

# Weekly POK News Digest

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

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**POK**  
**GB Elections**  
**Teachers' issues**  
**Gilgit-Baltistan**  
**Karakoram Highway**  
**Laptop scheme**  
**Tax Exemption**  
**New Provinces**



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## Contents

### Political Development

- Baltistan celebrates 'Mayfung' with fire & festivities
- G-B governor calls for separate province as demand for new provinces grows
- Thousands stranded after Karakoram Highway blocked by rockslide: official
- Hunza at a Crossroads: Choosing Leadership Over Loyalty
- Kashmiri rights group decries India's seizure of properties
- Tax exemptions for GB traders approved
- Permanent judge of 'AJK' SC: PM advises 'AJK' President to appoint Justice Chaudhry
- GB's looming challenges
- Transfers are administrative, not retaliatory, 'AJK' PM tells assembly
- 'AJK' PM vows to resolve teachers' issues on priority basis

### Economic Developments

- PM launches laptops scheme in 'AJK'

### Vernacular Urdu Media

- Government is well aware about economic woes of Teachers : 'AJK' Prime Minister
- Main suspect involved in murderous attack on Justice Malik Inayat-ur-Rehman arrested
- Strict disciplinary action should be taken against electricity thieves: Advocate Shazia Kiani
- India is systematically trying to erase the identity, recognition, and existence of Kashmiris: Mushtaq Butt

## Political Developments

### Baltistan celebrates 'Mayfung' with fire & festivities

*Dawn, 22 December 2025*

The ancient winter festival of Mayfung was celebrated across the Baltistan region on Sunday, with locals carrying fire sticks alongside officials during an evening of bonfires and traditional performances to mark the end of the year's longest night and welcome the New Year. The festival, known as "Losar" meaning New Year in the Balti language, officially began on the night of Dec 21, coinciding with the winter solstice. A central ritual involves playing with fire, lighting bonfires and carrying flaming logs to dispel misfortune and usher in good fortune. Locals say "Fung" symbolises joy, happiness and renewal.

"The basic aim was to celebrate the end of the longest night of winter and welcome the New Year," said Mehdi Ali, a local resident, adding that elders in his family say the tradition dates to pre-Islamic times. Some residents believe the rituals help ward off hardships, he said. The main public event was held at Skardu's Municipal Stadium, where a large crowd of elders and young people appeared, many in traditional winter dress.

The programme included traditional food stalls, fireworks, sword dances and local music. Dozens of glowing lanterns were released into the night sky, while candles were lit on rooftops

in nearby areas. Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza, Tourism Secretary Zameer Abbas, Baltistan Commissioner Kamal Khan and other officials attended. Organisers said the celebration reflects Baltistan's cultural identity and strengthens community ties.

"Mayfung is not only a manifestation of Baltistan's cultural identity, but also an effective means of promoting mutual harmony, commitment to traditions, and educating the new generation about our cultural values," an organiser said. The Mayfung events were also held in the Shigar, Ghanche and Kharmang districts. There are differing interpretations of the festival's origins; one local myth links it to the death of a cannibal king.

The celebrations came as snowfall was reported in upper parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, lowering temperatures and creating difficulties for residents. Roads in remote areas became slippery, locals said. Meteorological office forecast additional snowfall and rain through Monday.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1962560/baltistan-celebrates-mayfung-with-fire-festivities>

### G-B governor calls for separate province as demand for new provinces grows

*The Express Tribune, 22 December 2025*

The demands for new provinces are gaining momentum nationwide, with Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Governor Mehdi

Shah calling for separate provincial status and warning of protests similar to those in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' if rights continue to be denied. Speaking to the media at Jati Umra in Lahore on Sunday, the governor said that while Gilgit-Baltistan's (G-B) resources were being utilised, the benefits were flowing to the rest of the country rather than the region itself. "Our resources are being used, but G-B is being denied its due rights. If this continues, a protest movement like that of 'Azad Kashmir' may emerge here as well," he warned.

Mehdi Shah expressed disappointment with the coalition government at the centre, comprising the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), saying G-B had gained little despite being part of the ruling alliance. He recalled that Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal had visited the region and stated that generating 200 megawatts of electricity was not an issue, but no practical steps were taken. Mehdi said that while every province demands its full share of resources, G-B would only receive its rightful share once it was granted full provincial status.

Referring to regional developments, the governor said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken control of disputed areas in Kashmir without resistance. He added that had former Prime Minister Imran Khan and those who brought him to power taken better decisions and secured control

over their own areas at the time, the situation might have been different. He said that despite sharing the same land and mountains as other regions, G-B was being deprived of basic facilities due to its disputed status. "The water being used for electricity generation comes from our region, yet our needs are ignored," he said.

Highlighting demands raised during the 27th constitutional amendment, he said G-B had sought two key measures: increasing representation in the assembly from 24 to 30 seats, and provision of electricity. Addressing Ahsan Iqbal, he said that even if 200 megawatts could not be provided, at least 50 megawatts should be delivered as promised. The governor said the people of G-B had joined Pakistan by their own free will, unlike other provinces. He added that political leaders make promises during elections, noting that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had pledged to provide 100 megawatts of electricity to the region, expressing hope that the commitment would be fulfilled.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the ruling coalition, Mehdi Shah said that being an ally of the PML-N had not proven beneficial for G-B. He added that he had also raised this concern during a meeting of the party's central executive committee.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2583343/g-b-governor-calls-for-separate-province-as-demand-for-new-provinces-grows>

## **Thousands stranded after Karakoram Highway blocked by rockslide: official**

*Dawn, 23 December 2025*

The Karakoram Highway (KKH) in Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) Chanas area was blocked by a large rockfall on Tuesday, leaving thousands stranded, according to a local official. Nagar district Deputy Commissioner Asghar Khan told Dawn that the rockfall occurred in the early hours of Tuesday. He advised travellers and tourists to avoid the area until confirmation about the status of the KKH was received. "The [rock] slide occurred around *Fajr* time in the boundary area between the Nagar and Gilgit districts," Khan said. "We immediately informed the FWO (Frontier Works Organisation), and they arrived with machinery." Khan added that the boulders blocking the road were very large and would require blasting to clear. Nobody was hurt in the rock slide, but access to the Hunza and Nagar districts was cut off, leaving thousands of students, patients, and tourists stranded for eight hours. A long queue of vehicles formed on both sides of the road.

Some people walked across the debris and changed vehicles after reaching the other side of the blockage. Khan said that work to clear the blocked stretch of the KKH was underway and that he expects the road to be reopened for traffic by 11am on Wednesday. The KKH is no stranger to rockfalls, landslides or other natural events that

block the road. Earlier in July, thousands of people, including foreign tourists, were stranded at multiple locations in Gilgit-Baltistan due to blocked roads, including the Karakoram Highway (KKH), due to landslides.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1962824/thousands-stranded-after-karakoram-highway-blocked-by-rockslide-official>

## **Hunza at a Crossroads: Choosing Leadership over Loyalty**

*Pamir Times, 24 December 2025*

Hunza District holds immense geostrategic, geopolitical, and revenue significance for the federal government. Its importance spans centuries, rooted in its position along historic trade routes. This strategic value intensified after the 1917 Socialist Revolution in the former USSR, which triggered the global Cold War between socialism and capitalism. During this period, Hunza gained heightened importance for the British Empire, which sought to contain the spread of socialism into undivided India and Afghanistan. The former State of Hunza shared direct territorial boundaries with Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics, further elevating its strategic relevance. Consequently, the British government employed a range of strategies combining military pressure and diplomatic engagement to assert influence over Hunza, ultimately succeeding through diplomatic

intervention as a dominant global power.

Beyond its geostrategic importance, Hunza is home to indigenous communities that have maintained close ties with diverse ethnic groups for over a century. As a result, each clan or ethnic tribe occupies specific areas across the region. These tribal communities developed strong systems of agriculture and livestock breeding, with every group contributing significantly toward self-reliance and agricultural independence. Over time, they have demonstrated themselves to be a progressive, hardworking, and disciplined society within the region. While strong ethnic and tribal cohesion has long been a defining strength of the region, it has also become a political liability. Voting patterns are frequently based on family, tribal, or ethnic connections rather than leadership ability, a practice that has seriously undermined the emergence of effective political leadership.

A key driver of political decay in the region is the systematic sidelining of genuine political leadership from public life. Public platforms are effectively monopolized by leaders appointed through faith-based institutions, leaving no meaningful space for independent political actors. Political discussion in public gatherings is not merely discouraged but actively condemned, forcing committed political leaders into the

background as passive spectators. Paradoxically, once their tenure within these faith-based institutions ends, the same individuals readily enter federal political parties to contest elections. This opportunistic duality not only exposes deep hypocrisy but also severely demoralizes authentic political activists who have sacrificed their careers and personal lives for sustained political struggle.

Another critical reality is that candidates of federal political parties often act as defenders of their parent parties' interests in the region rather than as advocates for the development and rights of their constituencies. They rely heavily on infrastructure-based slogans to attract voters, while failing to pursue meaningful legislation that serves the long-term political and legal interests of Gilgit-Baltistan. This persistent pattern stands as clear evidence that, despite seven decades of rule, federal parties have been unwilling or unable to grant the region a defined legal status or to safeguard its fundamental political rights.

If an elected representative ultimately serves interests other than those of the people who voted for them, it raises a fundamental question about the purpose of democracy itself. Why should citizens use their most powerful democratic instrument the vote to elect representatives who act on behalf of external forces, party headquarters, or distant power centers rather than their own constituencies? Such a practice

reduces democratic participation to a symbolic exercise, stripping the vote of its true meaning and weakening public trust in the political system. In Gilgit-Baltistan, this concern is particularly urgent. For decades, elected representatives have often prioritized loyalty to federal parties over the genuine political, legal, and economic needs of the region. While development projects and infrastructure slogans are repeatedly used to secure votes, core issues such as constitutional recognition, political autonomy, and long-term economic rights remain unresolved. This pattern has left the people of Gilgit-Baltistan politically marginalized despite their consistent participation in electoral processes.

At this critical juncture, the responsibility lies with the electorate to reclaim the true value of their democratic choice. Voting should not be an act of habit, fear, or short-term gain, but a conscious decision to empower leaders who are rooted in the region and accountable to its people. Electing genuine political representatives those who are willing to challenge unjust structures and advocate persistently for political and economic rights is essential for transforming Gilgit-Baltistan's future. Democracy can only function when representatives reflect the will, struggles, and aspirations of the people they serve. Choosing authentic leadership is not merely a political preference; it is a necessary step toward

securing dignity, rights, and self-determination for Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2025/12/23/hunza-at-a-crossroads-choosing-leadership-over-loyalty/>

### **Kashmiri rights group decries India's seizure of properties**

*Dawn, 26 December 2025*

A London-based Kashmiri rights organisation holding special consultative status with the United Nations on Thursday condemned the Indian government's recent confiscation of properties belonging to pro-freedom Kashmiri leaders and activists, saying New Delhi lacked the legal authority to seize assets in the internationally-recognised disputed territory and had converted its original protective mandate into a punitive regime.

"The application of domestic criminal laws, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), to suppress dissent and confiscate or attach properties of dissenting voices in 'occupied Kashmir' is inconsistent with international obligations and the terms under which Indian forces were admitted into the territory in 1947," said Dr Syed Nazir Gilani, president of the Jammu Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR).

In a statement, Dr Gilani argued that India's military presence in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' was conditional and temporary, confined to defence

and the protection of life, property and civil rights pending a final determination of the region's status. He said the use of coercive domestic laws to silence political dissent and appropriate assets violated these commitments and breached obligations under the UN Charter, which, he maintained, took precedence over conflicting domestic legislation.

Dr Gilani's remarks came amid growing concern over property seizures in the 'occupied region', which critics and rights groups have widely condemned. According to local Kashmiri and Indian media reports, the administration has in recent years attached ancestral land in Pulwama and seized dozens of homes and other assets across the region under the pretext of security concerns or alleged encroachments. In the latest such move, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) ordered the attachment of land in Budgam district belonging to US-based Kashmiri leader Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai, citing alleged involvement in activities proscribed under the UAPA. Dr Gilani said India's decision to refer the Kashmir dispute to the UN Security Council under Article 35 of the UN Charter had internationalised the issue, removing it from India's exclusive domestic jurisdiction. He added that subsequent UN resolutions had placed India in the role of an interim administrator bound by a UN-supervised process, including the obligation not to alter the territory's

status or prejudice the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.

According to him, the use of IPC provisions relating to speech and association, as well as UAPA clauses permitting property attachment, violated India's duty to protect property, exceeded the limits of a temporary mandate and contravened the UN Charter, under which international obligations override conflicting domestic laws. "The confiscation of property belonging to dissenting voices amounts to a blatant violation of solemn commitments made to the government of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan and the United Nations, and undermines the UN framework governing the dispute," he said.

Dr Gilani further pointed out that UN Security Council Resolution 91 had safeguarded the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, adding that India's failure to adhere to the terms of its protective role in Jammu and Kashmir had incurred liabilities, including the loss of an entire generation. He said the JKCHR would consult legal experts and consider pursuing cases seeking compensation and restitution for what he termed the wrongs committed against the people of Kashmir. He also urged the governments of Pakistan and 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with UN Commission for India and Pakistan

(UNCIP) resolutions and the UN framework.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1963298/kashmiri-rights-group-decries-indias-seizure-of-properties>

## Tax exemptions for GB traders approved

*Dawn, 25 December 2025*

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday approved recommendations from a high-level committee to exempt income tax, sales tax, and federal excise duty on goods imported from China through the Khunjerab Pass by residents of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Following the directive, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) issued a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) to implement the measures immediately. The decision follows an agreement reached after week-long negotiations in Islamabad between traders' representatives and a committee headed by Federal Minister for Energy Awais Leghari. Traders in Gilgit-Baltistan had staged a sit-in during August and September, pressing authorities for tax exemptions, the clearance of consignments stuck at the Sost Dry Port, and the withdrawal of legal cases. Under the deal, the federal government has capped the tax exemptions at Rs4 billion (\$14.4 million) annually on 2,403 items imported for local consumption. The exemptions will be reviewed every two years.

The Prime Minister's Office issued an official notification on Tuesday

endorsing the committee's recommendations and directing the FBR to submit a compliance report within seven days. According to the SRO, the rules for the clearance of goods from the Customs Dry Port at Sost apply effectively immediately. The notification states that "sales tax, income tax and federal excise duty payable on imports covered under this notification shall not be levied" provided the goods are imported through the Silk Route Dry Port, Sost.

To qualify, importing firms and companies must be "solely owned by the persons who hold domicile of Gilgit-Baltistan," according to the order. The concessions are subject to strict monitoring. The agreement stipulates that any attempt to smuggle exempted goods outside the region will lead to a "partial or complete withdrawal of the concession". The Chief Collector of Customs (Enforcement) is tasked with ensuring goods cleared under the notification remain within Gilgit-Baltistan.

The exemptions will be managed through a quota system. "The benefit of non-levy of sales tax, income tax and federal excise duty shall be extended by the Collector of Customs on First Come First Serve basis within the approved quota limit," the SRO stated. Any goods imported beyond the 4 billion rupee fiscal year limit will be subject to standard tax levies. Shahid Jan, the GB Customs collector, told Dawn that a digital portal has been developed to

handle the clearance of goods. "Traders and all stakeholders will be trained for clearance of the goods through the portal," Jan said.

Jan noted that other demands from the protesters, including the release of stuck consignments, have been addressed following a decision by the Customs Tribunal Islamabad. Local traders and civil society groups welcomed the prime minister's approval. Proponents said the move would enhance economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs, youth, and the many residents, including transporters, hotel owners, and labourers, whose income depends on trade activities between Pakistan and China.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1963116/tax-exemptions-for-gb-traders-approved>

### **Permanent judge of 'AJK' SC: PM advises 'AJK' President to appoint Justice Chaudhry**

*Business Recorder, 26 December 2025*

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday advised President of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, to appoint Justice Khalid Yousaf Chaudhry as a permanent judge of the Supreme Court of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK). According to a notification issued by the Prime Minister's Office, the advice was issued in accordance with the relevant constitutional provisions governing judicial appointments in 'AJK'.

Justice Chaudhry is currently serving in an acting capacity, and his confirmation is aimed at strengthening the functioning of the apex court in the region, the statement said.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40399236/permanent-judge-of-ajk-sc-pm-advises-ajk-president-to-appoint-justice-chaudhry>

### **GB's looming challenges**

*Dawn, 26 December 2025*

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is going to the polls next year. The announcement by the GB chief election commissioner was not only about general elections, it also notified the holding of the much-awaited local bodies elections. The region, with its unique civic challenges and marred by development issues, has been governed without local bodies for two decades. This has put enormous strain on successive elected governments as people — desperate for their daily civic needs such as electricity, water, sanitation, road repairs etc — look towards their elected representatives in the GB Assembly.

As the region is governed primarily through the federal government, GB's reliance upon the centre and the budget granted to it has increased over time. Although GB has a legislative assembly of its own, the key decisions rest with the centre and its powerful bureaucracy.

This reliance is one of the reasons why the candidates and the voters in some cases look towards the ruling party in

the centre before elections. This results in political defections in GB which have become a norm and are neither considered unethical nor immoral. While the defections generally occur before elections (as is currently happening) the outgoing government faced them within three years of coming into power. As the wind changed in the centre due to the no-confidence vote, the fate of the then-ruling PTI in GB was also sealed.

The then-GB CM and PTI's regional president Khalid Khursheed Khan was disqualified by the GB Chief Court on the basis of obtaining a fake degree. Consequently, political instability, wrangling and defections have cast a shadow over the outgoing government. The defections also do not matter much in the local context of GB. Voters in many constituencies, if not all, vote for the influential and prominent political figures who are well-known in the community and in a few cases, due to tribal affinity. Since the region desperately needs development, hence the ruling party in the centre is the best pick for these candidates. Before elections, the parties announce development schemes to tilt voters in their favour. The infrastructure of GB demands urgent attention. Due to difficult terrain, it deserves special focus which the successive governments have failed to deliver.

Decades of neglect in the public health system have resulted in lack of health facilities, functioning laboratories, life-

saving equipment, and availability of doctors across GB. People in many cases take patients to what they call 'down country' for treatment, putting an additional burden on their finances. Even the basic facilities such as electricity, clean water and sanitation remain rare in many areas. Despite all these challenges, including a limited budget, the push to create more districts in GB is strange. In some areas, with a population of less than 50,000, carving out a district puts an additional burden on the limited budget. GB now pays more in salaries and spends less on its development, which should be the other way around.

A further burden on already meagre resources is tourism. While the recent boom in tourism and hordes of tourists arriving in GB has brought short-term benefits to the local population, the carbon footprint of these people and their vehicles has already started affecting the weather. GB is an ecologically fragile area. It cannot cater to mass tourism. GB needs a rational policy toward ecotourism and its implementation, benefitting local communities and the natural environment.

Taking tourists to mountain tops in a five-door jeep is not wise, neither are concrete hotels and guesthouses without proper sewerage and garbage disposal systems. Unfortunately, this is what has been done to GB in the name of promoting tourism which is evidently changing the region's fragile

weather. The elephant is in the room now. In the last few years, flash floods have destroyed homes, bridges, hundreds of hectares of agricultural land and displaced population of several villages.

This year, Ghizer, Ghanche, Skardu and other areas faced unprecedented floods that deprived many people of their livelihoods. The incoming government will have to confront these challenges and formulate effective and long-term policies to provide meaningful relief to the population. Not to forget, GB has a large educated, yet unemployed youth population which will likely place significant pressure on the government for effective governance. A glimpse of this has been witnessed in the past five years, when the region was embroiled in mass demonstrations and large sit-ins over one issue or the other.

These protests were against the state's attempt to end the wheat subsidy given to GB, and to impose tax. Sharp criticism was made of the GB Land Reforms Act of 2025 and against the arrests of leaders of the Awami Action Committee — vocal against certain government decisions — by civil society activists as well as political and religious circles. The longest sit-in of almost two months at the Sost dry port by GB traders and businessmen against the government's effort to impose sales tax, advance income tax, and federal excise duty through FBR, resulted in the decision to exempt

imports worth up to Rs4 billion from federal taxes if the goods are for local consumption.

The protesters demanded representation in the national legislature as a precondition to impose tax. The federal government's move reopened the old wound and regenerated the debate of the region's constitutional status and parliamentary representation. Whether the incoming government will be able to resolve the chronic issue of GB's representation is yet to be seen. While the future of GB remains uncertain, the formulation and implementation of effective and inclusive policies have the potential to mitigate the looming crises and place GB on a more stable and sustainable path.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1963332/gbs-looming-challenges>

**Transfers are administrative, not retaliatory, 'AJK' PM tells assembly**

*Dawn, 25 December 2025*

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Wednesday said transfers in government departments were carried out purely on administrative grounds, asserting that his government neither believed in nor practised vindictive transfers. Addressing the Legislative Assembly, he said corrective action would be taken wherever violations of law or rules were found.

"I myself was part of the previous government, during which the highest number of additional charges were assigned. However, the present government will make transfers strictly on the basis of need and will not subject anyone to unnecessary or retaliatory action," he said.

The prime minister announced that the Public Service Commission (PSC) board would be completed soon and that administrative shortcomings would be addressed promptly to improve public service delivery. Referring to traffic congestion in Muzaffarabad, he described it as a serious challenge and said a comprehensive strategy would be devised to regulate traffic in accordance with the law.

He said he would personally look into the issue of an allegedly false FIR raised by a former prime minister in Bhimber and ensure timely action. On the health sector, he said the matter of ambulances was pending before an accountability court, adding that a committee was being formed to propose a workable solution within ten days. He also said tenders for the Hajira Bypass had been floated and work would commence shortly.

Earlier, most Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed spoke on a condemnation resolution moved by Ms Imtiaz Naseem over the reported act of the Bihar chief minister pulling the hijab of a Muslim girl, terming it not merely an issue concerning Bihar but

one affecting the entire Muslim Ummah. He said no religion had the right to ridicule another and urged the federal government to raise the matter at the international level.

Commenting on another condemnation resolution moved by Food Minister Javed Iqbal Budhanvi regarding the detention by India of a woman from the Nakyal sector who had inadvertently crossed the Line of Control, Mr Waheed termed the matter serious and said the resolution, along with a letter, would be sent to the federal government seeking her release and repatriation.

Responding to a query regarding the Bank of 'AJK', Finance and Inland Revenue Minister Chaudhry Qasim Majeed said the 'AJK' government had provided Rs10 billion as equity to facilitate the bank's conversion into a scheduled bank, after which the appointment of its president would be made in accordance with the law. He said the Kashmir Council building in Islamabad had been notified for the bank's office, while the software contract had also been awarded.

During discussion on a call-attention notice on the closure of crushing plants in the capital, Mr Waheed said the government would determine the terms of reference in the light of superior court judgments, while also considering environmental and economic aspects. Mr Majeed said environmental clearance should be mandatory for crushing plants, adding

that land would not be leased where the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not issue an NOC.

Hydropower Minister Chaudhry Rasheed said the Planning and Development Department had already conducted a study on the issue and that crushing parameters could be set in light of its findings. Mr Budhanvi said illegal crushing plants posed a serious threat to public health and must be shut down, also calling for a legislative committee to issue notices to such plants with approval of the EPA.

PML-N legislator Nisara Abbasi said unnecessary tree felling and crushing plants were damaging the environment and public health in the capital, stressing that crushing plants could not be justified merely on grounds of providing low-cost material. Speaking on Ms Abbasi's call-attention notice regarding doctors' negligence, absenteeism and lack of facilities in hospitals, Health Minister Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi assured the House that doctors' attendance in emergency wards, OPDs and other units would be strictly monitored. He urged lawmakers to point out issues in their constituencies, assuring that complaints would be addressed within 24 hours. Later, the House was prorogued sine die.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1963023/transfers-are-administrative-not-retaliatory-ajk-pm-tells-assembly>

### **'AJK' PM vows to resolve teachers' issues on priority basis**

*Dawn, 26 December 2025*

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Thursday said his government would resolve teachers' issues on a priority basis through dialogue, asserting that educators would not need to resort to protests to secure their legitimate demands under the present dispensation. Addressing a convention titled "Teacher: As an Intellectual and Ideological Guardian", organised by the 'AJK' School Teachers Organisation, the prime minister said education and health remained the top priorities of his government, as both sectors were critical to sustainable social and economic development.

Mr Rathore said teachers bore a vital responsibility in preparing the younger generation in line with modern-day requirements, adding that alleviating their financial difficulties and improving the effectiveness of the teaching process were among the government's key objectives. He maintained that the government preferred engagement and confidence-building over street agitation, and would itself sit with teachers to address their concerns.

Describing teachers as the architects of the nation and agents of social reform, the prime minister said their role could never be ignored. He noted that Islam

accorded teachers a high status and stressed the need to balance rights with responsibilities. "A teacher who works with dedication and sincerity earns the support of society," he said.

The prime minister reiterated that he had always opposed vindictive postings and transfers, noting that increased public awareness in the digital age made self-accountability essential. While acknowledging that the state's challenges could not be resolved overnight, he expressed the hope that if the public maintained its trust [in PPP], visible improvement would be achieved over the next five years. Recalling the situation at the time he assumed office, Mr Rathore said the state had been facing unrest and declining public confidence in the political system.

"By the grace of Allah, the present government now enjoys public trust, which is our real strength," he said, adding that constructive competition brought positive change, even though strengths and weaknesses existed across all segments of society. He said direct interaction with teachers had long been his desire and expressed satisfaction at being among them. Calling on educators to cooperate with the government, he urged them to play an active role in the state's development, assuring them that the government would continue to take effective measures to address their issues.

Earlier, in his address, Most Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed said teachers were the state's true ambassadors on the intellectual and ideological front and played a central role in shaping the nation's thinking and training future generations. He termed teachers a valuable national asset and stressed the need to safeguard ideological values, calling the slogan "We are Pakistanis, Pakistan is ours" a guiding principle. Paying tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces, the senior minister said the sacrifices of the people of occupied Kashmir would not go in vain and expressed confidence that the Kashmir freedom movement would reach its logical conclusion.

Power Development Minister Chaudhry Rasheed described knowledge as "sadaqah jariyah" (continuous charity) and congratulated the organisers on holding the convention. Stressing the importance of ideological clarity, he urged teachers to uphold their duties alongside their rights, describing teaching as a sacred profession. He also noted that the day marked the birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and called for a renewal of commitment to the cause of accession to Pakistan.

The convention was attended by central, district and tehsil level representatives of teachers' organisations from across 'AJK'. Acknowledging that they had travelled

to Muzaffarabad from far and wide, the prime minister announced Friday as a holiday in public sector schools."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1963246/ajk-pm-vows-to-resolve-teachers-issues-on-priority-basis>

## Economic Developments

### **PM launches laptops scheme in 'AJK'**

*The Nation, 25 December 2025*

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said Pakistan's youth were the country's greatest strength and investment in their education and skills was an investment in the future. Addressing the ceremony as he formally launched the distribution of laptops under the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Programme in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' here at the University of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (UAJK), the prime minister said the laptops were not merely machines but a means to connect young people with the world, knowledge and opportunity. He cited success stories of students who, he said, had used earlier laptops to build careers and overcome social and economic barriers. "Our youth, especially Generation Z, are more aware, more capable and better equipped to use technology than earlier generations," the prime minister said. He urged students to play a positive role in the digital and social media space, cautioning against the spread of misinformation and fake news. "Truth and falsehood to-day are often shaped by narratives. Our educated youth

must stand for facts and responsibility," he said.

Reiterating the government's commitment to merit, Prime Minister Shehbaz said laptops had been distributed strictly on merit during previous programmes as well, rejecting criticism that such initiatives were political handouts. He said the continuation of education during the Covid-19 pandemic through laptops was proof of their value. The prime minister also announced major education initiatives for 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', including the approval of four Danish Schools, a planned tech-focused Danish University, and the revival of the Prime Minister's Education Endowment Fund to provide scholarships to talented but underprivileged students from 'AJK', Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan and other parts of the country, including for studies abroad. Touching on Kashmir, he said the people of Kashmir had made immense sacrifices and their emotional bond with Pakistan was unbreakable. He reaffirmed Pakistan's political, moral and diplomatic support for the Kashmiris and called for unity, hard work and faith to achieve national goals.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in conclusion said disciplined effort, unity and belief were essential to making Pakistan strong and prosperous. "Our youth are our future," he said, expressing confidence that with

opportunity and merit, they would take Pakistan and Kashmir forward on the world map. Earlier, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ameer Muqam said the atmosphere of governance in the country was improving and state institutions were regaining strength. He thanked the prime minister for approving a Danish School for Haveli district on the request of the 'AJK' leadership, calling it a significant step for educational uplift in the region.

Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said the laptop programme and new education projects reflected the federal government's trust in Kashmiri youth and would help them compete nationally and internationally. He said merit-based initiatives would strengthen confidence among students and parents alike.

Vice Chancellor 'UAJK' Prof Dr Nasir Jamal Khattak welcomed the prime minister and said the university was proud to host a ceremony celebrating merit and academic achievement. He said access to technology would enhance research, innovation and learning outcomes for students. During the ceremony, laptops were distributed to top-performing students, including merit scholars, amid applause. A guard of honour was also presented by the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Police contingent to mark the occasion.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says the government's policies

have enhanced confidence of investors. He was addressing the members of government team regarding privatization of PIA in Islamabad. The Prime Minister said the privatization of PIA has been completed in a smooth and transparent manner with all stakeholders on-board. He detailed that the bid opening process was completed transparently with bids in see-through boxes and live telecast on mainstream media.

He said the government made the decision to privatize the loss making state owned enterprises in the best interest of the country. The Prime Minister lauded the efforts of all government team members who played their role in the process and expressed the hope that the private group which has taken charge of PIA will revive the past glory of the national flag carrier.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/25-Dec-2025/pm-launches-laptops-scheme-ajk>

### **From Vernacular Urdu Media**

**Government is well aware about Economic woes of Teachers: 'AJK' Prime Minister**

*Jammu and Kashmir Times, 26 December 2025*

Prime Minister, 'Azad Kashmir' Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that resolving the teachers problems remains the government's priority and towards this end the government is taking tangible steps, too. With current government,

the teachers are not required to hit the roads for pressing their demands instead the government will sit with teachers and resolve their issues. Health and teaching department are among the priority list for every government because these departments are the main drivers in the development of any society.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/1-4.jpg>

### **Main suspect involved in murderous attack on Justice Malik Inayat-ur-Rehman arrested**

*Urdu Point, 26 December 2025*

Gilgit Police have arrested the main suspect involved in the murderous attack on Justice Malik Inayat-ur-Rehman. According to details, acting under Case No. 107/025 registered at Airport Police Station Gilgit under Sections 324 and 427 of the Pakistan Penal Code and Sections 6/7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, the main accused Azmat Khan son of Harmat Khan, resident of Mohammadi Mohalla Kashrot Gilgit, has been arrested.

According to police, during interrogation the accused confessed to the crime, and on his identification, the automatic firearm used in the incident was also recovered. Upon recovery of the weapon, a separate case No. 112/025 was registered against the accused under the Arms Act. After completion of the investigation, the accused's confessional statement was recorded under Section 21-H of the Anti-

Terrorism Act, and on court orders, he has been sent to jail on judicial remand.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4663236.html>

### **Strict disciplinary action should be taken against electricity thieves: Advocate Shazia Kiani**

*Urdu Point, 22 December 2025*

Advocate Shazia Kiani has demanded from the 'Azad Kashmir' government that strict disciplinary action be brought against electricity thieves, the electricity department should correct its direction, and ensure uninterrupted electricity supply to consumers. She expressed these views while talking to the media.

She said that electricity theft is now a serious crime; no one is above the law. Electricity thieves are national criminals; their circle should be tightened. Cases should be registered against electricity thieves, leading to arrests. The courts should be properly assisted in securing punishments for electricity thieves so that they can be given the harshest penalties, and in the future, they refrain from committing electricity theft.

She further said that to prevent electricity theft, along with the law, such technology should be used that makes theft difficult—just as K-Electric has done. K-Electric has installed Aerial Bundled Cables in most areas of the country. Now, open wires are not available to hook a "kunda" (illegal connection) onto them. The 'Azad

Kashmir' government can also reduce electricity theft by implementing this and learning from K-Electric's experiences.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4658234.html>

### **India is systematically trying to erase the identity, recognition, and existence of Kashmiris: Mushtaq Butt**

*Urdu Point, 26 December 2025*

Mushtaq Ahmad Butt, Information Secretary of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference 'Azad Kashmir' chapter, has said that India is engaged in efforts to systematically erase the identity, recognition, and existence of Kashmiri Muslims in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir'. While addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office-bearers of Muzaffarabad Press Club, Butt expressed deep concern over the grave situation in 'occupied Jammu and Kashmir' and said that it is the responsibility of the media to bring the real ground realities of 'occupied Kashmir' before the world.

He said that the Muslim-majority identity of the state is being changed through religious, social, and cultural restrictions on Kashmiris, as well as demographic aggression, which is a blatant violation of international laws and United Nations resolutions. Mushtaq Ahmad Butt clarified that India is rapidly changing the population ratio by settling lakhs of non-Kashmiri Hindus in 'occupied Kashmir'. There is a dangerous

conspiracy at work behind this. In the future, India will use this artificial population change as a basis to make a sham offer of referendum, so that the fundamental principle of Kashmiris' right to self-determination can be distorted. He said that this is a systematic deception that needs to be exposed in a timely manner, as it is the most urgent need of the hour. On this occasion, he urged the journalist community to give special importance to 'occupied Kashmir' on all three fronts—print media, electronic media, and social media—bring Indian atrocities before the world with documented evidence, and convey the voiceless cries of the Kashmiri people to the global conscience. The oppressed people will not be able to forget our negligence. Mushtaq Ahmad Butt congratulated the newly elected office-bearers and paid tribute to the professional services of the journalist community. He also inaugurated the new building of the Press Club.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4663018.html>

### **From Social Media**

**PAMIR TIMES @pamirtimes**

27 December 2025

Stakeholders Call for Community-Led Climate Action at Gilgit Seminar on Climate Change

**Link to the tweet:**

<https://x.com/pamirtimes/status/2004933991825375660>

**WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti**

27 December 2025

The Health Department of Basins Hospital corruption case has resulted in an Anti-Corruption Court sentencing four accused to life imprisonment.

##gilgitbaltistan

**Link to the video:**

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/2004811794196705679>

**JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri**

25 December 2025

Annual relief capped at Rs4bn on 2,403 items; waivers limited exclusively to local traders, firm, strict penalties mandated if exempted goods are moved elsewhere.

**Link to the tweet**

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/2004071067988775389?s=46>

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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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