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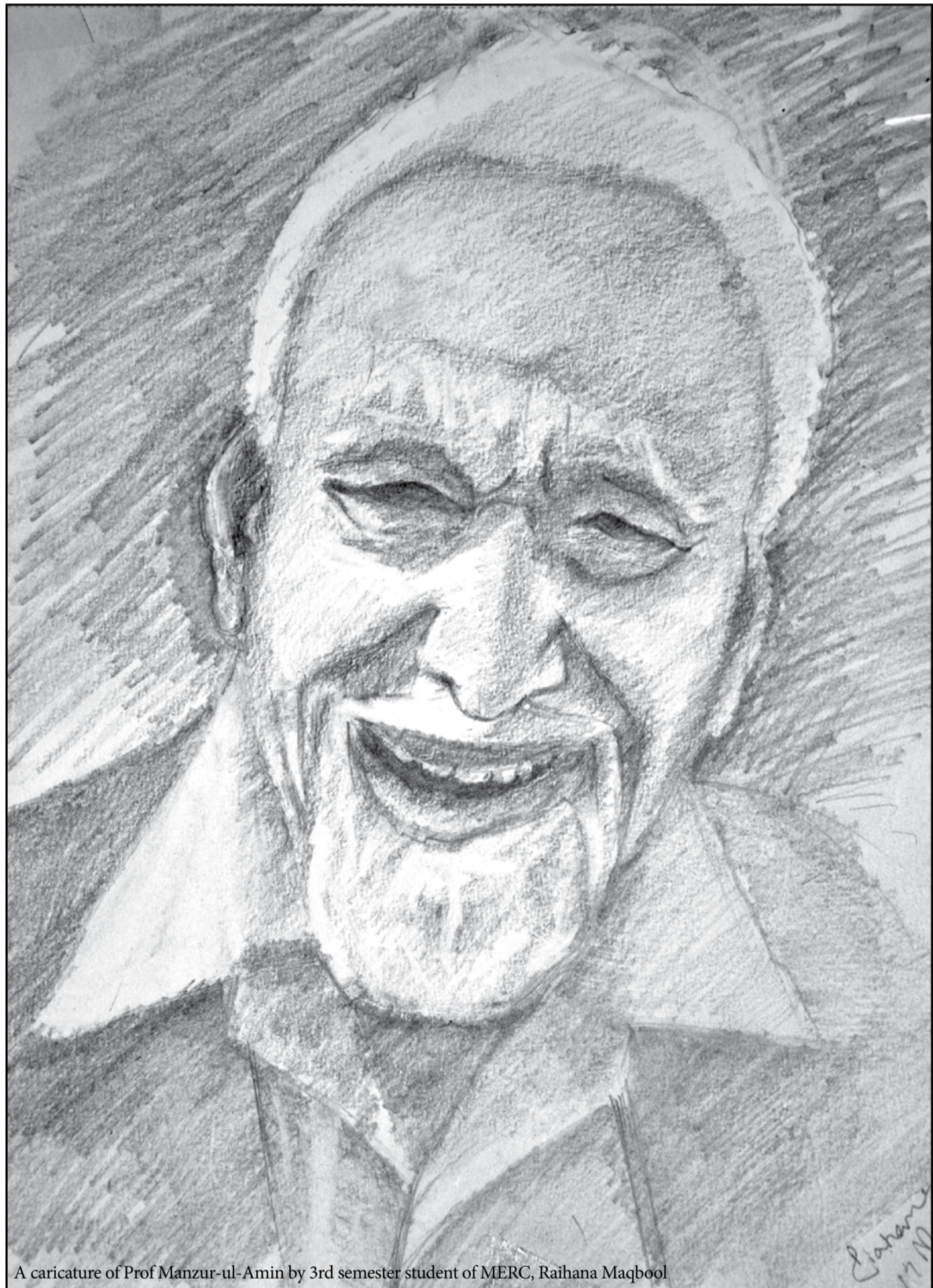
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Kashmiri youth turn easy prey for drug peddlers

Police seeks public cooperation to check the menace; religious scholars call for pro-active role of NGOs

Bilal Ahmad Bhat

Amir (name changed) still remembers his school days when he used to be the bright student of his class. After finishing his schooling from Greenland School, he went to Sri Pratap Higher Secondary School. It was during these days that a failed love affair made his life miserable so much so that he even attempted to commit suicide.

In this time of frustration, Amir met a friend to whom he narrated his story.

"... And the friend lit a cigarette and suggested me to have a puff. I soon realized that it was loaded with charas (cannabis) and found myself in ecstasy," he recalls.

"It was just a good solution for me to ease my pain. I then used to go to Bund (embankment on river Jhelum) as I had become an addict. To ease the pain I increased the dose," says Amir.

Along with three of his friends he says they used to take drugs in the form of pills and injections.

"Two of my friends died later due to high drug dose. To buy drugs I developed a bad habit of stealing money. I still remember the guy who is responsible for all this and I have seen hundreds like me becoming his prey. He is still spoiling future of hundreds of Kashmiri youth," says Amir.

He holds government and police responsible for his condition. "The drugs are easily available and the drug dwellers enjoy impunity," he says, adding that the kingpins who supply drugs roam freely.

"We have a drug lord who hails from Hazratbal area. He was arrested seven times but after 10 to 15 days he is being released. If he is dealt strictly under law he will never dare to do it again," says Amir.

Meanwhile, police has been seeking cooperation from people to nab the drug peddlers and dealers.

"Society has the primary role in eradicating the menace. They can approach us personally if they find any such case and we will deal with the culprits strictly. We will feel happy if someone approaches us because this will make our work easier," said Superintendent Police, Hazratbal, Abdul Qayoom.

"We have to work according to law. Investigation depends on the court proceedings. If someone is granted bail we have to free him," he added.

The SP also referred to the political turmoil in Kashmir due to which many youth are suffering from depression and some of them take extreme steps like resorting to criminal activities.

Religious scholars believe NGOs should also play a more pro-active role in checking the menace.

"Both government and NGOs should come forwards to address the problem of drug addiction. There more than 3000 NGOs in Kashmir but no one seems to work sincerity on ground. We are drifting towards things which bear dangerous consequences for our society," said Dr Hameed Naseem Rafiabadi of department of Islamic Studies, Kashmir University.

Dr Touseef Rizvi, who teaches Psychology at Kashmir University, said there are many factors responsible for the increase in drug addicts in the society "which include easy access to drugs, economic problems, unemployment and independence given to children".

'Commercialization is distorting journalism'

Telegraph editor visits MERC



Hajira

Srinagar: Media Education Research Centre (MERC) of Kashmir University organized separate interaction sessions with noted journalist, Sankarshan Thakur and Dhruva Awasthy of Song and Drama Division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Tuesday.

Thakur, shared his experiences of working as a reporter and also as an editor at some of the reputed media organizations.

Discussing different challenges facing journalism, he said, "I don't consider social media as journalism. It is difficult to ascertain the veracity of the content and process the information. But it is also true that many journalists are using it to gather information and today many stories come out because of social media."

About the growth of print media in the country, Thakur said, "Unlike West, print media is not receding in India though it has become more metro-centric. However, the growing vernacular press is catering to local needs."

Talking about the challenges posed by management affairs of media organizations to editorial discretion, he said, "Things should be decided by journalistic standards and not by managerial standards."

"Commercialization is distorting journalism. Journalist's work is over as soon as the manager chips in. You need an enlightened owner to insulate his journalists from commercial interests," he added.

Terming journalism as the "uni-

versity of life", Thakur said, "It is the only profession that allows you to see the world and land in unfamiliar situations."

Advising the media students to work hard, he said, "Don't do a half-baked story. You should strive to get the other side of the story."

"It is easy to report a glamorous story than a hard story because you have to battle with different aspects of the hard story. The more

advanced and easy journalism is getting, the more its quality suffers. People who join journalism should not do so for the sake of glamour or thinking of changing the world," he added.

Opposing the idea of media watchdog, he suggested self-regulatory mechanism to rein in media.

Having covered Kashmir for over 24 years, Thakur said, "I share an intimate connection with the place. My association with the valley dates back to 1984."

Sharing his experience of reporting Kashmir, he said, "Kashmir was like any other place before 1990s, but afterwards it was even difficult to move out of the office and hunt for a story. We were in an information blackout zone."

"Crying has become a song of Kashmir and Kashmiris have really cried a lot," he added.

Earlier, introducing the guest, Head, MERC, Prof S Mufeed Ahmad said that the department is organizing special lecture series so that students get acquainted with the diverse nuances of journalism.

"The aim is to help students learn from the first-hand experiences of the professionals in the field," he added.

In the afternoon session, Dhruva Awasthy, Regional Deputy Director, Song and Drama Division, discussed the role and relevance of folk forms in disseminating various messages.

Students of both the batches at MERC and the faculty attended the sessions. Tariq A Rather, Information Officer, Press Information Bureau (PIB) was also present on the occasion.

SMI

Kashmir's history gathers dust at SPS Museum

Delay in completion of new complex leaves artifacts in disarray

Hashim Hakeem/ Mohammad Saquib

Housed in a 114-year-old heritage building on the banks of Jhelum at Lal Mandi in Srinagar, the artifacts and other objects of historic importance are gathering dust at SPS (Shri Pratap Singh) Museum while the new under-construction museum complex is missing deadline after deadline.

Located adjacent to the museum, the new building was scheduled to be completed in October 2010. Though the structure of the new building is complete, its interior work is still pending.

The interior designing and layout work was assigned to a Mumbai based consultancy firm, Matrika Design Collaborative in 2008.

"Matrika Design Collaborative inspected and made sketches of at least 85000 artifacts so as to decide about their placement in the new building," museum curator, Mushtaq Ahmad told MERC Times.

He attributed the delay to elaborate tendering process, political unrest in the valley in 2010 and lack of local expertise in interior designing.

He said there is no lack of funds. "Police Housing Colony selects the tenders and provides money for the construction work whenever needed."

The curator claimed that the new building will still take two to three years to be completed. "The new museum site based on approximately one lakh sq/metres while the existing museum area is just 11,000 sq/metres."

"Minister of Tourism and Culture, Nawang Rigzin Jora held various discussions with us about completion of the museum's interior and layout designing. His emphasis was on completion of interior designing within the stipulated time," Mushtaq told MERC Times.

Meanwhile, people have expressed disappointment over the "bad" condition of the museum and the delay in completion of the new complex.

"This building does not deserve to be called a museum. It is rather a big store room with artifacts placed in a disorganized way. The visitors are also bored by inadequate fa-

cilities of recreation," said Aaqib, a university student.

The existing museum building bears a dull look and few people, mostly tourists and students, visit the place.

"Preservation of heritage treasures of the State should be a priority for the government, but the delay in the completion of the new museum complex reflects the non-seriousness of the government," said another student Sadaf.

Established by the then ruler of J&K, Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1898, the SPS Museum houses collection of archaeological excavations, ancient coins, seals, terracotta, potsherds, inscriptions, paintings, shawls, stuffed birds and animals, silver and bronze utensils of different civilizations.

sioner Secretary had said.

BOX: Early history

The museum was set up when a memorandum was submitted to the then Dogra ruler of the Jammu & Kashmir, Maharaja Pratap Singh by his younger brother, General Raja Sir Amar Singh, and a European scholar, Captain S.H. Godmerry, proposing the establishment of a museum in Srinagar to house exhibits and artifacts covering the region of Jammu, Kashmir, Baltistan and Gilgit.

The establishment of the museum was supervised by Sir John Marshal, the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India. The Accountant General of the state, Blerjee, served as the first head of the institution. Blerjee was responsible for preparing a



In a meeting chaired by Tourism Minister recently, Commissioner Secretary tourism and culture, Atul Dullo said the interior project of the museum was based on four phases with completion period of 18 months.

He said that the research design work of the museum has been already completed by the consultancy while as the design and drawing work is awaited from consultancy firm, Matrika Design Collaborative.

"The research and design project work of Phase-I has been completed by the firm and in respect of phase-II and III the designing firm submitted drawings and BOQ to Police Housing Corporation for Archaeology gallery to be established in ground Floor and for rest of floors and galleries is awaited," Commis-

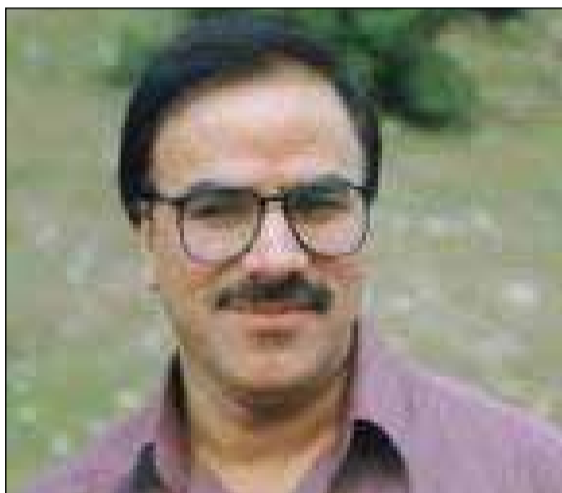
catalogue of the various coins kept in the museum.

The museum collection initially comprised displays of shawls and armory that were obtained from the Tosh Khana. After the reorganization of the Archaeological Department in 1913 under Rai Bhadur Daya Ram Sahni, artifacts excavated at Panderenthan, Parihaspora and Avantipura were first exhibited in the museum. This rich endowment formed one of the major additions to the museum's collection. Subsequently, a number of objects, mostly decorative household items, were acquired by the museum from private owners. The museum's various artifacts have been tentatively dated on the basis of style, period and material, etc.

MM

'Faith can help overcome mental disorders'

There has been an increase in the number of people suffering from various mental disorders in Kashmir over the last two decades. Noted psychiatrist, Dr Mushtaq Margoob talks about the reasons, impact and other medical and social issues related to the mental health of Kashmiris in an interview with Zuhaib Ashraf



Q: Some studies have revealed increase in the number of people suffering from various mental disorders in Kashmir. What are the reasons for this phenomenon?

The trauma through which people of the valley had to go through after late 1980's and 1990's and the rise of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorders) cases gives a clear picture about the causes. I call the young generation of Kashmir as the Trauma Generation. Children were restricted to their homes because it was unsafe outside. I conducted a research on a sample of 671 people (256 females and 415 males) with average age being 38.28 years. The total lifetime prevalence for any traumatic experience was 58.69 per cent (59.51 per cent in males and 57.39 per cent in females).

The other reasons may be the deterioration of family structure- breaking of joint families into nuclear families, which means there are no elders to help us by their experience leading to negative coping mechanisms in youth, who don't know how to direct their energies which is a feature of adolescence.

Unemployment is also one of the main reasons of the psychological stress especially the unemployment of women is creating more problems. The in-laws of a girl demand her to be working and that too with handsome salary. This has become a common cause of psychological disorder in women in Kashmir.

Q: What are the most common psychological disorders in Kashmir?

Depression is the most common disorder in Kashmir. According to an American research, depression would be the most common disease by 2020 after heart diseases. But Kashmir is already witness to worse condition. The number of PTSD cases has been increasing in Kashmir ever since armed conflict erupted in the valley in 1990's. The 1993 Hazratbal siege is a perfect example where people started developing disorders immediately afterwards the event, which had not first seemed to be so much harmful. Anxiety was most widely recorded in the days of turmoil in the valley but it has subsided with time.

Q: Where from do you see more cases coming- rural or urban areas?

There hasn't been any research as such on the issue. But surprisingly poor people are more likely to overcome the mental disorders than the rich. I think it's because they have more faith in God and believe in destiny. While as rich people are more materialistic so they lose every hope after losing something close to their hearts.

Q: What are the various forms of treatment?

There are many medical treatments and doctors do use them for a period of time, but what is to be stressed these days is therapeutic treatment. It is relatively more effective and with almost no side effects. I also remember how I used to treat patients suffering from PTSD by shock therapy. But these days life is easier with other forms of treatment coming up. Clinical psychologists, who are trained councilors, manage to work in tandem with other psychiatrists and counsel patients to better the treatment without restricting it to just medicinal part.

Q: Suicide and drug abuse cases among teens have also seen a surge over the years. What is your take on the issue?

Laws won't do much if it's not helped with moral responsibility of individual himself. All the actions that are self-destructive like drug abuse and suicide would diminish with time, provided moral development is imparted at the level of family and society. Middle East and Afghanistan are perfect examples of how they have tackled with it- especially the religious injunctions of building up a sense of all-seeing almighty God and the accountability in the hereafter. The processes like these that heal the

'hurt souls' by inculcating religious cognitive elements are inherent in such societies, where as such elements are minimal in Kashmir. People are thus thrown into learned helplessness and are not confident to rejuvenate their traumatic lives.

Q: Do superstitions hinder patients from seeking psychiatric help?

Absolutely. We have written a lot on it and media has also played a significant role regarding the awareness of the issues that

are plaguing our society. There is also this research that shows rural areas are more prone to such superstitions. In 1996, 73 per cent of the total patients would visit a faith-healer before seeking psychiatric help and more-so in rural areas (87 per cent in rural and 59 per cent in urban areas) while as in 2005, 68.5 per cent (84 per cent in rural and 53 per cent in urban areas). Many people still believe in the old processes of healing by amulets and certain other unverified tricks by soothsayers. I recently went to a school in Behrampora, a village in Sopore, where girls would get unconscious or fainted without any apparent reason and the principal of the school had called me and I went personally there. People had thought they were possessed which was surely not the case. The possession syndrome is actually something which has been there for ages. Media has played a remarkable role to make people aware of these baseless superstitions, which by a simple scientific process commenced from closure of consciousness by autonomous nervous system at the time of immense stress, resulting in fainting and hallucinations.

There were some superstitions associated with our psychiatrists. It was believed that a doctor treating mad people would also turn mad. Such superstitions are not there now. Thank God.

Q: What is your opinion about the awareness level among people regarding the mental health?

I personally go to different areas in Kashmir, addressing the need then and there. I had also been to Kashmir University and the way my research on drug abuse was taken in the campus and the number of people who read my books on the same was disappointing. Only two per cent of faculty members and five per cent of students had read my books. This was the time (2008) when it was reported that a woman was distributing drugs among female students in the campus, which I felt I need to address in some way possible.

Q: How many cases do you see in a day on an average at your clinic and hospital?

I see many cases in a day and the disorders are increasing day by day without any doubt, and hardcore scientific facts reflect it. I have also kept Thursdays for patients to whom I attend 40 minutes each. This process of prognosis is theatrical, which is helpful for psychological disorder cases. I remember in 1990's I used to see 300-400 cases per day with another colleague of mine Dr. Abdul Ahad.

Q: What is your advice to people?

The role of an individual is a must. Having faith in God and belief in a destined path, I am amazed with the benefits of such thinking for the society at large.

Ladakhis at the mercy of Zojila Pass

People pin hope on the proposed tunnel for end to their miseries

Mehrur Nissa

Normal life is thrown out of gear in Ladakh region in winters following cold weather and heavy snowfall. Matters are made worse by the blockade of Zojila Pass, which is also known as the gateway to Ladakh.

The landlocked region remains cut-off from rest of the world for six months from mid-November to April due to heavy snowfall on Zojila pass, which closes down 434-km-long Srinagar-Ladakh highway.

The closure of the highway is significant since it is a more preferred road link than the alternate 474-km-long, Manali-Leh highway which remains closed for a longer duration due to heavy rain and snowfall.

With the region being cut-off from the rest of the country, Ladakhis face many problems like shortage of eatables.

"We have to pass through many hardships in winter. We face shortage of vegetables, fruits, meat and other food stuff. We have to rely on stored dry food," said Hakima Banoo, a house wife.

"We need to store dry food in advance so that we can pass the harsh winter," she added. Ladakhis also face shortage of fuel like petrol and diesel.

Since many power stations run on diesel, its shortage also affects electricity supply.

"In winter we get electricity for only three hours in the night," said Ali, a local resident.

"It also hampers the studies of our children," he added. Ladakhi business commu-



nity also has to suffer heavy business losses due to closure of Zojila pass.

"We suffer around 50 per cent losses in business during winter," said Muhammad Abass, a local drug dealer.

"The closure of highway affects the economy of Ladakh badly," he added.

The region also faces shortage of medicines in the hospitals because of which the patients have to suffer.

"Serious patients who are recommended for treatment out of Ladakh also can't do so due to the closure of the highway," said Medical Officer at Kargil Hospital, Muhammad Ishaq.

Students who study outside Ladakh also can't return home during winters. Some of them even miss their exams.

Troubled by the highway closure, some of the students have opened a campaign page on the social networking site, Facebook titled "Zojila Watch" to highlight the problems faced by Ladakhis.

Meanwhile, Ladakhis have pinned their hopes on the six km Zojila tunnel project the work on which is scheduled to begin from August this year following the clearance from central government.

"Union Ministry of Road transport and highways has approved the construction of Zojila tunnel to provide all season link to the twin districts of Kargil and Leh with other parts of the world," State Minister for Transport, some newspapers quoted Qamar Ali Akhoun as saying recently.

The decision has evoked hope among the residents of Ladakh.

"After a long wait, the government is finally paying attention to the isolated region. If the tunnel is completed in time, it will make our life comfortable. We won't have to worry about availability of essential commodities anymore. We can also move outside Ladakh without any hurdle," said a resident of Kargil, Hamida. **»MTI**

Star News Executive Vice President visits MERC

Ruheel Sheikh

Srinagar, May 26: Executive Vice President (Engineering Wing) of Star News, Subrata Dutta Saturday interacted with students of Media Education Research Center (MERC) and highlighted the evolution of news production and process from analogue to digital mode.

"Evolution of electronic gadgets from XLR cables to optical fibers has brought a revolutionary change in news gathering and production. People have to adapt themselves with the change in the technology," Dutta said.

"However, the advancement in technology does not mean that the content of news



will change," he added.

Earlier, welcoming the guest, HOD MERC, Prof S Mufeed Ahmad said the interaction session is part of the series conducted

by the department wherein professionals from different media organizations share their experiences with the students.

He said students need to acquire knowledge and sharpen their skills as per the requirements of media industry.

"With the transition from analogue to digital, students have to update themselves and get connected with pen and camera," Prof. Mufeed said.

HOD MERC assured that the department will be at fore front to develop links between the students and media houses so that they can explore the field in a better way.

Dutta was accompanied by Srinagar Bureau Chief of Star News, Asif Qureshi. **»MTI**

MERC holds programme on Media and Social Responsibilities

Uбайд Shafi Bhat

Srinagar: Media Education Research Centre (MERC) of Kashmir University in collaboration with J & K Yateem Foundation (JKYF) organized a day-long programme on "Media and Social Responsibilities" in which speakers highlighted the role of media towards orphans, widows and destitute.

Speaking on the occasion, HoD MERC, Prof S Mufeed Ahmed said the department is proud to hold this programme in collaboration with a reputed organization like JKYF.

"The idea is to understand the problems of people on ground and to think of solutions to their deficiencies," Prof Mufeed said.

He also stressed upon rechecking of facts and reporting objectively. He said that journalists should perceive, conceive and then implement things for the social good. He assured full support to JKYF on behalf of MERC. Prof Mufeed also cited some Quranic verses to bring home the point.

Senior faculty member at MERC, Nasir Mirza said that journalists should extend their helping hand to the people in all possible ways.

"In journalism, there is a big debate going on whether to rescue or report in times of crisis, but I feel that journalists should strike a balance. While discharging their professional

JKYF felicitates the department, seeks support



duties, they should extend a helping hand to the people in distress, whenever and wherever possible. An ideal journalist is one who is spiritually awake, morally alert, politically conscious and socially active," Mirza said.

He also stressed on "utilizing power of communication to help people live a better life and to bring a smile on those faces who are troubled by times."

Emphasizing on the role of media in sensitizing society, Chairman JKYF, Mohammed Ahsan Rather said that journalists are a great instrument in institutionalizing social work.

"You (journalists) can be of great help and support to the masses. And you can do a lot while doing your work."

Mohammed Rafiq Lone, Associate Programme Executive, Press and publicity Division, JKYF underlined the importance of doing good deeds and cited from the holy life of the Prophet (PBUH) in setting an example of piety, righteousness and care.

Er. Syed Abdul Hameed, Patron JKYF, said that it is the "collective responsibility of the society to play its role so as to minimize the problems of orphans and destitute."

Showkat Shafi, PRO Kashmir University said that "reporting is a bigger social responsibility. In nineties, it was media that highlighted things and kept the people informed."

He added that we should not depend on media too much and give them their own space.

"Journalists should rise to the occasion and report. It is because of them things are surfacing." Some students also spoke on the occasion. JKYF felicitated the department and gave certificates to the students and faculty members in connection with the 12th annual day celebrations of the foundation held on April 29.

Lecturer MERC, Raashid Maqbool conducted the proceedings of the event, while as Tariq Ahmed Rather, Media Communication Officer, Press Information Bureau presented the vote of thanks.

Maiden student journalism awards given

Mir Zulqarnain

Srinagar, May 17: For the first time in its history, Media Education Research Centre (MERC) of Kashmir University in association with a group of alumni organised a special function to present Prof Manzur-ul-Amin's Professional Journalism Awards for MERC students today.

The function coincided with the presence of the department's founder, Prof Amin in the town. Speaking on the occasion, Head MERC, Prof S Mufeed Ahmad said, "The purpose of this function was to let the students seek inspiration from the success story of Prof Amin and to provide them an opportunity to exhibit their creativity." Prof Mufeed also announced that the award will be an annual feature of the academic calendar of MERC.

Earlier, in his introductory remarks, senior faculty, MERC, Nasir Mirza said, "The lessons I had the privilege to learn from him helped me to keep the department intact after he left the valley in early 1990, but we always missed him."



"Spring comes once a year, but the spring symbolized by the arrival of our mentor has come after a gap of 22 years," he remarked.

Saying that he is overwhelmed by the love showered by the MERC alumini on during this days prof Manzoor ul Amin in his address said "i have no joy to see MERC becoming a huge tree which gives patronage to our budding journalists ". Our boys and girls here have extraordinary communication skills

and talent, said Prof Amin and added that they only need guidance and exposure.

The students of both the batches at MERC besides the faculty members attended the session. The contestants had submitted write-ups, poems, paintings, features, photo features, slide shows and sketches about Prof Amin.

Rihana Maqbool, a 3rd semester student, bagged the first prize for her pencil sketch of Prof Amin. The second prize was shared by first semester students Amir Salati, Hilal-ul-Fayaz and Shafat Mir for their slide show while as the third prize was conferred on Waseem Malla of third semester for his write up. Besides, consolation prizes were given to Abid Hafiz Rabia Bashir and Faisal Shabir.

The jury members included faculty members of MERC, Nasir Mirza, Dr Sabeha Mufti and Muslim Jan, besides former students of the department, Shabir Ahmad Handoo and Jameel Qadri. Sponsored by a former student of MERC, M M Munaf, the awards were given away by Prof Amin himself.

'New Communication Technologies have revolutionized education'

Baseera Rafiq

A two-day national seminar on 'Television and New Communication Technologies – the changing paradigm of education' was held at Kashmir University on May 15 and 16. The event was organized by Educational Multimedia Research Centre (EMMRC) of the university.

In his inaugural address Governor N N Vohra who is also Chancellor of the university stressed on the need to make use of new communication technologies for the benefit of students in satellite campuses and other educational institutions of the valley.

"One of the effective ways to reach out to these students of satellite campuses and students studying in various colleges and schools is to telecast educative programs and documentaries produced by EMMRC," Vohra said.

"Besides disseminating information and education in academics through virtual and country wide classrooms the EMMRC must come forward in spreading awareness about social and environmental issues," he added.

The governor said Shri Amaranth Shrine Board (SASB) has asked EMMRC to make a documentary film on the up-coming annual Amarnath Yatra which would provide information to the pilgrims and the society at large about the different aspects of Yatra.

Vohra said the documentary film will provide an overall and effective orientation to the pilgrims "as the visual medium of television is more powerful in educating people and does not have the barrier of language as visuals speak for themselves."

In his presidential address, Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof Talat Ahmed said technology has revolutionised research and experimentation methods.

"Earlier to observe and study the phenomena of melting of glaciers we used to spend months and years in hostile weather conditions facing tough terrain. But now with the ease of technology we can monitor the melting of glaciers and other scientific and natural trends while sitting at our work places and institutes of research through satellite technology," he said.

Prof Talat said there is a need to educate students how to access this technology and make judicious use of resources available on the internet and other interactive media.

"The whole world has entered into an e-age and this seminar is a great opportunity for our students to know and learn from the experiences of veterans in the field of technology and communication who would provide useful insights about various technological tools, their mode of working and methods of communication in the light of changing paradigm of communication," he added. In his keynote address, founder head of Media Education Research Centre (MERC), Prof Manzoor-ul-Amin said New Communication Technology allows students to interact and learn through online medium breaking the confines of the four-walled classroom. "To maintain interest of students towards traditional classrooms teachers have to be techno-savvy and replace existing black boards with projectors and LCDs," he said.

Director CEC Dr T.R Kem who was guest of honour during the inaugural session also spoke on the occasion. The proceedings of the inaugural session were conducted by Ajaz-u-Haq.

Speaking during the valedictory function on the second day of the seminar, Minister for Science and Information Technology Syed Agha Ruhulla Mehdi who was chief guest on the occasion asked the academia and teachers to switch over to online mode of teaching. "The tremendous

increase in the number of open universities outside shows that academia is going digital and online all over the world which enables students to have easy access to the resource material and at the same time the content reaches to millions of recipients which cannot be achieved in traditional classrooms due to barriers of time and space," the minister said.

Maintaining that future centres of education would not be bound by physical parameters Ruhulla said, "Virtual classrooms have become a force to reckon with and very soon traditional institutions of learning and education would find it difficult to attract the students to the four-walled class rooms as the youth today can access information from anywhere due to availability of new communication technologies."

Registrar of the university Prof S Fayaz Ahmed who was special guest during the valedictory function said it is very important for the universities to switch over to new communication technologies to keep track of things happening in the world of information and technology.

Prof Geeta Bamzai of IIMC New Delhi also spoke on the occasion.

In his address Director EMMRC Dr Shahid Rasool said the recommendations of the two-day conference will be soon made public and sent to the concerned quarters for implementation.

Around 60 research papers were presented in the seminar by the participants including MERC faculty- Nasir Mirza, Dr Sabeha Mufti, Dr Aaliya Ahmed and Malik Zahra. MERC research scholars- Rabia Noor, Suhail Ahmad, Nazir Ganai, Isra Amin, Beenish and Rounaq also presented their papers in the seminar.

Dr Salima Jan, research scientist at EMMRC and coordinator seminar, presented a report of the two-day seminar.

MMT

His blindness could not stop him from living

Sadaf Khursheed

Rahmatullah Mir is an X-ray technician at Shere-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS). His visual impairment sets Mir apart from the other employees at the hospital.

Hailing from Uri in Baramulla district, Mir lost his eyesight in an accident when he was 12 years old.

Being a jolly and fun loving boy, Mir's life was abruptly changed by the accident.

"I faced lot of problems. I had to take help of my family for even small things. At one stage of my life I went into depression."

After he lost his sight, Mir virtually lived a life of isolation for some years before he heard about a blind school at Srinagar.

"When I went there I found that we were



only fed with lunch and dinner. We were not taught anything."

Mir got a job at SKIMS and received one-year training in X-ray techniques.

During that one year, Mir says he was helped by his senior and junior colleagues.

"I don't know how to thank SKIMS staff for their cooperation." He also expressed his gratitude for his wife. "She is my eyes. She has been very helpful to me." When asked if he ever feels disabled, Mir says its only when there is nobody around that he realizes his handicap. Mir has a message for the visually impaired persons.

"Never think anything is impossible. You can do whatever you want to do, the fate will follow." He believes the government should provide proper education to the visually handicapped persons.

"The state government should set up blind schools like we have in Chandigarh and Delhi so that blind people could get proper education in Braille system."

MMT

Emotional Homecoming

MERC founder revisits KU after 22 years

Prof Manzur-ul-Amin recalls his stint in Kashmir



Rouf Bhat

Founder and the first HoD of Media Education Research Centre (MERC), Kashmir University, Prof Manzur ul Amin revisited the department after a gap of 22 years on April 14 and interacted with students and faculty of the department.

Addressing the students and faculty at MERC, Prof Amin described Kashmir as the most beautiful place in the world. “Kashmir is not only in my eyes, but in the heart as well,” Prof Amin said.

He termed credibility, accountability, transparency, objectivity, authenticity and topicality as the essentials of good journalism.

Recalling his days as head MERC, he said, “All my memories related to this department



are as fresh as ever.”

“I was in Kashmir for a job interview in mid-eighties and the place attracted and inspired me to establish this department (MERC)” he said.

All praise for Prof Amin, the HoD MERC Prof Mufeed Ahmed paid rich tributes to him for having rendered valuable services as the


founder of the prestigious MERC.

Speaking on the occasion, senior faculty of MERC, Nasir Mirza termed it as a “historic day” for the department.

Saying that “Prof Amin has made a permanent place in our hearts”, Mirza described him as a ‘living legend’. “He is a great example for all teachers. He has so much to give, so much to teach,” he added.

MERC presented a memento to Prof Amin as a token of love and respect.

On the occasion, MERC alumni announced three prizes to be given to students’ write ups, features, pictures or caricatures about Prof Amin adjudged best by a five member committee constituted for the purpose.

The students of first and third semester of the department besides the alumni taught by Prof Amin attended the session. 

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