

MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

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North Kashmir Gets It's First Sikh Community owned restaurant



Minya Tufail
Baramulla

Baramulla Town in North Kashmir get's its first Sikh Community restaurant "RELISH" owned by two local females.

Safina Beigh, State People's Democratic Party women president inaugurated the restaurant wherein people from other religious communities also participated with great fervor.

Safina, wife of PDP founding member & Member Parliament Baramulla, Muzaffar Hussain Beigh congratulated the female owners of the restaurant. She said that women must come forward and create their own niche in the society.

She said that such ventures are a great step towards the development of State when young people especially women are joining hands for running business establishments.

"Relish" is the first such restaurant run by two Sikh women Parkash Kour and Narinder Pal Kour assisted by their wards Manjot Singh, Manpreet Singh and Dalbir Singh will be providing continental besides Indian food to the food lovers of the town on affordable rates.

Located at Kralhar near ITI Baramulla, the newly opened restaurant, according to owners, will serve food to Sikh community, food lovers and commuters who ply on national highways Srinagar-Baramulla, on an affordable rate.

"Safina ji is our inspiration, our role model. I always wanted to do something in my life. You can say this restaurant is basically an outcome of the inspiration we received from Safina Beigh," said Prakash Kour.

In a congratulatory tweet Safina Beigh wrote "Congratulations to both Prakash and Narinder Kour for embarking a great venture in the town, Best of luck."

On this occasion, Sikh youth leader Amanjeet Singh while congratulating the women entrepreneurs said that Sikh community has always been on the forefront of development in the state.

"Women are coming to the forefront. We have a cordial relationship with other communities in Kashmir but Sikh community was lacking a space where they eat and sit. This venture by these ladies is a great step to the empowerment of women and Sikh community," Amanjeet said.

He also welcomed and thanked PDP Women's wing Chief Safina Beigh for inaugurating the restaurant and inspiring the women of the valley.

10th INSPIRE Internship Science Programme concludes at NIT Srinagar

Fazil Buchh
Srinagar

10th INSPIRE internship science programme at National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar was conducted in the campus from 5-9 to promote innovations and research in various fields of science and technology.

The programme was inaugurated on 5th September in presence of NIT fraternity including director, deans, heads of departments, registrar and senior administrative staff.

Discussions were held on career in sciences by eminent personalities of the country including Prof K L Chopra (Former Director IIT Kharagpur), Prof Muhammad Sultan Khuroo (Former Director SKIMS) and Prof Rakesh Sehgal (Director NIT Srinagar).

Prof. Aijaz Ahmad Zargar, chairman INSPIRE and Dr M A Shah, convener INSPIRE), presented welcome and inaugural addresses during the programme.

Around 200 higher secondary students from various educational institutions of Kashmir valley participated in the programme. According to the organizers, the main objective of the programme is to motivate and inspire the young minds to

pursue serious studies in various branches of science.

The programme included a number of plenary lectures, workshops, hands on experiments, various engineering laboratory visits, and quiz competitions for participants so that they can reap the benefits and chalk out their plans for future career in science. The experts in various branches of science invited from across the country interacted and shared their experiences with the participants.

The programme concluded today with the summing up of five-day activities by Chairman Prof Aijaz Ahmad followed by feedback session from all district coordinators and students.

Certificates and mementos were distributed among the organizers and district coordinators. Director NIT Srinagar Prof Rakesh Sehgal in his concluding remarks appreciated the highly motivated participation of students from almost all corners of the valley in the INSPIRE programme and thanked the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India for sponsoring the event. Dr M A Shah (convenor) and Dr M A Chalkoo, one of the resource persons were also present on the occasion.

Traffic Department conducts vehicle checking drive in Baramulla

Mehvish Dilshad
Baramulla

A special check drive was laid by Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Baramulla, Dr Zubair wherein more than 110 vehicles were checked during the day.

Following the reports of overloading and traffic norms violation, ARTO Baramulla on Wednesday conducted vehicle checking and checked 110 Vehicles among which 14 vehicles were compounded and 20 Vehicles challaned for various violations committed against traffic rules. He was accompanied by Inspector Parvaiz Ahmad and other officials from Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Baramulla.

Meanwhile, the inspection team informed the people about their duty towards following traffic norms and road safety rules while travelling. The ARTO said, that it was prime duty of the commuters to raise their voice



against overloading and use of mobile phones by the drivers while driving.

Further, with a view to check rising pollution levels in the district, the team also checked the pollution checking centres in the district.

ARTO said "if any centre is found lacking the proper infrastructure for checking vehicle exhaust emission-based pollution, it will be shut down,"

ARTO also informed that teams have been constituted that would go around the district to check all the pollution control centres.

Baba Latifuddin Shrine: An abandoned hamlet

Fazlu Rehman
Srinagar

Considered to be one of the disciples of the famous sufi saint, Sheikh ul Alam, Baba Latifuddin Reshi's shrine is situated at the hill side of Poshkar village of Budgam district, is deprived of basic facilities evoking the resentment among locals and devotees alike.

With the paint on outer walls peeled off at some places and worn out wooden logs fitted deeply between the bricks, the shrine awaits renovation.

The area of Poshkar comprises about 20 households, lacks basic facilities.

The major shrines in the state are being monitored by Muslim Wakf Board, but this mini shrine, here in Poshkar are being monitored by locals itself.

A lot of devotees swarm the shrine on Thursdays and Fridays, face lot of problems during their stay. The poor maintenance of washrooms displease the locals and devotees visiting the shrine of Baba Latifuddin.

Apart from Shrine's outer appearance, the locals are willing to construct the shrine and lavatories on their own, but face challenges of bad connectivity of roads.

"We might have revamp the shrine, had we have a better road connectivity up to the threshold of the shrine" says Nazir Ahmad Reshi, one of the four caretakers of the shrine.

About 15 kilometres from sub district

Khag, one has to walk on foot to a steep road upwards for almost 20 minutes to reach in the premises of the shrine as it is not motorable.

A local young lady, wishing not to be named, took pot-shots at the local MLA for failing to address the issues of devotees and in shrine particular, "I visit this shrine on every Thursdays, I de-board at main chowk Poshkar to walk for an hour upwards to reach here, had local MLA made it motorable, it would definitely have been a journey of five minutes but they are busy in making the peoples' lives hell"

Prior to his Baba Latifud Din's conversion to Islam, he [Ladi Raina] is said to have been the Hindu Rajput chief in the Kishtwar region of jammu. Once he embraced Islam at the hands of sheikh ul alam, he was renamed as Hazrat Baba Latiffuddin. After becoming the disciple of sheikh ul alam, he followed Sufism, led an austere life and survived on wild grass. He made the upper reaches of Poshkar as his final abode where a shrine was erected. The shrine houses his mausoleum, his six male disciples and one female disciple.

Devotees throng the shrine especially on Thursdays when and pay obeisance at the shrine. A mosque is constructed on one side of the shrine however without any washroom facility.

'A washroom has been constructed but it is too small to cater to the umpteen number of devotees', says Mohd Amin, a local person.

"Water, electricity and road connectivity

are the three basic facilities which are plaguing us," says Ghulam Mohammad Reshi, one of the caretakers of shrine.

The shrine is attended to by four members who are called caretakers. They caretake overall developments of shrine. The shrine does not come under the portfolio of WAKF board.

According to locals, the Shrine gets its share of electricity from 200 kilowatt transformer planted at below in the village. The bulbs, caretakers' state, in the shrine rarely blink due to its remoteness from transformer, mangled electric wires tied to the branches of trees as poles to make electricity to the shrine and thus slight wind snaps the electricity and also poses threat to the pedestrians walking below.

"A transformer should have been sanctioned for Astaan Mohalla [comprises of nine households] which is close to the shrine as it would have ease the inconvenience to some extent and simultaneously cemented pools and new wire should have been approved to address the issue of electricity" says Ajaz Ahmad, a student, while staring at one of the branches with which electricity wire was fitted.

While taking a dig at Tariq Hameed karra, a local septuagenarian resident says they are good in making promises but bad in keeping them. "Tariq karra had visited to the shrine last time before elections and promised of black topped roads, electricity but once he won the election he forgot to make his promise true," he said.

"I pray some officer take it upon himself to get rid of all the difficulties the devotees are facing", he added.further

The shrine is having two water tanks. One carries 21 thousand litres and another 500 litres. The 21,000 litre tank was given to the committee by block after it was earlier sanctioned to village for storing home gas. They keep both the tanks always brimful lest heavy snow fall will make it difficult to trudge the tedious path to clear the frost pipes and bring water.

"We bring water from other side of this hill, pointing towards one of the small hills. The pipes through which water flows are all cracked. We need almost 70 pipes to do away with this problem but department doesn't pay heed to our pleas", says, Mushtaq Ahmad Reshi, one of the four caretakers of the shrine.

On being contacted the concerned deputy commissioner of Budgam Syed Sehrish Asgar she told that due to lack to funds construction of roads and improvement of electricity is getting delayed in Kashmir, he quickly added that "Beerwah area is too fragile, we need to pay heed towards it, this area is in my mind, surely we will work for its betterment in coming days," he confirmed.

When asked what if the mini shrine would be monitored by administration itself, to boost the pilgrimage tourism, he said "we should not make such shrines for institutions, better to contact tourism department for it," she said.

Gowhar iqbal
Srinagar

IEI celebrates 51st Engineers' Day

The state centre of Institution of Engineers India (IEI) on Saturday celebrated the 51st Engineers' Day on the theme 'Digital Transformation' here. The day is celebrated across India on the birth anniversary of Sir M Visvesvaraya on September 15.

The event was organised by the Sonwar centre of IEI wherein the renowned engineers of the state spoke.

Advisor to Governor Khurshid Ahmad Ganai, who was the chief guest on the occasion, said government will take into consideration and make the membership of IEI mandatory for in-service engineers after scrutinising all the aspects. He said the digital transformation is the future of every sector of the society.

"Government is keen in taking the technical education to the next level with regards to digitalisation," the advisor said. "Bharat Ratna Sir M. Visvesvaraya, the engineer, administrator and statesman has been a source of inspiration for engineers."

He said IEI being the apex body of engineers is committed for societal development of the country and lays special emphasis on initiatives to accentuate digital transformation as a part of this

industrial revolution.

Er Mohammad Ashraf Fazili, who was the guest of honour, said Industries around the world are now facing substantial challenges due to recent environmental, societal, economic and technological developments regarding disruptive concepts, cyber physical systems and cloud-based manufacturing which led to the "fourth stage" of industrial revolution.

"The fourth industrial revolution seeks to develop, strengthen and promote a wide range of digital technology which includes artificial intelligence, robotics, sensors, data analytics, and mobile and cloud information technology," he said.

Fazili said IEI is a strong believer of the digital learning initiatives being undertaken by the government with emphasis on contemporary subjects like Internet of Things (IoT) based applications.

Er Aamir Ali Mir, Director Disaster Management Cell and Executive Committee Member, IEI Jammu and Kashmir concluded the event by thanking the participants for making the event a "huge success".

Farooq Ahmad Shah, Secretary to Government and Dilafroze Qazi, Vice Chairperson SSM College of Engineering & Technology were also the guests of honour on the occasion.

Imperative to study food consumption patterns : GMC

Fajar Shora
Srinagar

Keeping in view the increased intake of junk and fast food and foods with high fat, salt and sugar among people, Government Medical College (GMC) has started a study to analyse the food consumption patterns in Srinagar.

The consumption of fast food has increased in Srinagar over years. The presence of high fats, salt and sugar in these foods are causing obesity, hypertension and diabetes.

“Department of Community Medicine has started conducting the community based study to collect evidence from people living in Srinagar on the consumption of high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) foods and their impact on the burden of non-communicable diseases”, A GMC spokesperson said.

He further said that the study will identify research areas relating to consumption of HFSS foods and Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSB) and will assess the effectiveness of strategies for reducing their consumption.

The 15 month study is a part of multi-centre taskforce study of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) which shall be carried among 4000 house-holds in Srinagar city.

The study shall assess nutrition status of the selected population and also shall measure the blood pressure and access biochemical profile on a subsample of the screened population,” he said.

Its scheduled to analyze the selected food and food products/items from each site for salt, sugar and fats, including trans-fats.

“On its sideline, the research staff will disseminate the information about harmful effects of food and food products rich in fat, salt and sugar and importance of physical activity,” said Dr. S. Muhammad Salim Khan, head of department and principal investigator of the study.



Kashmir's sole psychiatric hospital lacks faculty

Muneeb Naqeeb
Srinagar

Kashmir's only psychiatric disease hospital—Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS), Srinagar is facing shortage in manpower despite its upgradation five years ago taking a toll on mental care in the valley.

According to a doctor, hospital has just four permanent members and two others are working on adhoc basis despite of the fact that it receives huge rush of patients from across the valley.

“We lack both doctors and paramedic staff which compromises the care of the mental ill people who come to this facility from far off places,” he said.

The hospital on an average receives 300 patients in its outpatient department at the Department of Psychiatry at SMHS Hospital and 250 patients visit the psychiatric hospital daily. The six doctors run both IMHANS and psychiatry unit at SMHS hospital on rotation but lack of manpower has hit the recreational services for the mental disorder cases.

Five years ago, the psychiatric hospital was upgraded to the IMHANS with approval for additional capacity of 50 beds. But over the years the authorities at the helm have failed to upgrade its manpower which is overburdening the existing staff. Authorities at IMHANS said they have repeatedly demanded increase of manpower but the files are gathering dust with the government.

“We not only need psychiatrists but psychologists, clinical psychologists, counselors, nurses, pharmacists, and social workers to treat the patients,” said a senior doctor at Government Medical College (GMC), Srinagar.

He said that manpower was more important to provide trained mental health professionals in every district than the infrastructure.

In 2017, more than 50, 000 mental illness cases were registered at the psychiatry disease hospital with official figures suggesting a steep rise in these cases over time. Figures reveal that the prevalence of mental disorders is on the rise as compared to

2016 when only 40183 psychological disorder cases were registered at the hospital.

As per a survey conducted in 2016 by Médecins Sans Frontières, India (MSF), detailing the burden of psychiatric illnesses in Kashmir, one in every four households in Kashmir had a member who suffered from mental illness.

The survey had stated that 45% adults in Kashmir were experiencing symptoms of mental distress with 41% exhibiting probable depression. Doctors have also attributed the ongoing sociopolitical disturbances as a major cause which they said has given rise to depression.

“Unemployment, trauma, insecurity, anxiety and stress-related problems are increasing,” said Dr Yasir Hassan Rather, an associate professor at the hospital.

In May this year the Mental Healthcare Act (MHA) 2017 came into force in all states but on the contrary both manpower and infrastructure are waiting for an overhaul here.

Principal GMC, Dr Samia Rashid said that they have taken up the matter with the government adding that the manpower issue is under consideration.

“We have many times sent our demand about the shortage of doctors, clinical psychologists and paramedics. The file has also gone to finance department,” she said.

The hospital is the main referral institution for all patients suffering from psychiatric disease and provides to and fro referral services with other associated hospitals of GMC Srinagar.

“We are going to commission well established recreational facilities at IMHANS in near future,” Samia said.

In 2017, more than 50, 000 mental illness cases were registered at the psychiatry disease hospital with official figures suggesting a steep rise in these cases over time.

Baramulla town witness Fresh snow Bringing hope to Gulmarg Ski resort

Maleeha Irshad
Baramulla

Baramulla /with timely snowfall in the valley, people associated with winter tourism are hopeful of a good influx of tourists this season. In North Kashmir, the plains received mild snowfall while as Gulmarg ski resort received three feet snow on Tuesday.

Authorities at Gulmarg ski resort said that with the fresh snowfall, a good number of tourists were seen thronging the famous

health resort on Tuesday, bringing joy and happiness on the faces of hoteliers and people associated with winter tourism.

Officials said that Gulmarg received 3 feet of snow for the last 24 hours while as the upper reaches of Affarwat and Kangdoori received five feet snow.

Eyewitnesses said that tourists were seen thronging the famous health resort Gulmarg soon after the fresh snowfall.

“It was good to see tourist rush at Gulmarg with the snow around. As soon as it started snowing last night, tourists both locals and

from outside valley were seen here. We are hopeful of a good season this winter,” said Abdul Razzaq, manager at a hotel in Gulmarg.

Razzaq, however, wants authorities to keep the traffic moving and roads cleared so that tourists can reach Gulmarg with ease.

Chief Executive Officer, Gulmarg Development Authority Syed Hanief Balkhi while talking to this reporter said that Gulmarg received three feet snow for the last 24 hours, whereas upper reaches received five feet snow.

Seminar on Impact of Arabic on Indian Languages begins at KU

Sadaf Masoodi
Srinagar

Two-day National Seminar on “Impact of Arabic on Indian Languages” was organized here by the Department of Arabic, University of Kashmir.

Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University, Talat inaugurated the event on 11th September 2018 in Ghandi Bhawan, applauding the conduction of the seminar.

Expressed his hope in the seminar for the benefit of current scholars he said that “originality is the key for having a good impact factor.”

Prof. Musdaiq A. Sahaf, Dean Academic Affairs University of Kashmir was the Guest of Honour. He highlighted the rich treasure of Arabic language which makes it, fit for being the most influential languages of the world. According to some Linguistic experts the language has a potential to supersede other languages of the world by 2030.

Prof. Sahaf however, expressed his anguish for the language being ‘causality

of politics’ and the negligence of Arab countries. He emphasized the duty of scholars to carry out comprehensive research regarding influence of Arabic on Kashmiri Language.

Prof. M. Numan Khan, Head Department of Arabic, University of Delhi and President All India Arabic Teachers and Scholars Association presented the keynote address. He highlighted the Indo-Arab cultural and trade relations since ancient times. Citing some linguistic studies carried in India and abroad, he added, “these relations had direct effect on Indian Languages.”

Prof. Salahuddin Tak, Head Department of Arabic formally welcomed the Guests and participants who had come from different Universities and Colleges of the country and the state. He also presented an overview of the developments of the department. Dr. Abdul Rehman Wani, coordinator of the National seminar presented the vote of thanks. Dr. Tariq Ahmad Ahanger, Seminar coordinator anchored the inaugural session of the seminar.

J&K Tourism Department’s cafe lies in disarray

Wajeeha ali
Srinagar

Built at a cost of 45 lakh rupees, Rustum Garhi’ Cafeteria, atop the Dalgate hillock is lying in shambles.

The cafeteria was thrown open in the year 2009 by the then minister for tourism and culture, Nawang Rigzin Jora, after remaining closed for about twenty years.

The cafeteria was opened soon after the inauguration of the another tourism departments restaurant : Peerzoo restaurant and café located in polo view Srinagar. The café has been lying closed for almost 2 years now.

“Although the café has a nice view but I would hardly consider going to such a place especially with my family or friends because of its unusual location, given the uphill location of the cafe, it is a little too hard to climb there which is not convenient for the people” says Shahbaaz Ahmad

The cafeteria was to serve as “a major attraction for tourists”. It was to be

used to “popularize traditional Kashmiri cuisine”. The lofty plans have come to nothing. The place lies desolate and has become a den of alcoholics and drug addicts, say the local residents

“It’s disturbing for us to witness youth, including teenagers who are mostly drug addicts and alcoholics climbing uphill to smoke weed every day , we as local residents feel unsafe and worried, so we want the concerned authorities to look into the matter” said Mohd Ashraf Mir a local resident

“Since the cafeteria could not be outsourced, it would be utilized for some other purpose, we will use it for residential purpose instead of using it as a food outlet,” said Director of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, Tassaduq Jeelani

Once thronged by a huge number of locals and tourists alike, the restaurant has been lying closed since 2016. The party that won the bid to run it left it mid-way citing losses due to the 2016 uprising. Since then, no party has shown interest in taking it up, despite the tendered price having been lowered twice.

Haris Arshid
Srinagar

Kashmir has been historically famous for the best quality silk production and its trade world over in the form of raw textile, clothes and carpets. The state has been producing one of the finest silk qualities in the world with high end varieties like Lotus, Iris and Neel etc. Sericulture industry in Jammu and Kashmir State is of very old origin. The department of sericulture was created in the year 1889 under the monopolistic government to promote the silk industry in the state. In this regard a very good infrastructure including mulberry nurseries, silkworm seed stations and silk reeling factories were also established.

The industry witnessed a decline during the past two decades due to many reasons like low selling price of cocoons defunct silk reeling factories and other socio political reasons. But from the last seven

years the historic silk industry is making a silent comeback in the state with the cocoon production recording an increase of 36 percent during last seven years.

The government is now attempting to restruct the silk reeling factory at solina and gives boost to the silk production in the state. The industries department has hired workers from outside the state who knows the job, and in the first stage they have started reeling silk on five machines with 30 basins which were installed in one of the filatures in 1999 but have remained unused. The workers have also been training some 20 local kashmiris.

As per the report of Jammu and Kashmir Industries Corporation it reveals that cocoon production has increased by 36 percent from 810 metric tonnes in 2010-11 to 1,105 MT in 2015-16. With increase in production, the number of people associated with the trade is also gradually increasing.

In 2010-11, 75,000 persons were

associated silk trade in J&K, which has now increased to 3.5 lakh persons. Further people associated with sericulture farming have gone up from 22,700 to 31,882, claims the report.

The report mentions that number of villages dealing with sericulture too have increased to 2838 from 2450.

The reason for the growth attributed by the report is increase in price of the raw material. In 2010, average price of a kilogram of cocoon was Rs 300 which has increased to Rs 750 a kg in 2017.

“In the year 2015-16 there were about 7 lakh mulberry trees in the state out of which 53 percent (370,000) are in Jammu Division and 47 percent in Kashmir Division. There are 2,800 villages and 33,000 households which generating income of Rs 20.26 crore through the sericulture farming annually. It creates 5 lakh man days of work with 3 lakh on-farm and 50,000 off-farms.



Traditional Kashmir silk Industry making a silent comeback

36% rise in cocon production in last 7 years

Work on widening of Pandach Ganderbal road goes at snails pace

DC Ganderbal reviews work, assured project completion on time

SHEIKH ABID
Ganderbal

Work on Pandach-Ganderbal road widening is going through snails pace from the last five months after being kick started by the former PDP minister Nayeem Akhter on 13 May 2018 after decades of long delay.

The half of the road has been damaged in order to widen the existing width of road due to which there is lot of dust as the transport plays through it making the local population as well as commuters suffer on daily basis.

"We cannot open our windows for fresh air as there is plenty of dust outside which has made our life miserable and has also, affected our health conditions" Zubair Ahmad a local resident said.

The project is almost a decade long into consideration, as there used to be very narrow road from Pandach to Ganderbal National Highway due to which lot of frequent traffic jams would trouble the passengers as well as tourists. It is pertinent to mention

that the project is being executed under Central Road Fund(CRF) along with state government.

"It was a long pending demand of Ganderbal residents which was finally given green signal this year but, there needs to be fast track day-night work on it so that the road will be widened as fast as possible. Also it serves as the national highway due to which traffic load is much higher". Mhammad Shafi a local resident told MERC Times.

Meanwhile District Development Commissioner(DDC) Ganderbal, Dr Piyush Singla has called up a meeting with all the project related officials including Assistant Commissioner Revenue Ganderbal, Executive Engineer R&B ganderbal, Tehsildar Ganderbal and other concerned officials and stressed upon completing the project on time.

"We have directed the concerned officials to speed up the work process and also sort out the compensation amount to the affected shopkeepers and land holders, we are hoping that the project will be completed on time, he said".



We cannot open our windows for fresh air as there is plenty of dust outside which has made our life miserable and has also, affected our health conditions

Waste Management Plant a distant dream for Bandipora Residents



Tahir Hussain
Bandipora

The construction of scientific waste management plant has been a long pending demand of the local population of bandipora town, as more than 40-50 tonnes of the waste material is collected from the local areas by the municipal committee bandipora.

Locals alleged that the Municipal committee bandipora is dumping tons of the non biodegradable waste material including polythene and toxic hospital wastes in and around the banks of famous wular lake. The residents of the nusso bandipora who live along the banks of the wular lake told MERC TIMES, that 'dumping of the waste material and garbage in and around the lake has not only made their lives miserable but has also caused a great damage to the biodiversity of the wular lake'.

During 2013-14 and 2014-15, the 'Wular conservation management authority WUCMA' which is meant for the conservation of the wular lake has provided a financial assistance of Rs 39 lakh and Rs 42.90 lakh respectively to municipal committee bandipora through the then district commissioner bandipora for scientific disposal of Municipal solid waste, so as to prevent any sort of pollution within and along the banks of wular lake. Ironically the vehicles donated by the said agency (WUCMA) with 'SAVE WULAR' illustrations written on them are used to carry the garbage and non bio degradable waste materials on the bank of wular lake and the same toxic waste material gets washed away in the lake during rainy season.

Sources from the department (MCB) told the MERC TIMES, that the Municipal committee bandipora has also received an amount of Rs77 thousand per month from July 2009 to August 2016 and 17thousand per month

from August 2016 till date from 'HCC -hydro power construction company, 'an Indian Construction company which is building a power project in district bandipora' for the scientific management of the local domestic waste produced by the HCC, which means that the Municipal committee bandipora has received a total amount of Rs 76,47,000 from 'HCC and nearly about 80lakh from WUCMA', for scientific waste management of garbage, but the department has dumped the garbage in and around the banks of wular lake.

We gave dharnas for consecutive three days, even seized the machines and vehicles of the MCB to convince the district administration not to dump the waste here in open, even DC bandipora Manzoor Ahmad Lone and Dr. Shah Faesal also visited the area many times and assured the quick solution of the problem, but nothing happened on the ground, even more than 50 cows of the local population died by consuming poisonous waste material from the last few years alleged a local resident 'Sultan Ahmad Mir of Nusso Bandipora'.

While talking to the MERC TIMES, the executive officer of municipal committee bandipora admitted that "Yes, we are facing this problem from last many years. The construction of scientific waste management plant is on cards and soon some development will happen on ground".

Besides the Municipal committee bandipora has got the approval for the construction of scientific waste disposal plant in the area, the department is continuously dumping 40-50 tons of waste material collected daily from the local areas in and along the banks of wular lake.

While both the central and state government has initiated a number of projects to conserve the water bodies especially wular lake, the Municipal committee bandipora is making fun of all the tall claims and the government sponsored projects.

Workshop on Parenting, Early Childhood Care organised in Sopore

Wasfi Amin
Sopore

A training workshop was organised on 'Early Childhood Care and Education' by Mohd Shafi Memorial (MSM) Fajar, a creche, preparatory & kindergarten school in Sopore. The workshop was intended to help people better understand some of the issues that concern the society at large.

Rafi Ahmed Masoodi, patron Fajar, said, "Present age parenthood is different from past and today's children are burdened with books at an early age."

Professor Bilal Kaloo, Assistant Professor Education, Kashmir University, cautioned parents about the negative impact of fear psychosis that is put in a child's mind.

"When you try to put fear in the minds of kids by saying eat or the old man (bhoot) will come, they grow up thinking all old men are 'bhoots' and

how can they respect them?", he said.

Dr Suhail Naik, a renowned pediatrician and president Doctors Association of Kashmir (DAK), said, "Today's parents focus on just physical growth of their children and ignore the important factors like brain development and I.Q. of kids, as a result they lag behind in many disciplines."

Dr Nawshad Wani, HoD PG Psychology, GDC Baramulla, put out a detailed presentation on psychological behavior of kids.

"Something is taught and everything is caught. Kids learn themselves. We should not teach but we should be role models for them and they will imitate us," he said.

Dr Naira Masoodi, dietician SKIMS Srinagar delivered a talk on diet habits of kids. The event concluded with a question & answer session wherein audiences posed various questions to the panelists.

Blood donation camp held at KU

Saima Shakeel
Srinagar

A Blood donation camp was organised by Red Ribbon Club, department of Students Welfare (DSW), University of Kashmir and J&K State AIDS Control Society, department of Health and Medical Education in association with an NGO Amori Khariya and KU health centre.

The camp was inaugurated by Dean College Development Council (DCDC) and Registrar KU Prof Neelofer Khan and was held in the lawns of Gandhi Bhawan.

Appreciating students and volunteers for donating their blood, Prof Neelofer Khan said "such activities shape up the outlook of youth and inculcate the spirit of social activism among them, and engaging with youth at various levels is the foremost priority of the university".

Dean Students Welfare (DSW), Prof G.N. Khaki said that the main purpose of education system should be the

enlightenment of youth and endeavors' like blood donation camps form the bedrock of such enlightenment.

Student volunteers and employees of Kashmir University and voluntary donors from outside the University participated in the blood donation camp.

Project Director J&K State AIDS Control Society, Chief Proctor KU, Dr Khalid Chief Medical Office, Dr Mushtaq



Rather, Assistant Director Youth Affairs Rajesh, Coordinator Red Ribbon Club, Liaison officers and representatives from Amori Khariya were also present in the occasion.

'KASHMIR KALKHARAB' awarded by YouTube



Imania Imtiyaz
Srinagar

crossed 100k subscriber mark on the video-sharing social media platform.

In its latest video, the members of the Kashmir Kalkharabs group thanked its audience while showcasing the gift it received 'Silver Button' as a token of appreciation from the YouTube management.

The group which produces and shares their videos on their YouTube channel is the first loose-institution of a kind in Jammu and Kashmir to cross one hundred thousand subscribers mark that too in a single year.

The Silver Play Button is a reward for the YouTube channels that surpass 100,000 subscriber mark.

Named "Kashmiri Kalkharabs", broadly translated as crazy Kashmiris, the group consists of eight unemployed youth who themselves act and self-produce videos on different themes concerning daily life in Kashmir. It has earned them a huge fan following across the valley.

I started this channel a year ago," said 26-year-old Parveez Ahmad Bhat, founder of the channel. A graduate from Amar Singh College Srinagar, Bhat couldn't find a good job and thus started the channel. "Because of unemployment I started the YouTube Channel but didn't know at that time how to go ahead with it. In the group, no one has got formal training about what they are doing. They shoot video on phone and edit it. "We are self-taught," Bhat confided. After becoming first YouTube channel in the Jammu and Kashmir to cross 100 thousand subscribers, the group has started working seriously.

"We are happy to receive the Silver Button. Our hard work has paid us. Now we will start shooting videos with DSLR camera and will try to improve the quality of our work," he said. "We are looking for Gold Button & we will work seriously now." he further added.

The videos on their YouTube channel thousands of views and currently, the channel has got more than 136000 subscribers.

California based video-sharing website, YouTube, has recognized a Kashmiri comedy group whose video channel "Kashmiri Kalkharabs " has

3-day int'l festival on Environment and Wildlife begins at KU

Festival is organized by EMMRC Department of Kashmir University in collaboration with CMS VATAVARAN, NEW DELHI

Tanveer Rashid
Srinagar

International film festival on environment and wildlife commenced at Kashmir University today.

Congratulating the Educational Multimedia Research Centre (EMMRC) for holding a topical festival, vice chancellor KU, Prof Talat Ahmad on the occasion said that eco-fragile Kashmir needs special care towards conservation of environment.

EMMRC in collaboration with CMS Vatavaran, New Delhi is organising this festival.

"Climate change is happening, and one cannot stop it, but together we can definitely mitigate it," Prof Talat said.

Welcoming the participants, director EMMRC, Dr Salima Jan, underscored importance of conservation of water bodies and highlighted aims and objectives of the festival.

Joint director, CEC, Sunil Mehroo reminded creative communicators to keep in mind their target audience.



Festival manager of CMS Vatavaran, Sabyesachi Bharti said that his organisation is a product of research work, and they are holding such festivals to raise awareness about environment.

On the inaugural day of the festival 10 documentaries were screened. Amongst those 'The Terranoami Music Vedio' jointly sung by Waheed Jeelani and American based Rockstar Terranoami

"Say it' possible" produced and directed by Shafqat Habib which conveys and spreads the message about global warming and another documentary film 'Pangolins in peril': a story of rare scales" produced by a Pakistan documentary filmmaker, Muhammad Ali Ijaz were the main highlights of the day.

A panel discussion was held in which Justice (Retd) Hassanian Masoodi,

head geography department from KU, Prof Muhammad Sultan Bhat, EMMRC producer, Shafaqat Habib, and journalist Gowhar Geelani participated. The panellists were unanimous in their arguments that climate change can be minimised if people from childhood are made aware of its repercussions. Producer EMMRC, Ajaz ul Haque moderated the discussion. A painting competition was held on the sidelines of the festival in which students from various colleges and schools participated. Students from the music and fine arts also performed on the inaugural function.

The theme of this edition is "Conservation4water" with special focus on youth empowerment and community engagement. The three day film festival will delve on issues of the inter-connectedness of climate change and water, water struggles in a world dealing with global warming, livelihood insecurity, and highlighting the important issues affecting water through film screening, media workshop and open forum discussions.



Eight villages without electricity in frontier Kupwara

Hyder Ali
Kupwara

Not less than twenty kilometers from the district headquarter, Kupwara lies an area called Manigah comprising of 8 villages which has not seen electricity even in this modern 21st century era. These villages mostly rely on solar plates, which only a few have access to and kerosene lanterns for lighting purpose.

Having a population of around 10000, residents of the area, majority belonging to the Scheduled Tribe Gujjar community, complain of systematic government apathy as they are forced to live in the dark and without proper water supply in the digital age.

"Electricity, roads and water supply are the lifeline of any village and town. Manigah area has none of these. Since we don't have any approaching road

in the village, we had to unload all the material ahead of the nallah and take it from there manually," said a local resident Manzoor Ahmad.

Manzoor added that, "Health care facilities are located several kilometers away. In case of emergencies, locals carry the patient on their shoulders. Crossing strenuous paths of hills and forests to reach hospitals located in the district adds to the gravity of the medical crises."

I have not seen electricity in the village since my birth. I want to become a doctor, but I don't think it's easy to crack the medical entrance exam when you have to study holding a lighted wood stick in one hand," said Aamina, a class 12th student.

Meanwhile Civil Society Kupwara (CSK) says that, this era is called modern era and in which people should feel comfortable and enjoy hassle free

facilities like of electricity, portable water supply, health care, good roads and internet. It added they had demanded to the concerned authority that the villages be provided electricity among all other necessary facilities.

"Few years back, we didn't even have roads in the village. The water pipes laid by the government are of no use as we have to fetch water from a polluted natural stream that flows through the village. We don't even have a dispensary in the village," said Mohammad Ayoub, head of the village.

"There are only a few villages without electricity. Due to tough and hilly terrain of the area, it was difficult to lay the transmission lines. Our department is already working on it and has acquired the necessary equipments required for the project," said a power development department (PDD) official.

EDITORIAL TEAM

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