

SUHAIL KHAN'S AGENDA HAS BEEN EXPOSED. DOES THAT SET A NEW FRESH EXAMPLE?

RNI No: JKENG/2022/81439

VOLUME 3 | EDITION 08 | 19 FEBRUARY 2023 | ₹60

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# KASHMIR CENTRAL

## CUT OUT THE ACTIVISM, CALL IN PEACE

**Much of the activism in the Valley has often sprung from the need for money, adventure or plain absence of a true inspiration. It's time to change all that and thank God for that!**

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**KASHMIR CENTRAL**



**KASHMIR CENTRAL**

VOLUME 3 | EDITION 08  
19 FEBRUARY 2023

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# SPRING IS HERE, CAN SMILES BE FAR BEHIND?

**The Spring is back and we hope the bloom shines  
on our land and its people.**

**T**HE Spring is beginning to breeze in and one can only hope and pray that the season is blissful, peaceful and gives respite to the people of Kashmir. With all the might of the State and prayers of millions of people of Kashmir, it could be hoped that Spring and the run-up to the Summer is peaceful, incident free with every section of the society feeling safe and secure.

That said, we cannot wish away the evil eye of the enemies of peace and humanity. There are credible reports suggesting that adversaries of the State would do everything possible to vitiate the atmosphere and create a scary situation. Though Pakistan is caught deep-neck in an economic crisis and the terrorism that that country promoted for decades, is biting it back; its long drawn policy has however always been to divert the attention of its people from the disastrous fallout of its economic and diplomatic failures by creating some kind of trouble in this part of the world. As has been rightly said by some of our statesmen, a peaceful and a stable Pakistan is in the interest of our own country. The current situation in Pakistan is a cause for concern. Pakistan is facing an existential threat and we need to be extra vigilant and careful to defeat its ill intentions. Let's hope and pray that peace prevails and people progress and prosper with a sense of security and stability across the region.

**Bashir Assad**

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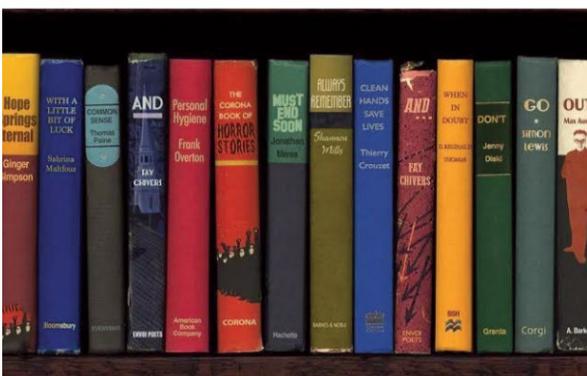
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**MOVE OVER  
ACTIVISM,  
PEOPLE  
WANT  
PEACE AND  
PROSPERITY**

by Bashir Assad

**ARTICLE 370**

Looking at impassioned activists crowding streets, or doling out those activism-heavy speeches can often be just an illusive trap. Behind it may not actually lurk the true spirit of activism and it may be coming from some really basic survival tactics.

A shady political group Awami Awaaz Party led by one Suhail Khan took a u-turn a few days back when it addressed a press conference stating it would fight for the freedom of Kashmir. Khan reportedly said to the press that his party was formed by the Army essentially to hoist the national flag at strategic points in Srinagar and issue statements against terrorism. Khan said he was now taking u-turn over alleged atrocities on the people by the State forces.

This episode needs to be put into context to understand the dynamics of activism across the political divide in the Kashmir valley.

In 2016, post the Burhan Wani killing, when entire Kashmir was on a boil, a friend from Kulgam village and who works with the government, had said that those on the streets pelting stones were never serious about the narrative of azaadi (freedom). It was amazing to see a person speak with so much of clarity and confidence at a time when emotional outburst was at its highest against the State and people were getting killed and injured in hundreds while fighting pitched battles against the State forces. The friend elaborated further: “The people of Kashmir were never serious about azaadi; rather they don’t

want it. What actually prompts them to come onto the streets has nothing to do with the narrative of freedom. I feel Kashmiris love adventure and that is why herds and herds of them get on to the streets. These are emotionally charged people, who risk themselves for short lived adventures”.

The friend pointing that the narrative is not real, is saying a lot. It also means it is superficial for those who drive it. They don’t believe in it. They often do it for money.

Before August 5, 2019, there was competitive separatism. People would compete with each other and try to be more ‘separatist’ than others, simply for money. There were hundreds of activists active on social media platforms, propagating separatism. They were being paid for it. They would instigate,



provoke and indoctrinate young minds just for money. It would also bring them a sense of power.

Post abrogation of Article of 370 in 2019, the same model was replicated by some people in the establishment. They promoted paid activism. And a number of youngsters were readily available to do the job for money. The competitive separatism (activism) was replaced by competitive nationalism! As beautifully articulated by a senior journalist Ahmad Ali Fayaz – ‘they were never nationalistic. In fact they are rechargeable batteries.’

Even some journalists of the Kashmir origin who had shifted base to Delhi long ago, returned to Kashmir only to be activists after the abrogation of Article 370. It fetched easy money for them besides other perks and privileges.

In December 2021 while speaking at a conference organised by 15 Core in Srinagar, I had vehemently opposed this activism. I had observed that the separatist narrative was very intelligently and craftily sanctified. The separatists were perceived as saints by the gullible masses. I pointed that a counter narrative had to be run by men of integrity and credibility and that the discredited activists present in that hall could not be the torch bearers of such a narrative. I had said that that kind of ‘activism’ with supposedly nationalist flavour was not based on conviction, realisation or ideological commitment. It was only a money game.



## Activism is an important wing of a culture but when it begins to get bought and lacks ideological conviction and the good of people, it is bound to lose steam, observes **BASHIR ASSAD**

I feel that integrity and ideological commitment are the pre-requisites for spreading the message of peace and love.

Now, Suhail Khan and his campaigns are exposed. And there are a dozen more Suhail Khans who will show their real colours soon. People at the helm of affairs are doing much disservice to both the State and the people of Kashmir when they promote this filthy culture of activism. There are allegations of extortion, sextortion against these activists. Some indulge in harassment of people and extort money from them while others take money on the promises of providing government jobs to the unemployed. All draw their strength from the patronisation of one or the other officer in the civil and military establishment.

I have, all along, been arguing that a majority of

people are disillusioned with the separatist narrative post the abrogation of Article 370. They have realised the cost they have to pay for separatism and separatist narrative. They are no more interested in violence and bloodbath. It is easier than ever before to reach out to the people directly, give them respite and bring them on this side of the fence. For that, the government and its institutions do not need activists and activism. People are the direct beneficiaries, and in volatile situations, direct sufferers too. So the approach must be direct. Activists and some so-called journalists have only earned bad name for the government. The culture of paid activism can never bring real change on ground. Commitment, conviction and integrity alone can make a difference.

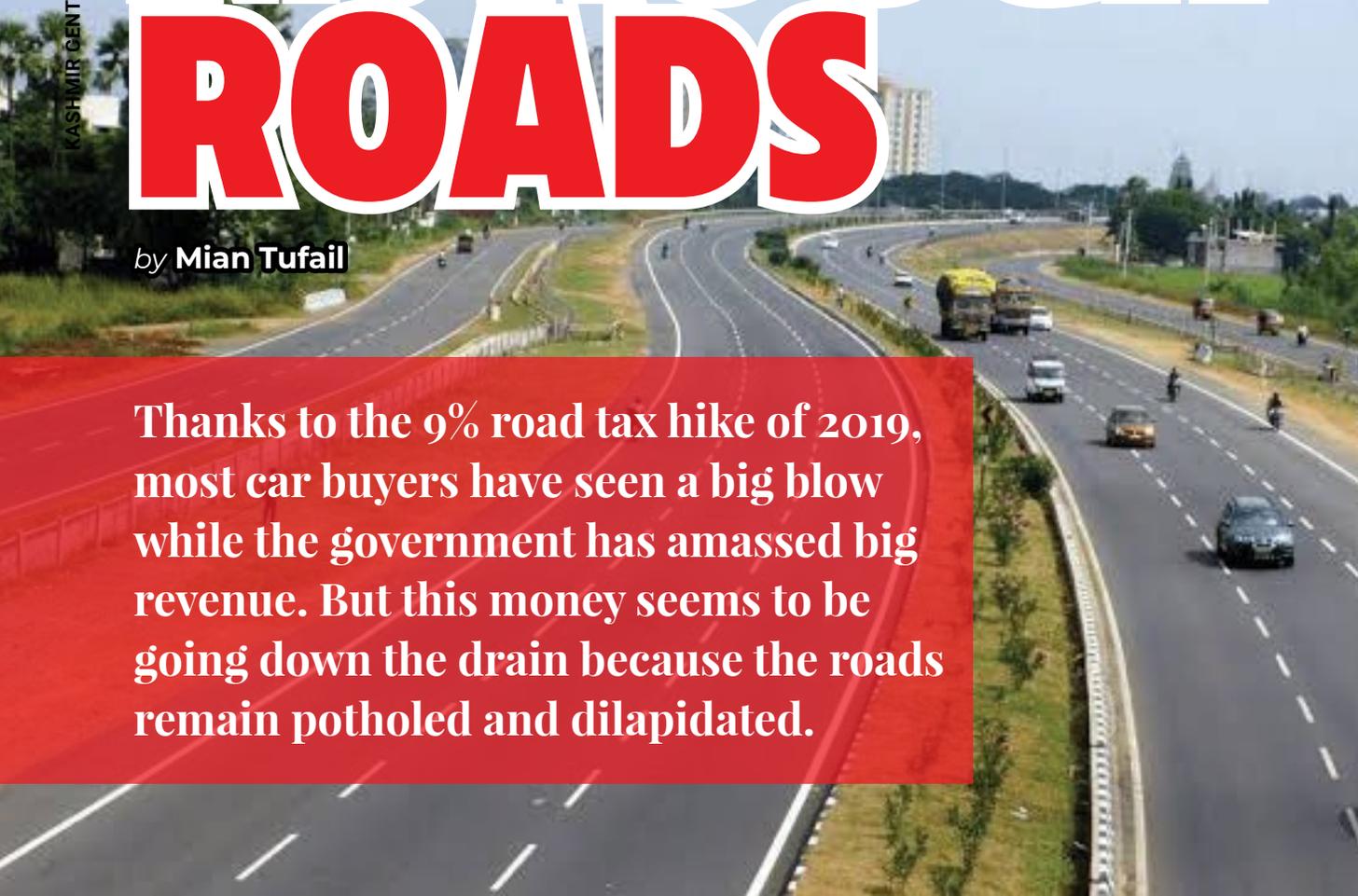
# ROAD TAX

# HIKE RUNS BUYERS INTO ROUGH ROADS

KASHMIR CENTRAL | 19 FEBRUARY 2023 | 8

by Mian Tufail

Thanks to the 9% road tax hike of 2019, most car buyers have seen a big blow while the government has amassed big revenue. But this money seems to be going down the drain because the roads remain potholed and dilapidated.





▼ In 2019, when the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was passing through a tumultuous phase due to political uncertainty, the then State Administrative Council passed an order of steep rise in the road taxes. The road tax for on-road cost of passenger vehicles was hiked from 1.7% to a whopping 9%.

The move was aimed to bring uniformity in the tax slabs with other states. The government maintained that due to low tax rate, a lot of people ended up with mass purchases of cars in the state. So the hike in road tax was seen as a deterrent in multiple car purchases by single buyers.

Meanwhile the automobile dealers saw the hike as

temporary when they noticed the slump in the market that year. The then government had reiterated that the move wasn't permanent and simply aimed to raise the sales of both personal and commercial vehicles.

But now, after almost four years of the implementation of the new tax slab, the picture isn't anywhere close to rosy. The predicament is such that both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir have seen a huge dip in the purchase of new vehicles. The automobile dealers in the Union Territory are feeling the heat, as sales have plummeted and the regressive tax slab evaporates the huge money from the new car owners.

Terming the 9% tax slab as regressive, Mushtaq Ahmad,

General Manager, Jamkash Automobiles, says the new tax bracket is a huge impediment in the sales of new vehicles. Adds he: "A car that used to cost Rs Three Lakh with a down payment of 10%, would get 2.7 lakhs as finance from the bank. The same car, for example, costs Rs Four Lakh, goes 10% for down payment with the bank and another 10% for registration, and costs the retailer around Rs. 4,60,000. The retailer is not in a position to spend this huge money to buy a car. This has been the outcome of the new tax slab imposed by the then Jammu and Kashmir government".

Pertinently, since Jammu & Kashmir transitioned into the status of a union territory,

the new administration hasn't reduced the tax slab to benefit local automobile dealers. Instead, the same tax structure is in place which has a direct bearing on the livelihood of some 10,000 employees working in this sector here.

Meanwhile, an amendment in the Motors Vehicle Act has further compounded the impact by way of increase in vehicle registration tax and this has hit the buying sentiment badly.

“Every year, different taxes get added up, be it GST or registration, and hence the transaction prices are skyrocketing for the consumers. Due to the unilateral imposition, consumers feel the burden which results in the sluggish sales of vehicles, adds Mushtaq.

Buyers now pay a flat rate of 9% as against slab-based approach depending on the size and engine capacity of the vehicle, making high-end and compact cars more expensive.

Aside from that, input costs required due to implementation of upgraded safety and emission norms, insurance expenses and the Motor Vehicle Act amendment has led to whopping hikes compared to before 2019. The hike has had a double impact on both the buyers and the automobile dealers.

The revenue generated by the government from the road taxes is massive since 2019.

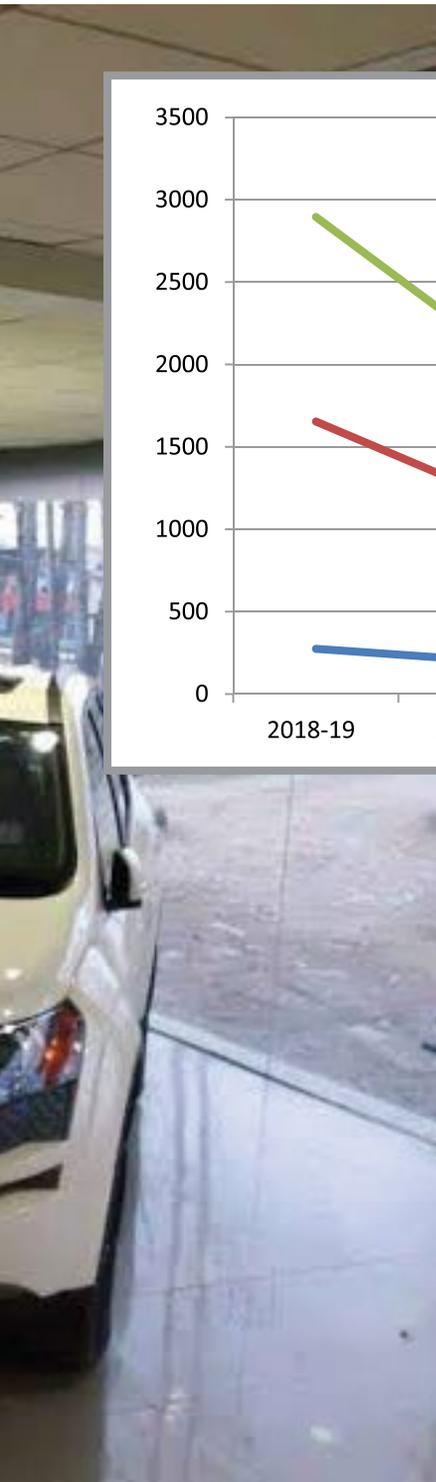
The slump in the car sales affects the automobile dealers whereas the revenue generated by the government



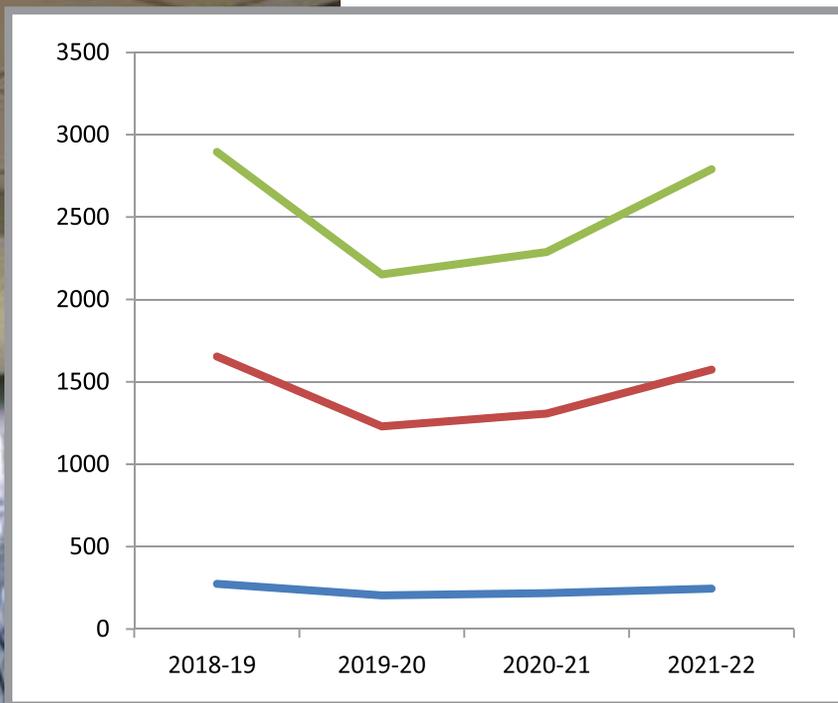
grows manifold. Mushtaq Ahmad adds, “The then state government didn't bother to take the automobile industry into confidence before imposing the new tax slab. The government has indeed earned huge revenues since

the imposition of the new road tax. But we cannot say if any improvement in the carriage way has been seen. The roads are still dilapidated and worsening under the title of ‘smart city.’”

The line graph depicts the



new generated revenue since the imposition of the 9% tax against the total sales and total costs from 2019 to 2022. There is a dip in sales after the new tax slab whereas the revenue generated is immense compared to earlier years.



The abrogation of Article 370 and Covid-19 have already drained the wealth of consumers in Jammu & Kashmir. The road tax has further burdened the market and buyers with huge registrations and down payments.

While people are waiting for a silver lining in these difficult times, the wait seems a long one since the economy of the country seems to have hit a downward spiral. “We want the government to reduce these taxes and in case there is no such proposal, then the government needs to put this money in road-making and maintenance to increase the shelf life of vehicles,” Mushtaq points.

Due to declining public transport in Jammu & Kashmir,

the easy bank finances for vehicles have seen a surge. Buyers resort to getting cars from outside of the UT at reasonable costs. Cars from Chandigarh and Delhi are preferred owing to good service and condition.

As per market survey conducted by Jammu & Kashmir Bank, nearly 95% car sales come through bank finance. Most popular cars in demand are the ones priced in the range of Rs 4 to Rs 7 lakhs, as per the survey.

Car-makers are unfurling new launches while dealers are hoping for a surge in the car business. However, major reforms and incentives will be needed to drag the industry out of the slump.

# Act Fast and Deviate the Devastation

by Mareaya Fayaz

**Melting glaciers, rising temperatures, climate changes and signs of eco-apocalypse are too real to be ignored. The question is - can we act to undo the damage or at least save more damage from taking place, wonders Mareaya.**

**W**e all have watched those apocalypse movies with that common running theme of zombie attacks, natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis etc. In such films, they generally depict how swiftly a civilisation will disintegrate in the event of something completely unprecedented. And while no two 'pop culture' apocalypses are exactly the same, most have the same ingredients: blood, unrest and a morally bankrupt society.

Eco-apocalypse movies, however, focus on a reality that is all too real. In fact, the effects of climate change resemble the signs of the end of the world quite a bit. Sea levels rising

and temperatures increasing can lead us into imagining our homes getting washed away. Never in my life have I seen papers and magazines writing so many articles about the climate crisis and I can only imagine that this is happening because the situation with climate change and global warming is becoming all too real.

It's no news that Kashmir's glaciers are melting quickly. Some of the man-made factors contributing to this have been identified by experts. The retreat of glaciers, particularly Kolahoi Glacier, is being attributed to a number of factors, including an unprecedented rise in temperature, deforestation, rising human activity and high levels of pollution. River Jhelum gets its water primarily from

Kolahoi, the largest glacier in Kashmir's Jhelum Basin. A substantial volume of the glacier melting observed last year, was significantly influenced by below average snowfall last winter, high winter temperatures, and summer heat waves. The snowfall this winter of 2022-23 was also lesser than usual. Since 1962, the Kolahoi Glacier has shrunk and lost roughly 23% of its original extent. The average mass balance of the Kolahoi Glacier has increased lately as per recent studies based on the last ten years of observation. The glacier is losing mass at a rate substantially higher than the glaciers in the other Himalayas, which is approximately 1.0 m water equivalent each year. Due to the anticipated climate change, it is predicted that the mass loss of the glaciers would worsen in the future, significantly reducing the stream flow of the trans-boundary rivers that originate in the area.

A depressing combination of record-breaking heat and little rainfall resulting in rivers drying up, wildfires raging and crop failures, has increased the cost of food. Last year, Europe saw the worst drought in 500 years. J&K

is an eco-fragile area, making it vulnerable to environmental problems like deforestation, encroachment on waterways, unplanned urbanisation, and climate change.

Recently, Ladakhi innovator Sonam Wangchuk was put under house arrest for a day ahead of his climate fast. Wangchuk had released a video on Twitter saying - "I have announced a five day climate fast to save and safeguard the Himalayas, the glaciers, Ladakh and its people". Before the fast could begin he was put under house arrest – which is a proof that the administration is not



*Sonam wangchuk innovator, education reformist*



taking the problem of melting glaciers and climate change seriously.

While talking to students and some research scholars during an interaction, research scholar Padma Angmo said: “It is very disheartening to see how the administration is dealing with the issue of climate change. Rather than helping setting up measures to fight the degradation of our natural environment, it’s moving against people who are trying their best to save our environment”.

When I last visited Ladakh, I could feel the changes in the air quality. When I had visited it as a little girl, it most definitely



*Aijaz Rasool Advisor environmental policy group srinagar*

felt different from what it feels now. The temperature in Ladakh is rising, which is definitely a concern.

Sharing insights, Aijaz Rasool, advisor and member of the Environmental Policy Group, Kashmir says: “Ladakh is an arid zone and has a fragile ecosystem. It is also facing the effect of climate change, like other places, due to global warming. The rise in temperature is resulting in depletion of glaciers due to increased melting of ice. The snowline has also been observed to have receded”. This has also been confirmed in a study carried out by Kashmir University’s Geo Informatics

Department which, besides reporting an alarming rate of melting of Ladakh glaciers, states that the Zaskar range has lost 117 cm thickness of ice cover per year while the Ladakh range has lost 46 cm per year.

Meteorological data reveals that the rate and spread of snowfall has decreased over the years and the average temperature has increased, accelerating the rate of melting, thus further causing gradual depletion and shrinking of glaciers. This is an alarming situation which will adversely affect irrigation and water supply sectors in the times to come.

The global climate change

and warming is due to the emissions from developed nations too. These nations have now committed to reduce the same, which at present, is causing increase in temperature at the rate of 0.2°C per decade.

Remedial measures have been put in place to ensure that the targets fixed for the year 2030 for global temperature are achieved in the first instant. Let's hope that commitments made are translated into achievements on ground.

Umar, another scholar of environmental science, says: "Melting glaciers is having a direct bearing on the environment in Kashmir. You can see that an hour's rainfall creates havoc in the Valley due to continuous melting of



glaciers keeping the ground surface saturated. Though we may experience no dearth of water supply right now but in the longer run, if the melting continues, we could become a water stressed place".

The situation with the glaciers has to be looked into because a stitch in time saves nine. But that is possible only if we are willing to take a pledge and save Nature.

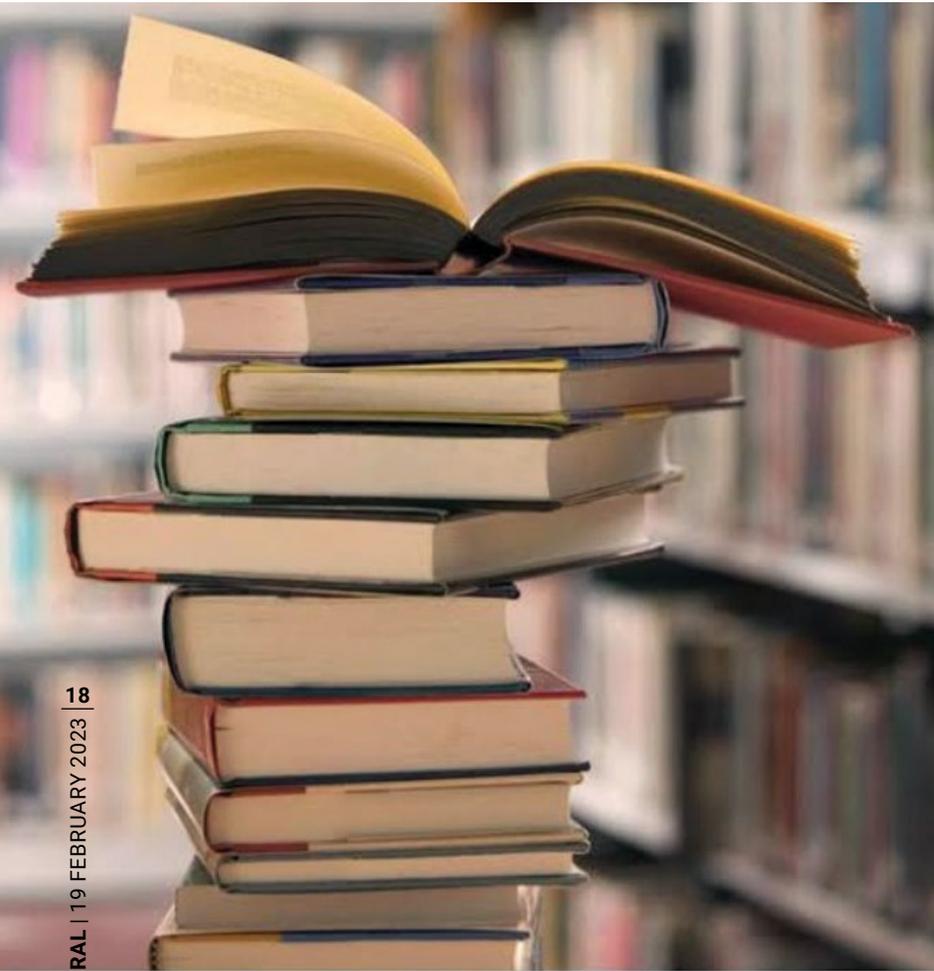




# GOOD OLD READING TIME TO BOOK IT

A book can be your best friend, holding your hand through long journeys, empty afternoons and lonely nights. It can make you laugh, cry, learn and evolve. But the internet and its frills have come and snuffed the life out of book-reading. We need to question the addiction and return to books.

by **Mir Tanveer**



▼  
**B**OOKS are a uniquely portable magic, said Stephen King. But do we really remember that?

With the advancement of Science and Technology, every aspect of life has witnessed a change. The connection with the world is at our finger tips, thanks to the internet. The internet has indeed made knowledge and information accessible at levels we could not have imagined! But then, all this has cut us away from the good old books – the hard treasure of knowledge we used to hold in our hands once!

The social media platforms have deepened the damage and

there is left almost no interest in book reading. A majority focuses attention on the content created on internet sites than books.

There was a time when people would spend hours reading books at home, parks, libraries or while travelling. We, at Kashmir Central, spoke to a number of individuals across academics, research scholars, journalists, writers and columnists on the worrying trend of decline in book reading.

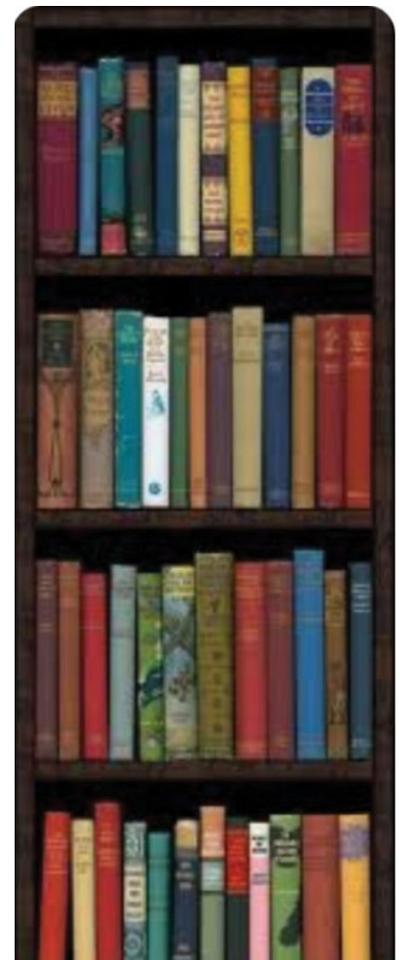
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## WHO HAS THE TIME?

▼  
 A research scholar in Media

Studies says: “The advent and subsequent increase in the use of various social media platforms, particularly among our young generation, has, without doubt, impacted the traditional book reading culture. Young students prefer to use social media than reading books. Also, the space enjoyed by physical books has been taken over by digital e-learning platforms”. A college student too adds that a majority of students remain busy with apps and social media. They don’t go beyond their subject books and in that too, in-depth study is a big miss.

A lawyer and a passionate book reader blames it also on our educational setup. “The book reading culture should



be inculcated in students while at school because that is when their core is created. Often, in schools, libraries lack an interesting collection of books and are not able to connect students with reading. If school libraries were to be made functional and attractive, things will change when it comes to the reading culture," he points.

Another writer articulates that "in present times, developing a book reading culture is challenging since the phone is a major distraction. The focus remains on online content, videos, documentaries and podcasts. This has provided an alternative to the book reading culture."

While talking to students that we met in different libraries, we figured that they were preparing for different competitive exams. They simply said their choice of books remained confined to their respective subjects. They said

their sole aim to study there was to get through exams.

So if books are held and read, they are done only for very practical benefits. The sheer, innocent joy of reading just for the pleasure of it is done and dusted.

## HOPE FLOATS

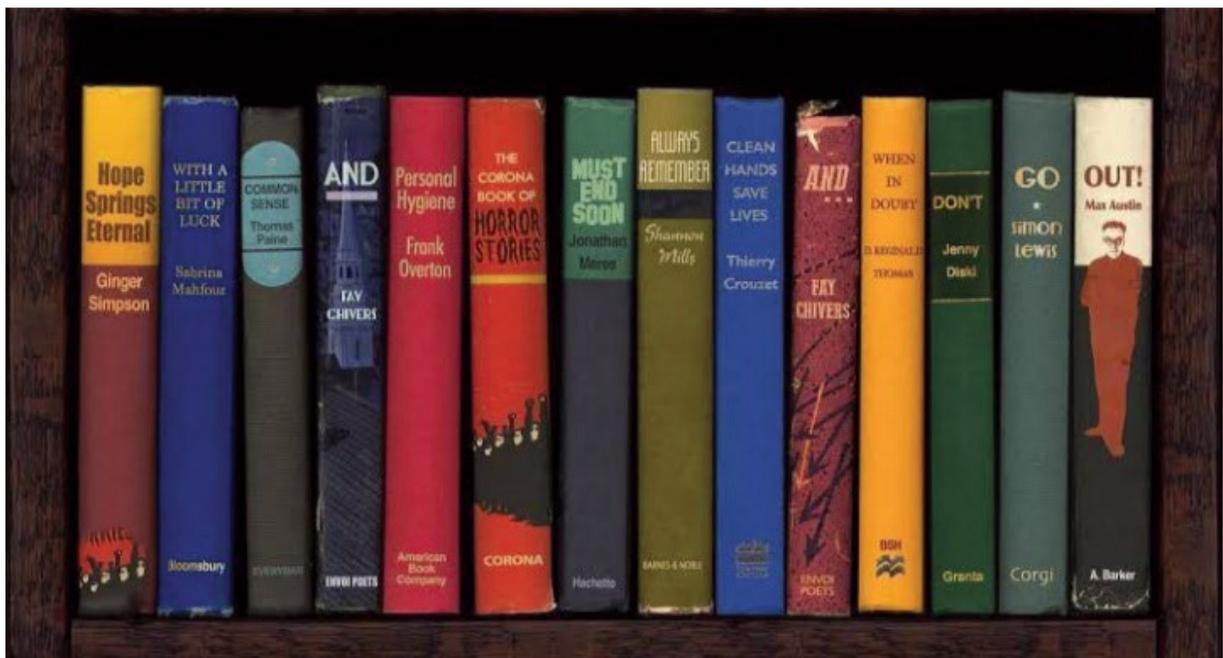
But there are people like Mir Huzaif, a student of Higher Secondary, who says: "I wasn't reading books before COVID 19. But since the epidemic forced us to stay indoors, I developed the habit of reading for the joy of exploring knowledge. This gradually developed into an interest. So now, despite my access to social media platforms, I love to spend time with a book – be it a hard cover or an e-book version. A book can rev up our knowledge by such huge levels!"

Another scholar working in

the Department of Urdu at the Central University of Kashmir says that despite access to social media platforms, book lovers still love to read. He adds: "What we really need is to develop well-stocked and technologically updated libraries to pull book readers".

That is an important step forward. We just need to create conditions and develop a system in such a way that students choose to pick worthy books. Books, after all, develop individuals and societies. They provoke ideas and creativity. They tighten our hold on languages and vocabulary.

Look at western societies! Despite technological development, people are still spending time reading books, and sessions between authors and students are a regular thing. We, as a society, need to take that example and blend it into our system.



# SEVERE ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

# PAKISTAN IS UNABLE TO GIVE EVEN ROTI TO ITS PEOPLE

20  
KASHMIR CENTRAL | 19 FEBRUARY 2023

by **KC Reports**

▼  
**P**akistan is in the midst of a meltdown. Pakistani analysts are calling it the crisis of roti, kapda aur makaan in Pakistan. Earlier, Pakistan was not able to provide kapda and makaan to its poor. Now, it is unable to give even roti to its people.

I was discussing the economic meltdown of Pakistan

with a friend. He made a somber comment which set me thinking. He said, “Pakistan ki economy ko na China, na Europe, na America bacha sakta hai. Not even our Muslim world can save them. Only some divine intervention can save Pakistan.”

Those who know of the depth of the crisis in Pakistan know that this statement is true.

It is now globally believed that Pakistan has created most of its own troubles. That is why its economy is collapsing.

Over the last few weeks, the world has seen how Pakistanis are not able to buy even the essential commodities for food. They don't have fuel to run their vehicles. But the problem is so deep and so huge that even with foreign aid, Pakistan may not be able to emerge from the crisis.



---

## UNABLE TO GET FOREIGN AID

▼

For Pakistan, the situation is only getting worse. Because of its poor performance on every parameter for decades, Pakistan is unable to get even foreign aid. The talks of the team of International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the Pakistan government have remained inconclusive.

The poor in Pakistan are unable to find anything to eat. But the damage being inflicted upon Pakistan's society and economy is not restricted to the poor alone. We have to remember that a society and an economy is an organic ecosystem. What happens to one section deeply impacts the other.

Islamabad-based journalist Mohammad Shehzad recently told stratnewsglobal.com that none of the political parties

will benefit from the current economic crisis in Pakistan. Imran Khan's PTI is in the opposition, but even his party will not gain any brownie points during this critical time.

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## ONLY HARDLINE JIHADIS WILL BENEFIT FROM CURRENT SITUATION

▼

Seasoned political analysts say that only the hardline jihadis will benefit from the current situation. Terrorist groups born and nurtured in Pakistan are already posing a threat to global security. The current crisis will further aggravate the situation.

Mohammad Shehzad spoke of the recent meeting between the business community of Karachi and the Governor of Pakistan's State Bank. He said that during the meeting, leading businessmen of Karachi gifted a beautiful box to the Governor.

He thought that there was some souvenir in the box. But when he opened the box, he found that they had given him the keys of their factories and business establishments.

The businessmen then said to him that Sir, we are in this business for decades. It is our bread and butter. But with the current challenges that Pakistan is facing, we are unable to run our business. You are the policy-maker, you please take the keys and run these businesses for us.

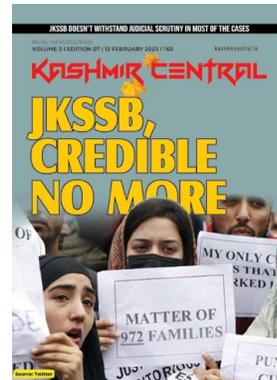
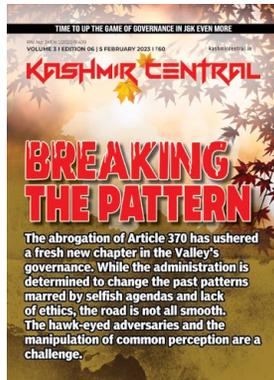
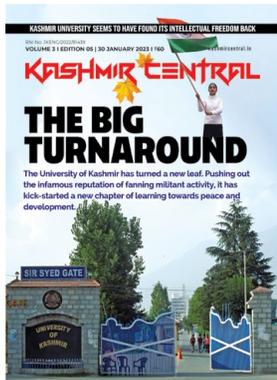
It is to be noted that this incident took place in Karachi, which is the commercial capital of Pakistan. The leading businessmen of the area have access to the Governor and can tell him about their problems.

But millions of Pakistanis who are reeling under the economic crisis have no one to talk to about the catastrophe that they are facing.

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