

Sacked Sajad Ahmad Bazaz

GK columnist turns ISI mole, terror asset in J&K Bank

Sensational disclosures on terror ecosystem speaks of rot in system

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Continuing with its policy of zero tolerance against terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir Administration has been working on various fronts to tackle the scourge of terror, unleashed by Pakistan and sustained by its ecosystem back home, to steer out the people from over three decade spell of misery and sufferings.

With the government sacking several employees from service for their terror links, the premier public undertaking of the Union Territory, Jammu and Kashmir Bank has also tightened noose on white collar sleeper cells in the organisation. The recent sacking of its Chief Manager, Sajad Ahmad Bazaz, reveals the ugly face of media-terror nexus, prejudicial to security of state and public order. The sensational disclosures by investigators reveal how the system was taken for a ride with terror ecosystem in a section of media and administration working in tandem with terror modules and sponsoring ISI to destabilize Jammu and Kashmir.

Sajad Ahmad Bazaz was at the pinnacle of his career. A skilled writer, he was appointed as Cashier-cum-Clerk in 1990 and later promoted in 2004 as a head, internal communication of J&K Bank, a public sector entity owned by the J&K Government. The current bank management seemed to have no clue that Bazaz was one of the most important Pakistani assets, secretly working for ISI and terror outfits. After abrogation of Article 370, the top investigators were probing link of deep ISI assets within the terror ecosystem and Bazaz's name popped up. After months long painstaking investigation they were in for surprises. The investigators said that Sajad Ahmad Bazaz, originally a resident of Batamalo Srinagar, was planted in J&K Bank in 1990 by Pakistan ISI through Fayaz Kaloo, owner and the Editor of Greater Kashmir. Sajad's appointment was on the post of Cashier-cum-Clerk. In 2004, he was suddenly given a jump to a position that was highly suspicious but it did not raise any eyebrow because of the then larger and deeper subversion in the system.

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Sources also confirmed that Sajad Ahmad Bazaz while being a full-time employee of J&K Bank was also a full-timer with Greater Kashmir as a correspondent-cum-columnist. This is open knowledge and known to all. Evidence collected by the agencies suggests that Sajad Ahmad Bazaz did not have honest intentions as a parallel employee of Greater Kashmir can be seen in the different names under which he wrote and published his write ups. Initially he used 'Sajad Ahmad' as his penname. He cleverly added one additional 'j' and also dropped his surname 'Bazaz'. Later with passage of time he got emboldened when neither his employer nor the law of the land could take cognizance of his wrongdoings, Sajad added his surname and wrote under byline 'Sajad Bazaz'. Additional evidence connecting him with Greater Kashmir is also available wherein Greater Kashmir had allotted an official e-mail address: sajjad-bazaz@greaterkashmir.com.

Almost all of his news stories and columns are centered around justifying and glorifying the secessionist-terrorist campaign in J&K. While some are subtle others are thinly veiled. Sajad through his ground reporting and opinion pieces published in his weekly columns titled 'Off The Record' and 'What's Up' in Greater Kashmir, toed the Pakistani line of UN intervention in Kashmir, tripartite talks and human rights violations.

Here are excerpts from one such write up in 2010, he exhorts the United Nations to play a pro-active role in Kashmir. Sajad writes:

"Instances galore where nations have suffered and some continue to suffer at the hands of mighty global powers well under the nose of United Nations Organisation and this is what has marred the credibility of this global forum. Most of the nations, particularly the weak nations have lost faith on the organisation, as it is viewed today as an extended arm of power of mighty nations like US and others.

The only role United Nations has

played is to keep Kashmir imbroglio alive. Even after six decades, the UN has failed to see an end to the conflict. Kashmir conflict was among the first crisis that the United Nations had to confront in the post-World War I period.

In the first 17 years of the conflict (from 1917 to 1961), the U.N was proactively involved in the process of seeking resolution of the conflict. But after the Indo-Pak war of 1965, the U.N's involvement surprisingly fell down. It completely ended its involvement with the signing of the Shimla Agreement in 1972- a peace agreement signed between India and Pakistan after the 1971 war. The Shimla Agreement laid emphasis on a bilateral framework to solve the Kashmir issue. By virtue of this agreement, it was not only the United Nations, which was kept out of the picture, but ironically people of the J&K State also lost their relevance as a party to the dispute. Notably, the U.N Security Council had passed 23 resolutions on Kashmir between 1948 and

been implementing agendas which have been most of the time put people of the state at the mercy of military, paramilitary and police personnel; and ultimately leading gross human rights violations.

He has authored numerous such write-ups and opinion pieces in Greater Kashmir that support the Pakistan ISI and Terror Outfits narrative on Kashmir.

In yet another write-up in his weekly 'What's Up' column, Sajad again dutifully serves the narrative of the adversary by questioning the genuineness of counter terrorist operations of Police and Security Forces, giving an impression as if all the operations against the terrorists have been fake. If there have been any aberrations which by virtue of inbuilt checks and balances of the state have been detected and action taken as per rule of law. However, he like many other false narrative peddlers of the adversary has been sowing the seeds of doubt to instigate people against the security forces. Sajad writes:

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1971 in which 18 resolutions acknowledged the right to self-determination of people of Jammu and Kashmir."

Sajad Ahmad Bazaz in this write up is conveying three things. Firstly, he is angrily calling upon UN to intervene in Kashmir. Secondly, while doing so, he is categorizing Kashmir as an independent nation albeit a weak one. Thirdly, he unabashedly rejects the Shimla agreement because it has diluted the right to self-determination of people of Jammu and Kashmir. This is typical Hurriyat's and Pakistan's current public stance. It is absolutely untenable for an employee of an entity funded and owned by government like JK Bank to openly preach and practice secessionism.

Continuing to peddle Pakistani official line on Kashmir for tripartite talks instead of India's stand of bilateral talks as per Shimla agreement Sajad wrote in his weekly column What's Up in 2010.

"Even as Government of India used all its defence tactics to suppress the separatist movement, it failed to bury the separatist sentiment and initiated armless tactics to woo locals for peace. In the last two decades of turmoil, we have witnessed appointment of working groups, committees, interlocutors etc. by the government of India to contain the element of anti India fever which yielded no results but kept the kettle boiling. So far, dialogue process was never broadened, proved only ornamental exercise and was confined to 'selected and tutored groups of India."

The above lines without mincing words reveals what Sajad believes in and is propagating: no matter how hard the Indian state tries in pacifying, accommodating, cajoling, it will never succeed in its mission in Kashmir. Concluding the above article, Sajad calls for involvement of USA as a third party in Kashmir dispute which again is a discourse popularised by the Pakistan to keep the flame of violence burning in J&K. Sajad Ahmad Bazaz writes:

"Obviously, there are many approaches, but it is the matter of unlocking from the positions they have locked themselves into. People here too have a crucial role as they will have to pressure their negotiators to think more creatively. And this all is possible under the umbrella of third party, which is none other than US. Let us hope that the year 2010 does not bring a sense of terror and persecution in the Kashmiri psyche."

Sajad in an article dated 13th July 2008 titled 'Vohra's challenges - will new governor prove himself as a change for better?'

In consideration of disputed nature of Kashmir and its proximity to neighbouring countries Pakistan and China, the appointment of governor for J&K has been a national security issue for India. This coveted post in the state has been most of the time held by former military or intelligence personnel with a background that they possessed hatred at least for Pakistan, which has been advocating Kashmiris cause of self-determination. During the course of this hatred, these governors have

"The inhumane law called Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has played an important role behind the business of fake encounters. The criminals in security agencies are widely using this law to cover up their illegal actions against innocent people. According to International people's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice more than eight thousand people are missing during last two decades of separatist movement in Kashmir. The people killed in fake encounters and in police custody are usually buried in mass graves near Army and Police camps. A few years back, 2,700 unmarked graves were found in the villages containing three thousand bodies."

The false flag of 'mass and unmarked graves' has been used by the Pakistani state and ISI to vilify the security forces and the Indian state locally, nationally and internationally. Tens of hundreds of Pakistani origin terrorists affiliated with dreaded terror outfits like Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Toiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Al-Badar etc have got killed in hundreds of encounters on LoC and in the hinterland whose dead bodies have been buried in several graveyards. Since there have been no takers of these dead bodies of these unknown foreign terrorists who operated under code names it has been impossible to put names on their graves. This has been extensively highlighted by Pakistan internationally with the help of its proxies in J&K. Sajad Ahmad Bazaz is a prominent Pak proxy in this effort.

On the subject of the circumstances in which Sajad Ahmad Bazaz was lifted from the chair of a clerk to that of a gazetted equivalent post of Editor, specially created for him, sources said that on 20th October 2003, a proposal for creating a post of Editor in J&K Bank was placed before the Board of Directors of J&K Bank and was got approved. The following tell-tale aberrations underline that his appointment to the post of Editor was part of a subversion:

i) Even before the approval of the proposal by the Board, the bank had already four days before, by way of an internal communication on 16th October 2003 invited applications from the cadre of Cashier-cum-Clerks to apply for the newly created post of Editor.

ii) The eligibility norms were tailored to bring in Sajad Ahmad Bazaz. Firstly, the provision of a written test was waived off. Secondly, the catchment was restricted to the category of cashier-cum-clerk cadre to give an undue advantage to Sajad. In itself, this is a matter of criminal investigation wherein an officer grade post was not advertised and opportunity was not provided to members of general public to compete for the post. Thirdly, despite the best efforts to manipulate things in favour of Sajad, the adversary failed to erase footprints. In the original scheme of things a requirement had been put in: the candidate should have publications pertaining to banking and finance. Sajad at the time of his selection had none to his credit. (He wrote some article on this much

later to cover up). Fourthly, the officer cadre employees having qualification of mass communication and journalism and who were superior candidates were kept out of competition (it is mentionable that qualification of mass communication and journalism was made a criteria for selection to this post of Editor). Fifthly, and importantly a statutory rule (Rule No.323) of the bank pertaining to Officers Recruitment, Discipline, Conduct and Appeal Rules-2000 was completely ignored. The rule stipulates that direct recruitment of officers outside the normal cadre in the junior management grade for possessing any special knowledge or qualification not available in the bank officers service if made by the competent authority directly out of candidates possessing such special knowledge or qualification if are to be absorbed in the normal cadre of officers service shall be mandatorily required to pass CAIIB examination. Sajad Ahmad Bazaz in gross violation of this statutory provision is the only officer in the entire his-

Conveyor' Haroon Reshi set up 'Kashmir Narrator' (news magazine) and Rashid Ahmad set up 'Honour' (news magazine). There are two most striking common features of these news magazines / newspapers: firstly, any casual or cursory reading any of the pages of any of the issues would instantly reveal that the content is all about propaganda and secondly, all were supported by Sajad through channeling J&K Bank's money by placing advertisements.

Actually each of these projects received seed money to start the venture from Pakistan.

"Hayat Bhat received Rs.2 crores from the ISI station head located in the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi. Sajad Bazaz helped in whitewashing this money through the channels of the J&K Bank where Hayat Bhat had accounts pertaining to his cover business of an advertising agency under the name and style of Helpline Advertising Services. A relevant trivia as per intelligence inputs, the Rs.2 crore that Hayat Bhat took

death penalty. Many self-styled judicial authorities (Shariat-boards) owing allegiance to JeI/HM came up in the length and breadth of Kashmir valley to enforce HM's Penal Code imposing brutal penalties on innocent citizens. Sheikh Mukhar Ahmad while being affiliated with HM outfit running its propaganda wing Hizb Media Centre, was working as a staffer of Greater Kashmir. Another such entity working in Greater Kashmir those days was Pakistani trained HM terrorist Lateef Bhat of Kadipora, Anantnag who was also affiliated with HM and its propaganda cell and worked for Greater Kashmir on behalf of HM outfit from Srinagar as well as from Pakistan occupied J&K filing stories for Greater Kashmir from Pakistan with the byline 'Abdul Latief'. The duo as per available intelligence records was duly supported by Sajad Bazaz who had formed a very close group," Sources said.

Sheikh Mukhtar Ahmad and Lateef Bhat both escaped from India, managing passports in lieu of money with Sheikh presently based in London and Malik in Brussels. Both continue to peddle anti-India narrative and are very important assets of ISI in Europe. Sajad Ahmad Bazaz has been widely known to be a close associate of both of them and the trio had formed a small group often been seen together working, living and dining. He has also been a close associate of Zabeerud-Din, who worked as Associate Editor for Greater Kashmir and is publicly known as pro-Pakistan strong man in journalism having written volumes of propaganda material against India.

The evidence shows how several elements of the secessionist-terror ecosystem are connected with each other and working in institutional frameworks that has respectability and their inter-connection in which the common thread passes through Sajad Ahmad Bazaz sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly.

It is interesting to note that Sajad Ahmad Bazaz owns and operates as many as 68 accounts within the J&K Bank alone.

Now, enters another ISI and terror asset in picture. His name is Shabir Bukhari. He continues to be in touch with the terror elements operating from Pakistan even today. Shabir Bukhari is communicating with the adversary through Manzoor Hussain Peer (cell No.84xxx0xx6). Manzoor Peer is directly in touch with Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) leadership. Shabir Bukhari is also in touch with ISI through user of mobile number 80xxx5xxx8 who in turn speaks to the user of mobile number 99xxx0xxx6 (administrator of a WhatsApp group of terrorists operating under banner of 'Kashmir Front'). The conversations are through VoIP based end-to-end encrypting messaging service called Telegram. It is relevant to note that just as Shabir Bukhari is the second most contacted person of Sajad Bazaz, Shabir Bukhari's most contacted person after his wife is Sajad.

"Sajad Ahmad Bazaz is a critical component of the overall terror ecosystem carefully nurtured by the ISI & terror outfits. And the most defining feature of this ecosystem is to try and maintain an air-gap (by layering) between gun wielding terrorists and the entire paraphernalia that supports and protects these terrorists in a variety of ways. These include creating and providing popular legitimacy through a combination of the fear of gun and propagation of false narrative, obstructing and subverting rule of law through bar associations and advocates when the law enforcement attempts to book them and take the matter to legal conclusion, arrange strategic logistics such as finances and tactical logistics such as SIM cards, phones, transport, food, medical attention, hideouts, information about law enforcement agencies and security forces, parallel intelligence network to identify and kill all those who try to expose the terrorists and their ecosystem. Sajad Ahmad Bazaz is in frequent communication with another lynchpin of this terror ecosystem namely Shabir Hussain Buch of Srinagar (93xxx5xx3). Shabir Buch is a known close associate of Mushtaq Latram, chief of Al-Umar terror outfit and a constituent member of UJC and a close associate of Masood Azhar, the JeM chief. Latram and Masood are operating from Pakistan. Shabir Buch's connection with the Pakistani High Commission in Delhi has always been a matter of concern. He was one among the key facilitators in embedding Carin Jodha Fischer an American citizen of German origin. After operating for about 10 years in J&K, her cover came to be blown as a deep asset of ISI subsequent to which she was deported forcibly.

was initially offered to Rashid Ahmad (a JeI ideologue, and former publicity chief of Hizbul Mujahideen). Rashid Ahmad developed cold feet in accepting this at that point of time," Investigators said.

It is relevant to bring on record that in brazen violation of rules and norms typically seen in scores of cases where the interests of the terrorist-separatist networks were involved, the governmental financial support to media platforms conditional to clearance of DIPR empanelment, all these news magazines and newspapers mentioned above obtained financial support from J&K Bank without having been empanelled by DIPR. Question is: how did these news magazines and newspapers functioned without DIPR assistance. The answer is: Sajad Ahmad Bazaz who opened up the coffers of J&K Bank.

Interestingly, as would happen in real life, jealousy and rivalry broke out between the elements within the terror ecosystem over who is more close to Pakistan and also who would corner the spoils of the proceeds of the businesses that came to be owned during the course of the terrorist-secessionist campaign. Fayaz Kaloo ran into Hayat Bhat over advertisement hoarding and billboard business which they had come to own with the support of the adversary and the leverage the adversary had within the local government.

Intelligence inputs show that Abu Qasim a dreaded Pakistani LeT terrorist operating in South Kashmir in 2010-15 was enlisted by Hayat Bhat for supporting his interests against Fayaz Kaloo. This explains as to how and why Fayaz Kaloo despite being a far bigger weight in conventional sense losing this round to Hayat Bhat. The latter retained his control over the hoarding business. In this episode Sajad Ahmad Bazaz too sided with Hayat Bhat as most hoarding advertisement of J&K Bank went to Hayat Bhat.

"Several terrorist outfits during 1990s had placed their representatives in Press colony Srinagar, designated by them as 'Publicity Chiefs' like Rashid Ahmad as mentioned before and many such people camouflaging as journalists were actually active terrorists or important senior functionaries of terror outfits. Sajad Ahmad Bazaz worked shoulder to shoulder with such elements in Greater Kashmir for the common objective of popularizing and amplifying pro-Pakistan narrative and spreading falsehood against the Indian state. One such example is that of Sheikh Mukhtar Ahmad aka Sheen Meem Ahmad originally from Lal Bazaar, Srinagar, who along with Late Advocate Ghulam Nabi Hagroo (a JeI ideologue and one of the founders of HM terror outfit) and Advocate Mian Abdul Qayoom (secessionist ideologue) drafted Hizbul Mujahideen Penal Code (Tazizaat-e-Hizbul Mujahideen), which would be put in operation by HM terrorists to punish innocent civilians on pretext of violating this code and also so called Islamic code of conduct (sharia), meaning