**Gilgit Baltistan elections**

**[Khalid Mahmood Rasool](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/6246)**

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‘This is an election of Gilgit Baltistan but nobody is talking about its issues, pains and miseries emanating from a disputed identity. Political parties are having a series of election rallies only to amplify their rhetoric as if rallies are being held in the rest of Pakistan. Crowds are chanting to voice party slogans but, believe me sir, people and issues of GB remain voiceless!’

Raja Nowsherwan Kiyani, a resident of GB, complained about the hijacking of the ongoing elections by the main political parties of Pakistan. Raja is an M.Phil from an Islamabad university and now runs a printing press enterprise in Gilgit and hosts an FM radio show on poetry and music as well. Disgruntled and disenchanted with the current state of affairs and lack of opportunities in the native region, Raja like many other young native people, feels that another historic moment has been lost to the petty politics of election.

[Pakistan reports 2,304 new coronavirus cases in one day](https://nation.com.pk/13-Nov-2020/pakistan-reports-37-deaths-by-coronavirus-2-304-new-cases-in-one-da)

The current GB administrative and political structure has evolved during the last six decades through a lot of misery and pain. The PPP government in 2009 paved the way for a representative assembly. The current elections are the third elections for the legislative assembly. Despite having a skeleton of a province-like set up, the GB government has no self-sustaining administrative powers and financial resources. Such is the state of this so-called strategic area of the country and the corridor for CPEC!

GB has been a victim of its own history. The people of GB have been waiting and demanding for the integration of Gilgit-Baltistan as a province of Pakistan ever since its accession to Pakistan. “Their demand is based on the original offer of unconditional accession to Pakistan after the liberation of the region as a result of an armed revolt led by the locals against the occupiers of Jammu & Kashmir. This offer was never accepted by Pakistan which oddly continued to consider it a disputed area.” A renowned analyst hailing from GB noted in his recent comments while summing up the torturous identity past of the area.

[Singles’ Day sales top $74.1 billion: Alibaba](https://nation.com.pk/13-Nov-2020/alibaba-singles-day-sales-top-dollar-74-1b)

The Supreme Court of Pakistan in 1999 had asserted that the people of GB are “citizens of Pakistan for all intents and purposes”, and that they were “entitled to participate in the governance of the area and to have an independent judiciary to enforce fundamental rights”. However, the dream of full integration with Pakistan still remains unrealised.

Fine, PTI is hell bent on bringing back the PMLN supremo from London and as the PM put it; “I will not spare these looters.” Fine, PMLN wants to sort out the so called ‘selected’ government. Fine, PPP wants to save the GB people from the ‘utter mis-governance’ of PTI and promise them ‘mars and the moon’. But, is this their usual political sloganeering and over-blown party narratives? What is in these for the people of GB?

GB is strategically located, bordering China, Afghanistan, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, AJK and KP. It has an area of 72 square kilometers with a population of about 1.5 to 2 million. It is a hard-mountainous terrain. It has a host of unresolved problems. PPP and PMLN both had one term each since 2009. And now PTI is eyeing to be the next one.

[Trump says delay in North Carolina vote count fishy](https://nation.com.pk/13-Nov-2020/trump-says-delay-in-north-carolina-vote-count-fishy)

With a large hilly area and scattered population, the existing road and urban infrastructure badly needs expansion and upgrading. Tourism being its major economic activity can only thrive with dependable infrastructure. Literacy is almost 100 percent but large and medium size private sector manufacturing and trading activities are virtually non- existent.

Electricity, a basic need of industry and people is a scarce luxury. The Indus River runs from the area and gathers speed and volume from its glaciers but no hydel power generation facility has been installed. Many urban and most rural areas suffer from long power outages; at times for entire days or nights.

Health facilities are very basic and primitive. Diagnostic facilities like CT Scan are available at a few government hospitals; these too with frequent breakdowns. No medical and engineering university is located in the area. The students who travel to other parts of Pakistan prefer to stay there for jobs and career growth as there are virtually no jobs back home for technical and educated people. The list of problems goes on and on.

[Biden reassures U.S. allies in calls with leaders of Japan, South Korea, Australia](https://nation.com.pk/12-Nov-2020/biden-reassures-u-s-allies-in-calls-with-leaders-of-japan-south-korea-australia)

But none of these problems and pains of people are the focus of election rhetoric. The same dirty linen of politics is being washed by all three major parties in front of the public of GB and aired live by the media. Sexist remarks of a federal mister, fiery speeches by PTI, PMLN and PPP are serving well their narrow political objectives but aspirations and the plight of the people of GB remains as ignored as has largely been in the past. One can only hope that the political parties have mercy on the people of GB and let this election be GB-centric, instead of mainstream noise and the fiery politics of Pakistan.

Khalid Mahmood Rasool

The writer is a Lahore based political economist, writer and Urdu columnist.