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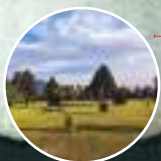
MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

New Violet in Kashmir

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‘Pick trash, get gold’

Novel way of Sadiwra Sarpanch to promote cleanliness drive

Syed Batool Andrabi

Sadiwara, a remote village Panchayat in Hiller Shahabad block of district Anantnag came up with an innovative and environmental friendly idea of offering a gold coin for collecting plastic trash.

Sarpanch of the village, Farooq Ahmed Ganai, an advocate by profession proposed this initiative of quid pro quo. “Not just Kashmir or Sadiwara, the whole world is drenched in plastic and trash. Our future generations will have to endure herculean suffering if this menace perpetuates,” said Farooq Ahmed Ganai.

“Issues like climate change and global warming are damaging our environment continuously, this menace being one of the colossal reasons for it. If it remains unaddressed our future generations won’t get access to clean drinking water or even lands for cultivation,” he further added.

“When he was elected as Sarpanch of Sadiwara in 2018, he suggested digging garbage pits in every household of Sadiwara, under the MG NREGA scheme. The Government adopted this concept and presently more than 60% of our panchayat is done with it,” said the Block Development Officer, Hiller. After this idea gained widespread support, Sarpanch Sadiwara had the idea to move through with “sanitation with community participation.” Ganai said, “Cleanliness of my Panchayat has always been my main motive.” “You can’t make the drive successful unless and until your own family and Mohalla people don’t



take part in it,” he added.

“Farooq Ganai began encouraging the residents of this mohalla to clean the roads, streets and drainage systems. He himself contributes to manage the finances even,” said Arshid Ahmed Wani, a resident of Sadiwara.

“We hope Sadiwara will emerge as a model village symbolising cleanliness, in the near future,” he added.

Javaid Ahmed Sheikh, who works as a teacher at Government High School Sadiwara, said, “I have been posted here for three years now, I can genuinely say that the change is visible. Once Adv. Farooq Ahmed won the election, he launched several campaigns to promote cleanliness through Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and other relevant schemes. He has made it his top priority to make Sadiwara a plastic free model for the country.”

Every Monday, the village panchayat and the mohalla communities gather the assembled trash and transport it to the

dumping sites for further segregation. “I coined the phrase ‘Give plastic-get reward’ in December last year. I observed that everyone in my panchayat toiled very hard to receive the promised reward by actively contributing in the initiative. Moreover, on Jan 7, 2023 I called DC Anantnag to Sadiwara for the distribution of awards to the deserving recipients, particularly children who had put in excessive efforts to clean Sadiwara. When they were told that the DC will himself distribute the promised rewards such as certificates, pens, notebooks and other goods, they got influenced and began to strategize more actively in the route,” said Farooq Ahmed Ganai.

“While distributing the awards, an idea came up in my mind. I decided to come up with something that not only attracts the interest of my community but also that of the entire country. Hence, the catchphrase was altered from ‘Give plastic – get reward’ to ‘Give 20 quintals of plastic – get a gold coin,’” he added.

“We have decided to recycle the waste and sell it to make money. First two gold coins will be given to volunteers by Farooq and his family as a reward for making Sadiwara plastic free,” said a local participant Muneer Ahmed.

“The first two gold coins are a gift from my wife in appreciation for taking this initiative and the remaining coins will come from waste recycling. We will present the first gold coin to the volunteers on April 30, 2023 regardless of the coins ‘weight,’” Sarpanch added.

Armless mechanic triumphs over adversity, seeks support for brighter future

Faizan Qureshi

In a remarkable story of strength and perseverance, 25-year-old Irshad Ahmad Ganie from the beautiful region of Lolab in Kupwara has triumphed over adversity. Despite being born without arms, Ganie has defied the odds and become a self-taught mobile mechanic.

Ganie’s education was cut short due to his family’s financial struggles. Although he completed his studies up to the twelfth grade, he couldn’t pursue further education due to limited resources. However, Ganie didn’t let this setback deter him. Instead, he charted an unconventional path to carve out his own place in the world.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, Ganie ran a mobile repair shop in Sogam, Lolab. He utilized his technical skills to support himself and his family. With limited means, Ganie’s resourcefulness became his lifeline.

Remarkably, despite his physical

limitations, Irshad had also completed a one-year computer course. Ganie learned to type using his toe and now types at a speed of ten words per minute. He is utilizing his toes for writing tasks as well.

Through self-guided learning, he honed his skills as a mobile mechanic, showcasing his determination to thrive against all odds.

Sharing his story, Ganie expressed, “I had to take up this work to support my family. I need around Rs three to four thousand per month for my medical expenses, and I arrange this amount on my own.” While his two sisters currently assist him with daily tasks, such as dressing and bathing, they will soon be getting married. With his elder brothers already living separately, Ganie finds himself shouldering household responsibilities single-handedly.

Irshad Ahmad Ganie’s extraordinary story is a testament to the unconquerable human spirit. Despite the challenges posed by his physical condition and limited resources, Ganie has forged his own path through determination and self-reliance. Now, he

I had to take up this work to support my family. I need around Rs three to four thousand per month for my medical expenses, and I arrange this amount on my own

looks to society and authorities for a helping hand, offering him the support he needs to shape a more promising future

Despite numerous visits from media personnel seeking our story, it has brought us no relief,” laments Haneefa, the mother. “We have pleaded with the administration for assistance, yet our appeals have fallen on deaf ears.”

In his pursuit of a brighter future, Ganie has reached out to officials and the wider community, appealing for support. Recognizing his potential, Ganie believes that with the right opportunities and assistance, he can overcome the hardships he currently faces.



Lankreshipora villagers revive fish, lotus stem cultivation in Wular

Aakash Gulzar

Lankreshipora, near the Wular lake, is renowned for its vibrant fishing community, proud of their cultural heritage.

Shabir Ahmed Bhat, a 42-year-old farmer and part-time mechanic from Nasoo, Bandipora embarked on a mission in 2011 to revive the age-old practices of fish and lotus stem cultivation in the lake, supported by the government. His initiative covers a vast expanse of 10 kanals of land.

Every day, at the break of dawn, Bhat starts his routine by treading on the marshy grounds. As the sole provider for his family, he is determined to continue despite concerns about the declining fish population in Wular.

Reflecting on his setbacks, Bhat said, "In 2014, devastating floods wreaked havoc in Kashmir, destroying all my farms and equipment. However, in 2016, the government compensated for our losses. I encourage the younger generation to invest their time in such projects, as they don't require significant capital."

The banks of Wular have witnessed a thriving fish farming industry, coexisting harmoniously with migratory water birds. The government-sponsored PM Matsya Sampada Yojana provides financial assistance and loans to farmers engaged in fishing and cultivation, promoting

sustainable development. However, the fishers in the region face formidable challenges, including pollution, dwindling fish stocks, sedimentation, and encroachments. These adversities also threaten the very existence of the lake, which has significantly reduced in size over the years.

The lotus stem, locally known as "nadur," holds immense value as a delightful delicacy among Kashmiris. It is often prepared alongside fish, particularly during winter. While the lotus stem naturally thrives in lakes and ponds like Dal, Wular, and Mansar, it has become increasingly scarce in Wular itself. The catastrophic floods of September 2014 disrupted its growth, limiting cultivation to artificial fields and ponds. Ghulam Ahmed, a resident of Lankreshipora, nostalgically recalls the days when Mangnipora was renowned for its abundant lotus stem.

In the harvest season, Bhat nurtures hopes for a more plentiful nadur production compared to fish. However, the task is laborious. Workers must dive into the marshy terrain to retrieve the precious lotus stems. Bhat said, "Our work begins in January. I

simultaneously manage fish, nadur, and vegetable business, demanding relentless labor for two to three months."

Cultivating fish and nadur has been a cherished tradition for generations in this lakeside community. While many farmers in Kashmir face idle months during the harsh winter, they find solace in this source of income. Although nadur production has improved this year compared to previous years, concerns linger due to unpredictable weather. Expressing gratitude for their blessings, Bhat said, "When the nadur dries, we sell it in the market at a good price. This occupation is not unfavorable; some earn their livelihood from the marshy lands, while others do so from the comfort of a chair. It is truly a blessing from God."



In 2014, devastating floods wreaked havoc in Kashmir, destroying all my farms and equipment. However, in 2016, the government compensated for our losses. I encourage the younger generation to invest their time in such projects, as they don't require significant capital





Hands that make KU gardens bloom

Uzma Shabnam

Nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, the Kashmir University's main campus is a sight to behold. The sprawling green lawns, majestic trees, and colorful flower beds add to the beauty of the campus. However, behind this idyllic scene, there are people who work tirelessly ensuring that the campus remains picturesque throughout the year.

The gardeners of Kashmir University, with their special lawn mower vehicles on the ground, keep the campus in pristine condition. Using a special vehicle called a ride lawn mower, they cut the unwanted grass and give the perfect shape to the lawns of different departments of the university.

"We are a team of around 50-60 gardeners, including three drivers who specifically operate ride lawn mower, we work under Landscape department of Kashmir University," said Khurshid Ahmed, one of the gardeners.

"Our job is to make sure that every corner of the campus is well-maintained," he further added.

The Main Campus of the University is spread over 247 acres of land, and it's very challenging for the gardeners to maintain such a large area of land. With the help of



special equipment like ride lawn mower, their work is done more efficiently.

The ride lawn mower is an essential tool for the gardeners. It is a specialized vehicle that is designed to cut grass quickly and efficiently. The vehicle is equipped with a cutting deck that runs on petrol. The deck cuts the grass at a uniform height, giving the gardens a neat and tidy look.

"The ride lawn mower is a great tool for us. It saves us a lot of time and effort. We can cover large areas of the campus in a short amount of time" said Tariq Ahmed, another gardener.

The landscape department of Kashmir University provides useful equipment

and tools to the gardeners of the campus. The department is responsible for maintaining the decorum of the gardens of different departments of the University.

"The Landscape department was established in 1950, equipment like brush cutters, ride lawn mower and power lawn mower are provided to the gardeners by the University," said Mohammad Saleem, an official of Landscape department.

He also made an appeal to the students to use dustbins for disposing of their waste and to refrain from littering the lawns.

University of Kashmir has a separate Botanical Garden, which is home to a diverse range of flora including rare and endangered species of plants. Students can take a leisurely stroll through the well-manicured gardens and variety of the plant life.

"I absolutely love the botanical garden here at Kashmir University. It's a peaceful oasis that allows me to escape the stress of daily university life. It's such a privilege to have access to such a beautiful space on campus where I can admire the stunning variety of plants and flowers. It's truly a refreshing and calming experience that always leaves me feeling rejuvenated," said Syed Batool, a student.

Kashmir's female rider breaks gender barriers with solo trip to Ladakh

Numan Bhat

Syed Mishba, a 21-year-old motorcyclist from Srinagar's capital city, is breaking social norms by embarking on a solo trip to Ladakh, making her the first female rider from Kashmir to do so.

Mishba, Kashmir's first female motto-vlogger, began riding as a joke when her cousin asked her to do it. The event, however, sparked a desire in her, which she pursued through her YouTube channel, "The Misba Vlogs."

In 2022, the channel grew in popularity by showing Mishba riding a bike and overcoming cultural stereotypes and gender boundaries.

Despite the mixed reactions of social media users, Mishba remained steadfast in her pursuit of her passions and dreams.

Her vlogging adventure has inspired other girls in Jammu and Kashmir to pursue their aspirations and reject social pressure.

Mishba emphasised that girls in Kashmir frequently fail to realise their aspirations due to societal pressure, and she advised them to speak up and seek



what is best for them.

Other women in the region have also torn through gender barriers and limits, indicating that the more equitably distributed gender has more access to resources and opportunities.

Mishba's solo walk to Ladakh showcases her endurance and desire, as she challenges traditional norms and encourages young

females in Jammu and Kashmir to follow their aspirations.

Mishba's solo trek to Ladakh demonstrates her endurance and ambition, as she breaks traditional standards and inspires young girls in Jammu and Kashmir to pursue their dreams.

"At first, I struggled a lot because I received a lot of negative comments, but my parents always supported me," she explained.

"People's comments demotivated me, but my parents always supported me, and that's what kept me going."

"We can do amazing things if we are given support and encouragement," she continued.

After vlogging for over three years, she claims that people's attitudes have shifted and that she is now receiving positive feedback. "I feel very good and empowered when I'm riding my bike." "When people see me, they are amazed," she said.

She has also begun a gym regimen in order to handle the big bikes. "Persistence is essential; with patience and consistency, any situation in life can be handled," she added.



KU scientists discover new viola plant in Kashmir

Nuzhat Masooudi

Researchers at the University of Kashmir have discovered a new plant in the Kashmir Himalaya, which is one of the unique biodiversity hotspots in the world.

The plant was discovered by researchers of Centre for Biodiversity and Taxonomy, Department of Botany, University of Kashmir.

The researchers have named the plant as *Viola Suavis* Subsp *Naqshii* and it belongs to genus *Viola* (commonly known as violets) and family (Violaceae). Notably, the findings were published last month in *Phytotaxa*, a leading international scientific journal.

Dr Anzar Khuroo, Associate Professor, Department of Botany, University of Kashmir said the new plant was discovered in Hazratbal, Srinagar. He said this is for the first time that this type of plant has been found in the world.

The researchers have named the plant in the honour of renowned plant taxonomist late Dr A. R. Naqshi, former faculty at the Dept. of Botany, UoK.

Dr Naqshi had contributed in plant taxonomy and played an important role in establishing the KASH herbarium – recognized by New-York based Index Herbarium.

“It is important for a particular



Scientists across the world continue their discoveries and there is a formal process involved in it. Whenever there is new discovery it is new to the science and nowhere else in the world that species is seen which we call discovery to science

region and for the world as well. It is significant discovery from the science point of view,” Dr Anzar said.

“The plant has medicinal and ornamental properties and its gene can also be used in floriculture and horticulture for purpose of genetic improvement for which we require genes from wild which are resistant and can be used for transferring economic traits,” he said.

In India, 35 species of *Viola* have been reported till date and majority of these species are distributed in temperate and alpine areas of Indian Himalaya and a few occurring in the lower hills.

Last year also the university published some species including one from Bangus valley.

Dr Anzar also said the world is facing two important issues that is climate change and biodiversity crisis posing challenges to the environment and also impact the economy and welfare of people.

“Scientists across the world continue their discoveries and there is a formal process involved in it. Whenever there

is new discovery it is new to the science and nowhere else in the world that species is seen which we call discovery to science,” he said.





Sgr's Polo-View market hosts historic open art exhibition

Iqra Qayoom

The newly refurbished Polo View market in Srinagar became a hub of artistic brilliance as it hosted the first-ever open art exhibition. Organized by the United Youth, the event aimed to promote art in the picturesque Kashmir valley and provide a platform for young artists to showcase their extraordinary talent.

The exhibition drew enormous crowd, comprising art enthusiasts, locals, and tourists alike, who were welcomed by a mesmerizing display of captivating artworks. Each piece of art told a unique story, resonating with the rich cultural heritage of the region and evoking a sense of awe and admiration among the attendees.

Adding to the ambiance of creativity and artistic expression, the organizers set up live art demonstrations that became the center of attention. As the crowd gathered around young artists passionately breathed life into their visions on canvases and other mediums showcasing their skills and imagination in real-time. The vibrant strokes of paint and the delicate intricacies of each brushstroke showcased the immense talent and potential that exists among the youth of Kashmir.

"This open art exhibition provided young art-loving people with an opportunity to exhibit their talent and present it to the world. We hope such events will continue in the future, encouraging more art enthusiasts to join and promote art in the public domain," Salman Khurshid, a Fine Art student at Kashmir University said.

The maiden open art exhibition at Polo View signifies a significant milestone in the journey of promoting art in Kashmir.



It serves as a testament to the region's artistic heritage and highlights the need to nurture and support the burgeoning talent. The event also underlined the importance of providing platforms for young artists to express themselves and gain recognition.

Arifa Rashid, a young calligrapher said, "It is a great opportunity for us to showcase our talent by infusing colors onto papers and drawing people's attention. Art deserves utmost space and priority, so that the younger generations can wholeheartedly embrace it."

The success of this exhibition has generated hope and enthusiasm among artists and art lovers alike, with the aspiration that such initiatives will continue to flourish in the future, further enriching the cultural landscape of the region. The creative display not only captivated the eyes but also served as a reminder of the artistic prowess that resides within the community.

As the sun began to set on the Polo View market, casting a warm golden hue on the artworks, visitors were left inspired and touched by the artistic journey they had witnessed. The open art exhibition

undoubtedly marked a milestone in the vibrant artistic scene of Kashmir, igniting a renewed passion for creativity and a collective commitment to fostering the artistic spirit in the valley.

With the resounding success of this inaugural exhibition, the artistic community in Kashmir looks forward to future events that will continue to celebrate and promote the rich tapestry of art, culture, and heritage that the region holds. The first-ever open art exhibition at Polo View was more than just a showcase; it was a celebration of the immense talent and boundless creativity that flows through the veins of Kashmir.

"As I walked through the exhibition, each artwork seemed to have a voice of its own, narrating tales of Kashmir's rich cultural heritage. It was a visual feast for the senses," Rajesh Kumar, a tourist from New Delhi said.

"I was captivated by the intricate details and storytelling evident in each artwork. The exhibition reminded me of the vibrant soul of Srinagar, reflected in the masterpieces created by its talented artists," said Mei Ling, a traveler from Singapore.

Children of brick kiln workers lack access to education

Mushahid Hussain

Children of laborers working in brick kilns in this central Kashmir's Budgam district are facing a significant challenge in accessing basic education.

These hardworking laborers, who have meagre incomes, find it difficult to support their children's education, leaving them with no hope for a brighter future.

These children are unfortunately forced to endure gruelling conditions, working 10-12 hours a day, which not only takes a toll on their physical well-being but also exposes them to harmful substances and pollutants that can have long-term health effects.

Their demanding work schedules prevent them from attending school, thus depriving them of their



fundamental right to an education.

The lack of education severely limits these children's opportunities for better employment prospects, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and perpetuating their families' struggles.

According to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of

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Srinagar boy designs drone for disaster relief

Mehroob Mushtaq

A student from Srinagar's Zakura area named Abban Habib has developed "Sky Robo Drones Company Pvt. Ltd." He has developed a drone that can assist individuals in need. In order for the rescue team to respond effectively based on the information that the drone reports, the drone can follow the location of the individuals and videotape the circumstances in which they are stuck. It can also provide emergency supplies like food, first aid, and life-saving equipment within 5 to 10 minutes, saving people's lives and valuable time.

Abban (18) has been interested in technology since he was in eighth grade. He graduated from Green Valley School Buchpora and is now enrolled at Government Higher Secondary School Nigeen Hazrat Bal. At this age, he has created a drone capable of monitoring the situation in disaster-hit areas from the skies and producing a map to analyse the damage. "We can go live on YouTube while the drone records the disaster-hit areas so that everyone around the world can see it, and global disaster experts who are not present with us can advise us on how to deal with such a situation," Abban explained. He also stated that it might be a valuable source of news coverage.

When massive floods hit Srinagar in 2014, he saw the people of Kashmir as helpless, which inspired him to design a drone. He wished to aid individuals who were stranded or in need of medical attention. "When the floods hit Kashmir, I saw many people suffer; some were cut off from essential supplies like food, while others were displaced from their homes because the disaster management team could not reach to them on time.

"During natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, only traditional methods of saving people are used, which is insufficient,



We can go live on YouTube while the drone records the disaster-hit areas so that everyone around the world can see it, and global disaster experts who are not present with us can advise us on how to deal with such a situation

and the use of drones is more effective in such scenarios," added Abban.

His startup is now being supported by NIT Srinagar and the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI). He tested his drone in December 2021 at Nigeen Club Srinagar during mock drills organised by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). His drone was displayed at a defence expo in Ahmedabad Design Week (ADW) in January 2022, which was held by a University in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. His contributions have also been honoured by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and AICRA's first startup tech conclave in New Delhi.

Abban created a website that allows users to connect to and manage their drones. The drones are linked to the cloud and may be

operated from anywhere in the world with adequate internet connectivity. It contains a panic button that anyone may hit during a tragedy so that the drone can instantly dispatch a scanner to scan the victim and bring supplies. He is currently aiming to create a mobile application for this.

Abban was offered incubator placement by a number of organisations at the Ahmedabad Design Exhibition, but he said he would rather work for Kashmir. "I turned down the offer because, for the time being, I want to work for Kashmir's development, to support my people, and to see Kashmir's technological advancements and Kashmiri youth as leaders in the field of technological innovations," he said.

The drone is the most thrilling and adventurous thing for Abban. He said that it only requires a few parts and has an easy formation process. "Just a few tools, speed controllers, a processor, and other things can work wonders." Additionally, he said that drones have emerged as a technology that is revolutionising emergency response, and he said he wants to promote how effectively drones can be used for a variety of tasks by demonstrating to people the machine's efficiency. In future, he said, "I want to turn this into a business model so that I can make money and assist people at the same time."

According to Abban, his father serves as his greatest source of motivation. Every step of the way, his father has praised and supported him, which has inspired him to try out other device projects.

"My father has been a huge assistance to me in creating the drone. Everything I am now is thanks to my father, and I feel blessed to have had the most loving parents. In my family, every attempt is valued, regardless of whether it is successful or not. I have the most devoted parents anyone could ask for," he added.

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1986, a child is defined as an individual who has not yet reached the age of 14. It is disheartening to witness these children being denied their right to grow, enjoy their childhood, and pursue an education, as they are compelled to work to support themselves and their families. This not only hampers their physical and mental development but also burdens them with responsibilities far beyond their tender age.

One example is Faraz Ahmed, a 27-year-old laborer from Bihar who works at a brick kiln in Mahwara Village, Budgam. He, like many others, is deeply concerned about his children's future. Due to the constraints imposed by his work, Faraz is unable to enroll his children in local schools. Even though his two children previously attended a school in their native village in Bihar, they have been deprived of education since coming to Kashmir.

Similarly, Mohan Lal, a 39-year-old laborer from Bihar, has been working at a brick kiln in central Kashmir's Budgam district for the past 16 years. His wife, two sons, and daughter have never had the opportunity to go to school. Once the brickwork season

begins in April-May, his children will resume working instead of receiving an education.

Mohammad Ismail, a 42-year-old laborer from Uttar Pradesh, shares a similar predicament. Although he earns a decent wage at the brick kilns in Kashmir, there are no schools or Anganwadi Centers near his workplace to provide education for his young children.

Despite the proximity of some brick kilns in Budgam to schools, the children still face significant challenges due to a lack of awareness and poverty.

Ghulam Nabi, the President of the Brick Kiln Manufacturer Association in Budgam, acknowledged the presence of approximately 300-350 brick kilns in the Kashmir valley, with a significant number situated in Budgam District.

Nabi expressed his deep concern and emphasized the importance of providing basic education to the children of brick kiln laborers. He has already engaged in discussions with the Director of Education in Kashmir, who responded positively and pledged to take initiatives to fulfil this crucial demand for education.



Young entrepreneur brings ‘Shahi Sheera’ back into business

Ada Jan

‘Shahi Sheera’ is a drink that used to be served at weddings almost a century ago, which eventually became a lost practice. Now, a Kashmiri woman named Ruhaab Lateef Mir is reviving the culture of serving Shahi Sheera. Ruhaab has served Shahi Sheera at almost 100 weddings and is fascinated and in love with Kashmiri cuisine.

Hailing from Khanyar area of Srinagar, Ruhaab is an environmental advocate by profession and a proud owner of her food unit “Khyen Khoardan by Ruhaab.”

Her love for Kashmiri cuisine started when she was a child. She enjoyed experimenting with traditional dishes and realized that many of them needed to be revived. In 2018, during a food festival at Kashmir University, she introduced a homemade dish. She learned that the Shahi Sheera had medicinal properties and was used by Hakeems and Unani practitioners for blood purification and other health issues.

While researching Shahi Sheera, Ruhaab discovered that it used to be served to guests during weddings. She and her mother prepared the drink for 200-300 people to be served at the Kashmir University Food Festival. Ruhaab participated in other food events and won hearts with her preparation of the Shahi Sheera. She served it for the first time at her cousin’s wedding, where it was a hit with guests, she said.

Ruhaab’s Shahi Sheera was a hit, and she was eventually able to serve it at over 100 weddings in last year. She even served it at her own wedding. The drink is made from four different fruits, each with unique taste and health benefits. Although her business,



‘Khyen Khoardan by Ruhaab,’ is small, she aims to own a manufacturing unit where she can integrate everything under one roof, she said.

Ruhaab’s aim to export Kashmir’s traditional recipes internationally inspired her to add ‘Murabba Behi’ (Quince Jam) to her list. Despite the low production of quince in the Kashmir, Ruhaab successfully added it to her menu. She hopes to generate employment in the valley and keep her products relevant in the market.

She invited people from the judiciary to her event, where they appreciated her preparations and advised her to continue her passion. Her aim was to raise awareness about traditional Kashmiri dishes. After completing her course from Kashmir University, she focused on cooking traditional dishes with her grandmother as her mentor. After two successful events,

Ruhaab’s confidence was high.

In 2020 after Ruhaab served the Sheera at her sister’s wedding an event manager ordered 1000 bottles for his upcoming wedding event, which finally led to more than 100 weddings serving the traditional Kashmiri drink in 2021.

The apricots used in Shahi Sheera are transported from Kargil, which is known for its apricot production, and are rich in Sorbitol, a natural glucose substitute that can be consumed by diabetic patients even.

She started running her small-scale unit in 2018 with family members and five more employees. Shahi Sheera is served in four different varieties, including Apricot, Redberry, blackberry, and mixed berry. Ruhaab is pursuing a food processing course through ITI Srinagar to learn how to do things properly.

Her aim is to introduce ancient and authentic Kashmiri cultural cuisine and export them throughout the world, and she is preparing for the largest manufacturing unit in the Valley. There are many other products in the queue which will be introduced soon. The unit is currently being run online only, but she is planning to open the first physical outlet in the Valley.

Two of Ruhaab’s products were displayed at the Dubai 2020 Expo.

Her husband and in-laws supported her initiative and extended their support to her activities. She plans to construct a proper unit where all things would be done under a single roof. Her aim is to ensure that her product survives in the market, generate employment for the youth in the valley, and hopes that people in the valley will appreciate her small initiative, she said.

Dazy’s Café popular among students in Gandeбал

Yasmeena Rashid

Dazy Akther, (36) and her sister in law from Tulumulla, Ganderbal together run a small café near Central University of Kashmir. They serve students, coming from different parts of the country, with hygienic home cooked food also.

While talking about how they started the café, Dazy said, “My husband is a painter, but due to his ill health, he couldn’t go to work, because of which we faced lot of financial difficulties and then this idea popped up in my mind. We realized that the students from the campus were facing a lot of hurdles in terms of hygienic food.”

“They knew this would be a challenge to start a café, as students usually don’t like the food which they used to cook at home. I had to be resourceful, so I turned to the internet and learned how to make samosas, maggi, coffee and now the students have become very fond of it,” she said.



The café has an in house capacity of 40 students. A small stream right in front of the café makes the experience more refreshing and enjoyable.

“It was difficult in the beginning as when we started the whole world was in their homes because of the deadly pandemic, we struggled a lot but by Almighty’s will, students started coming back and business started gaining momentum,” she said.

Handling kids and cooking at home managing café and working in the field is very cumbersome, but the duo manages it all, owing to their hard work and dedication.

“Most days when university students come for lunch in the afternoon, I myself, am not able to have lunch till 4 or 5 in the evening, it gets very exhausting, but my motivation and patience make me go through it.”

Dazy is often seen feeding her children in the hustle and bustle of the café. She has two children. The older one is 9 and her courage and hope of better future let her move forward in the life.



It was difficult in the beginning as when we started the whole world was in their homes because of the deadly pandemic, we struggled a lot but by Almighty’s will, students started coming back and business started gaining momentum

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