

MERC TIMES



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UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR



APPLES INSTEAD OF ALMOND

INSIDE
MERC
Times



Buthgam, the safe
haven for the Brick
kiln and Sand
Mafia industry
P2



Conference on
Horticulture chaired by
Khurshid Ganai
P3



SPOUT IN FAST FOOD
OUTLETS
P5

Buthgam, safe haven for Brick and Sand Mafia



❖ **Munawar Hussain**

Budgam: Once referred to as one of the serene and ravishing districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Budgam, the abode of Nund Reshi is now on the threshold of environmental disequilibrium. His quote “Aan Poshi teli yeli wan poshi” which inspires the whole world to protect the environment, unfortunately, doesn’t seem to have any impact on Budgam residents.

There are around 207 brick kilns functioning all over the district while at ground level the number rises to 300-350, an official sources said.

“The district administration does not seem to be concerned about these alarming figures at all and it will not,

until and unless the administration stops receiving a prodigious amount of revenue”, said Yawar Hussain, a local resident.

According to district Geology and mining department, an amount of RS 9.918.682 lakh have been collected in the year 2013-2014, which is the 9th most in the 22 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. The revenue collected in district Budgam comes mostly from brick kilns and sand excavation industry.

“The smoke that comes out from these chimneys contributes significantly to particulate matter which remains suspended in the air. The air we breathe in then causes bronchial infections and disturbs respiratory quotient” Dr Muzzafer, an expert said.

“With no check and control, everyone can and is allowed by administration, for some perks, to excavate soil and sell it for petty amount of money” Asif Ali, a local habitant said.

This uncontrolled loot of natural resources not only destabilizes environmental balance but has given birth to too many challenges as well, the district is facing, he added.

On being asked about breaking of norms, Farooq Ahmed khan, Head of Department of Mining said, we are keeping an eye on it, but, we also generate good revenue from it. We lack proper technology, but, we have put our demand to government. In future we will get all this done and problem will be over

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APPLES INSTEAD OF ALMONDS

❖ **Bintul Huda**

BUDGAM: Kashmir is known for its production of quality almonds, but, in Budgam the recent conversion of almond orchards into apple gardens has put a question mark on its viability . It has now become a common maxim of every orchard owner that “doing almond business is to embrace misfortune”.

Mohammad Razaq, an almond garden owner of Hayat pora village, Budgam ,complains that agricultural technology has made huge advancement worldwide. Farmers are using genetically modified and high yield varieties of saplings which boost both quality and quantity of the fruit, and unfortunately we are growing same species of almonds from many decades.

He further added, “The unprecedented focus of horticulture department towards apple gardens and their indifferent approach towards almond orchards have created this situation.

Unlike almond tree apple gardens need irrigation system, regular insecticide spraying and huge investment at the starting but despite that people are showing keen interest in growing apple gardens. “It is

cumbersome to grow apple orchards but we cannot afford low profit, we get by growing almonds”, explained Majid Hilal , apple garden owner.

While speaking to MERC Times Dr. Fayaz Ahmad Banday, Head Division of fruit science SKUAST-K, Shalima said, “The main reason for low produce of fruits is obsolete and traditional early blooming varieties of almond plants farmers are growing.

He further added that “Our department is doing extensive research to produce late blooming varieties, We have produced some late blooming varieties like “Maqdoom”, “Waris”, “Shalimar” and “parbat” but these are not still apt for climatic conditions of Kashmir as they bloom only few days after traditional early blooming varieties and also Horticulture department has not been able to keep these late blooming varieties available in the market.

Dr Muzaffar Husain, official of Agriculture department said, though 70% land in Budgam is sustainable for “wader”. We are now in coordination with Horticulture to provide adequate seeds and provide proper education regarding production of Almond tree.



❖ **Wajahat shabir**

SRINAGAR: In order to boost farmers and to discuss the issues for promoting Horticulture sector with various stakeholders, a one day Horticulture conference was held in Srinagar under the Supervision of Advisor to Governor Khurshid Ahmad Ganai.

Informing the stakeholders and farmers Advisor to

high density plants and root stocks by importing material from Europe, he added.

We demand more steps for bettering the aspect of seeds, adequate storage and more suitable marketing facilities, said Isfaq Majeed, a local farmer.

Joint Secretary Ministry of Agriculture said, "Director Agriculture Kashmir should deploy concerned officers for specialized trainings so that they can work at newly developed spice park coming up in the month of July.

Six mobile soil testing Vans and five soil testing laboratories have been set up at the grass root level to help out the farmers. Also regarding the National Mission on Saffron, it was said that production is being taken up on modern lines through National Horticulture Board, said an official source.

Director Horticulture P.K Gupta, Director Agriculture

Kashmir Showkat Ahmad Beig, Director HPMC, MD Agro Industries Development Corporation, MD SIDCO, MD National Horticulture Board, other officers and a large number of fruit growers and entrepreneurs from all over the valley attended the conference.



Governor Khurshid Ahmad Ganai said, for developing its apprehension capability under public sector RS. 60 Crore have been provided to the Department of Horticulture.

While RS 4.75 crore has been provided for developing

Conference on
Horticulture
chaired by
Khurshid
Ganai



RS 4.75 crore has been provided for developing high density plants and root stocks by importing material from Europe

Media and South Asia: bridging the gap

❖ **Saba Khan**

Srinagar: Jindal University organizes dialogue on Economic Development Growth. Experts debate kashmir's Economic problems and opportunities.

Sonipat-based OP Jindal Global University conducted a day-long seminar in the Kashmir University Campus in Srinagar on Sunday, April 10th, on the theme of "Economic Growth and Development in Kashmir"

The experts debated on Kashmir Economic problems and opportunities. They talked about the infrastructure in the Kashmir . The deliberations focused on policy inadequacies and failures in the state of Jammu and Kashmir with regard to key problems such as , Physical Infrastructure, Socio-economic inequalities, energy crisis ,educational Paradigm and the flawed development models that have failed to solve problems of kashmiris.

Mr Shakeel Qalandar emphasized on the need to develop the small scale



enterprises for resolving the rapidly increase in the unemployment problem in kashmir ,where almost 40% of the existing labour force is currently employed in the government sector . He also that we have our own traditional skills in the valley .

Mr shakeel added. Locals should be encouraged to acquire these skills from outside the state and add value by setting up local business across the valley.

Dr Peer Suhail criticized the national Hydro power Corporations land acquisition policies,saying that they are

disempowering local insitution and people .

Dr Javed Iqbal spoke on the energy crisis in Kashmir where almost 25%of the total state population still lives without electricity. He emphasized how critical it is for the state to invest in micro -hydropower projects and improve the royalty sharing on power purchase agreements signed between centre and the state.

Professor Rajeev Malhotra said on this occasion that the Chief Minister Ms Mehbooba Mufti will do better to focus

on the sectors in which Jammu and Kashmir as a state has under performed, including of primary healthcare access, infant mortality rates levels and income inequalities.

Panelists in this event felt that economic data collection methods need to be made more rigorous in order to inform betterpolicy making in the state .the panelists also agreed that trans -border trade in energy and the other goods and services would create a massive economic boom in the Kashmir .

The Panelists included Professor Rajeev Malhotra of Jindal School of Government and Public Policy ,Professor Kathleen Modrowski of Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, Professor Sreeram Chaulia and Professor Deepanshu mohan of Jindal school of internationals affairs .Prominent Kashmiri intellectuals who spoke at this event included. Mr Noor Ahmed Baba,Professor Gul wani,Dr. Muhammad Maroof shah ,Mr shakeel Qalandar and Dr. Peer suhail

Unbeaten Performance: Wadoo

❖ Adnan Hilal

Srinagar: President Football Players Welfare Association (FPWA) Mehraj Ud Din Wadoo on congratulated the J&K Bank Football Team for winning the All India Gold Cup in Bihar with a 'magnificent unbeaten performance' in the tournament.

"It's great to see Kashmiri footballers performing beautifully both in and outside the state" said Wadoo.

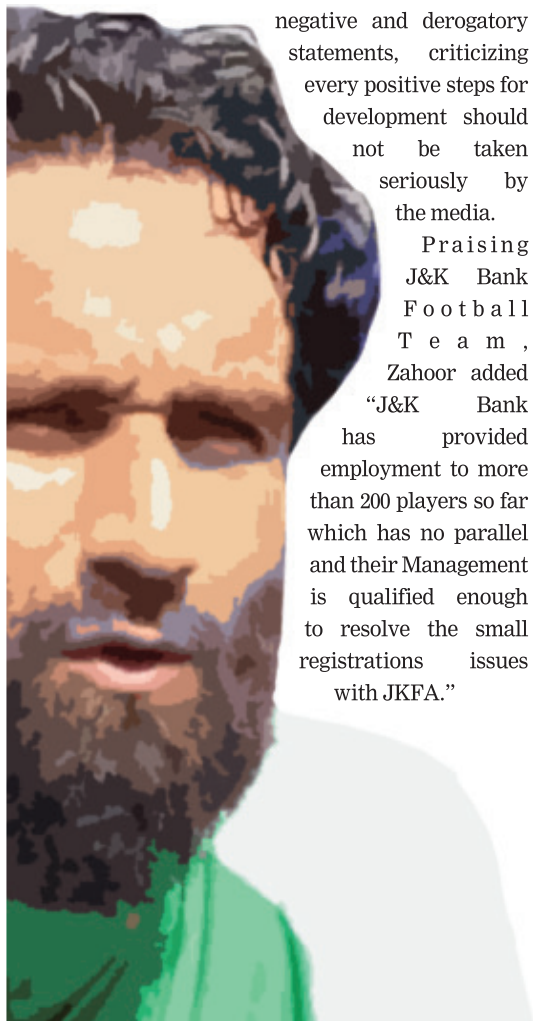
"I have also come to know that J&K Bank team has restricted the entry of outside and foreign players providing ample opportunities to local players and generating employments for state's talented youth" Wadoo added.

Taking a serious response against Football Development Forum Wadoo said, "Any organization that is related to football must support and encourage the positives and not to point out negatives. If you are not in a position to help then at least don't try to pull people down who are trying to climb up."

Taking a dig at Football Development Forum General Secretary and a former footballer of FPWA Zahoor Ahmed said: These self-proclaimed football developmental forums have no concrete background

& have been continuously issuing negative and derogatory statements, criticizing every positive steps for development should not be taken seriously by the media.

Praising J&K Bank Football Team, Zahoor added "J&K Bank has provided employment to more than 200 players so far which has no parallel and their Management is qualified enough to resolve the small registrations issues with JKFA."



Traffic Rules Ignored in Downtown

❖ Hayat Manan

Srinagar : Once called the commercial hub, Srinagar's downtown areas are troubled by the lack of traffic policing with huge difficulties and traffic jams becoming a constant source of discomfort for the locals.

'We have become victims of the double standards of the government. If the traffic police can regulate traffic in the city centre Lal chowk why can't they depute traffic police at busy intersections in downtown', said Mr Hakeem, a resident of Nowhatta Chowk.

of the masses to adhere to traffic rules and regulations for the general good of everyone.

A college student, Shabnam Wani, from downtown said, 'As the traffic department installed traffic lights to better streamline the traffic in and around Lal Chowk in 2014, the



People residing in congested areas like Habba Kadal, Rajouri Kadal and Nowhatta, witness heavy influx of traffic movement, accuse the traffic department of meting out a step motherly treatment to them.

SSP Traffic Maqsood-u-Zaman, said, "We cannot regulate the traffic everywhere with such a minuscule number of personnel." "We do hold traffic awareness programs from time to time but it is the responsibility

downtown area was largely left out of the ambit'. 'At peak hours in the morning and evening, the areas witness bumper to bumper traffic jams causing inconvenience to students and office-goers', he added.

Tuition centers: Burden or Bliss

❖ BISMA FAROOQ

Srinagar: Difference of attitude about private tuition centers while deliberating about its elements, is attentively a mess with regard to different age groups. Having different ambiances on certain point, the reaction of definite people is different over the consideration.

In Kashmir, tuition centers had started getting more population of students as compared to schools and colleges. Becoming a norm in wake of the alleged failures, the being provided quality education by the schools and colleges is allegedly lacking everywhere.

"We need to send our wards to the tuition centers because they don't get the quality education in the colleges and schools," Gul Mohammad, parent of a first year



student said. "It is becoming a trend in our society to attend the tuition classes, although I don't need any extra classes but my family says me to do so," a 10th class student said while being worried of the

work load he gets from his school and tuition centre as well.

Allegedly, students being compelled to attend the tuition classes suffer due to malpractice of teachers at tuition centers.

"Private tuitions should be banned. It adds burden to the students. They are left with no or less time or extra-curricular activities," a youngster said.

"We are very much concerned about the studies of our children. Our wards don't finish their curriculum in their schools and colleges, so we send them to tuition centers to complete their syllabus," a group of parents said.

SURGE IN FAST FOOD OUTLETS

❖ Saher Iqbal

Srinagar: A chain of fast food outlets that has braced up in the city are ready to serve the best from Burgers to Momos. The trend to eat out has hand-picked up among locals. To cater the demands of people, Srinagar city is witnessing an escalating of fast food outlets as the trend of fast food culture is picking up fast in Kashmir.

“We started few months back. Earlier we used to host very limited customers, but now we receive a good number. Majority of customers besides tourists are either students, working classes and families too visit sometimes,” Waheed Shabir who runs a fast food outlet, Chillz and Grillz in Srinagar said.

Ahmad a restaurant owner said, that initially there was dearth of restaurants in the city, but now we have enough restaurants in the city now which gives stiff competition to provide a good quality and affordable price to the customer,” he added.

Ahmad further added that earlier they used to



have only Kashmiri Wazwan but because of high market demands to other varieties they have added several dishes to their menu. “From Pizza to Momos, people want to taste something different. So we need to be prepared for that.

Parvaiz Ahmad Mir the owner of “Grills” at Nigeen Hazratbal Srinagar famous for its Shwarma said, that it was his son who gave him the concept of Sharwama. “We had good response from customers from very beginning and that is the reason we are opening another branch of “Grills” at Baghat .

Mahnoor Manzoor, a class 12 student of Kothi Bagh Higher Secondary School said. “Whenever I feel hungry I go out and eat something from any outlet. More important it is very trendy and we too prefer it.



We started few months back. Earlier we used to host very limited customers, but now we receive a good number. Majority of customers besides tourists are either students, working classes and families too visit sometimes

Kashmiri traditional street food hazardous for health

❖ Waseen Ahmad

Srinagar: In Kashmir, street food like Aaloo Monj, Nadir Monj and Pakodas are becoming health hazards for the people as the food is being prepared by frequently reused oil.

The procedure for making these snacks are hazardous for health. The oil used to prepare these snacks is often of low quality and is reused several times. Moreover they use some colouring agents in it during its preparation to give it a catchy look. The snacks are being sold and prepared at every nook and corner of the valley. People consume it in large quantities, mostly in evening hours.

“I love eating these snacks and often eat these in evening hours. If there are any health hazards due to these snacks then the concerned authorities should keep an eye on these vendors.” a food junky, Aijaz Ahmad said.

As per the health experts, oil is being heated to temperature typically between 149 degrees Celsius and 215 degrees Celsius. The fatty acids in the oil break down into harmful trans fats. Additives, such as food colouring and preservatives used in these snacks react with the fatty acids from the oil to produce toxic aldehydes.

“During cooking of snacks, proteins and carbohydrates in the food react with the hot oil. Oil-soluble flavors in the food are therefore released into the oil. If the oil is heated to a very

high temperature, chemical reaction takes place,” Dr Shakeel, a general physician said.

Moreover he added, repeated use of the same oil irritates the lining of the digestive tract. These chemicals interact with the cells in the lining of the food pipe, the stomach and the intestines and alter their genetic makeup, thereby killing the cells.

Meanwhile Assistant Food Commissioner Hilal Ahmad Mir said that we are continuously keeping our eye on those vendors and we will try our best to stop these activities in the market. “Besides this we have also taken some samples of oil which are proven as sub standard oil and we have taken action against those vendors”, he added.



SnowShoe Introduced In Kashmir

❖ Mohammad Hussain

Gulmarg: the world famous ski-resort becomes first place in India to host SnowShoe activity when SnowShoe Federation of India (SSFI) held J&K Tourism SnowShoe championship at ski resort in the first week of April.

The event was organized by SSFI in collaboration with Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir. The objective of the event was to introduce SnowShoe sport in India and for that that SSFI chose Gulmarg as the destination.

SnowShoe sport is popular in European and American Countries, is new entrant in India and in April Gulmarg become first Winter Sport destination in Country to host its activity.

The event was flagged off by Director Tourism, Kashmir, Mahmood Ahmad Shah alongwith SSFI President Mir Mudassar, WGFI President Col. Dhillon, Assistant Director Tourism Dr. Ilyas, Olympian Gul Mustafa and SSFI treasurer Mir Nazir. A young participant of Narbal area of Budga namely Ifshan finished first while as Umer Hamid of Budgam finished second. Umer Farooq of Srinagar gained the third position

While terming the moment as historically important, the Director Tourism said, “We are happy to see Gulmarg becoming first place in entire Country to host any SnowShoe sporting activity. It is small step towards a brighter future as this sport and activity has got immense potential”

On the occasion SSFI President, Mir Madassar said, “We are trying to procure more equipment and will introduce this activity in other parts of Country apart from Pahalgam and Sonamarg.”

Vegetable growers face tough competition outside state

Ask for HYV seeds, other facilities



❖ Muneem Farooq

Srinagar: The Valley's Vegetable growers, while accusing the administration of paying less attention to them, said that in last season they faced huge losses due to lack of demand from the outside states.

"At least, each grower incurred a loss of approximately Rs 5 lakhs," a grower, Mohammad Shafi said adding that "Government is not able to provide hybrid seeds to the all growers, which forces the growers to cultivate crops on their old seeds hence causing delayed and less production," he added.

Explaining other reasons for the tough competition, he further said that usually vegetables were cultivated earlier than other states in the Valley, which created demand for our produce. But with the advent of technology farmers of other states have switched to improved seeds and techniques allowing them to cultivate their crops earlier thus reducing the demand for our production.

He urged the government to introduce HYV seeds to provide timely and improved production. "HYV and improved seed quality can again get us back to the track," he added.

To meet the requirements of the Valley, he also requested to install canning and packing facilities at the headquarters of vegetable producing districts of Budgam,

Srinagar and Pulwama. Budgam is the largest vegetable-producing district in the Valley followed by Srinagar.

There is only one canning plant at Lal Mandi run by the Horticulture department. "People through the plant to get items canned. If the government installs more canning /packing plants, we will have fresh vegetables off-season as well. Then we would not be forced to import vegetables during off season (December-June) and the price rise of vegetables can also be checked", the growers said.

Describing Kashmir a large scale producer of vegetables, Agriculture department's information officer, Naseer Ahmad Lone said, "Vegetables are grown on about 26966 hectares in the Valley. A hectare produces 200 quintals of vegetables which generates revenue of about 100 crores annually".

Hailing different initiatives of department for improving vegetable yields, Naseer Ahmad said that the department has put forward a proposal of Vegetable cluster in towns and other urban areas. "The department is trying to educate the growers about the latest techniques," he added.

Experts in SKUAST believe that vegetable production can register a massive increase if the farmers use modern techniques and effective seeds. "If farmers are encouraged to opt for vegetables, Kashmir can become a major supplier of vegetables", they said.

KHUSHHAL SAR SHRINKS AND STINKS

❖ Imran Ali

Srinagar: Once famous for its pristine water and eye-catching beauty Khushhal Sar stinks today. The lake which stretched from Zoonimar to Aali Masjid, and linked up with Anchar Sar is now squeezed to half its size. Effluents and garbage from surrounding areas are directly dumped into the lake. Polythene and garbage has choked it completely.

Mohammad Ibrahim Ganie, a local inhabitant said a local resident "In my childhood, people both young and adult bathed and swam in the lake for the whole day in summer, tourists used to visit here, they enjoyed shikara ride in the lake. Today it stinks so much in summer that we need to cover our nose to walk near it".

Besides its scenic attraction for tourists, the lake was an important source of income for many locals, Zadibal Nadru, a product of Khushhal Sar, was famous across Kashmir for its delicious taste. Fish and fodder along with other lake products were also obtained from the Sar, he added.

Speaking to MERC Times, Assistant Professor, Environmental Science Department, Kashmir University Dr. Samiullah Bhat, said , "These water bodies including Anchar Sar, Khushhal Sar, Gil Sar are our assets and we need to preserve them but unfortunately the concerned agencies are taking less efforts to do so".

There are numerous causes like improper drainage system, weak surveillance over encroachments, non-professional approach of concerned agencies that created chaos". "There should be a proper mechanism to maintain these lakes. The concerned agencies should be technically equipped to carry out preservation processes" he added.

Reflecting the non seriousness of authorities towards the deteriorated condition of Khushhal Sar, Secretary, Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) said, "As of now, LAWDA has not any revival plan for Khushhal Sar. The Department is presently working on Conservation of the Dal Lake and the Nigeen Lake".



Qazigund Village Without Water

❖ Saba Bhat

Srinagar: The residents of Qazigund village of Anantnag are facing shortage of water, due to the blasting for construction a tunnel for four lining of Jammu-Srinagar Highway

Following the foul smell in a spring at Reshinag Lowermunda in Qazigund, residents stopped using water supply from it. A report by the Geology and Mining department Kashmir has found that the solutes (oil emulsion) in the spring water can be expressed as possible chemical compounds of mixing of ANFO (Ammonium Nitrate Fuel oil). Explosive materials used during the blasting with infiltrating recharge water (of under construction four lane tunnel) as one of the blasting agent contain fuel oil.

Residents said PHE has already appealed people



to not use water for the drinking purposes but they are not even supplying drinking water form the last one week. 'PHE officials failed to provide us safe

water. We request the higher authorities to look into the matter to help us' Sarpanch Nisar Ahmad Beigh said. The residents have to get water from two kilometers distance.

The matter came into the limelight after people of the village found fuel-like smell in the drinking water coming from the spring. 'We have been forgotten by the administration' says Nisar Ahmad.

On 31st of March, a geology team comprised of Dr A S Sodhi (CCGK), Khursheed Ahmad Mir (AMO), and Showkat Ali Shah (I/C DMO Anantnag) conducted a site inspection to the areas. The results might still take months while the villagers suffer without sources of drinking water.

"We are looking into the matter and we assure to them that issue will be resolves and relief will be provided to people", said a PHE official.

Bandipora area lacks electricity

❖ Sabeeha Shaheen

Bandipora: While there is a hue and cry over the hike in the power tariff, at the other end there is a small Hamlet of Khodi Mohalla Sumlar of district Bandipora which is in complete darkness in the 21st Century.

Kashmir is good at providing power at enormous rate, but, what could be the shameful of the administration that in the 21st century Khodi Mohalla Sumlar of district Bandipora is reeling under darkness, said Mohammad Shafi, a local resident.

Kashmir being one of the largest producers of electricity in India has multitude of villages yet to be electrified, one of them is our village who haven't received electricity yet, he added

We residents have approached the authorities many times but, "we have only been given false assurances". At that time they assured us the work will be started soon, but nothing has been done yet and government has failed us, said Zakir Hussain.

When contacted, the Power Development Department (PDD) officials said, that the villagers will have to wait till "a new scheme is announced".

Speaking to MERC TIMES, Chief Engineer PDD, Bashir Ahmad Khan said, we don't have any scheme yet through which we could install poles and transformer in the area, however, once the new schemes come up, electricity will be supplied in to the village.

Further the dependency on the firewood is resulting in various number of health issues especially women fall prey to diseases like tuberculosis and asthma due to overuse of firewood which emits enough smoke. We are hoping to get electricity as soon as possible from the newly formed government, said Khurshid Ahmad.

Official Apathy Turns Khurhuma Dab Canal Into Drain

❖ Showkat wani

Ganderbal: Khurhuma-Dab canal, a fresh water canal in Ganderbal has turned into effluent drain. Residents and business establishment located on its banks release sewage in to the canal and authorities are looking as mute spectators.

Local residents say some people through effluent into the canal and authorities are least bothered about it even toilet waste is discharged into the canal.

Accordingly to state water pollution Control act 1974, Any person involved in offence of polluting water body is liable to get 6 months imprisonment and penalty up to twenty thousand Rupees but act seems not acting in this case.

Adil Magray a local resident said "The canal stinks to much it is unbearable to walk near it. Authorities never tried to stop offenders involving in polluting

the canal." many villages are dependent on canal for many purposes which include irrigation and drinking purpose but pollution of the canal has make it unsafe for domestic and irrigational use.

When contacted Mohd Yusuf district officer, pollution control Ganderbal, he said, "if there is any genuine concern regarding water pollution of the canal then residents can register formal complaint in our office and then we will act on it according to statutes."

Inhabitants who use this water for various purposes say that water of the canal was used for drinking purpose but nowadays one have to think hundred times before putting their hand in the canal.

"One fail to spot any aquatic animals in the canal so is the level of pollution." They further added.

Residents demand proper attention by concerned authorities towards the canal so as to save the water body from extension.

Polo ground in shambles

❖ Mozam Bhat

Srinagar: The famous Polo ground football stadium in Srinagar which was once considered as the hub of football in Kashmir and which has hosted many tournaments in past is waiting for its maintenance now.

After the devastating floods of 2014 in which most of the Srinagar city got submerged, no measures were taken by Jammu and Kashmir Football Associa-

tion (JKFA) for the maintenance of Polo Ground.

"The condition of polo ground is very bad nowadays as they have just neglected this ground, while in past all the football activities were held in this ground", said Hilal Ahmad a local.

However Zameer Thakur, President of JKFA said, "due to our busy schedule of hosting some of the matches of 2nd Division I-League here we were not able to concentrate on the main-

tenance of Polo ground".

This year we were able to continue our football activities in winters as well, otherwise in past all activities were held in Jammu. The ground will be soon in good condition and football activities will be resumed there in summers", he added.

"One cannot always play on grounds laid with synthetic turf as it hampers the performance of the players", said Haroon Rashid, a football player who plays for a local club

Mehjoor's Hymn: A New Ritual In Schools

❖ Nadeem

Srinagar : 'Sahibo Sath Cham Mea Chani' a famous hymn written by Shayir-e-Kashmir (Poet of Kashmir) Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor will now be recited during morning assemblies, in the schools of Kashmir valley.

Shah Feasal, Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) passed the orders asking all the school heads of Kashmir division to ensure that famous prayer of , Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, 'Sahibo Sath Cham Mea Chani' (Oh Lord, My only Hope) is regularly recited. 'It is for all the schools of



Kashmir division', Faesal said.

During 'Mehjoor Day' function on 10th April 'Minister of Education Naeem Akhter urged Education Department to ensure the recitation of 'Sahibo Sath Cham Mea Chani' during morning assembly in all the educational institutions.

Mehjoor was born on August 11 in the year 1887 in Mitrigam area of Pulwama of South Kashmir and died at the age of 66 on April 9 in the year 1952. Former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh released a postage stamp in his honor on June 26 in the year 2013.

Devsar awaits renovation of collapsed bridge

❖ Danish Alam

Kulgam: Devsar and its adjacent areas continue to remain cut off from Kulgam Town. Reason, a bridge connecting the two ends collapsed more than eight months ago.

Bridge which was constructed over 1000 ft wide famous Nallah Veshav, collapsed during disastrous September floods. With the result, locals are helpless to travel additional ten to eleven kilometers in order to reach to the district headquarters. A population of more than 30,000 residents of Devsar and its adjoining areas is left with a single narrow passage as the only link between the two ends.

"We once visited the then MLA Sakina Itoo, but in her tenure neither did she turn up nor could allot any fund for the reconstruction of the bridge." said Muhammad Ibrahim Mir, President Halqa Devsar. "Even newly elected MLA, Abdul Majeed Padder also could help us in building the bridge" he added.

People are suffering, especially the students, as this bridge provided the only short passage to other areas , "we have to travel extra ten kilometers to reach the main city, earlier, which was two kilometers away." said a college student. Adding that their studies are



suffering too he said "We usually fail to reach on time to our schools and colleges."

Officais say that the re-construction will take some "we did everything to make things better and easy but due to challenging weather circumstances we are unable to do anything. Now, the work has started for the reconstruction and it will take more than two months to complete this bridge" said Divisional Commissioner, Kulgam.

DC Kulgam tightens noose against poppy cultivators

❖ Ali Mohd Pathan

Kulgam: To eradicate the menace of poppy/bhang cultivation in district Kulgam, Deputy Commissioner, Dr Syed Abid Rasheed lchaired a meeting with the officers of Excise & Taxation and Revenue departments.

While chairing the meeting, the DC stressed upon the Executive Magistrates (Tehsildars) to swing into action to destroy the poppy cultivation, if any. It was decided in the meeting that a joint team of Revenue, Police and Excise departments shall be constituted to ensure destroying of poppy crop in district Kulgam.

It was given out in the meeting that Excise Department has already identified some areas in Kulgam Tehsil where poppy cultivation is done on commercial scale which is against the NDPS Act.

The DC called for a stringent action against those who cultivate poppy and other narcotic drugs. Pertinent to mention here, that recently PSA was slapped against a drug trafficker.

It is pertinent to mention that under Section 15 of the Act, the production, process and transformation of poppy is completely prohibited and the one who indulges in such activity is liable to a rigorous imprisonment for six months and a fine of Rs 10000.

The meeting was further informed that public notices have been already issued to inform the people about the illegality of the poppy cultivation. In this regard, the revenue authorities have been impressed upon to engage local panchayat bodies to dealt with the menace. Besides, the religious leaders have been requested to dissuade people about the hazards of cultivation of poppy.

The meeting was attended by SP Kulgam, ADC, ACR, ETO and all Tehsildars.

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