

# Weekly POK News Digest

*(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)*

Volume 5 | Issue 22

26 May - 01 June 2025

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## **Political Developments**

### **GB Land Reforms Act hailed as historic step towards local ownership**

*Dawn, 26 May 2025*

Lawyers' community in Gilgit-Baltistan has lauded the approval of Land Reforms Act by the GB Assembly as the first legislation to give land ownership to locals, replacing the colonial-era law. The Gilgit-Baltistan Bar Council, in a meeting chaired by Syed Riaz Kazimi, passed a resolution lauding assembly members for getting the much-awaited land reforms act approved.

The resolution said the land reforms act replaced colonial law Khalisa Sarkar 1978 and made local people owners of their lands. It added that according to aspirations of people, ownership of land has now become possible. The resolution appreciated the efforts of Amjad Hussain, who moved bill and incorporated lawyers' recommendations into it before passing the legislation.

Speaking to Dawn, Advocate Islamuddin said the "Nautore Rules" were enforced in Gilgit and Baltistan before independence during Sikh rule. In 1978, the government repealed the Gilgit Sub-Division Nautore Rules, 1942, and the Baltistan Nautore Rules, 1965, and implemented the Northern Areas Nautore Rules, 1978.

In settled areas, Nautore Land refers to all lands that are registered in the settlement records under government ownership, while in unsettled areas,

Nautore Land refers to land that is not in the individual ownership or possession of anyone, which has not been allotted by any competent authority, and which is barren land located outside the village limits, the lawyer explained.

Mr Islamuddin said that all powers related to Nautore Land were vested in the collector/deputy commissioner as they had the powers to cancel the allotted land and transfer or register new allotments and transfers.

The collector had the power to take all decisions related to barren and public lands, he added. In the Nautore Rules, 1978, there was no concept of public land, divisible or indivisible land or common land; land was either in individual ownership or in the ownership of the Khalsa Sarkar (government land). But the GB Land Reforms Act 2025 finally replaced Northern Areas Nautore Rules, 1978, he said.

Mr Islamuddin noted that the GB Land Reforms Act was a comprehensive law, in which legislation had been made according to prevailing customs, local conditions and land structure of Gilgit-Baltistan. "The Gilgit-Baltistan Land Reforms Act 2025 divides land into two categories: Common Land and Government Land."

According to him, this new law declares all waste lands, pastures, mountains, rivers, glaciers etc. as common public lands and recognises public as the common owners of these lands and resources, whereas in the

Nautore Rules 1978, there was no concept of common public ownership and the government had full ownership rights and powers over waste lands.

Under the new law, other types of lands are called “Government Land”. This refers to lands that have been allotted to the provincial or federal government and are in the possession of the government, or are certified in the name of government institutions in the record books.

According to the GB Land Reforms Act, a “District Land Appropriation Board” (DLAB) has been constituted under Section 4, which will be headed by the deputy commissioner, and the member of assembly of the concerned constituency will also be a part of this board along with other members. This board will prepare a plan and recommendations regarding the distribution of distributable land and submit it to the “Gilgit-Baltistan Land Appropriation Board” (GBLAB), which will take a final decision.

Earlier, PPP GB chapter president and GB Assembly member, Advocate Amjad Hussain, who had introduced the bill, told the media that for the first time the colonial laws had been replaced with local laws. “After the GB Land Reforms Act 2025, the region’s people have been declared owners of the all common lands,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1913358/gb-land-reforms-act-hailed-as-historic-step-towards-local-ownership>

## **Land Reforms or Land Reclaims: Will Legal Ambiguities Enable Elite Capture?**

*Pamir Times, 27 May 2025*

On May 21, 2025, the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly passed a landmark piece of legislation: the Gilgit-Baltistan Land Reforms Act, 2025. While government supporters welcomed it as a long-overdue attempt to empower locals by formalizing their ancestral land rights, critics labeled it a bureaucratic manoeuvre to reassert state control over community resources. Between these two poles of celebration and skepticism lies a need for sober, critical engagement—especially from those of us who live the realities this law is meant to shape.

I believe this Act deserves a deeper look—free from political noise, guided instead by clarity, legality, and equity. What does the law actually say? Who benefits from it? Who might lose out? And more importantly, how do vague legal definitions risk undermining the very rights this law promises to protect?

At its core, the Act aims to undo the colonial legacy of the Nautore Rules 1978, which treated most communal lands as state-owned “Khalsa Sarkar” property. The new law proposes to return ownership to the people—by identifying, classifying, and apportioning Common Partible Land among rightful local claimants, known legally as Haqdar-e-Araze.

To implement this, two new bodies have been created: The Gilgit-Baltistan Land Apportionment Board (GBLAB), chaired by the Chief Minister and empowered to make final decisions, and The District Land Apportionment Boards (DLABs), which are responsible for preparing land plans and submitting them to GBLAB for approval.

The Act divides land into three major categories: Common Partible Land – Land that can be shared among locals; Common Impartible Land – Natural assets like rivers, glaciers, and pastures that cannot be divided or owned individually; and Government Land – Land already under the control or listed as such in revenue records.

Herein lies the catch. Section 2(x) of the Act defines Government Land as: “land which has been allotted to, acquired, or purchased, or in possession of the GB Government or any Federal Government departments, institutions or authority or which has been entered in the revenue record of the settled district in the name of the Government or any Federal Government department, institution or authority”. This definition, while seemingly standard, is alarmingly vague. It doesn’t differentiate between disputed communal land and actual government property, especially in unsettled districts where revenue records do not exist. Nor does it take into account customary usage—a critical oversight in a region where ancestral grazing lands, forest routes, and seasonal

pastures have been collectively used for generations.

Could this ambiguity be used to reclassify public lands as “state property” and hand them to powerful interests under the guise of “development”? The answer, unfortunately, is yes—if the law is not interpreted or enforced with caution and community oversight.

In a democratic legal system, every citizen must have the right to challenge administrative decisions, especially those involving ancestral rights. Yet, Section 18 of the Act blocks judicial intervention by invoking Section 172 of the Land Revenue Act, 1967. Section 17 further grants immunity to officials acting in “good faith.” This effectively prevents villagers from challenging wrongful classifications or land grabs in court. In parallel, Section 15 allows the Collector to summarily eject so-called “unlawful occupants” with just 15 days’ notice without trial—despite Article 10 of the GB Order, which guarantees due process. That’s not just a technical flaw; it’s a potential violation of constitutional rights.

To its credit, the Act does include some progressive reforms. It formally recognizes Haqdaran-e-Arazee, legitimizing local and tribal claims to village lands based on customary lineage. It introduces a framework for collective ownership—a sharp contrast to the top-down land allotments of the Nautore era. Additionally, it mandates that 10% of all apportioned land be set

aside for public uses like schools, mosques, and graveyards (Section 21).

Still, for every step forward, there are lingering shadows. If land is misclassified as “Government Land”, it could legally be leased or sold to corporate developers, tourism projects, or government-linked enterprises—without the affected communities’ consent. Though Village Verification Committees are mentioned in the law, they hold limited power. Final authority rests with GBLAB and DLAB, dominated by bureaucrats and political figures—not the villagers themselves.

This law also provides little clarity on how land will be allocated to the landless, to women, or to minority tribes. While Section 12(9) mentions allocating land to destitute individuals, it fails to define how that process will work, leaving it susceptible to manipulation and exclusion.

The Assembly debates laid bare the tensions surrounding the Act. Opposition Leader Kazim Maisam walked out in protest, declaring: “From the river to the mountaintop, this land belongs to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. No one has the authority to legislate on it without our consent.” Nationalist Leader Nawaz Khan Naji echoed public sentiment: “We must be prepared to sacrifice for the protection of our ancestral land.” Civil society has been no less vocal. Former Awami Action Committee Chairman Hafiz Sultan Rais called the Act a potential “legal tool for land grabbing in the name of development.”

The Gilgit Baltistan Land Reforms Act 2025 is neither inherently harmful nor a flawless gift. Its intentions—to redistribute land justly, empower locals, and end colonial hangovers—are admirable. But its loopholes, vague definitions, and lack of oversight could undermine those very goals. We need a clearer, tighter definition of Government Land. We need judicial oversight and independent review. We need public consultation, especially in unsettled villages and tribal communities. And we need to center women, the landless, and ethnic minorities not as footnotes but as rightful claimants in this conversation. The mountains may be still, but the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not. And neither should the language of the law be.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/05/26/land-reforms-or-land-reclaims-will-legal-ambiguities-enable-elite-capture/>

### **‘AJK’ rights group warns of fresh protests after Eid**

*Dawn, 26 May 2025*

A civil society alliance in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) campaigning for public rights has given the regional government a deadline of June 8, though Eidul Azha is likely to fall on June 7, to implement its ‘Charter of Demands’, warning of further mass mobilisation in the event of dilly-dallying or inaction.

The announcement was made by Shaukat Nawaz Mir, a prominent leader of the Jammu Kashmir Joint



Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC), in his speech in the small hours of Sunday at a massive rally held at Muzaffarabad's Lal Chowk.

Titled as "Conference of the Martyrs of Jammu and Kashmir and Public Rights", the rally began on Saturday afternoon, with thousands of participants arriving in caravans from across the region till late evening. The event continued until dawn on Sunday, during which more than two dozen speakers, including the JKJAAC's core committee members, addressed the emotionally charged gathering.

Local hotel and trader associations facilitated the participants by offering free accommodation and meals. The event ended peacefully, much to the relief of the local administration. The 13-point declaration read out by Mr Mir at the rally addressed internal governance issues, the Kashmir conflict, and the dangers of nuclear war in South Asia.

It stressed that lasting peace between Pakistan and India, as well as in the South Asian region, was impossible without a resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people. "The international community must ensure the peaceful and permanent settlement of the Kashmir issue as per the collective will of the people and their inalienable right to self-determination under the UN Charter," the declaration said.

It also warned that if any decision was imposed against the will of Kashmiris,

or if war was thrust upon the region, the people across all divided units of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir would reserve the right to peacefully dismantle the so-called "bloody" Line of Control (LoC).

The declaration raised grave concerns about the possibility of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan, and appealed to citizens of both countries as well as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, Afghanistan and Iran to support Kashmiris' call for self-determination to prevent becoming collateral in such a conflict.

Demanding the release of prominent Kashmiri resistance leader Yasin Malik and other political prisoners detained in Indian jails, the declaration also condemned "enforced disappearances" in the 'AJK' and "arrests of political activists in Gilgit-Baltistan".

### **New 16-point charter**

The committee warned the 'AJK' government to fulfil commitments made under a previous agreement regarding a 10-point charter of demands. If implementation was not ensured by June 8, the alliance said it would announce its next course of action during a representative meeting in the Mirpur division.

"We caution the rulers: if we are compelled to issue another protest call, they will not be able to escape its repercussions," Mr Mir said. The alliance also rejected the recent increase in perks and privileges for 'AJK's elite,

calling it a mockery of public sentiment. It reiterated its demand for complete reversal of these benefits.

In a strong rebuttal, Mr Mir dismissed Prime Minister Anwarul Haq's allegations of "RAW funding" for the protest movement, terming them baseless and malicious. "Our movement is being funded by donations from local residents and overseas Kashmiris, with complete transparency ensured through social media disclosures," he said.

According to the JKJAAC, the newly introduced 16-point charter — formally adopted at a core committee meeting in Dhirkot (Bagh) on May 21 — would now be pursued alongside the earlier demands. The new demands included free and equitable access to education and healthcare, employment opportunities, establishment of international airports in 'AJK', provision of clean drinking and irrigation water, construction of the Taobat-Bhimber Expressway, elimination of corruption, bribery and favouritism in government departments, interest-free loans for youth, regulation of exploitative cellular companies, quotas and financial support for persons with disabilities, and tax exemptions.

It also called for reform of judicial privileges and procedures, including transparent appointments, timely hearings and judicial accountability, to ensure the protection of public rights. The declaration strongly criticised the continued violation of Article 52-C of

the Interim Constitution and a 2019 'AJK' High Court ruling on hydropower resources, terming them detrimental to the rule of law.

Another key demand was the abolition of 12 legislative seats reserved for Kashmiri refugees living in Pakistan. The committee asserted that these seats had become instruments of exploitation and obstacles to local ownership and self-governance, and their immediate abolition was essential. Instead, the refugees residing within 'AJK' should be granted legislative representation and ownership rights, particularly those displaced after 1989, the JKJAAC stressed.

It further demanded an immediate halt to what it called the unconstitutional and unethical diversion of development funds from 'AJK' to the so-called 12 constituencies in Pakistan, describing it as a form of open corruption. It also opposed job quotas for refugees settled in Pakistan, calling them unjust to the residents of 'AJK'. "The right to employment in the liberated territory must be restricted to those living within it," it added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1913362/ajk-rights-group-warns-of-fresh-protests-after-eid>

### **The Constitutional and Political Crisis in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir': What Is the Real Issue?**

*Daily Parliament Times, 28 May 2025*

The constitutional and administrative structure of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) must always be



understood within a specific international and national context. The Interim Constitution Act of 1974 is, in essence, a “constitutional framework” that the Government of Pakistan provided to the people of ‘AJK’ as a temporary arrangement in light of the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir. This framework is not a permanent state constitution but a provisional and conditional political arrangement in which essential domains like defense, financial authority, and international representation remain with the Government of Pakistan, while internal affairs, development, local administration, legislation, and the dispensation of justice are delegated to the ‘AJK’ government. This interim setup, which is not internationally recognized as an independent government, was designed solely to facilitate the Kashmiri people’s right to self-determination through a UN-mandated plebiscite. However, in recent years, a series of political, administrative, and constitutional crises have severely undermined the legitimacy and credibility of this arrangement, affecting not only ‘AJK’s’ internal governance but also the sensitive international dimensions of the Kashmir issue. Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq’s Government and Constitutional Drift since the formation of the current government under the leadership of Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, ‘AJK’ has been mired in a deeply uncertain political environment. The structure, moral legitimacy, and

constitutional foundation of this government are all under serious question. This government is ostensibly comprised of members elected on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) tickets along with members of other political parties. However, the PTI defectors have neither formally separated from the party, nor has the party leadership taken a clear stance against them. The result is a quasi-“forward bloc” that neither fully belongs to the PTI nor adheres to any transparent governmental framework. To add to the confusion, this government has received unofficial support from three major political forces in ‘AJK’ — the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), and the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference — but this support is limited to power-sharing in the assembly, devoid of any ideological consensus, formal agreement, or coherent governance structure. This has rendered all participating parties ineffective in shaping government policy or maintaining their own political identity before the public. Consequently, public discontent has been rising, and its most visible expression has come through civil society and trader unions, which have stepped into the political vacuum left by the mainstream political forces.

### **The Rise of the Joint Awami Action Committee: A Result of Political Vacuum**

The dysfunction of political parties and the unrepresentative nature of the

current government created a vacuum that the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) has filled. Comprising trader unions, student organizations, nationalist groups, disenchanted political activists, and civil society members, this committee has built a potent movement around pressing economic issues such as rising electricity tariffs, subsidy cuts, unfair taxation, and inflation. While it started with economic demands, it has now gradually assumed a broader political role. It is deeply concerning that responsibilities traditionally associated with elected political parties are now being carried out by a non-elected, loosely organized forum. The JAAC, which initially advocated for common citizens' needs, is now also engaging in highly sensitive constitutional and political debates. At its most recent rally, the Committee expanded its charter of demands to include the issue of the 12 legislative seats allocated to Kashmiri refugees settled in Pakistan — a matter of serious constitutional and structural significance for 'AJK'.

### **The 12 Refugee Seats: Constitutional Necessity or Political Instrument?**

The 12 seats allocated in the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly for refugees from Jammu and Kashmir residing in Pakistan were initially intended as symbolic political representation. The idea was to demonstrate that the entire territory of Jammu and Kashmir is a single political entity, and 'AJK' represents only a part of it. However, over time, these seats have been

increasingly used for political leverage — for accessing development funds, securing public jobs, influencing administrative decisions, and obtaining admissions in educational institutions. Refugees living in Pakistan enjoy full access to public services such as education, healthcare, employment, and business opportunities. They also pay taxes in Pakistan and are entitled to constitutional freedoms as citizens. Despite these privileges, they also seek — and often obtain — the same developmental benefits and institutional preferences from the 'AJK' government that should be exclusive to local residents. This dual entitlement raises serious legal, moral, and constitutional questions. The legal jurisdiction of the 'AJK' government is limited to its own territorial boundaries. Therefore, allocating its administrative and financial resources to non-residents — especially those who do not contribute to its economy through taxes — is constitutionally debatable. The quota system, which allows refugees to claim public sector jobs in 'AJK', not only restricts opportunities for local youth but also perpetuates an unconstitutional structure.

### **The Way Forward: Reform or Ruin?**

The current scenario demands urgent and serious introspection from all political stakeholders in 'AJK' — including political parties, the government of Pakistan, the judiciary, and civil society. If these institutions fail to collectively address the growing

disconnect between the public and the political structure, then platforms like the JAAC, which are non-representative and structurally unaccountable, may dominate the political landscape in the coming years. This could eventually marginalize traditional political parties and result in sustained instability — a situation where even the Government of Pakistan might find it difficult to manage ‘AJK’ as a politically stable unit. The ongoing constitutional, political, and public crisis in ‘AJK’ cannot be resolved at a single level. It requires a multi-pronged approach, including a comprehensive political charter, constitutional reforms, a re-evaluation of refugee representation, the abolition of the quota system, and the reinvigoration of party-based democratic politics. Without these steps, the erosion of institutional credibility will continue from the grassroots to the highest levels — with dire consequences for the State of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, its people, and Pakistan’s strategic interests.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/05/28/the-constitutional-and-political-crisis-in-azad-jammu-and-kashmir-what-is-the-real-issue/>

### **‘AJK’ migrants want demands fulfilled before budget, polls**

*Dawn, 29 May 2025*

The post-1989 migrants from across the Line of Control (LoC) issued a veiled warning to the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) government over the alleged non-fulfilment of their demands.

At a meeting, members of the Refugees Working Committee — including heads of refugee camps and elected councillors — urged the government to fulfil their long-ignored demand for two reserved seats in the Legislative Assembly, one each for refugees from ‘occupied Jammu and the occupied Valley’, ahead of the general elections due next year. They also demanded an increase in the monthly subsistence allowance and allocation of funds for their resettlement in the 2025-26 budget.

The participants strongly condemned what they called the persistent neglect of the 1989 refugees by successive ‘AJK governments’. “It is deeply unfortunate that even after three and a half decades, the condition of Kashmiri refugees remains unchanged,” read a joint communiqué issued after the meeting. According to the communiqué, over 9,500 refugee families — comprising around 46,000 individuals — continued to live in miserable conditions in camps and rented accommodations across Mirpur, Kotli, Bagh, Muzaffarabad, Jhelum Valley, and other cities of ‘AJK’.

The participants recalled that a comprehensive ‘Charter of Demands’ was submitted to the ‘AJK’ government some 18 months ago, and among its key points were proposals for resettlement, resolution of other chronic issues, as well as allocation of one Assembly seat each for refugees from ‘occupied Jammu and the Valley’. However, they lamented that no action had been taken on the document to date. “Refugees

will no longer tolerate exploitation, nor will there be any compromise on the future of our younger generation,” the communiqué warned.

The group stressed that allocation of two separate seats for post-1989 refugees would help them elect their own representatives to advocate their concerns and contribute meaningfully to the discourse on India’s human rights violations in ‘occupied Kashmir’. The refugees also reminded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of the commitments he made during previous meetings. These included a Rs 1,500 increase in the monthly subsistence allowance and concrete steps towards their resettlement.

The group communiqué congratulated the government of Pakistan, the armed forces and Field Marshal Asim Munir on the success of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos against Indian aggression.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1913990/ajk-migrants-want-demands-fulfilled-before-budget-polls>

### **India’s aggressive posture threatening regional peace, Masood Khan**

*Business Recorder, 29 May 2025*

Former ‘AJK’ President and senior diplomat Sardar Masood Khan has warned that India’s hostile policies pose a serious threat to peace in South Asia and beyond. In an interview, Khan said India maintains a war-like posture under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has declared that any act of terrorism in India or Kashmir will be

blamed on Pakistan and met with retaliation.

“Pakistan must remain fully prepared to respond to any potential escalation, it would be dangerous to harbour any illusions about the intentions of Indian leadership,” he cautioned. India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Khan said, has publicly stated that any act of terrorism in India or ‘Indian occupied Kashmir’ will be attributed to Pakistan and met with retaliatory strikes.

Masood Khan provided an in-depth analysis of Pakistan-India relations, the prospects for dialogue, and the prevailing Indian narrative. He stressed that recent tensions have sent a clear signal to the international community that any conventional conflict in South Asia holds the potential to spiral into a nuclear confrontation, with consequences extending far beyond the region.

Khan noted that while India persistently accuses Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism, it has never presented credible evidence. Conversely, he asserted that Pakistan possesses irrefutable proof of India’s overt and covert involvement in terrorist activities within its borders—particularly through proxy networks operating in Balochistan and the tribal regions. He reiterated Pakistan’s longstanding commitment to resolving all outstanding disputes, including the Kashmir issue, through dialogue—whether via direct bilateral engagement or third-party mediation.

However, he lamented that India has consistently avoided serious negotiations. On occasions when it has shown a nominal willingness to engage, it has diverted the discourse toward secondary issues, effectively sidestepping the core dispute. Referring to the Pehalgam incident, Khan accused India of unjustly blaming Pakistan, heightening tensions, and subsequently committing acts of military aggression. He stated that Pakistan responded with a measured and resolute counteraction, effectively thwarting India's designs.

Following this, he added, New Delhi faced mounting diplomatic pressure that compelled it to express readiness for a ceasefire and talks. Yet, it now appears to be retreating from that stance. Commenting on India's proposed "new normal" doctrine, Sardar Masood Khan warned that if India establishes a precedent of blaming Pakistan for every incident and justifying military responses as routine, sustainable peace in the region would become impossible.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40365207/indias-aggressive-posture-threatening-regional-peace-masood-khan>

### **GB protesters block Karakoram Highway amid Khunjerab trade halt**

*Dawn, 31 May 2025*

Local traders involved in Pakistan-China trade via Khunjerab Pass launched an indefinite protest sit-in blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) at Pissan in Nagar, stranding

thousands of local and international travellers on both sides of the route.

The protest call was issued by the Pak-China Traders Action Committee, an alliance comprising the Gilgit-Baltistan Importers and Exporters Association, the Nagar Chamber of Commerce, and small trade associations from Nagar, Hunza, and Gilgit. Protesters chanted slogans against Pakistan Customs and the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government.

According to the protesters, the primary grievance is the suspension of customs clearance for imported consignments from China at Sost Dry Port for the last six months, effectively halting Pak-China trade. According to traders, 257 consignments imported from China have been stuck at Sost Dry port since december last year, causing "billions of rupees losses" from expired items, daily port charges, and other expenses. They demanded that the stranded consignments be cleared through a "one-time amnesty scheme" as they cannot absorb the damages.

They highlighted that a large portion of GB's population, including transporters, hotel owners, shopkeepers, labourers and customs agents, depends on this trade due to a lack of other job opportunities. Also, new policies of Pakistan Customs were described as "anti-poor", rendering thousands jobless. Further demands include exempting consignments at Sost Dry Port from misdeclaration cases, arguing it's challenging to prepare detailed packing lists and invoices under the current Chinese



import circumstances, where traders buy various items from multiple shops.

They also requested permission to submit import documents after examination of consignments at Sost. Traders called for the facilitation of barter trade between Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang province under the 1985 border agreement. They asked that goods imported by border pass holders be cleared separately near the Sost customs check post, continuing a 40-year practice.

Additionally, seized counterfeit items at Sost Dry Port should be destroyed or auctioned within Gilgit-Baltistan, where facilities already exist, rather than being transported out. A comprehensive future policy is sought to ensure uninterrupted trade.

Initially, organisers had planned a car march to Sost town near Khunjerab Pass on Friday to decide on joint protest actions. However, when convoys from Gilgit and Nagar began to move towards Sost, the administration deployed police at the KKH in Pissan, the Ganish bridge in Hunza, and other connecting roads. A convoy of hundreds of vehicles from Gulmat Nagar was stopped by the police, leading protesters to stage a sit-in at Pissan, which was later joined by other rally participants.

Addressing protesters, Ebad Nagri, Mir Abbas, Muhammad Ismail and others said they initially had no plan for a sit-in but decided on it after police stopped their march to Sost.

Protesters claimed they were protesting peacefully but accused the government of “trying to make it violent”. They noted the local administration had imposed Section 144 — a provision often used to suppress public gatherings — despite no law-and-order situation. They said the sit-in would continue until their demands were met.

“GB has no representation in parliament and other federal institutions, but still always remains in the forefront to defend the country,” said Abbas Mir, an organiser, criticising the federal government for crippling Gilgit-Baltistan’s financial lifelines. He added that political, religious, and regional parties supported their protest.

Protesters said they had met high-level officials over the past six months, but to no avail. Ebad Nagri announced that the protest “will only be called off after the fulfilment of our demands”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1914426/gb-protesters-block-karakoram-highway-amid-khunjerab-trade-halt>

### **Four terrorists killed, two policemen martyred in ‘AJK’ operation**

*The Express Tribune, May 29 2025*

Four terrorists were killed and two policemen embraced martyrdom during an exchange of fire between security forces and terrorists in the Hussain Kot area of Rawalakot district, ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), on Wednesday.



According to police officials, the encounter took place when law enforcement personnel raided a suspected hideout. The terrorists reportedly opened fire and hurled hand grenades at the security team, resulting in the martyrdom of two policemen on the spot. In an attempt to evade arrest, the terrorists detonated explosive devices, killing themselves in the process. Among the deceased was the ringleader, Zarnosh Naseem, who police said was wanted in several high-profile cases, including the murder of Constable Sajjad Resham.

Authorities added that Naseem had been residing in the Rawalakot area for some time and was affiliated with a proscribed terrorist outfit operating in the region. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Poonch, Sardar Zaheer, confirmed the deaths of the four terrorists and the martyrdom of two police personnel during the operation. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi commended the security forces for a successful counter-terrorism operation. In a statement, he paid tribute to the martyred policemen, noting that their sacrifice had helped avert a major tragedy.

“The martyred officers have set an example by sacrificing their lives in the line of duty,” Naqvi said, adding, “The entire nation salutes their courage and stands with the bereaved families in this difficult time.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2548289/four-terrorists-killed-two-policemen-martyred-in-ajk-operation>

## Economic Developments

### **CPEC Extension to Afghanistan: Boosting Regional Cooperation**

*Friday Times, May 29 2025*

The trilateral meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China in Beijing (May 21, 2025) called for extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan. This reflects trilateral cooperation in the region, aiming to enhance economic connectivity and regional collaboration. The 6th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' meeting will be held in Kabul.

Afghanistan has endured wars for decades and has been a battleground for competing powers. The country was a theatre of Cold War politics. Since 2000, terrorism has emerged as a global challenge, and to dismantle Al-Qaeda, the US-led coalition targeted terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan. However, whether the deployment of troops in Afghanistan defeated terrorism or brought stability remains questionable. The facts on the ground indicate that Afghanistan remains economically weak, and terrorism persists. Terrorism has evolved over the years, spreading across the region. Pakistan, as Afghanistan's neighbour, has borne the brunt of the instability.

Considering past policies aimed at tackling Afghanistan's instability and the countermeasures undertaken, not much success is evident. The inclusion of Afghanistan in regional connectivity marks a significant shift from previous

approaches. Afghanistan provides a vital link to Central Asia, and a peaceful Afghanistan could become a key connector in Central-South economic integration. This characteristic highlights Afghanistan's importance in the regional context. With Afghanistan's inclusion in regional connectivity, the country, often seen through the prism of war and terrorism, will now be viewed through a development lens. Regional connectivity, led by CPEC, offers Afghanistan an opportunity to grow economically and embrace stability.

During the trilateral meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called upon the three countries to "oppose all forms of terrorism and jointly combat terrorist forces". Stability in Afghanistan is in the larger interest of the region. The trilateral meeting involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China, aimed at strengthening regional connectivity, can be seen as a success of China's diplomatic efforts. China has investments in Afghanistan, including the Aynak Copper Mine in Logar province, which holds 11 million tonnes of copper. Song Wenbing, head of the Aynak Copper Mine Project, states that the project will create employment opportunities for nearly three thousand Afghans. China has also proposed US\$10 billion in investments in Afghanistan's lithium reserves. Moreover, China plans to offer Afghanistan tariff-free access, presenting an opportunity for Afghanistan to benefit from China's construction and energy sectors.

The decision to extend CPEC to Afghanistan, aside from offering economic benefits to Afghanistan, will also have a regional impact. China's economic role in the region will increase significantly. South Asian countries will look towards China and East Asia for trade ties. This economic integration at regional and trans-regional levels will alter the balance of power in South Asia. India, the so-called regional hegemon, will lose ground to regional connectivity and economic prowess.

CPEC is part of China's larger Belt and Road Initiative. The progress of BRI across world regions demonstrates the project's popularity in both developing and developed countries. Prior to raising objections to CPEC, India needs to reconsider its choices. In a world where regionalism and economic interdependence are gaining ground, South Asia's regional dynamics are also shifting. If India can reach out to Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific for economic and political gains, why cannot South Asian economies connect with East and Central Asia? These are emerging trends redefining countries' political orientations.

Pakistan's ties with Afghanistan have been at their lowest ebb, as Pakistan has repeatedly urged the Afghan Interim Government (AIG) to prevent the use of Afghan territory for terrorist activities. During the trilateral meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called upon the three countries to "oppose all forms of terrorism and

jointly combat terrorist forces.” Countering terrorism collectively is another positive development. As “Fitnatul Khawarij” is a regional issue and an obstacle to regional progress, a coherent regional policy is necessary to eradicate Fitnatul Khawarij once and for all. Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan, under the umbrella of regional connectivity, can trilaterally neutralise these terrorists.

<https://thefridaytimes.com/29-May-2025/cpec-extension-to-afghanistan-boosting-regional-cooperation>

### **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

#### **For terrorist acts in ‘Azad Kashmir’, territory of Afghanistan was used: IG ‘Azad Kashmir’**

*Urdu Point, 22 May 2025*

Inspector General of Police ‘Azad Kashmir’ (AJK) Rana Abdul Jabbar said that for the terrorist attacks in ‘AJK’, Afghanistan territory have been used. During a press conference in Muzaffarabad, IG police said that based on credible intelligence input of presence of terrorists, police took to action in Haseen Kot and in the meantime terrorists threw grenades and retaliated with their weaponry.

Four terrorists were killed in the operation and police also suffered two casualties along with five police personnel’s were injured. IG police said that the Prime Minister of ‘AJK’ announced package of 1 crore for the martyred policemen and 20 lakh for each injured. IG further mentioned that

Afghanistan’s territory have been used by such terrorists and the Afghan authorities will be provided proofs of such developments.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/national-news/live-news-4442992.html>

#### **War is no solution to any problem: Barrister Sultan**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 27 May 2025*

President ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ Barrister Sultan Muhammad Chaudhry said that with related to Kashmir issue, the Organization for Islamic Countries (OIC) has always spoken in favour of Kashmiri people and their right to self-determination. I want the OIC to play its role by pressurizing the New Delhi and impose economic sanctions over it so that it stops its atrocities in ‘occupied Kashmir’. The Kashmir issue should get resolved according to the wishes of Kashmiri people. Last month, India in the ‘occupied Kashmir’ of Pehalgam spot did a false flag operation and put its blame on Pakistan, and later attacked on it. Pakistani army and Pakistan’s people gave a befitting response to India and decimated their ill designs. We are neither in favour of war nor want to fight but India came charging at us to which we gave them an equal response. The main thorn in amicable relations of India and Pakistan is Kashmir issue and until Kashmir issue is not resolved, peace cannot be achieved in South Asia.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-27.jpg>

## From Social Media

**JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri**

26 May 2025

Lawyers' community in #GilgitBaltistan has lauded the approval of Land Reforms Act by the GB Assembly as the first legislation to give land ownership to locals, replacing the colonial-era law.

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1926852921917903147>

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

30 May 2025

Teachers protest across Gilgit-Baltistan

**Link to the video:**

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1926290264580067773>

**PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes**

26 May 2025

Ehsan Ali Advocate, Chairman of the Awami Action Committee, has been sent to jail on judicial remand. He was arrested two weeks ago in Gilgit while leading efforts to organize a Qaumi Jirga aimed at addressing regional concerns.

Following his arrest, along with the detention of several other activists, the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly passed the highly controversial Land Reforms Act 2025, sparking widespread debate and criticism across the region. #GilgitBaltistan #Pakistan

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1927037120658518374>

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

31 May 2025

Police crackdown continues against leaders of the Gilgit-Baltistan Public Action Committee. So far, 13 leaders, including the chairman, have been arrested.

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1928755108327604717>

# Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 5 | Issue 22

26 May - 01 June 2025

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**Disclaimer**

*PoK weekly 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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