmiri, Pahari, Gojri, Shina and Balti. Meanwhile, the rest are fading out due to phonetics formation among other factors. This was the crux of an international conference on linguistics held at University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on May 15. AJK President Sardar Yaqoob Khan attended the inaugural session and spoke about the Pahari language.

Dr Musawar, a prominent linguist and academician from Kashmir University Srinagar, presented a paper on the similarity of Shina and Kashmiri languages. He observed that both the languages have the same origin and need to be researched more. Migration is the main factor that changes the phonetics of any language and when the transformation occurs, in the phonetics then no one can ensure bright future of the language, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/550445/conference-on-linguists-south-asian-languages-fading-out-experts/>

“Lok Virsa to participate in Gilgit-Baltistan Unity Gala”

Pakistan Today, May 7, 2013

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage Lok Virsa will participate in the Gilgit Baltistan Unity Gala being organized on 10-12 May under Headquarters Force Command, Northern Areas. Lok Virsa's Executive Director,

Khalid Javaid stated that they are sending a 150-member delegation of various artisans, folk artists, musicians and dancers to the festival.

Gilgit has a thriving history of tourism and festivities. The Pakistan Army has decided to organize the Gilgit Baltistan Unity Gala to celebrate spring and cultural diversity. The event's major attractions include sports (football, basketball, cricket and polo), culture (handicrafts, artisans-at-work, gems, jewellery, woodwork, etc.), food (local cuisines) and folk music

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/07/city/islamabad/lok-virsa-to-participate-in-gilgit-baltistan-unity-gala/>

Shabbir Mir, “Landslide: One killed, three injured near Attabad lake spillway”

The Express Tribune, May 3, 2013

GILGIT: At least one labourer was killed and three others, including two Chinese engineers, were injured in a landslide while working near the Attabad Lake spillway in Hunza on May 1. Fida Ali, a resident of Nomal valley, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), died after being hit by a stone, while Niyat Jan, a resident of Ghizer valley, was injured. “They were working on a tunnel when they were hit by stones and boulders,” stated Rehman Shah, Hunza's assistant commissioner, adding that the two Chinese engineers are out of danger. The incident occurred as Labour Day was being observed across the country and the world in recognition of labour rights.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/543712/landslide-one-killed-three-injured-near-attabad-lake-spillway/>

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



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.idsa.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com