



Lab Newspaper of  
Media Education Research Centre, KU

Vol 7 | No 09 | JUNE 30, 2014

# MERC TIMES



## SENTENCE TO AL-JAZEERA JOURNALISTS

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# BAD ROADS WELCOME AMARANTH YATRIS

● **Afshan Rashid**

**F**ive days left for the annual Amarnath Yatra to begin, the authorities are still in an uncertain situation about the opening of Pahalgam route for the Yatra which, according to the official sources is still covered by heavy snow.

“The Chandanwari route, the track between Sheshnag-Wavbal-Mahagunus Top, Poshpatri-Panjtarni is still heavily covered with snow. The snow level, particularly at Poshpatri-Mahagunus Top and Wavbal, is between six and eight feet which may take few more days to clear it,” Chief

Executive Officer of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), R K Gupta said in an official statement.

On the other side the Baltal route is all set to be opened on the defined date of Yatra. The Baltal-Holy Cave (16-km) track is largely clear. The final stretch of about a kilometer up to the shrine is still fully covered with snow and, as in the past years, on this stretch the pilgrims would have to walk on the frozen path,” Gupta said.

Authorities claim that they are all set to start the Amarnath Yatra and all necessary arrangements have been made which include registration, accommodation and security arrange-

ments. But the road that connects Srinagar to Sonmarag via Ganderbal is in pathetic condition. No actions are taken to widen the road, macadamize it or even do the repairing.

“We enjoy the status of being in CM’s constituency but in reality we have not even availed a single benefit from it, the condition of roads is so bad that it seems we are living in some remote area and the growing tourist flow is causing lot of traffic jams adding to our daily problems and we don’t know what will happen after the Yatra starts,” said

Abdul Rashid, a local resident. The residents of Ganderbal district

expressed strong feeling against the Roads and Buildings department for its failure to repair the dilapidated road stretches in the area.

The main road connecting the district with Srinagar is in shambles. “We are trying to repair the roads as soon as possible and patching of roads is in progress, widening of roads is a long process and the program has been stopped because of the stay order given by court filled by some locals and we request people to drive in accordance to rules to avoid unnecessary jamming,” said Muzaffer Iqbal, JE R&B department Sonmarag.

## VALLEY BECOMES NON-LOCAL BEGGARS’ PARADISE

● **Anayat Sultan**

**T**he population of non-local beggars in Kashmir Valley appears to have increased manifold in the recent years.

At every traffic junction, tourist place, or place of worship, the beggars, most of them with amputated limbs, are seen chasing locals as well as tourists for alms. The people suspect involvement of “some agency” in leading the beggars to the Valley.

“There definitely seems some agency behind these beggars as most of them have amputated legs or hands. How is it possible that a person with amputated legs travels so far to beg here?” Omar Shafi, a student hailing from Qamarwari here, said.

The beggars are encouraged by the generosity shown by Muslims of the Valley during the holy month of Ramadan. Muslims believe that charity in the holy month fetches them more rewards. To most Muslims, therefore, giving a beggar a rupee or two during the month isn’t a tough ask. And it in turn encourages more and more beggars to rush to the valley with their begging bowls.

“Few days ago, I was waiting for a bus at a bus stop. Suddenly, a group of five or eight beggars surrounded me, and started pulling at my clothes. They didn’t let me go until I gave them some money,” Sheikh Aqib, a student from Baramulla in north Kashmir, said.

People associated with tourism

sector said that non-local beggars are bringing a bad name to the industry. Many tourists, they said, are puzzled to see so many beggars pestering around.

Bashir Ahmad, who rows a Shikara in Dal Lake, said: “The beggars are denting the reputation of our tourism industry. The tourists often complain about being ‘harassed’ by the beggars who keep tagging along until they dish out some money.”

Rishi Kumar, a tourist from Mumbai, said “Mumbai doesn’t have as many beggars as Kashmir has”.

“The presence of beggars in a tourist place like Kashmir makes the whole stay irritating,” he added.

The state has prevention of Beggary Act 1960 in place, allowing arrest of the persons who use their disabilities for begging. But police is accused of not using the laws against the beggars.

“Whenever a Kashmiri goes outside for studies or for any other purpose, he is harassed on one pretext or the other. But here in Kashmir, nobody bothers about the rising number of non-local beggars, who may be indulging in criminal activities as well,” Mohammad Ishaq, a law student at Kashmir University, said.

The police, however, said that the department is “looking at every angle of this menace” and has “taken various steps to keep it under check”.

“An anti-begging drive has been started. Many beggars have been arrested and deported to their native places,” SSP Srinagar, Amit Kumar, said.

## SMC TO MAKE SRINAGAR FOOD ADULTERATION FREE

● **Gazanfar**

**S**rinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) is likely to take strict action against the traders involved in food adulteration.

The authorities said they will make every effort to make Srinagar City “Adulteration free”.

The corporation has reiterated its stand to act tough against food adulteration and people who will be found involved in the practice of food adulteration.

Srinagar city has witnessed rapid increase in the number of cases of food adulteration in the past few months. Legal action against some manufacturing units has already been taken, but still the practice continues in the city.

Health officer of SMC Dr Shafiqat Khan said the department will take strong action against the shopkeepers who will be found involved in food adulteration irrespective of their brand name.

“This year, out of 185 samples of different food items collected by Food Inspectors from different parts of the city, 17 were found adulterated and many were selling sub-standard food items,” he said.

“We are doing our duties sincerely and we are firm that we will make Srinagar city free from food adulteration,” he added.

According to him, adulteration is done through different methods. In case of turmeric, shopkeepers add starch to it.

“We will not let people suffer by consuming adulterated products,” Khan said.

The most commonly adulterated commodities are Flour, milk, curd, sugar, tea, ghee, honey, spices, saffron, pulses, condensed milk, curries, cold drinks, vinegar and Wazwan items.

“Not a single offender will be allowed to escape the legal action and the manufacturing units indulging in these practices will have to face the music,” he said.

## HIMAYAT SCHEME ATTRACTS UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

●Altaf Hussain

**T**he Government of India (GOI) announced ambitious programme Himayat for upliftment of the women and for capacity building of youth in Jammu and Kashmir.

Himayat scheme was brought under the state's ministry of rural development in 2011 for an initial period of five years to help youth in gaining skills.

The Project is running in different districts. In district Budgam, it was extended initially to two blocks of Khansahib and Budgam. According to the proposal of rural development ministry, the scheme would cover 143 rural development blocks across Jammu and Kashmir.

"Himayat is a skill development training program by the ministry of rural development where unemployed youth get skill development training in various spheres like BPO, CSSA, and hospitality," Mir Faheem, in-charge of Himayat centre Budgam, said.

He said: "Under this scheme, a student is enrolled in a three months long training program, after which they are endowed with a job placement."

"With the help of Himayat centre, I was able to learn communication skills. Here, we learn about interviews, management, and computers," said Firdous Ahmed, a student.

"The entire program is quite good mainly for drop-outs who otherwise end up doing odd jobs due to the lack of skill. With this training, they get exposure and jobs in organised sectors. The duration of the training

course attracts youth as they get Rs1000 monthly for three months and Rs 2000 per month for next six months as post placement support from the Government of India along with a certificate," Shipra Thapa, a teacher, said.

So far 471 applicants have received training in different domains in Budgam block while 150 of them have got jobs in various states of India. In Khansahib block, until now 225 trainees are benefited by this scheme.

Jibran Khalid, a teacher, said: "Trainees are given appointment letters for jobs in various multi-national companies as per their capabilities".

He said that a total of 28, 204 have been trained across the state, of which 22, 375 have got placements. There are still 4825 under training, he said.

"Since youth are trained in varied job skills like retail mart, hospitality sector, trade sector, IT, pharma sales assistance, unemployment rate, which is so high, would be reduced to some extent," Zahoor Ahmed Paul, in-charge of Himayat centre at Khansahib block, said.

But youth are dissatisfied with the jobs provided due to low salary, indecent living place and working conditions. Many have left the jobs.

"The scheme is a hoax and total waste of time," Irshad Ahmed, an applicant said.

He said Rs 5000 to 6000 monthly stipend was unattractive.

"Women getting training under the scheme couldn't avail job offers. They are not allowed to go outside for a job.

## MOMOS: DELICACY GETTING FAMOUS IN VALLEY



●Ghulam Murtaza

**M**omos are becoming favourite food among locals in valley for its unique taste food.

Momo, a traditional delicacy of Nepal which has its origin in Tibet, is getting popular in different districts of the valley particularly in the Srinagar city.

The popularity of Momo in Kashmir can be gauged by the establishment of several Momo restaurants around the Srinagar city. Most of these restaurants are filled with customers round the clock.

Chebi, a Nepali citizen who is working as a manager at a very popular Momo restaurant, said: "We are witnessing hundreds of customers every day who mainly come to eat Momos. We are offering several Chinese dishes in our menu, but most of our customers prefer Momos."

"We started our restaurant in 2002. At that time people were not so much aware about this food, so we had a limited number of customers. However now the rush has increased," he added.

Abdul Kareem, a Tibetan refugee who runs a Momo dhaba at Eidgah, said the people prefer Momos because it suits their pockets.

"Momos are very popular in different areas of downtown area as I witness a lot of people especially students visit my Dhaba from the areas. They enjoy it and can easily afford it," Kareem said.

Momo is a type of steamed bun filled with meat inside over a covering of dough. Traditionally, momo is prepared with minced meat filling, but over the past several years, this has changed and the fillings have become more elaborate. These days, momo is prepared with virtually any combination of ground meat, vegetables, tofu, paneer cheese, soft chhurpi (local cheese) and vegetable and meat combinations.

## BRICK KILNS CAUSING POLLUTION IN BUDGAM



● **Mohd Toib Ganie**

**T**he air pollution caused by increasing number of brick kilns in district Budgam's Candapora, Nasrullahpora, Paler, Labartal, and Mirgund villages is affecting health of the local population and agricultural production.

"We have cultivable land all around, but polluted air is affecting the production. As compared to past, we face many problems. We have to buy eatables from the market though we can't afford it," heads of the villages said.

"The smoke emitted from brick kilns is harmful. Many villagers have lost their orchards. My orchard is also getting damaged gradually," said Ghulam Ahmad Wani, resident of Paler.

Botanist Ghulam Rasool Dar said, "the smoke released from the chimneys contains flue gases, which affect the atmosphere."

"The gases detain plants growth, and also have serious effect on human life," he added.

Smoke produced by burning of wood or coal contains harmful particles, which can affect both lungs and heart. Numerous scientific studies have linked exposure to particle to a variety of problems including coughing, irritation, or difficulty in breathing, decreased lung function, aggravated asthma, and development of chronic bronchitis, irregular heartbeat, nonfatal heart attacks, and premature deaths of people with heart or lung diseases.

As per the guidelines of Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), the excavation activity related to 'brick earth' is restricted to a maximum depth of two meters below the ground level, but many brick kiln owners have dug deep below the required level. The MOEF has also said the activities concerning excavation of brick earth is permitted up to five hectares. But the guidelines are hardly followed.

There are more than 207 brick kilns in Budgam, most of them are close to villages. Every villager blames Government for not taking any rapid step to save their lives and livelihood.

## KU STUDENTS DEMAND SUBSIDY ON FOOD PRODUCTS

● **Nazir Gillo**

**K**ashmir University students seek decrease in the prices of food products sold in the canteens. Students from all the departments of the University are also demanding subsidies on food items.

According to students, all canteens in the campus offer food products at subsidised rates or the university open an food facility on no-profit-no-loss basis.

"It seems that university has no control on these outlets, as they are charging students with overpriced food items, and no one comes in their way," Pervaiz, a Postgraduate student, said.

Outlets inside the campus are installed by estates department after issuing the tender notices through the department of food technology. A condition to be followed by all of them is that they shall provide some discount to the students.

"They are not even selling the food items according to price tags. After all, Canteen food is the part of university life and the overpriced food items are discouraging students," said Aqib lone, who studies in a social science department.

● **Idrees Ahmad**

**I**n a bid to promote girls participation in sports, Youth Services and Sports organized two day athletic meet for girls in Qamariya ground here About 250 girls of different age groups participated in this event. Girls from far flung

## JKYSS ORGANIZED ATHLETIC MEET FOR GIRLS AT GANDERBAL

areas also participated despite facing many problems. 'we come from kangan area and it take many hours to reach here', tabasum a participant said

Preliminary rounds was con-

ducted on 4th June and finals were played on 5th June. Siama of GHS Tulmulla, Khushboo of GHS Manigam and Tabasum of GHS Ganderbal were winners in 100m, 400m and 800m respectively. Shabnam of GHS Tulmulla was winner of Discus throw while Sakina of Qamariya model school came out victorious in long jump. Speaking with a participant Tabasum about athletic meet she said that I am enjoying this meet and these kinds of events will encourage us to take keen interest in sports especially in athletics.

According to students, the Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and many reputed universities in India are providing subsidised food in their campus canteens.

"Large number of colleges in India receives government support directly in the form of subsidies, while private non-profit colleges or proprietary schools receive government support indirectly in the form of grants or vouchers given to students. Kashmir University authorities revise its policies regarding its campus canteens," said Bushra Nisar, who is doing M. Ed.

Tanveer Ahmad Shah, Deputy Registrar Estates Department, said, "It is a valid demand that students are asking us to fulfill. We are aware about the fact that any University shall have a canteen offering subsidised meals. We are working on it."

He said the canteen committee is formed under the direct supervision of the Vice Chancellor every year, which issues tenders and notifies the prospective canteen operators. This committee is currently head by him and has a few senior Professors as its members. They do random quality checks on food products and also check overpricing.

On the occasion prize ceremony CEO Ganderbal Mir Sanualla and DC Ganderbal Sarmad Hafeez were chief guest. They distributed prizes among winners. On the occasion Firdous Ahmad convener YSS Ganderbal said that we are doing our best to increase standard of sports in Ganderbal and in future we will organize many more such events.

# SENTENCE TO AL-JAZEERA JOURNALISTS

FROM ONE-MINUTE SILENCE AT BBC TO NEW YORK TIMES' BLANK PAGE, SOLIDARITIES POUR IN

● **Irshad Khan**

Since the three senior journalists, Peter Greste, Mohamad Fahmy and Baher Mohamed were sentenced by an Egyptian court on Monday, prominent media organizations from across the world condemned the action. While condemning the sentence, the different media organizations have expressed solidarity with Al Jazeera, a Doha-based TV news channel.

Greste and Fahmy were given a term of seven years each, while Mohamad was given an extra term of three years for possession

of a bullet casing. Two more Al Jazeera journalists, Sue Turton and Dominic Kane were also tried in absentia for a term of ten years each.

On Tuesday, 24 hours after the sentence, hundreds of journalists, working with various media organizations, gathered outside the BBC headquarters in central London, holding a one minute silent protest against the sentence handed to the journalists.

Meanwhile, New York Times, an American daily, stood by the journalists 'ahead of time'. The newspaper, on the eve of the sentence on Sunday itself, as a mark of protest against the jailed Al

Jazeera journalists, left its back page blank with the message "This is what happens when you silence journalists", along with the hashtag #FreeAJStaff.

The three TV journalists were arrested in December 2013 in the backdrop of political unrest in Egypt that witnessed the Army's removal of

Mohammad Morsi from the Presidency earlier in the year. Since their arrest last year, Al Jazeera has consistently been denying the charges against them. Now, the



journalists being sentenced, the channel is pressing for an immediate release of the convicted who have already spent more than six months in jail.

## MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT CONSUMES TWO MORE LIVES

● **Ishan Fazili**

Two cases of man-animal conflict have been reported in Kashmir Valley in last three months even as 28 people were killed in the similar incidents last year.

In the latest attack, which happened in Kupwara district of north Kashmir on July 1, a 10 year old boy was mauled to death by a leopard.

According to the wildlife officials, most attacks occur in the north Kashmir districts like Bandipora, Baramulla and Kupwara, which accommodate around 10 per cent of the total forests of the state.

"Most attacks occur in summers as people get busy with agricultural and horticultural activities and become less cautious of the wild animals," says Shuja Hyderi, Regional Wildlife Warden Kashmir.

In the past few years, the valley has witnessed a high number of incidents of man-animal conflict. In 2013, 28 people were killed and 333 were injured in the attacks on humans by animals.

The wildlife department has taken initiatives to avoid the man-animal conflicts. The department is educating people through media about the ways of avoiding the conflicts, but to no avail.

"In December 2013, we set up at least 20 control rooms to look up to the cases of man-animal conflict and to provide compensation to the victims. An amount of Rs 3, 25, 000 for the injured was also announced last year," Shuja said.

## PARVEZ'S INDIA DEBUT PUTS 'POOR' JKCA UNDER SCANNER

● **Junaid Rafiq/Irshad Khan**

In the absence of cricket academies, professionals, division level cricket and proper playing conditions, Pervez Rasool's debut at international arena seems a magical one.

Cricket in Kashmir has not yet been professionalized, scams and scandals are part of the system. Despite these 'pathetic' conditions, Parvez's journey represents the craze for the game among valley's youth.

"It is a proud feat for me. I always believed in my ability. We are not less than anybody when it comes to talent, but reformation is needed in regard to how the cricket operates in our state," says Pervez Rasool.

The 25 year old right arm off spinner broke the jinx and brought an end to the long wait of the people of J&K to see a cricketer from the state to play at the highest level.

Mehraj U Din Wadoo, a Kashmiri Footballer, who represents the Indian National team says, "Cricket is the popular sport in our state. In football we have always produced skillfull players who represented India. The Parvez's debut was much needed to set the tune for the new era of professionalism in our state's cricket."

While Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) is anticipating the foray of Parvez into international cricket will pave the way for others to emulate the same but the ground situation is different. For many cricketers, JKCA has failed at regulating the game.

Sayyid, 22, who plays for the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) says, "JKCA is taking credit for individual success. Since establishment it has devoured funds allocated by the BCCI. Outside J&K we have proper club cricket with all

the facilities and players are paid handsomely even at the lowest level. Nothing like this exists in our state."

JKCA's woeful condition is not hidden; apart from SK Stadium it has no property. The state's cricket body has no turf wickets and uses grounds owned by schools, colleges or Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council said the group of senior cricketers in Srinagar.

While the development of turf wickets and cricketing avenues are the basic requirements of the game, the authorities state that they have "started the work on Islamia College turf and Amir Singh College turf but maintenance becomes an issue due to property rights." Joint Secretary, JKCA, Idrees Gandroo, when contacted said that these types of questions are genuine. We are already working on these issues. "We don't have anything to say about the allegations, but we welcome all suggestions and positive criticism."

In a recent development JKCA has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work on these various suggestions by involving all the stakeholders.

"We are trying to strike different deals under this plan to provide basic infrastructure to our cricketers. We may not be able to do something big, but we want to give at least basic facilities to our players in every district." Idrees said.

Parvez Rasool's achievement may not be enough for him to win the hearts of the valley's cricket lovers, who expect him to work for the improvement of sport in the valley.

Shahid Lateef, 16, 110 points cricketer, says, "After reaching to this level, we expect Parvez to guide the sport to new heights in the Jammu and Kashmir. I hope he will not disappoint.

## GOVT POLICIES FAIL TO CHECK CHILD LABOUR

● **Nelofar Jan**

**T**he different schemes of the government have failed to check child labour in the state.

In Kashmir, the problem of child labour is increasing day by day.

A 10-years-old Child Farooq, from Chadoora Budgam, works as a cobbler in Srinagar near the Civil Secretariat.

He said: "I would like to go to school, but my father cannot feed the entire family alone." Farooq has a strong urge to study and is fond of playing cricket, but is working as a cobbler since he was six years of age.

"I have never been to school. I wish to play like other children, but I have to do my work. I am away from my family as they live in a village and that too in a small tent. I go to see them after a couple of weeks with the earned money. While I am working in Srinagar, I miss them more than anything. I wish to be with them like other children in the family."

Twelve-years-old Nazima from Jammu lives in a slum on the outskirts of Srinagar. Her day begins at 8 A M when she goes to the city to earn livelihood by selling cloth for vehicle cleaning. As per Nazima, she manages to earn around Rs 70 per day.

"My father cannot feed us alone. I would like to go to school, but seeing my father's helplessness, I cannot even think of it. I wished to become a doctor, but that does not seem a reality now," she said.

## HIKE IN THE PRICES AS FESTIVAL COMMENCES

● **Sarvat Nabi**

**A** few days to the commencement of the Ramadan fast, the prices of foodstuffs and other essential commodities escalate in most markets across the country, according to a national survey.

People tend to consume more and even purchase more than they actually need. The prices of dietary essentials have risen steadily over the years, so that now there are estimates that nearly two-thirds of the population spends between 50pc to 70pc of its income on food alone. Rafiq Ahmed said, people of other religions get discounts, special offers on their respective religious occasions. But the shopkeepers here set the prices at their own whims, which increases the misery. The hiking of prices is not limited to urban areas but rural areas are also affected. The poor suffer the most.

There are no savings thanks to the rise in the prices.

Traders attributed some of the reasons for the hike in price to the Ramadan, the increase in the minimum wage of workers, high cost of transportation and increase in the cost of diesel, amongst others. In addition to personal costs incurred by retailers from suppliers".

Muneer Ahmed, a student said "the prices

of essential commodities are sky rocketing in this holy month and the government is doing nothing on its part. An effective mechanism should be introduced for checking of prices", The ground reality is that there is nobody to check the prices and make it rational. There should be a general price list of all the products. It really painful for people to spend more on an item which is cheaper at some other place. There are variable prices of same product in the same market and sometimes even in adjacent shops. It is a matter of concern, but government is not doing enough to in this matter. The government should keep checks on prices said Mr Rahim Khan, a resident of Humhama. Ramadan is a time of spiritual reflection, improvement but inturn the shopkeepers tend to create troubles for masses to earn profits. buying commodities in polythene bags they should inform us about it."

"If authorities want to implement a strict ban on polythene usage they should stop those who actually import polythene in the city. Once it is available to the shopkeepers, they do use it and unfortunately people also don't act against it and take it for granted," a shopper said.

"Moreover, awareness programmes should be organized to inform people regarding the hazardous nature of the polythene so that they come to know about how harmful it is for our environment," he added.

## JCRB FLYOVER CONSTRUCTION: TRADERS UNHAPPY WITH REHABILITATION POLICY

● **Rafia Rahim**

**E**ven as the construction of the Jehangir Chowk-Ram Bagh (JCRB) flyover has already started, the traders affected by the coming up of 2.5kilometer flyover accuse the government of failing to rehabilitate them.

The elevated express way corridor financed by the Asian Development Bank is meant for decongestion of traffic on the road leading to the Srinagar Airport from Lal Chowk. The project is to be implemented in parts. A number of engineers are involved in the construction of the flyover in Srinagar.

The JCRB flyover is perceived by the local populace as the royal express way only meant for the VIPs and VVIPs, and not for the common people.

The Secretary of the Traders Association Solina Bazaar Bilal Ahmad said, "The construction of flyover has affected the local business. The noise and the hard flash lights

have given the local people sleepless nights, the bumpy roads with the dust have equally affected the pedestrians and shopkeepers."

The authorities have assured proper rehabilitation of the parties affected due to the construction of the flyover. They appealed to the people for cooperation, citing that the need for traffic decongestion was highly important and as such construction of an alleviated expressway corridor was the only way out.

Director of the Economic Reconstruction Agency Alok Menghi said, "We are doing our best to rehabilitate the stakeholders, we are trying to compensate them and the process is still going on."

On the other hand, the affected stakeholders are unhappy with the rehabilitation process.

Aabid Hussain, a shopkeeper in the affected area, said, "I do not agree with the rehabilitation process. I have been affected by the ongoing construction of the flyover. We

are not against the construction, but we are against the policies of the government."

On May 9, the traders association protested against the construction of the flyover. One of the protestors said: "We favour the construction of JCRB flyover, but not at the cost of our livelihood. Give us an alternative place to run our business."

"Flyover is not for common people, but for the VIPs and VVIPs. They should have widened the road first," said another protestor.

Not only locals, but the workers too have grievances.

"We have to work for 12 hours a day, and we have no holidays, no medical facility, and no life insurance," said one of the workers.

Srinagar, summer capital of the State, faces the problem of traffic jams more than ever. The traffic mess is mainly due to narrow and withered roads.

The flyover could help in ending the traffic mess.

## MACHINE MADE COPPER UTENSILS FLOODING KASHMIR

● **Ubaid jeelani**

Copper forms the major mementoes from Jammu and Kashmir. The high quality products are mainly the artwork of skilled and indigenous craftsmen and comprise of samovars (tea Kettle), cooking pots, water jugs, hukka bases and much more. One would come across both plain and highly intricate work by artisans catering to tastes of buyers from different parts of world. Accordingly the price of an item would vary depending on the naqash (design) and obviously the weight of the item.

The art of copper ware casting has been flourishing in Kashmir since ages now. The origin of the copper work of j&k is from the fateh Kadal area of the valley and the first known products were domestic item like cooking pots, containers, hukka bases, ornamental glasses, water jugs, samovars. The artisans have been known for their skills long before the Muslims invaded the country. Kashmir craftsmen have maintained the skills of their ancestors and the quality of their work through ages.

In Kashmir copper business serves as a source of livelihood to thousands of skilled artisans engaged with this profession. However, with machines crippling in, the Kashmir's famed copper

ware is slowly losing its ground to technology making thousands of those artisans jobless. The manufacture of copper ware in Kashmir was once a famed vocation giving livelihood to thousands of artisans, serving source of income for hundreds of copper smiths. During the last decade or so, however, the sector has badly been affected by the introduction of machines.

"Our trade has become victim of machines. At my workplace I used to have many workers manufacturing and designing the copper items throughout the year". Ghulam Hassan a copper smith who is now alone working at his workplace at Sadrabal here says. He says that copper utensils manufactured in Kashmir were popular even outside the state for their intricate handmade design. But now the machines have taken the lead and the handmade designs have become rare.

Ghulam Mohiuddin, another coppersmith from Dargah, Hazratbal says "I was 10 year old when I started work at a copper place. But when machines were used for designing and manufacturing, there remained no work for artisans like me forcing me to leave our profession which was very dear to us". Ghulam Mohiuddin is now working as a sumo driver.

Kashmir artisans were known for producing excellent products of copper ware. The handmade

designs on articles were so intricate that defined the creating of the artisans. To encourage this local industry, Prohibition and Manufacturing of specified copper utensils by Machine Act 2006 was established by the j&k government prohibiting the manufacturing of copper utensils by machines. But there are some unscrupulous traders still dealing in copper utensils made by machines which have deprived genuine copper worker of their livelihood.

Different organizations are coming forward to save handmade copper utensils from being replaced by machine made, like Majestic Voluntary Organization who has always remained at the fore front for several years creating awareness among the artisans of Kashmir for their right.

From time to time, artisans have been demanding implementation of Prohibition and Manufacturing of specified copper utensils by Machine Act 2006 strictly as number of shops could be seen dealing in machine made copper ware, so that world famous Handicraft are revived to the advantages of the artisans. They also have been demanding supply of raw material of proper quality and also permanent space be provided for production, display and sale of products which should be done through government department meant for development of handicraft in j&k state.

## A G MIR'S INITIATIVE ATTRACTS HUNDREDS OF CIVIL SERVICE ASPIRANTS

● **UMAR. SHAFI**

Interaction between the recently selected civil service candidates and the aspirants was held at Amar Singh College at 11 am on Sunday. This interaction was a part of the initiative that was some years back started by A G Mir who is IGP Kashmir. A G Mir who is himself a 1994 batch IPS officer single handedly started the initiative called Initiative for Competition Promotion [ICP].

This interaction was held in order to give the students the first hand experience of civil service exam. Many new and senior IAS officers who are the permanent members of this organization were present. The recently selected IAS officers who were felicitated during the event were also invited to have one-on-one interaction with the students. These young officers shared their experience regarding civil service and also gave some important tips to crack civil service aptitude test. Apart from these Shah Faesal who is 2010 IAS topper made the event more exciting with his presence.

Addressing the students, Shah Faesal who is one of the permanent member of ICP



congratulated the candidates who recently qualified the prestigious civil service exam. "It is a matter of great satisfaction that more and more candidates are qualifying the prestigious examination" he said and added that IGP Kashmir A G Mir is the driving force for the initiative. He said the interactions like these will help more aspirants to get motivated for passing such exams. To inspire

students, Faesal further said that once you are in the civil service, it gives you a lot of pleasure as it provides you all the opportunities to help the people around you.

A G Mir while speaking on the occasion congratulated the candidates who passed the civil service test. He said that "there is a wave of happiness all over the valley due to these newly selected candidates". "These boys have made us proud and everyone of you should follow their guidelines", he said to the aspirants.

He further said the sole aim of creating ICP is to ensure one-on-one interaction of the aspiring students with the civil service officers. IGP asked the aspiring students to feel free to seek guidance and assistance from ICP for the civil service.

Today ICP is an organization run by many IAS and KAS officers under the dynamic leadership of A G Mir. Under this initiative, the students from various backgrounds are provided free guidance and coaching by different IAS and KAS officers. Among those who were also present and are part of the ICP were Shahnawaz [KAS], Owais [KAS] and Aziz [2008, KAS].

# ROAD ACCIDENTS ON RISE



● **Yasir Gaffar**

**N**umber of traffic accidents occurring on the Srinagar-Jammu highway and in the Srinagar city has gone up.

In one of the latest incidents, four persons died and thirty-seven others sustained injuries in different road accidents on this side of the Banihal tunnel. The dead included two brothers.

“There is a dangerous trend growing fast in the city, and other urban centers,” said DIG.

A group of people from downtown Srinagar said stunts attempted by young bikers are proving fatal. Recently, Rasik Shabir Harbol, a teenager, died on sport while performing stunts on a bike on the Nallah Mar Road.

Scores of speeding teenager motorcyclists could be seen performing stunts on the by-pass road, without any check.

“Even motorcyclist don’t observe minimum safety norm of wearing a helmet,” people said.

The traffic police present on the roads is a mute spectator to these frightening scenes.

The highway connecting two capitals of the state, despite huge presence of traffic police, has become a death trap.

“The traffic police department has miserably failed in enforcing effective measures for preventing increasing number of traffic accidents. It is high time for the traffic police to bring an attitudinal change in its personal, and to tell them in categorical terms that they are on roads for enforcing traffic regulations and preventing road accidents,” the people said.

# Trehgam Town Club Emerges Victorious In T20 Cup

● **Zafar Aafaq**

**T**he Trehgam T20 Cup organized by Trehgam Cricket Organization ended up in the victory of Town Club Trehgam. The final of the tournament was played between Trehgam Town Club (TTC) and Bategam Cricket Stars (BCS) at Hilltop stadium Trehgam, Kupwara on June, 22.

Bategam won the toss and choose to bat. The team scored 150 runs with the loss of six wickets Trehgam bowlers took four wickets at 27 runs in the beginning Wasim Lone and Sheikh Junaid added 80 runs for the sixth wicket. Wasim Lone scored 50 runs from 39 balls whereas Sheikh Junaid made 40 runs of 23 balls.

Chasing target of 150 runs, TTC begin with attack and got the team off to a fast start. In first 5 overs BCS bowlers conceded 60 runs. Imran Sheikh, star of TTC made a sizzling 45 runs with 5 sixes and 3 fours.

With the fall of Imran Sheikh, TTC innings lost its balance as they lost 4 middle order batsmen in the span of 12 runs. However, left handed wicket-keeper batsman, Malik Mushtaq started his innings with a boundary and ended with a six to take his team home. Mushtaq with the help of 3 fours and 3 sixes made 45 runs and was awarded with Man of the Match.

Headmaster Boys High School Trehgam was chief guest on the occasion. He distributed prizes among players. The tournament was started on June 12 and commenced on 22nd.



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