

POK

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News Digest

A MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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Jammu & Kashmir

(Source: GIS Section MP-IDSA)

In this Edition

Hunza has a historical position in entire GB. The Mir of Hunza, at one point of time, had a wide jurisdiction spanning from the Tagdumbash region till the Rakshan valley. However, today, the people of the region have been raising their voice consistently against their under representation in the local representative body and demanding additional seats appropriate with the real population.

The political assertion of Hunza came to light this month, when in the wake of the elections, the people of Hunza demanded three seats instead of one in the local assembly. Their argument has been that some constituencies in GB have as low as 11,000 voters compared to Hunza's 36,750 voters, which is more than three times high.

Similarly, the youth and students organizations of Diamer district staged a protest rally and a sit-in in front of the WAPDA Office in Chilas alleging discrimination in recruitment. The latest wave of protest started after WAPDA advertised vacancies for the Dam project. The demonstrators said that the GB and FATA, combined, received less than 1% of the jobs, which they feel is an injustice against them. They threatened to spread the agitation to rest of GB.

In AJK (PoK) the fact that clannish mind-set was in prevalence was acknowledged by the AJK President. He pointed out that by choosing to stay within the AJK and pick up small jobs in the area, the youth of AJK were losing the big picture and denying themselves the opportunity to serve elsewhere in Pakistan.

The media, quoting an anonymous foreign-service official, said that it was in the interest of Pakistan that GB should be accommodated as the fifth province and settle the issue once and for all time to come. By so doing Pakistan would be able to convince China about its intentions and China would not feel the risk of investing in a territory whose status remains undecided.

Coordinator, PoK Project

Political Developments

“Memorandum for creation of two more GB Assembly seats for Hunza”

Pamir Times, 01 September 2020

The people of Hunza have been knocking the doors of authorities and raising their voice consistently against this perpetual inadequate share in public affairs and under representation and demanding for additional seats appropriate with the real population. The people of Hunza were looking forward to the political reforms of 2009 as an opportunity to put an end to the step motherly treatment towards Hunza. It was expected across the board that at least one seat will be increased. But the ‘Governance and Empowerment Order of 2009’ brought disappointment for us. The recent electoral rolls of the 2015 revealed that there are constituencies in GB with as low as 11,000 voters as compared to Hunza’s 36,750 voters, which is more than three times high. It was this disparity that the GB Assembly too passed resolution for the creation of additional seat for Hunza but to no avail. [The] body of Lamberdars representing the people of Hunza demands for two additional seats of Gilgit Baltistan Assembly so that there should be justice with the people of Hunza.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/09/01/memorandum-reiterating-demand-for-creation-of-two-more-gb-assembly-seats-for-hunza/>

“Youth protests against discrimination in jobs”

Pamir Times, 09 September 2020

Youth and students organizations of Diamer district staged a protest rally and a sit-in in front of the WAPDA Office in Chilas. The latest wave of protest started after WAPDA advertised vacancies for the Dam project. GB and FATA, combined, have received less than 1% of the jobs, which the local youth feel is an injustice against them. The protesters said that they will spread the agitation to the rest of Gilgit-Baltistan

if the advertisement was not withdrawn and if the youth of Diamer and other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan were deprived of employment opportunities.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/09/09/youth-protest-against-wapda-alleging-injustice-in-diamer-bhasha-dam-project-vacancies/>

“BNF’s leader Abdul Hameed Khan renounces his separatist ideology, returns to Gilgit”

Pamir Times, 10 September 2020

Abdul Hameed Khan, leader of his own faction of the Balawaristan National Front (BNF), has renounced his party’s decades long ideology of creating a separate state named “Balawaristan” comprising of the northern mountain regions of Pakistan. The BNF leader, who had returned to Pakistan after years in self-exile, has reportedly told journalists in Gilgit today at a local hotel that he was being paid 25,000 Euros each month by Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Indian spy agency, to create unrest and instability in the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/09/10/bnfs-leader-abdul-hameed-khan-renounces-his-separatist-ideology-returns-to-gilgit/>

“Consensus on GB’s provisional status as province”

Dawn, 22 September 2020

In a significant development amid political tensions in the country, the government and the opposition almost reached a consensus on granting “provisional provincial status” to strategically-located Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) while agreeing to hold consultations on the issue after the elections of its legislative assembly later this year. According to sources, the government and the opposition had discussed the move prior to the meeting of the political leadership

with the army chief. The sources said the issue was discussed in a meeting between a government team comprising Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar with leader of the opposition and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president Shahbaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1580980>

“AJK President Urges Youth to Shun Prejudices”

Urdu Point, 23 September

Azad Jammu Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan on Wednesday prevailed upon the public sector universities of Azad Kashmir to prepare the youth of the state in a way that they must shun narrow-mindedness, regional and clan-based approach. Speaking at “An Evening with Former Vice Chancellors” organized by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir University in the State’s metropolis, he regretted that today’s youth consider as their right to get an education close to their homes and seek employment there, and in this way they are losing their broad vision and universal thinking,” he added.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/ajk-president-urges-youth-to-shun-prejudices-1037968.html>

“Pakistan’s Gilgit-Baltistan: Between the Kashmir conflict and China”

Trtworld, 25 September 2020

As legislative elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) are likely to be held in November, Islamabad has intensified its efforts to recognise the northern region as the country’s fifth province. China has also been pressing Islamabad to grant GB a constitutional status since the region happens to be the starting point of the ambitious China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a key component of the neighbouring country’s flagship Belt and Road Initiative. “China does not want to risk its investment in a disputed territory and has prompted Islamabad to fix the legal status of the GB,” said a senior foreign ministry official, who

requested anonymity because of the government’s ban placed on communication with the media. The common consensus in Pakistan is that GB residents have been wanting to merge with Pakistan for several decades, but the move has faced pushback from others: the Indian government, politicians from Pakistan-administered Kashmir and the leadership from its divided part administered by India across the Line of Control (LoC).

<https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/pakistan-s-gilgit-baltistan-between-the-kashmir-conflict-and-china-40053>

“Skardu: Two criminals sentenced to death for raping, filming and blackmailing teenager”

Pamir Times, 25 September 2020

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Skardu has sentenced Muzaffar Abbas and Tajamul Hussain to death for raping, filming and blackmailing a teenager in Skardu. ATC Judge Mahmoodul Hassan has also handed down life imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1 million each. The judge has awarded another culprit Mubarak Ali life term with Rs 0.5 million fine.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/09/30/pakistan-categorically-rejects-indias-unwarranted-and-irresponsible-remarks-regarding-gilgit-baltistan/>

Economic Developments

“Apple Production in Gojal Valley, Hunza, and its Potential in Local Market”

Pamir Times, 05 September 2020

Gojal sub-division, located in Hunza district, is known for producing top varieties of apples, in terms of size, colors, nutritiousness, aroma and taste. Production continues to improve, often with the help of experts from other countries. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had trained some local farmers from Gojal valley, taking them to Japan in 2004, and also years after. A project was started by farmers in Moorkhun village of Gojal, for production of imported Apples. The experiment worked and now the Japanese “Golden Apples” are not only famous in Pakistan, but also in the international market. Efforts are needed at the state and the regional government level to work more closely with the farming communities to further improve apple production in Gojal Valley, where large swathes of land still remain uncultivable due to lack of irrigation channels. Efforts are also needed to improve access to market, to help the farmers utilize their resources even more, and get the right kind of reward for their hard work.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/09/05/apple-production-in-gojal-valley-hunza-and-its-potential-in-local-market/>

“Jubilee Life and Bank of Azad Jammu & Kashmir sign Bancassurance Agreement”

Daily Times, 11 September 2020

The Bank of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (BAJK) and Jubilee Life Insurance Company Limited have recently entered into a distribution alliance for Jubilee Life’s insurance products in order to augment the accessibility of insurance products and capitalize on the significance of financial inclusion. The signing ceremony was held at a hotel in Islamabad. The consumers would benefit from innovative products as it renders financial security and financial well-being.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/665155/jubilee-life-and-bank-of-azad-jammu-kashmir-sign-bancassurance-agreement/>

Extracts From Urdu Media

“Work continues on development projects”

Baad-e-Shimal, 02 September 2020

Work on developmental projects is going on without any interruption. The completion of the projects would provide facilities to the local people at their doorsteps. The secretary of the development department has said that 55 crore were spent on many development projects. One officer said to complete the projects on time, all funds should be released. He said that the department had demanded 260 crore for deferred projects for the first quarter of the financial year. But only 80 crore were released. The amount is too less, he added.

<http://dailybaadeshimal.com/epaper/?page=cGFnZS00&dt=MDktMDItMjAyMA==>

“Indian attack on Gilgit-Baltistan, and Pakistan’s decision”

Qazi Javed, Jasarat, 23 September 2020

It is being reported that India is currently trying to get F-5 from the United States. Israel is also installing its espionage infrastructure in the United Arab Emirates to spy on Pakistan and China. Israel is also providing a defense system; it has developed with the help of the United States to India which can be used against Pakistan. At the behest of the US and Israel, Indian Prime Minister Modi has started talking about “Gilgit-Baltistan” (Gilgit-Baltistan ki ratt laga rakhi) and he is also alleging that Pakistan is preparing to attack India from “Gilgit-Baltistan”, which means that India is about to attack “Gilgit-Baltistan” (Jis ka matlab yah hai ke Bharat Gilgit-Baltistan par hamla karega).

In view of the prevailing situation, last month, the Pakistan Air Force conducted its air exercises in Gilgit-Baltistan. India started a propaganda that Pakistan was preparing to attack India along with

China. In fact, India and the United States are planning to work together posing a grave threat to the survival and security of Gilgit-Baltistan and destroy this gateway of the CPEC project. India has repeatedly said that Pakistan is preparing to attack Kashmir. GB is the only region that shares borders with four countries. This area is considered very critical from defence and security point of view. The area is being called the gateway to the CPEC, so India is trying to occupy it [by all means]. To save it, China is now trying to strengthen its hold on Ladakh and the Pangong Lake. A global newspaper Naval News points out that China is strengthening its presence along its border with India in Ladakh especially in the Pangong Lake. There are bottlenecks around the lake and around one thousand square kilometer area of flat land have been closed for traffic for Indian forces. Pakistan has also made an official announcement to work towards making Gilgit-Baltistan a province and in this regard the state has also taken the opposition into confidence.

<https://www.jasarat.com/2020/09/23/200923-03-8/>

“The “fall of Kashmir” and Gilgit-Baltistan”

Hamid Mir, Jang, 24 September 2020

A lot is happening in Pakistani politics. It has been further complicated by the recent NAB summon to Maulana Fazlur Rehman. It has added fuel to the fire. Nawaz Sharif’s diatribe against the Army has been ignored as his personal opinion. The joint declaration of APC has 26 points, including the ones outlined by Nawaz Sharif in his speech. The seventh section of the declaration holds the current regime of Imran Khan responsible for the “fall of Kashmir”. The 14th section demands “free and fair” elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), to be held “on time”. There is also a demand that tribal areas should no more be declared as “no go” areas. The opposition is calling revocation of special status for Jammu and Kashmir on 5 August 2019 by New Delhi as the “fall of Kashmir”, while

the government is moving on to make GB the fifth province of Pakistan. Some insensible statements by some government officials not only have caused concerns in “occupied” Kashmir but also among the political parties in “Azad” Kashmir. It is well known that a large section of people in GB wants the region to be a part of Pakistan so that they can enjoy the rights enshrined in the 1973 constitution. The same Constitution in Article 273 talks about Jammu and Kashmir which includes GB. Making GB the fifth province of Pakistan without resolving the Kashmir issue would be violation of the UN resolutions on Kashmir. India has violated the UN resolutions on 5 August 2019. Should Pakistan do the same? Pakistan should find a way of giving their rights to the people of GB without angering the government in “Azad” Kashmir. ... GB has many issues which remain unresolved. Is it not possible to address the grievances of the people of GB without making it a province? The point is that if GB is made the fifth province of Pakistan without resolving the Kashmir issue, it would also be seen as the “fall of Kashmir”. Then Modi and Imran would then be considered one and the same!

https://jang.com.pk/news/823863?_ga=2.59250030.2136895012.1600928651-1172285561.1585539487

“Politics on Gilgit-Baltistan”

Saeed Aasi, Nawa-i-Waqt, 25 September 2020

The political crisis triggered by the speech delivered by Nawaz Sharif at the All Party Conference (APC) does not seem to abate. After the APC, there were reports of a meeting between some political leaders and the Army Chief Gen Bajwa and ISI Chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. This report about the meeting was leaked to the media as if to create an environment much like the one during the time of Gen Zia-ul Haq, when he wanted to send his message across to the people that these politicians are nincompoops, and said “If I point my finger at them, they would rush towards me like dogs”.

The issue of Gilgit-Baltistan is being unnecessarily dragged into this crisis. I fully agree with Maryam Nawaz’s statement that the future of GB should be

decided in the parliament by the parliamentarians. It was once decided that GB should be made a province of Pakistan. Any such move is going to affect the Kashmir issue. “Azad” Kashmir’s Supreme Court has declared GB as part of “Azad” Kashmir. This is our position also that it is a part of disputed territory.

India does not want to give the rights to the Kashmiris to decide their future. It has unilaterally revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on 5 August 2019.

In contrast, Pakistan has a principled position on the issue. If we make GB a province of Pakistan, disregarding the judgment of the Supreme Court of “Azad” Kashmir, how can we defend our position on Kashmir? How would we raise New Delhi’s unilateral decision to abrogate Article 370?

Furthermore, there are many legal complications in creating a new province. Making South Punjab a new province is a long pending issue but nothing seems to be happening yet. G-B is even more complex and sensitive. We should not allow India to be aware of our weakness in the current situation.

<https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2020-09-25/page-8/detail-7>

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/>)

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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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