

# Weekly POK News Digest

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

Volume 5 | Issue 34

18 August - 24 August 2025

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No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
New Delhi-110 010

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## **Political Developments**

### **‘AJK’ high court strikes down quota system**

*The Dawn, 19 August 2025*

In a landmark verdict that could reshape recruitment and admissions policy in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), the region’s High Court on Monday struck down the decades-old quota system in government services and professional colleges, declaring it unconstitutional and discriminatory.

Justice Sardar Muhammad Ejaz, sitting as vacation judge, authored the judgement on a batch of six writ petitions instituted between 2016 and 2025, which were consolidated due to their common questions of law. The earliest petition was filed in January 2016 by senior lawyers, including Amjad Ali Khan and others, seeking annulment of the 25 per cent quota in civil services reserved for refugees from ‘Indian-occupied Kashmir’ settled in Pakistan, 6pc of which was later apportioned for post-1989 refugees.

The most recent petition was instituted in January 2025 by Raja Arbab Zaheer, challenging recruitment for section officers. Others petitions filed in 2022 and 2024 were also against quota-based appointments and admissions in medical and higher education institutions. In a detailed 65-page judgement, the court declared that all notifications and rules enforcing quotas in government services and professional institutions were “repugnant to the ‘AJK’ Interim

Constitution, 1974, violative of fundamental rights, and against the injunctions of Islam”.

Justice Ejaz observed that the fundamental rights enshrined in Article 4 — particularly the rights to equality, freedom of profession, and safeguard against discrimination in services — guaranteed that all State Subjects must be treated equally and allowed to compete on merit.

“Any job, post or educational seat created from the public exchequer is a trust which must go to the most deserving candidate,” the verdict read.

The judge noted that under the Constitution, no State Subject eligible for appointment could be discriminated against on the basis of “race, residence, caste, sex, or place of birth.” He further cited Quranic injunctions emphasising competence and trustworthiness as the criteria for public positions, observing that the quota system “runs counter not only to constitutional rights but also to the commandment of Allah Almighty.”

The court acknowledged that successive governments had periodically extended the quota system through notifications — beginning in 1972 and continued in 1980, 1987, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2021 — but ruled that such extensions were contrary to constitutional provisions.

It stressed that while para-6 of the 2013 notification suggested a transition to open merit after a grace period, the

government had failed to implement it. Rejecting objections that some petitioners lacked locus standi, the bench held that lawyers, students, and citizens could approach the court to protect fundamental rights of State Subjects.

While setting aside the quota system, the judgement allowed only one exception: the government could lawfully fix a quota for disabled persons, as envisaged under law, but in all other cases “appointments and admissions must be made strictly on open merit.”

Justice Ejaz underlined that the purpose of creating posts was not to distribute jobs but to enhance departmental efficiency. “If more competent persons are inducted through open competition, public institutions will perform better, and society at large will benefit,” he remarked.

Concluding, the court accepted the leading petition filed in 2024 by Raja Shafiqullah Khan and others, struck down all notifications and provisions regarding the determination and enforcement of quota ‘with immediate effect,’ and directed authorities to ensure that recruitment in government services and admissions in ‘AJK’s educational institutions — including seats reserved in different institutions across Pakistan — are henceforth made purely on merit.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1931809/ajk-high-court-strikes-down-quota-system>

## **Protest in Sost Enters Second Month; Police Step Back After Night of Unrest**

*Pamir Times, 21 August 2025*

The Pak-China border town of Sost witnessed a night of high tension as police and Frontier Constabulary (FC) attempted to disperse protesting traders, leading to tear gas shelling, aerial firing, stone-pelting, and unrest in the area.

The situation normalised by the morning after police and Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel returned to their station, though the sit-in by the Tajir Ittehad Action Committee continued for the 32nd day.

According to eyewitnesses, the confrontation began at around 4:30 am when youth from Nagar and Hunza arrived in Sost to show solidarity with the protesting traders amid rumours of an imminent operation. Clashes erupted near Dry Port Chowk, where police and FC personnel resorted to tear gas and aerial firing, while protesters allegedly retaliated by pelting stones.

Hospital sources confirmed that seven police personnel sustained minor injuries, while one driver with a head injury was referred to Gilgit for treatment. Security forces also detained four drivers from Nagar, accused of bringing convoys of supporters to the sit-in.

Protest leaders held an emergency press conference in Sost, alleging that police and FC personnel had not only

fired tear gas but also opened direct fire on demonstrators during the night.

Earlier, Superintendent of Police Hunza, Capt (R) Nabeel Ahmed, told Pamir Times that there was no plan to crack down on the sit-in. He explained that the security deployment was aimed at arresting an individual accused of extorting traders at the customs and immigration facility. “We requested the sit-in organisers to hand over the accused for investigation, but they have refused,” he said.

The Tajir Action Committee has consistently pressed its two-point demand: exemption of Gilgit-Baltistan traders from taxes at the border, which they argue are unconstitutional given the region’s lack of parliamentary representation, and implementation of a one-time special scheme for around 300 containers stranded at Sost Dry Port for more than a year.

The prolonged sit-in has paralysed trade and passenger movement through Khunjerab Pass, bringing cross-border activity to a standstill. Earlier this week, traders had temporarily allowed customs and immigration operations to resume after receiving positive signals from a federal committee formed by the Prime Minister. However, following the latest tension, traders announced the re-closure of customs, immigration, and cross-border movement.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/08/21/protest-in-sost-enters-second-month-police-step-back-after-night-of-unrest/>

## **Rain claims five more lives in ‘AJK’**

*The Dawn, 19 August 2025*

At least five people were killed in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ on Monday in different rain-related incidents as monsoon-induced floods ravaged multiple areas in the Ghizer district of Gilgit-Baltistan, blocking roads and destroying infrastructure.

In Neelum Valley, a vehicle with tourists on board skidded off the “slippery road” and plummeted almost 250 feet down the ravine. Three people were killed on the spot, while the fourth succumbed to his injuries on the way to the hospital.

Neelum Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Ahmed Janjua said a Karachi-based couple along with their two-year-old daughter — who survived the accident — and a helper were coming back from Taobutt when they met the accident near Shundaas.

As a result, Zeeshan Shahid, 38, his wife Anmol Haroon, 32, driver Farooq, 35, and helper Atif died. The couple had travelled to Kel in their car but had rented the jeep for their trip to Taobutt. District Disaster Management Officer Akhtar Ayoub told Dawn that the couple’s funerals had been held and their bodies as well as the child and the car were being sent to Islamabad to be handed over to the family members, arriving there from Karachi.

## **University teacher swept away**

In another incident, a faculty member at the University of Poonch, Dr Gul-i-

Lala, 32, was swept away after she tried to cross a swollen stream in her Suzuki Cultus.

According to Registrar Dr Abdul Rauf, Dr Lala had left the Shamsabad campus after delivering a one-hour lecture in the morning and was heading home via Hajira Road.

Eyewitnesses said she was advised to turn back because a torrent was flowing across the road, whereupon she opted for an alternative route on the outskirts of Rawalakot. However, while attempting to cross a culvert where water from an otherwise small stream was rushing over the road, the accident occurred.

Her vehicle, swept away by the water, was retrieved about a hundred feet down the stream, but she did not survive. Meanwhile, Poonch DC Sardar Umar Farooq told Dawn that rescue teams also evacuated 18 female students from a hostel whose ground floor had been submerged. Five residents trapped in their homes along Hajira Road were also rescued.

In the same district, three men collecting firewood in Karmal village of Rajdhani were stranded on a dry patch in the middle of River Poonch. However, they were rescued.

A flash flood in a water channel in Dhaman Pakhonor village of Sudhnoti district washed away four houses, two suspension bridges, and one RCC bridge, said Deputy Commissioner Mumtaz Kazmi. There were no casualties as the residents had already

vacated their homes, but they were unable to save their belongings, he added. The DC said the road leading to the village had also been destroyed at several points, but machinery would be deployed to reopen it.

### **Flash floods in GB**

As water shortages and electricity outages continued in Gilgit, Danyor, and other flood-hit areas, flash floods damaged infrastructure in Asumber, Hatoon, and Ishkoman valleys in Ghizer. According to the local administration, the Government Boys High School in Asumber was affected, while in Hatoon, the flood blocked the Ghizer River near the Hasis village. The flood damaged the Ishkoman Road at various places, while a house was affected in Dilnati Ponyal.

On the other hand, the increasing water level in the Ghizer River forced the residents living near its banks to move to safer areas. The Ghizer-Chitral Road remained closed due to the flood in the Gulapur area. The residents and affected people in Daen village remained disconnected as the only bridge linking the area to the rest of the region was recently damaged. Similarly, the flood-affected areas in Ghizer, Ghanche, Skardu, Astore, Hunza and Diamer remained marooned.

The Karakoram Highway (KKH) in Gulmit-Gojal in Hunza was opened to traffic, as was the Hoper Valley road in Nagar. The traffic on the Baltistan Highway and Naltar Highway



remained suspended, but people managed to cross the blocked roads in cases of emergency.

GB government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said Ghizer was the most-affected district as the mountainous region faced one of the worst floods that had killed 39 people, including tourists, since July. These disasters have caused damage to the tune of Rs30 billion, he added.

“At least two dozen people have been injured so far; 35 small and large bridges have been washed away; a dozen mosques and ‘Jamaat Khanas’ have been damaged, and more than half a dozen buildings of educational institutions have been damaged,” he said. About 350 houses were completely destroyed and at least 600 houses had sustained partial damage, he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1931804/rain-claims-five-more-lives-in-ajk>

### **All CMOs commence services in ‘AJ&K’, G-B**

*Business Recorder, 19 August 2025*

All the Cellular Mobile Operators have commenced mobile broadband services in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJ&K) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) despite challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions.

Approximately 90 per cent of the telecom infrastructure has been upgraded with 4G data services, ensuring wider access to high-speed mobile broadband services in the

region. Official sources in Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) told Business Recorder that the operators have achieved 4G data enablement on the upgraded sites, fulfilling the mandatory rollout requirements set by the PTA. The development is expected to significantly enhance digital connectivity, boost tourism, and improve socio-economic activities in the mountainous and remote areas of ‘AJ&K’ and GB.

The 2021 spectrum auction specifically mandated enhanced coverage obligations in underserved regions. By upgrading existing networks for data services, the operators have not only met their license conditions but also addressed a long-standing demand of residents for reliable mobile broadband services.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40378598/pac-asks-agp-to-conduct-ips-audit>

### **Mockery of merit’ in ‘AJK’ HC appointments assailed**

*Dawn, 20 August 2025*

Six civil society members have moved the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) High Court against a series of appointments, promotions, and transfers in its establishment, alleging widespread irregularities, nepotism and violation of service rules.

The petition — filed by Advocate Muhammad Shoaib Khalid, Muhammad Naveed Khan, Waqas

Mehboob, Taimoor Qayyum, Aamir Qayyum and Shahid Saleem Bilali — was submitted through advocates Muhammad Waheed Arif and Khawaja Muhammad Akbar.

It names around 55 respondents, including senior officials, selection boards, and recent appointees in the court's IT and administrative wings — 31 fresh recruits and 10 elevated from the subordinate judiciary. Invoking Article 44 of the 'AJK' Interim Constitution, the petitioners sought judicial scrutiny of what they described as a "mockery of merit and transparency".

They alleged that appointments advertised in 2020, 2021, and 2024 were manipulated through re-designated posts, lowered qualifications, and backdoor inductions without re-advertisement. Several beneficiaries, they claimed, were close relatives of serving officials, aided by "unpublished, person-specific rules".

Examples cited in the petition included the hiring of 14 IT assistants against 10 advertised posts, and the appointment of stenographers who were immediately transferred to the high court despite being ineligible. In some cases, they alleged, candidates bypassed the National Testing Service exam altogether and were handpicked by internal committees.

The petitioners further pointed to promotions and transfers based on retrospective or unpublished rules, warning that such practices eroded

public trust in the judiciary. "Close relatives and friends were consistently picked by committees exercising powers beyond their lawful authority," the petition alleged.

The petitioners asked the court to annul the disputed appointments and promotions, form a high-level commission to probe alleged nepotism, and verify the academic credentials of all high court officers. They also sought binding directions to ensure future recruitment was carried out strictly on merit, with posts duly advertised and quotas observed.

A court official told Dawn that since the high court was observing summer vacations, proceedings on the petition would commence only after CJ Sardar Liaqat Hussain returns next week and constitutes a bench to hear the case.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1932005/mockery-of-merit-in-ajk-hc-appointments-assailed>

### **From Risk to Resilience: Northern Pakistan's Path Forward against Climate Disasters**

*Pamir Times, 19 August 2025*

Northern Pakistan faces an escalating threat from climate-related disasters. Since July 22, 2025, flash floods, riverine floods, glacier bursts, cloudbursts, and landslides have devastated communities across Gilgit-Baltistan, claiming numerous lives, with many still missing. The region's infrastructure—including roads, water channels, drinking water systems, and electricity networks—has been heavily



damaged, while private properties such as agricultural land, homes, crops, trees, and small businesses have been destroyed.

These disasters are not isolated. According to the Climate Risk Index 2025, Pakistan ranked first globally as the country most affected by extreme weather events in 2022, largely due to catastrophic floods and heatwaves. Reports from German watch (2021) and the United Nations indicate climate-related losses exceeding \$29 billion, primarily from recurring floods, droughts, heatwaves, and glacial melt, with the 2022 super floods alone causing \$30 billion in damages. Despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan remains among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. The Global Climate Risk Index 2025 further notes that Pakistan experiences climate-related economic losses of over 1% of its GDP annually, highlighting the chronic vulnerability of its population.

Mountain regions, particularly Gilgit-Baltistan, face even higher risks. Communities here are directly exposed to hazards such as Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), snow avalanches, flash floods, and landslides. Recent incidents—including glacier bursts and unprecedented flash floods—have been catastrophic, particularly across Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). For instance, a glacier burst in Gulmit triggered flash

floods that swept away homes, farms, and a 45-year-old bridge on the Karakoram Highway, underscoring the disaster's intensity. Similarly, the advancing Shishper Glacier in Hassanabad, active since 2017, has devastated much of the valley along both sides of the stream.

Pakistan is home to over 7,000 glaciers, with more than 5,000 located in Gilgit-Baltistan. In Hunza and Nagar districts alone, over 20 glaciers pose ongoing threats due to abnormal activity influenced by climate change. Local reports indicate over 30 GLOF or glacier-related events in Hunza over the past five years, including some during winter, signaling unusual glacial behavior. Glaciers such as Shishper, Batura, Khurdopin, and Malungutti, along with newly formed glacier lakes, are closely monitored. Their abnormal activity threatens not only nearby populations but also downstream communities along rivers in Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, and Diamer, affecting thousands of residents.

Recent years have also seen more extreme temperatures, intense rainfall, and prolonged dry spells across parts of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, triggering snow avalanches, heatwaves, cloudbursts, torrential rains, flash floods, riverine floods, and landslides. Since 2010, over 500 climate-related events have been recorded, causing loss of life, displacement, property destruction, and stalling local development. Hazard assessments indicate that nearly 30% of Gilgit-

Baltistan's population is at immediate or medium risk from climate disasters, with many settlements requiring urgent relocation.

Addressing climate vulnerability in northern Pakistan requires urgent institutional reform, scientific monitoring, and community engagement. Key recommendations include:

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), established after the 2005 earthquake, have traditionally focused on emergency response. A shift is now needed toward long-term resilience, emphasizing risk reduction, climate-sensitive development, and "build back better" strategies.

A specialized body in Gilgit-Baltistan should develop a comprehensive disaster strategy including high-altitude search and rescue, cryosphere assessments, disaster risk modeling, early warning systems, and mitigation planning, while integrating the impacts of ongoing infrastructure and development projects. The authority should monitor glacier behavior, glacial lake formation, and the risks posed by advancing glaciers, which threaten lives, property, and critical infrastructure. Implementation should involve coordination between the federal government, civil society, and the international community.

The Gilgit-Baltistan Development Plan should be revised to ensure all projects

are climate-risk sensitive, sustainable, and incorporate resilient habitat planning at the local level. This approach will reduce unsustainable development pressures on natural resources and protect communities from future hazards.

Non-governmental organizations should be supported, particularly in replicating community-based disaster management models, such as those implemented by the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, to enhance local preparedness, response, and recovery capacities.

By combining institutional reform, scientific monitoring, resilient development planning, and community engagement, northern Pakistan can reduce the devastating human, social, and economic impacts of climate disasters. With proactive policies, strategic planning, and international collaboration, the lives and livelihoods of thousands of residents in Gilgit-Baltistan and surrounding mountain regions can be safeguarded for generations to come.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/08/19/82213/>

### **Thousands await help as GB limps towards normalcy**

*Dawn, 20 August 2025*

Thousands in Gilgit-Baltistan remained without potable water, electricity, and road access on Tuesday, as life returned to normalcy in the aftermath of flash floods that had ravaged the mountainous region since July this year.

On Tuesday, there were no floods in the GB rivers, and local volunteers had started to restore water channels and roads in several parts of the region. However, several roads remained blocked, including the Naltar Highway and the Ghizer-Shandur Road. The Baltistan Highway, which was blocked in the Roundu valley of Skardu, had finally been reopened on Tuesday, said officials.

Meanwhile, due to roadblocks, drinking water, irrigation, and road communication issues have compounded in the flood-affected areas, particularly in Ghizer, Skardu, Ghanche, and Gilgit. Similarly, residents complained of a severe water shortage in Danyor, Skardu and Ghanche.

A resident of Mazher Haldi village in Ghanche district in Baltistan said that their village had suffered four floods since mid-July. The repeated disasters have left the community in ruins, with houses swept away, agricultural lands destroyed, and families forced to abandon their homes, he added.

The district administration has provided temporary tents, and the affected families have been relocated to Payo Thang Haldi. However, the villagers have urged the authorities to declare a flood emergency in Haldi. The displaced residents taking refuge in Payo Thang Haldi were living without clean drinking water, electricity, proper sanitation, and food supplies. The destruction of the water

supply lines, electricity connections, and road networks had made their survival even more difficult.

Meanwhile, the Ghizer Rescue 1122 teams continued their rescue activities in the flood-affected areas of Daen village for the fifth consecutive day. Patients and other vulnerable groups had been safely transported from Daen to safe locations in rescue boats.

As the weather becomes normal, locals citing indigenous knowledge said the weather starts changing from August 15, and snow starts freezing on the mountains by mid-August. On Tuesday morning, there was a little snowfall on the mountains as well.

A day earlier, GB government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said Ghizer was the most-affected district, as the mountainous region faced one of the worst floods that had killed 39 people, including tourists, since July. These disasters have caused damage to the tune of Rs30 billion, he had said.

“At least two dozen people have been injured so far; 35 small and large bridges have been washed away; a dozen mosques and ‘Jamaat Khanas’ have been damaged, and more than half a dozen buildings of educational institutions have been damaged,” he said. About 350 houses were completely destroyed and at least 600 houses had sustained partial damage, he had added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1932008/thousands-await-help-as-gb-limps-towards-normalcy>

## **Lives Lost, Homes Swept Away: Gilgit-Baltistan's Summer of Floods**

*The Friday Times, 20 August 2025*

In the summer of 2025, Gilgit-Baltistan endured one of its most devastating flood seasons in decades. Accelerated glacial melt, record-breaking mountain heatwaves reaching 48.5 °C, and prolonged monsoon rains triggered glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), landslides, and destructive cloudbursts. Entire valleys were cut off, communities stranded, and vital infrastructure brought to a standstill.

More than 540 homes were destroyed, and critical routes—including the Karakoram Highway and the Jaglot-Skardu Road—remained blocked for days. At least ten lives were lost in Gilgit-Baltistan, while hundreds more perished nationwide as torrential rains battered Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh. Damages in Gilgit-Baltistan alone are estimated to exceed Rs 20 billion. Nationally, over 650 deaths have been reported since July, making this year's floods among the deadliest since 2022.

The devastation once again highlighted that Pakistan's climate crisis is not a distant threat but an escalating emergency. These disasters are not simply "natural" events—they are shaped by governance failures, poor land-use planning, and fragile infrastructure, all of which are compounded by rising global temperatures.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, visiting the region after the floods, pledged a Rs 4 billion reconstruction package. The relief package included compensation for affected families, the announcement of a 100-megawatt solar project to address winter energy shortages, and plans for a centralised weather alert and forecasting system. Federal Climate Minister Musadik Malik admitted the early warning network had failed, with some installations vandalised or left without maintenance, and called for relocating vulnerable settlements under the Land Reforms Bill 2025.

A dedicated Gilgit-Baltistan Climate Resilience Authority, with representation from government, scientists, civil society, and local communities, could centralise planning and adaptation measures. While these measures signal political recognition, they remain piecemeal—falling short of the structured climate adaptation strategy that Gilgit-Baltistan urgently requires.

For decades, unchecked construction in floodplains, continued deforestation, and weak enforcement of zoning laws have magnified natural hazards. Mountain streams are increasingly choked by debris, glacial lakes remain poorly monitored, and bridges built without climate-resilient designs collapse with each season of heavy rains. Without reforms, Gilgit-Baltistan will remain disproportionately vulnerable, despite contributing less than 1% to global emissions.

The path forward must treat early warning systems as critical infrastructure. These systems should be safeguarded against neglect and sabotage, strengthened with real-time satellite monitoring and community-led alert networks. In a mountainous region where communication barriers can be fatal, local ownership of alerts—whether through SMS, sirens, or radio—can transform warnings into lifesaving action.

Equally urgent is land-use planning. Relocation, when unavoidable, must not become forced displacement into deeper poverty. Communities must retain access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Managed with dignity, relocation can offer long-term resilience rather than compounding vulnerability.

Infrastructure too must evolve for tomorrow's extremes. Elevated roads, climate-resilient bridges, and reinforced embankments should be supported by slope stabilisation and nature-based engineering such as terracing and reforestation. Preventing soil erosion and stabilising landscapes are as crucial as rebuilding concrete structures.

Preparedness must also be decentralised. In Gilgit-Baltistan's rugged terrain, national responders often arrive too late. District-level operation centres, equipped with drones, radios, and trained volunteers, could ensure rapid search-and-rescue capacity even when valleys remain cut off. Localised disaster systems,

supported by community trust, provide the first and often only line of defence.

Economic resilience is another cornerstone. Recovery cannot end with shelter reconstruction—it must restore livelihoods. Farmers need access to climate-smart techniques, drought- and flood-tolerant crops, and efficient irrigation systems. Tourism, a lifeline for Gilgit-Baltistan, must adopt community-driven, sustainable models that protect fragile ecosystems while sustaining local incomes. Without this, one disaster season can collapse the region's economy for years.

Institutional reform is necessary to coordinate these diverse strands. A dedicated Gilgit-Baltistan Climate Resilience Authority, with representation from government, scientists, civil society, and local communities, could centralise planning and adaptation measures. Such a body would not only enforce zoning and infrastructure standards but also link local needs with national and international financing.

Global support is equally critical. Pakistan's climate vulnerability is disproportionate to its emissions, and mountain regions like Gilgit-Baltistan represent some of the world's most fragile ecosystems. Accessing climate adaptation funds through the Green Climate Fund, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank is vital. At international platforms such as COP, Gilgit-Baltistan should be presented as a model for mountain-focused climate



action, demonstrating how community-led and nature-based solutions can safeguard entire river basins. Integrating the region into the national Living Indus Initiative—which emphasises ecosystem restoration across the Indus Basin—would further cement its role in protecting Pakistan’s water security.

Gilgit-Baltistan is no longer simply a land of scenic grandeur. It is ground zero of Pakistan’s climate crisis, where the collision of ecological fragility and weak governance produces human tragedy year after year. The next disaster is not a question of if, but when. The challenge now is whether Pakistan will continue to respond with short-term relief or finally embrace long-term resilience. Investing in Gilgit-Baltistan’s adaptation is no longer just a regional necessity—it is a national imperative.

<https://thefridaytimes.com/20-Aug-2025/lives-lost-homes-swept-away-gilgit-baltistan-s-summer-of-floods>

### **Police fire tear gas as clashes erupt with Sost protesters in GB, organisers claim**

*Dawn, 21 August 2025*

A clash broke out between police and protesters in the early hours of Thursday, leaving several injured, protest organisers claimed, as traders continued to block routes in Gilgit-Baltistan’s Sost Valley.

Last month, Pak-China Tajeer Etihad Action Committee launched a protest

against the suspension of border trade via the Khunjerab Pass, blaming the federal government’s inaction over unresolved tax-related issues, which have inflicted heavy losses on importers and exporters over the year.

One of the organisers, Muhammad Ismail, claimed that the police had launched a crackdown against peaceful protesters, stating: “Police resorted to tear gas and aerial firing to disperse protesters from the venue.” Speaking to reporters, Hunza Superintendent of Police Nabeel Ahmed said that there was no plan to launch a crackdown on the sit-in.

“Police were deployed only to arrest a suspect who is allegedly extorting traders at the customs and immigration area upon their return from China,” he said. “The sit-in organisers had been asked to hand over the suspect for investigation, but they have not done so yet.”

The protest organisers said that the police and district administration had warned the protesters to disperse from Sost. Addressing an emergency press conference, Ismail, Ebadullah, Gul Sher and other committee members claimed that the police launched “an attack on protesters at midnight to sabotage the peaceful protest for the rights of GB people”.

The protest organisers said they had been engaged with various committees, including one constituted by the prime minister for negotiations, but claimed



that “the government resorted to using force”.

The organisers highlighted that the GB traders were protesting for one month for their genuine demands, including customs clearance of 280 consignments which have been stranded at the Sost Dry Port for 10 months.

Opposition Leader in the GB Assembly, Kazim Mesum, issued a statement condemning the use of force, warning the government that suppressing peaceful demonstrations could ignite a larger movement across GB.

Separately, the Sost Bazaar Association held a shutter-down strike and protest rally against the shelling and firing by police and FC. During a press conference, the association’s President, Ulfat Karim, said, “Sales tax and income tax are not applicable as GB was not constitutionally part of Pakistan.”

The association condemned the authorities’ action against the traders and denounced the indiscriminate shelling of shops, petrol pumps, hotels, and other properties, announcing its full support for the ongoing sit-in.

On July 28, traders in GB blocked Sost dry port, halting all trade and travel between Pakistan and China. The protest on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) has paralysed the regional economy and stranded travellers, including Chinese nationals who also staged a protest demanding passage into China through the Khunjerab pass.

In June, thousands of passengers and tourists remained stranded at KKH for many hours after traders had blocked the road. The protesters vowed that the road connecting Pakistan with China would remain closed to traffic till the acceptance of their demands.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1932291/police-fire-tear-gas-as-clashes-erupt-with-sost-protesters-in-gb-organisers-claim>

### **‘AJK’ SC declines to suspend HC order on recruitment controversy**

*Dawn, 24 August 2025*

The ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) Supreme Court on Friday declined to suspend a High Court order that had put on hold dozens of appointments and related notifications in the High Court establishment, pending proceedings on a writ petition alleging large-scale irregularities.

The matter came before Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram on an application moved by four of the affected parties, through advocate Manzoor Hussain Raja, along with their petition for leave to appeal (PLA) against the Aug 21 order of the High Court.

The applicants had sought urgent hearing and an ad-interim ex-parte relief for suspension of the High Court’s interim order. However, after hearing the counsel at some length, the apex court held that the request did not merit immediate relief.

Instead, the court issued notices to the respondents to explain why the relief sought should not be granted, allowing

them to file objections if any. The application, the court said, would be taken up along with the PLA after its completion in the registry office. The apex court did not immediately fix the next date of hearing.

On Thursday, Justice Chaudhry Khalid Rasheed of the High Court had suspended award lists, appointment orders and notifications relating to dozens of posts ranging from IT managers and stenographers to Class-IV employees, issued between 2020 and 2025. The suspension will remain effective until Sept 2, the next date of hearing.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1936317/ajk-sc-declines-to-suspend-hc-order-on-recruitment-controversy>

## **Economic Developments**

### **Medical Aid sent to flood victims in GB**

*The Nation, 19 August 2025*

On the request of NDMA, the Ministry of Health has dispatched medical aid for flood victims in Gilgit-Baltistan on Monday. Essential medicines and medical supplies have been sent via a C-130 aircraft to the affected areas to provide emergency healthcare services. Health Minister Mustafa Kamal stated that the Ministry is committed to ensuring timely and effective medical assistance for flood victims. He added that the Ministry is in constant coordination with NDMA and the provincial govt to manage the ongoing emergency situation.

“We will take all possible measures to guarantee prompt and efficient medical support,” said the Minister. He reaffirmed that the Ministry of Health stands with the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan during this difficult time.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/19-Aug-2025/medical-aid-sent-to-flood-victims-in-gb>

### **PM Shehbaz orders power supply for flood-hit parts of GB, KP**

*Dawn, 20 August 2025*

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered week-long uninterrupted electricity supply in flood-hit areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa, as road and power supply was restored in these areas on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan visited Gilgit-Baltistan and expressed satisfaction over the restoration of traffic in the minimum time.

He was informed that the National Highway Authority and Frontier Works Organisation have jointly worked on a war-footing basis on the affected highways and within minimal time opened Skardu and its surrounding roads for traffic while construction work on some bridges is still in progress.

“Heavy rains and flash floods on August 15 severely damaged lives, property and the communications system; however, NHA promptly began repair work and already opened

several roads and highways in Gilgit-Baltistan for traffic.

The meeting was informed that Jaglot-Skardu Road had been severely damaged, however, this and other roads in the province were now opened for traffic while rehabilitation work was under progress at various locations especially where bridges have been washed away.

The prime minister in the meeting commended the collective response to the flood crisis. “Those who are serving day and night in these calamity-stricken areas will be rewarded by the Almighty. The God will bless you all,” he added.

He extended special thanks to federal ministers, secretaries, the chairman of the NDMA, chief secretaries of the provinces and ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), as well as the armed forces, who he noted are working around the clock to evacuate stranded citizens, distribute food, and operate helicopters in remote regions.

PM Shehbaz also lauded the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), describing their humanitarian efforts as “a divine service”.

“This is a very difficult time. If we sacrifice our sleep and comfort for the nation, it will surely bring us a divine reward,” he remarked.

The prime minister highlighted key achievements, including the restoration of 37 out of 49 energy feeders, calling it

a significant contribution to stabilising essential services. He also praised the work of the FWO, National Logistics Cell (NLC), and the Ministry of Communications for rapid road infrastructure repairs in Buner, ‘AJK’, and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

PM Shehbaz also commended efforts in the communication and power sectors as vital to supporting affected populations. He announced that he will continue engagement with his team via Zoom and plans to visit the affected areas soon to oversee operations personally.

“We are united in this mission and every hand extended in help today will earn the reward of the nation — and of God,” the prime minister said.

### **Tree plantation drive**

Later, launching the annual monsoon tree plantation campaign, Prime Minister Shehbaz gave special directions to pay particular attention to tree plantation in ‘Azad Kashmir’ and Gilgit-Baltistan to mitigate the impacts of seasonal and flood-related disasters.

“Pakistan is among the countries worst affected by climate change. The Ministry of Climate Change should ensure full preparations for the upcoming Global Climate Change Conference”, the prime minister said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1932009/pm-shehbaz-orders-power-supply-for-flood-hit-parts-of-gb-kp>

## **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

**Flood victims of Raushin to be located to safe places and provide with medical and relief facilities on utmost priority: Haji Gulbar Khan**

*Urdu Point, 22 August 2025*

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan has directed that the flood victims of Raushin be immediately shifted to safe locations and ensured the provision of relief and medical facilities. He expressed these views during a briefing at the DC Office Ghanche regarding rescue and relief operations in the flood-affected areas.

He also thanked the Commander FCNA for promptly initiating the rescue operation, stating that timely information made it possible to protect precious human lives, for which they are grateful to Allah. The Chief Minister instructed the Deputy Commissioner to take protective measures in the populations adjacent to the river and to immediately shift the Raushin victims to safe locations.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4531833.html>

**Unveiling of RAW's Subversive Activities in 'Azad Kashmir'**

*Urdu Point, 21 August 2025*

The subversive activities of the Indian intelligence agency RAW have been exposed not only in Pakistan but also in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK).

India is engaged in efforts to destabilize 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' through its espionage network.

RAW has been exploiting economic vulnerabilities and other weaknesses to lure youth into espionage or to obtain sensitive information in exchange for financial benefits. It is targeting religious sites, public gatherings, and defense-related installations through its espionage activities, attempting to sow seeds of unrest and instability in the region, similar to its efforts in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to media reports, security agencies have arrested a youth in Rawalakot who was working as a spy for RAW. It is reported that the detained youth provided the location of a mosque in Muzaffarabad to RAW, which was targeted by India with a missile in May this year. India is, in fact, attempting to destabilize 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' to divert attention from its oppressive actions in 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir'.

The international community has rejected India's narrative regarding 'Occupied Kashmir', leading to its frustration. Despite extreme oppression, India has failed to suppress the Kashmiri freedom movement. Therefore, to achieve its nefarious objectives, it seeks to destabilize 'Azad Kashmir' as well.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4531084.html>

## **Book Banning is a Failed Attempt to Erase History: Jammu and Kashmir Forum**

*Urdu point, 20 August 2025*

Chaudhry Naeem Akhtar, Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Forum France based in Paris, has strongly condemned the ban on books by 25 prominent authors regarding Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, while speaking to journalists, Naeem Akhtar stated that censorship and restrictions on democratic freedoms continue in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir'.

He described the ban on books as irrational, regrettable, and contrary to democratic values, adding that they are unable to understand what content in these books poses a threat to the 'occupying Indian forces'. He questioned, if the situation is truly normal, then why the censorship? He said that history bears witness that banning books often leads to an increase in their popularity. The ideas that are suppressed take root more deeply in public consciousness.

Naeem Akhtar stated that this decision to ban books is a cruel attack on democratic rights and intellectual freedom. He further said that this ban, imposed on the sixth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, is another symbol of injustice against the Kashmiri people. He emphasized that banning books is a failed attempt to erase history.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/mirpur/national-news/live-news-4529592.html>

## **From Social Media**

**JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri**

*24 August 2025*

As the Glof wreaked havoc downstream, 330 households comprising over 3,000 individuals had become internally displaced persons (IDPs) in #Ghizer of #GilgitBaltistan, my latest on climate devastation. #ClimateEmergency

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1959582789034254441>

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

*23 August 2025*

Ten billion for the Glof project on one side, and this hero from Ghizer on the other, who saved the entire village. Salute to you.

#Ghizer #disater #Alert #gilgitbaltistan

**Link to the video:**

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1959002317765976456>

**PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes**

*21 August 2025*

Protest in Sost Enters Second Month; Police Step Back After Night of Unrest

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1958387263693521049>

# Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 5 | Issue 34

18 August - 24 August 2025

**Compiled by**

Mohd. Usman Bhatti and Muneeb Yousuf

**Edited By**

Dr. Smruti S Pattanaik

**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.*



**MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**

No. 1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191

Website: [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in); Email: [pokdigest@gmail.com](mailto:pokdigest@gmail.com)