

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

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21 July - 27 July 2025

POK
Polio Virus
Climate change
Gilgit-Baltistan
Awami Action Committee
Babusar valley
Police Protests
Tourism



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

‘AJK’ minister sees plot behind move to abolish refugee seats

Dawn, 21 July 2025

A PML-N lawmaker, who is also a minister in the coalition ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) government, has strongly defended the 12 assembly seats for the Pakistan-based refugees from ‘India-held Jammu and Kashmir’, asserting that the government in Muzaffarabad was representative of the entire state, not just the “liberated territory”.

Speaking at a press conference in Bagh on Sunday, held against the backdrop of a vigorous campaign by the Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action for the abolition of these seats, Minister for Religious Affairs and Auqaf Ahmed Raza maintained that nearly one million refugees from the ‘India-held territory’ living in Pakistan were a “fundamental party” to the Kashmir dispute, and neither their right to vote nor their representation could be constitutionally, legally, or morally withdrawn.

Mr Raza was elected for the third time from the LA-44 constituency of Kashmir Valley-V, which also covers some peripheral areas of Attock and Rawalpindi districts and the Islamabad Capital Territory. His late father Alhaj Sanaullah Qadri was elected from this constituency at least five times.

Ahmed Raza says regional assembly represents all of Kashmir, not just

‘liberated territory’; calls for unity in face of ‘Indian aggression’. “These refugees sacrificed their homes for the cause of Jammu and Kashmir and migrated to Pakistan on ideological and political grounds. They are as much rightful stakeholders of this state as those living in the liberated territory,” Mr Raza said.

He emphasised the 12 assembly seats were constitutionally protected under the ‘AJK’s interim constitution and were established by the “visionary forefathers” of the region to ensure inclusive representation of all territorial units of the former princely state.

“The demand for scrapping these seats is not only unjustified but also part of a broader ploy to divide our people and weaken the Kashmir freedom movement,” he said, warning that such moves could potentially exclude the refugees from a future plebiscite and undermine their long-standing association with the state.

Rejecting the impression that refugees were a burden on ‘AJK’, Mr Raza maintained: “We are not a liability on ‘AJK’; this region is our homeland too. The government of ‘AJK’ is not merely a local authority, but a representative set-up of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir.”

While referring to the latest census figures, he claimed the number of people currently residing in ‘AJK’ was barely over two million.

“Those campaigning against refugee seats must consider the historic and political context. Any attempt to exclude refugees from the system is tantamount to deviating from the foundational ideology of this region’s liberation,” he said.

Calling for unity in the face of Indian hostility, Mr Raza said, “We must not let our internal differences weaken our cause. Our unity is the biggest threat to our eternal enemy, India.”

He said there was need for transparency and accountability in verifying state subject documents, but this must not be used as a pretext to malign or disenfranchise an entire community. “I have always opposed fake state subject documents and support scrutiny wherever needed. But the misconduct of a few should not be used to target the entire refugee population,” Mr Raza stressed.

Highlighting the need for collective responsibility and political maturity, the lawmaker said: “We must move forward with solidarity, shun divisive narratives, and play our respective roles in steering the state toward development. Let’s not fall into traps that could damage the broader cause of Kashmir’s freedom.”

‘AJK’ Public Information Director Raja Amjad Minhas was also present at the press conference.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1925568/ajk-minister-sees-plot-behind-move-to-abolish-refugee-seats>

Poliovirus detected in GB

Dawn, 21 July 2025

Wild polio-virus type 1 (WPV1) has been detected in an environmental (sewage) sample from the Diamer district, the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health confirmed.

The special polio vaccination campaign was conducted in the Diamer district and adjoining districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from July 14 to 18, vaccinating 159,525 children, an official said.

“The Polio Programme is implementing a rigorous vaccination schedule to protect children from paralytic polio and interrupt virus transmission,” the official added.

Further immunisation drives are scheduled for coming weeks. A special vaccination campaign will be carried out from July 21 to 25 in the bordering Union Councils of KP and Balochistan to coincide with Afghanistan’s sub-national polio campaign.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1925575/poliovirus-detected-in-gb>

PMD issues Glof alert for GB, KP as over 200 stranded tourists rescued from Diamer amid floods

Dawn, 22 July 2025

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Tuesday warned of a heightened risk of glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs) in Gilgit-

Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as over 200 stranded tourists were rescued from GB's Diamer district as heavy floods battered the region.

The devastating impacts of climate change have become more visible in GB as cloudburst-induced floods wreaked havoc across the region. The flood-related death toll in the region rose to five today, after four lost their lives and 15 went missing yesterday in Diamer's Babusar area. In its alert, the PMD warned that the prevailing weather conditions increased the risk of Glocs, flash floods and landslides in vulnerable glaciated regions of GB and KP.

It forecast that the wet spell was likely to continue and could affect GB and KP in the current week, adding that scattered rain and thunderstorms, with isolated heavy falls, were expected in both regions. The death toll in GB since yesterday currently stands at five, according to Diamer District Commissioner Attaullah Kakar.

GB government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said in a statement: "More than 200 rescued tourists have been shifted to Chilas and provided shelter in hotels and guest houses."

He added that the tourists were now able to contact their families after being stranded for hours.

DC Kakar detailed that rescue operations were still underway to look for missing tourists, while four of the five deceased have been identified. According to Senior Superintendent of

Police (SSP) Abdul Hameed, 20 to 30 tourists from different parts of the country might be missing.

According to DC Kakar, the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA) of the Pakistan Army has been providing medical assistance and food to stranded tourists on Babusar via helicopters. "One of the five bodies will be transported via helicopter later today," he added.

Meanwhile, the Diamer administration declared a state of emergency along Thack-Babusar Road, suspending all tourist movement between Zero Point and Babusar Top.

A notification by Diamer District Magistrate Ataur Rehman, seen by Dawn.com, said all travellers "should be stopped at both ends" of the road until further notice.

"All tourists and local residents are strongly advised to evacuate to designated safe zones immediately and to avoid any travel on Babusar Road until its complete rehabilitation," the notification read. An emergency control room was also established that will operate "round the clock". It can be contacted at 05812-920181 and 05812-930037. The district magistrate also ordered six companies to dispatch at least two excavators each to the Babusar area to assist in road rehabilitation and retrieval of bodies, if any.

Muhammad Ali, a local social worker, told Dawn.com: "Thirty vehicles were swept away by the floods, and most

people have been rescued by the locals.”

Shahabuddin, a resident of Chilas, said the local people provided food and accommodation to some stranded tourists in Babusar’s Thak area of Babusar and were also assisting the rescue operation.

All doctors and paramedical staff of the Chilas District Headquarters Hospital were called on an emergency basis, according to a notification issued by medical superintendent Dr Abdul Mobin. Outlining the damage caused by the floods in a statement, DC Kakar said that more than 100 houses had been fully damaged in GB in the recent torrential rains.

Faraq told Dawn.com: “In Babusar, a wheat depot, a girls’ school, a police checkpoint, a tourism police shelter and four bridges have been washed away, while two mosques and a windmill have also been damaged.

Efforts underway to re-open Karakoram Highway

The process of removing debris and re-opening the Karakoram Highway (KKH) was underway by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Works Organisation, National Highway Authority and the GB administration, state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

“Several points from Thalichi to Chilas have been cleared. Similarly, traffic has been restored at Jaglot-Skardu road,” the report said. It added that the process of road clearance was

underway in Tatta Pani and Jalipur, while heavy machinery had been dispatched to reopen three points at Gandola Nullah.

“Babusar road was still blocked due to heavy mud on the road, but authorities have been instructed to reach the area,” Faraq said earlier today.

The GB government spokesperson shared that construction has begun on the restoration of highways and connecting roads, after the floods damaged a portion of the KKH, stranding tourists.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed authorities to provide every possible assistance and rehabilitation facilities to the flood-affected people across the country, Radio Pakistan reported.

In their separate statements, they directed relevant departments to accelerate relief activities in the affected areas, as well as expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives due to rains.

‘Hundreds’ of stranded tourists rescued in Skardu

Skardu Rescue 1122, in its WhatsApp channel, said three people were injured due to the flood in the Sadpara village, while the deluge has also hit the Kharmang district.

Ghulam Muhammad, spokesperson for the Baltistan Division Police Department, said in a statement: “In

Deosai, 413 tourist vehicles were stranded on the road connecting Sadpara and Deosai, after it was closed at ten different points due to the floods.”

According to the spokesperson, the stranded people were rescued by the police and shifted to Skardu in the morning after the damaged roads were restored overnight. He said, “Heavy rain in Skardu triggered flash floods in Barge Nullah, Dhagyol Nullah and Shagri Bala Nullah on the outskirts of the city.”

“The flood water entered homes and caused severe damage to public infrastructure and crops,” the official added.

NDMA issues landslide alert

According to an NDMA advisory, the following areas in the country’s north may potentially face landsliding: Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Astore, Diamer, Ghanche in GB; Muzaffarabad, Neelum, Haveli, Bagh, Poonch in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’; and Chitral, Dir, and Kohistan in KP.

In these areas, the following roads have been identified as prone to landsliding: Kohistan Road, Kolai Palas Road, Jaglot Road, Nagar Road, Hunza Road, Tatta Pani Road, Jaglot Skardu Road. The NDMA advised citizens to avoid travelling to mountainous areas and directed authorities to remain alert in case of an emergency.

On June 26, the GB Disaster Management Authority issued a warning of increased risk of glacial lake outburst floods (Glof) and flash floods. The public and tourists were advised to avoid going near rivers, streams and other waterways, and avoid bathing or washing clothes in streams since the water flow can reach dangerous levels.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1925829/pmd-issues-glof-alert-for-gb-kp-as-over-200-stranded-tourists-rescued-from-diamer-amid-floods>

‘AJK’ tribunal nullifies minister’s 2021 election

Dawn, 23 July 2025

An election tribunal in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) on Tuesday nullified the July 2021 election of Agriculture Minister Sardar Mir Akbar from a constituency in Bagh district. The verdict was delivered by District Judge Sardar Muhammad Akram Khan, who heads the tribunal, on a petition filed by Sardar Qamaruz Zaman of PPP, a former minister.

The petitioner challenged the notifications declaring Mr Akbar’s victory, citing alleged rigging, procedural irregularities and constitutional violations.

Mr Akbar had contested the election from LA-16 Bagh-III, commonly known as Sharqi Bagh, on a PTI ticket. He later served as a cabinet member in successive PTI governments led by Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi and Sardar Tanveer Ilyas.

In April 2023, amid mounting pressure and internal strife within the PTI, he joined a breakaway 'forward bloc' under the leadership of Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq. Sardar Akbar was elected in the 2016 general election on a PML-N ticket and served as minister for forests for five years.

'Transparency in question'

Sardar Akram Khan, the judge, noted in his ruling that after extensive deliberations and analysis of the objections raised, the court found that Mr Zaman had proven all but four of them. "Widespread irregularities, procedural violations and electoral fraud raise serious questions about the transparency of the election and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the returned candidate's success," the judge observed.

"Given that the fundamental purpose of an election tribunal is to ensure transparency in the electoral process and uphold the rule of law, it is only just that when blatant legal violations and corrupt practices are proven through concrete documentary and oral evidence, such election results be declared void," he added.

While dismissing the petitioner's demand for the return of Mr Akbar's salaries and allowances, the judge annulled the election results and cancelled the official notifications dated July 27 and July 30, 2021, which had declared him successful.

The tribunal directed the 'AJK' Election Commission to immediately conduct

fresh elections in LA-16 Bagh-III. According to constitutional and legal experts, the tribunal's verdict will only become enforceable once the election commission formally issues a de-seating notification.

The commission has been incomplete since January, when the five-year term of Chief Election Commissioner retired justice Abdul Rashid Sulehria expired. The commission is also supposed to include a senior member and one other member. While a former civil servant, Syed Nazirul Hasan Gilani, has been appointed as a member, the post of senior member remains vacant, further hindering the commission's ability to act on the tribunal's directives.

In a statement following the judgement, Mr Akbar said he would appeal the decision before the 'AJK' Supreme Court. "I hope the Supreme Court will do justice by overturning the tribunal's verdict and validating my election," he said. On the other hand, Mr Zaman addressed a meeting arranged by party workers in Bagh to celebrate his victory, instructing them to begin preparations for fresh elections.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1926004/ajk-tribunal-nullifies-ministers-2021-election>

Thousands stranded as more landslides block KKH

Dawn, 24 July 2025

Thousands of people, including foreign tourists, remained stranded at multiple locations in Gilgit-Baltistan due to

blocked roads, including the Karakoram Highway (KKH), due to landslides. Mobile and internet services across the region were also disrupted after fibre optic cables were damaged in several areas.

Gilgit-Baltistan government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq confirmed that KKH is blocked at Achar Nallah in the Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Thousands of passengers, including tourists, travelling to and from GB are stranded on both sides of the highway.

He said that while KKH has been reopened for traffic within GB, restoration work is underway in Kohistan. The Babusar Pass Road is also blocked at several locations. Mr Faraq assured that all tourists stranded on the Babusar route have been safely evacuated and search operations for missing individuals are underway. Those rescued from Babusar Pass have been brought to Chilas, where local hoteliers and government authorities have arranged complimentary accommodation.

The mobile and internet communication systems in the region were severely damaged, leaving the majority of residents without service for up to six hours on Wednesday. The region's communication system relies on an optical fibre cable connecting GB with Rawalpindi.

According to the Special Communications Organisation (SCO), recent flash floods in Babusar Valley

caused significant damage to the main optical fibre cable. Emergency alternative satellite arrangements were made, but consumers faced slow mobile and internet connectivity. Mr Faraq said that work has begun to restore the communication system.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Sadia Danish expressed concern over the safety of 40 individuals stranded in Danyore's Manogah Nallah in Gilgit. In a statement, she urged the government to initiate a helicopter rescue operation immediately.

Ms Danish emphasised that protecting human lives should remain the top priority and recognised the efforts of the provincial government, the Pakistan Army, volunteers and residents in the rescue operations during the flood emergency.

She also commended the generosity of residents, who opened their homes, mosques, imambargahs and hotels to shelter stranded tourists. Moreover, river erosion caused the collapse of the Hotu suspension bridge in Shigar, cutting off the only access to the K2 base camp. A large number of foreign expedition members and trekkers were stranded, while eight villages were also disconnected.

Officials from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said that a C130 sortie will be arranged from Gilgit to Islamabad to airlift stranded travellers. Stranded tourists are expected to receive airlifts free of

charge on Thursday (today) in an operation overseen by Gilgit's additional deputy commissioner.

GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan has assured that the rescue operations will continue until all stranded people in Babusar are rescued. He also declared the flood-affected areas of Thaki, Niyat, Khunra and Thor in Diamer as disaster zones. He also announced that the families of those who died in the floods at Babusar will receive death compensation under the government policy.

The chief minister ordered urgent measures to restore drinking water, electricity, irrigation channels and road communications in the flood-affected areas of Thor. He also visited the flood-affected areas to oversee the recovery efforts along with Adviser on Forests Haji Shah Baig and GB Minister for Agriculture Engineer Anwar.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1926193/thousands-stranded-as-more-landslides-block-kkh>

Kashmir resolution vital for stability

The Express Tribune, 24 July 2025

All Parties Hurriyat Conference 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (APHC-AJK) chapter leader Altaf Ahmad Bhat has said that resolving the Kashmir dispute is vital for establishing lasting peace. Bhat made the remarks during a meeting in Islamabad with Babar Foundation Chairman Sardar Babar Abbasi and Sardar Lal Khan Abbasi. He urged the United Nations to implement its resolutions on Kashmir and grant

the Kashmiri people their right to self-determination.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2557503/kashmir-resolution-vital-for-stability>

Over 60 houses damaged as GB reels from flash floods

Dawn, 25 July 2025

Dozens of houses were damaged after heavy rainfall and 'cloudburst' triggered flash floods in multiple villages of Gilgit-Baltistan, severing road links and destroying agricultural land.

Flash floods caused damage in Tangir, the hometown of the Gilgit-Baltistan chief minister, Ghanche, and Gilgit's Sikarkoi and Kundas villages.

Police said flash floods damaged public and private properties, including administrative offices, markets, power infrastructure, and communication systems in Tangir Valley. The water entered the local police station, destroying official records and equipment, and the residences of the police officers were also damaged.

Likewise, the offices of the assistant commissioner and additional deputy commissioner sustained heavy damage, while a residential house near the AC office completely collapsed in the flash flood. Spokesperson says six people killed so far; Babusar Road remains blocked

In Ghanche district, more than 60 houses in various areas were damaged by the flash floods, which also washed

away a bridge. The rise in water level in the Shyok River intensified erosion along the riverbank, whereas roads in the area remained blocked.

In the Chogo Grong area of Kondus in Ghanche, water damaged mosques, a school, a dispensary, roads, agricultural land, and livestock. Flash floods in the Sikarkoi and Kundas areas in Gilgit damaged several houses, shops, roads, and other infrastructure in multiple locations.

The flash flood also damaged motorcycles and cars parked outside houses. The floodwater affected several shops at Tangir Bazar and damaged the water channel of the Shekho powerhouse, which led to electricity outages.

According to GB government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq, over one hundred homes collapsed in Gilgit-Baltistan over the past few days, and six people have also died in flash floods this week. He said search and rescue operations were underway in Babusar Valley for missing tourists.

He said more than 300 stranded tourists had been rescued from Babusar and shifted to Gilgit, Skardu, and Chilas.

The Babusar Road remained closed to traffic on Thursday; but the Karakoram Highway remained open for light traffic.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1926455/over-60-houses-damaged-as-gb-reels-from-flash-floods>

Govt taking various steps for promotion of tourism sector in GB

The Nation, 27 July

The development and prosperity of Gilgit-Baltistan were the top priority of the federal government, and in this regard, various projects of development had been launched for the promotion of the tourism sector, health facilities, improvement in the education sector, and to mitigate the pressure of unemployment in this area. An official told a wire service that under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, a series of mega development projects for the development of the remote areas of Gilgit-Baltistan had been launched and work on progress. He said the incumbent regime also focused on developing the road network and connectivity of slum areas with each other to facilitate the local community. The local government is also upgrading the basic health units in the far-flung areas of the GB. He underlined that tourism is a lucrative business of the local community, and in this regard, the GB government provides training facilities to the youth of the area. Tourism is the best source of income for the local population, as millions of tourists visit this area every year. He commended the federal government's efforts in promoting tourism and emphasised the need for its enhancement. He proposed the establishment of camping sites and tourism facilitation centres across all provinces aimed at facilitating tourists

and promoting local attractions. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of extensive promotion of the Salam Pakistan portal, a dedicated platform designed to guide and assist tourists visiting Pakistan. He stressed the significance of leveraging technology to provide seamless experiences for travelers.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jul-2025/govt-taking-various-steps-for-promotion-of-tourism-sector-in-gb>

Economic Developments

Raise in salaries, allowances: 'AJK' police observe pen-down strike

Business Recorder, 22 July 2025

Police personnel in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), from grade 1 to grade 16, went on a pen down strike on Monday to press the government to substantially increase their salaries as well as allowances at par with other departments.

A large number of police personnel in all districts of the state took to streets to present to the government their demands. They said that their salaries were inadequate in these times of inflation. Despite threats by their seniors, they would not back down and would continue to demand their rights.

The protestors said they were ready to talk to the government for the acceptance of their demands.

The strike considerably slowed down the pace of work at police stations. On

the other hand, people, too, have thrown their weight behind the strike.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40373834/raise-in-salaries-allowances-ajk-police-observe-pen-down-strike>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Six Tourists killed in Diamer district of Gilgit

Urdu Point, 24 July 2025

According to government official, at least six tourists were killed by fast floods in diamer district of Gilgit. According to the government spokesperson Gilgit, Faizullah Firaq, the rescue team has found one body in the Babusar valley, taking the count of dead persons to six. As per Rescue 1122, floods inundated several parts of Ghanche district, and in Kandus village flash floods swept dozen of homes, one dispensary, one mosque, fertile land, and damaged the crops too.

On the other side, rescue team on Thursday evening recovered the dead body of retired Colonel in KP, whose body was missing after the floods swept away his vehicle. The search for her daughter is underway.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4502215.html>

Awami Action Committee's protest enters second day, talks with administration fails to make headway

Urdu Point, 24 July 2025

On the call of Awami Action Committee (AAC) Dhirkot, tehsil

dhirkot observed a complete shutter down along with complete halt of traffic movement on the roads. With the charter of demands remaining unfulfilled coupled with no results of the meeting between the AAC and the district administration, the call for protests have been extended indefinitely. Given the call of protest, the daily life in dhirkot has been affected.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4502235.html>

From Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

24 July 2025

Discussed the wrong strategies to deal with climate change disasters in Northern Pakistan #Gilgit_Baltistan, #Dawn TV programme #Zarahatkay with

@ZarrarKhuhro @ShahzebJillani and Wasatuallah Khan.

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1948434229521526877>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

24 July 2025

DRA allowance notification has been issued

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1948391726269509941>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

25 July 2025

Nine Lives Lost, Over 200 Houses Completely Damaged in Gilgit-Baltistan: Chief Secretary

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1948461476974363126>

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Disclaimer

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