

MERC TIMES



Vol 8 | No 06 | MAY 30, 2015

MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR



NEGLECTED GOLDEN HANDS

P6

INSIDE

4



MAIRAJ AALAM OBSERVED

5



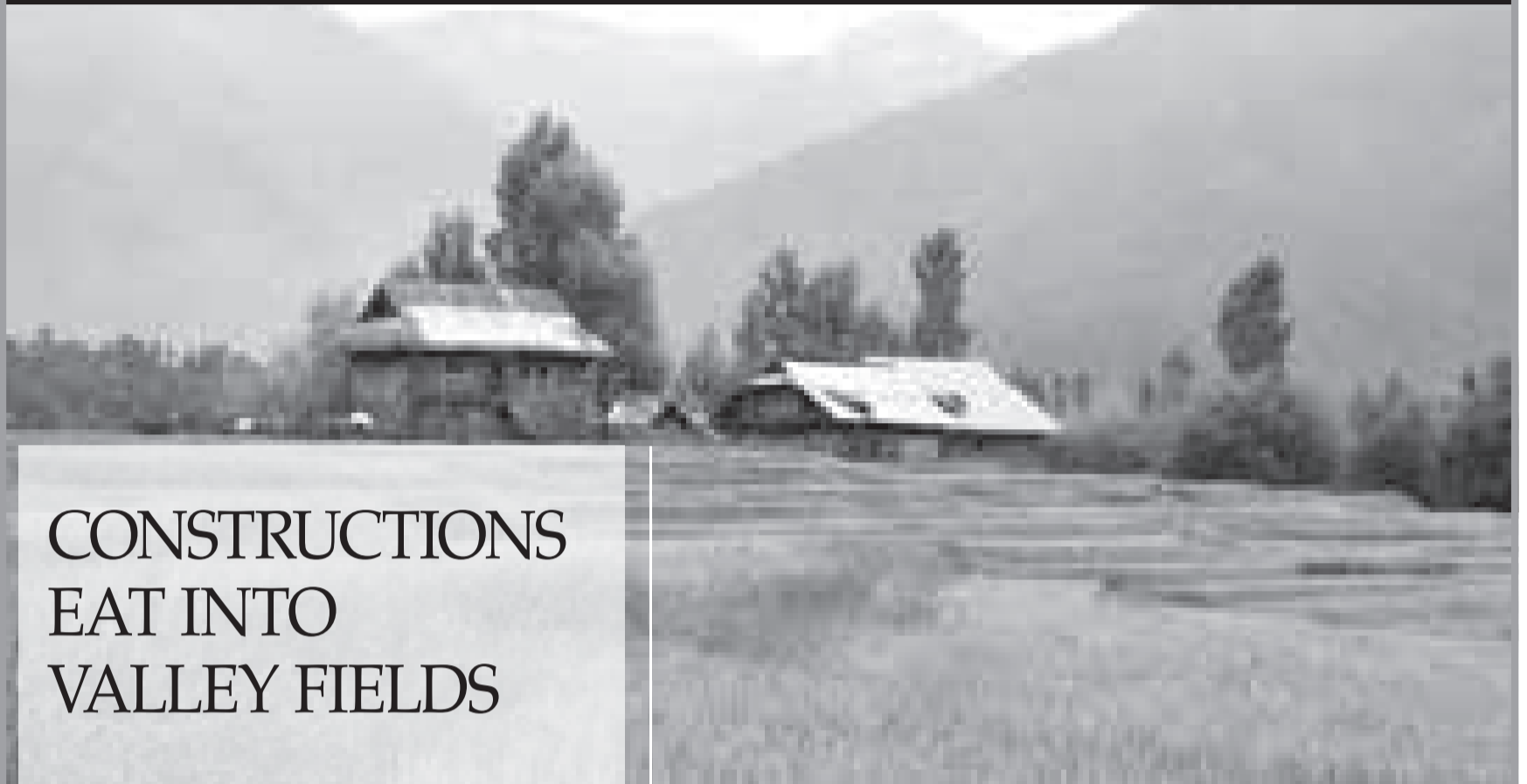
FEMALE MEDICOS BREAK TREND, OPT FOR PSYCHIATRY

8



GANDERBAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE KICK STARTS

C
M
Y
K



CONSTRUCTIONS EAT INTO VALLEY FIELDS

❖ Tasir Khan

Srinagar: Despite several laws being in place, the conversion of agricultural land into commercial and residential purposes is going unabated in valley. According to an official report, about 3, 57,306 Kanals of agricultural land have been used for non-agricultural purposes, particularly for construction of residential houses, in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to district wise official figures, district Shopian tops the list with about 1, 76,979 Kanals of land converted into non-agricultural purposes, followed by summer capital, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kulgam, Jammu, Bandipora Pulwama and Kupwara with about 60,999, 29650, 19444, 11982, 7865, 6725, 6627, 1398 and 1222 Kanals respectively making about a total of 3, 57,306 Kanals of land in both divisions of Jammu and Kashmir.

The provisions of J&K Land Revenue Act 1996 prohibit the conversion of paddy or vegetable land into any other practice.

“The conversion of agricultural land into other purposes is done in connivance of officials who facilitate construction of houses, buildings and shops on the farming land over the years,” an official of Revenue Department said.

A high-level official committee constituted by the government in 2009 to report on master plan violations, had identified and compiled a comprehensive report of around 2500 illegal structures in the Srinagar city alone.

“Most of these constructions were made on agricultural land by some politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats. Government succumbed to the pressure of these influential people and shelved the report without taking any action on it,” the official said.

Meanwhile the farmers fear that there will be a shortage of cultivable land if the concretization continues at the same pace. Commenting on the issue, Bashir Ahmad, a local farmer said, “There is an apprehension that we might not have any land available for farming. This will lead to severe food shortage.”

“Higher authorities are not taking any strict step to stop land conversion. Vigorous follow up is needed and new legislation on land use should be introduced in the state legislature.” He added.

NON-STOP BUS SERVICE ON CITY ROUTES



They shall stop only at Barzulla near Bones and Joints Hospital and Iqbal Park, said S p Traffic Haseeb-ur-Rehman.

Haji Peer Transport Company will operate their ‘Non-Stop’ Mini-Buses from Batmaloo to Soura via Jehangir Chowk-Dalgate, Batmaloo to Malbagh via Dalgate, Batmaloo to Buchpora via Dalgate and Batmaloo to Harwan via Dalgate. They shall stop only at Lal Chowk and Dalgate,

❖ Nisar Dharma

Srinagar: The Traffic Police City Srinagar has decided to start ‘Non-Stop’ bus service on some city routes for the convenience of general public and students.

Star Transport Company will operate their ‘Non-Stop’ Mini-Buses from Budgam to Batmaloo via Hyderpora-Ram Bagh Srinagar and on the return they will take Tengpora-Bye Pass route.

said an official of the traffic department.

New Kashmir Transport Company will operate their ‘Non-Stop’ Mini-Buses from Lal Chowk-LD to Dargah via Dalgate-Lal Bazar and Dargah to Batmaloo via Dalgate. They shall stop only at Tagore Hall and Dalgate.

The commuters are requested to travel in these ‘Non-Stop’ Buses so that their “precious time is saved” and are also requested to give feedback on Toll Free No. 18001807091, he added.

ISLAMIC STUDY CIRCLE ORGANIZES SEERAT CONFERENCE

'FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS OF BELOVED PROPHET (SAW) IN LETTER AND SPIRIT'



❖ Muneer Dar

Srinagar: Islamic Study Circle Jammu and Kashmir Thursday organized a Seerat Conference to spread the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) at Convocation Complex University of Kashmir.

The Seerat conference was attended by a galaxy of people including Ulemas, students, intellectuals and journalists.

Describing Islam as the religion of peace, the speakers said that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was an embodiment of love, equality and brotherhood. Speaking on the occasion, Maulana Yahya Nomani from Lucknow said that entire life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) was a source of great inspiration and guidance for the Muslims to follow and to succeed in their lives. Nomani said that image of Muslims and Islam portrayed by the western media makes us to believe that the Islam and its Prophet Muhammad (SAW) propagate terrorism and violence and the cult of violence owes much to these teachings.

“These assertions have no iota of truth as Islam and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) have given the concept of peace, tolerance and co-existence and the Prophet always advised the Muslims to eschew violence”, he said.

He said that the last Prophet (SAW) emphasized more on justice and education and his life is full of the examples of justice. When Prophet Muhammad (SAW) declared his Prophet-hood at that time there were only 17 literate persons in Mecca and exactly after 23 years when he left this world there were many lakh people who were not only

literate but well educated and expert in Quran, Hadith, legal knowledge, literature, history etc.

Maulana Adnan Nadavi while throwing the light on the life and teachings of beloved Prophet (SAW) said that teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) taught us to be sincere service to public and generous towards poor and needy.

Asking people to follow the teachings of Islam in letter and spirit, Nadavi said that Prophet (SAW) laid the foundation of Masjid Nabvi which later turned out to become a symbol of Islamic state. He said the Masjid acted as a school, a Madrassa, a training centre and parliament for the Muslims who wanted to solve their problems. He said those people who graduated from Masjid Nabvi left their impression for times to come. He said those people were not only brimming with Islamic knowledge, but they became the advocates of the concept of co-existence among humans which later brought an end to tyranny and the rulers who ruled by repression.

Justice (rtd) Bashir Ahmed Kirmani said the progress in Science and Technology, Education, Philosophy and Social Sciences under Muslims was so advanced that it became the cradle of knowledge world over. Unfortunately, he said since past few centuries, Muslims lost their place in such spheres of life since they stayed away from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and got entangled in unnecessary things which were least important to them. He emphasized that it should be our conscious endeavor to restore ourselves to the previous glory as forerunners of learning and guidance.

Expressing concern over the present state of

affairs of Muslims and Islam, Mirwaiz said some people for their own vested interests were continuously distorting the teachings of Islam and Prophet (SAW) and were thus spreading a negative image of the religion of peace. He said there is a pressing need that the teachings of Prophet (SAW) and Islam should be spread across the world in a proper Islamic context.

Kirmani said that both social and political problems can be solved in the light of Quran and Sunna. He said Islam has given special thrust on character building, adding, building individual character would bring social reforms which would ultimately become basis of raising a healthy society. “The word of Allah should be spread far and wide, but it was more important for Muslims that they should first work hard to implement the teachings of Islam in letter and spirit in their own respective societies.”

Dr Shakeel Shifae expressed serious concern over the growing immorality and materialism in the society. He said there was a pressing need to start a reform movement to get rid of social evils. He said parents and teachers have to play an important role in reforming the society by teaching their wards the true spirit of Islam, Quran and about the pure character of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Engineer Nazir Ahmed Gagroo concluded the proceeding with presidential address and prayers while Zubair Salfi and the budding students of Green Valley Educational Institute captivated the gathering with Naats during the proceedings of the Seerat Conference.

Mobile phones behind surge in accidents, reveals Study

❖ Gazanfar Afroze

Srinagar: Use of mobile phones while driving is apparently becoming a major fatal factor on the roads, a study has revealed backing the latest government statistics, which reveals that more than 4,000 lives were lost in over 25,000 road accidents in state, in which mobile phones contributed to an alarming proportion.

A study done by Highway Loss Data Institute, which says, mobile

phones are main reason behind surge in road accidents, while use of mobile phones during driving; rash and negligent, mechanical fault and bad roads are among secondary factors responsible for accidents.

Official figures reveal that 1,100 people were killed in 2013 and as many as 1,073 lost their lives in 2014. Recently In a written reply to a query, Transport Minister Abdul Ghani Kohli, told the Legislative Council of J & K Assembly that

25,460 road accidents took place in the last four years in which 4,471 people were killed.

“use of cell phones during driving has drastically increased the road accidents in J & K”, admits an official of the transport department.

“Apart from over taking and lane jumping, drivers don’t shy away to attend calls on their cell phones while driving and thereby putting lives of passengers and pedestrians in jeopardy” he said.

VALLEY OBSERVES MAIRAJ-UL-AALAM

❖ Murtaza Fazili

Srinagar: Mairaj-ul-Aalam (Shab-e-Mairaj) was observed across the valley on Sunday, 17th of May, with religious fervour. People in large numbers offered night long prayers held at various Mosques across the valley. Dargah Hazratbal, which houses the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad ((PBUH), witnessed the huge gathering of people.

Thousands of devotees across valley on Saturday thronged Hazratbal Shrine to join in the night long prayers. During the night, religious scholars in their sermons threw light on the “importance of this special night and its blessings.”

“I have been coming here to observe Shab-e-Mairaj since my childhood, I came here yesterday evening for the prayers and will probably leave today after the Isha prayers” Shabir Ahmad, a devotee from Manasbal area of Ganderbal, said.

After the night long prayers it was a



Photo Credits|Suhail

festive time at Hazratbal Shrine with devotees thronging the shrine, where after every prayer (Salah) the relic of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was shown to the people. Men, Women and children raised their hands for prayers as they got a glimpse of the Holy relic.

“The shrine is a place of spiritual and aesthetic relief, as most of the people gather in these days here to get some peace of mind and to clean their heart from misery and pain” Salima Begum, an old aged women said.

The markets also witnessed a lot of

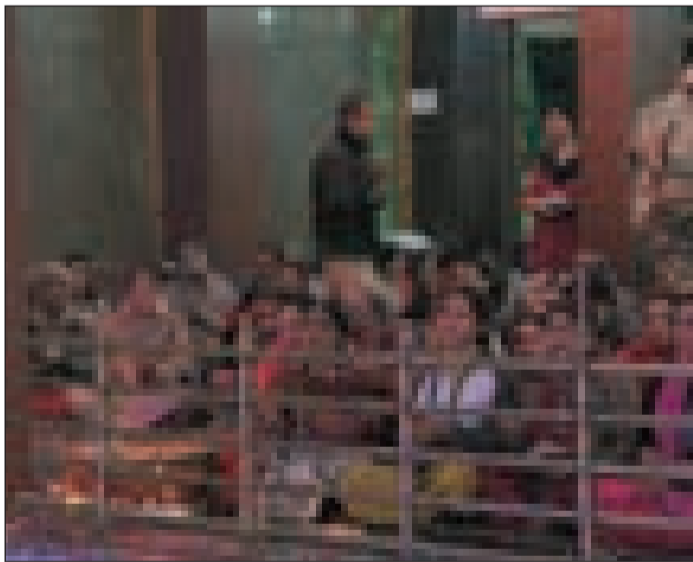
crowd throughout the day as people were busy buying the traditional snacks and other commodities. While children were busy buying toys and balloons.

“Every week Fridays witness a huge rush of people coming from all the corners of Kashmir valley, but today being the Shab-e-Mairaj, the rush is too high than the normal, and we are doing a pretty good business” said a roadside vendor.

Keeping in view the huge number of devotees visiting the shrine, government had made some arrangements for the people so that they may not face any inconvenience. Free Medical camps were put in place, while refreshments were also offered to the devotees.

Since a large number of vehicles were expected to come to Hazratbal, the traffic department, in order to avoid any hassle due to frequent traffic jams, had already issued the traffic diversion plan for the vehicles carrying the devotees to the shrine.

PUNDITS OBSERVE MELA KHIRBAWANI



❖ Afshan Rashid

Gandebal: Despite bad weather conditions and low temperature thousands of Hindu devotee’s participated in large numbers in “Maha Yagna” the Pooja held at Khir Bhawani.

Khir Bhawani is the most honored place of worship of Kashmiri Pandits and the annual pilgrimage to the sacred spring to seek the blessings of goddess Ragnya Devi. In the center of the spring is an island and in the centre of it (spring) is a small temple.

The occasion is celebrated on the eighth day of the full moon (Ashtami Shuklapak) every year. It is believed that on the day the goddess changes the colour of the water of the spring and turns into shades of green, milky, and light blue. The devotees take a dip in the water, wash their clothes and stop eating meat on the day. They offer milk, candy sugar raisins, clarified butter and candles amidst chanting vedic and tantaraic hymns both in Hindi and Kashmiri.

More than 50 State Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) buses were deployed into service to bring the devotees from different camps and from various locations at Jammu to Khir Bhawani temple at Tulmulla.

A number of political and social organizations, besides different departments had set up camps for the devotees. The link of communal harmony between Muslims and Pandits has been strengthened over the years by the festival as local traders are seen every year selling flowers, earthen lamps, milk and other necessary items for puja.

BANDIPORA-GUREZ ROAD REOPENS AFTER 4 MONTHS

❖ Wassim Nasir

Srinagar: The Bandipora-Gurez road was thrown open to vehicular traffic after remaining closed for almost four months due to accumulation of heavy snow at the Rajdhan Pass.

The 85-km-long highway was thrown open by General officer Commanding (GOC) of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps, Lt Gen Subrata Saha, at Rajdhan Pass, which is at an altitude of 11,700 feet and nearly 40 km from the district headquarters of Bandipora.

Speaking on the occasion, Lt General Saha complimented the Border Roads Organisation and civil labour for opening the road five days earlier than last year and braving adverse weather conditions in harsh winter.

“The Corps Commander also gave away prizes to some of the workers who toiled hard for opening the road. The Air Force was also complimented for air maintenance of the Gurez valley during the road closure period when nearly 550 civilians were airlifted between Gurez and Bandipora,” an Army spokesman said.

Gurez is connected to Kashmir valley by a single road from Bandipora which runs across the Razdhan pass at an altitude of 11700 feet. Owing to heavy snow fall and large number of avalanches and snow slides in the area, this single artery remains cut off for many months during winter every year.

The feasibility report of tunneling (planned 18 Km) under Razdhan pass to ensure all weather connectivity has also been prepared by BRO.



BROKEN BUT NOT BENT

NABLA'S FATEFUL PAST



❖ Nelofar Jahan

Srinagar: Agony is visible in the eyes of Nabla Begum, a 70 year old lady, living a miserable life since her lone son's killing in a gruesome massacre that claimed 55 lives and ruined around 300 shops, houses.

Nabla, resident of Iqbal Nagar, Sopore, lost her only son in indiscriminate firing of Border security Forces in the year 1993.

"It was 6 January 1993, when a cross firing incident left more than 55 people dead and devastated the public property" says Nabla, with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Nabla lives alone in her four room house and survives by earning meager 3000 rupees monthly from the three rooms which she has given away on rent.

Recalling the fateful morning of 6 January 1993, Nabla says, "My son was running a Hardware Shop in Main chowk (Patagroo Hardware). In the meanwhile a big explosion happened near shopping line in which dozens were charred to death" Nabla says while she bursts into tears.

Nabla's lone son was married 3 years ago and was survived by two children, wife and parents. "My daughter in law later became unwilling to live together and claimed share of property. We left no stone unturned to make her feel comfortable and tried to fulfill all her wishes even after his husband was killed. Soon Government announced jobs for next kin of deceased and monetary compensation and we named all upon her name including my son's Hardware Shop. But unfortunately she became unwilling to remain together and after proper separation my husband Abdul Khaliq Wani developed severe lung complication and died in SKIMS," Nabla says in broken voice.

Nabla who is herself suffering from heart-disease says that she has no other means of income except the meager amount 3000 rupees which she receives against rent of three rooms of her house. "Neither any NGO nor locals extended any help to me" Nabla said.

"My monthly Health expenditure is at least 1000 to 1500 rupees and rest of the money I have to spent on food items" claims Nabla.

The years of investigation could not yield any result yet, says Nabla.

WOMEN MEDICOSE OPT FOR PSYCHIATRY

❖ Arshie Qureshi

Srinagar: Lack of female psychiatrists in the valley is motivating young female medicos to join psychiatry as a profession, as according to the officials at Government Psychiatry Diseases Hospital, not a single woman joined this field till 2012, but during last two years, four out of nine candidates, who joined Psychiatry Department of Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, are women.

As per the Hospital records, Women constitute 62 percent of patients visiting this Hospital, and hundreds of women, they say, have no idea of medical counseling and continue to suffer. "This lack of female psychiatrists is motivating young medicos to opt for the profession", say valley Psychiatricians.

orders to reveal them to a male psychiatrist and in reverse, it becomes difficult for a male psychiatrist to get proper history from a female patient with childhood abuse and extreme personal problems. But they easily confide in a female psychiatrist," she said.

Dr. Kawoosa's views were echoed by Dr. Insha Rauf, who joined the department in 2013. Like her senior colleague, Dr. Insha Rauf was also dissuaded by her acquaintances when she chose psychiatry.

"People would tell me that I would be called doctor of mental patients. Even during the counseling, one of the counselors asked me 'Aur kuch nahi mila, yehi karna hain. (Didn't you find anything suitable other than this [Psychiatry]),' Insha said.



Dr. Yuman Kawoosa, 28, who regardless of opposition from her friends and relatives, decided to go against the trend in 2012 and join psychiatry. "It was a tough decision to pursue PG in psychiatry as I was among the toppers and could have chosen any branch. As there is stigma attached with psychiatry, my friends and relatives tried their best to dissuade me from opting for it," said Dr. Kawoosa.

Dr. Kawoosa says that many of the patients who suffer from adjustment disorders related to the conflict at home are happy to relate their problems to a female than a male.

"Most of the time, It becomes difficult for female patients who have sexual dis-

Dr. Arshid Hussain, Kashmir's renowned psychiatrist says that the trend of increasing number of female doctors joining psychiatry in Kashmir is similar to the worldwide trend. "The change may be recent in Kashmir, though it has existed worldwide for the last few decades. Women psychiatrists appear extremely interested and glad with their choice to be in this field."

Dr. Hussain added that the trend of young women medicos taking psychiatry as a career should be encouraged. "Inclusion of women psychiatrists in education, training, research, clinical care, and policy-making will have influence on the mental healthcare system," he said.

NEGLECTED GOLDEN HANDS



❖ Ubaid Jeelani

Srinagar: Pottery, one of the oldest professions in Kashmir is declining slowly as the older potters have died and others have changed their profession. This artistic business has almost given up since machine made products surged the Valley markets.

Kashmiri potters also known as KRAL can be seen working on the outskirts of Srinagar in which a special variety of clay is used. Its products were in great demand in Kashmir.

Lateef Kumar, a potter by profession said, "This artistic tradition of Kashmir is dying fast and the revival looks a distant dream. The tradition of using these items is fading away. It has forced the people, who are involved in this business to look for alternatives as they earn only 200 to 250 a day and the demand for these items is declining. With the introduction of machine made copper, Aluminium, steel and most important plastic products, our trade saw a drastic decline which till now is not able to cope up."

Pottery in Kashmir has a long history. The archaeological sites of Burzahama in Srinagar and Gufkral in Pulwama which dated back 5000 years also revealed the evidence of ancient Kashmir pottery. The earthen vessels such as jars, gharras, handis, jugs, incense burners, bottles and earthen lamps were found there.

"We are trying to explore new markets for our dying art and encourage consumers to opt for the clay objects instead of other material objects. If we are able to revive this art, it will surely help in our economic upliftment. It will give a push to our domestic economy and help us to revitalize our culture and tradition. The government has a role to play in it" said Aijaz kumar, a potter.

Fayaz Ahmad, a consumer who could be seen buying a clay pot said, "During gardening period these pots are in great demand and I myself prefer to buy these instead of plastic. These clay pots have their own advantages over plastic for gardening plants like it helps plants to breathe easily. This trade has received a set back and people now want to have long lasting products which they don't find in clay products. I think this is because of this durability it has suffered major setback."

Maximum potters have closed their workshops. Their condition isn't good. The golden hands which once chiseled marvels of soil have been neglected and something needs to be done to revive this art.

NOW, TRAINS ALSO OVERLOADED



❖ Yasir Gaffar

Srinagar: In order to reach the destinations in time people travelling towards the capital city from South Kashmir resort to massive overloading of trains. People are being seen on the rooftops of the trains and some are seen hanging dangerously thereby risking their lives.

The September floods washed away the vital links connecting South Kashmir with the capital city. This has led to a situation where travelers are left with only option of train to reach their respective destinations which in turn has led to the massive overloading in the trains.

There are currently three trains and each train with eight bogies which is insufficient to handle the ever increasing rush of passengers.

"People have time and again demanded for increasing the number of bogies but the authorities are silent on the issue", says Gulzar Ahmad a resident of Bijbehara.

Since road continue to be in pathetic condition, people believe that the roads leave no option but to climb to the rooftops of the trains in order to reach their destinations on time.

"The travel by road has become quite cumbersome and back-breaking as the roads are still in bad shape due to the September deluge last year", said Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad of Pulwama.

The student community comprises the bulk of passengers who are seen on the rooftops of the trains.

"It takes around 2 hours by road to reach the city which in normal circumstances should not take more 45 minutes. So in order to save our precious time and to reach our destinations on time, we have to board an overcrowded train", said Abid Wani, a student hailing from Kulgam.

Station master of railway station pulwama, Bashir Ahmed Dar said "It is true that there is the problem of overloading in the trains and to check that we have deployed our personnel".

Dar added that there is no proposal of increasing the frequency of trains as of now. "Basically this problem is because of the damaged roads and as soon as the roads get repaired, the rush would automatically subside."

DAMAGED BRIDGE STILL OPEN FOR TRAFFIC

❖ Sarvat Nabi

Srinagar: The Mouchwa Bridge, partially damaged by the last year's devastating floods is still open for traffic putting lives of the commuters at risk. The bridge connects Mouchwa with Gulzarpora, Rawalpora and other areas of Budgam.

Unnoticed and frequently used as a shortcut by commuters, the bridge has not been repaired since September last year. "The bridge used to be a time saving route for all the commuters however its current state jeopardizes the safety of the people as major portion of the bridge has radically sunk and one of the supporting pillars is completely damaged," said Ghulam Nabi who owns an automobile repair shop at Mouchwa.

The first look at the bridge clearly tells the magnitude of the damage as it is tilted and nearly touches the surface on one end. The bridge faced



the brunt of ferocious and powerful tides during the last year's devastating floods.

"Everyday hundreds of vehicles passes over this bridge thus risking their lives. No one from the

authorities has come for any survey of the damaged bridge so far," said Zahoor Ahmed, a local shopkeeper.

With no intervention from the authorities concerned, the locals themselves attempted to repair the bridge however their efforts halted due to financial issues.

"Railway department had constructed the bridge. Roads and Building (R&B) department used to repair it but none of them has come for its repair," Ghulam Nabi added.

Farooq Ahmed Wani, Sarpanch of Mouchwa said, "No Patwari or any other authority has yet assessed this problem. Rural development department had once come for surveying but nothing has been

done yet."

Officials in R&B department said that the issue will be looked into and diversion of traffic through a different route will be ensured.

NONSTOP BUSES FOR STUDENTS MISSING ON GROUND

❖ Junaid rafiq

Srinagar: The initiative that was taken by the traffic department to start a nonstop passenger bus service for the Kashmir university students to make their travel hassle free is not in force at all.

The students of the varsity complain that because of the slow movement of passenger buses on the routes leading to the campus, they often reach late and miss their early classes.

"Most of the times I have to travel by Sumo cabs as the regular passenger buses take a lot of time to reach the university and that costs me a lot of money," said Sarvat Nabi, a student from the university.

While talking to MERC Times SSP Traffic Haseeb ur Rehman said that in a couple of days they are going to streamline the service.

"We are going to make these buses carry 'nonstop boards' and they will stop at only particular points so to make the journey of students hassle free," he said

The drivers of the buses are reluctant to ply a nonstop service citing low fare as the main reason.

"As the fares were very low, we were not even able to meet the expenses that we spent on the service. The cost of running a nonstop bus service is more than what we get in return," said a bus driver.

In the backdrop of several complaints made by the students of the varsity about the slow movement of passenger vehicles on the routes leading to the campus, the SSP traffic had directed the Transport companies who are plying their vehicles on Dargah, Hazratbal route to start nonstop passenger vehicles from Batamaloo, LD and Pantha Chowk to Dargah Hazratbal during morning peak hours i.e. 800 hours to 1000 hours and evening 1600 hours to 1800 hours.

VILLAGERS DECRY 'PUMPING OUT' DOODHGANGA

Will result in water scarcity, hit agriculture, say locals
Won't let locals suffer: Dy. Com. Budgam

❖ Irshad Khan

Budgam: The residents of Chadoora and adjoining villages including Sogam, Ranger, Kanira, Kathair and Zohama, Wednesday staged a protest against the proposed creating of a tributary and laying of pipeline from the vital Doodhganga river to supply water to old airport and adjoining areas.

The enraged villagers who had gathered at the dumping site of the Economic Reconstruction Agency (ERA) near Sogam village of Budgam, also tried to tumble down the massive pipes piled there. The protestors alleged that the pipeline will create "drought in the area", especially during the peak irrigation season.

The ERA has been given the contract by the Budgam District Administration of fixing a 'sizable' 2-foot pipeline, which is, however, too enormous that the locals in the area are apprehensive that the project will result in "huge scarcity of water" in the area.

"If they lay the pipeline, we will die of water scarcity. There will be no water to irrigate our lands with", fears Abdul Rehm-



an, one among the protestors. The water level in the Doodhganga River, according to locals, remains enough in spring to sustain local population, however, as summer approaches, the water level starts decreasing and in autumn, "the canal goes dry".

The protestors allege that they had already approached the district administration about the issue but to no avail.

When contacted, Deputy Commissioner, Budgam, Mir Altaf while denying 'apprehensions' of locals, told MERC TIMES, "The project will not be thrust upon the locals". He also elaborated that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of the project "will take all the factors into consideration".

"We will take all the necessary steps so that the locals don't suffer at the cost of moving ahead with the project", Mir said.

BREAST CANCER ON RISE IN VALLEY

OVER 1781 CASES REPORTED AT SKIMS, SMHS

❖ Marouf Gazi

Srinagar: With its incidence showing an increasing tendency over last couple of decades, breast cancer has emerged as a major concern among the female population of Kashmir Valley. The preliminary indications point towards a rise in the occurrence of breast cancer amongst women in Kashmir.

The department of radiation oncology at SMHS Hospital, Srinagar received over 900 patients suffering from breast cancer during 2013-2014, while the number stood at 881 at Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura. Officials at the Oncology Department SMHS say that on an average 1-2 female pa-

tients suffer from breast cancer are admitted here while most of them prefer to go outside the state for their treatment. The cost of treatment ranges from Rs 50,000 to 20 Lakh, depending upon the stage of the disease.

Dr Ashiq Hussain Naqshbandi, Valley based Oncologist, claims that there has been an alarming upsurge in number of patients suffering from breast cancer in the valley for last 25 years. He has been studying the trends since 1997. His research put forth that most of the patients suffering from Cancer belong to areas adjoining Dal like Rainawari, Khanyar and Hawal.

"I found that people living in downtown areas were at the higher risk of breast cancer. The prime

reason was the lack of awareness among Kashmiri women. The highest incidence of breast cancer is seen within the age group 30-50 and is approximately three times higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas." said Naqshbandi.

Besides, lack of awareness, a number of specific reasons are said to be responsible for the increased risk of breast cancer. "Women who have had more monthly cycles because they started their cycles at an early age (before 12) and/or went through menopause at a later age (after 55) have a slightly higher risk of breast cancer. Another reason can be the genetic factor. A woman's risk of developing breast cancer is higher if her mother, sister, or

daughter had the same problem," said Naqshbandi.

Obesity has been consistently associated with an increased risk of Breast Cancer among postmenopausal women. Dr Naqshbandi said, "Fat cells produce estrogen and obese postmenopausal women tend to have higher blood estrogen levels than lean women."

Underscoring the need for early diagnosis and timely treatment of the patients, Dr Naqshbandi said that awareness about this disease can lead to early detection and thereby decrease the mortality rate.

Breast Cancer is a major killer disease in females globally and in developing regions, where the early cancer detection facilities remain unavailable.

GANDERBAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE KICK STARTS



❖ Idrees Ahmad

Ganderbal: The 7th edition of the Ganderbal Football league (GFL) was inaugurated at Sandibal village ground in Ganderbal district, on May 17th here. The tournament is being organized by Ganderbal Football Association under auspices of J&K Football Association.

30 teams are participating in this edition of GFL. The league is 'talent hunt' to select the best footballers

for national tournaments, organizers said.

Speaking on the inaugural ceremony, Mohammad Aziz thanked GFL for providing a platform to local youth to showcase their talent in this world class sport. "I am very happy that youth are participating in sports activities. I fully support organizers of GFL and I am very thankful to GFA that they are giving us a chance to host teams from various places of Ganderbal," he said.

Bashir Ahmad, president GFA said, "We conduct this league every year in collaboration with Jammu and Kashmir football association (JKFA). This league has produced top class players like Umar Jan and Bilal Ahmad who now play professional football within and outside the state. We are getting good support from the locals in conducting the league".

In the inaugural match, Ganderbal United Football Club (GUFC)

clashed with Lar Football Club (LFC). GUFC out-played LFC. Although the first half ended goal less, the second half was dominated by GUFC.

Zeshan Ahmad of GUFC was awarded man of the match for his match winning performance. Suhail, a player of GUFC said "This league is always thrilling and we as players are always keenly waiting it. We are very confident to perform well in the coming matches."

