

POK

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A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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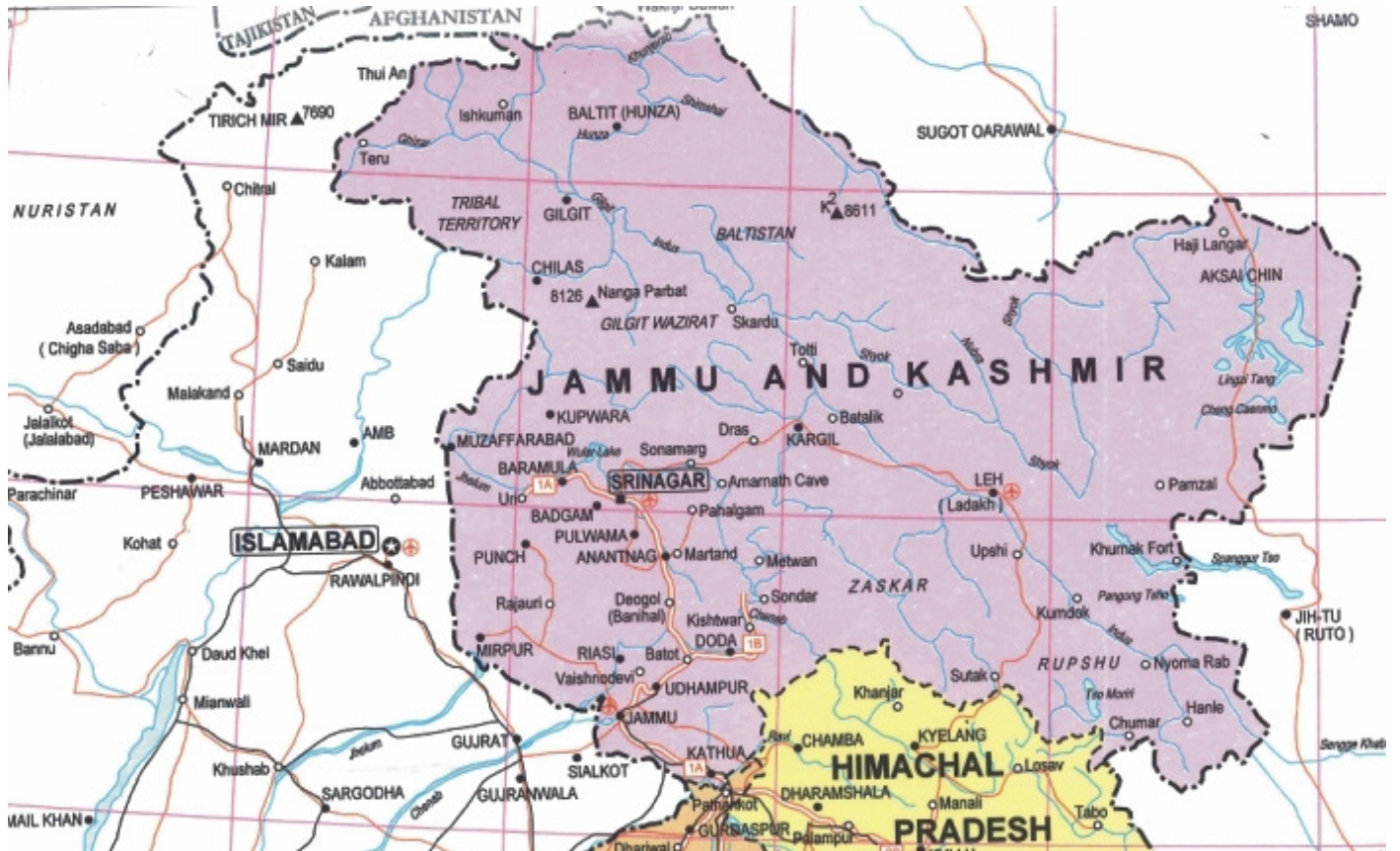
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

An inordinate delay in taking a decision on the constitutional status is becoming a source of widespread popular discontent in the Gilgit Baltistan region. It has been couple of years since a committee was constituted under Sartaj Aziz to look into various options and explore means of upgrading the political status of Gilgit Baltistan. However, despite the committee having submitted its report to the government of Pakistan, no further action has been taken to make Gilgit Baltistan a province or to bestow it with representation either in the National Assembly or some of the key federal institutions. As is understood, Pakistan is facing a mounting dilemma on the issue of integrating Gilgit Baltistan as a province. This is primarily due to Pakistan's fear that incorporating Gilgit Baltistan could be tantamount to compromising its long-held strategy on Kashmir vis a vis India.

The rationale behind keeping Gilgit Baltistan under temporary political frameworks over the last seven decades and more- one that has consistently been forwarded by Pakistan is that the region's political future is attached to the ultimate resolution of the Kashmir issue. However, one could argue that Pakistan has already made significant alterations in the original characteristics of the region- first by revoking the State Subject Rule that existed in Gilgit Baltistan since 1927. On the other hand, all that happened later as a fallout of this act of revocation i.e. the Shia majority of the region was consciously reversed by encouraging and allowing people from parts of Pakistan, mostly Sunnis, to come and settle in Gilgit Baltistan. A drastic change in the demographic structure of the region over the years has created fault lines amongst people of Gilgit Baltistan that has mostly to do with ownership of local resources.

Some reports in the current issue capture voices that appear to be urging implementation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir. It must be noted, however, that it was Pakistan which failed to comply with the essential prerequisite of UNSC resolutions by blatantly refusing to withdraw and demilitarize areas of the former princely state which it illegally occupied in 1947 by deceit.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

“AJK President meets Governor Balochistan”

Pakistan Observer, February 1, 2018

Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir met Muhammad Khan Achakzai, Governor Balochistan at the Governor House during an official visit to the provincial capital. During the meeting the two leaders discussed the ongoing situation in Indian Kashmir, matters of mutual concern and the ongoing development work taking place in Pakistan. The Governor stated that the Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir. The Governor vowed Pakistan’s moral, diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiris. President AJK congratulated the people of Balochistan and its Government on the successful inauguration of the Free Zone at the deep sea port of Gwadar. He also stated that this project will be a gateway for economic growth of not only Balochistan but also the whole of Pakistan. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor will run through the length and breadth of Pakistan helping our country become an economic engine in the region.

<https://pakobserver.net/ajk-president-meets-governor-balochistan/>

Parvez Jabri, “Imposition of property tax challenged in AJK HC”

Business Recorder, February 2, 2018

Recent imposition of property tax in Azad Jammu and Kashmir including Mirpur district, has been challenged in AJK High Court on February 1. Single-bench of AJK High Court comprising Justice Azhar Salim Baber issued interim relief order accepting two identical writ petitions which challenged the imposition of property tax in Azad Jammu Kashmir under the Property Tax Act 1974. The court issued notice to the concerned parties. The petitioner Zulfiqar Ahmed Raja Advocate contended in the

petition that Azad Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly has no constitutional and legal powers to pass the Property Tax Act 2015 and Property Tax Rules 2015. It has further been contended that the people of AJK are already paying income tax under section 15 of Income Tax Ordinance 2001 while, AJK Legislative Assembly had re-imposed the same income tax on the rental income which falls in the category of the imposition of double taxation and contradictory to the law and constitution. The AJK HC also accepted an identical writ petition filed by a local property owner Faiz Rasool challenging the imposition of property tax by the AJK government through an interpretation/amendment in the law by AJK Legislative Assembly.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/02/02/396649/imposition-of-property-tax-challenged-in-ajk-hc/>

“Unrest grows in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir over terrorism, autonomy and CPEC”

ZEE News, February 1, 2018

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is witnessing protests and demands for freedom from Islamabad’s vice-grip. A day-long seminar attended by over 2,000 people in Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK, saw repeated calls against the way Islamabad governs the region and demands for the shutting down of the terrorist camps spread across the region. The seminar was organised by the United Kashmir People’s National Party (UKPNP) on January 31, to commemorate the Tariq Mehmood Shaheed Peace Foundation. Leaders who spoke at the event demanded the restoration of self-governance to Kashmiris. They also called on people from across the political spectrum in PoK to join hands to combat extremism and the large number of terrorist training and staging camps spread across PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan. UKPNP leaders also raised objection to the exploitation of the land and resources of PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan. But most worryingly for Pakistan,

their objection specifically mentioned ‘mega projects’ in the disputed area - a shot that implicates the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), without directly mentioning it. Not just CPEC, a number of other projects that are the result of the China-Pakistan ‘all-weather’ friendship have been constructed in Gilgit-Baltistan. As the only land under Pakistani control that borders China, the Karakoram Highway (KKH), passes through Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://zeenews.india.com/world/unrest-grows-in-pakistan-occupied-kashmir-over-terrorism-autonomy-and-cpec-2077949.html>

Moonis Ahmar, “The Map controversy”

Daily Times, February 2, 2018

The map of India which was depicted by the then High Commissioner of India to Singapore, Mr TCA Raghavan during his talk on ‘Indian Foreign Policy’ at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) Nanyang Technological University, Singapore delivered in February 2011 included Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as part of India and showed Afghanistan as a neighbour of India. In 2013, Raghavan was posted as India’s Higher Commissioner to Pakistan. India’s seriousness to show J&K in official maps can be gauged from the fact that in May 2016 it introduced draft of geospatial information regulation bill in its parliament which depicted the whole of Jammu and Kashmir including Gilgit-Baltistan as its integral part and suggested that “wrong depiction of the map of India could land the violators in jail with a maximum term of seven years and impose a fine up to Rs 100 crore, according to the draft ‘Geospatial Information Regulation Bill 2016.’ The map controversy got an impetus when in May 2016 in a statement Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs voiced serious apprehensions over the Indian manipulation of the map of J&K and stated that “Pakistan had expressed serious concern to the UN Secretary General and the President of the UN Security Council with regard to the Indian government’s efforts to introduce controversial Geospatial Information Regulation Bill in the Indian Parliament. In violation of the UN Security Council resolution, the official map of India has been depicting the disputed territory of Jammu

and Kashmir as part of India which is factually incorrect and legally untenable. Through the passage of this Bill, the Indian government would penalize the individuals and organizations who depict Jammu and Kashmir as a disputed territory as per the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.”

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/193450/the-map-controversy/>

Tariq Naqash, “Indian shelling leaves eight injured in AJK”

Dawn, February 2, 2018

Heavy shelling from across the Line of Control (LoC) left eight civilians, including four women, injured in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on February 1. The shelling started early in the morning and hit different villages in the Khuiratta and Charhoi sectors of Kotli district. “The injuries, however, only occurred in one village in the Khuiratta sector,” SSP Raja Irfan Saleem noted. Residents of Khuiratta described the shelling as the heaviest in several weeks. A video clip made by a villager from Khuiratta showed shells landing in a field and emitting smoke. Some houses were partially damaged. SSP Saleem stated that eight people had been wounded in Sehri Chattar — a village that lies in close proximity to the LoC.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1386825/indian-shelling-leaves-eight-injured-in-ajk>

Shoaib Ur Rehman, “JI to hold rally on Kashmir day”

Business Recorder, February 1, 2018

Naib Ameer Jamat Islami Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Aslam on February 1 stated that JI will hold a public rally in federal Capital on February 5 to express solidarity with Kashmiri people. Addressing a press conference, he stated that people from different areas of Rawalpindi division and Azad Kashmir would gather at Shamsabad and then they would march to Abparaa where Ameer JI Senator Siraj ul Haq would address the participants. Mian Aslam stated that people of Kashmir had been facing atrocities for the last 70 years and JI from the first day was supporting

the cause of Kashmiri people. He noted that no one but the people of Kashmir themselves had the right to decide the fate of Kashmiris and they wanted to be the part of Pakistan. He stated that JI condemns the silence of international community over the violation of human rights in Kashmir.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/02/01/396579/ji-to-hold-rally-on-kashmir-day/>

Sumaira FH, “One-Minute Silence on Kashmir Solidarity Day”

Urdu Point, February 1, 2018

One minute silence will be observed across Pakistan on February 5 to show solidarity with the people of Kashmir in their struggle for freedom. In this connection, all provinces including Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Islamabad Capital Territory would observe one minute silence to express solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Similarly, general public will also observe one minute silence to honour Kashmiri martyrs, noted a press release on February 1. People will also be forming chains by holding hands at locations that connect Kashmir and Pakistan, such as Azadpattan and Kohala and Mangla bridges.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/one-minute-silence-on-kashmir-solidarity-day-253592.html>

Sumaira FH, “AJK Interim Constitution Act 2018 Tabled in AJKLA”

Urdu Point, February 2, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 2018 was tabled in AJK Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad on February 2. Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Raja Nisar Ahmed Khan presented draft bill. The draft amendment is relating to finality of Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). Expressing his views on a point, AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan noted that consultation would be made with all relevant stakeholders including Ulema, technocrats and political figures. He also stated that amendment bill will be passed after thorough discussion in joint

session of Assembly and Kashmir Council. Others speakers including former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, Minister Works Chaudhary Muhammad Aziz, Members Assembly Abdul Rasheed Turabi, Ahmed Raza Qadri, Raja Muhammad Siddique Khan, Malik Muhammad Nawaz and others also expressed their views on the Khatm-e-Nubuwwat (SAW) bill and assured their full support to it.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-interim-constitution-act-2018-tabled-in-a-254598.html>

Parvez Jabri, “PM AJK assures to resolve issues of Kashmiri refugees”

Business Recorder, February 3, 2018

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Raja Farooq Haider Khan February 2 stated that Pakistan-based Jammu & Kashmir refugees are being provided with state-of-the-art residential facilities in the under-construction Kashmiri colonies in various parts of the country. He stated this while chairing a high level meeting of the Kashmiri refugees settled in Pakistan in order to review issues related to their rehabilitation besides the resolution of other identical matters accordingly. The AJK Prime Minister reiterated his government’s resolve to solve all issues confronted by the Jammu refugees and that his government was taking concrete steps in right direction. The meeting reviewed developments on the issues so far of setting up of colonies for refugees in Pakistan, issuance of State Subject certificates and matters related that were already discussed with government of Punjab recently by AJK Board of Revenue.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/02/03/396921/pm-ajk-assures-to-resolve-issues-of-kashmiri-refugees-2/>

“Amendment declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslim proposed in AJK”

Pakistan Times, February 2, 2018

An amendment has been tabled in legislative Assembly in Interim Constitution 1974 of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to declare Ahmadi community

as non-Muslim by the government on February 2. Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Raja Nisar Ahmad Khan moved the bill “The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim constitution (12th amendment) Act, 2018” in the legislative Assembly under the chairmanship of Speaker Shah Ghulam Qadir. Prime Minister and leader of the House, Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that the amendment would be debated in the joint sitting of Legislative Assembly and Kashmir council before its passage to become part of the constitution. He further stated the Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution moved by then member Sardar Muhammad Ayoob Khan declaring Ahmadis as non- Muslim but could not be taken in the Interim Constitution Act 1974.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/02/02/amendment-declaring-ahmadis-as-non-muslim-proposed-in-ajk/>

Asia Maqsood, “India’s baseless opposition to CPEC”

Daily Times, February 3, 2018

India’s constant opposition to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will not affect the project in any way. It is purely a development project and there is no reason to restrain the development work in the disputed areas. India is reiterating that CPEC passes through the disputed area and is, therefore, a serious concern for the country. CPEC is a flagship project of China’s One Belt One Road Initiative which includes more than 65 countries of the world and it is not like a Multilateral Export Control Regime ‘an international body that states use to organise their national export control systems’/regime like NSG in which a consensus of the member countries is needed for new developments. Instead, the CPEC project is open and inclusive and invites other countries to invest for the mutual benefit and shared prosperity of the respective regions. Pakistan and China are working on the economic cooperative initiative and it is backed by the UN and several other countries of the world which suggests it is not directed against any third party. China would not give up CPEC just because of protests in India. The Indian government will not cease its developmental activities in Arunachal Pradesh either. But is it not important to

respect the voices of communities residing in disputed territories as a priority rather than following the institutional norms in developmental activities? From inter-governmental institutions like ADB/World Bank to each country sharing disputed territories like India or China or Pakistan, it is foremost important to stand up with rights to development of communities.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/194175/indias-baseless-opposition-cpec/>

“WAPDA’s focus on hydropower”

Pakistan Observer, February 3, 2018

Our country is undoubtedly blessed with immense potential of hydropower generation and after decades of neglect, it is a matter of great satisfaction that incumbent Chairman of WAPDA Lt-Gen (Retd) Muzammil Hussain is focusing on optimal utilization of water and hydropower resources — something which will not only help meet long-term power requirements of the country but also ensure availability of enough water for irrigation purpose. Being an environment friendly hydropower project which will further reduce dependence on expensive thermal power and help save foreign exchange amounting to millions of dollars, the first unit of Golan Gol hydropower project has started providing electricity to the people in Chitral. The first unit producing 36 megawatts of electricity is in fact three times more than the present requirements of the area whilst this project will actually generate 108 megawatts of cheap electricity when its other two units will also be completed in March and May 2018. Construction on this important project was started back in 2009 but like other projects it also faced long delays for various reasons. But since assuming office in August 2016, the incumbent chairman WAPDA made it his priority to complete this and other hydel projects such as Neelum Jhelum without further wastage of time in order to improve the ratio of hydel electricity in the national grid and help provide relief to the consumers. We expect that he will continue to move forward with the same vision and dedication to exploit the full hydel potential of the country that is estimated to be over fifty thousand megawatts. Recently, we have also seen him expressing his

concern over inability of the successive governments to launch any major water reservoir project and termed the early start of work on Diamer Bhasha dam very critical for the country.

<https://pakobserver.net/wapdas-focus-hydropower/>

“Kashmir struggle would continue to become a part of Pakistan: Raja Farooq”

Pakistan Today, February 3, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider on February 3 stated that the day is not far when Jammu and Kashmir will become Pakistan as no one can stop freedom movement of Kashmiris. This was expressed by AJK prime minister in a message during an interview. He stated, “Kashmiris do not have any option other than Pakistan and have been trying to become a part of the country for the past 70 years.” Raja Farooq also stated that Kashmiris get strength when Pakistan expresses solidarity with their struggle for independence. The AJK PM also noted that Kashmiris will continue with their struggle till freedom comes, adding that the sacrifices of youth would not go to waste and nobody will be allowed to barter these sacrifices. Praising the people of Kashmir, especially youth for following the programmes of pro-freedom leadership, he noted that arrests, curfew and restrictions cannot weaken the ongoing freedom struggle.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/02/03/kashmir-struggle-would-continue-to-become-a-part-of-pakistan-raja-farooq/>

“The human cost of Indian shelling across the LoC”

Dawn, February 4, 2018

Ceasefire violations are a frequent feature along the LoC and Working Boundary despite the leadership of Pakistan Rangers and India’s Border Security Forces agreeing in November 2017 that the “spirit” of the 2003 Ceasefire Agreement must be revived to protect innocent lives. Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif informed the Senate that Indian troops have

committed over 170 ceasefire violations along the LoC and WB in January 2018 alone. At least 11 civilians have died, whereas 51 others have been injured in the recent spurt of LoC violations, Asif noted at the time, adding that there has been a surge in Indian ceasefire violations since international pressure began mounting against New Delhi for its violation of human rights in India-held Kashmir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1387150/the-human-cost-of-indian-shelling-across-the-loc>

Jamil Nagri, “India may target CPEC installations, interior ministry tells GB”

Dawn, February 5, 2018

The Ministry of Interior informed Gilgit-Baltistan’s home department that India has made a plan to attack the installations of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in a bid to sabotage the multi-billion mega project. The ministry issued directives for making foolproof security arrangements to avoid any untoward incident. An official of the home department on condition of anonymity noted on February 3 that the department had received a letter from the federal interior ministry recently in which it had warned of possible terrorist attacks on the CPEC route. GB Home Secretary Jawad Akram, Inspector General of Police Sabir Ahmed along with other police and intelligence officials visited Diamer district on February 3 to review security arrangements for bridges on the KKH. Diamer SSP Muhammad Ajmal briefed the officials on security arrangements for the KKH bridges and other places on the CPEC route. Meanwhile, IGP Ahmed sent a letter to Gilgit, Diamer and Baltistan range DIGs, informing them that in the backdrop of prevailing law and order situation in the country and threats to the bridges on the KKH special preventive measures were required to be made. When contacted, Gilgit SSP Rana Mansoorul Haq noted that the GB police in collaboration with other law enforcement and intelligence agencies were taking measures for providing fool proof security to the CPEC route. In January 2017, the GB police claimed to have foiled a plan allegedly sponsored by Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to

sabotage projects related to CPEC and generate anti-Pakistan feelings in Gilgit-Baltistan. The GB police arrested 12 workers of the Balawaristan National Front from Yasin Valley of Ghizer district and seized a large quantity of weapons during a raid.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1387429/india-may-target-cpec-installations-interior-ministry-tells-gb>

Tariq Naqash, Kashif Abbasi, “World urged to play role for resolution of Kashmir issue”

Dawn, February 5, 2018

People will observe Kashmir Solidarity Day in Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on February 5 to express their unfaltering support to the Kashmiris. On February 5, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi will reach Muzaffarabad to address a joint sitting of the AJK Legislative Assembly and the AJK Council to pay tribute to the struggling Kashmiris and reaffirm Pakistan’s unwavering political, moral and diplomatic support to their just cause. On a message issued on the eve of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the prime minister called on the international community to urge India to respect the human rights charter. He also stated that they should also ensure a speedy resolution of the Jammu and in line with the United Nations Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1387426/world-urged-to-play-role-for-resolution-of-kashmir-issue>

Razi Azmi, “Kashmir, the millstone around our neck”

Daily Times, February 6, 2018

Incessant shelling along the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir led to the death of scores of Indian and Pakistani soldiers in the last few months, in addition to the casualties and suffering among civilians on both sides. Like an active volcano spewing smoke constantly, Kashmir is showing all signs of an imminent eruption, and threatening to explode at any time with devastating consequences for all around. Divided de facto between India and Pakistan, but claimed by both, Kashmir has become a matter of

nationalistic ego and a source of jingoism for New Delhi and, to a slightly lesser extent, for Islamabad. In this poisoned atmosphere, the issue itself has become confused with a solution seemingly impossible. Hostility with India also prevents Pakistan from having beneficial trade and economic relations with its much larger neighbor. It also prevents us from exploiting the full potential of trade relations with Afghanistan and Iran and, by extension, with Central Asia as well. It has been the direct cause of two wars and incessant military skirmishes as well as the source of diplomatic disputes and constant tension between these two close neighbors, who share much in common. A solution is not as difficult or elusive as it may appear, only if India and, to a lesser extent, Pakistan would shed some ego and think with reason. Under such a solution, the status quo (with some very minor adjustments) would continue in Gilgit-Baltistan (which will remain with Pakistan) and in both Ladakh and Jammu (which would remain with India).

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/196025/kashmir-millstone-around-neck/>

Faizan Hashmi, “AJK Evolves Integrated Phased Plan for Speedy Progress and Prosperity”

Urdu Point, February 6, 2018

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government chalked out an integrated phased plan for the speedy socio-economic development and uplift of tourism sector through the promotion of trade and tourism sectors in state. Various world fame tourism organizations will be invited to attend the scheduled global moot on tourism. Sources informed while referring to the endeavours to ameliorate the life style of common man and to complete the construction work on the ongoing development projects, that the government has directed the concerned authorities to identify the problems of the common man with the proposal for rapid solution. Sources also underlined that the AJK government was determined to turn Mirpur into the most attractive and model city of international repute through the uplift of tourism sector in the area. In order to translate this dream into a reality, the government intended to hold an

international investment conference in Mirpur soon which, sources added, would indeed help to promote the foreign investment in the trade and industrial sector in the area.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-evolves-integrated-phased-plan-for-speedy-255980.html>

Altaf Hamid Rao, “AJK Parliament declares Ahmadis as non-Muslims”

The Nation, February 7, 2018

The AJK Parliament on February 6 unanimously passed Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Bill, 2018, declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims. The joint session of both the houses of the AJK Parliament –Legislative Assembly (lower house) and AJK Council (upper house) – met with Speaker AJK LA Shah Gulam Qadir in the chair. Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Raja Nisar Ahmed tabled the bill in the session, which was passed unanimously. This act shall be called Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 2018, and shall come into force with immediate effect. It also defines non-Muslim as under: “A non-Muslim means a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to Christian, Jew, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Parsi communities, a person from Qadiani or Lahori groups (who call themselves Ahmadis or by any other name), or a Bahai, or any person who does not meet the requirements of a Muslim.” The meeting discussed the bill in detail and unanimously decided to approve the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Bill, 2018. The AJK Parliament declares Ahmadis as non-Muslims.

<https://nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2018/ajk-parliament-declares-ahmadis-as-non-muslims>

Tariq Naqash, “Pakistan never considered Kashmir a separate entity: PM”

Dawn, February 6, 2018

Reiterating Pakistan’s commitment to diplomatic, moral and political support for the just cause of Kashmiris and assistance to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) without any break, Prime Minister

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on February 5 stated that Pakistan never considered Kashmir a separate entity. “Pakistan has never felt that it and Kashmir are two separate entities... The hearts of the people of Pakistan and Kashmir throb together. The centuries-old bond of love between us will remain alive forever,” stated the prime minister in his address to a special joint sitting of the AJK Legislative Assembly and AJK Council held to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day. It was perhaps for this reason that Mr Abbasi focused much of his extempore speech on the need for unity and solidarity. He also assured the lawmakers that the AJK government would get whatever resources it needed from the centre for development. In this regard, he cited the doubling of AJK’s development budget and “initiation of several stalled projects” in power and communications sectors.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1387500>

Jamil Nagri, “GB reforms report submitted to federal cabinet for approval”

Dawn, February 8, 2018

The federal ministry of Kashmir affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan recently submitted a report, based on the recommendations of a parliamentary body, to the federal cabinet, seeking its approval to bring political reforms in GB. The nine-member constitutional committee headed by Sartaj Aziz, the then adviser to the PM on foreign affairs, was formed by the ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 29, 2015, to recommend steps to bring political and constitutional reforms in GB. On July 3, 2017, after receiving new proposals for administrative and financial powers from the GB government, the prime minister office reconstituted the committee by adding ministers of finance, laws and Kashmir affairs, and called for additional recommendations. The committee submitted a supplementary report on September 26, 2017, recommending provision of funds through an agreed formula to cover the revenue deficit in GB budget; transferring of development funds directly to GB government rather than through the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and shifting of budget of GB Supreme Appellate Court and Chief Court to GB Council. It recommended that in line

with the spirit of the 18th amendment, the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, before extending any federal government notification to GB, should consult the government of GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1388108/gb-reforms-report-submitted-to-federal-cabinet-for-approval>

“Bilateral talks with India were a hoax: AJK president”

Pakistan Today, February 7, 2018

Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan on February 7 called for forcefully raising the Kashmir dispute at United Nations and other international fora and reminded that bilateral talks between Pakistan and India failed to progress on the issue. The AJK president noted this while speaking at a seminar at Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), an Islamabad based think tank. The topic of the seminar was ‘Kashmir Day: Solidarity with the People of Jammu & Kashmir’. The AJK president noted that the Indian government’s policy on Kashmir dispute is not to engage Kashmir’s Hurriyat leadership on political issues, and eliminate Kashmir from bilateral agenda with Pakistan. He proposed that the matter should be taken up with renewed “vigour, conviction, and consistency” with UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, EU Parliament, British Parliament and US Congress. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President Masood stated, should be asked to categorically offer his good offices for resolution of Kashmir dispute instead of “artificially balancing” his statements between Pakistan and India.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/02/07/bilateral-talks-with-india-were-a-hoax-ajk-president/>

“AJK president asks UN to act on Kashmir issue”

Dawn, February 8, 2018

President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan on February 7 urged United Nations Secretary General António Guterres to stop “artificially balancing” between Pakistan and India and act on Kashmir issue. “We need to talk to the UN Secretary General and ask him not to artificially

balance his statements between Pakistan and India and let him categorically offer his good offices for resolution of Kashmir dispute,” President Khan noted at a seminar titled, ‘Kashmir Day: Solidarity with the People of Jammu & Kashmir’, organised by Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), a local think-tank. The AJK president appeared dissatisfied with the dialogue between Pakistan and India, which has been suspended since 2013, and described the talks’ process as a “hoax”. He recalled that Kashmir was once the core issue in Pak-India talks, but its importance was reduced to one-eighth or one-tenth of the agenda and on a par with routine subjects like religious tourism.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1388074/ajk-president-asks-un-to-act-on-kashmir-issue>

MA Mir, “Rallies, protests mark Kashmiri separatist Afzal Guru’s death anniversary”

The Express Tribune, February 9, 2018

The people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) took to streets on February 9 to observe the fifth death anniversary of Afzal Guru, the Kashmiri separatist leader, who was hanged in 2013 for his alleged role in a deadly attack on Indian Parliament. Rallies were organised in AJK, held Kashmir and Pakistan, as protesters raised slogans for Guru. In Muzaffarabad, protesters marched from Central Press Club (CPC) to Burhan Wani chowk. Another rally was organised by Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM) that took out a rally at National Press Club Islamabad to pay homage to Afzal Guru. JKSM vice chairman Altaf Bhat noted that Guru was not a given fair trail and was secretly hanged in New Delhi to break the will of Kashmiris, fighting for their right of self-determination since for the past more than seven decades. She also called upon the world powers, human rights organisations and International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to take notice of the separatist’s secret hanging. Kashmiris, she stressed, have decided to attain their right of self-determination and no one can stop them from achieving this objective.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1630672/1-rallies-protests-mark-kashmiri-separatist-afzal-gurus-death-anniversary/>

“PML-N Govt Lauded to Put GB on Path of Development: Raja Zafarul Haq”

Urdu Point, February 9, 2018

Leader of the House in Senate and PML-N Chairman, Raja Zafarul Haq stated that PML-N Government in Gilgit Baltistan has put the province on path of rapid progress and development besides launched scores of mega uplift projects to change destiny of the people. Talking to PML-N Gilgit Baltistan Vice President, Haji Aurangzaib, at his residence in Islamabad, Raja Zafarul Haq stated that PML-N government under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister GB, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman had laid the network of development projects worth billions of rupees in the province in line with the vision of PML-N President and former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, who was taking keen interest in the development of the province. Zafarul Haq further stated PML-N Governments outstanding performance could not be compared with the past regimes. The PML-N government has brought exemplary reforms and made concrete measures for speedy development and prosperity of people. All the promises made by former PM Nawaz Sharif during 2015 election campaign have been 100 percent fulfilled as he strongly believed in practical work and was taking keen interest in the development of Gilgit Baltistan as is evident from GB budget, which was increased from Rs 9 billion to Rs16 billion during his tenure.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/pml-n-govt-lauded-to-put-gb-on-path-of-develo-257811.html>

“Pakistan, AJK incomplete sans Held Kashmir”

The Nation, February 12, 2018

The inaugural session of the panel discussion titled ‘Kashmir at Present: Quest for Empowerment and Progress’ was held at the Presidency in the State’s capital town on February 10. It was held by the Alumni Association of National Security Workshop (AAN) of the National Defence University. On the occasion, AJK President Sardar Masood Khan stated that Jammu and Kashmir’s puppet chief minister

Mehbooba Mufti’s wish to join CPEC can only be made possible if her government ceases being a facilitator to Delhi’s oppressive rule in Indian Jammu & Kashmir and also if Indian forces halt cross-border fire over the LoC and the working boundary. The ceremony was attended among others by Major General Samrez Salik, HI (M), Director General ISSRA, Lt-Gen (r) Agha Muhammad, Ministers of AJK Government, alumni of NSW, senior military and civilian officers, Vice Chancellors of AJK Public Sector Universities and a large number of students. Highlighting the priorities of the present AJK Government, the president noted that special emphasis is being given to three key elements, namely: accelerating the pace of the freedom movement for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris; good governance and economic development. He further stated that under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a Special Economic Zone will be built in Mirpur which will provide an opportunity for specialised industries with investment opportunities.

<https://nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2018/pakistan-ajk-incomplete-sans-held-kashmir>

“Mirpur DBA elects new office-bearers”

The Nation, February 12, 2018

Distinguished jurist Abdul Aziz Chaudhry and Abdul Rehman Umer have been elected President and General Secretary respectively of District Bar Association Mirpur, in the annual elections, it was officially declared. According to official results, the newly-elected office-bearers are: Ch Azher Mehmood (Vice President) and Umair Gulzareen (Joint Secretary). Muhammad Abdul Aziz Ch was elected the DBA with 249 against his rival Raja Ghulam Bostan who got 154 votes. Six members newly-elected executive committee consists of Rizwan Akram, Ch Shoukat Ali, Tariq Mahmood Ch, Muhammad Zahid, Mukhtar Ahmed Mughal and Najeeb Hussain Sadiq.

<https://nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2018/mirpur-dba-elects-new-office-bearers>

“CPEC to open new vistas of socioeconomic uplift”

The Nation, February 13, 2018

AJK Minister for Sports and Culture Ch Muhammad Saeed stated on February 12 that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will open new vistas of speedy socioeconomic progress and prosperity in Azad Jammu & Kashmir along with the rest of the country. He was addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly-elected office bearers of Kashmir Press Club Mirpur on February 12. The newly-elected office bearers of the club took oath of their respective offices. The ceremony was held at the press club auditorium where AJK Minister for Sports and Culture Ch Muhammad Saeed administered oath to the newly-elected office bearers of the club including Syed Abid Hussain Shah (President), Sajaad Jaraal (Sr. Vice President), Mumtaz Khaksaar (Vice President), Sajad Qayyum Khanpuri (Secretary General), Hurram Usman (Deputy General Secretary), Bilal Rafique (Finance Secretary) and Waqaas Rasheed (Information Secretary). Speaking on the occasion, AJK Minister for Sports, Culture called upon the journalists to focus on lending all of their professional skills for the security, stability and socio-economic development of the country including AJK besides strengthening the Kashmir freedom movement from the base-camp of the freedom struggle. Ch Saeed noted that one of nine special economic zones, approved under the CPEC across the country, will be established over 12,000 kanal of land in Mirpur, the industrial hub of AJK. He further stated that the mega industrial estate to be established under the CPEC will bring about economic revolution through new opportunities for business and investment for the people of the region.

<https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2018/cpec-to-open-new-vistas-of-socioeconomic-uplift>

“Rallies held to pay tribute to Maqbool Butt”

The Express Tribune, February 13, 2018

People across Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) observed the martyrdom anniversary of veteran

Kashmiri freedom fighter Afzal Guru and Maqbool Butt on February 11 as they renewed their pledge to continue the struggle for Kashmiris' right to self-determination. Processions were taken out and rallies were held in all small and major towns of AJK to pay tribute to Butt who had been executed by India in New Delhi's Tihar Jail in 1984. They reiterated the resolve to continue their mission for bringing the Kashmir freedom struggle to its logical end and called upon the international community to exert pressure on India to immediately hand over the mortal remains of Butt and Dr Guru to their respective families and friends for a proper burial with traditional religious respect and honour. Speakers called on the International Court of Justice to institute an inquiry commission to probe into the judicial murder of Afzal Guru.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1632511/1-rallies-held-pay-tribute-maqbool-butt/>

Khaleeq Kiani, “24 development projects worth Rs184.8bn approved”

Dawn, February 13, 2018

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) on February 12 cleared a total of 24 development projects at an estimated cost of around Rs200 billion. The approved projects also include two roads at a cost of Rs16.3bn in the constituency of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. The CDWP meeting was presided over by the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Sartaj Aziz. Of all the projects, 10 larger projects worth Rs169bn were referred to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) for formal approval. Twelve smaller development projects worth Rs20bn were approved by the CDWP. The concept papers of two other projects involving Rs10bn estimated cost were also cleared by the CDWP. The projects included upgradation and renovation of railway stations at Bahawalpur, Raiwaind, Gujranwala, Karachi, Peshawar, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Lahore and Rawalpindi, with a total cost of Rs1.46bn, replacement of old and obsolete signal gear from Lodhran-Multan-Khanewal-Shahdara-Bagh Main Line Section of Pakistan Railways at Rs18.6bn and

improvement and widening of Chitral-Booni-Mastuj-Shandur Road at a cost of Rs19.1bn. The projects also include construction and rehabilitation of four bridges at Muzhgole, Osaik, Pokel and Churan, along with an approach road and allied components at a cost of Rs544.6m.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389000/24-development-projects-worth-rs1848bn-approved>

“ATC sends GB lawyers’ leader on judicial remand”

Dawn, February 13, 2018

The Anti-Terrorism Court on February 12 sent Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association President Ehsan Ali Advocate on judicial remand till February 26. Mr Ali, who was arrested on the night between February 11 and 12 from his home in Jutial Gilgit, is wanted by police in an FIR registered against him on January 8 for sharing a post on Facebook which allegedly hurt religious sentiments of people, and attempted to spread sectarian issue in the region. He was presented before the ATC judge Raja Shahbaz Khan who sent him on judicial remand till February 26.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389143/atc-sends-gb-lawyers-leader-on-judicial-remand>

“Four mega projects being completed in AJK under CPEC: President”

The Nation, February 14, 2018

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan stated work on four mega projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is being continued with a fast pace and AJK will emerge as an economic power in the region in the coming few years. Addressing a ceremony held on February 13 under the auspices of English Union Council (EUC), he elaborated the mega projects being implemented in AJK. He stated these projects include Karto-Kohala hydropower projects, Mansehra-Mirpur Expressway and Mirpur industrial zone.

<https://nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2018/four-mega-projects-being-completed-in-ajk-under-cpec-president>

March 2018

Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, “Anti-Terrorism Rules 2018 approved: Cabinet allows signing deal with Oman, Italy for supply of LNG”

The News, February 14, 2018

The federal cabinet accorded approval to the rules provided for freezing and seizure of the assets of the persons involved in terror activities. The details for the implementation of the rules would be choreographed in due course later. The Cabinet that had its meeting on February 13 under Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi at the Prime Minister Office (PMO) has directed that the process of filling up vacant positions of the heads of organisations in various ministries be expedited. The cabinet accorded its approval to the notification of Wapda Hydro-Electric Tariff for the FY 2017-18 determined by Nepra and further directed that the process of tariff determination for AJK should be initiated. Discussing developmental programme, initiated under the vision of PML-N leadership, the AJK government appreciated enhancement of budget for AJK from Rs12 billion to Rs22 billion under the present federal government and initiation of various landmark projects including Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Expressway and establishment of Mirpur Special Economic Zone under the CPEC project.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/280843-anti-terrorism-rules-2018-approved-cabinet-allows-signing-deal-with-oman-italy-for-supply-of-lng>

“Call for release of jailed activists, end to rights abuses in Gilgit-Baltistan”

The News, February 14, 2018

Denouncing the arrest of Advocate Ehsan Ali, a prominent human rights activist and senior lawyer from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), political and civil society activists staged a protest outside the Karachi Press Club on February 13 to demand the release of all activists imprisoned in the country’s northern region. The Inqilabi Socialists Karachi (ISK), a leftist group, had organised the protest as part of a campaign for the release of Ali and other jailed political activists, including Baba Jan. Those in attendance included

leftist political activists and supporters from different walks of life. Addressing the participants, the speakers leading the protest stated they would continue to raise their voices to pressure the GB government for the release of Ali, Baba Jan and other political activists, and for an end to the repression and human rights abuses in the region.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/280705-call-for-release-of-jailed-activists-end-to-rights-abuses-in-gilgit-baltistan>

Sadia Abbas, “AJK Ready for Business Start-ups: Sardar Masood Khan”

Urdu Point, February 14, 2018

Azad Jammu & Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan noted the state was ready for investment in extractive industry, advanced medical, education, diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, banking and hydropower generation. He was talking to prominent businessmen and academics belonging to Karachi on February 14. Earlier, he visited the Job Fair and Start-up Expo, organized by the Iqra University where more than 200 enterprises, corporations and businesses had come to pursue for talented graduates whom they could recruit. The President noted that Azad Kashmir’s massive mineral deposits constituting granite, marble, and limestone provide huge potential for investment. The President also informed the delegation that apart from these minerals, Azad Kashmir is a treasure trove of minerals, semi-precious and precious stones like bentonite, bauxite, gold and coal, in varying quantities, along with some of the finest reserves of ruby, sapphire, topaz and tourmaline.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-ready-for-business-startups-sardar-masoo-261216.html>

Sumaira FH, “GBNS Condemns Raid on Newspaper’s Office”

Urdu Point, February 14, 2018

Gilgit-Baltistan Newspaper Society (GBNS) strongly condemned the alleged raid by police on an office of a local newspaper. In a statement, the GBNS noted it

had constituted a five-member committee which had unanimously decided to boycott coverage of police department as a protest against what it called “illegal act”, on the part of police. It stated police took the advantage of IGP’s absence and conducted illegal raid on the newspaper office, adding that the society would meet the IGP to take up the issue and apprise him about the facts.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/gbns-condemns-raid-on-newspapers-office-260919.html>

“Govt committed to uplift of Gilgit-Baltistan: PM”

Pakistan Today, February 15, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on February 15 noted that the government is committed to the socio-economic empowerment and uplift of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Talking to Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman at the PM Office, he noted China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would create new economic opportunities for the people of the region. About energy situation in Gilgit-Baltistan, he stated the government during past two years had added 54 MW to the existing 82 MW power which was being produced in the area for last 70 years. He also briefed about the efforts of Gilgit-Baltistan government to promote tourism in the region and stated an increase in PIA flight operation to Gilgit would encourage tourism. He also apprised the prime minister about the progress on various landmark projects including the establishment of a cancer hospital, medical college and cardiology centre for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/02/15/govt-committed-to-uplift-of-gilgit-baltistan-pm/>

“PM Abbasi assures Gilgit-Baltistan priority region for CPEC”

The Express Tribune, February 15, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi met Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman at Prime Minister’s Office on February 15. Minister for Kashmir Affairs Chaudhry Muhammad

Barjees Tahir, Deputy Chairperson Planning Commission of Pakistan Sartaj Aziz and senior government officials were present during the meeting. Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan briefed the Prime Minister about various development projects including some landmark projects under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) portfolio. The prime minister reiterated that the government was committed to the development of the region, socio-economic empowerment and uplift of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. He also stated that CPEC project would create new economic opportunities for the people of the region.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1635671/1-pm-abbasi-assures-cm-gilgit-baltistan-priority-region-cpec/>

Sadia Abbas, “Water Policy to be Tabled in 10 Days; Javed Shah”

Urdu Point, February 15, 2018

Minister for Water Resources, Syed Javed Ali Shah, on February 15 stated that water policy will be tabled within next 10 days as it is about to be finalized soon after consultation with experts. He also stated this while responding to a supplementary question in the Senate and noted that meeting of high-ups was held on February 15 which decided to table the policy in next 10 days. To a question about water scarcity, he further stated that due to change in hydro-meteorological conditions since start of the September, the river inflows remained stressed. Indus River System Authority (IRSA), keeping in view the condition of the standing Kharif Crops, in cooperation with the stakeholders, was releasing full share to the provinces by augmenting the river flows through stored water in dams, he added. About water preservation in the country, he stated that WAPDA has prepared a master plan to construct new dams to preserve rain water in the country. In last decade, WAPDA has completed Mangla Dam Raising (2.88 MAF), Gomal Zam Dam (0.892 MAF), Satpara Dam (0.053 MAF) and Darawat Dam (0.089 MAF) to store water respectively. Diamer Bhasha (6.4 MAF)& Mohmand (Munda) (0.676 MAF) is ready for construction and KurramTangi (0.90 MAF) and Nai

Gaj Dam (0.16 MAF) are under implementation. WAPDA is also planning to construct Akhori Dam (6.0 MAF), Shyok Dam (5.5 MAF) and Chiniot Dam (1.0 MAF), he added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/water-policy-to-be-tabled-in-10-days-javed-s-261756.html>

Mohammad Ali, “AJK SC Circuit Bench to Hear Cases in Mirpur from Feb. 19”

Urdu Point, February 15, 2018

Circuit bench of the Supreme Court of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) will hear the cases at Mirpur from February 19 to March 2. According to the official notification issued on February 15, the Chief Justice of AJK Supreme Court Justice, Muhammad Ibrahim Zia has been pleased to order that the Supreme Court will hold its circuit sitting at Mirpur from February 19 to March 2. The Additional Registrar, Branch Registry Mirpur has been directed to fix the cases for hearing accordingly during the above scheduled presence of the Circuit Bench of the apex courts in Mirpur.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/ajk-sc-circuit-bench-to-hear-cases-in-mirpur-262013.html>

Jamil Nagri, “PM decides to abolish Gilgit-Baltistan Council”

Dawn, February 16, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi decided to abolish the Gilgit-Baltistan Council and transfer its powers to the GB Legislative Assembly. An official of the GB Council on condition of anonymity noted that that a high-level meeting was held in Prime Minister House, Islamabad, on February 15 where Mr Abbasi directed the authorities concerned to abolish the Gilgit-Baltistan Council within a month. After approval from the Law Ministry, the summary would be presented in the cabinet session for final approval after which a notification would be issued to discontinue functioning of GB and AJK Councils. Special arrangements should be made, noted the report, for setting up one or more special industrial

zones in GB under CPEC to provide larger employment opportunities for its people.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389970/pm-decides-to-abolish-gb-council>

“UN to Take Strict Notice of Grave Human Rights Violations against Kashmiris: President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Masood Khan”

Urdu Point, February 16, 2018

In an interview, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Masood Khan stated the voice of the Kashmiri people would never be suppressed as the next generation of Kashmiris have taken it upon themselves to secure their freedom. He also stated India will have no choice but to heed to the demands of Kashmiris, whose sacrifices will never go waste. While thanking Pakistan for its staunch diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiris, the AJK President stated Kashmiris from both sides Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Indian Kashmir are also taking their narrative directly to the international community.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/un-to-take-strict-notice-of-grave-human-right-262220.html>

“Members unhappy with decision to abolish GB Council”

Dawn, February 18, 2018

The six members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Council elected from GBLA expressed displeasure over the prime minister’s decision to abolish the body. In a joint statement issued on February 17, they termed the abolishment of GB Council against the interests of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The statement was signed by Arman Shah, Wazir Ikhtlaq, Ashraf Sada, Sultan Ali Khan and Said Afzal, all members of the ruling PML-N, and independent Syed Abbas. Meanwhile, the Council members met Governor Mir Gazanfar Ali Khan and Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman and expressed their reservations about the decision. They appealed to the Governor and the

Chief Minister to intervene to reverse the decision. However, a source stated the Chief Minister told the members that abolishment of GB Council had been principally decided and that powers would be shifted from Islamabad to GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1390128/members-unhappy-with-decision-to-abolish-gb-council>

“Political prisoners in Gilgit Baltistan”

Daily Times, February 19, 2018

The authorities in Islamabad need to live up to their claims regarding equal treatment of Pakistani citizens regardless of their geographic location inside the country. The fact of the matter is that their approach towards many Pakistanis, in hitherto marginalised territories like Gilgit-Baltistan, remains no better than that of the colonial masters whose control over our state institutions ended several decades ago. Several political activists, led by the iconic Baba Jan, who had raised voice for those displaced in the Attabad lake fiasco, remain incarcerated on charges of terrorism. That our law enforcement apparatus can charge GB residents with terrorism for exercising civil liberties that the rest of us, in mainland Pakistan, take for granted should be a moment of shame for those representing the Pakistani public in Islamabad. Incidentally, Pakistan’s greatest champion for human rights who left us last week, Asma Jahangir, condemned the authorities for Baba Jan’s incarceration and sought a fair and speedy trial for GB’s political prisoners. The case against Advocate Ali needs to be annulled and he must be released immediately.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/204430/political-prisoners-gilgit-baltistan/>

Ghulam Abbas, “PPP to submit no-confidence motion against GB CM”

Pakistan Today, February 18, 2018

After the dramatic change of government in Balochistan, PPP on February 18 announced that it had decided to submit a motion of no-confidence in

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) against Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman, who enjoys the support of the majority because of his party Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N). PPP announced that it had the support of 20 out of 32 members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA). He also stated that the decision of abandoning GB Council without giving alternative powers to GB was a highly unjustified move of the federal government. The federal government had pushed GB back to the position it had in 2008 by rolling back all the reforms introduced by PPP in 2009 by introducing a Self-Governance Order, he added. Addressing the press conference, Engineer Ismail stated that GB had been side-lined in every agreement signed with China under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) despite being a gateway to the multibillion-dollar project. He stated that locals had strong reservations over the absence of CPEC related projects in GB. Talking about the planned non-confidence motion, Javed Hussain noted that next chief minister, as per the understanding of the 20 members of the assembly, would be from Diamer district. In Diamer district, a strong candidate and GBLA member from PML-N Haji Janbaz had serious differences with Hafeezur Rehman.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/02/18/ppp-to-submit-no-confidence-motion-against-gb-cm/>

“PPP’s threat to destabilise GB”

Pakistan Observer, February 20, 2018

After allegedly playing a role to bring down PML-N government in Balochistan, Peoples Party vowed to repeat the exercise in Gilgit-Baltistan. Its leaders from GB announced to move a no-confidence motion against incumbent Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman claiming that it has support of other opposition members and also some members of PML-N. Neutral observers and analysts believe that PML-N governments not only delivered satisfactorily at Islamabad and Punjab but also in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, where for the first time a number of infrastructure and other mega projects aimed at genuine socio-economic transformation of these regions have been launched. Moving vote of no-

confidence is perfectly within the law but what matters is motives of such a move. PPP was, no doubt, a force to be reckoned with in Northern Areas and that is why it formed the last Government with Mehdi Shah as Chief Minister. It was, however, because of the dismal performance of his Government that PPP was defeated in 2015 elections and even its Chief Minister could not save his seat. The intention to bring about a change has been expressed at a time when Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi reportedly made a landmark decision to do away with GB and Kashmir Councils, a move towards strengthening self-rule and autonomy of both GB and Azad Kashmir. These Councils were considered to be tools in the hand of Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan for remote-controlled management of these regions and, therefore, their scrapping would surely be welcomed by people of these areas.

<https://pakobserver.net/ppps-threat-destabilise-gb/>

Manzoor Gilani, “AJK-GB democratic deficit, way out”

Daily Times, February 21, 2018

Parts of princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, known as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB) under the administrative control of Pakistan are neither its constitutional part nor autonomous to be called as ‘local authority’ as mandated by UNCIP. Despite that they are controlled by the Government of Pakistan directly as well as indirectly through AJK and GB Council headed by Prime Minister of Pakistan, federal bureaucracy at Islamabad, Muzaffarabad and Gilgit without any representation in policy and decision-making institutions affecting these areas more than any other part of Pakistan. AJK and GB, though governments in name, are practically non-entity and hostage to federal structure. Democrat deficit in both the areas and resentment against it, is more than loud. GB Assembly has passed two resolutions and all factions of AJK political leadership and civil society led by its prime minister Raja Farooq Haider from front are vociferous in their demand. Although they differ in details, but agree in substance. The formula of quantum and extent of autonomy is very simple and

comprehensible i.e. scraping the colonial authority of AJK — GB Councils, devolving all those (tax powers in addition to them) to these areas which are given to provinces of Pakistan under 18th amendment in particular, in return all powers of federal nature should vest in federal Parliament and Government, give provisional representation equal to the provinces pending final resolution of Kashmir dispute to these areas in Parliament, CCI, NEC, NFC, (Articles 153 to 163 of constitution of Pakistan) the local constitutional orders of these areas may be passed by Parliament under Article 258 of constitution of Pakistan by consensus and approval of the elected representatives of these areas in their assemblies. Given the disputed nature of both the areas under UNSC Resolutions, the nature and process of empowerment must be similar and simultaneous.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/205337/ajk-gb-democratic-deficit-way/>

“PML-N faces desertions”

Pakistan Today, February 25, 2018

Already mired with troubles following the disqualification of its chief and subsequent expulsion from the Senate elections, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) leader Mian Tariq Mehmood bid goodbye to the party, citing indifference of the leadership to his constituency. The disgruntled MNA, who was elected on the PML-N ticket from Gujranwala, also announced that he would contest elections against Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir in the upcoming general polls. Earlier, two former MPAs including Mazhar Javed and Ghulam Sarwar too announced to leave the party. According to details

of the meeting, GB's Principal Secretary Sibtain Ahmed's attitude was the reason behind the discontent. The meeting urged that he should be immediately removed from the post and an honest official be deputed instead. The participants also sought deputations of the party workers on political slots. The promises made by GB Chief Minister Hafeezur Reham during his elections campaign should be fulfilled, they further demanded.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/02/25/pml-n-faces-desertions/>

“GB lawmakers concerned over delay in reforms”

Dawn, February 28, 2018

The treasury and opposition members in Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) on February 27 expressed concern for the inordinate delay in announcement of political and constitutional reforms in the region. Through a resolution passed unanimously, the GBLA demanded of the federal government to share with the local lawmakers and implement the recommendations of a constitutional committee headed by Sartaj Aziz, the then adviser to the PM on foreign affairs. They also stated the body was formed on October 29, 2015 to suggest steps to bring political and constitutional reforms in GB. Minister for works Dr Mohammad Iqbal lamented that the people had voted them for protecting their basic rights, but the federal government was not extending constitutional rights to GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392258/gb-lawmakers-concerned-over-delay-in-reforms>

Economic Developments

Fakhir Rizvi, “World Food Program to Establish Warehouse in AJK”

Urdu Point, February 15, 2018

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan noted on February 15 that World Food Program would establish its warehouse in AJK. Lauding the sincere endeavours of World Food Program, Farooq Haider stated that his government will cooperate with WFP for the program of construction of their warehouse. Prime Minister made these assertions while talking to a delegation of WFP on February 15. Prime Minister further stated that the World Food Program is serving Azad Kashmir for several decades, “even before the earthquake, the WFP has completed human welfare projects within the AJK region and is still continuing a human service plan” he added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/world-food-program-to-establish-warehouse-in-261937.html>

“Azad Jammu & Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee Reviews Development Projects of Rs. 1.57 Bln”

Urdu Point, February 21, 2018

Azad Jammu & Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee (AJKCDC) February 21 reviewed Rs 1.57 billion worth six development projects pertaining to Industries, Rehabilitation & Resettlement, Development Authorities, Physical Planning &

Housing, and Health sectors. The 6th meeting of the approving forum of AJKCDC for the financial year 2017-18 was held under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister at the State’s capital city on February 21. The meeting was attended by the Cabinet Members, Chief Secretary, Secretary Finance, Additional Chief Secretary (Dev.), representatives of the Federal Government, Secretaries of the respective line departments and officers of the P&DD, Government of AJ&K.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/kashmir/azad-jammu-kashmir-cabinet-development-comm-265899.html>

Sumaira FH, “Senate Body Recommends Budget for Gilgit Baltistan Equal to Other Provinces”

Urdu Point, February 22, 2018

The Senate Standing Committee on Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan on 22 urged the federal government to provide Gilgit Baltistan (GB) with the annual budget at par with other provinces. The committee which met under the chair of Chairman Senator Sajid Mir also recommended the federal government that the funds package for GB should be given in forms of the budget, not grant in accordance with the needs of the area. The committee was informed that the budget for Azad Kashmir’s annual development projects had been doubled from Rs 12 billion to Rs 22 billion.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/senate-body-recommends-budget-for-gilgit-balt-266489.html>

International Developments

Asfia Afzal, “Kashmir issue is alive at UN: Maleeha”

Business Recorder, February 10, 2018

Pakistan will stand by the Kashmiri people and support their just struggle for self-determination until the achievement of their goal, Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi told a large gathering of Pakistanis and Kashmiris in New York on February 9. Presiding over a meeting organized by the Consulate General of Pakistan to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, she stated that the Pakistan Mission was working hard at the United Nations in seeking the implementation of its resolutions on the decades-old Kashmir dispute. In September, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi had forcefully stated Pakistan’s position on Kashmir in the UN General Assembly and later raised the issue with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. The prime minister had urged Guterres to take steps to resolve the issue as it posed a threat to regional and international peace. On her part, Ambassador Lodhi stated she had also highlighted the Kashmir issue, especially the human rights violations there, in all the forums of the United Nations and had even spoken about it to Secretary-General Guterres. The 193-member Assembly also adopted a Pakistan-sponsored resolution on self-determination which had 70 co-sponsors.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/02/10/398393/kashmir-issue-is-alive-at-un-maleeha/>

“Turkey stresses early solution to Kashmir dispute”

The Nation, February 23, 2018

Newly appointed Ambassador of Turkey in Pakistan Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul called on Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan and discussed the matters of mutual interest. Extending his best wishes to Ambassador Yurdakul on assuming his new appointment, the president hoped that the former’s tenure would prove to be productive in furthering the friendly relations between Turkey, Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. Ambassador Yurdakul expressed his pleasure on assuming his new assignment and noted that he would use his position in promoting the already cordial relations between Turkey and Pakistan, as well as Azad Kashmir, particularly in the spheres of economic and cultural ties. He also stated that Turkey and Azad Kashmir enjoyed a new affinity.

<https://nation.com.pk/23-Feb-2018/turkey-stresses-early-solution-to-kashmir-dispute>

Other Developments

Umer Jamshaid, “Experts Call for Devising Climate Change Strategy Held in Mirpur”

Urdu Point, February 22, 2018

The experts at a consultative workshop on Climate Change Strategy and Action Plans on February 22 called for devising integrated strategies and plans by the stakeholders for establishing Climate Change related baseline data for Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The workshop was hosted to raise awareness among all the stake holders including diverse segments of the civil society, by the state-run Climate Change Center (CCC) of AJK. Divisional Commissioner Mirpur Muhammad Tayyeb Chaudhry inaugurated the workshop.

He emphasized the need for ensuring water, food and energy security and protecting different sectors from climate change impacts. He underlined that government of AJK had already established the Climate Change Center with the support of Asian

Development Bank under Flood Emergency Reconstruction and resilience Project. Muhammad Tayyeb continued that Pakistan was among the top most countries vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and AJK was one of the most vulnerable regions in Pakistan. “As such, the forest, water and land resources State need to be protected to safeguard the catchment of the Mangla reservoir and other potential hydropower stations, habitat and biodiversity, agriculture, physical infrastructure, animal and human health”, he added. Addressing the concluding session of the workshop, the chief guest - Vice Chancellor state-run Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST) Prof. Dr. Habib ur Rehman emphasized for making the climate change as the part of the syllabus in the country including AJK with prime focus to solve the issues related to the climate change with scientific term besides giving scientific look to each related issue, he added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/experts-call-for-devising-climate-change-str-266532.html>

Extracts From The Urdu Media

“Chief Minister has set the base for sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan: Jamal Ahmad”

Daily Salam, February 3, 2018

The Pakistan People’s Party Gilgit-Baltistan’s Vice President and the former Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Jamal Ahmad stated that the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan has done more harm to the institutions like Supreme Court and army than Nihal Hashmi and Talal Choudhry, but no action was taken against him. If that is the rule, then all other people who are in jails under schedule 4 should be set free. Jamal stated that peace in Gilgit-Baltistan exists due to efforts made by the PPP government. He accused Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman for inciting sectarian views amongst the people. He further stated that the Chief Minister should come forward and explain about the Kunwadas water project, water supply scheme and government quarter schemes. He should tell the public about these projects and also explain who is sitting on these projects and doing nothing to execute them.

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

“UN is Guilty for Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily K2, February 7, 2018

A conference was held in Gilgit by the Jamaat-e-Islami, Gilgit-Baltistan on the constitutional crisis in the region. During the conference, it was argued that the UN is responsible for the constitutional crisis of Gilgit-Baltistan. By not implementing its resolutions, the UN has failed the people of Kashmir in general and Gilgit-Baltistan in particular. The UN is responsible for depriving G-B from its constitutional rights. On the occasion, Deputy Speaker, Jafrullah Khan, noted that India is responsible for creating unrest in the country particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan. He further stated that the UN is not only responsible for whatever is

happening in GB and Kashmir but also the sufferings that are taking place in the whole Muslim world.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?pid=4&eid=1&nid=1&tnid=8251&date=1517961600>

“Will not accept any Setup except Fifth province: Major (Retd.) Amin”

Daily Salam, February 16, 2018

The Parliamentary Secretary, Major (Retd.) Amin stated that Gilgit-Baltistan should be made the fifth province of Pakistan and should be given representation in the National Assembly and other central institutions. We will not accept any other setup except granting of a full provincial status, noted Amin in an interview. We will no longer accept any lollypops. We will pass a resolution in the Legislative Assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan for making the region a fifth province of Pakistan. The secretary further noted that they have been deprived of their rights since the last 70 years. It is the right time to move on and give Gilgit-Baltistan its constitutional right by making it a province.

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

“China has granted 5 billion for Gilgit-Baltistan”

Daily K2, February 25, 2018

China has allocated 5 billion rupees to develop Gilgit-Baltistan’s infrastructure particularly education, health and road infrastructure. These funds would be released to GB through the federal government. Moreover, China is also planning to create a regional forum of Gilgit-Baltistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan for border development. The purpose of this forum is to link these bordering regions into CPEC in the future.

<http://epaper.dailyk2.com/index.php?eid=1&nid=1&date=1519516800>

“Why can’t Gilgit-Baltistan be made Province?”

Baad-e-Shimal, February 27, 2018

The Minister of Construction and Development, Dr. Iqbal, stated that Gilgit-Baltistan is not a part of Kashmir. We are not Kashmiri so how can we be a part of the Kashmir issue then, further stated Iqbal. He also noted that we need to get united for representation in the National Assembly. He made

these observations during a discussion on a resolution passed in the Legislative Assembly on making a GB a fifth province. While Jafrullah stated that making GB a fifth province will affect the Kashmir issue. Nevertheless, the resolution was passed with a majority supporting the integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan.

http://www.dailybaadeshimal.com/popup.php?r_date=02-27-2018&img=02-27-2018page-1-1

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 edited and abridged to provide clarity. IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.

POK NEWS DIGEST



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