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# KASHMIR CENTRAL

# Enough, says Kashmir!

**Author, senior journalist and editor-in-chief of *Kashmir Central* Bashir Assad speaks of the paradigm shift in the Valley, during a London conference commemorating the 4th anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution of India. *KC* shares the core of his speech.**

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**KASHMIR CENTRAL**





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KASHMIR CENTRAL

# ACTION PACKED!

Looks like the month of August is set to see a lot of action in Jammu & Kashmir, thanks to the fact that the Supreme Court has started hearing the pleas against the abrogation of Article 370, on a daily basis. We delve into the kind of action this is.



THE month of August this year is astrologically considered a month of transits - full of action, celestially speaking.

Well, it looks like we are already witnessing an action packed beginning here in Kashmir. A lot many activities happening simultaneously. Particularly the month is providing an argument to narratives being peddled on either side. The political system has abruptly swung into action as the Supreme Court has started hearing the pleas (clubbed) against abrogation of Article 370 on a daily basis. The LG administration, on the other hand, is coming up with innovative initiatives to showcase a 'normal' Kashmir. The unique kind of Veshow Literary Festival depicting rich traditions has got a huge traction across all social media platforms. LG Manoj Sinha inaugurated the two festivals on August 7. It was really an innovative initiative organised by the Kulgam District Administration in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts. Events are being organised almost on a daily basis in one or the other part of Jammu and Kashmir but this time around, the events have more significance. The political class has suddenly become argumentative owing to the hearing of pleas against the abrogation of Article 370, on a daily basis. The LG administrative is responding through management of events which are significant in conveying the message. Manoj Sinha is following the 'action speaks louder than words' mantra.

It is just a warm-up exercise from other sides though the battle lines are already drawn. Heated arguments are anticipated in the coming days. Meanwhile, after a long pause of six months, encounters between the security forces and terrorists have resumed which again indicates that there would be more action on this front too.

**Bashir Assad**

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# DONE WITH GUNS, WE WANT PEACE!

Author, senior journalist and editor-in-chief of *Kashmir Central* Bashir Assad spoke strongly about the paradigm shift in the Valley since 2019, during a conference in London on August 5, 2023, marking the commemoration of the 4th anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution of India. We share the core of his speech with you.

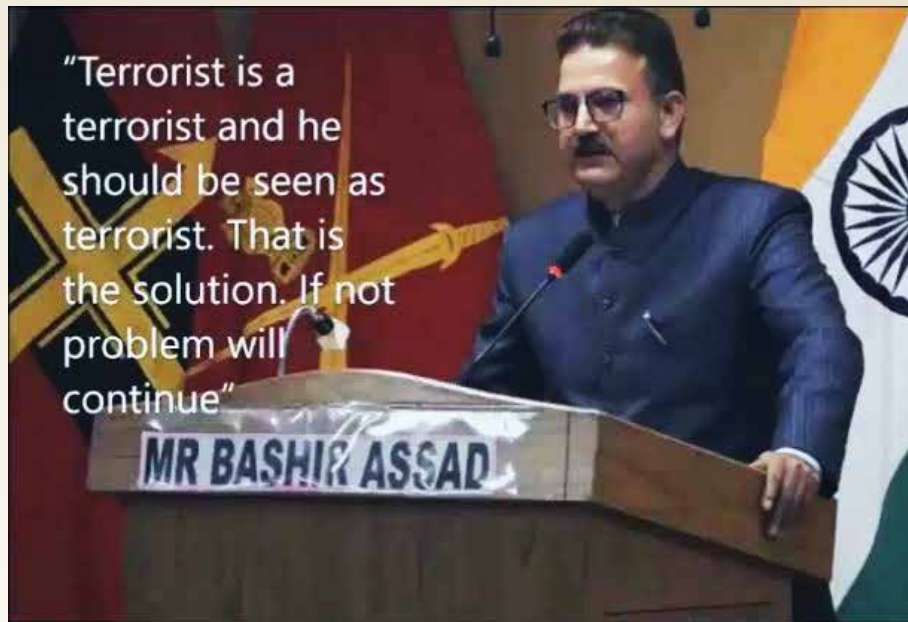
by **Mian Tufail**





**N**OT WITH STANDING the contesting claims by the contending stakeholders, Kashmir, over the past five or six years, has been witnessing a ground-breaking shift, and all, for good reason. Without going into the constitutionality or legality of the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution by the BJP government in 2019, one could clearly assess how the situation on ground has changed. This was stated by renowned author and journalist Bashir Assad in a conference in London on August 5, 2023 on the occasion of commemoration of the 4th anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution of India.

While speaking on the occasion, Bashir Assad said that two important events could be attributed to the shift in Kashmir. First, it was the infamous agitation of 2016 in the aftermath of the killing of a terrorist commander - Burhan Wani - in July 2016. The violent agitation consumed hundreds of lives in police retaliation; hundreds more were left injured and properties damaged on a massive scale. The narrative propagated by the adversaries was that of 'abhi nahin to kabhi nahin' (now or never). The intention was to scale up the violence to a level so as to bring the State to its knees. Every attempt was made to hurt the State. However, by the end of October, it only turned out



to be a self-driven goal, self-destructive and self-defeating. People started feeling the jolts of the violence and the undercurrents immediately set in. It was for the first in the three decades of violent turmoil that people started questioning the legitimacy of the violent narrative driven by the hardliner separatist, the hawkish Syed Ali Shah Geelani. The agitation of 2016 finally demolished the larger-than-life image of Geelani and other separatists who were fishing in troubled waters for the last 30 long years without being answerable to anyone. The people got disillusioned with the separatism and separatist leaders. The 2016 violent agitation was actually the turning point. The separatists were now on public scanner.

Two, the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019 by the Parliament was the final nail in the coffin. Though it came as a shock because of the hype created around the Article

by the political class of Kashmir, but the immunity to absorb this surprising development was already there, owing to the disillusionment with the separatist narrative. This is



something very interesting which we should appreciate. People had lost hope in separatism after the events of 2016 and there was no question of going back to violence.

That said, the post abrogation administrative measures of tightening the noose around the separatists, blocking hawala channels used for fuelling the unrest in Kashmir, demolishing the terror ecosystem, identifying the terror apologists and cleansing of the system changed the scenario altogether.

There were attempts by Pakistan and its progenies to internationalise the events. However, it could not find many takers as the global community incidentally had

more challenging situations. The issues the West and the East were facing were far graver than the noises around Kashmir and eventually were lost in the din. However, the western media consistently tried to fix New Delhi for what it terms 'suppressing the voices' in Kashmir.

Bashir Assad said that Article 370 which had suffered so many erosions, was hardly existent. It was just a tool in the hands of political elites for emotional exploitation of the people of Kashmir. That said, there are some legitimate concerns which need to be addressed to remove the misgivings and it is incumbent upon the government of the day to give the sense of security

and belongingness to the people of Kashmir. Bashir Assad described abrogation of Article 370 as a momentous step taken by the central government with respect to Kashmir.

In his well articulated speech, Bashir pointed, "The era of separatism is over in Kashmir. Gone are the days when people like Syed Ali Shah Geelani were handling Kashmir affairs through their indoctrination and forceful protest calendars".

Bashir Assad added, "There is behavioural transformation in Kashmir, more than anything else. People have been behaving responsibly. The undercurrent has been there since 2016; people had started realising the futility of violence, there was this deep realisation that the violence had destroyed two generations and peace must be given a chance to save the third generation. The abrogation of Article 370 has, at least, led to the discrediting of the separatists and the separatist narrative. People have also been watching the events unfolding in Pakistan since the last many years very carefully. A failed state which could not save its own people cannot be the saviour of Kashmir and the Kashmiris! Because Kashmiris are aspirational people, there is a shift in the thought process. They want to explore the huge opportunities which this vast nation offers."

Post abrogation, Kashmir is also witnessing a sea change in the administrative response to the issues of socio-economic concern.







Bashir added, “I am not against the transition of separatists into mainstream and for accepting the idea of India but I have my strong reservation towards those mainstream leaders who want separatists to be stakeholders in electoral machinations. Visiting the separatists and portraying them as messiahs of the society is an orthodox stunt which has no takers after the events of 2019”.

He reiterated that the annulment of Article 370 has restored order in Jammu and Kashmir and has cleansed the system which was hijacked by subversive elements. With the separatist structure coming to a close, the people are living a peaceful life without any pressure from inside or across the Border.

“The abrogation of Article 370 was an unprecedented move by the Union Government as it broke away the active terror system in the Valley and the emanating threats. It contained

violence and helped establish boom in the economy of Kashmir. Now there are greater opportunities for economic upliftment in the Valley,” he said.

“Kashmir has a history of being moderate and peaceful. Kashmir offered the world the culture of Sufism and diversity. It has an inclusive history and plurality. Today, with the abrogation, the thought process has been mainstreaming and the idea of a peaceful Kashmir is for all to see,” added Bashir.

The event was attended by a number of dignitaries from London including British MP Bob Blackman, Lord Rami Ranger, Stefan Voloseni, Chuni Lal Chawda, Krishna Bhan and Dr. Vijay Sazawal from the US-Kashmir Forum.

Bashir Assad is a renowned author from the Valley who has written a number of books on the politics of Kashmir. His

latest ones include ‘Kashmir Beyond Article 370’ and ‘K File’ in which he enlightens about the stereotypical narrative of Kashmir running on a grinding machine of disinformation and concocted accounts, unrelentingly flowing across from the Border. His emphasis remains on the new discourse and narrative from Kashmir. He is an avid articulator of new perspectives and the socio-political economic boom happening in Kashmir after the annulment of Article 370.

His ideology reflected in his speech in which he maintained that the beneficiaries of the new Constitutional changes in J&K shall be all of us - us as in our loved ones, our society – all of Kashmir that wants to live an abundant, enriched and peaceful life away from the dance of gun-trotting, penetrating hands from Pakistan.





# A PURGE, FOR THE WORSE

THE recent removal of the top two commanders overseeing China's nuclear arsenal, reveals serious fractures in Chinese leader Xi Jinping's regime and will harm its military modernisation, according to analysts.

Last week, Gen, Li Yuchao, commander of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force, and Xu Zhongbo, political commissar, the branch's second in command

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's recent purge of top military leaders and that too, pretty mysteriously, reveals major crisis within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and can play a crucial role in harming its military modernisation. An analysis.

were purged from their posts after having disappeared from public view for months. The reason for their dismissal and their current whereabouts are unknown.

Mr. Xi installed former deputy navy chief Wang Houbin as the new commander on July 31, while Xu Xisheng, an air force officer and member of the Chinese Communist Party's elite Central Committee, was promoted to political commissar.

Notably, both men come from outside the branch and have no experience in the Rocket Force, the arm of the PLA responsible for the country's nuclear arsenal and ballistic missiles. Analysts say their installation will likely jeopardise the regime's war-fighting ability, as it increasingly

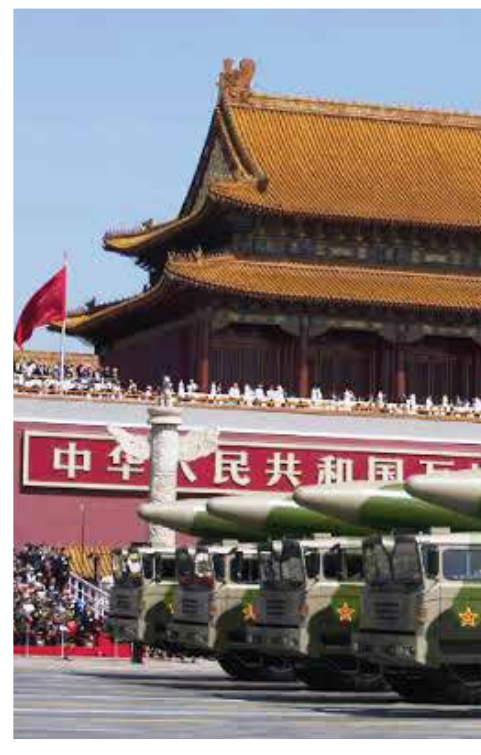
seeks to challenge the US and Russia's nuclear forces.

General Li and Xu Zhongbo's disappearance was among several leaders in the Rocket Force to have gone missing in recent months, presumed to be under investigation, signalling a wholesale purge of the branch's top brass. These include Lt. Gen. Liu Guangbin, deputy commander of the Rocket Force, and Lt. Gen. Zhang Zhenzhong, former deputy commander of the Rocket Force, according to Germany-based sinologist Frank Lehberger.

Besides the disappearances, the death of Gen. Wu Guohua, 66, former deputy commander of the force, on July 4, which was only confirmed by the Chinese state media in late July, has led many to speculate that the purges were due to

corruption or the leaking of military secrets.

Three weeks after his death, Chinese state media reported that General Wu had died of an unspecified illness. His death was earlier reported by overseas Chinese-language media, fuelling speculation that the general had killed himself.





## DISAPPEARANCES AND DEATHS

▼  
The purges came at a time of much upheaval within the opaque Chinese Communist Party (CCP). “There is more than meets the eye in the recent changes in the PLA Rocket Force, especially at a

In late July, he was given an uncharacteristically low-key funeral, his obituary omitting his status as a high level member of the CCP.

A humiliation basically. No reason was provided for this Either,” Lehberger said.

And Gen. Wu was not the only high-ranking military official to have died earlier

generals was “something unprecedented” in the history of the communist regime.

## CORRUPTION

▼  
Nishakant Ojha, an India-based geopolitical analyst, believes the purge of the Rocket Force’s entire command is linked to a crackdown on corruption. “The Rocket Force may have failed to meet certain high-level goals,” Ojha told The Epoch Times, adding that this may have prompted an investigation into where the money went. A July 28 report by South China Morning Post, citing unnamed sources, said several top PLA Rocket Force generals had been investigated for corruption by the military watchdog for months, including the force’s current commander, Li Yuchao, and deputies Zhang Zhenzhong and Liu Guangbin. Ojha likened the situation to the corruption probe of China’s state-backed semiconductor investment fund, known as “Big Fund,” this past year that led to multiple top executives, including the fund’s former president detained on graft charges.



time when the Chinese Foreign Minister has disappeared,” Claude Arpi, a French historian and expert on Tibet based in India, told The Epoch Times. The previous Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang disappeared for a month before being officially removed from his post, without explanation.

Lehberger, the sinologist, also noted the suspicious circumstances surrounding Gen. Wu’s death. “No reason was given why his death was kept a secret for three weeks.

this year, only to be belatedly confirmed by the Chinese regime. Gen. Wang Shaojun, 67, former head of the Central Guard Bureau died from an undisclosed illness in Beijing on April 26, Chinese news agency Xinhua reported on July 27. Gen. Wang had previously served as the chief bodyguard to Chinese leader Xi and other high ranking members of the CCP. “No reason was given why his death was kept a secret for three months,” said Lehberger, adding that the case of the two

## INTELLIGENCE LEAK

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For He Qinglian, a prominent US-based Chinese economist and commentator, the shake-up was the result of a leaking of military secrets that came to light when the US Air Force think tank published a report on



the PLA Rocket Force.

The report described the organisational structure of the Rocket Force, a branch known for its secrecy, with a remarkable level of detail, prompting analysts including He Qinglian to conclude it was leaked by senior officials of the force.

“It is not too difficult to grasp this kind of information,” she said, noting that the US intelligence services routinely recruited Chinese informants.

“What’s more, the CCP has always strictly dealt with this kind of espionage that undermines national security - in line with the principle of ‘killing a thousand rather than letting one go,’” she said, referring to a quote by former Chinese leader Mao Zedong. He Qinglian said she’s reminded of previous similar incidents like the 2010 purge during which the CCP dismantled a CIA espionage operation inside China by

executing or imprisoning dozens of informants over a period of two years.

## MULTIPLE FACTORS

Some analysts have noted that Xi’s replacement of the Rocket Force command occurred not long after the Russian Wagner mutiny of late June, directed against President Vladimir Putin. Lehberger called Putin a close personal friend of Xi Jinping and said that the Russian mutiny was believed to have shaken the Chinese leader to the core. While this is unconfirmed, Lehberger noted that “the peculiar timing and the haste with which the replacement inside the PLA has taken place” lends some credence to the speculation, especially taking into account that Xi has likely faced coup threats during his tenure. “Hence some commentators

dub the whole affair as ‘China’s Wagner moment,’” he said.

The Rocket Force, the PLA’s newest branch created by Xi during his sweeping military reforms in 2015, oversees precision missiles that are aimed at both stationary and moving targets anywhere in Taiwan, Japan, India and the US territories in the Pacific like Guam, Wake Island, Hawaii, as well as in continental America, said Lehberger. “Most (non-nuclear) precision missiles, controlled by the [Rocket Forces] could hypothetically also be targeted by hypothetical future Chinese coup plotters at Xi Jinping himself. Thus becoming hypothetically a sure and error-proof way [of] eliminating Xi as China’s leader ... very much unlike the botched coup by Wagner mercenaries, only armed with regular firearms, who were targeting Vladimir Putin in Moscow,” he said.



Lehberger also said that the CCP's recent messaging, targeting the PLA, revealed the causes behind the purge. According to him, Xi's speeches since July 24 and the various editorials published in CCP's state media, highlight four main problems in the military. "Lack of ethics among the PLA, lack of supervision of the PLA, formation of factions inside the PLA and active divulging of military top-secrets by the PLA," he said.

The first two factors can be linked to corruption and various forms of ethical misconduct, the latter two are serious and political and treasonous offenses that are directly threatening the survival of the CCP regime and Xi personally, according to the sinologist. "These four points corroborate my assessment that this whole affair is not only due to corruption or behaviour or ethical misconduct, but that Xi's status as autocratic leader of China is also threatened," said Lehberger.

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## IMPACT ON PLA'S WAR-FIGHTING ABILITY



The appointment of two outsiders to lead the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), with the commander from the Navy and his deputy from the Air Force, has raised the eyebrows of analysts. "All this shows that Xi Jinping has not only a huge problem of discipline within

the PLA, but also has serious problems finding officers that he can trust," said Arpi, the India-based historian.

Lehberger said that Gen. Wang's appointment was not only peculiar, but also detrimental to the Rocket Force's war fighting capability. He cites Gen. Wang's official biography, which states he started his career as a low-level officer in the PLA Navy's Air Force Detachment. Wang was more like a bureaucrat who never flew airplanes at the time, thus gaining no flying experience. Later he became an officer at the staff headquarters of the PLA Navy. As such, he was also never involved in a command of a warship, therefore lacking practical experience. "Wang was only commended for being a loyal, docile and

hardworking officer in the staff headquarters. Paradoxically it were those qualities, coupled with his total lack of technical or professional know-how, which did play a crucial role for Xi picking Admiral Wang Houbin as new PLARF commander," said Lehberger.

The general's lack of relevant experience will be especially damaging to the Rocket Force because, according to Lehberger, the force is much larger than other branches and it's essential that it be led by a commanding officer with specialised knowledge of ballistic missiles. "Moreover the main adversary of the PLARF is the formidable US Strategic

Nuclear Force, which forces the PLARF not to commit any kind of amateurish mistake with possibly catastrophic repercussions for the CCP," the expert said.

"A novice and outsider like Gen. Wang Houbin as head of the PLARF will therefore only elicit angry contempt and insubordination from the officer corps and the rank and file, in turn increasing the suspicions and paranoia of Xi," he added, describing this as a "vicious cycle".

The massive shake-up of the forces that Xi personally created indicates that the Chinese leader's reforms of the military, which commenced in 2015, is facing serious and unprecedented trouble, according to Lehberger. "This is corroborated by the fact that apart from a handful of high PLA officers who he knows personally for decades, Xi never trusts anyone else inside the PLA officer corps; he is visibly uncomfortable when meeting with PLA officers or with ordinary rank and file," he said.

Xi created both the Rocket Forces and the PLA Strategic Support Force, responsible for psychological, cyber, and information warfare, in December 2015. "Xi staffed them with handpicked officers, carefully vetted for their loyalty to him personally," he said.

(This write-up by Venus Upadhyaya, was originally published in The Epoch Times.)

# ARMOUR UP, FOR AN AI-DRIVEN WORLD

by **Waheed Jeelani**

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping various aspects of the society. Let's try and delve into the profound implications of AI, exploring its impact on employment, ethics, privacy, and the importance of responsible AI development. As we navigate the rise of AI, it is crucial to strike a balance between harnessing its potential and addressing the associated challenges, ensuring that AI technologies are developed and deployed responsibly for the benefit of humanity.

Since artificial intelligence seeps into varied aspects of our lives, it becomes extremely crucial that its implications on employment, ethics, privacy, and responsible development are addressed. A balance is most important wherein we embrace the potential of AI but never at the cost of ethics, privacy and societal well-being.



## THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF AI

AI's rapid advancement has revolutionised industries, enabling machines to perform tasks that previously required human intelligence. From autonomous vehicles and smart assistants to personalised recommendations and healthcare diagnostics, AI has the potential to enhance efficiency, productivity, and the overall human experience. Its ability to analyse vast amounts of data and uncover insights has opened new avenues for innovation, transforming industries and driving economic growth.

## EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE IN THE AGE OF AI

While AI brings unprecedented opportunities, it also raises concerns about the future of work and employment. As automation and AI technologies become more prevalent, certain job roles may become obsolete or undergo significant transformations. However, history has shown that technological advancements create new opportunities and demand for different skill-sets. By adapting to this changing landscape and fostering lifelong learning, individuals can capitalise on the evolving employment landscape and

find meaningful roles alongside AI technologies. It is crucial for governments, educational institutions, and businesses to collaborate in equipping the workforce with the necessary skills for an AI-driven future.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND AI GOVERNANCE

The rise of AI also necessitates a focus on ethical considerations and robust governance frameworks. As AI systems become more autonomous, and decision-making shifts from humans to machines, ensuring ethical behaviour and accountability becomes paramount. Questions of bias, transparency, fairness, and the potential for unintended consequences require careful attention. Responsible AI development involves setting ethical guidelines, fostering transparency in algorithms and embedding human values and principles into AI systems. Collaborative efforts between policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers are essential to establish regulatory frameworks that safeguard against misuse and protect societal well-being.





## PRESERVING PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

As AI relies on vast amounts of data for training and analysis, privacy and data security become critical concerns. Safeguarding personal information and ensuring the responsible use of data are imperative in an AI-driven

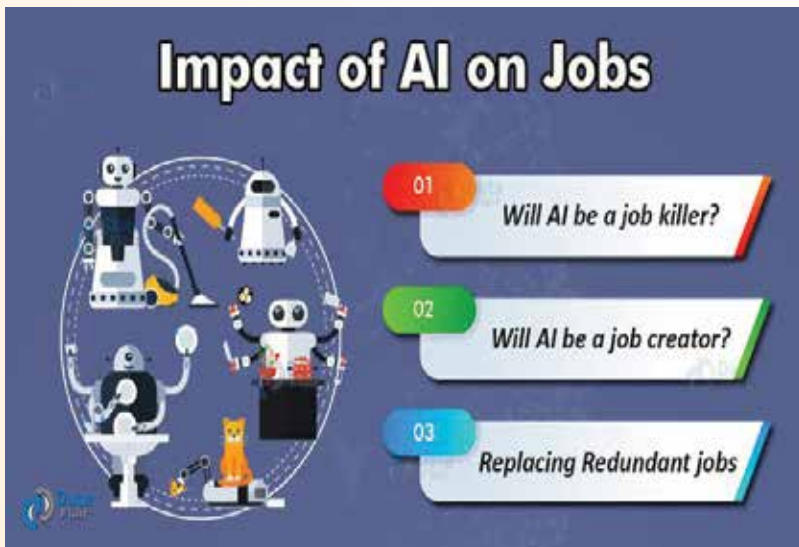
world. Striking the right balance between data access for AI advancements and preserving individual privacy is a complex challenge. Governments, organisations, and technology developers must work together to implement robust data protection policies, strengthen cyber-security measures, and establish clear guidelines for data usage, storage, and consent.

## THE NEED FOR RESPONSIBLE AI DEVELOPMENT

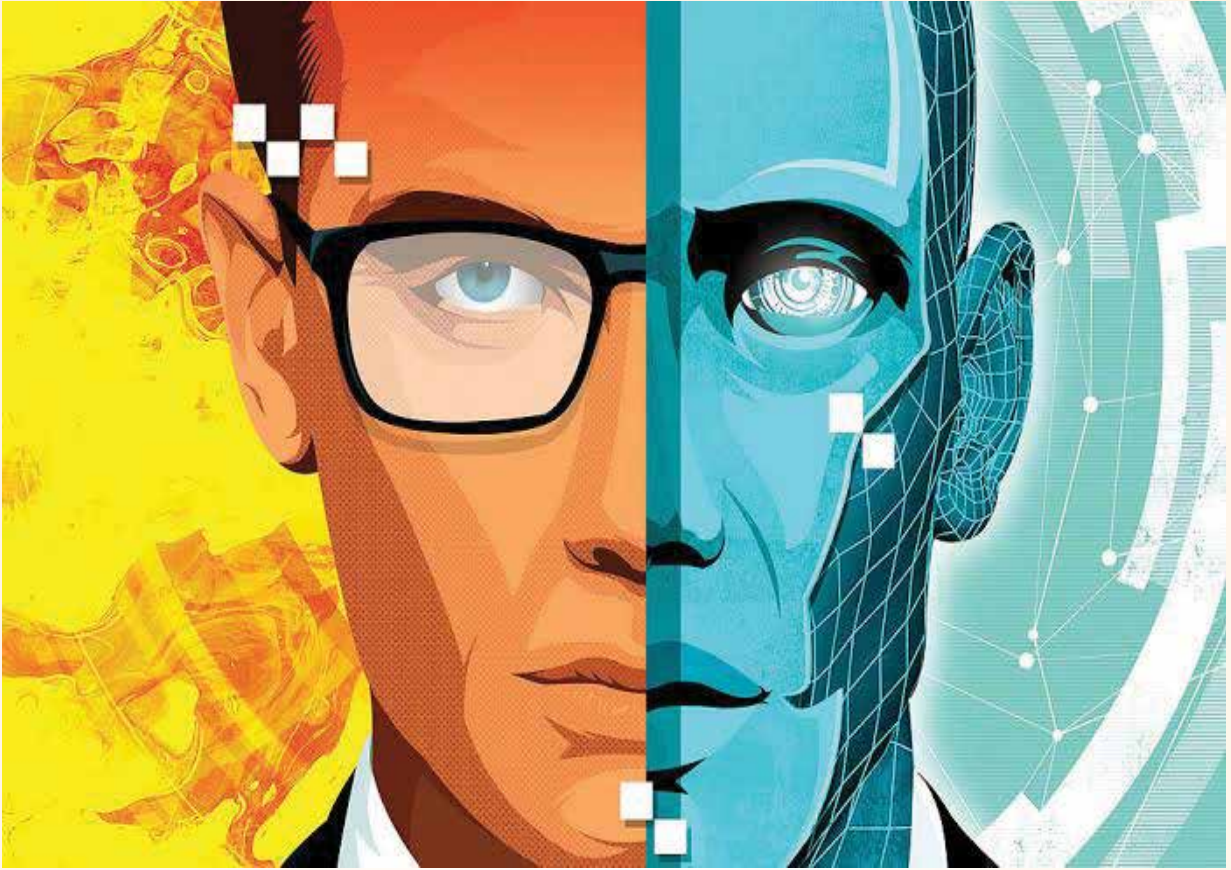
Responsible AI development encompasses the integration of ethical considerations, human values, and societal impact into the design, deployment, and use of AI technologies. It requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving collaboration between technologists, ethicists, policy-makers, and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. Responsible AI development includes designing AI systems that are transparent, explainable, and accountable, mitigating bias and discrimination, and ensuring ongoing monitoring and evaluation of AI systems' impact on society. By prioritising responsible AI development, we can shape AI technologies that align with our values, foster trust, and deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities.

## AI IN HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL GOOD

Beyond the concerns and challenges, AI holds immense potential for social good. In healthcare, AI-powered diagnostics, personalised treatments, and drug discovery can revolutionise patient care and improve health outcomes. In education, AI-enabled personalised learning experiences can enhance student





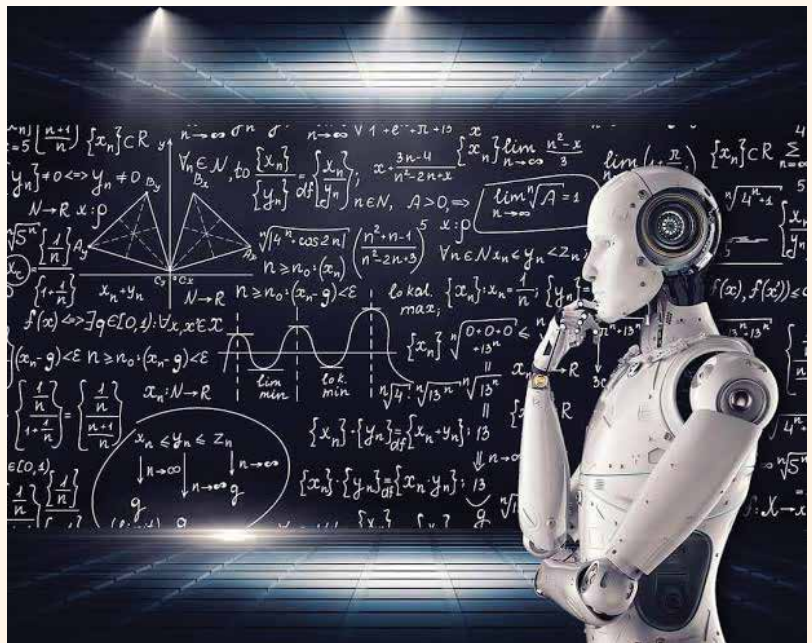


engagement and promote equitable access to quality education. Moreover, AI can contribute to addressing societal challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and disaster response, by facilitating data-driven insights and decision-making. By leveraging AI for social good, we can harness its transformative power to create a more inclusive and sustainable future.

The rise of AI brings both opportunities and challenges that must be carefully navigated. As AI continues to permeate various aspects of the society, it is crucial to address its implications on employment, ethics, privacy, and responsible development. By embracing the potential of AI while upholding ethical principles and societal

well-being, we can foster a future where AI technologies augment human capabilities, enhance productivity, and drive positive change. Through responsible AI development,

collaborative governance, and ongoing dialogue, we can shape an AI-powered future that benefits individuals, communities, and humanity as a whole.



# LESSONS AWAY *From* HOME

by **Faisal Akhoon**

While the education system in Jammu & Kashmir is on the fast track to revival after a long dead spell due to insurgency and turmoil, there is no denying the fact that there has been going on, a mass migration of Kashmiri students to colleges and universities away from home. And indeed, the educational institutes across India have been welcoming them with warmth and opportunity.





▼  
**I**N a world where education serves as the cornerstone of progress, access to quality learning opportunities is crucial for every individual, regardless of their background or geographical location. One such commendable initiative has been the welcoming embrace of Kashmiri students by mainland India's educational institutions.

Mainland India's higher education landscape has flourished over the years, offering myriad academic disciplines and programs across esteemed universities and colleges. Kashmiri students, driven by a thirst for knowledge, now have the privilege to select from a diverse range of courses spanning fields such as engineering, medicine, humanities, sciences, and social sciences.

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## THE HISTORY OF CHAOS

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Jammu and Kashmir, a land marred so often by conflict and turmoil, bears scars. While education is widely recognised as a fundamental human right, it has regrettably been one of the hidden casualties of this prolonged conflict. The repercussions have been particularly harsh on the younger generation, who have endured a dangerous and unsettling situation for decades.

The enduring conflict spanning years has dealt a crippling blow to the region's education system. Countless

children were robbed off the opportunity to exercise their fundamental right, a right championed by international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Frequent disruptions in the form of shutdowns, curfews, crackdowns, and cordon and search operations were a distressing norm in Kashmir. These constant upheavals resulted in the widespread closure of schools, an unprecedented consequence. Data collected by governmental and non-governmental bodies indicates a stark decline in enrolment figures over the recent years. Financial constraints and staff shortages have forced the closure of over 3,000 adult and non-formal education centres in the region since 1990. The younger generation, born after 1990, has been often confined to their homes due to persistent violence and uncertainty, spending more time within their homes' four walls than in classrooms.

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## A REVIVAL SINCE 2019

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The education sector in Jammu and Kashmir has achieved significant progress, especially post the Article 370 abrogation. The government has been actively implementing various initiatives to enhance curriculum, introduce innovative projects, and expand educational capacity. Notably, 25,000 new seats across 50 colleges were added in a year, marking a historic increase. Emphasis is being placed on value-based education and individual growth, with a focus on blending evolving education needs with market dynamics. Efforts are underway to make quality education accessible to all, including the underprivileged. The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) is a major stride, making Jammu and Kashmir a pioneer in aligning its curriculum and methodologies with the NEP's



multidimensional approach. Dropout rates have decreased significantly, and the region's education infrastructure is undergoing a dynamic development, including colleges, universities, and schools. Overall, Jammu and Kashmir's education sector is on an upward trajectory post the Article 370 abrogation, reflecting a commitment to holistic growth and transformation. But this is an ongoing process.

## EDUCATION AWAY FROM HOME

Limited opportunities in the region have led to a 'mass migration' of students seeking higher education outside. Insufficient colleges, political turmoil, and infrastructural issues have pushed students away. The Prime Minister's

Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS) attracts many, covering tuition and hostel fees. Opportunities for students outside Kashmir have become increasingly appealing due to various factors. The region's limited educational infrastructure, political instability, and challenging environment have prompted many students to explore educational prospects beyond its borders, for better opportunities and a more conducive learning environment. Students are drawn to universities and colleges in northern Indian states, such as Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh. These institutions offer a more extensive range of courses, better facilities, and exposure to a broader academic world. The PMSSS attracts students to universities outside Jammu and Kashmir, as it provides financial

support to cover tuition, hostel fees, and other expenses. Furthermore, the desire for exposure to diverse cultures and a global perspective has motivated Kashmiri students to study outside the region. Many believe that studying in more stable and academically enriched environments will provide them a competitive edge and broader horizons. Despite the challenges that come with studying away from home, such as adjusting to new climates and locations, the allure of better education and opportunities for personal growth remains a driving force. However, the situation also calls for addressing the issues faced by these students, ensuring transparent admission processes, equitable distribution of scholarships, and a supportive environment to enhance their overall educational experience.







## BRIDGE TO CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

▼  
The influx of Kashmiri students into mainland India has paved the way for cultural exchange and strengthened national unity. By studying alongside peers from different states and backgrounds, these students are not only gaining academic insights but also imbibing a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions. This interaction contributes to the breaking down of stereotypes and fostering a sense of belonging among students.

Recognising the financial constraints that some Kashmiri families may face, many educational institutions in mainland India extend scholarships and financial aid to deserving students. These initiatives aim to make education more accessible, ensuring that no aspiring scholar is held back due to economic limitations. Mainland India's institutions provide an environment conducive to social integration and personal growth. Students from Kashmir are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, and organisations, allowing them to showcase their talents,

build friendships, and develop essential life skills. One of the primary goals of higher education is to prepare students for meaningful and fulfilling careers. Varied universities in India collaborate with industries and businesses to offer internships, workshops, and seminars, thus providing Kashmiri students a platform to hone their practical skills and establish professional connections. While the educational opportunities for Kashmiri students in mainland India are undeniably promising, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the unique challenges they may face. Adapting to a new environment, language barriers, and homesickness can be obstacles, but with proper support systems in place, these challenges can be overcome.

## FIRST PERSON

▼  
We speak to a few students and teachers on the changing face of education in Kashmir as well as on the aspect of studying away from home. Meanwhile Ajaz Ahmad, a government school teacher in Srinagar, expresses his enthusiasm over the opportunities for

Kashmiri students today. He says: "Our commitment to education remained unwavering even during the transition period. The resilience shown by our students and staff has been commendable. We are witnessing a renewed passion for learning and academic growth among the youth. There are extensive educational courses across India and the students who are studying outside too are making us proud even as they tap their potential and move towards career growth".

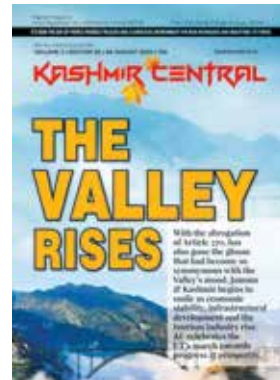
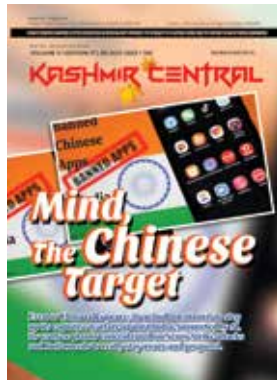
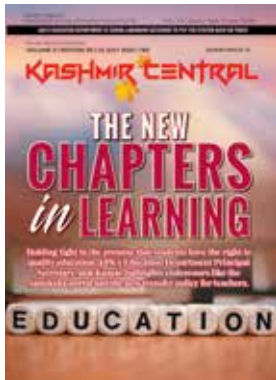
Owais Magray from Srinagar, and a B.Tech student at Chandigarh University says, "There are many Kashmiris in my university and in other colleges and universities outside J&K. Meanwhile, here there is a variety of courses and a huge accommodation. We shouldn't feel any hindrance in moving out of our hometown because it simply opens opportunities for our future and family. I'm happy my parents support me and motivate me".

Mainland India's warm embrace of Kashmiri students is a testimony to the nation's commitment to inclusive education and unity in diversity. This educational journey transcends textbooks, imparting invaluable life lessons of tolerance, empathy, and respect. As these young minds embark on their academic quests, they are not merely students but ambassadors of change, bridging gaps and building a brighter, more harmonious future.

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