

Weekly POK News Digest

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POK
Sost Dry Port
Gilgit-Baltistan
Karakoram Highway
Sehat Sahulat Programme
Joint Awami Action Committee



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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर परिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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Political Developments

PTI links political instability in 'AJK' to 'disregard for public mandate'

Dawn, 13 January 2026

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Monday attributed prolonged political instability in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) to "conspiratorial politics, ideologically hollow governments and systematic disregard for the public mandate." He claimed that its elected government had been ousted through internal and external machinations.

"After assuming power in 2021, the PTI introduced welfare-oriented initiatives and structured planning and development programmes in line with the vision of the party's founder, Imran Khan, but those efforts were deliberately derailed," said PTI 'AJK's information secretary, Syed Azhar Gillani, at a press conference here, adding that since the removal of the PTI government in April 2023, the territory had failed to achieve political stability.

Mr Gillani, flanked by fellow party leaders Mir Attiqur Rehman and Khawaja Shafique, maintained that attempts were made to weaken his party by engineering defections of more than 25 elected PTI lawmakers. "However, our party managed to reorganise itself and, within three years, re-emerged as a strong, organised and politically active force in 'AJK,'" he claimed.

Commenting on 'AJK's political landscape, Mr Gillani described the PML-N and PPP as "interest-driven groups devoid of ideology," alleging that they functioned as franchises serving powerful patrons and frequently altered their political positions to remain in power. He said that although voters had endorsed ideology in the last elections, their mandate was later violated.

Looking ahead to the next polls, he said the PTI would neither rely on "electables" nor engage in political horse-trading. Instead, ideologically committed party workers would be fielded. Acknowledging past political missteps, he said the party intended to nominate only principled, credible and people-centric candidates.

Responding to a question, Mr Gillani said the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) had raised genuine public issues and was advocating people's rights, which was why the PTI fully supported the committee's stance. He added that Imran Khan, despite being incarcerated, had directed party workers to continue advocating for public rights.

He said the PTI would focus on raising political awareness among the youth, exposing hypocrisy in politics and placing direct questions before the public regarding the past four years' performance in health, education, employment and opportunities for women and youth.

In response to another question, he said the PTI would contest the upcoming elections “with full force” and expressed confidence that the people of ‘AJK’ would once again repose their trust in Imran Khan’s political ideology.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1966590/pti-links-political-instability-in-ajk-to-disregard-for-public-mandate>

Islamabad, ‘AJK’, GB residents to get back health insurance from Jan 16

Dawn, 13 January 2026

The federal government has finally decided to resume the health card facility for over 10 million residents of Islamabad, ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, and Gilgit Baltistan. The PC-1 worth of Rs40 billion has been approved by the National Steering Committee of Sehat Sahulat Programme (SSP) chaired by Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal. The service will be resumed from Jan 16.

The meeting of the committee was attended by health secretary Hamid Yaqoob, special secretary of health and CEO of SSP Arshad Khan, along with members of the National Steering Committee. The committee reviewed progress on the restoration and launch of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) services to all permanent resident families of ICT, ‘AJK’, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The CEO of Federal SSP Arshad Khan shared prime minister’s

directives for immediate restoration of the services.

“The committee approved the revised PC-I with an estimated cost of approximately Rs40 billion, extending up to 30th June 2027, to provide free hospitalisation services to all permanent resident families of ICT, ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, and Gilgit-Baltistan under the UHC model of Federal Sehat Sahulat Programme.

“It was also decided to extend existing contracts with State Life Insurance Corporation and Nadra through addenda to ensure uninterrupted services, while outstanding liabilities will be cleared from the PSDP as per the prime minister’s directions,” a statement issued by the health ministry claimed. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Mustafa Kamal said the country must adopt modern health insurance and strategic purchasing models rather than directly managing hospital services to ensure quality, efficiency, and dignity in healthcare delivery.

Over 10 million residents of Islamabad, ‘AJK’ and Gilgit-Baltistan were (GB) suffering since March 2024 as the service was suspended because the federal govt had failed to clear its dues. On the other hand, residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab were enjoying the facility. Residents of KP have been getting the best possible medical facility as they can get medical treatment at private and public sector hospitals whereas residents of Punjab

can only get treatment at public sector hospitals.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had launched the health card programme on Dec 31, 2015, for Islamabad and described the move a first step towards making the country a welfare state. He had also announced the card would be expanded to all parts of Punjab, Balochistan, 'AJK', Gilgit-Baltistan and then Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). People of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) could not benefit from the initiative at that time because their governments had declined to become part of the federal government's programme in which they also had to contribute. Later, the KP had launched its own health card namely Sehat Insaf Card.

During the tenure of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government, the programme was expanded across the country. In April 2022 some of the hospitals had suspended the service as they feared that the PML-N government might discontinue the programme as PTI promoted/marketed the programme as its initiative. Later, the PML-N government limited the programme to public sector hospitals in Punjab and the service was completely suspended in Islamabad, 'AJK' and GB.

Since the start of health card in year 2015, the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan has been dealing with the card facility, and in 2021 it again won the contract of

insurance of health cards for the next three years (2022 to 2025). The insurance has been further extended to June 30, 2027.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1966599/islamabad-ajk-gb-residents-to-get-back-health-insurance-from-16th>

Protesters block KKH over delay in water supply project

Dawn, 14 January 2026

Residents of Nasirabad in Hunza on Tuesday staged a protest sit-in, blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) against delays in the completion of a water supply scheme from Minapin in Nagar, Gilgit-Baltistan.

Protesters alleged that thousands of fruit and non-fruit trees had dried up and crops over thousands of acres of agricultural land were damaged due to water shortages. A large number of local residents staged an indefinite sit-in at Nasirabad, blocking the KKH. They said Nasirabad valley has been facing a shortage of water, particularly during the summer season, for a long time. The local population depends on agriculture and fruit trees as their main source of income. Last year, acute water shortages severely affected crops and fruit orchards.

According to the protesters, a water supply scheme from Minapin to Nasirabad in Hunza was approved 15 years ago to address the issue. However, they alleged that despite the passage of 15 years, the pipeline-based water supply scheme has not been

completed. Baba Jan, a leader of the Gilgit-Baltistan Awami Workers Party and a resident of the area, said the livelihoods of local people have suffered for many years. "Fruit trees, including blackberry, cherry, apricot and other unique varieties in the valley, have dried up. Crops, which are the backbone of the local economy, were badly damaged last year due to the unavailability of irrigation water," he said.

He added that the water supply scheme, initiated 15 years ago, had completed about 90 per cent of its work, but was later revised. The revised project requires approval from a Gilgit-Baltistan CWP meeting; however, for the past three years, it has not been included in the meeting's agenda. Another protester, Wajid Baig, said local residents were also facing difficulties in accessing water for drinking and daily use. Protesters pointed out that while the GB government claims to promote plantation and the billion tree project, agricultural land and thousands of trees grown by local people are suffering due to water shortages.

They said they had repeatedly met officials and requested intervention, but no action was taken. The protesters staged the sit-in on the KKH despite temperatures dropping to minus eight degrees Celsius. Traffic remained suspended for several hours; however, in the evening, the road was opened for an hour to allow stranded tourists and emergency vehicles to pass.

The protesters warned that if practical work on the project does not start this year, half of the village could be completely destroyed agriculturally, further worsening the local economy and living conditions. They appealed to the caretaker chief minister to take immediate notice of the situation and direct the relevant departments to start work on the water supply project on an emergency basis.

They said the sit-in would continue until a notification is issued to begin work on the water project.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1966866/protesters-block-kkh-over-delay-in-water-supply-project>

Suicide Cases Persist in Gilgit-Baltistan; 40 Lives Lost in 2025

Pamir Times, 14 January 2026

The troubling pattern of suicides in Gilgit-Baltistan persisted in 2025, with 40 people losing their lives during the year, according to official police statistics. Tanveer Abbas, a local journalist, citing data compiled by the Gilgit-Baltistan Police, has reported that 23 men and 17 women died by suicide across the region in 2025.

District-wise figures show that Ghizer remained the most affected district, reporting 23 suicide cases. Gilgit district recorded 9 cases, while Skardu and Shigar reported three cases each. Two suicides were registered in Hunza during the year.

The data reflects a continuation of a worrying trend from previous years. In 2024, police records show that 46

people died by suicide in Gilgit-Baltistan, including 27 men and 19 women. That year, Ghizer alone accounted for 26 cases, followed by Gilgit, Hunza, Skardu, Diamer, Ghanche, and Nagar. Similarly, in 2023, a total of 47 suicide cases were recorded in the region, involving 28 men and 19 women, with Ghizer, Gilgit, Hunza, Ghanche, Skardu, Astore, and Shigar reporting incidents.

In addition to suicides, honour killings remained a serious concern in 2025. Quoting Tanveer Abbas and citing GB Police data, 13 people were killed in the name of “honour” across Gilgit-Baltistan during the year. Diamer district accounted for 10 of these cases, involving seven women and three men, while three honour killing cases were reported from Gilgit district.

The persistent rise in suicides and honour-related violence has highlighted the need for stronger mental health support systems, social interventions, and coordinated policy responses across Gilgit-Baltistan.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2026/01/13/suicide-cases-persist-in-gilgit-baltistan-40-lives-lost-in-2025/>

‘AJK’ abolishes seven posts of secretaries

Dawn, 15 January 2026

The ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) government has abolished seven secretary-level posts to fulfil an agreement with the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee seeking a reduction in administrative

expenditures. According to a handout issued by the Press Information Department on Wednesday, the abolition was approved by the cabinet at its meeting on Dec 17 last year as part of administrative reforms aimed at austerity and improving the efficiency of the official machinery.

The abolished posts include secretary of transport; secretary of population welfare; secretary of disaster management and civil defence; secretary of tourism and archaeology; secretary of religious affairs and auqaf; secretary of (ex-officio) environmental protection agency; and secretary of information technology.

During the tenure of former prime minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, several separate secretary-level posts were created even for departments with fewer than 100 regular budgeted employees, placing an additional burden on the exchequer. His successor, Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, who frequently spoke of austerity measures during his tenure, did not abolish those posts and instead elevated as many as 10 civil servants to the rank of secretary.

Subsequently, the number of local officers — mostly from the ‘AJK’ Administrative Service, Law Department and Secretariat Group — holding the status of secretaries to government, including the Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR), and secretaries to the president and the prime minister, rose to 26. Of them, two

were currently serving against non-secretary posts and four had been declared as 'surplus secretaries'.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1967016/ajk-abolishes-seven-posts-of-secretaries>

'AJK' University faces over Rs1bn deficit; staff threatens campus shutdown

Dawn, 15 January 2026

A financial deficit exceeding Rs1bn has pushed the University of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (UAJK) to the brink, with academic and administrative staff threatening to shut down all five campuses over the non-payment of salary increases for the past seven months.

The warning was issued by Academic Staff Association (ASA) president Dr Rehana Kausar and the Administrative Staff Association (AdSA) president Israr Saeed Qadri on Wednesday at a press conference along with some others. They said they had given the 'AJK' government a deadline of Feb 2 to take concrete steps to resolve the crisis, warning that failure to meet their demands by Feb 1 would lead to the complete closure of all campuses and a march towards the Legislative Assembly.

According to them, despite salary increases announced for the financial year 2025–26, 'UAJK' employees had yet to receive the enhanced pay. More than 30 employees had long been deprived of pension payments and leave encashment, while families of deceased employees had been denied

benefits under the family assistance package due to the non-availability of funds.

Several employees, they added, were suffering from serious ailments such as cancer, heart disease and kidney disorders and were facing additional hardship due to non-payment of medical bills. They said that despite assurances given between Oct 15 and Oct 25, 2025, salary arrears had not been cleared, leaving staff with no option but to protest.

Salik Abbasi, president of the Non-Gazetted Employees Association, and Sharif Awan, president of the All Government Employees Association, who were also present on the occasion, announced full support for the ASA and AdSA and warned of state-wide protests if the issue remained unresolved. Tracing the origins of the crisis in the 'UAJK', established in 1980 as the region's first university, Dr Kausar and Mr Qadri said the financial strain began after the Mirpur campus was granted university status in 2009, followed by Poonch in 2012 and Kotli in 2014.

While assets worth billions of rupees were transferred to the newly created universities, financial liabilities remained with the parent institution, they said, adding, a subsequent decline in student enrolment further reduced income, while the university's grant was frozen following the devolution of higher education under the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2017.

They said 'UAJK' currently received an annual grant of only Rs3.5 million from the 'AJK' government, which was grossly inadequate. As a result, annual salary increases had not been paid on time for the past four to five years, with the 2025 increase still pending despite being paid elsewhere in the state. They said faculty and staff had been observing a partial boycott of teaching and administrative work for the past week, but neither university authorities nor government officials had responded.

They informed that the current and former vice chancellors, as well as the ['AJK'] President and the Higher Education Commission chairman had repeatedly written to the 'AJK' government to fulfil its responsibility of addressing the varsity's financial crisis, but no positive response had been received so far.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1967070/ajk-university-faces-over-rs1bn-deficit-staff-threatens-campus-shutdown>

'AJK' gets first woman chief economist

Dawn, 16 January 2026

For the first time in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), a woman civil servant has been elevated to the post of chief economist in the Planning and Development (P&D) department. According to a Services and General Administration Department notification circulated on Thursday, Mahnaz Faheem, who was serving as

chief of section (BS-19) in the P&D department, was promoted to BS-20 and appointed chief economist in the light of a decision taken by Selection Board-I, chaired by the chief secretary, on Dec 9 last year.

Ms Faheem joined 'AJK's civil service in 1997 as a planning officer after obtaining a Master of Business Administration degree from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

In 2000, she earned a master's degree in gender and development from the University of Sussex, the UK, becoming one of the first two Chevening scholars from 'AJK'. Earlier, she had secured a gold medal in BSc with double mathematics and physics from the University of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'. After the devastating 2005 earthquake, she also served in two UNDP-funded projects in 'AJK'.

In a statement, Ms Faheem expressed gratitude to the government for the confidence reposed in her and said the appointment carried both honour and responsibility.

"Women's representation at senior policy-making levels is essential for balanced and responsive development," she said, adding that she would work to ensure economic planning in 'AJK' was informed by evidence, equity and a gender-sensitive approach that translated into tangible outcomes on the ground.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1967140/ajk-gets-first-woman-chief-economist>

Wheat scam Four Passco staffers on physical remand

Dawn, 16 January 2026

A Tandlianwala senior civil judge with powers as judicial magistrate, Jamil Ahmad Bhatti, issued on Thursday five-day physical remand of four arrested Passco staffers allegedly involved in embezzlement of wheat worth about Rs70 million.

Reports said Faisalabad FIA Station House Officer Ajmal Hussain informed the court that a first information report has been registered against seven employees and a broker after information received on Jan 13 that they were involved in selling wheat from Passco godowns and replacing same bags after filling with dust, causing huge loss to the government. He said record was examined and total loss will be calculated during investigation.

The arrested employees included assistant purchase inspector (API) Muhammad Suhail and three watchmen. One of the watchmen, Kashif, disclosed during initial probe that another API Nasir Khan and an assistant purchase officer Faisal Ameer embezzled wheat by selling through a broker, Jamil Gujjar, with the connivance of Okara Passco zonal head Rao Tariq and godown in-charge Rai Abdul Karim.

The SHO told Dawn that the role of zonal head and in-charge godown will be determined during investigation. He

said raids are being conducted to arrest three others nominated in the FIR.

Fined

A fine of Rs500,000 was imposed on a contractor of Project Management Unit (PMU) in Faisalabad's Government Teaching Hospital Ghulam Muhammadabad for the poor state of cleanliness by Commissioner Jehangir Anwar on Thursday during his surprise visit.

The commissioner talked to the patients about free of cost medicines. He asked the medical superintendent to provide a list of other required resources including doctors and paramedical staff and said that it is a priority to make hospitals complaint-free.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1967155/wheat-scam-four-passco-staffers-on-physical-remand>

Shehbaz urged to intervene over 'AJK' 'accord violations'

Dawn, 18 January 2026

The Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) has accused the government of violating a landmark agreement signed in October last year and has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to intervene, citing serious delays in implementation and expressing concern over the induction of a "controversial figure" into the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) ahead of the upcoming elections in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK).

In an open letter addressed to the prime minister on Saturday, the JAAC said the agreement was signed on October 3–4, 2025, following deadly protests in late September that claimed several lives. A high-powered delegation from Islamabad, dispatched on the premier's directives, had visited Muzaffarabad and concluded what the committee described as a historic accord, reassuring the people of 'AJK' of Pakistan's commitment to safeguarding their legitimate rights.

However, the committee alleged that the agreement had been repeatedly breached. It pointed out that the final clause required meetings of the negotiating committee to be held every 15 days, followed by the issuance of an official communiqué. Over the subsequent three months, however, only two meetings were held, on October 21 and November 4. A third meeting scheduled for January 5 this year was boycotted by the JAAC.

The committee also highlighted delays and shortcomings in the implementation of the Health Card Scheme. Although funds were released after a delay of more than 100 days, many major local hospitals in 'AJK' were not included in the State Life Insurance Corporation's panel. This, it said, would force even poor patients to travel to Rawalpindi or Islamabad for treatment, undermining the utility of the scheme.

Referring to compensation for victims of the protests, the JAAC said the

agreement promised financial compensation equivalent to law enforcement allowances for those killed on October 1 and 2, Rs1 million for each gunshot injury, and a government job for a family member of each deceased person within 20 days. "However, this clause has yet to be fully implemented, which amounts to a serious breach of the agreement," the letter stated.

The committee further said that FIRs registered against JAAC members and members of the public between May 9, 2023, and October 4, 2025, were to be withdrawn under the agreement, but the issue remained unresolved. It added that young people continued to face difficulties in obtaining police character certificates, while several individuals seeking employment abroad had been offloaded from flights and arrested after being placed on exit and passport control lists, causing financial losses and mental distress.

The JAAC also accused the authorities of violating another clause calling for the formation of a high-powered committee to review the issue of 'AJK' Assembly members elected from constituencies outside the territory. It said the committee's formation had been unjustifiably delayed, while MLAs elected on refugee seats were granted parliamentary privileges and standing committee positions. The committee further alleged that non-residents continued to be admitted to educational institutions under refugee quotas, in violation of the agreement.

Expressing alarm over political developments ahead of the forthcoming 'AJK' elections, the JAAC strongly criticised the PML-N for inducting Saqib Majeed, whom it accused of opening fire on peaceful protesters in Muzaffarabad on September 29, 2025, killing three people and injuring dozens. The committee said the incident had triggered widespread protests and clashes across 'AJK', resulting in further loss of life.

It noted that Mr Majeed, the son-in-law of Muslim Conference chief Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan and a former chief organiser of the party, was now being given political cover by the PML-N, a move it said had generated strong resentment across the region.

The JAAC said it had boycotted the negotiation process in protest against Mr Majeed's inclusion in the PML-N and urged the prime minister to take personal interest in the matter, hold the local PML-N leadership accountable, and reconsider the party's decision to induct what it described as an individual responsible for killing peaceful demonstrators.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1967604/shehbaz-urged-to-intervene-over-ajk-accord-violations>

Economic Developments

Macabre concessions at Sost Dry Port

Dawn, 13 January 2026

Despite complaints by some disgruntled residents, the Pakistani government has always endeavored to take cognizance of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)

issues and resolve them. Sost Dry Port in GB is a crucial trade hub, primarily facilitating trade between China and Pakistan.

Recently, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) issued statutory regulatory order (SRO) 2488 ostensibly to placate the protests of some residents of GB. The SRO states, "Sales tax, income tax, and federal excise duty payable on imports covered under this notification shall not be levied". The notified SRO — which could damage the textile sector — was issued on January 1, 2026. As per the SRO, "The benefit of non-levy of sales tax, income tax, and federal excise duty shall be extended by the Collector of Customs on a 'first come, first serve' basis within the approved quota limit for goods imported for consumption within the GB region".

The icing on the cake is that "The GB government shall ensure that all goods imported under this notification are exclusively used within [its] territory". How? Does GB administration have the critical mass to 'ensure' that the facility will not be abused? In addition, "Special procedures shall also be devised by the FBR to effectively identify, track, and clear goods which are imported via Sost for the rest of the country from the goods cleared under this notification." But, how effective have policies like this been in the past?

'Past experience clearly demonstrates that similar region-specific tax concession regimes have been repeatedly misused'. The SRO covers every item and gives carte blanche to

GB traders to buy whatever they want from China and get it cleared at Sost Dry Port. Notwithstanding the fact that bilateral trade figures between Pakistan and China are heavily tilted in favour of China, this new open permission could further widen the trade gap.

The SRO specified, “The cumulative amounts of sales tax, income tax, and federal excise duty as chargeable under the Sales Tax, 1990 (VII of 1990), Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, and Federal Excise Act, 2005 shall not exceed the limit of Rs4 billion in a fiscal year, as calculated in the Customs Computerised Clearance System.” A generous and merciful assurance for the trade and industry of Pakistan.

Facilitating and encouraging residents are responsibilities of the state, but the modus operandi should always be that other provinces or areas should not be affected. The draft SRO was issued at the far end of 2025 and, surprisingly, the FBR only allowed three days for objections or comments (25th was a national holiday, 26th was a Friday when establishments in many areas remained closed or worked half the day, and 27th was a Saturday).

Trade and Industry representatives are up in arms and term this SRO as sounding the death knell for Pakistani industries. Take textile, for example. There are 236 importable textile items. Anwer Aziz, Regional Chairman, All Pakistan Textile Processing Mills Association, took exception to allowing textile products, especially those manufactured domestically and sold to

local and foreign customers. As an example, he remarked that unbleached and bleached fabrics will enjoy the benefits of the SRO.

Mr Aziz asked, “How many textile processing mills are based in GB?” He added that despite so-called firewalls to check the inflow of imports, there is no guarantee that these fabrics would not find a way to Faisalabad, Lahore, or Karachi, as is the norm under the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement.

Although facilitating GB traders is welcomed, the point is that this facility should also be provided for local manufacturers to sell to GB under exempted sales tax and other taxes. If the cap of Rs4bn is enforced, then local goods could be categorised as ‘exports’ to GB and enjoy the exemptions. There is always the apprehension that this cap could be enhanced in the future to mollify protestors. A senior industrialist noted that the Rs4bn exemptions translate into imports of Rs16–18bn, about \$65m. Do GB denizens have the capacity to buy this imported quantity?

Anjum Nisar, former chairman of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry, said, “Past experience clearly demonstrates that similar region-specific tax concession regimes have been repeatedly misused. Earlier exemptions granted to erstwhile federally and provincially administered tribal regions were also subject to conditions and monitoring requirements, yet duty- and tax-free

goods found their way across the country, damaging local industries, and causing significant revenue losses.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1966531/macabre-concessions-at-sost-dry-port>

FBR includes names of 'AJ&K', G-B taxpayers in Active Taxpayers' List

Business Recorder, 14 January 2026

In a major development, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has included the names of taxpayers of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan in the Active Taxpayers' List (ATL). They were already on the ATL of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Central Board of Revenue and Gilgit-Baltistan Council Board of Revenue.

In this regard, the FBR has notified an SRO17(I)/206 to amend Income Tax Rules 2002.

In case of a person on the active taxpayers' list of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Central Board of Revenue or Gilgit-Baltistan Council Board of Revenue, the name of such a person shall be included in the active taxpayers' list under section 181A of the Income Tax Ordinance, notification pointed out.

According to the notification, name of a taxpayer shall be included in the active list under section 181A of the Income Tax Ordinance, if his or her temporary or permanent address registered in 'AJ&K' or G-B.

The Commissioner Inland Revenue, having jurisdiction over the case on the

basis of his temporary address mentioned on the CNIC, shall verify the non-existence of any employment or business in Pakistan through IRIS after making inquiry and seeking undertaking from concerned taxpayer.

The concerned Commissioner of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Central Board of Revenue or Gilgit-Baltistan Council Board of Revenue, as the case may be, shall verify the employment or sole business existence in the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' or the Gilgit-Baltistan through IRIS: The person, whose name has been included in the ATL is liable to file income tax returns under section 114 of the Ordinance, says FBR notification, adding, if such a person who does not comply with the notice under sub-section (4) of section 114 of the Ordinance, his or her name shall be removed from the active taxpayers' list under section 181A of the Ordinance, the FBR added.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40402113/fbr-includes-names-of-ajk-g-b-taxpayers-in-atl>

CDWP clears Rs40bn health cover for 'AJK', GB, ICT

Dawn, 16 January 2026

The government on Thursday cleared a Rs40.188 billion Sehat Sahulat Programme to provide universal health coverage in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) for two years ending June 30, 2027.

Prime Minister Shehzad Sharif is expected to formally launch the project

within the next couple of days. This was one of the five health sector projects worth Rs79.35bn cleared by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) at a meeting presided over by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal.

The *Sehat Sahulat* Programme was originally launched on Feb 7, 2018, and gradually expanded across the country and extended from the initial three years to seven years, ending June 2025 and was devolved to provinces. Presiding over a meeting on Jan 2, 2026, PM Shehbaz approved the continuity of the programme beyond June 30, 2025, until June 30, 2027, for 'AJK', GB and ICT only.

Under his directives, a modified project with a revised capital cost of Rs40.188bn was cleared by the CDWP and referred to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (EcneC) for formal approval under universal health coverage (UHC) scope. The project is a key component of the Uraan Pakistan social sector Initiative and seeks to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare services for all citizens, particularly the poor, vulnerable and underserved segments of society.

Under the revised framework, the *Sehat Sahulat* Programme is being implemented through the development budget on a universal basis in the three federal territories for improving overall public health outcomes by expanding coverage of secondary and priority inpatient treatments.

The programme would provide health insurance coverage for indoor healthcare services to all permanent resident families in the covered districts as per Nadra records to reduce out-of-pocket expenses and catastrophic health expenditures related to hospitalisation by up to 60 per cent.

The minister told the meeting that the programme was initially launched in 2015 by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif with the core objective of providing 100pc health coverage exclusively to poor and deserving families. He alleged that the subsequent renaming and expansion of the programme to affluent segments in certain regions led to the misuse of resources and restricted access for genuinely deserving households.

He directed that the programme be renamed its original title, i.e. the Prime Minister's National Health Programme, and that public resources remain focused on protecting vulnerable groups and strengthening the social safety net. All in all, the CDWP approved three smaller development projects with a combined estimated cost of Rs12.5bn under its financial powers and referred two larger (Rs56.8bn) projects, including the Rs40.188bn *Sehat Sahulat* and Rs15.95bn Jinnah Hospital (Polyclinic-II), Islamabad, to EcneC for formal approval.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1967205/cdwp-clears-rs40bn-health-cover-for-ajk-gb-ict>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Pakistan strongly reacts against the profiling of mosques and ulema in 'occupied Kashmir'

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 18 January 2026

Pakistan has strongly reacted against the profiling of mosques, ulema, and mosque management committees' by security forces in 'occupied Kashmir'. A statement has been released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which it has been mentioned that such initiatives by India are open interference in religious matters, which stand in violation of the basic religious freedoms. The purpose of such initiatives is to make the Muslim community of 'occupied Kashmir' nervous and push them into isolation.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/1-2.jpg>

Kashmir freedom and resolution of public issues is our top priority: Faisal Mumtaz Rathore

Urdu Point, 12 January 2026

The Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Faisal Mumtaz Rathore met with the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit-Baltistan, Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq Khan at Kashmir House. Detailed discussions were held on a range of national and state related matters, including the Kashmir issue. Also present on the occasion were Jamaat-e-Islami Deputy Secretary

General 'Azad Kashmir', Jamil Rathore and SO Sahibzada Younis.

Speaking on the occasion, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that the lives of Kashmiri leaders including Yasin Malik and the freedom-loving people who are imprisoned in Indian jails are in grave danger. The international community and international human rights organizations should take immediate notice of this serious situation. He stated that, following in the footsteps of his respected father, he will make every possible effort for the freedom of Jammu and Kashmir and for resolving the people's issues.

Although he has limited time, he will take steps to resolve the issues with complete seriousness and determination. He also assured that the problems highlighted during the meeting would be addressed. He expressed his firm resolve that the freedom of 'occupied' Jammu and Kashmir and the resolution of public issues are the topmost priority of the government.

He further said that he will soon visit the central office of Jamaat-e-Islami as well. On this occasion, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami, Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq Khan congratulated Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on assuming the Office of Prime Minister and expressed his best wishes for him.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4680282.html>

Issuance of health card reflects PPP's vision and people friendly policies: Shagufta Kazmi

Urdu Point, 15 January 2026

Syeda Shagufta Noreen Kazmi, Vice President and Member of the Organizing Committee of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Women Wing 'Azad Kashmir', stated that the launch of the health card scheme for the people of 'Azad Kashmir' reflects PPP's foresighted vision and people friendly policies.

Talking to the media, Kazmi said that the strong people's government that the PPP has established in 'Azad Kashmir' is the result of the prudent leadership, tireless struggle, and unparalleled political role of the central PPP leader and former Senior Advisor to the Government, Chaudhry Riaz. She also lauded Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir', Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore for launching people oriented welfare schemes, who she referred to as truly a people's Prime Minister.

She emphasized that the leadership of PPP, especially Chaudhry Riaz, has always fulfilled the promises made to the people.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/muzaffarabad/kashmir/live-news-4683183.html>

From Social Media

TARIQ NAQASH @TariqNaqash

13 January 2026

#PTI links political instability in #AJK to 'disregard for public mandate'

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/TariqNaqash/status/2010953076606435497>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

17 January 2025

Don't turn Diamer into an experimental lab; someone else is reaping the benefits while Diamer is getting a bad name. Chairman of the Peace Committee Gilgit-Baltistan Rahmatullah Bhutto #Diamer #chilas #Darel #Tangir #khh #security #convoy #government #wtv #BreakingNews

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/2012580533512065027>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

14 January 2026

Residents of Nasirabad in Hunza on Tuesday staged a protest sit-in, blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) against delays in the completion of a water supply scheme from Minapin in Nagar, Gilgit-Baltistan

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/2011292068124189051>

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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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