

# THE KASHMIR

Handwara Start-Up,  
Fully Funded By District  
Admn Kupwara, Offers New  
Hope To Women



# CONNECT

VOLUME 2

EDITION 7

11 JANUARY, 2023



**CHENAB  
VALLEY**

**SHOPIAN**



**POONCH**



**RAJOURI**

**RAJOURI-POONCH**

**ISI WORKING ON  
CREATING A SUPPORTIVE  
DEMOGRAPHIC  
CORRIDOR**



THE **KASHMIR**  
**CONNECT**

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

# POJK Rocked By Large Scale Protests against Pakistan

## People Decry Extremely Difficult Living Conditions



On January 11, a Facebook post and Youtube video circulated across various social media groups in Kashmir. The post said that Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir was rocked by protests, with Gilgit Baltistan demanding reunion with India.

The video showed that there had been large protests over all the three divisions of Pakistan-Occupied Jammu – Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Poonch.

For decades now, people living in POJK have been protesting that they have to live amidst extremely difficult conditions and very poor civic

amenities. Hence there is widespread resentment against the government of Pakistan in these areas.

A speaker in the video, Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza, said that these protests have been going on for decades, but they were never highlighted. The reason, he said, is that these protests are completely blacked out by the Pakistani media. Hence earlier, these protests were not able to reach the outside world.

Dr Mirza said that the situation has changed with the popularity of social media in the region, and the voice of the people is reaching the outside world. He added that the discontentment among the people has now reached peak level, and hence such protests and agitations are being seen in large numbers.

The anchor for the news report said that the people of Gilgit Baltistan have demanded re-union with India.

GAYATRI MOHAN

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Website

[thekashmirconnect.com](http://thekashmirconnect.com)

Periodicity: **Weekly**

Language: **English**

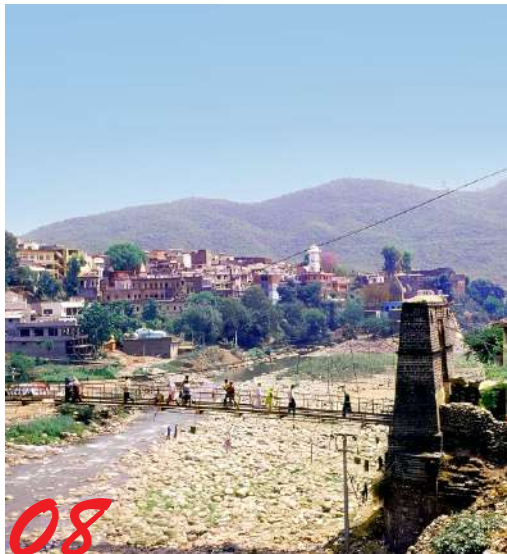
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Follow me    



**05** | Fully Funded Sanitary Pad Manufacturing Unit Opened In Kulangam by District Admn Kupwara

*By Abida War*

**08** | Create Supportive Demographic Corridors For Terror

*By Gayatri Mohan and Sheikh Mudasir*

**14** | Fast-Pace Development Shall Foil ISI Plans

*By Sheikh Mudasir Hussain*

**18** | Our Youth Must Understand That Gun Is Not A Choice

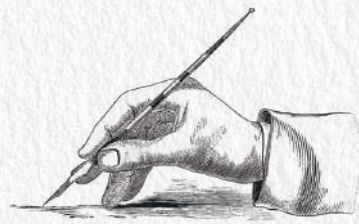
*By Mudasir Dar*

**24** | Do We Really See Ourselves As Part Of The Modern World?

*By Dr Sumi Saidullah*

FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPUTY EDITOR

ABIDA WAR



Milestone For Women Empowerment In Handwara

# FULLY FUNDED SANITARY PAD MANUFACTURING UNIT OPENED IN KULANGAM BY DISTRICT ADMN KUPWARA

## DC Kupwara Dr Diofode Sagar Dattatray Plays Pivotal Role

Today, January 11, marks a milestone in the empowerment of the women of Handwara. This is such a precious time for all of us.

It is matter of pride for us that today Handwara boasts of a new start-up managed and run by women. This is the setting up of a sanitary-pads manufacturing unit in our township. The unit has been set up with state assistance provided by Kupwara Deputy Commissioner Dr Doifode Sagar Dattatray. The DC provided assistance of Rs 5 lakh for setting up the project.





This project is 'Ba-Ikhtiyar Kwateen, Khushkun Kashmir'. The empowered women of a happy Kashmir.

I am involved in this wonderful initiative in my official role as Supervisor in the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Department, and also in my role as a crusader for the rights of women and children.

## DC Saab Helped Us In Setting Up The Project

I am happy to note that when we discussed the setting up of the sanitary pads manufacturing

unit with DC Dr Dattatray, we got a very positive response from him. The DC assured us that we have the full support of the government in positive initiatives which empower women and provide them with employment.

The project has been set up with the help of the NGO, Vatsalya Foundation, which has presence across 26 states in India. The sanitary pads manufacturing unit at Kupwara will be the 173rd such unit set up by this NGO. The amazing work done by this NGO for the empowerment of women has also been acknowledged by Limca Book Of Records. It is wonderful that the synergy of

all the stakeholders have come together for this project which shall provide employment to the local women, and it shall also empower them.

The progressive attitude of the women can be assessed from the fact that they are ready to address the issue of menstrual hygiene. They understand that the health of women is closely linked to menstrual health and hygiene. Hence women must given safe options for menstrual hygiene management. The bio-degradable sanitary pads manufactured at our unit are a major step in this direction. These sanitary pads are made with banana stem fibre. They are 100 per cent bio-degradable.

It is remarkable that this unit has been set up with wonderful synergy between the civil administration and the people of Kunalgam. Kupwara Deputy Commissioner Dr Dattatray has expressed satisfaction that the local womenfolk will be trained in handling the manufacturing process for the sanitary pads.

## Self Help Groups Will Run The Start-Up

The machinery to manufacture the sanitary pads has been installed. Self Help Groups (SHGs) of our township will take over the daily running and management of the manufacturing unit. Per day, the unit can manufacture 1000 sanitary pads in assembly line production. The SHGs will be able to maintain the unit as a profitable venture through the sale of the sanitary pads. The price of the sanitary pad has been kept very low so that these remain easily affordable for all women.

The DC Saab has stated that this unit is being started as a pilot project. If it is successful, more such units can be opened in other parts of the district.

This is the fifth such sanitary pad manufacturing unit opened by the NGO in Jammu and Kashmir. There is one unit in RS Pura and one in Kathua, both in Jammu region.

In Kashmir, the first unit was opened in Dudi village in Kupwara district in August 2022. The second unit was opened in Baramulla town a little over a month ago. The Sector Commander reached out to Mrs Swati Bedekar and Mr Shyam Sundar Bedekar of Vatsalya Foundation, the NGO, to open another unit in Kupwara region.

Mrs Swati Bedekar is full of appreciation for the women and girls of Handwara who have come forward with all their strength to make this project a success. Mrs Bedekar and her team are providing training to



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the teams associated with the project.

### Space Provided Free By Jenab Mohd Ramzan Beigh

I want to record my appreciation and regard for Jenab Mohd Ramzan Beigh of Handwara, who has provided the use of his building for setting up the manufacturing unit without taking any rent for it. Regarding his motivation for providing the use of his building for free, Jenab Beigh said with great simplicity that the Almighty showers blessings and grace upon those who help the people in need. He said that it made him feel happy that women and girls of the area would get employment and they would be empowered through the new project that has been started in the township.

Starting a unit is the first step. The test that we face thereafter is managing it successfully and sustaining it as a self-reliant profitable venture. I am involved with the project in my official capacity and even more in my personal capacity.

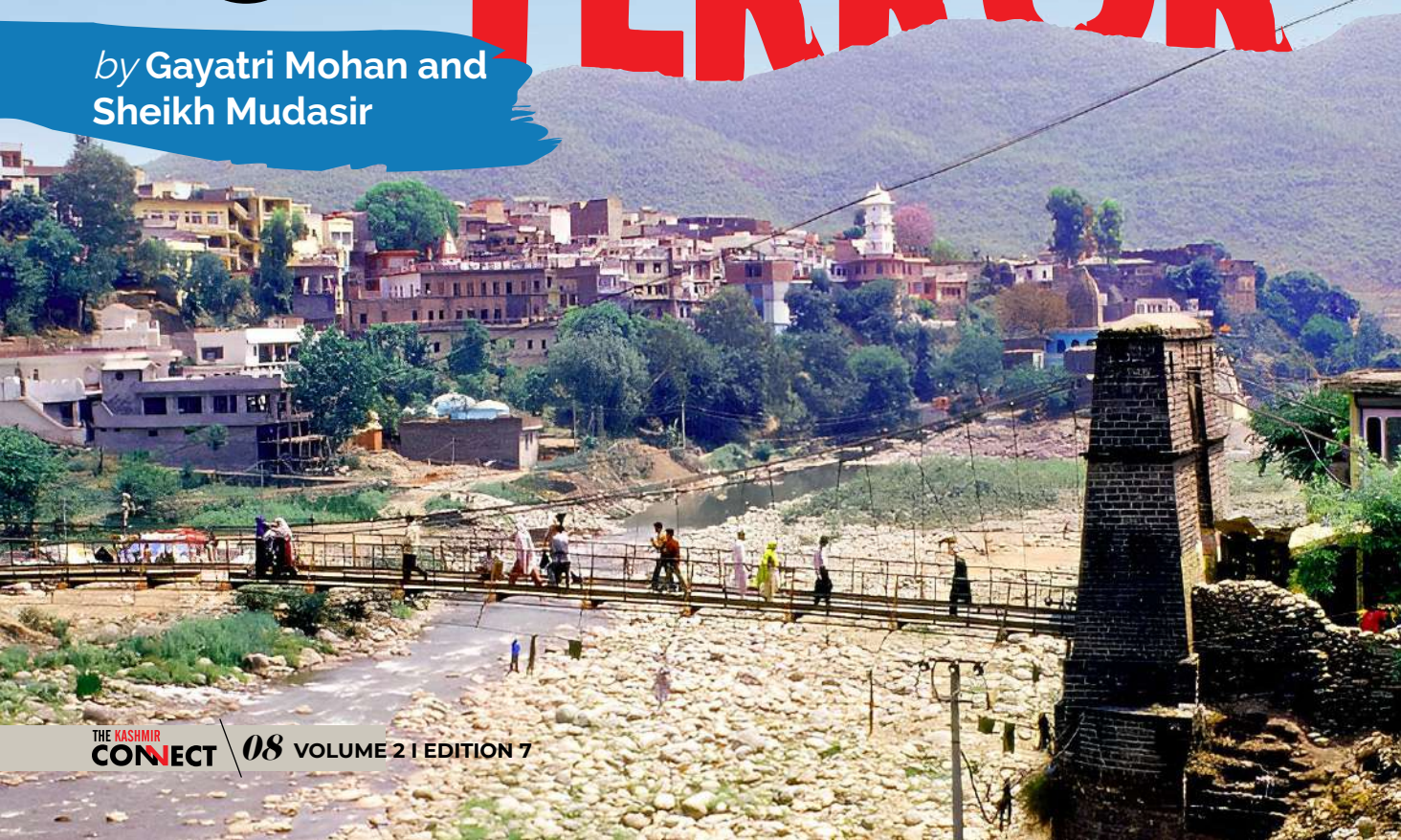
If my association was only in official capacity, I would have been working for the opening of the unit only during the office hours. But for the last several days, we have worked day and night for this project. All my sisters associated with the project are working with the same energy. We want to make this project successful so that we get the support of the civic administration to open more and more such projects here for the economic well-being and empowerment of women, and of society at large.

Rajouri Poonch

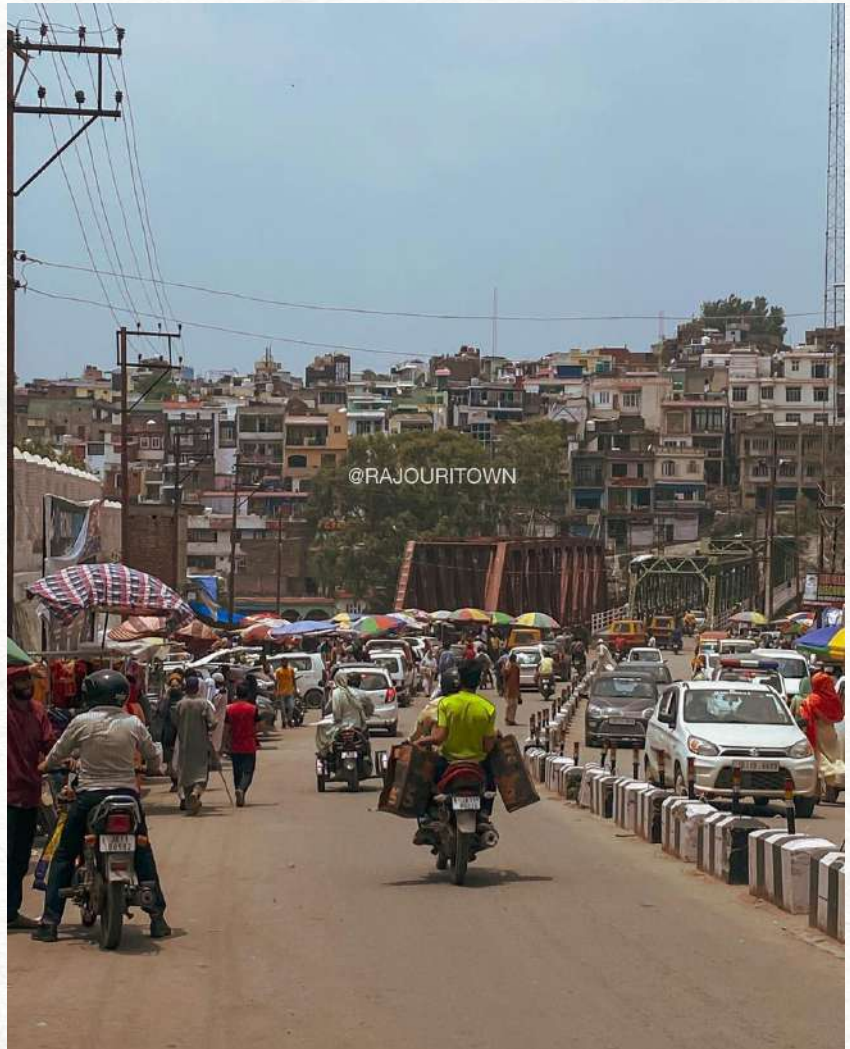
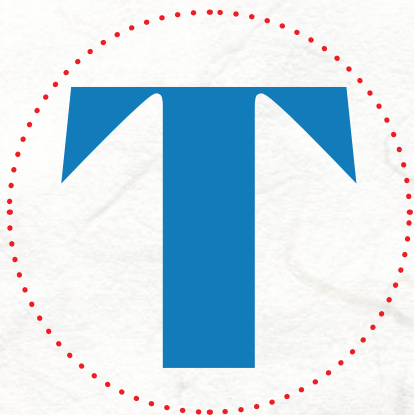
ISI AIM  
FOR J&K

# Create Supportive Demographic Corridors For TERROR

by Gayatri Mohan and  
Sheikh Mudasir







There is no point positioning the issue like ‘Is ISI working on creating a friendly demographic corridor in J&K?’ There’s no point being smart about it and raising a question. What we are witnessing is clear and present danger. And it is staring us in the face.

It is significant that following the Dangri attack, GOI is deploying additional 1,800 troops largely in Poonch and Rajouri districts to intensify anti-terror operations in the region.

We know the when and what of the terror attack in Dangri village of Rajouri. Some analysts have spelt out the why. But there’s more to it than meets the eye.

**TERROR**  
**ATTACK**  
**AIMS TO**  
**CHANGE**  
**SOUTH PIR**  
**PANJAL**  
**DEMOGRAPHY**

by Gayatri Mohan and  
Sheikh Mudasar

**Why?**

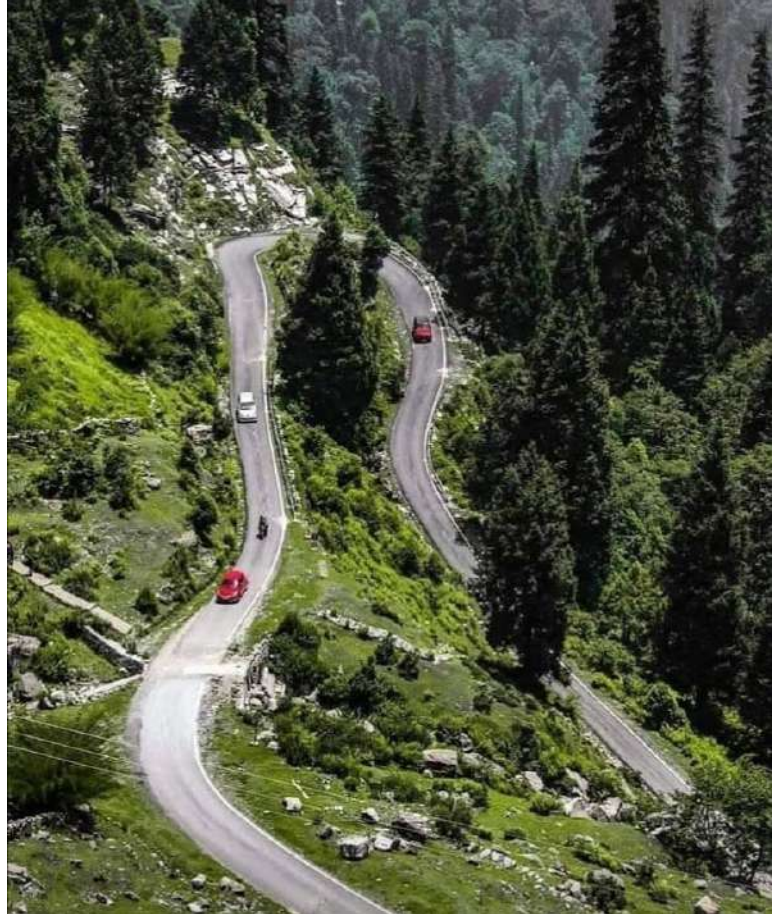
For many years, terrorists were targeting government policy in Kashmir. Many people were killed as a direct attack on government policy. Sarpanches or members of Panchayat were killed because they represented the grassroots political structures of GOI. Members of BJP and other political persons were killed as part of attacks on the government. Kashmiri Pandits were killed because their rehabilitation is government policy.

Last year, a non-local Hindu working in Kashmir for some years was killed because he had reportedly applied for the J&K domicile certificate. Outside labour or truckers were killed, again to target government policy to strengthen commerce and trade activities and networks.

## Why ISI Is Seeking Ethnic Cleansing In South Pir Panjal Region

After a long phase, people have been killed in the south Pir Panjal region solely because they are Hindus. The ones who were targeted are simple villagers. They do not represent any government policy. They have been living in these areas for generations.

Their killing is linked to Pakistan's terror ecosystem in Kashmir. ISI is seeking ethnic cleansing in the south Pir Panjal region so that it may be able to provide ease of movement to the terrorists through a sympathetic demography.



## Why did terrorists sent by ISI kill the Hindus in Rajouri? It is because ISI is seeking ethnic cleansing in the south Pir Panjal region so that it may be able to provide ease of movement to the terrorists through a sympathetic demography

Why did terrorists sent by ISI kill these Hindus? This is a complex matrix where several dots must be joined to arrive at a clear picture.

It is to be noted that the terrorists did not attack houses on the periphery of a village. They attacked specific houses in a closely packed area of Dangri.

The question is – why did the terrorists choose to come

inside the village to attack these houses? What was the objective of selectively targeting them?

Reports reveal that the terrorists asked for the Aadhaar cards of the victims before gunning them down. Intelligence agencies are aware that the sleeper cells of terrorists in this area had already identified the victims of the attack. Attacking these villagers was not a last-

# If the militants have Telenor SIM cards, then tapping their communication may be even more difficult. Sources reveal that in areas along the border in Rajouri and Poonch region, mobile phones can receive connectivity from the towers of Telenor, Pakistan's major cellular and digital services provider

minute choice on the basis of only the Aadhaar cards.

The attack on the village in Rajouri establishes that ISI's network is strong in this region.

It is known that before an attack, terrorists or their Over Ground Workers (OGWs) carry out elaborate reconnaissance of the area to identify the entry and escape routes. All this was done before the attack was executed.

On January 10, over 50 people from different parts of the district were detained by J&K Police in connection with the attack at Dangri village. If the investigation establishes that the OGWs who assisted the attack are from the same village or nearby villages, it is a matter of alarm and may deepen the communal fault lines.

## ISI wants OGWs To Occupy Land Vacated By Hindus

While the large section of the population in the south Pir Panjal region is against terrorism, some friendly pockets can enable the movement of terrorists in these areas.

ISI cannot carry out terror activities in the region without local support, and is keen to identify supportive pockets in

the area. From ISI's perspective, this is essential so that terrorists who attempt infiltration from the Poonch border get a safe corridor to escape to Kashmir or to Jammu.

To ensure total terror deterrence, the Army and all other security agencies must maintain complete dominance over all road networks in the region and protect the adjoining belts from terror infiltration. This is essential.

Brig Narendra Kumar (ret'd), Distinguished Fellow, United Services Institution of India (USI) noted in his recent write-up after the Rajouri attack, "All these areas have strategic significance and fall along the lines of communication that connect Jammu with the Kashmir Valley. It is a long-term ISI project to take complete control of the road axis and colonise land vacated by Hindus and create vulnerability for the security forces, especially during war."

## Narrative Support For ISI Shall Be Dangerous

If ISI is able to gain sympathy in the border areas of the Rajouri and Poonch, and narrative support for ISI becomes

common, it shall be dangerous. This can lead to serious security breaches.

The Rajouri- Poonch area is connected through forest routes to Shopian in south Kashmir. If the terrorists find a sympathetic corridor to pass through Rajouri and Poonch, they will find easy access to Kashmir Valley.

If the militants have Telenor SIM cards, then tapping their communication may be even more difficult. Sources reveal that in areas along the border in Rajouri and Poonch region, mobile phones can receive connectivity from the towers of Telenor, Pakistan's major cellular and digital services provider.

Sources reveal that Telenor towers connectivity is also available at Chakra village and adjoining areas in Uri sector, and in the Tangdhar-Kerna sectors in Kupwara. If some persons among the supportive demography are provided Telenor SIM cards and are able to provide phone connectivity to terrorists, it will lead to security breach.

Simultaneously, if any huge consignment of weapons or drugs escapes check in this region and is transported to Kashmir or any other part of the country, the terror players can use it to cause instability.

# ISI Attempts To Displace Hindus Ignored By Earlier Regimes



**Brig Narender Kumar** (*retd.*),  
Executive  
Council Member,  
United Services  
Institution of  
India (USI)

When I was commanding a Rashtriya Rifle unit in the Rajouri-Poonch area, many Hindu families had migrated and over-ground workers were targeting their land and property.

The situation in 2001-2006 was such that there was no one to light even the lamps in the temples in the Thanamandi and Manjakote area and so were other areas where the Hindu community was forced out.

The Centre and state governments have shied away from highlighting the ISI's attempts to displace Hindus and create corridors of sympathetic demography to further their designs especially along the communication arteries from Jammu to the Kashmir Valley. These attempts must be seen as a larger design.

It must be remembered that the demographic balance in Doda Kishtwar, Poonch-Rajouri and Ramban area is delicate with a Muslim majority and thus there has always been pressure on Hindu families to migrate. Repeated targeting of Hindus will create a situation of panic in these areas that could trigger another exodus or desperate selling of their land."

*Excerpt from an article by Brig Narender Kumar (retd) on rediff.com, published on Jan 4, 2023*

**Title:** Rajouri Terror Attack Is A Warning! Repeated targeting of Hindus in these areas in Jammu will create panic that could trigger another exodus.

# NOTES FROM THE VALLEY



FROM THE CONSULTING EDITOR'S DESK

SHEIKH MUDASIR HUSSAIN



# Fast-Pace Development Shall Foil ISI Plans

## Low Support For Terrorism In South Pir Panjal Region

Fast stretches of the Pir Panjal region are along the border. About 80 per cent of the population in these areas comprises Muslims. If the communal narrative gains strength and fault-lines become strong, ISI will gain from it.

Equally, any terror attack in the region is not possible without the support of the locals.

From about 1998 to 2006, with the escalation in terror activities, the Hindu families in the border areas of Pir Panjal region vacated their houses and moved to Rajouri, Poonch, Mendhar, Jammu and other safer areas. Army was deployed in the region in 2001. With high intensity operations by the Army, infiltration was stopped. Cross-border terrorism was eliminated in the hinterland. By 2008, the area was largely peaceful again.

Pakistan wants to revive terror activities in the area. By targeting the Hindu population, ISI is trying to deepen the communal fault-lines. If Pakistan is able to achieve this objective, they will be able to radicalize the youth. This shall have dangerous consequences in multiple directions.

People living in border areas generally have low income. This is because most of them do not have any regular income source, and are dependent on agriculture. Some youths may support to terrorism as a source of income.

Classifying a man or a woman as an OGW has been a difficult proposition for long. Most of those who are suspected to be OGWs take the plea of being coerced. The experience of the security forces has been similar in the border regions of Kashmir like Uri and Kupwara. The security agencies regularly seize consignments of weapons and narcotics, but very few locals are arrested for providing logistics support. This



## People living in border areas generally have low income. This is because most of them do not have any regular income source, and are dependent on agriculture. Some youths may support to terrorism as a source of income

is because voluntary logistics support cannot be determined easily.

The south Pir Panjal region is largely marked by communal harmony and the desire to maintain peace. If ISI is able to light up communal hatred here, perhaps a small section of the youth may get sucked into the OGW role to provide logistics support.

### Vital To Follow SOPs

This is a very delicate situation for the Administration and also for the security forces. Any initiatives in the south Pir Panjal region will have to be taken with great sensitivity. The Administration, JK Police, the Army and other security agencies shall have to be highly careful here.

Picking up youth for

interrogation is important but it is also fraught with risk. Now, police and the security forces are very careful with interrogation procedures. But even more, and all SOPs will have to be followed strictly. Even if a few youngsters start supporting the terrorists, it can be a huge breach for the security forces.

The objectives of ISI are manifold. It wants to expand jihadi influence in the south Pir Panjal region to de-stabilize and discredit India. In the international forums, India has consistently maintained that the so-called resistance in Kashmir is limited to a few districts of Kashmir. ISI's objective is to establish a hold in the south Pir Panjal region and radicalize the youth here in an effort to achieve its long-term objective.

**Rajouri, Poonch, Ramban,  
Doda, Kishtwar**

# **Areas That Need High Security Surveillance**

- **Infiltration hotspots**
- **Road network – dominance is vital**
- **Vulnerable areas where local population can be bullied into migration**



Despite the much-needed crackdown by the UT Administration and the stern action by the security agencies, Kashmir continues to have a robust terror eco-system even within the government institutions.

This is the reason why terror acts continue, why boys in their teens or early 20s are being radicalized to become militants or hybrid militants. Kashmir's terror ecosystem enables the narco terror unleashed by Pakistan to flourish. There are Pakistan-friendly saboteurs within the system. There are Pakistan-friendly pockets within society. These sleeper cells get activated as and when needed by Pakistan's terror operators.

Pakistan is seeking to adopt the same strategy in the regions bordering Kashmir - Poonch, Rajouri, Ramban, Doda and Kishtwar. ISI wants to build a supportive demography assisted by terror pockets, especially along the major arteries that connect Kashmir with Jammu. Friendly demographic pockets will mean that terrorists pushed in by Pakistan through the border along Poonch will get easy support of logistics to reach

other parts of Jammu and Kashmir in order to destabilize the region.



FROM THE DESK OF THE ROVING EDITOR

# KASHMIR: LET'S PROMOTE PEACE AND STABILITY TO THE WORLD

A group of people, including children and adults, are walking through a snowy mountain landscape. They are dressed in winter clothing, and the scene is misty and overcast. The people are walking away from the camera, up a snow-covered slope.

Our  
Youth Must  
Understand  
That Gun Is  
Not A Choice

by Mr Mudasir Dar



## We Haven't Learned Anything From Never-Ending Saga Of Death And Ruin

There has been a decline of around 37 percent in recruitment in militant organizations in the last year. For three decades, parents in Kashmir have turned to state officials for help in locating and rehabilitating their kids. We haven't learned anything from the never-ending saga of death and ruin.

Rather, it robbed us of everything. Property worth billions of rupees, human resources, mental stability, and peace are only a few examples. According to government data, 172 militants and 29 civilians were killed in Kashmir in the year 2022. Nearly 70 hybrid militants had been apprehended in recent times.

These numbers aren't something to be proud of. It illustrates the state of devastation that Kashmir is seeing daily. Youth deserve a chance to thrive, a chance to succeed, and a chance to lead society. They are the pillars upon which a nation's strongest foundations are built.

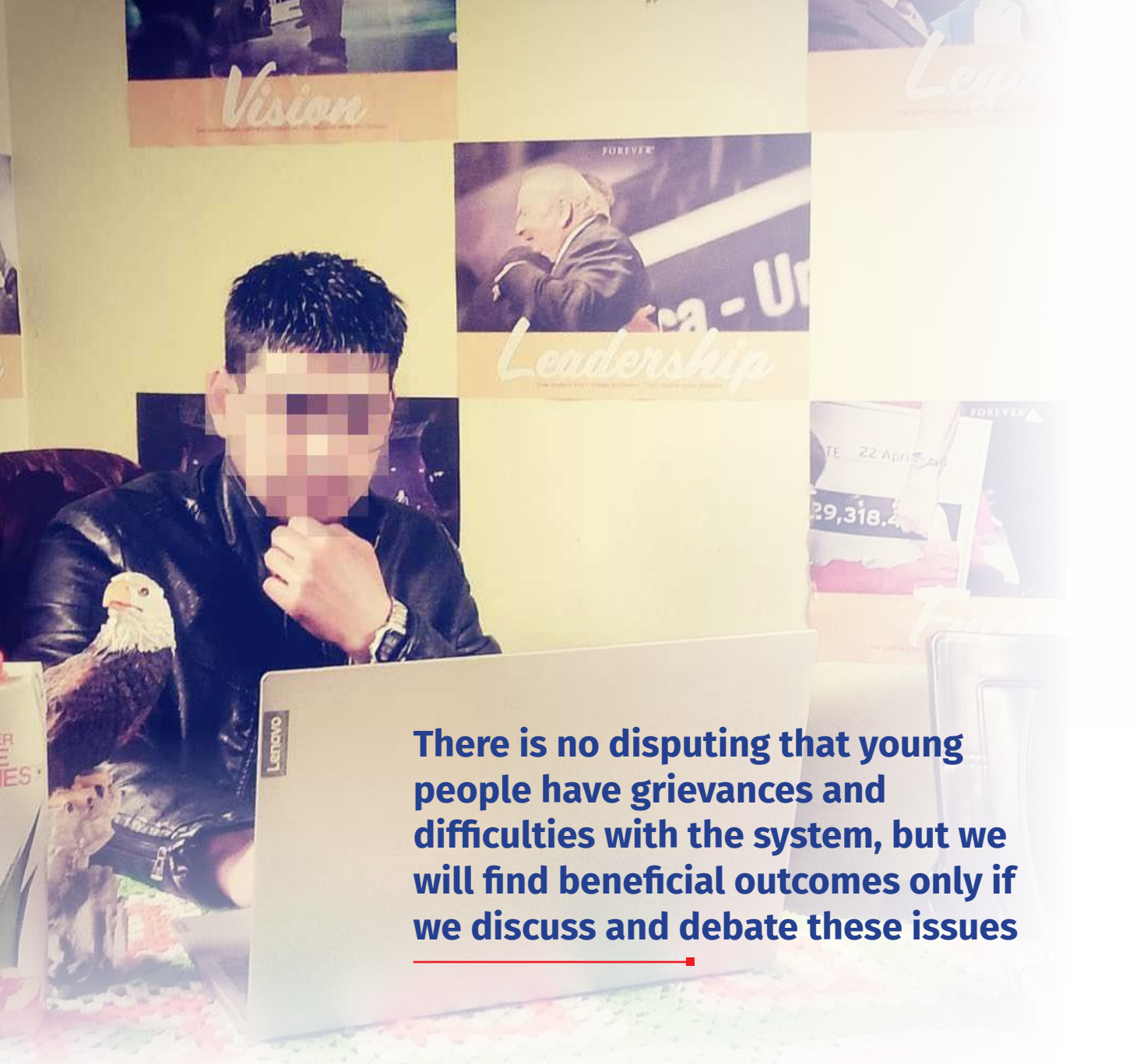
A nation's solid foundation lies on the shoulders of its youth. Youth is a great resource that must be utilized effectively in society's progress. They are the only resource capable of carrying the weight of the entire community. Rather than being the catalysts or predecessors of such disasters, they are considered the absorbers of turmoil and pain.

The story of Kashmir, on the other hand, presents a different one. Kashmir's young have grown up in a society where civic values, even the basic human values have eroded because we chose the wrong path. Due to political and economic instability caused

by these wrong choices, the youth have fewer alternatives for involvement in political processes that could assist them in resolving their problems.

With each passing day, the earth advances to new heights. But in Kashmir, even now a section of our youth chooses violence over peace. This is the reason why even now, many among us finish the day with a tally of the dead.

The count is unconcerned about political affiliations or religious affiliations. Even regions aren't sufficient. Till a couple of years ago, young people used to leave their families almost every day to join local militant networks. Their numbers have dropped, but it this still goes on.



**There is no disputing that young people have grievances and difficulties with the system, but we will find beneficial outcomes only if we discuss and debate these issues**

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## **Our Youth Must Choose Books, Laptops, Computers**

Kashmiris are peace-loving people by nature, and they deserve a peaceful atmosphere to live in, where there are no more headlines about killings and violence. Those who take extreme measures and wind up with guns are the ones who choose violence to peace. The

highest level of folly is drinking poison and believing that an opponent would die. The poison drinker will undoubtedly die, but his adversary will not. As a result, we lose our valuable human resources.

There is no disputing that young people have grievances and difficulties with the system, but we will find beneficial outcomes only if we discuss and debate these issues.

What have we accomplished as a society if we choose violence? Instead of weaponry, young people must choose books, laptops, and computers. Those who support violence and hand over guns in the hands of young innocent children by brainwashing up their minds should spare a thought for the parents and families of these youth. They are robbing these families of peace and stability.



# DE-RADICALIZATION, AND HOW IT CAN BE ACHIEVED

# Harsher measures needed at times, but approach cannot be 'One- size-fits-all'

by Mr Mudasir Dar

**D**e-radicalization is the process of changing an individual's belief system. It is the process of making him reject extremist ideology and embrace mainstream values.

In Kashmir, spending time in jail can strengthen a young person's resolve to take revenge. It has happened hundreds of times that many youth were not actively involved in a protest but were bystanders. When the protesters were

rounded up and arrested, these youth also got arrested. Many of them got jailed, and decided to join groups of militants or OGWs after they were released.

Others who are arrested for small crimes became radicalized in jail. After the abrogation of Article 370, law and order situation is far better in Kashmir. There are no street agitations and violence. The alienation is mostly ideological. But the terror ecosystem is still in place, and radicalization continues.

The focus should be on disengagement of the youth with the radicalizing forces. The state also needs to identify the driving forces that push the youth toward violent extremism.

## The focus should be on disengagement of the youth with the radicalizing forces. The state also needs to identify the driving forces that push the youth toward violent extremism

Rather than harming the property and homes of these ordinary Kashmiris, the security forces must try that minimum damage is caused while neutralizing the militants. To win the hearts of the people of Kashmir, this compassionate approach must be adopted.

Addressing these issues effectively shall require outreach to the youth of the valley on a large scale, not at a snail's

There is a good majority of the population that wants to deny space to the militants to stay in their homes but can't deny them when threatened at gun point. If the state initiates action against such people, they feel stuck between antagonistic forces on all sides. It creates a sense of isolation for them, since they feel that they deserve solidarity and empathy, not punishment.

### Democratic Image Of Nation Must Be Preserved

There is no doubt that the Kashmir conflict has claimed the lives of millions of people and destroyed property worth billions of dollars over the last few decades. The trend of damage and loss continues even today.

Through all the turmoil, the benevolence of a democratic state, the larger democratic image of the nation must be preserved. In a democratic setting, people feel safe.

## Issues That Must Be Addressed Holistically

- \* Issues of identity
- \* Sense of alienation
- \* Perceived injustice
- \* Economic empowerment
- \* Good governance

### Point Of Caution For Security Forces

Many times, militants force ordinary Kashmiris on gun point to give them refuge in their homes. The militants are eliminated by security forces in a short period.

pace.

Anti-terror laws such as Public Safety Act (PSA) and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) should not be applied against the family members of militants, or against the family whose residence was taken by militants at gunpoint.

# HARSH MEASURES FOSTER INSECURITY, VIOLENCE

For the state, it may be difficult to determine whether the family gave space to the militants voluntarily or out of coercion. But it is very important for the top officers and the decision-makers to make this distinction.

If such families are not treated with empathy, some of them may be driven towards the ecosystem of terrorism. Then the ecosystem of terrorism shall grow.

Harsh measures are needed only for hardcore militants or OGWs. For innocent civilians, they do not work. Harsh measures foster a deep sense of insecurity among the local community, particularly among the youth.



**Mr Mudasir Dar**

The Author is a socio-political activist, a recipient of the President Award in World Scouting, and former president of the Jammu and Kashmir Students Union. He is based in South Kashmir and can be reached at [mudasirdariust@gmail.com](mailto:mudasirdariust@gmail.com)

Bureaucracy cannot take the place of democracy. Democracy's institutions must be resurrected. Youth must be recognized as agents of change. Strict and illogical methods must be abandoned. Peace is deserving of a chance. Equally, efforts for peace and harmony must come from within the society. They must come from within us. Picking up the gun is no solution. There is nothing heroic about picking up a gun and getting killed within days, leaving parents and siblings wailing.

# OUR VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE CASTE BARRIERS

# DO WE REALLY SEE OURSELVES AS PART OF THE MODERN WORLD?

by Dr Sumi Saidullah



My hometown is Amnoo in Kulgam. I like to write about topics that I have directly experienced and witnessed. Being a researcher and psychologist, I thoroughly examine those problems before picking up the pen.

I constantly strive to inform and uplift the weaker groups in our society on a variety of subjects, both well-known and obscure. This time I have chosen to write about the labels that we all carry – our caste system. Does the caste reveal a person's status? I can argue that this label of castes indicates how much we respect an individual's merits.

I met an old lady in D.H. Pora a few years ago while we were both in a bus, coming towards Kulgam city. I like to converse with the elderly, so I initiated the talk with her. She asked me a question that surprised me. She asked me my caste. I was amused by her query. It is rather expected in our Valley.

I grinned and told her about it. She took a deep breath and said, "Oh, you too are from a high caste." She was evidently relieved. She told me that even if a person has nothing, he or she must be of a high caste. I knew I can't take her seriously on this. Somehow the elderly have this ideology.

We claim to live in a highly socialized, modernized 21st century. But is our society truly socialized and modernized in terms of what we think? Are we truly modernizing our hearts and minds?



## My friend who suffered caste discrimination refused to say anything. I was able to see the pain on her face. How will the lady at the store answer the Almighty about her discrimination among humans?



In other parts of the country too, caste barriers continue to exist. People still believe in untouchability, which is detrimental to our society and humanity. We are all made of the same soil. We all say, '*Insan Meti ka putla hai*'. No one is made of anything extraordinary. Then why discrimination?

Some of my friends are from different castes and communities. What really matters is whether they are good humans.

### Store Owner In Srinagar Refused To Place Money In Hand

I was in Srinagar about a month ago. My friend and I went to a shop near her house. We bought some products and paid the money. The woman managing the store held the currency note by the edge. To return the money, she dropped it on the counter. She did not give us the money in our hands, as is the usual practice.



I was perplexed as to why she did this. I discussed this with my friend. She refused to say anything. When I persisted, she told me that the lady belongs to an upper caste and we are from lower caste. That is why she behaves this way, believing that we are inferior.

Her actions caused me a great deal of pain. I was able to see the pain in my friend's face, though she did not say anything about it. How will the lady at the store answer the Almighty about her discrimination among humans?

After a few days, I discussed this incident with another friend. His response was equally shocking. He remarked, "Oh, you have a friend from that low caste?" I answered, "What do you mean by that low caste? Are they not humans?" He didn't respond. His remark surprised me, because he is well-educated. We say we are socialized, but what do our responses reveal about us?

The caste system is fraught with problems, and we must speak up against it. Discrimination based on

caste has a deep impact on relationships and young people's decisions.

## Conflict With Parents Over Marriage

I recently heard about a man in Kulgam district who is from an upper caste. He wants to marry a girl from a lower caste. Both of them are mature individuals. He decided to discuss the issue with his family. After much deliberation, he spoke to his parents about the matter.

At first, his parents told him that it was good that he had decided upon the girl he wanted to marry. But when they found out that she is from another caste, they flatly refused to allow the marriage. The parents ordered the boy to leave the girl as soon as possible.

Things did not end here. The parents of the young man then went to the house of the girl. They told the girl's parents – please tell your daughter to forget about our son. Some friends told me that the young man and the woman tried hard

to persuade their respective parents. But on both sides, the parents refused to budge.

After a long struggle with their families, the young man and the woman ran away from home and got married. After the marriage, their families had a big fight, blaming each other. Who was to blame for this whole mess? Each one sees his or her position as being correct.



**Dr Sumi Saidullah**

I have done PG in Counselling Psychology from IGNOU. I did Masters of Philosophy (MPhil) and PhD in Psychology from Bhagwant University, Ajmer, Rajasthan.

I am positive about every aspect of life. There are many things I like to do, to see, to experience and explore. I like to read, write; I like to talk and listen to others. So many things...

# WHY CASTE DISCRIMINATION?

## WE MUST ANSWER THE QUESTION COLLECTIVELY

In Kashmir and in other parts of our country, we practice caste discrimination. This is why people label others by their castes. After I heard of this incident, I wondered – is the happiness of the child more important, or is caste and community more important?

I cannot answer these questions unilaterally. All of us as a society must think upon these questions and come up with the correct answers. Some of us will say that happiness and satisfaction in life are more important. Some may say that caste and community are more important.

The caste structure affects more than just the choices, relationships or friendships. It also has an impact on people's mental health. Those from lower caste who have to face discrimination may suffer from low self esteem and may face identity issues.

It has a negative impact on a person's self-esteem and identity. Let us all remember that the Almighty has created us as equals. All of us are the creations of the Almighty. Only our good or bad deeds determine whether we are good humans or bad humans.





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