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JK PLAYERS SHINE AT RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

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Shalpora without water facility



❖ **Abid Rashid Baba**

SRINAGAR: Three years after the water supply to Shalpora locality of Batamaloo in Srinagar was disrupted, the Public Health Engineering (PHE) department has failed to restore the supply causing inconvenience to the residents. Residents said the water supply pipes were damaged in June 2014, and since then they have been left to suffer.

“The water supply was disrupted after a team of PHE and locals were repairing some water pipes,” said Mushtaq Ahmad Dar, a school teacher in the locality.

He said that the residents visited the concerned officials many times in the last three years but to no avail.

“Water tankers come two times a week but the water they provide is polluted and is not fit for washing purpose,” Dar said adding, “We don’t have even drinking water. It is shame for the department. Sometimes we don’t even get water to cook food.”

In the circumstances, residents are forced to fetch water from other localities. There are some tube wells in the locality, but residents said, the water was not fit for drinking. “It is difficult to go to other localities and fetch water. Often people shut their doors,” another resident said.

Residents complained that they were promised drinking water from tankers but that lasted for few months only.

“They only come two times a week which is very unfortunate. Sometimes they even forget to supply,” said Mohammad Nabi, another resident. Despite repeated pleas, the residents said, the authorities were doing nothing to address the problem.

“If there is water scarcity, at least PHE department should provide water till the issue gets solved. But unfortunately nobody has visited here. The damaged water pipes are craving for attention,” they said.

Chief Engineer PHE, when contacted, said Executive Engineer can talk on the matter.

Minister for PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control Sham Lal Chaudhary said that he would take up the matter with the chief engineer.

LASJAN PLAYGROUND TURNING INTO GRAZING FIELD

❖ **Adil Amin**

SRINAGAR: The tall claims of sports officials that they are improving sports infrastructure in the state are falling flat as the playground in Lasjan area of city outskirts is in the abandoned state, yearning for renovation.

Players of Lasjan and its adjoining area said “That the playground was considering as one of the finest ground of the area and was mostly used by footballers of the area, however, official negligence has pushed it to the state of uselessness”. National football player Zahid Ayoub, who often used this ground for his practice said, “It is unfortunate for the players of the Lasjan, especially for footballers. Many times we have approached the authorities and apprised them of our grievances, but they seem to be in deep slumber.”

These days, instead of players, grazing cows and rain waters are the only things visible on the ground. The

condition has forced players to find another place for practice. “Ground has turned into a grazing field for stray cows. Authorities are responsible for the present condition of the ground, if serious steps are not taken to facelift the ground, it will soon turn into a dumping site,” another local player said.

“Earlier, huge rush of players was witnessed in the playground, during morning and evening time players used to remain busy with practice, but due to the sorry state of the ground, that glory is all gone.”

A group of players said that, “if authorities will seriously look into the matter and maintains the ground properly, national level matches can be played here.”

When the problems of athletes and the playground situation was reported to Sports Director, Kashmir Division, Nuzhat Ara. She assured quick action soon and said “I personal visited the spot, and I know the condition of the ground. Very soon, renovation work will be started.”

Decoding myth of Kashmir economy on tourism

Ali Saifudin

SRINAGAR: There is this one major myth which most of the Kashmir feeds on, that Kashmir has an economy which is majorly based on Tourism. While Tourism comprises a decent part of the economy but according to fact the major part of the Kashmiri economy is the agricultural sector, which makes Kashmir an agricultural based economy.

On passing through the Ganderbal highway towards Kangan comes a vast portion where one can say extensive cultivation of lotus.

Now the interesting thing is that the Lotus is cultivated on waterbodies like Dal, Wullar, Aanchar, Manasbal but seeing a vast stretch of land blooming with lotus flowers that too alongside a national highway road is intriguing. This area is called Behama, Malshahibagh comes in the Ganderbal district.

This land in Behama was previously used in the cultivation of Paddy. The whole area used to be one big paddy field. On speaking to a resident of Behama named Bashir Ahmed who is a local mechanic and a Farmer we got to know that it is post 2015 that they have shifted from paddy cultivation to Lotus root (Nadru) cultivation.

He explained that the whole area used to be a marshy land and a decent place to grow paddy but the cultivation in that particular crop was not much profitable. He said “In 2015 the water level in these marshy paddy fields had risen to a level that it was difficult to grow paddy, so we decided to shift to cultivation of lotus root as an experiment, we got some help from the people of Aanchar who are skilled in cultivation of nadru and since then it has paid off well.”

Two years back the locals had decided to fill up an

irrigation canal and once the stream was blocked water level in the fields started to rise due to lodging.

We got to know that it is more of a collaborative agricultural venture.

The locals of Behama aren’t well acquainted with the craft of Lotus root cultivation, So they hired people from Soura, Aanchar, Hazratbal, Telbal, Manasbal places close to waterbodies and who would be well skilled in the process of growing lotus.

In many cases the locals have lend their lands to expert Nadru cultivators from different areas and have decided to sell the produce to the growers on a whole sale rate.

A senior local named Abdul rashid who is a retired worker from irrigation department said “I own some land here and i have given it to lotus framers from Aanchar and even Dal who come and grow these lotus on it and during harvesting they take their Nadrus and pay me a certain amount. On one acre i earn about 8k.”

These lotus roots (Nadru) is further sold in Mandi and local markets by the cultivators.

A normal stack of Nadru locally called a ‘NAD’ER GEAD’ is sold at around 150-250 per stack. In comparison Nadru grown in Behama sells at 300 per stack, the reason being the richness in taste.

It should be noted that in 2014 floods the dal interiors were badly hit. Dal was one of the major source of the lotus root. Post floods the lotus seed was completely destroyed and lost. A young local

named Arshid said that “one of the major losses from the flood was the whole of lotus seed was destroyed”. Although the lotus is slowly and gradually coming back to its place and they have borrowed seeds from places like Ganderbal, Aanchar and Wullar but it will take some time to come to its original pace of production.

Our 3500 households in JK without electricity: Union ministry report

❖ Arif Nazir

SRINAGAR: A report revealed by the Union Power Ministry few weeks back suggested that 356000 households that live nearly in 100 villages in J & K are yet to be electrified. Jammu and Kashmir is bestowed with abundant resources for hydroelectricity generation, the state has over 3.50 lakh households still without electricity in the 21st century. According Union Power Ministry's report, "out of 6337 villages in the state, 98% i.e. 6231 villages have been electrified, while 1.7% which comprises of nearly 100 villages are still un-electrified. The report states that the remaining un-electrified households which are assessed at 3,56000 as of December 2015 are targeted to be

connected by FY19. The energy sales of JK PDD are expected to increase by about 1000 percent from 6,135 Million Units in FY15 to 12,168 MUs by FY19. The report states that energy demand has gradually increased over the last five years at an annual rate of about five percent to six percent. According to the 18th EPS, the power requirement of the state is expected to reach 21,884 MU during 2021-2022. The report further pinpoints that state's poor performance on failure to improve peak deficit. Report reveals "The state performance on peak deficit has consistently remained poor than the national average." Further the report states that during winters, the demand for power increases and generation decreases making the state dependent (on outside states).

Kulgam Primary schools sans building, students accommodated in tin shed

❖ Ayad ullah Dar

SRINAGAR: Painting a grim picture of education sector, the teachers of Government Primary School in Dardparin village in Khuli Batapora area of Kulgam district are being forced to take the classes under tin shed or in open due to inadequate accommodation. The official apathy has put a question mark on the tall claims of administration of streamlining the education sector. The teachers are also finding it difficult to teach the 50 students enrolled in the school, which was established in the year 2004. Thus simultaneously, has affected the education of student. Official sources said that the tin shed is not only being used as classroom but for the Principal chamber and other things as well. "The 50 students enrolled in the school are being taught jointly in the tin shed," they said. They said that since its establishment in the year 2004, the authorities have failed to construct a concrete building for the

students. "No initiative has been taken so far to construct a building for the well being of students," they said. Sources said that the two teachers here are finding it difficult to teach a good number of wards. The locals in the area said that they approached to the Chief Education Officer (CEO) Kulgam and Zonal Education officer DH Pora several times but unfortunately nothing has been done in this regard. "There is enough land available for the construction of school but it seems they are reluctant to build raise a concert building for the students. Parents don't allow their wards to attend classes during rains while in sunny days, the students find it difficult to stay inside the tin shed," the locals said. They demanded government to either merge the schools with any nearby school or to raise concrete building for the well being of the students. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Talat Parvez told KNS that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is taking care of the construction of the schools. "I will personally talk to the CEO Kulgam in this regard," he said.

RAMADHAN FOOD TRAIL

❖ Hirra Azmat

SRINAGAR: The holy month of Ramadan is all set to kick-start soon. The month holds a pious significance for Muslims around the world. It is in the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, that the Quran was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad on the glorious night of Lailat ul Qadr. Each day Muslim families rise early in the morning and have a pre-fast meal known as Sehri or Suhoor. At sunset, families gather to break the fast with a meal known as Iftaar. But before heading for Iftaar, they break their fast with dates, after which they adjourn for Maghrib prayer- the fourth of the five daily prayers. It is said that Prophet Muhammad broke fast with three dates and water. And from there on dates has been associated with Ramadan as Turkey with Thanksgiving. During the period of Ramadan, when fasting lasts from sunrise to sunset, the body can develop mild health problems such as headaches, low blood sugar, and lethargy.

The food choices should be carefully made so that they can maximize benefits of fasting and minimize any health complications. "One should carefully monitor their eating habits once fasting for the day has ended. Dates are an excellent source of fiber, sugar, magnesium, potassium, and have



carbohydrates which will aid the body in maintaining health," says, 26 year old Kashmir based nutrition expert, Saba Mir. Another very important thing in Ramadan is water especially during hot summer days and when the body continuously loses water due to breathing, sweating and urination. "Excessive loss of fluid or dehydration can cause weakness, tiredness, muscle cramps, lack of energy and dizziness. Therefore it

is important to drink sufficient amounts of fluids in the form of water, lassi and so on at Suhoor. Juices and other beverages should however be avoided," says the nutritionist. Protein is also considered as an important source of energy required in this month. It is important in sustaining metabolism. "Fish, meat and skinless chicken are the good sources of protein that supply required amino acids to our body," she adds. While talking to University students about the benefits of light exercises during Ramadan, the reporter has collected different responses, "It is a Sunnah and health benefit to take a stroll or do a light exercise after dinner and holy month of Ramadan comes with the best exercise in the form of Taraweeh prayers, says Umer Syed, a 22 year old science student. Another student begs to differ, "We really don't require any kind of light exercise during this holy month. Taking balanced Suhoor and Iftaari meals is enough to keep us healthy," says Wasim Ahmad, a 23 year old media student.

8th Bandipora Wushu Championship begins

Syed Shahriyar

BANDIPORA: 8th District Bandipora Wushu Championship 2017 started here on Friday at Government Boys Middle School Chinpazpora and SJDB Public School. 430 boys and girls from different schools of the district participated in the championship in different age groups categories. Wushu Association of Bandipora organizes the Championship in collaboration with Wushu Association Jammu Kashmir. During the inauguration of the Championship, Development Commissioner Bandipora, Khurshid Ahmed was Chief Guest, while District Officer Food and Safety Yamin was the Guest of Honour. While speaking on the occasion, Khurshid Ahmed encouraged all the players and wished them luck. "You people are lucky enough that you have got a chance to prove your talent. The Championship is a big opportunity for the players of this district," he said.

Aromatherapy: a new popular in stress management

❖ **Syed Humaira**

SRINAGAR:: Aromatherapy is usage of aromatic oils to treat psychological and physical disorders. Aromatherapy or using essential oils has gained a lot of popularity in recent years. The heavy workload and the stress of the fast materialistic life is taking people to alternative medicine to relieve stress and aromatherapy is one such field.

In Kashmir, provided the topography and climatic conditions the cultivation of aromatic plants can be undertaken easily and the first step in this process has been undertaken by Saklain Rashid Kawos, a resident of old city's Bohri Kadal area.

Saklain left his job at a multinational company in Delhi as he wanted to start a business of his own and become an entrepreneur.

He has no regrets for leaving the job as through his entrepreneurship qualities, he is providing employment to more than a dozen people.

He started his own brand Saklain's Coterie. It offers various products ranging from essential oils to

handmade soaps to lavender shampoo, scrubs, moisturisers, massage bars, bath gels and lavender face packs that emit strong pleasant fragrances, all manufactured in Kashmir.

"I started growing lavender initially on 22 kanals and now I have extended it to 64 kanals which will be further expanded. We also sell homemade products of Kashmiri walnut oils and other stuff that is grown here. Earlier, there were only 30-35 products but now its expanding and the number is increasing," says Saklain.

The initiative for the cultivation of aromatic plants especially lavender on a governmental level was started by the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM) srinagar, but on an individual level the credit for the initiative goes to Saklain Kawos. Instead of running after governmental jobs, he preferred to set up his own unit and be self dependent.

"Kashmir produces sufficient lavender oil. If people are ready to work hard, this can be a full-fledged industry which can provide employment to many people," adds Saklain.

Kupwara boy brings laurels for JK State



❖ **Ikhtlaq ul Rehman**

SRINAGAR: A Kashmiri boy Faheem Ahmad malik 24, who hails from kalmoona area of Kupwara district brought laurels to the state by winning gold medal in North India Jeet Kune-Do (kung fu) championship. The jeet Kune-Do games were organized by schools games federation of India under Ministry of youth affairs and sports Govt. of india.

Eight states from North India participated in the Tournament. The players from different Jeet Kune -Do associations across north India under different weight categories participated in the tournament .Faheem who is doing his masters from

Uttrakhand won the gold in senior category under 55-60 kg weight.

I was in love with martial arts, but here in Kashmir I did not found any way. I actually came to Uttrakhand for my degree but fortunately I found my dream here also, said Faheem. Faheem was taking training from Uttrakhand Jeet - Kune do association which is affiliated with Association of all india jeet kune -Do Foundation.

Jeet Kune -DO, abbreviated JKD, is an electric and hybrid philosophy of martial arts heavily influenced by the personal philosophy and experiences of martial artist Bruce Lee. Lee, Who founded the system on July 9, 1969 , referred to it as " non -classical ", suggesting that JKD is a form of Chinese Kung Fu ,yet without form. Unlike more traditional martial arts ,Jeet kune Do is not fixed or patterned , and is philosophy with guiding thoughts .It was named for the wing chun concept of interception or attacking while ones opponent is about to attack.

"It is a beginning .Now my focus is to win gold at national championship which is to be held on September-October this year ", said Faheem.

With rise in drug abuse, establishing specialized de-addiction centres inevitable

❖ **Irfan Trambo**

SRINAGAR: People know only one Drug De-addiction Centre and that is run by the state Police, but there is another, not-so-well-known, functioning in Community Hospital that stands right in the compound of SMHS hospital, being run by the Department of Psychiatry, however the centre is craving for the immediate facelift. The centre has been curing chronic drug addicts from last many years, from patients who are dependent on certain drugs to the patients who used to take narcotics like Heroin and Cannabis.

The officials at the centre are worried about the increase in drug abuse in the valley, and said that there has been no focus in spreading mass awareness among the youth regarding the drug abuse.

"There somehow has been not that much of focus in creating mass awareness among youth regarding the abuse of drugs, if that is done, the situation will change to a larger extent," said Dr. Yasir.

A 30 bedded Drug de-addiction centre runs in-sync with the Mental Diseases Hospital, as they are maintaining a balance in running both the institutions with the staff they have been provided with.

"We have a limited staff here, and with this limited staff



we have to run this centre," said Dr. Zaid Ahmad Wani. The concerned officials have submitted a proposal to the state government that aims at establishing the centre as

the state of art, but the proposal is yet to be sanctioned by the government.

The centre is also starting a facility for children a separate block has been kept for the facility, which will start its functioning in coming days.

With what has been provided to the centre by the government, it is providing proper recreational opportunities to the inmates, and apart from that it is also providing a separate section for female patients.

The stay of patients is not that long in the hospital, as there is a set protocol to treat those who visit the facility for the medical help, "we initially analyze what sort of addict the patient is, then we treat withdrawal symptoms, and after that we discharge the patient to be brought regularly for the follow ups," said Dr. Yasir Rather.

With rising drug abuse in Kashmir, as earlier reported by this newspaper, with it being at its pinnacle in South Kashmir, there seems to be a serious need of establishing more such facilities, with face-lifting the existing centres, especially in Srinagar.

Experts say that if the centre in the compound of SMHS hospital is developed on modern lines it has got a potential to cater to wide needs of the people living in the city, even more, it can set a standard for rest of such institutions that may established elsewhere.

Talent Hunt Cricket tournament inaugurated



❖ **Qulsooma Akhtar**

BUDGAM: MLA Tangmarg Mohd Abbas wani inaugurated “Talent Hunt Cricket Tournament” at sports field here today being organized by Gulmarg Sports Organization.

As many as 64 Cricket Teams of Tangmarg Tehsil are participating in fourth edition of this tournament. The inaugural match of the tournament has been played between Youth Cricket Club Mulgam and Gurukul Reds Dhobiwan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Wani said that sports develop discipline, sportsmanship and sense of quick decision, besides ensure a strong mind and body of sports person which is

pre-requisite for creating a healthy and harmonious society, adding that only a healthy generation can face the impending challenges of today globalized era.

The MLA highlighted the importance for popularizing sports culture among youth of the state, saying that their talent need to be exploited, channelized in a right prospective and used for productive activities of the nation.

Underscoring the need for upgrading sports infrastructure in the State, the Minister said that several initiatives have already been taken by the government in this regard. He said that several measures are afoot to upgrade the facilities for sports lovers in addition to their academic pursuits. He said that the youth of the State have tremendous potential, adding that the State has produced ace players in varied sports who have brought laurels to the State participating at international and national levels. He also called for exploiting hidden sports talent by extending high tech facilities at par with other states of the country. The MLA stressed upon youth to take part in sports activities and avail benefits of the schemes launched by the central and state government.

On the occasion, students, prominent citizens and thousands of sports lovers were present.

Girl with the iron will

❖ **Shaheena Rahim .**

BANDIPORA: AT A TIME WHEN SPORTS WAS CONSIDERED MONOPOLY OF BOYS, A GIRL from Srinagar had a will to do different for herself. Bilquis Mir started her carrier in water sports 1997 and went on to become the only woman international referee of Kayaking from India. She has been instrumental in lifting state to a next level in the genre.

Bilquis says that there was no scope for sports in Kashmir during her time. “Sports were considering just the waste exercise and society was not responsive at all. Initially, in my sports carrier, my family was not supportive to what I was doing, and not to talk of society, it was far away from being supportive”.

Being a girl and facing the social constrains weren’t easy for her, she says adding that “It was not that easy for me to start my carrier in sports. What I did is that I treated every hurdle on my way as a challenge and continued with my journey.”

“With the passage of time, when I stated winning medals in different championship, my mother thought our daughter is doing a good job and we should support her then my family members started supporting me. What I learned is that first you have to prove yourself, and then everyone accepts what you do,” Mir says adding that initially her family had no knowledge about the sports.

Nothing stopped Mir from achieving her dream, while there in her family kept dreaming about becoming a doctor or an engineer, she had different goal in her mind. “Every girl cherishes a dream of become a



doctor, engineer, IAS, IPS Officer, but since my childhood, I had dream to do something different. I chose water sports as my dream, because I wanted to show people sports was not only meant for boys, girls too, can prove their mettle,” Bilquissays while smiling.

“Despite criticism, I never stopped moving ahead in my sports carrier and the negative approach of society towards me and the sports I have been playing boosted my sports carrier. Because of negative attitude of the society, this Bilquis is in front of you. My consistency, determination, luck and later, support of people around, helped me in achieving my goal,” she says.

Mir wants parents to supports their girl child in sports. She says that girls should come out from their cosy rooms and take active part in games. “People around try their best to discourage them, but they should never lose their hope,” she adds.

Mothers are symbol of strength

● **MOM movie cast:** Sridevi, Nawazudin Siddiqui, Akshaye Khanna, Adnan Siddiqui, Sajal Ali, Abhimanyu Singh

● **MOM movie director:** Ravi Udyawar

● **MOM movie rating:** 3.5 stars

SHAROZ KHUSHAL

Srinagar: Mom reminds you for the umpteenth time that we’re in Nirbhaya country. Like other films on the same subject, debutant Ravi Udyawar’s emotional thriller tells you that India, or should that be New Delhi specifically, isn’t safe enough for women, especially young girls. And its relevance makes it an important watch.

Mom joins Sridevi’s most recent film outing, English Vinglish (2012), and her iconic double-role in Chaalbaaz (1989) as a woman-centric film. Looking back on her five decades in Indian cinema, the actor

is certain that things are looking up for female actors in the industry and believes it is the best time to be a part of it, apart from Nawaz and Abhimanyu. Sajal Ali, who plays the young victim, is particularly effective. Adnan Siddiqui, as Sridevi’s husband.

Sridevi-starrer Mom is brutal and for the most part, a terrifying yet riveting film. The film deals with the horror and trauma a rape victim experiences and debutant director Ravi Udyawar has done an outstanding job of balancing the drama with equal amount of shock, thrill and honest emotions. The movie doesn’t make you cringe like recent thrillers such as Kaabil which also had a similar theme of being a revenge thriller centered around sexual assault.

Devki Sabarwal (Sridevi) is a high school teacher who is trying to win her over step daughter Arya, who doesn’t quite warm up

to her as the memories of Arya’s biological mother still haunt the 18 year old.

As you might have guessed a gruesome crime is committed and Sridevi finds herself fighting for justice, her character is torn between being a helpless mother whose child is battling for her life and being an outsider trying to reach in as the same child does not acknowledge her as her mother.

There’s one scene where Sridevi walks in and lays her eyes on her daughter in the hospital bed, that 10 second scene where she just breaks down should be studied and there should be a lecture in acting schools on how to portray someone who is terribly shocked and deeply distressed it is like the physical manifestation of love weeping uncontrollably. The supporting cast including Abhimanyusingh, Sajal Ali and

Adnan Siddiqui is solid. Akshaye Khanna proves yet again that he is a very fine actor, we’d like to see much more from him but Nawazuddin Siddiqui - as unbelievable as it is has surprised me yet again, he is so calm yet so loud, so low-key yet so sharp.

Special mention for A R Rahman’s music, the background score is like an additional principal character in the film, keeps you at the edge of your seat. Much to my disappointment though the climax sequence of the film is a BIG letdown, they did not in give to any cliches till the end but messed it up with the most predictable climax scene possible.

Powered by Sridevi Mom is just the kind of jolt we all need in frequent intervals I’m going with 3.5/5 for this revenge drama.

Mothers are a symbol of strength; this movie further reinforces that.

Reckless driving results 958 trauma deaths

❖ UBEER NAQUSHBANDI

SRINAGAR: As road accidents are on the rise in Kashmir due to bad roads and reckless driving, the Valley's premier trauma hospital --- Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) --- has received 387 patients with chest injuries in the past two years and most of them required neurosurgical intervention.

Chest trauma, which comprises one of the common causes of disability and mortality, has been mostly attributed to road accidents in the state. It has led to

958 deaths and injuries to 7,677 persons in 5,501 road accidents in 2016 in the state, as per the data of the state traffic department.

"We have received 387 cases of chest trauma, including 243 blunt trauma cases and 144 penetrating trauma cases in the past two years," said noted CVTS surgeon Dr Tasneem Muzaffar of Government Medical College (GMC), Srinagar. The chest injuries included 43 per cent rib fractures, 9 per cent clavicular fractures, and 43 per cent pulmonary contusions. "Major associated injuries

(neuro, abdominal or limb) were found in 43 patients," he said, while terming the number as worrying.

However, due to the effective management of the injuries, only 15 patients, having major associated injuries, died at SMHS Hospital. Dr Muzaffar said chest trauma was the leading cause of death after head and spinal cord injury. "Thoracic injuries account for 20-25 per cent of deaths due to trauma, with many of these deaths occurring in the pre-hospital setting," he said. At least 25 per cent chest trauma cases, he said, were the

contributing cause of mortality. "Over 70 per cent thoracic injuries result from blunt trauma and most occur from automobile accidents," he said. Deadly road accidents are common in the state and are often caused by overloading, bad condition of roads and reckless driving. In 2016, the maximum number of deaths were recorded in Jammu district, where 160 persons died in 1,275 road mishaps, followed by 84 deaths in Ramban. South Kashmir's Shopian district recorded the lowest number of 43 road accidents and three deaths in the entire state.

Food prices skyrocket in Ramadan

❖ Peer Viqar Ul Aslam

SRINAGAR: Contrary to the popular perception that food consumption goes down during Ramadan, it actually surges causing expenses on food to minimally double this month.

Notwithstanding the fact that the fasting period this year is around 16 hours on an average, leaving just 8 hours for the rest of activities which include iftar, the prayers of Magrib, Isha and Taraweeh, dinner, sleep and Sehri, people tend to go overboard spending extravagantly on food.

"Ramadan is the king of months, wherein virtues for every good act of ours increases seventy-fold. So I think we should devote the rest of the eleven months to earning and this month to spending alone. We ought to do as much Ibadah as possible in this month and spend in charity and on good food," says Muhammad Akram, a businessman from Rainawari Srinagar.

"I come first. If I am fit and fine, the better I can worship Allah. So I make it a point to have quality food for me and my family during Ramadan."

Fasting during Ramadan does not lead to fall in demand for food. On the contrary, people tend to consume more.

More varieties are prepared in Ramadan as compared to other months which lead to increase in expenses on food.

The increase is more of qualitative than quantitative as women spend a considerable amount of time preparing the choicest dishes for the family.

"Since we don't get much time to eat Sehri, my children and husband would rather go with little food if it is not appetizing enough. So meat or chicken varieties are a regular feature this month," says Zubaida from Nawakadal area of the downtown.

"For the family at Iftar time, I slice 3-4 varieties of fruit and have Roof Afza or kateer besides dates and Firini. My son also likes custard, so I have to prepare that too occasionally; for dinner and Sehri, meat or chicken curry," says Hamida,

a homemaker from Bemina.

Muhammad Yousuf, a government employee says that children once grew up enough need to be encouraged to fast as ordained by Allah. So they need to be provided with incentives for fasting.

"My children, a girl and a boy aged 14 and 10, are grown up enough to fast. But rather than forcing them to fast, I prefer to motivate and lure them into fasting. I promise them their choicest foods and drinks and that does it. If they can fast these long hours, then they will easily fast the other days which are on the wane now for the next 16 years."

Apart from this people also take dates and sweetened drinks to masjids to allow fasting people to break their fast and earn extra virtues this month.

"Without taking budget into consideration, my husband as a routine this month asks me to prepare Firini (pudding) and babribyole (Basil seed) sweet drink so that the same can be distributed among the fasting people at Iftar time in the Masjid. He also buys dates for the purpose and this is a regular every year," says Zainab from Safa Kadal.

Topping the Iftar food list is dates that come in different varieties. Watermelon like last year remains the most sought after fruit this month.

Among drinks, Babribyole ranks first followed by Rooh Afza (a herbal concentrate) and kateer (Tragacanth).

Firini, Siwayan and custard are the preferred Iftar sweet dishes.

However many feel that people have lost their perspective on Ramadan.

Prof. Muhammad Sidiq told MERC Times that rather than feeling the sufferings of people who are unable to get food and die of starvation, like in Somalia and elsewhere, we here go on an eating spree.

"Ramadan is here to teach us to curb our desires. We should feed our soul with prayer and not our stomach with food," he observed.

Kashmir Apples to be digitally graded



Hikmatyar

SHOPIAN: An 'integrated pack house for apples,' a facility to grade apples electronically, is being set up at Shopian in the Kashmir region.

The cost of setting this is expected to be Rs 3.88 crore (Rs 38.8 million). The pack house would be capable of grading a truckload of apples in an hour. The waxing mechanism in the house ensures maximum durability for the apples

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Sayeed said, "Advanced techniques like the integrated pack house are sure to give Kashmiri horticulture produce a value for its worth."

Advising the agencies concerned to launch an awareness campaign so that the orchard-owners became aware of the benefits of the facility, the chief minister suggested setting up a quality control mechanism.

Sayeed said the government had already introduced a market intervention scheme to help the sale of Kashmiri apple in markets outside the state. He asked the fruit growers to register themselves with the government and ensure the quality of produce by maintaining a minimum quality standard

The chief minister suggested an expansion of the fruit mandi and wanted the setting up of facilities like Internet and online connectivity, besides credit facility at the mandi.

He said Srinagar airport assuming international status next March spreads good omen for the Apple industry of the state whereby Apple from Kashmir would be transported to international market within one day only.

President of Fruit Dealers Association, Mir Mohammad Amin said the area is an Apple dependent one where about 22 thousand families are associated with growing apples.

Commissioner Secretary, Agriculture Production, Khursheed Ganai, informed that the Pack House would be capable of grading a truckload of apples in an hour.

He said the waxing mechanism in the house ensures maximum shelf life for the apples, which ensures a better market availability.

Railway Minister lays foundation stone for Bilaspur-Manali-Leh Rail Line



❖ Zakir Zahak

LEH: Union Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhakar Prabhhu on Tuesday 27 June 2017 officially lead the foundation stone for the final location survey of Bilaspur-Manali-Leh new rail line connectivity which will give immense socio-economic benefit to the region. The project is unique in the sense that it would be the highest railway line in India and thus an amount of Rupees 157 crore has been sanctioned for the year 2016-17, the length of all-weather railway alignment of Manali-Bilaspur-Leh would be around 650 Km and from Leh-Delhi it would be around 1100 km, confirmed by Northern Railway officials.

Railway Minister Suresh Prabhhu said, providing connectivity to remote areas in the country is the part of our Mission and Manali-Bilaspur-Leh railway track is the first step towards that dream for making 'One India'. "North eastern states of the country are on top priority towards this mission", he said.

Ladakh is always known for its cross-border strategic importance in India and always remained an attractive place for tourists across world with its unique topography and nature. However, due to heavy snowfall and harsh winter the national highway connecting Ladakh to Srinagar and rest of world gets closed every year thus disconnecting the whole region with rest of the world.

It is pertinent to mention that a major chunk of people opposed the initiative as they regarded the move a threat to environmental fragility of Himalayan region. The railway track so aligned will move through Shiwalik, Himalaya and Zaskar ranges. Responding to the question of environmental fragility Suresh Prabhhu said, "The provisions for environmental concerns will be kept in the cost of project and all measures will be taken to minimize the damage to fragile ecosystem".

MP Ladakh while expressing his gratitude on the occasion said, the project should not remain only on papers but it should be completed as per deadlines laid down by the railway ministry. He also said, "with coming Zojila tunnel and Bilaspur-Manali-Leh railway, Ladakh will no more suffer from digital and physical dis-connectivity with the rest of world".

Srinagar city sees sharp increase in non-local beggar



❖ Mudasir Majeed

SRINAGAR: As Holy Ramdhan arrived there is huge rise of Beggars across Kashmir valley, especially in Srinagar city. Little children's decorated with dirty hands and dusty faces, torned clothes - mostly without boots roaming

at every public place in Srinagar city including masjids ,shops and run after cars and cleaning windshields at different traffic crossings of Srinagar city.

" I belong to Rajasthan, everyday I earn more than 150 rupees outside Masjids or sometimes busy traffic crossings" said Raheem a Child beggar.

At traffic crossings we are witnessing various child beggars with few women's holding infants with empty bottles urging people for money with this excuse to buy money for her infant child. It's true that every year Kashmir valley receives tens and thousands of beggars hails from different states of India.

"We are earning good money here in Kashmir from last more than two years" said Akshit and his friend Beiju, both are 9 years old.

The places were most of the outsider beggars are begging are Batmalloo, SMHS front gate, Jehangir Chowk, Karannagar, Qamarwari, Shalteng crossing and busy traffic crossings. Moreover, the mammoth population of outside beggars mostly lives in Nowgam, Bemina and Batmaloo area of Srinagar city.

OVERLOADING CONTINUE TO HAUNT PASSENGERS

❖ Pardeep Singh Dardi

SRINAGAR The overloading in the mini busses especially (TATA-407) seems ever-lasting as the drivers continue to risk the lives of passengers here.

The passengers travelling in mini buses accused that the authorities miserably failed to curb the menace of overloading. "It is impossible to find a seat in the local mini buses, particularly in TATA 407s, which are often overloaded," passengers told MERC Times.

Witnesses said that the mini bus drivers especially in the Srinagar outskirts here continue to put the lives of passengers at risk due to the overloading.

Talking to this newspaper, Nisar Ahmad, a student said, "We are facing immense hardships due to the overload in mini buses."

"There is no end to the overloading in the public transports. The authorities should take action in this regard. The tall claims of the authorities over crack down on Passenger service vehicles for overloading and intermittent wrong stops has proven hoax on the ground," the passenger said.

Accusing the higher ups of Regional Transport Office (RTO) of ignoring their plights, the passengers here have demanded immediate redressal of their genuine grievances.

Numair Mushtaq, a commuter said, "The passenger vehicle operators plying on Bemina, Natipora, and Batwara route are allegedly creating artificial shortage of minibuses to get more of rush thereby putting commuters to inconvenience."

Pertinently, Traffic Police has said that it has cracked down on Passenger service vehicles (TATA-407) for



overloading, intermittent wrong stops, board/ de-board of passengers at places other than designated bus stops, without driving licenses, passenger inconvenience, slow and delayed operations and imposed 138 challans with fine realization to the tune of Rs.47500/-, besides 15 vehicles were seized.

The officials also said that they have booked 1.1 crore violators in the State and recovered fine of Rs.2.88 crore in the first quarter of this year (2017).

"During the period 1390 vehicles were seized while as 25426 two wheeler drivers found without helmets, 2264 triple ridding and 2939 with overloading," the officials said.

Dearth of medicines hits patient care in hospitals

❖ Firdous Azad

SRINAGAR: A J&K government report has found that less than half of required medicines are available in some hospitals in the summer capital.

With the J&K governments promise of giving low cost medicines being one of its most touted schemes, J&K chief minister Mehbooba Mufti has directed the chief secretary to ensure availability of these medicines, "for which the government has made all the financial provisions", at the earliest.

Chief Minister had conducted surprise checks on government hospitals to ensure availability of medicines and functional equipment.

On finding a gap of stocks, CM "took strong exception to the non-availability of medicines and consumables in some government hospitals and directed the chief secretary to ensure 100 percent availability of these articles at the earliest," said a government statement.

It added that the CM had also received complaints regarding problems in the functioning of X-ray and CT scan machines in certain hospitals.

According to officials, directions had been given to the CS on May 6, that a written report be submitted to him on "the



1st and 15th of every month" regarding the availability of medicines and consumables.

After the visit to hospitals the condition changed, as earlier the patients suffer due to non-availability of drugs and other equipments said Manzoor Ahmad a patient from Kulgam.

Landslides Hits Baramulla residents

❖ Sabrina Mushtaq

BARAMULLA: The landslide-hit residential houses in Hajibal village of Tangmarg area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district, fresh rainfall in recent days created a fear of more natural mishaps among the villagers.

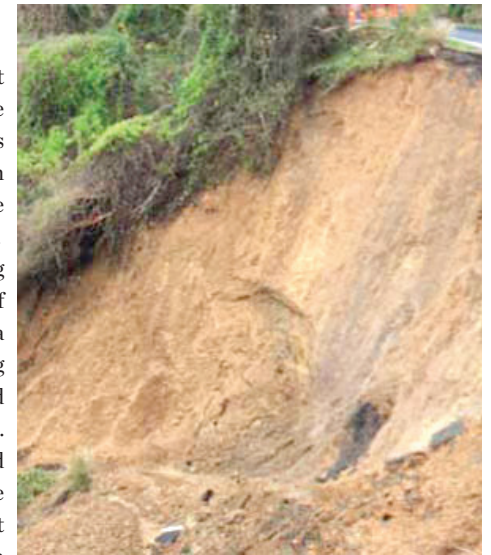
Hajibal village situated among forests and hills, at a distance of about 14 kilometers from Baramulla Town, the village has been witnessing landslides in a frequent basis and people have been bearing the brunt. The houses could be seen damaged due to landslides. Not only the house walls have developed cracks but roads and agricultural land has been facing landslides.

In Hajibal village total 95 families are residing. The village has population of 609 as per population census 2011.

Landslides are directly effecting the entire population. "We built our houses but they get damaged due to landslides. Whenever it rains or snows here, landslide occurs. This is a big problem now a day that we are facing," says Mushtaqahmad, a local resident.

The families have been struggling to find shelter, while the authorities visited them and did nothing to for their rehabilitation.

"But she didn't have much to offer to the families desperately in need of help," a



group of villagers said.

A few of the affected families have taken shelter in a local school, while the others have no choice but to stay in tents.

Adil Ahmad Lone, a resident of Hajibal, who lost his house in the landslide, said: "The administration has done nothing for us so far."

The villagers fear they may have to witness more landslides due to the rainfall occurring intermittently since last week.

"We fear that if something bad happens, we may find no one coming to our help. There seems no plan for our rescue or rehabilitation in case of another landslide," the villagers said.

Nowgam-Natipora road in shambles for years

Commuters allege official apathy, says authority in deep slumber

❖ FASIL SIDIQ

SRINAGAR: The road stretch between Nowgam to Natipora is dotted with big potholes throughout, taking a heavy toll on commuters.

The road ironically was never repaired after heavy floods hit the valley in 2014.

Locals allege that Roads and Building department has been acting as a quiet spectator of the horrible condition of the road.

They said though the officials are being apprised about the woeful condition of the road on daily basis, they don't seem to be bothered about it.

"The open drainage and potholes is a common sight, people at least expect that administration should fill these death traps, it seems all efforts go in vain," locals told Rising Kashmir.

They added these potholes cause injuries to passengers and damages to vehicles.

It takes people 45 minutes to cover a distance of 2.5 kms from Nowgam Bypass to Rambagh," locals said.

Right from Nowgam Bypass to Natipora, the road is in



dilapidated condition as a result the locals from Budshah Nagar, Mehboob Colony, NaikBagh and Nowgam have been facing lot of inconvenience. The damaged road has also been giving tough time to school going children.

"The shabby road poses accident risk. Vehicles get damaged due to deep potholes and wrecked road. We have approached authorities a number of times but they are yet to take any action," local residents told to MERC TIMES.

Owing to the negligence of the administration, IshfaqAsif a shopkeeper said, "Authorities continuously

fooled us saying macadamizing of the road will be done soon. Government also said they will develop fully fledged drainage system and water services in the area, but their promises are all hoax."

"The route has shorter distance to reach railway station from the city, and lack of accountability is the cause of deteriorating condition of road, the government must start the work immediately to avoid incidents," Asif said

Asif said there is a lack of coordination between different departments, which is the main reasons for the continuous deteriorating condition of road.

Ab Hamid Sheikh, Chief Engineer Road and Buildings department told MERC TIMES, "We are not delaying any construction work on the roads, as far as the drainage system is concerned, laying of water pipelines is completed."

"We are doing our best to complete all the work on the road stretches that have been dug up for laying pipelines for drinking water and drainage system. We are waiting for it to complete," he said.

"When all other works are completed, the road will be then blacktopped; maybe it'll be blacktopped earlier next month." Sheikh said

Borderless World Foundation: A hope for hopeless

❖ Syed Shakir

SRINAGAR: Borderless world Foundation a national non-governmental organization working all over the India with motive of upliftment of the downtrodden and marginalized sections of the society. The organization is also working in the state of Jammu and Kashmir to heal the wounds of conflict ridden people and society. The organization has opened various Orphanages in the state where orphan girls and boys are given educational as well as boarding and lodging facilities.

Adeek Qadam Chairman Borderless world Foundation hailing from pune founded the organization in 2004 and soon started its work in conflict zone Kashmir. The organization is a non-profit, non-governmental organization registered under India's societies registration Act 1860.

"The main motive of the organization is to give healing touch to the people of conflict ridden areas. J and K is a conflict hit area so that our organization is working here to give every possible support to the

people who suffered losses since 90's". Advisor BWF Dr. Peer GN Suhail said.

"Borderless world Foundation runs four homes for girl children who have lost their one or both parents in armed conflict in Kashmir Valley." Eqra Javid an Employee said.

"The organization has four homes located at different districts in valley. The four homes are located each at Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag and border district Kupwara and are named as Baseera-e-Tabasum. We are running FAH-facilitate and accomplish with humility, a home for those pandith migrant students who are living in migrant camps in jammu." She added.

Where the Organisation is the hope to various hopeless people of this conflict hit state. The organization went through a controversy few months earlier when reports came on social networking site facebook that the organisation has purchased land in District kupwara to construct orphanage there.

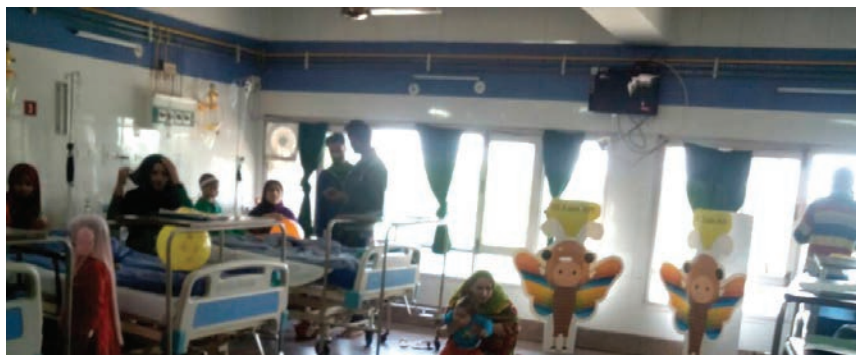
Legally, as per Article 370 no state subject or any organization which is

not Kashmir based cannot purchase immovable property in Kashmir. Article 35A of Indian Constitution prohibits non state subjects to purchase land or immovable property, seek government job or vote in elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

When tried to contact chairman of the organization to get clarification regarding the issue, however after repeated attempts he could not be contacted. Later on we contacted Advisor BWF Dr Peer GN Suhail and Harris Abrar an employee of the organization based at its Srinagar office. They told that the land was purchased for a Kashmir based organization under the same name. They assured that all the trustees of the Kashmir based Borderless World Organization are state subjects.

REGARDING THE ISSUE we contacted Tehsildar Kupwara and Concerned officers of Revenue Department of the area where land is said has been purchased. They could not locate any land which has been registered on the name of the organisation and assured if we will find any details about the land will inform accordingly.

'A ray of hope'@saviours



❖ Madhiya Nabi

SRINAGAR. Doctors of Oncology department at Sher - Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (Skims), Soura distributed various gifts among the cancer patients, to make them happy and to boost their morale so that they could fight the deadly disease, carcinoma.

The whole idea was the collective effort of both the doctors and the technical staff of the same department and was carried out efficiently. The ward, 1p which is specifically meant for children was decorated with balloons to make it more lively. Teddy bears were placed inside the ward so that it could entice the ailing kids and they could forget their suffering for a brief moment. Healthy cupcakes were distributed among the cancer kids and goodies in the form of a pink bag were distributed among female patients.

"As we all know that the cancer is a deadly disease and the patients

suffering from such disease undergo many psychological changes including depression, we often times make such arrangements to imbibe positive thoughts especially in young children as they are more prone to depression." Said doctor Faisal, senior resident of oncology department. When asked about the monetary force for such events, he said, "it's the collective efforts of both doctors and technical staff of the department. No external organisation pays for it".

"You have to keep the positive energy around the patients to help them fight against carcinoma and it was a small gesture from the faculty towards our patients to build a positive and a happy atmosphere around them. It soothes our soul if any of our efforts bring smile on their faces", said Ijasreshi, Hod of the same of department.

The event was all in all a good experiment which was quite evident from the joyous and excited faces of the cancer patients, more importantly the kids.

JK players shine at Rugby championship



❖ Shaheen Shafique

SRINAGAR: J&K Boys and Girls team secured 6th and 8th rank at all India level respectively at all India Junior national Rugby Sevens championship which concluded on Sunday at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium Chennai.

Teams from all the states of India participated in the championship which was organised by All India Rugby Association. The championship was held under 18 category of boys and girls.

J&K girl's team played four matches in which they won two against Goa and Andhra Pradesh and lost one against Maharashtra, while another match ended with a draw against Delhi.

J&K Boys also played four matches in which they won three against Goa, Telangana and Delhi and lost one match against West Bengal.

The J&K girl's team was led by

Suzain Bhat and the boys team was led by Suhaib Jeelani.

While talking to Rugby Coach, Soliha Yousuf, who accompanied both the teams, said that both teams gave their best performance.

"Our both teams performed very well which led them to the higher ranking in all India Sevens Rugby. All the players played with keen interest" adding "this is the result of hard work of our players and coaches."

"From this championship our players learned very much and there is always room for improvement. I hope that all the players will keep their spirits high for upcoming tournaments," she said.

"We will continue our hard work till we become number one team of India" She added.

However, the final title of the Championship was lifted by the teams (Boys and Girls) of West Bengal.

Plan to save western tragopan on cards

❖ **Shahbaz Qutab**

SRINAGAR : Western tragopan is a medium-sized brightly plumed pheasant found along the western Himalayas from northwestern Pakistan through Jammu and Kashmir into Himachal Pradesh and possibly the western parts of Uttarakhand. It is highly endangered and globally threatened.

The current population of the species is reported to be between 2500 and 3500 individuals, down from around 5,000 estimated in earlier studies.

A recent survey by a team of scientists and wildlife experts has shown that it is possible to conserve it if proper efforts are taken. The team focused on Jammu and Kashmir. The modeling of the habitat has shown that there was a reasonably good potential for the bird to thrive in the state. Large tracts of land (over 7,000 sq km) spread over PirPanjal range and Jhelum and Chenab valley were found to offer suitable habitats for it.

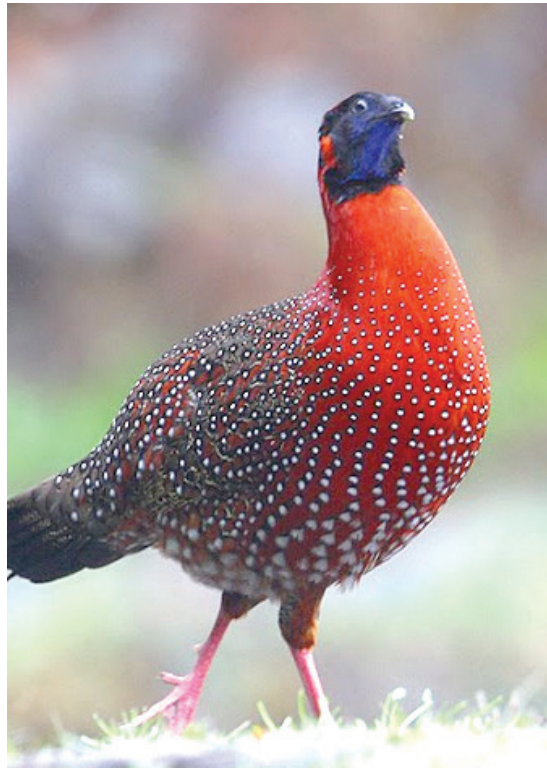
However, presently only a small portion of the area (156 sq km) came under the protected area network in the form of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and other conservation zones. The protected areas were mainly in Jhelum, Chenab and PirPanjal were poorly protected. All the tragopan sites are being used for livestock grazing and collection of non-timber forest produce resulting in disturbance and degradation of the Tragopan habitat and thus threatening its survival.”

Riyaz Ahmed working in wildlife Trust of India said “There is an urgent need to plan long-term monitoring and initiate appropriate measures to conserve the species,”

It's our duty to protect these creatures from extinction and should respect nature and we should save it for our future generations.

Dr. Sharma Said “ there are many species which are in the stage of extinction. These things happen due to human interference and cutting down of forest for cultivation and other human needs. We should focus on these issues as well and should save creatures like these for balance of nature.

The team consisted of Riyaz Ahmed, Kasturi Deb,



and Rahul Kaul of Wildlife Trust of India, Narayan Sharma and Veer Bhatnagar of Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru and Upendra Pacchnanda of Department of Wildlife Protection, Srinagar. Dr. Sharma is also associated with the Department of Environmental Biology and Wildlife Sciences, Cotton College, State University, Guwahati.

The team conducted bird counts at five areas :Tattakuti, Limber and Lacchipora wildlife sanctuaries, KharaGalli Conservation Reserve, and Kazinag National Park. Kazinag NP and Limber and Lacchipora wildlife sanctuaries are in Jhelum valley and KharaGalli and Tattakuti in PirPanjal range.

In addition, they collected secondary information about its presence in Chenab Valley (Kishtawar, Padder Valley, Doda and Bhaderwah), PirPanjal (NoorpurGalli, Sanwjian-Narian, and SudhMahadev), and Jhelum valley (Rampur-Bunyar). (India Science Wire)

Kashmir Mountains have a good potential to attract the adventures tourism

Athar Shah

SRINAGAR: Trekking in Kashmir is one of those adventure sports to get indulged in and not to be missed for anything. This is the only activity in Kashmir that allows you to enter the unexplored parts of this exotic land throwing you with an abundant platter of picturesque and awe inspiring sights as never seen anywhere. “I am addicted to the serene beauty of my motherland I miss it when I am not trekking, it's like i am addicted to the mountains of Kashmir and that is the only reason i trek.” said Aqib Hyder a local trek freak. Trekking in Kashmir assures to leave you with unforgettable experiences and make you come back for more wonders to explore. The natural terrain from the Shivalik Mountains in Jammu up to the rugged Ladakh Mountains is a trekker's delight.

The drastic change in its topography and natural sights all within small distances is a sheer delight to watch giving you the best that Kashmir has to offer. Trekking through the mountains and landscape of Kashmir, crossing through Alpine pastures perched amidst snow-clad peaks, pure unadulterated atmosphere including high altitude lakes are just a few of many scenes that this region can offer you.

Trekking in Kashmir tops the list of adventure activities in Kashmir making it worth exploring due to the flourishing hilly tracts of this region. This outdoor activity was known only amongst geologists and avid trekkers looking for better and more challenging adventures in the Himalayas. However, today, adventure tourism in Kashmir has become the prime focus and attention of the J&K tourism industry owing to a considerable number of the tourists flocking to Kashmir just to trek and experience its matchless natural beauty. “Whoa! I have no words to describe the beauty i have seen in the mountains of Kashmir, I am speech less” said a Dutch mountaineer Weasley Schneider

Therefore, no one can say that Kashmir is not a trekker's haven. The so-called descendants of Moses are your trustworthy companions throughout your expedition. They are the nomadic shepherds of Kashmir known as the ‘Gujjars’ and are considered to be very strong, courageous, and indomitable. These mountain folks can even carry you on their backs and cover the entire trekking expedition in just half the time.

Kashmir is famous for its excellent trekking trails and whichever direction you look at, you will be faced with unlimited trekking routes and mouth-gaping sights that are sure to spoil you for choices.

Blood donation camp organized at Leper colony

❖ **Sajidah Yousuf**

SRINAGAR: Amori Khariya, an NGO organized a donation camp ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr for Leprosy patients in Leper Colony Lalbazar on Saturday. The NGO distributed fruits and clothes among 80 leprosy patients with the aim that patients should have new clothes to wear on the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The camp was organized by office bearers of the NGO Areeb Kawoosa, Aatir Kawoosa, Sharoz Khushal, Jeelani Ahmad, Farhan Hafeez and Junaid Shabir.

Among 80 Leprosy patients 33 were female and 40 were male patients. Fruits and clothes were distributed to all 80 patients keeping in mind the Eid festival ahead.

The organisers in a joint statement said, “The main objective of this camp is to develop and improve the living conditions of Leprosy patients.”

“We are definitely looking to help them, we as a unit have taken this initiative and we will definitely work towards their development”, they said. Patients also expressed their happiness over the step taken by the NGO and thanked them for their kind

gesture.

“We are very happy and thankful to all the members of this NGO as they have taken a step towards us on the auspicious day of Eid-ul-Fitr. At least there is someone who cares for us”, said one of the patients.

President of Leprosy Patients Association, Lateef Ahmad appreciated the effort of organisers and was highly touched by the gesture shown by the organisers.

“This is good initiative taken by the NGO, they provided patients with the basic necessities of life which is highly appreciable”, he said.

Five day Payam e Ramadan festival begins at KU

❖ Aaqib Hyder

SRINAGAR: Five day festival Payam e Ramadan begins at Gandhi Bhawan, University of Kashmir on Thursday. The festival will continue till June 20th. The festival has been organized by The Division of Youth Affairs and Department of Students Welfare, University of Kashmir. The event was inaugurated by Dean Academic Affairs Professor Musadiq Amin Sahafand acting Vice Chancellor.

Dean Students Welfare Professor G N khaki was also present on the occasion. The festival started with the inaugural speech of Vice Chancellor. He spoke on the importance of Ramadan and appreciated the participants and organizers for organizing the festival.

In this regard, five different competitions will be held on five different days. Husn-e-Naat competition was held on Thursday with 55 students across different schools, colleges, higher secondary taking part in the competition. Students of different departments from Kashmir University also participated in the competition.

Renowned singers of Valley Muneer Ahmad



Muneer and Rashid Jahangir were the judges. Muneer Ahmad Muneer said, "This is a great platform for the youth to showcase their talent. These festivals should be held twice a year because talent in the valley is huge and it should be groomed and appreciated."

Students also expressed their satisfaction over participating in the event. "I am very proud of myself by participating in the competition. We should take part in such religious festivals", said Hawi Qazi a student of MERC department.

"Winning does not matter but taking part in such competitions gives me a sense of satisfaction and happiness", she further said.

Initiative for specially abled children



❖ Aneesa khan

SRINAGAR: The Special Education Needs started in the valley schools with the key concept to make every child move ahead and enjoy the right of moving at their own pace with their own strengths.

A decade ago SEN was started in two rooms with two teachers and a few students, however, with the passage of time it was expanded to a fully-fledged department with different work stations for students which includes separate sections for occupational therapy, speech therapy, computer section, vocational group, integrated block, functional unit and English remedial group.

Besides giving efforts for personality development of the children with special needs the idea to start the SEN was to bring sense of belongingness and inclusiveness in the valley children.

These students do their academics in SEN and go to the regular school for socialization and co-curricular activities. "A batch of students also comes to us for an hour or two everyday so that they can acquire sufficient skills before they enter the main school for the whole day," said the teacher.

The investment over the past years on the children with special needs has proved fruitful for the SEN team as their efforts have emerged as success stories. Reaching out to the students with physical problems has made DPS Athwajan earn much fame in the public sector.

Aisha Mir, student, said, "This is excellent initiative for those students who are being ignored in other schools."

SEN unit also makes all the student computer savvy so that they are not left behind in any way. The idea behind working of SEN is that education provided should be child centric, activity based using kinesthetic approach.

"SEN is for the special children, who feel ignored and are in need for more attention" said Miss Shela, SEN team member.

Student qawals entrall audience



❖ Syed Burhan

SRINAGAR: with a aim to educate specially abled children, a school has been started in the valley.

Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) in collaboration with Department of School Education J&K organized Qawali, Husn-e-Qirat and Naat competitions for students at Tagore Hall Srinagar. On second day of the event on June 15, students from five districts of the valley viz Baramulla, Pulwama, Ganderbal, Budgam and Srinagar presented Qawalis and mesmerized the audience. The student performers were appreciated by one and all present in the hall.

Among others present on the occasion included Secretary J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages Dr. Aziz Hajni, Deputy Director News Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar Qazi Salman, Head Regional News Unit Radio Kashmir Srinagar Mushtaq Ahmad Tantray, Cultural officer Department of School Education

J&K GhulamNabiShakir, former Member Parliament Sharief- Ud - Din Shariq and a galaxy of students and art lovers.

While welcoming the guests, secretary Cultural Academy Dr Aziz Hajni said that JKAACL is the platform from where budding scholars, poets, writers, singers and artists are nourished. He further added

that JKAACL will take all possible measures to promote the 'Kashur' talent. Recalling the contribution of noted poets and singers like Professor RehmanRahi and WaheedJeelani, Hajni said that present generation should see them as their ideals and role models in order to grow themselves as distinguished personalities.

While presenting the vote of thanks, Cultural officer Department of School Education J&K GhulamNabiShakirsaid, "Cultural wing of Education Department is quite concerned in bringing out the hidden talents of students. I warmly thank the Cultural Academy and Regional News Units of Doordarshan Srinagar & Radio Kashmir Srinagar for their coordination and cooperation in making this event a success."

On the occasion famous singers and musicians including Rehamatullah Khan, QaiserNizami and HaqeeemGhMohd judged the participants.

Prize distribution ceremony of the event will be held in Tagore hall on June 17. Governor J&K will present prizes and certificates to the winning participants.

Hazratbal shrine: a favorite place during Ramadan



❖ Farheen Qureshi

SRINAGAR: The month of Ramadan is one of the most blessed months in the Islamic calendar.

Spending time at Hazratbal Shrine (Dargah) in Ramadan is like the cherry on the cake.

Dargah Hazratbal shrine has a very high reputation in the region. The shrine houses Moi-e-Muqaddas, the Hair of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

The blessings of this month are countless. Thousands of believers from across Kashmir through Hazratbal shrine here and offer prayers during Ramadan.

Religious scholars in their sermons here highlight the importance of the month and its blessings. They also highlight teachings and various aspects of the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Dargah also offers different delicacies for Iftaar like sherbats and desserts. Hundreds of people sit together for Iftaar at the sunset in the Dargah.

People from different areas also come to Dargah to offer Tarawih prayers together.

Administrator Dargah Hazratbal Peer Masood Haq said: "This is a sacred place, people come here throughout the year but it is always special when it comes to the holy month of Ramadan. Thousands of devotees come here, bow down before the Almighty; their hearts find peace after coming here."

"We make sure each and every arrangement is there for Iftaar and for tarawih prayers. People come here from Shalimar, Nishat, Harwan and nearby areas for Tarawih prayers," he said.

Further, Masood added, "Religious sermons are a part of Ramadan at Dargah. Different scholars are invited to address large gatherings from 12.30 pm to 2 pm every day."

"Donations are as per the system and number of people come here and contribute for the noble cause in the month of Ramadan," he said.

"There are almost 300 washrooms here for the devotees, with every passing day number of people who visit the Dargah increase. We are looking forward to meeting the expectations of every individual," he said.

Abdul Jabbar from Ganderbal area who regularly visits the Dargah said: "I have been coming here for the past 30 years, I come here regularly for the month of Ramadan, and I offer each and every prayer here. Even I do my Iftaar here. I find this place very sacred and peaceful. If I don't come here I feel my day was incomplete."

Jabbar further said: "Bowing down before Allah and praying continuously here gives my heart peace."

DAK declares Hookah more cancerous than cigarettes

❖ Farooz Ahmad

SRINAGAR: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK), declared Hookah, locally called as 'Jajeer'. Higher cancerous potential than cigarettes and dismissed the Hookah being safer smoking option as believed earlier by locals.

Dr. Nisar ul Hassan, President of DAK, said that Hookah smoke contains higher levels of cancer causing chemicals than cigarette smoking thus increasing the cancer risk by several fold.

In another study, published in 'cancer Epidemiology' it was found that Hookah smokers breathe in benzene - a substance linked to increased risk of leukemia (blood cancer). Hookah smoking does not only users but also the people around them.

"Second-hand smokers are also at increased risk of cancer, heart and lung diseases as well as are affected adversely during pregnancy.

"When compared with a single cigarette, one Hookah session releases 125 times more smoke, 25 times the tar,



2.5 times nicotine and 10 times more carbon monoxide"

Jajeer or Hookah is a water pipe that has been a major form of smoking since the olden times in Kashmir. The tobacco smoke of Hookah contains several toxic agents known to cause lung, bladder, oral, stomach and food pipe cancer. The charcoal used to heat the tobacco produces high levels of carbon monoxide and cancer causing chemicals.

12 years on, Uri bridge awaits restoration



IDREES BUKHTIYAR

URI (BARAMULLA): Despite a number of assurances by the authorities to complete the historic Nand Singh Bridge in border town of Uri in north Kashmir's Baramulla district continues to await restoration.

The work on the bridge is incomplete since last 12 years. The bridge was damaged in devastating earthquake of October 8, 2005.

Located on Haji Peer Nallah, the bridge connects more than 35 villages with the tehsil headquarter in Uri.

According to locals, the construction work on the damaged bridge was taken up by the Project Beacon of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) but the contractor who was allotted the work abandoned it abruptly.

"The construction work on the bridge continued for only one year after the earthquake. Later we came to know that the contractor has left the work halfway," said Touseef Zaffer, a trader from the town.

As the construction was put on halt, the Beacon

constructed a temporary bridge nearby along Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Highway for smooth vehicular movement which however also got damaged in September 2014 floods.

"The temporary bridge was constructed again but it is weak and has no proper support. We fear it can collapse anytime," Touseef said.

Though the Beacon is yet to take over the construction work of the bridge again but the traffic continues to ply through the risky bridge.

Meanwhile in the past the Beacon officials have been setting a number of deadlines for the completion of the bridge but on ground no development has taken place.

Earlier, the officials had said that the reconstruction of the bridge will be started in May this year.

Chief Engineer (CE) Beacon, Brigadier A K Das told MERC Times that the work on the bridge will start anytime in near future.

"Yet we are fighting the case legally with the contractor and I assure that the work will start soon," he said.

Locals demand school up-gradation in Baramulla



❖ **Mohammad Imran**

BARAMULLA: People from Dangarpora North Kashmir's district Baramulla demands up-gradation of Government Boys Middle School Dangarpora to solve the educational problem of the village.

The complainants from Dangarpora said that village comprising of more than 2000 population is deprived from higher educational facility which is affecting

educational standard of the village.

"They narrated, that The nearest High Schools are located in Laridora and in Taripora at the distance of 5 and 3 kilometers from the village respectively.

"They also said that due to such a large distance, some students skip studies after 8th class".

People of the village put a strong demand for resolution of their problems by providing a school at least up to the 10th standard so that the kids of the village may not be deprived from higher

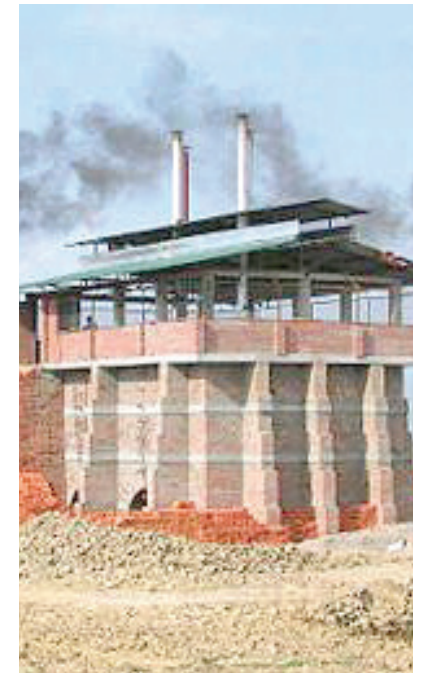
education. Government has nothing to hard if the present middle school functioning in the village is granted up-gradation. The people said the demand of up-gradation of this school has been there for last several decades but concerned authorities are least bothered.

"We are not able to impart education to our children beyond 8th standard because High School is very far from our village .We request Education Minster to look into the matter ". Said Bashir Ahmad one of the parent belonging to the village

He also narrated, that the present school was firstly opened in 1962-63 as primary school in Dangarpora and was upgraded as middle school in 2001-2002.

Talking to MERC Times the Chief Education Officer Baramulla, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad, when contacted, said that he has proposed up-gradation of five schools and one of them is government middle school Dangarpora. He is said to the people of Dangarpora to have given assurance in this regard.

Brick kilns, post threat to Budgam ecology



❖ **Mahdeesa Altaf**

BUDGAM: Unregulated and unchecked growth of brick kilns in Budgam is posing a serious threat to this district. Of all the brick kilns in Kashmir, approximately 60% operate in District Budgam alone. The raise of brick kilns in the areas of district Budgam has intensively increased especially near the localities, which has led to immense increase in environmental pollution. These kilns not only affect the poor workers working in them but also the local population. These kilns use coal, tires, saw dust, wood and oil as fuel which produces deadly smoke and soot ultimately affecting the flora and fauna of the area.

Talking to MERC Times, GhulamNabi,a local shopkeeper said,"These brick kilns pose a serious threat to health as it emits dangerous elements which cause various respiratory and other diseases. Moreover, these kilns require a large amount of sand and soil which affects the fertility of land."

"The leaflet distributed by pollution control board clearly shows that a brick kiln must be 500meters away from a water body,orchard or residential areas. These norms have been restricted only to books and brazenly violated on ground." said a law student from Budgam.

Deputy Commissioner Budgam Mir Altaf told MERC Times that they have already launched a crackdown on these kilns and dismissed license of many who were running illegally near residential areas.

'Ramadan binds People together in valley'

A free-spirited ethos exists in Ramadan with fasting, food and congregational Tarawih

Musaib Hafiz

SRINAGAR: The month of Ramadan binds the Muslims together by way of fasting, food, festivity, and congregational Tarawih prayers at Mosques, Darasgahs, Shrines, and Khanqahs.

People in Ramadan apart from praying, relish special dishes and drinks.

In Kashmir too in the month of Ramadan people prepare mouthwatering delicacies and dishes.

In Kashmir, drinks made from basil seeds (babr i beol treish) and rooh afza are essential during the holy month.

Breaking one's fast has to be followed by a dessert. The delicacies are especially made of semolina. Fruits lovers try fruit chat, and watermelons are served in almost all households.

During the holy month, people who keep fast wake up early to eat a pre-dawn meal suhoor.

Usually the suhoor dishes consist of rice, vegetables, mutton, chicken and Kashmiri noonchai (salt tea).

People rush to homes at sunset so that



they can have Iftaar with their families. In the month of Ramadan markets and streets are deserted at the Iftaar time till they had dinner.

At Iftaar people break the fast with dates and famous Kashmiri drink made from basil seeds.

A good number of people also break the fast at mosques.

In mosques it is common to host large iftaars, especially for the poor and needy.

After Maghrib, and Isha prayers, night prayers called Tarawih are also held in mosques.

In most of the Mosques, recitation of the whole of the holy Quran is completed in these congregational (Tarawih) prayers in the holy month

KU hosts fine arts workshop



❖ **Shahjhan Mughal**

SRINAGAR: Four days art workshop organized by Jatin Rangad, a Bangalore based artist, concluded at department of music and fine arts, University of Kashmir on Thursday. Students of music and fine arts department took part in the workshop and expressed their talents, desires and imaginations through various art performances.

Talking to MERC TIMES Jatin said "I have been coming here for five years and we are continuously holding art workshops here. The students here are wonderful and they are immensely talented". Students also performed in the event and expressed their happiness in their participation.

"I have worked with various schools and institutions here. The students whom I met here are really talented in the field of art and show great interest in this field", he added.

He asserted that there are only two percent people in the country who appreciate art and he wants to promote art throughout the country as it is wonderful field.

Arona Khan, a student of music and fine arts, was topper among the all participants. Her Theme was pain and frustration. She expressed her pain and agony through an emotional performance of smoking, burning her hands with fire.

She said, "I have been attached to this field since class 6th. I have faced many challenges in my life. I was just narrating my story through this performance.

My life is full of pain and agony. I expressed all the frustration through my performance. Now I am satisfied as my pain inside me has come out. She expressed.

Naushad Hussain, faculty of fine arts department said, "every year we hold this workshop. This is a part of our academic process of our students where we provide them with multiple dimensions of art and talent".

KASHMIR'S WALNUT INDUSTRY IN A FIX, GROWERS WORRIED



❖ **Nausheen Naseer**

SRINAGAR: Over the past several years, Kashmir's once-booming walnut industry has been scrambling to find its feet. Since India allowed imports from other countries, the rates have been steadily decreasing creating problems for growers and traders.

"We are facing tough competition from countries like the US and China. They sell walnuts at comparatively lower rates and this has resulted in huge losses for our walnut industry," said Akbar Lone, a trader from Baramulla.

Lone said that walnut kernels that used to be sold for more than Rs 1000 per kg now fetch between Rs 600- 700 per kg

only. "This is a huge loss, especially when you think about the loans that growers have taken from the banks and are unable to repay," he added.

But the production has been good, according to the growers. "We have been producing at least 2.25 lakh metric tons of walnuts every year," said Hamid Shamir, another trader from Srinagar.

Kashmiri walnuts are well known across the world for their quality. "They are organic, no pesticides are used and their oil content is also pretty high. That is why they are in high demand," said Lone. The plants start flowering in February and the harvesting begins in August. The climate in the valley is ideal for its growth. Kashmiri walnuts

are exported not only to other parts of India but also to countries outside India. According to official estimates, 60 per cent of the walnut produced in the valley is supplied to other parts of the country.

Growers complain that other problems are also pushing the industry to shambles. "There are no mandis in the valley, which is really unfortunate and there are no packaging and processing units either. All this requires a lot of money which the growers can't afford on their own," said Lone. "They need help from the government."

The kernels are also prone to diseases, so great care has to taken in transportation and storage. "Transport is another big problem for us," said Rahman Amin, a grower. He also said that the practice of levying tax on walnuts outside the state has also created problems for the industry. "No tax is levied in the valley, then why outside?" he asked.

When contacted, Director of Horticulture, Rafiq Ahmad Hakim, said, "I wouldn't say that the present situation is bad, but it could have been better. The problem is that the foreign walnut kernels are superior in quality compared to the local ones. That's why their demand is more."

He also said that the department is working to improve the production and quality of walnuts in the valley. "We are thinking of improving the grading and packaging of walnuts and there is also a long term plan of starting walnut orchards. This will take time, but we are on it."

Govt ignoring Punjabi language, says Sikh community

Hasina Jamiel

JAMMU: Sikh committees and various sikh organization have expressed their serious concern over the neglect of Punjabi language by state government. A meetings was held by various sikh organization at Gurudwara Baba Fatehsinghji, Gandhi nagar, jammu, under chairmanship of S.TarlochansinghWazir. Where they discuss the neglect

of punabi language by state government.

One of the sikh community leader said,"punjabi language linked with over religion and heritage and which was compulsory language in j&k till 1981, has been deleted from the map of j&k".

Chairman appealed to state government to restart the punjabi language in school and colleges, through this students are aware about their religion and heritage.



Heat effect: Two boys drowned in Kashmir



❖ Sajad Bashir

SRINAGAR: The soaring mercury has gradually started taking an indirect toll. Boys enjoying summer holidays go for bathing in major streams and not return home. Sunday witnessed two such deaths.

A 10-year-old boy drowned in Jehlum in central Kashmir's Maloora area Sunday afternoon. The deceased was identified as Sahil son of Abdul Hamid Parray, a resident of Gulshanpora Maloora. Sahil drowned while taking bath in the river that passes through his village.

SHO Police Station Parimpora told MERC TIMES that the rescue operation was going on to fish out Sahil's body.

Earlier, a 15 year old boy drowned to death in Habba kadal area of Central Kashmir's Srinagar district while he was taking bath in Jehlum.

Locals identified deceased as Towseef Ahmad Najar, son of Muhammad Yousuf Najar, resident of Habba Kadal.

SHO police station Mahraj Gung told MERC TIMES that Towseef's body was fished out from the river and rushed to nearest hospital where doctors declared him brought dead.

Football Talent Hunt Kick Start in Winter Capital



❖ YAWAR SHAFI

SRINAGAR: In yet another boost up to the Sports vocation, The State administration under the supervision of Deputy Chief Minister Dr. Nirmal Singh launched a Football Talent Hunt Tournament for both Boys and Girls. The tournament is being organized by Sashtra Seema Bal at The University of Jammu.

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Jammu

Sector is organizing "OORJA 2017 CAPFs U-19 Football Talent Hunt Tournament" in collaboration with Jammu University, a Prime Minister Initiative in the second phase.

Deputy Chief Minister in his address observed that there is tremendous sports talent among the boys and girls of the state as well as country and hoped that, with the availability of improved facilities and increasing opportunities, they will excel in all

sports and games. He said that if their talent is nurtured and adequately groomed, there shall be no reason for many of them to shine at national and international level in all games and sports disciplines in the coming years. He said that time has come for the youth of J&K to demonstrate their talent and bring laurels to the State in the various sports events at the national and international levels.

In a meantime, Minister of State for Education, Culture and Floriculture Priya Sethi, Vice Chancellor Jammu University R. D. Sharma and Senior Leader Yudhvir Sethi were also present on the occasion. While as P. K. Gupta, Deputy Inspector General, FHQ SSB New Delhi, Manvendra, Deputy Inspector General, Ajay Kumar, Commandant, Vijay Singh Jamwal, Second-In-Command, N. S. Negi, JAO, Barjeet Singh, Deputy Commandant, Sanjeev Kumar, Deputy Commandant, Kashtoori Lal, Deputy Commandant, Rajeev Kumar, Deputy Commandant, Jeet Lal, Deputy Commandant and other officer were also present in the opening ceremony.

The prizes for second phase are Rs. 100,000/- for winner team, Rs. 60,000/- for Runners up and Rs. 40,000/- for third place. A running Trophy will be rewarded to the winner in the second phase in addition, there will be trophies/prizes for best player of the tournament.

District Shopian Rugby Championship 2017 Concludes

❖ Junaid Manzoor

SHOPIAN: Two days long District Shopian Rugby 7-S Championship 2017 Concluded at Zainpur Sports Stadium today here. The championship was inaugurated on 22nd of this month in which 20 teams of Shopian district participated in the championship.

The Championship was held in two age groups under-14 and under-17. KGP won the final title under-14 defeating Hanfia Public school and the final title of under-17 was clinched by Allama Iqbal by thrashing Boys Higher Secondary Shopian.

The winners and runners up teams got berth in the state championship which will be held at Bakshi stadium Srinagar in the month July.



Organizing Secretary of the championship Mohd Shafi said, "the winners and runner-up teams will perform better in the upcoming state championship and we hope that our district players will get selected for the forthcoming National championships in near future.

Principal of the National Innovations public School (NIPS), Nadeem Ahmad was the chief guest on the closing ceremony of the event and he distributed the prizes among the winners and runners up team.

The championship was organized by District Shopian Rugby Association under the aegis of J&K Rugby Association and under the supervision and sponsored by J&K State Sports Council.

Qamarwari Bridge awaits completion

❖ Kaiser Majeed

SRINAGAR: After missing its first deadline in 2014, Qamarwari bridge is awaiting its completion from past six years. The bridge is being made to reduce the traffic congestion on the already existing old bridge there and connects Qamarwari with rest downtown area of Srinagar City.

The authorities in the Roads and Building (R&B) department have miserably failed to complete the project on time as it has so far missed several deadlines.

The work over the construction of the alternative bridge was started in June 2011 at the estimated cost of Rs 9.85 crore while the bridge was supposed to get completed in June 2014.

Sources said the construction of an alternate Qamarwari bridge was sanctioned by the government in 2011 to reduce traffic congestion.

“The work was started in the year 2011 but after passing six years, the bridge is still incomplete and a lot of work is also pending,” official sources said.

Locals however accused the department for

ignoring their plights and demanded immediate completion of the bridge.

The locals said that the inordinate delay in constructing the bridge has resulted in immense hardships to the residents here.

“The resident especially the commuters are being forced to face hardships as the area witnesses frequent traffic jams due to the congestion on the already existing bridge in the area,” they added.

Following the missing of first deadline, the Chief Minister J & K, Mehbooba Mufti during her tour to the city area in May 2016 set an another deadline for the completion of the bridge.

She, according to the locals has said that the bridge would be completed by end of Mar 2017 despite authorities failed to construct the bridge in this period.

Officials in the R&B department told MERC TIMES that the acquisition of land and shifting of a local Masjid was the main reason behind the delay in completion of the bridge.

However, he said that all the issues have been settled now and hopefully the construction of the bridge will be completed by the end of this year (2017).”

ESSENCE OF EID UL FITR

MujeebUIFeroz

SRINAGAR: Regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam, Ramadan fasting is the period when Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset. Muslims refrain from consuming food, drink and engaging in sexual relations. It also includes the increased offering of prayers and recitation of the Holy Quran – Allah’s book for guidance for the entire humanity. .

Following the successful completion of the month of Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr becomes a great occasion to thank Allah for giving believers the will-power and endurance to observe the month-long fast and follow rules in personal conduct. It is also a time to renew one’s faith in Allah and seek his blessings.

The festival has no connection with any historical event but is a day when Muslims thank Allah for the strength, the will and the endurance he gives them, especially during Ramadan.

Eid-ul-Fitr is to celebrate the happiness which man feels after successfully completing an important task of fasting the month of Ramadhan.

Muslims eagerly await the Eid-ul-Fitr to witness happy mood of the people. In Kashmir, Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to be on June 26 or 27. If the crescent moon is seen on Sunday, June 25, then Ramadan will have ended after 29 days and Eid-ul-Fitr will be on the next day, June 26. If the moon is not seen, then Ramadan will be assumed to have lasted 30 days and Eid will be celebrated on Tuesday, June 27.

Eid al-Fitr stands for eating, joy and greetings. Eid-ul-Fitr reflects happy mood of global Muslims having fulfilled one of the fundamental pillars of Islam in the service to Allah, the almighty. Allah’s full satisfaction is the motto of Muslims fasting for a month- a significant achievement of Islam.

Muslims, for whom Eid is the most important festival to celebrate even while facing anti-Islamic attacks on them by the enemies of Islam, seek Allah’s help, blessings and guidance during and after the Ramadan and always.

Eid-ul-Fitr as a very joyous day for Muslims should be the beginning of lives as the fasting would strengthen the minds to continue with what we have achieved through fasting. Muslims would not revert back to old way of life after the Ramadan fasting and Eid-ul-Fitr.

Hopefully, Muslims will continue the virtues they have imbibed during the patient Ramadan fasting all the time in future and emerge stronger and victorious next year to welcome the Ramadan. Spiritual gains Muslims have obtained during the month long fasting cum prayers would help Muslims to lead a more fruitful and happy life.

KAS aspirants want end on deadlock

❖ RashidManzoor

CHADOORA: The (JKPSC) Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission has withdrawn its June-14 notification for the mains examination, and is reassessing the merit of the candidates who appeared in the preliminary examination with political science, Zoology as an optional subject.

Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) aspirants, who qualified the preliminary examination held on 19th of March 2017 are urging the PSC to come up with a solution as soon as possible.

The move came after few students protested against the alleged discrepancies in the evaluation, Non availability of an official answer key from the PSC. This issue was taken into the cognizance of the Chief Minister’s grievance cell led by Tassaduq Mufti, who later issued a notice which was seen as interference into the autonomous body by some politicians and aspirants. Some of the victims of those discrepancies even approached PMO.

The postponement of the examinations has left many aspirants in disarray as there is no update as to how and when a new notification will arrive.

“I have been preparing for this prestigious examination from many years, I left no stone unturned till I cracked prelims of the examination with at least 320 points as per my self assessment, unfortunately the way PSC is working in no time bound manner has left me gut wrenched” said SaqibaManzoor, an aspirant.

Some of the aspirants said they were not able to decide whether or not to start preparations for the



mains.

“Previously, My Roll no. appeared in the list, using some unofficial keys and my self assessment I am touching 275 points that is near to cut off. Now, maybe I will not figure in the revised list after reassessment.” said Sameed Ahmad.

The candidates said the all the disparities should be rectified and the new merit list published at the earliest.

Chairman JKPSC, Latief-ul-Zaman Deva said that the verification of the answer keys is being carried out by a new team of experts.

“The new merit list will depend on the outcome of the result of the verification of the answer keys,” he said.

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