

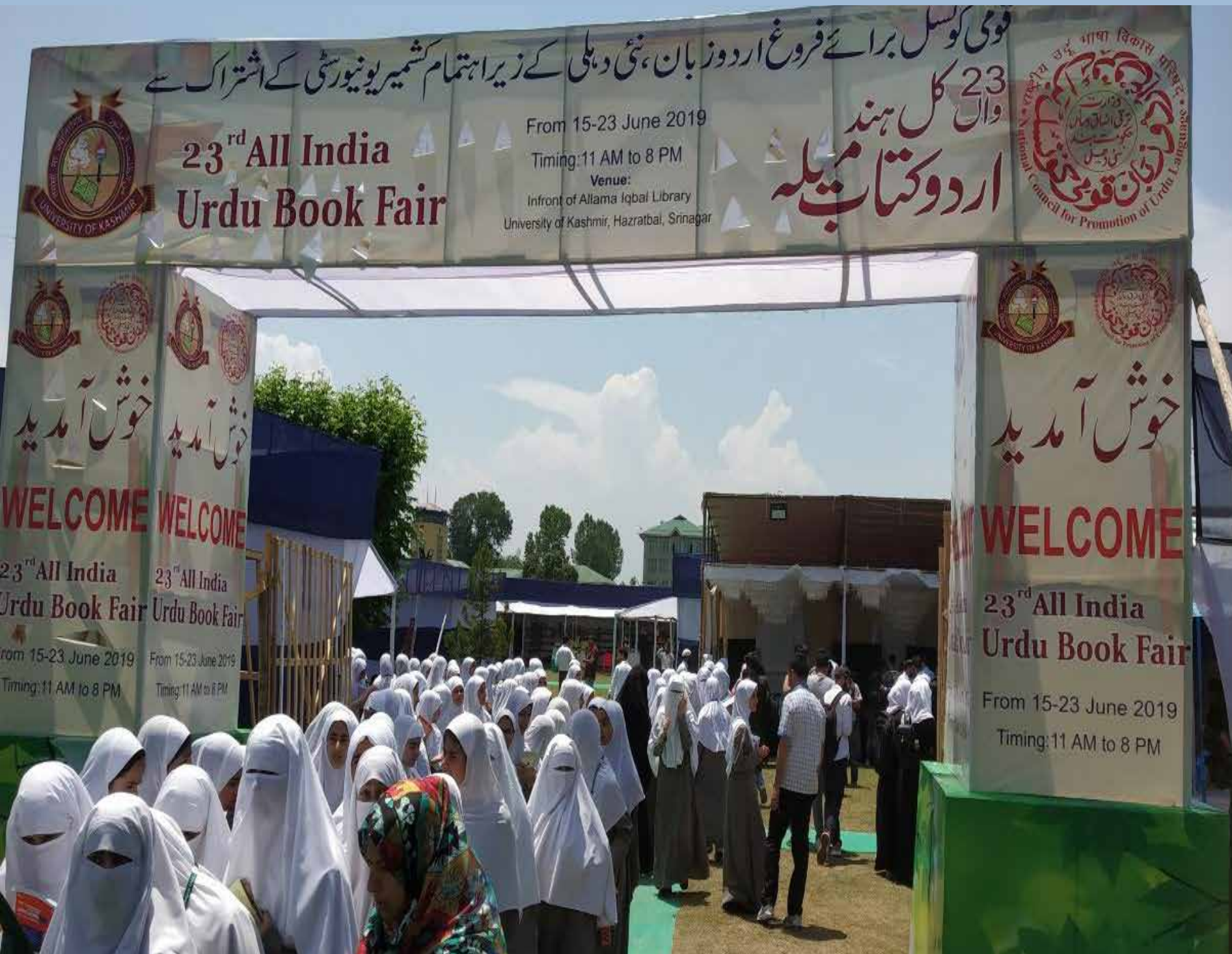
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# MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE  
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

## Urdu book-fair@KU



## Houseboat Owners Demand For Repairing of Houseboats

Saima Shakeel  
Srinagar

The Houseboat owners of Dal Lake demand for the repair of their houseboats. They allege that government has neglected houseboats and have left the industry to God's mercy.

"Kashmiri houseboats which are known for their unique architecture and style in the whole world are facing decline because of negligence, non-repairment and ban on reconstruction of these houseboats. It is the only way of income for us and we are not allowed to maintain it," said Shakeel Ahmed, a houseboat owner.

"We demand for the permission of repairing of houseboats as we are facing problems and we request government to give us the subsidy on cedar wood which we used to get before", he added.

Nazir Ahmad, another houseboat owner told MERC Times that earlier they didn't require any permission for construction and repairing of houseboats but now they are facing a lot of difficulties.

"The ban on repairing and reconstruction of houseboats has piled on the agony of the houseboat owners. Solely made out of deodar, the houseboats require frequent and careful maintenance on regular basis unlike other commercial structures", said Ahmed

"Even for the simplest repair works, we require clearance from multiple windows that is not usually given," said Nasir Ahmed, another houseboat owner.

Hamid Wangnoo, President of Houseboat Owner Association rued that Government orders on banning of repairing and reconstruction of houseboats leads to hardships faced by the houseboat owners. "From 3000 house boats only 965 are left".

"We have requested the authorities many times to look into the matter but they do not show any seriousness towards the issue", he added.

MERC Times tried to contact Director of Tourism, Nisar Wani but he didn't respond.



## Hailstorms damage orchards in north Kashmir



Minya Tufail  
Sopore

A 10-minute-long hailstorm created havoc in the areas of Sopore town on June 03. Many villages including Rafiabad, Zaingeer, Sangrama & upper town received a continuous hailstorm.

Hailstorm caused huge losses to the fruits and vegetables in the area. Farmers were distressed and recalled that it is third major hailstorm in area in the current year.

Farmer from Rafiabad, Abdul Aziz said, "Last year fruit growers brunt the losses due to erratic highway closure. This year uneven hailstorm already dashed our hopes and orchardists are in huge desperation."

Due to recent closure of highway, the

orchardists couldn't export fruits to the destinations at an appropriate time and faced huge losses. Government promised them compensation but have not come up with the same so far.

President Sopore fruit mandi Fayaz Ahmad Malik said, "Nature has been very cruel to us these days. It's not in our hands to stop the natural havoc. We had timely informed government to bring our crop under the insurance policy but successive governments did not pay any heed to us. We have started to get the statistic of the depth of loss and will soon meet Advisor of the Governor with an humble request of compensation".

While talking to Assistant Director Horticulture Sopore Gh. Rasool Mir said "We are assessing the situation and will soon take a survey of the affected areas."

## SMC reviews work of submerged areas

Fajar Shora  
Srinagar

Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) assessed the dewatering work at numerous submerged areas in the city due to unprecedented showers past 24 hours.

The team has pressed into service both mobile and stationed pumps across the city, particularly at vulnerable places.

Following complaints, SMC Commissioner, Khurshid Ahmad Sanai, took stock of the work at various places including Regal Chowk, Jehangir Chowk, Lal Chowk, Magarmal Bagh and Batamaloo. He was accompanied by Structural Engineer (SE) Drainage, Executive Engineer Left River Works, Executive Engineer Right River

Works, Executive Engineer Mechanical Division, Chief Sanitation Officer, Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs) and other officials.

SMC Commissioner observed to keep diesel generator sets in a state of readiness at the permanent dewatering stations. "We are doing dewatering to the best of our abilities. Our men and machines are working constantly to ensure no civilian faces any inconvenience due to rain water".

The officials apprised the Commissioner of the ground situation and the men and machinery in place.

The Commissioner, said, "We have prioritised areas and all those places where there are reports of submergence. Major areas facing the problem have already been attended to."

# Baramulla-a symbol of religious harmony

**Maleeha Irshad**  
Baramulla

**B**aramulla in north Kashmir, has emerged as a symbol of religious harmony where the Pandits are helped by their Muslim counterparts to run their business.

With idols of several Hindu gods and goddesses including Lakshmi, Durga, Ganesha resting on a shelf near the cash counter, 27-year-old, Ishfaq Ahmed Malik, a salesman, is busy entering sales record at a textile shop in Baramulla's crowded market, nestled against the backdrop of the snow-clad Ghosal Tank hills.

His employer Hridayanath Ganjoo, a Kashmiri Pandit, is away for the Shivratri celebrations in Jammu. "I have been at his shop for 11 years. On the occasion of Hindu festivals, he leaves for his other home in Jammu. He has been away for the last one month and will come back after Holi," Ishfaq shared.

He added that trust between them was vital for the smooth functioning of their business. Ganjoo's family is among the 29 Kashmiri Pandit families who live in Varmul and run their shops with the help of the Muslim community.

The colony near Veerwan, where Pandits live looks deserted, as all the Pandits celebrate their biggest religious festival - Shivratri in Jammu where the majority of them moved to when militancy erupted in the Valley in 1990.

In Baramulla town, one of the Pandit restaurants - Sewak Sweets, is a fine example of communal harmony, as they serve Muslims as well. Residents, shopkeepers and local industry associations reassured that the Pandits who stayed back in Varmul were safe.

"We, Muslims felt very bad about migration in 1989. We want that Hindus should come back. We will welcome them", said Mohammad Ashraf, President, Baramulla Traders Association.

We, Muslims felt very bad about migration in 1989. We want that Hindus should come back. We will welcome them

## Shortage of junior doctors at SKIMS MCH

**Mehvish Dilshad**  
Srinagar

**S**her-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Science (SKIMS) Medical College and Hospital (MCH), Bemina is facing shortage of junior resident doctors for last more than two weeks now. The crisis has taken a toll on patient care particularly Accident and Emergency services.

To deal with the situation, the hospital administration has now pooled junior doctors from various specialties to be posted at the Accident and Emergency. The move has added to the workload of these doctors as well.

The hospital administration in a circular issued on June 19 had admitted that the hospital was facing crisis in Accident and Emergency. In the same circular, the administration had pooled doctors from different specialties into a single roster till the arrangement is done.

"In view of Jr Resident crisis in Accident and Emergency, Junior Residents working in different specialties are hereby pooled into a single roster to be put on evening

night duty once in 15 days till arrangement of permanent Junior Residents is done in A&E. This is purely in interest of patient care and all HoDs / Incharge HoDs and Junior Residents are requested to cooperate," read the



circular issued by the Medical Superintendent SKIMS, MCH Bemina, Dr Shefa Deva.

However, nothing has been done to deal with the crisis as of now, while the administration is saying that the issue in the Accident and Emergency will be sorted out soon.

Medical Superintendent SKIMS, MCH Dr Shefa Deva told this reporter that the interview for the Junior Residents is scheduled in few days. She said that the issue will be resolved in a week's time.

"Actually, they are busy with NEET and other examinations for their PGs, they will be back soon and also we have an interview scheduled in next few days; the issue will be sorted out," she said.

She added that there was a dearth of male doctors in the Accident and Emergency and the administration has pooled male junior residents from other specialties to be put on duty there.

"It all happened because of the dearth of male doctors in the Accident and Emergency and that's why we have roped in male doctors from other specialties; we are making the Accident and Emergency section to function as of now," she added, assuring that the patients are not facing any difficulties.

Meanwhile, few doctors had reportedly come to join as Junior Resident Doctors three months ago; however, they were not taken in citing Model Code of Conduct.



## Ramdan festival concludes at KU

**Obaid Bashir**  
Srinagar

**S**han-e-Ramdaan, a three day festival concluded at the University of Kashmir Hazratbal campus on June 2

Department of Students Welfare (DSW) Division of Youth Affairs had organised the event and was supported by Radio Mirchi and LAYOUTS.

Husn-e-Naat, Husn-e-Qirat, Husn-e-Azaan and Islamic Calligraphy competitions were included in the festival.

The acting Vice chancellor Prof Neelofar Khan said "DSW has always given a face-lift to the university and has played an important role in engaging students in many cultural, social and intellectual activities"

DSW has been organizing this event every year in the same month and it has benefited students in showcasing their skills in Quran recitation, Islamic calligraphy and many other areas of religion, added Prof Khan

"I believe these events are much needed in our campus, as they not only help in enhancing our skills but they also play an important role in connecting us to our religion," said a participant Irfan

Students were appreciated for their participation in the event by the Registrar KU Nisar Ahmad Mir who was the special guest on the occasion.

"There are small tokens that we give on behalf of the university to the winners of various competitions in the programs held in the festival but the nature of this event is such that mere participation is spiritually rewarding", he said



## Week-long National Urdu book fair begins at KU



**Sadaf Masoodi/Muneeb Naqeeb**  
Srinagar,

**T**he Alama Iqbal library compound of Kashmir University (KU) was abuzz by book lovers as a week-long national Urdu book fair began here on June 15. The fair will last till June 23.

The 23rd such fair was organized by NCPUL (National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language), in collaboration with KU. The book fair was inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor KU Prof Talat Ahmad joined by Member Parliament (MP) Srinagar and former Chief Minister of J&K Farooq Abdullah.

Book Promotion Manager of the NCPUL, S.M Khurram said, "This is our 23rd such mela where we installed stalls and organized literary and cultural events for the promotion of Urdu as a language, which is dying fast as a language in the entire nation. So far NCPUL has published 350 books, with about 50 books every year since its formation".

Dr Abdullah congratulated VC KU Prof Talat, the faculty and students for securing grade A+ in the recent reaccreditation by the NAAC team.



# Annual Urdu at KU



Various stalls of Urdu literature, Islamic Calligraphy art and paintings were setup at the sidelines of varsity's compound by participants of the fair who came from across the country.

The book fair had 86 stalls and 51 book publishers participating from all over India. Apart from books on Urdu literature other books on several subjects such as science, psychology, history were available in English. Students availed discount on the books for sale as well.

"It is a moment of immense joy that the book fair is being held here in Kashmir and it looks like a mega event, I hope to collect as many books as I can, being a book lover", a student at the varsity, Tahil said.

Besides the stalls, Sufi cultural music was also played by local artists in the compound on the first day of the book fair.

Students from various schools and colleges from across Kashmir were visiting the fair.

Cultural Officer KU Shahid Ali Khan said that events like these are important to promote and revive the reading culture in this part of the world and the University was proud to have given all the book lovers a chance of participation in this important event.

The aim for organising was to promote reading habits in Urdu among the faculty and students.



## Two day workshop on environment concludes at KU

**Wasfi Amin**  
Srinagar

**A** two day workshop on the occasion of observance of World Environment Week concluded here at the University of Kashmir (KU) on June 12.

The workshop 'Beat Air Pollution and Recent Advances In Environmental Science' was organised by the Department of Environmental Science in collaboration with Centre of Research for Development, KU.

Prof Bashir Ahmad Ganai, Head, Department of Environmental Science said, "Air is getting polluted at an alarming speed. We need to contribute our bit in saving the environment." He added that Governments and policy makers around the globe must formulate such policies that would save the environment from further pollution.

Vice Chancellor (Acting), Prof Neelofar Khan inaugurated the photo poster presentation in which posters made by participants pertaining to the theme were displayed.

Prof Zafar Ahmad Reshi, Dean Research, KU, who was the Guest of Honour on the occasion

congratulated the department for organising the event. "Environmental concern is of paramount importance when we know that 91 percent of the world's population lives in places where the quality of air exceeds WHO guidelines limit."

Coordinator, Geo- Informatics Department of the varsity, Prof Shakil A Romshoo gave a lead lecture in a panel discussion on 'Status of Air Pollution in Kashmir.'

On the final day of the workshop, recent advances in Environmental Sciences in which modern analytical techniques in Earth and Environmental Science, Statistical Techniques in Research Planning and Analysis of Experiments and Environment and Health were discussed.

Head Division of Agricultural Statistics, SKAUST Shalimar, Prof Shakil Ahmad Mir, Deans of various schools, Heads of Departments, scholars, students and students from the participatory schools were also present on the occasion.

A short documentary was also shown at the beginning that reflected the milestones achieved by the department of Environmental Science.



## Kupwara villagers hospitalized after consuming contaminated water

**Haider Ali**  
Kupwara,

Nearly 30 people in the month of June suffered from diarrhoea in the villages of Babagung, Gushi, Hayan, and Hirri of north Kashmir's Kupwara district after consuming "contaminated" water.

"We all are facing the immense hardships due to the unhygienic water from past two months", said a resident Abdul Samad of Hayan village, adding that the residents are forced to drink the unhygienic water due to which many fell ill and some were even shifted to SKIMS Srinagar for treatment.

Residents alleged that people fell ill after the Public Health Engineering (PHE) supplied contaminated drinking water to the public. They further alleged that matter has been brought to the notice of authorities but no improvement has been witnessed.

Locals of these villages in Kupwara district accused PHE of supplying contaminated drinking water from past few months. The villages also alleged that traces of dead insects and birds are found frequently in the filter tank, adding many times they had sent village delegations to higher authorities

but none had paid heed to their concerns.

Kupwara Deputy Commissioner Anshul Garg visited these areas and interacted with the locals and enquired about the health of the affected people. Garg also inspected the mobile medical camps to check the treatment facilities available.

The DC constituted a team comprising Additional Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Superintending Engineer and Chief Medical Officer to conduct a detailed inquiry about the outbreak and to receive feedback from the people and submit the report to Deputy Commissioner Office.

Executive Engineer Er. Iftikaar Ahmad Wani Kupwara said, "It is due to turbidity the water supply gets contaminated and soon we will solve their issue."

"We have received more than 30 cases of diarrhoea and all of them are out of danger. And some of them have been shifted to district hospital for further treatment. We have also sent our team for inspection and collected samples of water to know the exact cause of this outbreak", said Ghulam Rasool Dar, Block Medical Officer Trehgam - Kupwara.

## Zakura Campus enters semifinals of Inter- Departmental Football Tournament

**Fazil Buchh**  
Srinagar

Zakura Campus of Kashmir University (KU), made it to the semifinals of Inter-Departmental Football Tournament by defeating Electronics Department of the main campus, KU, in the quarter final match played on June 13.

Zakura Campus won the match by six to nil here at football ground of the main campus.

Mohsin Ahmad from Zakura Campus scored two goals while as Labib Mushtaq, Moomin Zargar, Saif Amin Shah and Basit Ali scored one goal each.

Prof G.M. Bhat, Director, Institute of Technology (IoT) Zakura Campus and Assistant Director Sports, Dr Basharat Ali encouraged and congratulated the team on their success and hoped that IoT, Zakura Campus will perform much better in

all the sports activities.

"I congratulate the winning team on their huge success in the quarter finals and I want to see them as the winners of this tournament", said Prof Bhat.

Leading scorer of the match, Ahmad gave the credit of the victory to the whole team and staff who constantly encouraged them. "It was a complete team effort which lead us to victory. We executed our game plan well."

It is worth mentioning that the tournament was organised by Directorate of Physical Education and Sports of the varsity.

Meanwhile Zakura Campus secured 1st and 2nd positions in Inter- Departmental road race organised by the Directorate of Physical Education and Sports. Saqib Ahmad Wani from Electrical Engineering secured 1st and Mehraj-ud-din from Mechanical Engineering secured 2nd position.

## Bandipora residents demand starting of Digital Lighting System

**Tahir Hussain**  
Bandipora

The residents of Bandipora are up in arms against the District Administration for showing callous attitude and failing to start the digital lighting system that was installed in main market, a year ago. The digital lighting system installed in 2018 with an expenditure of about 10 lakh rupees is one among many projects which is yet to be put in the service of people to provide them some relief and to serve the purpose for which the lighting system was installed. Locals of the area while talking to the MERC Times complained about the incompetence of the District Administration to inaugurate and start many completed projects and to put them in the service of people including the digital lighting system in the main market that has been completed long before.

Bashir Ahmad, a local resident shared that it is impossible to move

from the main market during evening due to complete darkness which poses risk of stray dogs to the people.

A local contractor (name withheld) alleged that the government has not paid the pending bills of contractors which is the reason of delay for the inauguration of such completed projects.

"The bills of the completed projects are pending from last two years. Even I finished a project in 2017 but my money has still not been released," he added.

The Assistant Commissioner Revenue department, Reyaz Ahmad told MERC Times that all the completed projects in district will be started soon without any further delay so that people get benefited from these projects. He also assured of releasing the pending bills of contractors if that is a reason for not starting the lighting project in the market Bandipora.

# Drug addiction on rise among youth

**Imania Imtiyaz**  
Srinagar

**D**rug addiction among youth is increasing at a very alarming rate across the valley. Mostly teenagers are involved in this destructive circle of drugs.

There is a steep rise in the number of youngsters taking different type of drugs among which heroin is the most consumed one.

Dr Hamid Ismail, Registrar Department of Psychiatry Government Medical college (GMC) said solvents are the fourth most commonly used drugs in the world. "Solvents are frequently used by children, often as early as 10 years of age," he said.

Dr Hamid recommended that early



intervention starting at the primary school level might help to a significant degree in reducing the burden of dependence later on. "Adequate measures need to be imparted to the clinicians to develop skills to identify and treat intrauterine devices (IUDs)."

The patterned and chronic use of drugs is very worrisome and different sections of the society are coming forward to curb this menace across the valley.

Meanwhile J& K police has also taken an initiative by conducting different programs on drug awareness and also playing a very active role in keeping a proper check for any kind of smuggling activity related to drugs.

## Contractual teachers demand negotiation with authorities

**Sahil Iqbal**  
Srinagar

**D**emanding continuation of their services dozens of contractual school teachers on June 27 continued their protest in Pratap Park here

Protesters accused Governor administration that it is less concerned about their future. "We were given assurances by various envoys of the Government, but nothing has changed till date, Teachers from far-flung areas are worst hit as they have to bear heavy expenses in Srinagar".

President All Jammu and Kashmir Contractual Teachers, Adil Gulzar said, "Despite our continuous protest government has shown no keen interest in resolving our matter, but we wouldn't give up", adding "even though many political leaders supported our call but government has shown no keen interest to resolve the matter."

Gulzar added that they have sent a written memorandum to the Honorable Governor seeking continuation of their services but nothing has moved their attention.

Rayees Ahmad, another



teacher, said, "Government should take their demand seriously as they don't want to create law and order problem", further adding that they have no option left if their demands are not full filled.

Ahmad stressed that government should consider their demand that will benefit hundreds of youth as well as students in educational institutions.

The agitated teachers appealed government to resolve their issue as early as possible "otherwise the consequences will be dangerous as our livelihood is at stake and we can take any step which may be impossible for administration to control."

## Massive cherry production expected in Kashmir



**Haris Shopian**

**W**hile the cherry grower's of the Kashmir valley saw huge losses last season, this year they are harvesting a bumper crop of cherry after the improvement in weather. According to the horticulture experts, more than 25 percent of the crop was damaged last year, but this season the fruit will cross 1,300 metric tonnes.

During 2000's the grower's chopped off hundreds of cherry orchards as the sector saw huge losses, but in the recent years there has been an increase in the number of cherry growers in Kashmir.

"We brought new hybrid and Italian varieties of cherry and planted them. There were many varieties which were resistant to rains and that was why people replanted the cherry trees," said Naieem Raina, an orchardist in Shopian.

Waseem Ehmud Bhat, Scientist at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) told MERC Times that this year has seen a bumper cherry crop. He said last year Kashmir produced

1100 metric tonnes of cherry.

"We expect there will be increase in the quantity of cherry crop in the valley but the current rates of cherry are Rs 50 on average, which are not satisfactory," Bhat said.

The cherry crop last year, according to experts, brought Rs 70 crore gains to the orchardists and it is being expected that if the rains don't cause damage this year, the figure will cross the rupees one hundred-crore mark.

With renewed hope, hundreds of cherry growers in many parts of Kashmir have started picking cherry in recent days. Several types of this fruit are now being grown in Kashmir, such as Siyah, Makhmali, and Vishkan. The average rates of these cherries are between 50-60 rupees in markets in and outside Kashmir.

Cherry is being considered as a mid-year money fetcher for people dependent on horticulture. "People grow these trees because in the middle of the year there is no source of income. The cherry comes as saviour for the orchardists," said Malik Masood, a cherry grower in Shopian.

# Sanitation drive launched in Sonamarg

**Sheikh Abid**  
Srinagar

A special sanitation drive was conducted by Sonamarg Development Authority (SDA) in collaboration with various stake holders including Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) NGO's in Sonamarg, Nilgrath helipad and Dumail area of central Kashmir's Ganderbal District.

Around 100 men including school students and several machines were pressed into service to clean the Sonamarg bowl and to clean the area.

The drive was flagged off by, Chief Executive Officer Sonamarg Development Authority Shabir Ahmad and was carried out under Zahoor Ah Sheikh Assistant Executive Engineer SDA.

The drive was carried at Sonamarg office, Nilgrath village, Shutkadi village, Sonamarg Market, Dumail Baltal helipad and



its adjacent areas.

Chief Executive officer, SDA said that all the drains were cleaned. Phenyl was sprayed and the areas were fumigated. He said that apart from main Sonamarg Office and markets, roads and the meadow of Sonamarg were also cleaned during the drive.

"This drive is meant to make our Meadow garbage free. The good thing is that people are

very cooperative and are contributing a lot in making the Sonamarg beautiful and garbage free," Zahoor Ahmad Sheikh Assistant Executive Engineer told MERC Times.

He said that shopkeepers and pony wallas were advised to call SDA helpline in case of any unattended garbage.

"The SDA will respond quickly in case of any complaint and ensure the tourists and Yatris do not face inconvenience on account of unhygienic conditions in Sonamarg," he added.

The Chief Executive Officer SDA in his tour reviewed the sanitation of the area and also took stock of other issues, street lights, beautification of parks, maintenance of assets.

"We appeal shopkeepers and pony wallas to put the garbage in the SDA dustbins installed in different spots of Sonamarg so that SDA takes the garbage to its scientific disposal," he added.

# Budgam school lacks basic facility

**Fazlu Rehman**  
Budgam

One can witness students openly urinating in vicinity of Government Middle School Boys Budgam. Concrete lavatories for students and teachers lie defunct over the years, thus emitting horrible stink. Nestled in the heart of central Kashmir's Budgam district, the Government Boys Middle School goes unnoticed to authorities, despite repeated pleas made by the school administration. The School also runs without a peon, who could maintain the institution on daily basis. Staff members raise questions about various state run cleanliness campaigns. The open vicinity due to defunct fences generates more insecurity among the staff members as well as students here. Recently, during a night, a stealing incident took place in the school. According to school administration, burglars managed to enter into the school compartment and escaped with important items including computers. The school administration calls it as "lackadaisical approach" of authorities in the hands of "official-apathy."

"With a capacity of 100 students, the Government Boys Middle School Budgam



accounts staff role of 12 having female teachers at majority. "It is bizarre that there are even no washrooms for faculty members. We have majority of the female staff here. We suffer badly, even students suffer more than us," claims a teacher, Mohammad Yaseen. "You could witness yourself in which condition our children study here, I mean poor lavatories make them irksome always, where do female students go. It is the matter of grave concern and a tight slap to those so called

cleanliness campaigners who don't practice the mission equally, despite being in the heart of the district the school lies in mess," complains a local parent, whose kid is enrolled in 8th standard here.

According to reports, the state government claimed that around 17,506 toilets were constructed in government schools under the centrally sponsored scheme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and 2,555 under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in the past two years.

"You can imagine the height of carelessness of administration as the school runs without peon, sometimes teachers here skip the classes to buy some important items and clean the compartment," Tabasum Gul another teacher told MERC Times. The school headmistress Ulfat said, "Earlier, I had brought the issue into the notice of officials, but they rejected the concern. We really wish to see some miraculous change in the school. Let administration pay heed towards this concern. We as teachers equally suffer due to poor lavatories and poor maintenance. Recent robbery incident has shocked people in the area."

When contacted Syed Rohulla Mehdi, former MLA Budgam, he said, "I will definitely look into the matter and try to resolve the issue."