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## Gilgit Baltistan Development Accelerates with Emphasis on Tourism, Youth Jobs, and Health

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In a push to bolster regional development, the federal government has announced a series of initiatives aimed at transforming Gilgit Baltistan into a thriving hub of tourism, economic growth, and healthcare improvement. The program includes the creation of new camping villages, the introduction of digital tourist facilitation services, and the rehabilitation of key road networks. These projects come as part of an

expanded national strategy to enhance the integration of remote regions into the mainstream economy and create meaningful opportunities for youth employment.

Under the oversight of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, several development proposals were reviewed and approved during a recent visit to Gilgit-Baltistan. Authorities emphasised the need for modern infrastructure and sustainable tourism practices to unlock the region's untapped potential. Key proposals include the establishment of eco-friendly camping villages, a digital information centre for tourists, and improved connectivity through the upgrading of access roads to famous destinations such as Deosai Plains and Hunza. Officials have also highlighted the importance of ensuring that local communities benefit directly from tourism-related income.

Beyond tourism, the federal plan includes strengthening healthcare services and increasing employment avenues for youth in the region. The government intends to build new health centres, equip hospitals with modern technology, and provide vocational training in areas such as hospitality, IT, and renewable energy. These moves are expected to address long-standing regional disparities and respond to growing concerns about the lack of public services in Gilgit Baltistan. Speaking during his visit, the prime minister noted that “inclusive development is no longer a choice but a necessity to build national cohesion and resilience.”

However, while the current government touts these initiatives as a leap forward, critics caution that past promises have often stalled due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak implementation. There is also scepticism about whether the involvement of Islamabad in every step will ensure genuine local empowerment. Nevertheless, the renewed focus on

the region's development, especially in light of its strategic importance and natural beauty, is seen as a step in the right direction. If managed transparently and inclusively, these efforts could transform Gilgit Baltistan into not just a tourist magnet but a model of balanced regional progress.

