

## Media Analysis Center, Kashmir

- The free flow of negative content on Kashmir and its wide circulation on social media is damaging Indian interests locally, nationally and internationally. There is urgent need to counter this content in an organized and efficient manner.
- **Media Analysis Center**, Srinagar - a civil society initiative of Lehar Foundation - is an organized initiative to counter negative propaganda and content on Kashmir locally, nationally and internationally.
- Media Analysis Center (MAC) shall generate content which shall aggressively counter the lies being peddled regarding Kashmir in the domestic, national and international media.

- The content produced by MAC shall include news reports, features, videos and documentaries.
- The purpose is to break the toxic plot that keeps feeding malicious, negative news on Kashmir and circulating the same to deepen stereotypes of oppression and alienation. The attempt is to bring in a reality check on Kashmir and refresh the narrative in a positive, inclusive direction.
- MAC shall also provide a platform to bring together positive and happy voices of aspirational Kashmir youth, within Kashmir or outside. The Kashmiri voices of positivity and growth within India shall act as a force multiplier for the youth within Kashmir.

# Political rhetoric, emotive politics dominates DDC polls

## Issues of real governance lost in the din

The ensuing District Development Board elections in Jammu and Kashmir are no different from the earlier elections held in the erstwhile state in the Article 370 era.

Elections to Block and District Development Councils are aimed at strengthening and decentralizing the developmental institutions. But like earlier elections in Jammu and Kashmir, these too are being fought on emotive and rhetorical political narratives on both sides of the Jawahar tunnel, which connects these regions.

Panchayat Raj institutions and urban local bodies are primarily meant for the empowerment of the people through their active participation in infrastructural development socially and economically. Unfortunately, these elections are being used to further the agenda of ultra-nationalism by Kashmir politicians under Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) and the BJP to create further divisions in the already fragmented and fractured society of Jammu and Kashmir. These elections have given a fresh lease of life to both the BJP and PAGD leadership in the Union Territory. Both sides doing everything possible to regain lost ground post Article 370 abrogation. BJP is a step ahead in making PAGD a pan-India issue. The Abdullahs and Mufti are more than happy with BJP's frontal attack on PAGD. The issues of governance and participatory democracy have taken a back seat.

Much has been written and said on how Kashmiris celebrated the confinement of



**The Abdullahs and Mufti are more than happy with BJP's frontal attack on PAGD. The issues of governance and participatory democracy have taken a back seat**

the Muftis, the Abdullahs and other motley politicians after August 5, 2019. Kashmiris were happy to see the political dynasts being pushed to the margins. Kashmiris were even demanding action against the political elites for their corrupt practices. There was much hatred for Mehbooba after her disastrous stint as chief minister. After their release from preventive custody, the sworn political rivals - the Abdullahs and the Muftis - took no time in burying their mutual hatred for "the larger cause of Kashmir".

Kashmiris knew all along that this grand-speak was a facade to again search for power and relevance.

In her first press conference after release from custody, Mehbooba requested media persons to spare her the tough questions. Mehbooba knew that she could turn the situation to her benefit by again pursuing the politics of hatred.

It is ironical that she has again succeeded. No one is asking her questions concerning her disastrous performance as chief minister. No one is holding her accountable for the corruption and nepotism patronaged by her, or how she destroyed the state's institutions.

In Kashmir, elections to the District Development Board are again centering on emotive issues of "dignity, dialogue, democracy", and the anti-BJP rhetoric.

According to the PAGD rhetoric, the solution to all problems lies in somehow keeping the BJP from the capturing power in the elections to the District Development Board and the vacant Panchayat seats.



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The PAGD formula is this: Keep talking about Article 370. Manufacture conspiracy theories. Create doubts in the minds of the people. Make them more and more suspicious of New Delhi. Hide your sins.

Similarly, BJP has got a breather in Jammu by making the elections all about PAGD. Post the abrogation of Article 370, the BJP has been facing tough questions from the people in Jammu. There are more questions in Jammu region than answers. The BJP was on a slippery slope here, and public mood was not in their favour. After the formation of PAGD, things have started changing on ground. The BJP seems to be more vocal than ever before in constructing conspiracy theories. It has attributed the existence of PAGD to Pakistan and China. The situation now is that real issues of governance have gone missing in public discourse in Jammu region too.

There is a famous quote. The more things

change, the more they remain the same. This is playing out in Jammu and Kashmir.

For decades now, elections in Kashmir have been fought on emotive issues. This had established an exploitative class of politicians. These politicians would routinely whip up emotive issues to hide their sins and exploit the poor electorate.

Since 1977, not a single election has been fought on issues of governance in Jammu and Kashmir. Every ambitious politician took refuge in the "Kashmir issue".

Mufti Muhammad Sayed milked this the best. He formed PDP in 1999 to grab power on emotive grounds, and succeeded. What he could not achieve in nearly 40 years of mainstream politics, he found in two years of emotive electioneering.

This set the template for Kashmir. Every ambitious political upped the rhetoric and competed in emotive political maneuvering. Even the so-called communist leader Yusuf Tarigami joined the bandwagon. The politics around "masla Kashmir" was so intense that it built the political careers of all wannabes. Er. Rashid from Langate in Kupwara district took it to new heights.

After the abrogation of Article 370, people were anticipating some freshness in

## SIDE LIGHTS

- It is amazing to watch how political rehabilitation of the kith and kin of old horses is at its best. This is perhaps the first election in the history of Jammu and Kashmir where there seems to be consensus among all political parties to rehabilitate the sons and daughters of former legislators and politicians. Every single politician cutting across party lines has fielded his/her son/daughter from one or the other constituency. Politicians of Kashmir cry foul about the actions of New Delhi. They blame Delhi for the disempowerment of the common Kashmiris. But these same politicians are relentlessly squeezing the space for the commoners by fielding their wards.

From Dooru in South Kashmir to Tangdar in North Kashmir, one seed only sons and daughters of former legislators and political leaders contesting the DDC elections. Congress, PDP, NC and PC - all are on the mission of introducing their sons and daughters to politics. The disempowered have been further isolated.

- With or without Article 370, those who are politically empowered in Kashmir continue to have special privileges. The UT administration is restricting the movement of poor candidates on security reasons, herding them in secured hotel rooms and not allowing them to connect with the people. On the other hand, the kith and kin of former legislators - who are now candidates - are interacting with the people freely. This is because they enjoy security cover, they have government accommodation, they occupy government guest houses, town halls and residential rooms at block headquarters. And a team of local police station guarding them. Whose empowerment is this?

the political discourse of Kashmir, devoid of emotive and impractical narratives. The PAGD alliance intelligently revived the same old discourse, leaving little or no room for politics around real issues of peace, reconciliation and development. The confrontationist narratives are being played out so loudly that if some individuals or groups try to touch upon the real issues, they get lost in the din.

## Exercise Your Choice

# Vote, Because Elections Have Consequences

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### KASHMIR

**I**t is highly disconcerting to be barraged with negative news every single day, and to feel so powerless. Election to elementary democratic institutions like Panchayats, DDCs and Local Bodies offers us the chance to make it different. The vote gives citizens a voice in the narrative, even when we feel helpless.

Many young people feel that their vote does not count, and state this as the reason for not participating in elections. Millennials feel especially disillusioned by the corrupt, dishonest and exploitative politics of elites. As a result, many youngsters choose to sit out the election altogether. This disillusionment holds back thousands from voting.

The elders know better. They know that sitting out is abdication of responsibility. The elders know that it does not pay to have missing voices when it is time to stand up and make a choice. Globally, democracy gives power to those who are less advantaged due to racial and class barriers in our society. Vote for leaders who shall represent you and your ideas.

### Vote because elections have consequences.

You have the power to decide on the quality of life you want for yourself and future generations. Voting is your chance to stand up for the issues you care about. This is your life. Take the time to help decide what's best.

### Not voting is giving up your voices.

Elections are decided by the people who go out and vote. Take some time and learn about the candidates and what they stand for. If you don't vote, someone else will make the decision for you. Your power is in your vote.

### It's your money.

The government provides money for the welfare of the people. Voting for your candidate is your chance to choose how the welfare funds are spent – such as funding for health care and social services.

### Voting is an opportunity for change.

Do you want to make a positive impact? Voting gives you that chance! Support the candidates that can help your community, your people. Make your voice heard in these elections.

### The community depends on you!

Our communities are made up of friends, loved ones, neighbours and children. Some may not know how important voting is, while others don't have the privilege. Make the decision to vote for yourself and those around you.



- We know change in a democratic society is slow. And that is good, because rapid change is dangerous.
- Let us pledge to bring in the desired change by exercising the right to elect. Let us bring that change by voting out political blackmailers, thugs, tricksters and frauds.
- Let us bring that change by showing the door to socially discredited looters who occupy the space because of our non-participation.
- The politics of boycott has taken us from bad to worst. The boycott of one election day at the cost of five years is ridiculous.
- After election boycott, we keep complaining. We curse the abysmal performance of those who got elected. We knock at the doors of arrogant representatives, we suffer.
- Low turnout means that important local issues are determined by a limited group of voters. Voting is one of the most impactful things we can do for ourselves and for our community. Democracy gives every person the chance to have a say in what goes on. Key issues in every election increasingly relate to the concerns of the youth, making it essential for them to educate themselves on political issues, and exercise their vote.

MAKE SURE  
YOUR VOICE  
IS HEARD.



(Writer is a socio-political analyst based in Kashmir)

# The unlawful ways of the J&K Bar Association, Srinagar

## Straight Questions

**T**he Jammu and Kashmir High Court remains in news more because of the controversial Bar Association at Srinagar. Recently, District Magistrate (DM) Srinagar issued three notices to JKHCBA Srinagar.

The DM cited Kashmir Bar's Constitution, which states among its objectives: "to find ways and means, take steps, for resolving the issues concerning the public at large including larger issue of peaceful settlement of Kashmir dispute..."

The DM stated in the notice: "You are required to explain your position on the subject since it is not in consonance with the Constitution of India whereby Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the country and not a dispute, and also in conflict with The Advocates Act of 1961..."

The Bar has also been asked to submit a certificate issued by the competent authority, its Article of Association, its registered office, executive body and validity of registration among other details.

The notice said that the DM had received representation from advocates of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, wherein serious allegations were leveled and concerns were raised regarding the election process and its motive.

The J&K High Court Bar Association, Srinagar, has earned notoriety in presenting the state and the Constitution it practices in the courts of law as enemy state and enemy Constitution. Hilarious, because these same lawyers have earned fortunes by arguing the laws the Constitution which the Bar projects to be the enemy of the people. The Association whose credentials are being questioned by the DM is clearly playing a dual game.

It is common knowledge in Kashmir that JKHCBA Srinagar is a pro-separatist organization, supporting the separatist narrative. This suits and benefits the big fish in the association. JKHCBA Srinagar has remained steadfastly hostile towards mainland India, and has consistently organized seminars, symposiums and protests against the Indian state. The lawyers associated with JKHCBA live a luxurious life by practicing the laws and the Constitution enacted by the Indian Parliament. These same people claim to reject the same laws and the Constitution in their professional association. This is hypocrisy.



### Members and sympathizers of JKHCBA Srinagar, here are some questions for you.

1. If you are practicing Indian Laws and the Indian Constitution in courts and earning from it professionally, how can you claim to reject these for your professional association?
2. JKHCBA Srinagar is limited to the Srinagar wing of J&K High Court and District Court Srinagar. It has no support outside Kashmir. Then how can you claim to use the title inclusive of Jammu?
3. The infrastructure in the High Court and district courts of Kashmir is built by India. Your members utilize this infrastructure to earn professionally and live a luxurious life. Are you willing to renounce the utilization of this infrastructure, or renounce your hostility towards the Indian state?
4. JKHCBA leaves no opportunity to condemn the actions of the Indian forces if something goes wrong. Why do you remain silent on the atrocities perpetrated on the people of J&K by the proxies of Pakistan?
5. If JKHCBA is not a registered body, it is an illegitimate organization. How then can you seek legitimacy through the state?