

POK NEWS DIGEST

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Volume 3

Number 6

June 2010

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Hunza Valley Inches Towards Flood

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Jammu & Kashmir

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

About this Issue

The current issue embodies reports on the natural catastrophe that looms large over the PoK region and the ensuing discontent amongst masses who find themselves caught amidst uncertainties. There was widespread rage over delayed response from the government of Pakistan when Hunza valley was threatened by glacial outbursts and flood last month. People were displaced in large numbers and this posed a huge challenge to the state apparatus which has not proved efficient on earlier emergency situations such as this. PoK is vulnerable to natural calamities as it lies in an extremely sensitive seismic zone and the construction of dams and other infrastructure have proved rather adverse to the environmental balance in the region. It is important to note that the region cannot afford a calamity of the scale of the 2005 earthquake which incurred colossal damage to the lives of people.

A report included in this edition very significantly attempts to draw a link between the Times Square bomber, Shehzaad Faisal and the terror camps in PoK by revealing that he was trained at a Lashkar camp near Muzaffarabad back in 2006. Notably, Faisal admitted to his links with Lashkar during his interrogation by US authorities.

Prime Minister of the so called AJK, Raja Farooq Haider strongly opposed Pakistan's interference in the internal matters of AJK and noted that such meddling would lead to adverse consequences. This development reemphasizes the trust deficit between Pakistan and the so called AJK which has persisted over more than 60 years of Pakistan's invasion of PoK.

Priyanka Singh

Pakistani Dams in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Recipe for Environmental Disaster

Senge H Sering

On January 4, 2010, landslides and glacial outbursts caused a blockage in the Hunza River, transforming the upper reaches of the water body into a lake, which has now stretched to a length of around thirty miles. Pakistan's national disaster management corporation expects this lake to burst in the next few days causing flash floods. The accident may result into greater damage to the moveable property, pastures, farmland and dwellings in the lower districts of Gilgit-Baltistan, which is part of Jammu & Kashmir under Pakistani occupation. However, Ataabad landslide incident is not an isolated case. It may as well be the tip of the iceberg, as regular glacial outbursts, melting of glacial moraines and sporadic landslides are seen by many as a challenge which will continue to haunt the natives of Gilgit-Baltistan in the years to come. It is in fact the beginning of the long-term environmental disaster, accentuated due to excessive and unnatural human interventions by way of mega infrastructure projects like highways and dams. The unwarranted human interference has affected the growth and sustainability of local glaciers, which are the lifeline of the agro-based local subsistence ecosystem.

The glaciers of the Karakoram Range are a source of water for Gilgit-Baltistan, Tibet, East-Turkestan, Ladakh, Kashmir, Wakhan, Badakhshan and Tajikistan. Given the vast glacial reserves, Gilgit-Baltistan is often called the third pole of the world, or the water tank of South Asia. Many of her glaciers reach over sixty miles in length; the longest outside the polar region. However, owing to glacial retreat and drought, farmlands in Gilgit-Baltistan, Tibet and East-Turkestan are transforming into deserts. On the other hand, rapid increase in the atmospheric temperature is causing a series of floods and mudslides. These unnatural changes have alarming consequences for the local farmers who subsist on the natural resources which are fundamental to the survival of thousands of years-old native civilization.

After destroying Ataabad and killing twenty two people, the water has now flooded Ayeenabad, Sarat, Shishkat, Gulmit, Phasu and the neighboring areas where the villagers have reported loss to their livestock, while the environmental organizations are evaluating loss to wildlife and its habitat. Pakistani authorities have started dismantling the bridges over the Hunza River to evade additional costs associated with rebuilding of military infrastructure. The lake has blocked the geo-strategically important Karakoram Highway; which runs through the mountain ravines of Gilgit-Baltistan and connects Pakistan with China. More than forty thousand people of Hunza and Gojal valleys residing along the Hunza River have become refugees in other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan. As per latest reports, rupture in the lake may flood Gilgit city, which is the capital as well as the most populous part of the region. With over 3000 cusec water added daily, the breach of the lake may cause large scale damage in Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan including the Tarbela dam, which is Pakistan's largest water reservoir.

On May 21, Pakistani Prime Minister visited Hunza where he had to face thousands of protesters condemning and accusing Pakistan of failing to support the affected people during the calamity. The prime minister was made to realize that his government has refused to protect the interests and needs of the local people and his mega structures have impacted the local climate and resulting in the calamity. These projects need to be stopped with immediate effect and this may help curtail the possibility of a future catastrophe.

These calamities didn't appear over night. In 2008, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) conducted a survey on climate change in Gilgit-Baltistan. The comparative study covered fourteen villages situated along the slopes of the Karakoram mountains and analyzed data about environmental shifts over the past eight years. The report states that rapid glacial retreat and melting, which is the primary indicator of climate change, has happened due to excessive human interventions. The situation has been exacerbated since both China and

Pakistan embarked on infrastructural development at breakneck speed. The developments mainly support economic and military interests of the client states, however, with long-termed environmental and social ramifications for the natives. For instance, in the neighboring East-Turkestan, China has invested more than US\$88 billions in mineral extraction, oil and gas exploration, construction of highways, rail tracks, pipelines and industrial zones.

Gauging the success in East-Turkestan, Pakistan and China are now investing billions of dollars in Gilgit-Baltistan to build similar projects, which include the Karakoram Expressway, Karakoram Friendship rail track and tunnels, dams, oil and gas pipelines connecting the reserves and refineries of western China and Central Asia with the Middle Eastern and African sources, mineral extraction leases, and establishment of industrial zones. Most of these projects are built over glacial moraines, causing rapid and unnecessary melting and flooding. These projects are attracting a horde of settlers to Gilgit-Baltistan, and putting additional burden on the local resources. These ambitious developmental goals require extracting raw material in large quantity and importing thousands of additional labor, vehicles and equipment to expedite work. The consequences involve extra burden on the ecosystem with scarce natural resources, melting of glaciers and water and air pollution.

Planned and under-construction mega dams including Skardo (15000 MW), Diamer (4500 MW), Bunji (7000 MW), Yulbu (3000 MW), Raikot (675 MW), Hanzel (3000 MW), Tengus (625 MW) and Shengus (625 MW), may become the leading source of climate change in the near future. With the support of Chinese funding and workforce, Pakistan is building these mega structures in a declared seismic zone which is the epicenter and collision point of Karakoram, Himalayan and Hindukush tectonic plates. Not long ago in 2005, an earthquake with its epicenter near the current site of Diamer dam hit Pakistani occupied Kashmir, killing over one hundred thousand people and decimating several cities and villages. Any future occurrences of similar earthquakes or volcanic activity

might cause dam ruptures and annihilation of the habitable parts of Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan. The dams may help both China and Pakistan reap economic benefits and revenues in the short term, however, without taking the responsibility for long-term environmental damage. In the end, the future generations of Gilgit-Baltistan and East-Turkestan will be left to endure the losses.

The catastrophe in the Karakoram belt is not just going to hurt Gilgit-Baltistan, East-Turkestan and Tibet; but will rather have a global impact. On a larger scale, the glaciers play a significant role in setting atmospheric temperature, controlling weather patterns, regulating sea level and inevitably impacting the agriculture, transportation, commerce and geopolitics in different parts of the world. It is about time that the international political and environmental organizations come forward to support the natives of these regions in protecting their ecosystem and pressuring Pakistan and China to abandon their mega projects. To conclude, all stakeholders must come together to find means to undertake sustainable development which can put the needs of the local people as well as flora and fauna before the strategic and economic interests of countries concerned.

(The Author is former Visiting Fellow, IDSA. Views expressed are personal and not that of IDSA)

Political Developments

Raghvendra Rao, 'Times Square plotter trained at a Lashkar base in PoK', Indian Express, May 20, 2010

He may have denied links to radical groups in Pakistan and told his American interrogators that he acted alone in attempting to bomb Times Square in New York City, but there is fresh information emerging to suggest that 30-year-old naturalized US citizen Faisal Shahzad visited Pakistan in mid-June 2006 and received training at a Lashkar-e-Toiba camp in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). Quoting an unnamed commander at the Lashkar operations base in Dulai, a village 25 km south of Muzaffarabad, Canadian weekly newsmagazine Maclean's has reported that Shahzad was trained by the Lashkar.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Times-Square-plotter-trained-at-a-Lashkar-base-in-PoK/621234>

Shabir Choudhry, 'Some Clarifications Regarding Kashmir Dispute', May 22, 2010, Countercurrents.org

In order to justify the tribal invasion, which to many experts is the root cause of problems of people of Jammu and Kashmir, some pro Pakistan writers and agents of the Pakistani establishment claim that the tribal invasion was the result of mass killings of Muslims in Jammu. According to these claims, they went there to help Muslims. This contention has to be analyzed in light of historic evidence. No doubt Muslims were killed in Jammu, but the tribal invasion had no link with that mass killing. Those who orchestrated the Tribal Invasion tried to link it with the Jammu massacre after the planned invasion proved disastrous. Apart from the valley and some other parts of the state, the whole of Subcontinent was suffering from communal violence at that time. Tens of thousands of non Muslim migrants entered Jammu from Sialkot and other parts of Pakistan and aggravated the situation there.

<http://www.countercurrents.org/choudhry220510.htm>

'Barrister Sultan Mahmood for fresh elections in Azad Kashmir,' Associated Press of Pakistan, May 22, 2010

LONDON: The former prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has called for fresh elections in the AJK State as a way to end the present political crisis. Speaking at a dinner hosted in his honour by party activists on May 21 evening on the eve of his departure for Muzaffarabad, the Barrister said there was a need to seek a fresh mandate from the people who appear to have lost confidence in the present set-up. The Barrister who is also the chief of People's Muslim League said the current political bickering in AJK was also harming the cause of Kashmir abroad.

http://ftp.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=103682&Itemid=2

Shabbir Ahmed Mir, 'Lake affectees call off protest after being assured of support', The Tribune, May 23, 2010

GILGIT: About 200 people displaced by the Attabad Lake called off the protest in which they were threatening to kill themselves when they were convinced that the government would address their demands in a week's time. The protests were sparked by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's failure to announce a relief package during his visit on May 21. They were called off when DC Hunza, Zafar Taj held negotiations with the protestors and assured them that they would be compensated for their losses within a week. "We are conditionally calling off the protest for one week but if the government does not listen to our grievances, we will resume it," said one of the protestors. People demanded compensation and provision of facilities in camps.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/15416/lake-affectees-call-off-protest-after-being-assured-of-support/>

‘GB students seek relief package’, The News, May 23, 2010

ABBOTTABAD: The students belonging to Gilgit-Baltistan on May 22 staged protest demonstration outside the press club demanding a comprehensive relief package for the people affected from the natural disaster. The protesters said the people displaced due to the lake formed after landslide in Hunza were waiting for relief from the government since long. They said the natural disaster had destroyed the standing crops and orchards and rendered thousands of people homeless, but the government had failed to extend proper relief to the affected people.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=240794>

PM addresses GBLA; says govt to extend every support for socio-economic development of area’, Pamir Times, May 21, 2010

GILGIT: Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on May 21 said the federal government will extend an all out support for increased socio-economic development of Gilgit-Baltistan. Gilani, who was on a day-long visit to Gilgit and Hunza to assess the situation caused by the land-sliding at Attabad and the blockage of the Hunza river, was addressing the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA).

The prime minister said an amount of Rs 100,000 each will be given as compensation for the damaged homes in the villages affected by land-sliding at Attabad, adding, more financial aid will be given for Hunza affectees after the assessment of damage. He said the Pakistan Peoples Party-led government was committed to development of GB and assured members of GBLA that the process of disbursement of Rs. 15 billion package already announced by the federal government for Gilgit-Baltistan will be expedited.

<http://pamirtimes.net/2010/05/21/pm-addresses-gbla-says-govt-to-extend-every-support-for-socio-economic-development-of-area/>

Mumtaz Alvi, ‘AJK judiciary facing challenge of pending cases’, May 20, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The judiciary in Azad Kashmir is facing an uphill task of dealing with hundreds of pending cases and petitions, as the posts of two judges of the Supreme Court and four of the High Court cannot be filled until it has a permanent chief justice of the Supreme Court. In view of the crisis-like situation, the Secretary Law moved on May 17 a summary for making the incumbent Acting Chief Justice of the AJK apex court Justice, Khwaja Shahad permanent head of the SC.

http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=240235

‘Balawaristan: The Last Colony: Pakistan’s Suppression of Civil Society in Gilgit Baltistan’, May 21, 2010

At the stroke of midnight on 27th April in Gilgit, the Home Secretary of Gilgit Baltistan – Bilal Lodhi, gave instructions to the security agencies to expel twelve citizens (effectively state subjects of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir) forthwith and prevent them from gathering for a seminar on the 28th of April. Within a matter of hours, they were rounded up from various parts of the city and given notice that they couldn’t re-enter the region for three months. Eight of them were from Pakistani-administered Kashmir and the other four were from the very region they were being expelled from. These people were to take part in a public meeting in Garhi Bagh in Gilgit city to condemn the ‘Karachi Agreement’ of April 28 1949, under which administrative control of Gilgit Baltistan was handed over to the government of Pakistan, without any consultation with the local population of the region.

<http://balawaristan.blogspot.com/2010/05/pakistans-suppression-of-civil-society.html>

‘Nationalists of Gilgit-Baltistan Condemn Prime Minister of Pakistan’s response to Attabad-Hunza Disaster’, Gilgit-Baltistan Times, May 22, 2010

GILGIT: “Prime Minister of Pakistan’s visit to the disastrous area of Hunza is a publicity campaign and entertainment trip. It is a joke with the people of Hunza to inaugurate the Benazir Langar at the relief camps for the calamity hit people.” This was stated by Manzoor Hussain Parwana Chairman Gilgit Baltistan United Movement in a press statement condemning the inconsequential visit of Pakistan PM to Attabad Hunza. Parwana said that the visit of PM rubbed salt into the wounds of the affectees so the people chanted slogan against the policies of government and shown unsatisfactory over the arrangement made by the administration for them.

<http://gbtimes.wordpress.com/2010/05/22/news-nationalists-of-gilgit-baltistan-condemn-prime-minister-of-pakistan%E2%80%99s-response-to-attabad-hunza-disaster/>

‘Manzoor Watoo arrives to review arrangements at Atabad lake’, Associated Press of Pakistan, May 19, 2010

GILGIT: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Mian Manzoor Watoo arrived in Gilgit on a two day visit to monitor situation emerged at Atabad lake. Talking to media, the minister said that the government is fully aware of the situation and adopting all measures to oversee the affairs there. He noted that government is competent enough to deal with any situation at Hunza lake. Watoo said that there would be no dearth of food and the government owes responsibility of providing these commodities to the residents of these areas.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=103479&Itemid=1

‘AJK Bar council to observe black day today’, PPI, May 11, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chairman Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Bar Council Syed Nishat Kazmi on May 11 announced to observe black day on May 12 on completion of two years of judicial crisis in AJK. Addressing a news conference at National Press Club

(NPC) in Islamabad, he stated that AJK Bar council will hold a series of protests and in this regard the lawyer fraternity will stage a protest demonstration in Muzaffarabad on May 15. “All the bars will hoist black flags and will observe token protest from 12 to 15 across the AJK”, Kazmi stated. He further stated that if the issue was not resolved properly then they have no option but to launch country wide movement in Islamabad in coordination with the Pakistan Bar council.

<http://www.onepakistan.com/news/national/43845-AJK-Bar-council-observe-black-day-today.html?print>

‘AJK govt should focus on improvement of masses: Gilani’, May 17, 2010

Talking to Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider at the Prime Minister House, Gilani asked the AJK Government to focus its energy on improvement of living standards of the people by promoting good governance at every level. Gilani assured that he would soon visit the AJK. He said the funds allocated for development projects in AJK would be released timely and asked that these be diligently utilized so that the benefit could reach the masses.

<http://www.hamsab.net/ajk-govt-should-focus-on-improvement-of-masses-gilani/>

‘AJK Judicial crisis ends as Justice Gilani, Justice Riaz resign’, Kashmir Watch

MUZAFFARABAD: Deposed Chief Justice of Azad Kashmir Riaz Akhtar Chaudhry and acting Chief Justice Manzoor-ul-Hassan Gilani resigned on Tuesday. Khawaja Shahabuddin has been made acting Chief Justice, as reported by a private TV channel. Spokes person of Azad Kashmir President Raja Zulqarnain stated that after resignation of Chief Justice Riaz Akhtar, President had made Khawaja Shahabuddin as acting Chief Justice of AJK.

<http://www.kashmirwatch.com/story.php?id=27689&pic=1&cat=18&news=delus>

Tariq Naqash, 'AJK cabinet warns of action against president', May 5, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir cabinet endorsed on May 4 Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider's action of filing a reference against non-functional Chief Justice Riaz Akhtar and urged President Raja Zulfikar Khan to either fall in line or face action by the parliamentary party. "The cabinet endorses and fully supports efforts of Raja Farooq for reforms in the superior judiciary and considers the filing of reference (against Justice Riaz) a timely and appropriate action under the constitution and law," said a resolution adopted by the cabinet.

<http://www.dawn.com.pk/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/ajk-cabinet-warns-of-action-against-president-550>

Basil Nabi Malik, 'Where is the Gilgit-Baltistan government?', The Tribune, May 17, 2010

On January 4, 2010, a devastating landslide near Attabad in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) blocked the Hunza River creating a threatening artificial lake. The blockade of the river resulted in rising water levels, submerging villages and threatening more devastation in the event of a breach in the banks of the Hunza River. Till now, at least 20 people have been killed and 25,000 left stranded and these are not actual estimates. However, the tale does not end there. In fact the artificial lake is said to be increasing in depth at an alarming rate, with some cautious estimates indicating by as much as three feet a day. As of May 15, according to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the lake is 318.79 feet deep and stretches nearly 15.5 kilometres.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/13747/where-is-the-gilgit-baltistan-government/>

'Youth delegation from Sindh to visit Gilgit-Baltistan', Regional Times, May 9, 2010

KARACHI: A 30-member delegation of youths from Sindh would visit Gilgit-Baltistan. This was announced

by an official of the Sindh Department of Youth Affairs in Karachi on May 8. He said that the Provincial Minister for Youth Affairs, Syed Faisal Ali Sabzwari, chaired a meeting at his office in which arrangements for the week-long visit were reviewed. Mr Sabzwari said that this is a part of the Inter-Provincial Youth Exchange Programme.

<http://www.regionaltimes.com/09may2010/metrokarachinews/youth.htm>

Tariq Naqash, 'AJK High Court disposes of writ challenging appointment of Chief Justice', Dawn, May 8, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court disposed of a petition on May 7, challenging the appointment of Justice Riaz Akhtar Chaudhry as Chief Justice of the AJK Supreme Court, "as he stood removed from this office under the report of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), rendering the office of top judge vacant". The petition was filed by advocate Karam Dad Khan on March 27, 2007, but the Supreme Court had confiscated the same from the HC registrar's office on the following day. However, on April 15, this year, the apex court's acting CJ, Manzoor Hussain Gillani, sent the case back to the HC.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/ajk-high-court-disposes-of-writ-challenging-appointment-of-chief-justice-850>

'Rights violations PPP leaves dictators far behind', Weekly Baang Karachi, May 11-17, 2010

GILGIT: The recent illegal action by the government of Gilgit-Baltistan against the nationalist parties besides many other things has exposed the intention of the regime headed by the dummy Chief Minister Mehdi Shah. This was stated by spokesman for the Balawaristan National Front, Safdar Ali in a statement issued to the press in Gilgit. He said the nationalist parties had planned, as usual, to hold a rally to

condemn the infamous 1949 Karachi agreement on April 28. However, to forestall the event the local government at the behest of its masters in Islamabad arrested about 11 nationalist leaders from GB and Kashmir and banished them from the region for one month.

The rulers did not stop here. As they saw that despite the banishment of the leaders, the nationalists were going ahead with their plan to hold the rally even with more vigor, the police were given the task to sabotage the plan. Early in the morning on April 28, the police reached the venue and took it over and did not allow anyone to enter the site.

http://weeklybaang.blogspot.com/2010/05/weekly-baang-karachi-volume-03-issue-11_11.html

‘AJK judicial crisis: according to old verdicts, PM has no choice’, Pakistan Tribune, May 9, 2010

ISLAMABAD: While the AJK Supreme Judicial Council’s recommendations for the removal of the deposed AJK Chief Justice are pending in the office of the prime minister of Pakistan, the AJK superior courts deem that those recommendations have been approved, saying the PM is left with no authority, except to perform the executive duty, as ordained by the Constitution. In the recent judgments by the AJK HC, judges have declared that the office of the CJ AJK was vacant, and it should be filled at the earliest and that the chairman AJK Council, who happens to be the premier of Pakistan, was constitutionally bound to advise the AJK president to remove the judge from his office.

<http://www.paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?227330>

‘AJK PM’s warning against meddling’, Dawn, May 1, 2010

LAHORE: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider said any unconstitutional interference of Pakistan into legal affairs of AJK would also leave a bad impact on it (Pakistan). Addressing a gathering of lawyers at the Lahore High Court Bar

Association premises on April 30, he said the reference against AJK Chief Justice was sent to its Supreme Judicial Council according to constitution. He said the AJK CJ was bent upon interfering in the matters of executive and administration.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/local/lahore/ajk-pms-warning-against-meddling-150>

‘Gilgit-Baltistan lake plan finalises’, Express, May 5, 2010

GILGIT: Authorities in Gilgit have finalised a contingency plan in case the artificial lake in the Attabad area bursts its banks, officials said on Monday. “More than 600 policemen, backed by paramilitary Gilgit Scouts and Rangers, are ready to provide rescue services in case the dam is breached,” an official stated. He said the plan was finalised at a high-level meeting held in Gilgit with Chief Minister Mehdi Shah in the chair. The official said the police and paramilitary troops would not only provide rescue and relief activities but would also check possible looting by miscreants in case of any eventuality.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/10906/gilgit-baltistan-lake-plan-finalises/>

‘Plan for revival of sick industrial units endorsed’, Pakistan Observer

MIRPUR: The AJK government has launched an integrated strategy for the revival of dozens of sick industrial units located in Mirpur and Bhimbher to bring them in production-earning circle. The plan was approved in a high level meeting chaired by AJK Minister for Commerce & Industries and attended among others by senior officials of the State Industries Department and representatives of local business fraternity, official sources stated. The sources said the government was determined to accelerate the pace of industrial development in Azad Kashmir by laying network of industries in various parts of the state particularly in Mirpur division.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=29330>

‘AJK govt servants on strike’ Pakistan Observer

MIRPUR: The low-paid public servants belonging to all State-run departments staged a protest demonstration by wearing black bands around their arms, to press the AJK government for early acceptance of their long held demands, especially sufficient raise in their salaries. The call for the protest was given by All Parties Clerks Association, Mirpur. During the strike they raised slogans in support of their demands. Speakers urged upon the AJK government to immediately raise the salaries of the government employees at par with the government employees of all public-sector departments of Pakistan.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=27906>

Usman Manzoor, ‘Protests planned against Gilani by AJK lawyers’, The News, May 4, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The lawyers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) decided to hold protest demonstrations with the help of bar associations of Pakistan in Islamabad against the Prime Minister of Pakistan for delaying approval of recommendations of the AJK Supreme Judicial Council, binding on the premier. The AJK SJC had unanimously recommended removal of deposed Chief Justice of AJK Riaz Akhtar Chaudhry on charges of transgression of powers and subversion of the constitution.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=237376>

‘Number of BISP beneficiaries to be enhanced to 7m: Farzana’, Daily Times, May 4, 2010

QUETTA: The number of Benazir Income Support Programme’s (BISP) beneficiaries will increase from 2.7 million to seven million after the completion of the National Poverty Survey being carried out in all the four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), BISP Chairman Farzana Raja said

on May 3. Addressing a meeting of the provincial ministers and members of the Balochistan Assembly and later addressing a news conference along with Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani at the Civil Secretariat Quetta, she said presently 2.7 million families were getting a monthly cash grant of Rs 1000 each from BISP.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C04%5Cstory_4-5-2010_pg7_32

Jurgen Creutzman, ‘Gilgit-Baltistan: A Land Seldom Traveled’, May 2, 2010

We live in a global village where people are constantly impacted by things that happen around them. Even an incident in the remotest part of the world may alter the society, the economy and the environment for those, who live in the urban hubs of western countries. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for political thinkers to remain abreast with issues, know about the people and their societies and learn about their needs and demands when finding solutions for various disputes related to land, resources and identity. Some of these problem-areas, for instance, the Gilgit-Baltistan region just North of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), is seldom talked about and continues to remain under heavy censorship thereby restricting the ability of westerners to fully comprehend issues.

Gilgit-Baltistan, currently under Pakistani occupation, is not often mentioned when the issue of Kashmir is discussed. The region is situated at the rim of the Tibetan plateau and borders Kashmir valley and Muzaffarabad (Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) in the south, Ladakh and Tibet in the east, Xinjiang in the north, Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the north-west, Chitral in the west, and Pakistani province of Khyber-Pakhtunkha (previously NWFP) in the south-west. Given its geo-strategic location, the region has gained political importance for Pakistan, and therefore has become the sticking point, limiting the choices for both India and Pakistan to improve their bi-lateral relations.

<http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100547.php>

‘Why Azad Kashmir is called Azad?’, Kashmir Page, May 2, 2010

United Kashmir Peoples National Party arranged a seminar in London, titled: Challenges, options and role of Kashmiri Diaspora. The Seminar was attended by around 150 people from various walks of life; and addressed by many important leaders among them were pro independent prominent Kashmiris, Pakistani leaders, Pakistani analysts, Baloch and Swiss leaders.

In his written speech, Sardar Hyrbayar Mari paid glowing tribute to the struggle of the Kashmiri people which was in many ways similar to the struggle of the Baloch people. He said one part of Kashmir which is occupied by Pakistan is called Azad Kashmir. He said: There are hundreds of independent countries in the world, but no country write independent with its name, as it is understood that they are all independent. However with Kashmir Pakistani authorities have included azad (independent), it clearly means there is something wrong – – something sinister is at play; and they have something to hide. This word is included to fool people of Jammu and Kashmir, just to give them false sense of independence. He further said: all oppressed and occupied people should unite and coordinate their activities to fight forces of occupation. We have no other choice, but to fight for our rights and our national independence.

<http://www.kashmirpage.com/2010/05/why-azad-kashmir-is-called-azad.html>

‘Gilgit-Baltistan autonomy (Province-Like Status)’, May 3, 2010

The ‘autonomy package’ introduced by the government for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are a mix of good and bad news. The good news is that the area will now have an autonomous status with a chief minister and a governor. The bad news is that it has been given only a province-like status and has no institutional link with the four provinces or the Pakistani constitution. It is not yet clear how the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009 signed by the president will affect the area’s denizens

and other stakeholders. What is obvious, though, is that this is an entirely new experiment in statecraft where a democratically elected government has created a province-like entity through an order.

<http://shahzadafzal.blogspot.com/2010/05/gilgit-baltistan-autonomy-province-like.html>

‘Islamabad interferes in AJK affairs: Farooq’, The Nation, May 1, 2010

LAHORE: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider said Islamabad is doing unconstitutional interference in the internal affairs of government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The AJK PM warned the government of Pakistan against the interference in the legal matter of AJK and stressed that such practices on part of Islamabad can create undesirable implication for Pakistan. He was addressing the lawyers at Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA) on April 30. He said that some steps taken by government of Pakistan have created a split among the people of Kashmir but despite that Kashmiris consider Pakistan as motherland and they cannot talk against their Pakistan.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/01-May-2010/Islamabad-interferes-in-AJK-affairs-Farooq>

‘AJK denied water quota’, May 2, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The provinces of Pakistan have refused to allocate water quota to Azad Kashmir. IRSA has sent the matter to the council of common interests. According to sources, several meetings were held between federal government and provinces on water quota of Azad Kashmir, however, consensus could not be reached. The provinces held that they suffered from water scarcity and if they allowed Azad Kashmir quota from available water in the country their share of water will be drastically reduced that will be at the expense of their water interests.

http://www.samaa.tv/News19688-AJK_denied_water_quota.aspx

**‘PPP mulling over expanding GB cabinet’,
Express, May 02, 2010**

GILGIT: In a bid to include some of its dissident lawmakers into the Gilgit-Baltistan cabinet, the ruling Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) plans moving a resolution in the Legislative Assembly seeking expansion of the regional cabinet, sources stated. “We are going to move a resolution in the assembly and hopefully it will sail through smoothly,” a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the ruling PPP noted. “The resolution will seek inclusion of four more ministers in the cabinet, increasing its strength to 10,” he further stated. Chief Minister Mehdi Shah had announced his cabinet last week.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/10359/ppp-mulling-over-expanding-gb-cabinet/>

**Imtiaz Gul, ‘An unequal relationship AJK and Pakistan’s security doctrine’, Friday Times
May 14, 2010**

Recently, a former Musharraf aide admitted that incessant US pressure resulted in a scaling down of cross-border Jihadi operations and militants were told to refrain from violating the Line of Control because of unusual US satellite surveillance. On May 10, RajaFarooq Haider Khan, Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir, wriggled out of his commitment to chair a seminar. The seminar was convened to discuss the veracity of the claims by the former foreign minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri in 2007, that by March 2007, a compromise on Kashmir was around the corner. Barrister A. Majid Trambo, Kashmir Centre Brussels and Prof Nazeer Shaal were among the participants. At one stage Khan’s personal staff conveyed that the premier would be there within ten minutes. As it turned out later, the AJK Prime Minister skipped the event because Pakistan’s Chief Secretary for Kashmir – who is as dreaded by the Kashmir government as probably the COAS is by the armed forces – had showed up for a meeting.. This small anecdote explains the volatility of the independent state called AJK. This also sheds light on how Kashmiri leaders are at the mercy of the Pakistani authorities, illustrated by the government’s direct

in AJK’s recent judicial crisis.

<http://www.defence.pk/forums/kashmir-war/58967-unequal-relationship-ajk-pakistan-s-security-doctrine.html>

Mushtaq Mughal, ‘Judicial crisis in AJK resolved?’, The Nation, May 12, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The judicial and political crises in AJK that apparently seemed to have ended have further deepened the rift among stakeholders with the resignation of Acting Chief Justice Syed Manzoor Gillani and dysfunctional Chief Justice Riaz Akhtar Chaudhry. This rift among the stakeholders may appear in terms of unprecedented developments in the near future, sources stated. Sources further revealed that Prime Minister Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani’s had made two decisions. The PM AJK to some extent accepted the first one pertaining to the appointment of new Acting Chief Justice. However, the PM AJK did not welcome the second decision, which was about the formation of new Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/12-May-2010/Judicial-crisis-in-AJK-resolved>

‘Pakistan: Govt should invest in AJK for electricity’, Right Vision News, May 25, 2010

ISLAMABAD: AJK has the capacity to produce more than 18,000 MW electricity but due to the lack of attention of federal and AJK govt this capacity has not been harnessed. Azad Jammu & Kashmir rivers, steams and canals water is known as a white gold in the world. The first private hydal power project of subcontinent ‘Laraib’ is in final stage and it will be completed in 2012. it produce 85 MW electricity at the cost of 20 billion rupees. Sources told that Pakistan uses 37% oil which cost \$8 billion while if Pakistan imports coal instead of oil it will cost \$2 billion.

http://www.hydroworld.com/index/display/news_display.1191829174.html

Tom Hussain, ‘National security tensions hamper Pakistan’s response to Hunza landslide dam crisis’, The National, May 25, 2010

GILGIT: National security policy has been a major, but largely ignored, factor in the Pakistani government’s handling of an unfolding humanitarian crisis in the idyllic northern valley of Hunza-Nagar. Thousands of residents there are watching the clock, hoping a massive landslide dam will survive the imminent stress of being filled by melting glacial waters. The government had predicted the critical point would occur on May 24, but officials later said it could happen any time within the next week.

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100526/FOREIGN/705259892/1002/FRONTPAGE>

Tahir Niaz, ‘Government unveils Hunza aid package’, Daily Times, May 27, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani unveiled a package on May 26 to provide compensation to the people affected by the Attaabad lake in Hunza. Announcing the package at a news conference, the prime minister said Rs 200,000 each would be given to all those who had lost their land, Rs 400,000 for completely damaged houses and Rs 160,000 for partially damaged houses.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C27%5Cstory_27-5-2010_pg1_1

‘Wattoo chairs AJK budget meeting’, The Nation, May 27, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo chaired a high level meeting on May 26 to discuss the upcoming budget of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting was attended by President AJK, Raja Zulqurain Haider, PM AJK, Raja Farooq Haider, Secretary K&GB, M Iththisham Khan, Chief Secretary AJK, IG AJK, and representatives from Finance and Planning Divisions. The Finance Division was directed in the meeting that AJK Budget should

released as soon as possible, in order to revise the pay scales of AJK police; equivalent to those of other provinces.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Islamabad/27-May-2010/Wattoo-chairs-AJK-budget-meeting>

Nosheen Ali, ‘Disastrous Politics in Gilgit-Baltistan’, Pamir Times, May 25, 2010

It has merely been nine months since the federally-controlled Northern Areas were transformed into the more province-like Gilgit-Baltistan, with triumphalist claims about how the Pakistani state had finally empowered this marginalised region. Yet the regions people are already realising that a more democratic set-up does not translate into better policy-making and substantive recognition of their rights.

This disillusionment has emerged in the aftermath of an ongoing natural disaster, which started when a massive landslide on the Hunza river in early January caused the formation of an artificial lake. Over the last four months, the overflowing lake has destroyed hundreds of acres of agricultural, residential, and commercial land in the upper Hunza area of Gojal, while also blocking the Karakoram Highway and submerging two bridges. The only road link between Pakistan and China is now disrupted. Over 20,000 people have already had to move to IDP camps, and 50,000 more could also be affected as the lake continues to swell.

<http://pamirtimes.net/2010/05/25/disastrous-politics-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

Zulfiqar Ali Khan, ‘Rs100m Punjab grant for Hunza lake victims’, Dawn, May 25, 2010

HUNZA: Pakistan Muslim League-N chief Nawaz Sharif urged the nation to help the people affected by the Hunza lake created by the Jan 4 landslide. During a visit on May 24 to a camp of displaced people in Altit, he urged the government to take immediate steps to restore the Karakoram Highway to revive the local

economy. In this connection, he noted, help should be sought from China and Switzerland which had vast experience of dealing with such situations. Mr Sharif said private investors should be encouraged to run helicopter and ferry services for the stranded people of Gojal and for trade with China.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/16-rs100m-punjab-grant-for-hunza-lake-victims-550-hs-02>

‘Army Chief monitoring Hunza lake situation: Commander’, Associated Press of Pakistan, May 26, 2010

GILGIT: Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani is personally monitoring the rise of water level in Atta Abad Hunza lake. This was stated by Commander of the Armed forces in Gilgit-Baltistan, Major General Qamar Javed Bajwa in a news briefing in Gilgit on May 26. He said the land sliding was not a new phenomena in the area rather it had occurred in the past as well. He disclosed that through optic fiber the army chief and he himself were monitoring the situation. The Commander said the next 48 hours were very crucial as the water from the lake would start getting released within this timeframe.

http://ftp.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=104222&Itemid=1

‘UJC sets conditions for dialogue with New Delhi’, IANS, May 26 2010

SRINAGAR: United Jihad Council (UJC), the conglomerate of guerrilla groups based in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, has shown willingness to engage in talks with New Delhi, provided laying down of arms is not sought as a precondition. Reacting to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s offer of dialogue to separatists, provided they abjured violence, UJC spokesman Syed Sadaqat Hussain said in a statement from Muzaffarabad: “The militant leadership is prepared to enter into tripartite talks with India, provided the government of India accepts Kashmir as a dispute and initiates confidence-building measures, including revocation of the armed forces

special powers act (AFSPA), release of political detainees and curbing of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir”.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/UJC-sets-conditions-for-dialogue-with-New-Delhi/articleshow/5976877.cms>

Tariq Naqash, ‘AJK accepts centre’s choice of top cop’, Dawn, May 15, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir’s new inspector general of police (IGP) was accepted by the government on May 14, a day after Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani spoke to AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider. “The new IGP, Dr Tarik Ahmed Khokhar, has assumed the responsibilities of his office after the Services and General Administration Department endorsed a notification of the Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Division regarding his transfer and posting here, DIG (headquarters) Tahir Qureshi stated.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/local/islamabad/ajk-accepts-centres-choice-of-top-cop-550>

Economic Developments

Tom Hussain, ‘Landslide lake devastates China trade’, The National, May 21, 2010

GILGIT: A landslide dam in northern Pakistan that cut off road access to China since January has bankrupted the local trading community and threatens to destroy the mountainous region’s economy should it collapse and unleash mass flooding. The landslide happened on January 4, killing 19 people and severing an upstream part of the Hunza river, creating a large artificial lake, and left an estimated 25,000-30,000 stranded. A breach to the dam and subsequent flood would threaten another 13,000-18,000 people in up to 36 downstream communities in the Hunza-Nagar Valley, some 700km north of Islamabad, the federal capital.

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100522/FOREIGN/705219862/1002/national>

‘GB has vast potential for investors: CM’, Dawn, May 16, 2010

SKARDU: A two-day International Investors Conference started in Skardu on May 15 to explore prospects of investment in Gilgit-Baltistan. Ambassadors of 24 countries including, Japan, Britain, Russia, South Korea and Iran and about 40 investors from Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry attended the conference. Addressing the inaugural session, Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah, said that the GB was the most suitable region for investment in Pakistan as it offered a peaceful environment.

<http://pakistanupdate.wordpress.com/2010/05/18/g-b-has-vast-potential-for-investors-cm/>

‘Plan to explore AJK hydel power resources’, Pakistan Observer

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government had inked an integrated phased plan to explore and utilize the available hydel power resources in various parts of the State, official sources stated. Sources further noted that AJK’s demand for power

is 350 Mega Watt of electricity and is capable of producing over 5000 MW of hydel power. “Few state-owned power production projects have been launched in AJK, under the plan, while others, in collaboration with private sector, were under consideration,” sources added. The state government was seriously contemplating to utilize the hydel power generation resources not only to meet the requirement of AJK, but also to sell additional power to other parts of the country under the spirit of strengthening the economy of the area.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=31427>

‘GB to spend 70% budget on land revenue payments’, Express, May 9, 2010

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan will be spending 70 percent of its budget on land revenue payments. The decision was taken in a meeting of the Gilgit-Baltistan cabinet chaired by the Chief Minister Syed Mehdi Shah. In the meeting, it was also decided that a temporary ban will be imposed on recruitments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/11886/gb-to-spend-70-budget-on-land-revenue-payments/>

International Developments

‘Terrorism must be opposed and crushed’: KNP London’, May 10, 2010

Supreme Council of Kashmir National Party met in Watford, England to discuss issues related to the Kashmiri struggle and the KNP. The Supreme Council after detailed discussion unanimously declared that:

1. Terrorism must be opposed and crushed. It hurts innocent people; and it is seriously hurting interests of Muslims around the world, especially those living in the Western countries.

2. In this regard government of Pakistan and its agencies have a great role to play and have to be honest with what they claim. They have to stop this distinction of ‘good terrorists’ and ‘bad terrorists’; and revisit its policy because terrorists could not be strategic asset, as they have their own agenda which is against Muslims and hurts innocent people of other religions as well.

3. They have also to stop infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir as it hurts people of Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control; and create tension and hatred in the region.

4. Government of Pakistan must stop its endeavours to annex Kashmiri territory of Gilgit Baltistan, and give people of the region their fundamental human rights.

<http://drshabirchoudhry.blogspot.com/2010/05/terrorism-must-be-opposed-and-crushed.html>

‘Pakistan, AJK political figures invited to attend Birmingham moot on Kashmir’, May 21, 2010

LONDON: Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK has invited important political leaders from Pakistan, Azad Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir to attend an International Kashmir Conference to be held on July 18 at Birmingham. According to an official statement of the organization issued on May 19 from Kashmir House, President of the organization Mohammad Ghalib invited leaders from all over the world. From

Pakistan, the organization has invited Chairman Pakistan Muslim League (N) Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, Mr Riaz Khokhar, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Ameer Jamaat Islami Pakistan Syed Munawar Hussan and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan.

<http://www.sananews.net/english/2010/05/21/pakistan-ajk-political-figures-invited-to-attend-birmingham-moot-on-kashmir/>

‘Chinese hands reconstruct quake ravaged Muzaffarabad’, Pakistan Observer

MUZAFFARABAD: The much-hyped execution of Muzaffarabad City Development Project (MCDP) by Chinese construction companies has been kicked off under the Urban Development Programme of Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA). Brig (retired) Shiraz Baig, project director MCDP, said a total of 104 projects (according to an indicative list) would be executed in Muzaffarabad over the next four years at a cost of Rs 18 billion.

Of them, 26 had been categorised as priority projects and would see their commencement during the next three months, he added. Baig was speaking to a group of journalists during an on the spot briefing at Tahli Mandi Road project, work on which was initiated in the first week of April and is scheduled to be completed in eight months.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=32581>

‘UNHCR starts aid delivery to Hunza displaced’, Daily Times, May 27, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA) on May 26 started delivering relief items to assist the displaced people in the Hunza and Gilgit districts. Fifteen trucks loaded with shelter kits left a UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warehouse in Peshawar to Karimabad and Hunza. The UNHCR technical experts had already kicked off training sessions for capacity building of concerned authorities, local communities and different service

service providers to support ongoing relief efforts in Gilgit-Baltistan.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C27%5Cstory_27-5-2010_pg7_21

‘US\$ 100,000 UNICEF supplies reach Gilgit’, Balochistan Times, May 24, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) has provided essential life saving supplies for the people displaced in Hunza due to artificial lake in Hunza River which is the principal river of Hunza, in Gilgit Baltistan It is formed by the confluence of the Kilik and Khunjerab *nalas* (gorges) which are fed by glaciers. The essential supplies worth US\$ 100,000 have been handed over to authorities for distributing among IDPs. About 20,000 people are estimated to be displaced and in need of assistance, including 4,080 women and 12,000 children. UNICEF has dispatched relief items to protect children and families from the spread of disease due to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

[http://www.thefreelibrary.com/US\\$+100,000+UNICEF+supplies+reach+Gilgit.-a0227312190](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/US$+100,000+UNICEF+supplies+reach+Gilgit.-a0227312190)

‘SPAPEV readies 5 more schools in quake-hit areas’, The News, May 27, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Having been reconstructed by the Saudi Public Assistance for Pakistan Earthquake Victims (SPAPEV), five government schools, which were damaged in the October 8, 2005 earthquake in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are ready for opening. According to SPAPEV Regional Director, Dr. Khalid MAI-Othmani, classes will resume at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Chiroti, Rawalakot; Government High School Pakgali, Rawalakot; Government High School, Hullar, Bagh; Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Shergarh, Mansehra; and Government Girls Secondary School, Shergarh, Mansehra soon.

http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=241473

Other Developments

Tom Hussain, ‘Hunza Valley inches towards flood’, The National, May 16, 2010

KARIMABAD: Hanif, a sergeant in the Pakistani army’s corps of engineers, squatted at the edge of a road overlooking a massive grey-black mound of landslide debris. It was this debris that had on January 4 buried alive 19 residents of Ata-abad, a riverside settlement in the northern Hunza Valley. “We’ve been here, working with the Chinese, for nearly five months, when there was still snow in the valley,” he said, untying a cloth containing a modest lunch of chapattis and congealed lentils. Before he could tuck in, however, Tariq, another sergeant, dragged him back to the arduous task of excavating a spillway through the 70-metre-high mound. The landslide is holding back a 20km glacial lake that has been rising by a metre per day since the onset of summer at the start of May.

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100517/FOREIGN/705169917/1002>

‘Around 20,000 IDPs in Hunza – Nagar and Gilgit districts’, Pamir Times, May 21, 2010

GILGIT: Around 20,000 people have been sifted from their houses to IDP camps in Hunza – Nagar and Gilgit districts, as part of the preparatory measures undertaken to safeguard human lives in the wake of a highly potential flooding that might be caused by outburst of overtopping of the lake formed on River Hunza. Pakistan Army, Government of GB, FOCUS Pakistan – an AKDN affiliate, Pakistan Red Crescent Society and other NGOs are taking part in the evacuation and relief activities. Majority of the IDPs have been shifted to relief camps while many are living with families and relatives at safer locations. This is the biggest humanitarian crisis in the history of Gilgit – Baltistan.

<http://pamirtimes.net/2010/05/21/around-20000-idps-in-hunza-nagar-and-gilgit-districts/>

‘PRCS sets up tentage village in Chilmisdas’, The News, May 21, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on the request of government of Gilgit-Baltistan has set up a tentage village in Chilmisdas to accommodate 500 families of Hunza landslide affected people in Chilmisdas, a press release stated on May

(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

20. The PRCS is also running camps in Altit and Shashkat and so far over 5,000 people were being given relief and medical cover. The PRCS on the request of National Disaster and Management Authority (NDMA) has sent 2,500 non-food items (NFI) kits for the landslide victims.

http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=240297

Nisar Mahmood, ‘Possible lake breach poses threat to ancient rock carvings’, The News, May 20, 2010

PESHAWAR: Like other precious properties and infrastructure, many ancient rock carvings on Karakoram Highway (KKH) are at the risk of being washed away because of potential threat of flood from the artificial Attaabad lake in Hunza valley in Gilgit-Baltistan. These rock carvings are over 2,000-year old. Some of them consist of animal figures, circles and hunting scenes. While on some rocks figures of Buddha, Budhisattvas stupas, ancient inscriptions, Buddhist devotees, etc are inscribed. A young archaeologist-cum-journalist and explorer, Muhammad Usman Mardanvi, has released the photographs of the carvings which show how these remained preserved despite centuries.

http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=240234

‘Fresh landslides in Attaabad compromise rescue efforts’, Daily Times, May 19, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly Speaker Wazir Baig on May 18 said that the boat service in Hunza landslide lake had been temporarily discontinued due to fresh landslides and rain in the area. Fresh landslides have occurred in Attaabad, halting the boat service that was resumed after a one-day break to evacuate the locals to safer places. Baig said the road leading to Attaabad was expected to remain closed due to the surging water level.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C19%5Cstory_19-5-2010_pg7_13

‘Relief items to be distributed, among Hunza affectees’, Associated Press of Pakistan, May 18, 2010

ASTORE: Chief organizer Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman said a plan to distribute relief goods among the affectees of Hunza Attabad had completed. He stated government of Punjab has sent 15 trucks and the relief goods contain blankets, sugar, wheat amongst other things.

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=103268&Itemid=2

‘Gems and Jewellery Training and Processing Centre in AJK’, May 8, 2010

LAHORE: The Industries and Production Ministry has approved PC-I for the establishment of Gems and Jewellery Training and Processing Centre in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir with a cost of Rs60 million, an official noted on May 7. The centre to be established by Pakistan Gems and Jewellery Development Company (PGJDC) will provide state-of-the-art facilities, including gemstone identification lab, training facility (gem faceting, gem carving, bead Making, etc.) and gemstone processing facility. The timeline for completion of the project will be 36 months, he stated.

<http://finance.kalpoint.com/highlights/business-news/gems-and-jewellery-training-and-processing-centre-in-ajk.html>

‘May Day observed in AJK’, Pakistan Observer

MUZAFFARABAD: Like other parts of the country, May Day was also observed here on May 1 in Muzaffarabad. Different trade unions and workers organizations took out the rallies and held public meetings to mark the Day in a befitting manner. They paid tributes to those laborers and workers who laid down their lives in Chicago, some 124 years ago. PWD workers union also took out a big rally here.

Besides others, AJK Minister for Housing and Works Pir Murtaza Gilani also addressed the rally. Highlighting the problems faced by the workers class, the speakers urged the government to take immediate steps for providing relief to the people particularly the labour class.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=28713>

Noor Aftab, 'Evacuation from Gilgit city completed', The News, May 25, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Evacuation from the inner areas of Gilgit city has been completed after a report by engineers fearing emergence of another lake at the junction of the Hunza and Gilgit rivers in case of a massive water flow after an outburst in the Hunza river. Sources said the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) in its report had suggested not only to mark houses, to be affected in Gilgit city, but also get them vacated to avoid any untoward situation, if water in the Hunza river flows with speed after the outburst. The report stated that in case of a massive overflow in the Hunza river, water level would raise substantially at the meeting point of the Gilgit and Hunza rivers, which might push back the water of the Gilgit river to the inner areas.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=241102>

'Large Scale Deforestation Triggers Frequent Landslides in PoK', May 25, 2010

MUZAFFARABAD: Widespread deforestation in Pakistan occupied Kashmir is triggering frequent landslides in capital Muzaffarabad raising levels of pollution, apart from disrupting normal life.

<http://videosfromindia.smashits.com/view/13446/large-scale-deforestation-triggers-frequent-landslides-in-pok>

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir-An Overview

Pakistan Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoK): An Overview

Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoK) is constitutionally an integral part of the Indian Union and remains under Pakistani occupation since 1947¹, when Pakistan's Army engineered a tribal invasion and took control of more than 114,500 square kilometers of J&K. Pakistan declared its occupied part as 'Azad' or free and conferred to J&K Muslim Conference, a pro-Pakistani local political party, to constitute its first titular government.

Subsequent to occupation, Pakistan embarked on the agenda of usurping J&K. First to be annexed was Gilgit-Baltistan, which went under the direct control of Pakistan in 1949, as the leaders of AJK Muslim Conference were forced to hand over these regions of J&K through the 'Karachi Agreement'. Likewise, Shinaki Kohistan and Chitral, which constituted parts of Jammu & Kashmir before its partition in 1947, were also annexed and merged into the NWFP of Pakistan in 1955 and 1970 respectively. Later, when Pakistan and China agreed to demarcate 'international border' in 1963, Pakistan provisionally ceded 19,313 sq. kilometers of trans-Karakoram track of J&K including the segment of Baltistan known as 'Shaksgam' and part of Gilgit called 'Raskam' to China.²

Salient features of PoK are as under:

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

Administrative Divisions: Two, namely Mirpur-Muzaffarabad (referred to as Azad Jammu & Kashmir or AJK by Pakistan) and Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB).

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 19,313 sq. kilometer

Area of Chitral: 14,850 sq. kilometer

Area of Shinaki-Kohistan: 5,398 sq. kilometer

AZAD JAMMU & KASHMIR (AJK)

The Muzaffarabad district of Kashmir province, Mirpur and parts of Poonch districts of Jammu

province have been under Pakistan's control since the tribal invasion of 1947. Pakistan amalgamated these districts together and created the so-called AJK. AJK is the south-western political entity of the former princely state of Jammu & Kashmir. It borders the present-day Kashmir province to the east, Jammu province to south-east (both separated from it by the Line of Control), the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan (NWFP) to the west, the Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan Region (FAGB) of J&K to the north, and the Punjab Province of Pakistan to the south. 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, Prime Minister, High and Supreme Courts, Penal Code, 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, tax revenues, supposed 'foreign policy', rehabilitation of refugees and the financial control have been carefully placed under the discretion of the political establishment of Pakistan.

Currently, 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 of AJK: 13,297 square km

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

Capital: Muzaffarabad

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

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

President: Raja Zulqarnain Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Farooq Haider Khan

Political Structure

AJK Council: Total 12 members, selected by Prime Minister of Pakistan, six each representing governments of AJK and Pakistan. The AJK Council is headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

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

Judicial System: AJK has its own High and Supreme Courts, which are assisted by district session and magistrate courts. Further, AJK has its own Bar Council and Penal Code. However, approval of chief justices for High and Supreme Courts comes from Pakistani-dominated AJK Council. In addition, Pakistan’s military tribunals also function in AJK. The Chief Secretary, regional commissioners, and Inspector General of Police are also appointed by Pakistani minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan (KAGB), previously known as Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (KANA).

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

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

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

Political 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)

Federally Administered Gilgit-Baltistan (FAGB)

Gilgit-Baltistan was previously referred to by 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 than AJK. It borders Ladakh and Tibet to its east; East-Turkestan to its north; Afghanistan and Tajikistan to its north-west; Chitral to its west; Dir, Swat, Kohistan and Kaghan districts of NWFP to its south while AJK and the Kashmir Valley lie to its south-east. Before 1947, Baltistan was part of Ladakh region and ruled through the Jammu provincial government, while Gilgit was ruled under the authority of Kashmir province. When Pakistan occupied these regions, they were amalgamated under the garb of so-called ‘Northern Areas’ and thereby received the status of federally controlled region in 1974. However, the status of Gilgit-Baltistan is left undefined in the successive constitutions of Pakistan. Pakistan accepts Gilgit-Baltistan 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 constitutional and judicial rights. For instance, they lack representation in the Pakistani Parliament, Council of Common Interests (CCI), Hydro-electric Board and National Finance Commission (NFC). Further, they cannot access the provincial high courts and the Supreme Court of Pakistan for justice. The Judicial Commissioner exercises judicial powers in Gilgit-Baltistan who is a political figure nominated by the Minister for KAGB.

After occupation of Gilgit-Baltistan in 1949, Pakistan administered the region under the draconian and inhumane Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) for around 20 years.³ PM Z.A. Bhutto of Pakistan abolished FCR in 1974 and introduced an ad-hoc presidential ordinance to govern the region. Since then, Gilgit-Baltistan has been ruled by presidential ordinances, which have come under repeated amendments. In 1994, PM Benazir Bhutto promulgated Northern Areas Governance Order which was later renamed as Legal Framework Order (LFO) by President Musharraf in 2007.⁴ In essence, they all remained as ad-hoc ordinances without any constitutional cover.⁵ As pressure from both local and international political and human rights organizations increased with demands of genuine political and judicial rights for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan announced the so-called ‘Gilgit-Baltistan

Empowerment and Self-Governance Order' on October 26, 2009.⁶ Unfortunately, this order is yet another presidential ordinance with no parliamentary backing, and replaces the current LFO with some amendments.⁷ The term 'self governance' is coined as a strategic move to defuse pressure of the international organizations, which promises to introduce administrative, political, economic and judicial reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan. Although the ordinance is claimed as a replica of the AJK political and judicial system; it refuses the post of president, prime minister to the locals and establishment of penal code, and High and Supreme Courts.

According to the order, Northern Areas will be called Gilgit-Baltistan and the current Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) will be replaced by Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA), which will have the right to legislate and choose a chief minister. Further, Pakistan will replace the existing Chairman of NALA with a governor to ensure federal government's control over the region. Gilgit-Baltistan would also have its own public service commission, a chief election commissioner, an auditor general, and a boundary commission to settle boundary dispute between Pakistan and J&K. The legislative assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan would have a total of 33 members, including six reserved seats for women and three for technocrats. Further, similar to AJK Council, Gilgit-Baltistan Council will be constituted to ensure representation of federal government in the region. The council will enjoy legislative powers over 60 odd subjects. It will have 15 members which shall be presided over by the prime minister of Pakistan. While the Assembly is given the powers to propose the budget, approving authority will be ministry of KAGB in Islamabad. Compared to the provinces of Pakistan, where the chief minister is the supreme authority, the newly proclaimed order rests all administrative, political and judicial authority with the Pakistani governor which will eventually make the assembly a toothless tiger. Governor will be the executive authority and custodian of tax and revenues. He will administer Gilgit-Baltistan council on behalf of the prime minister of Pakistan, and oversee public service commission, election commission, boundary commission, judiciary, and auditor general's office.

He will be the authority to appoint heads of public service commission, election commission, boundary commission, commissioner of excise and taxation, chief judge of appellate court, auditor general, regional cabinet members and advisors. He will have the right to approve the budget, and dissolve the assembly and impose emergency under prescribed conditions. Further, the Inspector General of Police, Chief Secretary and all departmental secretaries, directors of departments, and commissioner and deputy commissioners of districts will be appointed by the governor. Likewise, it will not be the Assembly but the Council under the governor, which will legislate on natural resources of Gilgit-Baltistan, including minerals, forests, electricity and water storage, industries, school curricula, tourism, cinematography etc.

Salient Features of FAGB are as under:

Area of FAGB: 72,496 sq. kilometer

Population: 870,347 (1998 population census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: seven

Baltistan Region (part of Ladakh) is divided into Ganche and Skardu districts

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

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

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

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

Political Structure: In July 2009, NALA was dissolved before it could complete its 5-years term, and along with that, advisors to the Chairman including the Chief Executive were also sacked. Subsequently, election for GBLA was held on November 12, 2009 under the newly proclaimed self-governance and empowerment order. Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the ruling party of Pakistan, won two-third majority in GBLA and formed government.

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members, selected by Prime Minister of Pakistan; 7 representing government of Gilgit-Baltistan and 8 representing government of Pakistan. The Gilgit-Baltistan Council is headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Further, Chief Minister, Governor, Minister for KAGB and Prime Minister of Pakistan are voting members of GBC.

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Council: GBLA has 24 directly elected members while 6 female and 3 technocrats come through selection.

Governor of G-B: Dr Shama Khalid

Chief Minister G-B: Syed Mehdi Shah of Skardu district.

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)

Judicial Structure: Instead of High and Supreme Courts, Gilgit-Baltistan will have an appellate court which will be headed by the chief judge. The chief judge, as well the session and district judges will be appointed by the Pakistani prime minister. In addition to the appellate court, there will be a chief court in Gilgit. The number of judges has been increased from three to five. In addition, Pakistan's military tribunals will continue to function in Gilgit-Baltistan.

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

Per Capita Income: PCI of Gilgit-Baltistan is around one-fourth of Pakistan's average (US\$264 compared to Pakistan's US\$ 1,071).⁸

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.

Endnotes

¹ Baltistan was occupied by Pakistan a year later in 1948

² <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2754976?seq=7>

³ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/pakistan/law.htm>

⁴ <http://ips-pk.org/content/view/234/259/>

⁵ <http://www.kashmirnewz.com/a0012.html>

⁶ <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/gilgitbaltistan-package-termed-an-eyewash-089>

⁷ <http://www.kashmirnewz.com/a0012.html>

⁸ AKRSP Socio-economic Survey of Northern Areas and Chitral (SESNAC) 2005; http://www.finance.gov.pk/finance_blog/?p=238; <http://finance.kalpoint.com/pdf/highlights/todays-pick/per-capita-income-falls-to-1071.pdf>

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 '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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