

POK NEWS DIGEST

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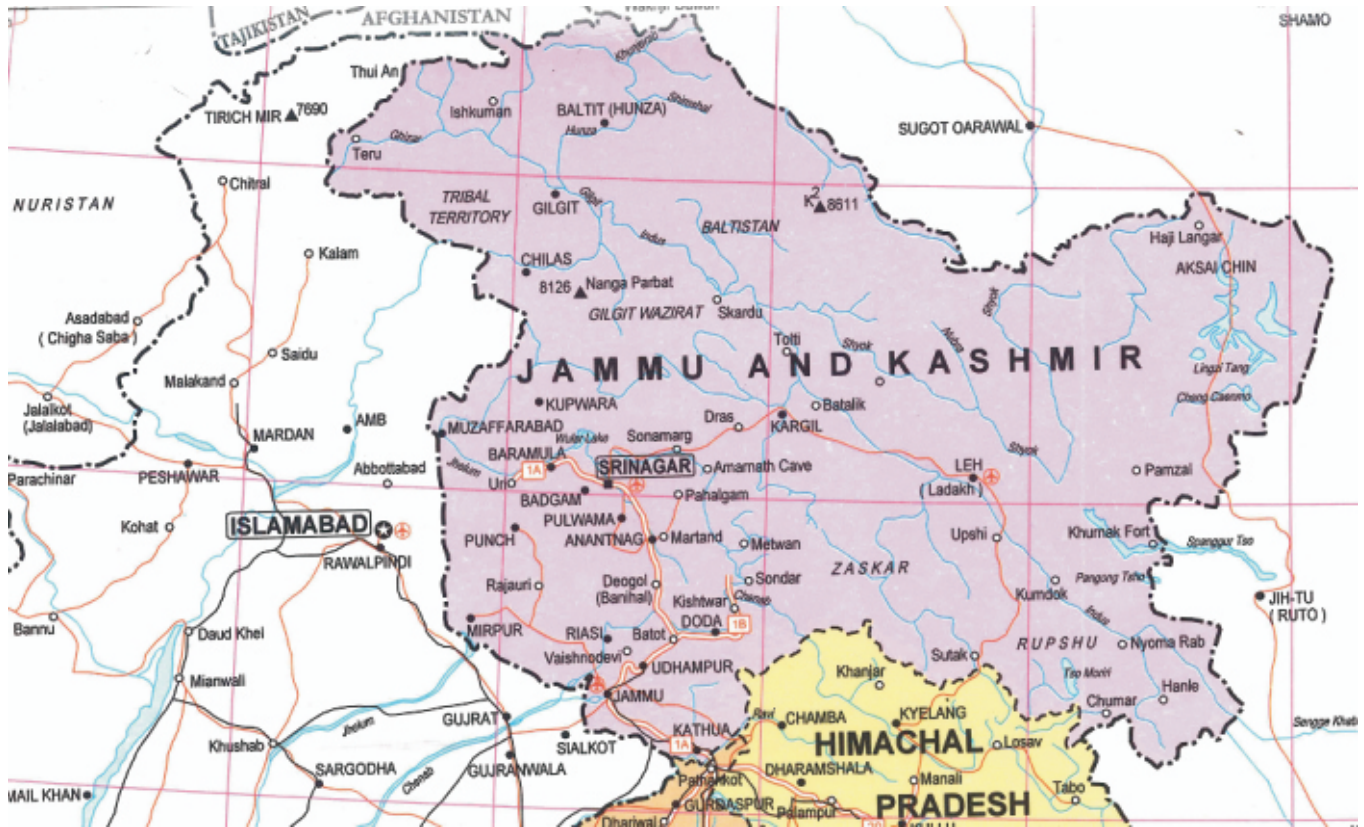
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Jammu & Kashmir

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

In this Edition

Cross LoC trade completed two years since it started in October 2008. There are positive signals as trading figures crossed an overwhelming Rs 300 Cr mark with an increase in volume of trade. The businessmen on both sides are keen to expand the trading ties between the two sides notwithstanding the problems they face on a regular basis in carrying out trade between J&K and PoK.

The current issue includes some reports which question Pakistan's Kashmir policy. In PoK, there are issues related to deprivation of basic rights of the people. The region which the locals consider to be very peaceful has allegedly been used by Pakistan to nurture militancy by establishing a network of militant training camps. The continued negligence in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake has led to widespread discontent across PoK and this was evident from the protest march that were taken out on the fifth anniversary of the earthquake.

It is important to mention the case of those who moved from Kashmir to PoK in the 1990's. Notably, a large number of these migrants have not been given citizenship by Pakistan and devoid of rights which makes it difficult for them to go for education and apply for jobs, as is noted in one of the reports included in this issue. There is increasing demand from some sections to grant a provincial status to PoK which could benefit them with equal rights and liberties that other provinces of Pakistan are entitled to.

Priyanka Singh

Political Developments

Shabbir Mir, 'G-B government failed its people', Tribune, October 29, 2010

GILGIT: This has been a bad year for Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). First, in the beginning of the year, the newly-elected government had to handle the Attabad landslide disaster, where 20 people died and about 25,000 people in Gojal were cut-off. Then came floods, wrecking havoc and destroying infrastructure. Lack of capacity to deal with crises of such magnitude further worsened the situation in G-B, which was already reeling due to shortage of funds. The government estimated Rs150 million in losses.

Faced with various challenges and limited resources, the government's performance has nevertheless disappointed people at large. Most of the promises made by the government even those made by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on the eve of general elections have not been fulfilled.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/69230/g-b-government-failed-its-people/>

'ARJK demands equal Rights for AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan people', PPI, October 18, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The Association for the Rights of the People of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (ARJK) on October 18 held its inaugural session in which participants stressed on the need to provide the fundamental rights to the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman of ARJK Syed Manzoor Hussain Gilani said that the people of AJK and GB should be given equal rights as rest of the people belonging to Pakistan were enjoying. He urged that the government appropriately amend the constitution of Pakistan under article 257 for governance of both the territories without changing their Political Status. "We strongly support the solution of Kashmir dispute within the parameters of United Nation (UN) resolution. He added AJK and GB should be provisionally entitled to all the

rights and privileges available to other Provinces of the federation of Pakistan, as they have representation in both houses of Parliament. The identification of the peoples of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is as Pakistani but they were not given equal rights as the citizen of Pakistan enjoys, he noted. Former Ambassador Inam-Ul-Haq said that the government of Pakistan should be aware from the injustice being done with the Inhabitants of AJK and Gilgit Baltistan.

<http://www.onepakistan.com/news/national/68951-arjk-demands-equal-rights-for-ajk-gilgit-baltistan-people.html>

'Promoting precious stones of G-B', Tribune

GILGIT: In the hopes of introducing precious stones to the international market, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Mehdi Shah plans to visit China, sources stated. "The stones found in the mountains of G-B are rare, and if these are introduced to the international market, not only the economy of G-B but also that of the whole country can improve," noted an official. The delegation, led by the chief minister, will consist of 17-members including some traders who specialize in the buying and selling of gemstones. Officials in Gilgit said that the event is to be held in Kashgar and will be well attended by several international delegations.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/68668/promoting-precious-stones-of-g-b/>

Shabbir Mir, 'Sectarian identities must not affect govt work', Tribune

GILGIT: Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Mehdi Shah warned that strict action will be taken against government employees if they allowed their sectarian identities to affect their jobs. He was referring to the three policemen who were arrested by security forces in connection with killing civilians belonging to rival sects in Gilgit, an episode which had created panic in government circles. "I warn all government employees to not work for their sects (it can be sectarian

organisation), if they continue doing so then they will no longer be tolerated," stated Shah while addressing a seminar organised by an NGO, Plan Pakistan, in Gilgit.

Gilgit has had a history of sectarian violence since the early 1970s. In August, at least 10 people died in target killings and many were injured during a fresh wave of violence. The chief minister in an attempt to discourage the trend posted over 50 policemen from the violence-scarred Gilgit to other districts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/68219/sectarian-identities-must-not-affect-govt-work/>

'The Gilgit question', Asian Age, October 27, 2010

The Northern Areas, illegally occupied by Pakistan, has been renamed Gilgit-Baltistan. This region is of great strategic importance to India. It borders Afghanistan and is legally a part of India, but our decision-makers have been ignoring it. In the 20th century, the British were alive to its importance in the context of the threat from Czarist Russia, and after the 1917 Revolution from the Soviet Union. Current reports of an increased Chinese military presence in Gilgit are a cause of grave concern.

The British had a political agent at Gilgit and later obtained a lease to administer the area. As Independence approached, the lease was terminated and Gilgit reverted to Jammu and Kashmir. Brigadier Ghansara Singh of the state Army took over as governor of Gilgit from the British political agent, Colonel Beacon, on August 1, 1947. Major Brown, commanding the Gilgit Scouts, staged a military coup at Gilgit, surrounding the residence of the governor on November 1, 1947. Brig. Ghansara Singh was forced to surrender and the Pakistan flag was hoisted in Gilgit. Pakistan got its first taste of a military coup. The non-Muslim troops of the Maharaja's Army took refuge in Skardu fort along with a large number of Hindu and Sikh refugees. Col. Shahmsher Jung Thapa was commanding the garrison. On November 1, 1947, when this coup took place, Pakistani forces had advanced to the outskirts of Srinagar.

<http://www.asianage.com/columnists/gilgit-question-049>

'PoK party condemns invasion by Pakistan in 1947', October 26, 2010

SRINAGAR: The All Party National Alliance (APNA) in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), has decided to observe October 22 as a 'Black Day' from next year onwards, in remembrance of the 1947 invasion by Pakistani army men disguised as tribesmen, which led to the division of the erstwhile princely state of Kashmir.

Addressing a conference recently, Arif Shahid, a senior leader of the APNA, said that dictum would be followed across Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and the Gilgit-Baltistan region. "The All Party National Alliance from next year will observe October 22 as Black Day across Azad (Independent) Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan because on October 22, on this inauspicious day, the tribal attack played a key and important role in dividing Kashmir," stated Shahid.

<http://sify.com/news/pok-party-condemns-invasion-by-pakistan-in-1947-news-international-kk0vEebgfje.html>

'Absurd logic', Dawn Editorial, October 26, 2010

Politicians across the world are known for coming up with bizarre ideas, and members of the Pakistani political class have proved time and again that they are second to none in this regard. Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan's contention that 'illiterate' individuals were ideal recruits for the police and army certainly falls within this category. The premier, speaking at an event in Muzaffarabad on October 24, called for a 10 per cent quota in the above-mentioned services for uneducated people. That in itself is not objectionable, but Sardar Attique's logic behind it certainly is. He justified his bizarre proposal by linking the success of the erstwhile British Empire to the existence of such a quota in the army and police. Uneducated recruits, the AJK prime minister argued, were perfect for the job because they quietly followed orders without asking questions. He also observed that in South Asian history uneducated individuals had fared better than those who could read and write.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/editorial/absurd-logic-600>

Shabbir Ahmed Mir, 'The 'Great Game' in Gilgit Baltistan', Tribune

The term “great game” is not new to the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, as the mountain-locked area has suffered a history of invasions. The British captured Gilgit-Baltistan during the 19th century and ruled over it for years, in order to keep a check on the increasing Russian influence in the region. Although they succeeded in their efforts, it was the local population that had to pay the price of destruction and slavery.

Notwithstanding, the question of the Chinese army's presence in Gilgit-Baltistan, speculations that the northern part of Pakistan is going to be the next battlefield of the Great Game are gaining strength. The recent flood that devastated the infrastructure of Gilgit and the rest of its valleys were followed by an influx of relief aid flown in by the US. This has raised many eyebrows, reinforcing the conspiracy associated with American interests in G-B: to contain China's “advancement” inside Pakistan (The Karakoram highway may be an example of it).

<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/2537/the-great-game-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

'Exploring socio-economic prospects', Dawn, October 26, 2010

GILGIT BALTISTAN: About two million people scattered over a territory of 72,496 square kilometres presents a rich mix of different cultures, languages, plants, animals and habitats. It is a landscape dominated by high peaks, rivers, lakes, glaciers, wild plateaus, and narrow valleys linked by networks of passes. Gilgit Baltistan (formerly Northern Areas) has a unique role to play in the sustainable development of Pakistan. Although spans a relatively small geographical area, GB serves as a vital catchment for the Indus River, upon which a majority of Pakistan's irrigated agriculture and hydroelectricity depends. Containing some of the world's largest freshwater resources on which the irrigated agriculture of Punjab and Sindh depends, the estimated hydroelectric potential in

Gilgit Baltistan goes beyond Pakistan's current needs.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/letters-to-the-editor/gb-exploring-socioeconomic-prospects-600>

Shabbir Mir, 'Gilgit officials likely to face corruption probe', October 25, 2010

GILGIT: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) will launch corruption investigations against various government department officials in a couple of days, sources stated on October 24. “Following reports of corruption in some government offices, the bureau has decided to send its team to Gilgit to verify the reports,” a source noted, adding that if accusations prove to be correct, the officials responsible will be arrested.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/67248/gilgit-officials-likely-to-face-corruption-probe/>

Vaishnavi Tannir, 'Growing Chinese Assertiveness: Love Thy Neighbour?', Mainstream Weekly

Many feel that the recent Chinese activity in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan spells trouble. At this point, fully comprehending the critical implications this move has, and will have, on the region and its participants, we have to carve a way forward. Moreover, an understanding of the underlying motives and perceptions of China, India and Pakistan is most significant. This particular manoeuvre affects these countries most directly, and the US in an indirect way. What could China's “grand strategy” be? Considering China's “Western Development Campaign” that seeks to boost development in peripheral regions like Xinjiang, this claim does hold some truth. However, as Dr Srikanth Kondapalli puts it, “Giving the devil its due does raise eyebrows. Infrastructure need not be an innocent move.” Thus, while the Chinese stand firm on their stance of economics being the primary motivator, it would be useful to inspect some of the unsaid reasons for their clearly long-term stay in the area.

<http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article2401.html>

Roshan Mughal, 'JKLF activists stage sit-in at LoC', Tribune

MUZAFFARABAD: Hundreds of pro-independence Kashmiris staged a protest sit-in at the Line of Control (LoC). Carrying party flags, banners and placards and shouting pro-freedom slogans, nearly 1,000 Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) supporters, led by its chairman Sardar Saghir, marched to the LoC from Kotli district and gathered at Sari Khoi Ratta where they staged the sit-in. A senior JKLF leader and its founder, Amanullah Khan, could not participate because of his illness but he will participate in the Muzaffarabad-Chakothi march on October 27 march.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/66861/jklf-activists-stage-sit-in-at-loc/>

Shabbir Mir, 'Minister's dam royalty remark sparks rage', Tribune, October 23, 2010

GILGIT: Federal Communication Minister Arbab Alamgir's statement denying Gilgit-Baltistan the right to claim royalty from Diamer-Bhasha Dam has sparked a sharp reaction in the region with politicians fastening their belts for a final showdown with the federal government.

“It's our land and we will have its royalty as per the judgment of the G-B apex court,” Amina Ansari, a lawmaker from Ghanche, Skardu, informed the media on October 22 while commenting on a statement made by Arbab Alamgir a couple of days back in Islamabad. “We will take up this matter with the federal government, but if the issue persists we will chalk out a future course of action,” she stated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/66355/ministers-dam-royalty-remark-sparks-rage/>

'Pakistani Interventions in Gilgit Baltistan Damage Fragile Ecosystem', PRNewswire, October 20, 2010

Pakistan's Policy of advancing militancy by exploiting dispute over river-water with India fails to Benefit Common People: Jurgen Creutzmann, Member of the European Parliament, and Chairperson of Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan Caucus

in the European Parliament - Gilgit Baltistan National Congress (GBNC) holds its second event at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva

A conference titled "Water Resource Exploitation, Environmental Pollution & Flashfloods in Pakistani Occupied Gilgit-Baltistan" was organized by Gilgit Baltistan National Congress at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva on September 24, 2010. The event was chaired by Senge Hasnan Sering, Director of GBNC. Speakers included Member of the European Parliament and Chairperson of Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan Caucus in EP, Mr. Jurgen Creutzmann; Vice Chairperson of International Kashmir Alliance and Spokesperson.

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pakistani-interventions-in-gilgit-baltistan-damage-fragile-ecosystem-105323488.html>

Tariq Naqash, 'Attique vows to promote tourism in AJK', Dawn, October 20, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan and Federal Minister for Tourism Maulana Attaur Rehman on October 19 inaugurated a tourist information and facilitation centre in Muzaffarabad. Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) in collaboration with the AJK tourism department will build the centre. The Prime Minister noted nature had gifted AJK with fantastic potential in tourism sector, adding that his government would launch an organised campaign to introduce tourists' spots to nature lovers within and outside the country, besides offering them a number of incentives.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/local/islamabad/attique-vows-to-promote-tourism-in-ajk-000>

Raja Asghar, 'Provincial status for AJK a novel demand', Dawn, October 19, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Some top Pakistani ex-bureaucrats and a retired judge of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's Supreme Court advocated a novel idea on October 18 of giving the territory, together with Gilgit-Baltistan, a provincial status in Pakistan's constitution until the Kashmir issue India is

resolved, no matter whether Kashmiris opt for accession to either country or for independence.

It seems to be a daunting task for the newly-formed Association for the Rights of People of Jammu and Kashmir (ARJK) think tank to pursue the previously tabooed course despite legal, diplomatic and administrative reasons given at a seminar by people like chairman of the association, Justice (retired) Syed Manzoor Hussain Gilani, former foreign minister and Foreign Secretary, Inamul Haque, former Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Kazi and retired Air Marshal Masood Akhtar. All Kashmiri political parties have opposed such suggestions in the past on grounds they would compromise their demand and Pakistan's stand for Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, including once in early 1970s when the then prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, made an offer during a trip to Muzaffarabad, only to retract the next day in response to strong local reaction.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/local/islamabad/provincial-status-for-ajk-a-novel-demand-900>

Shireen M Mazari, 'Raising more questions & suspicions', The Nation, October 18, 2010

Prime Minister Gilani's address to the nation on October 17 only succeeded in raising more questions and suspicions. To begin with, seating the PM AJK alongside three Chief Ministers, Sindh Senior Minister Pir Mazhar-ul-Haq (due to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah's illness) and Senior Minister from Punjab, Raja Riaz of PPP, was wrong visuals, which our enemies can pounce on. After all, by equating PM AJK with the provincial CMs can be taken as a move to show acceptance of the division of Kashmir and only AJK as part of Pakistan - and thereby the LoC as a "solution" to the Kashmir issue. Is this the so-called "good news" the PM had promised us on Kashmir - the total renunciation of our principled position on the Kashmir dispute? In international diplomacy and politics symbolism is as critical as hardcore agreements and surely our Foreign Office could have advised the PM on the repercussions of having the AJK Premier seated next to him alongside the

CMs for his address to the nation.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/18-Oct-2010/Raising-more-questions--suspicions>

'AJK lawyers demand appointments to top judiciary', October 15, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: Lawyers in Azad Jammu and Kashmir threatened to launch a protest movement if judges are not appointed to vacant posts in superior judiciary. Addressing a news conference in Muzaffarabad on October 15, Bar Association Standing Committee spokesman Shahid Bahar stated four positions are vacant in Azad Kashmir's High Court, while eight ad hoc judges have been appointed in the Supreme Court. Bahar termed the situation as a conspiracy to destroy judiciary. He called for early appointment of judges in line with recommendations made by the Chief Justice of Azad Kashmir High Court.

http://www.samaa.tv/News26600-AJK_lawyers_demand_appointments_to_top_judiciary.aspx

'Kashmiri migrants still treated with disdain in Pak 20-years on', ANI, October 14, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: Some 35,000 people fled from the Kashmir valley in India during the 1990s to settle in Pakistan, which claimed to speak for the beleaguered Kashmiri people, but years later, many migrants, disenchanted with the dream of a welcoming Pakistan, want to return to Kashmir.

Pakistan has not yet granted its citizenship to up to 40 percent of the migrants, mostly from the second or third generations, as reported in the Christian Science Monitor. Other migrants were granted citizenship in 2006 in the run-up to the POK state elections, in what some felt was a cynical ploy by politicians to garner votes.

Presently, most migrants live in camps and subsist on government handouts of about 8 dollars a month per person, and they are not even able to attend college or legally seek employment, as they have neither Pakistani citizenship nor any identity card. "we're always made to feel different. The people here don't like us, don't mix with us, and it's hard to

get a job," said Rana Altaf, a migrant, who lives with his family in a makeshift shanty on the outskirts of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan administered Kashmir.

<http://news.oneindia.in/2010/10/14/kashmirimigrants-still-treated-with-disdain-in-pak-20years.html>

'JuD: Resolve Kashmir or face violence everywhere', Indian Express, October 1, 2010

At a massive public meeting in Muzaffarabad, which followed three such rallies across Pakistan occupied Kashmir, Jamat-ud-Dawa on September 29 put the world on notice: solve the Kashmir dispute or face a fresh armed struggle that can spill beyond the borders of Kashmir. "It's the last chance for the international community to settle Kashmir issue peacefully. If the armed struggle begins again, it will spill beyond the borders of Kashmir," JuD leader Amir Hamza stated while addressing the rally. Urging the international community to take "urgent steps" to end "the repression in Kashmir", Hamza warned, "If the world fails, no power on earth can stop Kashmiris from reverting to a militant struggle."

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/JuD--Resolve-Kashmir-or-face-violence-everywhere/690874>

Beersmans Paul, 'Pakistan has No Stand in J&K'

Conclusions from the Study Tour to J&K from 24/June to 21/July 2010 by Beersmans Paul, President, Belgium Association for Solidarity with J&K.

A. J&K, as it was before partition in 1947, is at present under the rule of three countries:

- (1) China: Aksai Chin and a territory of 5.180 km² ceded by Pakistan to China;
- (2) India: J&K State comprising Jammu-region, the Kashmir-Valley and Ladakh (Kargil and Leh districts);
- (3) Pakistan: Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (Northern Areas).

B. In order to find a permanent solution a dialogue

is necessary on three levels, as we emphasise already since so many years:

- (1) bilateral level: between India and Pakistan;
- (2) national level: between the Government of India, the J&K State Government and the representatives of the civil society of the three regions;
- (3) internal level: between the different regions of J&K.

C. Priority must be given to end the sufferings of the Kashmiris. This can only be realised by stopping violence and misleading people. They want to have a future and jobs for themselves, for their children. After 20 years of militancy, it is high time to give growing up generations a chance to have a normal youth and education. Violence has been rejected as an instrument for seeking a solution. Pakistan should stop cross-border terrorism and cross-border infiltration, stop sending money, ammunition and weapons, stop giving training. Pakistan decides over peace or violence: as long as Pakistan supports terrorism, openly or covertly, there can't be peace in J&K. Without peace, there can't be a solution.

<http://www.kashmirtelegraph.com/2010/10/pakistan-has-no-stand-in-j.html>

Zafar Iqbal, 'Gilgit Baltistan: Rights violations expose Pakistan's intentions', October 11, 2010

SKARDU: Harassment of common citizens and disregard to sanctity of house privacy during search operations in the Gilgit city by security forces has made it clear that Pakistani rulers are voluntarily leaving Gilgit-Balastistan and Islamabad does not need the region anymore. Because had the rulers needed the region they would not have let loose such type of terror in the region and the rulers would not have forgotten that the region was part of the Kashmir dispute and its status to be resolved under the UN resolutions. These views were expressed by Chairman Gilgit-Balastistan United Movement (GBUM) Manzoor Hussain Parwana in a press statement issued in Skardu. He said terrorists were coming in the area and arms and ammunition were brought to the region. The terror elements were

being patronized by those who are at the helms of affairs in Gilgit-Baltistan. Gilgit-Baltistan neither produces arms and ammunition nor any terrorists.

<http://www.groundreport.com/Business/Gilgit-Baltistan-Rights-violations-expose-Pakistan/2929861>

Shabbir Mir, 'Boundary row dispute should come first', Tribune, October 12, 2010

GILGIT: The people to be displaced by the Diamer-Bhasha dam have asked the government to settle the boundary dispute between Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) prior to construction, warning that the row could complicate the situation. "The situation will be complex in the coming days if K-P's encroachment is not checked," said Atta Ullah, the president of Affectees of Bhasha Dam Committee on October 11.

The boundary disputes between K-P and G-B emerged a few years back after people on both sides claimed rights over Shandur and parts of Diamer. The tussle intensified as the Gilgit polo team boycotted the Shandur polo tournament. Last month, lawmakers hailing from Diamer had complained on the floor of G-B Assembly that the leaders of the Hazara movement had erected banners 'inside the boundary of Diamer district' suggesting that the area belonged to K-P.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/61438/boundary-row-dispute-should-come-first/>

Shabbir Mir, 'Gilgit-Baltistan approves filling 2,400 new vacancies', Tribune, October 30, 2010

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Mehdi Shah on October 29 approved filling of 2,400 newly created posts, stating that the appointments will be made strictly on merit. "The decision to this effect was taken in the cabinet meeting chaired by the chief minister," Information Minister Ali Madad Sher noted after the meeting.

The Information Minister stated that apart from other sectors, the education sector will have 600 posts. Apart from this, there will be 350 posts in the health sector, 36 posts in the livestock sector, 350 posts in water and power department, 246 posts in

agriculture and 333 posts in the newly-formed district of Hunza-Nagar.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/69781/gilgit-baltistan-approves-filling-2400-new-vacancies/>

'University in Gilgit to start Chinese language classes', Tribune, October 11, 2010

GILGIT: The Karakoram International University (KIU) in Gilgit plans to start Chinese language classes to reduce the communication gap between the people of the two neighbouring countries, official sources stated on October 10. "The management is discussing the idea and classes will be held soon," officials stated, adding that the course will be extremely beneficial for those doing business in China as well as those wishing to acquire higher education in the neighbouring country. The Karakoram Highway is the only land route connecting Pakistan with China via Gilgit.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/61031/university-in-gilgit-to-start-chinese-language-classes/>

Tariq Naqash, 'Quake anniversary marked by shutdown, protests in AJK', Dawn, October 9, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: A crippling shutdown strike was observed in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) capital on the fifth anniversary of 2005 earthquake on October 8, with people from different walks of life, including those with disabilities, staging rallies and demonstrations to condemn alleged delay in reconstruction, embezzlement of funds meant for the purpose and apathy of the authorities towards their plight.

The shops and business centres in almost all parts of Muzaffarabad remained closed on the call of Markazi Anjuman Taajran, an alliance of various bodies of traders. However, in some areas a few shops were opened by the members of a rival forum of traders whose leaders had taken a pro-government stance after a meeting with Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/local/islamabad/quake-anniversary-marked-by-shutdown,-protests-in-ajk-900>

Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, 'Pakistani rogue policy on Kashmir', October 8, 2010, Sri Lanka Guardian, Dhaka

For decades, rulers in Islamabad are playing nasty tactics in keeping Jammu and Kashmir into turmoil by instigating and funding Islamist militancy in that area while Pakistan is continuing to capture a part of Kashmir in the name of Azad Kashmir, which actually is the sanctuary of militancy under direct rule of Islamabad and Pakistani intelligence outfits. It is believed that, Islamist militancy is not only trained but also exported to South Asian region and other destinations from this place under the direct patronization of Pakistani Inter Service Intelligence [ISI].

Apprehensions in Indian security circles that the crackdown by the Pakistan army on Taliban - seen as a last resort after the jihadist turned their guns on the Pakistani state - could mean trouble in Kashmir are being proved correct. Not only have infiltration attempts by regular jihadist outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba gone up, the presence of Taliban poses a new threat.

The Taliban, who recently fought against Pakistan army in Swat Valley and other areas along the Pak-Afghan border, were well trained and battle-hardened. They could put their experience of fighting US troops to use in Kashmir.

Many Kashmiri militants are believed to have joined the Taliban and al-Qaeda groups after Islamabad was forced to shut down their ISI-sponsored training camps under American pressure following the September 11 attacks. In past four months, a number of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Joish-e-Mohammed militants were arrested by Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies. They confessed during interrogation that, Pakistani government were funding and patronizing their activities in South Asian region. Pakistan has consistently denied such allegation and tried to say that, they only are 'helping' their 'Muslim Jihadist Brethren' in 'Indian occupied Kashmir'. Pakistani rulers claim that, Kashmir is being 'occupied' by India, though they never can give any answer as to what they think about part of Kashmir in Pakistan.

<http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2010/10/pakistani-rogue-policy-on-kashmir.html>

Kosar Naqvi, Manzoor Ali, Roshan Mughal, 'Five years later', Tribune, October 8, 2010

PESHAWAR/ABBOTTABAD/MUZAFFARABAD: Five years later, the memories of the October 8 earthquake remain alive. "Memories of the earthquake are not a thing of the past for me. It seems like it happened yesterday," said resident Javed Iqbal from Balakot city in Mansehra district. Balakot was a city of around 20,000 people, and on that fateful day it lost around 14,000 of its inhabitants. It is reported that around 2,400 school children were dead in less than an hour and about 5,000 were injured as nearly 300 schools were destroyed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/59854/five-years-later/>

Shabbir Mir, '10 months on, victims still not compensated', Tribune, October 7, 2010

GILGIT: Acting governor Gilgit-Baltistan Wazir Baig asked the government to make it clear if the victims of the Attabad Lake disaster will receive compensation or not. "It's been over 10 months now since the tragedy but the people haven't been compensated for their losses as yet. The government should make it clear to them if it can pay for their losses or not," said Baig, who is also the speaker of the G-B assembly. Baig's remarks followed a threat by those affected by the landslide triggered lake to launch a country-wide strike against the government's failure to recompense.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/59383/10-months-on-victims-still-not-compensated/>

'The First Every Meeting of Gilgit-Baltistan Council has been Convened on October 22, 2010', Gilgit-Baltistan Times, October 6, 2010

GILGIT: The meeting of Gilgit-Baltistan Council was been convened on October 22, 2010 in Islamabad by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The 6 member Gilgit-Baltistan Council would function as an upper house of Gilgit-Baltistan. The Prime Minister of Pakistan will be the chairman of the

council. It is to be noted that the meeting of the council has been announced many times in the past as well but on the pretext of the busy schedule of Prime Minister of Pakistan for whom other business were most important has kept on cancelling the meeting of Gilgit-Baltistan Council again and again.

<http://gbtimes.wordpress.com/2010/10/06/the-first-every-meeting-of-gilgit-baltistan-council-has-been-convened-on-october-22-2010/>

'Ambassador of Czech Republic Visited Gilgit-Baltistan, Extended Friendly Relationships', Gilgit-Baltistan Times, October 5, 2010

SKARDU: Ambassador of Czech Republic visited Gilgit-Baltistan where he met with Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah at Skardu. He announced 200,000 US\$ and handed over keys of ambulances during his visit to the affectees of floods. The Ambassador stated that in Gilgit-Baltistan there are tremendous resources of water which could produce huge amounts of electricity crucial for development. Czech has expertise in energy turbine which could be utilized to generate power in Gilgit-Baltistan.

<http://gbtimes.wordpress.com/2010/10/05/ambassador-of-czech-republic-visited-gilgit-baltistan-extended-friendly-relationships/>

Speech of Abdul Hamid Khan, Human Rights Council 15th Session Human Rights of Ethnic and Religious minorities in South and Central Asia Geneva, October 3, 2010

Balawaristan (Pakistan occupied Gilgit Baltistan) is a disputed territory with approximately 72,000 Sq KM area and with a population of 2 million. It is rich in culture, and resources, but is highly deprived and neglected part in the entire state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) due to its different and unique ethnical and cultural background in South Asia. The people of Indian controlled J&K have all rights like rest of Indian states. In addition with special status under article 370 that gives it more powers in legislation, judicial, financial, cultural and executive powers as compared to other states of India. It, in spite of being constitutional part of India, state subject rule remains in force which

protects its unique culture and economical rights. Whereas this is not case with Gilgit Baltistan where foreigners, like Pakistani, Chinese and Afghan nationals have been settled to change the ethnic demography and unique culture of this Area.

<http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2010/10/gilgit-baltistan-speech-of-abdul-hamid.html>

'Peace Conference asks India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir Conflict according to wishes of Kashmiris', Pakistan Christian Post, October 3, 2010

KOTLI: Kashmir Peace Conference (KPC) on October 3 urged India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute according to wishes of Kashmiris in order to foster peace and prosperity in South Asian region. "India and Pakistan should rescind Indus Water Treaty (IWT) to accommodate the Kashmiris and revenue from use of water must be spent on local development under a new justified accord about regional rivers." the Conference demanded.

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenewsd.php?hnewsid=2325>

'Establishment tramples our rights: BNF', Weekly Baang Karachi, October 5- 11, 2010

GENEVA: The exiled Chairman of Balawaristan National Front (BNF) Abdul Hamid Khan said despite passage of over six decades, Pakistan has failed to respect the basic rights of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and burning issues like economic empowerment, political autonomy and human rights in the region remained unresolved in spite of promises made by the international community on the platform of United Nations. Speaking at a meeting of Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Mr Khan accused Pakistan's Establishment of perpetrating widespread human rights violations in Gilgit-Baltistan. He said the violations were not limited or confined to political field as local people's cultural, social, religious rights were being trampled without any check and the indigenous people were being turned into a minority in their own land. The BNF chief said the two million

people of the region had been denied their due rights guaranteed under the UN charters for the last over six decades.

http://weeklybaang.blogspot.com/2010/10/weekly-baang-karachi-volume-03-issue-32_03.html

'Gilgit Baltistan: Withdraw sedition cases against native right defender', Press release by the Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement

Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM) held a press conference to condemn cowardly act of the authorities, who have registered sedition case against progressive nationalist right defenders of Pakistan occupied Gilgit-Baltistan. The activists were holding a peaceful rally demanding relief

goods and funds for the flashflood and landslide victims of Hunza-Gojal. Chairperson of GBUM, Manzoor Parwana while addressing the press conference at Skardu, Baltistan, stated, “Sedition cases against peaceful flood victims has exposed the so-called democratic regime, which claims to have granted right of freedom of expression and political activity to the masses. Contrary to that, Pakistani agencies continue to obstruct socio-political gatherings, torture and detain activists and commit human rights violations with impunity. With the international community failing to notice, Gilgit-Baltistan continues to remain under colonial-rule.”

<http://www.unpo.org/article/11861>

Economic Developments

'Gilgit-Baltistan DWP approves 19 projects', Dawn, October 28, 2010

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan Developmental Working Party approved 19 development projects, senior officials of the planning and development department stated on October 27. They said that the projects were approved in a meeting chaired by GB chief secretary Saifullah Chattha. The sources noted the approved projects included 10 of the transport and communication sector, two of animal husbandry, two of physical planning and housing sector, and one each of irrigation, power and education sectors. Mr Chattha directed the administrative secretaries to ensure timely completion of the projects.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/gilgitbaltistan-dwp-approves-19-projects-800>

'Protest rally in PoK: Cross border trade suspended', October 27, 2010

SRINAGAR: Following protest rallies in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), the cross border trade between India and PoK was debarred on October 27. The PoK authorities suspended the trade on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, which is held every Tuesday and Wednesday and informed the Indian authorities. According the Indian army, 36 trucks from the Indian side were scheduled to cross over the Line of Control (LoC) but returned after the trade was suspended.

<http://news.oneindia.in/2010/10/27/protest-rally-in-pok-cross-border-trade-suspended.html>

Bharti Jain, 'Islamabad cold to cross-LoC travel, trade', The Economic Times, October 23, 2010

NEW DELHI: Even as India plans to simplify verification procedures for passengers wishing to travel to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus and cut processing time

for permits to just six weeks, Pakistan has failed to reciprocate New Delhi's enthusiasm for such CBMs, resulting in poor response to the cross-border service. Pakistan, sources in the government pointed out, has been dragging its feet over verification of applicants wishing to travel from Srinagar to PoK. This comes even as India has responded positively and promptly to similar requests from Pakistan for verification of passengers from PoK. The lack of co-operation from Islamabad in carrying out verification of local contacts of prospective travellers from J&K has slowed down traffic from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad. It has also brought about an imbalance between passenger traffic from PoK to Srinagar and that from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Islamabad-cold-to-cross-LoC-travel-trade/articleshow/6796311.cms>

'JK-PoK biz worth reaches Rs 300 cr in 2 years of trade', Indian Express, October 21, 2010

The cross-border trade between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) on October 21 completed two years as the trade volume on the Srinagar--Muzaffarabad route reached nearly Rs 300 crore since October 2008. The trade between the divided parts of the state, which was flagged off by the governor NN Vohra, has grown in terms of volume, value and number of items exchanged through trade facilitation centre at Salamabad in Uri sector of Baramulla district over the past two years.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/jkpok-biz-worth-reaches-rs-300-cr-in-2-years-of-trade/700627/>

Roshan Mughal, 'Businessmen want to expand intra-Kashmir trade', Tribune, October 22, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: Traders marked the completion of two years of cross Kashmir trade service in a rare meeting on the heavily-militarised Line of Control (LoC). Traders from both Azad

Kashmir and Indian Kashmir called upon their respective administrations to increase the trade volume and allow the traders of divided territory to meet every week at the LoC.

The one dozen traders, six from each side sat on the Peace Bridge at LoC in Chakothi under the watch of Indian and Pakistani civil and military officials and discussed the predicament they face in the weekly trading cross at the LoC and vowed to continue the trade despite challenges and obstacles.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/65935/businessmen-want-to-expand-intra-kashmir-trade/>

Peer Muhammad, 'PWD awards Rs94m contracts without approval', Tribune, October 18, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The Gilgit-Baltistan Public Works Department (PWD) has awarded contracts worth Rs 94.1 million for development projects without approval and in clear violation of rules, according to the 2008-09 audit report. The report, presented to a National Assembly special committee on Gilgit-Baltistan last week, reveals that the Executive Engineer Building and Road Division, G-B-PWD awarded as many as 13 contracts without advertising in newspapers. According to the Procurement Rules 2004, tenders must be invited from registered pre-qualified contractors, firms and suppliers through advertisements in the press for works exceeding the sum of Rs100,000.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/64095/pwd-awards-rs94m-contracts-without-approval/>

'Traders discuss boost in trade with India', Pakistan Observer

SRINAGAR: Traders from India and Pakistan discussed enhancement of trade between the two countries at the 'Chakan-da-Bagh' Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch District, as stated in media reports. A group of about 83 traders from Rawalakot (Azad Kashmir) met 65 Indian traders to discuss how trade between the two countries could be further improved.

To settle all the litigation processes, the traders discussed and calculated the trade benefits and

accounts. The Trade Facilitating Officer of Azad Kashmir, Raja Arshad, said such meetings provide a platform for the traders to discuss their trade processes at length. "The biggest benefit of this trade is that both the sides experience profit in their earnings. Their business is doing better. We are trying to make this trade better," said Arshad. The Trade Facilitating Officer of Poonch District, Gurmail Singh, said that the meet is a good way of settling all trade accounts between the traders.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=57432>

'Supply, stock of wheat to be ensured in GB', Pakistan Observer

HUNZA: Minister for Law Wazir Shakeel Advocate has said that steps were being taken to ensure smooth supply and stock of wheat in all the districts of Gilgit-Baltistan region. Talking to this news agency, he said that special instruction has been given to concerned authorities to proper supply and stock of wheat in the remote and far flung part of this region including Skardu, Ghangche, Astore and Hunza Nagar. The process of wheat stock in all the godown would be completed before the start of the winter season and snow falling, he noted. He said that people of far flung areas of GB would have the opportunity to purchase the essential commodity near to their living places without facing any difficulty.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=57422>

'Rs.12 billion approved for rebuilding of quake hit areas'

ISLAMABAD: The Federal government has approved Rs.12 billion for execution of rebuilding projects in earthquake affected areas of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). This was announced by Interior Minister Rehman Malik in a meeting which was held to review the ongoing development projects in earthquake hit areas. The meeting was attended by Member National Assembly Marvi Memon, Additional Chief Secretary AJK Tariq Khan, Deputy Chairman Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) Haroon Aslam, Director General State Earthquake Reconstruction

and Rehabilitation Agency (SERRA) Liaquat Ali and officials of Tahreek- e- Tameer Nau (TTN) Col. Yaqoob, Raja Wasim, Asif Mustafai and others.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=169917>

'Rs 700m released for land acquisition of Bhasha Dam', Daily Times, October 15, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The government has released an amount of Rs 700 million for the acquisition of land for the mega Diamer Bhasha Dam project as the first installment. According to the sources of the Ministry of Water and Power, the amount has been handed over to deputy commissioner Diamer so as to start the land acquisition process. The ground breaking of WAPDA offices and colonies is expected next month, sources added.

Referring to the water and hydropower potential of Gilgit-Baltistan, sources maintained that development of these resources through projects like Diamer Bhasha Dam would not only play a pivotal role in strengthening the national economy but also pave the way for socioeconomic uplift of the area.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C10%5C15%5Cstory_15-10-2010_pg5_14

'Wheat production in AJK kicks off', Pakistan Observer

MIRPUR: An integrated phased plan had been launched to raise wheat production in Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK), official sources stated. Director General Agriculture Raja Tariq Masood stated that 700 metric tons of high quality approved wheat seed had recently been supplied to the growers in all the districts of the state.

“Those cultivators who do not have wheat seed can collect the same from the progressive farmers to ensure timely cultivation of the crop,” he said, adding, “another 20 tons of seeds of various forms produced by different research farms are also available at the Research Farms of the department on subsidized rates.” Meanwhile, the official sources said the cultivators in AJK had to face problems in receiving the approved seed on time in the past, which, he added, caused delay in the

growing process in most of the areas.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=56971>

'ERRA halts funding to widows, orphans', Tribune, October 14, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: The Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (Erra) stopped the funding for widows and orphans who were victims of the 2005 earthquake under the Kashiana project. Erra had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which they were to fund the Kashiana project for two years, helping 120 widows and orphans who had lost their lands, spouses and parents in the earthquake. They had been declared most vulnerable during a survey of the earthquake-hit areas of Azad Jammu & Kashmir conducted by the authority. The project was started one year ago after the MoU was signed between the Social Welfare Department of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Erra.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/62326/erra-halts-funding-to-widows-orphans/>

'G-B govt shelve plans to impose taxes', Tribune, October 13, 2010

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government has put off plans to impose taxes on the people of the region till its assembly formulates a comprehensive tax policy, G-B Finance Minister Mohammad Ali Akhtar stated on October 12. “The G-B Assembly will discuss the issue and a comprehensive tax policy will be prepared. Until then no taxes will be imposed on the people of the region,” the Finance Minister noted. Nationalists and opposition parties in the region have opposed the idea of imposing taxes in G-B, pleading that the region has no representation in parliament therefore taxes cannot be levied on people.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/61882/g-b-govt-shelves-plans-to-impose-taxes/>

Bilal Hussain, 'Trans-LoC Trade: A Silver Lining', October 10, 2010

In every black cloud there is always a silver lining. The unabated unrest which has affected most of the business segments in the Kashmir valley, however,

baring few hiccups couldn't influence the trans-LoC [Line of Control] trade between two divided Kashmir via Uri-Muzaffarabad route which went 'smoothly' during past four months of curfew and protests. Despite odds that trans-LoC trade had witnessed in two years time to a greater extent, if not succeeded but has survived till date.

In the second week of September, 2010 the trans-LoC trade via Uri-Muzaffarabad route achieved another milestone by crossing Rs 300 crore mark. Officials at Trade Facilitation Centre [TFC] Salamabad, Uri, on record have said that the intra-Kashmir trade reached Rs 300.34 between the two divided parts of Kashmir.

<http://www.countercurrents.org/hussain101010.htm>

Sami Khan, 'The financial constraints of Karakorum International University ended: VC', Gilgit-Baltistan Times, October 8, 2010

GILGIT: Dr. Najma Najam the vice chancellor of the only University of Gilgit-Baltistan, Karakorum International University (KIU) stated that the government has cooperated with the University and financial problem have been resolved. She further stated that in a bid to achieve high level of academic excellence she has introduced subjects matching to international standards. The university has also introduced modern technological tools to assess any sought of plagiarism in the thesis submitted at Masters, M.Phil and PhD level. In addition, she stated that a year earlier when she has joined the university there were only 6 P.hDs and now just one year later there are 26 PhDs and in coming months 3-4 more PhDs will join the University.

<http://gbtimes.wordpress.com/2010/10/08/the-financial-constraints-of-karakorum-international-university-ended-%E2%80%93vc/>

Shabbir Mir, 'G-B deliberately turned into tax evaders' haven', Tribune, October 7, 2010

GILGIT: The provincial president of Pakistan Muslim League-N Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) said that the establishment has deliberately turned the people of GB into a 'tax stealing' community, in an attempt to perpetuate a weak political system in the region.

“The habit of not paying taxes has been nurtured into people in an attempt to keep the bureaucratic setup strong,” said Hafizur Rehman, the chief of PML-N's provincial chapter at a press conference on October 6.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/59380/g-b-deliberately-turned-into-tax-evaders-haven/>

'Huge defaults found in G-B House payments', Tribune, October 3, 2010

GILGIT: A parliamentary committee, constituted to probe alleged irregularities in the affairs of Gilgit-Baltistan House in Islamabad, has submitted its report, highlighting defaults of millions of rupees by politicians in recent years. “The committee headed by Raziuddin, a lawmaker, has acquired documentary evidence proving irregularities committed by various politicians belonging to the region over the past few years,” official sources stated on October 2. The committee was formed by Speaker of Gilgit-baltistan Legislative Assembly Wazir Baig more than a month ago after complaints of irregularities emerged against local politicians belonging to the former PML-Q government.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/57852/huge-defaults-found-in-g-b-house-payments/>

'Intra Kashmir Trade Breaks Down', Kashmir Observer, October 1, 2010

SRINAGAR: Like rest of the businesses, trade between two divided parts of Kashmir too remains virtually frozen for last three months with traders incurring losses worth millions of Rupees due to ongoing crisis. The two sides had traded goods worth Rs 356 crore during the last financial year.

The value of the cross LoC trade between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad during the last financial has been to the tune of over Rs 164 crore while goods worth Rs192.57 crores were exchanged on the Poonch-Rawalakote route. Giving details the Minister for Industries and Commerce S. S. Slathia informed the state assembly on October 1 that the value of Rs. 192 crore includes over Rs 70.73 crore worth export to PoK and Import from PoK worth Rs 121.83 crore. Export from this side along the Srinagar-

Muzaffarabad road was worth Rs71.80 crore, while the import from PoK was of the value of Rs92.41 crore, he noted. On the Poonch-Rawalkote route in Jammu region, goods worth Rs70.73 crore were exported to PoK and goods worth Rs121.83 crore were imported. On the question of opening of more trading routes between the divided parts of

Kashmir, the minister said it was a matter between India and Pakistan.

http://www.kashmirobservers.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5838:intra-kashmir-trade-reaches-356-crore-this-fiscal&catid=5:business&Itemid=6

International Developments

'Annual Kashmir EU Week commences', Kashmir Media Service, October 15, 2010

BRUSSELS: In conjunction with the European Parliament All Party Group for Kashmir, the Kashmir Centre Brussels has dedicated the 6th Annual Kashmir EU Week to “3 Dimensions of Kashmir”. The 6th annual Kashmir EU Week was inaugurated by Sardar Attique Khan, the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in front of an audience of MEPs, NGOs, think tanks, human rights organisations and delegates from permanent representations to the EU. A press released issued by the Kashmir Centre Brussels stated that the event sought to explore water resources, trade and environment in Kashmir.

<http://www.kmsnews.org/news/annual-kashmir-eu-week-commences>

'Four members of the European Parliament decided to roll up their sleeves and help the flood victims of Gilgit-Baltistan', PRNewswire, October 8, 2010

BRUSSELS: Four Members of the European Parliament Jurgen Creutzmann, Michael Theurer, Marietje Schaake and Thomas Mann decided to directly help the flood victims of the Pakistan-administered region of Gilgit Baltistan, north of Kashmir, as soon as it became evident that the central Pakistani government was not distributing

the international funds arriving in Islamabad to this region. The European Parliament Members therefore created a non-profit organisation named "Friends of Gilgit Baltistan".

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/four-members-of-the-european-parliament-decided-to-roll-up-their-sleeves-and-help-the-flood-victims-of-gilgit-baltistan-104554734.html>

Shabir Choudhry, 'Study tour for PAK and Gilgit Baltistan', October 4, 2010

LONDON: A group of people concerned about plight of Kashmiris in Pakistani Administered Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan is leaving for the region. The purpose of the visit is to see for themselves what goes on in these areas; and what quality of life people of these areas enjoy.

The delegation will ascertain what are the demands of the people of these areas and if they were happy with the status quo. The delegation will meet and interview political leaders and members of the civil society in both regions; and see what social, economic, cultural and political rights they enjoy and what could be done to enhance quality of life in these regions.

<http://www.kashmirmediawatch.com/world/study-tour-for-pak-and-gilgit-baltistanshabir-choudhry>

Other Developments

'Cultural festival kicks off in Muzaffarabad', Daily Times, October 24, 2010

ISLAMABAD: A three-day cultural festival (October 23-25) titled 'Kashmir Festival' kicked off in Muzaffarabad on October 23. Lok Virsa in collaboration with Ministry of Culture is organising the festival under the directive of Minister for Culture Pir Aftab Hussain Shah Jilani. This festival is organised with an aim to preserve and disseminate rich cultural heritage of the beautiful Kashmir valley, and to provide opportunity to local craftsman of the region to sell and promote their items. Lok Virsa Executive Director, Khalid Javaid and Kashmir Cultural Academy (KCA) Chairman, Jawad Jafri inaugurated the opening session. Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan was to formally inaugurate the festival on October 24.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C10%5C24%5Cstory_24-10-2010_pg11_6

'Planning underway to build sports complex in Azad Kashmir', Dawn, October 21, 2010

MIRPUR: Plans to build a multi-purpose sports complex in Azad Kashmir are currently underway, officials involved in the project stated. The sports complex is set to be built in the AJK city of Mirpur, which is also home to the region's largest cricket stadium the 16,000 capacity Quaid-e-Azam Stadium. A 2.5-acre piece of land has already been allotted to the AJK Sports Board by the Mirpur Development Authority for the said complex. The sports complex will comprise a grand gymnasium for indoor games such as badminton, table tennis, volleyball and basketball. Outdoor fields for sports like football and tennis are also part of the plans.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/sport/07-planning-underway-to-build-sports-complex-in-azad-kashmir-ha-03>

Shabbir Mir, 'Spillway to be deepened another 30 metres', Tribune, October 14, 2010

GILGIT: Authorities in Gilgit-Baltistan have planned to drain the 23-kilometre-long 'landslide' lake in Attabad within the next three months by deepening the spillway by another 30 metres, officials stated on October 13. "The work on the spillway will commence on November 1, as the plan is under discussion at the highest level," Provincial Finance Minister Mohammad Ali Akhtar noted on October 13.

A massive landslide early this year had blocked River Hunza, creating a lake that submerged at least five villages of upper Hunza as it expanded over the months. More than 4,000 people were displaced due to the landslide that had killed 20 people in Attabad village. In an attempt to drain the lake, army engineers completed a spillway by June, through which water discharge continues till present.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/62330/spillway-to-be-deepened-another-30-metres/>

'Bomb planted on Gilgit river defused', Dawn, October 12, 2010

GILGIT: The Bomb disposal squad defused heavy explosive material that was kept in a pressure cooker and planted under a suspension bridge over the Gilgit River. A senior police official told this correspondent requesting not to be named that police along with bomb disposal squad rushed to the site after getting information about the bomb. They cordoned off the area and started search for the device, which was later found underneath the bridge. The official said an anonymous phone call informed the police that there was a bomb planted on the suspension bridge. The official said that the device was defused and a case had been registered.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/bomb-planted-on-gilgit-river-defused-300>

'UN-HABITAT to establish housing museum in Muzaffarabad'

ISLAMABAD: On the event of fifth anniversary of

earthquake of 8th October 2005, which was the highest scale disaster in the history of the region, UN-HABITAT Pakistan is in process of establishing a unique museum in Thori Park Muzaffarabad where a variety of model houses will be displayed along with demonstration of safe construction of earthquake resistant buildings, as reported by UN-HABITAT through an official statement issued in Islamabad. "The models of houses at museum are mud house, dhajji house, bhattar house, confined and reinforced masonry models and conventional wooden house, which is being shifted from Leepa. UN-HABITAT helped the bereaved earthquake affected people for more than four years regarding construction of earthquake resistant buildings with the help of successful implementation of programmes in AJK and KPK. UN-HABITAT will complete the museum shortly with buildings and models to show safer construction as a proud deliberation of success. A demonstrative exhibition for general public has been organized on 8th October 2010", the statement noted.

<http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=169626>

'ERRA, MGPO sign MoU for schools' reconstruction in Muzaffarabad', Associated Press of Pakistan, October 5, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) and Mountain and Glacier Protection Organization (MGPO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on October 5 in Islamabad for reconstruction of two girls schools in District, Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Director Donors and Sponsors Coordination Cell, Lt Col Shahzad Ahmed Nazim and Chief Executive MGPO, Ayesha Khan signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=118229&Itemid=2

Shabbir Mir 'Gaise Valley forest in peril', Tribune, October 4, 2010

GILGIT: The Gaise Valley forest, the third largest and the only 'virgin' forest of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B),

is under immense threat of being wiped out in the near future if concrete steps are not taken immediately to preserve it, experts and residents of Gaise stated on October 3.

Gaise, a valley of district Diamer, is one of the worst-hit villages of the recent floods that have killed over 182 people in G-B. The valley alone suffered 52 casualties on August 11 when lightning struck at least 30 different places of the area. Floods and landslides that followed washed away everything, including standing crops, trees and livestock.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/58210/gaise-valley-forest-in-peril/>

'Watan cards come to Gilgit-Baltistan', Tribune, October 31, 2010

GILGIT: Chief Minister Mehdi Shah inaugurated the Watan card scheme in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on October 30. He appealed to the public for austerity in daily life. "This is a gift from the present government to the poverty-stricken people of the country," stated Shah. He noted that the rehabilitation of the flood victims will begin next month. The chief minister said that though the money that was offered to the flood victims under the scheme was insufficient for the reconstruction of houses, he maintained that it could still be used at least to initiate some form of reconstruction of the houses.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/70331/watan-cards-come-to-gilgit-baltistan/>

'Scholarships for Baltistan students', Dawn, October 30, 2010

In September 2008, the federal government announced undergraduate scholarships for students of marginalised areas under the project titled 'Provision of higher education opportunities for students of Balochistan and Fata (president directive)'. The aim of the project is to provide educational opportunities to talented but underprivileged students of backward areas of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the authorities ignored the students of GB in the scholarship scheme though

the region is no less backward than are Balochistan and Fata.

<http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/letters-to-the-editor/scholarships-for-baltistan-students-000>

Shabbir Mir, '16 flood-hit villages in Diamer given relief goods', Tribune, October 30, 2010

GILGIT: The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) and another non-governmental organisations (NGO) distributed relief goods in 16 villages of the Diamer District that were affected by the recent floods, an NGO official stated on October 29. "From October 11 to 25, a total of 1,596 families affected in the district were given relief packages containing 130 tons of flour, 6 tons of cooking oil and other items," said Ishfaq Ahmed a representative of the Diamer Party Allocation Programme (DPAP). Ahmed said that they would reach out to other villages of the district as well by the end of this month to ensure that the affected people get their share of relief goods. With winter approaching in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), the people most affected by this calamity have urged the government to speedup the rehabilitation process before they are struck by the bitter cold weather.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/69666/16-flood-hit-villages-in-diamer-given-relief-goods/>

'Governor Baig wants dams in Gilgit Baltistan', Pamir Times, October 30, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Acting Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Wazir Baig called on Federal Minister for Water and Power Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in Islamabad on October 29 and congratulated him on getting funds from

America for Sadpara and Diamer Basha dams. Wazir Baig was accompanied by Deputy Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly, Jameel Ahmad. He also asked the minister to hold talks with China for completion of Bonji dam. He said the timely completion of those dams would not only facilitate the people of Gilgit-Baltistan but would also help meet power shortage in Pakistan.

<http://pamirtimes.net/2010/10/30/governor-baig-wants-dams-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

'Weekly bus service unaffected despite Pak firing', PTI, October 28, 2010

SRINAGAR: The unprovoked firing by Pakistani troops on forward Indian positions failed to have any impact on the weekly bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad as 27 passengers on October 28 crossed sides near the Line of Control (LoC) in Baramulla district. While 16 passengers went to Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) aboard the 'Carvan-e-Aman' bus, 11 passengers came from across the LoC through 'Aman Sethu' (Peace Bridge) at Kaman Post along the LoC, official sources stated.

<http://ibnlive.in.com/generalnewsfeed/news/weekly-bus-service-unaffected-despite-pak-firing/453927.html>

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

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