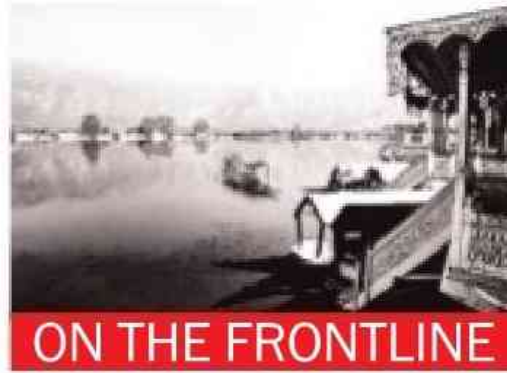


Let Modi govt come up with fresh initiatives

WHEN stone-throwing girls become the post-card image of Kashmir — there is a need to think seriously about the things that have gone wrong badly in the Valley. It is the failure of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the over-playing of the Home Department card that has made girls show their anger and the newly acquired “empowerment” through stones. This is indicative of the fact that all emotional connect within the families and the traditional values of the place have collapsed. It is very, very bad news.

It is a new and unique reality of Kashmir irrespective of the fact whether it is instigated or voluntary — this is a showcase of the horrifying developments taking place in the Valley. Whatever be the reason, one thing is certain that Kashmir is headed towards disaster. But before that it needs to be understood that these girls, who used to be a giggling lot and more serious about their studies than boys, have come to this dangerous state because of something more than an urge to hurl stones.

Like others, these girls in the 21st century have seen how their parents and neighbours have been living a life of psychological suffocation. All the time, they were told to stay indoors and out of the sight of gun-wielding militants and security forces. While going to fields, they were supposed to move in



ON THE FRONTLINE

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groups along with elderly women, and the urban centers had their own rules for them.

The books got them degrees, but the question that persisted in their minds was about their own contribution to the “cause of Kashmir.” Though they are themselves unsure about the fight and the outcome of their “struggle” yet they don’t want to be seen lagging behind in this arena where their role has drawn unique attention, internationally.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is preparing to send six specially trained women battalions to deal with stone-throwers. It is a typical response aimed at keeping the school and college girls confined to the premises of educational institutions or worse to battle the stone-throwing girls on the streets.

Sorry, this is not the remedy. It will not offer a permanent solution to the problem. This will only aggravate the situation because the images of bandaged heads of the injured girls spark more anger and frustration. The emotional gap widens. The Government of India should have learnt its lessons by now that how it should step back in such situ-

ations to cool the tempers.

The policymakers should be aware of one fact: That these are children of conflict and they are unafraid of tears and smoke shells for they have breathed the repulsive smoke since their childhood and seen bullets flying across. These children feel a vicarious sense of victory when they see the conflict deepen because of their small actions — like boycotting classes and hurling stones. They carry home stories of “mission accomplished”. Nothing is hidden from the eyes of their parents, teachers and neighbours because their images of pelting security personnel with stones reach their homes before them, courtesy the social media and TV channels.

The HRD ministry should step forward with new avenues for the students — boys or girls. It should re-look at the curriculum and the absence of extracurricular activities. The Centre cannot escape its responsibility, and it is high time that the teachers too were made accountable. It is not necessary for them to become narrators of the virtues of the country, but it is certainly incumbent upon them not to encourage secessionism or encourage secessionist activities.

The Quran says: To seek knowledge is a sacred duty; it is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female. This spirit should be inculcated. The HRD ministry needs to work overtime.