

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

Top leadership backs Kashmir cause with fresh resolve on Martyrs' Day

Dawn, 14 July 2025

Pakistan's top leadership on Sunday reaffirmed the country's unwavering support for the Kashmiri's people right to self-determination and their resistance against oppression, marking Kashmir Martyrs' Day with renewed pledges of political, diplomatic and moral backing.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in separate statements, paid tribute to the resilience and sacrifices of Kashmiris in their decades long struggle against Indian rule. Both leaders vowed that Pakistan will continue to support Kashmir cause until the region achieve self-governance in accordance with UN resolutions.

President Zardari commended Kashmiris for their "steadfast bravery and sacrifices" against Indian control and called upon international bodies and human rights groups to address the alleged state terrorism and rights violations in the 'occupied region'. PM Shehbaz echoed these sentiment, emphasising the "ongoing sacrifices made by Kashmiris in their fight for self-determination". He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to supporting their cause "politically, ethically, and diplomatically".

Naqvi condemns 'oppression'

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid tribute to the 22 Kashmiri martyrs of July 13, 1931, who, he said, "faced bullets with courage and dignity in

reverence of the call to prayer (Azaan)." He described the day as "harbringer of free conscience against a system that sought to silence the oppressed", drawing parallel between the Dogra regime and the current violence of Modi's government.

He accused the Modi government of "oppressive actions against Kashmiris," including "the genocide of Kashmiri youth, extrajudicial killings, and silencing of journalists". Naqvi also referenced former US President Donald Trump's offer to mediate on Kashmir, saying, "US President Donald Trump's offer to mediate opened a door to peace, but India closed this door, proving its warlike mindset through its rejection of dialogue."

'AJK' PM's warning

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, in an interview with a local news channel, said the sacrifice of the martyrs "formed the bedrock of the Kashmiri freedom movement, a fight that will endure."

Anwar-ul-Haq warned that "India's brutality shows no signs of abating," and cautioned that continued aggression would "only harden the resolve of Kashmiris, escalate their struggle for freedom, and provoke a fierce and uncompromising response from Pakistan's armed forces". He also accused India of fuelling unrest in Balochistan, calling for international accountability.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1924014/top-leadership-backs-kashmir-cause-with-fresh-resolve-on-martyrs-day>

GB bans new construction near Hunza lakes, eco-sensitive sites in Baltistan division

Dawn, 14 July 2025

Gilgit-Baltistan has imposed a moratorium on all kinds of construction and expansion of hotels on three famous lakes in Hunza, as well as in ecologically-sensitive areas in the Baltistan division, it emerged on Monday. Earlier this month, the Gilgit-Baltistan Environmental Protection Agency (GB-EPA) recommended a five-year ban on the construction and expansion of hotels on three lakes in Hunza.

Last month, the GB administration imposed a fine of Rs1.5 million on a hotel for allegedly dumping sewage waste into Attabad Lake. The development came a day after a foreign tourist and vlogger named George Buckley posted a video on his Instagram page, claiming that sewage water was being pumped out by the hotel into the Attabad Lake.

A notification by the office of the Hunza Division Deputy Commissioner, dated July 11, available with Dawn.com, said, "Accordingly, issuance of any new no-objection certificates (NOCs) for construction or expansion of commercial or residential structures is hereby suspended with immediate effect and until further orders, in the following areas." The notification specified that no new constructions or extensions would be allowed in the Attabad and Borit lake

areas, and a complete ban would be imposed on construction near the Duiker lake owing to "fragile mountain ecology and limited carrying capacity".

A separate notification by the Baltistan Division Deputy Commissioner ordered to, "Impose a region-wide moratorium on new construction of hotels/motels in ecologically-sensitive areas until full compliance with the Ecologically Sensitive and Critical Areas Rules 2023 is verified."

Previously, in a July 4th letter addressed to the Baltistan division commissioner, the GB-EPA identified uncontrolled hotel construction activity in central Skardu and surrounding areas, Upper Kachura and Lower Kachura Lake vicinities, Hargeisa Nullah, Bashoo Nullah and Meadows, and Chook or Zookh Nullah near Kachura as areas of concern. It also identified tourism hotspots in Shigar, Kharmang, and Ghanche districts.

In a letter addressed to the Hunza DC dated July 1, the GB-EPA recommended an "Immediate halt to new hotel constructions in central Hunza lacking proper wastewater systems and a five-year moratorium on all hotel-related construction and expansion in central Hunza, Duikar, Attabad, and Borit Lake[s]". The letter also called for a complete ban on construction along the banks of Borit Lake, with strict regulation of boating and its notification as an eco-tourism destination to protect its ecological function.

The recommendations state that environmental problems are becoming critical due to hotels built on the culturally important lakes of Attabad, Duiker, and Borit in central Hunza. According to the letter, a recent investigation into improper disposal of sewage by hotels had revealed facts of unorganised and shoddy construction and also identified shortcomings such as inadequate wastewater discharge systems and construction defects.

The report said that this unregulated and unsupervised development is compromising public health, freshwater resources, and sustainable development of the tourism sector, and is causing destruction to the ecosystem. It further stated that the sewage disposal system of hotels is outdated, ineffective and low capacity, resulting in water channels and the Hunza River being directly polluted.

The report has disclosed that when the drinking water was tested in this poor situation, sewage contamination was confirmed, posing the risks of typhoid, dysentery and hepatitis.

According to the report, the widespread use of diesel-powered generators by hotels is also causing air pollution, which is posing a respiratory hazard to tourists. It added that this practice is contrary to the concept of a clean, environmentally friendly place.

The report also shed light on the situation of Duiker Lake. Due to the uncontrolled construction of hotels, the

environment at this lake is rapidly deteriorating. The agency expressed fear that inadequate sewage and poor human waste disposal arrangements are damaging the fragile mountain environment of the area.

The report recommends a five-year ban on all new construction and hotel expansion around Attabad Lake to help protect water quality, maintain ecological balance, and protect it from natural disasters, especially floods and landslides, as well as ensure the constant availability of clean drinking water.

The agency recommends that boating and tourist activities in the lake should be restricted for this purpose. The report says that the lake is a protected area under Section 172 of the Forest Act 2019. It is an important habitat for migratory and endangered bird species. "However, boating activities here are creating a disturbing situation for nesting and movement of birds in this place, which is seriously damaging the international importance and ecological functions of the lake," the letter said.

The GB-EPA called for a transition to eco-friendly, community-based tourism is urgently needed. This model ensures: "With responsible tourism policies, Hunza can become a global benchmark for sustainable mountain tourism," the letter said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1924157/gb-environment-agency-recommends-5-year-ban-on-hotel-construction-near-hunza-lakes>

FC personnel martyred as unknown gunmen open fire at checkpoint in GB's Diamer: police

Dawn, 20 July 2025

A Federal Constabulary soldier was killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire at a forest checkpoint along the Karakoram Highway in Gilgit-Baltistan's Diamer district, police said on Sunday.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Diamer Farrukh Rasheed said in a statement, "The deceased has been identified as Muhammad Gul Sher from Dera Ismail Khan. "The motive behind the attack is not yet known, and the police are investigating the case. The suspects fled with the gun of the deceased."

Senior Superintendent of Police Abdul Hameed told Dawn.com, "Unknown assailants opened fire at the checkpoint while the deceased was on duty and his colleagues were asleep."

He added that police teams were raiding nearby areas to look for the suspects. In his statement, he speculated that the case appeared to be related to terrorism, ruling out personal enmity or a timber smuggling attempt. The forest checkpoint was situated at the Thore Road, primarily to inspect vehicles for wood smuggling via the road, which connects the KKH with forest areas in the district.

GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan condemned the attack, saying, "Firing by terrorists on state personnel is an

unacceptable act." According to a statement, he directed the police to bring the perpetrators to justice and sought a report on the incident from the home department.

GB government spokesman Faizullah Faraq said in a separate statement that funeral prayers for the martyred soldier were offered at the Police Lines in Chilas, and preparations were underway to send the body to his hometown.

In 2023, at least nine people lost their lives and 21 passengers received injuries after an Islamabad-bound bus came under fire in a terrorist attack near Chilas in Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1925424/fc-personnel-martyred-as-unknown-gunmen-open-fire-at-checkpoint-in-gbs-diamer-police>

'Azad Kashmir' PM downplays political manoeuvres, reaffirms majority support

Dawn, 15 July 2025

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq downplayed recent moves by coalition partners to court members of his 'Forward Bloc', asserting that he remained committed to stepping down voluntarily if his opponents managed to gather the support of 27 lawmakers — the number required to oust him through a no-confidence vote.

"Ever since I assumed office, I've been hearing speculations about my departure — and frankly, I've found

them amusing,” he said during a conversation with a group of senior journalists at his office. “Regardless of personal sentiments, I believe I will remain in this position for as long as it is the will of my Creator,” the ‘AJK’ prime minister said.

Recently, two members of the Forward Bloc — comprising defectors from the PTI — joined the PPP, while another aligned with the PML-N. Two opposition legislators also crossed over to the PPP, bringing its strength to 17 in the 53-member legislative assembly and fueling speculation that the party was preparing to replace Mr Haq with its own candidate.

“I won’t comment further on the matter,” Mr Haq said. “The media reported a no-confidence motion was in the pipeline, but I was later told by some colleagues that the idea had fizzled out,” he added. “At present, I enjoy the confidence of a majority in the assembly,” the ‘AJK’ premier asserted. When asked about his future political course, Mr Haq remarked that politics is an art rooted in timing and that both premature and delayed decisions could have adverse consequences.

He said any future course of action would be shaped through deliberations with members of the Forward Bloc, based on collective wisdom and mutual understanding.

Asked whether more lawmakers were considering leaving the bloc, he replied: “Those who wish to leave cannot be stopped — just as those who

want to join cannot be held back.” He then quoted a Pahari proverb implying that gains and losses often balance out over time.

Highlighting his administration’s performance, the premier said he derived satisfaction from defying critics who had claimed meaningful reform in ‘AJK’ was impossible. “I’ve demonstrated that when the person at the helm is determined to steer clear of corruption, tangible results follow,” he asserted. While acknowledging that systemic flaws embedded over decades could not be eliminated in a matter of months, he said consistent effort and resolve had yielded unexpectedly positive outcomes.

“When I took charge, the government faced a debt of Rs11 billion. Yet today, despite supplying electricity at just Rs3 per unit and wheat flour at Rs2,000 per 40kg, we are operating without a budget deficit,” he stated.

He also pointed to his own office as an example of austerity, noting that unlike his predecessors, he had been running official affairs with just a three-member staff.

“While elsewhere in the country the budgets of chief executives’ offices have been significantly increased, mine is the only one that has voluntarily surrendered its budget,” he asserted. Mr Haq also revealed that his administration had allocated Rs3 billion from ‘AJK’s own resources for development projects, marking a departure from previous years, when

development grants were entirely dependent on federal funding.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1924220/azad-kashmir-pm-downplays-political-manoevres-reaffirms-majority-support>

How Power Failures are Draining Gilgit-Baltistan's Economic Lifeblood

Friday Times, 17 July 2025

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), the land of towering peaks and glacier-fed rivers, remains paradoxically trapped in darkness. Despite having abundant natural resources and being a key contributor to Pakistan's water and tourism wealth, the region continues to suffer from an unrelenting electricity crisis.

In summer, residents face 6 to 8 hours of load shedding daily, while in winter, the outages stretch to 18 to 20 hours, a crisis once attributed only to freezing temperatures. This has crippled businesses, disrupted education, and deepened public frustration across Gilgit-Baltistan. Protests have become a common sight in Gilgit city, Skardu, and other districts, while political leadership remains unresponsive.

In a dimly lit classroom in Hunza, students huddle around a single solar lamp, straining their eyes to read. "We begged the authorities for a small generator, but they said there's no budget," says a teacher. Meanwhile, a nearby government rest house glows brightly, its diesel-powered backup humming through the night.

Data reveals a grim picture. Gilgit city has a total installed capacity of about 70 MW, yet in winter, only 33 MW is generated. Even in summer, when water flows are high, the system delivers just 59 MW. This shortfall is not merely seasonal, it is systemic.

GB has 148 power stations across 10 districts, yet suffers from chronic electricity scarcity. Why? Because most of these stations were constructed without proper feasibility studies, cost-benefit analysis, or understanding of seasonal variations. As a result, many powerhouses go idle in winter due to frozen streams, wasting public funds and failing to deliver power when it is needed most.

A new crisis is emerging: the exodus of skilled youth. Over the past five years, GB's freelance and digital economy had begun to thrive, with young professionals working remotely for national and international clients. Private banks, IT startups, and e-commerce ventures were slowly taking root, offering alternatives to traditional government jobs. But erratic power has forced many to relocate to cities like Islamabad or Karachi. "I was earning \$1,500 monthly as a graphic designer, but constant outages made deadlines impossible," says Ali Raza, who recently moved to Rawalpindi. His story is not unique. With every skilled worker who leaves, local businesses shrink, unemployment rises, and markets destabilise. Projects stall, investors hesitate, and the cycle of deprivation deepens.

This isn't just an engineering problem, it is a governance failure. The Water and Power Department lacks effective project planning, grid integration, and seasonal backup mechanisms. The focus has remained on adding new projects without improving the performance of existing ones.

Even when an additional 10 MW was added to the Gilgit grid over the past 18 months, it was swallowed up by growing demand and poor distribution. No real load prioritisation exists, and no winter contingency plan is in place.

Contrast this with Nepal, where similarly rugged terrain hasn't stopped innovative micro-hydro projects from bringing 24/7 electricity to remote villages. If Nepal can do it, why can't GB?

Pakistan's broader energy crisis is often blamed on Independent Power Producers (IPPs), pricing mechanisms, or distribution losses. But GB's situation is different. Here, even where electricity can be produced cheaply through hydropower, it isn't because there is no integrated policy, technical foresight, or political will.

The government must immediately move away from short-term fixes like expensive thermal generators and instead focus on sustainable, long-term solutions. Solar mini-grids and wind hybrids must be deployed in remote villages. Relying on frozen rivers in winter is no longer viable in a warming world.

Some communities are taking matters into their own hands. In Skardu, a youth-led cooperative has installed solar panels to power a co-working space for freelancers. "We're losing talent daily. If the government won't act, we will," says organiser Fatima Khan. Such initiatives deserve policy support, tax breaks for solar adopters, subsidies for energy-efficient tech, and grants for micro-grids could stem the brain drain.

Every new station must be preceded by rigorous hydrological, environmental, and demand-based analysis. Equitable distribution must be ensured, with an end to VIP exemptions. Public hospitals, schools, and community centres should receive priority during outages. Youth-led start-ups and community-driven energy cooperatives should be supported through grants and training. Most importantly, an independent audit of GB's energy projects both planned and completed is essential to expose inefficiencies and mismanagement.

Gilgit-Baltistan is not asking for luxury, just electricity to live, work, and study. The people of this mountainous region, who already endure physical isolation and harsh winters, are now facing a blackout of opportunity.

It is time for both the federal and GB governments to move beyond paper plans and ribbon-cutting ceremonies. The power crisis in GB is not just about electricity; it's about justice, dignity, and inclusion. The lights must come

back on, not just in homes but in policy corridors too.

<https://thefridaytimes.com/17-Jul-2025/how-power-failures-are-draining-gilgit-baltistan-s-economic-lifeblood>

Minister pledges support to 'AJK' health sector

Dawn, 17 July 2025

Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal has assured full cooperation to the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) government for the improvement and expansion of healthcare services across the region.

The assurance came during a meeting with 'AJK's minister for information Pir Mazhar Saeed on Wednesday, during which the latter briefed the federal minister on ongoing and upcoming projects aimed at strengthening the healthcare infrastructure in 'AJK'.

According to a press release, Mr Saeed told the federal minister that the 'AJK' government had recently launched a health package focused on the establishment of health facilities in remote and underserved areas. "The next phase of the initiative is focused on ensuring the availability of qualified doctors and essential medicines in these centres," he added.

Highlighting the region's healthcare achievements, Mr Saeed noted that 'AJK' has remained polio-free for more than two decades. "Our health indicators are significantly better than those in many of the provinces," he

said. Mr Kamal praised 'AJK's long-standing polio-free status, calling it a "remarkable public health achievement" and expressed confidence that the region would continue to maintain this distinction with the same commitment.

He also acknowledged 'AJK's tourism potential, describing it as a region endowed with natural beauty and a key driver of local economic development. "With the right investments, 'AJK' can unlock substantial economic gains by promoting sustainable tourism," he observed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1924637/minister-pledges-support-to-ajk-health-sector>

'AJK' to fast-track reforms, address teachers' issues on priority

Dawn, 18 July 2025

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) government has decided to immediately implement key reforms for the strengthening and rationalisation of elementary and secondary educational institutions in addition to resolving longstanding issues faced by teachers on a priority basis.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq on Thursday. Participants of the meeting included Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Deevan Ali Chughtai, Minister for Home Affairs Waqar Ahmed Noor, Minister for Hydropower Generation Chaudhry

Mohammad Rasheed, Secretary Inland Revenue Chaudhry Raqeeb, Secretary School Education Qazi Inayat, and other senior officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister stressed the need for effective rationalisation of staff and resources at the constituency level to ensure measurable improvements in institutional performance, adding that urgent efforts were required to improve the governance and efficiency of the education sector. "The government is committed to strengthening educational institutions and will take all necessary steps to address staff shortages where required," he said. "If we are investing billions in this sector, the results must reflect that investment."

Mr Haq underscored that the education sector held the key to broader systemic progress. He said that while the government was striving for reforms across all sectors, meaningful improvement in education would naturally contribute to the advancement of the overall governance structure. He also made it clear that, apart from fixing administrative gaps, the government would enact legislation wherever required to remove structural bottlenecks.

"We will provide all possible resources for public welfare and for the proper education and character-building of the younger generation," he said. Mr Haq directed participants to review all aspects of the education system thoroughly and take swift, result-

oriented action where improvements were needed.

Earlier, Mr Inayat briefed the meeting on the current distribution of institutions across constituencies, recruitment and staffing needs, cadre-related issues, and other administrative challenges hindering efficient service delivery.

He also briefed the meeting on the financial implications of addressing these issues. The meeting also discussed the long-pending matter of teachers' upgradation. Prime Minister Haq directed that the matter be conclusively resolved without further delay, stressing that ensuring teachers' professional rights and financial security was essential for upholding the constitutional right of quality education for future generations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1924936/ajk-to-fast-track-reforms-address-teachers-issues-on-priority>

Situationer: 'Unprecedented melting' in G-B

Dawn, 17 July 2025

Unprecedented heat waves, erratic weather patterns, and glacial calving have triggered intense floods in Gilgit-Baltistan, leaving a trail of destruction behind that has locals feeling apprehensive about their future amid a climate change crisis.

The crisis is further exacerbated by faulty early warning systems, which are supposed to disseminate timely alerts amid disasters to minimise human and infrastructure losses.

According to authorities, the unusual movements of glaciers and intense heatwaves across the region this year have resulted in massive destruction in downstream areas.

The region, home to around 8,400 glaciers and over 4,000 glacier lakes, has seen its ice cover deplete at a rapid pace, triggering glacial lake outburst floods and threatening future water shortages.

“Glof events, glacier surges, land erosion from increasing water levels in rivers and streams across the region have badly affected livelihoods, damaged homes, public and private infrastructures, agriculture lands and crops recently,” said GB Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) DG Zakir Hussain. He said it was obvious that climate change had altered the behaviour of glaciers.

In Hamorkhay village in Nagar Khas, dozens of households near the Hoper glacier have witnessed a surge in water levels, leading to erosion of swathes of land in this settlement. According to the local administration, six homes situated at the glacier side were damaged, with thousands of kanals of agriculture land, standing crops and cattle farms submerged by water released by the melting glacier.

Akbar Hussain, a local, told Dawn the situation was unimaginable. “The glacier surged speedily this year. The water originating from the glacier flowed towards the village side and started eroding lands, crops, trees and

cattle farms, and ultimately threatened homes,” he said.

According to GB Environmental Protection Agency (GBEPA) Director Khadim Hussain, heatwaves triggered by climate change have disturbed the normal structure of glaciers across GB.

He pointed out several factors, including carbon emissions and environmental degradation, which were contributing to these anomalous phenomena. GB is facing environmental challenges such as deforestation, encroachment of green belts, reckless construction and emissions from vehicles. The duration of the dry season has increased and rainfall is becoming scant, he said.

Meanwhile, snowfall is occurring in the months of February, March and May instead of the more suitable winter months, which allows snow enough time to solidify into ice before the summer sets in. He said snowfall in these months was not adding to glaciers, rather melting rapidly in May and June, triggering floods.

Glacial calving

While the melting of glaciers is releasing heavy deluges in waterways, glacial calving is further exacerbating the intensity of these floods. This phenomenon sees chunks of solid ice break away from the glacier and travel downstream. They damage homes and properties along the river and often block waterways, thus increasing the water level. When these ice blocks

melts, the built-up water gushes down, causing widespread destruction.

Zubair Ahmed, who is the GBDMA Assistant Director in Hunza and Nagar, said the Shisper glacier in Hassanabad had demonstrated unusual movement this year, as pieces of ice were moving with the waters in Hassanabad nullah.

He said that chunks from the glacier blocked the flow of water, causing a flood in the nullah when the build-up eventually breaks. “We are monitoring the Shisper glacier to avoid any human loss downstream,” he added.

In other areas of GB, rapidly melting glaciers triggered floods in Supultar nullah, Hamari nullah, Shimshal river, Khunjerab river, Shigar river and Indus river. The rapid melting of ice in a short amount of time results in water shortages in the remaining months. The GBEPA has expressed fears of a major water crisis in the region due to climate change.

Faulty early warning systems

In view of climatic threats, early warning systems and automatic weather stations worth billions of rupees were installed at glaciers in some parts of GB. However, most of these systems are either non-functional, have been stolen, or lack the capacity to disseminate timely alerts, according to sources.

Mr Hussain of the GBEPA claimed that international organisations had installed the equipment without

consulting local bodies or adhering to environmental laws and regulations.

The GBEPA had imposed a fine of Rs5 million on a donor-funded Glof-II project for degrading the aesthetic beauty of the high-altitude Kutwal lake in Haramosh Gilgit by installing advanced weather stations station on green belts near the lake.

These systems are “actually damaging the environment”, Mr Hussain claimed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1924660/situationer-unprecedented-melting-in-g-b>

Gilgit-Baltistan: A Region in Constitutional and Environmental Limbo

Pamir Times, 18 July 2025

For over seven decades, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) have remained side-lined in decisions that deeply affect their lives. Administered by Pakistan since 1948 under the broader umbrella of the Kashmir dispute, GB’s two million residents continue to exist in a constitutional void. There is no formal recognition of the region in Pakistan’s Constitution, leaving its governance to be shaped arbitrarily by state authorities.

Despite its strategic and ecological significance, GB is often seen by the rest of Pakistan as a scenic backdrop ideal for tourism. Few are aware of its fragile ecology, or the harm caused by unchecked development, such as road construction, luxury resorts, and mineral extraction, without

consideration for environmental sustainability or local consent.

GB is not just home to breath taking mountains and glaciers; it also holds vital natural resources that feed Pakistan's rivers and economy. However, the people who live there face systemic marginalization. The introduced Land Reform Act is the latest example. While the name suggests progressive change, the legislation has triggered fear among local communities, activists, and young people, who see it as a vehicle for further exploitation.

The Act claims to replace colonial-era land laws dating back to the British and Sikh rule, under which vast tracts of land were declared 'barren' and taken over by the state. These lands, though considered 'wastelands' by outsiders, were traditionally used by local communities for agriculture and grazing, and formed the backbone of communal life.

In practice, the new law is filled with vague provisions. It grants excessive powers to the state to determine land ownership and allows non-locals and institutions to acquire land, effectively sidelining the rights of the indigenous population. This opens the door for resource appropriation under the guise of legality, continuing the cycle of dispossession that has long plagued GB.

Unlike 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), where the State Subject Rule still offers some protection against

demographic shifts and land grabs by non-residents, GB lacks any such legal safeguards. Comparatively, India's controversial abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir was widely criticized for enabling similar demographic and territorial manipulation. Yet GB's ongoing plight has sparked little national debate.

Resistance to this state encroachment is growing. The Awami Action Committee (AAC), a coalition of activists and political thinkers across ideologies, has been at the forefront of opposing these policies. The recent arrests of AAC leaders reveal a troubling trend towards militarization and suppression of dissent in GB, echoing the pattern seen in other marginalised regions of the country.

The fate of GB's people and environment continues to hang in the balance. Unless there is a shift towards inclusive governance, constitutional recognition, and environmental justice, the legacy of dispossession will persist, etched in both the mountains and memories of those left unheard.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/07/18/gilgit-baltistan-a-region-in-constitutional-and-environmental-limbo/>

Subsidised wheat stocks exhaust in GB amid supplies delay

Dawn, 20 July 2025

A severe wheat shortage is intensifying across Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), depleting the region's reserve stocks and raising fears of a food crisis after the federal

government failed to release subsidised supplies more than two weeks into the new fiscal year, GB food department has said.

Officials with the food department said that wheat stocks have been completely exhausted. GB residents rely almost entirely on the subsidised wheat supplied annually by the federal government.

While the federal government allocated Rs20 billion in its budget to procure over 170,000 tonnes of wheat for Gilgit-Baltistan for the current fiscal year, officials said not a single sack has been delivered.

The delay is putting immense strain on locals who say they cannot afford to buy flour from the open market. Officials say not a single bag delivered though federal govt allocated Rs20bn for the purpose in budget

“Local people make their monthly expenditure budgets according to the subsidised rate,” Imtiaz Hussain, a local resident, told Dawn. “The current shortage is causing trouble.” Mr Hussain said the community is facing significant difficulty and demanded that the “federal government release the subsidised wheat without further delay.”

The situation has been worsened by recent flash floods and torrential rains, which have severely damaged road infrastructure and made transporting goods to remote areas extremely difficult.

An official with the food department told Dawn that the last of the small reserve stocks were distributed during the recent floods and are now gone.

He noted that frequent landslides on the Karakoram Highway, the Baltistan road, and other key routes have severely disrupted supply chains. Transporting goods from Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) warehouses in Islamabad to GB can now take several weeks, the official said.

The delivery of the remaining limited wheat from regional warehouses in Gilgit to remote areas also remains delayed because of blocked roads. Officials fear that any further delay in supplies could plunge GB into a full-scale food emergency.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1925368/subsidised-wheat-stocks-exhaust-in-gb-amid-supplies-delay>

Economic Developments

Public welfare projects: PM directs third-party validation

Daily Parliament Times, 18 July 2025

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed to ensure third-party validation for transparency in public welfare projects, especially those related to clean water, electricity, communications, and education. He emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards in completed and near-completion projects through independent validation.

Chairing a review meeting regarding the development projects of the current fiscal year, the prime minister instructed that delayed projects must be completed as soon as possible. He said that the construction of high-quality educational centers like Danish Schools in Gilgit-Baltistan, 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir', and all provinces was a top priority of the government.

The prime minister added that educational institutions were a vital part of the current fiscal year's development plans, aimed at providing international-standard education and training to children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring equal development opportunities.

He highlighted that water reservoirs were crucial for national integrity, and several projects were currently under construction to this end. He noted that the establishment of technology parks in Karachi and Islamabad will make Pakistan a significant economic hub for information technology both in the region and globally.

He emphasized that the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) was a key component of the government's economic vision for the country.

During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the completed development projects as well as those currently underway in the current fiscal year.

The briefing informed that multiple projects across the country in sectors such as communications, IT, water

reservoirs, electricity, educational institutions, and hospitals had been completed, and work on new projects was progressing rapidly.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Planning and Development Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and senior officials from relevant institutions.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40373267/public-welfare-projects-pm-directs-third-party-validation>

Pak-China to form panels for agriculture projects

Dawn, 20 July 2025

Pakistan and China have decided to form technical working groups to explore and implement projects focusing on high-yield cotton seed development, advanced water-saving irrigation technologies and modern farming techniques.

The decision to form technical working groups was taken at a meeting between Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, and a Chinese delegation on the sidelines of the China-Pakistan Economic and Trade Exchange Conference in Islamabad.

Mr Hussain highlighted the challenges Pakistan has faced in recent years, especially in cotton production, where declining yields and outdated seed varieties have created major setbacks, and expressed keen interest in learning from Xinjiang's remarkable progress in

improving agricultural productivity, especially in regions with arid and semi-arid climates, which closely resemble many parts of Pakistan.

He noted that Xinjiang's achievements in crop yield optimisation, irrigation management and mechanisation could serve as a model for transformation in Pakistan's agriculture sector.

In response, Ambassador Jiang Zaid-ong reaffirmed China's commitment to deepening agricultural cooperation with Pakistan. He appreciated Pakistan's proactive approach and openness to collaboration and highlighted the potential for long-term partnership in food security, technology transfer, and rural development.

Mr Hussain reiterated that agriculture development is not just a national priority but also a strategic domain for advancing the time-tested Pakistan-China friendship.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1925364/pak-china-to-form-panels-for-agriculture-projects>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Gilgit Baltistan trader's demands if not fulfilled by 21 July will resort to full-fledged protests

Urdu Point, 17 July 2025

The traders of Gilgit-Baltistan have asked the government to fulfil their demands by 21 July and if it fails to do so, they will resort to a full-fledged protests including closure of China-Pakistan trade.

On Thursday, the protesting traders held a meeting in a hotel in Gilgit. The meeting was attended by organizations of different kind including the Ahle-sunnat wal Jamaat GB, Markazi Anjuman Imamia GB, Ismayali Regional Council GB, Supreme Council Nagar, Chamber of Commerce Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, and Deputy President FPCCI and all other responsible persons took part. All those traders affected by the Pak-China trade were heard and after considering all aspects of it, a decision was made that GB is a disputed region where the federal government cannot impose any form of taxes. Especially, the condemnation was made of the Federal government and FBR's forceful, unconstitutional, and unlawful taxes and it was told that since GB is a disputed region and here other than custom duty all forms of taxes are essentially unconstitutional and not only should such taxes be abolished but also those taxes paid in the past by the traders must be returned to them.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4494266.html>

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approves 8 member coordination committee for 'Azad Kashmir'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 18 July 2025

Prime Minister Pakistan Mohd Shehbaz Sharif with related to 'Azad Kashmir' elections has approved an eight member political coordination committee. Barrister Iftikhar Geelani has been made part of the coordination committee.

Engineer Amir Muqam, Political advisor to the Prime Minister, Rana Sanullah, President Muslim League (N) 'Azad Kashmir' Shah Ghulam Qadir, former prime minister 'Azad Kashmir' Raja Farooq Haider Khan, Mushtaq Manhas, General secretary Chaudhary Tariq Farooq, doctor Najeeb and Barrister Iftikhar Geelani have been made part of the committee.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-18.jpg>

Non-Kashmiris are being settled in 'occupied Kashmir': Mohd. Ghalib

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 16 July 2025

President of Tehreek Kashmir Europe Mohd. Ghalib said that the sacrifices made by the martyrs of 13 July 1931 lives on and Kashmiris have never accepted slavery. In 1947, three lakh Kashmiris sacrificed and over the last 40 years in the pursuit of 'liberation movement' scores of Kashmiris were killed. Ghalib added that non-Kashmiris are being settled in the 'occupied Kashmir'.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-16.jpg>

From Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

17 July 2025

Unprecedented heat--waves, erratic weather patterns, and glacial movements' have triggered intense floods in #GilgitBaltistan, leaving a trail of destruction behind that has locals

feeling apprehensive about their future amid a #climate change crisis.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1945709561211388218>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

17 July 2025

At the KKH location in Nagar, young leader Sarfaraz Nagri's release is being protested by men and women.

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1945891414610457080>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

16 July 2025

Flash floods have once again severed the road to the "luxury" Lexus Hotel at Attabad Lake, Shishkat, #Hunza.

Raging waters surged into the hotel's parking area, raising fresh concerns for the safety of guests and staff.

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1945505440265031897>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

14 July 2025

The provincial government committed corruption of 8 billion rupees, how and in which department, Aurangzeb Advocate has presented evidence.

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1944767487452614902>

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Disclaimer

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