

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 5 | Issue 35

25 August - 31 August 2025

POK
Gilgit-Baltistan
Hudor Check Post Attack
flash floods traders' protest
Singal Nallah boundary issue
tourism economy relief package
renewable energy Border trade
affordable electricity
green tourism



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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

Contents

Political Developments

- Prince Rahim Aga Khan assures support to flood-hit GB
- Provision of affordable electricity to GB people top priority: Awais Leghari
- Many areas in GB's Ghizer cut off for 5th day as Gilgit-Shandur road remains blocked
- G-B court stays federal advisor appointment
- Why Gilgit-Baltistan's Wealth Doesn't Reach Its People?
- No end in sight to ordeal of GB's disaster-hit population
- G-B govt urges unity as land dispute shadows flood crisis
- G-B CM terms Rs4b flood aid insufficient
- PML-N accuses PPP of opposing 'AJK's legitimate rights
- 'AJK' assembly panel calls for foreign secretary's support to highlight Kashmir issue
- Two GB Scouts Martyred, One Injured in Hudor Check Post Attack near Chilas
- Martyrdom or Negligence: Preventing Avoidable Tragedies in Gilgit-Baltistan
- Strike observed in GB to back traders' protest in Sost

Economic Developments

- Tourism in GB drops 90pc amid climate disasters, conflicts

Vernacular Urdu Media

- Monsoon Rains and Floods Damage 169 Schools, 1809 Houses in 'Azad Kashmir'
- Chief-Minister GB terms attack on Gilgit Scouts a coward act

Political Developments

Prince Rahim Aga Khan assures support to flood-hit GB

Dawn, 25 August 2025

Prince Rahim Aga Khan, the leader of the Ismaili community, has said the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) will continue to support the Gilgit-Baltistan government and local communities to recover from recent damages and build resilience to face future challenges.

In a letter presented to the GB chief minister by the Gilgit Shia Imami Ismaili Council president, the Aga Khan extended “heartfelt sympathy for the devastating losses suffered by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan as a result of the recent flash floods and related disasters”.

“I am in close contact with our Council and the agencies of the AKDN in Pakistan, and I continue to monitor the situation as more such events are witnessed each day,” the letter said, adding that he was particularly sad to hear about the deaths of the volunteers who were working to restore the water-supply infrastructure near Gilgit.

“Thank you for your letter of 24th July seeking assistance in the recovery and restoration phase,” he said in the letter. “From the time of my great-grandfather, the Ismaili Imam has sought to play an integral role in the development and progress of the GB people. This region remains close to my heart...” the letter said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1937037/prince-rahim-aga-khan-assures-support-to-flood-hit-gb>

Provision of affordable electricity to GB people top priority: Awais Leghari

The Nation, 26 August 2025

Federal Energy Minister Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari chaired a meeting of the Steering Committee on the 100 MW Solarisation Project in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the Steering Committee, constituted on the directives of the Prime Minister, is fully functional and working towards the timely execution of the project, said a press release. He reaffirmed that the provision of affordable and environment-friendly electricity to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan remains a foremost priority of the government.

Highlighting the importance of renewable energy, Awais Leghari noted that the transition towards alternative energy sources is a pressing need of the time. He underscored that the government is pursuing sustainable and long-term solutions to strengthen the country’s energy mix and ensure energy security. The minister described the 100 MW Solarisation Project in Gilgit-Baltistan as a landmark initiative in the journey of national progress. He stressed that the project will not only enhance energy availability for the local population but will also serve as a catalyst for economic growth and social development in the region.

The session was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Energy and other relevant institutions.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Aug-2025/provision-of-affordable-electricity-to-gb-people-top-priority-awais-leghari>

Many areas in GB's Ghizer cut off for 5th day as Gilgit-Shandur road remains blocked

Dawn, 26 August 2025

Since late July, monsoon rains have wreaked havoc across the country, especially in its northern regions like GB, by triggering deadly floods, landslides and displacement, particularly in vulnerable, poorly drained, or densely populated areas.

According to locals, majority of the areas in the Ghizer district, including Gupis, Phander, and Yasin tehsils, remained stranded for five days as five kilometres of the region's main road were submerged by an artificial lake formed at Raushan village in Ghizer.

Local resident Meraj Ali Shah told Dawn that 300 houses had been damaged by the glacial flood, with houses submerged due to artificial lake in Hakis, Thangi, and Raushan villages as they remained without basic necessities. He added that hundreds of people had been displaced when a glacial lake outburst flood (Glof) swept everything in Tildas village. "They are living without electricity, drinking water, proper accommodation, medical facilities, [and] other basic needs," he said.

Locals also complained of a lack of support from the government, adding that they had been dependent on relief items by welfare organisations. Two patients in a critical condition were taken from Gupis to Gilgit on Monday through a helicopter belonging to the Aga Khan Development Network, as per the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat.

According to the locals, people affected in previous floods in Ghizer's Khalti, Daen, Chatorkhand, Yasin, and other areas did not have access to roads, clean drinking water, and other necessities.

Since three weeks, the Karakoram Highway at Hassanabad Hunza could not be opened as it was blocked after a Glof from Shishper glacier submerged a portion of the thoroughfare, posing severe difficulties to Hassanabad's residents. The Glof also damaged dozens of homes, farmland, and the area's government and private infrastructure.

Residents in the Hisper valley of Nagar district have been disconnected for a month as the only accessible road was blocked owing to river erosion and landslides. Gilgit's Haramosh and Bagrot valleys have also remained disconnected.

Locals said the water supply systems to areas populated by thousands of people, including Gilgit's Danyor, Sultanabad, and Mohammadabad have remained suspended, adding that they had to purchase water tankers daily, which the poor could not afford.

"For the last month, people in the populated areas have faced a severe water shortage," said a local resident Shahzad Hussain. Furthermore, according to the locals, the crops and trees have dried up due to the unavailability of irrigation water supply systems.

A local, Muhammad Alam, told Dawn that flood-affected people in Mashabrum sub-division of Ghanche

district in Baltistan are currently living in difficult circumstances. "Above sixty households in Ghanche district, including Haldi and Balayagan villages displaced in flood have taken shelter in tents under the open sky and are waiting for the government's assistance."

Unfortunately, locals said, no concrete steps have been taken by the government so far for their rehabilitation and redressal of their problems, due to which the victims have been plunged into severe difficulties and deprivation. Without basic facilities, they say they are forced to spend their days and nights in destitution and helplessness.

Furthermore, those traumatised by high intensity floods also complain of mental health issues, demanding mental rehabilitation. According to a statement issued on Tuesday by the GB government, the affected people in the recent floods, especially children, women and the elderly, are suffering from mental and psychological problems.

In view of these challenges, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Arif Tahseen, the additional secretary of the GB department of social welfare. Senior officials of various government and private institutions participated to formulate a coordinated strategy for the mental and psychological rehabilitation of the victims.

In the meeting, it was agreed to work together to restore mental health among the people of the affected areas in collaboration with the GB Health

Department, Aga Khan Health Service and Rupani Foundation.

On this occasion, Additional Secretary Tahseen said the recent floods have not only caused physical and economic devastation but have also left deep emotional and psychological impacts on individuals and families, especially children, women and the elderly in affected areas.

"To address these impacts, it is imperative that a joint and coordinated strategy involving all relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors be launched immediately to include this important aspect in the overall disaster response process," he said.

The meeting discussed the improvement of mental health facilities, provision of psychologists, community outreach programs and the launch of awareness campaigns, and suggested practical measures.

All the institutions expressed their determination to jointly fulfil this important national responsibility and agreed that a comprehensive and long-term plan would ensure the complete rehabilitation of the victims.

Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) Director General Zakir Hussain said in a statement that due to the recent rains and flood situation, the National Highway Authority machinery has been mobilised to clear the Gilgit-Shandur road in the Raushan area. He added that formal approval has also been obtained for the construction of an alternative route in a short period of

time and work on it is progressing rapidly.

“Under the project, a bypass will be constructed and the road will be connected to the main highway through a bridge,” he said, adding that this will ease movement and reduce difficulties faced by people.

“The government is utilising all available resources for the restoration of flood-affected areas, and for this purpose, work is being done in close coordination with the relevant institutions,” Hussain said. “We stand with the affected people and are trying to resolve their problems immediately.” Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expected to arrive in GB on Wednesday to review the disastrous situation.

A statement by the GB government said a high-level meeting was held to review arrangements for the PM’s expected visit. The meeting, chaired by GB Chief Secretary Abrara Ahmed Mirza, was briefed on the damage caused by the flood situation and the steps taken for the rehabilitation of the affected areas. The meeting’s participants also discussed the current status of the early warning system.

It was decided that all the relevant institutions will complete their preparations before the PM’s visit. Mirza directed the rehabilitation work in the affected areas to be accelerated, adding that all institutions should coordinate in this regard.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1937353/many-areas-in-gbs-ghizer-cut-off-for->

[5th-day-as-gilgit-shandur-road-remains-blocked](#)

Why Gilgit-Baltistan’s Wealth Doesn’t Reach Its People?

Pamir Times, 28 August 2025

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), a stunning region of Pakistan, is blessed with abundant natural resources and holds immense strategic importance. Positioned at a vital crossroads, it connects Pakistan with several countries, most notably China, the world’s rising global power.

Despite its rich potential and promising sectors that could drive economic prosperity, GB has not been able to fully harness these opportunities. Challenges such as its uncertain legal status and weak policy implementation continue to hinder the region’s path toward economic uplift and a higher standard of living for its people.

Education vs. Opportunities

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) stands out in Pakistan for its relatively high literacy rate compared to other provinces. Over the years, the people of this mountainous region have placed a strong emphasis on education, resulting in impressive progress in schooling and academic achievement. Despite this educational advantage, GB continues to face significant challenges in terms of economic development. Unlike other parts of Pakistan, the region offers limited opportunities for employment, business ventures, and income generation. The lack of industries, infrastructure, and large-scale investment has left many educated individuals struggling to find suitable livelihoods. This imbalance

between higher education levels and fewer economic opportunities creates frustration and disappointment among the youth. Information Technology (IT) has the potential to empower educated youth and improve their economic wellbeing. However, the government has failed to ensure reliable internet access. The only available provider, the Special Communication Organization (SCO), has become a major source of frustration for professionals, as its poor services directly limit opportunities for economic growth and innovation.

Tourism – Booming but Unfair

Tourism has rapidly emerged as one of the most promising economic opportunities. The region, blessed with breath taking mountains, glaciers, lakes, and valleys, attracts millions of tourists each year from across Pakistan and abroad. However, a significant portion of the tourism economy remains concentrated in the hands of wealthy capitalists and large investors, leaving limited benefits for local communities. With the rise of new trends such as “green tourism” and the growing influence of non-local investors, small-scale local entrepreneurs often find it difficult to compete with bigger players. As a result, while the region hosts millions of visitors, the true economic benefits are not fully reaching the indigenous population who have historically been custodians of the land and its resources.

Border Trade – A Lifeline under Threat

Border trade has long been one of the most significant sources of revenue for

the federal government, as well as a lifeline for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The trade routes connecting Pakistan with China through Khunjerab Pass have not only facilitated the exchange of goods but also provided employment opportunities for thousands of locals. Hundreds of small traders rely on cross-border trade to sustain their families, while thousands of educated but unemployed youth work as luggage carriers and transporters, earning a modest livelihood through this sector. Despite its importance, this vital economic doorway is gradually closing due to government policies and the growing monopoly of the National Logistic Cell (NLC) in the Sost dry port. The monopolization of trade by larger state-controlled institutions has reduced the space for small traders and local workers, cutting off a crucial source of income for ordinary families. As a result, many who once depended on border trade are now facing financial hardship and uncertainty about their future. If these restrictions continue, the consequences will not only affect the local economy of Gilgit-Baltistan but may also lead to increased unemployment, poverty, and frustration among the region’s educated youth.

Mineral Wealth – For Whom?

Gilgit-Baltistan is blessed with vast deposits of minerals and natural resources, making mining one of the region’s greatest opportunities for future economic prosperity. Precious stones, metallic ores, and other valuable minerals lie within its

mountains, holding the potential to transform the local economy and uplift the livelihoods of its people. Recently, even the Prime Minister of Pakistan publicly acknowledged that GB possesses such huge mineral wealth that, if properly utilized, it could help the country repay its foreign loans. While this declaration highlights the strategic importance of GB's natural resources for the national economy, it also raises critical questions. The foremost concern for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan is: what role will they play in this process? If the minerals of GB are to be used to stabilize Pakistan's economy, what guarantees exist that the benefits will reach the local population? More importantly, why should the sacrifices of GB's natural wealth be used primarily to pay off national debts, while the region itself still suffers from underdevelopment, lack of industries, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure? This paradox fuels feelings of neglect and exploitation among the people of GB, who have historically been marginalized in decisions concerning their land and resources. For mining to truly bring prosperity, it is essential that policies ensure transparency, local participation, and a fair share of revenue for the region. Without such measures, GB's immense natural wealth risks being extracted for national gains while leaving its own people in poverty and disillusionment.

Water – The Lifeline of Pakistan

Gilgit-Baltistan serves as the lifeline of Pakistan's agriculture and economy, as

it is the primary source of the country's water. The mighty Indus River originates from Baltistan, flowing through the length of Pakistan before ending in Sindh, nourishing millions of acres of farmland along the way. In addition to the Indus, the region is home to hundreds of glaciers, high-altitude lakes, and towering peaks like K2, often referred to as "water towers," which feed the river systems that sustain the nation. Without the continuous flow of these waters, Pakistan's vast agricultural plains and food security would collapse. Despite this critical contribution, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan—the custodians of these natural water reservoirs—remain neglected and marginalized. While their resources serve the entire country, the region itself faces underdevelopment, unemployment, and inadequate access to basic services. The irony is that those who protect and preserve the very sources of Pakistan's survival are themselves left in the shadows, excluded from the benefits that their land provides to the nation.

For Pakistan to secure its water future and strengthen its agriculture, it is essential to recognize the pivotal role of Gilgit-Baltistan. Policies must be designed not only to protect these fragile ecosystems but also to empower the local communities through fair resource sharing, infrastructure development, and livelihood opportunities. Only then can the custodians of Pakistan's water towers step out of the darkness and share in the prosperity their homeland sustains for the entire country.

To ensure balanced development, the government must adopt inclusive trade policies that protect the rights of small traders, encourage local participation, and maintain border trade as a shared opportunity rather than a restricted monopoly.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/08/28/why-gilgit-baltistans-wealth-doesnt-reach-its-people/>

No end in sight to ordeal of GB's disaster-hit population

Dawn, 27 August 2025

The local pharmaceutical industry on Tuesday sent medicines to flood-hit Gilgit-Baltistan as thousands of residents remained without road access and shelter in the aftermath of floods that ravaged the mountainous region over the past weeks.

For more than five days, a majority of areas in the Ghizer district had been cut off after a glacial flood that created an artificial lake in the area, inundating a large portion of the Karakoram. Locals feared the lack of access and destruction of water channels would lead to a food crisis in their areas and urged the government to restore access as well as power.

Meanwhile, they started restoring the connecting road, blocked at several locations, on their own. The K2 Road, which connects remote villages in Shigar and the K2 basecamp, was also blocked.

A local, Muhammad Alam, told Dawn that flood-affected people in the Mashabrum sub-division of Ghanche district in Baltistan were currently

living under difficult circumstances. "Above 60 households...have taken shelter in tents...and are waiting for the government's assistance." Unfortunately, locals said, no concrete steps have been taken by the government.

Meanwhile, the GB government said the survivors, especially the children, the women and the elderly, were suffering from mental and psychological problems. Last week, spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said 39 people, including tourists, had been killed in floods since July. He added that these disasters have caused damage to the tune of Rs30 billion.

"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 destroyed and at least 600 houses had sustained partial damage, according to the spokesperson.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was scheduled to visit GB on Wednesday, and arrangements in this regard had been finalised by the regional administration. Sources said the prime minister would visit Ghizer's flood-affected areas to announce rehabilitation projects.

Separately, the medicine stocks were sent to the flood-hit areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, where outbreaks of water-borne and vector-borne diseases had left hundreds of people sick.

The cargo included antibiotics, anti-malarials, anti-diarrhoeals, antipyretics, analgesics, intravenous fluids, oral rehydration salts, antifungals, antiseptics, and respiratory medicines, alongside diagnostic kits, surgical items, and personal protective equipment.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1937524/no-end-in-sight-to-ordeal-of-gbs-disaster-hit-population>

G-B court stays federal advisor appointment

The Express Tribune, 28 August 2025

The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Court on Wednesday restrained the federal ombudsperson from appointing a regional advisor in the territory, observing that the matter requires detailed hearing.

The order came in response to a petition filed by the Gilgit-Baltistan Advocacy Forum (GBAF), a civil society platform, which challenged the extension of federal law to G-B when the region had already legislated on the subject.

The Forum argued that the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2013, passed by the G-B Assembly, provided the necessary framework, yet no provincial ombudsperson had been appointed over the past 12 years.

Despite repeated efforts to engage political leadership and the National Commission on the Status of Women, the Forum said its concerns were ignored, prompting it to move court. Counsel Muhammad Luqman, who

represented the petitioners, presented arguments before a divisional bench that subsequently admitted the case for regular hearing and issued an injunction against the appointment.

Calling the decision "encouraging," the Forum said the ruling would strengthen public confidence in the integrity of the provincial legislative assembly and empower local laws. "This is a milestone for the protection of human rights and regional autonomy in lawmaking," said spokesman Jubilee Hunzai, expressing gratitude to their counsel for pursuing the case pro bono.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2563652/g-b-court-stays-federal-advisor-appointment>

G-B govt urges unity as land dispute shadows flood crisis

The Express Tribune, 27 August 2025

A simmering land and boundary dispute between communities in Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) Ghizer and Diamer districts has resurfaced, coinciding with devastating floods that have already battered both regions.

Government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said on Tuesday that the administration is making "serious and effective efforts" to resolve the Singal Nallah boundary issue peacefully. He stressed that the Ghizer administration and police are handling the matter with professionalism and impartiality.

The writ of the state will not be compromised under any circumstances," he warned, while appealing to residents to remember their shared cultural, linguistic and

social bonds. He described Gilgit-Baltistan as "a bouquet of diverse flowers".

The situation grew tense on Monday when dozens of armed men were spotted in the disputed area, just a day after floods wreaked havoc across G-B. Ghizer and Diamer were reported to be among the worst-hit districts. Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan convened a high-level meeting to address the matter, while local peace committees and other stakeholders have also been engaged to de-escalate tensions.

To prevent violence, G-B Scouts have been deployed on both sides of the disputed boundary, with police and other security agencies providing additional support. "In a time when natural disasters have caused immense suffering, our duty is to share each other's pain and support flood victims," Faraq added. "Boundary disputes can be resolved through jirgas and negotiations at a later stage. Right now, the focus must remain on rehabilitation and solidarity."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2563444/g-b-govt-urges-unity-as-land-dispute-shadows-flood-crisis>

G-B CM terms Rs4b flood aid insufficient

The Express Tribune, 29 August 2025

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan on Thursday said Rs4 billion relief package announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was no longer sufficient, as fresh floods after the premier's recent visit caused further devastation across the region.

Speaking at a ceremony where compensation cheques were handed over to the families of flood victims, the chief minister lauded the premier's earlier visit to G-B and thanked him for announcing the relief package. However, he added that the situation has since worsened, with more villages hit and damages multiplying.

"The prime minister's support is commendable and we are grateful for his timely announcement of Rs4 billion," the chief minister said. "But after his visit, additional floods struck our communities, destroying homes, bridges and livelihoods. The losses now far exceed the announced assistance."

The event was also attended by Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and G-B Engineer Amir Muqam, and provincial cabinet members. Relatives of those who died in the floods were provided compensation cheques under the government's relief measures.

Muqam, who travelled through remote valleys on foot to meet the victims earlier the day, reiterated the government's solidarity with the people of G-B and pledged that further assistance would be mobilised.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2563874/g-b-cm-terms-rs4b-flood-aid-insufficient>

PML-N accuses PPP of opposing 'AJK's legitimate rights

Dawn, 29 August 2025

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) regional president Shah Ghulam Qadir on Thursday accused the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of consistently opposing the legitimate

rights of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), and cautioned that protest demonstrations would be held across the territory if the allied party's local leadership did not clarify its stance.

Addressing a large public meeting in Forward Kahuta, the district headquarters of Haveli, on the first death anniversary of party's senior leader and former minister Chaudhry Muhammad Aziz, the PML-N regional head said that in the past, when Wapda was asked to release 600 plus cusecs of water from Mangla Dam for the drinking and irrigation needs of Mirpur and Bhimber, then Sindh chief minister Qaim Ali Shah of PPP had openly opposed the demand.

"Now when the question of giving representation to 'AJK' and Gilgit-Baltistan in the National Finance Commission is raised, the PPP-led Sindh government writes letters opposing it," he said. "Because of PPP's resistance, we neither get our due share of water nor a place in the NFC. The party must answer to the Kashmiri people. "The PML-N leader urged 'AJK' youth not to "become pawns in others' hands," asserting that the existing political system was established with the sacrifices of their elders.

"Everything we have today is ours, and we cannot compromise on it. Anyone who dares to undermine 'AJK's political system will first be stopped by the PML-N," he declared. Referring to the arrest of a PML-N office bearer in Bagh, Mr Qadir cautioned the 'AJK' administration against "victimising" his party workers.

He also stressed that his party would not allow 'AJK's peaceful atmosphere to be disrupted, nor could the region afford any "ideological subversion." Expressing gratitude to the Pakistan Army, Mr Qadir said it was the armed forces that stood guard on the LoC for the protection of the Kashmiri people.

"Those who criticise the army were hiding in Islamabad during the war with India. We are indebted to our soldiers and will always stand with them," he remarked. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf told the gathering that the massive participation was a testimony to the people's love for both the late Chaudhry Aziz and the PML-N.

"Seeing this passion, I am convinced that the next government in 'AJK' will be of the PML-N, with Shah Ghulam Qadir as the prime minister," he said. He reminded the audience that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had already approved three Danish Schools for 'AJK' instead of one, and one more would soon be set up in Haveli.

He asserted that Nawaz Sharif had allocated funds for 'AJK' "that no one had given in the past," and that voting for PML-N would ensure even greater resources for development. The event also witnessed a lively moment when, on public demand, both Mr Yousaf and Mr Qadir made parts of their speeches in Gojri and Kashmiri languages, drawing thunderous applause from the audience.

Former federal minister Chaudhry Javed Latif, late leader's son Mohsin

Aziz and several other party leaders also addressed the gathering.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1938091/pml-n-accuses-ppp-of-opposing-ajks-legitimate-rights>

‘AJK’ assembly panel calls for foreign secretary’s support to highlight Kashmir issue

Dawn, 27 August 2025

A day after a special parliamentary committee of the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) Legislative Assembly deliberated on different ideas — including foreign tours by lawmakers — to “highlight the Kashmir issue at international forums,” its members called on Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch on Tuesday to apprise and seek support for their outreach plans.

Led by Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, who heads the special committee, the delegation comprised eight cabinet ministers from all three coalition partners, two legislators each from PTI and PML-N — including a former prime minister and the opposition leader — as well as two All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) representatives.

According to a press release by his office, Mr Akbar informed the foreign secretary that the committee had been tasked with preparing a concrete strategy to project the Kashmir cause globally. This, he said, included holding all-parties conferences in provincial capitals and seminars in Kashmiri refugee constituencies in Pakistan to forge unity and build international opinion for a settlement.

He added that MLAs and APHC representatives would also undertake visits abroad to counter India’s propaganda and present the Kashmiri perspective to the world. While reiterating appreciation for Pakistan’s political, diplomatic and moral support, Mr Akbar said the sacrifices of Kashmiri martyrs had kept the movement alive and no power could weaken the “eternal bond” between Kashmiris and Pakistan.

According to the press release, Ms Baloch assured the delegation of “full support” and said Pakistani diplomatic missions would provide complete facilitation for the committee’s planned overseas engagements. The meeting came a day after the committee’s sitting at Kashmir House, Islamabad, where members had considered a broader outreach plan, with foreign tours as one element.

Participants maintained that after the success of operation Bunyan-ul-Marsus, the Kashmir cause had attracted unprecedented global attention, with even the US President reportedly offering to mediate. In this backdrop, they agreed that the government, opposition, and APHC would jointly evolve a strategy to project the issue at national and international level “more effectively.”

However, the prospect of sending delegations abroad immediately drew scorn on social media, where users derided the move as ‘political tourism at taxpayers’ expense.’ There was hardly a single post or comment in favour of the initiative. Many users questioned whether ‘AJK’ and Pakistani lawmakers had the capacity

to present the case of Kashmiris convincingly in the face of language and knowledge barriers.

Hafsa Shah Masoodi, a PhD scholar specialising in peace and conflict studies with a focus on Kashmir, recalled a similar federal initiative launched after the 2016 killing of Burhan Wani, which, she said, “looked more like a lollipop handed out to political backbenchers with the weakest grasp of the Kashmir issue.”

“...These so-called delegations are nothing but joyrides at public expense. The tragedy is that those least acquainted with the nitty-gritty of the Kashmir issue claim to ‘project’ it abroad, while those who truly understand it are rarely given a seat at the table,” she remarked.

Kotli-based activist Abdul Qayyum Raja wrote: “How can those who have not yet understood the Kashmir issue themselves explain it to the outside world? Several legislators have publicly admitted they have neither studied the UN resolutions nor AJK’s Interim Constitution of 1974. All they know is which party to leave and which to join in every election.”

London-based businessman Habib Mir echoed similar sentiments: “If foreign trips by clueless lawmakers could resolve Kashmir, the dispute would have ended long ago. Unfortunately, those who truly understand its sensitivities are rarely consulted.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1937402/ajk-assembly-panel-calls-for-foreign-secretarys-support-to-highlight-kashmir-issue>

Two GB Scouts Martyred, One Injured in Hudor Check Post Attack near Chilas

Pamir Times, 29 August 2025

Unknown assailants opened fire on the GB Scouts 112 Wing check post at Hudor near Chilas on KKH, around 12:30 PM on Friday, taking advantage of the cover of darkness. According to official sources, the attackers fired from the mountain top, targeting the check post.

The firing left three personnel injured. Despite immediate medical assistance, Naib Subedar Khushdad, a resident of Nagar, who sustained a severe head injury, and Havaldar Ashraf, a resident of Shigar, who received multiple bullet wounds in the back, embraced martyrdom. Lance Naik Sajid from Gupis, Ghizer, suffered abdominal injuries and, after undergoing surgery, has been shifted to the Surgical ICU ward where his condition remains critical.

The Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts is a paramilitary force stationed in the region, primarily responsible for assisting the government in maintaining law and order. At the time of the incident, eight personnel were present at the Hudor check post, while one was away on weekend leave. Apart from the two martyrs and the injured soldier, five others remained unharmed.

Following the tragic attack, security forces immediately cordoned off the area and launched a large-scale search operation to trace the perpetrators. This check post was established after a deadly attack at the same location on 4

December 2023, when terrorists targeted a passenger bus, killing at least eleven people and injuring more than two dozen others.

Following the December 2023 Hudur bus attack, law enforcement agencies conducted an intelligence-based operation on 4 July 2024 in the Gumary Budan area of Darel Valley, during which a militant commander identified as Shah Faisal, allegedly the mastermind of the Hudur bus attack, was killed.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/08/29/two-gb-scouts-martyred-one-injured-in-hudor-check-post-attack-near-chilas/>

Martyrdom or Negligence: Preventing Avoidable Tragedies in Gilgit-Baltistan

Pamir Times, 29 August 2025

Climate change in Gilgit-Baltistan is not just an environmental challenge; it is a catalyst that exposes deep structural failures. Each year, floods, landslides, and glacier bursts claim lives and destroy livelihoods, yet governance gaps and systemic negligence persist. When young volunteers step in to mitigate these crises, their deaths are often framed as martyrdom, masking the preventable nature of these tragedies.

The repeated loss of young lives during community work is a tragedy we can no longer accept as inevitable. Just days ago, seven young men died in a landslide in Danyor while restoring a water channel, which is a heart-breaking testament to this grim reality. This tragedy echoes a similar incident in June 2023, when two volunteers lost their lives in a landslide during

community work in Aliabad, Hunza. My heart aches for them, and I do consider them martyrs for their selfless service, but for how long will we continue to repeat this pattern?

At the core of this issue is *rajaki*, an age-old tradition of collective action and self-help embedded in the region's social fabric. For centuries, it enabled communities to build and maintain critical infrastructure. It is a celebrated form of resilience in a challenging landscape. Today, however, this cherished tradition has become a necessity born out of systemic neglect. The volunteers in Danyor stepped in to restore the region's only major water supply after repeated appeals to the government went unanswered. It is a stark illustration of what happens when institutions fail.

The immediate response to such tragedies often frames the victims as *shaheed* (martyrs), a term meant to honor their sacrifice. High-level officials, including the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, have paid tribute to these volunteers, promising their sacrifices will be remembered. While honoring the dead is important, this narrative can create a moral shield for authorities, allowing them to avoid accountability. Moreover, framing preventable deaths as noble sacrifices shifts attention away from the failures that caused them. This shift is dangerous. Public anger, which should demand structural reform, is redirected toward sympathy and mourning. Conversations move from "Why wasn't this prevented, or why were these sacrifices necessary in the first place to "they died honorably," indirectly normalizing systemic

negligence. The uncritical use of the martyrdom narrative can perpetuate cycles of incompetence and corruption in disaster-prone areas like GB, where proactive infrastructure and timely government intervention could save lives. These deaths are not mere accidents; they are predictable outcomes of a governance system that is thin, reactive, and often absent when it is most needed. A stronger, more responsible approach is required. We must acknowledge the bravery of volunteers while simultaneously documenting the governance failures that led to their deaths. Incidents like these should be framed as preventable losses, keeping the focus on accountability and policy reform. Instead of risking the lives of our youth in tasks that require technical expertise and safety protocols, we must hold authorities responsible for fulfilling their duties. Honoring the dead must go hand in hand with preventing future tragedies, transforming grief into action rather than resignation.

So, to prevent further tragedies in the region, communities should shift from reactive labor to sustained advocacy targeting government bodies responsible for their safety. At the district level, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Assistant Commissioner (AC) oversee the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), which coordinates local disaster management. Communities should formally submit requests for pre-disaster risk assessments, preventive infrastructure, and utility repairs, keeping a record of responses or inaction. Similarly, at the regional level, the Gilgit-Baltistan

Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) implements disaster policies and monitors district plans. The locals or their representatives should lobby the GBDMA to ensure these plans are created and executed, questioning budget allocations for disaster risk reduction and fund usage. While at the federal level, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) sets policy and provides technical support. Media, civil society engagement, and even social media influencers from the region can highlight gaps in protection, creating top-down pressure on GBDMA and district authorities. Instead of risking lives, form community-based disaster committees focused on advocacy. Regular meetings with ACs and DCs, presenting documented concerns and demanding access to official plans, can shift responsibility from volunteer laborers to the government agencies mandated to safeguard the population.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/08/29/martyrdom-or-negligence/>

Strike observed in GB to back traders' protest in Sost

Dawn, 30 August 2025

A shutter-down strike was observed in various parts of Gilgit-Baltistan to express solidarity with protesting traders of Sost who have been staging a protest sit-in, blocking the Karakoram High-way for the last 40 days for acceptance of their demands. The protest has led to the suspension of trade activities between China and Pakistan.

The traders have been demanding what the GB cabinet had suggested to the

federal cabinet. The GB cabinet asked the federal government to declare GB a non-tariff area and exempt the people of GB from collection of sales tax and income tax on goods being imported from China and ensure speedy clearance of consignments at Sost Dry Port under the amnesty scheme announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

On the call of Anjuman Tajiran of GB, the shutter-down strike was observed in Hunza, Nagar, Ghanche, Gilgit and Skardu. All markets, shops and business centres remained closed in these areas. Speaking at a press conference after the GB cabinet meeting, Special Assistant to CM on Commerce Muhammad Ali Quaid, along with GB home minister Shams Lone and others said the GB cabinet discussed traders' protest.

During a recent visit to GB, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had announced one-time amnesty scheme for stuck-up consignments imported from China stuck at Sost Dry Port and constituted a committee led by Awais Leghari to settle the issue. The committee sought recommendations from the GB government to resolve the issue.

Muhammad Ali Quaid said that GB traders and local residents have been demanding exemption of Sales Tax, Income Tax on items imported from China through Khunjerab Pass. He said this is not only the demand of the GB traders but also the demand of the GB people, adding that collection of federal taxes from the region is illegal as the status of the region has not been

decided by the federal government so far.

He said last year, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) had issued an SRO 1193 which already declared GB a non-tariff area and the GB government recommended the committee constituted by the prime minister to declare GB a non-tariff area and exempt its people from income tax and sales tax. The special assistant said the GB cabinet also asked the committee to remove SRO 499 under which cases were registered on goods imported from China.

The GB cabinet also recommended the speedy clearance of the consignments stuck-up the port for the last 10 months and removal of cases registered against traders. Speaking at a press conference in Sost, Pak-China Tajir Etihad Action Committee leaders said the peaceful protest movement of traders would continue till the acceptance of their demands. They said that economic exploitation of the GB people would not be accepted.

They said that over 200 consignments of goods were stuck at the Sost Dry Port and several of them have expired and damaged due to rains as the goods have been kept in the open area of the port. Besides, they said, port charges and other expenditures on them were increasing daily, causing losses of billions of rupees to GB traders.

Despite the sit-in on the highway, protesters are allowing passengers travelling between Pakistan and China through the Khunjerab Pass, but they have blocked all kinds of business transportation.

The opposition has appealed to the federal government to settle the issue before it expands to other areas. Abbas Mir, one of the organisers, said the protesters would welcome any development at the GB and federal levels regarding the settlement of the issue.

He said collection of taxes from the GB region was illegal and unconstitutional adding that the people's demand was clear is: "No taxation without representation". He said the GB had been deprived of its economic rights after the closure of business activities between Pakistan and China through the Khunjerab Pass.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1938327/strike-observed-in-gb-to-back-traders-protest-in-sost>

II-Economic Developments

Tourism in GB drops 90pc amid climate disasters, conflicts

Dawn, 31 August 2025

Unprecedented climate disasters and other factors have caused a sharp decline in both foreign and domestic tourist arrivals to Gilgit-Baltistan this year, badly affecting the local economy.

Officials said that international conflicts, natural calamities and other issues resulted in a 90 per cent drop in tourism across the region. Sajid Hussain, assistant director at the GB Tourism Department, said that only 270 international climbers arrived in GB this year to attempt peaks, including K2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum-I, Gasherbrum-II and Nanga Parbat, as compared to more

than 2,000 foreign climbers and trekkers who visited the region last year.

He said that most climbers returned without success due to extreme weather conditions at the peaks. Rockfalls, avalanches and high winds forced many to abandon their attempts and remain at base camps before heading back to their countries.

According to the department, only 40 climbers summited K2, 25 reached Nanga Parbat and about a dozen summited Gasherbrum-I this season. Iqbal Hussain, director at the GB Tourism Department, told Dawn that last year 24,000 foreign tourists without permits visited GB, along with one million domestic tourists. This year, he said, the situation is alarming as tourist arrivals — both international and domestic — have declined by 90pc.

Asghar Ali Porik, a tour operator, said several factors contributed to the sharp decline in foreign adventure tourists. "The legal battle between the GB Tourism Department and tour operators over the hike in permit fees, the Iran-Israel conflict, tensions between Pakistan and India, and unpredictable weather conditions at peaks compelled many foreign climbers and trekkers to cancel their plans," he added.

A tea stall owner on the Karakoram Highway said that the tourism season usually runs from May to October. "I have never experienced such a situation where you can go the whole day without a single client and return home empty-handed," he said.

Like him, hotel owners, shopkeepers, transporters, porters and tour operators are also facing financial losses. Haider Abbas, owner of Gilgit Looms, said his business had also been badly affected, adding that he had invested billions of rupees, but now found it difficult to pay shop rent and salaries.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1938538/tourism-in-gb-drops-90pc-amid-climate-disasters-conflicts>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Monsoon Rains and Floods Damage 169 Schools, 1809 Houses in 'Azad Kashmir'

Urdu Point, 28 August 2025

Monsoon rains and flooding in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' have caused damage to 169 schools and 1809 houses. According to the SDMA report, 27 people have lost their lives and 29 others have been injured due to the monsoon rains in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'.

Landslides and flash floods in rivers and streams have completely destroyed 303 houses, partially damaged 1809 houses, demolished 59 shops, and killed 237 livestock. Additionally, 17 watermills were swept away by floodwaters. The flooding also washed away 15 vehicles and 33 connecting bridges in various areas, damaged 169 schools, and affected 200 kilometers of roads. According to SDMA, the weather has cleared up in various areas of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', with pleasant weather prevailing in the mornings and

evenings. The intensity of heat has started to subside in both upper and lower regions.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4533685.html>

Chief-Minister GB terms attack on Gilgit Scouts a coward act

Urdu Point, 29 August 2025

Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan has strongly condemned the firing incident on GB Scouts by terrorists, terming it a cowardly act. He has taken strict notice and directed the Provincial Home Secretary to submit a report on the incident within 48 hours, issuing clear instructions to bring the terrorists to justice.

The Chief Minister stated that those who challenge the state's authority will not be spared. Paying tribute to the GB Scouts personnel martyred in the incident, he said the entire nation salutes their sacrifice for the region's development and peace. He prayed for the martyrs' elevated ranks and expressed heartfelt condolences to their families.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4534513.html>

IV-Social Media

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

29 August 2025

A subedar and a sergeant of the Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts were martyred, while another soldier was injured when terrorists opened fire on their checkpoint along the Karakoram

Highway (KKH) in Diamer district on Friday morning, officials said

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1961310616502899190>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

28 August 2025

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan love Pakistan deeply, and we will resolve all the issues here, says Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, Amir Muqam.

Link to the video:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1961094338059907460>

PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes

26 August 2025

In Pictures: The Human and Environmental Toll of the Taalidas Flood

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/08/26/in-pictures-the-human-and-environmental-toll-of-the-taalidas-flood/> #taalidas #Ghizer #Gupis #Pakistan #GilgitBaltistan

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1960172653505130660>

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 5 | Issue 35

25 August - 31 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; Email: pokdigest@gmail.com