

POK

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News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

• **Political Developments**

Protests in AJK

Batons, tear gas used to disperse teachers' procession in AJK

PML-N issues white paper on 'rigging' in G-B polls

UK MPs reject India's stance on Kashmir

GB govt moves to hold Local Body polls after 13 years

AJK president terms India a fascist, undemocratic state

PML-NAJK vice president joins PTI

• **Economic Developments**

AJK-DWP Reviews 5 Developmental Projects Costing Rs.4.6 Billion

Govt to announce economic package for GB soon

Govt affirms fulfilling pre-election-2016 promises in Azad Kashmir: AJK PM Farooq

Diamer people protest denial of jobs in power project

CBR seeks Withdrawal of amended SRO 96 (I) 2021 by FBR in AJK

• **Urdu Media**

Ghazwat-ul-Hind

The issue of unemployment needs to be addressed

Gilgit-Baltistan should get rights of a province

Constitutional rights of Gilgit-Baltistan should not be delayed

“Goal of Kashmiris is Pakistan and will remain so”



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Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

In this Edition

This issue of PoK digest contains the protest in AJK against food inflation that affects the common people and government's apathetic attitude towards the issue. There was also protest by the teachers against the arrest of a colleague and the police used baton and tear gas to disperse them. The rigging of election in GB was flagged by the PML-N. Rather than addressing the issue, the government is going ahead with the local elections in GB which is going to be held after thirteen years. Pakistan continues to accuse India of human rights violation in Jammu and Kashmir and is trying to draw world attention to it. Government has announced that it would implement 5 projects in AJK. People in GB continue to protest against unemployment of locals while outsiders are being appointed in the Diamer-Bhasha hydropower project. There is also protest against the extension of Frontier Corp personnel to guard the forest while locals do not have jobs in GB. The delay in granting provincial status to GB remains a major concern and they continue to demand their constitutional rights at par with other provinces of Pakistan. People of GB feel that the Kashmiri representatives have always opposed the idea of making GB a province.

Coordinator, PoK Project

Political Developments

Protests in AJK

Danish Khan, *The News International*, 04 January 2021

Spiraling food inflation is prevalent across Pakistan but the region of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) is its biggest causality. In the past few months, the price of wheat in AJK has increased by 30 per cent. This has forced people to come out in large numbers and record their protest. ***Interestingly, the ongoing protests against food inflation in AJK are led by grassroots action committees at the local village and bazaar levels.*** Action committees are non-hierarchical organizing bodies comprising everyday folks who collectively deliberate and decide their action plans. This makes them special because it demonstrates that ordinary people are not just aware and conscious but can also self-organize for their collective wellbeing without any big donors or state-patronage. Will this organic grassroots movement force any substantive policy changes in AJK and mainland Pakistan? The jury is out.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/768839-protests-in-ajk?_ga=2.70142935.616812123.1609658854-564372486.1592807652

Batons, tear gas used to disperse teachers' procession in AJK

Taroq Naqash, *Dawn*, 07 January 2021

Over a dozen school teachers and two police personnel were injured on Wednesday after riot police used batons and tear gas shells to disperse a big procession of male tutors, accusing them of violating an “understanding” with the administration. Around 68 teachers, including some pensioners, had been taken into custody for “rioting in a sensitive area,” Deputy Commissioner Abdul Hameed Kiyani told Dawn. Speaking at a press conference in the wake of the incident, representatives of All Azad Kashmir

School teachers Organisation threatened against launching a “state-wide agitation” if their demand was not met and their detained colleagues were not released by the government within 24 hours.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1600154/batons-tear-gas-used-to-disperse-teachers-procession-in-ajk>

Sanjrani to approach parliamentarians worldwide to bring attention to IIOJK

The Express Tribune, 10 January 2021

Senate Chairperson Sadiq Sanjrani said on Sunday that he would write to over 56,000 parliamentarians across the world to seek their attention for ending rising human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The remarks came during a meeting with Tehreek-e-Kashmir (TeK) United Kingdom (UK) President Raja Fahim Kayani who called on Sanjrani in Islamabad. Sanjrani added that Pakistan would raise the IIOJK dispute at every international platform, and that the movement of the people of the besieged valley was as per the spirit of United Nations – that has passed the resolutions for the Kashmiris right to self-determination. “It is time to give right of vote to the people of IIOJK so they can decide about their future,” Sanjrani said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279413/sanjrani-to-approach-parliamentarians-worldwide-to-bring-attention-to-iiojk>

PML-N issues white paper on ‘rigging’ in G-B polls

The Express Tribune, 10 January 2021

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday issued a white paper on the alleged rigging in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Legislative Assembly polls and warned the incumbent regime of “dire consequences” if “such practice” was adopted in the Azad Kashmir polls.

“A ‘selected’ government has been imposed through undemocratic means in Gilgit-Baltistan,” PML-N Secretary General Ahsan Iqbal said while addressing a news conference in the federal capital. He was flanked by other party leaders including Khurram Dastgir, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman and Marriyum Aurangzeb. Ahsan said he had repeatedly warned that G-B strategically and politically was a “sensitive” region and that it was absolutely crucial to hold “free and fair elections” according to the wishes of the people there.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279990/pml-n-issues-white-paper-on-rigging-in-g-b-polls>

UK MPs reject India’s stance on Kashmir

The Express Tribune, 14 January 2021

In an unprecedented development, *the House of Commons of the United Kingdom (UK) on Thursday held a debate on the “critical situation” in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), rejecting the “argument that Kashmir is an internal matter of New Delhi”.* The debate on IIOJK, proposed by Labour MP Sarah Owen, saw all parliamentarians in agreement “to hold the Indian government accountable for its abusive behaviour, especially in the Kashmir Valley”. They also hoped that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is due to make a visit to India at some point, will raise the IIOJK issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and seek his reassurance that “all is being done to seek a permanent solution to the Kashmir dispute”.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279984/uk-mps-reject-indias-stance-on-kashmir>

GB govt moves to hold Local Body polls after 13 years

The Express Tribune, 18 January 2021

The Gilgit-Baltistan government has started making preparations for holding local body elections after 13 years. According to Gilgit-Baltistan Finance Minister Javed Hussain Manwa,

the local body elections in GB were supposed to be held in 2008 but could not be held so far. The GB Election Commission, he added, was making arrangements and hopefully the local body elections would be made possible this year. The schedule would be announced after the electoral lists. Meanwhile talking to media in Gilgit, GB Election Commissioner Abid Raza said that preparations were being made for the local body elections. He hoped that arrangements would be finalized under the guidance of NADRA and Election Commission of Pakistan. *According to the new rules of Gilgit-Baltistan, local body elections would be held on party basis for the first time in which minorities would be represented for the first time.* The head of these institutions would be the mayor instead of the chairman.

<https://nation.com.pk/18-Jan-2021/gb-govt-moves-to-hold-lb-polls-after-13-years>

AJK president seeks UK’s proactive role for Kashmir resolution through UNSC

The Express Tribune, 21 January 2021

While welcoming debate on Kashmir in the UK parliament, *Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan said that in spite India’s all-out stubbornness, the world is convinced that peace and security cannot be ensured in South Asia without resolving the issue in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people.* ... “They (MPs) also conveyed a categorical message to the Indian regime to refrain from its illegal actions in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir state, and respect the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people,” Khan said. The AJK president thanked all members of the UK parliament including James Barry Daly, Sarah Owen, Naz Shah, Paul Bristow, and Steve Baker for their support to Kashmiri peoples’ struggle for their right to self-determination and expressing concern over the worsening human rights situation in occupied Kashmir.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2280080/ajk-president-seeks-uks-proactive-role-for-kashmir-resolution-through-unsc>

Masood for projecting Kashmir issue through parliamentary diplomacy

Daily Times, 24 January 2021

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan during a meeting with the Speaker of National Assembly, Asad Qaisar, said that Kashmir issue can effectively be projected at global level through parliamentary diplomacy and the incumbent parliament of Pakistan can play an important role in this regard. Chairman of the Parliamentary Kashmir Committee, Sheharyar Afridi was also present on the occasion. The state president thanked the speaker and the Parliament for expressing solidarity with the Kashmiri people on various occasions, and highlighting the situation of occupied Jammu and Kashmir at different parliamentary forums of the world. *He maintained that the Kashmir issue remains unresolved and continues to be in the agenda of the United Nations' Security Council for the last 72 years. The international community should look towards its resolution in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, besides playing a role to end state-sponsored terrorism in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir.*

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/716395/masood-for-projecting-kashmir-issue-through-parliamentary-diplomacy/>

AJK president terms India a fascist, undemocratic state

Pakistan Today, 26 January 2021

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has asserted that India is neither secular nor democratic but a fascist state, saying India's hegemonic designs are serious threats to peace and security of not only neighbouring countries but also to the whole of South Asian region. "India's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and its recent actions are not acceptable to the people of Kashmir and they are determined to continue their struggle till the return of the last Indian soldier," he said while addressing a meeting at a university in AJK, which the Kashmiri people observed as the Black Day.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/01/26/ajk-president-terms-india-a-fascist-undemocratic-state/>

PML-N AJK vice president joins PTI

Ary News, 29 January 2021

In a major development in Azad Jammu and Kashmir before elections, *Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice president, Sardar Arzish along with his supporters on Friday joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).* Sardar Arzish announced his decision to join Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf after meeting with its chief organizer Saifullah Khan Niazi. The meeting was attended by PTI President AJK Sultan Mehmood and others. Bestowing his confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, Sardar Arzish alleged that the ruling party of the AJK strengthened its ties with the Modi government and increased its family business rather than fighting for the just right of self-determination for the Kashmiris.

<https://arynews.tv/en/pml-n-ajk-vice-president-sardar-arzish-joins-pti/>

Economic Developments

AJK-DWP Reviews 5 Developmental Projects Costing Rs.4.6 Billion

Urdu Point, 4 January 2021

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Working Developmental Party (AJK-DWP) in its ninth Meeting on Monday under the chairmanship of AJK Additional Chief Secretary for Development Dr. Syed Asif Hussain reviewed 5 different developmental projects worth Rs.4.6 Billion. The meeting was attended by all concerned Secretaries; high officials of different departments including the secretary for Planning and Development besides, the representatives from the government of Pakistan who attended the meeting through a video link. The five projects of Health Department, Physical Planning and Housing and concerned sectors of communication have been evaluated in the Meeting which is estimated at 4.6 billion.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-dwp-reviews-5-developmental-projects-cost-1132050.html>

Govt to announce economic package for GB soon

Dawn, 14 January 2021

The government on Wednesday decided to announce soon a major economic package for Gilgit-Baltistan as promised before regional elections in November last year. In a meeting with the newly-elected leadership of Gilgit-Baltistan, the ministry of planning and development constituted two technical groups to finalise the integrated development plan on the pattern of the recently announced Karachi Transformation Plan. GB Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid and Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar jointly presided over the meeting.

The meeting decided to constitute technical working groups comprising relevant chiefs of ministry of

planning and development and officers of GB. An apex committee under the GB chief minister and an inter-ministerial committee under deputy chairman of the Planning Commission would monitor the preparation and implementation of the development plan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1601355/govt-to-announce-economic-package-for-gb-soon>

Govt affirms fulfilling pre-election-2016 promises in Azad Kashmir: AJK PM Farooq

The Nation, 20 January 2021

On Wednesday, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan said that his government has fulfilled its commitments made to the people and solid steps were taken to boost economic activities in Azad Jammu Kashmir. Addressing ruling party's workers convention hailing from Jhelum valley in the metropolis, he said AJK government launched mega developmental projects for the socio economic wellbeing of the people and also restored the dignity of the state through constitutional amendments. He said during the four years of his government, development projects costing billions of rupees were completed while the work on the rest of the projects is in progress which will be completed by the end of current financial year.

Referring to the projects completed in Jhelum Valley he said 32 kilometer road is being built, 65 kilometer road was reconditioned while Chakar to Sudhen gali road is also being constructed to provide better communication facilities to the people. He said schools are also being built and upgraded with a cost over Rs. 40 crore.

<https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2021/govt-affirms-fulfilling-pre-election-2016-promises-in-azad-kashmir-ajk-pm-farooq>

Diamer people protest denial of jobs in power project

Dawn, 28 January 2021

Activists of political parties and local people staged a protest sit-in outside the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) office in Chilas, the district headquarters of Diamer district, on Wednesday against denial of jobs to the local population in Diamer-Bhasha hydropower project.

The call for the protest was given by Graduate Alliance Diamer. Activists of PPP, PML-N and religious and regional organisations gathered outside the Wapda office. The protesters were chanting slogans against Wapda. They demanded granting of rights to the dam-affected people. The protesters said Diamer residents had sacrificed their homes and land for the dam, and demanded the appointment of locals in grade 1 to 16 posts in the dam project. They said priority should also be given to Diamer and Gilgit-Baltistan people in the appointments from grade 17 and above. The protesters also rejected a recent advertisement issued by Wapda for appointments on over 100 posts in the Diamer-Bhasha dam from grade 6 to 16. They said only candidates from Diamer had the right to get appointed on these posts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1604035/diamer-people-protest-denial-of-jobs-in-power-project>

CBR seeks Withdrawal of amended SRO 96 (I) 2021 by FBR in AJK

Urdu Point, 31 January 2021

Fearing drastic negative repercussions of a recently promulgated amended SRO 96 (I) 2021 of 26th of January this year by the Federal board of Revenue, the Central Board of Revenue (CBR) of Azad Jammu Kashmir government has requested to the FBR for immediate withdrawal of the afore said SRO for the survival of the Industrial-sector in the tax-free under-developing territory of Azad Jammu Kashmir.

In his recent letter addressed to the Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue of Govt. of Pakistan, Chairman Central Board of Revenue of AJK Government Farhat Ali Mir has described the SRO.96(I)2021 dated

26th January, 2021 issued from Federal Board of Revenue containing amendment in Sales Tax Rules of 2006 by the FBR as resorting to a unique and discriminatory treatment for the tax free territory of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/cbr-seeks-withdrawal-of-amended-sro-96-i-20-1155787.html>

Extracts From Urdu Media

Ghazwat-ul-Hind

Muhammad Abdullah Bhatti, *Ummat*, 12 January 2021

Shah Ni'matullah Wali was a spiritual leader and also a visionary in the 14-15 century AD. ***In his poetry, Ni'matullah predicted things that would happen 100 years after his time. Even British viceroy Lord Curzon read his work to see how Shah Ni'matullah had described the defeat of the British.***

Long before the events, Shah Ni'matullah Wali predicted the two world wars, the partition of the subcontinent, the creation of Pakistan, riots, the wars of 1965 and 1971 and which turned out to be exactly the same.

In his poetry Shah Ni'matullah Wali has also talked about a war between Hindus and Muslims what is called Ghazwat-ul-Hind by the Prophet Muhammad (N'matullah ne apne ashaar mei akhri musalmano aur hinduwo ki jung ka bhi zikir karte hai jis ka zikir sarwar-e-kowneen Nabi-e-doo jahna Ghazwat-ul-Hind ke naam se kar gaye hai). Like his other predictions, this prediction of Ni'matullah would also become true. The situation described by him about the weakening of political leadership, crises, and corruption of the rulers in Pakistan is what the country at present is going through.

Ni'matullah had said a leader would emerge who would take control in his hands. He would be a supporter of Islam and people would follow him. There would be a war in Chitral, Diamer and in some areas of China. At the same time, a crisis/anarchy (fitna) would emerge in India and the Mujahideen-e-Islam would stand for jihad (esi door mei mulk-e-Hind mei ek fitna pyaada huga tu Islam ke mujahideen jihad ke liye oth khade hoo gey). The war would continue for six years and would be severe. The Muslims would occupy whole areas

which they had lost (es jung mei musalman en tamaam elaqoon ko fateh kar lee gey jo unke hathoo se nikal chuke hoo gey). There would be a lot of bloodshed.

The power to foresee things is a special knowledge bestowed upon special people only, like Ni'matullah. Hazrat Abu Hurayrah has also said that Prophet Muhammad while talking about Hind, had said that an army would fight with Hindustan and would emerge as victorious. Those mujahideen would arrest the rulers of India.

The journey of Muhamamd Bin Qasim appeared to be a part of a larger war of Ghazwat-ul-Hind. Now the last part would be fought by the Pakistan Army and the people. In this battle of "right vs wrong", the right would prevail and the Muslims would rule India again. This has been written in many sacred Hindu texts as well.

<https://www.ummat.net/2021/01/12/news.php?p=idr3.gif>

The issue of unemployment needs to be addressed

Editorial, *Baad-e-Shimal*, 04 January 2021

It is unfair for the federal government to give three year extension to FC personnel for protecting forests in Gilgit-Baltistan whereas the locals remain unemployed. ***The government should come up with a policy to create a local force to protect the forests. In this way, one, the locals would get jobs. Second, they would be able to protect the forests better than the outsiders.*** It is required that the local rulers should raise this issue with the federal government. They should ask the federal government to revisit the three year extension to FC personnel.

<http://epaperdaily.com/pakistan/daily-baad-e-shimal-urdu-akhbar.html>

Gilgit-Baltistan should get rights of a province

Editorial, *Baad-e-Shimal*, 10 January 2021

President Arif Alvi and the federal minister for planning have assured that the issues of Gilgit-Baltistan would be resolved on priority basis. This was said during the meetings that the Chief Minister of GB, Khalid Khurshid Khan had with the President and the Minister. **President Arif Alvi has visited GB many times. He had said during his visit to GB that it would be given constitutional rights and all other issues that have been raised from time to time would be resolved. It is true that higher officials from the center and other provinces come to GB and promise a lot. But with time, these promises are forgotten and never kept.** For a long time, GB has been asking for a provincial status and there was some progress in that regard some time back. Even Prime Minister Imran Khan had said that GB would be given provisional constitutional provincial status. **But no further development on this has taken place so far. Because of the ambiguous status of GB, the region has lagged behind other provinces in development.** ... PTI government should not further delay the fulfilment of its promise and give GB a provincial status as soon as possible.

<http://epaperdaily.com/pakistan/daily-baad-e-shimal-urdu-akhbar.html>

Constitutional rights of Gilgit-Baltistan should not be delayed

Editorial, *Baad-e-Shimal*, 22 January 2021

The speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly, Syed Amjid Zaidi, has said that the federal government is going to make GB a province. He said that political parties in GB are united on that issue and soon a resolution would be passed in the Assembly in this regard. **But both PPP and PML-N are fearing that if GB becomes a province during the PTI rule, they would never come in power.**

What the speaker has said is a long pending demand of the people of GB. **They want GB to be separated from the Kashmir issue and be made a province of Pakistan. But every party has ignored the demand. Some progress was made but now it seems the issue**

has been put in a cold store. Kashmiri representatives have always opposed the idea of making GB a province. This time also, they have said that it would damage the Kashmir cause. **One more issue that is hindering the process is that making GB a province would require a constitutional amendment and the PTI does not have the required numbers in the national assembly.** ... The people of GB are hopeful of the PTI government and it is expected that the government would not disappoint GB.

<http://epaperdaily.com/pakistan/daily-baad-e-shimal-urdu-akhbar.html>

“Goal of Kashmiris is Pakistan and will remain so”

Editorial, *Daily Salam*, 23 January 2021

During a meeting in the National Assembly, speaker Amjad Zaidi said that Kashmir is the “jugular vein” of Pakistan and the latter can never give it up (*Kashmir Pakistan ki shah-rug hai aur Pakistan esey kabhi ga'fil nhi hu sakta*). **The speaker said that the government of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan condemn Indian atrocities in “occupied” Kashmir. While talking to Asad Qaisar, “AJK” President Sardar Masood Khan said that the “goal of Kashmiris is Pakistan and it will remain Pakistan”** (*Kashmir ke awam ki manzil Pakistan hai aur Pakistan hi rahe gi*). The people of Kashmir were with Pakistan and would remain with Pakistan. President Khan appreciated the efforts of parliamentary diplomacy to highlight the Kashmir issue at international forums.

<https://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: 2017 Census: 4,045,367 (Male: 1,980,794; Female: 2,064,421)

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Divisions: 3

Districts: 10

Sub Divisions (Tehsils): 32

Constituencies in AJK: 29

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 Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 41

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: <https://pnda.jk.gov.pk/statyearbook.php?page=AJK%20at%20a%20Glance> accessed November 2020)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 1.4 million (2017 census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Fourteen

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

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Ghizer, Diamer, Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Darel, Tangir, Yaseen

Ethnic Groups: Shin, Balti, Puriki, Ladakhi, Wakhi, Yashkun, Tibetan, Mongol, Tatar, Mon, Pashtun, Khovar, 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: 33 (3 reserved for technocrats and 6 for woman)

Governor of G-B: Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon

Chief Minister G-B: Khalid Khurshid Khan

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: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/06/17/gb-notifies-four-more-districts-total-number-of-districts-now-14/>)

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Disclaimer

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