

# Weekly POK News Digest

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

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## **Political Developments**

### **Pakistan's historic victory inspires new spirit across Muslim World: Altaf Ahmed Bhat**

*Daily Parliament Times, 16 September 2025*

Senior leader of All Parties Hurriyat Conference and Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement Altaf Ahmed Bhat, has said that Pakistan's recent victory over India has reshaped the global political and diplomatic landscape and injected a renewed sense of spirit and determination within the Muslim world. Speaking with Sardar Zubair Khan, leader of Voices for Justice USA, and Professor Sardar Waris, Bhat described the outcome as a "message of hope and courage" for the people of 'Occupied Jammu and Kashmir'. He said that after decades of living under Indian oppression, Kashmiris are now more determined than ever to achieve freedom and the right to self-determination.

Bhat stressed that Pakistan must play a decisive leadership role by forcefully advocating the Kashmir cause at international forums to build global pressure on India. He praised the efforts of the overseas Kashmiri and Pakistani diaspora, calling them "true ambassadors of the freedom movement," who have actively raised the issue in world institutions, human rights bodies, and parliaments.

"The Kashmir cause is not just the struggle of Kashmiris but of the entire Muslim Ummah," he said, urging unity and solidarity to send a clear message that the people of Kashmir will never abandon their right to freedom. On the same occasion, Sardar Zubair Khan reaffirmed that efforts abroad will be intensified to amplify the voice of the Kashmiri people. He highlighted the crucial role being played by the diaspora in lobbying, media campaigns, and legal advocacy at the international level.

Khan said Pakistan's victory had "shaken India from within" and warned that Indian intransigence cannot endure. "No matter how long the night of tyranny, the dawn of freedom will surely rise," he added. Paying tribute to the sacrifices of the Pakistan Army, he stressed that attempts to weaken Pakistan were, in reality, attempts to undermine the Kashmir freedom movement.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/09/16/pakistans-historic-victory-inspires-new-spirit-across-muslim-world-ataf-ahmed-bhat/>

### **JKLF delegation calls on representative of Congressman Blake Moore, Reuben Mendenhall**

*Daily Parliament Times, 16 September 2025*

In the U.S. state of Utah, a delegation of the Jammu & Kashmir community, led by Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leader Sardar Anwar, along with Javed Nasir, Irfan Aziz, and Saud

Ashraf, met with the representative of Congressman Blake Moore, Reuben Mendenhall. The meeting was also joined by political analyst Mr. Martin Giebitz and social leader as well as community interlocutor Te Anu Tonga and Sikh leader Harbijander Singh.

The delegation briefed them on the threats to the life of Yasin Malik, the imprisoned Chairman of JKLF and symbol of resistance, who is currently jailed in Delhi's Tihar prison. They explained how the fascist Modi government, through fake cases and political vendetta, is planning to impose the death penalty on Yasin Malik. A written letter was also presented to Congressman Blake Moore, appealing that he raise his voice in the U.S. Congress and at global human rights forums to ensure the protection of Yasin Malik's life and for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue.

While giving the briefing, Sardar Anwar informed them that the most popular Kashmiri leader, Yasin Malik, has dedicated his life to the freedom of his people. Over the years, he has engaged with Indian Prime Ministers, political leaders, intellectuals, Pakistani Prime Ministers, politicians, and thinkers, as well as ambassadors from different countries. During his 2001 U.S. visit, he met with American officials, think tanks, policymakers, and human rights representatives, urging them to help resolve the Kashmir issue peacefully in line with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Sardar Anwar emphasized that Yasin Malik is not only the voice of the people of Jammu & Kashmir but also a messenger of peace in South Asia. He added that an independent and sovereign Jammu & Kashmir could serve as a bridge of friendship, peace, and trade between India, Pakistan, and China, and has the potential to become the "Switzerland" of the world for tourism and commerce.

In response, Mr. Reuben Mendenhall promised that he would not only deliver the letter to Congressman Blake Moore but also continue holding such meetings and actively participate in the political and social activities of the Jammu & Kashmir community in Utah.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/09/16/jklf-delegation-calls-on-representative-of-congressman-blake-moore-reuben-mendenhall/>

### **NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq slams Indian brutality in 'IIOJK'**

*The Nation, 17 September 2025*

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has strongly condemned India's actions in 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK), terming them "brutal water aggression" and "serious human rights violations".

He was speaking to a delegation led by 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar. The delegation included 'AJK' Legislative Assembly members Raja Farooq Haider Khan, Ahmad Raza Qadri, and Dewan Ali Chughtai.

The Speaker emphasized that resolving parliamentarians' issues without discrimination remains his top priority. Parliament has consistently highlighted the Kashmir issue across all regional and international forums.

He affirmed that all members of the House are equal in his eyes. He noted that during the first 3.5 years of the 15th National Assembly, no production orders were issued against any member. As custodian of the 16th National Assembly, he reiterated his commitment to safeguarding the rights of all parliamentarians. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and property caused by recent floods in 'Azad Kashmir'. He reaffirmed the unwavering solidarity between the people of Pakistan and 'Azad Kashmir', and reiterated his commitment to raising the Kashmir issue across regional and international platforms.

Speaking on the occasion, 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar warned that glacier melt in 'Azad Kashmir' poses a serious risk of flash flooding due to climate change, with severe impacts on Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir. He also expressed solidarity with the flood-affected communities in Punjab.

Chaudhry Latif Akbar lauded National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for his contributions to strengthening parliamentary diplomacy and enhancing collaboration among the

country's legislative institutions. He also emphasized the immense potential for tourism development in 'Azad Kashmir'. Additionally, Chaudhry Latif Akbar hailed the Pakistan Army's success on May 10 as a landmark military and diplomatic victory. He emphasized the need for joint efforts by legislators from Pakistan and 'Azad Kashmir' to globally highlight the Kashmir issue.

He noted that members of the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly have been actively raising international awareness, and stressed that lasting peace in the region is impossible without a just resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Speaker Latif Akbar called for intensified global advocacy and praised the steadfast support of the Pakistani government and people for the Kashmir cause.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/17-Sep-2025/na-speaker-ayaz-sadiq-slams-indian-brutality-in-ijok>

### **Prisoner System of Pakistan**

*Pamir Times, 17 September 2025*

Pakistan is currently grappling with a severe crisis in crime and justice. Crime is widespread across the country, placing immense pressure on the already overburdened prisons of Pakistan. On average, prisons in Pakistan are working at 152.2% overcapacity. The overcrowding is mainly due to a poor bail system and a slow justice system, where an inmate may have to spend years in jail awaiting their trial. As a result, under-

trial prisoners constitute 73.41% of the total prison population nationwide. The country's prison system remains under immense pressure.

However, Gilgit-Baltistan stands as an exception. GB has the lowest number of prisoners of any other part of the country. According to a joint report published by the National Commission for Human Rights, National Academy for Prison Administration, and Justice Project Pakistan, there were a total of 372 prisoners spread across 5 prisons in GB. On average, each prison holds about 74 inmates, which is significantly lower than other parts of the country, like Punjab, where the average is 1,428 prisoners per prison. The five prisons in GB are namely District Jail Gilgit, District Jail Ghizer, District Jail Skardu, District Jail Diamer, and Gahkuch Jail. Among the 372 prisoners, only 3 are women—the lowest number of female inmates in any region of Pakistan—and 15 are juveniles.

The small prison population in GB is not solely due to its lower overall population. GB also boasts the highest literacy rates in Pakistan. A shared cultural heritage has nurtured strong relations, fostering a strong sense of community and a deep sense of mutual responsibility. This leads community members to care for and look after one another while avoiding things that may harm their community. This communal spirit leads people to resolve conflicts through dialogue rather than violence and deters actions that could harm the community.

This culture of brotherhood has left little room for criminal activities and has long contributed to peace and order in the region. However, lately, there has been a rise in crime rates, an alarming situation for the region's long-standing law and order. Due to limited information, it is difficult to ascertain the exact condition of the prisons. Nevertheless, some key reforms are needed. There should be a different prison or facility only for women and juveniles. The focus should be on making jails rehabilitation centers, not just places to hold prisoners. For this, vocational training and educational programs should be organized in each jail, classes on morality should be held, and prisons should collaborate with the social welfare department and NGOs to ensure the swift reintegration of prisoners into society. All the prisons fall short of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, a universally acknowledged blueprint for prison management. The government of GB should ensure that all its prisons comply with the Mandela Rules. Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on crime prevention, building systems that address the root causes of crime before they manifest into criminal acts.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/09/17/prison-system-of-gilgit-baltistan/>



**India is in a state of shock suffering convincing defeat in retaliatory 'Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos': 'AJK' APC**

*Daily Parliament Times, 17 September 2025*

India is in a state of shock after the success of Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos. This successful operation has boosted the morale of those associated with the Kashmir freedom movement and has given the Kashmir issue a new lease of life in the global arena", official sources said.

This was unanimously stated in a joint declaration passed in an All Parties Conference (APC) was held at Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis on Wednesday with Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq in the chair, says an 'AJK' government handout issued late Wednesday.

At a press briefing after the APC, former Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan read out the joint declaration to the media. The declaration stated that India was in a state of shock after the success of Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos. This successful operation has boosted the morale of those associated with the Kashmir freedom movement and has given the Kashmir issue a new lease of life in the global arena," he said. "In a bid to hide its fiasco, India was shamelessly hatching conspiracies to destabilize 'Azad Kashmir' and create unrest, as it has done in Balochistan", Khan said.

"The entire political leadership of 'Azad Kashmir' fully supports the ongoing freedom movement in 'occupied Kashmir' and stands shoulder to shoulder with their brethren in 'occupied Kashmir' in their just struggle for the right to self-determination," the declaration added. Referring to the cipher that has recently come to light, he said it was yet another proof of India's involvement in worsening the situation in 'Azad Kashmir'. Waving the cipher during the press conference, the former Prime Minister said all political parties strongly condemned this heinous conspiracy and reiterated their resolve to resist any attempt to destabilize 'Azad Kashmir'.

He added that all political parties would continue their efforts in the public interest and to resolve the problems of the people. "No other forum or pressure group, which comes into existence as a result of India's facilitation, will be allowed to make decisions in the streets," he warned. The APC also decided that from September 21 onwards, all political parties will launch a public relations campaign to express solidarity with the people of 'occupied Kashmir' and with the armed forces of Pakistan.

The first public meeting will be held on Sunday, September 21, in Rawalakot, followed by one in Pir Bagh on September 22, where leaders of all political parties will address. Speaking on the occasion, former Prime Minister Sardar Atiq Khan said all institutions

established in 'Azad Kashmir' were the achievement of national leaders and political leadership. People's Party 'Azad Kashmir' President Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin said, "We all agree that no one can be allowed to undermine our sacrifices.

This cipher is clear evidence of India's attempt to destabilize 'Azad Kashmir'. Former Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas remarked, "The emergence of this cipher is alarming. Our eternal enemy is involved in destabilizing this base camp." He added that the biggest constitutional forum of 'Azad Kashmir' is the Legislative Assembly, followed by local bodies. "The construction and development in 'Azad Kashmir' has been carried out by political parties. People should understand that they must not play into the hands of miscreants, and we will not allow the freedom movement to be harmed," he said.

PML-N President Shah Ghulam Qadir said that while political manifestos differ, all parties are united on the identity of the state. "We will launch the public relations campaign together," he affirmed. Jammu and Kashmir People's Party President Sardar Hassan Ibrahim said that the cipher exposed a dirty game. "We are united for the state of Pakistan. These facts have been presented to the people, and they must decide for themselves," he said. Jamaat-e-Muslimeen 'Azad Kashmir' President Syed Yasir Abbas Sabzwari added, "We must respond to

India together, just as we defeated it in Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/09/17/pm-ajk-ch-anwarul-haq-chairs-an-all-parties-conference/>

### **'AJK' Assembly warns 'anarchist groups' against undermining Constitution**

*Dawn, 19 September 2025*

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Legislative Assembly warned that, as custodian of the legal and constitutional rights of the Kashmiri people, it would crush any attempt by disruptive elements to undermine the state's Constitution. "The house stands firmly behind the government in thwarting every conspiracy to dissolve the geographical, constitutional and political setup of the liberated territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and reiterates its resolve that the people will not be left at the mercy of anarchist groups," said a resolution, moved jointly by regional heads of PPP, PML-N and Muslim Conference, along with eight cabinet members from PPP, PML-N and PTI 'forward bloc'.

The session, convened after a gap of more than 40 days, was presided over by Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar. From the six-member opposition, PTI's Hamid Raza and Jammu Kashmir People's Party's sole lawmaker and its regional head, Sardar Hassan Ibrahim, attended the session.

The resolution endorsed Tuesday's declaration adopted at a multi-party



conference in Kashmir House in response to the strike call by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC), though it referred to the body only as a “pressure group” without naming it directly.

However, Mr Ibrahim objected to the third and fifth paragraphs after Raja Farooq Haider, also among the movers, had completed its reading. Those paragraphs suggested that any forum or pressure group formed with India’s facilitation would be denied a role in decisions concerning public interest, and that the assembly fully reposed its trust in the ‘AJK’ cabinet and in the steps the ‘AJK’ and federal governments might take to maintain peace and curb provocation.

Mr Ibrahim argued that while subversive elements existed within the civil society alliance, branding the entire platform as an Indian creation was unjust. He recalled that the treasury had agreed to revise the contentious clauses, failing which he would not support the resolution. The chair then allowed him to read out amended paragraphs, which stated: “Any attempt to disturb the atmosphere in ‘Azad Kashmir’ through any covert or overt support from India will be vigorously resisted. This house demands that the government exercise its constitutional and legal powers to take necessary measures for the restoration of law and order.” The revised version was unanimously approved.

In another unanimously passed resolution, PPP regional president Chaudhry Yasin said the ‘AJK’ legislature would not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law. “This house is the supreme institution, enjoying sole rights of legislation in the interest of the state and its people. Anarchy is being spread under a conspiracy in this peaceful and sensitive region. This house assures that neither the state nor its people will be left at the mercy of mobs, and that constitutional rule will be ensured at all costs,” it read.

The assembly also adopted a resolution moved by Minister for Mangla Dam Affairs Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, paying tribute to the late All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader Abdul Ghani Bhat, who passed away in ‘occupied Kashmir’ the other day. The house offered Fateha for him and other martyrs from armed forces as well as those who lost lives in recent floods.

Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq and PML-N regional president Shah Ghulam Qadir, speaking on the floor, congratulated the government of Pakistan for its defence pact with Saudi Arabia, saying it would go a long way in ensuring regional peace and stability and serve as a deterrence against Israel and India.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1943032/ajk-assembly-warns-anarchist-groups-against-undermining-constitution>

## **‘AJK’ Govt. devises integrated strategy to frustrate Sept 29 JK JAAC’s lock-down call in the State**

*Daily Parliament Times, 18 September 2025*

Azad Jammu Kashmir government has devised an integrated strategy to frustrate the reported scheduled September 29 lock-down call given by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee in Azad Jammu Kashmir, in support of their 38-point charter of demands, official sources said.

“It has been decided to deal strictly with those who use to openly challenge the government writ by blocking the roads and streets, spreading provocation, and hurling sticks on the social media since past some days”, the sources told our Special Jammu Kashmir state Correspondent Altaf Hamid Rao here on Thursday.

According to the sources, the Azad Jammu Kashmir government, in a high-level meeting, took strict notice of the call for lockdown by the Joint Awami Action Committee and the announcements to close the means of communication including major and link roads and bridges connecting Azad Jammu Kashmir with Pakistan and decided to take stringent action against such elements to be found involved in creating law and order situation.

Meanwhile sources revealed that the AJK government will keep the doors of

negotiations open at all times on the Charter of demands issued by the leaders of the Joint Awami Action Committee. “However, those challenging the state writ voicing threatening messages and hurling sticks against the state institutions on social media, will be dealt with an iron hand, the sources concluded.

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2025/09/18/la-ajk-appreciates-the-signing-of-a-historic-defense-agreement-between-pakistan-and-saudi-arabia/>

## **No power in the world can separate Pakistan and Kashmir: DG ISPR**

*The Nation, 18 September 2025*

Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, held a special interactive session with students and faculty members from various educational institutions of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK).

According to a press release issued by ISPR, participants included students and faculty from Khan Muhammad Khan Postgraduate College, Mirpur University of Science and Technology, and Government Postgraduate College for Girls.

During the session, the students and faculty congratulated the Pakistan Army on the success of Operation Bunyan al-Marsus. Expressing unwavering support, they affirmed their solidarity with the Pakistan Army, declaring that they are ready to lay down their lives if needed. “No

power in the world can separate Pakistan and Kashmir,” they asserted.

The teachers also emphasized that Pakistan has emerged as a stabilizing force in the region.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Sep-2025/no-power-in-the-world-can-separate-pakistan-and-kashmir-dg-ispr>

### **‘AJK’ action committee slams govt over lack of seriousness in talks**

*Dawn, 21 September 2025*

A civil society alliance in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK), spearheading a rights movement, has alleged that the Pakistan government had offered it talks to resolve issues, but showed no seriousness in pursuing the offer.

In a statement issued after a meeting of its core members at an “unspecified location” on Saturday, the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC) said it had formed a negotiation committee after Islamabad sought a written invitation to initiate meaningful dialogue. However, it alleged that the federal government took no serious steps while the ‘AJK’ government, in the presence of all political parties, levelled “new and baseless allegations” against JKJAAC, thereby “sabotaging the process once again”.

In a video message, Sardar Umar Nazir Kashmiri, a core committee member from Rawalakot, is seen reading out the declaration at the meeting in which he asked the people of ‘Azad Kashmir’ to

make preparations for the upcoming “protest lockdown” on September 29.

Paying tribute to overseas Kashmiris for their “vibrant role” in the movement, the JKJAAC has appealed to international media, human rights groups and observer organisations to monitor its “peaceful movement and the September 29 lockdown”. It also sought support from the people of Pakistan, lawyers, students, and civil society, maintaining that “the privileged ruling classes” were the root cause of problems for both Pakistanis and Kashmiris.

The JKJAAC “condemned” the AJK government for accusing the alliance of receiving Indian funding and criticised it for not implementing the previous two agreements with the committee.

The major demand of the JKJAAC reportedly is the abolition of 12 legislative assembly seats reserved for refugees from ‘Indian-occupied’ Jammu and Kashmir settled in Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1943470/ajk-action-committee-slams-govt-over-lack-of-seriousness-in-talks>

### **Study exposes media freedom challenges in ‘AJK’**

*Dawn, 19 September 2025*

Journalism in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) remains under severe strain due to censorship, harassment, legal curbs, and systemic shortcomings, according to a new

research report released by a Pakistan-based media and development sector watchdog on Thursday.

Titled “Journalism in ‘Azad Jammu & Kashmir’: state of media freedom, access to information and safety of journalists and other Media professionals – way forward,” the study was launched by Freedom Network in Muzaffarabad in collaboration with the central press club, with technical support from International Media Support (IMS).

Painting a bleak picture of working conditions for media professionals in the region, the report noted that threats to free speech in ‘AJK’ stemmed from multiple quarters, including government authorities, caste-based structures, extremist groups and organised crime.

Journalists, it added, faced pressure from political actors, business elites and mafias, while digital reporters in particular were vulnerable as many operate without editorial guidance and take unnecessary risks.

“Media is facing severe limitations, including financial constraints, bureaucratic controls and safety concerns,” Freedom Network Executive Director Iqbal Khattak said at the launch.

“But the rise of native digital journalism is a new discovery, and I hope this report provides food for thought for stakeholders to work jointly on solutions.” The study

pointed out that many journalists were either unpaid or underpaid, with low wages, poor service structures and little professional support.

In the absence of industry regulations, media workers often relied on their organisations to pressure advertisers for revenue, further undermining independence.

While the Sindh province and federal government have enacted protective laws, ‘AJK’ was devoid of any such framework, leaving media workers to navigate hostile environments on their own.

This lack of legal safeguards, the report said, was reflected in frequent harassment, intimidation and threats against journalists.

It said that censorship in ‘AJK’ manifested in multiple ways, including direct restrictions, self-censorship and digital silencing. A broadened legal definition of “community” allowed authorities to criminalise criticism of government institutions, with punishments of up to seven years’ imprisonment. The report also highlighted poor gender representation, with only five women journalists in ‘AJK’, of whom just three are Press Club members.

At the same time, digital platforms were rapidly reshaping the media landscape, though algorithms on social media were said to favour Indian narratives and suppress Kashmiri voices.

Among its recommendations, Freedom Network called for institutional support, improved legal protections, stronger advocacy for media rights, gender sensitisation, right-to-information reforms, and capacity building for digital media practitioners.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1943124/study-exposes-media-freedom-challenges-in-ajk>

## **Economic Developments**

### **Deadlock persists on GB traders' demand for tax exemptions**

*Dawn, 17 September 2025*

The prime minister's 22-member committee failed on Tuesday to reach consensus on recommendations for resolving grievances of Gilgit-Baltistan's traders, with the matter deferred to another meeting scheduled for Wednesday. The committee, formed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to address concerns over taxes and clearance of consignments imported from China via the Khunjerab Pass, met in Islamabad under the chairmanship of Federal Energy Minister Awais Leghari. It was the body's fourth meeting. The session was attended by federal ministers Rana Sanaullah and Amir Muqam, Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, GB Assembly member Amjad Hussain Advocate, and representatives from the NLC, FBR, MI, IB, FIA and ISI.

### **Tax-free zone**

Sources said the GB chief minister and Amjad Hussain Advocate pressed for declaring Gilgit-Baltistan a tax-free zone and allowing residents to import unlimited items from China for local consumption. Mr Khan argued that as GB was a non-tariff area, the collection of federal taxes was unjustified. However, Senator Mandviwalla opposed the proposal for unlimited imports, while objections were also raised over the mechanism to exempt GB residents from income tax and other federal levies. Mr Hussain told Dawn that committee members from GB also sought urgent clearance of consignments stuck at Sost Dry Port for the past 10 months, which have caused traders billions in losses.

The meeting ended in deadlock over the mechanism for imports and exemptions. Sources said the committee would reconvene in Islamabad on Wednesday (today) to try to bridge differences and present unified recommendations to the prime minister. Earlier, the GB cabinet, after consultations with protesting traders, submitted proposals recommending that prior permission from the GB government be mandatory for imports intended for local consumption. It also called for reassessment of perishable goods stuck at Sost to allow depreciation relief under the prime minister's amnesty scheme.

The cabinet also suggested exempting local traders from all federal taxes —



including income tax, sales tax, federal excise duty and regulatory duty — on goods sold in GB markets, but imposing full duties and taxes on consignments transported outside the region. Meanwhile, opposition members in the GB Assembly staged a walkout on Monday after their resolution on traders' issues was not tabled despite being on the agenda. The resolution demanded that GB be declared a tax-free zone. Speaker Nazir Ahmed said the quorum had not been met, prompting members to stage a walkout in protest.

### **Sit-in enters 50th day**

At Sost, traders' sit-in entered its 50th consecutive day on Monday, blocking the Karakoram Highway and suspending cross-border trade with China. Immigration offices and border entry and exit points also remained closed. The blockade has stranded hundreds, including Chinese nationals, foreign tourists and Pakistani students enrolled in Chinese universities. Although immigration was briefly opened on Thursday, it was closed again the next day.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1942538/deadlock-persists-on-gb-traders-demand-for-tax-exemptions>

### **Gilgit-Baltistan's Tax Protests: A Crisis of Trade, Trust, And Representation**

*Friday Times, 20 September 2025*

The inconclusive meeting of the federal committee on 16 September has once again exposed Islamabad's inability to

decisively resolve the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) growing trade crisis. For over two months, local traders have staged a sit-in at the Sost Dry Port, blocking cross-border trade and travel with China. Over 200 containers remain stranded, some carrying goods that have already perished. Each passing day adds to demurrage costs, deepens local resentment, and undermines confidence in Pakistan's ability to govern one of its most strategically sensitive regions.

At first glance, the dispute seems to revolve around customs duties and taxes. The Federal Board of Revenue's decision to impose sales tax, income tax, excise duty, and withholding levies on goods imported via Khunjerab Pass is the immediate cause. But the issue goes far beyond tariffs. The protests have taken on a political character, with the rallying cry of "No Taxation without Representation" resonating across the mountainous region.

For GB's people, the contradiction is glaring. How can a region with no seats in Pakistan's National Assembly or Senate be asked to pay federal taxes? The answer lies in decades of neglect, ambiguity, and political exclusion. The imposition of taxes has simply brought these contradictions to the surface.

### **Economic Desperation**

Gilgit-Baltistan's economy is fragile at the best of times. With limited industrial development, the region has historically relied on small-scale cross-



border trade, subsistence agriculture, and a modest tourism sector. Families have long sustained themselves by importing consumer goods from China—cloth, pottery, stationery—and selling them locally or in markets further south. For many, this trade was the only viable means of survival in a remote region with limited opportunities.

Tourism offered another lifeline. The spectacular Karakoram and Himalayan ranges drew climbers and trekkers from around the world, while domestic visitors increasingly flocked to Hunza and Skardu. Yet even here, GB's residents often found themselves sidelined. Hotels, prime land, and tourism ventures were gradually acquired by investors from outside the region, leaving locals with few ways to benefit from their own natural assets.

The imposition of federal taxes has squeezed these fragile livelihoods further. Import costs have risen, margins have shrunk, and young people face even fewer options for employment. For many educated youth, migration to big cities or abroad has become the only realistic path to a future.

This explains why the protests enjoy mass backing. They are not confined to traders alone but are supported by civil society groups, opposition parties, religious organisations, and ordinary residents. The sit-in at Sost has grown into a broader expression of disenchantment with the state.

The blockade has already had ripple effects. Tourism has been disrupted. Pakistani students studying in China have faced difficulties in crossing the border. Chinese nationals and traders have been stranded, sparking concern in Xinjiang. What began as a local protest is now affecting bilateral flows of people and goods. The economic costs are rising by the day. The political costs may prove even higher.

### **Unavoidable Choices**

The sit-in at Sost cannot be dismissed as a passing disturbance. It strikes at the heart of Pakistan's Kashmir policy and its economic partnership with China. Successive governments have avoided granting GB full provincial status, citing the unresolved nature of the Kashmir dispute. But for GB residents, this has meant permanent limbo, excluded from federal decision-making, denied representation in parliament, and deprived of a fair share in national resources.

Over the years, Pakistan has experimented with limited reforms in GB. Local assemblies were introduced. Administrative powers were devolved on paper. Yet none of these changes resolved the underlying problem: lack of real authority and representation. For residents, the reality remains the same: their voices carry little weight in Islamabad, and their economic grievances remain unaddressed.

The current protests make clear that piecemeal reforms are no longer

enough. GB's people are distinct in culture, geography, and history. They see themselves as having chosen Pakistan voluntarily at its inception, and resent being treated as a bargaining chip in a dispute elsewhere.

From Islamabad's perspective, the trade protest has now become too costly to ignore. The Khunjerab Pass is not only the gateway to China but the symbolic starting point of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Smooth flows of goods and people through this corridor are critical to sustaining the partnership with Beijing. Continued unrest at Sost undermines confidence in Pakistan's ability to safeguard CPEC.

China is already concerned. Businesses in Xinjiang dependent on cross-border trade have reported losses. The spectacle of stranded Chinese nationals and students at Sost has raised alarm. For Beijing, CPEC is a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative. For Pakistan, it is the lifeline of its economic strategy. Neither can afford to let the protests drag on.

Nor is China the only external factor. India is watching closely, eager to exploit unrest in GB to its strategic advantage. Every additional day of indecision in Islamabad provides fodder for India's diplomatic narrative.

For Pakistan, the stakes are strategic as well as economic. So what should be done?

First, the federal government must honour the Prime Minister's promise of a one-time amnesty. Containers stranded at Sost should be released immediately, with waivers on demurrage fees. Traders who have already suffered losses must be compensated, at least partially, for perishable goods that have spoiled in the open.

Second, a practical tax mechanism must be formalised. Goods consumed within GB should be exempt from federal taxes, while consignments destined for the rest of Pakistan should be taxed normally. This arrangement balances fairness to GB residents with the federal government's broader fiscal needs.

Third, GB representatives must be involved in future policy-making. Customs and trade rules cannot continue to be imposed unilaterally from Islamabad. A joint federal-GB oversight committee could provide a more transparent and participatory mechanism. These steps will not resolve the deeper political question. But they can defuse the immediate crisis and buy time for more fundamental reforms.

### **The Way Forward**

In the longer run, Pakistan must face the unavoidable choice of addressing GB's ambiguous status. Designating the region as a Special Economic Zone with tax incentives could offer short-

term relief. However, economic concessions alone will not be sufficient. Without constitutional clarity, the cycle of protest and resentment will continue.

Provincial status is one option. Interim fiscal autonomy is another. Both would require political courage and consensus in Islamabad. Yet the alternative permanent limbo is no longer sustainable. The longer GB is excluded from Pakistan's political mainstream, the deeper its sense of alienation will grow.

Offering political and economic incentives does not have to wait for a Kashmir settlement. Pakistan can uphold its principled position on Kashmir while simultaneously integrating GB more fully into the federation. Indeed, stability in GB strengthens Pakistan's hand in any future negotiation, whereas unrest only weakens it.

The choice, then, is clear. Either Islamabad moves proactively to address GB's grievances, or it risks recurring crises that will damage national unity and undermine CPEC. The sit-in at Sost is not simply about taxes. It is about trust. It is about whether the people of GB believe they have a fair stake in Pakistan's future. Compromise, not delay, is the only way forward.

<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/20-Sep-2025/gilgit-baltistan-s-tax-protests-crisis-trade-trust-representation>

## **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

### **No agreement with the US regarding minerals: Engineer Ismail**

*Dailyk2, 16 September 2025*

Provincial Finance Minister Engineer Muhammad Ismail said that no agreement has been reached with the United States regarding minerals. If the opposition has a copy of the agreement, then let them bring it forward. We will thank the opposition and support them. In response to Syed Sohail Abbas's speech on Monday, he told the House that I responsibly state that we have not seen any such agreement anywhere, nor has any meeting been held in this regard, nor has any such agreement been made with America. He said that the opposition leader also held a press conference in Sukkur on this matter. I tried a lot, but no such agreement has come before my eyes. If the opposition has a copy of such an agreement, then it is a good thing. Then we should all be united.

Earlier, Syed Sohail Abbas Shah told the House that preparations are being made to implement sales tax in Gilgit-Baltistan. The legal draft has been submitted to the Assembly Secretariat after approval from the Cabinet. He said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan has signed an agreement with the United States regarding the minerals of GB, and the Prime Minister himself has said this in a press conference. Therefore, the draft of this agreement should be presented in the House, and

it should be specified which mountains have been given to America. I had submitted a formal adjournment motion in this regard to the Secretariat, but it is not included in the agenda. He said that we will not allow the establishment of an economic zones without taking the people into confidence.

<https://dailyk2.com/ur/?p=71396>

### **Gilgit-Baltistan Recognized as Tax-Free Zone by Federation**

*Urdu Point, 16 September 2025*

The federal government has recognized Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as a tax-free zone, accepting the demands of the traders. A meeting to discuss the implementation mechanism is scheduled to take place again on Wednesday.

Amjad Hussain Advocate, a member of the Federal Committee on Sost Port Issue, President of PPP GB, and member of the GB Assembly, stated during a telephonic conversation that he did not get a chance to speak in the federal committee meeting, while Hafiz ur Rehman remained completely silent, which he deemed appropriate.

In response to a question, he clarified that there will be no crackdown on the Sost sit-in, but the people there have developed a habit of spreading false news about a crackdown on the protest. He further said that the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan strongly represented GB and defended the tax-free zone status. It should be noted that traders

have been staging a sit-in at Sost for the past two months over their demands.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/important-news/live-news-4555635.html>

### **Event at Karakoram University Gilgit to Promote Awareness of the Chinese Language**

*Urdu Point, 18 September 2025*

An event was held at Karakoram University Gilgit to raise awareness about the Chinese language. The purpose of the event was to enhance students' skills in speaking the Chinese language and writing its characters. The event was jointly organized by the Institute of Professional Development, China Study Center, and the International Office of the university.

During the event, Dr. Faqir Muhammad, Director of the China Study Center, and Dr. Sajjad Haider, Director of the International Office, stated that the event was not just a competition but an effort to increase students' interest in the Chinese language. Keeping in view the importance of the Chinese language in Pakistan, Karakoram University is striving to connect the students of Gilgit-Baltistan with global opportunities.

They further elaborated that this program provides students with a means to explore the depths of Chinese culture and language, which will also prove beneficial for projects like CPEC in the future. They noted that the

program reflects a positive change in the education sector in remote areas like Gilgit-Baltistan, where students now have the opportunity to learn global languages at their doorstep. Numerous students participated in the event, and prizes were distributed based on their performances.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4558311.html>

### **From Social Media**

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

*22 September 2025*

Hafiz ur Rehman did not conduct an inquiry into the section second scandal of his era because he himself was involved PTI leader #pti #imrankhanPTI @AbdulKhalidPTI @SaraMirGilgity

**Link to the video:**

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1969838134700789789>

**Basharat Issa @BasharatIssa**

*14 September 2025*

Gilgit-Baltistan is the Timbuktu of Pakistan, told Zafarullah to the national security council of Pakistan. Exactly how a coloniser views their colony!!

[https://x.com/Wajahat\\_PTII/s/Wajahat\\_PTII/status/1966832717632573686](https://x.com/Wajahat_PTII/s/Wajahat_PTII/status/1966832717632573686)

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/BasharatIssa/status/1967279094250582523>

**Pamir Times @pamirtimes**

*15 September 2025*

Stakeholders Call for Inclusive, Transparent, and Dignified Disaster Response in Gilgit-Baltistan

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/1967476320344191389>

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**Disclaimer**

*PoK weekly News Digest is a collection of news reports and press releases published in various newspapers and local media related to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Gilgit Baltistan' by the government of Pakistan. The news reports have been edited and abridged to provide clarity. MP-IDSA is not responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the news items.*



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