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- **Commentary**

Political Unrest In Gilgit Baltistan: Possible Indian Initiatives - *Senge Hasnan Sering*

- **Political Developments**

Dawa Expanding Operations in AJK: Report

Independent Commission to Resolve the Boundaries of Diamer Bhasha Dam: BNF

Gilgit Baltistan: Nationalist Activists Booked in Skardu

- **Economic Developments**

ADB to Fund AJK Power Project

Cross LoC Trade on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Road Crosses Rs 13 Cr

- **International Developments**

Gilgit Baltistan Issues Echoe at Interfaith Moot in Geneva

- **Other Developments**

Concern Over Dumping of Debris Into Indus

ERRA Accused of Gross Nepotism Blunders in MCDP

Compiled & Edited

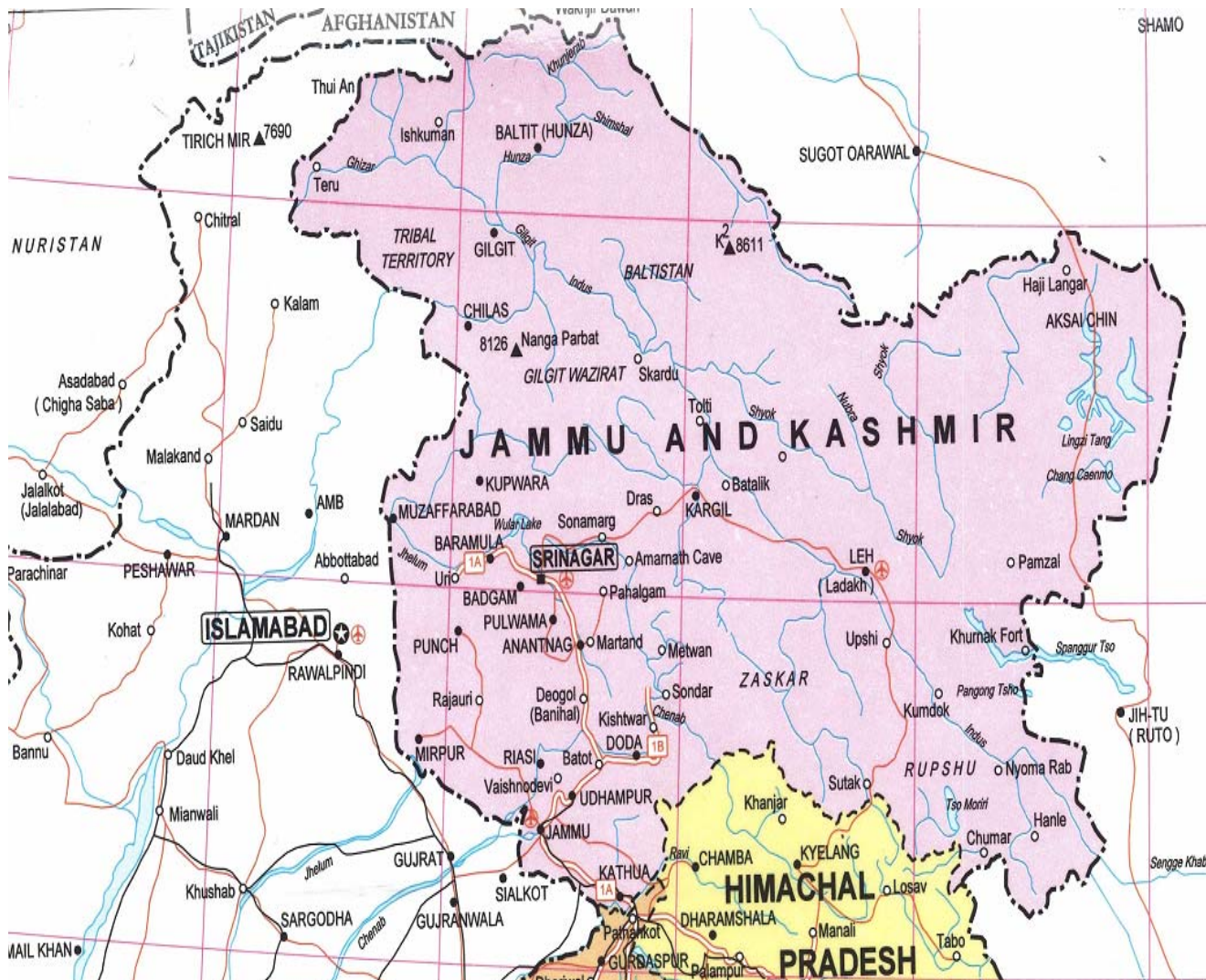
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

About this Issue

The existence of terrorists' camps in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir has been a grave issue of concern for India and also the international forces fighting the Taliban in the Afghan-Pak region. The region has proved to be a convenient hideout for militants especially the ones operating in Kashmir. The reports in this issue which include reliable international news sources endorse the fact once again. Notably, Pakistan has in the past denied any such clandestine activities in the PoK.

A report in this issue draws attention towards the ambiguity in the political status of PoK where it is questioned whether the Supreme Court of Pakistan has jurisdiction over issues pertaining to the so called 'AJK' since it apparently is an independent entity. The government of Pakistan has maintained this uncertainty of status through 60 years which has costed the people in terms of denial of basic political, economic and social rights.

Interestingly, several political leaders from the PoK have appealed to India to assist them in their quest for independence. The opinion was reiterated by them during an International conference on issues related to PoK recently held in New Delhi. These leaders consider Pakistan as 'foreign aggressor' and therefore stand against its forceful occupation.

The Northern Areas Legislative Assembly was dissolved just ahead of the day the budget was supposed to be presented. This development again hints at the instability in the existing political structure.

Priyanka Singh

Political Unrest In Gilgit Baltistan: Possible Indian Initiatives

Senge Hasnan Sering

The deep-rooted political and religious discontent in Gilgit Baltistan dates back to 1947-48. The human rights violations that continue unabated in this strategically located area have transformed many educated youth into what the Pakistani establishment calls anti-state elements. Some of them are even accused of being working for India's interests in the region. Keeping in view that Gilgit and Baltistan are constitutionally part of the Jammu & Kashmir State which acceded to India in 1948, Pakistan feels uneasy from the prospects of these nationalists "playing" in the hands of India. It is feared by many government officials including the Chief Executive of the Northern Areas, Mir Ghazanfar, that if political deprivation does not stop, soon the nationalists will be sitting in the legislative assembly winning majority of the seats.

In 1948, when the Gilgit Scouts captured what is currently called the 'Northern Areas' of Pakistan from the Dogra Army, majority of the local population had very high hopes from the Pakistani regime, since Pakistan's cause was promoted as that of a Muslim welfare country. More than six decades later, Pakistan has not determined whether these regions are part of Pakistan or not. Pakistan's successive constitutions have termed these regions as part of J&K and hence lying outside the geographical framework of the country. Neither these regions are a province nor an independent or autonomous body; they are ruled directly from Islamabad with an iron fist and termed by many international human rights organizations as the "last colony" of the world. People in the region now think that efforts and sacrifices of their ancestors to merge these regions with Pakistan have gone waste. The idea of self rule for Gilgit Baltistan which was the driving force to gain freedom from the Dogra Rule is now working against Pakistan's interests in these regions. Local nationalists openly demand that since these regions are part of J&K, Pakistan has no legitimate reason to rule and maintain its army, which literally converted this peaceful hamlet of the Karakoram-Himalayas into a military garrison. The nationalists now demand the right of self determination

which Pakistan advocates for the people of the Kashmir valley. They demand that political representatives from Gilgit Baltistan should be given the chance to represent themselves in the Kashmir Assembly where more than 22 seats lie vacant and reserved for the representatives of the people of Gilgit Baltistan. Further, they demand that the universities in Indian Kashmir should accommodate students from Gilgit Baltistan, since educational opportunities for students from Gilgit Baltistan in Pakistan stand next to nil. The evolving notion that the people of Gilgit Baltistan also consider India as one of the options for their future political survival is a huge change in their perspectives. They also demand a political set up similar to the so called Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). The rhetoric of Muslim unity and Pan-Islamism is no longer a popular idea. It is the change in perspectives and discontentment from Pakistan government that is forcing political groups to look towards other regional players for their survival.

Many political groups have accepted a possible role for India in promoting the cause of the settlement of Gilgit Baltistan issue. They compare their wretchedness and political deprivation with those living across the border in Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir where people have legitimate political institutions, political representatives in the national legislature and access to high courts and the Supreme Court. Such rights are non-existent in Gilgit Baltistan.

The desperation of the local leaders was very obvious when they expressed their opinions during a seminar in India in July 2009. The two-day seminar called 'Society, Culture and Politics in the Karakoram Himalayas' was held on 23-24 July, 2009, organised by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, New Delhi. Main issues revolved around the "tales of discrimination and persecution of the people in these areas at the hands of Pakistan's civilian and military establishment". The outcome of the conference was very interesting and unusual given the fact that India maintains a no-interference policy in the so-called internal affairs of Pakistan or the Pakistani administered parts of J&K. For the first time, the leaders and participants from PoK demanded that India should come forward and play its legitimate role

as a party to the dispute and help the people of Gilgit Baltistan attain their political rights as well as freedom from Pakistan. They showed concern that due to India's non-interference in these regions, the extremist elements have gained grounds and Talibanization of the society is a constant threat. These sectarian extremist elements target local people and deaths of thousands of Shias occur unabated. If India and the international community does not come forward for the support of the people of Gilgit Baltistan, then the locals will have no other option but to pick arms and fight out the Pakistani extremist elements. Some groups blamed India for not voicing the concerns of the people of Gilgit Baltistan at the international forums despite the fact that constitutionally these regions are an integral part of India. Some called Pakistan a foreign aggressor that needs to withdraw its troops from Gilgit Baltistan while others were of the view that both India and Pakistan are to be blamed for the socio-political deprivation in J&K. They were of the view that independent Balawaristan with secular model of governance will be beneficial for all neighboring countries including India and will help curb extremism in the region by acting as a buffer between India, Pakistan and China. China which fears from religious extremism in Xinjiang will also benefit greatly if Pakistan withdraws from Gilgit Baltistan and give self rule to the local people. They referred to the UN

resolutions which demand of Pakistan to vacate J&K and also withdraw its nationals from there. They asserted that if Pakistan wants to see peace at its border with China, then the locals should be granted their rights.

India on the other hand also feels that the fast changing geo-political situation in the region have allowed it to extend a helping hand to those groups which believe that India does have a legitimate role to play in the context of PoK. India sees these ethnic groups as part of the greater Himalayan cluster of nationalities which stretch from Afghanistan to Tibet and Myanmar. India can play an active role to help these communities survive culturally and revive their ancient cultural links. By acknowledging the contribution of societies of Gilgit Baltistan to the rich civilization of the region, India extended the much needed hand of friendship in the current volatile political scenario. By promoting the notion that all consultative mechanism across the LoC must be between the self-governing and representative entities of all ethnic and religious groups, India has acknowledged the right of the representation of the people of Gilgit Baltistan as a legitimate party to the Kashmir issue.

The Author is a Visiting Fellow at IDSA

Political Developments

“Dawa expanding operations in AJK: report,”

Daily Times, July 01, 2009

LAHORE: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) police have claimed the banned Jamaatud Dawa is expanding its operations and recruitment in the region. A confidential report submitted to the Pakistan government has revealed that the group had purchased 65 kanals of land in the Dulai area of Muzaffarabad to construct a mosque, a school and a dispensary. AJK Inspector General of Police, Javed Iqbal sated his force was closely monitoring the group’s activities.

Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira, however, denied that banned Pakistani groups were expanding their activities. “No such report has come before the government claiming these organisations have revived their activities,” he informed the BBC. However, he added, it was a different matter if it was submitted by an intelligence agency.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C07%5C01%5Cstory_1-7-2009_pg1_8

“Terror groups spreading out in PoK: report,”

The Hindu, July 01, 2009

Islamabad: Terrorist groups banned by Pakistan, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed, are expanding operations and recruitment in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, according to a secret government report. The detailed report, submitted by regional police to the PoK Cabinet on March 25, states that three banned groups — the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the JeM and the Lashkar — are active in the PoK capital, Muzaffarabad as reported by BBC on June 30. The Harkat and the JeM are said to be planning to open madrassas or seminaries in Muzaffarabad, where the LeT is already operating a madrassa.

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/07/01/stories/2009070160711300.htm>

Masood Rehman, “SC seeks govt explanation on jurisdiction in AJK,”

Daily Times, July 03, 2009

ISLAMABAD: A three-member bench of the Supreme Court on July 2 sought a written explanation from the government, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Council chairman, and the ministries of Law and Kashmir Affairs on whether the apex court has any jurisdiction over the affairs of the AJK.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C07%5C03%5Cstory_3-7-2009_pg7_19

“Independent Commission to resolve the boundaries of Diامر Bhasha Dam: BNF,”

Dardistan Times, July 07, 2009

GILGIT: Burhanullah Khan, Central General Secretary Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance demanded for an impartial and independent commission to resolve the conflict over Bhasha Dam and its boundaries. Burhan stated that if the government continues the coercible construction of the dam, it will have to face serious reaction locally. The people of Gilgit Baltistan would not allow using their land for the benefits of others. The region is a disputed area where expansionists cannot embark on developments which further escalate tension between the local people and other regions like Pokhistan. The dam constructed on the soil of Gilgit Baltistan would only benefit the Pokhistan while displacing thousands of local people. Burhan appealed to the people of Chitral and Kohistan to stand by with Gilgit Baltistan based on their centuries old cultural, geographical and political relations with the region.

<http://dardistannews.wordpress.com/2009/07/06/independent-commission-to-resolve-the-boundaries-of-diامر-bhasha-dam-bnf/>

Diamir Basha Dam's construction to start in 2nd quarter of 2010: Kaira

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas said that the construction Diamir Basha Dam would start in the 2nd quarter of 2010, while the repatriation of families to be affected by it would start this year itself. He said this during a meeting of National Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs held with its chairman Shehzada Mohi-ud-Din in the chair.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=148065>

“AJK JI Amir for modern welfare Islamic state”

July 07, 2009

BIRMINGHAM: Amir of Jamaat Islami (JI) Azad Jammu and Kashmir Abdur Rashid Turabi said his party is striving for the establishment of modern welfare Islamic state based on concept of social equality and economic justice. Addressing a reception hosted by prominent business community leader Ghulam Mustafa Khan, he said Jamaat Islami is truly a democratic political party believing in non-violent constitutional politics. The Jamaat, he said has Islamic agenda being pursued through democratic means, he further added.

<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/07/10/ajk-ji-amir-for-modern-welfare-islamic-state/>

Gilgit Baltistan: “Creating Harmony”

Chairman of the Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM), Manzoor Hussain Parwana said nationalist parties are inching towards achieving their objectives with the support of the masses of the region. He stated this while addressing a meeting of the GBUM's supreme council. He said the people of Gilgit-Baltistan had foiled the conspiracy to create a lawless situation in the region after the murder of NALA deputy speaker, Asad Zaidi. He said his party was playing a major role in building regional, communal and political harmony in the region. By turning up in large numbers at a meeting of the GBUM in Skardu on May 1, the people of the region had proved that no force can divide them to achieve their vested interest.

<http://www.unpo.org/content/view/9615/256/>

Momin Iftikhar, “Kishanganga row: Heading for arbitration,”

Pakistan Observer, July 28, 2009

The dispute over sharing waters of Neelam River or Kishanganga, depending upon which side of the Line of Control one speaks from, are fast accumulating to irreconcilable levels. Much water has flown since the eighties when Pakistan expressed its intention of constructing a 900MW plus Hydro Electric Project using the Neelam waters. India followed a few years later with a plan of its own to change the water course of the River just before it crossed into Azad Kashmir and use the diverted waters to generate 330 MW of electricity before discharging the water into Wullar Lake.

A game of playing chicken seems to be on as both the countries have awarded contracts for construction of hydro electric power projects based on the Neelam/ Kishanganga waters knowing that one of the projects would have to be aborted or substantively modified in due course of time. As a last ditch effort, to solve the issue bilaterally before referring the case for arbitration by the World Bank, Pakistan has intimated India the names of two negotiators with August 11, 2009 set as the deadline. If the bilateral parleys fail to throw up a solution, the case would be referred to court of arbitration.

<http://pakobserver.net/200907/28/Articles04.asp>

“No to Governer's Rule in Gilgit-Baltistan”

After facing growing public pressure, the ruling PPP has started hoodwinking the people of Gilgit-Baltistan through its local chapter under the pretext of giving them a package. The draft of the proposed package has been leaked and spread in the region by the PPP through one of its representatives. According to the draft, the name of the chairman will be changed to governor. This shows that like a communist party a new viceroy will be appointed in place of a chairman. The PPP seems to follow in the footsteps of former rulers including Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Pervez Musharraf in playing with the papers and for this it is using the local party leadership.

<http://balawaristantimes.blogspot.com/2009/07/no-to-governers-rule.html>

“Gilgit Baltistan: Nationalist activists booked in Skardu”

July 15, 2009

The civil administration has imposed section 144 in Skardu and instructed the secret agencies to arrest the students and sympathies of Baltistan Students Federation from other cities of Pakistan whom have intention to visit Skardu to attend the convention of BSF on 18 July 2009. Skardu Police has registered FIR against 16 nationalist activists under the sections 186,149,506,447,357 of Pakistan Penal Code.

The police arrested Syed Hyder Shah Rizvi (Vice President Balawaristan National Front) ,Shulam Shehzad Agha (Secretary General Gilgit Baltistan United Movement) ,Haji Inayat Ali (senior citizen) including the workers of BSF Hassnain ,Muhammad Sabir,Muhammad Ashraf,Amjad Ali,Sakhawat ,Asif, Ashaq,Feroz ,Abbas and Ismail .

<http://skardu.blogspot.com/2009/07/gilgit-baltistan-nationalist-activists.html>

“AJK President for urgent efforts to resolve Kashmir,”

Associated Press of Pakistan, July 24, 2009

WASHINGTON: Azad Jammu and Kashmir President, Raja Zulqarnain Khan has called for urgent efforts to resolve the Kashmir conflict, saying the lingering dispute imperils regional security. He was addressing the 10th International Kashmir Peace Conference in the Capitol Hill, which was attended by leading experts, diplomats and lawmakers. Kashmir, he said, remains one of the oldest unresolved issues on the global agenda and needs attention of the international community, particularly the United States, for result-oriented progress

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=82220&Itemid=1

“APHC-AJK vows to continue struggle for Accession to Pakistan,”

Kashmir News, July 19, 2009

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting of the All Parties Hurriyet Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter was held at the Hurriyet headquarters on July 19 with its Convenor, Mehmood

Ahmad Saghar in chair. In the meeting, the speakers threw light on Accession to Pakistan Day Resolution passed on July 1947, described it their destination and pledged to continue peaceful struggle for it.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/aphc-ajk-vows-continue-struggle-accession-pakistan>

Amitabh Sinha, “PK leaders seek India’s help in fight against Pak”

WHILE India has been extremely sensitive about being seen to be getting involved in Pakistan’s internal affairs, a number of political groups in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir have now been openly seeking New Delhi’s help in their fight against what they describe as their persecution by Islamabad. Their argument is simple. Officially, India continues to consider the whole of Kashmir, including the areas under Pakistan control, as its own territory and therefore it becomes its duty to protect them against a foreign aggressor, which is how they describe Pakistan.

A motley group of these political leaders and intellectuals from areas around Gilgit and Baltistan, referred to as Northern Areas by Pakistan, assembled in New Delhi to participate in a two-day international seminar on ‘Society, Culture and Politics in the Karakoram Himalayas’ that was dominated by tales of discrimination and persecution of the people in these areas at the hands of Pakistan’s civilian and military establishment.

<http://www.defence.pk/forums/strategic-geopolitical-issues/30552-pk-leaders-seek-india-s-help-fight-against-pak.html>

“APHC delegation meets Prime Minister AJK”

ISLAMABAD: Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime minister Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan once again reiterated his government’s firm support to the people Kashmir for their just and peaceful struggle for freedom and right of self determination. He also pledged to resolve problems and remove hurdles in the way of rehabilitation, education, health-care, employment and problems of text books for school children and also national identity cards for the displaced families and persons. He made these

assurances with a delegation of All Parties Hurriyet Conference AJK which met with the Prime minister under the Chairmanship of its Convener, Muhammad Farooq Rehmani here in Islamabad.

<http://kashmiruprising.blogspot.com/2009/07/aphc-delegation-meets-prime-minister.html>

Farooq Ahmed, “People of Gilgit-Baltistan seek to frame package,”

Dawn, July 29, 2009

GILGIT: Politicians, lawyers and human rights activists at a consultative meeting here on July 28 unanimously sought role of public representatives, intellectuals and political parties in the finalisation of the proposed reforms package for Gilgit-Baltsitan. They asked the government to submit the draft package to the Northern Area Legislative Assembly for debate so that people of Gilgit-Baltistan could know beforehand at least what decision was going to be made about their future by Islamabad. The consultative meeting arranged by Human Rights Advocacy Network Gilgit-Baltistan witnessed heated debate over the proposed package.

Northern Areas High Court Bar Association President Manzoor Ahmed noted the packages announced so far by various governments had strengthened the bureaucratic system not the people. He said the people of the region had been deprived of all those fundamental rights which were being enjoyed by other citizens of the country.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/news/cricket/>

“Pro-liberation group of Pakistan administered Kashmir keen to join peace dialogue,”

ANI, July 31, 2009

NEW DELHI: Balawaristan National Front (BNF) chairman, Abdul Hamid Khan has said that India should involve the people of Gilgit Balistan, Chitral and Shhenaki Kohistan regions in the peace dialogue process of Kashmir. Talking to reporters on July 30, Khan said, “A dialogue on Kashmir between India and Pakistan should not ignore the strategic importance of Balwaristan”. “India should not ignore Gilgit Baltistan which combining Chitral comprises an

area of 100,000 square kilometres. Whenever there is a dialogue regarding Kashmir, India should include people of Gilgit Baltistan,” he further added. He also expressed concern at the recent construction of 16 airstrips along the Karakoram Highway (KKH) that links Pakistan with China.

<http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/114606>

“India for opening of Kargil-Skardu route,”

Hunza Times, July 25, 2009

NEW DELHI: India today sought opening of the Kargil-Skardu route between India and Pakistan for passenger traffic on humanitarian basis as well as to counter the “virus” of extremism and militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

“We have continued to press for opening the Kargil-Skardu route for passenger traffic and eventually as a full-fledged communication corridor”, Shyam Saran, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated at a conference on “Society, Culture and Politics in the Karakoram Himalayas.”

<http://hunzetimes.wordpress.com/2009/07/25/india-for-opening-of-kargil-skardu-route/>

Tom Hussain, “This is not Taliban territory, its Shangri-la,”

July 29, 2009

GILGIT: Representatives of Pakistan’s tranquil Northern Areas, a tourism centre bordering China, have petitioned the government to revert to the historical name of Gilgit-Baltistan to distinguish it from areas plagued by militant insurgency.

The five districts of the Northern Areas are situated amid the sky-scraping peaks of the Karakoram mountain range that divides the Indian subcontinent from Central Asia. Isolated from the rest of the world until May 1978, when Chinese and Pakistani engineers completed the Karakoram Highway (KKH), the world’s highest road route, it is a magnet for tourists drawn by the history of the Silk Route, an ancient trade link between China, the Middle East and Europe.

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090729/FOREIGN/707289886/1103/NEWS>

Mark Magnier, “In Pakistan, Skardu is suffering backlash of Taliban violence,”

Los Angeles Times, July 18, 2009

There’s still another part of Pakistan, an oasis of striking beauty all but free of the turmoil, Taliban militancy, suicide bombers and security fears that have gripped much of the rest of the country. Clocks here in Skardu in northern Pakistan, an hour’s flight from Islamabad, may display the same time as their counterparts in the capital, or in Lahore and Karachi. But the slow pace, tranquillity and welcoming of outsiders are more befitting of a long-gone age when traders on horseback plied the nearby Karakoram Highway.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-pakistan-oasis18-2009jul18,0,4286480.story>

Asif Ezdi, “Kashmir’s legal status,”

The News, July 16, 2009

In hearing a case challenging the appointment of the chief justice of the Azad Kashmir Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of Pakistan on July 2 sought written statements from the Pakistan government and the prime minister, in his capacity as chairman of the Azad Kashmir Council, on whether or not the Supreme Court of Pakistan has jurisdiction over the affairs of Azad Kashmir. The petition has been filed by a judge of the AJK Supreme Court, Justice Manzoor Gilani.

The attorney general said at the hearing that if the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was admitted, it would damage Pakistan’s long-standing principled stand on Kashmir. He also said, “AJK is a sovereign state and it has its own president, prime minister, legislative assembly and speaker. Therefore the apex court cannot interfere in its affairs.” (The assertion that AJK is a sovereign state has never been made previously by the Pakistan government in any international or domestic forum. It is also inconsistent with the interim constitution of AJK, passed with the approval of the Pakistan government, which states that the defence and external affairs of Azad Kashmir are the responsibility of Pakistan.)

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=188196>

Shabbir Ahmed Mir, “Nala dissolved,”

The News, July 26, 2009

GILGIT: The Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (Nala), which completed its five-year term this year, was dissolved on July 24, sources stated. Qamar Zaman Kaira, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting who is also the Nala chairman, signed the notification that immediately left the offices of Nala Chief Executive, Mir Ghazanfer and those of eight other cabinet members ineffective. Consisted of about 35 members, including women members, Nala was elected during Pervez Musharraf’s regime that saw introduction of some reforms in the status of what was previously called as NAs Legislative Council (NALC).

http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=189911

“No Government in Pak’s Northern Areas, hence no budget,”

ANI, July 28, 2009

GILGIT: The Legislative Assembly in Pakistan’s Northern Areas With the seven-member cabinet of the region dissolved two days before the presentation of the budget, the Speaker of the Assembly, Malik Mohammad Miskeen said that no budget could be presented in the absence of treasury members.

<http://news.smashits.com/411160/No-Government-in-Pak-39s-Northern-Areas-hence-no-budget.htm>

“Kashmir will be on composite dialogue agenda: Kaira,”

Daily Times, July 23, 2009

BRUSSELS: Composite dialogue process between India and Pakistan will be initiated soon and all important issues, including Kashmir, would be on the agenda, Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira said on July 22. Talking to reporters after his meeting with James Elles, member of European Parliament and chairman of All Party Kashmir Group in EU Parliament, Kaira said the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting between Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh was a right step. He said a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue was imperative for development and prosperity in the region, adding

Pakistan had always backed an amicable resolution of the issue as per UN resolutions.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C07%5C23%5Cstory_23-7-2009_pg7_4

Abbas Ali, “Political unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan,”

Dawn, July 26, 2009

GILGIT-BALTISTAN is a simmering cauldron of discontent. The continued deprivation of political, economic and human rights is driving the people of this strategic northern end of Pakistan to desperation. They have been fighting for their rights not just since 1947. A brief review of history will be in order to understand the current hostile attitude of the people towards the current political set-up in Gilgit-Baltistan. The British left the Gilgit Agency on July 31, 1947,

two weeks before the independence of the subcontinent. On October 27, 1947 the people of Gilgit-Baltistan founded a new country ‘Islamic Republic of Gilgit.’

However, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan wanted to be part of the newly-born Pakistan. During the transitional period the ‘Islamic Republic of Gilgit’ approached the founder of Pakistan, Quid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with a plea to join Pakistan. As a corollary, on November 16, 1947 Pakistan established its administration in the area. But until today the region has not become the legal and political part of Pakistan. Many people in the region think that their efforts and sacrifices of their ancestors have gone waste.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/in-paper-magazine/encounter/political-unrest-in-gilgitbaltistan-679>

Economic Developments

“ADB to fund AJK power project,”

Greater Kashmir News

MIRPUR: Work on the first private sector 84-megawatt hydroelectric project located 7.5 km downstream of the existing Mangla Dam in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) will start in the next couple of weeks, Khalid Faizi, chief executive Laraib energy stated on June 27. The local and international financial institutions have given approval to Laraib Energy Limited and Hub Power Company to start the construction.

<http://kashmirnews.co.cc/2009/06/30/adb-to-fund-ajk-power-project/>

Traders seek use of US dollars

JAMMU: Cross-LoC trade on Poonch-Rawlakote route stood at Rs 3.46 crore as traders from the two sides to use US dollars instead of barter system in the trade. Out of 30 trucks which exchanged sides on the LoC, only five left Poonch carrying tradable items to AJK while 25 came to Poonch from other side of the LoC, official sources said. Coconut, cardamom and kernil were the only three items sent to AJK by the traders of Poonch and Jammu. The businessmen of AJK sent dal moong, Peshawari sandals and basmati rice to their counterparts in Jammu and Poonch.

<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/07/03/traders-seek-use-of-us-dollars/>

Muhammad Shahi, “Jagran power station earns Rs325.4m annually,”

The News, July 03, 2009

MUZAFFARABAD: Jagran hydropower station, around 85 kilometres from Azad Jammu and Kashmir capital, is an underground set-up in the Neelam valley contributing to the development of the state. On October 23, 2008, then president Pervez Musharraf inaugurated the hydropower station, a mini-dam. The station, which was established in almost five years, costed around Rs4.54 billion, while its annual earning is approximately Rs325.4 million (32crores and

54lacs). The station houses five generators, each with a capacity of 6.08MW; the station’s total production capacity is 30.4MW or 132KV.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=186140>

Ishfaq Tantry, “Cross LoC trade on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road crosses Rs 13 Cr,”

Rising Kashmir, July 05, 2009

SRINAGAR: Cross LoC trade through Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, which started last year, has started to pick up its pace. In the eight months since the first truck rolled across Kaman Bridge in Uri last October, the total trade volume between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad has crossed Rs 13.10 crore. Beginning October 2008 till 21st July, goods worth 4.55 crore were exported to Muzaffarabad from Valley through Salamabad Trade Facilitation Centre in Uri, while goods valuing around Rs 8.64 crore were imported from Pakistan administered Kashmir .

http://www.risingkashmir.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=14595

Sayed Abid Hussain “AJK govt lauds tax dept for surpassing target,”

The News, July 08, 2009

MIRPUR: AJK president, prime minister as well as several members of the AJ&K Council appreciated the recent achievement of the tax collection target, coupled with a big surplus during the fiscal year 2008-09, by the AJK Income Tax, Excise and Sales Tax Department, official sources stated.

“The collection of over Rs4.533 billion against the set target of Rs3.500 billion is an exceptional achievement, showing a big surplus revenue of over Rs1.033 billion under the dynamic guidance of Commissioner Income Tax and Collector Excise and Sales Tax of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Muhammad Asif Abbasi,” sources quoted the AJK president and prime minister as saying.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=186909>

Javed Mahmood, “Wapda seeks \$5b from ADB for Bhasha,”

The Nation, July 13, 2009

KARACHI: WAPDA has sought \$5 billion loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam. Chief Executive Officer, Bhasha Dam Project, Dr Izhar stated that the ADB officials were willing to provide \$2.50 billion for the project to WAPDA which has, however, requested the ADB to give it US\$5 billion. The ADB officials plan to take up the issue with its board. Bhasha Dam CEO said the ADB officials were holding meetings with WAPDA officials to work out the amount of loan and look into the environmental and social aspects of the project.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/13-Jul-2009/Wapda-seeks-5b-from-ADB-for-Bhasha>

Ishfaq Tantry, “Business exchange through LoC slows down ; Traders allege harassment by police, security agencies,”

Rising Kashmir, July 15, 2009

SALAMABAD (URI): The business exchange through LoC may further slow down as the traders

associated with cross-border trade via Srinagar-Muzaffarabad have alleged harassment at the hands of police and other security agencies. The traders alleged that they are being harassed by security agencies especially by Special Operations Group of Police on different pretexts.

http://www.risingkashmir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14928&Itemid=1

“Gilgit call to open old trade routes,

July 14, 2009

SKARDU: Chairman Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement Manzoor Hussain Parwana stated closing the doors of economic development on the people of Gilgit-Baltistan is tantamount to their economic murder. He said the government of Pakistan should take immediate measures to open the old trade routes from Skardu to Kargil, Ishkoman to Tajikistan and Astor to Srinagar. He said at present Karakoram Highway was the only route of economic activity between China and Pakistan but areas near to this vital highway have been hit by the wave of terrorism and there was a danger that the KKH may also be hit by terrorists.

<http://globalpoliticsnews.com/?p=306>

International Developments

“Britain, EU should play role regarding Kashmir resolution”

BIRMINGHAM: AJK Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Abdur Rashid Turabi said that Britain and the European Union should play their role for the resolution of Kashmir issue. He further said that the British had to resolve the issue if it wanted to wash the Kashmir stigma from its forehead.

<http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/07/02/britain-eu-should-play-role-regarding-kashmir-resolution/>

Gilgit Baltistan issues echoe at interfaith moot in Geneva

BRUSSELES: Chairman Balawaristan National Front (BNF), Abdul Hamid Khan highlighted some of the

burning issues facing Gilgit-Baltistan at an conference under Interfaith International held in UNHRC building in Geneva. In his long speech during the conference, Mr Khan covered crucial areas such as judiciary, law and order, human rights, constitutional issues and unemployment and the sense of deprivation prevalent among the people of the region. He blamed Pakistan for the problems being faced by the region. He said judiciary doesn't exist as a full and independent department in Gilgit-Baltistan.

http://www.balawaristan.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1765:gilgit-baltistan-issues-echoes-at-interfaith-moot-in-geneva&catid=1:latest-news

Other Developments

Khawar Ghumman, “Concern over dumping of debris into Indus,”

Dawn, July, 24 2009

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency has criticised the National Highway Authority for continuously ignoring its concerns over the dumping of debris into the Indus river system which would eventually end up in Tarbela dam. The NHA, in collaboration with a Chinese company, is currently working on a project to realign some 100km of the Karakoram Highway due to construction of Diamer-Basha dam in Gilgit-Baltistan. Building of a road in a hilly area needs a lot of blasting with the help of dynamites to level the surface, producing loads of debris.

‘Over the past few months, our agency in Gilgit-Baltistan is continuously writing to the NHA against disposing of its debris into Indus and Hunza rivers, but they are completely ignoring our concerns,’ the Director General of Pak-EPA, Asif Shujah stated.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/13+concern+over+dumping+of+debris+into+indus-za-07>

“Mirpur, adjacent areas faces most agonizing power outages,”

The News, July 02, 2009

MUZAFFARABAD: The power load shedding is being carried out for the most prolonged periods on the fourth day of closure of the Mangla Power House in Mirpur Azad Kashmir and its adjoining areas. The load shedding duration in urban areas has been increased up to 12 hours while in rural areas up to 18 hours. The Mangla Power House was shut down due to some technical glitch triggering the shortfall to rise upto 1000 Megawatts, which caused to unleash unscheduled load sheddings in Azad Kashmir and Southern Punjab.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=81923>

(Other Developments continued after Abbreviations)

ABBREVIATIONS

AJKHEB	Azad Jammu and Kashmir Hydro Electric Board
AJK	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
APHC	All Parties Hurriyat Conference
BNF	Balawaristan National Front
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CDP	Community Development Programme
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
GBDA	Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance
GBUM	Gilgit Baltistan United Movement
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
JIAJK	Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Jammu & Kashmir
KAC	Kashmiri American Council
KKH	Karakoram Highway
KNM	Karakoram National Movement
LoC	Line of Control
NLI	Northern Light Infantry
NALA	Northern Areas Legislative Assembly
NAEDC	Northern Areas Executive Development Committee
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PoK	Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
POGB	Pakistan occupied Gilgit Baltistan
PPP	Pakistan Peoples’ Party
UJC	United Jihad Council
WAPDA	Water and Power Development Authority

“Kaira approves scholarships for 207 Kashmiri students,”

Associated Press of Pakistan, July 15, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Qamar Zaman Kaira has approved award of scholarships-2008-09 to around 207 Kashmiri students. More than 700 students applied for the scholarship programme introduced last year to have an education in different subjects. Azad Jammu Kashmir Council Secretariat constituted a committee to award scholarship to students both male and female on merit and selected 207 Kashmiri students.

http://www.app.com.pk/en/_index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81542&Itemid=2

“ERRA accused of gross nepotism Blunders in MCDP; project director senior than Administrative Secretary,”

Kashmir Watch, July 16, 2009

Pakistan's Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) continues to indulge in the gross nepotism while making appointments in government run projects for rebuilding Kashmir post the 2005 earthquake. The recent case in this regard is the appointment of a retired Brigadier to the post of Project Director, Project Management Unit, Muzaffarabad City Development Project (PMU-MCDP) in Grade 21.

Brigadier retired Sheeraz Baig was appointed as Project director PMU-MCDP in February this year on contractual basis.

http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1247780744&archive=&start_from=&ucat=15&var1news=value1news

“AJK: UNICEF's Nefarious Agenda Exposed; UNICEF Pakistan chapter plagued with corruption, cases sexual harassment and exploitation”

Kashmir Watch, July 26, 2009

MUZAFFARABAD: UN children agency UNICEF and Erra awarded Hygiene Promotion Project to scandalous, tainted and dubious non-local NGOs despite opposition from AJK government. The project

is part of 5.6 million US dollar Drinking Water Quality Improvement and Hygiene Promotion project. It is being implemented directly by Erra with the support of UNICEF and Royal Netherland Embassy (RNE) without involving government of Azad Kashmir.

http://www.kashmirwatch.com/showexclusives.php?subaction=showfull&id=1248621763&archive=&start_from=&ucat=15&var1news=value1news

“University for women in AJK,”

July 25, 2009

It takes a time to setup a university, however, the women's university in AJK is vital and for that a complete and perfect planning is required. This was said by Begum Shehnaz Wazir Ali, Advisor to PM Pakistan on Social Welfare. She is also the chairperson of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. She was talking to PM AJK in a meeting at Kashmir House.

<http://pressforpeace.blogspot.com/2009/07/university-for-women-in-ajk.html>

“PM asks ERRA to complete projects on time,”

Daily Times, July 25, 2009

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday directed the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) to complete the remaining development projects as soon as possible and ensure transparency in their execution.

http://www.dailytimes.com/default.asp?page=2009%5C07%5C25%5Cstory_25-7-2009_pg7_31

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir-An Overview

Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoK) is constitutionally an integral part of the Indian Union and remains under Pakistani occupation since 1947, when Pakistan's Army engineered a tribal invasion and took control of more than 114,500 square kilometers of J&K. In 1949, the leaders of AJK Muslim Conference were forced to hand over Gilgit Baltistan Regions to the Pakistani federal government through the 'Karachi Agreement'. Since then Gilgit & Baltistan are ruled directly from Islamabad. Again in 1963, Pakistan ceded Trans-Karakoram Tract including a segment of Baltistan Region known as 'Shaksgam' and part of Gilgit Region known as 'Raskam' to China. Further, Chitral and parts of Chilas called Shinaki Kohistan, which constituted parts of Jammu & Kashmir before its partition in 1947, were also merged into the NWFP of Pakistan in 1970 and 1955 respectively.

Total Area of PoK (under the current form): 85,793 sq. km

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad and Gilgit & Baltistan; referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK, and the 'Northern Areas' respectively by the government of Pakistan

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5,800 sq kilometers

AZAD JAMMU & KASHMIR (AJK)

After the partition of Jammu & Kashmir, the Muzaffarabad district of Kashmir province, and Mirpur and parts of Poonch districts of Jammu province went into Pakistani occupation. Pakistan amalgamated these districts together and created the so-called AJK. AJK is envisaged as an autonomous region by Pakistan. The government of AJK is considered as a parallel government, which was established to challenge the legitimacy of the J&K government in Srinagar. Despite the fact that AJK is neither a country nor a province of Pakistan, it has its own President, a Prime Minister, a Supreme Court, national anthem and a flag. These structures and the designations are only titular in nature and real authority lies with the federal government of Pakistan. Significant matters such as defence, supposed 'foreign policy', rehabilitation of refugees and the financial control have

been carefully placed under the discretion of the political establishment of Pakistan. As of today, the parts of Kashmir province under PoK is divided into three districts of Muzaffarabad, Bagh and Neelum, while the parts of Jammu province under PoK is divided into five districts namely Poonch/Rawalakot, Sudhnati/Pallandari, Bhimber, Kotli and Mirpur.

Area: 13,297 square km

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

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

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

Capital: Muzaffarabad

President: Raja Zulqarnain Khan

Prime Minister: Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan

“Azad Jammu and Kashmir” Council: Total 12 members- 6 each representing governments of AJK and Pakistan. The AJK Council is headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 49, of which 29 are directly elected from the AJK, 11 are elected from Pakistan under the provision for the 'Kashmiri refugees', whereas rest of the 8 seats are reserved for females, overseas Kashmiris and the technocrats.

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

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

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

Political 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)

NORTHERN AREAS (NAs)

Gilgit Baltistan is officially referred to by the government of Pakistan as the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA). It is the northernmost political entity within the Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoK) and is under direct control of the Islamabad government. The area, after separation of Chitral and Shinaki Kohistan, is still five and half times bigger to that of AJK. The status of the *Northern Areas* is not defined in the successive constitutions of Pakistan. Pakistan accepts NAs as part of the Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, however, does not consider it as part of AJK. Due to a direct control imposed from Islamabad, the locals still await basic political and judicial rights. For instance, they do not have the right to cast vote and lack representation in the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan. Further, they cannot access the provincial high courts as well as the Supreme Court of Pakistan for justice. The Judicial Commissioner exercises judicial powers in NAs who is a political figure nominated by the Minister for Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs. The Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) is a political institution which lacks power to legislate and is headed by the Minister for Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs, who is currently a Member of the National Assembly elected from the Gujrat district of Punjab province. The Northern Areas are further divided into two regions, namely Gilgit and Baltistan.

Area: 72,496 km

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: six

Baltistan Region is divided into Ganche and Skardu districts

Gilgit Region is divided into Astore, Diamer, Ghizar and Gilgit districts

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

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

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

Legislature: Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) Total 30 seats, of which 24 are directly elected and 6 female members are selected by NALA members.

Chairman NALA: Qamar Zaman Kaira

Chief Executive NALA: NALA was dissolved on July 25, 2009 before it could complete its 5-years term, and along with that, advisors to the Chairman including the Chief Executive were sacked. Elections for NALA will now be held in October 2009.

Political 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)

Literacy rate: 15% male- 3.5% female (World Bank estimates of 1997)

State of Infrastructure: More than two-thirds of the villages lack potable water, electricity, telephone, health units, girls' schools, paved roads, ration depot, and pony tracks.

Disclaimer

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

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