

Vol 10 • No 09 • Pages 16 • JUNE 15, 2017

MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE,
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

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Fading Memoirs theatre play bags JK Academy awards

❖ Adnan Hilal

Srinagar: English theatre play, Fading Memoirs presented by XMITA bagged several awards in recently held annual theatre festival-2017 held at Tagore Hall which was conducted by J&K Cultural Academy. Directed by Arshad Mushtaq, 75 minute theatre play Fading Memoirs blends contemporary immersive theatre performance art and experiments with conventional and traditional folk form using different installations and moving images. The premier show of Fading Memoirs was part of the Annual Drama Festival Organised by Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art Culture and Languages (JKACL). The event was attended by well known artists, writers and journalists of Kashmir besides foreign delegates and drama lovers. The play emerged winner with five top honors that included Best Director (Arshad Mushtaq), Best Actor female (Ridha Akhoun), Best Light Design (Wasim Raja Khan) besides being one of the top production and a special honor in acting for theatre legend and veteran actor M Yousuf Shahnaaz. "The play is my personal journey into the realms of subconscious which has revealed itself in different hues and expression with passing time. It is much more than the notes put on paper. These are the memoirs of the extended self. It is an effort in remembering and reminding," said Arshad Mushtaq, the Director of the play. "The play was mesmerizing, I was alive as if we the audience were a part of it" said Aqib Ahmed a student from Kashmir University

KOUNSARNAG PILGRIMAGE TO BEGIN FROM JULY 24

❖ ALI PATHAN

SOUTH KASHMIR: From July 24, hundreds of pilgrims will undertake a 6-day long pilgrimage through serpentine mountain tracks to the Kashmir's high altitude Kounsarnag Lake, which devotees associate with Lord Vishnu.

Deputy Commissioner Reasi Kumar said "The pilgrims, after stay at base camp of the yatra at village Harshu in Mahore tehsil of Reasi district, would proceed for Kounsarnag and pay obeisance on July 30, the day on which 'Nag Panchmi is observed'.

The Army and other security agencies will ensure area deployment and security for an incident-free pilgrimage to the

shrine, he said.

The DC said that efforts would be made to promote Kounsarnag as a major pilgrim tourist destination.

DC directed the Tourism Department to chalk out a strategy to give wide publicity to the pilgrimage. This should be done by erecting hoarding at prominent locations, to attract the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrims, he suggested.

For the past ten years, the yatra is being undertaken from Reasi. Kounsarnag is surrounded by peaks on all sides and is over 4000 metres above sea level. Many adventure lovers also trek to Kounsarnag which is second largest high altitude lake in the valley with an area of 110 hectares.

Delay in bridge creates mess

Waseem Ahmad

Srinagar: Several areas around Pandrethan area of Srinagar suffer everyday due to the delay in the construction of a bridge connecting areas located across Jhelum River.

The locals from these areas including Soiteng, Lasjan, Padshahibagh, Athwajan, Pandrethan, Batwara, and Sonawar lamented government's lackadaisical approach towards the construction of the bridge and alleged them of showing indifferent attitude towards the people.

"The construction work on the bridge was started in 2009 and was scheduled to complete in 2013. In the absence of the bridge, the locals have to face immense hardships to reach to the other side of the embankment.

The authorities have failed to keep their promise" said Bashir Ahmad, a local said resident.

"The construction work is moving at snail's pace. Every time the locals raise the issue of the slow pace, the authorities would give different excuses. Sometimes the work is completely stopped for days and to befool people, authorities would employ one or two laborers to give the impression that the work is underway," another local said

To commute on daily basis, Soiteng residents often have to risk their lives by boarding overcrowded fishing boats to cross the river at Batwara.

While revealing their ordeal the locals said that initially they demanded construction of a pedestrian bridge at Syed Abad Soiteng, which was the shortest distance to reach to the other side of the river but government skipped the proposal citing security reasons.

An official at Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction corporation (JKPCC) said that after taking nearly two years in deciding the location for the construction of the Bridge, the construction work on 120 meters double lane bridge at Pandrethan was started in 2012 but lost pace due to the lack of funds.

"Out of a total project cost of 13.33 crores, only 6.65 crores were released until last financial year which delayed the construction work. The funds were released through National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)", he said.

He also said that the construction work was stalled due to non-availability of funds but we have managed to complete the major portion of the bridge.

"80% of the construction work is complete and the remaining 20% will be finished by the end of this year," he said.

The Bridge connects areas like Lasjan, Soiteng, and Padshahibagh to the Srinagar via National Highway.

Five day Payam-E-Ramadhan festival concludes at KU

❖ BISMA FAROOQ

SRINAGAR : A Five-day festival on Payam-e-Ramadhan concluded at Kashmir University. An Award ceremony was held at the closing event of the festival organized by Department of Students Welfare (DSW) at Gandhi Bhavan of Kashmir University. Winners from various categories including Naat, Qirat and Islamic calligraphy were facilitated with cash prizes and certificates. Registrar Kashmir University Prof Khursheed Ahmed Bhat, the chief guest emphasized on the importance of holy month of Ramadan. He said "Such events are very important and should be organized more often in order to maintain a connection with our culture and heritage". Dean student's welfare GN Khaki thanked all the guests and

sponsors for their participation and assistance in the festival. He said, "DSW plays an important role in building a connection between the university and students".

"I request Registrar Kashmir University, Prof Khursheed Ahmed Bhat to keep us assisting to organize such events in future, as these events are very vital to expose students to new activities," he added. Shafiya Shafi who received the award in Islamic Calligraphy category said, "I am feeling proud for being among the few female participants who participated in the festival, but at the same time I want more and more girls to participate and represent us at such events".

Shahid Ali khan, the organizing Secretary of the festival concluded the event by facilitating the Guests and judges and thanked them for making the event possible by their presence.

LPG, petrol depot to come up in Anantnag

❖ DANISH PATHAN

ANANTNAG: The Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and Information Department, Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali reviewed the functioning of Food, Civil Services and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) here at Dak Bungalow, Anantnag. The concerned officers apprised the Minister with the performance of the FCS&CA department.

During the meeting, the Minister directed the Assistant Directors (ADs) to hire the private vehicles for lifting of food grains at a depreciation hiring rate of 15% in case State Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) fails to provide the requisite number of trucks.

Meanwhile, the minister also directed the ADs to ensure the lifting of all the food grains under NFSA and MMSFES is completed by 7th of this month so that timely distribution of rations is ensured.

Keeping in view holy month of Ramadan, the minister announced an additional quota of one kg of sugar per household, besides, the quota of Atta for next five months shall also be doubled with the commensurable decrease in rice allocation. The Minister stressed on distribution of the food grains on quarterly basis.

Following the reports about the pilferage of kerosene oil, the Minister directed the District Development Commissioners to constitute committees for the purpose and submit the reports in a time bound manner.

“Consumer is more important and his satisfaction is the priority of the department”, said the minister. In this regard, he directed for distribution of ration cards on fast track basis, and asked the concerned DDCs to monitor the process. Besides, he called for intensified market checking on regular basis for preventing food adulteration, profiteering and black marketing.

The Assistant Directors have been authorized to

engage the technical staff on temporary basis so that the digitization process is completed. Besides, he also called for online allocation of rations to different districts and directed the Director FCS&CA to take necessary measures in this regard.

The DDC Anantnag was directed to identify a patch of 70 acres of land along railway track for construction of LPG and petrol depot in the district.

Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali directed the DDCs to ensure that no petrol pump comes up in the vicinity of populated areas.



“Consumer is more important and his satisfaction is the priority of the department”

What happened to School Education’s feedback initiative?

❖ Saba Khan

SRINAGAR: Directorate of School Education Kashmir’s initiative for improving the system may have got stuck in the paper work, with no one among the authorities seemingly aware of its progress.

The directorate started ‘Aap Ka School, Aap Ki Raa’ cell in February to seek suggestions from the society for making the education system attain “greater heights”.

Days before the schools reopened in March, the then-Director School Education Kashmir (DSEK), Kumar Rajiv Ranjan, asked students, teachers, and parents to share their suggestions with the cell.

Their productive responses, which they could send through phone, post, or internet, were, as per him, to be ‘implemented during the academic session’.

Besides, the directorate intended to revive the ‘old practice of narration by students at morning assembly’ and ‘encourage them in paragraph writing’.

For this purpose, the DSEK had announced, the first two days after winter vacations would ‘exclusively be utilized’ to let the students ‘share their dreams, experiences during winter and sorrows, if any’ with the school.

“Kindly send us your valuable opinions, advice and comments in this simple form given below. We will get in touch with you personally for gathering more details during its implementation,” read the DSEK notification.

However, about three months later, the DSEK seems clueless about the initiative.

Joint Secretary School Education, Mehboob Hussain, said, “I have no idea about ‘Aap ka School Aap ki Rai’.”

The officials at DSEK too don’t know about it.

Zahoor Ahmed, DSEK Spokesperson, doesn’t know of its progress. He passed the buck to Director School Education Kashmir.

However, the Director, Dr G N Itoo, declined to comment over the matter.

“Kindly send us your valuable opinions, advice and comments in this simple form given below. We will get in touch with you personally for gathering more details during its implementation,”

Inter School Naat Competition Held At Humhama

❖ Mu’Azzam

SRINAGAR: Students from various schools in the Budgam district participated in maiden inter school Husn-e-Naat competition, 2017 which was organized by Private Schools Association of Kashmir (PSAK)

The competition was inaugurated in presence of Secretary Education Farooq Shah, Director Education G.N Itoo and President PSAK G.N Var among other officials.

The Organizers in a statement said that the week-long competition will provide a platform to students from both private as well as Government schools to showcase their skills in Naat Khwani. The competition will continue till June 19th, 2017 in all districts across the state to select the ‘Sana Khwan-e-Mustafa’(SAW)

“Today was the first event of the Naat competition aimed to polish the talents of the school children in Naat Khwani.” Said Var.

Besides schoolchildren, the participants will also include Naat Khwans from adjacent areas so that it will ultimately lead to the emergence of the best Naat Khwans.

Boys upto 16 years of age and girls upto 14 years from all over the state have been invited to participate in the Husn-e-Naat competitions on both individual as well as school levels. Eminent ‘Sana Khwans’ of the state have been assigned the task of judges.

The Association said that the students will

also be provided help for the preparation of the final event as prior to the final round, all those who have qualified for it will be trained in a free workshop to be conducted by famous Naat Khwans of Kashmir.

The first position holders in the district competition would be invited to participate in final competition that will take place on 20th of June at SKICC Srinagar. The final shall be followed by the felicitation ceremony.

Cheshmashahi Milk Plant records Rs 32.12 cr business last fiscal

❖ Saba Gul

ANANTNAG: The Jammu and Kashmir Milk Producers Cooperative Limited (JKMPCL) run Cheshmashahi milk processing unit recorded a business of Rs 32.12 crore last fiscal and also sold 76 lakh liters of milk in 2016-17.

The information was given out today during an inspection of the unit by Minister for Animal & Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries, Abdul Gani Kohli who was accompanied by Minister of State for Forest, Animal & Sheep Husbandry, Cooperatives and Fisheries, Mir Zahoor Ahmad.

Secretary Cooperative Bashir Ahmad Bhat, Chief Executive Officer, JKMPCL and other concerned were also present on the occasion.

It was said that the JKMPCL aspires to achieve 100 crore turnover by the year 2020.

On the occasion, the Ministers took a detailed stock of the milk plant's functioning and went round of its various sections.

They instructed the concerned officials to work with utmost dedication for promoting the business which besides catering to the needs of the society adds to the economy of the State.

During their visit, the Ministers took review of the activities carried out at the Milk Plant.

It was informed that 15000 milk producer members are associated through 450 Village Daily Cooperative Societies with the JKMPCL.

Taking stock of Chilling Machines, the Ministers were apprised about the benefits of



enhancing Chilling Capacity. It was given out that quality and quantity of milk received has improved significantly.

Later, a review meeting was held during which thorough discussions were held on Strengthening the Infrastructure for Quality and Clean Milk Production (SIQ-CMP) scheme, Intensive Dairy Development Programme (IDDP) and AMCS at DCS Chadoora Budgam.

The meeting was told that milk is also procured from Rajouri and on an average around 3000 liters are procured daily.

Addressing the meeting, Kohli stressed on maintenance of quality control of milk, curd and ghee which he said is essential in gaining confidence of the consumers and for increasing the marketing of THE products.

Mir Zahoor also spoke on the occasion and stressed for developing cordial working relationship between the JKMPCL and the Village Level Cooperatives for deep percolation of benefits.

On the occasion, a documentary film regarding Amul was also screened.

ONLINE SHOPPING EMERGING NEW TREND

❖ Saher Iqbal

SRINAGAR: Online shopping has emerged as a popular means of buying various products in Kashmir, especially among the youngsters. The ease shopping combined with the wide range of products and attractive prices are some of the benefits associated with online shopping.

"There is a 20-30 per cent price difference between products we buy online and through traditional shopping. And there are products online which you do not find on shops," said Wajid Hafiz from rambagh who shops frequently online.

E-commerce companies such as Snapdeal, Flipkart, Myntra, Amazon and others offer a wide range of products to choose from. The home delivery feature makes online shopping an irresistibly attractive proposition.

"We receive 1, 65,000 shipments on an average every month," said branch head of e-com Xpress (an online service provider) Hyderpora, Irfan Sheikh.

Unlike traditional shopping where you find the same collection for weeks, these companies keep adding new products every day.

"If there is new trend in fashion, you come to see that online. It keeps you abreast of the changes in the world of fashion," Wajid added.

One of the important factors that keep luring the buyers to online shopping is the heavy discount on products. Almost each product appears with two price tags- market price and the online price.

"I wanted to buy Lenovo phone. It would cost me Rs 9000 from the shop. I bought the same phone from snapdeal at Rs 5300 only," Sheikh Nasser Said.

He further said that he found the same issue with other products he wanted to buy from shops such as bike riding suits and a body cover for his bike.

Abaan Malik, a class 6th student, bought a computer mouse online. "Benefits apart, it feels nice to shop online."

Given the magnitude of orders to deliver, Manager Ecom Xpress, Bilal Ahmad, who is currently looking after eleven branches across the valley, is looking for further expansion of his services.

"Our efforts will be to reach the remotest places of Kashmir," he said

Delhi based Kashmiri artist display painting

❖ IHayat Manan

SRINAGAR: An art exhibition was held in hotel Comrade Inn, Rajbagh here on Sunday. Uzma Nawchoo, who is a Delhi based Kashmiri artist had put her paintings on display under the banner 'Prechaw', (questioning.) The event was organized by Centre for Research, Development and Peace (CRDP).

"The purpose of the exhibition was to depict miseries and trauma that women in war suffer. The exhibition was primarily having two themes: Women of War and Daaren Peth (on windows)", program organizers said.

The paintings expressed the pain of women as the artist had used the brush to give a shape to the cries of the wailing women. Resistance, wretched by war, lost son etc. were the titles of the paintings in this category.

Another section comprised of the life of Kashmiri women in conflict like situations. The paintings showed

the scenes which are quite common in Kashmir. The titles were "Kani Jung", "Chhag", "Bobi Daari Peth", etc.

"When a war happens, women loose their men and their sons hence become the ones at the suffering ends. I have tried to express the pain of the women in war because in Kashmir when a conflict rises women stay inside and peep through the windows hence suffering the most", said Uzma, who is an artist and also facilitates art and art therapies with various schools.

"We have been providing the platform for young artists to showcase their talent in many streams be it painting or any other art form. We are also working in the field of research, youth development, etc. Programs like this should happen frequently, for they boost up the morale of an artist", said Peer Suhail who heads CRPD.

When asked about the support from the family Uzma said, "Firstly being a Kashmiri then a girl, it is very hard

to convince your parents for such an offbeat subject. But if you trust your abilities and your art nobody is going to stop you. You need to be best in your field and you will be successful".

While speaking with Kashmir Vision artist's father Manzoor Ahmad said, "I was not personally satisfied with her going in this field but eventually when I saw people praising her art I understood that she is made for it. She paints with both her hands simultaneously which makes her unique and makes me a happy proud father."

Many students were also a part of the workshop as well. "I have never seen such a wonderful exhibition here in Kashmir before.

Exhibitions like these should happen often as it gives us a support and feeling that our art is not getting wasted", said Afifa Faiz Makhdoomi, who is an Applied Arts student.

Wayside wastage and environmental pollution in Manasbal Lake



❖ **SHOWKAT WANI**

GANDERBAL: Life in Manasbal area is becoming unpleasant and difficult day by day as wayside wastage on the streets stinks and make environment unpolluted. Wastage bins present on the road are polluting environment every passing day.

“Wayside wastages are creating most obnoxious odors causing nausea in people the passers-by and the people living close to it suffer extremely for it. There is no good system of treating this wastage in the area of Manasbal district Ganderbal”, said Mushtaq Ahmed.

“It is learnt that the people finding no other alternative throw away garbage and wastage here and there. It has made life in the area very miserable. The people living in the area expect that the concerned authority should pay close attention to this worst thing so that they can get rid of this unpleasant situation around”, said Aadil Bashir.

While talking to MERC TIMES, Manasbal authority he said, “The problem around us is really alarming but right now we don’t have enough financial support behind us but still we are trying to get rid of this problem as soon as possible.

JK Govt lifts ban on polythene, silently

❖ **Wajahat Shabir.**

SRINAGAR: In a surprising move with serious environmental ramifications to eco-fragile Jammu and Kashmir, the state government has allowed manufacture; sale and use of polythene carry bags above 50 microns in thickness to allegedly benefit a strong lobby of polythene manufacturers and importers.

In wake of damage to the state’s fragile environs due to polythene, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court in 2006 had imposed complete ban on the entry, use and sale of polythene bags at tourist places and healthcare institutions. Subsequently, on June 18, 2008, the JK government banned all kinds of polythene bags in the state by issuing SRO 182 under the J&K Non-Biodegradable Material (Management, Handling and Disposal) Act, 2007.

The SRO 182 of 2008 which read, “...imposes ban on the polythene carry bags,” imposed blanket ban on polythene bags while the SRO 45 of 2017 reads, “imposes ban on ... polythene carry bags less than fifty microns in thickness,” thereby lifting ban on polythene above 50 microns.

However, officials have questioned the need for the controversial SRO saying it would hamper their efforts to enforce ban on use of polythene. They said Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Pollution Control Board and Excise department have been seizing polythene bags in the state or during its transportation at Lower Munda check post. “When blanket ban on polythene was not



fully implemented, how can this ban with rider be implemented?” Question being raised by common people

“However, the project could not take off due to pressure from polythene manufacturers who enjoy close rapport with power corridors in the state,” sources said.

On May 16 last year, Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh had stated that government would soon bring in a stringent legislation to cleanse the state of polythene pollution. “But government has blatantly failed to enforce ban on polythene on ground. Now by virtue of the new SRO, it has given license to polythene manufactures to undertake their trade without any hassle. This raises question marks over government’s claims to work for environmental conservation,” said an official.

18000 street lights to light up Srinagar City

Muneem Farooq

SRINAGAR: To improve street lighting, Srinagar Municipal Corporation is installing 18000 street lights and at the same time repairing defunct lights too.

The lighting will be done in city’s smaller lanes and bye lanes too.

“CM is very keen to illuminate all streets of the city particularly during the month of holy Ramzan. We have a target to install 18000 street light in the Srinagar city in which we have already installed 4200 street lights. We have to cover small lanes, and main roads will be covered by PDD. City has expanded from 300 sq.kms to 430 sq.kms, so we have to take care for newly developed colonies too. We are installing lights in the lanes towards Mosques and other worship places on priority basis. People are requested to give simple application in SMC office for street lights”, said Srinagar Municipal Corporation Commissioner, Dr. Shafkat Khan.

Keeping in mind this growth rate, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched 100 cities National Programme



on January 5, 2015 to convert conventional street and domestic lights with energy efficient LED lights. Under Street Light National Programme (SLNP), the government aims at replacement of 1.34 crore conventional street lights across the country.

SMC has issued directions for repairing defunct street lights in the city.

Khan said that since January 2017, 10460 defunct street lights have been repaired and made functional. “All pending defunct street lights will be restored by or before Eid-ul-fitr,” he added.

“I have set up five teams to address the complaints regarding defunct street lights. The team will be available from 9 am and address all the complaints registered with our helpline number 24704499,” Commissioner SMC further said.

Commissioner emphasizes that necessary measures are being taken to ensure maximum possible facilities to the people and restore the evening life of the city so that people will move freely in the late hours.

Locals have hailed the initiative of SMC and said that these steps will revive the evening life of the city. They said that the good lighting will help locals and tourists alike to freely move in the night without any difficulty. People have now demanded that such kind of developmental steps should be taken in other towns also.

Bulk supply to Kashmir regulate fruit prices on Ramadan

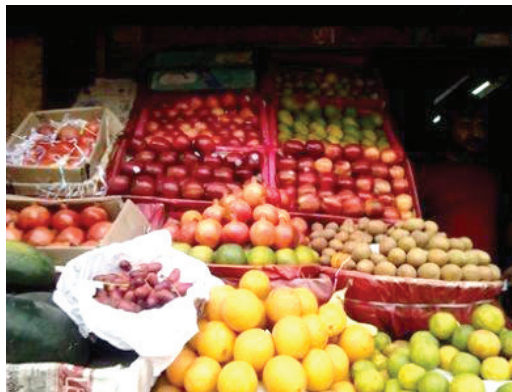
❖ Auqib Salam

SRINAGAR: As the holy month of Ramadan began across the Kashmir, the fruit and vegetable dealers across the valley have decided not to increase the price of essentials.

President New Kashmir Fruit Association Bashir Ahmad Basheer said there will be no hike in the prices of fresh fruits.

“We have good stock of fresh fruits in mandis and more stock is coming from outside the state which has helped regulate the prices.

The wholesale rates at Parimpora Fruit Mandi for bananas is between Rs 50 – Rs 62 per dozen, for watermelon it is Rs15- Rs 17 per kg, for mango between Rs30- Rs 45 per kg, melon would go between Rs15-18 per kg, grapes would sell at Rs 40 –Rs 55 per kg, Kashmir apples go at Rs 900-1000 per 8kg and Rs 1100 per 8kg for Fouji variety of apples.



In the retail market, bananas sell at Rs 70 per dozen, watermelon go at Rs 20 per kg, mango at Rs 50 per kg, melon Rs25 per kg, Kashmiri apples at Rs 140 per kg, and Fouji variety of apples go at Rs 150 per kg.

Street vendors are anticipating increase in sales in the holy month of Ramadan as people use fruits for

many Ramadan delicacies for Iftaar meals.

Muslims in Ramadan break their day long fast preferably with dates, mostly imported from Arab countries. It has huge market in Kashmir.

The dates in the wholesale market go at different rates as per the variety and quality. Different varieties of the dates are imported to Kashmir.

Gulf dates go at Rs 120 per kg, Royal Crown Sultan Rs 140 per kg, Royal Booman 145 per kg, Barari Kimyayi Rs 340 per kg, Barari Fit 230 per kg, KAS 200 per kg.”

Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumers Affairs has also intensified market checking to regulate the prices of the essentials in the market.

One of the officials at grievance cell of FCSCA Mukhtar Ahmad said they received few complaints from customers at Elahi Bagh, Srinagar where fruit vendors were overcharging.

The officer said that their team reached the spot and solved the matter by fining the vendors for overcharging.

First Mechanised parking in Srinagar



❖ Faila Khan

SRINAGAR: To bring much relief to commuters of the city, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti, launched the mechanised parking lot in the Lal chowk, Srinagar.

The project which was initiated in 2013, got delayed due to 2014 floods, and took two years to complete in Rs. 27 crores.

The project has been built by Economic Reconstruction Agency under the Asian development Bank funding and will accommodate 288 vehicles.

The project was transferred from ERA to SDA (Srinagar Development Authority) and will be offering discount till Eid-ul-Fitr. The operational hours will be 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM during Ramadan and 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM after Eid.

“The whole project is computerised and will be maintained by Simplex Company for three years. The entrance for the parking lot is from M.A road and exit follows from exchange road,” said an official.

“The response has been so great, within just few days, the number of vehicles is increasing and 215 to 220 these days, which is a good number, we are looking for other parking spots like in Sheikhbagh and Press Colony,” he added.

The parking charges is Rs. 20 for first hour and Rs. 10 for following hour, but presently the charges are reduced to half and offer is valid till Eid-ul-Fitr.

While talking to the commuter, Sadia Khan said, “It is such a positive initiative by the government, with the traffic mess around the city, it is a relief to park a car without the fear of your car being towed.”

Traffic department in sleep, fizzles to execute rules

❖ Syed Jesarat

SRINAGAR: The local buses plying across the cities are violating the traffic norms as the traffic department of J&K fails to ensure reservation of seats for women and physically challenged person in the buses.

“It has been observed that there is no proper arrangement for accommodation of women folk and physically handicapped persons travelling in the State Carriage buses in State, resulting in hardship and inconvenience to passengers,” states a circular by Transport Commissioner in the Handbook of Traffic Laws and Procedures.

The circular clearly ensures the Traffic department “to reserve specific seats in their vehicle for these categories of passengers which should be properly painted in white alphabets containing the words, ‘Reserved for Women and Handicapped Persons’ in Urdu and Hindi.

But the Traffic department is glaringly violating the Motor Vehicles rules by allowing these reserved seats to be occupied by men.

“If a pregnant lady boards a bus, no man has the courtesy to stand up and offer the seat to a lady who is actually reserved for her,” said Shazia Bhat.

For big buses, seats 1 to 12; for Medium and Mini Buses 1 to 9 seats respectively are reserved for these categories. “However, in case these categories are not travelling in the



bus, the same may be allowed to be used by the normal male passengers,” the circular states

“They don’t even provide seats to physically challenged people. They are made to stand, in humanitarian ground that’s not good, the traffic police who have to monitor these buses, don’t fine them for the violation of rules, as if such a thing never existed. If these seats are reserved then why they don’t allow us to seat on them,” said a group of aggrieved women commuters.

Senior Superintendent Traffic, Srinagar, Sargun Shukla said, “The Regional Transport Officer is the authorized person to look into the issue, because they have formulated the rule. I am doing my bit to enforce it.”

Garbage outside School endanger students health



❖ **Musaib Mehraj**

SRINAGAR: The sponged smell caused by indiscriminate dumping of garbage in front of the G.D Goenka School in Lalbazar Srinagar poses serious threat to the student's health. The Residents and shopkeepers dump their garbage in front of the school, due to which sponged smell is present all the time while passing through the school. The administration does carry out garbage alternatively but the foul smell poses serious threat to the students.

About 815 students are enrolled under GD Goenka School and they are under serious health diseases due to sponged and ominous smell present outside the school campus.

"The situation has worsened now, since the locals dump their garbage continuously outside school. Foul smell emanates from the rotting garbage", students said.

Parents also complained about the garbage being dumped there, "We have several times asked the school administration to look into the matter", said a mother of a student.

"Every time I come with my kid we cover our faces while passing through the school. The dogs and eagles are present in the large number, that poses threat to my children", she said.

The school authorities and parents have taken this issue to the notice of

the officials on several occasions.

Principal of the School, Johnson P.J said, "The day when garbage is not picked it creates lots of smell, during evening time eagles and dogs are all around piling over the garbage posing threat to children."

"It is a concern for school children, those who go in buses are safe but there are lots of students who come and go by their own thus affecting them adversely", he added

Further Johnson said, "Occasionally there is a garbage bin but that reduces width of the road resulting in a traffic mess all over. We do apply lemon powder on several occasions as a safety measure but that too is not a prolonged answer."

"We have talked to the municipality about this issue and we want it to be removed forever", he added

Vice Principal Asiya Murtaza said, "We have asked the authorities multiple times and in between they cleared the garbage everyday but there is not any permanent solution from their side."

On talking to SMC Commissioner Shafkat Khan, he said, "We are taking stern action against it; we are planning to make more than 400 dumping containers that will continuously carry garbage across the city."

Khan further added, "Dumping containers will carry garbage not only outside Goenka School but across the whole city."

JKAACI organizing "Ramazan special" series

❖ **Nazima Rashid**

SRINAGAR: Minister for Rural Development Panchayati Raj, Law & Justice Abdul Haq chaired a high level meet. He said that Government is working to create its own cultural identity by reviving the local art and music which is full of spirituality.

Speaking at Musical event Organised by Jammu And Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture And languages the Minister said like a body needs food to remain healthy, similarly soul needs food to remain rejuvenated. He said devotional and spiritual music refreshes ones soul and connects it to God.

Stating that the spirituality and sufism is deep rooted in kashmiri culture and forms the bedrock of kashmiriyat, Abdul Haq said devotional music has always played an inherent part in "religio-cultural" scenario of Kashmir valley.

He appreciated the efforts of JKAACI in organizing the month long events under the series "Ramazan Special" and bringing

acclaimed artists Nizami Bandus to the state. He said that events like these provide people with opportunities to appreciate the devotional music and provide food to the soul. The evening was marked by spiritual and cultural songs rich with traditional tones. The songs with their expression communicated a message of Love, Peace and Harmony.

Earlier Nizami Bandus offered a spell bound performance that took the audience on a spritual journey creating a musical imagery in accordance with the religious faith by singing Na'at and qawwali. The performers sung Soulful sufi poetry before an appreciative audience.

Lead performer Chand Nizami of Nizami Bhandu, expressed thanks to the academy for providing them opportunity to perform in kashmir, He said 'People of the state had a long assosiation with the music especially sufi music and kashmiris loves sufi music'. He further said that it was an honour to perform for the people who not only enjoy the music but understands and connects with its sprit.

Blood donation camp held at Kashmir University



❖ **RAFIA MANZOOR**

SRINAGAR Red Ribbon Club Department of social Welfare, University of Kashmir in association with ITTIFAAQ organized a voluntary blood donation camp held at Gandhi Bhawan. The event was supported by Aarabh foods and spices, Fire side cafe and zehra bout8ique.

70 students from different departments donated blood; Kashmir University Vice Chancellor Khurshid Andrabi was the chief guest

The event started 11:30 am in the morning and concluded at 4:00 pm. Students from

various departments participated.

People from outside Kashmir University also participated in the event.

Irfan Ahmad about the event said, "I feel happy to donate blood. One point blood can save 3 lives".

The founder of the Ittiffaaq, Nida Rehman said that the aim of organizing the blood donation camp was to create the habit among the people for donating the blood for good cause.

The camp in charge, Dr.Roof Ahmad said about 67 blood points were collected from students and outsiders.

SMC creates awareness to keep city clean and green



❖ **Rahil Hussain**

SRINAGAR: To create awareness for the sanitation of the city, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has started painting the murals on the walls along Lal Chowk Bund with a message to keep the city neat and clean.

Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation Shafqat Khan told MERC Times that the aim of painting the walls is to create awareness among the masses.

“We want to tell the people that this is their city and they must keep it clean and green,” Shafqat said.

“The appeal we want to make through these paintings is that people should not litter on roads, rather use dust bins for it, so that further improvement is made in the sanitation of city,” he added.

“We have assigned this job to the students of Music & Fine Arts department, University of Kashmir who will be later paid for their work,” Shafqat added.

Interestingly, citizens have welcomed the move taken by the SMC.

“I guess it is for the first time the authorities have taken such an extreme good step. And we hope it will prove fruitful for us,” said Altaf, a resident of Bemina.

This project is the part of Swachh Bharat initiative.

Kashmir enjoys nightlife this Ramzan at Kashmir Haat

❖ **Sadia Mir**

SRINAGAR : The Kashmir Haat, known as Numaeshi in Kashmiri, is turning out to be a new spot for spending time for youngsters and families after breaking their fast in the holy month of Ramadan.

With more than a dozen food stalls set up in the market, cuisines of different varieties have been made available to attract people in large numbers.

The stalls have been set-up by Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC).

“The traditional varieties include babreboul, kulchas, tandoori rotis, nun chai, shirmal and kehwa served in samawar,” said Managing Director, JKTDC, Sarmad Hafeez.

“We are offering more than 28 varieties in the menu that includes traditional Kashmiri delicacies. There is also a provision for people to take away food for Sehri,” Hafeez said. Among various mouth-watering delicacies present at the JKTDC stall includes chicken kebabs, lahbi kebabs and Chinese cuisine.

“I am here with my family. We are enjoying Iftar together. Night market is a good concept. My kids are enjoying and it gives me happiness. We will definitely visit again,” said Fayaz Ahmad, a visitor.

The well-decorated night market comprises of stalls of food, Kashmiri handicrafts, boutiques, and a special area for kids to play and enjoy.

“I feel so good after coming here. I am enjoying with my sister. I want to visit this place again and again,” said Mohammad Rayees, also a visitor.

People visiting the stalls said they are satisfied with the quality and presentation of food. “Food is tasty here and the ambiance is great,” said Shazia, a visitor to the market.

Dubai Food from Delhi is also offering some

delicious food items such as garlic chicken, chicken haleem and other Mughlai delicacies such as mutton stew and mutton masala. While Handicrafts Department has set-up a stall selling shawls and other handicrafts, Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) is planning to hold natia-qawallis at this special night market in days to come.

A lucky draw is also among attractions at the night market. There are attractive prizes such as bikes, household appliances and accessories to be won by people at this special bazaar.

“Such a great combination of art, culture, food and music is a treat for any person who wants to spend an evening at a quality place. I hope there are more such initiatives in days to come which provides a source of relaxation for both locals and tourists,” said Shafi Ahmad, one of the stall managers.



Defying the summer heat, people throng “Taqdeer Park”

❖ **TAJAMUL ISLAM**

SRINAGAR: At this period of season when the sun unleashes its blistering heat on the earth, Kashmir can't remain aloof and it also gets its share of heat, though comparatively less than other states. As Kashmir is famous for its hill stations and pleasant climate, its heart Srinagar also holds a wide array of places where people spend their leisure time to evade the heat and reutilized daily tiredness.

One such spot is located just outside and along the eastern fencing of university campus. It's a patch of land transformed into an alluring park and is NASEEM

BAGH PARK famously known as ‘Taqdeer park’ by locals. Its location is mesmerizing as it runs along the bank of Dal Lake, thus giving a splendid view of it. It holds 3 ghats of Dal Lake from where shikaras always remain ready to give a Dal ride. As it is only a few hundred yards away from famous ‘char chinari’ people in bunches use to take a shikara ride up to there at only 50 rs.

The park is maintained by Floriculture Deptt and is guarded by 13 employees including 7 casual labours and one night chowkidar. The park remains jam-packed particularly in evening hours. People from across the classes spend their time here to get relief from daily fatigue.

“People from all walks of life use to come here and spend their valuable time, like couples, families along with their children particularly come during evening time, university students and also the street dwellers, as unlike other parks in city, we don't charge anything here. Anyone can come and spend time along the Dal shore and enjoy their time without paying anything,” said Mukhtar Ah Dar, a gardener.

This park is very skillfully maintained as Department of Floriculture has provided the latest equipment's for grass cutting and watering. The park remains filled with the aroma of diversified flowers which adds to

its beauty, said Mushtaq Ahmed

“We try to keep the park as clean as possible for that dust bins are also installed at many places of the park. We want many more people to and enjoy here. We regularly cut the grass and water the plants so that the purpose is served,” said head Gardner Mohd Yousuf.

“I regularly visit this place, it provides a sense of relief and refreshes your mind and body as well. Usually I come with my friends in the evening hours and after praying the maghrib prayers at shrine, we return home. This park is maintained well and unlike other parks I don't have to pay anything,” said Ashraf

Mufti Sadia, a budding female entrepreneur

❖ Useeba Bashir

SRINAGAR: Despite social pressure to drop the idea of entrepreneurship, 25-year-old Mufti Sadia has started her own women boutique “Hangers the Closest” in Sarah City Center, a retail complex at Jahangir Chowk, Srinagar.

Sadia, a Master’s degree holder in International Business from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) hails from Srinagar. Before starting her own business, she worked with multiple companies for couple of years but she wanted to do something on her own.

In 2013, she decided to establish her own business in a small shop at Lal Chowk, Srinagar. Only after receiving good response from people and larger

space in Sarah City Center, she took her business idea to the next level.

Talking to MERC Times, Sadia said: “This was not easy for me to start my own



business. Being a girl, it was very difficult for me but I decided to face all the odds and with blessings of Allah and support of my family, I succeeded to a satiable extent,”

Earlier Sadia used to sell ladies suits only but she has now added designing suits, Kashmiri pheran, Tillapheran and kurtees to her boutique collection. “My boutique is not only for high end customers. The range of suits in my boutique starts from 500 rupees only. Women from every class of society can afford that.” She said.

“I go shopping at ‘Hangers the closest’ only because I can find a wide range of designer and other wear at an affordable price. The boutique has a unique collection of clothes” Saima Ashraf, a customer said. In addition to working towards prospering her livelihood and success, she has provided employment to eight girls in her boutique. Interestingly, she has now started taking online orders from India and abroad

Kashmir World Film Festival begins at Tagore Hall



❖ Fehmeeda Rashid

SRINAGAR: A five-day film festival begins here at Tagore hall Srinagar. The program themed as “Kashmir World Film Festival” is aiming to promote film industry in Kashmir. The festival which has been organized for the first time in Kashmir valley will continue till July 5.

The festival is organized by Actors Creative Theatre (ACT), an organization working in the field of art Film and literature, in collaboration with Media Education Research Centre (MERC), Kashmir University and Film & Television Institute of India (FTII).

The program was inaugurated by Dr Asgar Hassan Samoon, Secretary Higher Education Department, J&K.

Speaking at the occasion, Chairman ACT and film maker Mushtaq Ahmad Khan said, “The festival provides a stage to youth who

see their carrier in film making and acting”.

“Kashmir is a best place for film culture and we are trying to involve the youth of Kashmir in film making as it is a wonderful field to work in”, he said.

Some Bollywood personalities including Alina Mughal and Hassnain Hyderabadwala were also present at the occasion.

The Life time achievement award was given to the Coordinator MERC, Kashmir University, Indian Film Directors Ved Rahi, Mohammad Yousuf Bhat and Mohi ud Din Mirza. Also, some famous Kashmiri writers and film makers were felicitated at the occasion including veteran actor Abdul Gani Khan who acted in movie ‘Habba Khatoon’.

Students of Media Education Research Centre (MERC), Kashmir University and Media Students from Women’s College M.A road are participating in the five-day film festival.

Low hanging electric wires threat to resident

❖ Iqra Akhoun

SRINAGAR: The residents of Mujgund area in the outskirts of city are living under constant fear due to uncovered power supplying lines hanging low and tied on decayed wooden poles.

The residents complained that chance of accident always persists there. Last week a live wire fell on the ground while children were playing nearby. The sound of the breakdown sent shock waves throughout Mujgund. However, there was no loss of life.

“Some of the electric wires are low lying, touching the roofs of the residential houses and branches of trees,” said Irshad Ahmad a shopkeeper in Mujgund.

Ali Mohammad, a village representative said, “The wooden electricity poles installed on the fields are also a big hindrance for both human beings and animals”.

He feared that this half-broken and tilted electric pole can collapse anytime. He further added that at few locations the height of poles and wire are equal to the human height which is very dangerous for the people passing through it.

The children’s also live under constant fear as low lying electric wires pass through the inner roads of locality.

“Due to overhead transmission lines we are not able to play properly outside because these wires are lying a little above our heads,” Said a student Adil



Hussian

They said that Power Development Department (PDD) installed the new poles many months back but are delaying to shift the cables on to the poles. The low hanging overhead power cables posing a risk to life and property.

Residents said that they have repeatedly lodged complaint in the Power Development Department but no one has turned up to resolve their issues despite assurances from top officials.

“We requested PDD officials many times to replace the decayed wooden poles from the area, but our pleas fell on deaf ears and the problem still persists” said the locals.

Speaking to MERC Times, Executive Engineer PDD Srinagar said, “I will look into the matter and hopefully the problem will be addressed soon.”

KASHMIR WORLD FILM FESTIVAL CONCLUDES

❖ **Tanzeela Qazi**

SRINAGAR A five-day Kashmir World Film Festival concluded here at Tagore Hall on Wednesday. The festival was organized by Actors Creative Theatre (ACT), in collaboration with MERC, Kashmir University, Canon India, and Film & Television Institute of India (FTII).

The five-day festival was attended by the students from Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir, Journalism students of Central University of Kashmir, students from different colleges and Higher secondary Institutions, and many movie lovers of the valley.

During the festival, different films

were screened which includes regional, national and international as well, among those were Gul directed by Gul Reyaz, Lissa Aisha directed by Asthma Bseiso and Kabuliwala directed by Tapan Sinha.

The program also provided an opportunity to media students to learn some basic skills of film direction.

“We had called renowned Bollywood filmmakers who held film making workshops to guide the young artists and the people who are interested about making their career in films,” said an organizer.

Bhupendra Kainthola, Director FTII was chief guest at the event, while Bollywood actor Rajat Kapoor was the guest of honour.

Locals accuse R&B Department of using sub-standard material in macadamizing roads

❖ **Sajad Bashir**

PATTAN: Locals of Andergam village, Pattan are accusing Roads & Buildings Department Kashmir of using sub-standard material in macadamizing roads. They said the executing agency is mixing liters of asphalt with crushed stones (bajri) to macadamize roads.

“After our concerted efforts, the authorities permitted to macadamize this busy road but the effort goes waste because they are using sub-standard

material,” Nazir Ahmad, a local said.

Speaking to MERC Times, Executive Engineer Roads and Buildings Division Sopore, Mohammad Saleem Khan denied the allegations.

“We were filling some patches with khak-bajri, which will be followed by macadamizing the patches,” he said. “Some officials of the department visited the spot and found nothing wrong.”

Khan said he would personally visit the area to find out facts.

Blood donation camp held at Kashmir University

❖ **Syed Irshad**

SRINAGAR: ITTIFAAQ-United we stand, a Srinagar based trust in collaboration with Dean Students Welfare (DSW), University of Kashmir and Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) hospital on Wednesday organized a blood donation camp at the lawns of Gandhi Bhawan, University of Kashmir. However, the doctors said they collected 67 pints of bloods from the students as well as from outsiders.

Nida Rehman, the founder of the ITTIFAAQ said that the aim of organizing

the blood donation was to create the habit among of people for donating the blood for the good cause.

She said that it was not necessary to donate the blood here only; they can donate the blood at SMHS or SKIMS Soura as well for its good use.

We should donate our blood every year for those who have dire need of it and are unable to buy it from the market.

Syed Bilal, a volunteer for the event said that people should come in huge numbers to donate their blood and the hope is that the turn over should increase in future.

The students who donated their blood at the camp expressed their happiness over the initiative taken by the ITTIFAAQ.

The donation camp started at 11:30 am and concluded at 3:30 pm.

The Vice Chancellor Kashmir University was the chief guest on the occasion who inaugurated the event.

The VC appreciated the students to hold more such events in near future.

The sponsors of the event were Aaraft, a national masala mills, Fire Side Cafe, 92.7 Big FM, Zahra-the boutique and CP Advertisers.

Use of loudspeaker creates clutter

Nisar Malik

SRINAGAR: Residents of Bandipora are complaining of loud noise by loudspeakers during the month of Ramadan.

“Loudspeakers are creating a lot of jumble especially in the month of Ramadhan” said Syed Bilal, a student of university of Kashmir, he added, “After Sehri (midnight meal) up to Tarawi (night prayer) loudspeakers vandalizes my eardrums due to its unnecessary and overuse, so we demand limit the use of loudspeakers”

Talking to well-versed Mufti Zahoor of Bandipora, he said that according to Shariah (Islamic law) loudspeakers are permitted for mere Azaan but a chunk of people in Kashmir hardly follow it. He added “According to a Hadith reported by Hazrat Aisha (r a), Prophet MOHAMMAD (pbuh) used to get up cautiously in the middle of the night for offering Tahajud so that his wives’ sleep would not get disturbed”

Forwarding a message to the people of Kashmir, Mufti Zahoor said that loudspeakers should be used keeping in mind the religious sentiments and the people suffering from diseases.

Reading Kashmir in a fairy tale: The house that spoke, by Zuni Chopra

Mohammed Nadeem

SRINAGAR: Before reading this novel, I presumed that it might be something like Coraline or The Beauty and The Beast.

But after I finished reading it, I realized it was more than that, much more.

It was about me and my tragedies. It was about Kashmir. My Kashmir, A burning paradise. And sadly even in a fairy tale, Kashmir is lingering in darkness and destruction. It is like reading Alice in The Wonderland but a horror version of it.

There are three main characters in the

novel. Zoon, a 14 year old Pandit girl.

Kruhen Chay (Black Shadow) a mysterious creature made of fire-less smoke and shadows.

Then there is The House itself where everything is alive and speaks with Zoon.

The House That Spoke is a feat. The language is simple and clear. There is wit, humor, harmony, rhythm and a lot of mystery and symbolism.

Dark clouds, bone chilling winds and stormy rains impinge on the reader as well as on the characters within the story.

The author’s attitude towards the

characters is kind and gentle. Even at times, our villain Kruhen Chay (Black Shadow) is seen with a kind eye. Characters are three dimensional and lively. As the story builds, characters come to life beautifully.

Characters are drawn from a historical-mystical perspective.

All elements within the plot are carefully formed within the story. There is suspense, mystery, thrill and tragedy – all molded together artistically. A sense of cold and harsh atmosphere is evoked while reading, as the novel is set in chilly winter.

Residents protest over power crisis at Kullan

❖ Farhad khan

GANDERBAL: The inhabitants of Kullan village in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Friday staged protest over indiscriminate power supply. Protesters blocked Srinagar-Leh high way at Kullan for hours.

The villagers were accusing Power Development Department (PDD) for over curtailments in power supply, irking residents to live in darkness from past ten days during this month of Ramadan.

The protesters were shouting slogans against PDD department, and demanding immediate restoration of electricity supply within the village.

Protesters did not allow any vehicle to move

which causes traffic jam for several hours.

"We are facing immense hardships due to shortage of electricity. PDD is ignoring our demand so, we come out on streets to bang their deaf ears" said villagers who were protesting there.

"We have been ignored at all fronts. We are appealing PDD officials to restore power supply to our area to give us some relief in the holy month of Ramadan" locals added.

However, Police Post Gund In charge reached on the spot and pacified the protesters assuring them that their issue will be addressed. Following assurance the villagers called off their protest but warned that if the problem is not addressed shortly, they will continue their agitation.

Khalsa Aid organizes Iftaar party for Dalgate fire victims

❖ Sheikh Saman

SRINAGAR: In a heart-warming gesture, Khalsa Aid organized an Iftaar party for the fire victims of Abi Navporsa, Dalgate on 25th of this Ramadhan.

Volunteers of Khalsa Aid disturbed dates and fresh fruits and also 60 numbers of blankets among the fire victims' families. The fire broke-out on 24th April left almost 26 families homeless, their houses were entirely gutted in the incident.

A volunteer Jeevanjot Singh said, "Our main motive was to organize this Iftaar party for these people in order to bring some happiness and join on their faces, though they are facing very tough time from last two months due to devastation caused by fire,"

Another volunteer Zara Firdous hailing from Jammu district said, "It was wonderful and unforgettable time for me to serve these people, it was an overwhelming experience for her".

A fire victim Ghulam Hasan Dar while praising the work of Khalsa Aid said, "I don't know who these people are but their hospitality towards us is 'Masha Allah' good" adding that "Government should rehabilitate us before coming winter, as our families are still living in tents"

Khalsa Aid is a UK based humanitarian International origination with aim to provide humanitarian aid in disaster areas and civil conflict zones. The organization is based upon the Sikh principle of 'Recognize the whole human race as one'

Photography: new emerging trend

❖ Naveed Wani

SRINAGAR: The valley of kashmir has nowadays seen more inclined towards art of photography as people prefer to click their every passing moment.

A new trend of capturing the moments is seen as most enjoyable engagement of people. Particularly youngsters are seen enjoying the clicks by using mobile phones and even buy their personal cameras to capture their life moments. "The photography makes us to feel the real happiness of life as what we enjoy a whole day we capture it for our whole life," said

Farhat uzair a student of Kashmir University.

"The passion of photography is a good and positive trend as it builds more skill and creativity in youngsters," Pardeep Singh Dardi, a freelance Photo Journalist said.

"Photography can also be seen as the relief to the depressed and agitated minds of the people of kashmir," he added.

Meanwhile, the famous film maker and writer Farooq Masoodi when asked about told MERC TIMES that new trends in still photography are very positive and have impact on our life style greatly, it has made the art of photography accessible to even the most amateurs.

Barter system mars prospects of much-hyped cross-LOC trade

Shah Tawqeer UI Islam

SRINAGAR: More than nine years after it was started, the cross LoC trade along Uri-Muzaffarabad route is more a story of hype than the real business as part of major confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan governments.

Traders' community blames the barter system and lack of banking and communication facilities for the low turnover.

According to government officials at the Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC) at Salamabad in Uri, 31567 trucks have so far carried goods from Uri to Muzaffarabad, while as 2881 trucks have carried goods from Muzaffarabad to Uri since 2008, a total export and import of about Rs 3700 Crore.

Hilal Ahmad Turki, General Secretary Salamabad-Uri Trade Union, blamed the successive governments for being uninterested in improving the trade. He said, "This trade has remained confined to barter system with exchange of goods only without any money transaction,".

He further said the quantity of goods traded between both the countries has declined considerably. "Earlier 50 trucks loaded with goods would be exported from here to Pakistan but now it

has been restricted to just 25 trucks".

During the year 2015, goods worth Rs 494.4093 crore were exported from Pakistan and Rs 668.88 crore was recorded as turnover of the import from the other side.

Traders from both sides are demanding that the trade should not be restricted to only 21 items. Rather all items produced and manufactured in Jammu and Kashmir should be incorporated in the list.

The traders are also demanding that the trade should be driven on demand-supply basis.

Another grouse that traders have is that their trucks have to unload goods at the check point near the LOC. The goods are then reloaded onto local trucks for onward journey, which results in damage to goods, especially perishable items like fruits and vegetables.

Some business experts say the cross-LOC trade could go beyond present turnover of Rs 300 crore per week if both governments "show seriousness" in the trade by making available proper infrastructure.

However, an economics professor of Kashmir University wising anonymity said trade would have resulted much better results but New Delhi's approach is not in favor of its promotion.

Honesty still prevails, Man returns bag full of Cash

❖ TAHIR BHAT

SOPORE: Not often you come across a bag full of money sitting on the road. But when such an incident happens, your honesty is the first thing that gets tested. A few weeks ago Ali Mohamad Parra—a commuter from Pattan, experienced one such moment when he found a small hand bag containing nearly three Lakh rupees on the road near Assistant Regional Transport Office (ARTO) Sopore.

He returned the cash to its rightful owner.

It was Friday and Namaz time, and just when Parra was came out his car at ARTO, he saw a small hand bag lying on the road.

“I picked it up and it appeared that the bag contains documents but when I opened, I was taken aback to see so much of cash in the bag,” Parra told MERC Times.

He asked many people that whether they have lost the bag but no one owned it.

“After I counted the cash it contained Rs 2, 84, 110.” Parra said.

Later in the day he sent a note to a local daily to make the information public. Same day he got a call from a person from Magam area of Budgam who claimed to be the rightful owner of the bag.

“He sounded terrified on phone,” Parra said. “His voice made him appear reliable and I told him to meet me at ARTO Sopore next day.”

According to Parra, the person told him that he had raised the money after selling his vehicle for his sister’s marriage scheduled after the festival of Eid.

They met at ARTO Sopore the next day. Parra handed over the cash to the claimant after confirmation. “He revealed the marks which matched with the bag I had found,” Parra said.

“There was lot of people around who witnessed the moment when I handed over him his cash.”

Parra, 46, owns a small scale transport company in Pattan town.

Parra said that he returned the cash to set an example of honesty.

“Allah has given me enough. It was test to my faith and by performing this deed I tried to please Allah,” Parra said.

“It feels good that Allah gave me an opportunity to make someone happy.”

The story came into spotlight many weeks after someone shared it on social media. It got everyone talking and he was hailed as a true definition of Good Samaritan. He said that he did not publicize his act but someone came to know about and posted it on Facebook. Since then he has been receiving phone calls, from known and unknown people, congratulating him for his honesty.

Insanitary surroundings at GB Pant Hospital: a nuisance for patients



❖ Asim Rajah

SRINAGAR: The heaps of garbage and the leakage of the drains around the GB Pant Hospital is a nuisance and pose threat to the health of infant patients visiting the hospital.

The visitors also prefer to remain inside the lawns of the hospital to save themselves from infection due to the foul smell of the unhygienic garbage littered around the adjacent areas of the hospital.

The attendants at GB Pant Hospital said that stray dogs during the night time mostly remain inside the hospital premises and pose a threat to attendants who have to get a medicine and other required items from the shops and chemists outside the hospital.

An elderly attendant Zaiba Begum said: “My granddaughter is admitted to the hospital for the last three days. Yesterday one of the in-charge sisters of the ward told me to bring a medicine from outside and when I was about to reach the main gate, stray dogs inside the hospital premises started barking and ran after me.”

Begum said, “I cried aloud for a help, then some of the attendants and a chemist came to rescue me.”

The attendants present there further said that

they face problems due to flooding of water from the drains.

The father of another infant admitted in GB Pant Hospital said, “The overspill of the water due to the blockades of the drains has become a nuisance for the attendants and pedestrians since I admitted my son here, I fell twice into the dirty pothole near the chemist shop outside the hospital.”

“Despite the death of more than 500 infants and children in the year 2012, the GB Pant Hospital authorities show a lackluster attitude to solve the problem of unhygienic surroundings in and outside the hospital premises,” attendants alleged.

The threat of infection to newborns babies and admitted infants due to the unhygienic milieu is overlooked and the foul smell continuously haunt the patients, attendants and pedestrians alike.

In-charge Medical Superintendent GB pant, Dr. Kanwal Jeet Singh said, “The land where the garbage is been thrown is custodian land and we have asked the State government many times, to let us utilize the land for car parking but this has not accepted by government yet.”

Singh said, “We have sent a letter to Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Commissioner regarding the stray dogs issue and he has assured us that the SMC will solve the problem soon.

International Yoga Day celebrated with fervor across Kashmir

❖ Kaiser Majeed

SRINAGAR: Department of Students Welfare (DSW) of Central University of Kashmir (CUK) in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Government College of Physical Education today celebrated third International Yoga Day in Ganderbal.

According to the officials, dozens of students from various departments of the University participated in the event.

The students of both the institutions performed different Yoga Asans shown by the trainer during the event.

Vice-Chancellor while interacting with the students of both the institutions emphasized the importance and



significance of Yoga and other physical exercises in fitness of individuals.

Prof Mir said, “Physical exercise is imperative for leading a healthy life,” Prof. Mehraj ud Din said after witnessing the Yoga Asans performed by the students.

Registrar, Prof M Afzal Zargar also highlighted the advantages and benefits of Yoga and all other traditional activities in physical and mental development of the person. He stressed the need of performing physical exercises for maintaining good health.

Dean, Students Welfare, Dr Fayaz A Nikka underscored the importance of Yoga in strengthening the physical and mental capacities and capabilities of the human beings.

Rising theft cases: Ellaibagh residents terrified

❖ **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.

Srinagar Master Plan proposes conversion of archaic structures into heritage hotels



Bintul Huda

SRINAGAR: After a proposal to shift Civil Secretariat from Srinagar, the draft Master Plan has proposed to convert the Old Secretariat, Deputy Commissioner’s office, CAPD office buildings beside other archaic structures in the summer capital into heritage hotels.

“Forest Department Building, Sheikh Bagh, Lal Chowk, Biscoe School campus, Lal Chowk, Old Secretariat Complex, District Court Complex Lal Chowk and Veterinary Hospital Maisuma, Old Assembly Hall, Budshah Bridge, Srinagar, Divisional Commissioner/DC’s Office complex, Doordarshan complex, official residence of Chief Justice opposite SK Stadium, office complexes/buildings are proposed to be transformed into heritage hotels preferably on PPP mode for economic revitalization of Lal Chowk as well as to increase the capital base of local authority,” reads the draft Master Plan 2015-2035 which has been put in public domain.

“Other buildings to be transformed into Hotels include those located along Church Lane, Sonwar, Chest Disease Hospital, Dalgate, CAPD godowns at Shaheed Gunj,” it said adding that in addition to the heritage buildings (to be listed by the Heritage Conservation and Development Authority) within the core city, the Master Plan envisages development of a tourist’s spine along both banks of river Jhelum from Fateh Kadal to Safakadal and around the Brari Numbal lagoon to act as a gateway to the Old City.

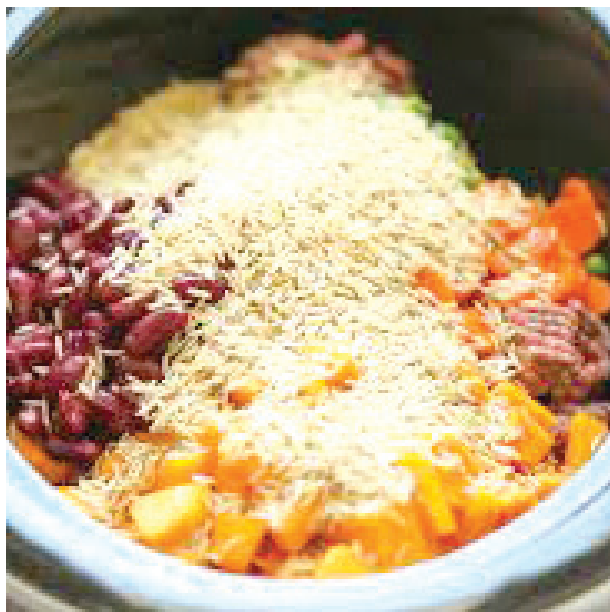
The draft plan further adds that taking cognizance of this widespread phenomenon, the Revised Master Plan proposes to align the tourist infrastructure by creating tourist clusters and tourist circuits for tourism infrastructure and further integrating the growth of individual hotels or guest houses with road hierarchy, functional nodes (Airport, Railway stations, bus terminals etc as envisaged in the Landuse Plan) and potential mixed land use zones.

“Mushroom growth of hotels and guest houses has not only compromised the quality of tourist accommodation but has drastically spoiled the pristine aesthetics and urban design of the city,” it adds. To decongest the summer capital, the draft Master Plan for Srinagar-2035 has proposed shifting of administrative offices, including the civil secretariat, and various other institutions to peripheries of the city.

The draft Srinagar Master Plan (2015-2035) has been put in public domain for 60 days to seek suggestions, objections to the plan before being put in the State Cabinet for final approval. Master Plan has envisioned an increase in Srinagar local area from the existing 416 Sq. Km. to 766 Sq. Km---- 82 percent increase from “We have repeatedly approached the authorities regarding the issue, but they don’t even bother to listen to us, let alone solving the problem,” the local alleged.

While talking to MERC Times, Chief Sanitation Officer, SMC said, “I will look into the matter and public grievances will be resolved soon.”

“Save Food, Save Life”; awareness campaign launched



❖ **Junaid Manzoor**

SRINAGAR: In collaboration with government higher secondary school Baghat-i-Kanipora, students of central university, Department of teacher education (B.ed) started drive against Food-wastage.

The theme of campaign “Save food save life” was started from Baghat-i-Kanipora to Aribagh,

Kanihama and its nearby areas. More than 100 students of different schools participated in the campaign.

To aware people about food-wastage, the campaign aimed to bring change in peoples’ lifestyle.

Most of the students were from 9th and 10th class, carrying play cards, highlighting the issue.

The placards read, ‘1.3 Billion tons of food is lost or wasted every year around the globe’, ‘Love food hate waste’, ‘Take what you want eat’, ‘Save food, cut waste’.

“We’ve all seen news reports about people who are starving in countries plagued by war or drought. Unfortunately, millions of people in the world go hungry

because they can’t get enough to eat most of the time,” Adil Rashid, a 10th class student of higher secondary school said to MERC Times.

“Extra food has been prepared to make sure everyone is well fed knowing the fact of their expected wastage,” Hamid said.

He added, “most of us have seen that food is thrown in garbage, not because it is stale but it is in surplus.

SHORTAGE OF WATER CREATES MESS DURING RAMADAN



❖ Syeed Bilal

SRINAGAR: Several parts of Srinagar are facing water shortage even as the holy month of Ramazan is in progress. People are up in arms against the authorities for failing to provide regular water supply.

People alleged that despite bringing the issue into the notice of the officials concerned nothing was done.

We are facing shortage of water in this blessed month and the authorities are doing nothing. We are being forced to come on roads”, alleged a group of residents from the Bagh-Mehtab area of the city.

Similar complaints were received from the Abu Bakr colony in Humhama.

“The scarcity problems increased after the September deluge as the Rangil water treatment plant, which supplies water to Srinagar, was damaged in the floods but the Government has completely failed to provide regular water supply even after years have been passed “said another resident from Lal

chowk.

Public Health Engineering (PHE) officials said the Rangil project has been restored fully and the department is trying to provide adequate water supply to the people. “We are trying to provide maximum water supply to all areas, but people should also cooperate. They should not waste water booster pumps. It creates problem in the distribution,” said a PHE official.

Meet Muneer Ahmad, a disabled student struggling to continue his studies

❖ Shahzad Ashiq

SRINAGAR: Muneer Ahmad, 16, a cheerful teenage boy who loves to play cricket, going to school and talking to people isn't able to do these activities like a normal teenager. Unlike other children, Muneer has to struggle through all these activities due to severe physical challenges.

“Despite trying very hard, my son can't walk and do other activities on his own. I have to make his bath and change his clothes,” says Yasmeena Begum, Muneer's mother.

With Muneer struggling on crutches, his school uniform is spoiled and he reaches school grubby almost every day. There are provisions under the scheme for physically challenged people by the state of Jammu and Kashmir for assistance for the purchase of aids and appliances. Unfortunately, Muneer has received nothing of those sorts from any Governmental department.

“If the government gives Muneer a wheelchair and other assistance, it will help him get to school in good condition. That way only he can further his studies without any obstruction” his father said

Muneer has scored 478 marks out of 500 in 8th standard. According to his teachers, he is a brilliant student who would have excelled more if he was normal and fit.

“I want to be a doctor and treat disabled people like me. I don't want anybody to suffer like I am suffering.” said Muneer.

Three government run schools crammed into a three room set

❖ Mehvish Mumtaz

ANANTNAG: Three government run schools, two middle school and a primary, are housed in a three room rundown building in South Kashmir Anantnag. One of the rooms is utilized for office purposes while remaining two are used as classrooms. This is another story of sorry state of affairs afflicting our Education Department.

“Initially two schools, Wandipora Middle School and Government Middle school Chambran which were established in 1969 and 2003 respectively were functioning from a rundown building which was on the verge of collapse after developing cracks in 2015 earthquake.

After many pleas to higher authorities the schools were finally shifted and attached to Government Primary School Herpora in May 2016”, said Farooq Hussain, principal of Middle School

“In all the Three Schools we have 62 students merged from Eight classes. Staff Members which are 8 in number just have one 9x12 room to retire and to conduct



official business as well”, He added.

“We are facing space crunch and can't give proper accommodation facilities to the students enrolled here. During the class

the teacher usually sits on a chair while the students from all the three different classes, remain huddled around him. This often causes chaos and confusion”, said a teacher.

.”On one day we take classes of students from 1st primary to third primary under open sky while as the students of 4th and 5th class are adjusted in one room,” said Firdous Ahmad a teacher.

Adding that the routine changes the other day in which 4th and 5th class students are made to sit in a classroom under open sky. But during rains or inclement weather conditions, the rooms remain congested and students are forced to take classes in a random manner.

“The people accuse us of not teaching their students well, you tell us, how can we teach three classes together and that too at one time, said a teacher wishing anonymity. “The higher authorities have been telling us that they will arrange a spacious place for the schools but nothing has happened so far,” he added.

“All we want is proper classrooms, a washroom and a playground. We are not able to give our best to our studies because of chaos and confusion in classrooms. We just have two classrooms to study where we are merged together.” said Shazia Jan, 8th class student.

FAROOQ ANDRABI VISITS DOORU CONSTITUENCY

❖ SABEEHA SHAHEEN

SRINAGAR: The Minister of State Haj and Auqaf, Syed Farooq Ahmad Andrabi chaired a meeting at Town Hall Dooru to review the pace of works on various developmental projects in the area and also inspected arrangements made for the current month of Ramadan.

The Minister directed all the officers of PDD, PHE, Food, Health and other essential services departments to keep better facilities for the people during the current month of Ramadan.

The Minister was informed that Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs department has already stocked 2000 Qtls of rice in Dooru and 2700 Qtls of rice in Verinag circle out of which the major portion has been disturbed among the people. It was also revealed that the Social Welfare department has provided marriage assistance in favour of 48 beneficiaries and sanctioned 127 cases for which the assistance will be provided during this year. Similarly, under ASRA Scheme, 653 cases have been sanctioned in the constituency.

During the meeting it was informed that two bridges at an estimated cost of Rs.12 Crores will be constructed for which tenders have already been received. In addition to it, a bridge at Rain Chowgund at an estimated cost of Rs.9.50 Cr. will be also constructed soon. He was also informed that macadamization work is under progress on Larkipora and other roads road.

The Executive Officer (EO) town area committee Dooru and Verinag informed the Minister that out of 547 street lights, 505 lights have been made functional. The market checking is being conducted on weekly basis and a fine of Rs.2000 has been recovered from the erring shopkeepers. The committee has also undertaken a special cleaning drive of mosques and shrines.

The Minister stressed upon the officers and Engineers to fulfill their responsibilities in providing basic needs to the people. He also appealed the public to strive for maintaining peace so that developmental process is expedited which was badly affected during last year.

Is moral education need of the hour?



❖ B M Hussain

SRINAGAR: Moral education is considered pre-requisite for overall development in students. Today's schooling fall short of moral education therefore ignores ethos and ethical development in students. There has been loud hue and cry from different sections of the society to introduce moral education in schools.

However, Gulistan public school at Goosu Batpora take a lead to introduce Islamiyat and Arabic as a core subject aiming to make students well versed with moral values. The decision was

made in a function organized by Islamic society at Madremeharban hall Batpora, where scholars from West Asia threw light on the importance of moral education amidst western wave of cultural imperialism thus emphasized more relevance than other subjects. It was made mandatory for every school falling in the vicinity of Batpora Telbal. There were some other prominent personalities including former MLA Hazratbal Syed Ali Akhoun, Prof. Syed Shad Ramzan, a well known poet and other dignitaries.

Addressing to the gathering Dr Basharat Basheer Madni said in his

inspirational speech, "that the students should be taught moral principles, cultural ethics, humanistic ethics, and developmental ethics, because they are to build a firm base for strong society to counter the threat of western imperialism".

Meanwhile, Prof. Razza broke the ice in his poetic way, "they are blossoms about to come out as flowers let them grow within the light of education. He acknowledged that parents are responsible to imbibe moral education to their children as those youngsters whose parents teach them good values will reinforce their learning, and those who lack such guidance at home, moral education in school is even more crucial."

The function went all through the day and different concerns were brought into light that concerns the society, but stress on moral education took much more prominence.

Speaking the concluding words, the then MLA Akhoun said, "moral education is the need of hour, and responsibility lies on the family to inculcate moral values in their children.

He later donated one lakh rupees to improve school infrastructure.

At the end of seminar, prizes were distributed among the students who recited Naats during the ceremony.

REVITALIZING THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

❖ Imran Ali Buth

SHOPIAN: To revitalize the culture of library with the help of technology, Jammu and Kashmir government launched an e-learning program this year by installing computers in public libraries. The program provides advanced learning assistance to the aspirants of various competitive exams-free of cost.

The public libraries are functioning as e-learning centers, enabling students to access curriculum based study material which includes offline video lectures, e-books, online consultation with experts, and also the books in printed format.

Speaking to MERC Times, Director Libraries, Mukhtar-Ul-Aziz, said, "The program is aimed to provide a platform to the students where they can avail quality and comprehensive coaching for competitive exams free of cost."

Explaining the procedure of library membership, the Director said, "There is a simple procedure, a

student only needs to produce an identity card from a recognized educational institution to get registered." Resources like mobile tabs, computers and the expert-designed study materials available in the library would be an additional benefit to the students to crack the competitive examinations.

Expressing his excitement, Umaid Rasheed, a final year student, said, "It is an appreciable move to promote the educational system in our State. There is a dire need to develop such advanced study centers where the aspirants of competitive exams could get technological assistance for preparation."

Mudasir Ahmad Dar, a student of 11th class, said, "I am happy to know that the public libraries are now serving as advanced techno-study centers. It will really help, especially the poor who are willing to appear in the competitive exams, to get quality coaching."

"There are many such students who are capable to compete but due to the lack of financial resources they failed to make an attempt. Such steps would provide a helping hand to those students who cannot afford to go private coaching centers", said Mudasir.



74th General Orientation Course begins at KU

❖ **Munawar Hussain**

SRINAGAR: A General Orientation Course (GOC) for college and university teachers was held at University of Kashmir.

The 74th GOC, organized by University's UGC-Human Resource Development Centre, was inaugurated by Dean, Academic Affairs, Prof MA Wani.

Addressing the participants, Prof Wani said: "Such courses are of immense significance given the

fact that teachers now have to be more responsive to the changing paradigms in higher education than ever before and orient themselves accordingly."

Referring to Choice Based Credit System of education in vogue now, he said: "With the introduction of CBCS it has become more important for teachers to have knowledge of other allied subjects in addition to their own areas of specialization for the overall benefit of the student community and these orientation

courses help a lot in that direction."

Director UGC-HRDC Prof Mohi-ud-din Sangmi spoke at length on the aims and objectives of the General Orientation Course. He said such exercises provide useful insights on various aspects of teaching-learning pedagogy which young college and university teachers should know and work upon.

Coordinator UGC-HRDC Dr Geer M Ishaq apprised the participants about the schedule of the four-week-long orientation course.

Government libraries working on rented building

Asif Bilal

SRINAGAR: More than 70 per cent government libraries in Jammu and Kashmir are operating in rented accommodations, as the state government has failed to upgrade the infrastructure.

The official data maintained by the department of Libraries and Research shows that around 103 of 136 libraries existing in various districts of the state are housed in rented buildings.

As per the data, 60 out of 79 libraries in Kashmir Valley are functioning in rented buildings, most of which are not suitable for the purpose.

The officials in the department blamed it on the difficulties in acquiring land for the development of infrastructure.

"It is becoming difficult for the department to identify land for constructing library buildings in Kashmir. In places like Srinagar and Baramulla, the land price has gone up and the department has not enough funds to buy it", said an official.

"But some of the library buildings in Kulgam, Dooru and Charar-e-Shareef are already under construction," an official said, wishing anonymity.

He further added, "We are trying to do it in a phase-wise manner. At present, some library buildings are being constructed in the state. In the recent years, 25 libraries have been shifted to state-owned buildings while 12 others have been provided rent-free accommodation," he said.

The insiders in the department said the proprietors of the rented buildings have been increasing the rates at will.

"Often, it leads to confrontations between the department and the building owners. They ask us to vacate the buildings and sometimes demand huge sums from us as rent. We have to bear it till the government manages to establish buildings of its own," official revealed.

Also, at least 40,000 books, as per the department's records, went missing from these public libraries in 2013.

Khalsa Aid organises Iftaar party for Dalgate fire victims

❖ **Sheikh Saman**

SRINAGAR: In a heart-warming gesture, Khalsa Aid organised an Iftaar party for the fire victims of Abi Navporsa, Dalgate on 25th of Ramadhan.

Volunteers of Khalsa Aid disturbed dates and fresh fruits and disturbed 60 number of blankets among the fire victims' families of 24 April fire incident in which shelters of 26 families were gutted.

A volunteer Jeevanjot Singh said, "Our main motive was to organise this Iftaar party for these people in order to make them happy and join in their tough time which they are facing from last two months due to devastating fire,"

Another volunteer Zara Firdous hailing from Jammu district said, "It was wonderful and unforgettable time

for me to serve these people," adding that it was an overwhelming experience for her.

A fire victim Ghulam Hasan Dar while praising the work of Khalsa Aid said, "I don't know who these people are but their hospitality towards us is 'Masha Allah' good" adding that "Government should rehabilitate us before coming winter, as our families are still living in tents"

Khalsa Aid is a UK based humanitarian International origination with aim to provide humanitarian aid in disaster areas and civil conflict zones. The organisation is based upon the Sikh principle of 'Recognise the whole human race as one'

Pertinently, Khalsa Aid also came here during the floods of 2014 and provided basic needs to many flood hit families.

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