

POK News Digest

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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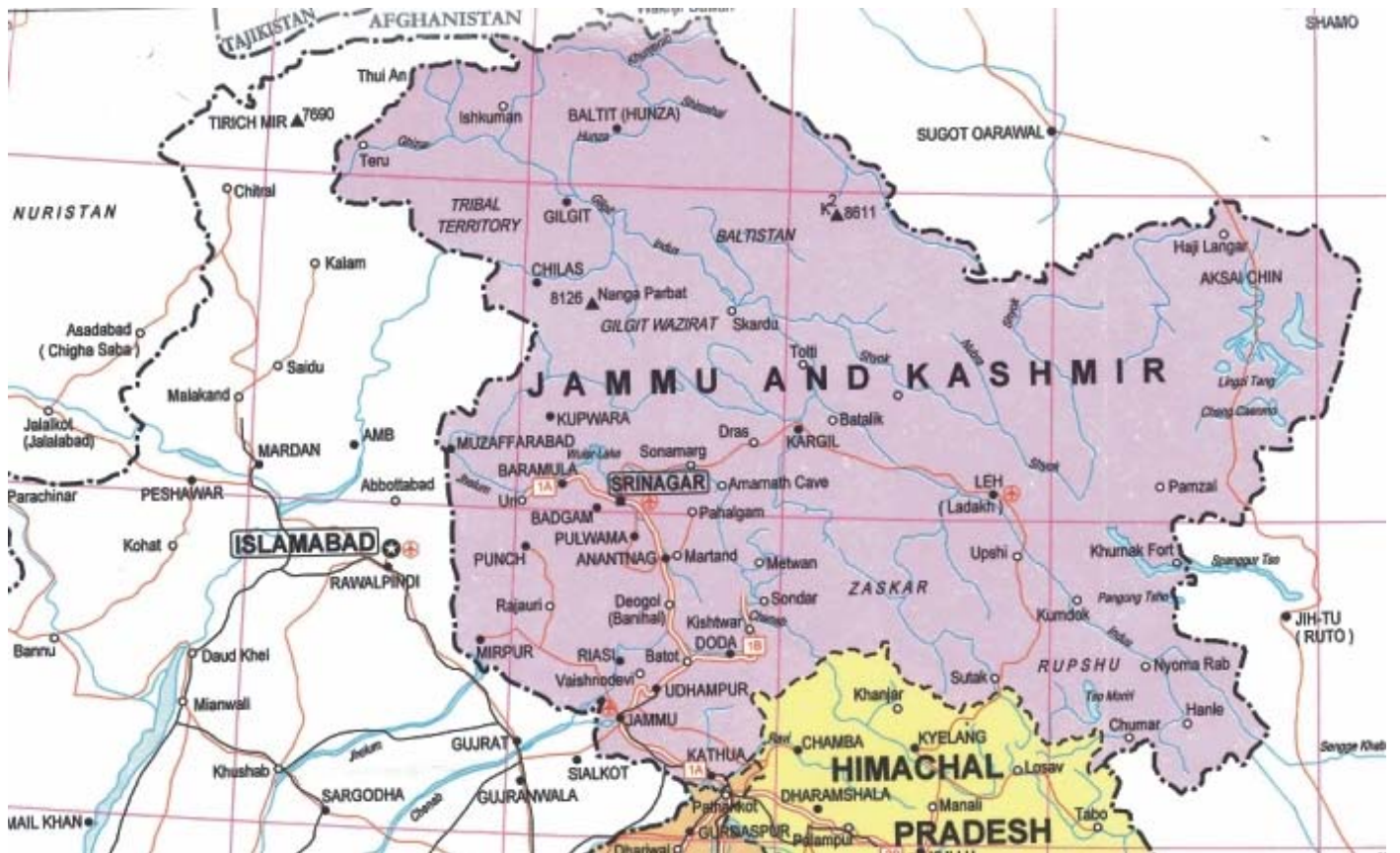
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Jammu & Kashmir

In this Edition

India-Pakistan relations hit a rough patch in 2016 in the wake of the Uri attack and the subsequent surgical strikes conducted by India. Since then, the two countries have not been actively engaging with each other. The shadow of discord between the two neighbours is also reflecting in the news reports on Pakistan occupied Kashmir, some of which are included in the current issue. On an average, there is a persistent effort on part of the Pakistani establishment to portray India as a belligerent country that is staging attacks on the Line of Control (LoC) and causing loss of lives there. While this is far from reality, truth is that Pakistan for years has perpetrated militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. This has not only caused unprecedented damage in terms of lives lost but has more than often derailed the dialogue process between the two countries. Despite efforts to persuade Pakistan to give up militancy as an instrument of state policy, including from several quarters in international community, the country has relentlessly pursued the agenda of using proxy tactics against India. In one of the reports in the current issue, a leader from PoK acknowledges how Pakistan is spending hefty amount to launch terrorists inside India. Ironically, PoK region is in dire need for development. Instead of spending money on the welfare of the people, Pakistan is misusing it to fulfil its ulterior purposes against India.

Gilgit Baltistan's constitutional limbo is continuing as the committee headed by Sartaj Aziz has failed to make a headway in this direction. The people of the region have waited in anticipation about the outcome of the committee's report. However, the wait of the people continues inordinately and there is not much hope at the moment regarding any progress being made on the region's political status. In view of the CPEC, the undefined constitutional status of Gilgit Baltistan is being hotly debated as a major portion of the corridor cuts across the region before getting into Pakistan.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“OPF Chairman orders provision of facilities to Kashmiri expatriates”

Pakistan Observer, December 1, 2016

The Chairman OPF Board of Governors Barrister Amjad Malik on November 30 directed officials of his department to provide all facilities to Kashmiri expatriates and gear up colonization process at OPF Housing Scheme Chitarpari Mirpur. He was on a visit to OPF Regional Office Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The chairman also addressed the open house “khuli kahchahri” at the Regional Office and issued directions on the spot for resolution of problems being faced by visiting expatriates. The Chairman was accompanied by Chairman OPF Housing Committee, Muhammad Jahangir Minhas, Director General (Housing), Sajid Mehmood Qazi and other high officials of OPF. Barrister Malik stated that OPF considers initiating a pilot project of 50 houses at Mirpur Housing Scheme to be distributed among families of deceased Kashmiri expatriates.

<http://pakobserver.net/opf-chairman-orders-provision-of-facilities-to-kashmiri-expatriates/>

“AJK cabinet expands to 12 members today”

The Nation, December 1, 2016

The expansion in AJK cabinet will be made on December 1 with induction of three more ministers in the existing 9-member cabinet of Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider, sources noted. “Three new ministers, one each from Mirpur city, Jammu and Kashmir valley’s constituencies (meant for Pakistan-based J & K refugees) will sworn-in in a simple but impressive ceremony to be held in the capital city of Muzaffarabad on Thursday - December 1st,” AJK government spokesperson confirmed. AJK President Sardar Masood Khan will administer oath to the newly-elected ministers. The new ministers to be added in the cabinet included Ch Muhammad Saeed,

newly-elected member of AJK Legislative Assembly from Mirpur city constituency, Syed Shoukat Ali Shah, newly-elected MLA from Jammu constituency and Nasir Dar, the newly-elected MLA from Kashmir valley constituency. Twelve of Jammu and others and Kashmir valley constituencies in 49-seat AJK Legislative Assembly are meant for the Pakistan-based refugees of Jammu and Kashmir state, besides the residents of AJK settled in various parts of the country.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Dec-2016/ajk-cabinet-expands-to-12-members-today>

“Rush to build bunkers in Azad Kashmir as fears grow”

Business Recorder, December 1, 2016

Residents in Azad Kashmir are racing to build underground bunkers for the first time since the 1990s, frightened by what they say is the worst cross-border violence since a cease-fire was agreed in 2003. Months of tension between India and Pakistan have erupted into shelling and gunfire across the frontier, claiming the lives of dozens of people, including civilians. People in Azad Kashmir’s Neelum Valley say the attacks come once or twice a week, and they never know when they might have to dive for cover. Chand Bibi has concrete and steel rods waiting to be transformed into an underground bunker where her terrified family can take shelter as the monstrous boom of shelling reawakens old nightmares.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/108921/>

“Admin evicts Indian firing ‘victims’ from state land”

The Nation, December 2, 2016

The district authorities foiled a bid made by “Indian firing victims” to occupy the state land near

Khaliqabad on Mirpur Jatlan Road. The administration uprooted their huts on the land belonging to the State Forests Department, officials stated. Assistant Commissioner Raja Qaiser Aurangzeb noted that at least 250 people had erected the huts on the land. He alleged that they belong to the professional land grabbers and land mafia. However, the people were of the view that they belonged to the Indian firing-hit areas of Line of Control in Bhimbher and Kotli districts, However, the hundreds of the people with 15 to 20 families fled away from the scene leaving their tents-resort abandoned as the authorities launched the operation clean up.

<http://nation.com.pk/multan/02-Dec-2016/admin-evicts-indian-firing-victims-from-state-land>

“Tourism Policy being Formulated to Promote Tourism Industry in GB: Fida”

Radio Pakistan, December 2, 2016

Minister Tourism Sports and Culture Fida Khan stated Tourism policy is being formulated to promote tourism industry in Gilgit-Baltistan. He noted this in an interview on December 2. The minister stated that one million tourists visited GB previous year while one point two million tourists target was fixed for the next year. He also stated that tourist information centers would be set up in Gilgit and Skardu airports and in all district to facilitate them. Calendar of events would be implemented and steps will be taken for development of sports and culture. He pointed out that thirty three polo grounds have been upgraded throughout Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/02-Dec-2016/tourism-policy-being-formulated-to-promote-tourism-industry-in-gb-fida>

Shabbir Mir, “Blackouts galore: As glaciers refreeze, power outages abound”

The Express Tribune, December 2, 2016

People in Gilgit are angry over a spike in power shortages owing to a shortfall of seven megawatts in the region. Deputy Commissioner Hamza Salick, in a press briefing on December 1, explained that power

generation in the city had fallen from 35 megawatts to 28 megawatts because the glaciers had frozen and the flow of water in the rivers had reduced. The shortage of power has severely impacted the routine life of Gilgit’s residents, particularly for heating purpose. They have subsequently been forced to purchase and burn firewood.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1250837/blackouts-galore-glaciers-refreeze-power-outages-abound/>

“AJK Govt Working in Accordance with Party Manifesto: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, December 2, 2016

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that his government is working in accordance with the party manifesto in the State. Talking to various public delegations in Muzaffarabad on December 2, he noted government is focusing on the transparency of the institutions. He also assured that problems of Mirpur including the supply of potable water would be addressed. Raja Farooq Haider also stated steps are being taken for promoting tourism in Mirpur. The Prime Minister assured that modern hospitals for cardiac treatment would be constructed in Azad Kashmir.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/02-Dec-2016/ajk-govt-working-in-accordance-with-party-manifesto-haider>

“Nawaz promises development in AJK”

The Nation, December 3, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif termed the victory of party leaders, Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi and Chaudhry Mohammad Siddique as members of the AJK Council as the confidence of the people of the area in the policies of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led government in Azad Kashmir. Greeting both these leaders with a thumping majority in the AJK Council elections, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif hoped that they would come up to the expectations of the people of their area by taking forward the development agenda of the PML-N. Sharif noted that his government wanted to extend the development policies of his government to the

AJK as well, so that the people of Kashmir could also reap the benefits of the development agenda of the federal government.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Dec-2016/nawaz-promises-development-in-ajk>

Shabbir Siham, “Probe begins against influentials over ‘exploitation’ of young girls”

Daily Times, December 3, 2016

The law enforcement agencies including the police have commenced an investigation against the blackmailing and exploitation of young girls hailing from the northern areas by five members of the Legislative Assembly and senior bureaucrats of the Gilgit Baltistan government. The cruelty with the constrained girls of Gilgit Baltistan was revealed when a case No 23/2016 was registered at Shalimar Police Station after the kidnapping of a 14-year old girl and the police had arrested two accused Wasif and Nadeem and unearthed many hidden facts in the case. During the course of the investigation both the accused told the police that some powerful personalities from Gilgit Baltistan were involved in the heinous crime. The abducted girl was recovered from the farm house of a wealthy and influential businessman of the federal capital.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/03-Dec-16/probe-begins-against-influentials-over-exploitation-of-young-girls>

“Karachi police illegally detains 10 Shia students”

ABNA, December 4, 2016

Karachi police raided residential flats and rounded up at least 10 Shia students originally belonging to Gilgit-Baltistan and booked 5 of them without any justification in false cases. Raid was conducted in Johar Complex near Safoora Goth on main University Road late on last night. They picked up 10 students namely Sajid Ali, Shamsur Rehman, Jafar, Tehzeeb, Tahir, Wajib Iqbal and others. Ziauddin also stated that he was not at his flat last night but police wrongly detained two of his roommates. He also stated that they were students and not criminals and neighbours

should have been contacted for confirmation of the integrity of the students because they all know that those students were peaceful and noble.

<http://en.abna24.com/service/central-asia-subcontinent/archive/2016/12/04/795867/story.html>

“PM gives Green Signal to Basha Dam’s Financing Plan”

Daily Times, December 5, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved the financing plan for Diamer-Basha Dam which was presented by the Secretary Water and Power on December 5. According to Radio Pakistan’s transmission, the proposed plan, on self-reliance basis, will fund the Dam’s portion of the project from PSDP allocations and WAPDA generated resources. Allocated portion of the dam will be independent from the rest of the financing for the power generation portion, which will be arranged on commercial basis by the ministry either through WAPDA or by leasing its existing projects. PM Nawaz directed the water and power, planning and finance secretaries to expedite completion of financial proposal.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/05-Dec-16/pm-gives-green-signal-to-basha-dams-financing-plan>

“Nawaz-Modi friendship disintegrated Pakistan: Bilawal”

The Nation, December 5, 2016

Pakistan People’s Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto on December 5 demanded development projects for Gilgit-Baltistan, saying Punjab was getting Orange Line Train project that cost around Rs2 billion. Addressing a gathering of party activists at Bilawal House, the PPP chief once again warned the government in case his four demands were not met until December 27. Bilawal noted his party would win mandate of the people across the country in 2018. “PPP will democratically occupy politics of Punjab,” stated the PPP chairman. Bilawal also stated the people of Pakistan were fighting terrorism and not the government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N). PPP was the only political organisation in the country that initiated a war against terrorism, he added.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/05-Dec-2016/bilawal-demands-development-projects-for-gilgit-baltistan>

“PML-N won elections in AJK & GB through NRO with terrorists”

The News, December 5, 2016

Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari stated that PML-N had been winning elections under an NRO with terrorists and the recent nexus between them has been exposed again recently in Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. PPP Chairman was addressing the PPP workers from Gilgit-Baltistan at Party’s 49th Foundation Day celebrations being held at Bilawal House, Lahore. The day was reserved for PPP workers from GB. “PML-N and its interior minister were applying and exploiting NAP for political targets and victimization instead of targeting terrorists. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari noted that it was only his family, party and the workers who were fighting the terrorists and embracing martyrdoms while all others are doing politics over NAP and terrorism policy. He also pointed out that PML-N fielded terrorists against his party in Gilgit-Baltistan elections and blamed PML-N for hiding its extremism behind the clean-shaven faces.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/169942-PML-N-won-elections-in-AJK-GB-through-NRO-with-terrorists>

“Skill development workshop for GB youth”

Dawn, December 6, 2016

The Directorate of Training and Research (Customs), Islamabad, and Model Customs Collectorate, Gilgit-Baltistan, organised a five-day training programme for awareness and professional capacity building of educated youth of Gilgit-Baltistan in collaboration with Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP). The main aim of the programme was to create awareness and tap the skill potential of the youth of

Gilgit-Baltistan. A large number of participants from various sections of life participated in the capacity building programme, stated a press release.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300783/skill-development-workshop-for-gb-youth>

“NA Body briefed about ongoing Projects in AJK, GB”

Radio Pakistan, December 6, 2016

The meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan was held in Islamabad on December 6 under the Chairmanship of Malik Ibrar Ahmed. The Committee was briefed about the ongoing projects in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The Committee was also briefed about the losses caused by continuous unprovoked firing by the Indian Army at Neelum Valley. The Additional Chief Secretary highlighted the damages and effects on environment due to heavy firing and fencing of the border by the Indian side across the line of control in the last few months.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/06-Dec-2016/na-body-briefs-about-ongoing-projects-in-ajk-gb>

Shabbir Mir, “Removing CPEC bottlenecks: Tunnels may smoothen Trade in Winter”

The Express Tribune, December 6, 2016

Steps will soon be taken to keep the flow of containers nonstop on the CPEC route even in extreme winter conditions, official spokesperson for the Gilgit-Baltistan government Faizullah Faraq stated on December 5. Expressing optimism regarding removal of bottlenecks in bilateral trade with China, Faraq hinted at the possibility of excavating a series of tunnels along the CPEC route. “The first convoy that reached Gwadar via Sost was a test case,” noted the spokesman. “It was a success and now (the flow) will not stop.” Keeping in line with decades-old traditions, the border between the two countries closed on December 1. The border closure, lasting till April 1 next year, is observed under an agreement signed by both countries in 1985 to avoid losses in harsh

weather conditions in this mountainous and rugged region. A month earlier, the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was formally launched as hundreds of Chinese trucks loaded with goods rolled into the Sost dry port in Gilgit-Baltistan on November 1, 2016.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1254649/removing-cpec-bottlenecks-tunnels-may-smoothen-trade-winter/>

Sarfraz Ali , “AJK prime minister calls on PM Nawaz Sharif”

Daily Pakistan, December 7, 2016

Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Farooq Haider Khan December 7 called on Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif at the PM House. According to press release issued by prime minister house both leaders discussed matters pertaining to development projects and current political situation in AJK during the meeting. Tensions between Pakistan and India have been running high following an alleged ‘surgical strike’, unrest in Kashmir and the Uri army base attack in September 2016. Since then there have been repeated outbreaks of cross-border firing in Kashmir, with both sides reporting deaths and injuries including of civilians. Pakistan and India have, most recently, locked horns over Kashmir since Indian forces stepped up a crackdown against protesters after Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani was killed by government forces in July 2016.

<https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/ajk-prime-minister-calls-on-pm-nawaz-sharif/>

Fazel Sher, “Indian firing victims to get Rs 100 million, National Assembly body told”

Business Recorder, December 7, 2016

The government announced Rs 100 million compensation package for the victims of Indian troops’ unprovoked firing along Line of Control (LoC), as Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will soon visit Azad Jammu and Kashmir to distribute compensation cheques among the affectees. Briefing the National

Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan about the losses caused due to unprovoked firing by the Indian army at Neelum Valley along the LoC, Additional Chief Secretary of the AJK Farhat Ali Mir noted that Prime Minister Sharif is visiting AJK to distribute the compensation amount among the affectees as well as to express solidarity with Kashmiris. MNA Malik Ibrar Ahmed presided over the meeting. He apprised the committee that 39 people, including 29 males and 10 females, were killed and 128 others got injured because of unprovoked firing of Indian army.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/110798/>

“GOVT Taking Steps to Rehabilitate LoC affectees: AJK PM”

Radio Pakistan, December 8, 2016

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that government is taking tangible steps to rehabilitate Line of Control (LoC) affectees in the state. Addressing a compensation cheques distribution ceremony in Muzaffarabad on December 8, he noted that federal and state governments are taking concrete measures to minimize the sufferings of people residing at the Line of Control. On the occasion, AJK Prime Minister on the behalf of Prime Minister of Pakistan distributed donation cheques among the victims’ families.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/08-Dec-2016/govt-taking-steps-to-rehabilitate-loc-affectees-ajk-pm>

Asim Yasin, “Khursheed questions ATR service for Gilgit, Chitral”

The News, December 9, 2016

Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Syed Khursheed Shah on December 8 asked why the six new ATR flights were started for Gilgit and Chitral when it had been decided that the plane won’t fly to these areas. “These ATRs were facing problems and were not fit to fly at high attitude,” he noted while talking to newsmen at the Parliament House. Khursheed demanded action against the PIA

managing director on the tragic crash resulting in loss of precious human lives. To a question, he noted the chairman PIA only headed the board and the real administrative powers rest with the MD.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/170857-Khursheed-questions-ATR-service-for-Gilgit-Chitral>

“GOVT to Announce 30 years Forest Working Plan soon: Official”

Radio Pakistan, December 9, 2016

An official of Federal Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan says government is taking revolutionary steps for developing the area and allocated billions of rupees for development projects like universities and hospitals in GB. The official noted the government will also soon announce a 30 years Forest Working Plan, Timber Policy and Tourist Policy for the region with the collaboration of GB council. He also stated that the renovation of Skardu Airport was in progress and feasibility report for the widening of Gilgit Airport had been prepared. He further stated that the government has allocated more land for the expansion of Karakoram International University to provide better education facilities.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/08-Dec-2016/govt-to-announce-30-years-forest-working-plan-soon-official>

“Zero Tolerance Policy being Observed against Corruption: HAIDER”

Radio Pakistan, December 9, 2016

The AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that zero tolerance policy is being observed against corruption and nepotism in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He was talking to cabinet, legislative assembly's members and various public delegations on the eve of World Anti-Corruption Day at Kashmir House in Islamabad on December 9.

Raja Farooq Haider Khan urged the civil society to extend its cooperation in elimination of corruption and other bad practices in the state. He also stated that a comprehensive strategy is being evolved to wipe-out corruption and nepotism in Azad Kashmir.

AJK Prime Minister further stated that Accountability Bureau would be thoroughly reformed to set a precedent for transparent accountability process in the state.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/09-Dec-2016/zero-tolerance-policy-being-observed-against-corruption-haider>

Biplob Ghosal, “PoK Erupts with ‘azadi’ slogans; Pakistan Army brutally thrashes protesters”

Zee News, December 10, 2016

In huge trouble for Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, locals in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) have hit the streets to protest against the administration. The protesters are demanding freedom from the clutches of Pakistan. To thwart the protests, Pakistani Army was ordered to clamp down on the agitators. Ever since July, PoK region has been witnessing unrest, with hundreds of people coming out in the open to protest against the Pakistani establishment. The locals in PoK have alleged that the July 21 election, which saw Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) winning 32 out of 41 seats, was rigid. The protesters have maintained that they were not allowed to cast their votes, and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and others rigged the polls in favour of Sharif's PML-N. Besides PoK the Sharif government has also been entangled in the Balochistan area, where the freedom movement has gained momentum. Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the human rights violations in Balochistan, several Baloch leaders living in exile have been aggressively advocating for freedom of the restive region from the clutches of Pakistan.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/pok-erupts-with-azadi-slogans-pakistan-army-brutally-thrashes-protesters_1957215.html

Masood, “Dar Discuss Financial Matter, Developmental Budget of AJK”

Radio Pakistan, December 11, 2016

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar held a meeting with President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar

Masood Khan in Islamabad on December 11 and discussed financial matters and developmental budget of AJK. The President AJK briefed the minister about the financial problems of the state. Ishaq Dar also ensured that all the financial issues of Azad Kashmir will be resolved on priority basis. He also assured of full cooperation in developmental progress in AJK.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/10-Dec-2016/sardar-masood-ishaq-dar-discuss-financial-matter-developmental-budget-of-ajk>

“Pakistan pays Rs 1 cr per terrorist to cross LoC: PoK leader”

Business Standard, December 12, 2016

Even as Pakistan keeps pleading its innocence at international forum regarding it not being involved in terror-related activities, particularly when it comes to India, Sardar Raees Inqlabi, a leader of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir-based Jammu and Kashmir Aman Forum, has rubbished that claim by saying that Islamabad is paying hefty amount of cash to send terrorists across the Line of Control (LoC). “You (Pakistan) are hiring killers and murderers; you pay them one crore rupees and turn them into a bomb and make them cross LoC, which is the main reason of tension.

We condemn this terrorism. If you are so fond of firing, you must fight army to army,” stated Inqlabi. Further exposing Pakistan’s state-support to terror outfits and questioning Islamabad’s ulterior motives, he asked, “Those terror outfits which are banned in Pakistan in accordance with the National Action Plan, why are they being allowed to operate from ‘Azad’ Kashmir (PoK), and why are the banned groups been given a free hand in PoK?” “Those organisations which are banned by Pakistan have been given free hand here and along the LoC, and thus, we demand that Islamabad must impose a blanket ban on such outfits akin to the National Action Plan in Pakistan,” adds Inqlabi.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/international/pakistan-pays-rs-1-cr-per-terrorist-to-cross-loc-pok-leader-116121200067_1.html

“Form Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Poonch scouts to counter terrorism: Chuni”

State Times, December 12, 2016

SOS International exhorted upon the Central Government to constitute Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Poonch battalion which will prove quite productive in countering terrorism along this side of Line of Control (LoC).

While addressing a rally at Maheshpura Chowk on December 11, SOS International Chairman, Rajiv Chuni noted that presently, there is conflict between India and Pakistan and the stated conflict can’t bring to an end till ages. He also stated that to tackle the ongoing scenario of terrorist activities in State and country, Government must constitute three battalions i.e, Mirpur Scouts, Muzaffarabad Scouts and Poonch Scouts. “The logic behind such a demand is that since youth of these areas from refugees are familiar with language, culture and topography will prove productive in countering terrorism along LoC. The move would also help the financial condition of PoK refugees’ youths by providing employment”, Chuni noted.

<http://news.statetimes.in/form-mirpur-muzaffarabad-poonch-scouts-counter-terrorism-chuni/>

“People Protests Against NHA in Gilgit-Baltistan to Demand Compensation for Their Land”

Bihar Prabha, December 13, 2016

Poverty and misery is something the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been putting up with several decades. Against the backdrop of extreme poverty, the unemployment is on the rise. Their safety is at stake. The people were protesting to demand compensation for the land taken away from them for a national highway project.

<http://news.biharprabha.com/2016/12/people-protests-against-nha-in-gilgit-baltistan-to-demand-compensation-for-their-land/>

“AJK governance: New minsters in Haider’s cabinet given portfolios”

The Express Tribune, December 14, 2016

The Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Raja Farooq Haider Khan on December 13 allotted portfolios to the three newly-appointed members of his cabinet, a notification stated. According to the notification, Chaudhry Mohammad Saeed has been given the portfolio of Minister for Tourism, Culture, Mangla Dam affairs and Mirpur Development Authority. Syed Shukat Shah has been made Minister for Food Department while Nasar Dar the Minister for Rehabilitation. The prime minister had expanded his cabinet from nine to 12 members by inducting three new ministers earlier this month. However, they had not been assigned portfolios. Among the new ministers, sources stated, Chaudhry Muhammad Saeed is a former president of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Saeed, who hails from Mirpur, had defeated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) AJK head and former AJK prime minister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry during the legislative elections in July 2016.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1262488/ajk-governance-new-minsters-haiders-cabinet-given-portfolios/>

Shabbir Mir, “Land compensation: Clash between two Chilas tribes leaves 13 injured”

The Express Tribune, December 14, 2016

At least 13 people were injured when two tribes in Chilas, Diamer region of Gilgit-Baltistan, clashed on December 12. Subsequently, the local administration on December 13 imposed Section 144 in the area while heavy contingents of security forces were deployed to maintain peace in the volatile town. On December 12, the local Soniwal tribe had held a protest outside the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) colony. They were demanding their share of compensation for the lands which the government had acquired to build the 4,500 megawatts Diamer-Bhasha dam in the area. According to members of the Soniwal tribe, the

government had treated them unfairly out of pressure from the dominant tribe of the region— Boto tribe.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1262504/land-compensation-clash-two-chilas-tribes-leaves-13-injured/>

Tehzeeb Hussain Bercha, “Laudable efforts”

The News, December 15, 2016

For long, Gilgit had been a victim of pollution due to the negligence of concerned authorities. Now, the government of Gilgit-Baltistan has taken several admirable steps to make Gilgit a garbage-free city. The Gilgit-Baltistan government also orchestrated a solid-waste management project, first time in the history of GB, as well as upgraded the municipal committee as the municipal corporation. This step was helpful to open new opportunities to unemployed persons as well as increased the efficiency of the department.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/171945-Laudable-efforts>

“Govt promoting tourism in AJK”

The Nation, December 15, 2016

AJK Secretary Information and Tourism Mansoor Qadir Dar noted on December 13 that all the available resources would be utilised for the promotion of tourism. Addressing the Tourism Department officials in Kotli, Dar noted that Azad Jammu & Kashmir was enriched with huge natural potential of tourism. The state government, he added, will turn AJK into the most attractive spot for the tourists. He also stated that under-construction projects of tourism in various parts of AJK will be completed on priority grounds since it was the top priority of the government to promote tourism. Dar also directed the authorities concerned that the land reserved for a tourism park near Poonch River in Tattapani in Kotli district should be made viable for the attraction of tourists.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/15-Dec-2016/govt-promoting-tourism-in-ajk>

“1100 officers to be inducted through FPSC in next one and half year: CM”

Radio Pakistan, December 15, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeez-ur-Rehman noted eleven hundred officers would be inducted through Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) in the next one and half year. This he stated while addressing the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly proceeding in Gilgit on December 15. The Chief Minister stated that the PML-N government has fulfilled its promises made with people during the election campaign. He also stated that the PML-N has set up four new districts with twelve hundred new vacancies. He further stated that the Federal Government has awarded Gilgit -Skardu road project costing 46 billion rupees and work on it would be initiated soon. Referring promotions, he stated two thousand four hundred employees in education department were promoted to the next grade.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/15-Dec-2016/1100-officers-to-be-inducted-through-fpsc-in-next-one-and-half-year-cm>

“Masood underlines need of British assistance in resolving Kashmir dispute”

The Nation, December 15, 2016

President Azad Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan, underlined the need of British assistance in resolving the longstanding Kashmir dispute and enhancing the quality of education in the state. He was talking to a delegation of British Council led by Roze Merry Hill which called on him, in Muzaffarabad, on December 15. He also talked about a million people from Mirpur and Kotli districts of Azad Kashmir who are settled in the United Kingdom and playing their positive role for the progress and development of the country. He also stated that a large number of Kashmiris are the members of European and British Parliaments and also representing local bodies' institutions. On this occasion, country head of the British Council informed that the council will sign a memorandum of understanding with the AJK government soon for the development of different

sectors including formal and technical education.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/15-Dec-2016/masood-underlines-need-of-british-assistance-in-resolving-kashmir-dispute>

“TAJK holds Kashmir conference in Muzaffarabad”

Kashmir Watch, December 15, 2016

Leadership of political, religious, Kashmiri organizations and Huriyyat leaders stated that Kashmir will not be freed from talks but freed from Jihad Fee Sabilillah. India did not accept resolutions of the UN. We do not accept cease fire line. The UN has played double role to solve the problems of Muslim Ummah including Kashmir. Unit of Islamic countries should be made to solve Muslim Ummah's problems. Leaders of political, religious and Kashmir organizations expressed these views while addressing Kashmir Conference organized by Tehreek e Azadi Jammu Kashmir (TAJK).

<http://kashmirwatch.com/tehreek-e-azadi-jammu-kashmir-holds-kashmir-conference-in-muzaffarabad/>

Shabir Choudhry, “CPEC – A potential threat to turn Gilgit-Baltistan a battleground – II”

The North Lines, December 16, 2016

Apart from economic aspects, Gwadar also has a great strategic and military significance. Astonishingly, not much attention is given to this; and even not much has been stated about a deal of eight submarines to be supplied by China to Pakistan, which will surely elevate Pakistan's naval military strength. Chinese military ships and submarines have already taken their positions in and around Gwadar. Panos Mourdoukoutas writes in Forbes that ‘China desperately needs the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It's part of that nation's vision to write the rules of the next stage of globalization and help its export and investment engines grow for years to come...China has to either appease India or “forget” about the CPEC project’. The article further suggests: “If pro-Indian forces in Pakistan sabotage

China's CPEC route," China should expect an open confrontation against India, because that raises the possibility of an open confrontation between China and Pakistan on the one side, and India and its allies on the other.

<http://thenorthlines.com/cpec-potential-threat-turn-gilgit-baltistan-battleground-ii/>

“AJK govt stops NGOs from working”

The Nation, December 16, 2016

The AJK government directed all the non-governmental organizations working in Muzaffarabad division to cease their activities immediately and apply for new registration with Social Welfare Department, official sources confirmed. Through a notice, which was also published in a local newspaper, all the NGOs were directed to cease their projects till renewal of their registrations, stated the AJK government. Any organisation acting in contravention of law will be dealt with accordingly, the official sources noted on December 15 quoting the official notice. At the same time, the announcement has shocked the already registered civil society organisations across the AJK. Various registered NGOs while unanimously rejecting the reported restrictions have termed the reportedly unilateral order uncalled for an unwarranted and an obstacle in serving the sick humanity including poor and drown-trodden.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/16-Dec-2016/ajk-govt-stops-ngos-from-working>

“Provision of Better Health Services to Masses Govt's top Priority: AJK PM”

Radio Pakistan, December 16, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that provision of better health services to masses is the top priority of the government. Addressing an inauguration ceremony of Free Medical Camp organized by Pakistan Islamic Medical Association in Muzaffarabad on December 16, he noted that health sector is being reformed in

the state. Raja Farooq Haider Khan also stated that emergency health services are being introduced in Azad Kashmir to provide timely medical facilities to poor and destitute people.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/16-Dec-2016/provision-of-better-health-services-to-masses-govt-s-top-priority-ajk-pm>

“Diabler-Bhasha dam work to start next year”

Pakistan Observer, December 17, 2016

Minister of State for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali on December 16 noted the process of land acquisition for Diabler-Basha dam had almost been completed and physical work would start from next year. 'We've acquired the required land for the dam and work on it will start next year by all means,' Abid Sher Ali informed the National Assembly in response to a supplementary question asked by Aisha Syed during the question-hour session. He also stated no practical step for construction of dams was taken by the previous governments adding that the present government initiated work on eight to nine new dams, with each of them producing over 50 megawatts of electricity. He further stated that after the 18th Amendment provinces could build dams, which could produce electricity upto 50 megawatts.

<http://pakobserver.net/diabler-bhasha-dam-work-to-start-next-year/>

“Boosting tourism: Gilgit-Ghizer road to be turned into an expressway”

The Express Tribune, December 19, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman on December 18 noted that they would develop the Gilgit-Ghizer road as an expressway. Talking to Radio Pakistan, Rehman noted the G-B government would start work on projects which have been funded and supported by the federal government. By developing the road on the pattern of an expressway, the G-B chief minister hoped it would facilitate and promote tourism. The thoroughfare connecting two major cities of the region would allow locals to travel easily for trade

and employment and also extend their access to health and education. Rehman noted the federal government would provide Rs1.2 billion to build the road. The chief minister further stated that his government was working on building capacity of various departments so that they can efficiently utilise development funds.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1267366/boosting-tourism-gilgit-ghizer-road-turned-expressway/>

“LG Polls to be held after Population Census in GB”

Radio Pakistan, December 20, 2016

In Gilgit-Baltistan, Local Bodies Election would be held after population census. This was stated by Gilgit-Baltistan Information Minister Iqbal Hassan while talking to media in Gilgit on December 20. He noted a strategy is being devised to carry out population census in Gilgit-Baltistan smoothly.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/20-Dec-2016/lg-poll-to-be-held-after-population-census-in-gb>

“GBLA Pays Tributes to Former COAS”

Radio Pakistan, December 21, 2016

The 13th Session of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) after 5-day proceedings concluded in Gilgit on December 21. The Assembly during its session paid tributes to former Chief of Army Staff General (Retd) Raheel Sharif for his remarkable services against terrorism. The house hoped that General Qamar Javed Bajwa will continue war against terror till its complete elimination. Another resolution the house demanded was the construction of protective bounds in banks of rivers and streams to stop desalting, soil erosion and increase the life of dams. The Assembly also demanded stop illegal cutting of forest and ensure environmental protection. In another resolution, the Assembly emphasized maintaining customary laws and ensure ownership of pastoral rights.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/21-Dec-2016/gbla-session-after-5-day-proceedings-concludes-in-gilgit>

“PML-N vows to turn AJK into welfare state”

The Nation, December 22, 2016

Top PML-N AJK leader and ex-advisor to government Ch Haq Nawaz noted that AJK will be turned into a true welfare state under the spirit of the party’s manifesto. “The recent land-slide victory of PML-N in general elections-2016 in Azad Jammu & Kashmir is primarily the manifestation of faith and trust by the people in the leadership and healthy policies of the party in line with the vision of Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif and the AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan,” Haq Nawaz noted. He is former Advisor to the outgoing Prime Minister Ch. Majeed-led PPP AJK government. He had parted ways from the PPP much before the July 21 general elections in AJK after opposing the policies of the party and its government and joined the PML-N.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Dec-2016/pml-n-vows-to-turn-ajk-into-welfare-state>

“Punjab decision cheers up Kashmiris”

The Nation, December 22, 2016

The Punjab government cheered up the Kashmiris by deciding to grant the ownership rights of the property temporarily allotted to Kashmiri refugees settled in the Gujranwala and Rawalpindi divisions since 1947, during December 2016. The Settlement and Rehabilitation Wing of the Board of Revenue Punjab directed the divisional commissioners of Gujranwala and Rawalpindi to complete the process by December 31, 2016 as per target fixed by the Chief Minister of Punjab Shahbaz Sharif, sources noted. The chief minister made the decision under section (3) of the Evacuee Property and Displaced Persons Laws (Repeal) Act 1975. “In pursuance of the approval accorded by the Chief Minister of Punjab, the Settlement and Rehabilitation Wing of Board of Revenue Punjab decided to confer proprietary rights upon the non-claimant Jammu & Kashmir refugees who had earlier been temporarily allotted evacuee land for maintenance purpose,” sources quoted the directive circulated by the Board of Revenue Punjab

to the divisional commissioners as well as district collectors of Sialkot, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal and Jhelum. To implement the above decision, the Punjab government constituted a Divisional Committees for the conferment of the rights to the refugees.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Dec-2016/punjab-decision-cheers-up-kashmiris>

“People of AJK, GB tied in deep Historic Relations: Haider”

Radio Pakistan, December 22, 2016

The AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that people of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are tied in deep historic relations. He was talking to Chairman Public Accounts Committee Legislative Assembly Gilgit Baltistan Saeed Afzal in Islamabad on December 22. The AJK Prime Minister noted that the steps are afoot to enhance contacts and coordination between people of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. He further stated people of Azad Kashmir are keen for the progress and prosperity of people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/22-Dec-2016/people-of-ajk-gb-tied-in-deep-historic-relations-haider>

Shabbir Mir, “G-B governor distances himself from disparaging remarks”

The Express Tribune, December 23, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Governor Mir Ghazanfar Ali on December 22 distanced himself from a statement attributed to him. The statement, reported in the vernacular press, had the governor reportedly referring to the people of Diamer as being “Taliban-minded” and needing “madrasas but not a university”. The comment sparked unrest in Diamer valley. On December 22, he attempted to clear the air surrounding the statements and the status of a university which is supposed to be built in the valley. “Let me be clear that the words attributed to me aren’t mine,” Ali told media at his office. “I am being

blamed for the delay in the [construction of a] university campus in Diamer, but that is not the reality,” he noted, adding that he was ready to support lawmakers from Diamer in their endeavour.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1272217/hot-water-governor-distances-disparaging-remarks/>

“Nisar, Hafeez discuss law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan”

Radio Pakistan, December 24, 2016

Interior Minister Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan stated that the federal government will continue its cooperation with Gilgit-Baltistan for the development of the territory. He was talking to Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman who called on him in Islamabad on December 24. The Minister also stated that the government is committed to resolve the problems being faced by the people of Gilgit Baltistan. During the meeting, law and order situation also came under the discussion.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/24-Dec-2016/nisar-hafeez-discuss-law-and-order-situation-in-gilgit-baltistan>

Tariq Naqash, “AJK urges PM to grant water use charges”

Dawn, December 24, 2016

The PML-N government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) called upon Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to ask the authorities concerned to take measures for grant of water use charges at a rate of Rs1.10 per unit from the Mangla power project and ‘soon-to-be commissioned’ Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project (NJHP). According to official sources, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider has written a letter to Mr Sharif, urging him to consider the region’s case on the basis of equality and justice in the same manner and rates which have been adopted for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in case of the Tarbela power project or for Punjab’s Ghazi Barotha hydropower project. He wondered how agreements signed with AJK at the time of the construction of the Mangla dam in 1967 and its raising in 2003 had

been overlooked to “falsely present AJK as a defaulter” of the Water and Power Development Authority and distribution companies.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1304180/ajk-urges-pm-to-grant-water-use-charges>

Shabbir Mir, “Share in CPEC: G-B scholars demand education, health facilities in region”

The Express Tribune, December 26, 2016

Scholars in Gilgit-Baltistan on December 25 demanded that health and education sectors in the region should be made a part of the mega infrastructure projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). “Obviously CPEC would pass through G-B and people are bound to suffer from dust and other pollutants once the traffic starts flowing through it,” asked Mujahid Shah, a PhD scholar while addressing a seminar in Gilgit on December 25. The seminar, titled “CPEC and prospects of development in education and health in G-B”, was organised by Striving Towards Education And Progress (STEP), a local NGO. Shah stated that as the multibillion dollar project is built in the region, it should be accompanied by well-equipped hospitals and doctors to deal with health issues. Furthermore, quality educational institutes should be built which educate locals to take advantage of the growing trade envisioned under CPEC.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1274896/share-cpec-g-b-scholars-demand-education-health-facilities-region/>

Shabbir Mir, “CPEC benefits: Gilgit-Baltistan to get economic zone”

The Express tribune, December 27, 2016

Gilgit-Baltistan will be drawing greater benefit from the multibillion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the region is set to get a sizeable economic zone to boost trade and commerce. “The economic zone, spreading over 250 acres, will have scope for economic activities at larger scale,” stated a government official while referring to a joint coordination committee meeting on CPEC which was

held in Islamabad recently. The meeting had been chaired by Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal. Representatives of all provinces and Azad Jammu and Kashmir were present in the meeting. G-B was represented in the meeting by Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman. “The economic zone will have [designated] industries for agriculture, livestock, minerals and handicrafts,” the official informed the media on December 26, while asking not to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media. He added that the details and modalities discussed in the Islamabad meeting would be shared with authorities in China when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visits there with a delegation in near future.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1275732/cpec-benefits-gilgit-baltistan-get-economic-zone/>

“Efforts underway for Promotion of Tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan: Fida”

Radio Pakistan, December 27, 2016

Minister Tourism Fida Khan stated that efforts are underway for the promotion of tourism in Gilgit Baltistan. Talking to media at Gahkuch in Ghizer on December 27, he noted GB government has planned to renovate existing rest houses to overcome shortage of accommodation for the tourists. Over one billion rupees would be spent on this project. The minister noted that the government will organize seminars and other program to attract international and domestic tourists towards the area. He noted that the youth will also be imparted training as tourist guide aimed at to facilitate tourists and generate employment.

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/27-Dec-2016/efforts-underway-for-promotion-of-tourism-in-gilgit-baltistan-fida>

“JKLL blasts India’s water terrorism”

The Nation, December 28, 2016

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation League (JKLL) President Justice (retd.) Abdul Majeed Mallick stated that India could not succeed in its nefarious designs by suspending the water supply to Pakistan. The

people of the state will never allow Pakistan to be barren at any cost, he noted. Mallick, also the former chief justice of AJK High Court, categorically stated while addressing the convention of his party held in Mirpur on December 25. Delegates of the party, besides the top intellect class from various parts of Pakistan, AJK and United Kingdom attended the day-long convention. JKLL leader from United Kingdom Mafsar Hussain, ex member AJK Council Ch Suleman Advocate, Khawaja Manzoor Qadir Advocate, District President JKLL Shahid Majeed Mallick and others also addressed the convention.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/28-Dec-2016/jkll-blasts-india-s-water-terrorism>

Shabbir Mir, “Revival of magisterial system yields results”

The Express Tribune, December 28, 2016

The magisterial system, recently revived in Gilgit-Baltistan after decades, has started yielding effective results as people seem satisfied with the quick dispensation of justice. The system was revived by the government this year in an effort to ensure speedy justice to the public. Nowadays, cases of price hike, black marketing, encroachments, and lesser law and order issues are heard and decided in the courts of deputy commissioners and assistant commissioner, providing quick relief to the people. The executive magisterial powers of deputy and assistant commissioners were abolished under the Local Bodies Ordinance 2002, issued by the then President Gen (retd.) Pervez Musharraf. Under the new law, deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners are empowered to hear cases in which the accused could be sentenced for up to three years.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1276932/quick-justice-revival-magisterial-system-yields-results/>

Shabbir Mir, “A year of highs and some lows for Gilgit-Baltistan”

The Express Tribune, December 31, 2016

The year 2016 brought a mixed bag for Gilgit-Baltistan. Development work resumed and the first shipments under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor rolled through with a host of foreign and domestic tourists, but there were times when it seemed that the powderkeg of sectarianism was about to blow up. After the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was voted into government during the June 2015 elections, the party promised to pave over 80 kilometres of roads within the first 100 days of its government. While it may have missed that target last year, it did manage to accelerate development efforts during 2016. Work on paving Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam from Sakwar to Jutial Chowk was completed, while roads in Ghari Bagh and other parts of the city were fully or partially laid. Likewise, roads in various parts of Skardu town were metalled. Despite the promises made, the constitutional limbo, which has haunted the region since its independence, continued this year. A committee formed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to look into the options of making G-B a constitutional part of Pakistan also failed to deliver. The committee, headed by Sartaj Aziz, held several meetings, but without results.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1279868/year-highs-lows-gilgit-baltistan/>

Economics Developments

Tariq Naqash, “AJK seeks federal govt help to fight fiscal woes”

Dawn, December 10, 2016

The newly installed PML-N government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is looking for an ‘institutionalised support’ from the federal government rather than any one-time grant to tackle its fiscal woes. In this regard, the AJK government prepared a detailed briefing for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif about what Muzaffarabad wants from Islamabad in the pursuance of two federal government notifications, issued in 1971 and 1992 by the cabinet and finance divisions, respectively. Mr Sharif was scheduled to fly to Muzaffarabad on December 8 to chair the budget session of the AJK Council, have a meeting with the ruling PML-N parliamentary party and attend a briefing on AJK’s overall requirements. All the arrangements for his engagements were ready, but the visit was put off at the last moment due to inclement weather.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1301594/ajk-seeks-federal-govt-help-to-fight-fiscal-woes>

“Government to give Incentives to Investors in GB: Iqbal”

Radio Pakistan, December 11, 2016

Minister Information, planning and Development Iqbal Hassan stated that the federal government will give incentives to the national and international investors for investment in Gilgit-Baltistan. Talking to media men in Gilgit, he noted there are vast opportunities for investment in Power, Mineral and Tourism sectors. The minister further stated that the GB government has made first ever Gilgit-Baltistan Investment Board functional and this will help to smoothen the economic activity and create job opportunities.

January 2017

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/11-Dec-2016/government-to-give-incentives-to-investors-in-gb-iqbal>

“LCCI suggests Launching of shares of Bhasha, other dams in Stock Markets”

Business Recorder, December 15, 2016

Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) on December 14 suggested the Ministry of Finance to launch shares of Diamer Bhasha and other proposed dams in domestic and international stock markets to generate funds for the mega projects. LCCI President Abdul Basit and Vice President Muhammad Nasir Hameed Khan, in a statement, noted that the country needed over \$30 billion for the construction of Diamer Bhasha and other dams, and to make them operational for power generation. The government would have to generate funds from its own resources in the absence of funds from international donors, he added. Elaborating the point, the LCCI office-bearers stated around \$14 billion would be required for the construction of Diamer Bhasha Dam other while other expenses would also be incurred besides the cost. Around 150 kilometer area of Karakorum Highway would have to be reconstructed at a cost of \$6 to 7 billion. Around \$3 billion more would be required for erection of transmission line from Diamer Bhasha to the national grid. Hence collectively more than \$20 billion would be required for the construction of Bhasha Dam, they added.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/business-a-economy/331688-lcci-suggests-launching-of-shares-of-bhasha-other-dams-in-stock-markets.html>

MA Mir, “Benefiting labourers: AJK govt raises minimum wage to Rs14,000”

The Express Tribune, December 21, 2016

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government on December 20 set Rs14,000 as the minimum wage

for unskilled workers. According to a notification issued by Labour and Welfare Department in Muzaffarabad on December 20, all unskilled labourers working in private sector would be paid a minimum salary of Rs14,000 from July 2016. The notification further stated that the new wage policy will have to be implemented at all industrial, commercial, private schools, colleges, hotels, petrol pumps, private security companies, and other semi-autonomous bodies in letter and spirit. The policy will also extend to labourers working on the Neelum-Jhelum Hydro Power Project. The notification added that any institution which does not implement the new wage policy would be prosecuted under the existing Labour Laws of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The labour and other unskilled workers organisations appreciated the new wage policy.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1269561/benefiting-labourers-ajk-govt-raises-minimum-wage-rs14000/>

“AJK government approves Rs701 million for multiple projects”

The Express Tribune, December 28, 2016

The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on December 27 approved three projects worth Rs701million for the forest and Information Technology (IT) departments. The Cabinet Developments Committee (CDC) has given approval for the projects. The three forest department projects consist of community-based water management systems in Mirpur, Rawalakot, and Muzaffarabad, while the IT department project is for the computerisation of land records in Dhirkot, Hattain Bala and Dhudial. The CDC meeting was chaired by AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan and was also attended by ministers, the state’s chief secretary, and other government secretaries. Prime Minister Khan further noted that the demarcation of the forest areas is the need of hour and the forest

department should utilise all available resources to ensure the protection of wooded areas with help from local communities. “The forest department should first demark the forest area and land in my constituency, where illegal logging is at its highest level, before moving on to other areas,” the AJK premier told the CDC meeting.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1276941/forest-demarcation-ajk-government-approves-rs701-million-multiple-projects/>

“Federal Government increases development budget for AJK: PM”

Online News, December 31, 2016

AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that the federal government has increased development budget of Azad Kashmir from Rs 12 billion to Rs 21 billion. Addressing a news conference at Prime Minister House on December 30, he noted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his visit to Muzaffarabad on December 29 had in principle accepted a number of demands of AJK government that include constituting a high level constitutional reform committee to suggest amendments in the Interim AJK Constitution, Act 1974, increasing development and non-development budget to end financial crisis in the state, declaring AJK part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor, providing financial resources for construction of 1450 kilometers roads, construction of Lower Topa-Muzaffarabad Express way, upgradation of Muzaffarabad Mansehra Road, construction of Shunter Nullah Tunnel under CPEC and increase of AJK’s share in federal taxes and the federal government will implement the decision soon.

http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/index.php?page=news_detail&news_id=6204

International Developments

“JKSDM will hold weeklong activities on Kashmir in UK”

Kashmir Media Service, December 4, 2016

Jammu and Kashmir Self Determination Movement UK Chapter is organizing a full week of activities starting on December 2 evening from Halifax Yorkshire meeting Yorkshire and East Midlands Members of the European Parliament and Dinner with Conservative party officials in the area. International Human Rights Day will be observed in Bradford on December 10. Lunch meeting will be held with the Pakistani media and evening dinner with Lord Nazir Ahmed, Shadow Minister Barrister Imran Hussain, Naz Shah MP and Amjad Bashir Member European Parliament Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committee and former Lord Mayors, councillors and community leaders. On December 11, a lunch meeting will be held with Afzal Khan MEP and Shadow Justice Minister Barrister Yasmin Qureshi MP in Jammu & Kashmir Information Centre Manchester followed by Community meeting with Kashmiri and Pakistani organizations in Birmingham in the evening.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/2016/12/04/jksdm-will-hold-weeklong-activities-on-kashmir-in-uk.html>

“WFP decides to Extend Anemia Reduction Project in AJK”

Business Recorder, December 9, 2016

World Food Program (WFP) on December 9 decided to extend its wheat and flour fortification project in Azad Kashmir (AJK) for further one year with the aim to overcome the anemia problem in the poor class in collaboration with Micro-nutrient Initiative (MI), Secretary Food Department Raja Muhammad Abbas noted. Abbas stated that this was decided in a high

level meeting attended by WFP officials, Senior Technical Adviser MI headquarter Dr. Noor Ahmad and Policy officer MI, Dr. Masood Abbasi besides officials of the food department to review the impact of the project.

The meeting also discussed in detail the sustainability of the project, fortification of wheat and flour as per World Health Organization (WHO) standards and post withdrawal strategy and emphasized the Food Department to take over the project on sustainable basis to achieve the goals on permanent basis.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/331169-wfp-decides-to-extend-anemia-reduction-project-in-ajk.html>

“Pakistan to protest World Bank’s incorrect map excluding GB, AJK”

Pakistan Today, December 14, 2016

Pakistan has decided to lodge an official protest with the World Bank (WB) after the lending agency used a map of Pakistan without the territories of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). World Bank’s Lead Economist for African Region Vincent Palmade used the map in his presentation during the official ceremony of a book launch in Islamabad on December 13. The book titled ‘South Asia’s Turn: Policies to Boost Competitiveness and Create the Next Export Powerhouse’ was launched during the annual general meeting and conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists. Ministry of Planning & Development and Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (Pide) jointly organised the three-day conference. The WB has defended its decision to use the ‘incorrect’ map.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/12/14/pakistan-to-protest-world-banks-incorrect-map-excluding-gb-ajk/>

Hamza Rao, “Russia to install 60 LPG AirMix plants in Murree, Gilgit, AJK”

Daily Pakistan, December 30, 2016

In a new development, Russia will install 60 LPG AirMix plants in Pakistan out of which 24 will be set up in Balochistan. The rest will be set up at Murree, in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK. Experts stated that the LPG AirMix plants would assist in sorting out the deficiency of the gas in the country. “We are in talks with Russian firm and are very close to finalisation of the deal for setting up 60 LMP AirMi plants in

various parts of the country,” Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources confirmed. This will be the second deal on natural gas with Moscow being finalised as Russia will construct 1,100 kilometre LNG pipeline from North to South too. It is pertinent to mention that the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) that met on October 31 accorded approval to the plan for setting up of the LPG Air Mix Plants at Murree (Kurbagla, Dewal, Company Bagh and Tret), Awaran and Bella at an estimated cost of Rs1.353 billion.

<https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/russia-to-install-60-lpg-airmix-plants-in-murree-gilgit-ajk/>

Other Developments

Aziz Ali Dad, “Cultural ambivalence in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, December 18, 2016

Humans are the only living beings that have succeeded in overcoming the limits imposed by instinct. This has helped them develop a worldview that fuels a better understanding of self, society and the world. It is this worldview that knits every dimension of society into a symbolic whole called culture. The traditional culture of Gilgit-Baltistan developed in an organic way in a situation of relative isolation from the rest of the world. However, the isolated position of Gilgit-Baltistan started to change with the growing exposure to the outside world in modern times. It has exposed the region to exogenous

lifestyles, people, ideas and institutions. Coupled with these elements, the process of modernisation during the last four decades has brought about drastic changes in perception. In the cultural context of Gilgit-Baltistan, the rupture with continuity was not a uniform process across different spheres of life. It has rather occurred in a hybrid form whereby some spheres of life experienced rapid changes and gave way to new things while some elements of traditional worldview have been reinvigorated by the very forces of modernity.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/172676-Cultural-ambivalence-in-Gilgit-Baltistan>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“‘Pro-government’ opposition leader Elected in Azad Kashmir”

Daily Mahasib, December 4, 2016

The Azad Kashmir government in an unprecedented development voted in favour of an opposition leader. This was done only to favour a particular opposition party so that the opposition leader can be used for political expediency. This has happened first time in the history of a parliamentary form of government. Therefore, the government has succeeded in electing ‘pro-government’ opposition leaders. This will dent the spirit of democracy. How can a pro government opposition leader criticise or question government policies? It is not difficult to comprehend it. It became clear during the election of Kashmir Council when a government’s candidate got three votes and the opposition leader grabbed 6 votes. One has to wait and watch that how a pro-government opposition leader performs? Will he be able to undertake his functions smoothly or will he be just a government agent in the form of opposition, only time will tell.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=04-12-2016>

“PPP is not against CPEC, Want equal share”

Daily Baade-e-Shimal, December 10, 2016

The PPP-GB President Amjad Advocate stated that it is under the Chinese pressure that Islamabad is willing to give constitutional rights to Gilgit Baltistan. He further stated that China is reluctant to invest in a disputed territory. Therefore, it wants legal hurdles to be removed. While talking to the media, Amjad stated that the Sartaj Aziz led Committee has finalised its report and in which he has proposed to give Gilgit Baltistan complete constitutional rights. Gilgit Baltistan would be given representation in the National Assembly and in Senate as well. According to Advocate, it was only during PPP rule when Gilgit

Baltistan was given provincial setup under the Governance Order 2009. He also stated that the CPEC dream cannot be fulfilled without making Gilgit Baltistan a partner in it. The PPP is not against CPEC but only wants an equal share for the people of Gilgit Baltistan in the corridor.

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

“AJK’s Financial Crisis: Irrepressible”

Daily Mahasib, December 11, 2016

Azad Kashmir’s financial vows are not ending. It is lingering in this mess since a very long time. Financial crisis does not only affect employers and pensioners but its impact can be seen in the developmental sector also. Those labours who are working in these projects also get affected. One expected that the financial crisis would be addressed after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s recent visit to Muzaffarabad. People were hoping that Nawaz Sharif will announce a huge package for the region. Unfortunately, weather conditions did not allow this to happen. His trip to AJK was postponed. Nawaz Sharif had a talk with Farooq Haider on phone and promised that he will soon visit AJK. When will Nawaz Sharif visit the region no one knows yet? But work on the projects which have been already discussed should start as soon as possible so that AJK does not descent further into financial crisis. Islamabad should prioritise this crisis as it is affecting the common people also.

<http://mahasib.com.pk/epaper/page.php?id=4&edition=muzzaffarabad&dt=11-12-2016>

“Decision on Gilgit-Baltistan’s Constitutional Status not Easy”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, December 16, 2016

The Senate has given full consent on another report on CPEC. Members of the Senate stated that GB is

the gateway of the corridor but it got no economic zones under CPEC. In the CPEC report, members suggested that apart from the KKH, construction of other alternative routes should be built within the corridor. Report also stressed that resentment and pessimism of the Gilgit Baltistan people should be addressed. The report further noted that there has been no development for the people of Gwadar also. It suggested that curfew should not be imposed on roads while transporting containers. On Gilgit Baltistan's constitutional identity, the Senate members maintained that any decisions regarding Gilgit Baltistan's identity is not easy to take. According to the report, Gilgit Baltistan's status is entwined with the Kashmir cause.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=12-16-2016&img=12-16-2016page-1-1

Arif Nawaz, “Why is Gilgit-Baltistan Neglected in CPEC?”

Daily Baad-e-Shimal, December 17, 2016

Why is China investing so much in Pakistan? What will they get from it? And what would Pakistan gain from CPEC? What is the importance of Gilgit Baltistan in CPEC? These are the questions every Pakistani has in their minds. We know CPEC does allow China to connect its region with the Gwadar Port. CPEC will help Pakistan to address its energy crisis. There is no doubt that Pakistan's future is linked with CPEC. In other words Pakistan's dream of becoming an Asian tiger is related to it. With CPEC's culmination, Pakistan will become a hub of world trade. Through CPEC, China will address its Malacca dilemma. The Pakistani rulers are saying that every province will benefit from the corridor but no one is talking about Gilgit Baltistan. No one is ready to talk about Gilgit Baltistan's share. Then question that arises: is Gilgit Baltistan not a part of Pakistan? Do people of Gilgit Baltistan not contribute in Pakistan's development? Have people of Gilgit Baltistan not given sacrifices for Pakistan? History tells how much the people of region sacrificed for the defence of Pakistan. In spite of giving so many sacrifices for Pakistan, the rulers neglected Gilgit

Baltistan in CPEC. One cannot even understand the logic behind it. I just want to remind the Pakistani rulers that Gilgit Baltistan people are also Pakistani. They should also be given equal rights and treated at par with the people from other provinces so that this region will also step towards development.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=12-17-2016&img=12-17-2016page-4-4

“AJK Prime Minister is not Thwarting GB's Development”

Daily Salam, December 26, 2016

In a meeting with the members of the Gilgit Baltistan Council, Raja Farooq Haider assured them that his government will not hinder the development of Gilgit Baltistan. Haider further stated that he wants Gilgit Baltistan to get a bigger status than the AJK setup. Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir share similar tradition, language and history. Our effort is to reduce the difference and distance between the people of the two regions. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is satisfied with the work and development in both Gilgit Baltistan and AJK. This is a good gesture on part of AJK's Prime Minister. He has offered a hand of friendship to the people of GB. But one should take his statement on Gilgit Baltistan with a pinch of salt. Whatever he stated in past regarding Gilgit Baltistan was reported in media. His predecessor Chaudhry Abdul Majeed once stated that Gilgit Baltistan should not be made a province. JKLF leader Yaseen Malik also expressed his reservation in a letter he wrote to Nawaz Sharif. Statements from the Kashmir leadership is the reason why the differences and resentment have grown between these two regions. Gilgit Baltistan has suffered more than anybody else for the Kashmir cause. Without having a constitutional identity for the last 69 years, people of Gilgit Baltistan still celebrate Kashmir day every year. On the other hand, Kargil and Ladakh is also part of a disputed region but India has given them representation in the Lok Sabha.

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

“CPEC in GB and the responsibility of the Government”

Daily Salam, December 30, 2016

Two big projects of Gilgit Baltistan, Chilmisdas and Phander power project have been inducted in CPEC. It was decided in meeting of JCC in China. This meeting was attended by the provincial heads including GB in Chin. Hafeez ur Rehman also made a presentation there and strongly highlighted GB’s concerns and demands regarding CPEC. Hafeez ur Rehman further stated that if GB is not given its full share in CPEC, people will get distressed. This in

turn will help enemy to exploit this resentment among the people regarding CPEC. Therefore, the Committee gave their consent to include four power projects in CPEC. This is a good step to address the power woes. These projects if completed on time will address power crisis in the GB. Government of GB should also take initiative to introduce eco-friendly projects so that the corridor along with development of the region does not affect the ecology. However, few people are raising their questions on CPEC and its implication on the region.

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

Fact sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

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 Muhammad Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 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.ajk.gov.pk/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Nine

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

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

Governor of G-B: Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan

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

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan

National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan

National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

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

Disclaimer

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

POK NEWS DIGEST



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