

MERC TIMES

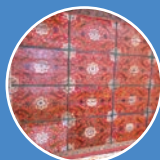


MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE,
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR



KU CELEBRATES WOMIENS' DAY

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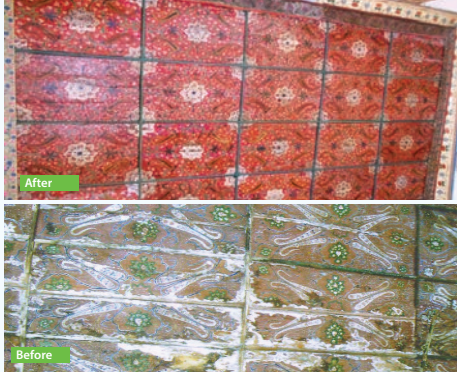


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Papier-Maché Ceiling of Shalimar Bagh Restored



❖ Imran Ali Buth

Srinagar: Age old papier-mache ceiling of Black Pavilion in Shalimar garden which had decayed over a period of time has been restored by INTACH Kashmir chapter. The project which was funded by the German Embassy, New Delhi is at its final stage of completion.

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) which is a national NGO working towards preservation and conservation of tangible and intangible heritage has its chapters all over the country. The Kashmir chapter of INTACH had submitted a proposal for restoration of Papier-Mache ceiling in Shalimar garden to the German Embassy in the year 2014, immediately after the embassy had organized a musical concert in the Shalimar garden in September, 2013. The proposal was approved by the embassy and the work started in February, 2015. "We engaged local youth who were having a background in fine art, after 3 months training course at Indra Gandhi National Institute of Art, New Delhi they started the restoration work under the supervision of renowned Art Conservator, Sanjay Dhar" said Saima Iqbal, Conservation Architect, INTACH, Kashmir Chapter. She said, "The process of restoration was based on scientific techniques and internationally prevalent practices to restore the papier-mache panels". "It was a tough task to do because the condition of panels was bad and papier-mache work had decayed considerably, but we put all our efforts to complete this delicate task" she added.

The historic papier-mache ceiling is believed to have been introduced in the Shalimar Bagh in the late 19th century Dogra period when various repairs were being carried out in the Mughal gardens. This makes the ceiling about 140 years old.

Saima said, "The work was completed in a time bound manner, we work tirelessly to make it possible. The entire process was coordinated by renowned Art Conservator, Sanjay Dhar who has worked on various internationally acclaimed restorations of art work".

The restored work is likely to be inaugurated in the first week of May, 2016 by the German Ambassador.

Low Wages Force Kashmiri Artisans to Give Up

❖ Hayat Manan

Srinagar: Kashmir is famous world-wide for its art work, like shawls, paper machie, wood carving, namdas, basketry, carpets, embroidery, willow, khatamband, etc and has got a great market globally for its design and richness in style and quality. Most of the work is exported to international markets like England, France, Germany and Middle-East countries.

Expressed his dismay over the way the art is being appreciated in state Mohammad Yousuf Mir, a specially-abled seventy year old Phireenj craftsman, who is contributing to Kashmir Arts from the past sixty years, said, "The art is dying a slow death. I have been working since I was ten years old, when there were no machine works here and there used to be good market. But it is going the other way now," he sighed.

Suffering from polio, he has mastered the skill in embroidering and despite numerous health issues he never gave up his work. Recalling early days the artist said, "There used to be a sense of pride in this profession as there was a huge market for the work in the state and outside as well."

The bleak future of the art can be understood by the fact that the hard he puts in a whole day fetches him a meager amount of 80 rupees. "It's the middle

man, who fetches the cloth from the dealer to get that designed from the artists, who is responsible for the low wages we get" he said adding that, "The middle-man gets his commission from both the dealer for getting the work done as well as from the artists for getting them the work".

He further said that the work is sold in thousands of rupees outside the state and the people who 'deserve' to get the maximum share 'unfortunately' get the minimum. However the claims were refuted by the middleman saying that the market is running 'low' for the handmade products.

Showing his concern for every Kashmiri, he said, "If the trend of paying low wages to the craftsmen continues in the valley, the time is very close when we will lose our heritage work", adding, "There are handful people in the valley who are associated with the work which is very alarming as the craft is on its verge of extinction."

Showing more satisfaction over hand-made things, Sheen Fayaz, an engineering student from Srinagar said, "Handwork was always my favorite and will continue to be so as there is a vast difference

between the designs, patterns and feel between the two. I love the handmade designs."

"There is more clarity in handwork as compared to machine work and that the thread doesn't loosen after washing it. The design is more attractive and the quality is fine" said Neha Sharma a tourist from Amritsar.



Nowroz: A new beginning and a festival of joy

❖ Danish Ali Pathan

Srinagar: In case you missed the New Year celebration this January, here is another chance of celebrating. Millions of people across the Middle-East and Central Asia celebrate this traditional Persian New Year, on 21st March of English calendar called as Nowroz, which literally means a 'New Year'.

Nowruz is not simply the first day of the Persian Calendar but this day has got some religious significance as well. "Whatever a person does on Nowruz will affect the rest of this year. So, if a person is warm and kind to their relatives, friends, and neighbors on Nowroz, then the new year will be a good one," believes Ali Mohd, a student of Kashmir University adding, "If there are fights and disagreements the year will be bad one."

In Kashmir this day is celebrated with avidness and enthusiasm. There is a tradition of making different varieties of dishes and foods in Kashmir. During the Nowruz holidays, people are expected to visit one another (mostly limited to families, friends and neighbors) in the form of short house visits, which are usu-

ally reciprocated. Typically, the youth will visit the elders first, and the elders return their visit later. In rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir people start planting trees, because the season is very nice.

In Iran people decorate their house on this eve and families gather together to observe the rituals, people call this as the day of joy because, it has been celebrated here for over 3,000 years. Nowruz is the most important holiday in Iran, marking the official New Year of the country. In Iran, following the 1979 Revolution, some elements from the government have attempted to suppress Nowruz with very little success. These considered Nowruz a pagan holiday and a distraction from Islamic holidays.

"It is the day when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) held Ali (PBUH) on his shoulders to destroy the Quraishie's idols in the house of God (Kabbah)," said another student Sarwer Ali, from Department of Kashmir History of Kashmir University.

The day also assumes special significance for Shia Muslims as it was on 21st of March 656 A.D when Imam, Ali (R.A) assumed the office of the Muslim caliphate.

Kashmir University's First Woman DCDC

"As a woman it is my duty to help other woman. God has given me a chance and I want to utilize it to its full."

❖ **Muneem Farooq**

Srinagar: Professor Neelofar Khan has taken over as the first woman Dean College Development Council (DCDC) of the University of Kashmir. She replaced Professor GM Shah whose term as DCDC ended on 31st January.

She has served the University in various capacities, now holds the distinction of being the varsity's first woman Dean Students Welfare. A doctorate in Home Sciences from the University, Professor Neelofar has been a two-time member of the University Council, the varsity's highest decision-making body. She has also served as Dean, Applied Sciences and Technology, Head of Home Sciences Department, Director of Women's Studies Centre at the University of Kashmir.

Professor Neelofar has also been a member of many prestigious associations including the Home Science Association of India (HSAI), Nutrition Society of India (NSI), National Alliance of Women's Organization (NAWO) and All Indian Women's Association (IWA).



Professor Neelofar has also worked as a UGC's Regional Coordinator for North Western Region in capacity building programs of women in higher education. She was also a member of

UGC's consultative committee for these programs.

Professor Neelofar has served as the DSW of the varsity for more than seven years. While in office, she has

conducted a number of youth festivals like weeklong SONZAL and various other extra-curricular programs for students of different colleges.

Admitting of being 'very sensitive' towards problems of the girl students, Professor Neelofar said, "As a woman it is my duty to help other woman. God has given me a chance and I want to utilize it to its full." Meanwhile, Professor was the first to ply a special bus exclusively for girl students of the University.

She has also been instrumental in introducing a certificate course in Woman and Law in Woman Studies Centre. "While in Woman Studies I have been organizing a number of activities for woman development including sensitization programs and awareness programs," Professor said adding that "I want women to progress in the contemporary society that is more of patriarchic in nature."

As a DCDC, Professor Neelofar assured that she will try and bring the associated and the private colleges at par with country's top ranking colleges.

Kashmir University Celebrates World Womens Day



❖ **Saher Iqbal**

Srinagar: The day-long seminar titled "Sensitization of police and media personnel in curbing violence against women " was organised by Women's Study Centre University of Kashmir in collaboration with Dean College Development Council, Department of Students Welfare and Department of Law.

Chairing the seminar, organised to mark the International Womens Day , Professor Andrabi,Vice Chancellor KU said "We have to deal with things and practices which are not in confor-

mity with our religious teachings and cultural values, and once we succeed in doing so, our society would be free from all evils and the world would be a better place for both men and women."

He further added that the incidence of crime against women "appears to be on rise and the society has to come forward to fight this disturbing trend".

On the occasion , Professor Neelofar Khan,Dean College Development Council said the seminar has been organised to see "what mechanisms and laws are available for women folk to

safeguard their dignity and honour". She called for strict enforcement of laws to ensure that crime against women decrease.

While addressing the audiences, Deputy General of Police (Central Kashmir Range), Ghulam Hassan Bhat said," Sensitization of Police personnel on issues related to violence against women is very crucial".

Dean Students Welfare, Professor Fayaz Ahmad said,"Perhaps our social system has collapsed and that's why we need to re-educate ourselves and ensure that nobody's right to privacy and

honour is trampled

Professor Beauty Bandy from Department of Law KU spoke about the ways and methods to stop violence against women ."The NGO's can play a vital role in empowering women socially and economically. They can impart them, self-help training. We should empower women to help them protect themselves from any exploitation",She further added

A documentary "Eve's Silent Nightmare" produced by Dr Saleema Jan from EMMRC, was also screened on the occasion.

Kausernag: An Unexplored Destination



❖ Ali Pathan

Srinagar: To the south of summer capital Srinagar in district Kulgam is a trekking famous place known as Kausernag, one of highest altitude springs of Kashmir valley, situated at a height of 12140 feet above sea level and some 120kms from Srinagar via the famous Aharbal waterfalls. This spring is located in the Pir Panjal mountain range.

Despite of tranquil beauty and serenity, a feeble amount of people visit this pristine lake, the prime reason is that they are not familiar about the place, the second reason being complicated trek route without signboards and guidance.

A trekker Mudasir, a Bsc student from Anantnag while sharing his experience said, "Once we planned to visit Kausernag but unfortunately we lost the way as there were no sign boards. We hardly found a hut for taking shelter."

"I have heard from my grandparents a little about Kausernag. We planned a trip but many people suggested that the route is complicated so we decided not to visit the place," said Shabir hailing from Srinagar city.

The apathy of government towards the spring is not bringing the spring to limelight. So far, the government hasn't taken any major step towards its development.

"The ecological disturbance is our prime concern. The goal is to develop places enroute Kousernag especially Kongewatan, which will encourage the trekkers as well as tourists to visit the place "said chief executive officer of Aharbal Development Authority.

Let us wait and watch whether the administration takes up the matter and gives a Kausernag a new level and identity. A lot needs to be taken care of as mentioned by the CEO of Aharbal Development Authority

And Tabasum's Dreams Bloom

❖ Saba Gul

Srinagar: Nowadays, women are treading into almost all spheres of the world and have proved themselves independent. In Kashmir, entrepreneurship is no longer the domain of men alone. Today more and more women are taking up entrepreneurial activities to generate self employment. **Rubeena Tabassum**, a housewife of Yarikalan, Budgam is one such example.

Despite being a successful house wife she was not satiated with doing only house hold chores which women are mainly responsible for. She desired for something different and beneficial for the society. While, listening to a radio program "Manzilen Aur Bhi Hain" by Entrepreneur Development Institute, she aspired to become an entrepreneur and anticipated the idea of establishing a commercial floriculture unit. "I promptly took the course and received training from Jammu Kashmir Entrepreneur Development Institute (JKEDI),but I was disheartened with the poor response from some financial institutions", says Rubeena. After rejection from money lending institutions, as a resolute lady she did not lose her hope. Her husband took the consumer loan and backed her project.

Thereby she started **UNITED FLORITECH**, a unit for cultivating carnation flowers on four kanal lease lands."Today,

I have five green houses of carnation and lilies from Holland which grow in much controlled temperature and humidity under these shade houses. Also an open cultivation of Gladiolus is on more six kanal lease lands." she said. Her business is successfully flourishing and making good turnover. Rubeena wants to further diversify her business towards aromatic and medicinal plants.

Rubeena has also received J&K Bank women entrepreneur award of the year 2006 on 8th march 2007 by the then J&K Bank Dr. Haseeb Drabu on International Women's Day for excelling in floriculture.

"Balancing my time between home and work is really a daunting task but my patience is my real mantra. People in rural Kashmir are very conservative they do not accept business women. Most of the agricultural work is done by women. For them the domain of women is fixed."Rubeena asserts.

Rubeena believes that a woman is a blessing to mankind and if she has zeal and courage she can do wonders. She intended to become a medico but realized her dream after marriage. "Today I regret those days when I desired to become a doctor as I never knew that my destiny had planned something beautiful which will enhance my abilities and bring me such honour", she asserted, while giving all credits to her husband and thanking him for backing her in tough times.

Tulip Garden Open for Tourists



❖ Wajahat Shabir

Srinagar: Asia's largest Tulip garden was opened for the tourists on Tuesday. Indra Gandhi Memorial Tulip garden is house to the 2 million plants. Every year the garden used to be open for tourists in the month of the April, but, this time around it has been opened early. It has been opened three weeks before it used to be.

This is not only benefit for the Tourism department, but, it has brought joy on the faces of tourists who have come from different states of India and from the foreign. Round about 100,000 tourists visited in the 2014 more tourists are expected to arrive this time around.

There are more than 70 species of Tulips on vast land over the famous foothills of Zabarwan.

Due to warm weather, the tulips bloomed earlier and the garden was thrown opened before schedule. Opening the garden before schedule will have no impact on the tourists or the tulip bulbs, said Director Floriculture Talat Parveez.

The opening of the famous garden begins the tourism season in the valley. Though the garden was opened silently there will be a grand opening later. The garden will be open for two weeks. He added.

Thousand visitors were seen enjoying the bloom." We are here for the first time and we are lucky to be present here. We heard that garden will open early this year. So here are we enjoying in beautiful Tulip garden, said Rakesh Sharma.

Speaking to theMERCTimes, Imran Ahmed, incharge Tulip Garden said "we lack proper advertisement for the tulip garden. People in India are unaware of the fact that how beautiful Tulip garden is and we also have a capacity of hosting 10 lacks visitors at a time.

Proper advertisement means more tourists which in turn will boost up economy sector of the State and about the early opening of the Tulip garden this year, weather has been the key responsible and if the weather remains same then the Tulip may survive for more day. He added

SUNDAY GRADUATES



❖ Saba Khan

Srinagar: After early nineties when the state began to seethe with rising unemployment, some well-known avenues of living found closure.

To this effect, a group of dispirited youth decided to brave the straitened time. So while everyone else would work for the six days, this group thought to try its hand in business on Sundays.

Those were the formative years of what has come to be known today as Sunday Market. Starting from the TRC ground, the market stretches all the way up to Lal Chowk. Vendors begin erecting stalls and spreading out their merchandise on the folding hammocks by as early as 8 A.M.

There are pillows, cushion covers, curtains, clothing, and handicrafts. You name it. It is a paradise for the families who dislike wasteful splurge and prefer sagacious and tight-fisted investment.

By afternoon, it becomes near-impossible for commuters to walk through in the wake of the surging crowd. Sunday Market is famous for selling its merchandise at inexpensive rates. Often buyers end up taking away their item of choice at a throwaway price they wouldn't get elsewhere. The market draws a huge rush catering largely the urban bourgeois of Srinagar city.

From its 27 years of existence, the market has become a defining feature of the Sunday outings of an ordinary Srinagar citizen.

The striking thing about this market is that the vendors are mostly educated youth with impressive graduate and post graduate degrees.

For instance, Showkat, a textile merchant from Pampore is a graduate of SP College. Ehsaan from Hazratbal, a grocery seller passed his

B.com from the Islamia College with 50 per cent.

Showkat 30 has done graduation from SP College with having 55% in B.A stream and selling clothes in the market. Ehsaan 24 from Hazratbal has completed graduation from Islamia college hawal. He had submitted lots of government forms.

Jan Mohammad 25 from ALAMGARI BAZAR selling utensils in the market. After completing graduation I applied for the job but when the result did not come I started selling clothes in the market to support my family. There is a lack of private as well as government sector jobs.

Nasir 26 completed graduation from Kashmir University and is selling clothes in the market. To support the family I started to sell things and also doing the private job.

Surprisingly, Yasoob another vendor is a post graduate from Kashmir University. "In the absence of any job and pressure from my family to work, I had to choose this business," he says. Many youths denied giving details about identity fearing "shame" as they had been vending groceries and clothes despite lofty education background.

Because of this, many observers believe, the lives of our youth are destroyed. In Srinagar, there is a big issue related to jobs where talent and merit have been ignored this is the also reason of the unemployment in the Srinagar city. Also, there is a lack of 4th class job in government sector for Srinagar people. The government is not doing anything related to that and this has become a big problem for the educated youth of Srinagar said Ehsaan.

The hopeless and depressed youth of Srinagar does not bother about government to provide them jobs. Sunday market vendors say that we want to work legally as we are the bonafide citizens of the society. "We just want to work freely," says Shabir, a vendor, while trying to meticulously arrange the items he is selling. "We have no other source of income."

Ganderbal awaits construction of Bridge

❖ Showkat Wani

Srinagar: The residents of Ganderbal awaits construction of concrete Bridge in Wayil. Commuters due to which locals are suffering and they have no way to then through steel bidge.

"We demand construction of two lane Concrete bridge over Nallah Sind at wayil in place of makeshift steel bridge. The bridge is very vital as it connects Srinagar-Leh National highway (NH 1D) at Wayil village, 8KM from Ganderbal town", said Imtiyaz Ahmed a locale.

Locals say that make shift steel Bridge was constructed in 1993 after floods washed away 40 year old wooden bridge. Since then government didn't paid any heed toward construction of full flagged bride. Sharif-u-Din, Sarpanch of Wayil village said, "We have many times approached to ministers and officers for construction of Concert Bridge, but, nothing was done".

All most all the vehicular movement which leads to Sonmarg, Ladakh and to other northern places of district passes over the bridge. Concrete bridge can decipher the travelling problems of the area, he added.

"There is huge rush of tourist and pilgrims during summers especially during Amarnath Yatara, throughout that time commuters badly suffer as bridge is one way which causes traffic jams for hours." Towseef Ahmad a commuter said.

According to local residents, the makeshift bridge was early managed by Border road origination (BRO) beacon wing. They didn't construct the concrete bridge, then last year in 2015 government handed over the bridge to R&B department for further management.

Beard: Trending Fashion Among Youth in Valley

❖ BISMA FAROOQ



Srinagar: Saved suggestions could be numerous; obsessions might be abiding otherwise, dudes in Kashmir going gaga with a new trend of mounting out beards. Becoming more plugged to the new trends day by bay, the influential craze is flattering to the heights in the valley. Beard looks carried over on social media is making a thumb up every now and then.

Beards are seen with a many possible looks, like Big Bushy Beards, Designer Stubble, Simple Beards and what not. Although the trend is making its way out from the western countries, at the same time this is seen most in Kashmir. "You can call it beard but I call it awesomeness escaping through my face," a well known Kashmiri fashion designer, Shahid Rashid Bhat said. "Being a fashion designer, I have to remain active with every little element of fashion cycle.

Fashion does not only start from shoes to upper, for me it starts from head to toe," he further added.

"I am kind of a hard working guy and I like rough looks with an unclear beard moreover it adds charm to my personality," Adil Reshi, a young businessmen said. Smart looks are seen everywhere in Kashmir with no one remaining back to adopt more prominent ones.

Adding to the "Hipster" styles of the Kashmiri youth, beards are getting popular in every corner of the valley. "Beard gives me a manlier and attractive look that is why I have grown it", a youngster

with facial fuzz said. "More importantly it requires no exercise to grow a well attractive beard" he added.

Nevertheless guys are doing whatever to keep their trendy beard into the turf. The attraction is becoming fascination with its health benefits. Researchers say that beard contains a disease-fighting bacterium that aids the fight against antibiotic resistance.

Commercialization of Agricultural Land

❖ **Bentul Huda**

Srinagar: At a time when people are protesting against the implementation of National Food Security Act (NFSA) in Kashmir, the conversion of agriculture land for commercial purposes is increasing at an alarming rate in the valley.

The rice fields of Kashmir valley are diminishing day by day and nothing is done to stop the use of agriculture land for commercial purposes. The agriculture land which was used to cultivate rice in past is now transformed into residential houses, hotels, and shopping malls.

The provisions of J&K Land Revenue Act 1996 prohibit the conversion of paddy or vegetable land into any other use. But authorities had failed to stop the conversion of agriculture land.

The conversion of Agriculture land has seen a mass rise in last few years due to the high economic activity and scores of shopping malls, hotels, and residential houses had been constructed on these lands

“The landowners sell their lands at cheaper rates to land brokers and they first make roads through these agriculture lands then accordingly make plots by filling the land

and after that these plots are used for commercial purposes,” Zubair Ahmad, an environmental science student said.

The land owners who used to cultivate rice in their lands in past said that they are not able to cultivate anything in these fields as their children are not willing to do this work now.

“Our new generation feels ashamed of doing farming and they don’t want to make farming as their full-time profession,” Nazir Ahmad a land owner said

“Due to the rapid urbanization of our societies day by day landowners did not like this profession now as it needs lot of hard work and instead sell these lands or built shopping malls or hotels so that they can earn money easily,” he added

As per Agriculture figures, two lakh canals of agriculture of the net sowed or cultivated area of 3.5 lakh hectare has been converted for commercial and other purposes in Kashmir over the years.

The experts are of the view that the increasing rate of use of agriculture land for commercial purposes is leading the state to further dependence on food imports from outside the state.

People Gloom as Badamwaer Blooms



❖ **Adnan Hilal**

Srinagar: The Almond Grove of Srinagar popularly known as Badawaer has turned into a hub of illegal activities. Locals and tourists find it inconvenient to visit Badamwari because of the intolerant activities like gambling, drugs, liquor consumption prevailing in the park

A local resident of Hawal, Altaf Ahmed said, “I used to visit the park in early morning with my kids but ever since the immoral activities have dominated the park, it has become quite embarrassing to roam in the park with my small kids.”

After months of chilling cold, the arrival of spring finally brings bliss both to the natives & foreigners. It gives them a reason to celebrate a life full of bloom. Because of an eco friendly weather, people look out for going to outings &

family picnic at such places. But this year, spring has drawn a gloom on the face of its visitors. People from Badamwari & the adjoining areas (Hawal, Zadibal, Gojwara, Rainawari) have expressed anger over the continuing immoral activities taking place in the public parks.

“Badamwari is not only a public park but a national heritage. People who are unceasing the heinous crimes in the public parks should be strictly punished by the law” said Showkat Ahmed Hakak, a daily visitor to the park.

“Immoral activities in the park have become a concern & authorities of the park are keeping an eye to maintain a social environment of the park”, said an official of the Badamwari Park.

Sources have said that police has dispatched a team to keep an close eye on the culprits who are indulging in disrupting the social environment of the public parks.

Cement Factories, Illegal Constructions Threaten Saffron Cultivation

❖ **Bhat Mohd Hussain**

Srinagar: As many as 300 villages in and around Pampore involved in saffron cultivation are battling to save the ‘Golden Crop’ which has shown a steep decrease in production over the past few years.

The growers blame advancement of dozens of cement industries, illegal constructions and road widening on massive scale besides shortage of proper irrigation facilities for the downfall.

As per reports, in 1997, 5,707 Hectares of land was under saffron cultivation which decreased by 2,697 hectares, thus leaving only 3,010 Hectares under the cultivation.

The annual cultivation also dropped to mere Six metric Tons from 16 Metric Tons. According to farmers, illegal constructions on large scale have led to the massive decrease in the cultivable land. According to Dr Farooq Lone of Sheri Kashmir University Of Agricultural Science and Technology (SKUAST), it is the particulate pollution especially cement dust and lack of proper irrigation on time that has lead to the major decrease in the cultivation of the crop.

According to data furnished by the growers, the turnover of 15-20 Kilograms per Kanal in preceding years has sharply dropped to Seven to Ten Kilograms per Kanal this year.

The losses incurred by the growers

can be ascertained by the fact that the Kashmir produces the world’s most expensive variety of saffron priced at Rs 2.5 Lakh to Rs 3 Lakh per Kilogram, thus causing a huge loss to the growers.

According to a grower of Karewa Pampore, who cultivates about six kanals of land annually has faced a considerable downfall of 25% in the cultivation. Many other similar cases have been witnessed in and around the area.

The ‘golden crop’ provides livelihood to thousands of persons directly and indirectly. “The concerned, therefore, need to take measures to improve production by providing knowhow and high yield seeds. Mass awareness programs should be organized to

promote the latest techniques. Besides, administration should take immediate steps to improve irrigation facilities and a special care should be taken in the month of September when the need of proper irrigation is very high,” said a grower.

The authorities believe lack of proper use of techniques and latest tools and implements by the growers is causing the fall in the produce. They said the growers need to abandon the primitive modes of cultivation and seek the advice of the experts in future.

It can be noted that the area of cultivation which comes under National Saffron Mission (NSM) has marginally better produce that the remaining area

WORLD CUP FEVER

❖ **Mu'zzam**

Srinagar: ITemperatures are on the rise as the sixth edition of the ICC World Twenty20 tournament strides towards the knockout phase. The competition got underway on the 8th of March, 2016 in Nagpur with the final match scheduled to be played on the 3rd of April at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. 5 other cities Dharamsala, Bangalore, Mohali, Mumbai and New Delhi are going to host the matches of the tournament spanning over 27 days. This is the first time that India is hosting the ICC World T20 competition since lifting the trophy in its inaugural edition in 2007 when South Africa hosted the tournament.

The spirits of the Indian cricket team are up having recently lifted the Asia Cup title for the 6th time

after defeating Bangladesh in the final by 8 wickets. With that being said, the hosts should expect resilient competition from all the other teams playing in the tournament. No team has yet won the ICC T20 world tournament on multiple occasions. The inaugural edition saw India defeat Pakistan at the Wanderers in Johannesburg. The 2009 tournament took place in England and was won by previous runner up Pakistan who defeated Sri Lanka in the final at Lords. England defeated Australia in the final of the third tournament hosted in 2010 by the West Indies. West Indies won the fourth edition which was held in Asia by defeating Sri Lanka in the final. The fifth tournament, the 2014 edition was hosted by Bangladesh with Sri Lanka emerging as the winners.

The matches played so far in the group stages have been nothing short of enthralling in the way

they have turned out to be. We have seen some incredible display of cricketing skills on the field coupled with some nail biting finishes. The beauty of Twenty 20 cricket has come to the foreground as it has once again been proved from the matches that no team can be considered a minnow walking into a match. The unpredictability of the game just makes it more worthwhile. Fans have had the opportunity to witness daring run chases as well as some strong target defenses.

So as this competition progresses further we can only expect the fireworks to increase in numbers and in intensity. Let's hope for a cracker of a competition between the bat and the ball in all the remaining matches of the competition as well.

Cheers to competition.

Cheers to Cricket.

Central Government Job Plan "Himayat" Fiasco



❖ **Munawar Hussain**

Srinagar: To deal with severe disturbance and turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir, GOI had announced two of its ambitious programmes – Udaan and Himayat hopefully for the betterment of both sections of society. To go with subsequent, "Himayat", it was brought about under the central rural development ministry in 2011, with the duration of five years in enriching youth with different job skills in a choice of domains.

"Himayat is a skill development training programme by the ministry of rural development where unemployed youth gets skill development training in various spheres like BDO, CSSA, Hospitality etc", Mir Faheem expounded, in charge at Himayat centre in Budgam. He further added that under this scheme a student gets three months training after which they are endowed with job placement.

A job oriented project 'Himayat' was seen as a ray of hope by youth. They couldn't resist their temptation of getting the advantage of the

project at once launched. Seeing a bunch of students for enrolment at centre premises speak volumes about the scheme.

"It is quite good mainly for dropouts who end up in odd jobs due to lacking of skill from they get exposure and jobs in organized sectors. Duration, of course, that is three months the student finds interesting during which he/she gets 1000 monthly and 2000 per month for six more months as PPS(post placement support) from govt of India and a

certificate", Shipra Thapa, a teacher, accounts as well.

Under the project, people are placed in different job sectors in hospitality, hotel management, call centers and in other sectors outside. But youth is dissatisfied with jobs provided due to low salary, indecent living place and working, so leaving their jobs. Many beneficiaries have left the job trained under the programme.

Women, in particular, getting training under the scheme couldn't avail of job offers. For the matter of security sense, they are not allowed to job outside. "Women would not be an advantage of opportunity unless private sectors are established here", Ishrat banno, a new trainee at the institute, said.

Non availability of jobs in State due to not having private sector apparatus is making incessantly inroads into the Himayat scheme. 'Himayat' does not serve the whole purpose for which it was setup. Peace and tranquility seem a dream in Kashmir but yes, to some extent; it has given hope to much hopeless across Kashmir region!

12 YEARS, NOT ENOUGH

❖ **Nadeem**

Srinagar: Twelve years after the project was launched, the construction of the much-hyped 'State of Art' library in the heart of city centre is hanging fire. Yet the authorities claim that soon the project will enter its final leg.

Being built at an estimated cost of Rs 17.34 Crore, the foundation stone for Sri Pratap Singh (SPS) Library was laid amid much fanfare in 2004 by the then chief minister late Mufi Muhammad Sayeed at Maulana Azad Road. The state authorities had probably promised the moon by setting the deadline at six months.

Officials claim that 'several reasons came in the way of completion'. Disinterest of government authorities and lack of funding too played its part. "Earlier one lady had claimed in court that this land belonged to her, while a portion of this allotted land was taken by the College of Education. The construction was stayed by the court for many years," said an official in the constructing agency, wishing not to be named.

The government, for many years, stopped disbursement of funds for the construction of the library due to which it has consumed these 12 years, said the official. Presently, two stories, of the five story building have been completed with brick work, while the same for other three-stories is incomplete.

Once the library is complete, it would also have an art gallery, auditorium, exhibition hall, children section, researcher's cabin, a cafeteria and fire proof blocks for manuscripts.

Absence of Zebra Crossings, Bus Stops Poses Risk to Commuters

❖ WASEEM AHMAD

Srinagar: Absence of Zebra crossings and improper use of bus stops is giving tough time to the pedestrians in crossing the roads as well as smooth flow of traffic in Srinagar city and in other parts of the Valley.

The black and white painted strips on roads known as zebra crossings which are used to cross the roads all over the world is still a distant dream in Kashmir as the lack of awareness among the people and absence of zebra crossings on most of the road is posing problems to the pedestrians.

Though zebra crossings were marked on some of the roads in Srinagar in past but they have now faded away and nothing has been done on their maintenance.

According to pedestrians, zebra crossings here are painted only at few plac-

es in Srinagar area only when there is the annual Durbar move from Jammu to Srinagar in April but no awareness is done by the authorities about using the crossings.

“There are no zebra crossings here on most of the roads; people often jump on roads while crossing it which poses a serious threat of accidents,” Zubair Ahmad a resident of Srinagar said

It becomes very difficult for pedestrians particularly elderly people and school going children to cross the busy roads of Srinagar as most of the roads leading to various administration departments and educational institutions are without zebra crossings.

“We often have to wait for a long period so that we can cross the road as there is no zebra crossing around our school,” Abid a student said

In addition to the problem of Zebra Crossings here, the other problem



faced by people in Srinagar is the improper use of Bus stops.

The improper use of bus stops in Srinagar city often leads to the frequent traffic jams and hampers the movement of smooth flow of traffic.

The minibuses and private cabs hardly stop at designated bus stops and stop in the middle of the roads to pick-up and drop the passengers.

“They often race each other to pick up the passengers that lead to traffic jams and pose a serious threat of accidents on roads,” a student said

Meanwhile SSP traffic (Srinagar) Maqsood Ul Zaman said, “We are doing our best to check the traffic violations but it is up to the people to obey traffic rules and if they properly follow these rules, traffic jams will not occur frequently.”

“We have been time and again organizing and will organize in future more awareness programs to educate people about the traffic rules and about the zebra crossings. We will also convey to the concerned authorities to kindly maintain zebra crossings at vital junctions,” he assured.

Smoking Epidemic in Kashmir

❖ Sabeeha Shaheen

Srinagar: Termed as the cancer capital of India, Jammu and Kashmir has become an abode for tobacco users. With almost 12% of population smoking cigarettes, which is more than double the national average of 5.7%, the rise of cancers in Kashmir from 1448 cases in 2009 to 1768 cases in 2015 has been due to high rates of smoking in children, young and adults.

Having a very high prevalence of tobacco consumption that is leading to epidemic proportion of cancers, heart diseases, respiratory illnesses etc.

Mainly in the young people. Nearly Eight Lakhpeople of Jammu & Kashmir will die prematurely from 27 different tobacco-related lethal diseases according to a report released by an NGO, Voluntary Health Association of India, which works on Tobacco control.

J&K government has initiated certain measures to curb the maniac of smoking. Enforcement of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of

Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 is being implemented here through different government departments with police being the



enforcing agency and district administration at the forefront.

Youth being most gullible to the abuse of tobacco, Education Department has of late declared all educational institutes as ‘No Smoking Zones’.

“We understand the gravity of this issue. In this effect, we have issued an order asking all educational heads to make sure that ‘No Smoking’ boards are placed at prominent places in their respective institutes.” Said Director Education, Kashmir, Shah Faisal.

District administration is focusing on monitoring the sale of tobacco products. In few districts, administration has removed all advertising materials, promoting the use of tobacco.

“According to section 5 of COTPA direct or indirect advertisement of tobacco products/brands are strictly prohibited and punishable. We initiated

a drive last month and removed all hoardings from main markets in the district. If shopkeepers and distributors don’t stop such practices, we in future will be imposing fines also. Which range from Rs 1000 to 1 lakh, depending on kind of offence.” Conveyed, Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag, Muneer-ul-Islam.

These measures seem to be like a straw in the big murky pond. Still a lot of things needs to be done by both government and society together.

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