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MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE,
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

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SMC organized workshop on solid waste management



❖ **Imran Ali Buth**

Srinagar: In a two day workshop organized by Srinagar Municipal Corporation at SKICC Srinagar, experts from outside states stressed upon modern scientific techniques for adept solid waste management in the Srinagar city. The issues of inappropriate solid waste management which hampers the overall fragile Eco-system of the valley were highlighted and discussed in detail.

Explaining the methods at workshop, Rajesh Babu an expert said, "Biological treatment method which involves using of micro-organisms to decompose the biodegradable components of waste would be useful, also sanitary landfills can facilitate in controlling disposal of waste on land."

Pointing out that the seventy percent of waste generated here is untreated, Sunil Kumar, a Nagpur based scientist said, "this untreated waste finds its way into water bodies which eventually leads to contamination and eutrophication." He said that scientific methods include incineration, recycling, thermal treatment, and gasification can be used for solid waste management.

"Incineration has several advantages including waste volume reduction, cutback on transportation costs and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions", Kumar added.

Experts emphasized the role of local governance to ensure appropriate solid waste management practices in all the cities and towns of the state.

Appreciating the efforts of Srinagar Municipal Corporation for organizing such events, Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh, said that the authorities must sensitize the general public about the importance of implementation of Solid Waste Management Rules.

Speaking at the occasion, SMC Commissioner Dr. Shafqat Khan told that the workshop aims to highlight globally adopted standard practices of solid waste management, and to educate concerned stakeholders about the ways and means to tackle waste in scientific manner.

Srinagar Municipal Corporation at present has only one dumping site at Syedpora Achan which comprises of 540 kanals of land where the waste is being dumped.

The exiting site of dumping waste is said to be improved and modernized into scientific engineered landfill site with financial and technical guidance from Asian Development Bank (ADB), the official website of Srinagar Municipal Corporation shows.

JKSJA organizes One Day Conference on 'Cyber Law'

❖ **B. M Hussain**

Srinagar: Jammu & Kashmir State Judicial Academy (JKSJA) organized one day Conference on 'Cyber Law' for Sub-Judges and Munsiffs of Kashmir province, here today.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Judge, High Court of Jammu and Kashmir inaugurated the Conference.

The conference hosted eminent Resource Persons including District & Sessions Judge, East District, Kakardooma Courts, Delhi, Talwant Singh and Deputy Director, Data Security Council of India, Venkatesh Murthy K, who shared a plethora of knowledge on the subject with the participants along with special anecdotes from their personal experience in cyber law.

Sub-Judges and Munsiffs from District Srinagar, Ganderbal, Budgam, Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama, Shopian, Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara participated in the workshop.

During the welcome address, Justice Sanjeev Kumar, highlighting the importance of Cyber Law for Judicial Officers, said that the advent of cyber space has revolutionized communication networks, but with its susceptibility to misuse, there is a need to equip ourselves with cyber laws.

"We need to take necessary measures to prevent its misuse, regulate its use, monitoring its operations, and provide proper deterrence to prevent recurrence of such offences", Justice Kumar said.

He further said that the country is ushering into an era of digitalization, wherein everything is put in the cyber space vis-à-vis communication, banking, commerce, trading, storage of data, etc, which inherently provides criminals ample opportunity to penetrate and commit offences like theft, defamation, intimidation among others.

He commended the State Judicial Academy for organizing conference on Cyber Law which is very important for the judiciary as no lawyer or Judge today can afford not to know about electronic evidence. 'Detection of cyber crimes, their proper investigation and active prosecution are the new challenges of the day and equally important is the challenge of effective adjudication', Justice Kumar added

The conference deliberated in detail on the importance of Cyber Law for Judicial officers, Emerging Threat Landscape of Cyber Crimes, Information Technology Act 2008 and Admissibility of Digital Evidence besides Search and Seizure of Digital Evidence.

There were brainstorming sessions in which Judicial Officers interacted with the Resource Persons and sought clarification on different issues relating to appreciation of Electronic Evidence.

Director, J&K State Judicial Academy Abdul Rashid Malik introduced the programme by highlighting objective behind organizing the Conference on Cyber Law and moderated the sessions. He welcomed the Dignitaries and the Judicial Officers and concluded the programme with the vote of thanks.

FOUR YEARS ON SPORTS POLO GROUND AWAITS COMPLETION



Waseem Ahmad

Srinagar: Started in 2013, multi-purpose Indoor sports hall at polo ground, Srinagar awaits completion for Four years.

The foundation stone of the indoor sports hall was laid by then Minister for Medical Education, Youth services and sports, Taj Mohi-ud-din on 2013 and the work was started soon after that.

At that time, it was announced that the indoor sports hall will be completed within six months but the Jammu and Kashmir State (JKSSC) Sports Council has failed to complete the work on the Indoor Sports Hall.

The Indoor sports hall was approved at a cost of 1.82 crore and it have facilities for playing many indoor games.

As per people, the inability of concerned authorities to complete the work on Indoor Sports hall have impacted the condition of whole Polo Ground

as well.

"The building material for the indoor sports hall is spread all over the Polo Ground which is very pathetic. Polo Ground was once one of the beautiful playgrounds of the valley but now it is in shambles," Basit, a Football player said

Despite repeated attempts no one in the JKSSC was available for the comments about the Indoor Sports hall.

Crafting Hands: a flashing opportunity to avail

❖ **Munawar Hussain**

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir valley is bestowed with beauty, not only of having infinite natural bounties but also gifted with exceptional skills. Handicrafts of Kashmir are famous throughout the world, whether we talk about Pashmina shawls, carpets of varied designs, or papier-mâché products, all attain a special fame.

Retaining the opulence of art, it is quite fascinating to observe the process how papier-mâché products are shaped initially. Before reaching the hands of the Naqash, artifacts are molded, shaped, and smoothened, for that exquisite stroke of the brush, which has down the centuries remained the epitome of Kashmiri craft. But the most alluring part is, using the discarded paper adeptly to make decorative artifacts, inspiring to bring soul in dead things, reuse them to recreate their essence in completely different and delightful style.

Sakht-kar, who makes the products from paper pulp, goes to publication houses to gather and stockpile the discarded paper. "After paying minimal charges

per kilogram, we accumulate the discarded paper in quantity; the first phase starts with immersing it into a tub containing water and keep it there for few days. After moistened, we grind the slackened paper normally in a stone-mortar with wooden-pestle". Shabir Ahmad – a Sakht-kar describing his work.

The other materials like straw of rice plant and copper sulfate are then mixed with grinded paper to make a pulp easy to apply on a mold.

After completing the layering of pulp over the mold, it is left for few days to dry up.

There is wide range of objects made in papier-mâché craft. "Since I came to this field, I made a number of objects depending on the taste of customers. It includes Samovars, flower vases, boxes of varied shapes and sizes, balls and bells, pen holders and so on", Said Shabir Ahmad, while showing the objects he made.

Finally, the object reaches to the painter, locally called as Naqash, to get decorated with multiple designs.

"Using a trace paper, we sketch out the design on it and then pierce it with a needle to make minute holes, exactly as per

the design outline is drawn. Charcoal powder or simply white-powder, depending on the surface color, put in a cotton cloth is then rubbed on the trace paper after positioning it on the object", explained artist Fida Hussain.

After getting the design outline on the object, the Naqash brings life to the object.

Preserving the work culture; an alternative to tackle unemployment

With the increasing bleak job market in the state, the youth could ponder upon other available sources and opportunities whereas, the government needs to create such apparatus, to counsel the unemployed youth, provide them accessible tools and resources to find other means of job.

"There are possibilities to create abundance of opportunities if these crafts be taught to earn livelihood in the valley. It would not only cater unemployment but also preserve our cultural heritage", said Shabir Ahmad.

"These crafts should be inserted in school-curriculum to make the students familiar at their early stage of life. Like sports, they can adopt it as co-curricular activities and choose the one with own inclination", said Fida Hussain.

HSS Kothibagh, Tony Blair Foundation organize workshop



❖ **Saba Gul**

SRINAGAR: Tony Blair Foundation, an international NGO based in London, in collaboration with Directorate of School Education Kashmir and College of Education today held one day workshop at Higher Secondary School Kothibagh Srinagar.

Tony Blair faith foundation runs a program called Generation Global which helps the students and teachers of different nationalities to have a conversation on diverse issues through Skype and internet. This organization runs a program of empowering the students and teachers by providing them latest skills through Generation Global in almost 20 countries of the world.

The workshop was inaugurated by the Director School Education Kashmir Dr. G.N. Itoo addressing the teachers and experts; he said that Tony Blair Faith Foundation is doing a commendable job by providing the teachers and students of the valley a platform to share their views with students and teachers of other parts of the world.

He added that it is a great initiative and Directorate will always extend its support and cooperation to Tony Blair Faith Foundation so that teaching community and the students get an learning exchange platform with their counterparts across the globe.

Director School Education said that Generation Global helps the students and teachers to overcome prejudices about different cultures, beliefs, values and religions.

Sandyha Gupta the Education Consultant Asia for Tony Blair Faith Foundation said that teachers from the valley have shown an overwhelming response regarding this program.

In order to rope-in maximum number of teachers and students for the program, Director School Education advised Principal SIE to coordinate with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. He assured the participating teachers that all the ICT labs at district head quarters would be upgraded so that the programs of such nature are conducted in hassle free manner.

WILDLIFE ENCROACHMENTS ON RISE IN KASHMIR



Ali Mohd

Kulgam: A 75-year-old woman was mauled to death by a bear while her 40-year-old daughter-in-law was critically injured in the attack that took place south Kashmir Kulgam district Monday afternoon.

The slain was identified as Fatima Begum and her injured daughter-in-law as Shaheena Bano, both residents of Ladgov village in Kulgam district.

The incident is seen as an indicator of

growing man-animal conflict in the rural areas of south Kashmir. Earlier on Saturday, a minor boy was attacked and dragged away from the village by a leopard from outside his house in Banderpora village of Pulwama district. His body was recovered the next morning.

Monday's incident took place at about 3:15 in the afternoon.

"My mother, wife and my daughter had gone to their orchard on the outskirts of the village when a bear attacked them," Reyaz Ahmad Bhat, Shaheena's husband told media men at the Kulgam district hospital.

Fatima and Shaheena were rushed to hospital where Fatima was declared brought

dead. "Fatima had a gash in her throat proving fatal for her. Shaheena has injury to her head and is stable after stitches and treatment," said Medical Superintendent of the Kulgam district hospital, Dr R D Kasana. He said that Shaheena's daughter Hina too had some scratches but she has been sent home after first aid.

Residents of the area have alleged that the Wildlife department has been ignoring their repeated pleas to prevent wild animal attacks in the villages.

Students ferried in overloaded vehicles; authorities unmoved



❖ **Saba Khan**

ANANTNAG: Against Supreme Court's directions, many schools in Kashmir Valley ferry their students in overloaded vehicles, risking their lives and comfort.

The Supreme Court of India last year directed the transporters to ensure safety of school children.

In Kashmir, however, students, especially minors, continue to be ferried in jam-packed vehicles, which are also considered unsafe.

"I can't bear my children being ferried like cattle in a compact vehicle. Although we made a representation to the school, it seems they are least bothered about the safety of our children," said Nisar Ahmad, a parent.

He said many parents have, of late, discontinued utilising schools' transport services. "You can see many parents ferry their children on bikes or hire autorickshaws," Ahmad said.

Nelofar, a resident of Wanbal, said her children often complain of suffocation in the

cab.

"Often, my children complain that they feel nausea," she said. "A cab fit for eight children is made to carry 14. Even the traffic police is not taking any action against these schools."

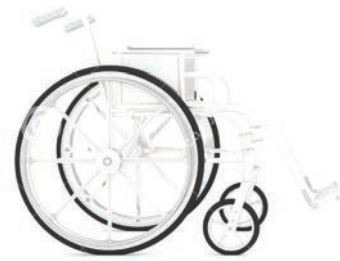
The Private School Association of Kashmir President, G N Var, refused to accept that the private schools indulge in the unsafe practice. "The traffic police is there to act against the violators, but we don't see anything like this happening here," he said.

Traffic Police SSP, Srinagar, Sargun Shukla, said they were taking action against the violators.

"We can only fine them. But if we keep on ceasing these vehicles, the minors will bear the brunt; they can't make it to their homes alone and by foot," she said, appealing the parents to raise voice against the authorities.

Joint Director School Education, Mehboob Hussain, said the parents should approach them with their complaints.

"We will take action against the schools," he said.



There is always "HOPE"

❖ **Showqat Wani**

SRINAGAR: Hope Disability Centre, an undertaking of She Hope Society for Women Entrepreneurs, is an NGO in Jammu and Kashmir since 2001 working for rehabilitation of physically challenged people and women empowerment.

Started from one-room unit at Wayil in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district providing physical rehabilitation and special education to mere 5 children with physical disabilities, 16 years before, Hope has now expanded across Jammu and Kashmir for carrying out social work. Today, Hope is a fully grown rehabilitation centre, providing prosthesis and orthotic support to persons whose limbs were amputated either of accidents, armed conflict or congenial diseases.

"Hope also provides physiotherapy, occupational hearing and speech therapy, mobility aids, corrective surgeries, equipment and aids to persons with hearing impairment

and activities in daily life (ADL). The NGO conducts Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) in its outreach programmes," said Ajid Shafi, consultant of Hope Disability Centre at Wayil Ganderbal.

Livelihood programmes, especially for women and their empowerment, are conducted through awareness, education, counselling, skill training for employment, creation of self-help groups, and micro-loan scheme facilitation.

Besides, it carries out programmes and workshops on health awareness, advocacy and access to human rights, child development and disaster risk and reduction management.

While talking to MERC Times, Ab Rahman Bhat from Rapora Lar, Ganderbal said, "Few days earlier, I survived a mortal injury as an axe accidentally hit my face and hands. Being a laborer by profession I couldn't afford the treatment. It was the Physiotherapy Centre at Wayil Ganderbal where Doctors assisted me to get through this situation."

Non-functional ATM's aggravate residents

❖ **Fehmeeda Rashid**

GANDERBAL:: Cash-dispensing machines in Ganderbal often remain out of service, giving tough times to the people.

"Sorry I am temporarily out of service" is the message on ATM screens that keeps on irking the bank customers.

"What is the fun of a facility that fails you when you need it the most," questioned Bashir Ahmad adding that it was not for the first time that he had to confront such a problem. "In fact the ill-working of the ATMs of the bank has become a routine now," he said. Another customer Suhail Ahmad said, "it is surprising that ATMs in the commercial hub of Ganderbal are either not working or are out of cash very often."

"On Sundays banks are closed, the only source to get cash is ATM machines but given their inoperativeness



it is hard to fulfill our daily customary needs," a local said.

"We need money to buy basic commodities and medicine. Who keeps reserve cash these days?" Saba Zehra a local said.

Many customers alleged that the bank authorities when asked about the problems cited "poor link connectivity".

However, a local questioned, "If poor link connectivity is the reason for malfunctioning of ATMs, then why this problem is confined to Ganderbal alone. We have seen ATMs outside working round the clock without any glitches."

While speaking to MERC Times, a senior official of the bank said the problem arises because "the ATMs are outsourced to a vendor which takes time to load the cash."

ANNUAL ALOHA COMPETITION HELD AT KUPWARA



❖ Iqra Akhooon

KUPWARAL: 6th Annual Aloha District Level Competition, Abascus and Mental Arithmetic competition was held here at Town Hall Kupwara. Aloha, which has been engaged in exploring the untapped energies and talent of the young students for so many years now organized this event.

The event started with competition 'Abascus' in which a huge number of students from different and far-flung areas of District Kupwara participated enthusiastically. At the end of the competition the successful students were encouraged with felicitation and prizes.

The program concluded with an impressive Prize distribution ceremony. The Prize distribution ceremony was presided by Dr Ishfaq

Reham and Mr Qasim Ahmad who were the chief guests on the occasion. The teachers and staff members of Aloha including Israr ul Haq, Miss Gul Bahar, Miss Gazala Akhtar, Miss Shazia Kousar, Mr Zubair Ahmad and Mr Bilal Wani coordinated the event successfully.

It was due to the positive and proactive efforts of the teachers and staff members of Aloha that the competition and program ran successfully. The teachers also held relevant Counselling sessions for the student in order to encourage them so that the inner talent in them gets explored and channelized in a positive manner.

Pertinently, Aloha also launched 'kupwara polythene drive', and educated the participants to stop using polythene and save environment.

Tengpora inhabitants demand shifting of dumping site

Junaid Manzoor

SRINAGAR: Heaps of garbage collected from adjacent areas is dumped near Tengpora, Bypass, causing immense inconvenience to the residents, commuters and shopkeepers of the area. Huge mounds of garbage are collected from the nearby areas and dumped along the roadside.

Locals said that garbage piles attract stray dogs and that is another matter of concern. They are reluctant to move out especially children as they may fall prey to dog bite as they cannot outrun them.

"I am not able to perform my duty properly in such a stinky atmosphere. I have to block my nose with a mask to stand near the place. I don't understand why inhabitants of this

area made silent over this issue," said Bashir Ahmed (name changed), a traffic police cop.

"Though we went to concerned officials several times, but they hardly pay heed to the common people and their sufferings," said a local Shopkeeper.

"We are trying our level best to make our city clean, for that we need cooperation from the society as well. We have installed dustbins in almost every area of the Srinagar city, people still throw garbage, on the roads, now whom will you blame!

As far as Tengpora Bye pass is concerned, we will soon install few more dustbins in the area and will shift the dumping site to some other place," said Manzoor Ahmad Paaray, the Chief Sanitation Officer.

Film Appreciation Course concludes at Media Department, Kashmir University

❖ Asim Rajah.

SRINAGAR: The five day film appreciation course conducted by Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in collaboration with Media Education Research Centre, Kashmir University concluded at Media Auditorium, Kashmir University on Friday.

During the course, Media Students were trained in different nuances of film appreciation and cinema. Many International and National movies were screened at the Media House which included 2016 Lotus National Award winning movie "Kasav" directed by Sumitra Bhawe.

Director Sumitra Bhawe while sharing her experience said, "Films are not meant for audience and awards, but to explore our life. We can come out of depression by going deep into life as everybody wants love and compassion, but we are losing it. And, that is why we are in the present situation of dwelling mental illness".

Actress Irawati Harshe while sharing her experience said, "Losing the source of connection with each other is the root cause of depression."

She further added that people in Kashmir are very loving and interactive; it was

nice to be among such a beautiful group of students. I would like students to be in touch as I found them bright and fun loving. Director National Film Archive of India (NFAI) Prakash Magdum informed, "It is the only organization under government of India which is actively working for preserving of films in India and we have preserved 30 silent films."

He further added that we have also preserved three films from Kashmir, which includes Kashmir's first silent film "Mainz Raat" directed by Jagjiram Pal in 1964. The other two films are Shayar-e-Kashmir Mahjoor directed by Prabhat Mukherjee in 1972 and Babaji directed by Joyti Sarup in 2001.

Coordinator MERC Faruq Masudi, while concluding the session said, "I would like to thank faculty of FTII and MERC for conducting this workshop smoothly. And, in near future FTII in collaboration with MERC will be conducting seminars for the preparation of entrance examination of FTII. The film appreciation course was beneficial to students as it provided new insights and perspective to the film as an art form."

He further said that film is a strong medium for Kashmiris to present their stories to the world and course like these by FTII will hone their talent.

Fruit trucks stranded on highway traders fraternity dejected

❖ Bint-ul Huda

Srinagar: More than 40 fruit trucks carrying plums and cherry are stranded on the national highway due to one way traffic schedule for the ongoing Amarnath yatra.

Kashmir fruit trade fraternities and exporters were very upset with the move as they were complaining that the trucks carrying the fruits have a short span of life time.

President New Kashmir Fruit Association Bashir Ahmad Bashir said "from Kashmir valley we are exporting fruits like Plums (Alu-Bukhaar) and Cherry, only fruits this time we are that are exporting from Kashmir from last month to other states, eventually when this pilgrimage started and our trucks were halted for hours."

He added "Each and every day we are facing trouble, fruits should reach immediately to Fruit Mandi in time, if these trucks will not reach on the spot, the fruits are rotten and have to dispose later to waste bin, these fruits can't be kept in a container for more time, its taste and quality get decreased, the big trouble for the fruit fraternity of

Kashmir."

"Cherry and Plums (Alu-Bukhaar) are very tender and soft in its making, so it's the main problem that we are undergoing this time due to one-way traffic," Bashir said

While talking to Ajaz Ahmad SSP highway said "we have neutralized all the traffic from Banihal to Ramssoo, and did everything support and reached the spot where trucks were stranded for some time."

"Commuters were stuck in a serpentine traffic jam on Thursday the strategic 300-km Srinagar-Jammu highway, due to bad weather."

The trucks and others cars were not stranded amid Amarnath Yatra pilgrimage. It was due to bad weather, the harsh rain fall on the upper area of the highway." Ajaz said

He added, "Congestion started due to rainfall and stone shooting, created a way for one side traffic movement and blockage, for taking consideration and clearing the roads, the one-way traffic smoothed the people coming to Kashmir valley."

OFF-ROAD MTB CHAMPIONSHIP CONCLUDES

❖ **Sheikh Saman**

SRINAGAR: First Off-Road MTB championship organized by Sheikh-ul-Aalam Sports Development Association Budgam (SSDA) in collaboration with J&K State Sports Council concluded at Polo Ground here on 6 August.

Last day of the event saw competition for the title with semifinals and finals held in under-14, 17 and seniors categories.

In Under-14 category, Abhaydeep Singh of Burn Hall emerged winner while

as Tajumul of Celestial Buds Narbal bagged second place and Junaid also of Celestial Buds finished third.

In the Under-17 category Fazal Wani of Burn hall cruised to win while as Zaid Hameed of Burn Hall and Faheem of Candid Higher Secondary finished second and third respectively. In the senior category Rameez emerged winner while as Waheed of Celestial Buds and Parvaiz from Amar Singh College finished second and third respectively.

The two-day event saw around 350 riders hailing from different schools and clubs of Kashmir participating in it. The championship was supported by J&K bank, J&K Tourism, Amblin, Youth Services and Sports Department Budgam and Spring Buds Educational Trust Ompora.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahmood Ahmad Shah, Director Tourism said, "I am impressed with the idea which is unique in our part of the world. In European countries these type of

events are part of their culture and daily activities. They do it because they love to do and develop same mentality among their youth from very early age. We need to develop same concept here by conducting more and more such events."

Students from RP School, Burn Hall, Kashmir Harvard, Tyndale Biscoe, Celestial Buds, Spring Buds Ompora, Minto Circle, Candid Higher Secondary School and Modern Era participated in student categories.

Kupwara Boy Wins Gold Medal

❖ **Tahir Bhat**

SRINAGAR: Faheem Rashid Malik, 23, a resident of Kalmoona village of Kupwara brought laurels to his state by winning gold medal in North India Jeet Kune-Do (kung fu) championship that was held at Sehranpur (Uttarakhand). The Jeet Kune-Do competition was organized by Schools Games Federation of India in association with Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

"I participated through Uttarakhand Jeet Kune-Do Association Academy that was founded by Fareed Khan, my coach," Malik said.

Faheem won the gold in senior category of 55-60 kg weight and was declared best player in the U-24 category in the championship, that had participation from eight states.

Jeet Kune-Do, abbreviated JKD, is an electric and hybrid philosophy of martial arts heavily influenced by the personal philosophy and experiences of martial artist Bruce Lee.

Lee founded the system on July 9, 1969, and is referred as "non-classical".

"I was interesting in martial arts from my childhood, but here in Kashmir I did not found any way to fulfill my aim of becoming the champion of martial arts," Malik said.

Malik is son of a government employee, Abdul Rashid Malik. Though his father manages the family, it is his brother funding his studies and passion. Malik is all praise for his brother Jaffer Rashid, a banker.

"It is because of his encouragement that I came close to the dreams of my childhood," Malik said. "I have dedicated the gold medal to my brother."

When Faheem decided to pursue his studied in Dehradun, it was his brother who took it upon himself to finance him. Their father is a class fourth employee.

"It is my responsibility to help my brother as my father has to bare the expenses of my other siblings," said Jaffer. "Faheem's hard work and passion for Kung Fu has finally paid off."

Faheem's family is proud of the achievements of their son. They hope he will, one day, become an international champion. He wants to represent J&K, his home state, in a national level championship.

Baramulla Hospital lacks basic facilities

❖ **Syed Irshad**

SRINAGAR: Authorities are calming that they are taking immense steps to revolutionize the health system in Jammu and Kashmir, but the ground reality is starkly opposite to it.

The district hospital in Baramulla is grappling with heavy rush of patients, low ratio of doctors and paramedics and has almost crippled the health care system of hospital.

"The staff in 100-bed old hospital equals to that of new 200-bed hospital, this low ratio of staff is the root cause of all problems," a patient said.

The new hospital had raised the expectations of people of Baramulla who thought that after the completion of new hospital building their health issues would be duly addressed. However, the new hospital has only one anesthetic available, with the result patients admitted for surgeries after 4pm are

forced to visit Srinagar hospitals, adding to their woes.

"We are running three theaters a day and there is availability of only one anesthetic. How can one expect that hospital will run round the clock as per the expectations of common people," said a doctor.

"By spending corers of rupees on the new hospital building, nothing has changed here. Infrastructure cannot help if there is dearth of doctors. Patients were being referred to Srinagar hospital in past citing non availability of doctors and same practice is even now. So what has changed?," questions Ramzan Malik, a local.

When contacted, Chief Medical Officer Baramulla said, "I have already requested higher authorities to address the issue. They assured that they will look into the issue with great attention and they will take all possible steps to solve these problems."

Dilapidated roads irk Rainawari residents

Tanzeela Qazi

Roads are damaged everywhere in the areas of Rainawari especially puj mohalla, Main shah sahib, Nadiyar, Kalwal Mohalla, Jogi lankar and Kralyaar.

The condition of the roads is becoming bad to worse. Also, the roads have become unfit for smooth ride within a few months of formation apparently due to poor quality.

Bashir Ahmad Dar, resident of Miya shah sahid Rainawari said that they had failed to withstand even a single rain. Since then, No repair or maintenance work was taken up lamenting that the

corporation was responsible for the poor condition of roads.

Another resident said that the workers, who dug roads to provide drinking water connection to the newly constructed houses, had never closed them properly. It had further damaged the roads. We find it extremely difficult to drive in certain areas due to the poor condition of roads.

With concerned officials and authorities paying little attention to carry out repair and maintenance works the roads have suffered extensive damage. The chief engineer (Road repairs) said that the problem will be solved at the earliest and we don't want people to suffer anymore.

Water crisis hits village Bakura



❖ Farhad Khan

GANDERBAL: Water shortage hits Ganderbal's village Bakura and it's adjacent areas, and people are protesting against the PHE Ganderbal for the negligence of the officials.

The protesters blocked the Batpora Nagbal link to protest against the officials.

Mushtaq Ahmad War told the reporter that there has been the

water shortage in our village and we approached the PHE division Ganderbal, they assured us for the quick action and started to send the water tankers for sometime which was not solution for our problem.

Another elderly person speaking to MERC TIMES said that govt has laid the corner stone of water treatment plant in Bakura back in 2008- 2009 but has not been completed till this date.

When contacted, PHE executive Ganderbal, he said that we were approached by the people about the problem earlier also and we sent a team for the field inspection to take the action and look at their problem.

Sharanz waterfall in North Kashmir craves for government attention



Asif bilal

North Kashmir: The Sharanz waterfall on 'Ningli' stream near Baba Reshi Shrine here in North Kashmir area is craving for government attention.

Located in the lap of green picturesque area on the Nallah Ningli near Nagbal Baba Reshi, the waterfall is at a distance of about 5 Kms from Baba Reshi Shrine, the waterfall has remained a spot of attraction for the tourists visiting Tangmarg and Gulmarg Tourism spots.

The famous waterfall has the potential of producing Hydroelectricity and can turn into famous tourist destination if government could wake up for development, locals said.

However due to lack of basic facilities in the area the visiting tourists face immense hardships. Locals

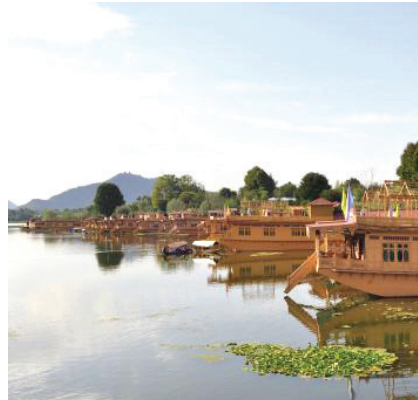
opine that this unexplored tourist destination if maintained properly can to a greater extent boost the economy of the area.

"This waterfall (Sranz) is one of the most beautiful spots in area; this is not less than Aharbal waterfall in Anantnag. Authorities should take steps to maintain this tourist spot," said a local visitor Mohammad Arif.

"If the waterfall is utilized properly, it can produce electricity for the nearby areas, besides will help in boosting the economy of the area through different means," said Ajaz Ahmad a teacher.

People demand that the whole area around the Shranz waterfall should be developed and be put on the tourist map. "If the area around the waterfall is developed and put on the tourist map, it will provide employment opportunities for the unemployed youth of the area", Ahmad said.

SESSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION HELD AT NIGEEN



❖ Auqib Salam

SRINAGAR: Various stakeholders working to protect the famous Nigeen Lake in Srinagar in a function organised by Nigeen Lake Conservation Organization revealed that due to continuous awareness campaigns, they have been able to keep the lake the polythene free. As further steps are "afoot to ensure it remains pollution free in future."

The campaign was organized by Nigeen Lake Conservation Organization (NLCO) in collaboration with J&K tourism at Nigeen club Srinagar.

"Aim of the event was to make the delegates aware about the work of NLCO towards the

conservation of environment. The event was also aimed at displaying the tourism potential of J&K state", said an event organizer

While speaking on the event, patron NLCO Dr. Kaloo said "As sponsors of the event that was held at one of reputed universities, we wanted to host the delegates and enlighten everyone about what is being done in the field of conservation of environment by different organizations in Kashmir".

Chairman NLCO, Manzoor Ahmed Wangnoo said, "Due to tireless work of LAWDA and dedication of our volunteers we have been able to make Nigeen Lake polythene free and steps are afoot to ensure it remains pollution free in future."

"I can say with authority that Nigeen Lake is probably the only water body in Kashmir that is polythene free". Wangnoo added.

Highlighting the potential of Tourism in J&K, Director Tourism Mehmood Ahmad Shah discussed about the unique USP's of J&K as a tourist destination. He enlightened the audience with unique feature of flora and fauna of J&K state.

"It is important for us to let the foreign delegates know about the tourism potential of J&K state and the things that we have to offer as a tourist destination so that they can promote us back home," Mehmood said.

MASHEK a steps towards better future

❖ Faiza Khan

ANANTNAG Scores of Youths from South Kashmir's Anantnag district have started the initiative, Mashek - Write your dreams, to reach out to under privileged children who are deprived of basic right of education, health and hygiene.

The initiative encourages people from various fields to start contributing with old books, stationery and money, so it reaches to less fortunate people.

Co-Founder of Mashek initiative, Tammana Mukhtar said "It all started earlier this year with the basic aim of providing education, it was a rough ride at start but within months the number of volunteers and contributors increased, all thanks to social media especially Kashmir Dial's Facebook page," she said.

The response from people was overwhelming, people were ready to contribute and we started collecting books, stationery, bags and other stuff. She further added.



"We have volunteers from all districts; we have collection and distribution events. It just feels good to be a part of something so positive," said Sadia Khan, one of the volunteers.

Faiza Khan, one of the contributors said that i got in touch Mashek, through social media; I had spare books and then contributed around 50 books, and stationery.

Mashek initiative recently collaborated with Vertical Amble Mountaineering Club, and reached the hilly regions of Aru Valley, Pahalgam, and provided people with food supplements there. They also provided free tuitions in recent summer vacations.

Labors in classroom, students outside



❖ **Syed Jesarat**

SRINAGAR: In brazen violation of the rules and regulations, education department of Khag a have allowed a contractor to occupy two rooms of a government run school for accommodating labourers working on the construction of a girl's hostel in Khag Education Zone of the district.

Mushtaq Ahmed, whose son studies in the school said that the students have been forced to take classes in the scorching heat. "Two rooms have been occupied by a private constructor among which one is being used by the laborers and the other for dumping of the construction material," he said.

A teacher preferring anonymity said "The construction work causes

unbearable noise as JCB's and other machines run throughout the day.

Pertinently, there are two government run middle schools functioning at the construction site".

However, according to an official it was only after the consultation of the local representatives that two abandoned rooms were allocated to the contractor. The allocation of two rooms hasn't created any space dearth at the school.

When contacted Chief Education Officer (CEO) Budgam Abdul Rouf Shahmiri said, "The matter will be taken up with concerned ZEO. I have no information about this issue. But it will take up the matter with zonal authorities.

Kashmir Combative trains martial art



❖ **Malik Nisar**

BARAMULLA : Ashfaq , a resident of Rangwar, Baramulla, started training martial arts with his cousin brother, who used to teach Kung fu, when he was barely six years old.

Twenty years down the line, Ashfaq, who now works as a journalist and a content writer, also runs "Kashmir Combative- The Fight Academy" where hundreds of youth are trained in combative sports.

"Along with running the academy, I completed my masters in Convergent Journalism from the Central University of Kashmir. Since my childhood I had a passion for martial arts and see 18 years have passed and I am still in this field now from competitive mode to coaching mode," says Ashfaq.

He holds a black belt degree in martial arts and has won dozens of medals in the sports version of martial arts both at state and national level. However, the laurels failed to provide him with a sense of fulfilment and he decided to focus on training people instead of chasing medals.

"The hard-truth is that sports-based martial arts do not prepare you for the realities of violence in the 21st century especially, when your life is on the line. That's the reason I decided to train and teach my students the realistic aspect of combat and martial arts," explains Ashfaq.

"To me, Kashmiri martial artists along with medals need a realistic approach to martial arts, a skill set to defend their honour, life and loved ones in the conflict zone of Kashmir," he added.

"I have been training in KC since 2011. We are trained here like soldiers. The thing that differentiates KC academy from other martial art academies in other parts of India is the focus on the reality-based combat," said Danish Manzoor, a student of Kashmir Combatives- The Fight Academy.

Another student, MusharifQayoom, 11, has grabbed 13-time gold medals at different platforms of combat sports. "There is no martial art academy in the valley. I used to see martial arts on TV and got impressed by it...we take it as a part of real life situations not only the game," said Musharif.

LOW WAGES HALT CARPET MANUFACTURING

❖ **Mehvish Mumtaz**

SRINAGAR: Carpet manufacturing that once fetched Kashmir money and fame is losing its artisan base fast, as the weavers does not want their next generation to go for a 'low-paying backbreaking job'.

The Carpet Industry in Kashmir is facing a number of issues including the competition in international market, cheap machine-made carpets in the name of Kashmir carpets, lack of innovation and new design but the main setback is due to disinterests of the weaver.

"There is a severe shortage of skilled carpet weavers these days. The craft is dying. The new generation has no interest in this craft. There was a time when we used to export our carpets to the whole world and it made us famous in the world but I see a bleak future for this craft now," said 60-year-old weaver.

"Why should our young generation be involved in this when it doesn't even fetch us even two meals a day despite



working for long hours? At least, I will not allow my children to become weavers. I have suffered all my life and I don't want them to suffer like me," said Naseer Ahmad Baba, who became a carpet weaver, when he was barely 15-years old.

These weavers blame that they are living a life of misery, where as the middlemen and traders will keep reaping

benefits without providing for the basic needs to the people, who basically do the main job.

However, Jammu and Kashmir Directorate of Handicrafts claims that government has taken a number of steps to revive carpet weaving and support the weavers.

Reyaz Ahmad, Publicity and Exhibition Officer (PEO) of the directorate said that Craft Development Institute (CDI) and Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT) is in process to revive this dying craft and is providing free training to artisans.

"Directorate is playing a vital role in promoting handicrafts products in rural as well as in urban areas by providing financial and technical assistance to unemployed youth and artisans of the state for setting up micro and small units in industrial sectors under various schemes", PEO said. "We have established around 550 training centers in every district and around 8500 persons are trained through these centers annually. We are providing them mechanized looms free of cost," He added.

Robbers prowl at Illahi Bagh

❖ **Musaib Mehraj**

SRINAGAR: DSeven people's looted cash and valuables worth rupees three lakh from the readymade garment shop in the Rangpora area of Illahi Bagh Srinagar.

"At about 2 am when we were slept I heard some noise from outside and suddenly a person standing at one place caught my eyes. I opened the door to catch him, he tried to escape but I overpowered him and caught him," said Zahoor Ahmad, Owner of the shop.

Accused person has been taken into custody by the Zakura Police station and FIR has been lodged against all seven



people out of which six managed to escape.

"This has become a routine in this area, every now and then there is a robbery in our area and nothing has been done," said

Zahoor Ahmad.

"This is 21st robbery in our area this year, earlier thieves managed to escape with cash and jewellery worth rupees 30 lakh from another household of Ghulam Mohammad", Ahmad added.

"A month back outsiders from Kashmir who work here were also looted in whom the thieves escaped with six mobile phones, 8000 rupees cash and clothes," they said.

"We are facing these hardships every time and no one has come forward to our rescue, we have talked to the authorities as well but there is no response from them," locals further added.

World Film Festival Concludes At Tagore Hall



❖ **Nazima Rashid**

SRINAGAR. : The five days 'Kashmir World Film Festival' (KWFF) concluded at Tagore Hall here on Wednesday. Organized by Actors Creative Theatre (ACT), a Non-profit organization in collaboration with its different sponsors, the festival also screened the international movies.

The auditorium witnessed huge rush of students from Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir. Students from Central University, colleges, higher secondary schools and movie lovers were also present there.

Meanwhile, three films were screened in afternoon. The films include Gul directed by Gul Reyaz, Lissa Aisha directed by Asthma Bseiso and Kabuliwala directed by Tapan Sinha. Around twenty One films were screened in seven different languages that include Hindi, Urdu, English, Kashmiri, Bengali, Bhojpuri and Spanish.

The guest of honor on the occasion was bollywood actor Rajat Kapoor while the chief guest was Bhupendra Kainthola, Director FTII. The movies that won the awards in different categories include Bokul (Fiction), Shepherds of Paradise (Documentary) in national category, Velvet Revolution, Mirror, In Between are in

International category.

The films awarded in 'Jury special mention' include both the nationals, One is Kintsukuroi (Fiction) and another is Waenji Gaash (Documentary).

Chairman ACT Mushtaque Ahmad Khan said, "I am thankful to all those who made it possible." "All the five days went good. I am thankful to all my friends and especially to my mother, its because of her blessings, all this was possible," Khan further said. "The presence of Director FTII and the bollywood actor Rajat Kapoor gave me a clear idea now that my event has been completed successfully," he added.

Besides screening of films, the young artists were given a chance to learn about film direction. The five days film workshop was conducted by Canon Indian and Film and Television Institute (FTII).

"I have Talked to Vice Chancellor Kashmir University Dr. Khurshid Iqbal Andrabi about conducting Short Courses On Film Making at Kashmir University. He has given us surety, so we might conduct the courses after 22 July. We want Kashmiri Students to Come forward and Showcase their talent and passion in Film Making" said Bhupendra Kainthola, Director FTII.

The film festival received overwhelmed response from the audiences especially students.

KU sports ground in shambles



❖ **Rafia Manzoor**

SRINAGAR: Kashmir University students suffer as the playground besides Maulana Rumi gate remains in shambles.

With sports season setting in, the authority's negligence has led to the maintenance of University playground at a snail's pace. The students have complained about the lack of maintenance of playground that hurdle's them from taking part in any sports activities.

The authorities seem to be in no mood to maintain the playground. Their negligence led to the transformation of ground from lush green grass to tall weed plants resulting in keeping players away from playing.

"The ground is not in such a condition to take part in any physical activity. We can only witness garbage,

unleveled surface and tall weed plants in this ground", said a group of varsity students.

"Along with our studies we wanted to take part in sports but the authorities have maintained it at a snail's pace. Now the summer is at its peak and it will be very difficult for us play or take part in other physical activities", they said.

However the authorities have claimed that the main reason behind grounds negligence was the interference of outsiders in the University playgrounds.

Nisar Ahmad, Director Physical Education University of Kashmir said, "The thing that led us to neglect this ground was the interference of outsiders. They come here and start playing despite some restrictions."

"We have started to maintain other grounds as well and after one month every ground will be ready", he added.

TIMBER SMUGGLING CONTINUES IN BUDGAM



❖ RAHIL HUSSAIN

BUDGAM: Notwithstanding its tall claims on forest protection, the state government has been unable to check the deforestation of green gold by timber smugglers in central Kashmir's Budgam district.

According to the reports the movement of

the smugglers has been on rise in thick forest ranges in upper belts of Pir Panjal Mountains.

"The smuggler movement starts during the night hours", said a delegation of locals from Budgam.

As per reports timber and coal prepared in the forest is transported to lower areas on horses as the dusk falls. In Nilnag

forest, there has seen some illegal activity in recent weeks.

"It is dangerous for us to go on night patrolling," some of the forest officials told MERC Times.

There has been reportedly unabated deforestation at various locations thick with tree line in all the three forest ranges of Dodhganga, Sukhnag and Raithan.

Similar reports have been received from Sukhnag range where the forest area across Zogu, Pathalan, Shalekein, KadleBal, BearanDakan, Pan khalDael and Lade Modan have witnessed timber smuggling.

Reports said the timber smugglers have also damaged many green trees in S3 compartment of Raithan Range and in forests near Tangnar, Hapat tar, and upper ranges of Dodpathri locations.

"Around 80 cubic feet of illicit forest timber was seized and a few horses confiscated in this forest range over past one month. At least four FIRs against nine timber smugglers have been lodged at Khan Sahab police station," Range Officer RaithanParvaiz Ahmad Parray told MERC Times.

When contacted Chief Conservator Forest Nisar Ahmad Darzi said the forest department was always ready to nab the timber smugglers. "Our employees have curbed attempts at timber smuggling," he said.

"A number of FIRs have been filed besides seizures made of hundreds of cubic feet of timber in the district," Darzi added.

Sufi musical evening enthral audiences

❖ SADIA MIR

SRINAGAR: With an aim to highlight the link between Iran and Kashmir in respect of music and Sufism an event on traditional Sufi music in honour of music artists from Iran was organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) in collaboration with 'Beeline Services' - a Kashmir based advertising, travel and MICE company,

On the occasion, Iran's famous poet, Dr Mustafa Rehmardost spoke about the similarities between Iranian and Kashmiri culture.

"Iran has had a very long association with Kashmir owing to the commonalities between religion, culture, art, music etc and in the present scenario, there is a need to strengthen these ties even more," he remarked.

Performances were also held by popular Kashmiri Sufi singers Ustaad Mushtaq Ahmad Saaznawaz and Ustaad Munir Ahmad Mir, who enchanted the audience with their soulful Sufi renditions of the poetry of Hafez Shirazi and Amir Khusru, the legendary Iranian mystics.

"Holding such events bridges the gaps between the societies and brings them closer besides promoting religious tourism. Such events not only give a big boost to our economy with far



more holdings but also revive the true essence of Kashmiriyat," said Mirza Ghazanfar, the event organiser while outlining the aim of holding the event.

He went on to say that there is untapped tourism potential in Kashmir and the visiting guests will prove to be the ambassadors of the tourism rich Valley in their country, besides establishing an age old traditional and cultural link between Kashmir and Iran.

Speakers said that organizing this "welcome" event will send a good message across Iran and beyond, about the tremendous tourism potential that J&K is blessed with.

Shamsipora-Vehil road in shambles

Syed Bilal

SHOPIAN: The residents of Shamsipora, Vehil and adjoining areas of Shopian district staged protest against the deplorable condition of Vehil-Nehama road.

The protest road alleged that government has not been paying heed to their repeated pleas as the road is in shambles and taking a heavy toll on the commuters.

Residents of Shamsipora said that the road in the area is rutted and dotted with potholes. "Due to the bad condition of the road, the transporters avoid plying on the road compelling villagers to walk by foot to reach respective destinations," a local resident said.

According to locals of Nehama, the road was macadamized and repaired a long time back. "Due to the terrible condition of road, the seven to ten-minute journey of eight kilometers from Vehil to Nehama takes 40 minutes," Aqib Ganie, a 12th class student said.

The residents alleged that they have brought the issue into the notice of the concerned department, however, the officials have turned deaf ear to their pleas.

"Employees and students of the area fail to make to their work places and educational institutions in time as the public transport barely plies on this dilapidated road," Bashir Ahmad, a government employee from the area said.

The officials said that there was no chance of immediate repairs of the road. "Work on Shamsipora-Vehil road will start after the approval of funds from ministry," Executive Engineer, Roads and buildings department Ghulam Mohammad Bhat said. He further said, that they have already submitted proposal of the academization of the road to the concerned authorities.

JKAAC organizes 'Culture on Cruise' on the Banks of Dal Lake

❖ TAJAMUL ISLAM

SRINAGAR An enthralling Cultural programme was held as part of 'weekly cultural programme series' titled "Culture on Cruise", on the banks of Dal Lake Srinagar.

The event was organized by J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) in association with Tourism Department Kashmir.

The programme saw performances from

Jammu and Kashmir's famous artists including Manzoor Ahmad Shah and Rashid Jehangir, which enthralled the audiences.

Secretary JKAACL, Dr Aziz Hajini, thanked the people for their overwhelming response towards this initiative and showing their interest in knowing and preserving the culture and heritage of State.

He said that such events provide people from all walks of life an opportunity to come together and celebrate their culture, heritage and diversity.

Kashmiri women footballers selected in PIFA

Useeba Bashir

SRINAGAR: Two Kashmiri women footballers achieved a historic feat by getting selected in Premier Indian Football Academy (PIFA).

20 years old Nadia Nighat hails from Rambagh area of Srinagar and 22 years old Afshan Ashiq from Bemina have been selected in the trials conducted by Premier India Football Academy in Srinagar. More than 25 Kashmiri girls participated in these trials.

Nadia Nighat is a National football player and the first female football coach of Kashmir. Besides, she runs her own football academy in Srinagar where she trains both boys and girls.

"For the last 13 years I am playing football at different levels and with each passing day I am doing more and more hard work. This selection is the outcome of that hard work. Getting selected in PIFA is one of the best achievements of my life so far," Nadia said.

While as Afshan Ashiq considers selection as a result of hard work and good familial support.



"My family's support for the game has always been overwhelmed. This is just another milestone in my football carrier; my main goal is still far away from me. I want to become the best female footballer ever." She said.

Pertinent to mention, PIFA is a football club based in Mumbai having international alliances with many football academies in UK and Europe

Sopore town without garbage dumping site

❖ SHAH TAWQEER

SOPORE: The failure of administration to arrange a garbage dumping facility in Sopore has evoked widespread resentment among the locals as heaps of domestic and market are lying scattered across the town.

"In absence of solid waste management facility, the garbage mounds are common scene here with residents alleging that Municipal Council is doing nothing to address the problem. The solid waste including plastic bags, polythene and hospital garbage is being thrown on the roads and also into the drains leading to their blockade", said Mushataq Ahmad

Mounds of garbage are spotted near bus stand, Degree College, Government Girls Higher Secondary, and Super Bazar Model Town and along Jhelum banks here, Ahmad added

"It is difficult for us to walk due to the foul smell emanating from the garbage heaps. Living at places surrounded with filth increases the health risk," said a local resident.

"Apart from biodegradable waste from the households, a large quantity of non-biodegradable garbage including polythene and medical waste is dumped in the open, increasing the risk of disease outbreak," residents added", said Showket a student

He added that with the population growth and increased commercial and industrial activities; the problem of waste disposal is becoming tougher

"Tons of garbage is produced daily, which needs scientific treatment. Although authorities dump garbage at many places and then cover it with earth to avoid stench, but there is no permanent garbage disposal system in the town," they further said.

Locals are peeved as the garbage piles that have helped increase canine population which is posing threat to people especially students and elderly persons.

Official sources said that there is no land available where garbage from the town could be dumped.

"In Sopore, there is no garbage collection, segregation and disposal system in place and people have demanded effective removal of the garbage and urged government to take immediate steps in that regard", said an official.

NABARD vis-a-vis socio-economic emancipation of Farmers

Muneem Farooq

JAMMU: NABARD (National Bank For Rural and Agriculture Development) being the apex development bank of India which essentially deals with the prosperity and integrated rural development has significantly aided the locale of Kashmir.

On its 36th Foundation day, Minister for Agriculture, Ghulam Nabi Hanjura on Wednesday called for better synergy among the stakeholders to ensure the envisioned goal of advancement of agriculture sector with socio-economic emancipation of farmers is achieved.

While outlining the state of agriculture sector in the state he said NABARD can play very important role in uplifting the economic condition of the farmers of the state through enhancement of technology

based applications, linkage with the credit and creating mass awareness about the marketing and management of their farms on entrepreneurial lines.

"The awareness and sensitization of farmers holds key to better implementation of the welfare schemes and called upon the Agriculture department and concerned agencies to reach out to the farmers by organizing regular awareness programmes," the minister opined.

The Minister said that works are apace on the implementation of different projects taken up under NABARD funding which include development of seed multiplication farm and Potato seed multiplication farm at Bakore, Gool and Sanasar, respectively.

Pertinently, around 50 percent of Rs 10.20 crore project cost sanctioned under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) by NABARD, the state

govt. has expended Rs 5.54 crore till June 2017.

The minister said climate resilient aggregation project in block Bhalwal in Jammu and Surisyar block in Budgam at a project cost of Rs.22.5 lakh. He said that the ambit of this project would be extended to the other parts of the state to realize the objective of enhanced resilience of agriculture crops, livestock and fisheries through development and application of improved production and management technologies.

"The implementation of the schemes like Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bhima Yojana (PMFBY), National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC), Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) Scheme and focus on integrated farming will make the farming sector more lucrative," minister added.

Water crisis emerges in Anantnag

❖ Danish Pathan

ANANTNAG: Many areas in Anantnag district of south Kashmir are facing water crisis following a dry summer which has led to visible depletion of water level in several water resources.

What is leading to worsening of the crisis, officials say, is non-judicious use of water by the people including car washes, irrigating 'orchards and kitchen gardens' and other avoidable practices.

The affected areas include Pushwara, Khandipahari, Harnag and several other places in and around main town Anantnag.

Besides, the rural areas including dozens of villages in Kokernag belt (AhlanGadol, Larnoo, Nowgam, Shangus) have also been affected by scarcity of drinkable water.

The residents of these areas are facing acute shortage of water for more than a month now.

"We have to get water from the sources, around our village, which is not fit for human consumption but we do not have any alternative," a resident of Kokernag said.

The officials at the Public Health Engineering (PHE) department acknowledge that the water sources have been depleted, in wake of a dry summer.

"At this point in time the gauge reading of Jhelum at Sangam should have been somewhere around 7 to 8 ft. but its only 2.85 ft.," a senior official said.

He said that same was the case with another major water source, Lidder River.

"The gauge reading on Lidder is 0.54 ft. which should have been at least 0.8 ft. at this time of the year," the official said. Superintendent Engineer (SE) of the Hydraulics wing in PHE, Shah Nawaz Ahmad said that the department was taking a series of measures to ensure people did not suffer.

"Apart from providing 'water on wheels' we have formed a task force to check non-judicious usage of water, which remains a major concern at this time of water crisis," the SE said.

He said that the task force will keep a check on non-judicious use of water.

"People tend to waste a lot of water by washing cars and watering their gardens and kitchen gardens. No matter how small their gardens are the watering process puts an avoidable pressure on water sources," he said.

Almonds production hits a new low

❖ Wajahat Shabir

SRINAGAR: There has been a sharp decline in almond production in the Valley in the last few years as growers, fearing losses, have been shifting towards cultivating apples. Mohiudin Yattoo, an almond grower from Central Kashmir's Chadoora area, blamed inclement weather in the summers for the drastic fall in production. "From past three years, Valley witnessed inclement weather from March and April that drastically affected the production of almonds in Kashmir as majority of growers use an indigenous variety which blooms early," he said, adding that this year the production has doubled in comparison to the last few years.

Experts at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture and Science blame climate change as one of the major factors for the switch over. As per official data available till 2011, land used for almond production has reduced to 7,107 hectares from 16,418 hectares and production has come down to 6360 metric tons from 16,537 metric tons.

Budgam district is known for its high-quality almond produce, but the recent shift towards apple cultivation has exposed the government's indifference towards growers.

"Now every almond grower thinks that growing almonds brings misfortune and government is least bothered," says Mohammad Shafi, another grower who had recently started planting apple saplings in his almond orchard.

It is now common knowledge among orchard owners that "doing almond business is to embrace misfortune".

Mohammad Hussain, another grower from Central Kashmir, complained that despite the technological advancements in agriculture, the same variety of almonds are being grown in Kashmir from many decades. "Nobody is showing any concern about Valley's almond growers, despite, the almonds produce in Kashmir are rich in taste," he said.

"The state government has failed to monitor dry fruit production and it is harsh to see the condition of dry fruit production declining at immense pace. Also, we are using the same old indigenous varieties in almond production," says Mohammad Shaban, another grower.

Shiekh Muzaffar, Directorate of Extension Education at Sher-e-Kashmir University, said the almonds are self-pollinated and it is during the third week of March every year, almonds start to bloom and it lasts to 10 to 15 days.

"From last three years we faced inclement weather between the months of March and April that resulted in the decline in almond production and this quantum decrease forced growers to opt for apple cultivation," he said.

He said that they have produced different varieties which bloom in the late season.



"We are working on different varieties like Shalimar, Makhdoom and Waris. These varieties are late bloomers, likely in the month of April, as weather remains conditionally good in April as compared to March," he said, adding that they are also working on selection program and there are chances that SKUAST_K may be able to get a new variety in coming years.

"The new variety could be a game changer in almond production as almonds will start blooming late as compared to indigenous varieties."

Director Horticulture, Kashmir, Rafiq Ahmed Hakeem said that inclement weather is the main cause in decline of almond land and production in the Valley.

"Kashmir is heaven for apple cultivation and is more profitable than almond production. So, farmers prefer profitable market which lies in the apple cultivation, which is also a big reason of farmers shifting from almond to apple cultivation.

Hakeem said that varieties like Californian almond are of good quality and are bigger in size.

"Nowadays, people prefer Californian almond as compared to local production, which are smaller in size."

He, however, said that despite all these odds, government is working on addressing this issue. "In coming years we may import varieties from different countries, which will surely improve our almond production. And, more importantly, the horticulture department has identified various nurseries where work on new varieties will take place in coming time," he said.

Spot registration for artisans held at Chadoora

❖ Kaiser Majeed

Budgam: A day long on spot registration-cum-awareness camp was organized by Department of Handicrafts here at Nagam Chadoora for providing on the spot registrations to eligible artisans of different crafts.

Large number of artisans from adjacent habitations participated in the camp to obtain registrations which is prerequisite for availing benefits under various central/state sponsored schemes.

The Department had put in all the necessary arrangements for successful culmination of the

camp. People appreciated such innovative efforts of Director Handicrafts and emphasized that such camps should be organized in future also.

Assistant Director Handicrafts Budgam reiterated that Director Handicrafts had conveyed unambiguous instructions to facilitate registrations of the artisans at their doorsteps.

Thieves prowl at Ellahi-Bagh



❖ **Shabir Parray**

SRINAGAR: The growing incidents of theft in Rangpora, Elahibagh have become a cause of concern for the residents.

The residents of the area are living in constant fear. In a recent incident valuables worth thousands were robbed from a garment shop at Rangpora, Elahibagh.

“We are living in constant fear because of the increasing number of robbery cases,” said Sajidah, a local resident.

Locals told MERC Times that a boutique was looted in the area by some unidentified thieves.

“At around 2 am, they barged inside our house and took away the goods worth 3 lakhs that include the ready-made clothes and other items,” said Zahoor Ahmad who runs New Taj Boutique.

“It is not for first time that the incident has happened. It is happening frequently. But nobody among the authorities is bothering to look into the matter,” Ahmad said.

However, he claimed that they have captured a thief yesterday on the spot who is now lying in the police

custody.

“We almost had caught all of them but because of the darkness they managed to escape,” He added.

A group of non-local laborers working in the area said that many of their valuable things were stolen in past few months.

“We lost around six mobile phones, clothes, and Rs 2,000 cash,” said Mohammad Wasim Khan who hails from Bihar.

In March this year, the thieves decamped with Rs 35 lakhs from the residence of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, a local.

“Later, we approached the police station Zakura in this regard. But nothing happened so far,” Bhat said.

The residents have appealed the Police Department to address these growing incidents of robbery.

Superintendent of Police Hazratbal, Peerzada Naveed said that they are working to sort out the issue.

“These incidents are in my notice and we are working on it,” SP said.

He asked people to cooperate with the police and bring the incidents of thefts into their notice.

Kashmiri Wushu Coach Shines

❖ **Bisma Farooq**

Srinagar: Struggle from home to making carrier in Wushu, Asif Hussain, a mentor, guide, and a coach has made a remarkable impact in the field of Wushu.

“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals”.

“It was never an easy task to reach the heights of success in Wushu,” Asif Hussain Mir, 25 year old Wushu player.

“Every sports person needs to struggle in one or other way, in order to achieve the goals of success,” Asif said.

In year 2016, Asif participated in south Asian games test event, where he got silver medal. The event was held at Shillong. This was his one of the biggest achievements in his Wushu carrier so far.

Asif started playing Wushu back when he was in 6th standard. Wushu or Kicking, punching and throwing has always been a passion for him. “It has always been my passion; I used to practice in late hours, due to which my parents were always concerned for me,” Asif added.

“It takes so much of hard work dedication and energy to reach on national or international level,” Asif added. He said that lot of people helped him in his life to reach the success levels. “I am thankful to Mr. Mohammad Maqsood, Mr. Kuldeep Handoo, Mr. Aijaz Hassan, Mr. Umer, Mr. Sikandar, Mr. Nazir Ahmad and Mr. Nasir Hussain. These people helped me in my every thick and thin,” he said.

“Hard work and luck equally matters. Sometimes luck favors and sometimes not. I always kept my hopes tight and worked harder for my goal,” Asif said.

Asif received award of honor from district Wushu association Srinagar and recently, on September 9, Asif was awarded with outstanding sports person in Wushu in an award ceremony organized by Kashmir Harvard School.

“My inspiration is my coach, though he is not between us now but he always taught me to work hard and win,” Asif added.

Asif also said that his family is equally responsible for his success in this field. “My parents always supported me. At first, there were some problems but later on they understood my passion for Wushu and supported me,” he further added.

Physical education Department won football cup



Adnan Hilal

Srinagar: Physical education department won the final of Inter-department football tournament organised by Physical Education & Sports at University of Kashmir. More than 13 departments from Kashmir University had participated in the Tournament.

The final match of the tournament was played on Friday between Department of Physical Education & Sports (M.P.Ed) and Business School.

The match reached an intense climax as both teams failed to score in the allotted time and match was decided by tie breaker.

The defending champions Department of Physical Education & Sports (M.P.Ed) kept their cool during tie breaker and finally retained their title. They defeated their arch rivals by 4-3 in a tie breaker. Prof.

Nisar Ahmad Rather, a veteran sports official was the chief Guest on the occasion and distributed prizes and trophies on the closing ceremony.

“I assure that Directorate will conduct 15 days Coaching Camp for the students of PG who will later represent University of Kashmir at Inter-College level” said Nisar Ahmed Rather while concluding the final ceremony.

“I appreciate the participation of all the department’s & young talent in the Tournament” said Sajid Yousuf Dar, the coach of university football team.

Tauseef Ahmad Bhat, Assistant Director, Assistant Prof Dr. Surjeet Singh, Assistant Prof Dr. Jigmat Dachen, Senior Coach Harbinder Singh, Surjeet Kour, Muneer Aalam Volleyball Coach and Dr. Inam were also present on the occasion. The tournament was conducted under the supervision of only international football coach of J&K Sajid Yousuf Dar.

Dilapidated road irks Vehil residents



❖ Syeed Bilal

SHOPIAN: The residents of Shamsipora, Vehil and adjoining areas of Shopian district on Saturday protested against the deplorable condition of Vehil-Nehama road, which connects 30 villages with Kulgam and Shopian District headquarters.

The deplorable condition of Vehil-Nehama road is troubling the local residents who ridiculed the official lethargy and step-motherly treatment to the area.

Residents of Shamsipora said that the road in the area is rutted and dotted with potholes.

“Due to the bad condition of the road, the transporters avoid plying their vehicles on road compelling villagers to walk by foot to reach respective destinations,” a local resident said.

According to locals of Nehama, the road was macadamized and repaired a long time back.

“The terrible condition of road is a reason that seven to ten-minute journey from Vehil to Nehama takes 40 minutes,” Aqib Ganie, a 12th class student from the area, said.

The residents alleged that they have brought the issue into the notice of the concerned officials time and again, however, they have turned deaf ear to their pleas.

The officials said that there is no provision of immediate repairs to the road. “Work on Vehil-Nehama road will start after the approval of funds from ministry,” Executive Engineer, Roads and buildings department said. He further added, that they have already submitted proposal of the macadamizing the road to the concerned authorities.

Commercialization of Agricultural land rolls up in Kashmir

❖ Shahzad Ashiq

URI: Cultivable land in J&K continues to shrink. It may not pose an immediate problem for the people of the region but it surely will hurt the people in future time.

The decrease is mainly attributed to diversion of cultivable land for non-agricultural purposes, including construction and other development activities.

Latest data from the agriculture ministry shows that as many as 20 states reported decrease in cultivable land to the extent of 1090,000 hectares in four years from 2007-08 to 2010-16 Jammu and Kashmir is one of them.

It may not pose an immediate problem for the nation’s food security but its long-term effect could be disastrous with the country needing more and more food grains to support its growing population. Under NRRP (natural resources regional plan), states were advised that acquisition of agricultural land for non-agricultural use should be kept to the minimum, multi-cropped land should be avoided to the extent possible for such purposes and acquisition of irrigated land, if unavoidable, may be kept to the minimum.

Though the law prevents the use of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, the allotment of the land for construction comes under the jurisdiction of the town planning authorities.

“Whenever land is used other than agriculture purposes, for that government permission has to be taken. But our towns, cities have also expanded and master plans are always being developed,” said Agriculture Minister Gulam

Nabi lone.

“So, they determine the use of the land due to which the problem has come up of mushroom growth of constructions in the agricultural lands,” he added.

Farmers fear that this growing trend of private builders to purchase farmland for building residential colonies would lead to a devastating food crisis in that Kashmir Valley in the coming years. According to economic survey, out of JK’s total land area of 24.16 lakh hectares, 10 lakh hectares were under agriculture production during 1995-96. It has been reduced to just around 5 lakh hectares in 2016, the survey states.

“We should not forget that man started from agriculture and agriculture is the backbone of every growing economy of the world. Urbanization is fatal no doubt,” said Aaliya Irshad a research scholar in the department of food and technology.

The government needs to take serious steps for revival of primary sector as more than thirty lakh people, in J&K state, are involved in agricultural and allied activities. The government should also take measures to check out the level of urbanization; our fertile land being converted into construction purpose and should ban all the unregistered factories and industries (brick kilns and stone crushers), that are damaging agricultural land.

Furthermore, a lot more needs to be done to improve the income levels of the farmers in the state as the per capita income of the state is among the lowest in the region. And, if we grow continuously losing our agricultural production, then there will be a huge question mark on our survival.

Denied wages for months, private security guards deep in debt

❖ Nadeem

ANANTNAG: Private security personnel deputed for the security at various health institutions in Srinagar are aghast as for last six months their wages have not been released, some have plunged deep in debt, with what are they getting from the officials is only indifference.

Muhammad Ashraf Khan, hailing from Beerwah and who is deputed for the security at the entrance of Mental Diseases Institute, Rainawari said that with what meagre amount he is being given as salary, he was feeding his family, but from last many months he has not been given a penny, giving him a tough time.

“Our basic salary is 4600 and in hand we 4000, but from last around six months we have been deprived for our salary,” he said.

Ashraf is working as a private security personnel from last three years and according to him he never got his salary on time. “This has been the routine,

we are given salary after five-six months, which is not justifiable,” he said adding that even on Eid-ul-Fitr they were not given the salary, “now, another Eid is coming and we stand deprived of our salary.”

The security at the hospital is provided by a private security agency known as Iqra Securities, apart from Mental Diseases Hospital, Rainawari, the agency is providing security at GB Panth Hospital, Sonwar as well. The employees there as well are complaining of the same.

Some among the security employees said that they have been forced to borrow money from their friends and relatives to make their ends meet and have plunged deep in debt, “I have been continuously borrowing money from people, as I will have to feed my family, can’t let them die,” says a private security personnel, wishing not to be named.

While this reported was talking to him, his son passed by, he was quick to add “see my son, he has to return from his school as I have not been pay his

dues at school and today he has been shown the door,” he said, adding that the situation is really bad.

When this reported contacted the officials of the security company, they too seemed to be helpless, struggling to get their dues released from the Health Department.

Muhammad Anwar, Managing Director of the company, while talking to Merc Times said that the company is trying hard to get the salary of their employees released from the government.

The MD of the company said that many a times we have released their salaries on our own, keeping in mind that the employees should not suffer, “but right now we cannot do anything, however, we are in touch with the government, and hopefully before Eid they will get their dues.”

The concerned Medical Superintendents outrightly said that they have got nothing to do with it and it is the matter between the company and the health department.

Negligence of state govt hits KGVB scheme



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❖ SABEEHA SHAHEEN

SRINAGAR: The centrally sponsored scheme Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) has hit a road block as the J&K government failed to complete the construction of the buildings over the past more than six years.

As per the official document, 47 KGBVs were running as day school till last year, however, the number this year has come down to seven.

“State should make efforts to convert these seven KGBVs also to the residential KGBVs and should complete the work by the end of March 2018,” reads the minutes of the Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting convened by MHRD on March 10 this year.

However, the state government has cited security reasons for failure in conversion of the KGBVs to the residential schools. “Insufficient accommodation, lack of boundary wall and security issues hampers converting non-residential KGBVs to residential,” reads the PAB minutes.

KGBV scheme was introduced by the GoI to provide educational facilities for girls belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minority communities and families below the poverty line in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB).

Moreover, around 37 posts are lying vacant in the operational KGBV, hampering the functioning of the schools. “2453 seats are lying vacant in operational KGBVs. State should create an awareness program by involving representatives from local authority and community at large and see to it that maximum seats are filled by the end of June 2017,” read PAB minutes.

As per the figures, 33 posts of wardens, 44 Accountants, 27 watchmen, 19 Peons, 15 Head Cooks and 69 Assistant Cooks are lying vacant in all operational KGBV schools. “State must expedite process for filling up of all vacant posts.”

TOURISM DEPARTMENT HUTS CRY OFFICIAL APATHY

❖ Mua'zzam

Srinagar: In the year 2013, Tourism Department constructed some Tourist huts at Saderkoot Payeen, a tourist village in Bandipora district. However today, four years later, the huts have turned into ruins, courtesy official negligence and lack of maintenance.

Three wooden huts were constructed for tourists within the Wullar catchment area but the irony of the situation spells out that the huts were never put to use.

During the inauguration of the Wullar Conservation Project by the then Chief Minister Mr. Omar Abdullah in the year 2011, Saderkoot

Payeen was declared as tourist village following which the work on the construction of these tourist huts began. A good amount of money was spent on the construction of these wooden huts among which was a boat club, a canteen and a guest house for tourists. But now due to the absence of watch and ward and due to lack of maintenance, these huts lie abandoned.

The tourist flow to the village was expected to increase manifold with the construction of these tourist huts and it was also expected that water sports activities would be started in the Wullar Lake. However, unfortunately none of these ideas could take a practical shape.

A local resident wishing anonymity said that all that these huts are left for now is illegal activities including dugs. “These huts have turned into a junkie’s hub. Due to no upkeep by the concerned department, these huts are thronged by revelers at evening time,” He said.

A Local said that these huts have been rendered useless and they are located inside dense willow nursery along the banks of the Wullar Lake away from the main road. “There is no approach road for these huts. We appeal the authorities to look into the matter,” he said.

An official from the Tourism department could not be contacted for comments.

Vital road projects hit as govt unable to acquire land

❖ Hayat Manan

Srinagar: Major road projects in Srinagar are reporting no progress, as the state government struggles to meet the land acquisition costs due to the paucity of funds.

Currently, the three main road widening projects including Qamarwari- Shalteng, Khanyar-Zadibal and Dalgate to Zakura are in limbo, with the government yet to clear scores of the land acquisition cases.

As per the sources, the state government was releasing a meager amount of Rs 15 crore per annum against Rs 282 crores of overall land acquisition cost.

“Every year, the state government only releases Rs 15 crore, which covers a very less number of beneficiaries. The main reason behind the delaying of these projects is the failure of the government to complete the land acquisition process on time. Currently the government is in a state of how to do it”, source said.

“The total cost of these projects is gradually burdening the exchequer as the cost of land is increasing every year. Had the government cleared the land acquisition cases, the project might have been near to completion”, sources said.

As per the reports, the Centre might have assisted in the completion of these projects had the state government completed land acquisition cases.

“We have scores of cases here when a beneficiary has raised objection over the cost paid by the government. Many cases are pending in the courts,

which has resulted in the stalling of these projects”, sources reveal.

Of these road projects, many have been conceived decades ago but have reported no progress.

In one instance the widening of the Khanyar to Zadibal was conceived in the year 1976. Due to the delay, the cost of the project has increased from Rs 50 crore to over 100 crore.

“The entire area for road widening was demarcated and majority of the land acquisition cases were cleared. But now when it has been delayed for a long time the state government is perhaps facing difficulties to bear the cost”, revealed a source.

Similarly, the widening of Qamarwari- Shalteng, which was started in the year 2010 is yet to see completion.

The authorities initially set July 2012 as deadline for the project, which it missed.

Though a major road portion has been covered under road widening plan but it is yet to see overall completion.

Another road project, Syed Meerak Shah Road from Dalgate to Zakura, has met the same fate, as it has been in limbo for the last seven years.

At an estimated cost of Rs 336.24 crore, the project was aimed to ensure smooth traffic movement through old city to Hazratbal shrine.

“The state government has paid for the land acquisition in areas like Khanyar. However, due to some unknown reasons the project has not been executed by the authorities. The areas often witnesses’ pesky traffic jams and local have been raising the concern to the government repeatedly,” Sajad Ahmad a resident of Khanyar said.

The Chief Engineer Roads and Building department, Abdul Hamid Sheikh, said the state government was looking into these vital road projects.

North Kashmir football event conclude

❖ **Sajad Bashir**

SRINAGAR: The final of football tournament held in north Kashmir's Baramulla district concluded on Wednesday.

Jammu and Kashmir students welfare organization in collaboration with 46RR [Sikh BN] Baramulla, under the title of "little and multi-talented football tournament under-sixteen 2017" organized the tournament on 1 August and continues till yesterday.

16 teams from three districts of north Kashmir (Bandipora, Kapwara, and Baramulla) voluntarily participated in the tournament. The tournaments were held in age group of under-14 and 17 years.

The finals of tournament played between Singpora reds academy versus Soccer academy. In which Singpora Reds academy leads soccer academy by 3 points and emerges winning team.

The winning team honored with the cash prize of 10000 thousand and uniform. Whereas the also-ran team honored with cash prize of 8000, uniform. Umer Majeed of (Rangwar Baramulla) declared player of the tournament.

The chief guests of the tournament was SSP Intiyaz Husain and commanding officer (CO) of 46RR.

The chief guest SSP Baramulla Intiyaz Husain while speaking on the occasion advised players "make your care and interest to your studies and sports do not get involved in social evils build your future I am always available for all of you any time anywhere," Said Intiyaz Hussain.

Jammu and Kashmir students welfare association is a volunteer organization with a slogan of "learn for yesterday live for today hope for tomorrow" presently they have 2200 members for all over the state.

SUFISM: A HEALING TALENT



Naveed wani

SRINAGAR: The valley of Kashmir is nowadays seen more inclined towards the age old Sufism, as the young generation of Kashmir is seen singing different Sufi songs in their own style.

"The Sufi poetry suffered a serious decline due to the advent of Bollywood and western music," said Ali Saffudin, a media student and the popular Kashmiri singer.

He also added that the new trend of presenting Kashmiri songs is a big and a positive change in expressing the Kashmiri culture through a different prism.

"We find peace and comfort while listening to the Sufi poetry in a different style," said Farhat Uzair, a Kashmir university student. "The valley is going through violence since a long time and in these conditions, listening to Sufi songs creates a feeling of peace and rejuvenation", he added.

Moreover, a senior professor Mr. Nasir Mirza, who holds good on the Sufi literature told MERC TIMES that the Sufism was introduced to world through one of the prominent preachers of 13th century named as Moulana Jalallu din Rumi.

He also told that the young Kashmiri's presenting Sufi poetry through singing and other ways is really appreciable and such engagement provides healing touch to the sufferings of Kashmiri youth.

Entrepreneurship coming up as new 'Job' alternatives

❖ **Saher Iqbal**

SRINAGAR: If you are passionate about doing something on your own, are a risk taker, and can't handle a boss, well then, entrepreneurship may just be the right thing for you. In simple terms, entrepreneurship is about selling a product or an idea, but then it is also about innovating.

Like what new you have to offer, about packaging and repackaging products and ideas, and having knowledge of your target market. It also is about your leadership quality and how you can manage your business and let it survive in difficult times. Off late, many educated youth are showing an interest in entrepreneurship.

Fiza Khurshid, studying in the final year of her graduation, aspires to start her own food outlet. She says that time is not far when "our egoistic generation" will prefer to start their own ventures than bear a boss. "Government jobs these days are very few. I am passionate about fulfilling my dreams, so I would like to spend my golden years in them only, rather than look for any other job," Fiza said.

Parents in Kashmir have been more career-sensitive about their children, partly due to the conflict and insecurity. They find government jobs more secure than businesses.

Iftikhar Ahmed Malik, a government employee who wishes his son to become an IAS officer says that every parent wants to see his child's future secure. "Here hartals are a routine, halting the business activities. People are forced to opt for a job even if it pays peanuts, rather than think for venture establishment," Malik said.

He however acknowledges that trends are changing. "During our time, starting business meant owning a retail shop. But now, trend is changing. Almost every week in newspaper, I read about some youth entrepreneur," he said.

The training is mandatory to receive support from EDI. An independent consulting firm, the Silk Route Consulting Group, is also trying to make it easier for intending entrepreneurs to make the right moves. Set up by two friends, Ejaz Ayoub and Sameer Gojwari, the Silk Route organizes workshops where experts provide insights on various aspects of entrepreneurship.

This includes information ranging from legal requirements, to creating connections and networking, to finding capital support for your venture. "We started with a workshop attended by 10 people only which has grown now to 250 participants. Experts from J&K Bank, legal advisors and young entrepreneurs are invited to provide basic information and help," said Ejaz.

According to Ejaz, Technology is the biggest advantage of this generation. One can sell online depending on nature of the business and doesn't need to invest in a big space also.

Silk route's efforts are bearing fruit in the shape of Phamb.com, a recently launched pashmina selling e-portal, Nexcare.in which will be an online pharmacy and booking portal for doctors, and Panunshop. Com, which will be selling Kashmiri art online.

Another service offered by Silk Route is e-mentoring, where participants are mentored by successful businessmen living abroad through Skype.

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