



YOUNG JOURNALISTS SHOULD TRY TO PROJECT THINGS IN RIGHT PERSPECTIVE' P4

MERC TIMES

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MERC observes World Press Freedom day



Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir organised a one day seminar in connection with World Press Freedom Day at Media House auditorium, Kashmir University on May 3. ▶ ▶ ▶ See page 4

JK's EDUCATION SYSTEM BELIES OFFICIAL CLAIMS

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SOCIAL MEDIA: TOWARDS A GREATER ROLE P8



JHELUM POLLUTION UNABATED

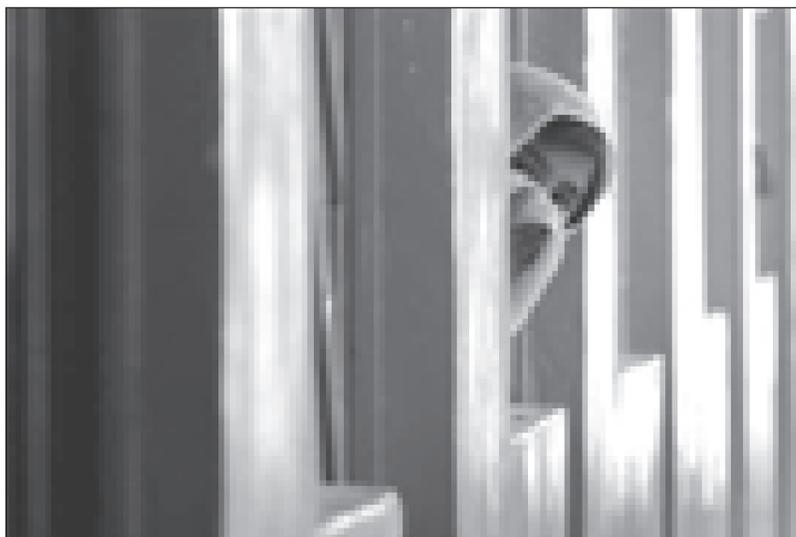
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'For the last more than three decades, two middle schools from two different zones, continue to function in the same rented building in Zampakadal, Chattabal area of Srinagar'

THE DEPARTMENT RECENTLY HELD MEETING IN THIS REGARD AND THE ISSUE OF DILAPIDATED AND RENTED BUILDINGS IS AMONG OUR TOP PRIORITIES:
Director RMSA



JK's education system belies official claims

► *Ulaid Shafi Bhat*

While Government of Jammu and Kashmir is busy reviewing the achievements in the education sector of the State, under different centrally sponsored schemes like SSA, RMSA, the ground situation belies the official claims.

For last more than three decades, two middle schools from two different zones, continue to function in the same rented building here in Zampakadal, Chattabal area of Srinagar.

With shortage of every essential that a middle school should possess, Government Girls Middle school Balgarden, zone Batamaloo and Government Boys Middle School Chattabal, zone Zaldagar have been functioning in the local Masjid Intizamiya Committee building for over three decades. The former school functions in 5 rooms of the ground floor and later functions in 10 rooms of the first floor of the same building.

The Government Girls Middle school Balgarden has five rooms to impart education to students of nine classes. The five rooms are without proper light, of which two are meant for official purposes and the rest three serve as class rooms.

According to the teaching staff, the school lacks everything from classrooms and washrooms to proper teaching and non teaching staff.

"Leave aside proper library and other equipments, our school functions in five dark rented rooms to impart education to students up to class 8th and after every 6 months, the Masjid Intizamiya committee

locks the building and demands hike in the rent," said Head Mistress of the middle school Tabassum Jabeen.

"We often take classes in the office during lunch break and don't allow students to go outside. They are confined to the classrooms as there is no playground where they can play," she added.

The staff members of the school said that due to the dilapidated condition of the school, the roll has decreased.

"The condition of the school is such that the locals don't want to send their wards

here. This year the roll of the school has decreased to 42 students," said a teacher.

The condition of the Government Boys Middle School Chattabal, which runs in the first floor of the same building, is no different. The school runs in 10 small rented rooms of the decades old building. The school is also under staffed.

"We face immense problems in this rented building. The building is decades old and it can collapse anytime," Head Master, Ghulam Ahmad War said.

"We have 10 rooms but none of them is worth calling a classroom. Both teachers and the staff suffer due to the deplorable condition of the school," he added.

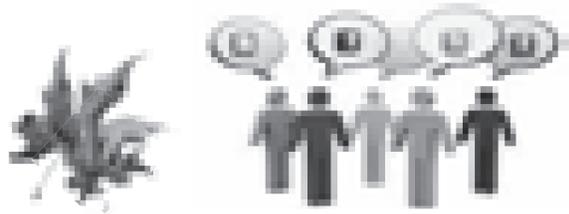
President Intizamiya Committee, Masjid Ahle Hadees Zampakadal Chattabal, Manzoor Ahmad Dar said that they have allowed both the schools to function in the building "on humanitarian grounds."

"The schools have been operating in the building from 1975 and there has been no increase in the rent so far and we get mere Rs 880 for a month as rent. We even locked the school building many a times," said Manzoor Ahmad.

Meanwhile Director, RMSA, Hilal Ahmad Parray while admitting the dilapidated condition of these two schools, said, "We face certain difficulties to get the land in Srinagar city but, infrastructure in most of the upgraded schools has been improved and it will take some time to improve the condition of education system in Srinagar."

"The department recently held meeting in this regard and the issue of dilapidated and rented buildings is among our top priorities."

ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING STAFF, THE SCHOOL LACKS EVERYTHING FROM CLASSROOMS AND WASHROOMS TO PROPER TEACHING AND NON TEACHING STAFF.



'The social media has shown it is definitely going to have more stress on the traditional media. Traditional media has its own importance but social media is fast'

Social Media: towards a greater role

► Fida Hussain

Majid Shah, a student of Law and civil service aspirant remains busy using the Facebook to get the latest news. He uses social media to cover the 'current affairs' part of syllabus. He spends 3-4 hours daily on social networking sites to keep himself updated.

"You don't need to spend money on newspapers and magazines. Social media has provided us the easiest way to access the news and happenings around the world," He says while checking his tweets on his Smartphone.

"It saves my time because I get maximum information in less time," he added.

Like the outside world, people in India have also been extensively using social media for different purposes. According to a report, the number of social media users in Urban India was 62 million by December 2012, with about 74% active internet users.

The info graphic showcases the estimated number of social media users by June 2013 as 66 million. Highest proportion (84%) of users (among the active users) is from the demographic segment "young men". A higher proportion (82%) of the Mobile Active internet users access social Media. Facebook is the leading website accessed by 97% of users in India.

"We can say social media is replacing traditional media, it is fast and handy. We don't need to take in hand the newspapers and peep through every page of it. Now we switch over to mobile phones and get the important news," said

It saves my time because I get maximum information in less time

Hamid Ahmad, a Journalism student of Central University of Kashmir.

It is pertinent to mention that the outcome of 2014 general elections in India in 160 constituencies is likely



to be influenced to a great degree by social media users, a study has anticipated. The study 'Social Media and Lok Sabha Elections', jointly conducted by the RIS Knowledge Foundation and supported by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) said that "there are 160 high impact constituencies out of the total of 543 constituencies, which were likely to be influenced by social media during the next general election".

"Before the inception of Social

Media, I used to read every page of the newspaper. But now I don't even see the first page because I get news instantly from the social networking websites. So, I don't feel I am so inclined to traditional sources of information now," says Shahid, a research scholar.

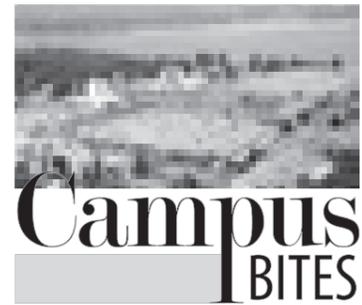
"Social media has played a role in the conflict zones of the world including Kashmir. It is an important tool now not only for journalists but also for the common people," says Waseem, a sociology student.

In Kashmir, the social network has become a means of dissent. Youth have shifted their strategy from street to online protest. During the 2008, 2009, and 2010 unrests social media played an important role in bringing the facts before people and number of pages were created on Face book to register the protests by youth.

From an armed rebellion in 1989, the opposition to Indian rule in this restive state is morphing into an "ammunition-free" struggle, one where youth make use of both traditional and more sophisticated methods of protest such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Blogs.

The youths used Facebook to create a weekly routine for the protests, discuss ways to hold Kashmiri leaders to account and share news updates

"Kashmiris have realized the changing dynamics at the global level. Violent means of protest are not accepted by global policy institutions. That is why they are fashioning their struggle accordingly," said a political science research scholar



► Shahid Andrabi ► Yusra Khan

April, 27:

Mani Shankar Aiyar accompanied by Mme France Marquet, a SAF Trustee and Prof Veena Sikri Vice -Chairperson SAF-India interacted with students at Institute of Kashmir Studies (IKS).

❖ KU to start M. Phil, Ph. D from this year at IKS: Prof Talat

May, 3:

High level delegation from Learning Links Foundation (LLF) -a Non Profit Organisation visits Career Counselling Cell (CCPC). The collaboration with Learning Links is a serious effort to prepare capable and competent teachers, who can deliver in challenging education systems:

❖ Director CCPC Prof Shabir Ahmad Bhat

May, 15:

Department of Students Welfare (DSW) University of Kashmir, in collaboration with Department of Haematology and Transfusion Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar organised a Blood Donation camp.

The camp witnessed large participation of students from different Departments of the varsity who were very enthusiastic about this noble cause.

These events inculcate amongst the students a sense of social responsibility and concern about the humanity:

❖ (DSW), Dean Prof Neelofar Khan.

Allama Iqbal Library

Allama Iqbal Library observed 23rd April as World Book Day.

Library experiences huge rush of readers every day. A whopping figure of 1000 students visit on daily basis:-

❖ Chief Librarian Dr AM Baba



Publish things which reflect both strengths and weaknesses in the society: Prof Talat Ahmad

MERC observes World Press Freedom



JOURNALISTS SHOULD AVAIL MAXIMUM BENEFITS FROM RTI: G.R SUFI

► Umar Hayat

Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir, organised a one day seminar in connection with World Press Freedom Day at Media House auditorium, Kashmir University on May 3.

The seminar was titled "Safe to Speak: Securing Freedom of Expression in all Media"

G.R.Sufi, Chief Information commissioner J&K who was the chief guest on the occasion briefed the audiences about the functioning of the Right to Information act in the state and called it as 'public authority'.

"Right to Information is directly linked with the freedom of expression and liberty. State has become democratic and one which doesn't know its functioning has to learn it."

He also added that not only the Government, but the private institutions are indirectly connected with this Act and for the existence of 'civilized society' this Act should be used judiciously.

"We have already so many examples where the information has changed the state of affairs like the case of 2-G scam. For the larger interest of the public we have to use it judiciously. Besides the valley journalists should also avail of this Act to obtain maximum information," he said.

Vice Chancellor, Prof Talat Ahmad, in his presidential remarks termed journal-



G.R. Sufi
Chief Information
Commissioner
J&K

"THE VALLEY JOURNALISTS SHOULD ALSO AVAIL THIS TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM INFORMATION THROUGH THIS ACT"



Prof Zafar Reshi,
Registrar

"PRESS FREEDOM IS ESSENTIAL AND FOR BEING A GOOD JOURNALIST INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION PLAYS VITAL ROLE,"



Mr Faruq Masudi
Coordinator/Head
(MERC)

"WE ARE HERE TO TRAIN STUDENTS WHO SEEK AND DISSEMINATE TRUTH AND AT THE SAME TIME PROTECT THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION."



Nayeema Mahjoor
Former News Editor, BBC

"INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA HAS PRESENTED THE VOICE BEFORE THE PEOPLE WHICH EARLIER WAS BEING SUPPRESSED,"



Shujat Bukhari
Editor of Rising Kashmir,

"WE HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE TO THE SOCIETY AND CITIZENS AND GIVE THEM SOME KIND OF SPACE WHERE THEY WILL PUT THEIR OPINION"



ism as an important profession, and said journalists should try to strike a balance and be real professionals. "Publish things which reflect both strengths and weaknesses in the society,"

"Freedom of press is not meant to publish whatever you want. The young journalists should try to project things in right perspective and try to be good journalist," he said.

Nayeema Mehjoor, well known Radio broadcaster, Ex- editor news and current affairs, BBC, also spoke on the occasion.

While sharing her life time experiences she said, "During my career I have seen what difficulties media have to face, be it in terms of curbs and restriction which are being put on it,"

She also added that, "Introduction of social media has presented the voice before the people which earlier was being suppressed."

Shujat Bukhari, Editor, Rising Kashmir, on this occasion said, "We have to be responsible to the society and give them some kind of space where they will put their opinion. We cannot take them for granted as news paper is the public property and we are just presenters of the news."

Contd. on Page 5



Right to Information is directly linked with the freedom of expression and liberty. State has become democratic and one which doesn't know its functioning has to learn it: CIC

Contd. on Page 5

MERC observes

He also added, "MERC department has played significant role for flourishing the journalism in the valley and the basis is to follow the fundamentals which are essential to be a good journalist."

Prof Zafar Ahmad Reshi, Registrar, Kashmir University who also spoke on this occasion said, "Press freedom is essential and for a good journalist interpretation of information plays



vital role."

Earlier in his welcome address Coordinator MERC, Faruq Masudi said the role of the department is to train journalists who seek and disseminate truth. He advised students to become well versed with technological advancements as well.

"We are here to train students and at the same time protect the Right to Freedom of Speech and expression," he said.

Meanwhile, the Bi-annual magazine, Media times was also released by Vice Chancellor, Kashmir University in presence of other dignitaries.

The seminar was coordinated by Editor, Muslim Jan and was sponsored by J&K Bank.

Senior Faculty Member MERC, Mr Nasir Mirza presented vote of thanks on the occasion whereas the proceedings of the event were conducted by Rashid Maqbool.

Land Grab mafia on rise in Budgam



► *Sajad Rasool*

HUNDREDS OF KANALS OF FOREST LAND REMAINS OCCUPIED BY PEOPLE, AUTHORITIES FAIL TO TAKE ACTION

Thousands of kanals of forest land has been occupied by land mafia in Pir Panchaal forest division of Budgam for the last twenty three years. Besides occupation by land mafias, concrete constructions have come up in the green belt areas. The forest department has failed to get rid of this illegal occupation so far at major places.

Recently in forest compartment number D/33c (Gurwaith block) range Raithan some people not only damaged concrete iron fencing, but also uprooted newly planted trees. According to the highly placed sources in Forest department, a complaint was filed against the culprits but Range Officer Raithan failed

to lodge an FIR against them.

"Despite having the knowledge about this issue, forest officials are acting as mute spectators," said a local resident

Although, 180 kanals were taken back from the illegal possession last year by the former Range Officer, still hundreds of Kanals are lying in occupation of people in Gogal Dara falling in compartment 34 of Raithan Range.

"Department has totally failed to conserve and protect the forest land in our area. Officials are shielding the forest land grabbers. No concrete step has been taken to check increasing encroachment of the forest land," locals alleged.

Forests in Arizal, Mujipathri, Kachwari and Tangnar Doodhpathri areas have shrunk due to unabated encroachment. People have turned forest land into agricultural land at maximum places. In Yarikhah area people are growing maize on forest land.

"Officials always turned a deaf ear towards the growing encroachment. No step till date has been taken by the department to curb encroachment" laments Meiraj udin Andrabi, a local social activist.

"Forest department has not properly demarcated land and covered it by wiring or other means due to which people feel free to capture land. Necessary steps need to be taken as soon as possible," he maintains

According to the locals asking for anonymity due to political interference, not much has been done by forest department in taking the encroached land back.

When contacted, Forest Range Officer, Forest Range Raithan, Manzoor Ahmad Said, " We are trying to get the encroached land released from the people, but at some places the encroachment is 40 years old and we are devising a strategy to control illegal occupation."



'On the date of every hearing, I preferably travel to court through the lane where my daughter was abducted'

Holdup Justice

► *Saeed Adil Hassan*

Around 90 kms from Kashmir's summer capital, Abdul Gani, 65, father of Tabinda Gani stares for hours at the cloudy sky in Kupwara after attending 349th hearing of his daughter's case in a local court. Tabinda Gani, a 14-year-old school girl was abducted, gang raped and murdered on July, 20 2007. Six years have passed, but visibly the grief-stricken father is yet to get justice.

Last Monday, the case completed its 349 hearings. Ghulam Mohammad Shah, a senior advocate at the District and Sessions Court, Kupwara, who is currently handling the case said in a statement: "Due to constant delay in trials, court has yet to record the statements of some important witnesses, including the then DSP in charge Handwara."

Tabinda's case is not alone that awaits justice in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where 86 child rape cases have been reported from 2001 to April 2013, with 80 of them pending in different courts across the state.

"On the date of every hearing, I preferably travel to court through the lane where my daughter was abducted," Abdul Gani said in almost choked voice.

"I do that only to keep promising her soul everytime that I will return with justice to my daughter's soul."

It was on July 20, 2007, when Tabinda, a class 7 student, was walking towards her home. On that fateful day, she had promised her elder sister that she they would lunch together. Their mother had passed away some years back

and her father and brother were away for work.

Almost 300 meters from the main crossing, someone suddenly appeared from behind and threw sawdust in her eyes. She was then dragged into a nearby orchard by four young men, two of them local Kashmiri boys with criminal background and two from outside the state, who tore apart her clothes. When she resisted, the accused beat her up and then took turns to rape her.

Fearing detection, the assailants slit her throat and dug up a small grave where she was buried. Later, Tabinda's uncle received a phone call from one of the family members that her school bag and shoes have been found in a village orchard. Few minutes later, another call informed them that Tabinda's body had been found. She had been left naked with a pencil in her hand; her uniform almost 50 meters away from her body and her bag full of books

“

The case completed its 349 hearings. Ghulam Mohammad Shah, a senior advocate at the District and Sessions Court, Kupwara, who is currently handling the case said in a statement: "Due to constant delay in trials, court has yet to record the statements of some important witnesses, including the then DSP in charge Handwara."



protests broke out in Kashmir.

Recently Jammu and Kashmir government takes a note to modify the existing laws against rape in the state and to incorporate capital

punishment for sexual offences.

"Establishment of Fast Track Courts is under active consideration of the state Government to facilitate speedy disposal of cases and early dispensation of Justice," Mir Saifullah, Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, was quoted saying in recent past.

Medical reports had confirmed that the abductors raped her before slitting her throat. "We had already brought the evidence and witness against the accused in the court. Now ball is in the court of law, they have to give verdict of this case based on factual evidence", said a police officer who works on this case.

In 2012, Jammu and Kashmir government has set up an award of bravery in the name of Tabinda Gani. But 'heartbroken' father says, justice to her daughter's case would mean more than any bravery award.

"My daughter was minor child, what bravery she exhibited. She could not even prevent herself from the lust of criminals who killed her in a brutal manner," he says.

Mohammad Masood, brother of Tabinda has already said no to court visits. He says, by delaying justice in case of his little sister has already killed the justice!

We had already brought the evidence and witness against the accused in the court. Now ball is in the court of law, they have to give verdict of this case based on factual evidence" Police



'RBI regulations and Sharia law cannot run simulations in the country, our banks are functioning under RBI regulations. They functions under rate of interest system. Under Sharia Law, there is no rate of interest system. Different countries have adopted the Sharia system, but Indian banking system is working under RBI regulations'

RBI will not create any hurdle, If GoI allows Islamic Banking in the country: Dr. Subbarao

► Sajad Rasool/Jawaid Ahmad

An interactive lecture was delivered by Governor of RBI, Dr. D. Subbarao on the theme "RBI - Making a Difference in Everyday Life", at the J&K Bank Corporate Headquarter in which the students and academia of University of Kashmir participated.

The Governor, who was Chief Guest on this occasion, observed that Reserve Bank of India is a vital national institution which has been playing a crucial role in the economic development of the country. He particularly referred to the role played by the RBI during the challenging Balance of Payments crises in early 1990s.

The Governor thanked Dr. Subbarao for acceding to his suggestion, made during his visit to Jammu last year, to address the students during his next visit to the State. He anticipated that during his future visits to J&K, Dr. Subbarao will talk to a much larger number of university and college students in the Kashmir valley and other regions of the State for the benefit of the student community.

The Governor thanked the J&K Bank and the Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir for having arranged this interactive session with the RBI Governor during which he talked in a clear and precise manner on issues which are not generally easy to understand. He congratulated

the Chairman, management, staff and all the stakeholders of the J&K Bank on its Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The Governor, Reserve Bank of India, in his highly informative



talk, dwelt on varied issues, including the mandate of the Reserve Bank of India and its role in the economic development of the country. This was followed by a lively Question-Answer session during which Dr. Subbarao replied to the queries of the students on several issues of financial management.

Vice Chancellor Kashmir University, Talat Ahmad speaking on the occasion, thanked the Governor for taking the valuable initiative of arranging interactive session with the RBI Governor for the benefit of the students and the academia and for his keen interest and support in the growth of the University.

Governor Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Dr D. Subbarao said RBI will not create any hurdle, if Government of India allows Islamic Banking in the country.

Addressing a press conference, after the

not RBI, which is standing in the way of starting of Islamic Banking in the country. It is the government which has to determine, whether to allow the Islamic Banking or not," he said.

Dr. D Subbarao also said if the government allows the Islamic Banking, then they have to enact a new law. "Various people including some MPs gave us proposals. We are studying them. However, we are not any authority to take any decision. It is the government which has to take the decision," he said.

He stated that RBI regulations and Sharia law cannot run simulations in the country. "Our banks are functioning under RBI regulations. They functions under rate of interest system. Under Sharia Law, there is no rate of interest system. Different countries have adopted the Sharia system, but Indian banking system is working under RBI regulations," he said.

The RBI Governor also said that they have set up a target that every household should have at least one bank account so that the family could benefit from the modern banking system.

"A population less than 20,000 to any village should have a banking facility. We are working on the target and we are hopeful that our banks will achieve the target," he said.

He said that RBI is also trying to introduce plastic currency in the country and save expenses on paper currency.

"The RBI is introducing innovative measures. The printing paper currency is costly and costs us more and it has less life. Therefore, RBI is trying to introduce plastic money. We will introduce it on trial basis and see if it is successful," He said.

He also said that plastic currency was introduced 15 years ago but that time people resisted and did not accept it. "But it is right time to introduce it."

conclusion of Central Board of Directors (CBD) meeting, the RBI Governor said that different Banks operating in the state will increase their Credit Deposit Ratio (CDR) from existing 36.5 percent to 40 percent so that more loans would be given to the people who require it.

Dr. Subbarao maintained that they have received several proposals from various people including some Members Parliament that Islamic Banking should be started in the country and RBI is studying these proposals.

"Let me clear that It is

EVERY TIME



Jhelum pollution unabated



► *Muzamil Bashir*

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The River Jhelum that once used to have the crystal clear waters is losing its beauty and serenity to unabated pollution. Jhelum that rushes in the middle of the Sopore is being polluted by the people unabatedly. Lack of civic sense among the people is further worsening the situation. The river this time acts as a medium to shift garbage from one place to another.

“The whole garbage that is dumped has been creating an aroma that is detrimental for the residents,” said Nazir Ahmad, a local resident

“We have already written many letters to the Municipal Community but no action has been taken by the authorities yet. The situation is getting worse,” he added.

Jhelum flows through India

There was a problem regarding the garbage dumping; the localities are suffering. We are on the job and hopefully the issue will be resolved within next few days:
SDM Sopore

and Pakistan. It is the largest and most western of the five rivers of Punjab, and passes through Jhelum District. Verinag spring is the chief source of the river Jhelum. There is an octagonal base at the spring, surrounded by a covered passage. Jhelum rises

from Verinag Spring situated at the foot of the Pir Panjal in the south-eastern part of the valley of Kashmir. It flows through Srinagar and the Wular Lake before entering Pakistan through a deep, narrow gorge.

The water has become filthy, muddy that gives dreadful look of the river. People are dreadfully polluting it by adding harmful materials like polythenes, domestic wastes, human excreta which is seen everywhere near the banks of river

“The awkward stench with lot of infected particles has been the cause of several diseases in our locality,” said Ghulam Nabi, another resident

“More and more the most part of the drainage system directly makes its way into the river. Before many years ago, the water was very clean. We would use its water for drinking, washing, bathing but today the situation is different,” he added.

This manual pollution is making the immense decrease in water level and can lead to severe damage to the whole ecosystem. The pollution that increases day by day has created havoc which the government has neglected.

When contacted, Sub Divisional Magistrate Sopore Mohammad Hamid said, “There was a problem regarding the garbage dumping, the localities are suffering. We are on the job and hopefully the issue will be resolved within next few days.”