

## A silver lining for peace and progress in Kashmir

In the most visible sign of tensions reducing in Kashmir, the government of India is planning to announce an amnesty scheme for stone-pelters in the Valley, and even withdraw cases against first-time offenders, [Hindustan Times reported on Tuesday](#). This would not be the first time amnesty is being offered, however it appears that this time it is possible to move ahead with the peace process.

Conditions in the Valley have changed dramatically since July 2016 when tension because of stone-pelting reached its peak following the killing of Hizbul militant Burhan Wani. Hundreds were killed during the ensuing protests, and if today there is a silver lining visible it is because of the sustained efforts of both state and central governments. The latest in this [string of positive developments is the appointment of Dineshwar Sharma](#), a former intelligence chief, as the interlocutor between the State and various representatives from Jammu & Kashmir.

Last year 88 locals took to militancy, and it is important for the government to arrest this trend. This cannot be done through brute force. The focus on reaching out, especially to the youth in the Valley, is the right approach because winning their trust and building their confidence in the State is what will help in the long run. Sharma has said that his focus will be on the youth and on "...how to change their mindset because they are the ones who are angry", the HT report quoted.

The J&K police's decision to not register a case against Majid Khan, a militant who surrendered following an emotional appeal from his mother, is reflective of the hope the State has in its efforts to reach out to the youth. Following Khan's return, two other mothers have also [appealed to their sons to return](#).

Helplines like [Madadgaar \(Dial 1441\)](#), where families and well-wishers of youth who want to surrender can call, is another positive initiative.

These positive developments come at a time when support for terrorists in the Valley is on the wane. Still security forces are on vigil as infiltration bids and ceasefire violations as recently as on November 17 at the Poonch sector. As winter sets in, cross-border terrorism and militancy is expected, which is also works in the government's favour. All in all, this is a golden opportunity to put an end to the cycle of unrest in the Valley, and usher in progress and development.

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