

JKSSB DOESN'T WITHSTAND JUDICIAL SCRUTINY IN MOST OF THE CASES

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JKSSB, CREDIBLE NO MORE



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KASHMIR CENTRAL



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VOLUME 3 | EDITION 07
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A CASE FOR CLARITY

The anti-encroachment drive, though coming from the spirit of law, has not exactly gone the whole hog. The intention looks right but the actions have been a bit confusing. No wonder the public is confused too!

The recent anti-encroachment drive by the Jammu & Kashmir administration has been dominating the mind space of its people. The response to the drive has been mixed. Most people are happy if the retrieval of the State land is limited to the big sharks who grabbed such land in huge chunks. The UT administration has assured more than once that the poor encroachers in possession of a few marlas of non-propriety land shall not be touched.

Immaterial of who has encroached upon the State and community land, we must accept with humility, that there has been no accountability and no respect for the law of the land for 30 long years of turmoil. The situation was like the proverbial 'jis ki laathi uske bhains'. The big sharks defied the law in a big way and the small fries did that in their own little capacity. Both are, however, guilty of being illegal encroachers. The bulldozing of the properties raised over non-propriety land, no doubt, is an extra-legal measure. Due procedure should have been followed. But no, removing them with bulldozers has not been the option. The properties should have been simply demarcated and sealed. But well, one cannot shy away from stating the truth. The truth is that there was absolute lawlessness and those in power abused their power.

For the first time in the last 35 years, there is a sense of accountability which needs to be appreciated. We may differ when it comes to the actions taken but it looks like the intentions are aligned with the spirit of law. That said, there is definitely a section of officers in the administration who are law unto themselves. Unfortunately the vision at the highest level is butchered by a few. People are targeted selectively, which enrages the general public.

All this may sound confusing but the confusion is real. One is confused as to how to present the picture. There are confusing signals. No wonder, the public too is confused.

Bashir Assad

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JKSSB

Jammu and Kashmir Service Selection Board

JKSSB, CREDIBLE NO MORE

by **Bashir Assad**

The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB), a State-level institution, is mandated to carry out recruitment of Group C and D government posts.

The board has always attracted criticism in the media for its lackadaisical approach towards filing of the posts. The present administration under Lieutenant Governor Manoj Singh, had carried out a major re-organisation of the board after a paper leak during the recruitment of Sub-Inspectors (Home Department) in October 2022. But then the JKSSB failed both the government and the aspirants due to delays and apprehensions in offering tenders to blacklisted agencies.

Despite a major re jig by the LG administration, the Jammu Kashmir Services Selection Board has failed both the government and the aspirants, reports Kashmir Central

THE QUESTION MARK ON JKSSB

In August 2022, the recruitment of Sub-Inspectors (Home), Junior Engineers (Civil) and Finance Account Assistants was scrapped by the J&K government after candidates pointed out loopholes in the final merit list. At the orders of LG Manoj Sinha, the government formed a committee to look into the queries raised by the aspirants. The committee recommended

the scrapping of all three examinations and found that the JKSSB officials were hand-in-glove with those who sold the examination papers for Rs fifteen lakh.

Seeing that the merit was badly compromised by these officials, LG ordered a massive re jig in the board administration. All the former members were shown the door and new members were inducted to safeguard the merit system in Jammu and Kashmir.

NEW MEMBERS, BUT THE SAME OLD STORY

The new administration, after taking charge, issued a tender for the examination conducting agency. But following their predecessors' footprints, the new board of members too granted tenders in favour of an agency - Aptech Private Limited - blacklisted in more than eight different states in the country. The aspirants smelled foul and informed the JKSSB of the credentials of the new examination conducting agency. But the board didn't pay any heed to the aspirants' grievances



Aadil Hussain Malik

and finalised the tender with certain corrigendum in the original draft to favour the blacklisted company exclusively. The aspirants then went to Jammu and Kashmir High Court against the board. The

court granted relief to the aspirants and demanded scrapping of the new examination for the posts. Although, JKSSB in a Division Bench, retrieved relief in conducting the examination but the matter is still sub-judice and the court has ordered the JKSSB not to publish any results till final disposal of the case.

A TARNISHED REPUTATION

Kupwara resident Aadil Hussain Malik, an aspirant for the post of Finance Account Assistant,



while talking to KC says the JKSSB has lost its credibility for holding fair examinations in the UT of J&K. He adds, “Allegations, incompetence and no proper appointments since 2020 have brought the institution much discredit. Brazen tinkering with the merit system and helping blue-eyed candidates to get a berth is what the board seems to signify. For the last three years, I have been preparing for an examination which was advertised in 2020 and till this date, it has not been conducted properly”.

Aadil further mentions that the new examination conducting agency has been

The new administration, after taking charge, issued a tender for the examination conducting agency. But following their predecessors' footprints, the new board of members too granted tenders in favour of an agency - Aptech Private Limited - blacklisted in more than eight different states in the country.



accused of copy & pasting questions from specific online websites which kills the concept of level playing field for the aspirants.

Pertinently, Kashmir Central in its December 18, 2022 issue had carried a detailed story on the scrapping of Sub-Inspector and JE Civil exams. KC had talked to a number of candidates in that story who had articulated on their ordeal and inefficiency of the board.

Meanwhile, the fate of a number of recruitments is lingering in the Central Administrative Tribunal and the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. Aggrieved students who see that the merit has been compromised, rush to courts for justice. Surprisingly, JKSSB doesn't withstand judicial scrutiny in most of the cases.

In 2003, JKSSB had notified on 29 posts for Assistant Information Officers. The same posts were re-advertised in the following years to pave way for some dubious candidates since rules were bent to favour them. A provisional selection list was published in 2012. The aggrieved candidates had knocked on the door of the court while the court quashed the whole recruitment. The JKSSB filed SLP in Supreme Court of India and lost the case there with an order to restart the fresh recruitment. So far, no such recruitment has been initiated which reflects upon the effectiveness and accountability of the board.

The board has left no stone unturned to persecute meritorious, hard-working youths who aspire for dignified employment and have been

left hopeless, dejected and disenchanted. This has further compounded the sense of despondency and alienation among the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

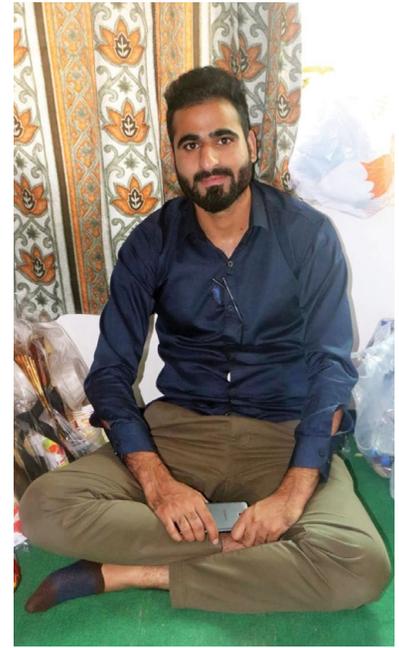
Irfan Shabir Bhat, who's a SKUAST Wadoora student, says, "I have appeared in five examinations of the JKSSB so far. Out of the five, only a single examination went to its final stage and the rest four are still not completed. This proves the level of incompetency of the board".

He further adds that the "board has left us in trauma and mentally agitated. We don't know how the SI and JE recruitment will pass the judicial scrutiny. The aspirants are devastated with the

approach of the JKSSB. We want the government to fasten the process and hand over the board's reigns to some other credible agency".

Well, the complaints against the JKSSB are enormous and proven in the courts from time to time. The JKSSB examination calendar is not in consonance with its counterparts in other parts of the country. Allegations mar the image of board despite the huge rejig by the administration.

LG Sinha had given clear directions to the new members that any tinkering with the merit system won't be tolerated. But the board failed to complete recruitments and the investigations about the corruption of the members



Irfan Shabir Bhat

by the CBI and the Jammu Kashmir Police have been the new landmark in the working of the board!



THE TALL TOWERS OF LEARNING

by **Mareaya Fayaz**

▼
I am a research scholar. And one thing being a research scholar has taught me is the importance of a comfortable space to dive into research. Actually this holds true for any kind of student and especially those studying for the civil services exams.

I personally have always found solace in the library at my university. So do students who join libraries - public or private - to study. Not being able to access such a space is very distracting and I have faced this problem during the Covid Lockdown of 2020 and then again in 2021. I was caught up at home and could not progress in my work the way I could if I were to get into a library. So one day I asked my father if there



was any public library or even a private library in my hometown where I could go and study. To my utmost surprise, his response was no! He added that once there was a library in my hometown but during the days of militancy, it was set on fire.

And though it was fixed later, it still stood abandoned.

Well, it is quite heartbreaking to see that even though we are progressing in varied ways, we have still not been able to focus on something as important as a library.

A library is where a civilisation finds its base – its ideas, ethics and perspective. So why not underline the importance of a library! And if we could build public libraries all over the State, we could actually change the intellectual climate of our culture, observes Mareaya

A CIVILISATION'S MEASURE OF EVOLUTION

There is no exaggeration in saying that a civilisation's advancement is facilitated by libraries. Access to information is necessary to create a society that is well-informed, that can tell right from wrong and can go on to play a true role in the growth of a society. It is true that a library plays behind a society's



social, political, economic and cultural endeavours.

In developing societies, as a library began to take on the responsibility of providing such essential services, they made it free of cost. Many countries and states began to establish libraries with a legal foundation too. This is the case in most countries, though in many others, additional measures are taken to guarantee effective and consistent public library services.

A CASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Understanding the crucial role of a library, a mindful step was taken by the J&K government in 2020 as they sanctioned two smart libraries for the city of Srinagar. Indeed, these two are playing a role in our civilisational advancement but given the bigger need, this

isn't enough. We need 24-hour functioning libraries for all the tehsils in Kashmir to help students and civil services aspirants. We need libraries stocked with contemporary bestsellers, paperwork, cutting-edge technology, picture printers, well-read & well-informed librarians and everything else that a decent library offers.

These days, public libraries are a big concept and more and more people are showing interest in them. Such libraries can aid our education sector by bringing gifted students together on one platform where they can exchange useful opinions on social, economic, educational, environmental, ethical and technological concerns and connect with one another. We have already seen that students who are preparing for civil services or even service selection board examinations leave Kashmir

and set themselves up in Jammu or Delhi to prepare for examinations because they find the atmosphere there more supportive, thanks to easy access to 24-hour functional libraries, fully equipped with modern facilities including books. The administration should work on keeping these aspirants in their hometowns by providing them working libraries.

While speaking to a young man named Javed, a civil services aspirant from Anantnag district, I came to know that he was residing at Bathindi just to enrol himself in a private library. He said if there were a functional library in his own district, he would not have to stay away from home as a paying guest.

Tufail, a friend of mine shared that when he was a student at the university, he never faced any difficulty as to where to study as there was

a 24-hour functional reading room on the premises of the Allama Iqbal Library. But after finishing his degree, he is staying at home and it's very difficult for him to concentrate there. And since there is no library in his hometown - private or public - he is at a loss about where to go and study.

Saima, a civil service aspirant says: "For a student studying for an examination, lack of a proper place to study is like an invisible disability. One needs a peaceful and a quiet place to study because preparing for such exams requires full concentration and if there is lack of such a place, it is a big threat to studies and a career".

So, imagine the kind of empowerment we could bring to our people, especially the youth, if we could build easy-to-access 24-hour functional public libraries! In a short span of time, we could actually change the intellectual climate of our State!

No wonder then that American author Laura Bush says - I have found that the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card!

These days, public libraries are a big concept and more and more people are showing interest in them. Such libraries can aid our education sector by bringing gifted students together on one platform where they can exchange useful opinions on social, economic, educational, environmental, ethical and technological concerns and connect with one another



They said it!

We decided to put together some very telling quotes by famous authors, thinkers and intellectuals on what they have to say about the treasure-house called the library. Here goes!

- I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of a library:
—**JORGE LUIS BORGES**
- Nothing is pleasanter than exploring a library: —**WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR**
- Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life: —**SIDNEY SHELDON**
- The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library: —**ALBERT EINSTEIN**
- When in doubt go to the library: —**J.K. ROWLING**
- Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities: —**R. DAVID LANKES**
- Libraries were full of ideas – perhaps the most dangerous and powerful of all weapons: —**SARAH J. MAAS**
- Libraries always remind me that there are good things in this world:
—**LAUREN WARD**
- Everything you need for better future and success has already been written. And guess what? All you have to do is go to the library:
—**HENRI FREDERIC AMIEL**
- You want weapons? We're in a library. Books are the best weapon in the world. This room's the greatest arsenal we could have. Arm yourself!: —**RUSSELL T. DAVIES**
- Cutting libraries during a recession is like cutting hospitals during a plague: —**ELEANOR CRUMBLEHULME**
- To ask why we need libraries at all, when there is so much information available elsewhere, is about as sensible as asking if roadmaps are necessary now that there are so very many roads: —**JON BING**
- Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation: —**WALTER CRONKITE**

SAMPLE IT: STREET & SIMPLE!

by Mir Tanveer

*Jannat ki tasveer ko dekho,
Aao zaraa Kashmir ko dekho...*

While the Valley charms with its meadows and mountains, there are Kashmiri flavours that enhance the whole experience. **MIR TANVEER** goes sampling some street foods of the Valley and comes away hoping that the tradition lives on.

Thus spoke poet Nazeer Banarasi. But then that is a beautiful reality the world nods to. Not for nothing is Kashmir also known as the Venice of East, thanks to its lush landscapes, beautiful meadows, mountain ranges and valleys.

The physical beauty of Kashmir is a given, yes. But let's also talk of its flavours. The rich Kashmiri cuisine, the flavours so typical and so rare that people from across the world seek them. When it comes to a tourist to

Kashmir, he/she has much to choose from – the mouth-watering traditional *Wazwaan*, dishes like *nadru* and *yakhni*, the famous saffron kehwa and so much more!

Besides the restaurants and options in fine-dining hotels, there are Kashmir flavours to be sampled through its street food!

Among the street food hotspots in the capital city of Srinagar, one of the most famous is the Dargah Hazratbal, standing on the banks of the beautiful and the serene Dal Lake where you find almost every variety of street food the Valley is famous for. Every gourmet – from within



or outside of Kashmir - loves to visit this place to partake of the deeply aromatic flavours of Kashmir.

Among the best loved street food dishes that one must try in Kashmir are *Nadir Monje* (Fried lotus stem dipped in flour), *Masala Tshot* (*chana* and traditional radish chutney wrapped in a bread known as *lavasa*), *Halwa Paraatha* (the *halwa* is made of *sooji* and the *paraatha* is made from

flour), *Kanak Masal* (made from wheat that is boiled till it becomes tender and then mixed in spices and served hot) and *Tuji*, a Kashmiri barbequed dish (though not traditional but very common among the young).

⊗ *Nadir Monji* - the top dish of the list – is best had either at Dargah Hazratbal or on the way to Pahalgam at Khanabal, Anantnag, a

50 odd kilometres from the capital city. We got talking to Bashir Ahmed, a passionate street-food lover at Dargah Hazratbal who said, “I always love to buy *Nadir Monji* from the Dargah for myself as well as my children. I love to savour it with noon *chai* in the evening. This Kashmiri dish is unparalleled”.

⊗ Dishes like *Masala Tshot* and *Kanak Masal* can be savoured at almost every nook and corner of the City. In fact you'd find a variety of street food being sold at different locations across hospitals, colleges, universities. *Masala Tshot* is a favourite with people of all ages. Mohammed Ramzan, a *Masala Tshot* hawker along the banks of Dal Lake,



Srinagar, says: “This is my sole source of earning a livelihood. Customers from different areas come to me to sample my Masala Tshot. I add some crispy spices and toppings to make it both visually aesthetic and tasty”.

⊗ *Halwa Paraatha* is available at select places where there are huge gatherings, like, at shrines in the Valley. This is worth a try to surprise your tastebuds with something out of the routine. A huge number of people love this dish with noon *chai* in the evening hours.

These street food vendors take special care about ensuring that the preparation is hygienic and that quality and taste are not ever compromised upon. It is their constant endeavour to keep the quality standardised.

⊗ *Tuji*, not a traditional dish but very popular across the Valley is mostly loved by the younger generation. The mouth-watering and tingling *Tuji* is available in four different varieties - meat, beef, chicken and fish. Khayam Chowk in the old city and Makai Park on the banks of Dal are places where good *Tuji* can be sampled. At Khayam Chowk, *Tuji* is a hotseller during late hours of the day. A huge crowd can be seen savouring multiple varieties of *Tuji*.

⊗ Then there is *Gaadh Nadhir* –a fresh water fish cooked with lotus stem and served with rice. Almost 22 spices are used in this dish (fenugreek leaves, red chilli, paprika, coriander, garlic, ginger, mango powder,

cardamom, cloves and so on). It is another bestseller!

⊗ Apart from the traditional Kashmiri dishes, momos - a Tibetan dish - are also loved by most people in Kashmir. Momos are easily available at many places in the local market. It is one among the emerging streets foods in Kashmir. A street vendor selling momos at Lal Chowk in Srinagar says when he started out, there weren't many takers but gradually many locals started enjoying momos and nowadays, the inflow of customers is good!

While sampling all these delicious street dishes, I felt a certain fear and hoped that like other traditions and customs that are fast fading away from the Valley, this whole culture of street foods too does not fade away. After all, lesser and lesser people are opting for this business. Junk foods and other modern replacements have started eating into our culture too which may just change the original flavours of Kashmir. Also, these spots full of people enjoying street foods are a platform for social bonding. Besides, they are a great livelihood for the vendors.

Let's keep the tradition of street food alive in our Valley and keep our flavours flowing and flourishing. After all, as Dana Goodyear said, 'food is a lens for culture'.

THE FREE FALL OF THE PAGD

The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration was supposedly formed to uphold and defend the past encroached identity of Jammu and Kashmir. Ironically, today it struggles to save its own face and purpose, reports Mian Tufail

by Mian Tufail





The Gupkar Alliance was formed in August 2019 to safeguard the special Constitutional provisions granted to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. So, the State's political parties, many of which were foes turned friends, huddled together on the evening of August 4, 2019 to pressurise the Government of India against any tinkering with the erstwhile special status of Jammu & Kashmir.

Within hours, a whole lot of these new friends found themselves inside jails, to pave out a safe passage for the

transition of J&K from a state to a union territory.

A year after the abrogation of Article 370, leaders from the six political parties here met once again on August 22, 2020, and signed the Gupkar Declaration and resolved to adhere to the 2019 declaration. This time, they changed the name of the group into People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, the acronym being PAGD.

The objective of the PAGD was to boycott elections to the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly and work towards restoring the special status of the State. The resolution of PAGD

saw the members unanimously agree to unify their efforts to protect and defend the identity, autonomy and special status of Jammu & Kashmir. But the year 2022 saw three of its constituents namely People's Conference, J&K People's Movement and Indian National Congress, bid the alliance farewell and walk their own political paths.

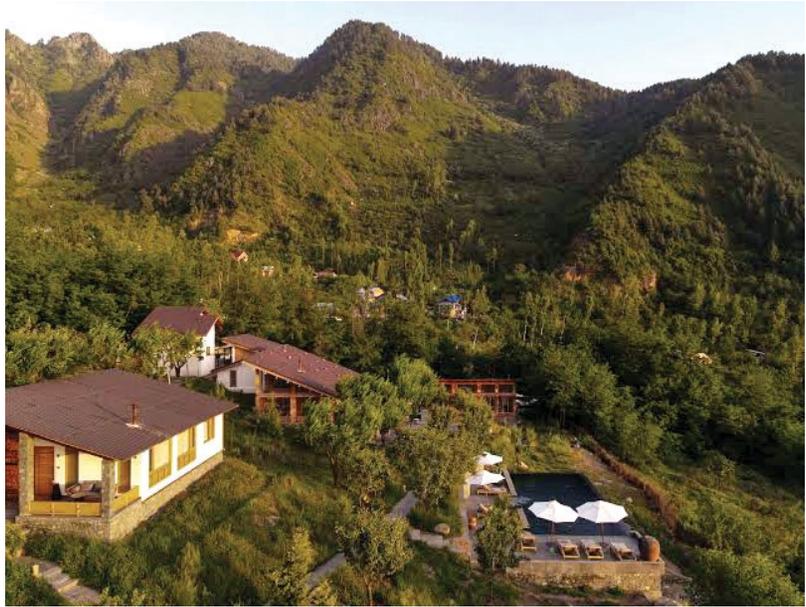
AN ALLIANCE OF DECEPTIONS?

PAGD had vowed to safeguard the sanctity of Jammu &

Kashmir with the boycotting of elections till the central government restored the pre August 5 position. But the announcement of the National Conference to fight elections solo was a setback to the alliance! In August 2022, the National Conference Working Committee unanimously passed a resolution not to ally with any like-minded political party for the pre-poll alliance.

With such a confusing background, the status of the PAGD is right now facing question marks.

Political commentator and social activist Mudasir Wani tells KC: “PAGD has lost its relevance in Jammu & Kashmir. Differing statements by its partners has created a wedge between the amalgam and the State’s people. Today, when the administration is stubborn about carrying out the anti-encroachment drive without prior notices, the PAGD has kept a criminal silence on the whole issue”.



CPI (M) leader Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, who’s the spokesperson for the PAGD, however reiterates that the alliance isn’t an electoral pick. He adds: “The PAGD was conceived for a larger cause than just as an electoral alliance. We have been carrying out our periodic meetings and are committed to our core objectives upon which the alliance was formed and accepted by the people of

Jammu & Kashmir”.

The National Conference announced constituency incharges for all 47 seats of Jammu & Kashmir. The message is clear - the grand old party of J&K has shut the doors of PAGD for any future alliance.

PAGD & THE ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE

The massive anti-encroachment drive started by the J&K administration to retrieve the State land occupied illegally, has somehow failed to extract any reaction from the PAGD. The alliance neither issued any statement on the issue nor did it convene any meetings.

The government has reiterated that a good chunk of land was illegally grabbed by politicians and their kith and kin. And well, the drive has kept the Alliance partners on toes too, to safeguard their properties worth crores built on State land.



During the demolition of Nedous Hotel in Srinagar, Awami National Conference President Muzaffar Ahmad Shah, who's a main constituent of PAGD, tried to stop the demolition drive. He maintained he had tried to stop the drive as a responsible relative of the hotel owners. Showing land documents and lamenting against the administration in front of the media, he said the government had haphazardly started the drive with an intention to destroy its opponents in the Valley.

Most former and present constituents of PAGD, who amassed huge State land, are facing the anti-encroachment drive. Ali Mohammad Sagar, general secretary, National Conference - despite the claims that his house was built on milkiyat land - faced the brunt of the demolition drive too.

LAND GRABBING BY THE PAGD CONSTITUENTS

In a shocking revelation by the Wildlife Department, Srinagar, most of the forest land had been occupied by the National Conference and People's Democratic Party leaders, both ranked number one and two in the PAGD amalgam.

Sources revealed that the biggest chunk of land around Srinagar city had been encroached upon by the NC and PDP leaders. Former NC legislator had grabbed around 40 kanals while his counterpart

in PDP had encroached upon 54 kanals.

Huge structures and destruction of forest land

are a hallmark of these encroachments. Former bureaucrats, said to be in league with these politicians and who





reportedly raised constructions under their names, are under the scanner too.

The son of a former Speaker who's in-charge of Eidgah Constituency of the regional party, has managed to raise an illegal construction at the Brein-Nishat Conservation reserve. Not only him, numerous other politicians from the NC and the PDP have managed to acquire huge pieces of land to build businesses and palaces.

Advocate Shabnam Gani Lone, sister of JKPC Chairman Sajad Lone, raised her house and the outer wall on the State land at Nishat. The tehsildar and revenue officials concerned carried out the demolition of her house in the presence of police personnel. Pertinently, JKPC was the founding member of the PAGD and later

the party broke all ties with the alliance after the District Development Council elections in 2020.

Surprisingly, all these encroachments have been taking place in the vicinity of the Raj Bhawan.

Mudasir says, "It will be interesting to see how Raj Bhawan clears itself from the clutches of land-grabbers who have converged around its vicinity in broad day light".

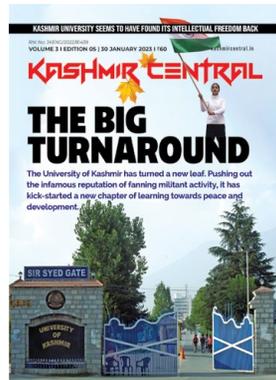
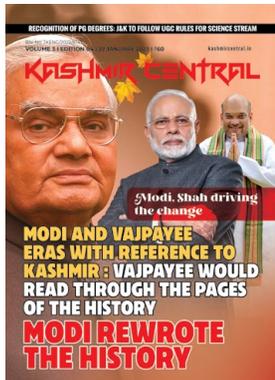
The PAGD has maintained deep silence on the issue and is not pressurising the administration in any form, as per its objectives.

Obviously, the very principle upon which the alliance was formed, is under threat and the land-grabbing by its constituents has demolished its sanctity in the eyes of the public.

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