

# Weekly POK News Digest

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

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**POK**  
**AJK' unrest**  
**Gilgit-Baltistan**  
**Awami Action Committee**  
**shutter-down strike**  
**micro-hydro plant**  
**protests**



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

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## Political Developments

### **‘AJK’ paralysed by competing protests, communications blackout**

*Dawn, 30 September 2025*

At least one person was killed and over a dozen others were injured — including a policeman — in the ‘Azad Jammu & Kashmir’ (AJK) capital on Monday, as the region observed a shutter-down and wheel-jam strike amid a communications blackout.

The strike, called by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC) over the issue of its unfulfilled charter of demands, saw rival groups stage simultaneous protests, which accused each other of fomenting violence during an otherwise peaceful demonstration. Mobile and internet services have remained suspended in ‘AJK’ since Sunday noon, and sources said the curbs could continue until Wednesday.

The casualties occurred around Neelum Bridge after midday, when a ‘peace rally’ led by Muslim Conference leader Raja Saqib Majeed clashed with the JKJAAC protesters who were gathered there.

The strike was announced last week, after JKJAAC-government negotiations remained deadlocked over the abolition of elite privileges and seats reserved for the Pakistan-based refugees from ‘Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir’.

### **Witness accounts**

Witnesses claimed that participants of the peace rally fired upon peaceful JKJAAC demonstrators “without any provocation”.

Ghulam Mustafa, a bystander, said one bullet hit Mohammad Sudheer, 30, who owned a crockery shop at Tahli Mandi Road who died due to excessive bleeding.

An official at the Combined Military Hospital confirmed that Sudheer died during treatment. Mohammad Basharat, 50, a shopkeeper in Shokat Lines, was wounded by shrapnel.

According to another eyewitness, the peace rally was protected by police and paramilitary troops. Police lobbed tear-gas shell on JAC demonstrators, and fired at them.

People at the hospital showed spent bullet casings, which they said they had collected them from the ground while trying to rescue injured people.

“When the action committee had already given a call for lockdown for Sept 29, why was Mr Majeed allowed to hold a so-called peace march on the same day?” questioned 20-year-old shopkeeper Raja Safeer, who was among those in the emergency ward.

Incidentally, some local media reports suggested that the peace rally had been fired upon by JAC protesters, but this could not be independently verified.

### **Another gathering today**

Later in the evening, hundreds of people gathered at Muzaffarabad's Lal Chowk, where JAC leaders including Shaukat Nawaz Mir delivered charged speeches.

Mr Mir alleged that some elements wanted to create a May 9-like situation in 'AJK' for reasons best known to them, and urged the army chief to take stock of the situation.

Mr Mir called on the charged crowd to reassemble at the same spot at 11am today (Tuesday) for the next course of action. All businesses and shops remained shuttered and street vendors away almost across the 'AJK', while roads also remained deserted.

Reports also suggested that similar gatherings were staged in Rawalakot and Sudhnoti, while in Bhimber, a rally was led by PM Chaudhry Anwarul Haq's brother, Ehsanul Haq, who is associated with the PTI.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1945570/ajk-paralysed-by-competing-protests-communications-blackout>

### **'AJK' witnesses shutter-down strike for second day**

*Dawn, 1 October 2025*

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) on Tuesday witnessed an overwhelming shutter-down and wheeljam strike on the second consecutive day amid intermittent skirmishes between law

enforcers and activists in the state capital Muzaffarabad. The atmosphere was highly charged following the death of one person and injuries to several others a day earlier.

Although government offices remained open, attendance was thin for want of transport. Banks were also open but hardly saw any client. All private businesses and shops, including medical stores, remained closed. Even street vendors were nowhere to be seen.

Angry youngsters, some carrying batons, blocked intercity roads in many areas of the state capital till afternoon by placing different obstacles and torching bushes.

Nevertheless, some private vehicles and motorcycles were seen running through the roads sporadically, without facing serious resistance from the activists. On receiving information about blockades, police personnel swiftly rushed to clear the road obstacles.

Skirmishes reported between activists of JKJAAC and law enforcers in Muzaffarabad; angry youngsters block inter-city roads in many areas

According to witnesses, at several such places they lobbed tear gas shells to quell disturbance and also made arrests. In some areas, law enforcers were also pelted with stones from the mountain slopes, forced them to retreat to safety.

On Tuesday, there were reports of minor casualties on both sides, but these could not be verified as government officials refrained from sharing anything with the media.

This correspondent tried to reach out to a number of senior officials, but their staff said “they were busy in meetings and unable to take calls”.

By the afternoon, thousands of people gathered at Muzaffarabad’s Lal Chowk where Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC) leaders, including Shaukat Nawaz Mir, addressed them.

“A state is like a mother, but unfortunately ours has turned out to be a witch that killed its own children,” fumed Mr Mir. The JKJAAC alleged the shots were fired by the participants of a government-backed rally, led by Raja Saqib Majeed of Muslim Conference.

On Monday, Muhammad Sudhir, a 30-year-old shopkeeper belonging to Neelum Valley, was killed in Muzaffarabad after sustaining gunshot wounds.

Late on Monday night, relatives and other activists had placed his body on the main artery in Chehla Bandi neighbourhood to press the authorities for registration of an FIR against Mr Majeed and other accused. The body was removed only after their demands were met.

“We have full recording evidence as to who fired upon peaceful protesters and at whose behest,” Mr Mir said. Reports from Rawalakot said that thousands of people had assembled at Tourism Chowk, but police avoided confronting them.

In Dadyal, where tensions had escalated immensely in a similar protest in May last year, thousands of people threw huge containers into the river from Palaak Bridge where they had been placed by the administration, apparently to block movement between Kotli and Mirpur district.

### **Media affected**

Meanwhile, the absolute suspension of internet and mobile phone services since Sunday hit the journalist community hard as no local newspaper could be published for the second consecutive day on Tuesday.

Many of those working for the national and international media, as well as some of the vloggers, had to travel to Garhi Habibullah in the neighbouring KP, from where they filed their stories and uploaded the stuff on Sunday and Monday.

But on Tuesday it was learnt that internet services had also been snapped in Garhi Habibullah, forcing some of the journalists to travel up to Mansehra for filing reports.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1945767/ajk-witnesses-shutter-down-strike-for-second-day>

## Protest Divided

*The Nation, 30 September 2025*

The protest movement in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' appears to have lost its momentum. After the Joint Public Action Committee secured a flour and electricity subsidy, along with other relief measures, many expected the demonstrations to wind down. Yet, whether out of dissatisfaction with the gains achieved or emboldened by their success to demand further concessions, the committee called for another strike.

This new call, however, left the people of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' confused and indignant. Unsurprisingly, the second strike faltered as protesters refused to join in, and the movement degenerated into a disorganised mix of individual actions. It has now become clear that deep divisions exist within the committee, with some factions urging people to create chaos and disruption in pursuit of additional benefits, while others – led by figures like Shaukat Mir – have urged unity and a return to the peaceful negotiations that had produced earlier successes. Similar rifts have emerged between leaders of different divisions, further undermining the strong front that had been presented by the protestors before this. As individuals take matters into their own hands, a law-and-order concern has also begun to emerge.

What was once a unified and peaceful movement has splintered, and those attempting to exploit it for personal gain are now plainly visible. It is to be hoped that law enforcement agencies and government representatives in the region handle the remaining peaceful elements of the Joint Public Action Committee with care while working to restore peace and stability, so that the lives of ordinary citizens can return to normal.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Sep-2025/protest-divided>

## Govt offers talks after 'AJK' demo turns deadly

*Dawn, 2 October 2025*

The government on Wednesday invited protesters in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) to resume dialogue, as the territory reeled from deadly violence amid an ongoing protest movement.

The unrest over the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee's (JKJAAC) demands took a bloody turn on Wednesday, with at least nine people killed in clashes with law enforcers – including three policemen – and over a hundred injured.

Talks between the JKJAAC, the 'AJK' government and federal ministers over elite privileges and reserved seats for refugees broke down last week. Rival groups have since staged protests, trading blame for violence that marred

what began as a largely peaceful movement.

Addressing a press conference alongside Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, 'AJK' PM Chaudhry Anwarul Haq said a "civilised and peaceful" path to securing public rights lay in negotiations, warning that violence would only deepen the crisis.

In Muzaffarabad, most shops — including medical stores, restaurants and tandoors — remained shut, while street vendors and public transport stayed off the roads. Major arteries were strewn with broken glass, boulders and other debris, forcing the few private vehicles on the streets to take detours or turn back.

The main flashpoint was again Neelum Bridge and its environs — the same spot where a shopkeeper was shot dead on Monday — with police deployed on one bank of the Neelum River and demonstrators massed on the opposite side. Witnesses said protesters hurled stones at police, who responded with tear gas shelling and gunfire.

According to one youth, police resorted to firing directly at the crowd, killing at least six protesters and leaving several others critically wounded. The exact number of casualties could not be ascertained due to a communications blackout, which left key officials unreachable.

Enraged residents burned bushes and placed obstacles on roads to protest the

killings. Earlier, journalists observed a heated exchange in the district headquarters complex between Islamabad police personnel and some 'AJK' police officials. The former reportedly complained they had been left in an unfamiliar area while stones were being thrown from higher ground.

### **Dialogue offer**

During their presser, 'AJK' PM Haq said that just as the federal government has extended an invitation for talks, "I too urge the Awami Action Committee to participate in the negotiation process to resolve political and social issues through mutual understanding."

He recalled that the JKJAAC was not an organised political force, as it comprised both nationalists and violent elements, and added that the use of violence and force by them could never be justified. "I warn again that violent protests only lead to chaos; therefore, it's essential that we talk," he said.

He claimed that '90 per cent' of the protesters' demands had been accepted, and judicial reforms could also be carried out through legislation. "But there is a deadlock over the reserved seats for refugees, which cannot be abolished in the context of the Kashmir freedom movement," he added.

PM Haq said that PM Shehbaz Sharif had personally asked for dialogue with the JKJAAC. Expressing deep grief and sorrow, the 'AJK' premier stated that



there could be no recompense for the loss of human life.

“The responsible leaders of the Action Committee should call off this protest and engage in dialogue. The cabinet members of ‘AJK’ are in Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot and Mirpur, and the government is fully prepared for dialogue,” he added. PM Haq condemned recent arson, including an attack on a school and urged an end to violent protests.

As for police casualties, he confirmed three deaths, with eight personnel critically injured and more than 100 wounded in recent clashes, while reports regarding civilian casualties were still being compiled.

Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the federal government had remained in close contact with the ‘AJK’ administration, with him and Minister for Kashmir Affairs Engr Amir Muqam mandated by the prime minister to help resolve the dispute.

“We held talks with members of the Awami Action Committee in Muzaffarabad,” he said. “Ninety per cent of the demands were accepted, and both the federal ministers acted as guarantors to ensure the implementation of the agreement. The IGP was directed to cancel cases from the previous protest, electricity-related issues were acknowledged and local government-related demands were also accepted.”

However, he said two of the JKJAAC’s demands — abolishing refugee seats and reducing the number of ministers — fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the ‘AJK’ Legislative Assembly.

He criticised the committee for pressing ahead with district-wide protests from Sept 29 despite a written draft agreed “to their satisfaction” and warned that violent demonstrations would not deliver results.

### **Interior ministry calls meeting**

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior has convened an important meeting in Islamabad on Thursday (today) to consider steps to defuse the situation. Separately, Jamaat-i-Islami deputy emir Liaquat Baloch phoned Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to express concern over escalating tensions and reports of casualties among police and civilians.

He expressed serious concern over the loss of precious lives and stressed that all parties should exercise restraint. Mr Baloch expressed a lack of confidence in the government committee’s ability to resolve the issues or reassure the public to remain calm.

The JI leader said that in such a tense environment, the Ministry of Interior should play an active role. He also opposed the use of force in ‘Azad Kashmir’ and stressed that the matter should be resolved on the principles of justice.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1946002/govt-offers-talks-after-ajk-demo-turns-deadly>



## **Nine killed as Awami Action Committee protest turns violent in 'Azad Kashmir'**

*The Express Tribune, 1 October 2025*

Six civilians and three police personnel killed as the protests turned violent led by the Joint Awami Action Committee in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'. According to a statement issued by the 'AJK' government on Wednesday, 172 police officers were injured in ongoing violent protests, including 12 in critical condition, while 50 civilians were also wounded.

The government has appealed to the public to remain peaceful and refrain from violence. Authorities have also warned citizens to ignore false news circulating on social media and to share only verified and credible information.

Earlier, it was reported that three police officers were killed and nine others injured during an attack carried out by armed men belonging to the Awami Action Committee in Dhir Kot, 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'.

Armed men affiliated with the Awami Action Committee opened fire on police personnel, resulting in the casualties. The officers who were killed include Constable Khurshid and Constable Jameel, both from Bagh, and Constable Tahir Rafi from Muzaffarabad.

Families of the deceased and injured officers demanded that the government

bring the attackers to justice and impose strict penalties.

## **JKJAAC strike over constitutional demands**

On Monday, shutter-down and wheel-jam strike across 'AJK' killed one and paralyzed life in major districts before escalating into violence following clashes at Neelum Bridge.

Led by JKJAAC central leader Shaukat Nawaz Mir, the strike brought Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Poonch, Neelum, Bhimber and Palandari to a halt. Markets remained shut, roads were blocked, and internet services were restricted across much of Muzaffarabad, except areas bordering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Tensions flared when activists of the Muslim Conference, holding a parallel "Aman March" in support of shopkeepers wanting to keep businesses open, confronted JKJAAC protesters at Neelum Bridge.

Muslim Conference supporters, including party leader Raja Saqib Majeed and his brother, allegedly opened fire on demonstrators.

"The incident, captured in viral social media footage, clearly shows the persons shooting at the crowd," journalist Farhan Ahmed Khan said. Four protesters were injured; one of them, Sudheer, later died in hospital.

In the evening, nearly 5,000 people gathered at Lal Chowk, where Shaukat Nawaz Mir delivered a fiery 17-minute speech.

He condemned the firing, accused the authorities of trying to stage "another May 9" through their "touts", and insisted JKJAAC harboured no hostility toward state institutions or the Pakistan Army.

Mir announced that a protest would be held with Sudheer's body at Chehlabandi on Neelum Road, demanding an FIR and post-mortem, neither of which had been completed.

He also called for further demonstrations at Lal Chowk on Tuesday afternoon. "Fake footages are being aired to suggest everything is normal," he alleged, vowing to continue protests until demands are met.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2570048/three-police-personnel-killed-during-awami-action-committee-protest-in-ajk>

### **Talks resume after deadly 'AJK' unrest**

*Dawn, 3 October 2025*

A high-level government delegation held negotiations with a civil society alliance in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) on Thursday after days of fierce clashes between protesters and law enforcers that have left at least 10 people dead and scores critically injured.

The eight-member committee, dispatched by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, comprises federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Amir Muqam, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Rana Sanaullah

and Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, along with PPP leaders Raja Pervez Ashraf and Qamar Zaman Kaira, and former AJK president Sardar Masood Khan. They were accompanied by 'AJK' Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, who had been staying at Kashmir House in Islamabad for the past several days.

Negotiations began in the committee room of the Chief Secretary's office in the afternoon, with Shaukat Nawaz Mir, Raja Amjad Ali Khan and Anjum Zaman Awan from the Muzaffarabad division representing the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC), which has been spearheading the rights movement in the territory.

However, core members from the other two divisions — Poonch and Mirpur — could not immediately join the negotiations as they were away from the capital.

Sources said the Muzaffarabad trio, along with other core members, later left for Dhirkot, where their colleagues from Poonch and Mirpur had already gathered for consultations. The meeting continued until late in the night on Thursday and talks with the government's high-level committee were expected to resume on Friday morning.

A strike has paralysed 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' under a communications blackout after talks over elite privileges and reserved refugee seats collapsed

between the JKJAAC, the 'AJK' government and federal ministers, sparking protests and violence. On Wednesday, the 'AJK' prime minister and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry invited the alliance for fresh dialogue.

On Thursday, the entire region observed a complete shutter-down and wheel-jam strike for the fourth consecutive day, under a ceaseless communications blackout imposed since Monday. No fresh incidents of violence were reported.

Though government offices and banks technically remained open, attendance was negligible. Interestingly, many government officials avoided using official vehicles for commuting and instead preferred to walk or use rented motorcycles.

### **'Enemies of Pakistan'**

Before the delegation left for 'AJK' capital Muzaffarabad, members of the government negotiating committee spoke to the media in Islamabad and stressed the need for dialogue to end the unrest that has gripped 'AJK' for the past three days, Dawn reported.

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said the government should play its role to address the issues in 'AJK'. However, he added that given the present situation in the region and the world, some "elements would want to disturb peace and stability in Pakistan to push forward their agendas".

He said the government remained committed to resolving the issues of the people of 'AJK', but they should also be mindful that no such situation was being created, which "Pakistan's enemies" could take advantage of. 'AJK' PM Haq thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz for issuing directives for sending a "high-level delegation" for restarting talks in the region and expressed the hope that members of the JKJAAC would also work towards ending the impasse in negotiations between the two sides.

Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said, "We are all saddened and concerned over the situation. We will try our best to fulfil the just demands of the people of Kashmir and steer them out of the current situation at the earliest as the enemies of Pakistan and Kashmir would have their own objectives."

Rana Sanaullah also emphasised that "violence is not the solution" to any problem. He said they aimed to resolve the matters in accordance with the law and Constitution, ensuring the restoration and maintenance of peace. Amir Muqam also thanked PM Shehbaz for addressing the issue. "We want the protest and the difficulties of the people of Kashmir to end. We hope that [JKJAAC] members would consider this ... and engage with us for talks."

Sardar Muhammad Yousuf, Qamar Zaman Kaira and Tariq Fazal Chaudhry also shared similar views.

The Ministry of Interior also convened an important meeting in Islamabad on Thursday to consider steps to defuse the situation.

### **PM calls for peace**

According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office on X earlier on Thursday, PM Shehbaz had directed the negotiation committee to immediately proceed to Muzaffarabad.

According to the statement, the prime minister voiced deep concern over the law and order situation in 'AJK' as Wednesday's violent protests left three policemen dead. He urged citizens to remain peaceful and instructed law enforcement agencies to show restraint.

"The prime minister has made a strong appeal to citizens to remain peaceful. He has urged that peaceful protest is the constitutional and democratic right of every citizen, but protesters should refrain from causing harm to public order." The premier also directed that law enforcement agencies exercise restraint and patience with the protesters.

"The prime minister has said that respect for public sentiments must be ensured, and any unnecessary harshness should be avoided," the statement said, adding that the government was always ready to address the issues of its Kashmiri brothers. Expressing "deep concern over the unfortunate incidents during the protests", the premier ordered a

transparent investigation into the matter.

### **Funerals in Muzaffarabad**

Earlier in the day, hundreds of people gathered at Khurshid Football Stadium and the 'AJK' capital's famous Lala Chowk to attend the funerals of two people killed in an alleged police firing in Muzaffarabad.

Addressing the mourners, Mr Mir of JKJAAC updated the crowd on the latest developments, vowing that the struggle would continue until the acceptance of key demands.

These include the abolition of 12 refugee seats, withdrawal of elite privileges, implementation of a June 2019 High Court decision regarding agreements on power projects in 'AJK', and provision of health cards.

He stressed that before discussing these issues, the alliance would demand the immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of those responsible for killing "unarmed protesters" in Muzaffarabad, Dhirkot and other areas of 'AJK'.

He also sought a public mandate to engage in negotiations with the official committee, pledging that there would be no compromise on people's rights. Reports from Kohala, a border town about 35km away, said that thousands of people from 'AJK's southern districts had reached there by evening.

A source told Dawn that JKJAAC leaders had directed the crowd to wait

in Kohala until further instructions after the conclusion of their consultations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1946248/talks-resume-after-deadly-ajk-unrest>

### **‘AJK’ tangle**

*The Express Tribune, 3 October 2025*

There is a situation in ‘AJK’. An apolitical protest is getting out of control and spilling over into a march on the federal capital. Overblown by its organisers, the Joint Awami Action Committee in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, and responded to very late by the authorities in Islamabad, the protest seems to be going over the brink. Reports say at least nine civilians were killed in clashes with security forces that also left three cops dead.

The 38-point charter of demands presented to the ‘AJK’ government is not something new, as it has been in the wings for months. This uprising is an outcome of a series of indecisive talks between the Action Committee and those at the helm of affairs. The demands pertain to civic rights of the dwellers, with protesters calling for the removal of perks for ruling elites; abolition of 12 assembly seats reserved for Kashmiri migrants from ‘occupied Kashmir’; and provision of royalty for hydel power projects in the territory.

The consolation at this point of time is that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has constituted a high-powered committee to talk it out, and parleys continue in

Muzaffarabad. The directives from Islamabad are to broker a deal, and let the fissure come to an end. Both the protesters and the security forces need to exhibit restraint and let the negotiations process take its due course.

The people of ‘AJK’ have taken to the streets several times in the last few years, and it is high time they were heard and their grievances were addressed in a compassionate manner. The lockdown across ‘AJK’, now in its fifth day, is taking a toll on civic life, and it would be prudent on the part of both parties to ensure that the talks are meaningful, and tranquillity is attained.

Civic rights movements are the order of the day, and Pakistan is not immune to it. The restlessness prevalent in ‘AJK’ and Balochistan, apart from other peripheries, are primarily related to fundamental rights and social mobility. A genuine focus on it in an unbiased manner can make a difference. It's time to usher in an era of healing.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2570256/ajk-tangle>

### **Matters with JAAC resolved, agreement to be signed soon: Tariq Fazal Chaudhry**

*Dawn, 3 October 2025*

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday night announced that the final round of negotiations with the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) had begun



and an agreement was slated to be signed soon, in a bid to end ongoing unrest in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK).

Talks between the JAAC, the 'AJK' government and federal ministers over elite privileges and reserved seats for refugees broke down last week. Rival groups have since staged protests, trading blame for violence that marred what began as a largely peaceful movement in 'AJK'. Fierce clashes between protesters and law enforcers have left at least 10 people dead and scores critically injured in the territory.

A fresh round of talks between a high-level government delegation and a civil society alliance was held yesterday, followed by another one today. Chaudhry, who is in Muzaffarabad as part of the federal government's delegation, took to X and stated that matters between the two sides had been settled.

"[The] final agreement is expected to be signed soon [and] the final round of negotiations is underway," the federal minister wrote. "Public interests and peace are our priority." Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said earlier that the government negotiating team was very close to an agreement with the JAAC.

Speaking on Geo News programme 'Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada ke Saath', the minister said that the government delegation, made up of members from both the PPP and PMLN, has nearly

reached a consensus on a possible agreement.

"Both sides are currently studying the proposal," Iqbal said. "I am hopeful that an agreement will be signed soon." The planning minister called this "a victory for Pakistan and 'AJK'" and that plots to sow discord and create violence had been foiled. He also gave credit to the JAAC leadership for coming to the table.

"This entire episode should serve as a lesson for our system of governance: we need to understand what has changed in Pakistan's society. If we cannot respond to these changes, then there will be gaps that can be exploited. We have to be more responsive."

Earlier, Chaudhry said in a post on X that the government's committee was holding a second round of talks with the JAAC representatives in Muzaffarabad.

"We fully support the rights of the people of Kashmir," he said, maintaining that most of their demands, which were in public interest, had already been accepted.

"Constitutional amendments are required to fulfil the remaining few demands and talks are ongoing regarding that.

"We believe that violence is not the solution to any problem. We hope that the Action Committee will resolve all issues through peaceful dialogue," the minister said.

In an earlier post, he shared that PPP leader Raja Pervez Ashraf, Senator Rana Sanaullah, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Religious Affairs Minister Sardar Yousaf, Adviser to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira, Masood Ahmed, Kashmir Affairs Minister Amir Muqam and Chaudhry himself were part of the government's negotiating team.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had expressed deep concern over the unrest in 'AJK', directing the negotiation committee to immediately proceed to the 'AJK' capital and find an immediate and lasting solution to the issues. A shutter-down strike has paralysed 'AJK' under a communications blackout since the start of this week as the JAAC continues to press its demands.

### **HRCP sounds alarm**

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has said it is "deeply alarmed by the ongoing violence in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), where reportedly at least nine people, including three police officers, have lost their lives and hundreds have been injured during protests".

"We strongly condemn the use of excessive force and the deaths of civilians and law enforcers alike as well as communication blackouts," the HRCP posted on X.

It underlined that while "dialogue is essential, it cannot be meaningful amid

the continued political disenfranchisement of the region's people. The right to peaceful protest must be upheld and grievances addressed transparently".

"We urge both the federal and 'AJK' governments to avoid further escalation, respect people's fundamental rights and commit to genuine, inclusive negotiations. To this end, HRCP intends to send a fact-finding mission to 'AJK' as soon as possible to assess the situation," it added.

### **People of 'AJK' freely enjoy their civil, political rights: FO**

Commenting on the protests, the Foreign Office said the people of 'AJK' freely enjoy their civil and political rights and actively participate in shaping their democratic future.

"Pakistan remains firmly committed to upholding their dignity, safeguarding their rights, including the right to peaceful assembly and protest, respecting their sentiments, and advancing their socio-economic development," it added.

"This commitment reflects not only our constitutional responsibility but also our enduring moral obligation to the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

However, it noted that in stark contrast, "our brothers and sisters in 'Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir' (IIOJK) continue to face a grim reality under occupation".



“The use of brute force, denial of fundamental freedoms, and systematic and grave human rights violations have become the hallmark of India’s state-sponsored terrorism against the innocent Kashmiri people to suppress their just struggle. Efforts to silence dissent, demographic engineering, and the denial of civil liberties underscore the severity of the situation,” it continued. It said that rather than casting unwarranted aspersions on ‘AJK’, India must reckon with its obligations under international law and the UN Charter.

“India must respect the inalienable rights of the Kashmiri people, most importantly their fundamental right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Pakistan believes that the path to lasting peace and stability in South Asia lies in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute,” it concluded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1946315/govt-delegation-holds-second-round-of-negotiations-with-joint-awami-action-committee-amid-ajk-unrest>

### **‘AJK’ disorder**

*Dawn, 4 October 2025*

For the past several days, ‘Azad Kashmir’ has witnessed deadly protests, as life in the region remains paralysed. At the forefront of the protests has been the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee, which

has been pressing for the acceptance of its 38-point charter of demands.

The demands range from calls for subsidies to changes in the structure of the ‘AJK’ legislature. Matters got out of hand on Monday when supporters of the JKJAAC and participants of a Muslim Conference ‘peace rally’ clashed during a strike call. There were more clashes on Wednesday, resulting in at least 10 deaths to date, while the region has also been experiencing a communications blackout.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had dispatched a high-level negotiating team on Thursday, including several federal ministers, to try and find a solution to the deadlock. Officials say that “90pc” of the protesters’ demands have been accepted, but two issues remain unresolved — calls for an end to ‘elite privileges’ of ‘AJK’s ministers and officials, and the abolition of reserved seats in the region’s parliament for refugees who had arrived from ‘held Kashmir’.

This is the third major round of protests in the region in two years, with many of the outstanding issues unresolved. Where the issue of elite privileges is concerned, the fact is that when officials secure handsome perks for themselves and there is no visible improvement in governance, it is bound to fuel discontent.

As for subsidies, while the common man should not be overburdened, the state’s financial situation must be kept

in mind when demanding financial relief, while tax rates should also be fair and rational. Regarding the abolition of refugee seats, this is a legislative matter, and it should be thoroughly debated in the 'AJK' parliament, which can arrive at a democratic solution acceptable to all.

The fact is that both the state and the protesters need to step back from the brink, and find constructive ways to address contentious issues. Protest is a fundamental right and heavy-handed state actions cannot be condoned. All sides must also keep in mind that this is a very sensitive area, and no actions should be taken that can lead to instability in 'AJK'. Life must be brought back to normal, and long-term solutions need to be debated and found so that the region does not erupt in protest again.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1946491/ajk-disorder>

### **PPP condemns action against 'AJK' protesters**

*The Nation, 4 October 2025*

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Labour Bureau and the Railway Workers Union on Friday condemned arrests and use of force against the rights movement in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', urging the government to resolve the issue peacefully.

In a joint statement, Chaudhry Manzoor Ahmed of the Labour Bureau and leaders of the union said attempts to silence demonstrations undermined

democratic values. They described the demands raised by the Joint Awami Action Committee as genuine and warned that repression of peaceful voices would only increase resentment.

The statement accused the Muslim Conference of fuelling violence and called for action against those involved. It also criticised police action outside the Islamabad Press Club and suspension of internet and mobile services in 'AJK', terming these a violation of basic freedoms.

The leaders demanded immediate release of detained activists, including Anis Kashmiri, president of the Railway Workers Union and district general secretary of the PPP. They expressed grief over loss of life during recent protests and conveyed solidarity with the injured.

The statement urged the government to protect democratic traditions of the region and pursue talks that lead to a fair and lasting settlement of public demands. It added that the Labour Bureau stood with the social and economic struggles of workers in Kashmir, Pakistan and abroad.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Oct-2025/ppp-condemns-action-ajk-protesters>

### **The Fraying Edges**

*The Nation, 4 October 2025*

The protest movement in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' finds itself at a crossroads. After the Joint Public Action Committee secured concessions

on flour and electricity subsidies, along with other relief measures, many expected a natural winding down. Yet, perhaps out of lingering dissatisfaction, or emboldened by their earlier wins, the committee has called for another strike.

This latest move has left much of the public in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' puzzled and weary. The fresh call to action failed to ignite the same passion, and what began as a cohesive movement is now fraying at the edges. Behind the scenes, real differences are simmering within the committee. Some voices, driven by motives that seem questionable, appear less concerned with genuine public grievance and more with personal or political advantage. Others, including figures like Shaukat Mir, have urged a steady return to dialogue—the only path that has delivered anything tangible so far.

The larger picture cannot be ignored: Kashmir sits at the heart of Pakistan's national consciousness. The sacrifices made by Pakistan and its leaders for the Kashmiri cause span decades, and cannot be erased by a few weeks of impassioned protest or incendiary slogans. This is a time for careful stewardship, not confrontation. Escalating the conflict or letting it slip into chaos will only deepen the wounds.

Government must keep the peace and hold any miscreants accountable, but it also cannot turn a deaf ear to the

genuine anguish of ordinary people. A political solution is urgently needed—one that brings real relief to a frustrated public, while stripping away the unfair perks that have long shielded the political elite from the hardships faced by everyone else. 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' deserves cool heads and honest answers. Only then can the region hope for calm, stability, and a chance for its people to breathe a little easier.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Oct-2025/fraying-edges>

## **Economic Developments**

### **700 households powered as 500kW micro-hydro plant inaugurated in Ghizer**

*The Express Tribune, 28 September 2025*

In a region where climate disasters have turned survival into a daily struggle, the inauguration of a 500kW community-run micro-hydro powerhouse in Ghizer's Umalsat valley signals a rare and radiant breakthrough.

Launched on Saturday, the facility now supplies electricity to more than 700 households and businesses—ushering in light, warmth, and economic revival across some of Gilgit-Baltistan's most remote and flood-battered communities. Importantly, the company offers subsidised tariffs aligned with government rates, capping household bills at PKR 2,000—even for families using electricity for lighting, cooking, and heating.

The timing is critical. Ghizer district, like much of Gilgit-Baltistan, has been grappling with the aftermath of devastating floods that swept away roads, homes, irrigation channels, and bridges. Forests were razed, livelihoods shattered, and access to basic services severed.

In this landscape of loss, the new powerhouse stands as both infrastructure and inspiration—offering not just energy, but autonomy and resilience.

“This electricity gives us a new beginning,” said Fatima, a resident of Darkut. “My children can study at night without kerosene smoke choking the room. We use heaters for cooking and warmth. After the floods, this light means everything.”

The project is more than a technical feat—it’s a community-led triumph. Locals have established Silgan Electric Limited, a grassroots utility company that owns and operates the plant. Rahimullah, the company’s General Secretary, described the initiative as a reclamation of dignity. “We’re powering schools, health centres, and small businesses. This is our foundation for rebuilding—not just infrastructure, but confidence.”

The powerhouse connects to the existing government transmission line, enabling future expansion to 1,300 consumers in two additional villages. With its subsidised billing model, the company ensures affordability without

compromising service—an approach that could serve as a template for other remote regions facing similar energy challenges.

The project was made possible through the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), under the Central Asia Poverty Programme (CAPP). At the inauguration, Chairman Hussein Tejani praised the community’s resolve. “In these challenging times, this community has shown how local, decentralised solutions can secure essential needs and drive recovery,” he said, highlighting the model’s sustainability and replicability.

The NGOs’ legacy in Gilgit-Baltistan spans decades, with 169 micro-hydro projects generating a combined 13,844kW of clean energy. These initiatives have not only electrified villages but also catalysed local governance, gender inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

Building on this foundation, it (Akrsp) has launched the Madad Electric Cookstove (MEC) Project in partnership with Third Pole Solutions. The initiative aims to distribute 50,000 clean cookstoves in electricity-surplus villages—reducing deforestation, improving indoor air quality, and creating new opportunities for women in energy entrepreneurship.

“In the face of climate-induced disasters, projects like this are vital,” said General Manager Jamil Uddin.

“We are not just producing electricity; we are producing resilience and a proven model for communities to lead their own way out of crisis.”

As Gilgit-Baltistan confronts the twin challenges of climate vulnerability and energy poverty, the Umalsat powerhouse offers a blueprint for recovery—one powered not by distant institutions, but by the people themselves.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2569431/700-households-powered-as-500kw-micro-hydro-plant-inaugurated-in-ghizer>

### **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

#### **Demonstrators fired from hilltops and attacked with sticks embedded with nails: Injured Police Officer**

*Urdu Point, 2 October 2025*

An injured police officer during protests in ‘Azad Kashmir’ stated that demonstrators from the Kashmir Action Committee fired from hilltops and attacked police with sticks embedded with nails. Despite invitations for dialogue from the federal and Azad Kashmir governments, the protests led by the Awami Action Committee (AAC) have not ceased.

The injured officer reported that the AAC protesters snatched weapons from the police, fired at them, and threw tear gas. The officer noted that they urged the protesters to demonstrate peacefully, stating there would be no objections, but the

demonstrators climbed the hills and opened fire from above despite being asked not to.

The officer further revealed that the AAC protesters beat police personnel with nail-studded sticks, injuring even an SP (Superintendent of Police) during the violence. The protesters ignored all appeals from the police.

The officer explained that they were on duty in the Plak area of Chakswari city, Dadyal, when violent protesters surrounded their residences and set their belongings on fire. According to the officer, the agitators were armed with 30-bore and 9mm pistols, and “by the grace of Allah, our lives were spared” as the protesters left no stone unturned in their aggression. They also removed a container and damaged the ambulance in which the officer was being transported.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4573936.html>

#### **Shooting During Protests in Muzaffarabad and Adjacent Divisions, Situation Tense**

*Urdu Point, 29 September 2025*

The situation turned tense in Muzaffarabad, the capital of ‘Azad Kashmir’, and other adjacent divisions due to firing during protests. The Awami Action Committee stated that the state is killing us; state institutions are killing people in Muzaffarabad. The state has hired thugs who are doing this—we have all the evidence. The state wants to turn Muzaffarabad into



Lal Chowk, Srinagar; we are ready. One of our workers has been martyred, more than a dozen are injured, but we will continue our peaceful struggle.

According to reports, large numbers of people came out of their homes in all small and large cities and villages across 'Azad Kashmir' and held rallies, gatherings, and processions. Protesters were carrying banners and placards, and during this time, slogans were raised in favour of their demands. For the second day in 'Azad Kashmir', internet and mobile phone services are suspended, and for the first time, landline telephone services have also been completely shut down. Communications of Kashmiri people with the outside state have been cut off; overseas Kashmiris have also been unable to contact their loved ones. Regarding the internet suspension, PTA spokesperson Zubaida Nisa stated that internet services have been suspended on the directives of the Federal Ministry of Interior.

It has been reported that the shutdown and wheel-jam strike in the state were called by the Awami Action Committee, which struck over a 38-point Charter of Demands, including the demand to end 12 seats for refugees and the privileges of the elite. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif supported talks on the Awami Action Committee's demands and appealed to them to end the protests.

Muslim League-N Kashmir official and former Information Minister Mushtaq

Ahmad Minhas told journalists that Prime Minister Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif has appealed to the Awami Action Committee to cancel its strike. "We discussed the strike issue with the Prime Minister of Pakistan; he listened to us very patiently and said that coordination had been reached on almost 98% of the Joint Awami Action Committee's demands; there was a deadlock only on two demands."

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated, "Please convey this message to the officials of the Awami Action Committee that I will arrive in Pakistan in two days and will personally invite the officials of the Awami Action Committee." Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also appealed that whatever issues the Kashmiris have, he will play his role in resolving them. He appealed that the core committee of the Awami Action Committee should cancel the protests in the broader interest of Pakistan and Kashmir because India will highlight this, and thus it will become a cause of ridicule.

Prominent member of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee, Shaukat Nawaz Mir, said in a statement that it has come to our notice that the Prime Minister of Pakistan has stated that he himself wants to come and see these issues and call off this protest. So, I want to ask my higher authorities that those who have shut down internet services and left us in a very old era where we cannot convey our message to anyone nor hear

anyone's message—what impression do you want to give? You have pushed us into a dead end. If the Prime Minister of Pakistan has really made this statement, then you will have to restore internet services so that we can announce our next course of action after seeing his statement.

It has been reported that the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee had presented a Charter of Demands based on 38 demands before the government, which included demands such as the abolition of elite privileges and the end of 12 seats reserved in the Kashmir Legislative Assembly for Kashmiri refugees residing in Pakistan. For negotiations on these demands, on September 25, Minister for Kashmir Affairs Ameer Muqam and Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry from Islamabad arrived in Muzaffarabad. The lengthy negotiation session in Muzaffarabad between the Awami Action Committee, representatives from Islamabad, and members of the local government ended inconclusively.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/important-news/live-news-4570008.html>

### **Minimum Wage Set at PKR 40,000 for Financial Cooperative Societies in Gilgit-Baltistan**

*Urdu Point, 1 October 1 2025*

The Registrar Cooperative Societies Gilgit-Baltistan has issued a notification setting the minimum

monthly wage at PKR 40,000 for skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled employees working in all registered cooperative societies across the province. This decision was made in light of the recommendations of the Gilgit-Baltistan Minimum Wage Board and the "GB Minimum Wage Act 2019" and will be effective immediately.

According to the notification, instructions have been issued to all General Managers, Presidents of Cooperative Societies and Banks, Assistant Registrar Baltistan, Circle Registrar, and inspectors in the districts of Hunza, Ghizer, Nagar, Gilgit, Diamer, and Astore to ensure strict compliance with the wage determination.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4572928.html>

### **From Social Media**

**JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri**

29 September 2025

The famous Attabad Lake is shrinking, with a major part of it filled by mud and flood debris.

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/1972557719555985761>

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

4 October 2025

Journalists in Gilgit stage a full-scale protest against the attack on the National Press Club in Islamabad



#nationalpressclub #Islamabad #gilgit  
#media #protest #gilgit #press #club

**Link to the video:**

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/1974220355574096316>

**SAJID HUSSAIN @SAJIDSABIR**

*2 October 2025*

Pakistan: Authorities must protect the right to peaceful protest and lift communications blackout amid Jammu

<https://amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/10/pakistan-authorities-must-protect-the-right-to-peaceful-protest-and-lift-communications-blackout-amid-jammu-kashmir-protests/>

#RightMovementAJK

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/SAJIDSABIR/status/1973766878180057178>

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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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