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MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

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Lal Bazar lanes full of craters

Muneeb Naqeeb

Srinagar

Grievances of residents of Lal Bazar took a hype due to the dilapidated roads that cause inconvenience to the locals.

Locals from the area said that the roads are dotted with potholes that hampers smooth pedestrian and vehicular movement.

Expressing dismay over the dilapidated condition of roads, the residents said they have been ignored by the government.

Tariq Ahmad Shawl, a local, said that the roads are in a dilapidated condition, causing inconvenience to the inhabitants.

"We approached the concerned officials many times, but there was not any positive response. During emergencies we have to face a tough situation," Shawl said.

He said school going children and senior citizens cannot come out of houses, as 500-meter lane remains waterlogged and needs urgent attention.

Another resident, Ghulam Nabi said, "Government spends crores of rupees for roads in the city, but there is nothing for the city outskirts. The roads have not been repaired since last two years."

The locals threatened to stage a protest at Lal Bazar and block the road if their demands were not fulfilled.

Chief Engineer R&B, Sami Arif Yesvi said that he will look into the matter. "In the next two weeks, all roads in the area would be macadamized," he assured.



Frequent power cuts irk Sabdan residents

Mirza Sharafat Hussain

Budgam



We are facing tough times as hot weather and power breakdowns are making our lives miserable

Residents of Sabdan Budgam held protest demonstrations against Power Development Department (PDD) for their carelessness and unscheduled power cuts. According to the protests, the area has been reeling under darkness for a few days now due to short circuiting of main transformer of the locality.

Owing to the negligence of the PDD, the transformer is still at the grid station Budgam without repairing which is giving locals a tough time. "Despite numerous requests and visits to the grid station, no one is paying heed to us and we are facing difficulty," said Ali Mohammad, a local.

In this ongoing hot summer wave, the electricity shut down has added to the woes of people in this area where lack of proper transport is also a major issue. "PDD officials charge us hefty amounts but fail to provide the necessary power supply

or spare transformer," alleged Abdul Ghani, another local. He further added that the PDD never provides them a spare transformer until the main one is repaired and they have to wait for days and sometimes weeks together for getting the repairing done.

"We are facing tough times as hot weather and power breakdowns are making our lives miserable," said Zaffar Ahmad, a resident of Sabdan.

The locals added that the officials are disinterested in responding to their plight. Chief Engineer Hashmat Qazi did not respond to repeated calls from MERC Times.

Young cricketer dies after getting hit by ball

Imania Imtiyaz

Srinagar

An unfortunate incident took place at Nanil area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district during a cricket match when a 19 year old batsman died after being hit by the ball in the neck.

The cricket tournament was being organised by the Government's Youth Services and Sports department in the area on July 12.

The Director General (DG) Youth Services and Sports

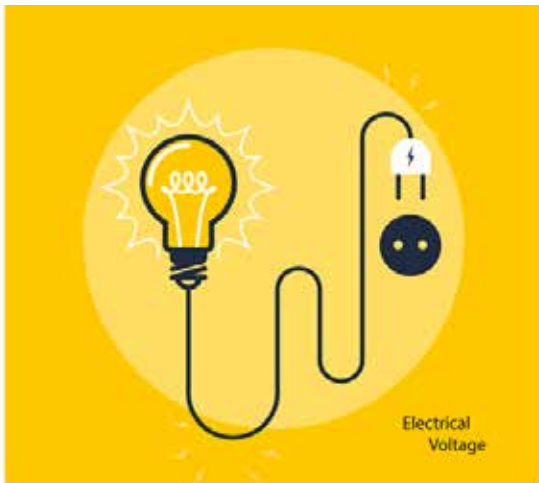
department, Saleem-Ur-Rahman while confirming the incident said that the batsman suffered injuries after the ball hit him and he fell unconscious despite being equipped with protective gears.

DG said that the guy was immediately rushed to hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. The cricketer was identified as Jehangir Ahmad War (19) of Pattan Baramullah.

Meanwhile Governor Satya Pal Malik has conveyed his condolence message to the bereaved family and announced ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh.



Frequent power cuts in Kupwara irk locals



Hyder Ali

Kupwara

The residents of block Kralpora located 15 kms from the district headquarter Kupwara are up in arms against the Power Development Department (PDD) for unscheduled power cuts in the area. The areas of Kralpora that have seen power cuts since the first week of July include Ramhal, Sheikhpura, Reshigund, Hagan and Batapora. Block Kralpora that has a population of 30000 has been under darkness for a month due to unscheduled power cuts.

Locals said despite being fully metered, PDD resorts to unscheduled power cuts. "We are facing lot of inconvenience due to frequent power cuts," locals said. They further added that despite paying bills on time they are forced to spend evenings and nights in darkness.

The students of the area preparing for the upcoming

10th and 12th class board exams said that they are unable to study at evening due to non-availability of power supply. "We are facing immense problems and can't concentrate on our studies due to this power shortage," said Bushra, a class 10th student. Another 12 class student, Zaid Bhat said it has been a month without proper electricity and they are hardly able to study during the evening hours.

Mohammad Altaf, a local resident, said, "The adjacent villages of block Kralpora are receiving proper power supply, although these villages and Kralpora get the power supply from the same receiving station." The inhabitants appealed Chief Engineer Power Development Department (PDD), division Kupwara to look into the matter and ensure uninterrupted power supply in the area.

While speaking to Executive Engineer PDD division Kupwara Showkat Ahmad Malik, he said, "We are looking into the issue and the matter will be resolved shortly."

Swiggy to step in Kashmir

Syed Mudawar

Srinagar

India's food delivery giant Swiggy is about to start service in Kashmir soon. The online food delivery service which serves food across various metropolitan cities of India is under the contract making process with the local restaurant owners of Srinagar at the moment.

The circle head for Kashmir Nitika Sharma while speaking to MERC Times said, "We are all very excited to start work in Kashmir, the paradise on earth".

She added, "Kashmir has its own food culture and it would be great to serve the place having a rich taste of Wazwan".

The restaurant owners were also quite optimistic about the coming of such a company



to Kashmir. The owner of Grills Restaurant said, "It is great for business and the professionalism and service quality of multinationals like Swiggy is going to increase sales as well as the access of restaurants."

Swiggy plans to start with Srinagar and then extend its services to various tourist destinations like Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg. Nitika Sharma also asserted the entry of Zomato to Kashmir market. as For this purpose the restaurant owners are being offered two types of contracts which are exclusive and non-exclusive.

With the arrival of corporate companies to Kashmir the business prospects for the Valley seem bright in near future.

COPTA, a pipe dream, no implementation on ground

Mehvish Dilshad

Srinagar

While the State is facing difficulties in the implementation of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COPTA), the Act to curb tobacco menace, the Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education, Atal Dulloo said that it was all due to the lack of synergy and training among enforcement agencies on the ground.

Dulloo was addressing a gathering of health officials and other stakeholders during a daylong State Level Inception Cum Sensitization Workshop organized by Directorate of Health Services, Kashmir (DHSK) under National Tobacco Control Programme (NCTP) here on July 15.

He said while the implementation of the legislation was inevitable, the process

is delayed due to the fact that there are so many enforcement agencies on the ground, and that they lack in overall training.

"While we have a law in place, there is a need to implement it in letter and spirit. The enforcement is the key, but what holds it back from the effective implementation is that they (enforcement agencies) lack coordination, as there are many of them," he said.

While he explained in detail the law that curbs the spread of tobacco menace, Dulloo said that the stakeholders will have to think whether the fine that is being imposed will really act as a deterrent and stop the violators from not doing it again.

He pitched for the overall and best training for the agencies that are on the ground with regard to the implementation of the law, while stressing that it was not enough that the state has managed to record a decrease of two percent in tobacco use in the last six years.

While the NTCP programme is currently functional in only three districts of the state- Jammu, Budgam and Leh, Dulloo along with other experts pitched that the programme must be extended to other districts of the state as well.

Giving a detailed insight regarding the tobacco use in the state, Ashish Kumar Pandey, Senior Technical Advisor, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Cancer said that the effects of second-hand smoking were higher in J&K, while it was lower in the effects of chewing tobacco in comparison to the rest of the country.

Dr Rehana Kausar, in-charge NTCP Cell also gave a detailed presentation regarding the work that the Cell has been doing since its inception in 2016. Those present on the occasion included Director Health Services, Dr Kunzes Dolma, Commissioner Food Safety, Vinod Sharma along with the officials concerned.

Dying Fresh water springs around Dal

Rooh Yaseen

Srinagar

The freshwater springs of Kashmir Valley are turning into murky pools of water due to the negligence of Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) as well as the local population.

There was a time when the valley was known for its precious springs and its clean waters. These waters were used by Kashmiris from centuries for drinking and other purposes. The refreshing water of these springs also helped children in escaping the scorching heat of the sun in summers as they swam in them.

Shalimar, a famous Mughal garden, is one of the oldest charms of the valley and a spring in its environs is one such victim of negligence.

Locals alleged that the authorities are responsible for the marred condition of the springs citing negligence on part of authorities which has resulted in waters turning noxious each passing day.

"Before 2017, we used to swim in the

Musa, a Kashmir University student said.

Some of the Kashmir University students led by Mohammad Musa are trying to restore the spring to its original condition by scraping out as much of the waste as they can from the spring.

People in the vicinity of the area use the water from the spring for their agricultural purposes but don't bother to keep it clean. Some of the boys alleged that the local farmers block the water channel of the spring and making the water stagnant.

Vice Chairperson LAWDA, Sajad Hussain Ganai ensured that the department would take immediate cognizance of the spring and try to reach out to other dying springs

and will start the work as soon as possible. "I will send a team to check the condition of the spring and make an appropriate plan to restore it to its original state."





Female Judokas shine in the tournament

Sadaf Masoodi

Srinagar

An annual inter-college Judo tournament (Men & Women) 2019 which concluded here at University of Kashmir witnessed huge participation of female judokas here on June 29.

Fourth time winner in women's category Women's College M.A. Road lifted the winner's trophy while continuing to dominate the game with their performance while Amar Singh college lifted the runner-up trophy.

Co-ordinator, Directorate Physical Education and Sports Dr Nisar Ahmad congratulated the participants throughout for the 'appreciable game' and expressed his elation on the 'plausible' participation of girls in the game.

"It is really a joy to see young women take the sport with dedication and we hope that you bring laurels to the place. We have been relentlessly trying to be at par with the rest of the country and with the passion of our young generation it is achievable."

In the championship, Kubra, Ifran, Hadiya and Adfar bagged a gold medal each, while Yasirya won silver and Mehak baggaed



bronze medal.

Part of the winning team and student at Women's college Mehak expressed her gratitude to the Directorate Physical Education and Sports of the varsity for providing them space to develop their passion in the sport. "It is necessary for women of Kashmir to have support of the state and administration in shaping their talent it be in sports or any other field. I am really thankful that we are provided with the support and appreciation through due recognition of our hard-work here."

In men's category overall winner trophy was clinched by Gandhi College Srinagar while as runner up trophy was lifted by Amar Singh College Srinagar.

Shahyla, Khushboo and Heena baggaed

gold in women's category while Masheed, Junaid and Shahid bagged gold in men's category for Amar Singh College. Besides, Aqib bagged silver and Moomin bagged bronze.

Various competitions were held in eight weight categories for both boys and girls. The three-day event witnessed tough competitions in all categories.

Dr Nisar Ahmed accompanied by Assistant Directorate Physical Education and Sports, Nadeem Ahmad Dar distributed prizes, trophies and medals among the winners. Dr Nisar Ahmad also thanked the officials of the Directorate, Directors of participating colleges for their corporation and the participants for making the event a great success.

"I would like to congratulate the winners and the participants for their brilliant performance and the officials of this Directorate who are trying day in and day out to lend dynamism to the work we do. Without their support and dedication the tournaments wouldn't have been possible," Ahmad said.

Sports Assistant of the Directorate Surjit Kaur supervised the tournament and its proceedings.

Students decry poor infrastructure

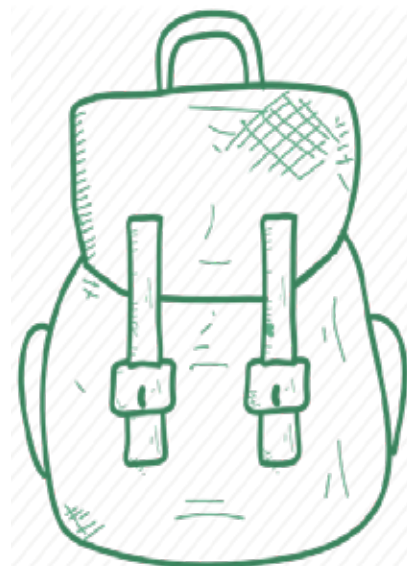
Saima Shakeel

Pulwama

The Government High School in Mitrigam village of south Kashmir's Pulwama district has only six rooms functioning for about 110 students. The students of the High School shared that three classes are being simultaneously taught within a single room.

The locals of Mitrigam village alleged that Government High School depicts the grim scenario of the education sector in the J&K state. "The infrastructural standards of this school puncture the tall claims of the government," said the locals.

They added that the government talks about introducing smart classrooms in the schools, while as the school in their village



lacks even basic facilities.

The teachers posted at the High School also confirmed lack of basic infrastructure. "A High School is supposed to have a minimum of 12 to 15 rooms but our school has only six rooms including an office," said Tabasum, a teacher.

According to locals, the Education Department had started the process of identification of land for the construction of a permanent campus for the school. "About two to three kanals of land were identified by us for the purpose but the concerned department rejected the offer," claimed the locals.

When contacted, Chief Education Officer(CEO) Pulwama, Naseem-ul-Ganie, said, "Non-availability of land is the only hindrance in constructing the new building for the High School".

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International conference held on Religious Studies

Mir Tanveer

Srinagar

A two day international conference on 'Rethinking Education of Religions in the modern world' concluded here on July 31. The conference was organized by the Department of Religious Studies Central University Of Kashmir (CUK) in collaboration with Institute of Objective Studies, a Delhi based community welfare organization, in the auditorium of EMMRC University of Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion Chairman Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam focused on the need of community based research to be conducted particularly among minorities.

"IOS was established with the same goal of conducting and promoting empirical research as well as conceptual research among various diverse communities. Besides that, we also conduct various



national as well as international workshops all across the country."

Professor Talat Ahmad, Vice Chancellor University of Kashmir while expressing his

views during the workshop stressed upon the need of modern day education along with the religious education. "We need to maintain a balance of both religious as well as modern day education so that we don't breach any extremes in between."

He also stressed upon the need for madrassas to cope up with the modern day education too. "Children of madrassas should be taught Computers, English and other modern day subjects in order to become practical and get their due in the society."

The workshop was attended by various eminent international as well as national scholars, academicians, writers and students.

Two books were also released on the occasion. The program was hosted by Assistant Professor CUK Dr Nazir Ahmad Zargar.

Compound approach to solve road afflictions

Sheikh Arsh

Srinagar

The state government has initiated measures to renew about 125 kilometres of road length in Srinagar while taking a compound approach, aiming at long term solution to concerns revolving around roads in the capital city.

The targeted length includes 100 kilometres that require resurfacing and 25 kilometres which require full macadamisation. It stretches across different kinds of roads including the National Highway road and major and interior roads of the district.

The roads, which require full macadamisation include Zero Bridge-IG Road via Kursoo, Zewan-Khonmoh Road, Shala Naseem Road and Boulevard Road from Nehru Park to Kralsangri.

Sheikh Siraj, a local resident of Rajbagh said, "Dilapidated roads have always been a big obstacle in anyone's smooth functioning. It comes with water logging during rains that causes lot of inconvenience. We are looking forward to this multidimensional approach from government taken in favour of

roads."

Meanwhile, in response to several public grievances projected in the recent past all the Public Works Department divisions in Srinagar have been asked to come up with proposals for improving interior roads and lanes in the district. The departments have been asked to focus on rural roads assessing their needs in consultation with the local residents to prepare and submit project reports for further processes of execution.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Shahid Choudhary said that the instructions are given to all concerned engineers to propose innovative projects involving advanced technologies and ongoing consultations of the district administration with experts from outside the State in this regard — all of it aimed at giving Srinagar the roads that it deserves.

"Rectification of roads by macadamizing upto 125kms, widening at major traffic nodes, mending of drainage system, in-depth examination of roads performance are among the various others measures to give Srinagar sustainable roads," Choudhary said.



Workshop on Disaster Management concludes

Insha Rani

Srinagar

A two-day training workshop for girl volunteers organized by Civil Defense Srinagar in collaboration with JTFRP (Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project) funded by World Bank concluded at Government College for Women, MA Road here on June 23.

The objective of the workshop was to train 128 girl student volunteers of Women's College to face the challenges caused by natural disasters. The volunteers were given basic training by instructors from the Civil Defense.

Nighat Aman, Deputy Controller, Civil Defense Srinagar in her inaugural address stressed on the need for collaborative efforts to face the challenges caused by natural disasters. "Such workshops are of great help for people. We have conducted such workshops before. We conducted road safety week in April, relief and rescue activities and snow clearance during last winter season, plantation drives and medical camps in different areas of the Srinagar city," she said.

Students also appreciated the initiative and demanded that more such workshops should be held in colleges across the city.

"There should be awareness about the measures to be taken during natural disasters. And this is possible when such workshops are conducted and volunteers are given basic training. Students should be trained so that they could prepare themselves to face such challenges," said Shaista Bhat, a student of 5th semester of the college.

Jehangir Hashmi, Additional CEO, JKERA congratulated Civil Defence, Srinagar for organising the training programme and said, "Since J&K is very vulnerable to natural disaster, so such workshops are of utmost importance to improve the level of preparedness to meet the challenges of natural disasters".

Dr Yasmin Ashai, Principal Women's College thanked Civil Defence and JTFRP for organising the workshop for girl students of the college.

J&K is very vulnerable to natural disaster, so such workshops are of utmost importance to improve the level of preparedness to meet the challenges of natural disasters

KU holds workshop on International World Population Day



Sheikh Abid

Srinagar

National Service Scheme (NSS), University of Kashmir (KU) held a day long workshop on International World Population Day. The event was held at Kashmir University's Gandhi Bhawan auditorium here on July 11.

Advisor to Governor K Vijay Kumar, the chief guest on the occasion, spoke on the population management and its importance. He said that population figures from last few decades has reached to seven billion with a drastic increase during these years comparatively to old times.

He stressed the need to understand the population dynamics from these drastic figures. He also spoke on the issue of growing unemployment with growing population.

Emphasizing on women empowerment the Advisor encouraged the women-folk to come forward and participate equally in nation building and become a workforce to reckon with, so as to contribute to the overall development of the society. "Women of our state are equally talented and they should also come forward and participate in nation building through the capacities they possess", he said.

At last he expressed his gratitude to Vice Chancellor KU Prof Talat Ahmad and senior faculty members of the University for celebrating this day.

Prof Talat Ahmad, who was the guest of honor on the occasion, stressed on the role of women in social upliftment and social set-up. He stressed on the need for strengthening the women population in the country.

He advised the NSS to organize more seminars, symposiums and other activities so that the benefits are reaped by the society.

Awareness of women rights consultation held at IMPA

Tahil Ali

Srinagar

Taking up the sexual and reproductive rights, economic issues and public services of young women in Kashmir, a state level consultation was held here on July 24. The event was organized by Action Aid India and held at J&K Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural development.

There were deliberations in the consultation regarding various schemes of several institutions in uplifting the women and what needs to be done for the women in Kashmir, need of having safe environment for girls in and outside their households and their workplaces, including institutions of education.

Director General Social Welfare Rukhsana Gani who was the special guest on the occasion highlighted the role that Social Welfare Department has played and continues to play for young girls and women. She spoke about the institutions working under the department to provide assistance in various spheres like health, education, counseling, rehabilitation etc. "Women need to be at the helm of affairs when it comes to policy making. NGO's need to support government especially in the domains of public making- bringing grounded evidence, and awareness generation on the ground - as there are many policies in the department about which a lot of women and young girls are not aware about," Gani said.

The consultation was categorized in three sessions - sexual and reproductive health and

rights, economic rights and gender responsive public services.

Former Chairperson J&K Women's Commission Nayeema Mehjoor who was a key speaker on the occasion spoke about the economic challenges that women face at workplaces highlighting occupational hazards faced by them working on menial wages and sexual harassment faced by women at workplaces. "There is much work that is going on for women empowerment and much



needs to be done to bring equal opportunities that working women in the other parts of the country enjoy."

Another key speaker on the occasion, Mission Director Skill Development Mission, J&K Dr. Peer GN Suhail gave a brief overview of economic issues of young urban women in Kashmir and interventions by Skill Development Mission. "We have tried in our various projects to not only impart skills to young women but we have also tried to break stereotypes by imparting those skills to women which were earlier a men monopoly." Dr Suhail added that capacity building programmes for women who come from

marginalized communities should be taken on priority.

Head Department of Gynecology, L.D Hospital Srinagar, Dr Nighat Firdous while talking about sexual and reproductive health said that motherhood has not to be forced upon women because of the social pressures and women need to be psychologically, physically and socially ready for procreation. "Entire society needs to be sensitive about the health of a procreating women in particular. It

does not mean a period of nine months but a women's health conditions are to be taken care of at every phase including the postnatal period." Dr Firdous added that reproductive health should be available, approachable and acceptable to every women.

Gynecologist at Jawahar Nehru Memorial Hospital Srinagar, Dr Zeenat spoke about the reproductive health risks and consequences for young adults. She said that the reproductive health has to be taken seriously

in order to prevent mortality, morbidity, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and suicides. "Sex education has to be imparted at school level. Women have to be educated about menstrual issues, unsafe abortions, unwanted pregnancies and many such issues related to their wellbeing."

Gender Specialist Resource Centre, Social Welfare Department Sameena Mir talked about the interventions by the department related to economic and social rights of young urban women in Kashmir. "We have one stop centre for women in nine districts where we provide various services to women like legal assistance and rehabilitation."

Two dead, four Injured in road mishaps

Sheikh Ehsaan Ellahi

Srinagar

Two people lost their lives while as four others were injured in different road accidents across the valley in the month of July. A motorcyclist met with an accident at Parraypora area of Srinagar resulting in critical injuries to the rider namely Afaq Ahmad Khan, a resident of Natipora. He was shifted to Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS)

Soura where he succumbed to his injuries.

Meanwhile a Terrano Vehicle collided with a Xylo vehicle at Srinagar's Shalteng Highway resulting in on spot death of a passenger, Narendra Singh of Nagrota Jammu who was boarding the Xylo.

In an another accident, a Wagon R and a motorcycle collided at Khanyar resulting in injuries to the motorcyclist. Mohammad Shafi Hajam and Hameeda, residents of Gojwara, Srinagar.

The police have registered cases regarding all the accidents in the concerned police stations.

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