

MERC TIMES



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UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

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Govt Plans to setup Handicraft Museum in Srinagar

Old heritage structure near exhibition ground is proposed to be restored and reused as handicraft museum

❖ Imran Ali

Srinagar: In order to revive the cultural assets of Kashmir, J&K Government plans to restore the old heritage structure near exhibition ground. The building which is in dilapidated condition is proposed to be reused as handicraft museum.

Department of Tourism, Kashmir had prepared a concept plan for restoration of old heritage building at exhibition ground on the directions of Dr. Asgar Hassan Samoon, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir. Dr. Samoon chaired a meeting on 13th November, 2015 to discuss usage of unused land and building near the exhibition ground and the Tourism department was directed to prepare a concept plan for its restoration, officials said.

Speaking to MERC Times, Mehmood Ahmad Shah, Director Tourism, Kashmir said, "A detailed project report for restoration of old heritage structure near

exhibition ground has been prepared and submitted to the administration department for further approval".



The site which is located near exhibition ground comprises an old Educational Structure which was constructed in the early part of the 20th century as

per local sources. During the post Independence period the building was used as a state level training institute for teachers. The building was partially damaged in a fire incident which took place during the early part of the 1990's, since then the building remains in dilapidated condition. Adjacent to the structure, there is open land which is currently used by Srinagar Development Authority as paid parking slot.

"The building is an important part of the fast vanishing Colonial Architecture of Kashmir which was developed during the ending parts of the 19th century and the pre-Independence period" said Hakim Sameer Hamdani, an architect. He said, "Highly reminiscent of European architecture, this architectural style was prevalent in many of the civil lines of the city, especially around Wazir bagh, Samander Bagh, Residency road etc. Unfortunately most of this architectural legacy has been lost in recent years at an ever alarming pace".

Budgam an ideal locale for earning "Sand Money"

Health of local people deteriorating due to unabated soil excavation

❖ Munawar Hussain

BUDGAM: Unabated soil excavation in Budgam is proving to be hazardous to human life, affecting their lives severely in terms of health, shelter and other necessary resources like water to survive.

The activity of soil extracts that is taking place in many districts in Kashmir has damaged the ecological stability; also worsened the living conditions of people to a large degree and Budgam district is no exception.

Known for its expanse of Karewa land commonly known as 'Wuder' Budgam has been facing soil excavation issue for a decade and has now reached to an alarming level.

An Environmental science student, Rahil Ali, said, "The soil digging started back in 2000 at Budgam and is still continuing. Throughout this long period, beautiful peaks of green karewa



land have been razed to the ground which poorly damaged the fragile ecology. It also resulted in infertility of soil owing to which our agricultural land is devoid of any vegetation".

Soil mining has had a serious effect on overall productivity of cultivation. Treasure of worth lakhs like an almond, apple, saffron and the precious resource of water particularly has dwindled hugely.

On this grave issue Panch, Maqbool Dar of a village, Rashipora, district Budgam has expressed dismay over it, "There is big Mafia behind this illegal activity of soil mining proved much disadvantageous to our agricultural

land and environment. It has left our large swathes of land disfigured with signs of deep gorges and ravines".

"Karewas land was a repository of crop production like saffron, almonds, apricots, etc. Majority of the people would do business of saffron and almond and earn their livelihood but illegal practice of digging has cost the source of their living. And mainly there is to be seen paucity of water- a precious resource Budgam was known for", he further said.

Significantly, Unhygienic environment emanated by soil digging is taking a toll on the lives of people.

"People living in areas where soil

excavation is taking place are highly prone to chronic pulmonary diseases causing difficulty in breathing due to inhalation. They need to be very much cautious of it. Patients often complain of frequent chest diseases like inflammation, chest pain it is in that of inhalation of unclean air stuffed with dust emanating from soil digging sights. The disease could cause lung cancer in longer terms. Dr Muzafar, a physician warned.

"There are also skin related problems. Skin color gets changed and proves allergic to skin infection", he said

Several areas in Budgam like Dadina, Kakunmarun, Garind where soil digging is taking place unabatedly. Tippers that transport heavy amount of soil are constantly damaging roads and houses.

Hussain Ali, a resident, rued that rush of tippers carrying soil from Dadina village has damaged our houses and walls. The columns of dusts raising from roads are settling on houses and creating health problems". Locals have made their presence felt in front of administration several times but to no avail.

KU hosts educational conference

❖ Hayat manan

SRINAGAR: A one day educational conference was held at the Media House, Kashmir University to make students cognizant about the various courses being taught at Al-Falah University

The Conference was inaugurated and presided over by the Jawad Ahmad Siddiqui, Chancellor, Al-Falah University.

On this occasion Jawad Ahmad Siddiqui, Chancellor, Al-Falah University, said “all the courses are approved by statutory councils like AICTE and NCTE and it is catering the educational needs of large score of Kashmiri students who prefer to study in NCR, Delhi”.

He also informed that apart from this, most attracting factor for Kashmiri students in Al-Falah University is financial assistance through a variety of Scholarships.



He further added that during last year around 200 Kashmiri students received scholarships form AICTE as well as Ministry of Minority and also announced free

seats for orphan candidates.

The academicians present over the dais felt that Al-Falah University is evolving as a good alternative for Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

It is good to see that various courses are being offered at Al-Falah University. Also there is sense of security in AL-Falah University as compared to other universities. I am looking forward to avail a course there, said Iqbal Ahmed a student.

A number of prominent personalities from Kashmir were present in the function. Academicians from University of Kashmir including Professor Mohammad Yousuf Ganaie Head, Department of History; Professor Nazir Ahmad Shah, Ex-Dean Faculty of Engineering and currently Principal, SSM college of Engineering, Dr. Nasir Iqbal chief Proctor, University of Kashmir.

Astronomy workshop at KU

❖ Showkat Wani

Srinagar: A three day workshop on astronomy was held at Kashmir university. Teachers from Fifty higher secondary school of Jammu and Kashmir participated in the workshop. The participant teachers took part in activities conducted by astronomers and science communicators from across India.

They were engaged in hands-on demonstrations in astronomy that can be taught to their students. These included measuring distances and heights using

own simple telescopes using very low-cost equipment. They also learned how to use their telescopes to observe the Sun safely. This was in preparation for showing the transit of planet Mercury to students on 9th May.

I developed good knowledge here while participating in the workshop. It was a nice experience. I hope we will get more such kind of workshop, said Asif Ahmed, a student.

The workshop was organized jointly by Kashmir University’s Physics Department and Public Outreach and Education Committee (POEC) of the

CM witnesses ‘Mercury transit’



❖ Saba Khan

Srinagar: In first of its kind the Chief Minister of J&K Mehbooba Mufti had a view of Transit of Mercury at Kashmir University.

President, Astronomical Society of India, Prof. Ajit Kembhari, explained to the Chief Minister the spectacle, which is something rare because it requires the Sun, Mercury and Earth to be in almost perfect alignment. It happens just a dozen or so times per century and the next time when the event will occur is in 2032, he added.

The Chief Minister was also briefed about the need to set up a centre of astrophysics in Kashmir University for popularising the culture of exploration and inculcating scientific thinking among aspiring students.

The Education Minister floated the

idea of introducing astrophysics as a subject at undergraduate level.

The VC underlined the need for setting up an observatory in Kashmir to help promote astronomy as a subject.

Because of cloudy weather, the Chief Minister watched the event through live transmission. She also presented a telescope to a group of young girl students on the occasion.

Minister for Education, Naeem Akhter and Vice Chancellor, KU, Prof. Khursheed Iqbal Andrabi, were also present on the occasion.

Director, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Prof. Sree Kumar, Secretary, ASI, Prof. D. Banerjee, Deputy Commissioner, Farooq Ahmed Lone and Director, School Education, Shah Faisel were also present on the function.



the Sun and measuring the elevation of the Sun. They were also trained in role playing games that can be used to explain the motion of the Sun and the Moon as well as time and seasons.

Speaking on occasion Rakesh Sharma, professor said, “it was a good experience to work with the Physics department. We are looking forward to organize such kind of workshop again at Kashmir University.”

The teachers then developed their

ASI, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Vigyan Prasar; Navnirmitti Learning Foundation; Science Teachers Association of Kashmir and Directorate of School Education Kashmir, at Kothi bagh Higher Secondary School

The training sessions were conducted by Dr T V Venkateswaran and Ms Irfana Begum from Vigyan Prasar; Purushottam Tripathy and Dr. Chatterjee from Navnirmitti.

New hydroelectric power project Ganderbal in limbo

❖ **Mohammad Hussain**

Ganderbal: Government fails to start work on multipurpose 93 Megawatts power project here. Non serious of successive governments had put the vital project on back-burner. Officials blame lack of coordination between PDC and government a main reason for delay in execution of project.

Sources said that the proposal for the plant was made in 1992 then after the long gape of 16 years government approved the project and assured that work on the project would be started soon but successive regimes have failed to initiate work on the project.

According to official Sources estimated cost of the project is 817 crore exclusive of rehabilitation. 34 acre private land was acquired in 2013 and 100 crore were spent on rehabilitation. Apart from that land for project consists of 27 acres forest land, 17 acres government land.

Sources said total installed capacity of the project is 93 MW which consists of 3 units of 31 MWs each. The project will have long tunnel

of 10.08 KM from Prang to Beehama to carry water. Head work of project will be at Prang and power station will be constructed at Beehama near Ganderbal town.

Technical officer of the power project said that project is multipurpose besides generating electricity it will also provide water supply to srinager city and will also be used for irrigation purpose.

Residents of Ganderbal said many times politicians promised us that project will be completed in stipulated but the promise proved out to be

bluff. this project will to some extent reduce power deficit in Kashmir.

They further added that project can also create employment opportunities in the area.

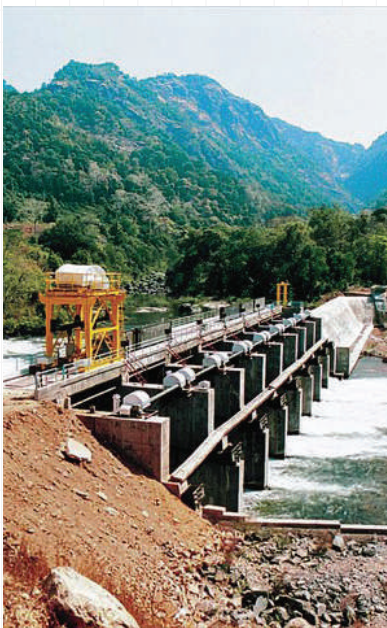
Sources Hindustan construction company bagged the contact for construction of project at the cost of 817 crore in 2014 and completion time was set 48 months but after that nothing has be done.

When contacted Fida Mohammad Faroqi, Chief engineer, New hydroelectric power project Ganderbal he said, "government has not yet fixed the contract of the project. Successive governments have not even made Board of directors for the project. Recently during governors rule the board was constituted which can make a committee to coordinate execution of the project, without that project can't be realized."

He further added that they have got environment clearance and clearance from central water commission (CWC) and have acquired the land now all the need is seriousness of government towards the project.

Residents of Ganderbal appeals to MLA to raise the concern at higher ups in government.

When contacted MLA Ganderbal Ishfaq Jabbar he said "This project is vary vital as it will help in decreasing power deficit. The project construction is already delayed. I have raised it early with governor and now I will raise this project in upcoming assembly session. If politics is not played over the project construction of the project will be started in coming



Bridge over Khider village incomplete

❖ **Ali Pathan**

Srinagar: Thousands of people are badly suffering as an under constructed bridge over khider river in oriel village of district Kulgam remained incomplete for years.

The work of bridge commenced nine years ago by department of R&B latter authorities failed to complete it.

Near about eight villages having population of fifty thousand face hardship as they have to travel 3-4 miles by foot to reach the main road, said Mushtaq Ahmed a local inhabitant.

"It takes us more than half an hour by foot to reach the main road", said Farooq Ahmad a resident of kraloo village.

Local's demand that work on bridge should restart but apathy of government officials is disappointing them.

"Wecomplained many times to incumbent officials but our demand was totally neglected." said Mudasir a govt. teacher.

"Few monthsback D.C Kulgam Syed Abid and M.L.A devsar constituency Mohd Amin Bhatt visited here they assured us that work will start soon but it didn't happen this is worrying us." said Mohd Shafi a local of oriel village.

Hopeless villagers are waiting for the day when their menace will end.

M.L.A Devsar constituency said, "It is big project as an M.L.A of losing party I can't do much, but still I am trying to get a possible solution

"we could have finished our work on time, but, it is the Lack of funds that is forcing us to stop the work." said contractor of bridge.

Fish Brings Fortunes for to Kashmir's Aquarium Man



❖ **Saher Iqbal**

Srinagar: Though decorating homes with aquarium may not be common, but Firdous Ahmad Badyari, 30, made his fortunes in a short span of two years while manufacturing fish tanks. After trying his luck at many jobs to earn livelihood for many years.

Firdous found manufacturing aquariums the unexplored business industry in Kashmir.

The sight of an aquarium at fishers department fascinated him so much that he ventured into this business in 2009. Despite having Humped back, firdous worked steadfastly and today he is living decently, and an inspiration to many. Firdous proudly displays fish tanks of all sizes at his firm at Fun Fish Aquarium

at Dalgate.

Firdous invested rupees 17000 which he had received through a lucky draw, he went to Delhi to buy equipment's and fish for manufacturing tanks. "I used to sit at my father's shop at Dalgate. The shopkeepers collected money and a lucky draw was held every month. One month luck

favoured us and we got Rupees 17000," said Firdous.

"We have recently started manufacturing Aquarium with live plants," he added. He deals with all kinds of fish, fish food, and every accessories used in an aquarium.

"It feels very good to visit the aquarium," Waleed, a customer said. "I often visit the aquarium for the fish food and I get the foods at reasonable rates," he added.

Reeking Backyard



❖ **Muneem Farooq**

Srinagar: The streets in the Srinagar city are piled with tons of litter as no breakthrough has been achieved over the dumping of garbage in the city. However, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) claims that its men and machinery are on job to clear the accumulated garbage in Srinagar.

SMC had to stop its garbage lifting activity in the city, after the residents of Achan started an agitation demanding closure of the city's lone dumping area.

A recent survey conducted across India declared Srinagar a clean city that came just three years after when Srinagar was rated as the fourth dirtiest city in India. Though the standard of

living in the city has improved but thousands of people in Srinagar and Jammu cities continue to live in slums.

"Srinagar city has undergone major changes in the land use pattern due to the unplanned expansion of residential colonies and illegal commercialization of important city arterial," said an administrative official

"Srinagar is considered as the face of Jammu Kashmir state. The city of Srinagar is historically as well as culturally important and, therefore, deserves proper handling", said Hamid Bashir, a social worker.

About 95% of the structures have violated the land use either by raising illegal constructions or by conversion of land use. The fringe areas are equally not good from the planning point of view. These are characterized by narrow lanes, without any public facilities, said an official of Srinagar Municipal Corporation.

The houses are in dilapidated condition which will widen the demand supply gap of housing in near future. The Srinagar city has already swollen up beyond municipal limits and started engulfing nearby urban fringe villages and three small towns of Pampore, Budgam and Ganderbal.

Parenting Turns Trendy

❖ **Bisma Farooq**

Srinagar: Kashmir is witnessing a new trend of admitting children to the crèches for the major part of the day. The trend is noticeable mostly among of the parents who are working, and prefer their wards to spend the day at the day-care, while they stay in the offices.

While researchers warning that the trend is alarming, the parents argue that they don't have any other option but to admit their children to the crèches while they perform their professional duties.

Dr. Muzaffar, a Pediatrician says that, "living in a different environment, apart from family can affect a child psychologically and socially as well."

Uninterrupted parent-child contact has been the subject of firm claims. "During the first five years of a child's life, the extended disconnection from his parents stands foremost among the cause of persistent

misbehavior in often cases," Dr. Muzaffar added.

The experts are of the opinion that the time spent in the day-care bring about certain negative effects on the psyche of a child.

Zamrooda, a working lady says that she has no other option but to admit her child to day-care. She is of the opinion that the competition is increasing day by day and the children are to be prepared for the same. "I have no other option to deal with my routine work and there is no one else to take care of my children in my family." Zamrooda said.

By embracing the day-care institutions, the parents are trying to run it in both ways—a dual benefit trend. On one hand the parents are making it easy for themselves to perform their duties and on the other hand training their children for the upcoming competition. This dual benefit, as the researchers say is "same to the mental degradation of the child."



Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development, seen with participants attending Twenty-seventh Appreciation Course in Parliamentary Processes and Procedures for Professors/Associate Professors/Assistant Professors of Universities/Colleges organized by the BPST. Also seen in the picture are Shri Raghunandan Sharma, Honorary Advisor of BPST, and Smt. Kalpana Sharma, Joint Secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat (2 May 2016)

**LET
ORIGINALITY
SURVIVE**



❖ **Adnan Hilal**

Srinagar: Replicas of Kashmiri Pashmina shawls produced in Amritsar continue to pose threat to the original craft. With the increase in production of such replicas the originality is at the stake.

The practice continues unabated, with no monitoring by the authorities. With time it is posing serious threats to the original craft and the livelihood of those who are associated with it.

Hilal Ahmed Sheikh, a prominent businessmen and owner of S.H enterprises said, "The local vendors in Kashmir sell the fake Pashmina shawls in the name of Genuine Pashmina Shawls at a much cheaper price, thus diminishing the sale of real Pashmina shawls which are sold at a higher rate"

Adding how the market for Kashmiri Pashmina Shawls has decreased he said, "without bothering about the

quality of the Pashmina Shawl, visitors as well as locals usually fall prey to the fake Pashmina shawls because of their cheap price."

Mohammad Shafi, who involved in Handicraft business from last twenty four years, said "it takes 20 days to weave a Pashmina shawl and the Amritsar factories imitate the same in one hour with the help of machines"

"It is high time for the government to take steps to recognize the people who are bluffing customers with the fake version of Pashmina shawls" said Imran Ahmed Sofi, a young Entrepreneur from Fatehkadal.

In 14th Century, when Sultan Zain Ul Abideen was ruling Kashmir, Pashmina industry was setup then with the sole aim of providing livelihood to the masses.

Natipora Traders Await Compensation



❖ **Saba Bhat**

Srinagar: Even though GOI released the package for flood hit traders in Kashmir. Authorities at the revenue department are in deep slumber and have failed to settle down the pending rehabilitation amounts among the Natipora Traders Association (NTA)

Members of the association have expressed a serious concern over the delay in the issuance of flood relief cheques to the traders registered with the association.

Mehraj ud Din Khan, president of NTA, said that we raised the issue of pending disbursement of relief to the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Farooq Ahmad Lone.

On his orders, revenue officials

of Natipora area namely Patwari Ghulam Jeelani, Girdawar Bashir Ahmad and an official Showkat Ahmad assured us that they will expedite the release of cheques within a couple of days. Some of the traders from our association received the amount but majority has not received a penny.

“It is very pathetic to learn that some cherry-picked traders have been provided with the relief while, maximum traders have been neglected” said Tariq Ahmed, member of NTA.

However, the Association has once again appealed to the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar to look into the matter personally and put an end to the problems and sufferings of flood hit traders of this area.

Sher Bagh “heritage in shambles”

❖ **Sabeeha Shaheen**

Srinagar: Known for its favorite haunt for tourists because of its large quality of fishes, gushing water and scenic surroundings Sher Bagh, Anantnag has lost its charm.

Sher Bagh has lost its tourist attraction due to continuous presence of forces at Andar Nag area which has not only polluted the gushing and serene waters, but, has also been an impediment to various developmental works, said a locale.

“We only did what the district administration advised us to do”, said an official of Municipal Council Anantnag.

The stone that decorated the fish pond of the park was removed and fancy tiles were laid instead, with the result the tiles have broken and the water of the fish pond has got murkier, said the local caretaker of the park.

Famed fishes of Sher Bagh are nowhere to be seen now, says a old man who used to visit the park frequently.

However the district administration seems uninterested to restore the pristine beauty of Sher Bagh which was once used



A beautification project which was formulated by the Municipal Council Anantnag(MCA) which costed Lakh of rupees on its beautification which results in enormous killing of fishes, he added. Locals blame the MCA and the contractors for not properly executing plans and funds on sherbagh.

to be epicenter of social, political, religious and cultural gatherings.

Talking to MERC Times, a official of district administration said, ‘we have no proposals to further spend money on Sher Bagh, the already spent money is yet to be released and allotting the new work is not possible’.

Banking sector benefiting people

❖ **Wajahat shabir**

Srinagar: The growing banking sector are benefiting the customers and increasing the competition among the other banks which is a good sign in the present scenario.

The Minister of Youth Services & Sports, IT and Technical Education Imran Raza Ansari attending at function said, “that banking sectors are growing at good rate. It is building the competition among the banking sector and more schemes and advantages are being set up.

It is a good move. It also helps in creating jobs. The Minister said this after inaugurating the 75th branch



of HDFC bank here at Qamarwari.

Appreciating the role of the bank the Minister said that the banking sector plays an important role in the socio-

economic development of State, and

HDFC bank is marching towards the same in valley.

He said not only has the bank provided the job opportunity to the unemployed educated youth. Post September 2014 the HDFC under its corporate responsibility distributed Rs 5.50 Crore, among flood affected and adapted 15 schools for rehabilitation.

The bank with a high credit deposit ratio of 63 percent was established in 2005, and is presently serving more than two lakh customers at its 75 branches, said the Vice President, HDFC bank, Zubair Iqbal.

Kashmir has seen an enormous up rise in banking sector. It is a good move. Not only it provides competition, but do provide good amount of employment, said Imtiaz Ahmed

‘1.6 million people in Kashmir living with significant symptoms of depression’



❖ Nadeem

Srinagar: “More than 70 percent of adults have experienced or witnessed the sudden or violent death of someone they knew”

Depicting a grim picture prevalent in the valley of Kashmir, a ‘first-of-its-kind’ report by international organisation Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) has put the figure of adults with significant symptoms of mental illness at staggering 1.8 million (nearly 45 percent of total adult population). The report also points out that 93 percent people living in the valley have experienced or witnessed conflict-related trauma.

The Kashmir Mental Health Survey (KMHS 2015) by MSF has been prepared in collaboration with the the department of psychology in Kashmir University, and the Institute of Mental health and Neuroscience Kashmir.

The main objective of the survey, according to MSF, was to estimate the prevalence of mental health related conditions specifically depression, anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms ‘within the Kashmiri population’. While the report is not yet released but a symposium was held in Government Medical College Srinagar on Wednesday to share the findings.

‘1.6 million people in Kashmir living with significant symptoms of depression’

The key findings of the report underscore that 1.8 million (45 percent) adults in the Kashmir Valley show significant symptoms of mental distress. The report also reveals that approximately 1.6 million adults (41 percent) in the valley are living with

significant symptoms of depression, with 4,15,000 (10 percent) meeting the diagnostic criteria for severe depression.

“An estimated 1 million adults (26 percent) in the valley are living with significant symptoms of an anxiety related disorder. Nearly 1 in 5 adults (1996) in the Kashmir Valley is living with significant PTSD symptoms, representing 7,71,000 individuals, with 2,48,000 (6 percent) meeting the diagnostic criteria for PTSD,” the survey reads. The survey further mentions that, on an average, an adult living in the Kashmir Valley has ‘witnessed or experienced 7.7 traumatic events during his/her lifetime.’

“A majority of people have experienced or witnessed natural disasters and conflict-related trauma (94 percent and 93 percent respectively). More than 70 percent of adults have experienced or witnessed the sudden or violent death of someone they knew,” the KMHS 2015 observes.

Dr Maqbool Dar, Head of department, Institute Of Mental Health & Neurosciences(IMHANS) GMC told the people during symposium, “IMHANS has treated 44,133 patients during the period between April 2015 and MArch 2016; while as in Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) hospital, during the same period, 30,641 people were treated in OPD.”

While high rates of co-morbidity of symptoms of depression, anxiety and PTSD were found in adults living in the valley, the MSF survey reveals that ‘communities had little knowledge of mental health services and viewed the management of mental illness largely through socio-cultural and biomedical models.’

FIVE YEARS ON, QAMARWARI BRIDGE AWAITS COMPLETION

❖ Waseem Ahmad

Srinagar: Srinagar : A bridge in Qamarwari area of Srinagar being constructed by Roads and Building(R&B) department awaits completion for last five years.

The newly constructed bridge adjacent to other bridge which was constructed in late 70’s in Qamarwari was sanctioned by government in 2011 to reduce traffic congestion. But the bridge is incomplete and a lot of work is still pending in its construction.

The work on the 127mts long bridge which according to R & B costs 9.85 crore was started in June 2011.

Despite the end of first deadline in its construction which was in June 2014, R&B department has failed to construct the bridge in the given time frame.

The inordinate delay in construction of the bridge is giving tough time to commuters. They have to face immense hardships because of the frequent traffic jams.

“We are not able to reach on time anywhere as it takes us one or two hours to cross jam-packed Qamarwari chowk.” said an aggrieved commuter.



Meanwhile the R&B department officials claimed that devasta ing floods of 2014 in which almost whole Srinagar got submerged and acquisition of land is the main reason behind the incompleteness of construction of the bridge.

“We have completed almost 50% of the work and we are doing our best to complete the bridge soon”, said an official of the Department.

With the tremendous increase in the traffic and due to rise of small cars from last ten years, The Bridge was constructed to ease the pressure on the already existing bridge The Patients who come from North-Kashmir and have to go SKIMS Soura for treatment often got stuck in frequent traffic jams in the area.

“We have to face lot of inconvenience to reach SKIMS Soura due to frequent traffic jams in this area”, said Nazir Ahmad a patient going for treatment to SKIMS Soura.

The aggrieved commuters appealed to the concerned department to complete the bridge on priority basis so that we don’t have to face any inconvenience more.

CM FLAGS OFF 4 NEW TRAINS

❖ Bintul Huda

Srinagar: In an attempt to boost Railway transport, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Sayed flagged off four new Trains at Anantnag via Baramulla on Thursday.

It was the first public address of Mehbooba Mufit, after becoming Chief Minister last month

Congratulating the people on the introduction of four new trains, the Chief Minister said, "she hopes it is the beginning of many more good initiatives which Centre will take in the state".

"I am looking forward to the completion of 111 km long Katra Banihal Railway line, which will provide an all weather link to the



valley", she added.

"These new trains will be helpful to us, as there won't be so much of chaos as it was before. More over it is a good step when it comes to the field

of Horticulture sector", said Nazir Ahmed a local inhabitant.

"Good to see a Woman performing well at political stage, she is a good role model to the Women's of the

society, she added.

Highlighting the advantage of railways in promotion of the state's Horticulture sector, railway official said, Kashmir's wide range of fruits will find it much easier to reach terminal market and "mandis" in the rest of the country through the Railway transport.

"our aim is to popularize use of freight trains to better market Kashmir's fruit so that they are able to reach new destination in the country well in time," he added.

The trains will run six days a week between Budgam, via Baramulla-Banihal and Baramulla. These will have eight coaches with the same speed that are already running on the track, but, with limited stops.

Artistic Mastery

After weaving portraits of Khomeini and Mirza Ghalib; these Ghulam Ali Sheikh is busy weaving the portrait of Narendra Modi. MERC TIMES's Danish Pathan spends a day with the state awardee artist to know what his craft is all about.

MT: Tell me something about yourself? When did you jump into this craft?

Sheikh: My name is Gulam Ali Sheikh. I am 45 years. I have been working as a carpet weaver for about 30 years now. I was 16 when I first embraced this art. I was drawn to this field because I had an inclination towards the art work.

MT: Any formal training in making carpets? If so, who taught you and what were the basic things that you learned?

Sheikh: Yes, I was trained at the Carpet Training Center under the small industries government of Jammu & Kashmir. I learned basic weaving there.

MT: What are the technical challenges you face when making carpets?

Sheikh: Sometimes designs can be very intricate and therefore difficult to make. It is difficult when there is more than one shade of the same color in a particular design. Writing errors in the weaving language also pose problems.



MT: How many hours do you work per day?

Sheikh: I work for 6-8 hours per day, five days a week. I choose my own working hours.

MT: Do you have any favorite designs and color combinations?

Sheikh: I like to make portraits on the carpet; I have already made carpets with portraits of famous personalities.

MT: Do you remember any master piece you ever created?

Sheikh: There was one 2' x 4' (ft.) quality, I call it as 'Gandhi's' carpet. I made a few years ago. It was very beautiful because of the color combination and the design.

MT: Are there any designs that you haven't made yet, but would like to make?

Sheikh: There are numerous designs

all around. But is my dream make some designs based on paintings.

MT: Which carpet took much of your time?

Sheikh: I made an 8' x 10' (ft.) "Four Seasons" carpet that took one and half year to complete. That was a longer period.

MT: What design and quality are you currently working on?

Sheikh: I'm currently working on a 6' 9' (ft) 'Six Horses' and 5 x 8(ft.) 'Kabbah'

MT: Have you guided anyone before in this art?

Sheikh: Yes, I have taught several people how to read the weaving language. I still help other junior weavers from time to time.

MT: How long does it usually take to become a master weaver like you?

Sheikh: It really depends on the individual's ability and interest, but usually after 5 years of training in the carpet weaving language a person is on his way of mastering the craft.