

Weekly POK News Digest

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Political Developments

Gilgit-Baltistan protest over trade intensifies as KKH blocked for third day

Dawn, 2 June 2025

The protest led by traders and supported by political parties against the centre's trade policies intensified on Sunday as protesters blocked the Karakoram Highway (KKH) for traffic. Local importers and exporters have been protesting against what they call the exploitative policies of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The sit-in against the revenue body entered its third day at Gulmat Nagar on Sunday. The protesters have vowed the road connecting Pakistan with China will remain closed to traffic till the acceptance of their demands. Thousands of passengers and tourists remained stranded on both sides of the road for many hours, with long queues of vehicles seen on both sides on Sunday.

'Economic murder'

The call for protest was issued by the Pak-China Traders Action Committee, an alliance comprising the Gilgit-Baltistan Importers and Exporters Association; Gilgit-Nagar Chamber of Commerce; and small trade associations from Nagar, Hunza, and Gilgit.

Meanwhile, various delegations of traders, scholars, civil society members from Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit and other

areas joined the protesters. The protest leaders, Abbas Mir, Ebad Nagari, Muhammad Ismail and others, said thousands of protesters had been sitting on the road for the past three days but the authorities were reluctant to listen to their genuine grievances.

They lamented GB has "no industry" or employment opportunities in the private sector. The trade activity between Pakistan and China through the Khunjerab Pass was the biggest source of income for locals, they added. They added people affiliated with this trade — transporters, shopkeepers, labourers, customs clearance agents, hotel owners, small businessmen — have been jobless for the last seven months due to the suspension of trade at Khunjerab Pass.

They said protesters have been demanding the clearance of over 240 consignments stuck at Sost Dry port for the past last seven months under a one-time amnesty scheme, as traders cannot afford billions of rupees in losses.

They said the policies of FBR and Customs at Sost Dry Port "economically murdered" locals. They claimed that locals with border passes were not allowed to import items from China and the barter trade between Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang province of China has been suspended.

The traders called for the facilitation of barter trade between GB and Xinjiang under the 1985 border agreement. Additionally, seized counterfeit items

at Sost Dry Port should be destroyed or auctioned within GB, the protest leaders demanded. GB has a disputed status, yet local traders are paying all taxes and customs duties on imported goods.

Failed talks

Addressing the protesters, the president of PML-N Nagar chapter, Javed Hussain, said the federal government was “not serious in settling the issue”. Mr Hussain, also a former member of GB Assembly, said trade policies at other ports of the country have been relaxed because “people of those areas have representation in parliament”.

“GB people have been paying all taxes, yet the FBR is reluctant to clear their consignments. He said no taxation without representation was a universal law and the people of GB were neither given representation in parliament nor exemption from taxes.

“The government of Pakistan even gave amnesty to high-profile terrorists. So, giving a one-time amnesty to clear 250 consignments after paying taxes was not a big demand,” he said

GB Home Minister Shams Lone, assembly member Ayub Waziri and other officials met the protesters and tried to convince them to end the protest. However, the talks failed to produce results. The government delegations told the protesters that their demands were “genuine” and supported by the GB government.

They added that the issues were related to the federal government, and the chief minister has already sent recommendations to Islamabad. Muhammad Ali Quaid, special assistant to chief minister, told the media that the GB government has no power to solve the demands of the protesters.

He said the issue will be discussed in the upcoming meeting of the apex committee, including civil and military leaders.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1914874/gilgit-baltistan-protest-over-trade-intensifies-as-kkh-blocked-for-third-day>

Land Reform Act 2025; Should it be Contested?

Pamir Times, 2 June 2025

The Gilgit-Baltistan Land Reforms Act, 2025 aims to grant proprietary rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan over common partible land, ensuring equitable land distribution and legal ownership. It establishes land apportionment boards, defines Haqdar-e-Araze (rightful landowners), and introduces mechanisms for land allocation. The act should be celebrated instead of contested at any level. There are various reasons for celebrating it. Societies are becoming a complex phenomenon owing to the increasingly growing urbanization, the distinction between rural and urban areas is diminishing over time. Given the growing characteristic of urbanization

in the region, there must be an efficient and effective structure in place to cater the needs of urbanization. Importantly, the structures and legal modalities restrict individuals from carrying out arbitrary actions that might destroy natural landscape of the region. The enforcement of this land Act bars individuals from taking such measures that fuel communal unrest, conflict between stakeholders and government and locals. Let's explore the positive facets of the bill keeping in view the concerns of the local people.

The first point is granting of proprietary rights to the local people. How could this provision empower the local common people of the region? According to Cornell's law dictionary, Proprietary rights, also termed property rights, are the rights that accompany legal ownership of tangible or intangible property; rights over or in respect of property. In the aforementioned Act, proprietary rights are established over common land, which included both impartible and partible land, defined in Chapter III, Section v sub-clause III. The confusion has been created by the word impartible land, some have misconstrued it as the land that would be untouchable and rights over the said land would be established by the government of GB. The ambiguity is owing to misinterpretation of Section VI wherein it bars apportionment to any individual. This needs to be understood; no individual but Haqdaran e Arazee and the village will

continue to exercise their collective rights over the land. The interpretation must be taken in good faith. When I say in good faith, it means the land is being protected from occupation; influential and well-connected people in the past have been exercising clandestine ownership to accrue individual benefits. This particular clause creates uniformity within the given jurisdiction and ensures equitable land distribution and collective legal ownership. In addition, for the first time the government has taken into consideration the sustainability aspect. GB is the most climate vulnerable region in Pakistan having profound impacts of climate change. The restriction in place would serve as climate friendly and ecological habitat will be protected in future.

Second important point is declaration of Haqdaran-e-e Arazee in Section XI of chapter III. Accordingly, the share of entitlement will be determined by the village verification committee (VVC) under the auspices of customary laws. Customary laws are the fundamental sources from where municipal and public international laws have been derived. This section bounds the VVC to verify Haqdaran Arazee in the light of customary laws. This further consolidates the rights of local people on the land and over the people of the specific region. This provision in its entirety complies with the norms of democracy where people are considered as sovereign and laws are made to serve the governed not the

governors. However, nomination of people in the VVC can be a debatable point. In order to make it more effective, the committee must be comprised of educated people along with the elders of the village. The concerned Tehsildar, who is in charge or administrative authority should keep in mind the above-mentioned concern while nominating the members.

The third important point is of the mechanism of land allocation. The Act provides for formation of three regulatory bodies in general to decide the whole process from declaration of Haqdaran Arazee to partible and impartible land and to partition of the land. The institutional bodies viz. VVC, District Land Apportionment Board (DLAB), and the GB Land Apportionment Board (GBLAB). The later is the final authority head by the chief executive of the province, the chief minister (CM). This Act has made it crystal clear that the say of the CM will be the final verdict to decide the fate of a piece of land and ownership rights of the people over the common land. The three long stages introduced in the bill guarantee, transparency, good faith and welfare of the people. It must be reminded to the people in opposition and treasury benches that it is not the persona or personality that matters but institutions. The stronger the institutions, the more transparent will be the mechanism of partition and apportionment of the land.

Now, here comes the role of civil society, opposition members and the common masses to develop a consensus to make institutional bodies involved transparent, effective and efficient. The lawyer community must sensitize the public about importance of legislation and their significance for a society. Laws are passed and implemented to uphold social order in a society. Unfortunately, we as a nation are averse to change and Litigium. Of course, it may be because litigation is cumbersome process that require prudent minds and able litigants to decode the phrases and simplify the terms for a better understanding of a common man like myself. We expect prudent minds, irrespective of party affiliation, to come forward and debate the bill to sensitize the public of its very importance and identify the lacunas to revamp the bill in a next episode. A good beginning is always a half done.

In the end, I as son of soil appreciate the efforts of those who were on the driving seat, those who proposed the idea of land ownership for a decade, within and outside the assembly. There may be shortcomings in the bill, and there are few, all these discrepancies can be removed through mutual consultation and debate. But it is unfair to reject and oppose the landmark achievement of the elected representatives on the basis of few shortcomings. I must suggest the opposition to propose amendments once the bill becomes law and is

practiced. The amendments must be incorporated on the basis of its consequences for the society and people. We as a nation must learn to move forward positively in order to be at par with other nations across the world. Criticism for the sake criticism must be shunned but optimism must overcome the pessimism. We must remember that there is always a silver lining at the end.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/06/01/land-reform-act-2025-should-it-be-contested/>

War threats will keep looming unless Kashmir resolution: 'AJK' PM

The Nation, 2 June 2025

'Azad Jammu Kashmir' Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq, while highlighting the dangers of the unresolved Kashmir issue, has said that the threat of war would continue to hover over South Asia unless the longstanding issue of Kashmir is addressed in its historical perspective.

The prime minister said this while talking to a delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference 'Azad Kashmir' branch, which called on him in the state metropolis on Sunday under the leadership of its convener, Ghulam Muhammad Safi. Speaking on the occasion, the PM stated that the recent military standoff between India and Pakistan has brought the global spotlight back on the Kashmir issue, with pro-Kashmir voices advocating for early resolution of the dispute gaining momentum.

Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq paid eulogizing tributes to the Pakistani Armed Forces for the unprecedented success achieved against the enemy under Operation Bunyanum Marsoos. He also showered praise on Field Marshal General Asim Munir for adopting a clear stance on the Kashmir issue. He expressed the hope that the federal government and other relevant quarters would intensify their efforts, both at diplomatic and political fronts, to seek a just and lasting solution to the Kashmir issue.

He urged the world community to take effective notice of the worsening situation in the disputed territory and play its due role to help resolve the lingering dispute peacefully in accordance with the UNSC resolutions. Paying homage to the martyrs of Kashmir, the PM expressed the optimism that the day was not far off when Kashmiris would achieve their cherished goal of freedom. The delegation was comprised of Hurriyat representatives, including Advocate Pervez Ahmed Shah, Abdul Hamid Lone, Raja Khadim Hussain, Mushtaqul Islam, and Abdul Majeed Mir were present in the delegation.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Jun-2025/war-threats-will-keep-looming-unless-kashmir-resolution-ajk-pm>

Vacancies hamper GB justice delivery

Dawn, 3 June 2025

Vacant positions of judges in the Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court has

been causing difficulties for dispensation of Justice to litigants while the authorities concerned have no importance for the highest judicial forum of the region, that has to ensure fundamental rights of two million people.

These views were expressed by newly-elected GB Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association President Muhammad Iqbal Advocate while addressing the oath taking ceremony of the office bearers of Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association.

Chief Justice Supreme Appellate Court Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan administered the oath to the newly-elected cabinet of GB Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association office bearers. On the occasion, Muhammad Iqbal took oath as president, Advocate Shakoor Khan as general secretary while Advocate Zakaria as a joint secretary. Mr Iqbal said the appellate court has been facing difficulties owing to delay in appointment of judges since 2012. He added the pendency of cases is increasing in the court and litigants are suffering.

Positions of judges at the GB Supreme Appellate Court are vacant for last eight years, he said, adding last month the Supreme Court of Pakistan had directed appointments of two vacant judges positions in GB Supreme Appellate Court.

He further said that thousands of cases are pending at the GB's highest

judiciary and litigants are suffering. He said GB Supreme Appellate Court's Chief Judge Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan were attempting to dispose cases that can hear only by one judge. Addressing on the occasion, Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan congratulated new cabinet members of GB Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association.

The Chief Judge of Supreme Appellate Court said that the main job of both judges and lawyers is to provide justice to the litigants. He expressed the hope that all the officials will perform their duties with dedication and assured his full cooperation to them.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1915104/vacancies-hamper-gb-justice-delivery>

First polio case from GB takes year's tally to 11

Dawn, 3 June 2025

Health authorities have confirmed a new case of wild poliovirus in the Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan, marking the first instance of the virus reported from the region. The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health has confirmed a new case in 23-month-old male child from District Diamer, Gilgit-Baltistan.

"This is the first case of wild poliovirus reported from GB and the eleventh confirmed case in Pakistan this year." Providing details of the case, GB Health Secretary Asifullah Khan said the child

was diagnosed with poliovirus in Diamer's Tangir area.

He said that the child has not travelled outside the area, however, the virus strain has been confirmed to have originated from Karachi's Liaquatabad area. Mr Khan observed that there was a record of administering polio drops to the child. However, he added, the child was not provided with the vaccines given immediately after birth.

Two booked

Diamer police have registered a case against two unidentified persons for attacking a polio monitoring team in Tangir Valley of Diamer. The case has been registered with Jaglot Police Station. According to the FIR, the complainant, who was part of polio monitoring team, said two days ago he along with other team members Muhammad Bilal, Kainat Hussain, driver Adnan Hussain and Iqbal Hussain, had gone to Sheikho area in Tangir Valley for polio vaccination survey.

He said two unidentified individuals stopped their vehicle in Sheikho area and opened fire at the tyres. The suspects told the team that "they are ruining their environment by bringing in unveiled women from Gilgit". They threatened: "If you do this again, you will be killed." Later, the attackers fled towards mountains, the FIR said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1915103/first-polio-case-from-gb-takes-years-tally-to-11>

Rawalakot Terror Incident: a Tragedy, a Question, a Cry of Conscience

Daily Parliament Times, 30 May 2025

In the once-serene valley of 'Azad Kashmir', a tragic event recently unfolded that has shaken the collective conscience of the nation. In Tarar, a village near Hussain Kot in the Rawalakot region, a deadly encounter claimed the lives of four terrorists, including two brothers from Bagh district. In this bloody exchange, two brave police constables were martyred and five others were injured. Echoes of Gunfire in a Land of Peace 'Azad Kashmir', despite decades of Indian cross-border shelling and aggression, has remained internally peaceful. But this incident marks a chilling shift—it signals that the enemy is no longer confined to our borders but is infiltrating the minds of our youth. The police constables who laid down their lives in Rawalakot were more than uniformed sentinels; they were sons, brothers, and fathers who had pledged themselves to the security of the state. When Constable Tariq Bashir and his colleague Gulfaraz left home in uniform that day, they carried with them the silent prayers of their families. But when their bodies returned, draped in the national flag, the air was thick with sobs and sorrow. This was not just the funeral of a brave policeman—it was a reminder of the sacrifices made by the sons of the nation.

From Sons of the Soil to Symbols of Tragedy

On the other side of this grim episode were two young men—Zarnosh Naseem and Gibran Naseem—whose lives took a devastating turn toward extremism. Once the pride of their home, the center of their parents' dreams and aspirations, their transformation into radicals ended not just in personal tragedy but in public disgrace. When their lifeless bodies returned to their homes, only screams, regret, and painful questions remained. Their parents, particularly their father Raja Naseem, have publicly insisted that their sons were not terrorists but patriotic citizens. In a lengthy social media video, he defended their innocence. Yet, conflicting narratives have emerged. Saqib, an associate of the brothers, was arrested with a car full of weapons near Azad Pattan. In his statement, he confessed to involvement in the murder of Constable Sajad Resham and other crimes. He also admitted connections with Dr. Rauf, a known extremist from Jherr Ghaniabad, and Ghazi Shehzad—individuals allegedly working to turn 'Azad Kashmir' into a theatre for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA). While Saqib is now in police custody, others from the group remain at large, hiding underground. The threat hasn't vanished—it has simply gone into the shadows.

A Deeper Illness: Ideological Poison, Not Just Violence

This tragedy is not just about bullets and bloodshed—it is a symptom of something deeper: ideological corruption, educational vacuum, parental helplessness, and societal negligence. Zarnosh's radicalization can be traced back to 2021, when he threw a shoe at federal minister Ali Amin Gandapur and was absurdly hailed as a "hero" on social media. That moment of defiance was not courage—it was the first crack in a moral decline. When truth is buried under the noise of populism, extremism finds refuge in false narratives. The connection between Zarnosh and extremists like Dr. Rauf—reportedly linked to the TTA—exposes a disturbing reality. These figures prey on emotional and idealistic youth, luring them with promises of jihad, revolution, or spiritual redemption. In truth, their only goal is to weaken the state and bolster hostile propaganda.

Guns or Pens? Noise or Wisdom?

We must decide—will we arm our youth with pens or with guns? Will we offer them reason or noise? The burden is collective: parents, teachers, clerics, politicians, and the media must recognize that youth require not only physical sustenance but also ideological nourishment. When we fail to offer intellectual sanctuary, the

poison in the enemy's narrative can seem like a cure. Framing the state and its constitution as the enemy only drives more youth into destruction. The constitution is not a prison—it is protection. Our institutions are not oppressors—they are guardians. If they require reform, the path is dialogue—not disorder or insurgency. Our educational system must evolve to teach tolerance and constructive dissent. Religious teachings must be rooted in understanding, not fanaticism. Salute to the Guardians of Peace our security forces stand as steadfast walls against every assault from the enemy. The officers who died in Hussain Kot were more than uniforms—they embodied sacrifice, integrity, and duty. Their martyrdom was not in vain. In Banjosa, during Tariq Bashir's funeral, citizens from all walks of life united in a resounding message: we are ready to lay down our lives for the motherland. There was no sense of defeat—only the pride of victory in having foiled a vile conspiracy. Among the injured, one name stands out in a heart breaking clarity—Constable Zeeshan, whose both arms were torn apart by a terrorist-fired bomb shell. Now living as a double amputee, Zeeshan is not just a survivor—he is a living testament to the brutal cost of our internal war against extremism. His sacrifice, though not mortal, is no less monumental. He will forever carry the physical and emotional scars of a battle

he fought not for glory, but for the safety of ordinary citizens. Let us remember: the courage of our defenders is not only etched on tombstones, but also written on the living bodies and wounded hearts of those who stood between terror and the innocent. It is now our collective responsibility to stand beside them—not only in tribute, but in continued commitment to the cause for which they bled.

Beyond Grief—Toward Reform and Responsibility

If today we can feel the grief of Zarnosh and Gibran's parents, let us use that emotion as a call to action. We need reform, not revenge; insight, not hate; unity, not division. India's recent aggression, disinformation campaigns, and social media warfare remind us that modern conflict is not just about weapons—but about narratives. When our own children are weaponized against us, it means our roots are under attack. And the only true defense is national unity.

A Nation under Visionary Leadership

Under the visionary leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the Pakistan Armed Forces stand ready to counter every threat. We place our full trust in his strategic clarity, unwavering commitment, and national philosophy. But this is not the army's battle alone—it is the nation's. And it will not be won through force

alone, but through wisdom, conviction, and moral resilience. While our military defends the borders, our police remain ever vigilant to curb internal unrest. Both are vital cogs in the machinery of national security. A single question echoes: what legacy will we leave for our future generations? Awareness or chaos? Truth or noise? If we fail to revive the tradition of honest dialogue and intellectual discourse today, tomorrow this land may remain only a geography, not a living ideology. We must vigilantly observe every moment, every decision, every ideology that could lead another youth down the path of Zarnosh and Gibran. Because if one more soul falls into that abyss, the blame will rest on all of us.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/05/30/rawalakot-terror-incident-a-tragedy-a-question-a-cry-of-conscience/>

KP, GB govts to jointly organise Shandur Polo Festival

Dawn, 3 June 2025

The Shandur Polo Festival 2025 is scheduled to commence from June 20 to 22 at the world's highest polo ground, located 12,500 feet above sea level. However, the area of Shandur is a disputed territory between Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan; the ownership claims of both governments are under consideration by a provincial boundary commission.

Matches of freestyle polo between archrivals Gilgit and Chitral teams are considered the major attraction of the event. The Shandur polo festival is organised annually in July; however, this year the festival has been arranged from June 20 to 22 out of respect for the month of Muharram. This unique event has gained both national and international recognition over the years, attracting a large number of foreign and local tourists.

According to a statement celebrated for its traditional freestyle polo matches, the other activities in the festival also showcase the rich cultural heritage of the region through vibrant cultural performances, music shows, paragliding displays, and angling competitions.

This year, four teams from Gilgit-Baltistan — Teams A, B, C, and D — will participate in the tournament, bringing together top polo players from the region. The matches will continue over three days, culminating in the much-anticipated final showdown. The GB Sports Department has already initiated comprehensive preparations to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. Authorities are working with full enthusiasm to facilitate the influx of visitors, ensure player safety, and highlight the region's tourism potential.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1915051/kp-gb-govts-to-jointly-organise-shandur-polo-festival>

Verification of subsidised wheat beneficiaries begins in GB

Dawn, 4 June 2025

The Gilgit-Baltistan Food Department, in collaboration with National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), has started verification of subsidised wheat beneficiaries' CNICs to ensure transparency in distribution of subsidised wheat. Recently, the food department, in collaboration with Nadra, found 310,405 fake CNICs which were submitted for subsidised wheat. The data verification exercise is aimed at ensuring transparency in subsidised wheat distribution.

According to officials of the GB food department, the verification process examined data from 1,773,893 individuals belonging to 270,794 households in the region. Among the fake entries, 27,058 CNICs were found belonging to non-GB residents, 41,917 were expired, 1,531 remained unverified, and 3,612 belonged to people who have already died. Ultimately, only 1,381,525 CNICs were successfully verified as eligible for subsidised wheat.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1915315/verification-of-subsidised-wheat-beneficiaries-begins-in-gb>

Gilgit-Baltistan traders block KKH for fifth consecutive day

Dawn, 4 June 2025

Local traders protesting import-export policies continued to block the Karakoram Highway (KKH) at Gulmat

Nagar for a fifth consecutive day on Tuesday, with a separate demonstration also halting traffic in Sost town near Khunjerab Pass.

The KKH Hunza-Nagar section remained blocked at two locations, causing difficulties for tourists and passengers amid long queues of vehicles.

Protesters, led by the Pak-China Traders Action Committee, vowed not to call off their sit-in until their demands concerning trade with China and what they termed "exploitative policies" by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) are met. The committee is an alliance comprising the Gilgit-Baltistan Importers and Exporters Association, the Nagar Chamber of Commerce, and small trade associations from Nagar, Hunza, and Gilgit.

Key demands include the clearance of 240 consignments imported from China, stuck at Sost Dry port for seven months, through an amnesty scheme, and a waiver of all port charges.

They also seek an exemption for consignments at Sost Dry Port from misdeclaration cases, facilitation of barter trade between Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Xinjiang province under a 1985 border agreement, and an exemption for GB residents from sales and income taxes on goods imported from China, citing the region's disputed status.

The protest has drawn support from GB political and religious parties, with

opposition members in the GB Assembly announcing their solidarity.

GB opposition leader Kazim Mesum, in a statement, noted “the only land route with China [is] blocked” and urged the federal government to “resolve the demands of the traders before the entire GB people will take to streets”.

Protesters said they initially planned to march towards Sost but were stopped by the administration, compelling them to stage the KKH sit-in.

They said the federal government is “reluctant to settle the genuine issues of the local people” and warned “the situation will be dangerous if their demands are further delayed”.

Protesters highlighted that GB people “had annexed the region with Pakistan without getting status and rights of constitutional citizens”.

Organisers of the protest closed the KKH to all traffic except ambulances, disconnecting the road link with China and leaving local passengers and tourists stranded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1915319/gb-traders-block-kkh-for-fifth-consecutive-day>

AKRSP Hosts Regional Youth Convention in Gilgit Showcasing Youth Contributions to Inclusive Development

Pamir Times, 5 June 2025

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) hosted a two-day Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral Regional

Youth Convention at Serena Hotel Gilgit on 7-8 June 2025 to promote youth and civil society engagement in local development.

The event was organised in collaboration with the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP), under the European Union-funded project “Building Resilience of Civil Society and Youth to COVID-19 in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.”

The convention brought together over 150 participants, including youth leaders, civil society organisations, local support organisations, government officials, private sector representatives, and development partners from across Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. It provided a dynamic platform to showcase achievements, share experiences, and foster dialogue on youth leadership, civic engagement, and inclusive development.

Group-based experience-sharing sessions were held, where participants from CSOs, LSOs, gender pairs, micro and small enterprises, and youth-led initiatives reflected on their journeys and the project’s contribution to their personal growth and community development. These discussions highlighted enhanced capacities in civic leadership, climate action, economic resilience, and institutional strengthening.

The convention further included technical sessions, such as one

conducted by the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy on legal compliance for CSOs and MSMEs, equipping local organisations with essential knowledge for sustainable operations.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/06/04/82098/>

Prolonged Closure of Karakoram Highway Severely Impacts Tourism and Agriculture

Pamir Times, 3 June 2025

A high-level joint meeting was held in central Aliabad, Hunza, bringing together key stakeholders from the region's tourism and transport sectors. The meeting included representatives from the Hunza Hotel Association, Anjuman-e-Tajiran Hunza (Hunza Traders' Union), Hunza Tour Operators Association, and the Transporters Association.

The gathering was convened to address the ongoing and severe impact of the prolonged closure of the Karakoram Highway (KKH), the region's vital economic lifeline. Participants expressed grave concern over the crisis unfolding across Gilgit-Baltistan, noting that nearly 98% of the region's economy is directly or indirectly reliant on tourism. The blockade of the KKH has resulted in a dramatic decline in tourist arrivals, which has, in turn, devastated the livelihoods of thousands of families working in hotels, tour services, transport, and retail.

The timing of the road closure has further compounded the crisis. Currently, the cherry harvest season is in full swing in the Hunza and Nagar valleys. However, due to the inaccessibility of major transportation routes, local farmers are unable to get their produce to market, leading to major losses for the agricultural sector.

In a unified voice, all four representative bodies called on the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan and the Force Commander Gilgit-Baltistan to take swift and decisive action to reopen the Karakoram Highway. They emphasized that restoring access is essential for reviving the tourism industry, facilitating trade, and safeguarding the region's already fragile economy.

The participants warned that continued inaction could lead to a surge in unemployment, deepening poverty, and widespread frustration among the local population. They urged the government to engage directly with business stakeholders to develop and implement a practical and immediate solution. "We earnestly appeal to the authorities to act without delay," the joint statement concluded. "The future of our region hangs in the balance."

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/06/03/prolonged-closure-of-karakoram-highway-severely-impacts-tourism-and-agriculture/>

Economic Developments

PM orders removal of impediments to execution of Diamer Bhasha Dam

Business Recorder, 4 June 2025

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed authorities to remove all obstacles to the timely completion of the \$15 billion Diamer-Bhasha Dam, calling it vital for the country's energy security and agricultural self-reliance. The prime minister, while chairing a high-level meeting on water resources, stressed that building new dams was crucial to expand water storage capacity, ensure reliable irrigation, and reduce the risk of floods.

"The country's self-reliance depends on affordable power and agriculture, both of which require increased water storage and efficient usage," he said, urging officials to prioritise major hydropower projects.

Sharif added that affordable electricity and agricultural growth were key to the country's economic independence, and vowed full government support to advance these priorities. The Diamer-Bhasha Dam – a 4,500-megawatt concrete-filled gravity hydropower project under construction on the Indus River between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan – is expected to rank among the world's largest dams upon completion.

It will not only generate electricity but also irrigate 1.2 million acres of farmland, create 16,500 jobs, and extend the operational life of the Tarbela Dam by 35 years.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers, AhsanIqbal, Amir Muqam, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Moeen Wattoo, Adviser Rana Sanaullah, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Gulbar Khan, and senior officials.

It is pertinent to mention that last month, Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal said the government would fast-track hydropower projects to counter potential Indian moves to divert water from shared rivers.

His remarks came after India put in abeyance its participation in the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, accusing Pakistan of orchestrating the Pahalgam attack. However, Pakistan vehemently denied the allegations, terming it a false flag operation carried out by India itself.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40366178>

Ladiesfund Launches in Skardu: Empowering Women of Gilgit-Baltistan

Friday Times, June 2 2025

Dawood Global Foundation proudly launched Ladies fund Skardu, marking another milestone in its

mission to champion women empowerment across Pakistan. The Skardu chapter, set against the breath taking backdrop of the northern mountains, brought together inspiring female leaders and change-makers from across Gilgit-Baltistan in a powerful roundtable introduction and networking event.

The event welcomed passionate women from a variety of fields, unified by a shared vision: to elevate the role of women in society, recognize their contributions, and create opportunities for growth and leadership.

"I am very thankful to Ladiesfund. They are appreciable to give women of Gilgit Baltistan to express and show their skills to the nation and I hope Ladiesfund will support them in all aspects. Thank you so much," said Princess Skardu Mrs. Nazia Batool, wife of Prince Skardoo and daughter of Prince Shigar, who was Chief Guest at the event. "I hope Ladiesfund will continue to support them in all aspects. Thank you so much."

Empowering Women through Wash: Ensuring Safety, Dignity, and Equality

The Skardu launch is part of Ladiesfund's wider commitment to supporting women leaders in remote and underserved areas of Pakistan. As with its successful chapters in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and

Multan, as well as its international chapters in Barcelona, New York City, Kuala Lumpur, Washington DC, London, and Toronto, Ladiesfund Skardu will serve as a vibrant community platform where women can collaborate, grow, and access national and international opportunities.

The roundtable included introductions, discussion of upcoming initiatives, and potential impact projects focusing on skill development, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation. The event also set the stage for future philanthropic initiatives, talent spotlights, and training workshops for tribal and local women.

<https://thefridaytimes.com/02-Jun-2025/ladiesfund-launches-in-skardu-empowering-women-of-gilgit-baltistan>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Action Committee's call for restoration of crusher Plants, Affectes staged Protests

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2 June 2025

The shutting down of the crusher plants have led affectes to stage a protest, which was joined by civil society members, transporters, contractors among others. It was seventh day of protest and the administration seems hardly concerned. Crushing plant owners stated that the Department of

Environment and the Department of Minerals misguided the government, which they said led to the closure of the plants.

Condemning the move, they said with the closure of the Kamsar crushing plant, construction work across the city has stopped, and the prices of construction material have suddenly increased a thousand fold. The affected raised slogans against the administration. For the further course of action, decision will be taken in today's protest. On this occasion member district counsel Mir Imtiyaz Ahmed, President Block factory Haji Bashir Mughal, Raja Tajamul Hussain, Chaudhary Sidiq labours union, leaders of transport and trade among others.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/FRONT-PAGE-02-1-1-scaled.jpg>

No trade with India but have to talk on Kashmir and water: Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 3 June 2025

Central Ameer of the Jamaat-e-Islamia Pakistan Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman said that enough celebrations have been done and now is time to prioritize Kashmir issue. While addressing a gathering on "down with Israel and India" in Hyderabad, Nayeem Ur Rehman said that Donald Trump left

after doing the value for the dollar and Muslim leaders have blood on their hand for the genocide in Gaza and now Pakistan has to play its due role. He further said that India attacked our cities but our forces gave them strong response. India's strength in front of world has been exposed and Pakistan has emerged as victorious on the scene. He further added that efforts be made for the freedom of Palestinians and Kashmiris. We are against Israel and America, and children are dying for food in Gaza. Hafiz Naeem further said that Pakistan should expose India, and rather than having trade with India, talks be held on Kashmir and water. Enough of celebrations and now is the time to prioritize Kashmir issue.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-03.jpg>

From Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

3 June 2025

Diamer police have registered a case against two unidentified persons for attacking a polio monitoring team in Tangir Valley of Diamer of #GilgitBaltistan

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1929822002426138974>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

5 June 2025

Now you will have to pay tax on cherries too.

#GilgitBaltistan

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1930393914403381683>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

3 June 2025

"Prolonged Closure of Karakoram Highway Severely Impacts Tourism and Agriculture"

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1929906819738046930>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

5 June 2025

Those who should have been in the houses are on the streets and those who should have been on the streets are in the houses. Traders Action Committee.

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1930337457146319002>

Weekly POK News Digest

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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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