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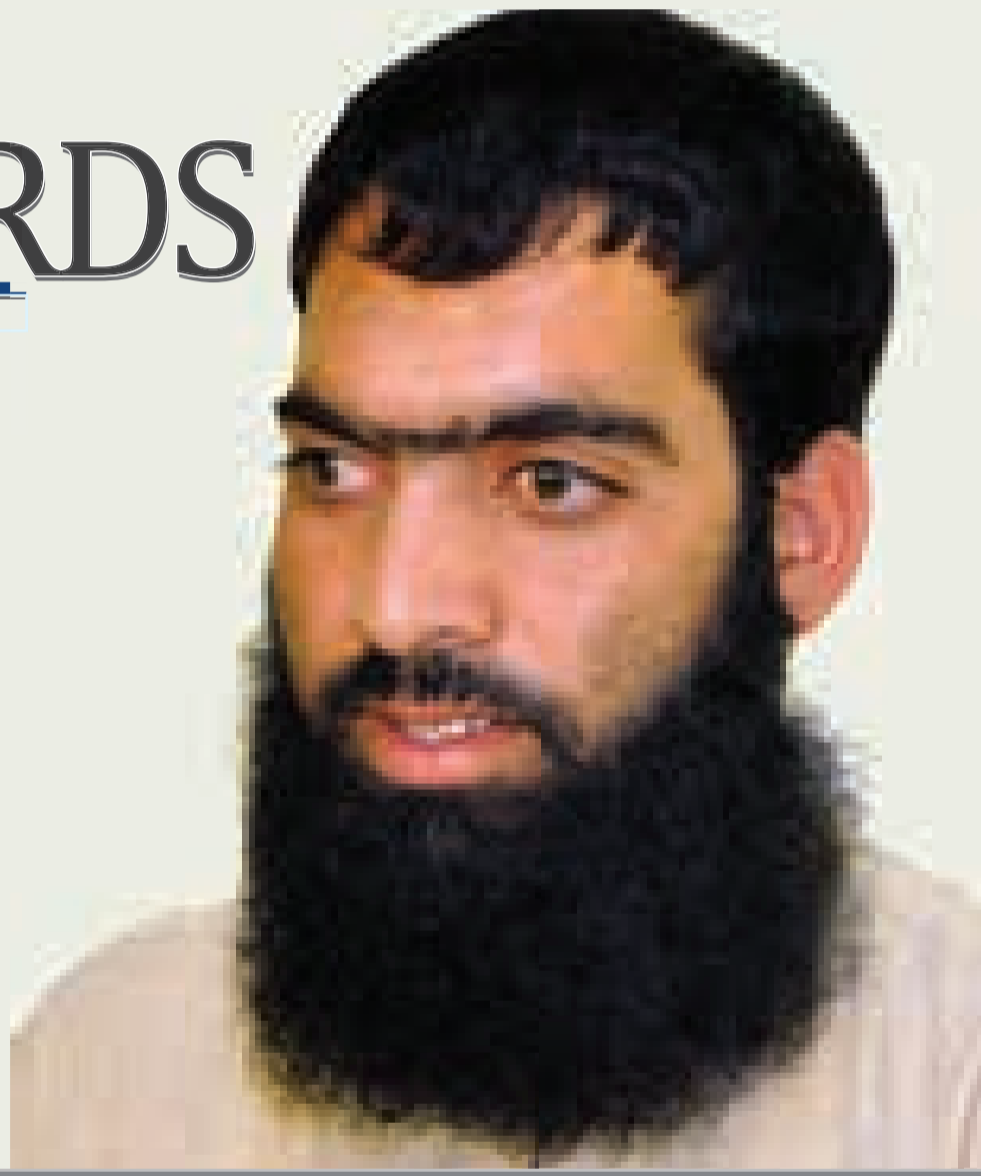
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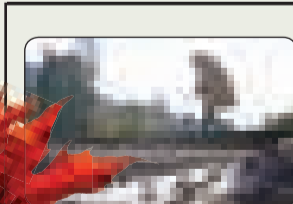
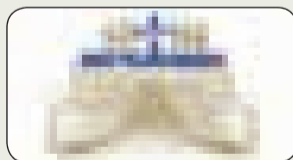
LEADING TOWARDS LIGHT

Visually impaired for more than a decade now, Shahnawaz Samoon is pursuing his post-graduation in Urdu from Kashmir University. Talks to **Shahid Andrabi about the struggle, support and sustenance received after he lost his sight.**



FROM COACHING TO RECRUITMENT, CCPC HELPS SHAPE CAREERS

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SOPORE BRIDGE FALLS PREY TO GOVERNMENT APATHY

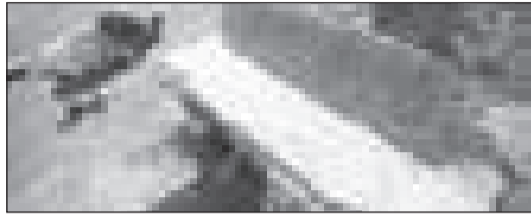
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Youth in early 20s victims of drug abuse in Kashmir: Experts

P7





Locals blame Srinagar Municipal Corporation for its pathetic condition which is getting worse with each passing day.

Noorbagh Park in shambles

Sheema Farooq

Heaps of garbage, dogs and stench welcomes public in Municipal Park of Noorbagh. People visit this park during the evening to spend time there but now they avoid to visit the park because of its bad condition.

"Some time back a person was happy to see beautiful condition of the park but now people seldom visit this park," said Shaban Bangroo, a local.

Locals blame Srinagar Municipal Corporation for its pathetic condition which is getting worse with each passing day.

This park is of vital importance, as it is the only park in the whole

Noorbagh area where people spent their free time.

"I got disappointed to see this condition of the park.

It is now turned into garbage dump," said Sufi Basharat, who is a frequent visitor of the park.

Locals said nobody from Municipal Corporation pays any attention towards the park, they hardly visit it to check its pathetic condition.

"I have not seen any official from the municipal corporation checking the condition of the park," said Abdul Aziz, a shopkeeper.

"We brought the matter

in notice to the concerned authority many times but to no avail," said Mohd Yousuf, a resident.

When contacted, Municipal authorities, they denied of having any such park registered with them.

"No such park is registered with us," said an official of the municipal corporation.

Locals said MLA Eidgah, Mubarak Gul, along with a team of engineers visited the place and made estimation for this park but all his promise proved completely an eye wash.

I got disappointed to see this condition of park. It has turned into garbage dump," said Sufi Basharat, who is the frequent visitor of the park.

SUNDAY MARKET: UNIQUE SHOPPING EXPERINCE

Umar Hayat

As shops and business establishments in Lalchowk remain mostly closed on Sundays, 'Sunday Market' enjoys brisk business with customers coming from all walks of life to buy products at relatively cheaper rates. Over the years, this Market, spread over 3-kilomter stretch, has become a favorite shopping spot for Sunday shoppers in Kashmir. Thousands of people, especially those who remain busy on weekdays, can be seen thronging the market.

The market selling second hand garments and other products attract customers from nook and corner of the Valley. Affordable at a

reasonable price, the products speak of their own to grab the attention of customers. Sunday market is flooded with readymade garments and meets the requirements of people, both in winter and summer seasons. Branded trousers, sweaters, shoes, caps, blankets and other day-to-day products make this market a common man's mall under open sky.

"It is an exciting place to shop. I find wide variety of goods at affordable prices, I visit this market often," says Asif, a youth from Bemina.

SUNDAY MARKET NOT ONLY ATTRACTS LOCAL RESIDENTS BUT OF THE OUTSIDERS, THIS PLACE IS LIKE ANY OTHER VISITING PLACE IN KASHMIR FOR THE VISITORS TO VISIT

"Being a student it is very tough to purchase costly products so it is better to come to Sunday market and buy things. I come here twice every month to make purchases," says Shabir of Ganderbal, who travels some 10 kilometres to reach this market.

Every Sunday people from all walks and all ages could be seen travelling to this particular market.

"This market is suitable for all ages. As a mother, I easily find warm and cozy clothes for my daughter," says saima from

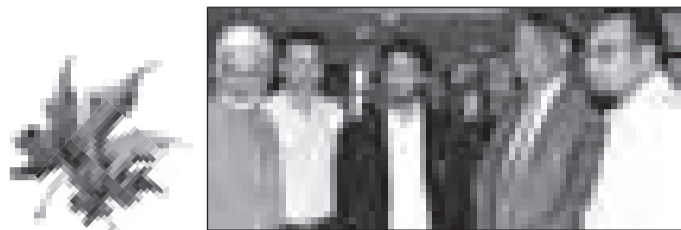
Lal Bazaar.

"Sunday market not only attracts local residents but of the outsiders, this place is like any other visiting place in Kashmir for the visitors to visit," says Rashid, a vendor.

"I was excited to see the market and the rush of the people here. Despite cold in the morning I left early to buy a jacket for myself and for my wife. I was not expecting that this market has so much to offer in terms of variety," Said Santosh from Haryana.

Besides providing affordable garments and other essentials, Sunday Market provides good source of income to many unemployed youth of the valley.

"I passed 12th exams just one year back. I have been here now from the last 2 years. I earn good profit".



Along with 1040 recruitment, CCPC is also benefiting the students by providing coaching to prepare them for qualifying different competitive exams

FROM COACHING TO RECRUITMENT, CCPC HELPS SHAPE CAREERS

Aqil Makhdoomi

Centre for Career Planning and Counselling, Kashmir University, is proving to be advantageous as it has succeeded in recruiting more than one thousand students in different reputed companies of India.

Along with 1040 recruitment, CCPC is also benefiting the students by providing coaching to prepare them for qualifying different competitive exams.

Proficiency of the CCPC has been ascertained as numerous students who got coaching from CCPC have succeeded in cracking different prestigious exams including Civil service and Kashmir administrative services.

Shabir Ahmad, Director, CCPC Kashmir University, underscored the importance of counselling among the students as he said that career counselling gives proper direction to the hard work of a student.

“Coaching is very important for the students who are aspiring to crack competitive



exams. Centre provides proper guidance to the aspirants,” said Shabir Ahmad.

More than five thousand students have registered their names in the centre. They remain in touch with the centre for participating in various counselling and career planning events

“There are a plentiful job opportunities. But it is unfortunate that students of our valley

are oblivious to such opportunities. So we also aim to create awareness among the students about these opportunities. We also want to provide hostel facilities to our students and make every journal and book available to the students which would help in these exams.”

Centre brings many reputed companies like TATA Consultancy Service, Oil and Natural Gas Cooperation (ONGC), Infosys Technologies, Hindustan Uniliver Ltd., Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited, HCL and Amul, represented by high level professionals offering jobs and training programs to students.

Centre is also providing coaching to the students so as to prepare them for All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE), Common Entrance Test and many other competitive exams.

“We provide coaching to the students who have passed their 12th class examination. They are on threshold of their career and we want to give them proper counselling for their exams,” Shabir added.

PROF. G. MUSTAFA HONoured WITH SHIKSHA RATTAN PURASKAR

Owais Gora

Prof. G. Mustafa Shah, Dean College Development Council and Head of the Department of Zoology, University of Kashmir has been honoured with most coveted Institutional and globally reputed Presentation/award of “Shiksha Rattan Puraskar,” along with Certificate of Excellence at a befitting grand annual function for his Meritorious Services, Outstanding Performance and Remarkable Role. The award and the Certificate of Excellence was presented by General (Retd) J. J. Singh, Former Chief of the Army Staff”

“The award is an acknowledgement of the fact that Prof. Dr. G. Mustafa Shah is a national level researcher in the area of his work and the fact is that he has broken new grounds for the current and future researchers,” said J.J.singh.



Prof. Shah has done his Ph.D. in the field of Wildlife Ecology & Management in 1985 under the Supervision of Prof. M. Y. Qadri, Ex-Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir. Prof. Shah has a teaching and research experience of more than 27 years with 85 research publications in the National and International Journals of repute to his credit. He has guided 25 research scholars for their M.Phil.and Ph.D. programme in the field of Ornithology, Fish & Fisheries, Wildlife Ecology & Management

in the Department of Zoology. Prof. Shah has attended and presented research papers in a number of National and International Conferences both in and abroad and is the advisory member of various organizations viz. SACON- Salim Ali Centre of Ornithology, MOE, Govt. of India; International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, California, U.S.A.; Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai; International Wetland Research Bureau; Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN); World Wildlife Fund (WWF); Board of Professional Entrance Examination (BOPEE) and has successfully attended certificate/training courses in the field of Wildlife Rehabilitation on “Wound Management in Wildlife”; “Wildlife Diseases”; “Project Wildlife” and on “Wildlife Nutrition” in Texas, U.S.A in 2007.



But there are very few opportunities in the valley and the participants know that. "I know that my voice is my asset. I want people to know me through my voice like they know Haya," says an aspiring RJ Insha Farid

RJs

CELEBRITIES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

Shafiq Shah

Six years back, when Wafa Wakil started her career as an RJ, becoming an inspiration for valley's young boys and girls had not crossed her mind. Because the path, Wakil walked on was not tread by the girls of Kashmir.

Today she is one of the popular voices of Kashmir. "It was like jumping in the well without knowing the depth," she says. "Today when my listeners bring flowers to me, I feel so overwhelmed".

Known in the valley as RJ Haya, Wakil started her career when she was 21. And within a couple of years, she

became a household name in the valley.

Wakil's success as an RJ has motivated many and they too want to follow her – by becoming Radio Jockeys.

So when a 'RJ Hunt' was organized in Srinagar, thousands participated in it. "We didn't expect this much response," says Station Head of 92.7 Big FM, Muzaffar Shah.

Sameen Khan (24), an engineering graduate wanted to be an RJ when he was studying in Jalandhar. "I wanted to become an RJ. I appeared in an RJ hunt in Jalandhar but was disqualified in second round it didn't dampen my passion."

Wakil didn't only inspire students



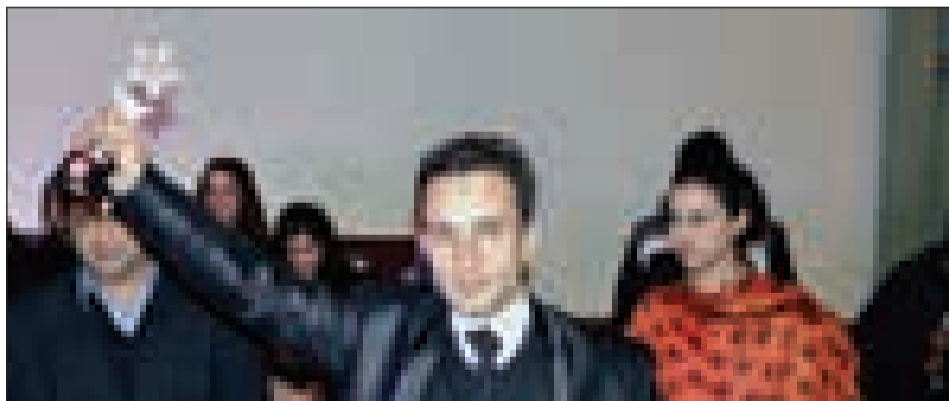
but also those who are persuing other professional courses. Even doctors and engineers are lured not only by a "decent salary" but also by the glamour in the job. "You can earn a handsome salary here," says Faik-ul-Nisa, a participant who is doing her internship after completing MBBS. "You also get fame here".

But there are very few opportunities in the valley and the participants know that. "I know that my voice is my asset. I want people to know me through my voice like they know Haya," says an aspiring RJ Insha Farid.

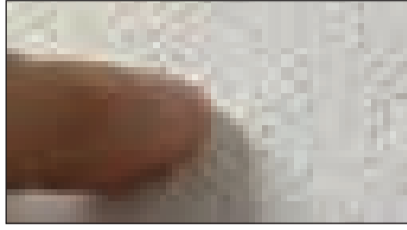
For Arshid Khan, a resident of Gurez – the remote village on the Line of Control - the wait, however, has come to an end. The 23-year-old, for the first time had tried his luck five years back. But his passion kept him going. Three years ago, he joined as an intern with 92.7 Big FM.

A rapper by choice, who imitates Honey Singh and Bohemia, Khan is a commerce graduate. But the debits and credits of accountancy don't interest him. Since childhood, he was adamant to try something different.

"I wanted to be a film actor because it gives you fame," he says. "Now I want to fulfill my dream though this job."



Wakil's success as an RJ has motivated many and they too want to follow her – by becoming Radio Jockeys.



It is an examination we are supposed to pass through patiently. Challenges and hurdles hug each and everyone, one should keep his conscious awake, alarmed and sensitized. Adversity always presents an opportunity for introspection.

LEADING TOWARDS LIGHT



I AM PROUD TO HAVE GONE THROUGH THAT PASSAGE OF LIFE IN COLLEGE WHERE I TRESPASSED FROM THE PERSONS WHO STOOD JUXTAPOSE TO ME AT EVERY POINT OF TIME.



finding time and change in Kashmir University's department of Urdu?

SS: I feel a different kind of environment here in university. The way I am being treated, I never thought that the university will stay wall to provide me an absolute support. I am thankful to my department particularly our HOD and faculty members. My classmates too make me feel home everytime.

SA: What are your aims in life?

SS: I have not given a concrete shape to my aims and ambitions. It is too early now to certify the definite goals. But I may here point out that I am born to contribute towards humanity, towards destitute community and in particular towards that segment of society which is writhing in the pain of penury, lurching in the spell of destitution, breathing under the shadows of dusk. I want the change to see on the faces of downtrodden people, I want the heroes of change not change from heroes.

SA: What is your message to those who are leading their lives without vision?

SS: I just want to tell them that one has to accept every decision from Almighty. It is an examination we are supposed to pass through patiently. Challenges and hurdles hug each and everyone, one should keep his conscious awake, alarmed and sensitized. Adversity always presents an opportunity for introspection.

Shahid Andrabi: Tell us something about your background?

Shahnawaz Samoon: I hail from Khyndal Gurez in district Bandipora. I did my schooling from Government Higher Secondary School Dawar Gurez and also my B.A from Government Degree College Gurez too.

SA: How did you lose your eye sight?

SS: It was in the year of 2003 when I lost my eye sight due to some natural cause. I was studying in Class 5 then.

SA: What problems you faced in your studies after the incident?

SS: I faced many problems. Most of the problems I confronted in my class while learning as I have never been helped with Brail system [education system for blinds].

I experienced problems while writing my exams in particular and most often, real life problems chased me every time, but somehow I managed.

SA: How did your family support you after that?

SS: I am enjoying an unflinching support from my family. They supported me from time to time, particularly my parents, my sisters and my friends. I was treated a normal family member everytime.

SA: And how was the treatment of your teachers and classmates back in school and college?

SS: I am proud to have gone through that passage of life in college where I trespassed from the persons who stood juxtapose to me at every point of time. Besides this, my friends and teachers supported me during the

crucial phases of my life. I am lucky enough to have such kind of persons in my life.

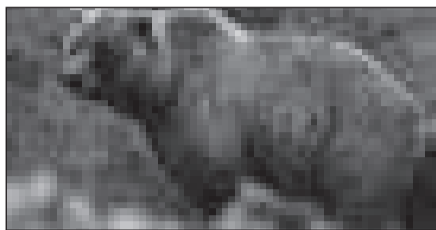
SA: How did you keep yourself motivated every time in spite of your loss?

SS: Well, whatever I am facing today it is from Almighty. Whatever I am passing through or whatever I am today is because of kind of balance I maintained and the degree of patience I kept during this course.

SA: Did government provide you any assistance to support your education?

SS: Unfortunately, I have not been supported by the government or by any other organization so far. Whatever I did, I managed that with the help of my family. I underwent two surgeries; my parents bear all my expenses.

SA: How are you



“Every evening I have to pass through the same graveyard. At least more than ten times, I witnessed the bear, standing only inches away from me but she never attacked me.”

A ‘FRIENDLY’ BEAR

BEARS ARE NATURAL BORN KILLERS, BUT THIS ARE SEEMS TO BEAN EXCEPTION

Saeed Adil Hasnaa

Ever since life started on this blue planet, Man Vs Wild has been a continuous phenomenon. Over the centuries man has established himself as a dominant creature. Being able to violate the natural drawn lines of territory has undoubtedly proved costly. But this course has got an exception. Four years ago people from Yaroo, Batpora, and Langate, villages in North Kashmir saw a bear in a nearby rice field, which caught everyone by fear, and people started chasing her. Since then almost every person in the village has witnessed this female bear at least couple of times.

Mohsin Khan, 27, a local resident, says, “I never saw a bear in this village during my childhood. But now, bear sightings are common. Four years ago, I saw a bear in the rice fields; I was frightened and cried for help. The whole village came and we chased her with axes but failed to catch her. She managed to take shelter in a dense graveyard in a nearby village. Since then she has been residing in the same graveyard and living as a friend.”

Khan is not the only one to claim this as almost everyone here describes the situation in the similar fashion. But this bear seems to have violated the natural norms. Barkatulla Wani, who owns a shop at Langate, usually comes home late in the evening, “Every evening I have to pass through the same graveyard. At least more than ten times, I witnessed the bear, standing only inches away from me but she never attacked me”.

Cricket Ground is one of her favorite spots. She slowly takes a walk around and across the ground during matches. Locals are no more interested in chasing her. Shahid Lateef, 17, says, “Bear usually comes here during evening when everybody is playing on the ground. She usually moves

around and stands inside field for some time, and then leaves. Initially we used to chase her but not now. She is now our decent neighbor.”

Dwelling in the human habitat where food is available for her all the time, can be the one reason for not being that wild. This female bear usually catches the fish in the river, eats maize, fruits and vegetables from the fields. Abdul Khaliq, 57, village head, says, “Four years ago, she was not that big. As her age is increasing her size and power is also increasing but during these four years nothing ugly has happened because of her presence. She gets enough to eat from other sources. That is, why she does not at-

the female bear”.

Unfortunately for the Wildlife Protection Department, affair proved too costly. Bilal says, “They established a cage inside graveyard and everyday keep a chicken inside in order to trap Sow but she comes and takes chicken everyday without being trapped.”

“The Jammu and Kashmir government pays 100,000 rupees to the families of those killed by wild animals and 5,000 rupees to 33,000 rupees to attack victims but this bear seems to have taken note of it. It looks she wants us to spend this budget on chicken,” says Talib Ali, an employee of Wildlife Protection Department.

Despite the fact that the bear has never posed any threat. People hesitate to move around in fields, especially women who initially used to visit fields alone they are now afraid to be attacked. They now prefer to take male members along with them. Taja Begum, 37, a housewife, says, “I know she does not attack humans but I am afraid to visit my kitchen garden as are other women in the village. Every time, I go there I feel myself in danger of being attacked by a bear. Now, I don’t dare to go alone. I prefer to take my elder son with me.”

The Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Protection Department recorded 198 human deaths and 1,600 attacks by wild animals in Jammu and Kashmir State from 2006 to Sep 2013. Umar Manzoor, a 5th class student who was taken away by a man-eater leopard in the frontier district Kupwara was the recent to

be reported. But everybody here wants this story to have a happy ending.

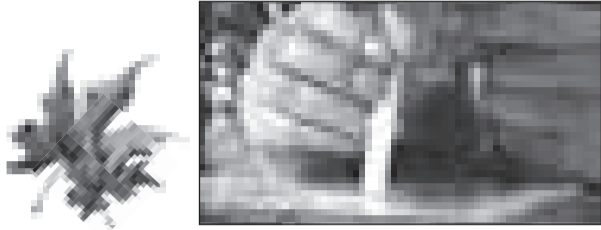
Many hunters visited the village. They wanted to kill her but local residents did not allow this to happen. “We don’t want to kill her nor will we let her to kill us. We are always keen to shift such animals to wild life sanctuaries and we are making continuous attempts to catch her.” Talib added.

WE DON'T WANT TO KILL HER NOR WILL WE LET HER TO KILL US. WE ARE ALWAYS KEEN TO SHIFT SUCH ANIMALS TO WILD LIFE SANCTUARIES AND WE ARE MAKING CONTINUOUS ATTEMPTS TO CATCH HER.”



track humans”.

Police Post Langate is on the opposite side of same graveyard. Bilal Ahmad, an on duty policeman, says, “I guard the entrance gate, every day I see her in front of our gate. On many occasions I have seen people and bear walking side by side. However for the safety purposes we informed Wildlife Protection Department about the presence of



Dr. Mushtaq Margoob, Valley's leading psychiatrist said the pattern of drug abuse is on rise in Kashmir and number of patients is increasing from last two years.

SOPORE BRIDGE FALLS PREY TO GOVERNMENT APATHY

Muzamil Bashir

The bridge connecting Khushaal mohalla and Ashpeer in the north Kashmir's Sopore town over the river Jhelum is facing government's apathy for over a decade now.

The construction of PSE, PMT Bridge was taken by the beacon in 2004 which is yet to reach its completion due to the negligence of the concerned authorities. Stretching through the length of 216 meters and 12 meter width, the bridge does seem to reach at its completion.

Constructed with the amount of Rs 8 crore, the bridge has put the

question mark on the government officials who often promise "time bound" work.

"Various equipments are lying on the work site and the beacon department is seen in slumber to adhere the work," Rashid Ahmad, a local said.

The bridge was to be completed in 2007 as referred in the work tender of the construction department. The beacon department was given the ultimatum thrice to act on the work site on war footing basis via concrete deadlines of completion in 2007, 2008 and 2010 but the ground level officials are seen adamant to act such.

"Government is constantly delaying the work of completing

the bridge which has created chaos among us," Mushtaq Ahmad, a local resident said.

He added that almost 55 percent of the work site is at its final stage when rest of the work is honed.

The bridge not only links two villages but was also undertaken for construction to ease the traffic mess on the other bridge of Sopore town as well, said Ishtiyah Khan.

"The bridge has direct link with Sopore fruit mandi and also shortens the distance of thousands fruit loaded trucks going to different parts of state and country," he said.

While beacon officials couldn't

“

THE BRIDGE HAS DIRECT LINK WITH SOPORE FRUIT MANDI AND ALSO SHORTENS THE DISTANCE OF THOUSANDS FRUIT LOADED TRUCKS GOING TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF STATE AND COUNTRY,"

”

be reached for their comments on the matter, MLA Sopore and the District Magistrate Baramulla have paid many visits to the spot, as per locals, but no action has been taken yet.

YOUTH IN EARLY 20s VICTIMS OF DRUG ABUSE IN KASHMIR: EXPERTS

Younus Ahmad Dar

Youth in their early twenties are the potential victims of drug abuse in Kashmir which has devastating implications on their families and the society as well, experts say.

Altaf Ahmad, a psychiatrist at Government Psychiatric Hospital, Rainawari said the menace of drug abuse has crept in our society and is taking heavy toll on the health of the society.

"The personal implications of the drug abuse mainly damage the health, brain, liver, stomach and it also makes one dependent," said Dr Altaf.

"Such patients could also be seen lying at the banks of the rivers and they develop criminal tendencies under the drug influence which is more dangerous for the whole society," he added. Social workers and activists feel a big mafia group operating in the valley is secretly supplying drug substances to users which mostly come from the state of Punjab through Jammu region and

Kashmiri's are slowly getting into their trap.

Ali Mohammad Mir, a social worker said, "Most of the drugs are supplied from Punjab through Jammu border into the Kashmir region and drug respondents are slowly on rise in the valley". He said they were mobilizing the community volunteers and sensitizing the masses about the poisonous effects of drug abuse. Khursheed-ul-Islam, a sociologist said drug addicts drain out their financial resources and sometimes steal money or jewelry items in their own homes when they do not have money to buy drugs.

"The average expenditure of a drug addict runs in thousands or lakhs depending on the amount of substance taken by him," said Dr. Islam. He further said that in order to escape from the domestic tension, frustration and social problems, users take drugs that provide them relief temporarily but ultimately it proves dangerous for the family and the society.

Dr. Mushtaq Margoob, Valley's leading psychiatrist said the pattern of drug abuse is on rise in Kashmir and number of patients is increasing from last two years. He attributed rise of drug abuse patients to Opium and Cannabis. In 2010, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College, conducted an awareness program in three districts of Srinagar, Anantnag and Baramulla to control the menace of drug abuse in Valley.

THE AVERAGE EXPENDITURE OF A DRUG ADDICT RUNS IN THOUSANDS OR LAKHS DEPENDING ON THE AMOUNT OF SUBSTANCE TAKEN BY HIM," SAID DR. ISLAM.

EVERY TIME



JHELUM Pollution Keeps People at Bay

Yusra Khan

Javaid Ahmad, 52, has been rowing boat across the Jhelum for 36 years to earn his livelihood after his father's health deteriorated.

While he struggles hard to make his two ends meet, hopelessness is growing inside him.

The pollution is destroying the river. Its water levels has been reduced significantly. The human intervention is increasing as well. Infact settlements around the river have swelled with all the waste

and garbage finding way into the water.

People are no more dependent on boats for crossing the river. A foot bridge has already reduced the distance while another one is under construction.

"Jhelum is depleting and it stinks. Also bad smell is keeping away the tourists. No one wants to use the boat. It is harmful for our health too due to which our business is suffering badly," says Javaid.

The state government came up with several plans for conservation of Jhelum, which includes beautification of its

banks. However, nothing fruitful has resulted so far. Earlier, government started inland water transport in Jhelum to attract the tourists.

"Besides providing an alternate transport facility to locals, we expect the new service to attract tourists," Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir says.

The Srinagar Municipal Corporation blames people for depletion of the river. Officials say, people throw garbage carelessly into the river, causing large scale pollution. It is the responsibility of people as well to keep the river clean.

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