

Weekly POK News Digest

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POK
Diamer Bhasha
transparent elections
Joint Awami Action Committee
Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue
Hydropower Project
Gilgit-Baltistan
CPEC



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Political Developments

27 'Azad Kashmir' lawmakers fail to submit asset details

Dawn, 6 January 2026

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Election Commission on Monday made public the names of 27 members of the Legislative Assembly and one member of the 'AJK' Council for failing to submit their annual statements of assets and liabilities within the stipulated time, warning that their membership could be suspended if the details were not furnished by Jan 15.

The list included the names of the incumbent prime minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore; three former prime ministers — Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi of PTI, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan of the Muslim Conference and Raja Farooq Haider of PML-N; Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar; Deputy Speaker Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed; and cabinet members Mian Abdul Waheed, Sardar Javed Ayoub, Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Sardar Ziaul Qamar, Chaudhry Muhammad Rasheed, Zafar Iqbal Malik, Javed Iqbal Budhanvi, Chaudhry Muhammad Akhlaq and Sardar Muhammad Hussain.

Other lawmakers included Shah Ghulam Qadir, Chaudhry Muhammad Ismail, Muhammad Akmal Sargala and Raja Muhammad Siddique of PML-N; Hafiz Hamid Raza, Ghulam Mohiuddin Deevan and Muhammad

Iqbal of PTI; Aamir Ghaffar Lone and Shahida Saghir of PPP; and Akbar Ibrahim, Asim Sharif Butt and Pir Mazhar Saeed from the PTI renegades. The lone member of the 'AJK' Council was Khawaja Tariq Saeed.

According to a press release issued by the election watchdog, the lawmakers were required under Section 26-A of the 'AJK' Council (Election) Act, 1976, and Section 78 of the 'AJK' Elections Act, 2020, to submit details of their assets, along with those of their dependent spouses and children, held up to June 30 of the year. The statements, prepared on the prescribed pro forma on stamp paper, were to be submitted by Dec 31. The commission said the names had been made public in accordance with the relevant provisions of the law after the lawmakers failed to meet the deadline.

It warned that if the asset statements were not submitted by Jan 15, the membership of the defaulting lawmakers could be suspended under the relevant sections of the two election laws, adding that the suspension would remain in force until the submission of the required details.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1965301/27-azad-kashmir-lawmakers-fail-to-submit-asset-details>

Rallies across 'AJK' mark Right to Self-Determination Day

Dawn, 6 January 2026

Rallies and seminars were held across 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) on

Monday to mark the Right to Self-Determination Day, with participants urging the United Nations to implement its January 5 resolution on Kashmir as a prerequisite for lasting peace in South Asia.

In Muzaffarabad, Pasban-i-Hurriyat Jammu Kashmir (PHJK), an organisation of post-1989 migrants from 'Indian-occupied Kashmir', organised a rally that drew a large number of participants, including women, children and elderly citizens. The march began at Burhan Wani Shaheed Chowk and proceeded to the UN Observers' Office near Domel - the confluence of the Neelum and Jhelum rivers.

Participants carried banners and placards highlighting flagrant human rights violations in 'Indian-occupied Kashmir' and demanding the right to self-determination, which they said had repeatedly been pledged to the Kashmiri people by the international community and India itself. Addressing the gathering, Legislative Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar called upon the United Nations to ensure implementation of its own resolutions to resolve the Kashmir dispute. He said the January 5 resolution provided a clear roadmap for settlement of the issue and that the Kashmiri people had been waiting for its enforcement for decades.

PHJK chairman Uzair Ahmed Ghazali said the people of Jammu and Kashmir

wanted to determine their political future through a UN-supervised process, as envisaged in the Security Council resolutions. He urged the international community and global human rights organisations to play a more effective role in addressing the situation in the disputed territory, including securing the release of political prisoners. Participants raised slogans against Indian military presence and reaffirmed their resolve to continue their struggle for the right to self-determination until their demands were met.

Similar rallies were held at several district headquarters, while a seminar was organised at Kashmir House in Islamabad, with senior most minister Mian Abdul Waheed, former presidents Sardar Yaqoob Khan, Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan, former premiers Raja Farooq Haider and Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, and APHC leader Altaf Ahmed Bhat among the prominent speakers. Separately, 'AJK' Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, who was in Islamabad, attended a seminar organised by the Friends of Kashmir at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services.

He said January 5 served as a reminder of the UN's unfulfilled commitments to the Kashmiri people and urged the world body to take effective notice of the situation in 'Indian-occupied Kashmir'. He maintained that Kashmir remained a disputed territory and the

Kashmiri struggle, marked by decades of sacrifices, could not be ignored indefinitely. Meanwhile, speakers at a conference here on Monday urged the international community to prevail upon India to implement United Nations resolutions on Kashmir.

The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), organised the conference titled "January 5: The Call for Self-Determination in Jammu and Kashmir." Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman of the Kashmir Institute of International Relations, Islamabad, said there are a number of UN resolutions on Kashmir, but the UNCIP resolution of January 5, 1949, provided a roadmap towards a solution to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. He said India knew from the outset that it would forcibly 'occupy' the Muslim-majority princely state.

He said India approached the UN claiming that the Maharaja had already signed the Instrument of Accession with India and sought to have Pakistan declared an aggressor. However, he added, the Maharaja had already relinquished his authority and fled the region. The UN subsequently decided that the people of Jammu and Kashmir should determine their own future.

He said the UN maintained the same position even after India attempted to

mislead it by holding Constituent Assembly elections in the region under its 'occupation' and arguing that the polls reflected the will of the people to remain with India. He encouraged the younger generation to understand the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in its true perspective and to become future diplomats for the Kashmir cause. Farooq Rehmani, a senior leader and former convener of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, said India never intended to implement UN resolutions and therefore complicated the process by raising one objection after another. He said the ceasefire was meant to bring peace to the region, but India used it to divide 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' from 'Indian-occupied' Jammu and Kashmir.

He added that the 1990s witnessed one of the worst phases of human rights violations in 'Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir', during which unmarked graves were discovered across the region. He said that since August 2019, India has been actively pursuing an agenda of demographic change, with thousands of domicile certificates issued to non-Kashmiri Indians, while the Kashmiri leadership continues to languish in jails.

Director of the India Study Centre, Dr Khurram Abbas, said that on this date in 1949, the UNCIP acknowledged the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. However, he said, after almost 78 years, the people of Jammu and Kashmir are still waiting to

exercise this right. He added that the relevance of the resolution had increased manifold after August 5, 2019. Members of the think tank community, intellectuals and a large number of students attended the event.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1965294/rallies-across-ajk-mark-right-to-self-determination-day>

Twelve caretaker GB ministers sworn in

Dawn, 7 January 2026

Twelve ministers of a Gilgit-Baltistan caretaker government took oath of their offices at a ceremony held at Governor House on Tuesday, five days after being notified. Acting Governor and Speaker of GB Assembly Advocate Nazir Ahmed administered the oath to the GB caretaker ministers.

Following are names of caretaker ministers and their portfolios:

Sajid Ali Baig, Minister for Home and Prison; Engineer Altaf Hussain, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development; Ghulam Abbas, Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Information Technology; Retired Col Abrar Ismail, Minister for Finance, Planning and Development; Meher Dad, Minister for Food; Sharafat Din, Minister for Forest, Wildlife and Environment; Maulana Sarwar Shah, Minister for Mineral, Industries, Labour and Commerce; Raja Shehzad Khan, Minister for Tourism, Excise and Taxation, Communication and Works;

Mumtaz Hussain, Minister for Water and Power; Dr Niaz Ali, Minister for Health; Syed Adil Shah, Minister for Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs; and Bahadur Ali, Minister for Education, Law and Prosecution.

The oath-taking ceremony was attended by GB Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza, former GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, officials and politicians. Meanwhile, Syeda Fatima assumed the office as Adviser for Social Welfare, Population and Women Development, while Abdul Hakeem as Adviser for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Water Management. On Friday, five weeks after the appointment of a caretaker chief minister, the Gilgit-Baltistan Council notified a 14-member caretaker cabinet, including two advisers. The appointments were made by PM Shehzad Sharif in his capacity as head of the GB Council. The five-year tenure of the GB Assembly ended on Nov 24 and GB caretaker Chief Minister Yar Muhammad was sworn in on Nov 26.

Talking to journalists after the oath-taking ceremony of caretaker ministers, caretaker Information Minister Ghulam Abbas said the priority of the caretaker government is to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in the region and it would provide all facilities to the GB election commission in this regard.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1965568/twelve-caretaker-gb-ministers-sworn-in>

Federal Govt, 'AJK' implement recommendations of JKJAAC

Business Recorder, 6 January 2026

The Federal government and the government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) have implemented the recommendations of the Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC) related to health, education, bureaucracy, electricity, accountability law, migrant seats, and development.

This was stated by the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam while addressing a joint press conference along with Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and 'AJK's Elementary and Secondary Education Minister Deewan Ali Khan Chughtai here on Monday.

Muqam said the government has already implemented several demands of the Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee and is fully committed to implementing all agreed-upon demands in letter and spirit. He said all First Information Reports (FIRs), except for fifteen cases related to murder, have been withdrawn, while all detained protesters have been released. He further added that the 'AJK' government has written to the Chief Justice of 'AJK' for the constitution of a judicial commission to register FIRs against those responsible for the mayhem during the protests.

The Minister for Kashmir Affairs said the demand to restrict the 'AJK' cabinet to twenty members has also been fulfilled. He said several departments have been merged to reduce the size of the government, and now twenty-one departments are functioning under twenty secretaries. He added that all government employees who were suspended during the protest demonstrations have been reinstated.

Regarding the establishment of the 'AJK' Bank, Muqam said the requirements of the State Bank of Pakistan have been fulfilled, and the bank will be made operational soon. He said compensation has been paid to the families of the deceased and the injured, while jobs have also been provided to the families of those who lost their lives. He said the demand for tax collection on the pattern of Punjab has also been approved. On the issue of property transfer, he said the matter has been referred to the President, who will issue an appropriate ordinance in this regard.

Muqam further said the demand regarding the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer and board members of the Universal Service Fund has been met. He said Ishtiaq Ahmed has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the USF. He added that the 'AJK' Government has approved two separate boards Intermediate and Secondary Education for Poonch and Muzaffarabad. He also said admissions

to medical colleges will be made strictly on open merit.

The Minister said the demand related to students' organizations is under consideration at a higher level. He said water supply schemes for ten districts of 'Azad Kashmir' have been included in the Public Sector Development Programme. He added that a tender has been floated for garbage segregation to improve solid waste management.

Talking about the health sector, Amir Muqam said the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' has announced the launch of the health card scheme for the people of 'Azad Kashmir' by the twentieth of this month. He said funds will soon be released for the installation of MRI and CT scan machines in 'Azad Kashmir'. He added that a development scheme worth nine hundred and ninety-eight million rupees has been approved for operation theatres and nurseries at Tehsil Headquarters hospitals.

Regarding upgrading the 'AJK' electricity system, Amir Muqam said the 'AJK' Government, IESCO, and the Power Division have jointly prepared a PC-1 worth ten billion rupees for this purpose. He said the demand for e-tendering for electricity meters has also been approved. He added that the issue of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project is under discussion and will be resolved soon.

On amendments to the accountability law, the Minister for Kashmir Affairs said an ordinance will be issued shortly. Regarding the issue of twelve migrant seats in the 'AJK' Assembly, Amir Muqam said it has been decided to constitute a nine-member committee comprising three members each from the 'AJK' Government, the Action Committee, and the Federal Government.

He said the Federal Government issued a formal notification after receiving the nominations. He added that the first meeting of the committee was held on the second of this month, but the Action Committee did not attend the session. On the establishment of an international airport at Mirpur, Amir Muqam said the Civil Aviation Authority has completed the feasibility study, and its findings will soon be made public. He said work on the feasibility of the Kahuta-Azad Pattan Road is also underway and will be completed shortly.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry expressed regret that members of the Joint Awami Action Committee did not attend today's meeting, convened to review progress on the implementation of agreed-upon points. He said the committee boycotted the meeting over the issue of chairmanships of standing committees in the 'AJK' Assembly being given to

one or two elected members on seats reserved for migrants. He added that chairmen of these standing committees have zero perks.

Chaudhry said suspended employees during the protests have been reinstated, and compensation for affected individuals has been provided. Property transfer ordinances have been submitted to the President, USF CEO, and board appointments completed, and two educational boards have been approved. Open merit policies in medical colleges are now being implemented, while water supply projects are progressing under the agreement.

The Minister expressed disappointment over JKJAAC members' absence from today's scheduled monitoring meeting, calling it a setback to ongoing efforts for public welfare and development in 'Azad Kashmir'. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry added that all details of the October 2025 agreement had previously been shared with the media, and federal oversight committees continue to monitor implementation. He reiterated that the federal government remains committed to resolving public grievances and ensuring peaceful, structured development in 'Azad Kashmir'.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40400806/federal-govt-ajk-implement-recommendations-of-jkjaac>

'AJK' govt has implemented all points of JAAC agreement within its jurisdiction: info minister

Dawn, 7 January 2026

The 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) government on Wednesday stated that it had accepted and implemented in letter and spirit almost all points of its agreement with the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) that fell within its jurisdiction, adding that issues relating to the federal government could take some time.

The federal government on October 4, 2025, signed an agreement with the JAAC to end the tense situation prevailing in the region since late September. The 'AJK' government claimed it had resolved or was moving towards resolution of more than 90 per cent of the issues outlined by the JAAC. "We have implemented all matters that were within our domain. However, federally funded projects are approved through a defined process, and that naturally takes time," Minister for Information and Religious Affairs Muhammad Rafique Nayyar said at a press conference. "Similarly, matters related to constitutional amendments also take time because they pass through different stages," he added.

Nayyar said the PPP-led government, under 'AJK' Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, had worked day and night during its one-and-a-half months in power to resolve public issues. "The prime minister is young and energetic.

He has removed the word 'rest' from his lexicon and has kept himself and his team constantly on their toes for public welfare," he said. Nayyar added that the atmosphere of inertia in the prime minister's office and the ministers' block had come to an end and the government had held a record five cabinet meetings within 90 days, approving measures to resolve public matters on a fast-track basis.

Listing steps taken by the government in connection with the agreement, Nayyar said that since PM Rathore himself was among the signatories on behalf of the 'AJK' government, it placed an even greater responsibility on the government to ensure its implementation. Regarding the reduction in the property transfer tax, he said the cabinet had already approved reducing the property transfer tax to 8.5pc, and a notification would be issued after the required legislation was enacted.

As for health cards, Nayyar said the government was not facing any financial constraints and that negotiations with the relevant company were underway. The prime minister, he said, set a deadline of January 20 to resolve the issue. Responding to a question as to why the government was not holding talks with the JAAC, Nayyar said the government was always ready for negotiations and wanted to move forward by taking all stakeholders on board.

"Our sincerity can also be gauged from the fact that the prime minister himself went to the house of a core member of the Action Committee. We are available 24 hours a day. If talks are to be held, just give us half an hour's notice," he said. Nayyar clarified that the 'AJK' government was not functioning under the agreement with the JAAC but under the public mandate. However, he added, the government remained fully committed to implementing all commitments made in the public interest.

The minister expressed regret that talks held in Islamabad on January 2 were attended by representatives of the federal and 'AJK' governments, but members of the JAAC did not turn up. Describing 'AJK' as a highly sensitive region, Nayyar said the ancestors of its people had made immense sacrifices for its freedom. "Our objective is to maintain an atmosphere of peace and order in the state and to resolve all legitimate public issues, and we will spare no effort to achieve this," he added.

In response to another question, Nayyar said the PPP would contest the next elections based on its performance and would once again seek the people's trust. He said elections would be held on time, as there was no provision in the Constitution for their cancellation. The information minister said that when he had previously held the information portfolio two-and-a-half

years ago, he had visited press clubs across 'AJK' and made efforts to resolve their issues. "We will seek guidance from the media and will take every possible step to strengthen it," he added.

Talks between the JAAC, the 'AJK' government and federal ministers over elite privileges and reserved seats for refugees broke down towards the end of September last year. Rival groups then staged protests, trading blame for violence that marred what began as a largely peaceful movement in 'AJK'. Fierce clashes between protesters and law enforcers left at least 10 people dead and scores critically injured in the territory. After two rounds of talks, an agreement between the JAAC, the 'AJK' government and the federal government was reached.

On December 29, the federal government notified a nine-member committee to deliberate on a contentious clause of the agreement, the abolition of elite privileges and 12 seats reserved for Pakistan-based refugees from 'India-occupied Kashmir'.

Under its terms of reference, the committee will deliberate on the issue of "members of the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly other than the 'AJK' constituencies (sic)" and has been authorised to meet as frequently as required and submit its recommendations to the Monitoring and Implementation (M&I) Committee

constituted under the Muzaffarabad Agreement.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1965646/ajk-govt-has-implemented-all-points-of-jaac-agreement-within-its-jurisdiction-info-minister>

'AJK' plans to hold expats' conference next month

Dawn, 8 January 2026

'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review preparations for the proposed Overseas Kashmiris Conference, scheduled to be held in the second week of February in the state capital.

According to an official statement, the meeting discussed the objectives of the conference, organisational strategy and priority areas, with a particular focus on encouraging overseas Kashmiris to contribute to the region's economic development. Investment opportunities in tourism, information technology, power and hydel sectors also came under discussion.

The prime minister directed the relevant departments to identify priority sectors and potential investment sites across 'AJK' and prepare clear, investment-ready proposals to facilitate informed decision-making by prospective investors. It was decided that investments in tourism, IT, power and hydel sectors would be encouraged to

accelerate economic activity in the region.

Terming overseas Kashmiris a vital asset for 'AJK', Mr Rathore expressed the hope that the proposed conference would prove to be a "game changer" for economic development. He said his government was committed to simplifying procedures, ensuring investor confidence and creating a conducive environment through measures such as special economic zones and a one-window operation.

"We have to assure the investors that their capital is secure and that their investments will be profitable in the long run," he said, adding that the government aimed to address unemployment by promoting investment-led growth, improving infrastructure and expanding tourism-related businesses across the region. "We will strengthen the economy by empowering the common man and will no longer allow the youth to be trapped in the cycle of unemployment," the prime minister said.

The meeting also endorsed the formation of a committee to address issues faced by overseas Kashmiris to ensure the prompt and effective resolution of their concerns. Participants were invited to present their suggestions, following which the prime minister issued directions to formulate a roadmap for future strategy. The meeting expressed optimism that the proposed conference would contribute to improved economic growth and foster a strong,

sustainable and long-term partnership for development and prosperity between the Kashmiris based overseas and the liberated territory.

Earlier, on Monday, Prime Minister Rathore was called upon by Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) Chairman Syed Qamar Raza at Kashmir.

House in the federal capital, where it was decided that overseas Kashmiris from across the world would be invited to participate in the conference. The two sides had also agreed to form joint committees comprising representatives of the 'AJK' government and the OPF to finalise conference arrangements, agenda and administrative matters. The committees would submit their recommendations to the prime minister.

Wednesday's meeting was attended by Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed, Minister for Forests and Wildlife Sardar Javed Ayoub, Minister for Finance and Inland Revenue Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Minister for Communications and Works Sardar Ziaul Qamar, Adviser on Trade and Industry Sardar Fahad Yaqoob, Chief Secretary Khushal Khan and other senior officials.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1965670/ajk-plans-to-hold-expats-conference-next-month>

Free Kashmir

The Nation, 7 January 2026

Across 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', rallies and seminars were held to mark Right of Self-Determination Day, with

participants urging the United Nations to implement its January 5 resolution on Kashmir, which calls for an impartial plebiscite to allow the people of the region to decide their future. Nearly eight decades on, Kashmir remains the open wound of the 1947 partition, a land marked by occupation, repression, and sustained brutality that increasingly mirrors the Israeli occupation and devastation of Palestine.

Kashmir is a divided people on a besieged land, and the consequences of that division extend far beyond its borders. This unresolved dispute continues to keep the entire South Asian region on edge. It must be reiterated, year after year and at every available forum, that Pakistan cannot achieve lasting economic, agricultural, political, or military security while the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people remains unfulfilled.

The logic of partition was unambiguous. Muslim-majority regions were to form one state, while Hindu-majority regions formed another. That Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority region placed under Indian control, remains forcibly annexed defies that very logic. The rejection of Indian rule by the Kashmiri people themselves is evident and enduring, sustained only through an overwhelming security presence, widespread surveillance, and systematic repression.

There is no viable long-term alternative to Kashmiri self-determination. The

region's strategic importance is undeniable. The rivers that sustain Punjab and much of Pakistan flow through Kashmir, while its mountainous terrain connects Pakistan, China, and India. Beyond geography, however, lie human costs that cannot be ignored. Families and communities have been torn apart for generations, separated by force and fear. This injustice demands correction.

The urgency of the Kashmir issue is heightened by the accelerating violence against religious minorities in India. If this trajectory continues unchecked, Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs will face further marginalisation and persecution, while Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority region under Indian control, will be subjected to even harsher repression.

Pakistan must never allow this issue to fade from memory or diplomacy. Like Palestine, Kashmir is not a complex moral puzzle. It is a question of occupation versus self-determination, of oppression versus justice. Peace will not return to South Asia until this fundamental issue is resolved, and the Kashmiri people are finally allowed to decide their own destiny.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Jan-2026/free-kashmir>

'AJK' PM visits mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam

The Nation, 11 January 2026

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', Faisal Mumtaz Rathore,

visited the mausoleum of the founder of Pakistan, Hazrat Quaid-e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, where he was presented a guard of honour by a smartly turned-out contingent of the armed forces. He laid a floral wreath and offered Fateha for the soul of Quaid-e-Azam. On this occasion, Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, while recording his remarks in the guest book, paid rich tribute to Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He said that Quaid-e-Azam was a great leader of the Muslims of the subcontinent, a wise politician, and a practical embodiment of principles. "Pakistan came into existence due to his relentless struggle, perseverance, and vision," he remarked. "Quaid-e-Azam's vision of Pakistan still serves as a beacon of hope and guidance for us," the prime minister said, adding that his teachings of unity, faith, and discipline provide a firm basis for sustainable growth, development, and stability. He expressed his resolve that the government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' would continue its struggle for public welfare, good governance, and the promotion of merit in the light of Quaid-e-Azam's vision. Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore also prayed for the security, progress, and stability of the country. The prime minister was accompanied by Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Jan-2026/ajk-pm-visits-mausoleum-quaid-e-azam>

'AJK' doctors warn of strike from 26th for long-pending demands

Dawn, 10 January 2026

United Doctors Forum (UDF) — an umbrella organisation of the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) and the Young Doctors Association (YDA) in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) — warned the government of a state-wide protest from Jan 26 if their "long-pending and legitimate" demands were not accepted. The warning was issued by UDF Chairman Dr Wajid Khan and General Secretary Dr Arshad Raja — who also serve as heads of the PMA and YDA, respectively — at a press conference here. They were flanked by other office-bearers, including Dr Waqar Butt, Dr Basharat Hayat, Dr Aamir Ikram, Dr Raja Imtiaz and Dr Bilal Ahmed.

Lamenting that years of delays had paralysed the health system and demoralised medical professionals, they said doctors had long shown restraint and exhausted all constitutional, legal and democratic forums for redress. "Unfortunately, instead of being resolved, our issues are being further complicated and decisions are repeatedly deferred," Dr Khan said, adding that such delays had pushed the healthcare system into uncertainty. The UDF leaders alleged that the promotion mechanism in the health department had completely collapsed, with promotion cases

pending since 2019, resulting in several doctors retiring without promotions.

According to them, a committee headed by the chief secretary had failed to convene even one effective meeting over the past three years, reflecting “serious administrative failure and lack of governance”. The continued absence of a permanent director general of health had emerged as a major issue, they said, maintaining that the department could not be run on an additional-charge basis. “If a regular DG is not appointed, doctors, as key stakeholders, will resist any such arrangement,” they warned.

The UDF leaders also expressed strong concern over the non-payment of financial benefits and allowances to doctors since June 2022, despite a clear Supreme Court verdict. They said a notification issued in Feb 2025 was contrary to the court’s ruling and amounted to “open injustice”. Highlighting infrastructural shortcomings, they said government hospitals across ‘AJK’ were facing an acute shortage of medical facilities and modern equipment. Medical machines installed in 2009 were still in use in 2026 despite having exceeded their operational life. They described the presence of only one MRI machine in the entire region as “deeply alarming”.

Referring to medical colleges, they said key positions such as principals had been rendered ineffective, Poonch Medical College was functioning in a dilapidated condition, and despite the

approval of the PC-I for Mirpur Medical College, construction work was progressing at a “painfully slow” pace, adversely affecting academic standards. The UDF leaders also raised concerns over security threats to women doctors and paramedical staff, incidents of physical violence in hospitals, one-sided inquiries and police action. “In every such incident, doctors are made scapegoats, which is grossly unfair,” they said.

They reiterated demands for the immediate payment of salaries to PST and contract doctors, regularisation of doctors serving for years, and prompt regular recruitments through the Public Service Commission. On the health card policy, the UDF leaders said it was a highly sensitive matter but doctors had been completely excluded from policymaking. They warned that the inclusion of private hospitals without proper categorisation would burden the public exchequer and lead to the wastage of public funds. They also protested against the severe shortage of residential facilities for doctors and house officers, as well as the non-implementation of incentives and allowance packages for doctors posted in remote areas.

Announcing the protest plan, the UDF said a two-hour open strike would begin across ‘AJK’ from Jan 26 and continue for two weeks. During the strike, OPDs would remain closed, while emergency services would continue. Failure to act by Feb 2 would

lead to complete hospital shutdowns. The UDF leaders claimed that over 1,200 doctors from across 'AJK' were expected to participate in the strike.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1966092/ajk-doctors-warn-of-strike-from-26th-for-long-pending-demands>

Economic Developments

G-B govt to adopt & operationalize Gilgit Cardiac Hospital

Business Recorder, 11 January 2026

The federal government has directed the government of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) to adopt and immediately operationalize Gilgit Cardiac Hospital, situated in Jutial area of the regional capital.

Gilgit Cardiac Hospital is the premier and only dedicated cardiac hospital in the region for a population of more than 2 million. The federal government has directed the chief secretary of G-B to respond with a comprehensive plan within three days. The government wants to ensure comprehensive cardiac care, advanced diagnostics, and treatment technologies, including angiography machines, a CT scan unit, and a radio fluoroscopy system. According to an official communique issued from the Prime Minister of Pakistan Office (PMO) states, "request for adoption of Gilgit Cardiac Hospital and Establishment of Satellite Cath Labs of NICVD or PIC in Baltistan and Diamer regions of the G-B".

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40401572/g-b-govt-to-adopt-operationalize-gilgit-cardiac-hospital>

Pakistan-China Strategic Dialogue: Advancing CPEC, Trade, and Regional Connectivity

Friday Times, 5 January 2025

The 7th round of Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue between Pakistan and China has concluded in Beijing. The Dialogue was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue is the highest consultative mechanism focusing on the spectrum of bilateral relations, as well as regional and international developments.

During the dialogue, both sides reaffirmed their commitment towards trade cooperation, enhancing people-to-people exchanges, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). While commenting on international morality and the situation in Venezuela, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, "China opposes the use of force in international relations and rejects the imposition of one country's will on another." Yi also called upon the international community to uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter. Russia and Iran have criticised the US attack on Venezuela as a violation of sovereignty, while Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has called the US attack "an act of state terrorism" and the abduction of President Nicolas Maduro "an unacceptable, vulgar and barbaric kidnapping."

South Asia is an economically deprived region often construed through the prism of confrontational politics. The region has been in the global limelight due to its proximity to Afghanistan and the wars fought there. In the post-9/11 era, South Asian countries faced the spill-over impact of the war on terror in Afghanistan. During this period, India used Afghan soil against Pakistan.

At present, with CPEC and China's emerging role in South Asia, the region is being seen in the context of economic connectivity. This is a positive development as it reflects the region's progress and economic uplift. CPEC foresees a future led by geo-economics. South Asia's regional connectivity with East and Central Asia will expose the region to industrialisation and technology transfer. Importantly, regional connectivity will allow energy-deficient countries access to energy-rich countries. This energy connectivity will promote inter-regional cooperation.

Regional connectivity is for the region's economic security and peace. Thus, economic connectivity needs to be prioritised to balance out the confrontational politics in the region. Pakistan's ties with China and CPEC represent a political-cum-economic opportunity. Pakistan can learn from China's economic practices and development approach, in particular, innovation in research and development and entrepreneurship

initiatives. Skill development is another area where Pakistan can learn from China.

In order to reap the economic dividends of regional connectivity, Pakistan needs to build its economic muscle and diversify its trading ties. Pakistan's economic engagement with regional countries, as well as the economies of East Asia, will promote Pakistan's narrative of geo-economics. It will also open up opportunities for educational and technological exchanges.

In the context of South and Central Asian connectivity, Afghanistan's stability is of utmost significance. Afghanistan's instability carries a domino impact on Pakistan. Peace in the tribal belt of Pakistan (former FATA) and Balochistan cannot be established without peace in Afghanistan. To achieve a durable peace in Afghanistan, regional and extra-regional players will have to step up efforts towards peace. In South Asia, to pursue regional connectivity and economic integration, what is needed is a change of mindset with a focus on economic development. The approach that regional connectivity projects are dominated or influenced by a single political actor is not in tune with the essence of trade cooperation.

CPEC will provide China with easy access to the Indian Ocean and will also make Pakistan a trading hub. However, coupling CPEC with China's dominating role in South Asia would

not be correct. Likewise, equating Pakistan's economic growth with India losing ground in the region would also not be correct. Such approaches only reinforce adversarial tendencies in the region, obstructing progress. Regional connectivity is for the region's economic security and peace. Thus, economic connectivity needs to be prioritised to balance out the confrontational politics in the region.

<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/05-Jan-2026/pakistan-china-strategic-dialogue-advancing-cpec-trade-regional-connectivity>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Pakistan Muslim League-N will emerge victorious in upcoming elections: Farooq Haider

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 12 January 2026

Former Prime Minister 'Azad Kashmir' (AJK), Raja Farooq Haider Khan has urged party workers to begin preparations for the upcoming elections. He expressed strong confidence that the PML-N will secure victory in 2026 and form the government, after which it will guide 'AJK' toward a path of development and prosperity. In his interaction with famous journalist Mohd. Umar Awan, Haider also emphasized the importance of unity beyond party lines, particularly for Assembly-6. He called on party workers to prioritize the people's welfare to transform it into a model constituency.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-12.jpg>

Diamer Bhasha Dam is the guarantor of national prosperity and no disruptions in work will be tolerated: Caretaker Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan

Urdu Point, 8 January 2026

The caretaker Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Justice (Retd.) Yar Muhammad participated via video link in the meeting of the Ministerial Committee constituted by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to resolve issues of Diamer Bhasha Dam on a priority basis. On this occasion, the Caretaker Chief Minister stated while addressing the meeting: "Diamer Bhasha Dam is a mega project of extreme importance for the prosperity of the country. It is essential that work on such an important project continues without interruption and without any hindrance. The people of Diamer have always played a positive role for this important project and have made sacrifices."

He further said that the federal government, especially the Prime Minister of Pakistan, has been addressing the concerns of the affectees with keen interest, which is highly commendable.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit-national-news/live-news-4676161.html>

Kashmir 1989 migrants decide to raise their case before political heads and people of the country

Urdu Point, 9 January 2026

The 1989 Kashmir migrants have decided to present their case directly before the President of Pakistan, the Prime Minister, Field Marshal, and the people of Pakistan. They have called upon the 'Azad Kashmir' government, political and religious parties to clearly state their position regarding the 1989 Kashmir migrants. The working committee will present a detailed report on the issues faced by the migrants at a press conference at the Central Press Club on 1 February 2026 and announce the future course of action.

According to details, an important meeting of the Migrants Working Committee was held today in the capital Muzaffarabad. The meeting was attended by presidents of camp committees, elected councillors, advisors, committee members, and other representatives. It was decided in the meeting that representatives of approximately 10,000 families of 1989 migrants residing in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' will hold a major press conference at the Central Press Club on 1 February 2026. In this press conference, the issues, difficulties, and sufferings faced by the 1989 Kashmir migrants will be brought before the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal of

Pakistan General Asim Munir and the 250 million people of Pakistan.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4677230.html>

From Social Media

TARIQ NAQASH @TariqNaqash

10 January 2026

#AJK #doctors warn of #strike from 26th for long-pending demands

Link to the tweet

<https://x.com/TariqNaqash/status/2009850493712118135>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

6 January 2025

Is there freedom of expression in Gilgit-Baltistan? According to the law, a case is registered against protesting youth, then they say there is complete freedom here. Alas #Gilgitbaltistan

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/2008552371245510942>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

4 January 2026

Everybody calls the Deosai Plateau the 'land of giants.' Even the Dawn correspondent in Gilgit wrote that it 'is sometimes called the land of giants.' But is it? And if it is, where does the title come from?

Link to the tweet

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/2007845486087274983>

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Disclaimer

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