

POK

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News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

• **Political Developments**

Campaign for Gilgit-Baltistan

PoK Prime Minister asks PM Imran Khan to attack India with forces

Clash in Naltar Valley

JIT to probe the double murder incident in Naltar

Leader of Pakistani Kashmir speaks out

China provides rations to the needy in Gilgit Baltistan

• **Economic Developments**

Tourists not allowed to visit Hunza for 30 days

• **Urdu Media**

Long pending demand for constitutional rights

India looking for excuses to attack Pakistan

Will GB get constitutional rights?

PTI Govt supports freedom of expression



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

**No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg
New Delhi-110 010**



Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

In this Edition

The election fever manifested itself in the GB with the local leadership taking on India in a combative manner. Even the so called prime minister of AJK (PoK), belonging to PML-N was seen prodding Imran Khan to use Pakistani forces to attack India! He also said that in 1962, lost an opportunity to liberate Kashmir! However, there did not seem to be any enthusiasm over such aggressive posturing by local leaders. Rather the spread of religious conservatism and inter-sectarian animus became visible in a clash between two groups over picnickers from Lower Naltar playing music in front of a Mosque! A Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was set up to probe the Naltar incident.

There were reports of China making visible efforts to reach out to the people and deliver essential items like medicines, food packages and equipment to the local administration to fight the pandemic. At the local level, the fear of the pandemic ran high as the local authorities banned tourists from entering Hunza, tourists for 30 days.

In the vernacular media there were discussions on whether Imran Khan Government would bring about necessary changes in the constitution to absorb GB into Pakistani federal set up and honour Pakistani Supreme Court's concerns about the people of GB not being granted their fundamental rights like the people in Pakistan. There was a recurrent view that the government will have to weigh in the adverse impact of such a step on Pakistan's stand on Kashmir as a dispute to be resolved according to the UN resolutions.

Coordinator, PoK Project

Political Developments

Campaign for Gilgit-Baltistan

While the COVID crisis occupies most of government's attention in Pakistan, people in Gilgit-Baltistan are looking forward to fresh elections. The incumbent Pakistan Muslim League (N) led government is about to complete its term. *To settle some issues, the apex court in the country has also given a go-ahead to prepare and hold elections in the region. As the environment for political activity continues to form in Gilgit-Baltistan, India is suffering badly from its usual distress.* On one hand, New Delhi is unable to loosen the tight curfew in the held valley, definitely due to fear of an unprecedented backlash in Kashmir, while on the other hand announcement of elections in Gilgit-Baltistan has stuck a spiny bone down India's throat. *Meanwhile, in RAW headquarters located in CGO complex, few desk officers could be seen cheering on incoming details of successful attacks by Baloch insurgents on our armed forces in Balochistan, while at the same time few middle-aged analysts are seen perturbed and frustrated unable to grasp deteriorating situation in Kashmir.* Newspapers continue to show that how New Delhi is receiving decorated coffins draped in national flag from the occupied valley. The indigenous revolution by the "Davids of North" is bleeding a million soldier strong Goliath, with latitude. However, New Delhi is not stopping anywhere short of spreading a malicious narrative about Kashmir as well as Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/611079/campaign-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

PoK Prime Minister asks PM Imran Khan to attack India with forces

Times of India, 12 May 2020

The Prime Minister of Pakistan occupied Kashmir, Raja Farooq Haider, who is known for his

controversial statements on Kashmir, has asked Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to attack India with forces. He reacted while speaking to media after visiting villages near the Line of Control (LoC) amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Pakistani forces have made bunkers inside these villages near the LoC and engage in constant ceasefire violations with Indian forces. He added, "It is your duty to protect your brothers and sisters. India is giving weather reports on PoK, we should start updating on Delhi".

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/pok-prime-minister-asks-pm-imran-khan-to-attack-india-with-forces/articleshow/75690818.cms>

Clash in Naltar Valley

Pamir Times, 25 May 2020

Two young men have died after coming under attack from a group in Naltar Valley of Gilgit district. The incident took place in the upper reaches of Naltar valley after a group of picnickers from Lower Naltar were attacked. As a result of the armed attack two youth, Muzamil and Farjad Hussain sustained injuries. Farjad Hussain died, while being evacuated. Later, Saleem Abbas has also succumbed to the injuries at Provincial Headquarter Hospital, Gilgit. Locals have also reported that the two groups clashed because the picnickers from Lower Naltar were playing music in front of a Mosque.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/05/25/young-man-killed-over-land-dispute-in-naltar-valley/>

Lack of Caretaker Government in Gilgit Baltistan, Sheraz Abdullah

Pamir Times, 28 May 2020

The present Government of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) will complete its five years term on June 24th, 2020. The next general elections will be held within the

prescribed time, depending on the situations in GB. *In the absence of clarity for the rules of game for upcoming elections, once again Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCOP) has intervened at the request of Federal Government and have ordered the government to conduct the elections.* On April 30, a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court in Islamabad, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed, had allowed the government to organize general elections in GB, and prior to the election, set up a caretaker government. What was needed after that judgment back then was that all the political parties to join their hands together and demonstrate their political willingness to let GB grow constitutionally. Preventive measures such as a nationwide dialogue involving the representatives from GB and other state-owned institutions should have been held immediately. The recommendations that would have emerged from this dialogue should have been implemented. *The political leadership in GB and the Federal Government failed to take necessary actions to implement a constitutionally mandated framework which remained idle for almost five months till the time SCOP intervened once again at the request of the Federal Government.*

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/05/19/caretaker-govt-in-gilgit-baltistan-unprecedentedchallenges-amidst-covid-19/>

JIT to probe the double murder incident in Naltar

Pamir Times, 26 May 2020

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman has directed the Home Secretary to constitute a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe the Naltar incident in which two youth were killed after a clash between two groups. The CM has also directed officials to register the FIR of the incident under Anti-Terrorism Act. Rehman has expressed deep sorrow over the loss of two precious lives in the Naltar incident. He has said that the culprits involved in the tragedy will be brought to justice.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/05/26/cm-directs-home-secretary-to-form-jit-to-probe-the-double-murder-incident-in-naltar/>

Leader of Pakistani Kashmir speaks out

Asia Times, 30 May 2020

In an interview with Asia Times, the Prime Minister of “PAK’ Raja Farooq Haider said that Pakistan had an opportunity in 1962 to liberate Kashmir from India’s “occupation.” However, when the then-president of Pakistan and army chief General Ayub Khan asked then-US president John F Kennedy, the latter told Ayub Khan not to intervene and remain neutral [on the] Indo-China war. Raja Haider said that “to be very honest neither the masses of Kashmir nor I are satisfied with the efforts from the state of Pakistan after the annexation of J&K by India. The US is backing New Delhi, and Europe, other than occasionally highlighting human-rights abuses in J&K administered by India, has done nothing. So I believe we have done very little to highlight this issue.” The prime Minister added that “*I [have] received messages from Indian-administered Kashmir and women there are still waiting for [us to help]. They keep asking to have the Pakistan Army arrive to rescue [them].* I can [assure you] that even if Pakistan ditches Kashmiris and New Delhi keeps oppressing them, they will continue to struggle for freedom and eventually will get it on their own, but in that case, our side of Kashmir or Pakistan will get nothing.”

<https://asiatimes.com/2020/05/exclusive-leader-of-pakistani-kashmir-speaks-out/>

China provides rations to the needy in Gilgit Baltistan,

Bol, 31 May

China has always helped Pakistan in critical times, providing relief to the underprivileged in Gilgit Baltistan is yet another example of strong Pak China ties. As per details, all sectors of China have been continuously supporting Pakistan to control and prevent the novel coronavirus pandemic that has claimed nearly 1500 lives since February 26th, 2020. *From medical goods and services to food relief packages, Chinese help continues to pour in*

Pakistan. The Chinese Embassy has provided ration food packages for Gilgit Baltistan (GB) with the assistance of the local government. As a matter of fact, China always adheres to the concept of building a community with a shared future for humanity.

<https://www.bolnews.com/pakistan/2020/05/china-provides-rations-to-the-needy-in-gilgit-baltistan/>

“Kashmir movement shifting to a decisive new phase”

Anadolu Agency, 31 May 2020

Pakistani philosopher and economist Khurshid Ahmad has said that the fear of death has vanished in the Indian-administered Kashmir, shifting the Kashmir movement to a decisive new phase. But, he added, the responsibility lies with the leadership in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to make fruitful gains

to the current situation, focusing on the right to self-determination and reaching out to world capitals by lobbying, conferences and campaigns. Khurshid said that a new research group on Kashmir be established while the scope and role of Kashmir Committee be widened by including advisors, technocrats and Kashmir experts.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/kashmir-movement-shifting-to-a-decisive-new-phase/1860144>

Economic Developments

Tourists not allowed to visit Hunza for 30 days

Pamir Times, 29 May 2020

The Hunza district administration has imposed a 30-day ban on all tourists entering Hunza. The ban was announced through a notification issued by Fayaz Ahmad, District Magistrate, under Section 9 of the newly passed “Gilgit-Baltistan Infectious Diseases (Prevention and Control) Act 2020. The ban has been

imposed after the number of CoVID-19 cases reached 18 in the Hunza district. Official vehicles will be allowed to visit the district, according to the notification. Under the new order, hotels and guest houses will be penalized for hosting tourists during the ban period.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/05/29/ban-imposed-tourists-not-allowed-to-visit-hunza-for-30-days/>

Extracts From Urdu Media

Long pending demand for constitutional rights

Editorial, *Baad-e-Shimal*, 02 May 2020

Gilgit-Baltistan is the only area of the world where the people run a movement for being part of Pakistan. Otherwise, most of the movements across the world seek freedom from the countries. The people of GB fought against the Dogra Rulers and linked their future with Pakistan. Both the governments of PPP and PML-N started a process of giving due rights to the people of GB. The Sartaj Aziz Committee recommended giving constitutional rights to GB. But “Azad” Kashmir did not like any such move. The leadership of “Azad” Kashmir established contact with Islamabad and stopped the latter from acting on the Tariq Aziz Committee’s recommendations. Because of the lack of constitutional rights, GB does not have equal say and does not get equal share of resources in financial allocations. Also, four important bureaucratic positions are filled by Islamabad. GB lacks development and infrastructure. There is also increasing unemployment in the region.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/?page=cGFnZS0y&dt=MDUtMDItMjAyMA==>

India looking for excuses to attack Pakistan

Editorial, *Daily Salam*, 06 May 2020

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that India was looking for excuses to attack Pakistan. He said that RSS/BJP policies are endangering regional peace and stability. He said that RSS/BJP is a fascist ideology. The premier said that the resistance in Kashmir was against the Indian atrocities and brutalities. He asked the international community to intervene and stop India from disturbing regional peace.

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

Will GB get constitutional rights?

Editorial, *Baad-e-Shimal*, 21 May 2020

After winning the 2015 elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, Nawaz Sharif had promised to give the people the area constitutional rights. The PML-N chief also set up the Tariq Aziz committee. Sporadically, articles were written in newspapers about the progress and some propositions in regard to GB’s future status. But nothing happened at the end. According to some reports, a committee has been set up to give constitutional rights to GB. The committee would submit its reports about reforms and giving rights to GB in the Supreme Court after the Eid. The court would take final call on the matter. According to the reports, the federal government and other institutions agree on that GB should be given a provincial provincial status. The Supreme Court had asked earlier that a law should be passed in this regard in the provincial assembly and later made an Act of Parliament. It is said that after the court’s judgment, the government appoint Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi as the head of a committee to formulate a law in this regard. According to some reports, Prime Minister Imran Khan wanted to give this news to the people of GB himself. It is to be seen what is going to come for the people of GB in future.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/?page=cGFnZS0y&dt=MDUtMjEtMjAyMA==>

PTI Govt supports freedom of expression

Daily Salam, 24 May 2020

Federal Minister for information and broadcasting Shibli Faraz has said that the government believes in freedom of expression, constitution and democratic rights. He said that the government supports promotion of regional languages and journalism and

literature. He said that regional presses are part of national media. For freedom of expression and free media, facilities would be provided by the government. The purpose of verification of the newspapers is to promote true journalism. The action is moving forward in collaboration of media houses and other groups.

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

Fact Sheet on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)

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

Area ceded to China by Pakistan: 5180 sq. kilometres (Area of Shaksgam Valley)

(Source: Jammu & Kashmir Government website at <http://www.jammukashmir.nic.in/>, accessed on November 14, 2010)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Area: 13,297 square km

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

Capital: Muzaffarabad

Divisions: 3

Districts: 10

Sub Divisions (Tehsils): 32

Constituencies in AJK: 29

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

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

President: Sardar Masood Khan

Prime Minister: Raja Farooq Haider Khan

AJK Council: Total 17 members

AJK Legislative Assembly: Total seats are 41

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

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

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

Political Parties and Groups: United Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' National Party, AJK Muslim Conference, International Kashmir Alliance, JK National Party, Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (Amanullah), Peoples United Action Committee, All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

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

Gilgit-Baltistan

Area: 72,496 sq. kilometers

Population: 1.4 million (2017 census)

Capital: Gilgit

Districts: Fourteen

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

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

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

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

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

Gilgit-Baltistan Council: Total 15 members

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly: 33 (3 reserved for technocrats and 6 for woman)

Governor of G-B: Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon

Chief Minister G-B: Khalid Khurshid Khan

Political Parties and Groups: Balwaristan National Front (BNF), Gilgit-Baltistan Thinkers Forum, Gilgit-Baltistan, United Movement (GBUM), Baltistan National Movement, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), Gilgit Baltistan

National Alliance (GBNA), All Parties National Alliance (APNA)

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

Compiled and Edited by
Dr Ashok K Behuria (Pakistan Project Coordinator)
Dr Smruti S Pattanaik
Dr. Priyanka Singh
Dr Yaqoob ul Hassan
Dr Zainab Akhtar
Dr Nazir Ahmed Mir
Dr Mohammad Eisa

Disclaimer

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

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg

New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: www.idsa.in; Email: lbscidsa@gmail.com