

Weekly POK News Digest

(A weekly news digest on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)

Volume 6 | Issue 5

02 February - 08 February 2026

POK
Relief Efforts
Education Sector
Gold Exploration
Gilgit-Baltistan
Aga Khan Development Network



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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Political Developments

Political activity gears up for election of 'AJK' President

Pakistan Today, 2 February 2026

Following the death of the President of the State of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, political activity surrounding the election of a new president has intensified.

Various political and social figures have begun lobbying in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad to secure the constitutional post. Behind-the-scenes contacts and consultations are also underway as political leaders seek to build consensus on a suitable candidate.

Sources said unannounced meetings and consultations are being held among key political figures in an effort to agree on a name for the presidency. Former Speaker of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar is among the prominent names under consideration.

Political sources said the name of former Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan is also being discussed as a potential candidate. In addition, former prime ministers Raja Farooq Haider Khan, Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan and Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan are also included in the race for the presidency, sources added.

Sources further said that former President of 'Azad Kashmir' Sardar Masood Khan is also being considered for the post once again. The name of former Foreign Office spokesperson Ms. Tasneem Aslam has also emerged among the possible candidates.

Given the constitutional and symbolic significance of the office of the President of the State, all major political parties are keen to nominate an influential and experienced figure for the position. Political parties are intensifying consultations with their leadership and allies ahead of a final decision.

Sources said the process of electing the President of the State will be completed in accordance with constitutional requirements, and significant progress is expected in the coming days.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/02/02/political-activity-gears-up-for-election-of-ajk-president/>

Pakistan declares February 5 public holiday to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day

The Nation, 2 February 2026

The federal government has declared a nationwide public holiday on February 5 in observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day, reiterating Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of 'Indian-administered Kashmir' and their right to self-determination.

An official notification issued on Sunday stated that a one-minute

silence will be observed at 10 a.m. across the country to honor Kashmiri martyrs. Marked annually, the day symbolizes national unity and solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

Officials said various activities, including seminars, rallies, and prayer gatherings, will be held in major cities and towns to draw attention to the Kashmir issue and reaffirm continued political and moral backing. Government offices, educational institutions, and most private businesses will remain closed, while essential services will continue as usual.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Feb-2026/pakistan-declares-february-5-public-holiday-observe-kashmir-solidarity-day>

‘AJK’ president laid to rest with state honours

Dawn, 2 February 2026

Thousands of people converged on a playground in this lakeside city on Sunday to pay their last respects to President Barrister Sultan Mahmood, as ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) bade farewell to a veteran leader who rose to prominence at a relatively young age and went on to play a long and decisive role in the region’s politics.

The 70-and-a-half-year-old president, who breathed his last in an Islamabad hospital on Saturday evening after protracted illness, was accorded a gun

carriage funeral — a state honour reserved for figures the state considers of exceptional national importance.

On Saturday, the coffin was transported directly from Islamabad to the president’s ancestral village of Chechiyan, located about 15 kilometres on the outskirts of Mirpur. On Sunday, it was brought in a large vehicular procession to the Quaid-e-Azam Cricket Stadium in the heart of the city, where it was draped with the ‘AJK’s national flag and placed on a military gun carriage before being taken into the packed ground amid full ceremonial protocol.

In Pakistan, a gun carriage funeral is typically accorded to presidents and prime ministers, chiefs of the armed forces, highly decorated military officers, and, on rare occasions, national figures whose services are deemed extraordinary, symbolising that the deceased is being mourned not merely as an individual but as a national asset.

The funeral prayer was led by Qazi Muhammad Rafique, the spiritual leader of Gulhar Sharif — the most revered shrine in the neighbouring Kotli district — at around 4pm, after which police contingents presented a guard of honour to the late president.

Prominent among the mourners were ‘AJK’ Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Acting President and Legislative Assembly Speaker

Chaudhry Latif Akbar, heads of political and religious parties, chief justices and judges of the 'AJK's superior courts, cabinet members, the Commander 10 Corps, and other senior military and civilian officials.

Mr Mahmood's son and cabinet member Yasir Sultan briefly addressed the gathering. Later, the coffin was taken by ambulance to Chechiyan for burial in the family's ancestral graveyard alongside his parents.

Acting President Chaudhry Lat-if Akbar, Information and Religious Affairs Minister Rafique Nayyar and several other cabinet members were present at the burial.

Meanwhile, as the Chechiyan area is home to the renowned shrine of Baba Peera Shah Ghazi (Kharri Sharif) and its annual Urs falls on Feb 2-3, Mr Nayyar directed the administration to observe restraint in view of the 'AJK' government's three-day mourning for President Mahmood.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1970556/ajk-president-laid-to-rest-with-state-honours>

GB govt continues rehabilitation in quake-hit Chipurson Valley

The Nation, 2 February 2026

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan continued relief and rehabilitation operations in Chipurson Valley of Upper Hunza following the earthquake that struck parts of the region on December 19.

According to official reports, three villages in Chipurson Valley were immediately declared calamity-hit after the quake to ensure a swift response and timely provision of emergency assistance. The earthquake, measuring between 5.6 and 5.8 on the Richter scale, was felt across Hunza, Ghizer and adjoining districts. Chipurson Valley emerged as the worst affected area, where according to government's initial reports, about 150 houses, 150 cattle sheds, six water channels and an under construction power project got damaged.

GB Chief Minister's Spokesperson Shabbir Mir said the government responded promptly by placing all relevant departments on high alert. "Despite harsh weather conditions and difficult terrain, the Gilgit-Baltistan government ensured immediate medical assistance, road clearance and uninterrupted relief operations in the affected areas," he said, adding that on the advice of Chief Minister Justice Retired Yar Mohammad, Minister for Home Sajid Baig, Minister for Forests Sharafuddin and Minister for Tourism visited the valley to assess the situation firsthand and meet affected residents. He said road connectivity in Chipurson Valley was restored within 48 hours, restoring access up to the last village.

Shabbir Mir said the government was working closely with partner organizations to ensure sustained relief efforts. "Our focus extends

beyond immediate assistance to a coordinated rehabilitation plan and ensuring the long term safety of affected communities,” he added. On January 22, an army team visited Chipurson Valley and distributed relief items, including 3000 liters of kerosene oil, 15 tents, 100 sets of warm clothing and 100 ration packs. Each ration pack contained wheat flour, pulses, sugar, cooking oil, milk powder and tea.

Likewise, relief items distributed by the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) include 250 winterized tents, 250 food packs, 650 blankets, 250 hygiene kits, 300 kerosene heaters, 100 shawls, 45 kitchen sets, 900 bottles of drinking water and 150 milk pack cartons.

As part of emergency support, GBDMA is installing six bathing washrooms and six composting latrines in Zhudkhune, Timpani and Shitmirg villages to improve sanitation facilities for affected communities and relief workers. In addition, 72 fireballs have been provided as a fire safety measure for tent clusters to minimize fire risks during winter conditions.

“The government is ensuring all out support to people affected by the disaster,” the Chief Minister’s spokesperson said.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Feb-2026/gb-govt-continues-rehabilitation-quake-hit-chipurson-valley>

Enforcement of ‘AJK’ Assembly resolutions on finality of prophethood sought

Dawn, 3 February 2026

Leaders of the International Khatm-i-Nabuwat Protection Council’s ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) chapter on Monday called for the immediate enforcement of resolutions passed by the ‘AJK’ Legislative Assembly, recommendations of the Islamic Ideological Council (IIC), and judgments of the high court to ensure constitutional and legal protection of the belief in the finality of prophethood.

The demand was made during a press briefing addressed by Maulana Ameenul Haq Farooqi, Maulana Abdul Malik Siddiqui and Maulana Adil Khurshid, along with other leaders.

The speakers said belief in the finality of prophethood was the foundation of Islam and the cornerstone of the Muslim Ummah’s faith, stressing that denying it amounted to rejecting Islam itself. They said the doctrine was firmly established through verses of the Holy Qur’an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and was upheld by the consensus of the Muslim Ummah that anyone claiming prophethood after him, or believing in such a claim, fell outside the fold of Islam.

Referring to Mirza Ghulam Ahmed Qadiani’s claim of prophethood, the leaders said it was aimed at undermining Muslim unity, a move

that the Muslim Ummah had from the outset declared a mischief and consistently resisted.

They recalled that the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution on April 28, 1973, moved by Major retired Sardar Muhammad Ayub Khan, approving three demands.

The leaders noted that Pakistan's National Assembly declared Qadianis a non-Muslim minority on September 7, 1974, and that the 1984 Anti-Qadiani Ordinance was enforced in 'AJK' in 1985 during the tenure of Gen Ziaul Haq, thereby implementing clause (c) of the 1973 resolution.

They said clause (a) of the resolution was implemented on February 6, 2018, through an amendment to the 'AJK' Interim Constitution declaring Mirzais non-Muslims. However, clause (b) relating to registration and the structuring of the electoral and constitutional system on that basis remained unimplemented.

"Under the existing framework, if a Qadiani does not disclose his identity, he can be registered as a voter as a Muslim, and there is no clear constitutional barrier preventing him from attaining offices such as president or prime minister," they said, adding that eligibility for these offices in 'AJK' was limited to being a Muslim, without an effective verification mechanism.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1970680/enforcement-of-ajk-assembly-resolutions-on-finality-of-prophethood-sought>

Vibrant, credible policy on Kashmir sought

Dawn, 4 February 2026

Vice Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Liaqat Baloch on Tuesday stressed the need for a clear, vibrant and credible national state policy on Kashmir, calling for strengthening 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) as the true base camp of the Kashmir freedom movement and ending interference from Islamabad and Rawalpindi in its affairs.

Addressing an All Parties Solidarity Kashmir Conference organised by Jamaat-i-Islami Islamabad, Mr Baloch said no message of Pakistan's disloyalty should reach Srinagar. "The leadership of 'Azad Kashmir' must be empowered, and the base camp must function independently and meaningfully," he asserted.

Referring to the internal situation of the country, Baloch said Pakistan was gripped by a deepening political crisis and the hybrid system had failed to deliver. He urged political forces to pull politics out of a dead end without seeking alms from the establishment, emphasizing that political problems required political solutions.

Highlighting the historical role of Jamaat-i-Islami, Baloch said whenever Feb 5 was mentioned, the name of Qazi Hussain Ahmed would inevitably come up. He recalled that following meetings between Jamaat-i-Islami and

the government, February 5 was declared as Kashmir Solidarity Day, with the first observance held in 1990. He said freedom movements take time but never die, citing India's independence after 90 years of colonial rule and the Palestinian struggle continuing for over a century.

"Kashmir's freedom is not dependent on a few constitutional articles. India cannot suppress the Kashmiri aspiration for freedom, nor can any government in Pakistan afford to ignore the Kashmir issue," he said, adding that the Kashmiri struggle was backed by UN resolutions and could not be defeated through propaganda.

Liaqat Baloch called for unity within the Muslim world and urged Muslim countries to resolve their issues independently. He referred to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years and said events like Operation Al-Aqsa Storm had once again brought the Palestinian issue to global attention.

"Similarly, the sacrifices of Kashmiris will not go in vain. India must change its mind set on Kashmir, and Pakistan must adopt an unequivocal stance," he added.

Criticizing instability in 'AJK', he said five prime ministers had been changed in five years, questioning the credibility of the base camp under such circumstances. He warned that betraying Palestine under the guise of peace initiatives would harm Pakistan and its armed forces, stressing that state

power alone could not ensure sustainable governance. He urged the public to make February 5 a historic day by coming out in large numbers to express solidarity with Kashmiris.

Referring to Balochistan, Baloch said the situation had once again become alarming and called for an All Parties Conference and the implementation of a National Action Plan-style framework. He urged the prime minister and army chief to recognize that authority could not be sustained through coercion alone.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said the people of 'occupied Kashmir' were making immense sacrifices, but shortcomings lay on Pakistan's side.

He regretted that 'Azad Kashmir', meant to be a base camp, had been turned into a political battleground, leading to growing alienation among its people. He warned that internal disputes in Pakistan could overshadow the Kashmir issue if it was not actively kept alive. Abbasi termed India's August 2019 move as the biggest hostile action since 1947 and stressed that keeping the Kashmir issue alive was a national responsibility.

"The Kashmiri struggle is one of the longest freedom movements in the world. The people of Kashmir remain steadfast; the complacency is on our side," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1970931/vibrant-credible-policy-on-kashmir-sought>

GB education crisis*Dawn, 4 February 2026*

Despite having a high literacy rate in the national context, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has remained without a single medical college. For years, leaders of all major political parties have repeated the same announcements, laid the same symbolic claims, and vanished the same way without building anything. This political neglect is utterly bipartisan and unfortunately uninterrupted.

The two existing universities — the Karakoram International University and the University of Baltistan — continue to function under chronic budget constraints, limited faculty capacity, outdated curricula, and inadequate research environment. Instead of evolving into strong regional institutions, they have been left to stagnate.

It is because of these failures that more than 25,000 students leave GB every year in search of degrees they should have been able to pursue at home. Families take loans, sell land, and uproot their lives, not for better opportunities, but for access to a fundamental right. In a world where education is rapidly advancing through technology and scientific literacy, GB is still fighting for foundational infrastructure.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1970975/gb-education-crisis>

Ex-'AJK' premier questions govt mandate, warns of legal action*Dawn, 5 February 2026*

Former 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) prime minister and PML-N parliamentary leader Raja Farooq Haider on Wednesday accused the PPP government of overstepping its mandate, saying it was meant to function like a caretaker setup to facilitate elections but had instead indulged in political interference and patronage.

Talking to reporters in the opposition chamber of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Haider said that despite having 22 ministers, the government's "hunger for power has not diminished" that he claimed was evident from "undue interference in opposition constituencies and the replacement of elected representatives with party workers". "This approach is neither justified nor acceptable," he said.

Mr Haider maintained that the PML-N had secured thousands of votes from every constituency in 'AJK' and questioned why its ticket-holders were being side-lined. "In constituencies where PPP MLAs exist, consultations should also be held with PML-N ticket-holders," he demanded.

Raising concerns over governance, the former premier called for the criteria for appointments up to Grade-5 to be made public. He also questioned the government's decision to launch

development projects worth billions of rupees while claiming a shortage of funds. "If the government does not act with fairness, we will be left with no option but to approach the courts," he warned.

Mr Haider also urged Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore to uphold the neutrality of his office. "He should remember that he is the prime minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', not a representative of a political party," he said.

Responding to a question, the former premier maintained that the office of the 'AJK' president was the constitutional right of political parties and should not be assigned to non-political individuals. He said he fully endorsed the stance of PML-N President Shah Ghulam Qadir on the issue, adding that it reflected a unanimous position within the party.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1971139/ex-ajk-premier-questions-govt-mandate-warns-of-legal-action>

Aga Khan IV: A Visionary Who Rewrote the Development Story of Pakistan's Northern Regions

Pamir Times, 5 February 2026

The passing of his highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV on February 4, 2025, marked the end of an era for Pakistan's northern regions. For nearly seven decades, he transformed Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral from remote, marginalized valleys into living

examples of community-led, sustainable development. His work demonstrates that progress is most enduring when it is rooted in people, institutions, and culture, supported by a conducive policy and governance environment.

Since assuming the Imamate in 1957, Aga Khan IV combined spiritual leadership with a practical development vision. He recognised that poverty cannot be addressed by charity alone; it requires long-term investment in human capacity, social cohesion, and local governance. Through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), he integrated education, health, infrastructure, culture, and livelihoods into a coherent model of inclusive development.

"Our ultimate goal is to enable people to become the masters of their own destiny," he once said. This philosophy guided the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), launched in 1982, which mobilised villages and women's groups to manage savings, irrigation, small enterprises, and local infrastructure. Unlike conventional top-down projects, AKRSP empowered communities to identify priorities, make decisions, and take responsibility, laying the foundation for self-reliance and social cohesion.

Building Strong Civil Society and Social Foundations

The Aga Khan firmly believed that sustainable development depends on

strong civil institutions and social capital. He observed that no society can prosper without inclusive organizations that encourage participation, accountability, and cooperation. In Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, thousands of community-based organizations emerged under this framework. They managed schools, clinics, water systems, and micro-enterprises, while nurturing leadership among women and youth. These institutions strengthened social cohesion and enhanced collective problem-solving capacity. This model contrasted with conventional administrative approaches that rely mainly on centralized planning, showing that development rooted in local participation is more resilient and adaptable.

Education, Skills, and Cultural Confidence

Education was central to the Aga Khan's development thinking. Through community schools, teacher training programmes, scholarships, and higher education institutions, he expanded learning opportunities in remote valleys. He stressed that education is the most important long-term investment for any society.

At the same time, he promoted cultural preservation as an integral component of development. The restoration of Baltit, Altit, Shigar and Khaplu forts, retrofitting of old Mosques, Khanqas, houses, the revival of traditional arts and crafts, and the protection of

architectural heritage strengthened cultural confidence and supported sustainable tourism. By linking heritage with livelihoods, these initiatives demonstrated that modernization and tradition can advance together.

Peace, Pluralism, and Social Stability

In diverse and sensitive mountain regions, the Aga Khan consistently linked development with peace and pluralism. He emphasized that stability is built on justice, opportunity, and mutual respect. Through dialogue platforms, youth programmes, and inclusive institutions, AKDN initiatives helped reduce social divisions and foster cooperation across ethnic and sectarian lines. This experience highlights that economic progress and social harmony must advance simultaneously.

Enabling Environment: Scaling Bottom-Up Development

Aga Khan IV repeatedly emphasized the importance of the "enabling environment", a set of policy, governance, and institutional conditions that allow local initiatives to flourish. Even successful bottom-up approaches have their limits when broader systemic support is absent. In Gilgit-Baltistan, community-led initiatives alone cannot overcome challenges posed by weak governance, unresolved constitutional status, or fragmented policy frameworks. Bottom-up development benefits most when complemented by strategic large-

scale infrastructure projects such as the Karakoram Highway, sound fiscal policies, well-targeted public sector budgets, and functional local government systems. Regional economic integration, active participation of elected representatives, and the championing of women's empowerment and climate resilience further enhance impact. When these elements align, bottom-up initiatives gain scale, legitimacy, and sustainability, demonstrating that local empowerment and macro-level planning are mutually reinforcing rather than opposing strategies.

Continuity and Innovation under His Successor

Following his passing, his successor, Prince Rahim Al Hussaini Aga Khan V, has reaffirmed this development philosophy of his father. Over the past year, AKDN programmes have strengthened climate adaptation, flood response, renewable energy, digital skills training, and youth entrepreneurship, quality education, secondary and tertiary health care in support of the government in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. These initiatives reflect continuity in values and innovation in practice, responding to global climate change, technological transformation, and economic uncertainty.

Confronting Emerging Challenges

Northern Pakistan faces complex and interconnected pressures: climate change threatens glaciers, water

security, and agriculture; youth unemployment increases migration; regional economic integration remains limited; governance gaps and top-down federal decision-making undermine local participation. Addressing these challenges requires stronger institutional frameworks, constitutional clarity, fiscal prudence, and policies that empower local governments and communities, the very "enabling environment" Aga Khan IV repeatedly highlighted as essential for sustainable development.

A Development Path Rooted in the People

Prince Karim Al Hussaini Aga Khan IV's work in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral represents one of the most sustained experiments in participatory development in the Global South. It combined ethical leadership with professional management, cultural sensitivity with modern institutions, and spiritual values with practical action. His legacy demonstrates that poverty reduction is not merely a technical task but a long-term social project grounded in inclusion, pluralism, and shared responsibility.

As mountain communities navigate rapid environmental and economic change, the principles he championed, self-help, education, cooperation, and respect for diversity, remain highly relevant. Under Prince Rahim, these principles are being applied to today's challenges, ensuring that communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral remain

not only resilient but empowered to shape their own future.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2026/02/04/aga-khan-iv-a-visionary-who-rewrote-the-development-story-of-pakistans-northern-regions/>

Kashmir: unfinished agenda of partition

Business Recorder, 5 February 2026

Every year on February 5, Pakistan observes Kashmir Solidarity Day—a solemn occasion to reaffirm support for the Kashmiri people and their right to self-determination. It is not merely a ritual of remembrance but a moral reckoning, a reminder that the valley’s cries for justice have echoed across generations without resolution.

On Solidarity Day, the valley’s scars remind the world that peace demands courage, empathy, and dialogue. The sacrifices of Kashmiris, their resilience in the face of repression, and their unyielding demand for dignity remain etched into the conscience of South Asia.

The roots of the Kashmir dispute lie in the turbulent partition of 1947. When British India was divided into the sovereign states of India and Pakistan, princely states were given the choice to accede to either dominion.

Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state ruled by a Hindu monarch, Maharaja Hari Singh, hesitated until tribal forces from Pakistan entered the valley. Seeking

military assistance from India, the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession, permitting Indian troops to enter.

This arrangement was provisional, intended to be ratified by a plebiscite under United Nations auspices. That plebiscite, however, never materialised, leaving a wound that has festered for nearly eight decades.

The first war between India and Pakistan in 1947–48 ended with an UN-brokered ceasefire, dividing Kashmir along the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistan administered ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ and Gilgit-Baltistan, while India retained Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, and Ladakh.

UN Security Council resolutions affirmed the right of Kashmiris to self-determination, but successive decades hardened the dispute into a military and political stalemate. Kashmir became a recurring flashpoint: the wars of 1965 and 1971, the Kargil conflict of 1999, and countless skirmishes along the LoC underscored its volatility. For Kashmiris, life has been marked by militarisation, curfews, and cycles of protest and repression.

For Pakistan, Kashmir remains the “unfinished agenda” of partition. For India, it is considered an inseparable part of its union.

A watershed moment came on August 5, 2019, when India unilaterally abrogated Articles 370 and 35A of its

Constitution. These provisions had granted Jammu and Kashmir special status, including autonomy over internal matters and protection of residency and property rights. Their removal stripped the region of autonomy and bifurcated the state into two federally administered territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. For Pakistan, this move amounted to annexation—a violation of UN resolutions and international norms.

For Kashmiris, it was a betrayal of promises made at independence. The valley was placed under lockdown, communications severed, political leaders detained, and a heavy military presence imposed. International human rights organisations voiced concern, but India dismissed criticism, insisting the changes were necessary for integration and development.

Since 2019, the dispute has entered a new phase. The abrogation has deepened mistrust, hardened positions, and made dialogue more elusive. Pakistan has intensified diplomatic efforts to highlight the plight of Kashmiris, while India has sought to normalise its control. The Kashmiri people, caught between competing narratives, continue to demand dignity, rights, and recognition.

The way forward is fraught with challenges but not devoid of

possibilities. Kashmir is not merely a territorial dispute; it is about the aspirations of millions whose voices must be heard. Confidence-building measures—easing restrictions, releasing political prisoners, and restoring communication—could help create an environment conducive to dialogue.

Despite deep mistrust, history shows that dialogue has yielded progress, whether through the Simla Agreement of 1972 or the Lahore Declaration of 1999. Reviving backchannel diplomacy, focusing on humanitarian issues, and reducing tensions along the LoC could pave the way for broader discussions.

While often described as a bilateral issue, Kashmir's implications for regional stability are global. The presence of two nuclear-armed states locked in confrontation makes Kashmir a matter of international concern. The UN, major powers, and regional organisations can encourage dialogue, press for human rights protections, and support initiatives that reduce tensions. Ultimately, perpetual hostility serves neither side.

For Pakistan, Kashmir is central to its identity and foreign policy, but peace and stability are equally vital for development. For India, integration without consent risks perpetual unrest. A just and negotiated settlement, however difficult, is the only sustainable path.

As Faiz Ahmed Faiz wrote in words that still resonate with the Kashmiri struggle:

“Qafas udaas hai yaaron, sabā se kuch to kaho,

Kahin to bahr-e-khudā aaj zikr-e-yār chale”

(“The cage is sorrowful, friends, speak to the breeze,

For God’s sake, let the beloved’s name be spoken somewhere today.”)

These lines capture the yearning for freedom and the unyielding spirit of a people who refuse to let their voices be silenced.

Kashmir Solidarity Day is thus not only a reminder of past sacrifices but also a call to envision a future beyond conflict. As Pakistanis stand in solidarity with Kashmiris on February 5, the message is clear: the dispute cannot be wished away, nor can it be resolved through unilateral actions. It requires courage, dialogue, and empathy.

History teaches that even the most intractable conflicts can find resolution when the will for peace outweighs the appetite for confrontation. Kashmir remains a flashpoint, but it need not remain a wound forever. The choice lies with leaders in Islamabad and New Delhi, and with the conscience of the international community.

On this Kashmir Solidarity Day, hope endures that the valley—long scarred

by conflict—may one day echo not with slogans of defiance but with the voices of peace.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40405634/kashmir-unfinished-agenda-of-partition>

‘AJK’ assembly special session expresses solidarity with Kashmiris

Daily Times, 6 February 2026

A special session of the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) Legislative Assembly (LA) was held here on Thursday on the eve of Kashmir Solidarity Day, presided over by Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar. Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif delivered a special address to the assembly, while Prime Minister of ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ Faisal Mumtaz Rathore also spoke on the occasion.

The proceedings were witnessed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning and Development Chaudhry Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, along with a delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference led by its Convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi.

At the outset, Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan for visiting on Kashmir Solidarity Day, stating that his presence

had boosted the morale of Kashmiris engaged in the freedom struggle across the Line of Control. He said the Kashmir issue remained the unfinished agenda of Partition of subcontinent and accused India of continuously violating United Nations resolutions on Kashmir. Referring to August 5, 2019, he said India had unilaterally revoked the special status of 'occupied Kashmir' and declared it a Union Territory, after which the people were effectively besieged.

The Speaker said more than 900,000 Indian troops were committing extreme atrocities in 'occupied Kashmir', but despite this, the hearts of Kashmiris beat with Pakistan, which they see as the center of their hopes and aspirations. He expressed confidence that the day was not far when the entire Kashmir would be liberated and accede to Pakistan.

He noted that the Hurriyat leadership was imprisoned, with Shabbir Ahmad Shah jailed for the past 38 years, while reports were emerging about the possible awarding of a death sentence to Yasin Malik. He also recalled the execution of Afzal Guru and said that recently, on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat, Indian authorities had locked mosques in 'occupied Kashmir'.

Chaudhry Latif Akbar said that following the success of "Bunyan-un-Marsoos," Pakistan's stature had further risen globally, crediting Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for this

achievement. He said India had been isolated internationally for the first time and urged the Prime Minister to once again raise the voice of Kashmiris forcefully at the global level.

He alleged that after its defeat on May 9 and 10, India was now involved in promoting terrorism inside Pakistan, expressing confidence that under the leadership of the Prime Minister and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, such efforts would also be defeated.

Addressing the session, Leader of the House and Prime Minister of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' Faisal Mumtaz Rathore thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for visiting Muzaffarabad and addressing the special assembly session on Kashmir Solidarity Day. He said that the Prime Minister's third visit to 'Azad Kashmir', within two and a half months of the formation of the current 'AJK' government, reflected his deep affection for the Kashmiri people.

He said that India had deployed 900,000 troops in 'occupied Kashmir' and imposed a brutal 'occupation', but had failed to control the thoughts and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. He asserted that the destination of Kashmiris was Pakistan and no power in the world could separate them from it. He said that on Kashmir Solidarity Day, the people of Pakistan were forming human chains at all entry points to express solidarity with their Kashmiri brethren.

Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that the presence of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the military leadership in Muzaffarabad on this occasion was proof of the importance of Kashmir to Pakistan. He paid tribute to the martyrs of the Kashmir freedom movement and to the soldiers of the Pakistan Army who laid down their lives defending the Line of Control, stating that the sacrifices would continue until the success of the Kashmir freedom struggle.

He recalled that Kashmir Solidarity Day was first initiated by Qazi Hussain Ahmad and later officially observed under the leadership of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, paying tribute to both leaders. He said that Kashmiris had decided to accede to Pakistan even before the creation of Pakistan, noting that the resolution for accession was passed at the Srinagar residence of Sardar Ibrahim Khan, the grandfather of Assembly Member Hassan Ibrahim. He also mentioned the role of veteran Kashmiri leader Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, who consistently raised the slogan of accession to Pakistan.

The 'AJK' Prime Minister said that the slogan of accession to Pakistan was a legacy for which Kashmiris were sacrificing their honor and dignity. He added that the bond between Pakistan and Kashmir was based on the Kalima, which surpassed all other relationships. He appreciated the role

of Pakistan's political leadership, across party lines, in addressing Kashmiri issues and thanked the Prime Minister for initiatives such as the establishment of Danish schools.

Highlighting challenges, he said that some schools affected by the 2005 earthquake were still without proper roofs, forcing children to study in harsh conditions. He appealed for Rs 5 billion in the 2025-26 federal budget for the reconstruction of these schools.

He thanked the Prime Minister for providing resources to 'Azad Kashmir' and noted that all political parties in 'AJK' had always welcomed visiting Pakistani prime ministers without discrimination, calling it proof of Kashmiris' attachment to Pakistan.

He expressed hope that the day would soon come when Kashmiris would achieve the objective for which they had made immense sacrifices. He said India's true face had been exposed to the world, as it had turned 'occupied' Kashmir into a prison, while Pakistan had consistently stood by the Kashmiris in every difficult time.

He concluded by saying that Kashmiris reaffirmed their resolve that no power could weaken or break their bond with Pakistan, adding that the movement for the completion of Kashmir was, in fact, the movement for the completion of Pakistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1446845/ajk-assembly-special-session-expresses-solidarity-with-kashmiris/>

Protests held in GB against Tarlai Imambargah attack

Dawn, 8 February 2026

Thousands of people took to the streets in Gilgit-Baltistan on Saturday to protest against the suicide bombing at Imambargah Khadijatul Kubra in Islamabad a day earlier. A shutter down strike was observed in Skardu, where a police inspector, Bahadur Ali from Ghanche, who embraced martyrdom in the incident, was laid to rest.

The strike was observed on the call of Anjuman-i-Imamia Baltistan. Shopping malls, shops, and trade activities remained suspended for several hours. Thousands of people staged a protest sit-in at Yadgar-i-Shuhada, Skardu, and other areas of Baltistan.

Protest demonstrations were also held in Kharmang, Shigar and Ghanche areas of Baltistan.

Moreover, protesters blocked the Karakoram Highway at Danyor for several hours. Demonstrations were held at Shaheed Zamir Abbas Chowk and other areas in Gilgit. The protesters chanted slogans against the government and terrorists, demanding protection for citizens. Four people from Gilgit-Baltistan, including the police inspector, were among the victims of the Islamabad blast, while several others from GB were injured.

Meanwhile, the funeral prayer of the martyred police officer was offered at

the Central Mosque in Skardu. Meanwhile, Pakistan People's Party Workers (PPP-W) condemned the terrorist attack at the imambargah.

In a statement, Dr Safdar Ali Abbasi, President PPP-W, and Naheed Khan, former Political Assistant to Benazir Bhutto, said the barbaric assault on worshippers was an attack on humanity itself.

"Mosques and Imambargahs are sacred places where the names of Almighty Allah and His beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are echoed. These are places where there is no distinction between rich and poor, no protocol, no class, only connect between the Creator and His creation," said the statement.

PML-N Member National Assembly Isphanyar Bhandara also condemned the incident. In a statement, he expressed condolences to the families of those affected and wished a speedy recovery for the injured. He said attacks targeting civilians are unacceptable and reflect the brutality of those responsible.

Mr Bhandara stressed the need for a swift and transparent investigation into the incident and added that all those responsible must be dealt with in accordance with the law. He expressed confidence in law-enforcement agencies to identify those who planned and facilitated the attack.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1971762/protests-held-in-gb-against-tarlai-imambargah-attack>

Economic Developments

Gilgit to Get Full-Fledged Eye Hospital by May 2027

Pamir Times, 3 February 2026

A full-fledged eye hospital is set to be established in Gilgit before May 2027, announced Nasruddin Rupani, Chairman of the Board of Al-Shifa Institute of Eye Care and Chairman of the Ibn-e-Sina and Rupani Foundations, during a fundraising event held in Houston.

The event, jointly organized by the Al-Shifa Institute of Eye Care and the Ibn-e-Sina Foundation, drew a large gathering of community members and aimed to raise funds for Al-Shifa Trust's healthcare and welfare projects in Pakistan.

Speaking at the event, Rupani said that an eye clinic is already operational in Gilgit City in a rented facility, while construction on a purpose-built hospital building is nearing completion. Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan, President of Al-Shifa Trust, shared details about the Trust's work across Pakistan and highlighted the impact of its initiatives. He also noted that the Gilgit eye hospital project is being fully financed by Rupani.

Muhammad Aftab Chaudhry, Consul General of Pakistan in Houston, urged the community to support the cause generously, stressing the urgent need for accessible eye-care services in

remote and underserved regions. The land for the hospital has been provided by the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Al-Shifa Trust is one of Pakistan's leading charitable eye-care organizations, providing free or highly subsidized eye-care services to thousands of patients annually. Its network includes state-of-the-art hospitals and secondary eye-care centers in Rawalpindi, Muzaffarabad, Sukkur, Kohat, and other regions. In addition, Al-Shifa Trust runs community outreach programs, mobile eye units, and training institutes for ophthalmologists, nurses, and allied health professionals, playing a vital role in preventing blindness and improving vision care nationwide. The fundraising event concluded with a musical performance.

<https://pamirtimes.net/2026/02/02/gilgit-to-get-full-fledged-eye-hospital-by-may-2027/>

Kazakh firm keen to invest \$20m in gold mining in GB

Dawn, 6 February 2026

Kazakhstan's Elaman Group has completed preliminary studies in Gilgit-Baltistan and identified strong potential for placer gold exploration and development, expressing its intention to make an initial investment of \$20 million, with further funding planned in subsequent phases.

The commitment was conveyed by an Elaman Group delegation during a

meeting with Minister for the Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh in Islamabad on Thursday. The talks focused on investment opportunities in Pakistan's mining sector, particularly placer gold mining in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Kazakh delegation was led by Azamat Utegenov, founder and managing partner of the Elaman Group, and included Ulas Alimbaev, Director of Strategic Development; Rysbek Zhaksybaev, Head of Production; and Erik Akhmetzhanov, Chief Geologist.

During the meeting, the delegation presented the group's experience and key achievements, outlined priority areas of activity and discussed prospects for expanding investment cooperation, including the possible implementation of joint projects in Pakistan.

According to a press release issued by the group, the engagement marked an important step towards implementing agreements reached at the highest level, opening new avenues for private-sector collaboration and joint investment projects, and contributing to economic growth and stronger bilateral ties.

Mr Sheikh emphasised the importance of strengthening economic relations between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, reiterating Pakistan's interest in attracting foreign investment and

assuring comprehensive support for Kazakh businesses.

The delegation also shared plans to introduce modern mining technologies in collaboration with Chinese partners, aimed at ensuring efficient, sustainable and environmentally responsible operations.

Elaman Group underscored its commitment to corporate social responsibility and community development, with a focus on local employment, skills development and social uplift in project areas.

It was further shared that discussions on forming a joint venture with local partners had been finalised, paving the way for smooth project implementation in line with Pakistan's legal and regulatory framework.

Mr Sheikh assured the delegation of full facilitation at both federal and provincial levels, including regulatory support, coordination with relevant authorities and assistance through the BoI's single-window operations. The minister highlighted the role of foreign investment in economic growth, job creation and regional development.

The meeting took place amid intensified intergovernmental engagement between Pakistan and Kazakhstan. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev concluded a two-day visit to Pakistan on Wednesday, during which the two sides discussed trade and economic cooperation, investment

partnerships and expanded collaboration in industry and business.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1971302/kazakh-firm-keen-to-invest-20m-in-gold-mining-in-gb>

From Vernacular Urdu Media

Boycott to resume in ‘AJK’ University from February 9

Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2 February 2026

The protest schedule at ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (AJK) University will resume from February 9. The announcement was made jointly by the Academic Staff Association and the Administrative Staff Association of ‘AJK’ university.

<https://jammukashmirtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Resize-of-FRONT-PAGE-02.jpg>

Muslim League-N Gilgit-Baltistan unite ahead of elections

Urdu Point, 2 February 2026

All factions of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Gilgit-Baltistan have agreed to end their internal differences and move forward unitedly in the upcoming elections.

The consensus was reached during an important meeting held on Monday under the chairmanship of Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam. Leaders from the Hafiz Hafizur Rehman group and the Akbar Taban–Muhammad Anwar group participated

in the meeting and resolved their differences.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam said, “Muslim League-N is one and united. We will contest the elections together under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif. Party tickets will be awarded purely on merit.” He added that all disagreements had been completely resolved, stating, “I consider myself part of the Gilgit-Baltistan party team. Hafiz Hafizur Rehman and I are on the same page, and we will move forward in line with Nawaz Sharif’s vision.”

General Secretary Akbar Taban also expressed confidence in party unity, saying, “Our hearts are clear. We are fully united and stand together with complete agreement and harmony.”

This development is being seen as a significant step toward strengthening PML-N’s position in Gilgit-Baltistan ahead of the forthcoming elections.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4703537.html>

Kashmir Solidarity Day Observed with full enthusiasm in Gilgit-Baltistan

Urdu Point, 5 February 2026

Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed with full enthusiasm across Gilgit-Baltistan, as rallies, processions, and demonstrations were held to express unwavering solidarity with the people of Kashmir.

A major central event took place at Sir Syed High School, Gilgit, where a large number of government officials, political and social leaders, teachers, students, and citizens participated.

Addressing the gathering, speakers strongly condemned the ongoing atrocities and grave human rights violations being committed by Indian forces in 'occupied' Kashmir. They highlighted the continued oppression and brutality faced by the Kashmiri people and emphasized that Kashmiris must be granted their internationally recognized and inalienable right to self-determination, as guaranteed by United Nations resolutions. The speakers urged the international community to play an effective role in ensuring a just and lasting resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

As part of the solidarity activities, several rallies were taken out from different areas of Gilgit, which later converged at Ittehad Chowk. Participants carried placards and banners bearing anti-India slogans and messages of solidarity with the Kashmiri people. Slogans such as "Kashmir Banega Pakistan" and "Bharati Zulm Na Manzoor" echoed throughout the area.

While addressing the rally, speakers reaffirmed their firm commitment that the people of Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan would continue to extend political, moral, and diplomatic

support to their Kashmiri brothers and sisters until the achievement of freedom and justice.

The events concluded with special prayers for the elevation of the ranks of Kashmiri martyrs and for the early liberation of 'occupied' Kashmir.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/pakistan/news/gilgit/national-news/live-news-4706809.html>

GB Transporters Association dissociates from Feb 8 strike

Daily K2, 8 February 2026

President of the Gilgit-Baltistan Transporters Association, Javid Abbasi, has announced that the association has dissociated itself from the strike scheduled for February 8.

In a statement, Abbasi said that the association does not support strikes called by any political party and has no involvement in political activities. He emphasized that the transporters' community is closely connected with public service and, under all circumstances, remains committed to facilitating the people.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had called for a nationwide strike on February 8 to mark the second anniversary of the 2024 General Elections. The party also announced a day of mourning following Friday's suicide bombing in Islamabad.

<https://epaper.dailyk2.com/gb/2026-02-08/page1>

From Social Media

TARIQ NAQASH @TariqNaqash

2 February 2026

While the military leadership marked its presence at President Sultan Mahmood's funeral, no public office holder from #Pakistan turned up to bid farewell to a man who consistently championed #Kashmir's accession to Pakistan —an act that has angered his followers

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/TariqNaqash/status/2018329424710824157>

WAJAHAT ALI @wajahatgilgiti

8 February 2025

In Gilgit-Baltistan, state repression was used to fail the wheel jam and shutter down strike, former advisor Elias Siddiqui #pti #mwm #protest #strike

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/wajahatgilgiti/status/2020534721311101092>

JAMIL NAGRI @jamilnagri

7 February 2026

Thousands people staged protest demonstration in #Gilgit_Baltistan against the suicide bombing at Imambargah Khadijah-tul-Kubra in Islamabad, police inspector Bahadur Ali who embraced martyrdom in the incident laid to rest in Skardu, shutter-down strike also observed in the city

Link to the tweet:

<https://x.com/jamilnagri/status/2020151482943783059>

Weekly POK News Digest

Volume 6 | Issue 5

02 February - 08 February 2026

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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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