

THE **KASHMIR**

Open Letter To
Ms Arfa Sherwani

CONNECT

VOLUME 2 EDITION 12

16 FEBRUARY, 2023

NEED FOR POLICY TO PROTECT SMALL LANDHOLDERS

**WHAT MATTERS ULTIMATELY IS THE
MESSAGING THAT PEOPLE ACCEPT**



STONE-PELTING IN JAMMU

TOP NETAS OWN LAVISH PROPERTY IN AREA

Is There A Correlation?



THE KASHMIR
CONNECT

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CELEBRATE THE LOCAL TRADITIONS, CULTURE

The winter fests and snow fests happening in different parts of Kashmir are the much-needed activity of the day. They normalize the environment and give the locals, especially the youth, a welcome break from the routine. The Deputy Commissioners of some districts are on the forefront in involving the youth in organizing these activities. That is where the gains from such events can be maximized.

There is an urgent need to organize such events also in other parts of the union territory like Rajouri, Poonch, Mendhar, Ramban, Banihal, Udhampur etc. Now that spring is on the way, sports activities can be encouraged at these events. Some local sports should also be included in order to sustain them.

The district administrations do not have to look at these events as a mega exercise that shall involve vast logistics. One day events are a viable format. Local musical instruments can be promoted. Some seasonal activities that may relate to horticulture, floriculture or local arts and crafts can be made part of the fest. Proper marketing of

these activities shall generate tourist interest.

The kangri is such a beautiful symbol of Kashmir. A fest can be woven around the Kangri and can be marketed by the tourism department. Kangris of different kinds from different parts of the Valley can be brought there. Their making can be explained to the visitors. Raw material can be made available to those who want to try their hand.

Water chestnuts or lotuses grow in large numbers in the valley. Some events can be woven around these themes. Recently, a leading figure of the tourism sector said to me that tourism is not just what is available. Tourism is also created. These are the ways in which tourism can be created.

We often don't attach so much value to our heritage and local cultural traditions, because we do not realize the commercial strength that can accrue from them. Globally, mega tourist events have been woven around local cultural traditions. It is time for us to celebrate our culture and create tourism around these activities. This will protect our local heritage and culture and also popularize them globally.

– GAYATRI MOHAN

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CONNECT

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPUTY EDITOR

We Must Shun Gender Bias

We Must Build Our Society On Values

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A strong society is built on values. They are the foundation on which we raise our children. If we lose our basic foundational values, much will be lost even though we may build palatial houses and properties.

It saddens me to see the gender bias among parents. Many parents who are expecting a child do not want a daughter to be born. This bias is against the principle of universal justice. The Almighty blesses parents with daughters or sons as the Almighty desires to. It is not right for us to choose or reject any gender.

Let us remember the example of China. The state imposed the one-child policy in order to control the population. Since only one child was allowed, a very large majority of parents preferred that they should have sons only. Girls were mercilessly killed. The number of boys among children that were raised was inordinately high.

Some decades later, China realized the huge error of this policy. When those boys grew up and became men, they had too few girls within the society to marry. A very large number of men in the society had to stay unmarried. Many of them arranged for girls to be brought from elsewhere to marry, but that led to a whole new set of complications.

This problem was faced in some states in India too. The dominant preference for sons led to female infanticide in these states. Today these states are facing a similar set of complications.

Interfering with the universal justice of the Almighty is not correct. We must accept daughters and sons alike. We must remove social evils like dowry. Our education and learning must enable us to make the right choices and the right decisions in life that are high on values and morals.

CONTENTS

THE KASHMIR CONNECT



06 | Need For Policy
To Protect Small
Landholders

By Zahoor Ahmad Shah

14 | Stone-Pelting In
Jammu To Protest Anti-
Encroachment Drive

By GM MIR

20 | Open Letter To Ms Arfa
Khanum Sherwani,
Senior Editor, The Wire

By Sheikh Mudasir Hussain

24 | Sabotage From Within
System

By Gayatri Mohan



NEED FOR
POLICY TO
PROTECT
SMALL
LANDHOLDERS

WHAT MATTERS ULTIMATELY IS THE MESSAGING THAT PEOPLE ACCEPT

by Zahoor Ahmad Shah

The statement of J&K Apni Party chief Mr Altaf Bukhari that no person from outside the state will be allowed to settle in Jammu and Kashmir is indicative of the fear and the anger of the common man against the current anti-encroachment drive in the union territory.

"Those who are not a citizen of J&K, will not be allowed to settle here. The police and security forces will try their best to settle them, but we will not step back. This is our land and we are its people. We are not wearing bangles," Mr Bukhari said.

This statement has come from the chief of Apni Party. Over the last few years, many in Kashmir have called Apni Party as the B Team of BJP in Jammu and Kashmir.

It is to be noted that Mr Bukhari, who is also a former minister in the erstwhile state, had stated on January 5 that his party would not be averse to forming an alliance with the BJP to form a government in Jammu and Kashmir when the elections were held.



currency and acceptance to the idea of Naya Kashmir.

If any new policies leave gaps for creation of fears and rumours, it shall hurt the faith of the people at the bottom of the pyramid. People in rural areas have started believing in India. Their faith must not be shaken. Otherwise it can disrupt the peace achieved with so much toil. It can adversely impact the nation-building measures in Kashmir.

It is correct that the fears and anxieties over the anti-encroachment drive have been fuelled by the politicians who are trying to protect their own encroachments over prime state land and kahcharai land. At the same time, it was important for the Centre to have sent out the correct messaging regarding the anti-encroachment drive before initiating it.

Correct and constant messaging regarding the anti-encroachment drive would have reassured the people and would not have given any space for fears to grow or multiply.

Vital To Keep Faith Of People At Bottom Of Pyramid

In some quarters, it is being felt that the messaging of the anti-encroachment drive has been faulty. Some analysts say that in order to protect their own land-grabbing, the politicians inflamed the voters.

But at the end of the day, what matters is not how the politicians tried to inflame or mislead the voters. What matters is what messaging that

the people finally believe.

In this era of post Article 370, the middle class along with the rural and urban poor are the new and firm believers in the state. They have started developing faith and believing in the idea of a virtuous India and a prosperous Kashmir.

The rural and urban middle class and the poor are the ones who have moved forward with the ideas of Naya Bharat and Naya Kashmir. They believe in the government's promise of development. They have given

Media Reports Say Policy May Be Announced Soon

On February 13, reports emerged that the Centre is soon coming out with a policy that will protect small land holders from the anti-encroachment drive that is currently in force in the union territory. Reports said that the policy has been given the shape and is expected to be announced shortly.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha had repeatedly assured the people that small land

holders will be spared from the anti-encroachment drive. Sources revealed that the policy has been drafted while addressing this aspect.

Kashmiris who are committed nationalists and are concerned over the emerging situation say that the announcement regarding the policy should have been made beforehand.

In the absence of the policy, confusion and fear has risen to the fore. The announcement of the policy to protect small land-holders from the anti-encroachment drive is an effort by the Centre to address these fears. Wherever one goes, whether to a neighbourhood grocery shop, the salon, any common area, the talk relates to the current anti-encroachment drive.

Confusion And Fear Has Risen, Wrong Notions Being Spread

It is important for the government to announce the policy soon that shall reassure those with small land-holdings that they shall not be divested of their property. The people will support the anti-encroachment drive as the correct initiative if it targets only the influential and powerful land grabbers.

At the time of the abrogation of Article 370, the entire political class of J&K was held in detention by the Centre. This had been done as a pre-emptive measure so that no violence could be engineered by the political forces which would disrupt the peace process.



In some quarters, it is being felt that the messaging of the anti-encroachment drive has been wrong. At the end of the day, what matters is not how the politicians tried to inflame or mislead the voters. What matters is what messaging that the people shall finally believe

At that time, across the nation people were surprised to learn that Kashmiris were delighted and celebrating that the political class had been kept under detention. Good governance and the transparent policies of the UT Administration have resonated with this class and have reinforced their faith in the state. The middle class and the poor, whether in urban or rural areas, are identifying with the Indian state. It is important for the state to strengthen and reinforce their faith at all times.

Kashmiris who are committed nationalists say that due to lack of the correct messaging, wrong notions are being spread regarding the anti-encroachment drive. They highlight that before formulating any policy, the Central government must bear in mind that Kashmir has been a disturbed area. In this light, for the implementation of any policy, the government

must consider the merits and demerits from all dimensions.

Those who are engaged in building anti-state narratives keep working silently. Any fear or anger among the people gives them space to spread negative sentiment against the state. It is important that no space is provided to the terror ecosystem to spread rumours and disinformation regarding the state.

If People's Faith Is Shaken, It Can Weaken Gains Made By The Government

After the abrogation of Article 370, people had largely placed their faith in the government that it would lead Kashmir towards progress and harmony. If their faith is shaken in any way, it can weaken the gains made by the government.

At ground level, those who stand with the state are working hard to build a positive narrative.


The game in Kashmir is largely based on perception. It is important that the initiatives of the government are seen in the right perspective.

India must empower, uplift, and give more representation to the poor. Those at the helm of power must always be cognizant of the fact that if the rural and urban poor and the middle class are agitated, it has the potential to dilute Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi's Idea of "Naya Kashmir".

Regarding the anti-encroachment drive, fear and anxiety have sparked off rumours among the people. At many places, people have started protesting, organizing demonstrations and blocking roads to show their resentment against the land encroachment drive. The bottom-line remains that if there are problems in the implementation of any policy at ground level, it can lead to disillusionment, despair, and resentment.

A snowy winter landscape with evergreen trees and a path. The scene is covered in a thick layer of snow, with some trees having snow on their branches. A path is visible in the foreground, partially covered in snow. The overall atmosphere is cold and serene.

CONFUSION OVER SELECTIVE RESPONSE TO ENCROACHMENTS



At ground level, those who stand with the state are working hard to build a positive narrative. The game in Kashmir is largely based on perception. It is important that the initiatives of the government are seen in the right perspective

The varying response of the implementation agencies at ground level to blatant cases of encroachment has led to confusion among the people. At some places, the encroachment has been demolished by bulldozers. At other places, the buildings made over encroached land have been sealed. At even more places, violations of a similar nature have been overlooked or deliberately ignored.

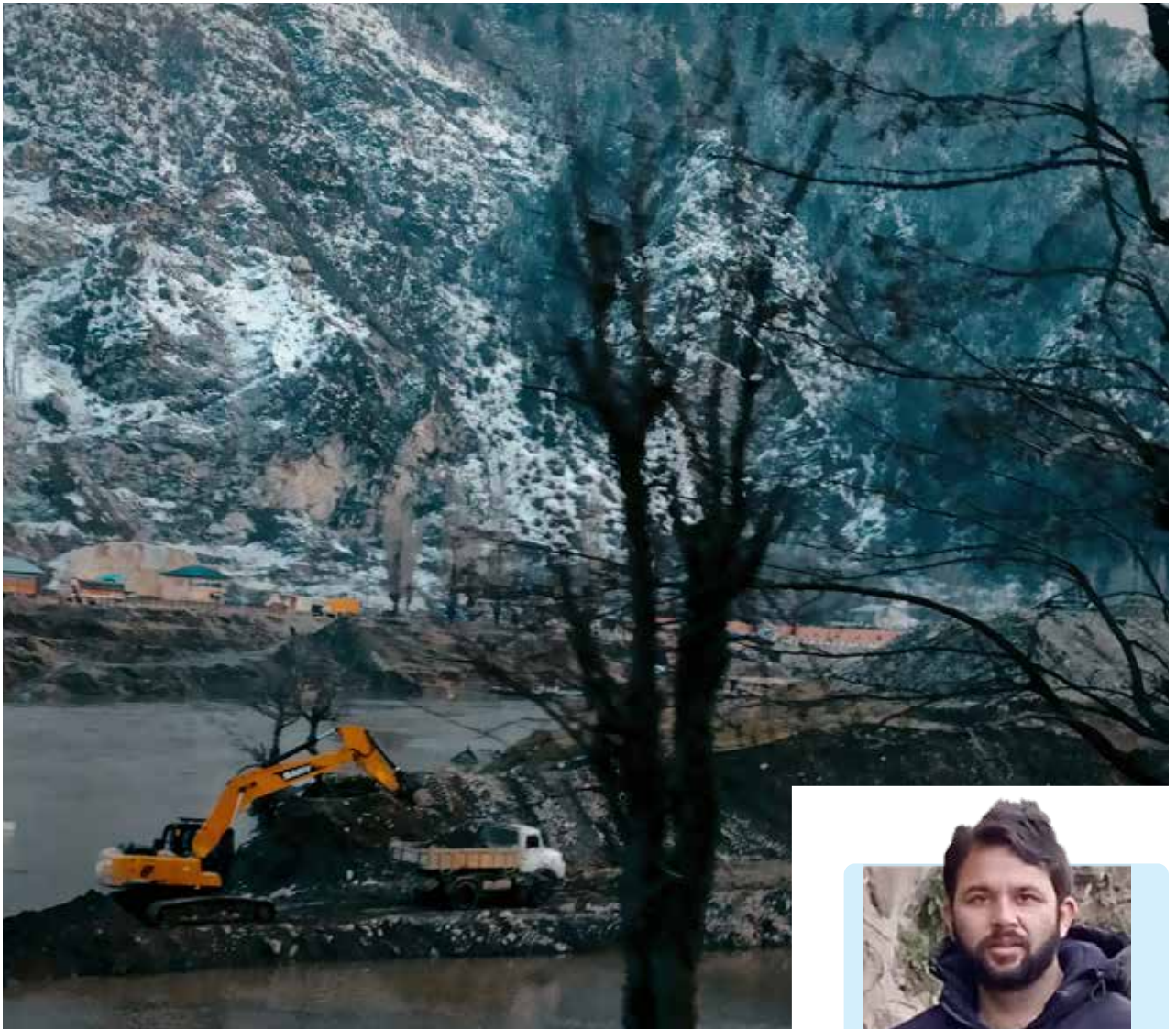
All this confusion could have been avoided if the government

had announced the J&K Anti Encroachment Land Retrieval Policy before initiating the exercise at ground level. The policy must specify what kind and what size of buildings shall be sealed or demolished. What are the kinds of structures and up to what size that shall be categorized as "small-holder property" and shall be spared from the anti-encroachment drive.

If this exercise had been initiated beforehand, the anti-state forces would not have been able to spike fears and anxiousness among the commoners.

After Abrogation, Society Had Largely Distanced Itself From Notions Of Separatism, Alienation

After the abrogation of Article 370, Kashmiri society largely distanced itself from the notion of separatism or alienation. Instead, a new wave of integration with the national mainstream has arisen to the fore in Kashmir. In such a scenario, the steps taken, policies followed and tactics



Mr Zahoor Ahmad Shah

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adopted must not be such that can inflame some sections of the youth and take them back to the tracks that had been shunned.

The security situation has improved immensely because of the support provided by the people. It is the people themselves who squeezed the space for violent activities, and rejected the mind space that supports violence. These are major gains and they must be strengthened further.

Any laws that seem to be

going against the interests of the middle class, the poor and the tribals of Jammu and Kashmir have the potential to shift the focus from Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi's idea of New India and Badalta Kashmir. Any wrong policy initiative can alienate and agitate the already depressed class of rural/urban poor and middle class. Further, it will disrupt the development and peace process achieved with so much hard work and sacrifice.

STONE-PELTING IN JAMMU TO PROTEST ANTI- ENCROACHMENT DRIVE

WHAT IS THE CORRELATION?

**TOP NETAS
OWN LAVISH
PROPERTY
IN THE AREA**

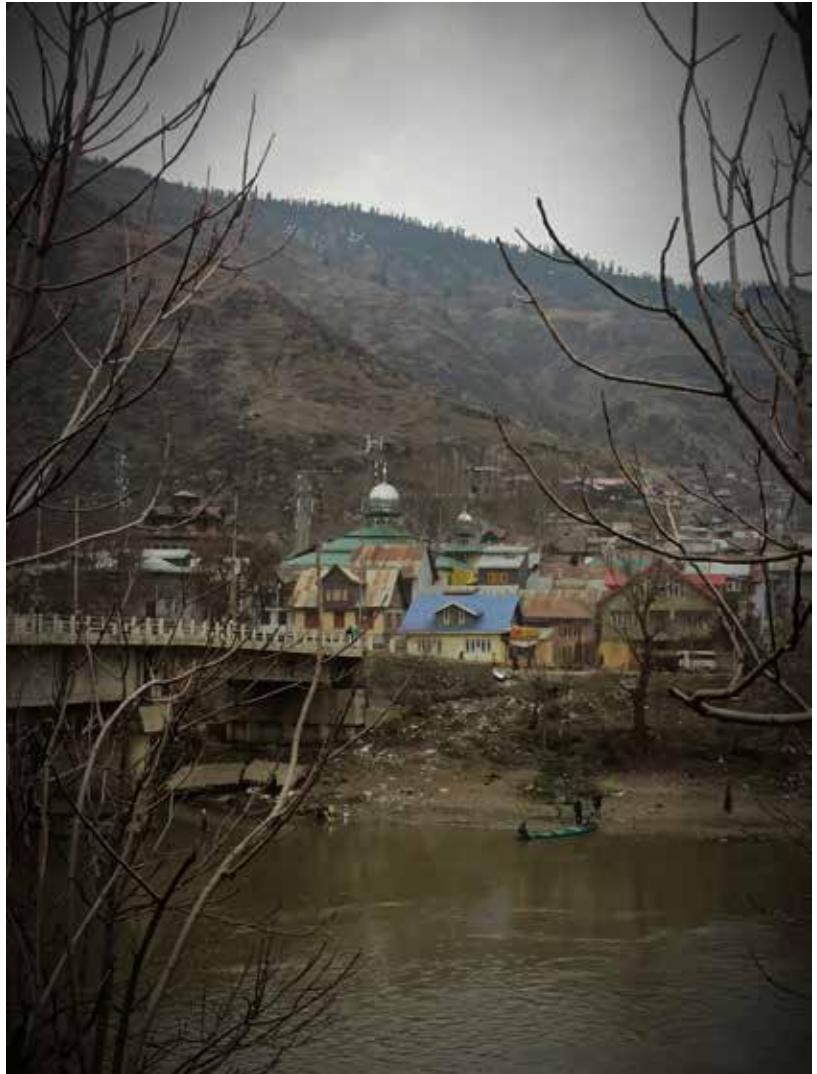
by GM MIR

lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha has repeatedly reassured the people that small land holders will be spared from the anti-encroachment drive. Then why do we see a wave of fear and apprehensions in Kashmir among the small land-holders that they shall be targeted as part of the anti-encroachment drive?

The reason is that this fear has deliberately been manufactured by our politicians. From the beginning, the LG Administration had specified that the target of the anti-encroachment drive shall be those influential persons who misused their power, privileges and connections to illegally grab state land and construct different types of structures on them – both residential and commercial.

The government knows that the people would have appreciated the move to retrieve state land from the influential encroachers and land sharks. At the same time, the politicians know that they shall not be able to justify their blatant land grabbing. That is why they have raised the bogey of people's exploitation in the anti-encroachment drive.

Within the first few months after the abrogation of Article 370, the people themselves observed a marked change in our society. In private conversations, we started admitting that the people of Kashmir are pragmatic. They have moved on after the abrogation. What they seek



The politicians know that they shall not be able to justify their blatant land grabbing. That is why they have raised the bogey of people's exploitation in the anti-encroachment drive

is peace and progress, and a stable future for their children.

Our politicians cannot digest this new reality. They keep taking people up the garden path, telling them that Article 370 shall be restored. But people are smart. They know

the truth, and they know how to adapt to the truth.

It is only our politicians who continue to make Article 370 a big issue. They continue to flog the dead horse, doing politics over its abrogation or restoration.

DEMOLITION OF HUGE COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE ON STATE LAND IN JAMMU

In conversations, many people question why did the Administration have to break down commercial structures at some places? They could have attached it.

I believe that the action that was initiated was absolutely correct. We need to remember that the right message has been delivered to the politically powerful and the influential that they cannot take the state for a ride.

All over India, rich and influential men are not allowed to grab prime state land and build personal structures. If this is done, the state shall have no authority, and it shall be a free-for-all. Pakistan allowed the rich and influential to do what they wanted, and look where Pakistan is today. People don't have roti, they don't have petrol, and Pakistan is begging the world for money.

Small-Holders Have Not Been Targeted

The same is the case with the manufactured opposition among the people over the anti-encroachment drive. The truth is that the Administration has not targeted the small-holders during the anti-encroachment drive. Land is being retrieved only from those who have indulged in huge land-grabbing or have taken on the role of land sharks.

We all know what our politicians have done in Kashmir in the name of the conflict. State land, Kahcharai land – all this was grabbed and colonized in the most posh areas. A number of our political leaders have been in the business of property dealing through their proxies. For years, they have indulged in the dalali of prime land and have made crores upon crores in profit.

What was the pattern of the politicians in Kashmir? Five marla milkiyat land, 15 marla state land – put it together and raise a residential structure, a commercial structure. That is why they are instigating the people for ho-halla. They are inflaming the poor by saying that you all are going to lose your land.

Rumours Have Been Deliberately Manufactured, Circulated

In the peripheral areas of Jammu where the anti-encroachment drive was carried out, no one owning a few marlas was disturbed. But still there was stone-pelting in the area.

Powerful politicians from different political parties or their relatives own lavish personal and commercial structures in the peripheral areas of Jammu. These leaders have extensive land ownership here. The stone pelting took place in the area. What is the correlation?

Rumours have deliberately been floated in Kashmir. Fears have been created. Slowly, truth will be revealed before the people. Our politicians cannot fool all the people all the time.

The politicians know that if the drive continues, they will get exposed before the public. The land grabbed by them shall be retrieved. That is why they instigate the common people that small-holders shall lose their land. They want to bring the people on the road to save themselves.

WHY OUR POLITICIANS ARE UNITED IN PROTESTING THE ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE

W e know that our entire political class is fragmented.

They came together for PAGD. That fell apart soon enough. So what is the reason that they are all united against the anti-encroachment drive?

The reason is that they know that their corruption and nepotism shall be exposed. They have occupied land in posh areas themselves, in the name of their relatives. That is why our politicians are afraid of being



STATE LAND
KHASRA NO. 55 /56/ 57/ 58/ 59
VILLAGE : RAKH BAHU TESHIL : BAHU
TRESPASSERS SHALL BE PROSECUTED
STRICTLY AS PER LAW

caught. They also know that if the people come on the roads to protest the drive, they will not lose their illegally occupied land.

Let us go by past experience. Our politicians told us that the removal of Article 370 was the end of the world. It actually brought stability in our environment. We bid goodbye to curfews, hartals, shutdowns, schools and colleges shut, street violence and killings. We can now focus on the progress and prosperity of Kashmir.

Similarly, the bulldozer is to take away the land grabbed by the political elites. The move shall rationalize property prices in Jammu and Kashmir. The bulldozer shall empower the common man.

Wrong To Give Communal Angle

I see that some people are giving a communal angle to the anti-encroachment drive. This is not the truth. The government should carry out the drive even with greater force than before so that people are able to see how the political royals were making fools of us.

In the posh areas in which our politicians own land in Srinagar, Jammu and other major towns of Kashmir, the land must be measured. How much of it is state land, how much is milkiyat land. We are talking about areas where a kanal sells for crores.

In siyasat daano ne zannat ko loot kar khaya hai. They and their cliques have looted ecologically sensitive zones like Gulmarg, Pahalgam. They or their cohorts were always in the forefront for land grabbing.



Let us go by past experience. Our politicians told us that the removal of Article 370 was the end of the world. It actually brought stability in our environment. We bid goodbye to curfews, hartals, shutdowns, schools and colleges shut, street violence and killings

The anti-encroachment drive has not targeted the poor anywhere. If any wall or any structure was interfering with road connectivity, only that has been removed in the interest of the general public. There has been no action against the poor anywhere.

Why Did Our Political Elites Trigger Violence In Narwal?

Why did the politicians instigate the youth to attack the demolition drive in Jammu? They are scaring the people so

LAND SHARKS: POLITICIANS, THEIR RELATIVES, RETIRED BUREAUCRATS

Official figures reveal that nearly 4 lakh kanal of encroached State and Kahcharai land has been retrieved encroachers in J&K UT. These are mostly politicians, their relatives and retired bureaucrats across Kashmir valley. The Administration has further specified that the drive will continue without any break till the remaining 2.74 lakh kanals of land is taken back from the grabbers.

Official figures reveal that 2,16,683 kanals of state land has been retrieved from encroachers in 10 districts of Kashmir valley till date. Most of the owners are influential persons who had misused their power to construct residential or commercial structures on the grabbed state or Kahcharai land.

Media reports reveal that the government is working on a policy to protect small land holders from anti-encroachment drive.

that their own land grabbing shall remain under wraps. They did the same in Narwal. They knew that we have illegally occupied state land, and the state is going to initiate the move to retrieve the land. They are instigating people for their personal benefit.

The commoners must encourage the government in this move. If the politicians dictate the terms to us, it shall again be a problem for us. Some top bureaucrats are also involved in this racket of grabbing state land. All these rich and influential people know that legally, they cannot question the government's move. So they are using the people as a convenient front.

On social media, there is a deluge of propaganda against the anti-encroachment drive. All our political parties have their brigades dedicated to social

media. They can make any kind of content trend or go viral. They are using social media as a tool to deepen fear among the poor regarding the anti-encroachment drive.

This negative and agenda-driven propaganda can be effectively countered by the UT Administration. In all the districts, the DCs should reach out to the social media influencers. The DCs should interact with them, involve them in the local initiatives. Social media is a huge space. The government must proactively engage the influencers in this space.

Many social media influencers keep posting negative stuff because nobody has explained the right perspective to them. Engaging with them can set off a cycle of positive communication on both sides.



Mr GM Mir

Editor Of KSHOTZ - The Kashmir Truths, a weekly newsletter brought out from Kashmir that brings to light the many ways in which the terror ecosystem destroyed Kashmir, and what should be the road ahead



FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR'S DESK

SHEIKH MUDASIR HUSSAIN

OPEN LETTER TO MS ARFA KHANUM SHERWANI, SENIOR EDITOR, THE WIRE

Ms Sherwani, you are among those who are preparing the ground for more innocent, gullible Kashmiri youth to pick up arms against the state and join terror groups



Ms Sherwani, your video reports for The Wire have gone viral in Kashmir.

You would be thrilled, The Wire would be thrilled. Ms Sherwani, I may please inform you that ISI, Pakistan Army, the Pakistan establishment – all of them are thrilled. You would be aware that former prime minister of Pakistan Mr Imran Khan tweeted a short clip of your report with his usual comments on Kashmir.

This is so convenient, Ms Sherwani. You and your clique make Pakistan's dirty job in Kashmir so easy. But you know what? Despite your couching it in fancy terms like "The most honest account of the situation in Kashmir post-370", and the viral viewing, your video reports still remain a dirty job. Let me explain why.

Ms Sherwani, you are among those who are preparing the ground for more innocent, gullible Kashmiri youth to pick up arms against the state and join terror groups like The Resistance Front, Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish e Mohammad and others. Or they shall become Over Ground Workers (OGWs) for terror groups, providing support for all activities. Or they shall become hybrid militants.

You, of course, may have considered none of this. You think that you are doing "honest journalism" by giving voice to the feelings of the people. No Ms Sherwani. Your work is far more insidious. You are practicing narrative terrorism.

Does it matter to you that a section of Kashmiri youth

Ms Sherwani, I say to you with humility and gentleness – please stick to your comfortable, plush life in Delhi. Don't tell us Kashmiris that abrogation is the worst thing that happened to us. You make no mention of what all we suffered when terror ruled

continue to choose violence to kill and die, and one of the reasons is the intellectual deceit of people like you? Does it matter to you that these budding youth leave their parents and siblings wailing and distraught, and injured for life?

I should know what I am talking about, Ms Sherwani. I was among those youth who got entrenched in the terror ecosystem. Many factors in Kashmir contributed to that entrenchment. One of the factors was the relentless bashing of the government by "honest journalists" like you.

Fools that we were, boys like me put two and two together and made ten. When we read news reports like yours, they were validation for us that Pakistan's propaganda was right. We believed your bashing of the Indian government. This bashing justified the Pakistan narrative on Kashmir. It made Pakistan's narrative look honest. It made us believe that the separatists were right.

Ms Sherwani, I was a hardworking student who was studying to be a doctor. In Class 12, I got carried away by the

separatist ideology and became a hard-core stone thrower, relishing the mindless clashes with the security forces in my hometown.

Steadily, I became an Over Ground Worker (OGW) for Hizbul Mujahideen, the militant arm of the Jamaat e Islami – the fountainhead for the toxic separatist narrative in Kashmir. I used to be the gang leader for organized groups of stone-pelters. I was so aggressive that in my area, people used to call me "Chhota Geelani". I was jailed thrice for my violent ways.

My life transformed when I realized in jail that poor boys like me were being fooled so that we became terrorists and OGWs, while the separatists and their children were flourishing in luxury. Ms Sherwani, my father couldn't bear the pain of seeing his son's life destroyed, in and out of jail. *Vo merey ghum me mar gaya.*

How do you fit into this story, Ms Sherwani? You fit in because of the ideology you practice. You were in Kashmir some days ago, releasing one video report after another.



Please note, Ms Sherwani, that the abrogation of Article 370 is steadily ending the duplicity in Kashmir. It has put an end to the engineered deaths on our streets, the grievous pellet injuries for our youth, the never-ending hartal calendar, the shutdown of educational institutions for months together, the local economy in doldrums

You consistently projected the abrogation of Article 370 as deep damage done to Kashmir and to Kashmiris.

Ms Sherwani, I say to you with humility and gentleness – please stick to your comfortable,

plush life in Delhi. Don't tell us Kashmiris that abrogation is the worst thing that happened to us.

Terror forces have been assiduously working in Kashmir for decades to radicalize and indoctrinate gullible youth. Your

propaganda will deepen their manufactured alienation. It will fuel the carefully planted angst inside a section of our youth against the Indian state, and they may choose the path of violence and terror. This shall derail our hard-earned peace and progress.

Or if you want to come to Kashmir, Ms Sherwani, please be honest to your God and to your profession. Please take note of the sweeping positive changes that we are witnessing at ground level after the abrogation of Article 370.

Your video series reveals your seething anger over the abolition. You declare in your "honest journalism" video that the voluble Kashmiri has been forced into silence by the government. Are you aware, Ms Sherwani, that the

terror ecosystem allowed the voluble Kashmiri only to lambast the government? He was not allowed to ever question the terror ecosystem. Hundreds of Kashmiris who dared to defy the terror players were brutally killed.

Ms Sherwani, I still live in Old Town Baramulla, my home town, which used to be called mini Pakistan. For years now, I have counselled scores of boys who were on the brink of joining terror ranks. Their parents or other family members reach out to me in despair to protect their sons. I give these youth my own example and tell them not to destroy their life, their career.

Ms Sherwani, read the recent comment of former Congress leader Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad. He said, "Anger against Centre (over abrogation of Article 370 and 35A) was slightly cooling down, militancy was ending, people could freely roam outside, strikes & stone-pelting ended..."

Mr Azad was making this point in the context of the UT Administration's anti-encroachment drive in Kashmir. The drive has been deeply politicized by our politicians to protect themselves. They have blatantly grabbed state land for decades and are using the common man to derail the positive initiative.

Please note, Ms Sherwani, that the abrogation of Article 370 is steadily ending the duplicity in Kashmir. How many stories should I tell you of how the terror ecosystem destroyed the lives of innocent, gullible boys? This honest admission by Mr Azad: militancy was ending, strikes and stone-pelting ended...

These words translate into peaceful living and normalcy for lakhs of Kashmiris. It has put an end to the engineered deaths on our streets, the grievous pellet injuries for our youth, the never-ending hartal calendar, the shutdown of educational institutions for months together, the local economy in doldrums. All these and more were engineered by Pakistan and the terror ecosystem.

That was Kashmir before abrogation of Article 370. Was that the Kashmir that you preferred, Ms Sherwani?

It is strange indeed. The Kashmiris are rejoicing in this new march of peace and development. They are rejoicing in the new-found normalcy. And you who live your rich, plush life in happy and prosperous Delhi are grudging us this peace, you are lambasting it. Why Ms Sherwani?

Kashmiris gave you the melancholic responses in your video report because this is what you must expect of us. We are conditioned to hold the state responsible for everything that we don't like about our life. This melancholy keeps us safe from the whiplash of the terror ecosystem. Hence our responses to you, hence the deluge of appreciation on social media for your videos.

One, this is our conditioning. This is our default response. Second, we are safe when we label the state as the bad guy in the picture. Nobody is going to kill us for it.

There is so much more to tell you, Ms Sherwani. For starters, I hope that my open letter

reaches you and forces you to think. If Article 370 had not been abrogated, Pakistan and the terror ecosystem nourished by it would have continued to relentlessly pursue Kashmir's total devastation. Does the thought make you happy, Ms Sherwani? Next time you set out to strengthen the tukde-tukde narrative for India, please pause and think.



Mr Sheikh Mudasir

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SABOTAGE FROM WITHIN SYSTEM

WHY UT ADMIN NEEDS TO BE ON GUARD

by Gayatri Mohan



During elections to the District Development Councils (DDC) in December 2020, the top brass of the UT Administration was startled by reports that in many polling booths across the valley, election officers were abusing voters for choosing to participate in democracy and cast their vote.

During mid-2021, it was observed that a section of the mid-level bureaucrats in Kashmir were deliberately sabotaging the functioning of the DDCs and other government departments. Close examination of this pattern revealed that these officers nurse the Jamaat e Islami ideology. They silently work within the system to sabotage the efforts of GOI to strengthen grassroots democracy in the form of DDCs.

Since the abrogation of Article 370, many such instances have come to the fore where mid-level officers have deliberately derailed the welfare policies of the government. They have sat over files and delayed decision-

Perception management drives Kashmir. The government must always do right. Equally, the government must always be seen to be doing right. Over the last few weeks, negative messaging regarding the anti-encroachment drive has flooded the social media in Kashmir

After the abrogation, the poor and unprivileged sections, which form the large bottom of the pyramid in Kashmir, have aligned with the dream of Naya Kashmir free of corruption and nepotism. This section must be assured with constant messaging about the roadmap of the state and the bona fide intentions of all state actions

making so that the common man is harassed and starts thinking that the state is harassing him.

Need To Ensure That No Officer Is Acting With Mala Fide Intention

The UT Administration must be on guard that no government functionary at any level is able to initiate wrong action against any commoner in the name of state decision. This is especially important when the anti-encroachment drive is going on.

In early January, UT Administration directed all DCs to ensure hundred percent removal of encroachments from state land by January 31, 2023. The clarification by LG Shri Manoj Sinha came as a consolation to thousands of poor people. The LG stated that "the common man and poor people wouldn't be touched by the administration. The government is concerned to safeguard the interests of poor people".

On February 2, Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta directed the Deputy Commissioners to safeguard the habitations and livelihoods of the poor and downtrodden.

Despite this, fears continue to besiege the general populace, generating rumours and disinformation. It needs to be carefully watched that no government functionary is able to act with mala fide intention to target the poor with the intention to malign the state.





The Messaging Of Any Initiative Is Very Important

The district administrations across the Union Territory need to be wary. The positive intentions of the anti-encroachment drive shall be compromised if some officer driven by mala fide agenda deliberately targets the small-holders.

The Administration must assiduously follow what was known as Macaulay's Downward Filtration Theory For Education. The British educated some upper caste Indians so that the move would influence the lower

strata people.

Similarly, the anti-encroachment drive continue to keep steady focus on big land grabbers in Srinagar and the adjoining towns, and major tourism hotspots like Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Sonamarg etc. It is the government's mandate to protect the forests, the wetlands, the state and kahcharai land from influential politicians and bureaucrats.

In the aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370, the elite political class was kept behind barricades. People celebrated their confinement. In the same way, people shall support the anti-encroachment drive if the

government resolutely ensures that no action is taken against the small-holders, and only the big land grabbers are targeted.

The messaging of any initiative is very important. In Kashmir, the state initiatives for progress and development have continued since independence. But what has mattered at ground level is the play of perceptions.

Perception management drives Kashmir. The government must always do right. Equally, the government must always be seen to be doing right. Over the last few weeks, negative messaging regarding the anti-encroachment drive has flooded the social media in Kashmir.

After the abrogation of Article 370, the commoners had completely disassociated from the separatist philosophy of Syed Ali Geelani. Over the last few weeks, his video warning the Kashmiris of dire consequences has started circulating in the social media.

After the abrogation, the poor and unprivileged sections, which form the large bottom of the pyramid in Kashmir, have aligned with the dream of Naya Kashmir free of corruption and nepotism. This section must be assured with constant messaging about the roadmap of the state and the bona fide intentions of all state actions. This will minimize confusion among people and provide space for development initiatives to flourish.

Reports in the media that the government is working on a policy to protect small land holders from anti-encroachment drive is a step in the right direction.



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