



Jammu & Kashmir
Peoples Democratic Party
 جموں و کشمیر پیپلز ڈیموکریٹک پارٹی

SPEAK UP

Monthly Party Newsletter



An old man camps in the wreckage of his home, demolished to vacate state land in Roopnagar, Jammu.



*Arsalan's grief stricken father with a relative.
 Photo: Faizan Mir for The Wire*

REDUCED TO WRECKAGE

While PAGD leaders celebrated their new year under detention to prevent them from protesting against the premature and illegal Delimitation process the Chinese Army spent it near the Galwan valley, ironically under the sign - "Never yield an inch of land" where they recorded new year greetings. Like all playground bullies, BJP is too scared to tackle someone their own size. Speaking of bullies, by now most of us have heard about apps like "Bulli Bai" and "Sulli Deals" that were auctioning muslim women. As portrayed by BJP these perps were not lone psychopaths but a part of a highly coordinated attempt to condition people to accept abuse and misogynistic dehumanization of muslim women. Could you imagine if a Kashmiri had committed such a crime?

A Kashmiri student was once jailed for a decade old tweet praising the Pakistani cricket team. Unfortunately, the minority killings in October 2021 have been followed by hundreds of arrests including that of Arsalan, a 12th class student, arrested by NIA for allegedly "radicalizing, motivating and recruiting youngsters of J&K to effect violence in the UT." Barely able to make ends meet, his parents have collapsed with anxiety as they cannot afford litigation. More recently, on Republic day, Kashmir was treated to an internet shutdown to celebrate the day our constitution came into effect, in the very place where our constitution is being decimated by violating the basic human rights of our people.

If Kashmir is the garden of Eden, then the Iranian apple has proved itself to be proverbial forbidden fruit. Bypassing duties by coming through Afghanistan, a part of the South Asian Free Trade Area, it has caused a sharp decline in the demand and prices for Kashmiri apples. Despite apple growers approaching the Agriculture Minister and LG they have yet to act on the matter. Horticulture is the backbone of our economy although GOI would have you think otherwise. This is an insidious attempt at destroying lacs of livelihoods. Make no mistake, for BJP it has and will always be about the land. Whether it is allotting a thousand canals of land to the army or the selective eviction of Gujjars and Bakerwals from state land they have inhabited for centuries BJP will do whatever it takes to satiate their colonial hunger. All this is done in the in the name of "normalcy" and "development" until its time to give people



Hostile takeover: Saleem Pandit escorted by forces. Photo: Shahid Tantray for The Wire

their constitutional right – a legislative election, and then “normalcy” evaporates and GOI rushes to make contradictory assertions. Honorable Home Minister Amit Shah recently asked our youth, “to be a part of the development process.” Fair enough, but we’re confused if he is referring to the thousands of youths wrongfully jailed since 2019 or millions of others living in fear of arrest and other punitive measures. Not surprisingly, the UNHRW has raised concern over Kashmir in their [World Report 2022](#) which talks about the “broader pattern of systematic infringements of fundamental rights used against the local population. The clampdown on dissent was facilitated by the draconian counterterrorism law, tax raids, foreign funding regulations, and charges of financial irregularities.”

After subverting every institution that could hold them accountable, BJP is leaving no stone unturned to destroy the last remaining pillar of democracy – journalism. Our press that survived the last 30 years facing guns from all sides, refused to join Godi Media Inc. As a result, they are being targeted by government agencies. 23-year-old Sajad Gul, an independent journalist was arrested by the NIA on Jan 5th for posting a video on social media. After he got bail on Jan 15th he was charged with the brutal PSA. Charges included “attempt to murder” and although the charges won't stick he will be jailed and embroiled in litigation long enough that the process will be the punishment. Less than four years after its establishment, the Kashmir Press Club has met an untimely end. Taking advantage of the Covid lockdown on Jan 15th, a few journalists aided by local police took over the press club where office members were kept hostage. What would have happened if this took place in Delhi or Mumbai and what type of precedent are we setting by allowing this? When they are not arbitrarily detained or facing the barrel of a gun our journalists are humiliated in other ways. Two kashmiri journalists were among the top 20 women harassed on the Tek Fog app used by the BJP to go after dissenters. Women journalists like Quratulain Rehbar have endured endless harassment and interrogation by police and military. The last embers of our hope, the Kashmiri press are being snuffed out and buried alive because they refused to be infected with BJP's malignant propaganda. Indeed, when all you have is a hammer everything looks like a nail.