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MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR



MERC holds interactive session

Full story on P5

Trenz village residents decry water leakage

Haris Arshid

Shopian

The recently upgraded 21km Shopian-Aglar road is adversely affected by leakages in pipelines fitted alongside by the department of Public Health Engineering (PHE). The road was upgraded at a cost of Rs 26 crore under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) scheme. The road has developed cracks, ditches and potholes at number of places.

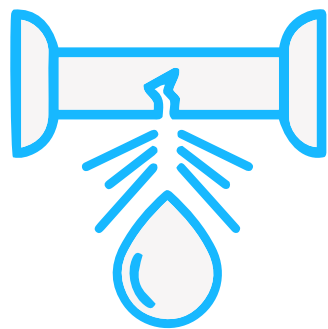
Despite many complaints from locals nothing has been done to overcome the problem till date.

"We went to both the PMGSY as well as PHE and explained the issue to the authorities, but no steps were taken to solve the problem which is not only causing inconvenience to the inhabitants of the area but it is a loss to the state exchequer also," said Imtiyaz Ahmed, a local resident of Trenz.

Locals alleged that officers of the concerned departments are blaming each other for redressing the said issue which is giving the residents a tough time. "PHE department does not take permissions from us before digging the roads. We wrote to them many times for asking us before they dig the roads but they did not pay any heed," Muhammad Saleem, Engineer PMGSY said.

While talking to MERC Times, Muhammad Aslam Zargar Executive Engineer PHE Shopian said that the matter has been taken up with Ex. En PMGSY for further course of action. "The leakages are a never ending process and we are committed to address such issues."

The residents have appealed the Governor to look into the matter and redress the issue as soon as possible.



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Sopore town faces sanitation problems

'Chota London' turns into open dustbin, sans dumping site

Minya Tufail

Sopore

Once known as 'Chotta London' for its affluence and economic boom, Sopore township town now symbolizes a miserable tale of discrimination and official apathy. Over the years the town has been rundown from all the developmental works.

Nazir Ahmad Wani, a local resident said, "This town has been deprived of every entity; no one pays any heed to develop the town. This was a crown of towns in Baramulla district once but now it's losing the shine. The condition of roads is worse, frequent traffic jams is a daily routine here. There is dust and dirt everywhere. Street lights are lying defunct. Health care facilities are very poor."

Shortage of water is another major reason for the demonstrations here. Most of the town particularly areas of old Sopore and satellite colonies like Noorbagh, Shallapora and Model Town bear the brunt of water crisis round the year.

The failure of the Public Health Engineering department to pump the required 24 lakh gallons of water daily to cater to the needs of the town is main cause for the water shortage here.

As there is so much talk about Swachh Bharat campaign, the Sopore town continues to crumble under the garbage it produces. The authorities are failing for years to finalize a dumping site for the town's garbage.

Amidst this administrative neglect, streets, markets, roads and riverbeds of Sopore are getting overwhelmed by the garbage, posing dangers to the environment, water and the health of residents.

There are no toilets either for males or females and it creates lot of

in convenience to the people in the town.

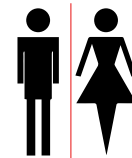
The local hospitals have also reported rise in cases of dog bites, from the canines that feed and thrive on the garbage dumps.

The 200-bed facility sees a huge rush of patients from Sopore and adjoining areas like Bandipora, Rafiabad, Handwara, and Kupwara and even from far off Tangmarg. However, the dearth of basic facilities and the major part of the hospital still under construction after decades of work going at snail pace leaves the patients and attendants complaining.

Unhygiene and leaking washrooms lack of basic facilities, are the hallmarks of Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Sopore, which is seen as a leading hospital in north Kashmir.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mushtaq Ahmad said that they are sending a team to know the status of work regarding identified dumping site.

"I have assigned a team of four members who will get the detailed report from the people regarding the dumping site and other daily life issues," he said.



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Drug de-addiction colloquium held at Srinagar

Obaid Bashir

Srinagar



A colloquium themed on drug de-addiction was held at the Government Boy's Higher Secondary School, Shalimar here on July 27.

Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in collaboration with the Directorate of School Education Kashmir organized the colloquium, which was supervised by Nazir Ahmad Thakur, Secretary SHRC.

Speaking on the occasion, Thakur accentuated the distressing situation of drug addiction which has engulfed

the entire world and particularly the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized on stakeholders to address the issue at their level so that the danger is suppressed.

"I believe drug awareness programs should be conducted as such programs help to spread awareness among the youth which is extremely important, given the fact that the younger generations are getting involved in drug addiction at an alarming rate", said Syed Shakir, a participant

Speakers and psychiatrists from Drug De-addiction Rehabilitation Centre, Government Medical College, Srinagar and Police Control Room, Srinagar, also participated in the seminar.

Shahid Bashir

Srinagar

Barbar Shah residents demand bridge widening

Frequent traffic jams in the area cause commuters to suffer

Residents of Sathu Barbar Shah are up in arms against Road and Buildings (R&B) department, demanding the long pending construction of Sathu Barbar Shah Bridge which causes inconvenience to vehicular and pedestrian movement.

Almost, every day, passengers and pedestrians express their resentments pertaining to the issue.

The authorities, however, seem to be least interested in resolving the issue.

Irshad Ahmad Bhat, a local shopkeeper said that they have approached all concerned departments requesting them to widen the bridge but in vain.

Earlier R&B department made a plan to widen the bridge within 15 months, but the foundation stone still awaits its inauguration. R&B department even made a temporary bridge for the traffic movement by

giving an ultimatum of 15 months to widen the main bridge. The temporary bridge is now in shambles but they never initiated the work of main bridge.

Irshad Ahmad Lone another resident said, "Too much of traffic mess causes threats to minors as they come out of their homes alone. Even traffic police is not able to control the ever rising traffic mess in the area."

Adil Maqbool, a student who travels everyday from Maisuma to Kashmir University said, "These frequent traffic jams at Barbar Shah bridge costs me more than a class every day. Government must do something to cater this issue on priority."

Chief Engineer R&B Sami Arif Yesvi told MERC Times, "The construction of bridge needs displacement of lot of property and there is an accusation issue". He assured that they are coming up with an alternative place to construct the bridge. He said that they are planning to change the alignments of bridge to avoid the loss of property.



NSS organizes first aid training program

Fazil Buchh

Srinagar

A day long First Aid training program was organised by National Service Scheme (NSS) University of Kashmir (KU) in collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) for the Officers of IOCL and NSS volunteers at Gandhi Bhawan auditorium, University of Kashmir on July 15

The workshop took place under the guidance of CEO of Life Line Foundation, Padma Shree, and his team of trainers.

In the workshop, the participants were made aware of the various critical situations which require immediate first aid attention and hands on training was provided to

the participants.

Prof. Shamim, Coordinator NSS unit KU, warmly welcomed the training experts and impressed upon the volunteers to make full use of the opportunity.

Faheem UI Rafiq from IOCL introduced the experts about the purpose of daylong event.

Around 100 students received the training and deliberated with the experts on life saving skills which included practical exercises of CPR(Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation)

"It was a pleasure to be part of such program which taught us the first hand aid to various complaints. Every individual is not aware of these first aid steps but need to have a knowledge of them. So it was a helpful initiative", said Rumaisa, a student of University of Kashmir.

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Rumaisa, a student of University of Kashmir



Kashmir to host maiden I-league football tournament



Schnian Meer

Srinagar

Stage is all set for the first football tournament in Kashmir as Real Kashmir will start their campaign against East Bengal Football Club on their home turf TRC Srinagar. It is the first tournament expected to be commenced in the valley on July 22

Real Kashmir came into the tournament after playing Durand football tournament where they reached semi final spot and automatically got them promoted into the I-League tournament .

Meanwhile football lovers are excited as they will get to see their favorite stars in action and are ready to cheer for Real Kashmir Football Club.

"I and my friends are very excited about the tournament. Real Kashmir Football Club has taken football to a next level and it's a proud moment for us to support and cheer for the team. We cannot wait to see the team in action," said Aadil Malik, a supporter.

Malik added, "Real Kashmir Football Club is the first team to play at a huge stage and it will pay way for more players to come out in large number and make our place more famous".

Meanwhile a coaching staff of Real Kashmir Football Club Muhammad Burhan said, "Boys are excited to come on the ground and showcase their talent".



MERC holds interactive session



Wasfi Amin

Srinagar

Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir (KU), organized an interactive session with Syed Nazakat,

founder of DataLEADS and editor-in-chief of Centre for Investigative Journalism on July 1. It was attended by students, scholars and faculty.

Syed Nazakat while sharing his experiences told the students to be creative in observing things and delivering messages to the audiences. He informed

them to develop passion for the profession.

“A good journalist is one who meets new people every day and develops sources to inform him about the happenings around. As a journalist, you need to identify your weaknesses and work to eliminate them. You should prepare yourself for bigger roles. Contemporary journalists should perform multitasks to sustain the competition,” he said.

Nasir Mirza, senior faculty member said that such interactions help the students in achieving their goals and broadened their vision about the profession.

The students welcomed the initiative and hoped that the department would organize similar sessions in future.

Insha Rani, a student said that the session was very informative. “Such interactions help us to learn from the experiences of others and provide us information about the international scenario of journalism”.

Electric buses to ply in Srinagar

Move aimed to provide eco-friendly passenger transport system under **Smart city program**

Abid Aleem

Srinagar

Governor Satya Pal Malik and Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Arvind Ganpat Sawant flagged off new JKSRTC electric buses here at Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC). A total of 20 e- buses will ply on different routes in Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor observed that the start of electric bus service is a step forward towards providing eco friendly public transportation with modern facilities to the commuters in the region. He emphasized on using e- Buses to abate pollution levels and urged people to largely utilise public transport for their daily travel in a bid to contribute towards environment preservation.

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises on the occasion said that the fleet of e- Buses will contribute in

reducing the pollution levels. The Central Government is taking several initiatives to meet the challenges of environment threats by focusing on improving the quality of mass transportation, he added. The Union Minister further said that the state government has made a demand for 150 e- buses and the Centre will meet this demand in total.



Enterprises; Prof. Nazeer Ahmed, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST Kashmir; Baseer Khan, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Alok Kumar, IGP Traffic J&K; Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar.



Batwara residents anguished over piling garbage on roads

Afshan Mir

Srinagar

Inhabitants of residential areas falling under Badamibagh Cantonment Board threaten to block the highway at Sonwar, if authorities failed to lift the garbage from the area.

Expressing resentment against the district administration, they said piles of garbage are visible in every nook and corner of the area including Shivpora, Sonwar, Indranagar and Batwara.

Despite repeated pleas to the administration, things have remained unchanged on the ground, the locals said. They appealed the authorities to lift the unattended garbage or face the agitation.

Hilal Ahmad, a local said heaps of garbage were visible in every nook and corner of the entire area. "Most of the dumper bins are overflowing with garbage and households are also feeling the heat with no door-to-door collection," he said adding that dogs are on rampage in the area.

Ahmad said foul smell emanates from the garbage and it has become a breeding ground for several diseases causing health problems to the locals.

Another resident Muhammad Farooq said, "Scattered garbage can be spotted everywhere. District administration seems to be in no mood to intervene in the matter as people are continuously suffering".

Farooq said garbage has now attracted array dogs as they keep searching for food in these dumps. Garbage piles pose threat to locals especially during the morning and evening prayers.

"The Cantonment Board authorities should look into the matter and lift the garbage from the area. We are surprised to see that the district administration is not taking any action in the matter", he further added.

Farooq said two months have passed but it seems authorities have turned deaf ears to the issue.

The residents threatened to block the highway if the administration fails to lift the garbage from the area.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr. Shahid Choudhary told MERC Times that they had allotted land for dumping the garbage in Pulwama area but there was some issue. "They have asked for additional land at Khanmoh and in coming two days we have a meeting with Divisional Commissioner regarding this issue," he said. Choudhary assured that the issue will be resolved on priority.

PDD dispatches bill to a connection less house

Aarif Shah

Srinagar

In a bizarre incident Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department (JKPDD) has sent an electricity bill worth Rs 79,000 to a household in Shadipora Payeen in Sumbal, having no electricity connection!

In 2014, the house-owner Mohammad Ishaq Wani got his first electricity bill. The same day Wani visited the concerned office in Sumbal town to plead his point that he has no electricity connection. "At that time the officials promised an on-spot inspection of my house to ascertain the truth," said Wani. But even after five years, nobody from the department has visited to his house.

"I am using kerosene lamps for lighting purposes. I don't have an electricity connection yet," said Wani.

For another five years Wani knocked at every possible door to convince authorities that he has no electricity connection, but failed. Instead, in 2019, Wani received a cumulative electricity bill worth Rs 79,000 for "using electricity since 2014".

Wani, a labourer, is now left in a fix as how to convince the PDD to see the obvious!

Interestingly, almost every neighbour of Wani's is ready to vouch for his innocence, provided if approached by the PDD.

"In my entire lifetime I have never seen electricity in his house. He manages by lighting a kerosene lamp," said Bashir Ahmad Wani, 34, who lives a few houses away from Wani's. "We want strict action to be taken against the department and concerned officers. How can they harass a poor soul like this?"

In 2017, Wani visited Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora's office with a written complaint against PDD's callous attitude. After listening to Wani's story DC assured him that his case will be investigated. "But still I got this bill recently," said Wani. "Every visit to PDD means a big blow to my savings as I live hand-to-mouth."

In September 2018, once again Wani was at the DC's office with another application seeking investigation into the matter.

When contacted DC Bandipora, Sajad Ahmad Ganaie said, "He should come to my office and I will look into this matter personally. I cannot make any statement until this matter is brought in my notice."

In all these years Wani's has accumulated a bundle of applications and electricity bills, which he often looks at under the dim light of a kerosene lamp.



Cleanliness drive conducted in Gurudwaras

Fajar Shora

Srinagar

Multiple sanitation drives were conducted at various Gurudwaras here in the city by Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) in the wake of Guru Hargobind's birthday on July 5

The drive was conducted at Chattipadshahi Rainawari, Lal Chowk Gurudwara, HMT and other concerned areas.

Commissioner SMC Khurshid Ahmad Sanai along with Chief Sanitation Officer, Chief Enforcement Officer and concerned ward officers visited Chattipadshahi, Gurudwara at Sanat Nagar and few other

places to review sanitation and other related functioning on the occasion.

While talking to MERC Times a worker at Rainawari Gurudwara said that he is glad that such initiative is being taken by SMC.

"We look forward to more such initiatives and sanitation drives to be carried out as it makes us feel good and as it's the birthday of our Guru, it makes it more prominent," he said.

While speaking to management of various Gurudwaras Commissioner SMC said that they should feel free to ask for any assistance related to sanitation and other allied services.

He has further directed sanitation staff to be active and render sanitation services constantly on occasion for the convenience

of devotees thronging Gurudwaras.

Meanwhile former Chief Minister and President Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Mehbooba Mufti in her message of felicitation termed Guru Hargobind Ji a great saint and seer who preached and practised the gospels of love, oneness of mankind and universal brotherhood throughout his life.

She said that Guru Hargobind Ji inspired millions across the globe to render sacrifices for achieving the goals of justice, equality, social good and protection of fundamental rights of humanity.

Both men and machinery were put at work to conduct extensive sanitation drives at different Gurudwaras in the city,

Plight of English language in govt schools

Fazlu Rehman

Srinagar

Proficiency in language particularly English is important element in one's success. English language, being the global language is most needed for business of communication in today's world.

English has replaced other languages as medium of instructions in schools and also serves the medium of official communication. But government schools presents a grim picture.

A government teacher Ajaz Ahmad working at Government Girls School Shanipora Khansahib, expressed his viewpoint saying, "We are General Line Teachers, not the language experts,"

However, this inadequate response could not meet the query why government schools are lagging behind. Another government teacher Maryam Un Nisa said, "Our students come from marginal background. Language cannot be taught in a classroom only but active participation is needed from parents too".

A parent gave his understanding saying, "I always dream of my children being fluent in speaking English because it is the language of opportunities. It is an important tool of survival in today's world because of new cultural and economic values. It is the gateway to social progress, the needs of the students are to be understood by



the teachers," adding "the thrust should be on teaching English as a language for communication. Therefore, the teachers need to inspire students to aspire them for learning the language."

G. A Bhat, a language expert while speaking to MERC Times said, "English

is a global language and it has to be given a separate treatment as a skill subject that demand rigorous practice and constant drill, but unfortunately teachers treat it as a content subject. With the result students resort to rote method and do not bother to practice the language in a regular manner".

He further said that speaking English is like driving a car that meets different situations at roadway and has to act as per the situation.

Fayaz Ahmad Baba, Principal, State Institute of Education (SIE) a nodal agency involved in curriculum development said, "English is one of the prime subjects used as a medium across curriculum. In view of its significance special training programs are conducted in the front line areas of English language like phonetics and phonology. The

language being alien, teachers not only need high proficiency but skill also". He further added that teachers require a special professional training on continued basis that will enhance the communicative competency of teachers which they have been doing, "We are hopeful for quality excellence very soon".

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Kralapora farmers stage protest

Ubaid Gul

Budgam

Farmers from Kralapora village of Chadoora tehsil in central Kashmir's Budgam district held a protest demonstration here on July 20 against the Irrigation



Department for failing to provide water for their agriculture land.

Scores of farmers assembled here at Press Enclave and chanted slogans 'We want proper water supply for agriculture land', 'Farmers are suffering huge loses', and 'We want Justice'.

Abdul Majeed Mir, one of the protesting farmers from Kralapora village said, "Due to the shortage of the water supply in the river, our crops have been damaged. We have 2000 kanals of agriculture land in the plot, in which 1,500 kanals of land have been converted into horticulture land due to the shortage of the water supply".

Mir added, "Only 500 kanals of land are now used for agriculture purposes in the area. The water is coming from the Dahigam canal. The river is blocked at Dadaompoora village as people are throwing their waste directly into this river."

Ghulam Rasool Rather, another farmer from Kralapora village added that they are directly dependent upon the agriculture land. "My family members are directly earning their livelihood from the agricultural land and due to the shortage of water to the agricultural land, the farmers have been worst affected "

Hanief Ahmad, Executive Engineer of the Irrigation department of Budgam told MERC Times, "I have already raised this issue with the Chief Engineer. Hopefully the work will be started very soon in the area."

Flash floods wreak havoc in Lolab

Maleeha Irshad

Kupwara

Hheavy rains triggered flash floods in Lolab area of north Kashmir's Kupwara district that resulted in death of a woman and damage to several residential houses and crop fields.

According to police and local reports, a woman identified as Shafiq Bano, 35, was washed away by the floods in Bat Bagal, Surgam of Lolab at around 4:30pm on July 10. The woman's body was later recovered by locals and police.

Heavy floods caused large scale disaster to the standing crops as well as the residential houses in the village. One foot-bridge connecting Shimriyal village was also washed away due to the floods, the reports added.

"There were multiple cloudburdt in Kantpora, Putshahi and Dooniwari village," said Waheed Mir, a local villager.

Confirming the death of the woman, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Anshul Garg said, " I am highly disappointed for the loss of the woman and the heavy destructions of my town".



EDITORIAL TEAM