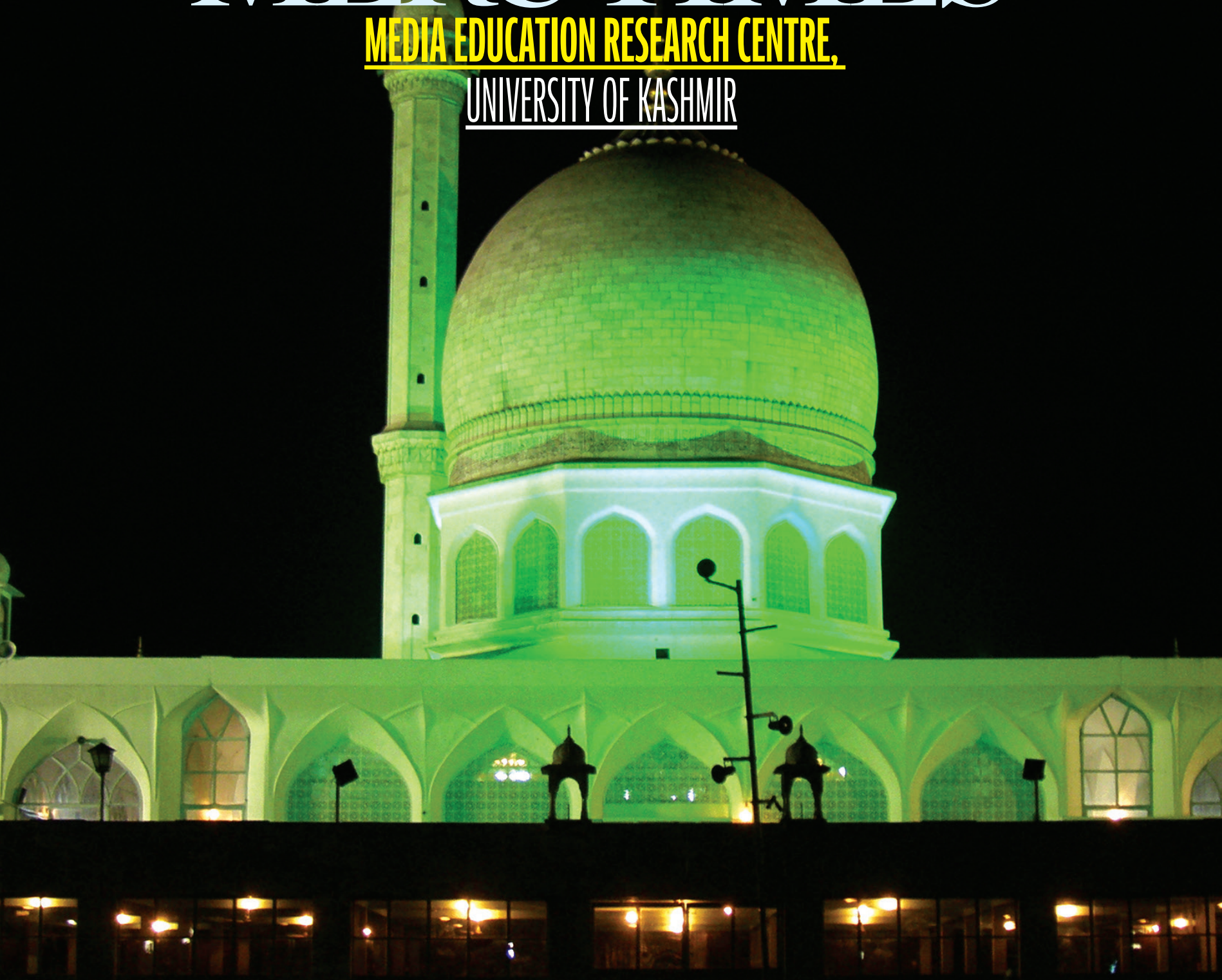


Vol 10 • No 18 • Pages 08 • NOVEMBER 30, 2018

MERC TIMES

MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE,
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR



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Poor BSNL service irks Pahalgam subscribers

Sheikh Ahsaan
Srinagar

The subscribers of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in Nunwun town of Pahalgam have alleged that the internet and tele-communication services of the state owned telecom company is majority of times non-functional, despite of submitting the monthly bills on time.

The subscribers told MERC Times that both the call connectivity and internet is poor in the area. They cannot make any calls even during emergencies.

“Many a times tower signals disappear suddenly while making a call. The call drops of BSNL telephony and erratic internet is frequent in the belt due to poor network”, Said one of the subscribers.

“The BSNL mobile telephony and BSNL internet is worst in providing services”, He added.

Another subscriber told the reporter that the BSNL services in Pahalgam is such that they are unable to even download small files on internet.

“It takes around 50 minutes to download a file of 1MB” He said.

The subscribers said that the problem of poor connectivity was brought into the notice of BSNL authorities a number of times but no action has been taken so far.

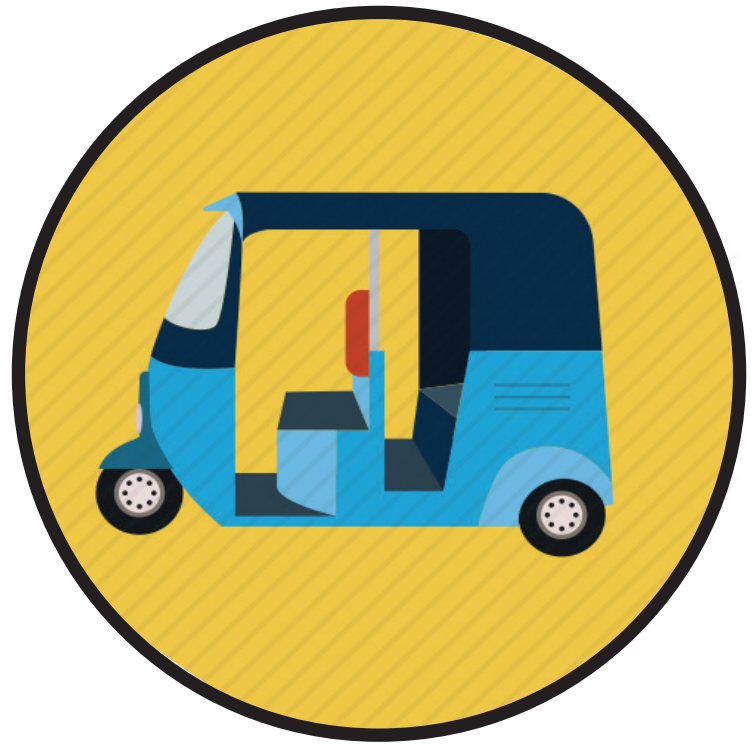
“As we pay our bills regularly, the BSNL authorities should improve its services, otherwise we have no option but to switch to other cellular operators,” said a local resident, Salman.

People of the area said the problem exists due to lack of adequate mobile towers in the area, as a single tower has been kept for more than 30 villages.

Meanwhile, the subscribers appealed the General Manager BSNL to look into the issue and send a team to the area to improve the services.



Many a times tower signals disappear suddenly while making a call. The call drops of BSNL telephony and erratic internet is frequent in the belt due to poor network



Auto-rickshaw drivers boss Srinagar commuters

Aarif Shah
Srinagar

The continuous failure of authorities to install calibrated meters in auto-rickshaws is taking heavy toll on passengers in Srinagar city.

The auto-rickshaw drivers charge passengers arbitrarily causing immense inconvenience to them. The passengers mince no words to accuse the authorities for not installing meters in auto-rickshaws.

“Different auto drivers charge different rates, there is no fixed rate on any route. They charge us heavily as per their wishes. And authorities are sleeping.” said Faisal Irshad, a student.

However authorities have directed auto-rickshaw drivers to install calibrated meters in 20 days through an official notification.

Passengers also accuse auto drivers of taking advantage of their helplessness in the absence of buses and sumos especially in the late evening hours.

Mohammad Yosuf, a passenger shares, “some auto drivers charge us more arbitrary rates by taking undue advantage of our helplessness. The authorities have completely failed to install meters in autos despite heavy claims through media. Nothing has been done on ground in this regard.” However the auto-rickshaw drivers refute these allegations by saying we cannot go against our association.

“We have our association and we can not go against the rates set by association. People never ask us for installing meters and why should we install it”, an auto driver replied to

the query.

Regional Transport Officials said that “Traffic Department has already issued a notification in this regard. There are about 10000 registered auto-rickshaws in the Srinagar city, out of which 1500 have already installed meters in their three-wheelers.”

They further said that once the deadline is over, we will restart the drive against it.



We have our association and we can not go against the rates set by association. People never ask us for installing meters and why should we install it

Flu vaccine protects pregnant women, their babies: DAK



ABID ALEEM
Srinagar

While Urging pregnant women to get vaccinated against flu, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Sunday stated that flu vaccine protects expectant mothers and their babies from flu.

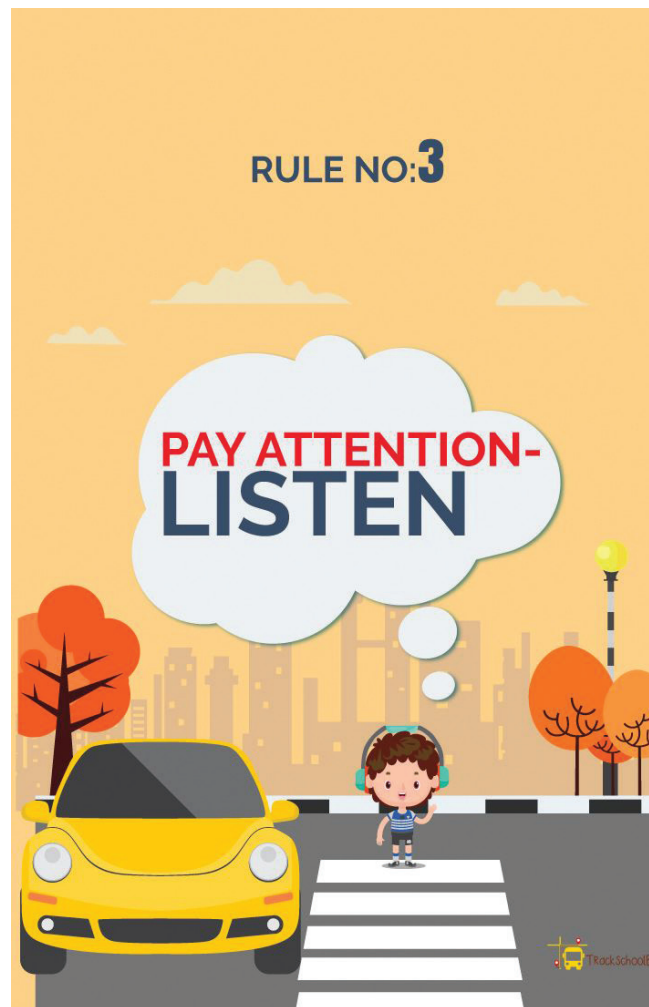
“ Pregnant women are more vulnerable when it comes to flu due to the way their immune system, heart and lungs change during pregnancy,” said DAK president and flu expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan in a briefing.

“ Pregnant women who get the flu are at higher risk of hospitalization, and even death,” he stated.

Dr Nisar said the risk of premature labor and delivery increases when expectant mothers catch the flu and there is a greater chance of birth defects and even death of a baby in the womb. “ Preventing influenza during pregnancy is an essential element of prenatal care and the most effective strategy for preventing influenza is vaccination,” he said.

“ Flu vaccine in pregnancy saves infants from dying in the womb,” he said.

Regulation and strengthening of traffic rules a must: IGP Traffic



Rooh Yaseen
Srinagar

Meeting was conducted by IGP Traffic J&K Alok Kumar of officers of Traffic Police City Srinagar and Rural Kashmir with an aim to strengthen traffic enforcement and regulation mechanism here at Traffic Police headquarters on Tuesday.

Besides, IGP Traffic J&K reviewed the traffic arrangements of Eid-E-Milad Un Nabi. The meeting was attended by SSP Traffic City Srinagar, Al-Tahir Gilani, SP Traffic Rural Kashmir, Muzaffar Ahmad Shah, Additional SP Traffic City Srinagar, Sonam Decha, Dy SPs, DTIs of Traffic City Srinagar and Traffic Police Rural Kashmir.

The IGP sought feedback from officers regarding current traffic Management/situation in the Valley.

On the occasion IGP Traffic J&K stressed upon the officers to take all necessary measures to smoothen the flow of traffic in Srinagar City and all areas of Kashmir Valley by strictly enforcing the M.V Act / Rules with zero tolerance against visible offences viz. use of seat belt, overloading

in PSVs, use of helmet etc. He further stressed upon the officers to exhibit high sense of responsibility and behavior while dealing with the traffic violators.

Kumar in his deliberations with the officers sought assurances from the officers for a visible change on ground with a people friendly attitude and ensured that technology oriented gadgetry and other implements would be provided to the traffic officers for traffic regulation and enforcement in the near future.

He directed the officers that the entry of heavy vehicles (tippers) into City Srinagar be allowed as per the prescribed time. The officers were directed that they will liaise with the management of coaching centers to stagger the timing of coaching centers during peak hours, so that the traffic movement on these routes may not get hampered.

IGP stressed upon the officers that they will liaise with SMC Srinagar and will conduct regular drivers at HSHS and

Mahraja Bazar to remove the illegal occupation on the road side so that the traffic movement on this road stretch can be normalized. Besides this the officers were directed that they will ensure that all lower subordinate officials will wear florescent jackets during night hours for visibility and safety. The officers were directed to ensure that no PSV shall be allowed to ply on M.A Road and shall follow the diversion plan strictly and violators be dealt strict as per M.V Act.

IGP Traffic J&K also visited the under construction Jahangir Chowk-Rambagh Flyover and directed CEO ERA to open one tube of the said flyover from Jahangir Chowk to Naaz Crossing during peak hours who assured that one tube of said flyover will be thrown open from tomorrow during peak hours to ease out traffic pressure on this particular road stretch.

He also visited the Hazratbal shrine to review the traffic arrangements for Eid-e-MiladUnNabi and gave on spot directions to the officers regarding smooth movement of traffic. The IGP requested the general public to cooperate with Traffic department in regulating the traffic.

Sheikh Arsh
Srinagar

In spite of an active ban on burning of fallen leaves and twigs in Srinagar, people have been seen constantly violating the ban that results in increase of pollution levels.

In November 2017, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) had asked people to stop burning of leaves and twigs as it causes severe air pollution during winters.

"Fallen leaves are burnt to get charcoal that is used in traditional fire pots (Kangri). The burning of leaves are our source of income during winters," said Rafeeqa Bano, a local at Chinar Park Dalgate.

Further she said that every year they burn fallen leaves and twigs in the park and then sell charcoal in the market. If the government wants to control air pollution, they must first ban the brick kilns and old vehicles which emit toxic gases throughout the year, she added.

Another woman, Zaiba Begum who was collecting fallen leaves near Abdullah Bridge said since

Defiance of ban on burning of **chinar** leaves



Fallen leaves are burnt to get charcoal that is used in traditional fire pots (Kangri). The burning of leaves are our source of income during winters

decades her family has been using the burnt leaves to get warmth during harsh winters and also earn livelihood.

"We make around 30-35 bags of charcoal every season and sell major portion of it in the market to earn livelihood and rest we keep for our own use," she said.

Chief Sanitation Officer, SMC, Ghulam Rasool said that they have already issued an advisory for implementing a complete ban on burning of fallen leaves in the city.

"Violators are dealt with strictly under the rule of law. From past one month SMC squads have strictly ensured the blanket ban," Rasool said.

During the morning and evening hours in many areas, government forces are seen burning fallen leaves and SMC has already taken cognizance of that, he added.

"The biomass waste burning is banned as it is harmful and illegal and needs to be stopped immediately," Rasool said.

He said fallen leaves are taken to Achen dumping site, where it gets segregated into bio and non-biodegradable waste. After decomposition it can be used for fertilizers in various public gardens and parks in Srinagar city

NGO 'Save' organizes 'Speak Out' event in Srinagar



Insha Rani
Srinagar

'Save', a non-governmental organization, organized a day-long event "Speak Out" here in Srinagar. The event was sponsored by Lieper Publications, the first self-publication of Kashmir. It was organized to boost the talents and to provide a

platform for the budding writers of the valley.

Writers from different parts of the valley participated in the event.

They presented their work in Urdu, English and Kashmiri Language and covered topics like hope, love, separation, freedom and death.

Aiyman Bashir, 22, one of the participants

told MERC Times that she has been waiting for such chance where she could showcase her work and listen to the diverse opinions of other writers.

"This is for the first time I am participating in such an event. The response I received from others has boosted my confidence", Said Aiyman.

Another young writer, Mir Shabaz, 20, said that such events are very important for knowing the diversity of writing genres in Kashmir and for gaining experience.

"Kashmir has got immense talent but the place lacks a platform where writers can stay connected. It was a great experience for me to come across the work of young writers, hailing from different parts of the valley," he added.

Faheem Bhat, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and founder of Lieper Publication told MERC Times that by organizing such events they are creating awareness among young writers about the publication of their work as they face a lot of problems in

publication process.

"In such events, we select the work of participants which is later edited by experts and finally published," he added.



Kashmir has got immense talent but the place lacks a platform where writers can stay connected. It was a great experience for me to come across the work of young writers, hailing from different parts of the valley

Eid-Milad-un-Nabi marked Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) birth anniversary

Mirza Sharafat
Srinagar

On Wednesday, Muslims across the valley celebrated birth anniversary of Last and most venerated Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) with utmost religious sanctity. Religious processions were carried out while thousands participate in vehicle rallies carried out by various societies.

Thousands of devotees gathered at Hazratbal Shrine to have a glimpse of holy relic. During prayers, people were seen beseeching God and praying for their kith and kins. Holy Relic was displayed to devotees for five times, after every prayer.

Amid well arrangements from various public service departments, thousands of worshippers attended congregational prayer ceremonies and paid tributes to

associates of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) "It is a day for all of us to heal. It is that very moment when prayers are granted to us and when heaviness of heart is lifted by divine powers" said a devotee named Ashfaq Rasool while his tears profused.

Evert year, Milad celebrations take place in Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. While, number of rallies and processions also marked the anniversary of Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) birthday across the state. Majority of Muslims believe in 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal as Prophet's birth anniversary, while minority faction believes that birthday of Prophet falls on 17th of Rabi-ul-Awwal



It is a day for all of us to heal. It is that very moment when prayers are granted to us and when heaviness of heart is lifted by divine powers

2 Day workshop cum mentoring programme kick starts at KU

Ubaid Gul
Srinagar

Atwo day workshop cum mentoring programme kick started at Gadhni Bhawan University of Kashmir in which "INSPIRE Awardees" of J&K state & teachers from different districts of JK participated.

The inuagrual function of workshop was presided over by vice chancellor Kashmir university prof Talat Ahmad.

Innovation in science pursuit for Inspired Research [INSPIRE] scheme is one of the flagship programmes of department of science & technology [OST], Govt of India the scheme covers students in the age group of 10-32 years & has five components .The first components, INSPIRE Award [MANAK] is being executed by National Innovation foundation India[NIF] & to motivate students in the age group of 10-15 years & studying in the class 6-10 to pursue science & career in research.

The objective of the scheme is to target one million ideas/innovations rooted in science & societal application

to foster the culture of creativity & innovative thinking among school children. This will help address societal needs through science & technology & nurture them to



become sensitive & responsible citizens.

13 innovations from J&k state were shortlisted through state level exhibition & project competition [SLEPC]

under INSPIRE scheme in the state of j&k for National level project competiton [NLEPC] to be conducted in New Delhi .In the whole process NIF/GLAN cell JK University of Kashmir ,was part of the implementing agency in the district & state level competitions to shortlist the innovations.

The objectives of the two day workshop is to facilitate the INSPIRE innovators to interact with the experts & mentors so as to add value to their innovations for better competition at national level competition.

While delivering the inaugural address,Prof Talat Ahmad, Vice chancellor KU ,said that a strong innovation eco-system is crucial for economic growth of the country he added,that university of Kashmir will do everthing needed to strengthen the innovation infrastructure in the state .He congratulated the students & the organizers for organizing the mentorship programme despite of the unfavourable situation in the valley .

Prof G.Mohiuddin Bhat ,chairman NIF cell ,while welcoming the participants, highlighted the role of the university to strengthen an innovation eco-system in the state.He said that the university has

acquired a leadership role in the region but more needs to be done to establish infrastructure for innovation facilitation through the university.

Residents, businesses suffer with frequent power cuts in commercial hub Batamaloo

Shahid bashir
Srinagar



Frequent unscheduled power-cuts have made lives of people difficult in winters in Kashmir and people are demanding concrete measures to solve the power crisis.

“Due to frequent power cuts we suffer a lot, as in this era, technology plays an important role for any business and we have to recode thing in our computer system, and due to the power cuts we are not able to work properly, we have already installed inverters but that too gets down because of insufficient electricity,” said Rameez Ahmad, who runs a Pharmacy in Batamaloo area of Srinagar.

“I have to pay employees for making the records of the company and they can hardly work four hours in a day. It is just the beginning of winter, in fact harsh winter is yet to come and electricity has vanished already in Valley,” he said.

He said the power development department employs a curtailment schedule according to which there is a two hour cut after every two hour supply, however, the two hour supply period is erratic, to say the least.

The power is curtailed every ten minutes leaving the people high and dry. The service gets worse during the night hours, when the service is snapped for hours with half an hour of supply in between.

“I started a beauty salon few months ago, but from last two months I am facing many issues because of power curtailment. I don’t have an inverter (battery) and my service is almost dependent upon electricity, I am losing my customers, PDD is not even following their own power schedule,” said

Iqra, who runs a salon in Karan Nagar area.

The power outage is also making people suffer in cold, as traditional heating measures like firewood have given way to modern gadgets running on power. PDD, as per its own schedule, is supposed to cut power for five hours in metered areas and for eight hours in non-metered areas but that is hardly the case on ground. Instead, people get power for a few hours.

President of SDA Complex Batamaloo Mehraj- ud-Din told MERC Times that there are around 1100 shopkeepers in the complex, and they all suffer due to power cuts.

“For inverters we need electricity, and if we buy a generator for that we need kerosene which is not available in the market, what do we do. Every evening we have to put on lights of our cars to even shut the shops properly,” he said.

He lamented that Kashmir was facing power problems despite having enough resources for hydropower.

Residents complained that they are hardly receiving four to five hours of electricity in a day.

“When we go back to our homes during evenings, it is dangerous in the dark streets with dogs roaming around,” a shopkeeper from Batmaloo said.

The power crisis also creates problems for students.

“Some days back I have to do copy (Photostat) my study material and we are not able to do as every shopkeeper told us there is no electricity. After a lost of struggles we found one shopkeeper and he charged us seven rupees for a two-side pages, on generator,” said Tanzeela, a student.

Urban Forest Division organized plantation drive in Srinagar



Schnian Meer
Srinagar

A large plantation programme was organized at Nishat Hariparbat Range by the DFO Urban Forest Division Srinagar, as a part of the plantation drive for winter plantation in Kashmir Division.

The members and the local youth of the area participated in huge numbers in the plantation drive during which about 9200 Conifer polarized saplings will be planted in the area.

DFO Urban Forest Division, Srinagar Reyaz Gul said that these plantation drives will be carried out in various areas and institutions in the coming days under the institutional plantation programme

Kashmir World Film Festival commences at Tagore hall



Obaid bashir
Srinagar

The fourth edition of Kashmir World Film Festival (KWFF) kick started, today at Tagore Hall, Srinagar. The seven day film festival has partnered with Zee Cinema and Zee TV.

Hindi Film industry actors , local

politicians and public figures from all walks of life were seen there, giving some joy to cinema-deprived fans of the Valley.

“Kashmir, as we know, is a conflict zone which is why we have been very less exposed to the cinema. Film festivals like this are much needed here, for the aspirants to get better understanding about things that we need to know,” said

Mudasir Ahmad Dar, a student.

The guests on the festival spoke fondly of the days when film crew would frequently visit the Valley and when cinema halls used to function in the pre-militancy era.

“Whenever I come here, I do not come as a film personality but as a half Kashmiri. I will always come here. Even if you don’t

invite me, I will be here,” said popular Bollywood actress, Tabu.

Mushtaaque Ali Ahmad Khan, Kashmiri film- maker and actor, who started the festival last year said, that the festival has now become a biannual affair.

Film-maker, Madhur Bhandarkar, said, he had been coming to the Valley for past 10 years and was happy over the respect and love he gets from the people of Kashmir.

The festival later began with Bhandarkar’s period political thriller ‘Indu Sarkar’.

Doctor and politician, Sameer Koul, said that it was difficult to detach cinema from Kashmir. Remembering the pre-militancy era, he said, “I remember going to Boulevard during my school days, to catch the sight of film stars.”

Mushtaaque Ali Ahmad Khan, said the films were selected keeping in view the local sensitivities.

“Now, we hold the festival twice a year as our youth are deprived of cinema. We select the films keeping in view the culture and religious beliefs of our society. We bring films that are in tune with local sensitivities,” he said.

“The festival is committed to bring the best of the world’s films to Kashmir and to provide a platform to the talented filmmakers of the Valley,” Mushtaaque added.

Defunct water pumping station in Gulshan Nagar Nowgam, locals agitate

Mir Afshaan
Srinagar

Locals of Gulshan Nagar area of Nowgam agitated over the defunct of water pumping station, which extends over 24 km drainage covering 28 areas.

According to the locals, Water pumping station was established in 2008 under ERA and then handed over to the SMC department of Srinagar in 2012, it was functioning properly until it was under Jammu and Kashmir ERA department but after 2012 this water pumping station is nothing less than a place full of trash.

While talking to MERC TIMES, President of Gulshan Nagar area, Showkat Ahmad Baqal said, “After 2012 water station was lying defunct and the equipment in the water station are all uncovered and now



full of dust. SMC did not at all look after this station nor did they care about its function.”

Meanwhile, Showkat alleged that SMC

paid no heed to their repeated requests about the defunct of the water station.

He further added, “After media covered this issue, the SMC department woke up

and came to the place and started cleaning the drainage and started motors. We want them to continue this process and after every two months they must put men on work and remove slits from drains so as this drainage works properly.”

Expressing concerns over the issue, MERC TIMES even talked to the commissioner SMC, Peerzada Hafeezullah, who said, “Our team went there to inspect and noticed, surely there is a major problem of not functioning of this station. Our department has failed to maintain the motors and other machinery of the water pumps, But we will work on this and assure the locals that soon the motors will be replaced with new and upgraded motors and the water pumping station will function properly and in coming days I’ll personally pay a visit there and make sure this water pumping station works adequately.”



Two day national workshop on Intellectual Property Rights begins at EMMRC, Kashmir University

Tahil Ali
Srinagar

Two day national workshop on Intellectual Property Rights began here at EMMRC of Kashmir University on Friday.

The workshop was organized by Central Council For Research In Unani Medicine (CCRUM), Ministry of Ayurvedic, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) and Government of India in collaboration with National Medicinal Plants Board.

Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Prof. Talat Ahmad who was the eminent guest on the occasion spoke on the importance of Unani medicine and it's cultural and empirical inheritance. "Though Unani medicine is losing it's shine but the research in the same field plays an important role in reviving the tradition of Unani medicines," Prof Talat said.

He also added that there is a need for modernizing the Unani system so that its relevance is kept intact and Unani medicine should be upgraded as an effective collaboration of different relevant fields.

Additional Secretary Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India Shri Pramod Kumar Pathak was the chief guest



on the occasion. In his presidential address Pathak spoke about Unani medicine being a comprehensive system. He said that Unani medicine is 'preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative.' "AYUSH and CCRUM focus on health promotion and Government of India and state governments have been actively facilitating various schemes and programs in this regard. Facilities of hospitals and Research institutes are also provided by AYUSH,"

added Pathak.

He said that AYUSH isn't only limited to India but has collaboration with various international institutions in countries like South Africa, Israel, Iran, Bangladesh and others. "Our main aim is to promote and innovate Unani system and educate people about its benefits", he said.

He said that a total of 16 patents have been passed by CCRUM and about 40 are awaited in research.

Commissioner Food Safety, Government of JK, Dr Abdul Kabir Dar speaking on the occasion said, "dealing with patents is a serious business and CCRUM is doing a great job in preserving them and I hope they continue to do so."

Kabir congratulated CCRUM for its work on Unani medicine and smooth functioning of Unani Hospitals in state and at centre.

Guests of honour Joint Advisory AYUSH, Mukhtar Qasmi, Director General AYUSH Asim Ali Khan, Advisor AYUSH Dr Mohammad Tahir also spoke about the importance of legal rights to protect work and other significances of Unani system.

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