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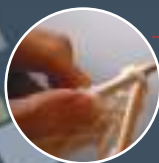
MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR



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J&K Tourism dept organizes houseboat festival to promote winter tourism

Neelofar Nazir

J&K Tourism department organized a two-day 'Houseboat Festival' to promote winter tourism in the valley, officials said.

The festival commenced on December 7 in Dal Lake and Nigeen Lake of Srinagar. The festival was inaugurated by Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

It featured a floating stage, live music, cultural events, art exhibition, and food fest. Illuminated houseboats and light shows were also part of the festival.

A live concert was also performed by several Kashmiri folk artists.

Director Tourism, Fazl ul Haseeb said houseboats have played a unique role in



attracting tourists from across the globe.

He said that the Kashmir Valley's famed and intricately carved houseboats, which

over the decades have emerged as dream stay for honeymooners, will be this winter season's main attraction.

At 70 Bano continues to knit, teach, run her shop

Yameen

Shops along the road leading to Nagbal Chowk in Ganderbal, are mostly owned and run by men. The only exception is a thirty year old shop owned by Shaista Bano. Seventy year old Bano does knitting there and also teach the craft.

The shop cum training centre is filled with colorful yarn, knitting needles of different sizes, few sweaters and an old carpet-weaving machine.

"I was born in Khanqah area of Srinagar. Since my childhood, I found peace in knitting and after passing my matric exam my father got me admission in Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Srinagar and thus began my engagement towards this skill and craft of knitting," said Bano.

"After my marriage, I was already working for the ITI. I have worked at various locations in the Valley, but as I was transferred to Ganderbal, my father-in-law passed away and after some time, my mother-in-law too passed away," Bano said, adding that after the tragedies she had to leave her work. That was when she decided to teach knitting to college going girls.

"We were three friends and came here



to pass time, but eventually it became a hobby and the next thing we knew, we were knitting something for someone all the time," said Adeeba Shafiq, one of Bano's students.

Bano had started her own shop in the 2000 and people started coming and learning the craft from her. "But now people prefer ready-made garments and this craft is being practiced by few people only," she said.

Bano said that it is pretty easy to learn

the basic knots and process of knitting. People learn it by watching videos on YouTube. My granddaughter too insisted me to start making videos. But it takes a lot of hard work to stay consistent, not to make any mistakes because if you skip one knot you have to start again.



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Resin art is trending in Kashmir

Seerat Bashir

WKashmir is witnessing a huge number of growing artists from past few years. There has been a boom of many arts, which have specially seen their presence on social media ever since the breakout of pandemic.

One such art form is Resin art, in which beautiful items are made from a liquid material called epoxy. It is a unique painting style. A running chemical called epoxy is combined with various colours and pigments to create beautiful patterns and designs and then it hardens gradually.

Many young artists across the globe have made different items from resin be it photo frames, bookmarks, alphabet key chains, coasters etc. They take it as their passion as well as livelihood.

In Kashmir the art form is mostly pursued by female artists and some of them have become very famous on internet because of their stunning work.

Some of the famous resin artists of Kashmir include Mahrukraina, Inshashabir, Malikazra, Shafiya, Nazima Bashir.

Mahrukraina from Rainawari, Srinagar, is a B. Tech passout. She is the first female of Kashmir to experiment resin art apart from being a professional calligraphy artist.

She said Kashmir is filled with artists like painters, calligraphers, sketchers and



Being in hostel it was difficult to manage studies as well as resin art but eventually I learned to manage it. Last year I got admission in Physical College Ganderbal and had to stay in hostel

many others but I hadn't seen any person doing resin art and that is the time when I thought to start resin art in Kashmir. Now it has become a trend here.

Raina was first interested in calligraphy but gradually she started taking interest in resin art and during pandemic she started experimenting with resin. She said it takes time in experimenting and once I am sure of something then only I make it public.

From past few years internet is flooded with artists, there were many hidden artists in Kashmir who have done marvellous work but remained unknown till they become the stars through internet. People started knowing them through

internet and this has helped us to grow, Raina added.

Another famous resin artist InshaShabir hailing from Qazigund area in south Kashmir's Anantnag district said learning resin art was the turning point of her career. Once she realized her interest and never looked back. Over the past two years resin art has given her unique recognition in this field.

"I have done my bachelor's in Fine Arts from University of Kashmir and after completing the degree my interest developed more in this. It provided me a platform to showcase my art which got me immense appreciation," she said.

I have taken this art to commercial level and currently working to impart my skills to others. I have conducted workshops which had helped others to learn resin art, she said.

Nazima Bashir from Nowshera Srinagar, pursuing bachelor's in physical education runs small business of resin art on social media and is currently thinking of expanding it offline as well.

"Being in hostel it was difficult to manage studies as well as resin art but eventually I learned to manage it. Last year I got admission in Physical College Ganderbal and had to stay in hostel. It was not possible for me to just be into studies so I took my art with me," she said.

It has been two years since I started

Contd... on P 4

Tech companies go for major layoffs

Faisal Anjum

Every week seems to bring a new round of layoffs in the tech sector. It started earlier this year with smaller, growing companies and has now extended to tech giants like Amazon, Meta, Intel, Twitter, BYJU’S, and Spotify.

According to Global Placements, an international people recruitment company established in 1994, the layoffs crossed 60,000 in September and October this year.

“The world economy received many jolts such as COVID-19 lockdown, Russia – Ukraine war, inflation etc. These are some of the prominent reasons for layoffs. We should be optimistic, things will be good, but for that we need to have good policies at national as well as international level,” said Professor Imtiyaz-ul-Haq, the Head of Department of Economics, at Kashmir University.

The layoffs happening in India are mostly in education technology. The Indian start-up layoff tracker by Inc 42, India’s largest tech media & information platform, showed that more than 15,700 employees had been laid off in 2022. Byju’s, Chargebee, Cars24, Ola, Innovaccor, Unacademy and Vedantu are some of the big companies that laid off their employees.

“During the pandemic, there was a surge in demand. Companies wanted to increase their output to meet the market requirements and over hired during that period. Now, when life is returning to normal, consumption fell, resulting in layoffs. Hiring and firing is a common process in these companies and an employee should always evolve in order to survive,” said Dr Manzoor Ahmed, Assistant Professor at Department of Computer Science, Kashmir University.

According to a research done by National Bureau of Economic Research, layoffs increase the odds of suicide by two and a half times. This is also true outside



of the United States, even in countries with better social safety nets than the U.S., like New Zealand.

“The tech industry layoffs are basically an instance of social contagion, in which companies imitate what others are doing. If you look for reasons why companies do layoffs, the main reason is that everybody else is doing it. Layoffs are the result of imitative behavior and are not particularly evidence-based,” said Jeffrey Pfeffer, an American business theorist and professor of Organizational Behavior at the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, in an interview to Stanford News.

“I’ve had people telling me that they know layoffs are harmful to a company’s well-being, let alone the well-being of employees and don’t accomplish much, but everybody is doing it and their board is asking why aren’t they doing the same,” said Pfeffer.

“My advice to a worker who has been laid off is when they find a job in a company where they say people are their most important assets, they actually check

to be sure that the company behaves consistently with that espoused value when times are tough,” he concluded.



I’ve had people telling me that they know layoffs are harmful to a company’s well-being, let alone the well-being of employees and don’t accomplish much, but everybody is doing it and their board is asking why aren’t they doing the same

Contd. from P 3

COlearningresinartthroughtutorialson YouTube and sometimes by experimenting on my own. I didn’t tell anyone about this until I learned it completely. When I saw perfection in my products then I made a professional account on instagram namely “AYULKAAR” a Kashmiri word which means delicate work and I think it suited

this work, Nazima said.

“I always believed in myself and my hard work and finally it paid-off. While growing up, I always wanted to start something creative which would help me financially as would be therapeutic to mind and I think resin art did it,” she added.

Nazima said that she gets orders from outside Kashmir also and gets positive

response from people who order from me.

“I make different products like key chains, book marks with customized names on them, holy book stands, photo frames and pendants also,” added Nazima.

It is still not known to many people because of the non-availability of resin products in local markets but the growing trend will make it known and famous like any other art in some years, she said.



Shrinking **Hokersar**

Winged visitors, local population losing huge support base

Zainab Shafiq

Home to varied flora and fauna, Kashmir, a biodiversity epitome, sustains the most important ecosystems—wetlands.

Kashmir boasts about such multiple addresses, one among them being the Hokersar wetland, located 14 kilometers north of Srinagar.

Spread over an area of 13.75 square kilometers, including lake and marshy area, Hokersar has been historically famous because of its proximity to Srinagar and mostly as the destination for millions of winged visitors.

Tens of thousands of different species of birds, including ducks and geese like Tufted Duck and Graylag Goose visit this wetland every year.

Most of these birds move temporarily from various central Asian destinations and Siberia to breed here, which makes this protected site very important.

“Hokersar is like an airport for these birds,” says Ghulam Hassan Dar, the in-charge of anti-poaching at the wetland.

The arrival of birds starts from September and they start leaving once the temperature improves, he, he said.

According to the last census the wetland had a million guests. On the census day—January 29—locals volunteered to help count the birds. This, Dar believes, spreads awareness and helps people understand the importance of these birds.

Vital to the ecosystem, as they play an important role in nutrient cycling, seed dispersion and flower pollination, these birds are falling prey to human interventions and hunting. It’s estimated that almost 60 birds are killed every day in wetlands across Kashmir.

“We have only 40 people to guard the wetland,” said Abdul Rauf Zargar, the Wildlife Warden at the Hokersar wetland.

“There are no means or special equipment to track the birds. It is extremely difficult to manage. Nevertheless, we are trying to take appropriate measures,” he said.

Almost all the destinations of the migratory birds are notified protected areas for better conservation, management and sustainable use under the Ramsar Convention of 1971, Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and J&K State Wild



“We have only **40 people** to guard the **wetland**,” said Abdul Rauf Zargar, the **Wildlife Warden** at the **Hokersar wetland**

Life (Protection) Act, 1978. Under these laws, poaching of birds or animals is an offence, defying which the violator can face imprisonment.

“If a person is caught, his gun is snatched, license seized and a case is filed in the court,” Dar said.

Nisar Ahmad Parray, Senior Scientific Officer at the Kashmir University said that

foreign aids are provided to the NGOs to keep poaching in check.

Apart from being a safe heaven to migratory birds, Hokersar’s significance as a flood absorption basin is well recognized.

In the devastating floods of September 2014, officials said, Hokersar retained almost 2.7 million cubic meters of water and prevented the adjoining areas from further damage.

But over the years, gradual siltation has reduced the depth from 3-10 feet to 1.5-3 feet.

Steady encroachment and increasing pollution have reduced the area of the wetland to mere 5-6 square kilometers. The documented details suggest that Hokersar has lost around 2031 kanals and 13 marlas since 1947.

In its August 2017 landmark decision, the High Court directed the government to demarcate the wetlands and take measures to conserve water bodies in the Valley. The concerned bureaucracy was asked to submit action plans regarding building interconnections between wetlands and rivers.

“This is a chronic problem as de-siltation is manual and requires a lot of manpower,” Zargar said.

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Karakuli makers try new designs to attract young buyers



Seerat Bashir

Kashmiri artisans have come up with new designs to revive the traditional cap used by Kashmiris, known as Karakuli. These new designs include Kani print caps, Afghan styled pakol caps, anchored woollen caps, and more.

The culture of Karakuli caps was popularized by Muslim leaders in the Kashmir valley in 1930s. Most of the politicians choose to wear Karakuli caps.

According to famous poet and cultural activist, Zareef Ahmad Zareef these caps were first worn by British polo players in Kashmir. It is one of the oldest handicraft industries in India. Once a necessary headgear for a groom and a common wear for the elderly, Karakuli seems to have lost its appeal. Less and less people can be seen wearing it now. Young grooms also don't prefer it.

One Karakuli cap shop owner in Srinagar, Ali Mohammad said, "My family has

Muzaffar Jan, a Karakuli cap artisan said thirty years ago, the market for these caps was good, but now people have stopped wearing Karakuli caps. To revive this tradition now they have reshaped the cap according to the taste of young generation



been in this business for around 125 years. The raw material comes from Afghanistan."

Mohammad added that earlier it was

presented as a gift to the groom on his wedding, but now this ritual has ended.

However, according to Ali Mohammad, Karakuli has started picking up again and this has given slight push to the trade.

Muzaffar Jan, a Karakuli cap artisan said thirty years ago, the market for these caps was good, but now people have stopped wearing Karakuli caps. To revive this tradition now they have reshaped the cap according to the taste of young generation, he added.

The craze for new designs of Karakuli caps such as pakols and chitralli caps was generated when Irfan Khan wore both in the bollywood film Haider. There had been a spike in demand for the caps after the movie became popular in the valley.

The process of making the cap is also extensive, and it takes more than a week to complete one piece. We are trying to make more and more new designs to keep this tradition alive in Kashmir, said Jan.

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However, a project in coordination with the Irrigation and Flood Control Department has been launched which is aimed at de-silting and dredging, along with the removal of encroachments from the wetland, he added.

"We are implementing the project, which involves de-silting an area of five kilometers of the Flood Spill Channel, from Shareefabad to Souzeth," Farooq Ahmad Shah, Secretary Irrigation and Flood Control, said.

"It was originally supposed to be a project of rupees 32 crore, but fresh tendering

reduced it to 21 crore and I believe it will be ready by March, 2023."

Under the contract, the company is supposed to drive the entire silt 2.5 kilometers away from the wetland.

Siltation also increases pollution load which adversely affects the aquatic life in the wetland, and causes eutrophication (excess of dissolved nutrients that stimulate the growth of aquatic plant life, usually leading to oxygen depletion). This eventually leads to a decline in the number of fishes. Besides, it also results in weed infestation which impacts the growth of hydrophyte plants; and migratory birds feed on these plants.

A researcher at Kashmir University, Manzoor Ahmad said that in addition to helping in the purification of the water and carbon sequestration, a process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form, wetlands also provide livelihood for the locals.

But with the rapid shrinking of wetlands, this support system of the local populace is also getting wiped out.

Dar said when the Department tried to fence the 13.75 square km area recently, it faced public outcry. "People said it was public property and cannot be fenced," he added.



Gazanfer takes Kashmiri rap to new heights

Taha Wani

One of the rappers of Kashmir, Mir Gazanfar, of youtube channel SXR Music, from Sonwar, Srinagar, started his journey in music in 2010. During his early years, his lyrics used to be about the incidents, which occurred in his day-to-day life and were written in English.

“At that time, when I was studying in the SSM college of Engineering and Technology, I mainly focused on English hip-hop rap songs. Not many people used to sing such songs in the Valley,” Gazanfar said.

It was difficult for him to get the proper guidance about how to produce these rap songs. Then he met Roushan Illahi, known by his stage name MC Kash, who being one of the first rappers of Kashmir, provided him a lot of guidance regarding hip-hop.

“After that, I started making songs in



Kashmiri, Hindi and Urdu languages,” said Gazanfar.

Due to the lack of opportunities and facilities in the beginning of his career, along with internet issues and no studio, or appropriate equipment like a high-definition camera and editing software,

Gazanfar had to face a lot of problems to release his first song. But as the years went by and technology improved, he got better at it.

Most of Gazanfar’s songs focus on social issues and women’s rights. He said that he has spent eight years in Delhi where he learnt new things about rap.

After coming back to Kashmir, Gazanfar opened his own music studio at Rajbagh, Srinagar, where he records his songs.

“If anyone wants to record songs, we provide them suitable music and other services in our studio,” said Gazanfar.

During the early days of his musical journey, Gazanfar had to face a lot of challenges and criticism from the society, as the concept of Kashmiri hip-hop was still new to people.

“I have collaborated with two international artists. These songs have already been released and people really love listening to my songs,” said Gazanfar.

Counterfeit products of renowned brands become popular for winter shopping

Mir Mehwish Farooq

Srinagar’s commercial hub Lal Chowk is flooded with duplicate copies of the popular brands mostly sold by footpath vendors.

Winter tide triggers demand for winter wear and such replica products of popular brands such as jackets, trousers, sweaters see increasing popularity.

The vendors sell replica of garments and shoes under popular brand names like Puma, Nike, Levis, Adidas at a price range between Rs 100 to Rs 500. These duplicate copies of these goods witness rush of customers at different markets of valley.

As winters arrive products such as jackets, hoodies and shoes are predominantly sold as first or second copies of these brands.

These products mostly contain the logo of the brand and tagged with high rate. However, the product is sold at a very reasonable rate.

The dealers of these products are mostly from parts of Punjab, Ludhiana and Amritsar.

Vendors selling puma jackets claimed that original products come with barcode, also a



watch retailer in Amira Kadal, said we are concerned with selling part.

Locals said the people are becoming more brand conscious that is the reason of increasing demand; the quality is hardly now an issue of concern.

A retailer selling an adidas tee shirt carrying tag of Hilton worldwide said we manage to sell 2000 pieces per month. He said customers know that they are duplicate because original costs at least about 1200.

A non local customer who was buying shoes from a vendor Ubaid said “we just buy them for the sake of using them and nothing much”

While as Ubaid added “customers are aware these are copied goods”.

A vendor Qasim at Makkah market said these products are original, it is a lot in company whose rate comes down so the price tag is removed and it costs around rs250.

Another customer expressed “everyone can not afford branded items and its always good to carry brand name”.

Retailer Wasim selling woodland floaters said “these are 3rd quality original people buy these more comparatively to that of non brands.



Harrissa: Winter delicacy that you cannot ignore

Tufail Ganie

As the Valley is under the grip of bone-chilling cold, the most popular winter dish, Harrissa, a minced mutton delicacy acquired from Central Asia during the Mughal rule, is a breakfast favourite in almost every household.

Umer Bhat, a local from Batamaloo, said, "Today we see numerous types of meals in every restaurant, and people enjoy eating them, but Harrissa has its own spot that no other dish can replace."

"Harrissa is now sold all day long in several bakery shops and can also be prepared at home, but if one wants to experience the authentic flavour and taste, they should eat at popular harrissa selling places like Aali Kadal, Maisuma, and Batamaloo," he further added.

On winter mornings, a crowd gathers in front of a few shops in Srinagar that are known for making delectable harrissa.

Nazir Ahmed, a harrissa seller from Batamaloo said, "I feel happy when clients



Harrissa, a minced mutton delicacy acquired from Central Asia during the Mughal rule, is a breakfast favourite in almost every household

come to my shop during the winter season because I always wait for this season to provide this delicacy to the people of Kashmir. Not only do the people of Kashmir come to my shop every year to taste my harrissa, but tourists come as well. I am

filled with joy when customers visit my shop in the early hours of the morning, despite the chilly winter weather."

Even when the temperature is close to freezing early morning, people queue to buy harrissa or eat it in these shops, which is prepared overnight during the winter season.

Munawar, a harrissa lover said, "It is one of my favourite breakfasts of winter, it keeps the body warm during the cold days. I often leave a bowl at a harrissa shop a day before and collect it the next morning to enjoy it with my family."

There's a hub of harrissa-making shops, mostly located in old city Srinagar, also known as Sheher-e-Khaas, as people turn up in large numbers during the early hours to have this mutton dish. However, doctors advise against its excessive consumption.

"Harrissa has muscle and tissue building protein. It should be consumed in the proportion of one gram per kg of body weight. Over eating can lead to health complications and it overloads the body system," said orthopedist Dr Yahya,



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Inextinguishable Kanger

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Srinagarites welcome E-rickshaws, demand same service across Kashmir
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Srinagarites welcome E-rickshaws, demand same service across Kashmir

Iqra Nabi

Electronic auto-rickshaw service started in Kashmir early April this year. The administration has taken the initiative due to rising pollution and traffic snarls in Srinagar. This trend in Kashmir is getting positive responses from common people.

As part of the Smart City Project, the J&K government launched the MUMKIN scheme for e-rickshaws in order to empower youngsters and foster their independence. The government has prioritised usage of eco-friendly transportation as part of this project in order to cut down on pollution. More than 30 electric buses are now operating on various routes as part of the Srinagar Smart City project.

People are praising the RTO's initiative and stated that this aims to popularise the eco-friendly mode of transportation at a cheap price to benefit the local population and also

create job opportunities for young people throughout Kashmir.

"Employment has scaled because of the introduction of e-rickshaws, this initiative has really been beneficial to people. Each passenger is charged Rupees 10-15 according to the distance," says Altaf Ahmed, an e-rickshaw driver.

"Since the introduction of e-rickshaw in Srinagar people, especially students have felt sense of relief," said a student Sajid Maqbool. Another female student also recognised the service as big relief for the female students. She said that earlier she used to travel in overcrowded buses which was very discomfoting.

Seema Masoodi, a law student at Kashmir University, says that since this service was introduced in the city, the female students breathed a sigh of relief as they would face multiple challenges while travelling in overcrowded buses.

"It's a good initiative and it should be implemented in other districts as well," she further said.



This aims to popularise the eco-friendly mode of transportation at a cheap price to benefit the local population and also create job opportunities for young people throughout Kashmir



Affordability, mobility makes 'Kanger' peoples' favourite in winters



Razia Shaban

Traditional fire pot commonly called 'Kanger' in Kashmir, is an earthen pot that is woven with wicker in shape of basket and delicately crafted by artisans. Kanger helps beat the winter chills as the pot is filled with hot charcoal that lasts for six to seven hours.

The proud possession of a common Kashmiri is used underneath the traditional outfit called 'Pheran' to keep warm during chilling winter.

Kanger is woven in different sizes for children and adults and in varied shapes and designs.

Abdul Gaffar, north Kashmir's famous Kangri weaver said, "Everybody cannot weave Kanger. It needs skill, dexterity and craftsmanship." He emphasized on how the weavers collect twigs in the month of May and June from deciduous shrubs. These shrubs are peeled and then soaked. These peeled and soaked shrubs are then dyed in different colours.

Dried and dressed twigs are woven around a bowl shaped earthen pot decorated with colourful threads to make

It is cheaper and does not need gas or electricity as fuel. It is also 'mobile' in a sense that you can carry it with wherever you go which is not possible to do with other heating appliances



Kanger beautiful. "Kanger weaving is a source of livelihood for us and we work wholeheartedly to put together each Kanger, which costs around Rs 500 to 600," Gaffar said.

Weaving Kanger demands craftsmanship and great skill. Kanger weavers are known as 'Kanyil'.

Despite the availability of other heating appliances, the demand of Kanger remains high in Kashmir. There is rarely any household in valley that doesn't prepare Kanger daily.

"Since the winter has approached, cold has gripped the valley and people have already started preparing Kanger to keep themselves warm," Sajad Ahmad a local student said.

The scarcity of electricity during winters also makes Kanger the best choice of a common person. It is cheaper and does not need gas or electricity as fuel. It is also 'mobile' in a sense that you can carry it with wherever you go which is not possible to do with other heating appliances. In addition to these advantages the heritage value of Kanger also keeps it alive, Sajad said.



Story of Shepherds: Frame by Frame



Caring father: He was very happy to be capturing in this frame. There is a strong faith that runs their world and makes them happy in their own space.



Shepherd with his stick: At this young age he manages a large heard of almost 300 sheep and goats.



'Jannat' in Jannat: Her name is Jannat (heaven). When asked the meaning of her name, she looked puzzled and said she didn't know.



Like a Rock and 'Tea': He was very bold and was the first to agree to give a pose in front of the camera. He even raised his cup towards me, offering me a sip.



This person was a guest where I had visited and he had came to visit her daughter. He said he saw his daughter after 5 years.



She came out of her tent to show her son that something is going on outside as he was crying



Two to Tango: They are in-laws. They can be seen working together. One baking the bread and the other making the dough.



In this community only the eldest of the women has a "priveledge" to serve tea.



'Daan': They still use this traditinal earthen stove for cooking.



He followed me everywhere and I learned from him how to spread smiles. I even let him use my camera and capture few pictures.



This tent housed five goats fed inside as they were not yet grown enough to go out for grazing in open.



He was all prepared for a long walk as he had to reach a place called Diginibal, situated on top of a mountain.



His mother was all suiting him up to look well in front of camera.



She was shy, however, after much persuation she honored me with a pose for my camera.





20 years on, Jetty bridge awaits completion



Mohammad Younis

The construction of Jetty bridge located at Khawaja Bagh, Baramulla awaits completion since 20 years thus causing extreme hardships to the locals.

“The bridge looks like a dream as more than four years have passed since previous deadline and no major changes can be seen in the construction of the bridge,” said a local resident Ghulam Ahmad Dar.

The work on the bridge was initiated by Mohammad Shafi Uri in 2002, the then Education Minister of J&K and the

project was under Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction Corporation (JKPCC) who missed various deadlines due to paucity of funds.

The bridge will connect Khawajabagh and Janbazpora areas of Baramulla and will also pave a bypass between Baramulla and Kupwara via Handwara route reducing several miles.

“When the construction of other bridges is completed in due time, why is this bridge being abandoned,” another resident Ghulam Rasool said.

“The work on bridge was stopped in 2014 and was resumed in 2017 due to government pressure, however, the

work was later completely stopped due to non-availability of funds,” an official from JKPCC said.

“The construction of bridge was initiated with an estimated cost of Rs 15.65 crore and was later revised to Rs 21.37 cr,” the official added.

However, in September 2018, the J&K Government established the J&K Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation (JKIDFC) with a mandate to raise loans for such projects.

“Incomplete work on Jetty Bridge was the main reason for the government to establish IDFC,” an official said.

Non availability of staff at PHC irks Hajibal residents

Mohammad Younis

Residents of Hajibal village in North Kashmir’s Baramulla district allege non-availability of staff at local Primary Health Centre of the area is causing them serious inconvenience.

As per the locals, the health centre, which is operational inside a rented building remains closed on most of the days due to habitual absence of the staff.

Hajibal is located on a hillock adjacent to the Baramulla town around 21 kms away from the district headquarters. The village has a population of around 609 inhabitants as per 2011 census and the only option for accessible medical care for them is the said PHC.

“We face a lot of inconvenience due to non-availability of doctors in our village, for even smaller issues we have to travel



We face a lot of inconvenience due to non-availability of doctors in our village, for even smaller issues we have to travel down to the main town

down to the main town,” said a local resident, Shabir Ahmad.

“We always have this fear that in case of any medical emergency during winters how would we travel to the main town as snow usually blocks the roads,” President of the village, Abdul Majeed said.

Block Medical Officer, Baramulla, Dr. Farooq Ahmad Sheikh told MERC Times that the staff is sharing duties with another health care facility on rotatory basis.

“As of now the staff is discharging their duties three days a week at Hajibal and three days at Drangbal, we are likely to conduct a meeting in which we will solve this issue,” Dr. Farooq said.

However, local residents contest the claims made by the Medical Officer and allege that the staff is never available at the PHC.



Counterfeit products of renowned brands are popular among winter shoppers

Mir Mehwish Farooq

Srinagar’s commercial hub Lal Chowk is flooded with duplicate copies of the popular brands mostly sold by footpath vendors.

Winter tide triggers demand for winter wear and such replica products of popular brands such as jackets, trousers, sweaters see increasing popularity.

The vendors sell replica of garments and shoes under popular brand names like Puma, Nike, Levis, Adidas at a price range between Rs 100 to Rs 500. These duplicate copies witness rush of customers at different markets of valley.

As winters arrive products such as jackets, hoodies and shoes are predominantly sold as first or second copies of these brands.

These products mostly contain the logo of the brand and are tagged with high rate. However, the product is sold at a very reasonable rate.

The dealers of these products are mostly from parts of Punjab, Ludhiana and

As winters arrive products such as jackets, hoodies and shoes are predominantly sold as first or second copies of these brands



Amritsar.

Vendors selling puma jackets claimed that original products come with barcode, also a watch retailer in Amira Kadal, said we are concerned with selling.

Locals said that people are becoming more brand conscious that is the reason of

increasing demand; the quality is hardly now an issue of concern.

A retailer selling an adidas T-shirt carrying tag of Hilton worldwide said we manage to sell 2000 pieces per month. He said customers know that they are duplicate because original costs at least about 1200.

A non local customer Ubaid, who was buying shoes from a vendor, said, “We just buy them for the sake of using them and nothing much. Customers are aware these are not original.”

A vendor Qasim at Makkah market, Lal Chowk said that these products are original; it is just the rejected lot from the manufacturers or sold cheaper under stock clearance sale.

Another customer said that since everyone can not afford branded items and if we get a brand name at cheaper rates what is the big deal.

A retailer Wasim, selling woodland floaters, said that these are “3rd quality original”, people buy these more as compared to that of non brands.

What is Antarctica trying to say?



Mir Mehwish Farooq

Antarctica often considered as a desolate barren desert continent covered by fresh white snow utterly not affected by human interference. The story actually may be quite opposite; Antarctica is a white reflection of our dark deeds and damages done to environment.

This far-off continent is hinting towards proximity of a global catastrophe, the much evident climate change. Things in Antarctica are changing and this is far from normal, the signs clearly suggest that earth is hurting and Antarctica is the sore where it is bleeding.

The ramifications of climate change on Antarctica in particular are quite underreported and undervalued.

It is fundamental for us to familiarize ourselves with the changes that the landmass is experiencing and is a cause of concern seeing that it gives essence of climatic transition our planet is in course of. Some prevalent symptoms are bursting out:

Red snow

The snow in Antarctica is turning red and it even has fragrance but nothing is pleasant in it. The colour is red due to an algae identified as *Chlamydomonas nivalis* *Chlamydomonas*, which thrives in freezing water as the ice melts. Red color reduces the surface albedo of the snow which, reflects less and captures more heat from sunlight hence melts at a faster rate.

Dooms day glacier

The melting of glaciers may be the new

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normal for us, but melting of Thwaites glacier of Antarctica may change the story of sea level rise. There may be dramatic rise in sea level up to 1.5 to 3 feet if we see the glacier unfreeze. Its melting already contributes 4% to global sea-level rise each year. Behind the scenes of this melting glacier is devilishly

climate change.

Food Chain Changes

There is evident change in food chains of varied species of Antarctica. Protein rich Krills that feed on algae underneath sea ice have been declining in west Antarctic peninsula which in turn affecting penguin populations.

The importance of Antarctica is somewhat unobserved but this continent is a treasure of information, often considered as a 'natural laboratory'. It has facilitated scientists enormously in understanding the past of our planet, how earth was millions of years ago and can help depict the fate of our planet with respect to events associated with climate change and its impacts

Antarctica being in polar zone having permanent ice cover has an impact on exchange of heat, moisture and gases between atmosphere. Any change to this may impact and indicate strong repercussions of climate change on our planet and to our lives.

Antarctica is an extraordinary Continent despite being isolated; hostile with dissimilar climatic conditions it has an impact upon earth's climate and ocean system. The continent being in polar zone has permanent ice cover which influences the exchange of heat, moisture and gases involving atmosphere and ocean, any change to this may significantly impact and indicate strong repercussions of climate change. Therefore, it becomes important for our generation to understand Antarctica as its existence is of utmost importance for the survival of human race.