

Pak to make Gilgit Baltistan its 5th province despite India's protests

written by iasexam.com | 18/09/2020



Disregarding India's strong protests, Pakistan is moving ahead with plans to make Gilgit Baltistan (GB) its fifth province, with a federal minister saying that elections in the region that New Delhi opposes will be held in November.

Prime Minister Imran Khan will soon visit the region and make the formal announcement, Ali Amin Gandapur, Pakistan's minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, told a delegation of journalists from the region in Islamabad.

Key Highlights

- New Delhi had conveyed to Pakistan several times that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of India by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.
- In May, the external affairs ministry said Pakistan or its judiciary had no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it and rejected attempts to bring material changes in Pakistan-occupied areas of the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir. "Instead, Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation," the ministry had said.
- Gandapur said the status of a full-fledged province with all constitutional rights is being planned for Gilgit-Baltistan and this will include representation in both houses of parliament.
- Gandapur said that elections in the region would be held in mid-November and

distribution of party tickets to candidates would begin soon. New Delhi had protested Pakistan's move to conduct elections in the region, which it considers an integral part of the country that had been illegally and forcibly occupied.

- Work on the Moqpondass Special Economic Zone would begin under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), while the government takes steps to improve health, tourism, transport and education facilities, he said.
- The CPEC is the flagship project of Beijing's ambitious multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India has protested to China over the project as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- In 1999, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan were citizens of Pakistan and directed the government to initiate appropriate administrative and legislative measures.
- In 2009, Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order (GBESGO) was introduced according to which, the Northern Areas were renamed as Gilgit-Baltistan. The order gave it a province like status with no representation in parliament.
- In 2015, the government constituted a committee headed by Sartaj Aziz which proposed giving Gilgit-Baltistan the status of a province and in 2018 a new Gilgit-Baltistan order was introduced and all the powers of the Gilgit Baltistan Council were transferred to its assembly.
- The GBESGO of 2009 and the Gilgit Baltistan Order of 2018 were challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan which reconfirmed its earlier judgement that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are citizens of Pakistan.
- The court also suggested that certain changes should be made to the presidential order issued by the present government and instructed the federal government to promulgate the modified Gilgit-Baltistan Reforms of 2019.

SOURCE: *The Indian Express*