

TABLES TURN ON THE LOCAL AQUAF COMMITTEES AND THEIR MORALLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND HEAVILY ERRING MEMBERS.

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# KASHMIR CENTRAL

## The Ugly Truth

The local Aquaf committees are under the administrative scanner and sadly, enough of heinous and inhuman acts of theirs are coming to the fore. We expose the ugly truth



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VOLUME 3 | EDITION 10  
5 MARCH 2023

**Editor-in-Chief**

Bashir Ahmad Bhat  
(Bashir Assad)

**Editor**

Ms. Balpreet

**Managing Editor**

Bisma Nazir

**Roaming Editor**

Ms. Mareaya

**Legal Advisor**

Advocate G M Wani

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editor@kashmircentraLin

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# SRINAGAR'S G-20 MEET SET TO BRING GOOD TIDINGS

INDIA assumed  
presidency of  
the G-20 from  
Indonesia on  
December 1,

2022 for one year,  
till November 30,

2023. Since then,

sideline conferences,

workshops and symposiums are being hosted, covering a wide range of issues

for mutual benefit of the member countries. Economy, ecology, healthcare,

education, IT and a whole gamut of issues are being discussed in representative

meetings and MoUs are being reached in each meeting. It is expected that these

sideline meetings of the representatives of G-20 countries could help in making

progress on the issues being discussed.

Srinagar, the capital city of UT Jammu & Kashmir is also set to host a couple

of sideline summits across May 21-May 23, 2023 at SKICC. The final summit is

scheduled to be held in September this year and heads of all the G-20 countries

are expected to participate.

In the runup to the final summit, preliminary meetings on a host of issues

are being held in many parts of the country. Significantly, the Srinagar summit

too would be a major exercise in the run-up to the final summit. More than 150

delegates of G-20 countries are expected to participate in this one. The delegates

mostly comprise diplomats and senior officials from foreign ministries of the

G-20 countries. This signifies that the Srinagar summit would actually set the

discourse for the final G-20 summit. This, according to diplomats' sources, is

expected to be a very important and a crucial meeting which would hold the key

for the final summit.

The UT administration has started its preparations for hosting the summit.

A comprehensive security plan has been worked out to facilitate a smooth and

a hassle-free three-day summit. The face-lifting of the Boulevard and Gupkar

Road is also being taken up.

The delegates, it is believed, would also engage in sideline meetings with

various sections of the Kashmir society including academicians, trade bodies and

other civil society groups. LG Manoj Sinha launched 5G Jio services ahead of the

summit, earlier this week. Jio has made an investment of Rs 6,529 crore in the

UT to give a fillip to the vision of a digital J&K and has created 36,000 direct &

indirect employments. An investment of more than Rs. 1,230 crore is in progress

and by the end of December 2023, it will connect every block and tehsil of J&K. It

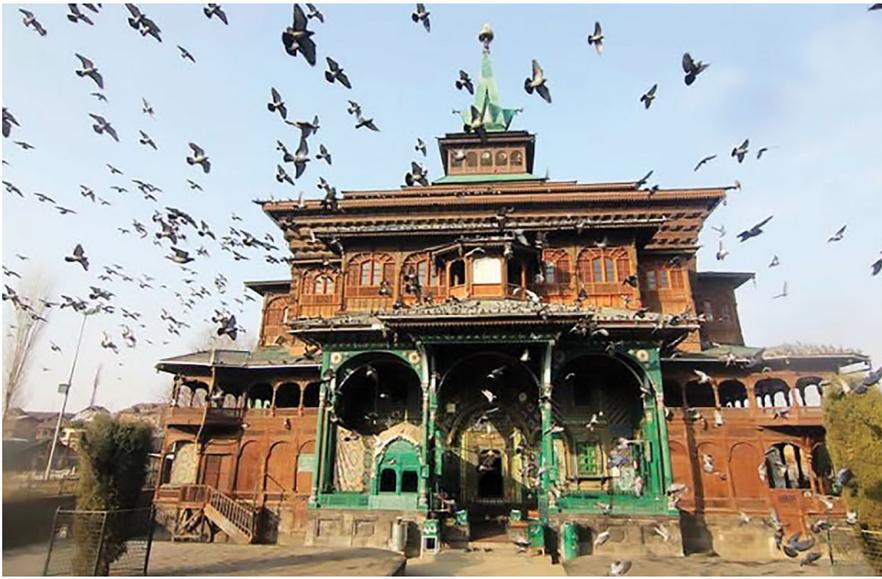
is expected that the much-awaited investment will get a fillip in the coming weeks

which could further be hugely beneficial for the people of the Valley.



**Bashir Assad**

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# The seamy side of local **Auqaf** committees

A **big**  
expose

by **Bashir Assad**

The local Auqaf committees are under the administrative scanner, thanks to glaring instances of their heinous and inhuman acts coming to fore finally.





**T**he local Aquaf committees, declared illegitimate by the Jammu & Kashmir WAQF Board in December 2022, are under the radar of the administration for their past extra-legal and extra-judicial activities.

Glaring instances have come to the fore wherein Aquaf committees or their individual representatives have indulged in heinous and

inhuman acts. According to sources in the police and the civil administration, the Aquaf committees or members of such committees have not only shielded rapists and molesters but in certain cases, have fudged evidences and recommended action against the abused, giving a clean chit to the accused, merely for money.

It may be recalled that post the inception of militancy in 1990, the local

Aquaf committees had got into prominence, owing to the collapse of the system in the Kashmir Valley. The committees took over the job of judge and jury, police and executive authority as the governance system had collapsed because of militancy. Extremist religious groups, particularly, took control of the committees in an attempt to further their agenda. As the police and civil



**As the committees enjoyed absolute power, they virtually became extra judicial and extra-legal bodies. Their intervention in all matters otherwise pertaining to the police, the judiciary and the revenue departments, were seen as mandatory.**

administration - either out of fear or complicity - detached from the public, the role of the local Aquaf committees in matters of civil and community disputes was overarching. As they enjoyed absolute power, they virtually became extra judicial and extra-legal bodies. Their intervention in all matters otherwise pertaining to the police, the judiciary and the revenue departments, were seen as mandatory.

After the institution of State reinforced, post the elections of 1996 and 2002, the legitimacy of Aquaf committees remained unchallenged because of the interests of the political class. The civil disputes, particularly, were settled by the committees without any reference to the law of the land. The settlements arrived at thereof were stamped as amicable. However, there was so much vested interest at play that the contending parties had no right to challenge the impunity with which the committees would function. There were both political and financial interests behind the authority of the Aquaf committees.

When the Jammu & Kashmir WAKF Board declared by the local Aquaf committees as void ab-initio, the order invoked mixed response from various sections of the society throughout the Union Territory. However, the district police and civil administration immediately started scrutiny of such committees. Glaring, rather heart-wrenching instances came to the fore.

In South Kashmir's Pulwama district, some Aquaf committees were found indulging in crimes which could be seen as acts of flesh-trading. In a village, a father was allegedly involved in sexual abuse of his two minor daughters and when one of the victims approached the local Aquaf chairman, pleading for safety, the chairmen returned her with the remark that he would talk to her father. Rather than acting swiftly on the complaint of the minor girl, the chairman took the side of the guilty father, forcing the

daughter to stay mute. In yet another glaring instance, a local imam in a Pulwama village allegedly received Rupees Two Lakh from an offender who had raped a physically-disabled girl. The shameless Imam then approached the Deputy Commissioner concerned for settlement of the matter outside court. In yet another case, a teacher who was also the member of the local Aquaf committee, had sexually abused a girl till she conceived. The matter was brought to the notice of the local Aquaf committee

which brushed the issue under the carpet and did everything to save the culprit.

While talking to this correspondent, the Deputy Commissioner of Pulwama gave a detailed account of more than 12 such Aquaf committees in the district which have the record of indulging in all kinds of immoral practices.

Indeed, the writing is on the wall. It's time to turn the tables on these committees and their morally irresponsible and heavily erring members.



# SMART UP, MY CITY!

by Bisma Nazir

**BASHIR** Badr had famously said once:  
*Hai ajeeb shehr ki zindagi,  
na safar raha na qayaam hai,  
kahin kaarobaar si dopahar,  
kahin bad-mizaaj si sham hai*

**W**ell, we won't say that these lines describe our cities here in the Valley but there is no denying that some of them can do very well with a brush up and some facelift.

And indeed, the good news is that Srinagar and Jammu are among the hundred cities across the country being developed along modern, scientific lines under the Smart City Mission.

**Our cities, mainly Srinagar and Jammu, are in for a face-lift and upgradation at varied levels, as they feature among the cities being developed under the Smart City Mission.**

## THE SPRUCE-UP

In both Srinagar and Jammu, realignment of roads, sewerage and drainage system, walkways, the face-lifting of Jhelum and Tawi river fronts, development of heritage sites and facelifting of old towns is going on in full swing.

Srinagar Smart City Mission is a 930-crore integrated project that covers around 135-145 heads under 8 categories.

Srinagar Municipal Corporation Commissioner Amir Athar speaks to Kashmir Central exclusively

to give an overview of the mission. It merits a mention here that Amir is the nodal officer of the project, supervising all the departments and agencies engaged in the mission.

Giving a detailed account of the work going on under the Smart City Mission, Amir says there are various projects being taken under the mission that actually hold the capacity to uplift and develop the city of Srinagar and its peripheries. He adds the upgradation of Polo View Market, redevelopment of Residency Road including construction of underground utility ducts, improvement and upgradation of Maulana Azad Road, upgradation of Ghanta Ghar, upgradation of Lal Chowk precinct,

improvement and upgradation of Batamaloo Qamarwari Road, improvement and upgradation of Batamaloo Moominabad Road, façade illumination of important heritage buildings and shrines are the main highlights of the Smart City Mission in the City centre.

Amir further adds there are more than 12 other projects being taken under the Smart City Mission with a focus on beautification of Jhelum River and Dal Lake. He says the projects along the Dal Lake and Jhelum River include redevelopment and beautification of Shalimar Canal and improvement of access to the Shalimar Gardens, development of the Lake Front along the northern Foreshore Road,

from Nishat to Naseem Bagh including pedestrian walk way, cycle track and viewing decks. There is a focus also on the upgradation and redevelopment of Nishat Sathu from Nishat to Dhol Dum including the cycle track, walk way and decks for angling, re-development of the cycle track along Chunti Canal from Dal Gate Junction up to Badshah Bridge, improvement of access to Chumtikul by way of construction & retrofitting of footbridges and viewing decks, a public bicycle sharing scheme, installation of cautionary signals, butterfly gantries, beautification of the Indira Gandhi Road including intersection, improvement and utility rationalisation,





construction of a footpath from Dal Gate to Nishat on the RHS, improvement of Gupkar Junction including approaches, redevelopment of Convent road along Jhelum riverfront, Jhelum Riverfront Development Phase-1 which includes beautification of Bund Road access, parks, Illumination, public amenities, social spaces and *ghats* and finally re-sectioning and slope improvement of River Jhelum for the development of the river front.

Amir adds that MA and Residency roads are being developed in a way to bring uniformity in road width with roadsides and walkways on the lines of modern scientific basics. He says that Lal Chowk is being developed as a Non Motorable Transport Zone (NMT) which could compete with any modern city across the world. He adds that electric cycles will be made available at various spots for

the convenience of the general public along the pattern of the Delhi metro-station outer-parks. He says that underground utility ducts too are being developed along MA and Residency roads to address the problem of waterlogging and flashfloods.

---

## SMARTER ABOUT ECOLOGY

Amir says that the government is sensitive to the ecological fragility of Srinagar city and steps are being taken to preserve and protect its fragile ecology and environment. Under the Smart City Mission, the government is developing green patches along roadsides and walk ways, he says, adding that water bodies conservation projects are going on at Khushalsar, Ram Munshi Bagh, Badshah Bridge Crossing, Dal Gate and Shalimar to keep a





check on water pollution. He also adds that noise monitoring systems are being installed at important points to monitor the noise pollution.

Amir informs that tenders were floated to procure 100 electric buses and that TATA Motors qualified the tendering process. The first batch of electric buses would be commissioned in the last week of March or first week of April, says Amir. These measures, he promises, are eco-friendly.

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## QUICK & CONVENIENT

▼

With so much action and construction work going on, Amir says every effort is being made to avoid inconvenience to the common public. So, he says, men and machinery are being deployed day and night to complete the ongoing projects. “We didn’t suspend work even in the harshest winters,” he says, adding that most projects under the Smart City Mission would be completed by 2024 while some may take a little more time.

But overall, the takeaway from this information is that our cities are in for a new, spruced up look that will certainly be more inviting, convenience-oriented and yet, as arrestingly beautiful as they always have been.

Allow us to sign this off with lines by Ahmad Mahfuz:

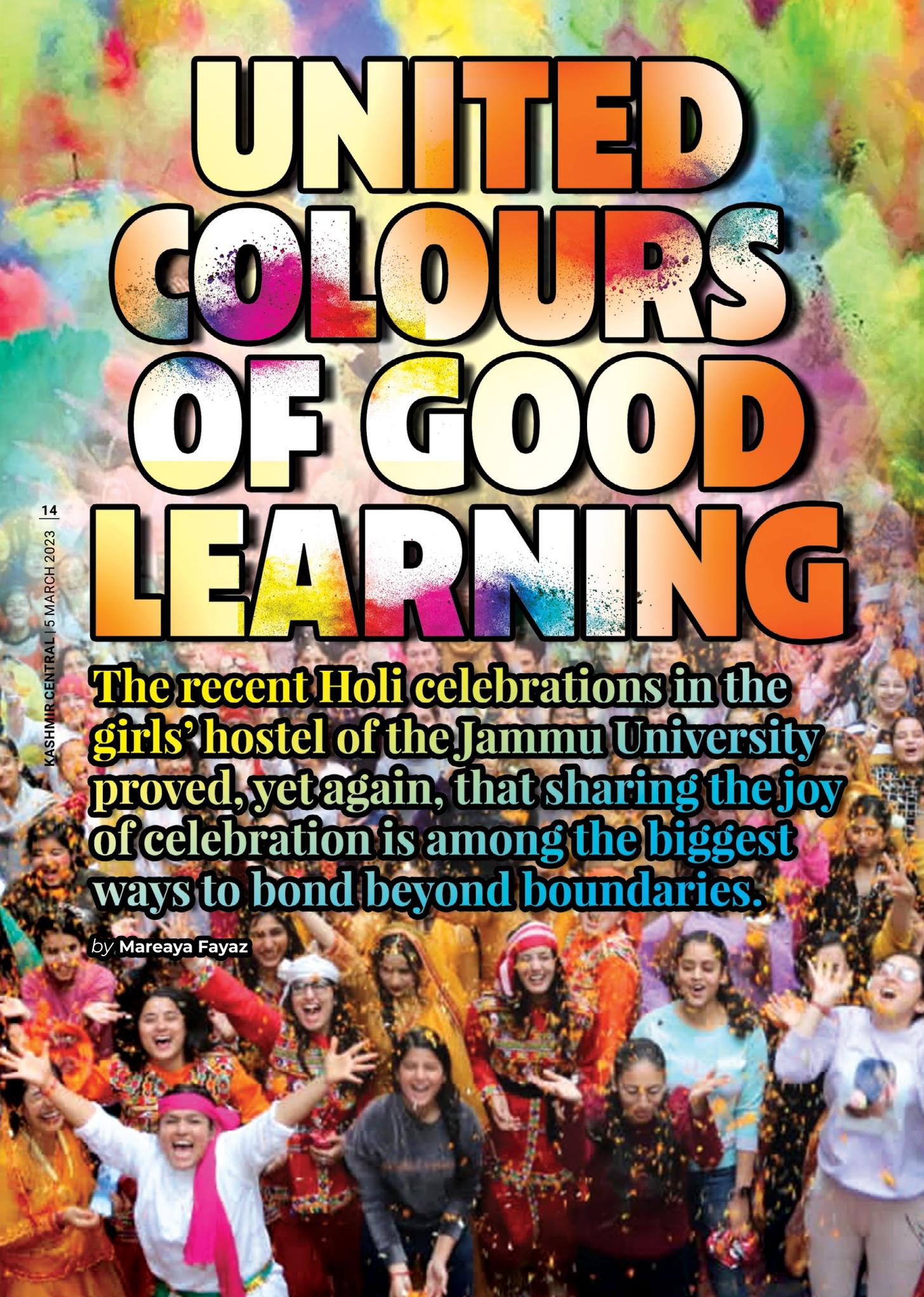
*Suna hai shehr ka naqsha  
badal gaya Mahfuz,  
to chal ke hum bhi zaraa apne  
ghar ko dekhte hain...*

# UNITED COLOURS OF GOOD LEARNING

14  
KASHMIR CENTRAL | 5 MARCH 2023

**The recent Holi celebrations in the girls' hostel of the Jammu University proved, yet again, that sharing the joy of celebration is among the biggest ways to bond beyond boundaries.**

by Mareaya Fayaz



The loud shout of 'Bura na maano Holi hai' had no meaning for me until I joined the university where students from all religions, different regions and cultures come together. Separated by religions, regions and genders the thing that brings us together is our thirst for knowledge.

After joining the university, I realised there was one more thing that brings us closer – a shared enjoyment - and what better than the fun we share while celebrating different festivals together!

We recently celebrated the festival of *Holi* on our hostel premises and it was definitely a bonding moment for all of us. All the women, irrespective of



religion, region or culture and whether they celebrated *Holi* or not, came together to colour each other, splash water at each other, dance together and simply have fun together. The celebration saw girls perform different dances with the others cheering them on. There were

tasty treats to add that feel of special something to the moment.

The festival of *Holi* is celebrated in Jammu & Kashmir in its own traditional manner, with *Holika Dahan* (burning) on the first day and splashing of colours and water on the second



day. The run-up and excitement leading up to the festival begins a week before the real festival with both young and old feeling great enthusiasm. Kids buy toys, water pistols, and vibrant balloons. The markets in the UT are full of such kiddie stuff at this time.

I got talking to a few women on the campus, asking them how they felt about celebrating the festival.

Ashfana, who hails from Rajouri district, said she had never celebrated any festival except religious festivals of her own community and that this was the first time she was celebrating *Holi*. “I have definitely enjoyed. Watching girls dance to the sound of a dhol has been fun, a new experience. Yes, I guess, festivals do bring us closer”, she said.

Rukaya, a girl from Doda district, said she hadn't had this much fun since a long time and would like to do this again if given a chance! She chirped: “It was a mesmerising experience and it will stay with me for a long time. I will always cherish these memories and they will go with me wherever I go”.

Priyanka, a scholar who organised a group dance during the celebrations, said she was thrilled to perform in front of such a wonderful crowd that cheered so heartily. “It really boosted our confidence and it was really a great experience for those who participated and those who cheered. Everyone enjoyed the moment and I think it really brought us closer”.

A woman from Srinagar



shared that like many others, she had had no experience of *Holi* earlier but that didn't stop her from enjoying with her friends. They danced to the beats, threw colour at each other, drenched each other with water balloons, and she said, “I definitely loved it! I never knew that moving to another place and being with people from other communities could be such a lively experience!”

Nandita, a student of Law,

said: “This festival has certainly brought us closer together. I saw students from different communities coming together and enjoying. Moments like these are worth cherishing and they should be created again and again. Institutions should certainly focus on such activities apart from education”.

Deeksha, another student said that the *Holi Mahostav* at this girls' hostel in the University of Jammu was splendid. “We all enjoyed a lot. The refreshment from our dearest Provost Mam was wonderful. It was really a great event. Love to see this side of our second family”.

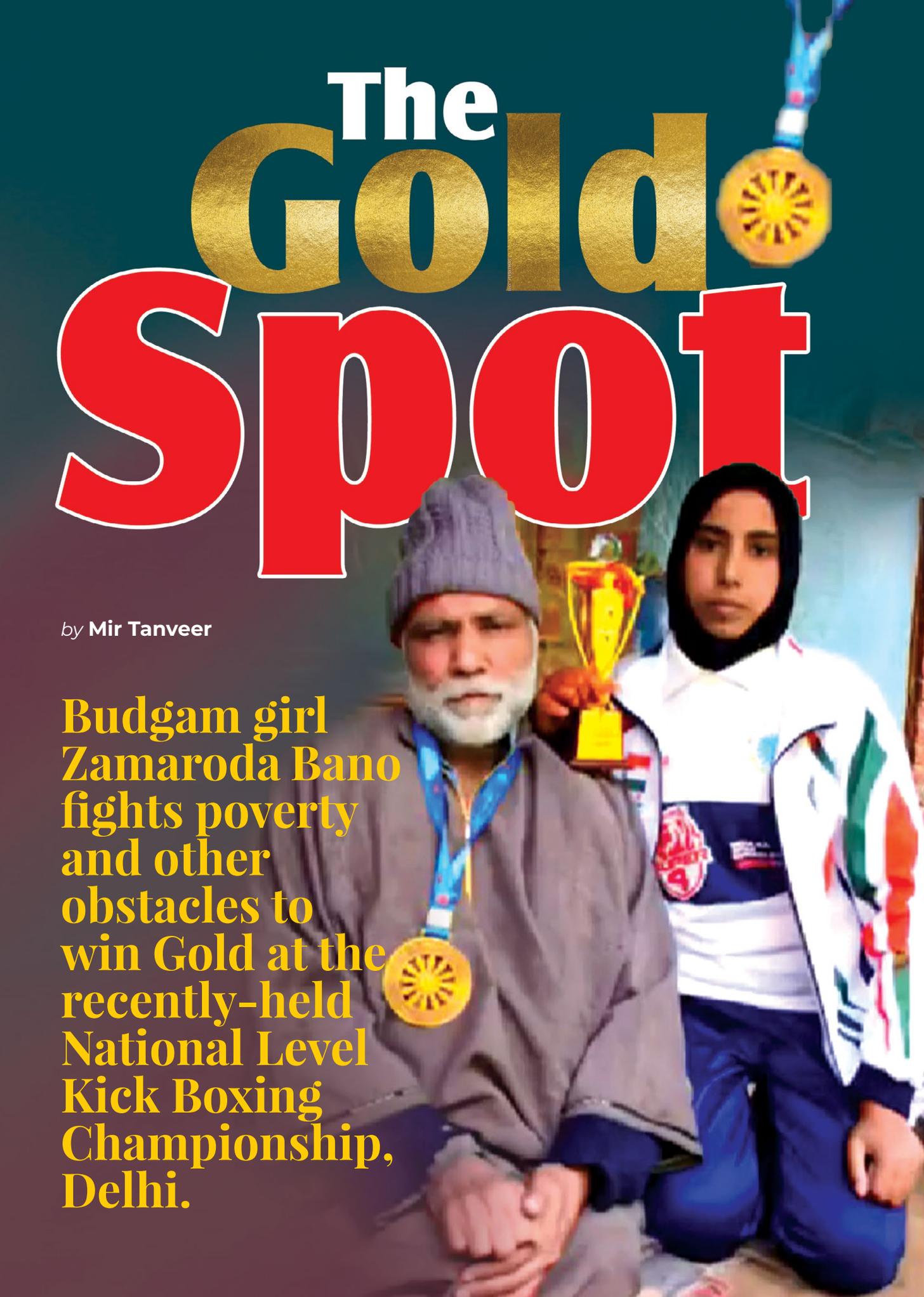
It is indeed true that the people you spend most of your time with, become your family. This institution has provided us with new families with whom we share our joys and sorrows and also celebrate our festivals. This kind of sharing is a part of good education!

# The Gold Spot



by Mir Tanveer

**Budgam girl Zamaroda Bano fights poverty and other obstacles to win Gold at the recently-held National Level Kick Boxing Championship, Delhi.**





**“It is too tough and challenging for sports players from poor families to survive in this field. Without government support, the poor but talented sports players won’t be able to go much far and their talent would be lost”.**

Look around Kashmir and inspirational stories will sprout about like tulips. Among many such inspirational stories is one about a girl from the Central Kashmir district of Budgam. In Village Hazarpora

Aripanthan, there lives a girl who has turned out to be a gold medalist at the recently held kickboxing championship in Delhi. This championship was held in the honour of former Chief of Army Staff General Bipin Rawath.

In this competition, players from across the country participated under different categories.

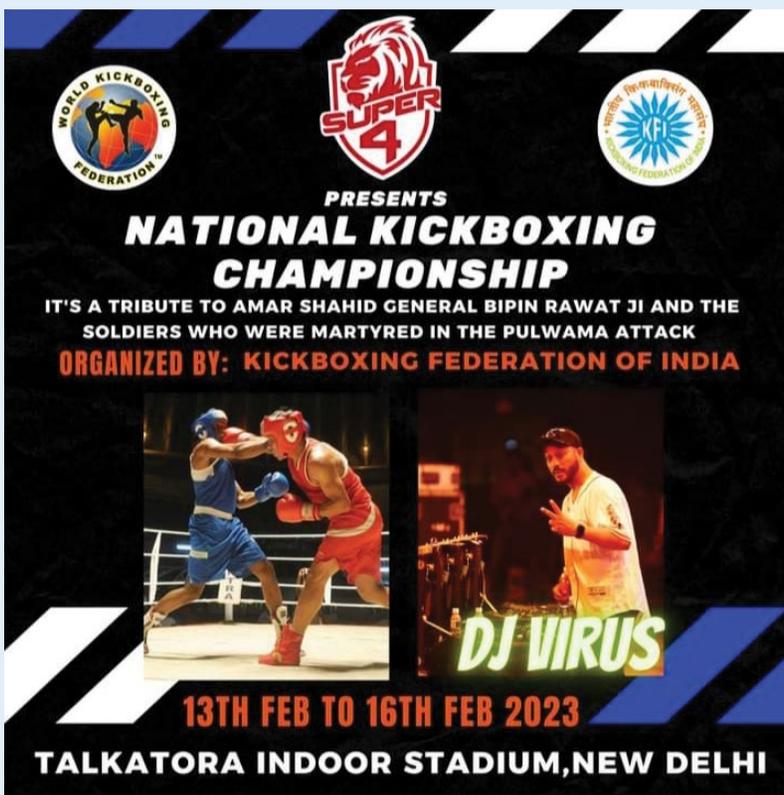
Zamaroda Bano, this girl from the Kashmir Valley, is the gold medal winner in the senior category of kick-boxing competition.

Hailing from a small village of Hazarpora Aripanthan, Zamaroda has under her belt, eight golds and two silvers till date.

It’s not been an easy journey. She has faced a lot of difficulties while trying to achieve her dream of becoming a national champion.

Talking to Kashmir Central, she reveals she always dreamt of becoming a police officer and an enthusiastic sports player in life. But due to economic constraints and her weak family background, many obstacles blocked her way towards her goal and the going was always tough.

She carried out her education





Zamrooda Bano Mixed Martial art

only up to Class 12 after which she had to leave due to a financial crunch. But she never lost hope in the positive and carried her passion forward as a sports player. She always reminded herself - “when your confidence and courage are with you, nothing can take away your goals”.

So, during her school days, she would work as a labourer during the walnut harvesting season to make ends meet for her family and to cover her personal needs. “However,” she adds, “In all these tough conditions, the Indian Army guided my sports career to new heights as they provided me all the guidance and support I needed. I am very thankful to them for helping me”.

In her childhood days, she would always discuss with her father, her dream of becoming

a great sports player. And somehow, her father would always end up feeling bad as he could not possibly provide her the needed paraphernalia or facilities to chase her dream. Her father is a specially-abled person.

However Zamaroda Bano chose to request the district administration of Budgam and LG of the Union Territory, asking to be supported and sponsored in the journey ahead.

And indeed, the request worked and here she is.

During an interaction, her brother Bhat Hameed said, “My sister has made our family proud and with this performance, she has proved her mettle in her sports career. This has inspired and encouraged all of us since despite poor financial conditions, our sister chased her passion of achieving big in a

sports career”. He hoped that the administrative machinery will provide her assistance in her journey ahead.

Her father Ghulam Qadir says that now on, the most memorable moment of his life will be when he heard the news about his daughter winning Gold at the National Level championship at Delhi. “My daughter has faced her challenges so bravely, without any fear. She has never put any kind of load on my shoulders”, he adds.

Meanwhile, while speaking to Kashmir Central, Zamaroda Bano says: “It is too tough and challenging for sports players from poor families to survive in this field. Without government support, the poor but talented sports players won’t be able to go much far and their talent would be lost”.

Zamaroda’s message to the society is that “we should provide our daughters a chance to showcase their talent in different fields. They should be encouraged in carrying their journey forward. I have had to face many trolls by the society being a Kashmiri girl. But I tolerated all that to reach my goal. When you dream of something great, poverty and other factors should not come in your way and you should keep your hopes high. My firm belief in myself and my dream has helped me graduate from being a labourer to being a national champion. I hope to be able to carry forward this journey in future competitions too”.

Amen to that!

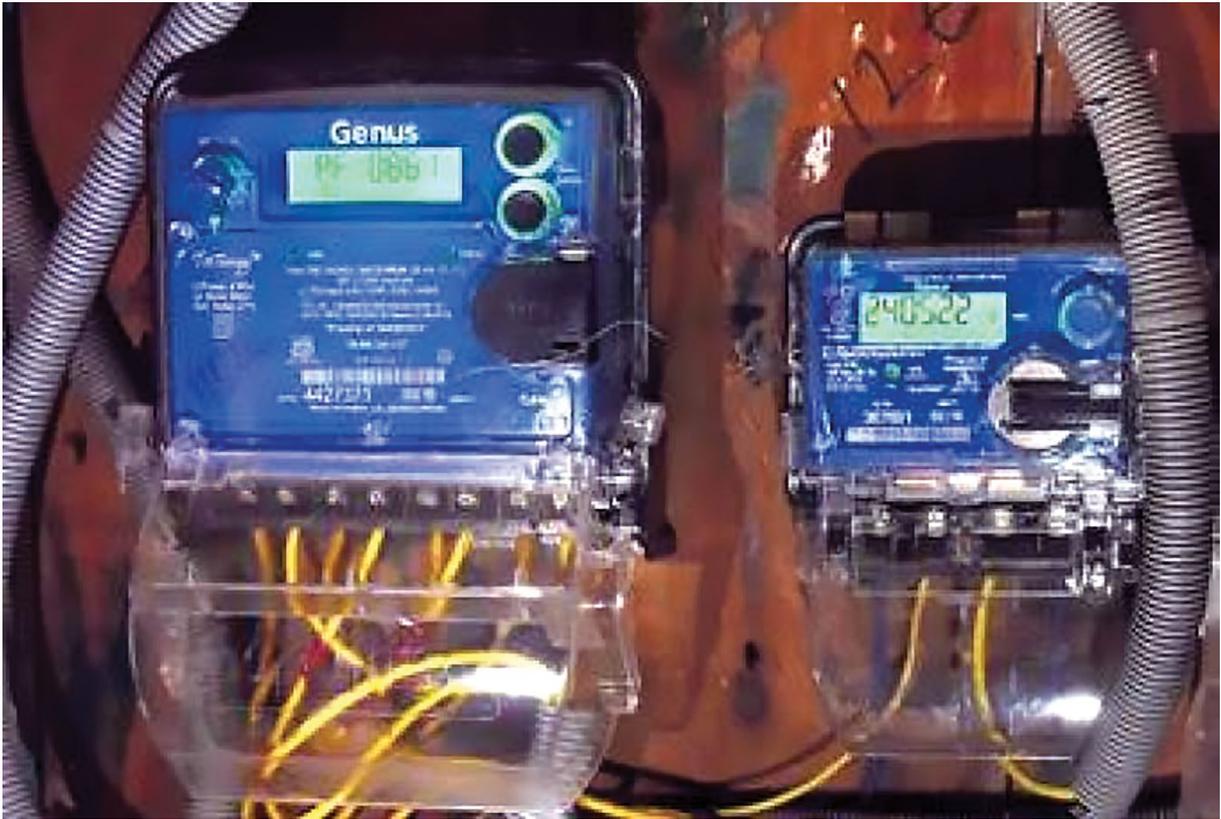
# FIGHTING THEIR OWN GOOD?

20  
KASHMIR CENTRAL | 5 MARCH 2023

**The old city areas of Srinagar are witnessing a strange protest by women – against smart meters! While such meters have proved very beneficial for the common public, it's obvious that it's dirty politics behind such protests!**

*by* **KC Report**





▼  
**V**ideos of sporadic protests by women in the old city against installation of smart meters have gone viral on social media.

Smart meters have been installed in almost all areas of the city of Srinagar. It has been observed that consumers are judiciously making use of electricity in the areas where smart meters have been installed. Smart meters, in fact, have, to a great extent, addressed the issue of power theft. There is discipline and thus, unnecessary use of electricity is greatly avoided. The installation of smart meters is essential not only in context of power thefts, but also makes responsible citizens out of the public.

So obviously, it is almost



shocking and actually hilarious to see people resisting this installation. The downtown has unfortunately earned a bad name in many ways over the last 30 years of turmoil. Lawlessness and unaccountability have destroyed the fabric of the society. The politics of agitation, in fact, has devastated families in the old city. And sadly, the people in certain areas of the old city are conditioned to agitate

on anything and everything which, in reality, could be in their own interest.

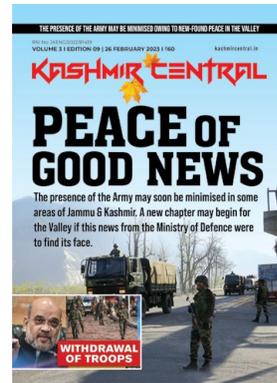
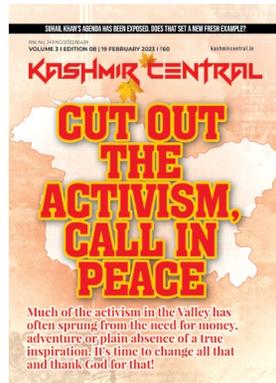
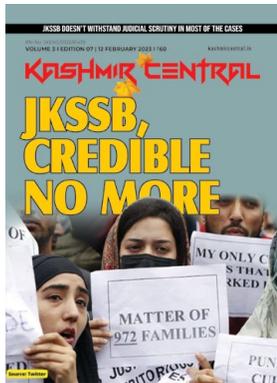
While the people in areas where smart meters are already operational, are actually happy with the initiative, what is it then that provokes these women in some pockets of the old city to resist the installation?

The answer is obvious - politics and politics alone!

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