

# MERC TIMES



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## BREAKING BARRIERS OF DISABILITY | P5

INSIDE

2



NON-LOCAL BEGGARS UNDER POLICE SCANNER

3



FLOOD THREAT AGAIN LOOMS LARGE IN VALLEY

8



SLUMS SWELL IN CITY CENTRE

C  
M  
Y  
K

## Even in Ramadan, city areas sans potable water

❖ **Irshad Ashraf**

Srinagar: : Irked by persistent water scarcity, the residents of Shadab Lane, Usmania Colony Baghi Mehtab here complain of acute water crisis from the past one month.

Scores of residents of this area told MERC Times that concerned PHE division has been plainly ignoring their repeated complaints.

“Since March this year, our colony especially Lane 1, 2 and 3 are facing potable water crisis, the concerned PHE division Chadoora had told us that because of silt accumulation in the filter plant, they were unable to resume supply,” says a Shadab Colony inhabitant.

“It has been more than 4 months and the issue has not been completely solved, we are yet again crying for this basic necessity and that too in this holy month,” he adds.

The residents said that they had no drainage system in the area and as such and all the tube wells were actually pumping out contaminated water thus putting their health in jeopardy.

Talking to MERC Times, concerned Executive Engineer, PHE division Chadoora, Aijaz Ahmad Qureshi denied the fact that the whole colony is facing the issue.

“It is just three or four houses in the rear part of that colony that are facing this issue. We do send our water tanker to them though,” Aijaz said.

When asked about the silt issue, Aijaz said that the issue has been resolved and he will look into this matter as well.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for PHE, Abdul Majid Padder while speaking to this reporter noted down all the details and assured of immediate response to the issue.

## Non-local beggars under Police scanner

❖ **Sami-ullah**

Srinagar: The authorities are likely to act tough against the non-local beggars who visit here from different states to receive alms in the holy month of Ramadan.

The authorities last year had arrested scores of beggars in the Srinagar city who were fleecing people during Ramadan.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Farooq Ahmad Lone told this reporter that the administration would launch a massive drive against the increasing number of non-local beggars in the city.

Lone said that he would pass on the instructions to the SHOs of the Srinagar police stations to check the increasing number of beggars in their respective areas.

“The beggar population is increasing in the month of Ramadan as people prefer to give alms wholeheartedly. It is truth that they are leaving people to different kind of inconveniences. To check their increasing number we will launch a massive drive and I will pass on the orders to the SHOs of different police station to act tough against

them,” he said.

Reports say that thousands of the non-local beggars from the states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Kolkatta have thronged to valley during the last week in view of Ramadan.

As per reports scores of these non-local beggars have flocked to the Srinagar city and other towns of Kashmir who are harassing people in the holy month of Ramadan.

“It has become a norm for the huge num-

ber of non-local beggars to visit Kashmir in the month of Ramadan. These beggars are making huge money in this holy month by begging outside mosques and shrines. Yesterday morning I saw large numbers of non-locals arriving from a truck and soon after arriving here they started making rounds to the area,” said Ghulam Nabi, a resident of Qamarwari.

These non-local beggars who arrive here in large number get scattered to famed markets and towns of the valley.

Many among them barge into the buses and ask people for alms.



## ‘Model schools, smart classes just an eyewash’

83 percent govt-run institutes have no computers or internet: MHRD

❖ **Nisar Dharma**

Srinagar: At a time when state government is all oratory about developing a handful government run schools into ‘model schools’, a survey by Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) tells how over-ambitious and fruitless plans in the past have changed the state of these schools from bad to worse.

The MHRD survey reveals that a good number of government-run schools in the Valley lack basic amenities including electricity, laboratories, computers and internet.

“Eighty three per cent of the government run schools in Jammu and Kashmir lack computer and internet facilities,” reads the survey thereby explaining the academic and competitive chasm between students studying in government and private schools.

The survey in detail reveals that during the year 2012-2013, 83.93 per cent of the government schools in Jammu and Kashmir were without the computer and internet facility, adding, “After one year, in

2013-14, 83.02 per cent of schools were still without the computers and the students continued to remain unknowledgeable about the computer and internet in government run schools.”

The survey further reads that in 2013-14, around 27 percent of the state’s secondary schools had no power connection. Similarly, in 2012-13, around 30 percent of secondary schools were without electricity connection.

Experts believe that the computers and internet facilities are having much importance in today’s period as it makes a student eligible in every aspect. “The lack of these facilities is one among the causes that the government run schools in the state have shown dismal performance during the recently conducted class 10th examination. The survey is enough to reveal why government run schools lag behind the private institutes in JK,” experts said.

Pertinently, the state Education Minister Naeem Akhtar, who says he wants to make government schools “models” for private schools in the state, had

recently acknowledged in an interview that growing corruption in appointment and transfer of teachers had ‘virtually destroyed the educational system’ in Jammu and Kashmir.

“The tragedy is that, over the years, that void in standards and achievements has widened. In the recent Class 10 results, the performance of government schools has been around 50 percent,” he said.

Adding to the above issue of lack of facilities, official statistics reveal that there are a number of government schools in different districts with zero students enrolled. In Srinagar, 19 government schools have no student while other districts in Kashmir too have zero enrollments - for instance, there are 12 such schools in Budgam, 24 in Pulwama, 15 in Kargil and 18 in Kupwara. Official data suggests that for 24,265 schools (16 lakh students), there are 1.43 lakh teachers in J&K. But some officials within the department claim 16 lakh may not be correct figures since many schools reportedly have registered blown-up figures so as to extract more money for uniforms and mid-day meals.

# MHRD starts online registration for scholarship

❖ **Omer Malik**

Srinagar: The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has started online registration for grant of Prime Minister's Special Scholarship (PMSSS) for the year 2015-16 to the students from Jammu and Kashmir. During the current financial year, 5000 scholarships are to be granted to the students from J&K under the scheme for undergraduate courses.

According to a notification issued by the J&K's Higher Education Department, interested students fulfilling the eligibility criteria can apply for the scholarship online on <http://aicte-jk-scholarship.in>

The online application and document verification has started from 13 June 2015 and will close on 28 June 2015 at 17.00 hrs.



The Department has cautioned students that NGOs have no role in PMSSS and they should not approach any NGO for admission under the scheme.

Pertinently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi while reviewing the progress of PMSSS, through

video-conference, with the JK Chief Secretary on 27 May 2015 called for legal action against NGOs involved in duping students from J&K enrolled in various colleges outside the State under the Special Scholarship Scheme.

As per the notification, the aspiring student must be a domicile of J&K and should have passed 12th class or equivalent examination from State Board or Central Board affiliated school located in the State. The family income from all sources for the financial year 2014-15 must be less than Rs 6 lakh per annum.

A student selected under the scheme would be entitled to a scholarship of upto Rs 30,000 per annum for tuition fees for general degree courses, upto Rs 1.25 lakh per annum for engineering course and upto Rs 3 lakh per annum for medical studies.

## Flood threat again looms large in Valley



❖ **Junaid Rafiq**

Srinagar: Thousands of people in both South and Central Kashmir have moved to higher ground as rain-swollen Jehlum, tributaries and nallahs and flood channels swamped parts of South Kashmir including Kulgam and Anantnag placed under an emergency flood alert just nine months after some 300 people died in flooding that left whole Valley especially capital city Srinagar in shambles.

Officials ordered residents along the banks of the Jehlum River to move to safer places as the water crossed above danger mark at Sangam and Ram Munshi Bagh Srinagar. The incessant rains, which threw life out of gear across Kashmir, triggered a flood alert in South and Central Kashmir areas. The flood alert level of 13 feet touched at Asham in North Kashmir by 3 pm on Jun 25 prompting authorities to sound high flood alert.

Scores of areas in Anantnag and Kulgam were submerged due to rain waters. The torrential rains block Srinagar-Jammu highway at many places while authorities

also suspended train-service.

While speaking to MERC Times, Chief Engineer, Flood Control Department, Mir Javid Jaffer said, "We have issued flood alert for South and Central Kashmir," adding, "the water level at Sangam is above 'above' danger mark. Right now it is above 28-feet and when it crosses the 23-feet mark, flood alert is declared."

Jaffer said the situation in Srinagar is also being monitored while water level at Ram Munshi Bagh is above danger mark. "It is 1.5 feet above the danger mark," he said, adding, "There has been blunt increase in water levels in north Kashmir Rivers."

Reports of damages to residential houses and cowsheds were received from various areas of the district, including Dooru, Verinag, Kokernag and Shangus. In Shopian, the water level of Rambiar Nallah also increased considerably and reports said several villages were submerged. Consequently, they said, the Fire and Emergency department personnel have rescued many families in different hamlets of South Kashmir's Shopian district.

## 'Sranz' craves for Government attention

❖ **Nelofar Jahan**

Srinagar: The Sranz waterfall located near the revered Baba Reshi shrine in North Kashmir is craving for attention of the local administration to come up on the tourism map of the state.

The waterfall is located in a bowl shaped valley and is surrounded by the lush green forests and open meadows. In spite of its scenic beauty and landscape, the tourist potential of Sranz remains unexplored due to the lack of infrastructure and the apathetic attitude of the administration.

"It is no less than the famous Aharabal waterfall of Shopian district of south Kashmir," said Ghulam Mohammad Lone.

Sranz waterfall originates from Affarwat Mountains and the Alpathar Lake of Gulmarg. The water flows down the valley via 'Nallah Ningli'.

"Nallah Ningli has a great economic value. It serves as a source of livelihood for many families in Kandi, Baramulla. The locals of the area extract sand, gravel and stones from it to sell them and for domestic use," said Aejaz Ahmad a teacher who resides near Sranz.

The Locals of the area are showing strong resentment towards the Government for failing to put Sranz on the tourist map of the state. Moreover, the Sranz waterfall also has a great potential to produce hydroelectricity.

"If Sranz will be put on tourist map it will boost the economic sector of the area," says Mohammad Asif a local.

"The waterfall has remained a spot of attraction for the tourists visiting the famous tourist resorts. We demand status of a tourist spot", said Mushtaq Ahmad a tourist guide.

The road connecting Sranz waterfall to the district headquarters Baramulla is in shambles and needs parapet walls at several places.

"Due to recent rains and landslides, link roads connecting Sranz has suffered huge damages. Nobody from the State Government visited the area, they are in slumber," said Abdul Rashid.



## Footpath encroachment leads to traffic mess in city

❖ **Sibtain Hyder**

Srinagar: Lal chowk, the commercial hub of valley is witnessing a traffic mess due to roadside encroachments.

“The main cause behind this traffic mess around Amira Kadal, Hari Singh High Street, Residency Road is the footpath encroachments by some vendors”, Pervaiz Ahmad, an employee of civil secretariat said.

“As you can see the footpath has turned into mobile shops and if any space is left by them its filled by wrong parking, so we as pedestrians are compelled to walk in the main roads”, he said.

While people are left with no choice other than walking on main roads this adds problems to the smooth flow of traffic and at times leads to fatal accidents.

“I have been hit many times by a car while walking towards my office in Hari Sing High Street. Where will I walk when footpaths are already occupied by the vendors? If you say any-

thing to them they use abusive language in return”, said Hilal Ahmed, a bank employee.

The shopkeepers too complain about the encroachment as it adds to their trouble by blocking the entries to the shops which not only makes it difficult for the people to come in to their



shops but also blocks the traffic leading to jams.

“They open up shops in front of our shops which at times confuses the customer, whether the street vendor is related to us. Apart from this now they have moved beyond footpaths and sometimes occupy the main road creating hurdles in traffic movement” Rashid Baba, a shop-

keeper said.

Although the police raids these areas and vacates them but as soon as people leave the place, these vendors settle down again. This has affected the charm of footpaths and people are deprived of uninterrupted walks.

“Many problems are faced by the people due to these street vendors. Their number has increased considerably in the last few years, which is not a good sign”, says Aqib Amin, a student.

When asked about why they occupy the footpath and allow people to use them, they were sharp enough to say that they don't have proper shops or proper place to business, number of people said.

“Government should provide us with a separate space where we can do our business. This is the only source of living for us and we are completely dependent on this business and if people are complaining about it then it's very unfortunate that they lack regards for the right of feeling of others”, said a street vendor.

## No landline connections for Batamaloo



❖ **Muneer Dar**

Srinagar: It seems Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has declared Mominabad Batamaloo as no man's land for landline connections for its Rajbagh and Bemina sub-divisions.

Subscribers who are eager to avail the benefits of BSNL landline connections in Moominabad Batamaloo are in a fix and don't know which sub-division they have to approach for the matter.

“When we approach Sub-Division Rajbagh to avail the landline services in the area, the concerned officers pass the buck and ask us to approach sub-division Bemina. At Bemina sub-division, the officers have been telling us that Moominabad area falls in Rajbagh sub-division,” a group of residents of the area told this reporter.

They appealed General Manager BSNL to look into the matter. An official from BSNL said that keeping the code series (247) in view, the Moominabad area falls under Rajbagh circle. “I fail to understand why the Rajbagh circle is reluctant to perform its job,” he said.

When contacted General Manager BSNL DK Aggarwal told MERC Times that the subscribers should approach customer care centre either in Lal Chowk or at Dalgate.

“Let these people approach at one of the centres, their issue will be resolved,” he said.

## Stone mining continues in Kupwara despite ban

❖ **Zafar Aafaq**

Kupwara: Despite ban on mining of stones by court of law, the illegal process of excavation of stones continues in twin villages of Gugloosa and Shumnaag in frontier district Kupwara. It has engulfed the whole populace of the area into a state of panic due to dangerous consequences of mining process.

The inhabitants of these areas approached the district court after the miners and people involved in business continued “harmful” process despite frequent formal and casual requests.

“First we requested the miners to stop excavating stones we they turned down, there after we filed a case against them in court of law.” said Abdul Gani, a local Sarpanch.



The court passed an interim order in favour of the applicants against the miners wherein the process of mining of stones was banned in the area.

“The court order clearly states that the mining of stones in the area is a punishable offense,” adds Abdul Gani.

“This neglecting attitude of authorities has made the miscreants adamant to carry the illegal process,” comments Gulzar Ahmad Mir, a local.

The locals complain “the practice of mining has increased chances of land sliding as a result of which our homes and shelter are damaged.

The miners claim their livelihood is dependent on this business, if they stop and leave the business of mining, their families will be starved. As per Ghulam Mohiudin, a local involved in stone mining business “it gives us bread and butter.”

## Breaking barriers of disability



### ❖ Arshie Qureshi

Srinagar: Women entrepreneurs in Kashmir face challenges of cultural bias and lack of funds, in addition to pressures of balancing work, home and family. Though in a male-dominated industry, Shakeela Bano used her patience and skill to learn the tricks of the trade and build a successful business for herself.

Shakeela was born in a family dealing with handicrafts in Downtown area of Srinagar. Coming from a family of handicrafts business, she had an inclination towards learning embroidery which she fulfilled and as of now, but had to struggle more than any ordinary woman owing to her disability. She is identified as one of the successful woman entrepreneur in the state who has been benefited from the loan provided by the Women's Development Corporation.

TO give entrepreneurs a platform to display their products, a ten-day exhibition was held here starting from June 12 at Sports Ground opposite Sher-i-Kashmir Park, its motto was give market exposure to people doing business in small scale from their homes.

According to Director Naheed Soz, "This was being organized by the corporation. Such expos would be held once in a while and it helps women entrepreneurs develop contacts and their business."

Nearly 150,000 women are cur-

rently being benefited by the schemes of WDC added Naheed. Women are being provided loans at nominal interest rates to assist them starting and sustaining their own businesses.

Shakeela has been in business for 9 years and has travelled across the country to participate in trade fairs. Today, Shakeela's workshop employs more than 200 women and retains several top clients in her profession. She went into business for herself but then "The business helped my husband and entire family in consolidating the economic condition of our family. Their belief in me has ensured that I go on to the next challenge," saus Shakeela.

Despite a setback of death of her 12 year old son in a grenade attack in Srinagar, she persevered and eventually got contracts from people outside the state.

It was her courage and passion for her work that helped her make it through the tragedy. "I had to start, for my other family members, for myself. I didn't want to be idle. I am very creative and love my work".

"Discrimination against people with disabilities in Kashmir is still very prevalent," she said.

I have so much to tell other entrepreneurs, like me", she said. "They shouldn't give up. Being a woman entrepreneur with a disability is not easy, but it is the most fulfilling thing in my life, other than my family."

## DARUL-ULOOM RAHIMIYA STANDS FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

### ❖ Muhammad Younis

Srinagar: Darul-Uloom Rahimiya, a Muslim religious school, under its rehabilitation plan, with the help of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind has constructed around 618 dwellings including 380 concrete houses, 159 prefabricated huts besides repairing 79 houses, damaged in floods last year last.

In June, keys of 200 concrete houses were handed over to the flood victims of Batamaloo and Mehjoor Nagar areas here in the valley by General Secretary of Jamiat-e-Ulema Hind, Moulana Mehmood

room, kitchen and bathroom. An official of the Jamiat-e-Ulema said each house was constructed at a cost of Rs 125000.

"We have started working on new initiatives. Our work is in progress in Banihal, Kulgam, Bandipora, Anantnag and some flood affected areas of Baramulla district," Madni said.

"People had been generous enough in donating for their brethren. We received funds from different parts of the world and the works we had done were just because of those donations", he said.



Madni during a function held at Batamaloo here.

"Undoubtedly, there is need for more efforts to help the people whose houses were damaged in devastating floods. The work done by our organization is not sufficient. Flood-hit people in some areas still need some assistance for their survival," Madni said.

"Our contribution wouldn't be suffice the destruction that has happened here but we will do everything possible to heal the wounds", he said.

Each house has been constructed on 16 by 18 feet plot consisting of a

Castigating the approach of the governments both central as well as state, Madni said, "Government has not done any commendable job for the people so far."

Later in his address, Director Dar-ul-uloom Rahimiya Bandipora, Maulana Rehmatullah said, "it is the duty of common people to rebuild Kashmir."

"If one village is affected, people of other areas should come forward to rehabilitate their brethren. The disasters like earth quake and flood should serve as eye-opener for us to unite and lend helping hand to people in distress," he said.

# Lepers living miserably in Kashmir

❖ **Gazanfar afroze**

Srinagar: Condemned by their families and neglected by the society, they are virtually left untouched by the Government. Stricken by a life sucking disease and left to fend for themselves, they are called lepers. In desolation and despair they have many grisly stories to narrate as they are unattended souls with shattered dreams.

Away from hustle and bustle of the city, these lepers live in an isolated Leper Colony at Bah-rar area overlooking famous Nigeen lake. But in absence of basic amenities and proper medicare they live a miserable life.

The Colony was established by Christian mis-sionaries over a century ago when a dreaded dis-ease Leprosy was at its peak in Kashmir. To control the disease, these missionaries admitted Leprosy patients from various areas of the Valley in the Colony. When these missionaries gradually left the Valley after partition, the Leper Colony was taken over the Government. However, the successive re-gimes have failed to upgrade basic infrastructure or improve living conditions of these lepers.

Made of clay, wood and stones, the hospital has over a dozen wards housing 85 patients.



“In absence of basic facilities, our life has turned into a virtual hell,” said a patient Dilawar Khan of Budgam, who is admitted in the Colony for past over four decades.

“This Colony is our home and last abode,” said Muhammad Moosa another patient while sitting in his dingy small room.

“I was diagnosed with leprosy as a child. My par-ents left me here and never returned. We are con-demned section of the society, everybody hates us and this place is our last resting place,” Moosa said with tears welling in his eyes.

Most of these wards lack toilet and bathing fa-cilities.

“We have to answer nature’s call in open. In ab-sence of heating arrangements, we shiver in these wards,” he said.

The patients said the makeshift hospital in the Colony sans basic medical care.

“On paper, two doctors and 14 paramedics and staffers have been deputed in the hospital. A se-nior doctor visits the hospital twice a week and lady medico sees patients on other days. Exclud-ing a chowkidar and a dressing man, rest of the paramedics and staffers hardly attend to their duties. We demand inquiry into the matter,” the patients said.

They said the hospital sans ambulance service. “In case of emergency, we face immense problems to rush to other hospitals. Who says this is a hos-pital? The messy state of affairs in this hospital mocks at government’s claims of providing quality healthcare facilities in Kashmir,” they said.

When contacted Director Health Services Kash-mir said the Lepers are being provided medicare and other facilities.

“The Lepers in the Colony are disease free howev-er they have nowhere to go. We provide them with basic medicare and balanced diet on same pattern as patients in others hospitals. I will ensure that the doctors and paramedics deputed in the Colony are present there during duty hours,” Dr Saleem-ur-Rehman said

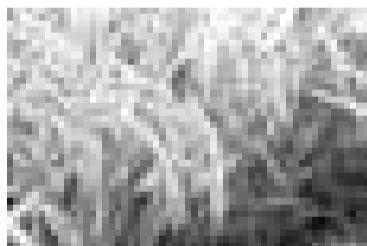
## Rice production slumps in valley

❖ **Nazir Gillo**

Srinagar: Jammu and Kash-mir’s dependency on import-ed paddy is largely growing as annual production of paddy in state has fallen to its shortest ever.

The state’s annual paddy produc-tion has slumped substantially and that is being seen as a major set-back for the state’s economy and a big concern for the department of agriculture.

Even though the agriculture department has started series of initiatives to boost paddy cul-tivation in the state, the people



prefer to grow wicker stems and poplar trees on the fields, earlier used to cultivate paddy crop.

“by cultivating poplar trees I am in no loss as earlier in the case with paddy cultivation where I with all my family members had to do hectic jobs to earn somewhat sustainable two time meals”, Ba-sheer Ahmad, a farmer said.

Scarce snowfall in the winter

and the declining water flow from springs leads to the famine-like situation and is causing recur-ring droughts in Kashmir, once unheard of in this region. With the springs dying, the agro-economic picture of the valley is changing. Rice, the chief crop in Kashmir, is giving way to poplar, apple and kikkar, which require less water

“Last year the paddy yield in this field came down by one third of the previous year.

The only option was to switch over”, says Gul-zar Ahmad of Nowpora, a farmer who recently brought his land under kikkar cul-tivation.

“If all this is not controlled at this stage, the economy will be shat-tered, says B L Malla about the decline in springs”. The dream of industrialization which we people also see in Kashmir will come to a stop, as most industries are dependent on electricity, which is produced by hydel-projects in the valley.

## Kashmir heading for ominous climate change



❖ **Suhaib Mansur**

Srinagar: The changing weather pat-tern across the state has set the alarm bells ringing in the state. Geographically Jammu & Kashmir is the most vulner-able place as far as climate change is concerned. The experts believe that the weather change can have a drastic im-pact on the ecology of the state.

The state in the recent time has wit-nessed floods, untimely incessant rains and hailstorms. The summer this season has been on the cooler side as compared to the previous summers. The experts believe that a slight fluctuation in the average temperature in a place like ours can be disastrous for both economy and environment. And this may also result in high frequency of flash floods in the val-

ley say experts.

“The research conducted by the depart-ment of earth sciences reveals that kash-mir is heading towards a grave problem of increase in average temperature, Irfan Rashid, assistant Professor Earth sci-ence.” This has resulted in the melting of Kolahai Glacier which feeds the rivers and tributaries of the valley”, he adds.

The incessant rains this year has bro-ken all previous records and has resulted in serious damage to the standing crops as well. There are reports that farmers in south Kashmir have faced the maximum brunt of the weather change this year.

“Excess rain and cooler summer tem-peratures rising winter temperature and other indicators are more than evident here. The question remains are we ready to handle it. Kashmir is one of the most vulnerable places due to its geographic location. A slight fluctuation in average temperature will bring major changes”, says Sonum lotus, director metrological department Jammu and Kashmir.

The water table as a result has risen to such a level that now even if there is rain-fall for a day, there are chances of floods. This has resulted in a sort of perennial paranoia among the city dwellers.



## Wild Life of Kargil under threat



❖ **Mutaza fazily**

Kargil: Apart from the picturesque beauty Kargil is known for its rare wild life which has a direct share of Himalayan fauna but it is getting affected these days leading to the decrease of many rare species.

These include Himalayan ibex, Himalayan Leopard, Asiatic ibex, Brown bear, Tibetan fox and Ladakhi Urial, Markhur.

The reason in the declination of these species are very diverge but most of this occurred after the Kargil war of 1999.

“Since the war, there has been a huge affect on the wild life, we don’t see many wild animals over there in mountains as I used to see in my childhood,” said, Mohamad Amir a resident of North Kargil.

The wild life experts are also concerned about this serious issue and are trying to know the causes of such decline.

Iftikar Ali, a researcher from Wildlife Institute of India Dehradun said, “We are studying the fauna of this region from last two years and here is a big decline in the number of rare species and here are huge cases of Man Animal conflict.”

He further said, “The main reason for this decline is habitat destruction, poaching and retaliatory killings. A total of 75 cases of life stock attacks were reported in north-eastern region of Kargil by predators like snow leopard, Tibetan wolf, Tibetan fox and Feral dogs.”

Further adding more to it he said, “These are clear and cut pictures that the wild life of this region is on a verge of declination as due to the destruction of habitats wild Animals are coming down in the villages which is leading to man-animal conflict and Government has to play a pivotal role to conserve the wild life of this region otherwise they will be extinct.”

Earlier in the month of April Predators attacked on a huge number of live stock in Drass region.

“My farm had been affected due to the recent attacks of Snow Leopard killing 20 sheep, this is not for the first time such killings have been happened in past and they usually attack after the snow melts,” says a local farmer.

## Aanchar lake gasping for breath

❖ **Ubaid Jeelani**

Srinagar: Due to the negligence of successive governments, the Aanchar Lake has been pushed on the verge of extinction. In the absence of conservation measures and regulation, the lake has been extensively encroached upon. At many places the water body has been filled up by unscrupulous persons.

Aanchar receives majority of its water from Dal lake through Nallah Amir Khan via Gilsar and Khushalsar. It is also fed by a network of channels from Sindh River from western shore and finally merges with Jhelum river at Sangam.

“Numerous springs which used to infuse fresh water into the lake have been choked. The lake and its springs were blessed with pristine waters and had medicinal properties. People from off places used to come here and drink its water. Ironically the official apathy and public greed has destroyed the lake,” says Riyaz Ahmad, a local.

The lake’s catchment area is mostly used for raising various kinds of vegetation including agricultural fields, apple orchards and willow plantation which has resulted in reduction of open water surface at an alarming rate.

“Due to unplanned urbanization, siltation and pollution, Aanchar has presently shrunk to less than seven square kilometers. The water quality of

the lake has also deteriorated. Influx of untreated sewage from catchments areas has severely affected the lake fragile eco system. The problem is compounded by unabated use of pesticides and weedicides in the paddy fields and orchards in the catchment,” said Prof Shakil A Romshoo,

Head Department of Earth Science, Kashmir University.

Bashir Ahmad, a lake dweller said that due to pollution, Nadru production has been reduced in Aanchar. Their decrease indicates that the lake is on the verge of extinction.



## Six years on construction of district hospital Ganderbal in limbo

❖ **Yasir Gaffar**

Ganderbal: Construction of district hospital in central Kashmir’s district Ganderbal is still incomplete, although the deadline was December 2013, completion of construction has been delayed for 3 years.

People of the district face hardships because of lack of space and limited infrastructure in the community district hospital Ganderbal. Jammu and Kashmir project construction company (JKPCC), cry lack of funds a reason for the delay.

Yaseen Ahmad, a local resident of Ganderbal said, “We face many problems as we don’t have enough facilities in old district hospital. Government had promised us that every facility would be provided in new hospital but I don’t understand why there is so much delay.”

Public is very furious because of delay of con-

struction work. They had even protested several times but all in vain. Some people accuse JKPCC of not rationalizing the funds in an improper way.

Gulam Ahmad Dar, a Counselor of nearby Fathpora village said, “People of my village often ask me about the construction of hospital, as I am local representative. I also asked the officials several

times about the delay in completion of construction they often pass the buck.”

Dr Sameena, superintendent district hospital Ganderbal said while talking to MERC Times said, “We aren’t able to accommodate rush of patients as space,

infrastructure and staff is limited. Construction agency is not rationalizing the funds properly for speedy completion of new district hospital.”

When we contacted, Kaiser Wani, manager of the project, about delay in construction of hospital he said, “We are not able to complete construction of this hospital because we face problems of funds.”



# Lack of sports facilities in Kashmir University departments

❖ **Idrees Ali**

Srinagar: The students of Kashmir University (KU) interested in sports are demanding sports equipment to be made available in departments to enable them take a sports break for refreshment. The departments do not provide any facilities of indoor sports as well.

Students of different departments echoed that sports facilities were necessary in every department.

“We don’t have any kind of sports equipment available in our department. I carry football with me from my home and during break I play with my class fellows. Our department should have sports facilities so that we can play different sports,” a student of commerce said.

Although Kashmir University has Physical Education and Sports department (PES), but that is not able to cater to the needs of students who want to play

sports in their respective departments.

“I study in Mass Communication department and I have to walk 300 meters to reach PES department



which takes about 20 minutes and then no equipment is being provided by the said department,” Altaf a student said.

Responding to the issue, Bashir Ahmad Khan, Di-

rector PES, said, “Our department faces shortage of funds. We are not in a position to provide every facility to students who are interested in sports.”

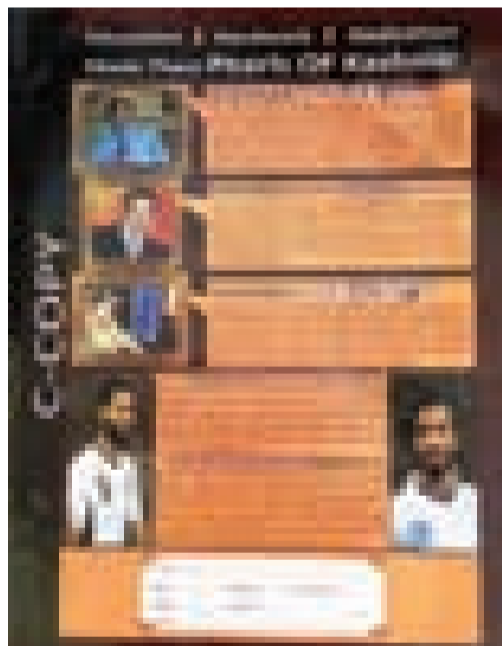
He further added that even as PES tried to coordinate with different departments about sports activities but unfortunately not much interest has been shown by them.

Busy schedule and work load exhausts students and sports activities can provide a dose of refreshment. Universities in other states provide good indoor sports facilities in each department but Kashmir varsity is lagging behind.

“Unfortunately In our state sports remains on back foot, we will soon send a proposal to higher authorities for sports infrastructure and I hope of a good response”, Head of Bio-chemistry department Professor Akbar Masood, said.

As of now, there is the need of sports facilities in Kashmir university departments, at least for indoor games like carom, table tennis, badminton etc.

## Icons of Kashmir don school notebooks



❖ **Rafia Raheem**

Srinagar: Move over from Chota Bheem, Ben 10, Shinshan, Bollywood celebrities. Your kids will now have inspirations to draw from icons – Shah Faesal (IAS), Ruveda Salaam (IPS), Mehraj Wadoo (Football Player) donning cover pages of their notebooks.

“These local icons shall replace the Bollywood and cricket celebrities on

cover pages of the exercise notebooks, which, in addition carry other handy information. The exercise notebooks of different variants are purely made in Kashmir by a local entrepreneur,” a statement by the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) said Tuesday.

Named as C-Copy, the exercise notebook carries photographs and a brief introduction of achievers like IAS topper, Dr Shah Faesal, Dr Mushtaq Chalkoo, IPS officer Ruveda Salam, international football players Mehraj-Ud-Din Wadoo and Ishfaq Ahmed.

“The C-Copy also carries other useful information for students, teachers and parents as well.”

The idea came to Mudasir Iqbal Khan, when he was driving in Jawahar Nagar area of Srinagar city and saw few students struggling to cross the road.

“They were holding each others’ hand and trying to cross the road but due to continuous traffic flow they were not able to do so. Seeing their helplessness I stepped out of my car and made them cross the road. When I came back I started thinking about the incident and its probable solution (s),” said Khan.

## Slums swell in city centre

❖ **Sarvat Nabi**

Srinagar: A row of almost 20 unplanned, garbage laden, plastic thatched huts with satellite television dishes installed on most of them; this is how many of the nonlocal slum dwellers live at Padshahi Bagh-Mehjoor Nagar area of Srinagar. This ‘colony’ is proving a ‘nuisance’ for the local residents who blame it for many social evils including alcoholism, drug addiction, altercations, and communicable diseases.

“There are more than 20 such huts in this area and they all have encroached to form a colony of their own. Now and then, we have had ugly quarrels with these people especially when we find them drunk and roaming around the streets”, said Muhammad Sultan, of Padshahi Bagh area.

This entire colony crept on the bund during the floods and managed to resettle in the same place in a matter of a few months. Around 30 families, including women and children, from states like Bihar, UP, and Bengal form this community. They have occupied the government grasslands and accumulate scrap and gar-

bage throughout the day. This settlement is on one end of the flood channel with Jawahar Nagar-Raj Bagh a stone’s throw away.

“We took up the matter with concerned authorities, including SMC and Police. They acted upon our complaints momentarily but in the long run, we see this slum expanding every year,” said Ahad Shiekh, an old resident of the area.

The residents of the area believe that if this slum would have been on the Jawahar Nagar side of this flood channel, it would not have even existed. “As Padshahi Bagh-Mehjoor Nagar are neglected areas no one cares about what happens here. We have complained to the local police station many times but after a brief lull, this problem always persists,” said a local resident.

Apart from collecting garbage, these non-resident dwellers burn rubber scrap to obtain metal wires from it. They do it mostly in the night for least intervention and engulf the entire area in harmful smoke.

Other areas in the city where such slums are expanding include Parimpora, Lasjan-Byepass, Barzulla, and Bemina.

