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MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE,
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

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Lotus @ Ranji



❖ ALI SAFIUDDIN

Srinagar: It's almost a week prior to the Ranji Trophy Net Trials and every young lad at the B ground of The Sher e Kashmir Stadium is worn out and all sweaty. It's an end of a long and tiring practice session but it's not just a days ending rather a routine for these guys. Three tall and broad young cricketers have taken up a corner in the stadium and are leaning towards their kit bags post the practice session and are discussing the technicality of the game in a very passionate manner. The discussion takes place between top three young Kashmiri Cricketers Umar nazir, Umar Nissar and Owais Shah who are highly prospected for this year's Ranji Squad.

In the state cricketing circuit these guys are well renowned and all the three have previously had the chance to represent the state at the Ranjhi levels but this year these three young sportsmen have had a different kind of preparations for the big stage. The trio has teamed up together with a self coaching schedule in which all of them have pushed each other to bring the best of their games.

A commoner may not be well aware of the significance Ranjhi holds for an aspiring cricketer. Its the first major step towards professional level cricket and a doorway into the international level. A chance to rub shoulders with big names from each state. Currently, the match fee for a Ranji Trophy player is Rs 10,000 per day and he gets Rs 40,000 as match fee. However a state team regular earns around Rs 12 lakh per season as the player gets a percentage of broadcast rights earnings, which is given as a whole sum amount at the end of the season." but it's not all money, it's about the chance to display your skills as a cricketer at a much finer and competitive level" says Umar Nissar. Who is aspiring for the opening slot in the Ranji squad of J&K.?

The Jammu and Kashmir Ranjhi team has not been able to do wonders in the tournament despite having a good balanced team every year. This year the JKCA board was facing a monetary crises. The situation deescalated to point where the board was even considering to withdraw from this year's Ranji season. The association is facing a lot of hindrance to launch any pre season preparatory activities due to the monetary crises.

JKRB, FLYOVER LIKELY TO BE COMPLETED BY JUNE 2018

❖ ARIF NAZIR

Srinagar: While the completion of Jehangir Chowk Rambagh flyover has missed the second deadline, the officials at Economic Reconstruction Agency (ERA) which is presently engaged in construction of the same, said the JCRB flyover shall be completed by June 2018.

The project manager at ERA said the suspension of construction work several times resulted in loss of huge time which delayed the completion of JCRB flyover.

He said over 58 percent of the work had been completed so far.

"We are expecting that the flyover will be physically complete by the month of December this year. However if any work is left-over that shall be finished by the month of June 2018. The flyover shall be completed by June 2018," said Mohammad Iqbal, project manager at ERA.

Pertinently, the construction work of flyover was resumed in the month of December last year after five months of suspension of work due to 2016 unrest and turmoil in Kashmir valley.

"At present around 300 laborers are engaged in construction work and the pace of the work is picking up. The number of laborers will accordingly go up. When the construction work was at peak, over 700 labors were engaged in constructive work," Mohammad Iqbal, revealed.

The construction of 2.4 Kms long JCRB flyover was started in 2013 with a time period of three years for the completion of the work.

However, the construction missed first deadline after 2014 floods.



Due to the suspension of work due to summer unrest last year, the work remained suspended for around 5 months.

Project manager ERA said the company was making full efforts for competition of the work by 2017.

The flyover consists of four sections. Section A from Jehangir Chowk to Magarmal Crossing. Section B from Magarmal crossing to sericulture department and section C from sericulture towards Rambagh.

"We have been making efforts to complete the construction within the given time period however due to unfavourable circumstances the work was stopped several times," Mohammad Iqbal said.

He added, "We have completely lost five months of work last year. The company is making efforts to make up for the lost time."

25 day kayaking camp for students

Haseena Jameel

Srinagar: Taking a step forward to boost infrastructure in the valley Director Tourism inaugurate 25-day kayaking, canoeing camp at Nigeen

The state government on the occasion of National Sports Day inaugurated 25-day kayaking and canoeing camp for students of various schools at Water Sports Centre Nigeen.

Speaking on the occasion, Director Tourism said "Sports hold an important place in the overall development of the students".

He said that the department is organizing water sports activities to train local youth especially students for national and international events.

"We want to tap the talent of students at their young age. We have the necessary infrastructure here at Nigeen Water Sports Centre which we want to utilize for the

benefit of the students. Schools should take part in such camps," he added.

National players of kayaking and canoeing including Zahoor Ahmad Latoo will be imparting training to the students who will be supervised by national women coach and international player Bilquis Mir.

On the occasion, Mir encouraged the students especially girls to participate in the water sports activities.

She said water sports have a lot of future at a national and international level, especially for women.

"We will train the students here and if we find some students are good at this sport, we will ensure that they go ahead and play at state and national level. This is the right age to prepare for sub-junior state and national championships," she said.

"It is a good adventure; we will learn other activities other than studies. it will be good if same activities are taught at school level so that it can help us during climate atrocities", said a student.

CHINAR- PRIDE OF KASHMIR



❖ SHARAZ KHUSHAL

SRINAGAR: Autumn is the most beautiful season among all the seasons in Kashmir. The changing colours of leaves simply look mystical. In this season, the maple leaves of majestic Chinar trees turn from green to gold.

Being a student of Kashmir University, where there are many Chinar trees, I have seen the nature's beauty very closely in autumn. It was my favourite place in the whole campus. The beauty and love for the autumn of Naseem Bagh has attracted many dignitaries to visit the valley again and again during this season.

India's former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the Kashmir valley during autumn. The yellow, crimson, and gold hues of autumn offer a mesmerizing beauty to tourists who visit Kashmir.

Tourists from different parts of world come to valley to see the glorious beauty of autumn. Some say that Chinars were brought to Kashmir from Iran, others say they have come from Greece.

While talking to Zariel Ahmad Zariel, a writer who has extensively researched on Chinar trees in Kashmir said that these trees are originally from Kashmir and it is myth that they have brought to Kashmir from Iran or Greece. The famous Urdu poet Allama Iqbal described Chinar in the autumn as 'Aatish-e Chinar' (the Chinar on fire).

For trekkers, water sports lovers and also for those who come to just spent their time in Kashmir, autumn is the best season to visit the valley. The mornings, evenings and the gentle warmth of the

autumn sun is so refreshing.

Autumn is called "Harud" in the local language which denotes the foggy season with different hues in air. During autumn, people of Kashmir collect the fallen leaves and burn them in a pile to make coal for their (kangri) traditional fire pot. This fire pot helps them in braving the harsh winters.

Autumn season starts in the valley from mid-September till mid- December. For me, when I was studying journalism in Kashmir University, a place called Naseem Bagh was the most relaxing and beautiful. During autumn it was just eye-catching and gave me relief from the stress of classrooms.

But at the same time it is worrying that the number of Chinar trees is on a decline in the Valley. An official report states that Kashmir had around 42,000 Chinar trees in 1970. Though the felling and lopping of Chinars is banned in the Valley, officials were given green-signal for cutting of the majestic trees for the expansion of roads and other developmental projects

In his book titled, "The Trees Of Our Heritage" published in 2007, he puts total number of Chinars in Kashmir as 17,124. Maintaining that the figure given by him is correct, he said about 746 Chinars are being cut in the Valley every year.

It takes around 150 years for a Chinar to grow to its full size. The world's oldest Chinar is found in Chattergam, Chadoora in Budgam.

The Chinar, which is said to be planted by a Sufi saint Syed Abul Qasim Shah Hamdani in 1374 AD, has the stem of 31.85 m in circumference and stands at 14.78 m tall.

PMR department in SKIMS proves a non-starter

❖ FURQAN KHURSHID

SRINAGAR: Bizarre it may seem, but the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) Department of Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), even after spending crores, is running without proper faculty and facilities.

According to the experts one should be having a proper degree to perform the duties as PMR specialist, however, there are currently two consultants working in the department without a proper degree.

"The two consultants are currently working in the department who are MD Medicine, which is a grave violation of norms," sources said. The matter was taken to the court which quashed the appointment these two consultants, however, as per sources; they continue to hold the posts.

After the court order, and even after the appointment getting quashed, there has so far been no replacement for the same, nor have they been vacated from their post sources said.

"The department is currently having two senior residents with proper degrees and other junior residents are non-academic," sources added.

As of now, according to the sources, there is no Orthotists, Prosthetists, Occupational Therapist, Vocational Therapist, Rehabilitation Psychologist and Speech Therapist, raising eye brows on functioning of the department.

Abdul Rahim, whose son was in the need of an artificial limb, was forced to get it from the market, which eventually cost him around fifty thousand rupees.

"I am a poor person; he (his son) lost his leg in an accident, the hospital should have provided this, not free, but on subsidized rates, but they did not," he said.

The department is witnessing numerous patients like those who have undergone amputations, patients with rheumatologic disorders, deformities of bones and joints, but what seems to be lacking is the comprehensive rehabilitation of such patients, which is not happening due to the scarcity of staff.

There is also basic absence of a separate ward in the department. The department is provided with a four bedded ward—the official website states that there is a separate 8 bedded indoor ward—which usually remains occupied by the patients from other departments.

Director SKIMS, Prof. A. G. Ahangar could not be reached for his comments on this issue. Despite talking to this reporter he did not respond to the queries posted to him.

Ayadullah Dar

MYSTERIOUS HAIRCUTS CONTINUE, KULGAM STUDENT BECOMES FIRST MALE VICTIM

Kulgam: A twelve-year-old boy has become the first male and the latest victim of a series of hair chopping incidents that have created panic in several areas in the state.

Shaik Farooq, a class 8 student of village Chek Watoo in Kulgam Monday found himself a part of the disturbing and mysterious trend.

"After having his dinner at 8.30 pm, he went into the corridor of his home when somebody got hold of him and sliced down a quarter of his hair. He started crying and rushed back to the kitchen. We rushed into the corridor but the whole area was filled with a foul smell. Knowing what has happened in such instance, we thought

we too would be unconscious and as such retreated back to the kitchen," said Farooq Ahmad Dar, victim's father.

Dar said they checked all the rooms of the house and found out an open window on the first floor.

"Whoever, did it must have entered from that window," he said.

In shock, the family only moved out after 20 minutes of the incident to call a neighbour.

"Then only the nearby villagers gathered to look into the matter. Our house is located in a relatively isolated area," Dar added.

Earlier around 11 am on the same day, a girl of the nearby Korel village too had become a victim of braid chopping.

Kulgam has witnessed at least 6 such cases in the last few days, however, it was

for the first time that a boy became a victim.

Tehsildar Damhal-Hanjipora Atta-Ul-Munim Tak claimed that many steps had been taken to put an end to the mystery.

"We have made active the local Nambardars, Chowkidaars and village committees. Police too has been involved after victims filed reports," he said.

A local police officer said they were ascertaining the facts of the case.

To mention, J&K Police Monday constituted a Special Investigating Team (SIT) to investigate braid-chopping incidents in Kulgam district and appealed to people not to pay heed to rumours spread by anti-social elements. The SIT was formed on the same day CM Mehbooba Mufti asked the State's Police Chief SP Vaid to constitute a special team to investigate

Northern Railway celebrates plantation day

❖ Yawar Shafi

SRINAGAR Northern Railway celebrated Harit Divas, a day dedicated to plantation of trees in various regions of the Kashmir. The event was organized under the banner of the Minister of Railways.

A total of 5000 trees were planted along railway tracks in the railway premises of Srinagar, Budgam and Anantnag districts in a single day.

The plantation drive was headed by the Chief Area Manager of Srinagar region of the Northern Railway. Assistant Divisional Engineer, Assistant Mechanical Engineer



and Assistant Security Commissioner Railway Police Force were also present on the occasion.

The departments of Forests and Social Forestry also extended cooperation to the railways by making arrangements of saplings for the development of green corridor along the railway tracks of Kashmir valley.

On this occasion, the Railway family of valley also issued an appeal to citizens to plant at least five trees in their surroundings for providing a green and healthy atmosphere to the population.

Sports Council to release documentary shot by MERC students



❖ Hirra Azmat

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir state sports council is coming up with a power-packed promotional video cum Documentary of eight minutes and thirty seconds which will be released in the month of September. The teaser of 1 minute and eight seconds will be released today on the occasion of National sports Day.

The video features the leading sports personalities of the state, officials of the sports council including the secretary and joint secretary of the council, director Cricket academy, instructors, and students. It will be released on the official website and other social networking sites: Youtube, Facebook and Instagram.

“We are trying our best to inculcate the sports culture among the youth of our state. We are providing them best coaching facilities, availability of sports infrastructure and sometimes we do sponsor the individual youth sports events for overall promotion of the sports. This documentary will be of great help to the council, as our motive is to involve more and more youth towards the sports,” says

Waheed Ur Rehman Parra, Secretary J&K state sports Council.

He further added that, “We have set state Cricket as well as football Academies where huge number of aspiring sportspersons are being trained under reputed international coaches including Mehrajuddin Wadoo and International Cricketer Parvez Rasool”.

This video is a sincere effort to promote sports activities among the youth,” Nowsheeba Nazir, project Coordinator in Sports Council.

Nowsheeba along with her colleague Umar Wani are trying to digitize sports and IT. They believe in digital era, it's easy to spike an interest for sports in the young minds provided it's promoted properly.

“Today we can create a sports event on FaceBook wherein people can actually join it and physically be present. It's a great way to revive our sports culture and we are hopeful that this video will make an impact,” says Umer.

The video has been shot by two Post Graduation students from Media Education Research Centre Department- Adil Amin Akhoun and Bisma Farooq.

Srinagar techies launch online blood bank website

Vikar Ul Islam

SRINAGAR: Ehsas blood donation, the web portal has been active since January 2017 in promoting the blood donations campaigns and arranging blood points for critical and emergency cases within minutes of the advertisement published on the website.

Mohammad Yasir, a young techie from Lal Bazar and a founder of this essential web portal easily organizes blood donors ready to donate at times of emergency for patients across Jammu and Kashmir.

The website employs advanced features to send customized notifications to hundreds of its registered donors and triggers mass social media response to arrange blood for the patients to help save precious lives.

Yasir, wanted to develop an advanced portal so he called all his tech savvy friends, setting up a meeting with them explaining his idea and how this could help save numerous lives.

Yasir alleged “While surveying hospitals, I found they have no mechanism in place to promote blood donations, proper counselling to blood donors, or an organised pattern to encourage more people to volunteer as blood donors.

Hujat Ul Islam, founder of SOA Web Technologies, who initially started to work on the website, that registers blood donors and sets a date when they can donate blood, Keeping in view the health advisory a donor cannot donate

in less than 90 days from the last donation date.

I was really impressed by the idea as it was the first blood donation management website from Jammu and Kashmir, people should register and come forward to save precious lives.” says Hujat ul Islam.

The rare O negative blood group donors are reserved for emergency situations and are only called or notified on priority, while the website is slowly progressing and has managed more than 50 points of blood for various patients who posted their requirements on the website.

Technically the website has been entirely managed by Amir Sammad from Lal Bazar is handling the website and updating the requirements constantly on the social media, the website has proven very essentials in handling blood donor requirements in time bound situations.

Our aim is to bridge the gap between a volunteer and the needy person and the Internet is the best medium with which it can be achieved successfully.” Says Amir Sammad.

The members of Ehsas Web Portal claim that in just a few months, hundreds of people have registered themselves for the ‘Volunteer Blood Donation’ purpose. They state their mission to serve the mankind irrespective of sect, race and region or religion.

The objective behind the website is to streamline the voluntary blood donations management and ensure the blood banks can fulfill the requirements every day.

'ABAYA IS BACK IN KASHMIR'



❖ **UBEER NAQUSHBANDI**

SRINAGAR: On a hot summer day, three of her friends teamed up with Aaliya, a class 12 student, to buy a dress that helps her follow the religious teachings regarding a woman's dress. The four matched a black Abaya with an Irani Hijab – the colour combination and the design of embroidery looked pretty.

Aaliya told her friends that she would buy the dress the next day. She says her friends wanted to buy it too. For girls like Aaliya, the Abaya and Irani Hijab is a way of balancing fashion needs with religious commitments in a conservative place like Kashmir.

"The combination looks cool and is comfortable. It gives me a sense of security in the predominant religious society," Aaliya says. "Moreover, people with narrow thinking don't pass hateful comments."

Over the last couple of years, fashion scene in Srinagar was dominated by western clothing, especially among young women. Young girls showed little interest in traditional outfits and preferred jeans, jackets, overcoats, and cardigans. But Abayas seem to have made a comeback.

Shahaid Ahmad Wani, who owns Libas, a fashion apparel showroom, said that Abaya and Burqa culture never vanished from Kashmir. He said he has been taking orders for such dresses in all seasons. However, the young generation and employed women leaned towards western dresses, Wani says. Women, he believes, stepped outside the traditional way of dressing to shape their personality according to their work.

"Wearing Abaya is religious and it dates back to centuries. We should keep in mind that religion doesn't expire. It comes back in one way or the other," he says. "Today we receive at least 15-20 orders for designing various types of Abayas."

Zara Khurshid, a graduate student, has eight Abayas in her wardrobe – all different kinds of fabrics. She finds the Abaya economical than other outfits available in markets. "I need not to spend thousands of rupees on different types of clothes. An Abaya that costs few hundred rupees does it all," said Zara.

Imad Haqq, owner of an Abaya store at Nowhatta said, "Mostly school and college-going girls and young brides are regular customers. Women in Kashmir imitate Dubai and Saudi fashion sense more. It is a pity that simple burqas are outdated. The only women who wear unpretentious burqas in Kashmir are girls of Darul Uloom madrassas."

Nusrat Majeed, an employee in the education department has a different story behind wearing an Abaya. She says that she has to manage home as well as office and doesn't get time to dress up. "I am not only a teacher, I am a home maker as well. I don't get enough time to get ready so I put Abaya on top of clothes that I wear at home. It saves my time and energy".

CUK organized 2-day International Conference on Tourism at Leh

❖ **ABID RASHID**

Ladakh: The Department of Tourism Studies, Central University of Kashmir (CUK) in collaboration with Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress (ITHC) and Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS) organised an international conference on Tourism at Leh on the theme "Recovery Marketing Strategies for Tourist Destinations in Conflict Situations."

The inaugural function of the two-day conference, sponsored by Ministry of Tourism Government of India, was held at Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar, Leh Ladakh.

Prof. S P Bansal, Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National University, Haryana and President Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress was the Chief Guest, while as Prof. Sandeep Kulshreshtha, Director IITTM Gwalior and Senior Vice-President, ITHC and Prof. Geshe Konchok Wangdu, Director CIBS, were the Guest of Honor, Prof. S M Muhammad Ismail, Chairman Handicraft Board Sri Lanka and former Vice-Chancellor, Sri Lanka University, was the keynote speaker, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir, Conference Patron and Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir, Prof. S Fayyaz, Conference Director, Dean School of Business Studies and Head Department of Tourism Studies also attended the conference.

Prof. S P Bansal released the abstract book consisting of 134 abstracts of the papers contributed by

academicians and scholars of the country and abroad. In his special address, he deliberated on the Tourism in India and the type of tourism education, which is being taught to the students. Prof. S P Bansal also talked about government initiatives and other measures taken by the government for promotion of tourism. Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir welcomed all the guests and said that Ladakh is the best place in the world in terms of culture, nature of people and beauty. He also discussed the role of media in tourism.

Prof. Sandeep Kulshreshtha while addressing the gathering discussed about global challenges confronting tourism and role of media in it tackling these. He specifically talked about the three regions of the State, i.e Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, and their uniqueness in terms of culture and heritage and how best the resources in the State could be utilized.

Prof. Geshe Konchok Wangdu, Director CIBS, while speaking on the occasion, thanked the Vice-Chancellor, CUK for holding the Conference in Leh. He also talked about Ladakh heritage and underscored the need for its preservation.

Mr. Faizan Ashraf Mir, Organizing Secretary introduced the delegates about the conference theme and the overwhelming response received by the department for the Conference. He gave the detailed account about the number of abstracts received. Mr. Ashaq Najar, Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism Studies, proposed the vote of thanks.



Development eludes Zanskar despite acquiring sub district status

Zakir Hussain

Kargil: Despite conferred with sub district status, a village in JK's Ladakh is craving for development even as inhabitants blamed 'callous attitude of authorities' responsible for it.

The inhabitants of Zanskar—a village which is spanned over 7000 sq km area, where majority profess agriculture and cattle farming, said that authorities are insensitive towards the problems faced by them.

"Despite being given sub division status, senior KAS officer rank was never posted as SDM here. Often the affairs are run here by a non-gazetted officer. At times this important position (SDM post) remains vacant for longtime," said Amir Ali, a student at Kashmir University who hails from Zanskar.

The people of Zanskar said that due to the

unavailability of any senior official as sub district head, they have been made to suffer for none of their fault. "There is still a single lane road built eighties that connects Zanskar with the district headquarters Kargil. Till date there have been no efforts from the authorities to develop this lone route," they said.

They added that their woes are aggravated during winter months when there is no road connectivity to their area for almost six months. Besides, residents said that they are also facing crisis on the health front. "People still depend on Ayurvedic Tibetan medicine (Amchi as locally known). Almost every village has its own Amchi who treats the local patients with his own resource and capacity," they said.

Another resident from the area, Tsering Lodop said that there seems to be plan with the government for their area. He said due to lack of road connectivity Zanskar is also losing its tourist share.

Dogs roam freely in Chest Disease hospital, authorities unmoved

'SMC WAS INFORMED 20 DAYS BEFORE; DIDN'T TURN UP' OFFICIALS

❖ Irfan Trambo

SRINAGAR: Valleys oldest hospital Chest Diseases Hospital, Dalgate, commonly known as 'Drugjan,' is facing serious sanitation issues; with canines roaming around within the hospital compound is raising serious questions over the cleanliness of the hospital.

Given the nature of the hospital where extra care is to be taken while dealing with the patients so that they and other may not catch infection, but what is seen on ground is total opposite.

Just outside the OPD block of the hospital stray dogs can be seen roaming around and some can be seen eating thrown away food items—right in front of the block—where hundreds of patients come on regular basis for follow ups and other diagnostic tests.

"I don't understand if this is a hospital or something else, you see, there are stray dogs everywhere," said Farida, who was accompanying her father in the hospital, adding that what is the difference between footpath and the compound of this hospital.



When this reporter visited the hospital, it was seen that the dogs were roaming even on the upper side of the hospital where the old building of the hospital is situated, which is known as ward number-1, in addition to this, the kitchen where the attendants cook food for themselves is also surrounded by stray dogs.

Hospital as of now seems not doing anything to curb the dog menace, as they said that they written to Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to do the needful.

The sanitation supervisor, of the hospital Muhammad Yousuf said that with the large scale construction going on

within the hospital compound it is difficult to curb the dog menace within the compound.

"You see, there is construction going on every side, it makes our job of keeping the place clean, difficult," he said.

The walkway going up to the administrative block stands dirty, with dogs defecating right on the sides of the walkway.

According to sanitation supervisor, they hospital authorities have written to SMC officials asking them to depute a team to curb the menace in the hospital; however, SMC is yet to respond to the call.

"We have written to SMC some 20 days ago, but they have still not sent the team to the hospital," Muhammad Yousuf said. When contacted SMC Commissioner, Dr Shafqat Khan said they are on it and the menace will be tackled soon. "We are receiving calls from different departments regarding the dog menace, we are on it and soon it will be taken care of."

Two months ago when canine dogs went on rampage in Umarabad, city outskirts, Dr Shafqat had then he had said that the dog menace will be curbed; however the situation is still the same.

STRINGS OF THE SOUL



❖ Humaira

SRINAGAR: Iqbal Shah, 28, is a sarangi player. The tunes of the instrument overwhelmed him when he played it for the first time.

He developed a liking for the Sarangi music and wanted to become a professional player.

Son of a professional local musician Nazir Ahmed, Iqbal hails from south Kashmir's village. His choice is triggering opposition at home but he is dreaming to become a Sufi musician. His father counsels him against his passion, insisting that there is "no value" and "no future" in it and family business would be a better option to earn a living and respect in the society. But Iqbal remains unchanged.

"My father didn't allow me first but finally he has started teaching me basics," Iqbal says. Now, every alternate day, music enthusiasts visit Iqbal's home to learn the art from Nazir Shah. Iqbal nowadays spends five to six hours daily to master the music.

"The more I practice, the more I become passionate about it," says Iqbal. Now, his passion for music has taken him from a Sarangi player to a Sarangi instrument maker. Iqbal has setup up a workshop in the balcony of

his home manufacture the instruments and sell them. "Artists often come home and buy from us", Iqbal adds. "I learnt Sarangi making from my father." Starting with Sarangi, Iqbal now plays

Harmonium, Piano keyboard, guitar, Violin and Tabla. Music is normally a collective effort that is why bands perform in chorus. But Iqbal had set his journey alone. After a year long wait, he found Rameez Ahmed, 23 and Tajdar Ahmed, 22 living in his neighbourhood. They also had musical family backgrounds. Rameez plays Nout and Tajdar is a Rabab player.

"It was hectic for me and it took me almost half a year to convince them that playing musical instruments is not an evil practice but it is a way to connect to the Divine," Iqbal says.

Soon, Iqbal's home became the kindergarten school of music where the trio would rehearse for hours daily.

The trio have also been invited by local schools for different musical concerts and Iqbal was also offered a job as a music teacher that he refused politely.

"I refused the job, but promised the school authorities that I will be playing occasionally for the students for free. Money has never been a priority, passion is what drives me," adds Iqbal

They got a chance to perform at DPS Srinagar. They bagged first position and were honored by Dr Farooq Abdullah and Amitab Mattoo.

The trio faces resistance from people. They have also been called "bands". People who understand and appreciate sufi music respect it," says Iqbal. "We sit together and create the compositions and write them."

"We avoid marriages functions because we are not entertainers, We want respect for the sufi music we play" stresses Iqbal.

Generating Jobs

Adil amin

SRINAGAR: Minister of Agriculture, Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura inaugurated 2-day exhibition cum honey trade mela organized by SKUAST (K) on the 'World Honey Bee Day'. Observed to build community awareness of the bee industry, through education and promotion. Hanjura said "that by adopting new technological interventions in this sector and by creating awareness among farmers, the beekeeping sector can play an important role in addressing unemployment issue in the State". Apiary (beekeeping) can become a vibrant source of employment and income-generation in the State and has a potential of generating around 50,000 jobs.

In order to ensure marketing of honey bee farmers, the Government will establish canters across the State which he hoped will yield good results on ground. The Minister directed the Agriculture Department and SKUAST (K) to conduct a census in all the districts to assess the number of bee-keepers and total production of honey produced in the State and furnish the district wise report accordingly. He also called for setting up of Bee-keeping Self Help Groups adding that this will help the Bee-keeping unit holders in financing and marketing their produce.

Responding to the demands including transportation during migration of Bee-Keepers, providing of subsidy and marketing put forth by the farmers, the Minister assured them that their genuine demands would be looked into and addressed on priority.

Vice-Chancellor SKUAST (K) also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the initiatives taken by the varsity for the welfare of the farming community.

DYING ART OF CALLIGRAPHY GETS FRESH OXYGEN



❖ Shaheena Rahim

SRINAGAR: Nadiya Mir exhibited the calligraphy art she learnt by chance at the weeklong Islamic calligraphy exhibition-KhushKhat, one of the artists.

Starting from a hobby, Nadiya never thought that she would fare well in the art to the level that people would start calling her as an artist. Hailing from Kralpora, Nadiya an economics postgraduate with a diploma in fashion designing is elated on her new found taste.

She says that the massive anti-India uprising in 2016 provided her a chance to concentrate on the art. She learnt the techniques of the art without any guidance.

“During the months of shutdown, I was thinking to decorate my room. The idea of Calligraphy stuck my mind. I started doing it. When I showed my work to others, they praised me and I started doing it more,” she said.

Nadiya continued to do Calligraphy as a hobby for months. When she uploaded pictures of her work on social media site, she got huge appreciations and orders from Shahid Rashid, a Kashmiri fashion designer.

“He (Shahid) liked my work and it motivated me to work harder. Then I started working more on myself by getting inspired by famous calligraphers to create best designs every time,” she said.

By decorating her work of Islamic Calligraphy with henna designs, she makes her frames appear more beautiful.

Nadia has mastered in using colours-black, golden, silver and bronze-to make the work more appealing.

For her, the art is about getting close to happiness, religion and God. She said,

“When I draw Allah, I think more about Him and through this art I find solitude in remembering Him.”

Another young artist Ishfaq Ali Parray presented his work as contemporary calligraphy- fusion of calligraphy and painting.

Born in Zadibal area of Srinagar, Ishfaq was inspired by the art of Paper machie to which his family was associated for decades. He is deeply inspired by Kashmiri artist Masood Hussain.

After Graduating from Applied Arts from Institute of Music and Fine Arts, University of Kashmir, Parray has been doing Islamic calligraphy from six years and exhibited his art at many State and National events.

He has painted Quranic verses and famous poetic verses calligraphically by making use of dark colours.

“Doing calligraphy on canvas adds texture as it involves use of brushes instead of calligraphy pens,” he said.

He started doing contemporary calligraphy when he got a work from one of his masters. He said, “My master told me to make calligraphy which should look like painting. I too found it something different and started working on it more.”

He said that contemporary calligraphy demands more efforts and patience from an artist. “Making calligraphy with painting brushes is difficult for a calligrapher but an artist can do anything. It needs to have high control over brush and the thinking that it is pen instead of brush,” he said.

Ishfaq has seen good response and demand among people for his work. He said that the art of contemporary calligraphy is more famous in Iran and it is gaining popularity in Kashmir too.

First Kashmiri girl to join National cricket camp



❖ Ikhtlaq Ul Rehman

SRINAGAR: Jasia Akhtar became the first ever female cricketer from Kashmir and second from J&K to get a call for the Indian women's national cricket camp.

Jasia Akhtar, who hails from Braripora village of Shopian has made the state proud by her achievements in the game.

“I have participated in a number of National Level events between the age groups of 17 and 19 in various sports disciplines like Cricket, Softball and Kabaddi in the National School Games held under School Games Federation of India. I then chose to go ahead with Cricket and achieved what no other girl from the valley achieved,” Saba said.

She won a gold medal in cricket U-19 girls at Bhopal, MP in the year 2005-2006

“I have also participated in various competitions at various levels through JKCA during 2009-2010 and 2010-2011,” she added.

For the year 2012-2013 she was selected for All India North Zone Cricket Team from J&K State.

Jasia was then spotted by Punjab Cricket Association and was made a team member for T-20 Interstate Tournaments in which there team emerged as winners and she made her mark by being the highest scorer. After this she was also selected for the All India North Zone team from the state Punjab where there team remained runners up of the tournament.

One of the biggest achievements of this girl was when she was selected by Rupali Bank Women Cricket Dhaka, Bangladesh as team member to participate Dhaka Premier Division Women's Cricket league in the year 2014-2015 where Jasia was the highest scorer of the tournament.

She was also selected for the India Camp that was scheduled to be held from the month of September, 2016.

Water scarcity hits Kunzar town of Baramulla

❖ Qulsoom

SRINAGAR: Inhabitants of several areas of kunzar area in north Kashmir's Baramulla district are up in arms against the authorities for failing to provide them with potable drinking water.

A delegation of villagers from manglora, waripora, Dhobiwan, utikoo, wussan Gonipora, ogumuna, kwarhama and Tarhama said they face immense water shortage for past several days.

Amidst scorching heat wave, inhabitants particularly women are left with no option but to fetch water from distant springs and streams. The inhabitants of Chanpora, Gonipora and Takiya in Kunzar area too have

complained of shortage of water.

Meanwhile, the farmers dependent for irrigation on 'Khai Kohl' flowing from Gulmarg said their paddy crops have got badly affected. “Due to leak in the stream at various points water flow to our fields has been affected,” they said.

Executive Engineer PHE Division Tangmarg said in view of shortage of potable drinking water, the supply would be made in shifts. “Nowadays we face water shortage generally because of low water quantity from upper reaches and other resources. We have decided to supply water in shifts to the affected areas from today. However I make a fervent appeal to people not to use water for irrigating parks and gardens,” he added.

Radio Storytelling Workshop organised by Department of Information and public Relations

❖ SABRINA MUSHTAQ

SRINAGAR: Noted journalist, broadcaster, author, storyteller, script writer and lyricist, Neelesh Misra known for his famous radio show 'Yaadon Ka Idiot Box', on Wednesday said that seeing the world through the prism of the character is the key for better storytelling.

Mishra was speaking at a daylong workshop on 'Radio storytelling' organized for media students by the Department of Information and Public Relations at Media Complex in Srinagar.

The workshop was attended by the faculty and media students of Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir, Islamic University of Science and Technology Awantipora, Govt Women's College, MA Road and Government Degree College Baramulla.

Director Information, Muneer-ul-Islam, Joint Director Information (Headquarters) Abdul Majid Zargar, Deputy Director Information (PR) Sheikh Zahoor, Bureau Chief of 'The Hindu' Peerzada Ashiq were

also present on the occasion.

Regarding the art of storytelling Misra said, "getting involved in the character mentally helps in coming out with good stories."

He asked the students to stress on delivering the message honestly and cited the instance of a postman whose job is to deliver



the message without adding anything to it.

He asked the students to decide and explore early about their career choices and not to get influenced by the peers or family pressure. "A person can judge himself in which field he can do best," he said.

Misra shared his journey life experiences full of challenges and opportunities from his birth place Nainital to becoming one of the successful voices in the broadcasting world.

He also shared his story behind the scene conversation with Mahesh Bhat while researching for a book which led to his debut song for Bollywood 'Jaadu hai Nasha hai' for movie, Jism.

Speaking on the occasion, Director Information Muneer-ul-Islam said the DIPR is always ready to facilitate the media students with different genres of media to enrich their knowledge. He said various initiatives have been taken to give professional touch to the functioning of the Department and create avenues and opportunities for the media students.

The Director Information announced that DIPR will soon start Internship for media students, both at Jammu and Srinagar.

He said that many more programmes are in pipeline which would help media students to get required exposure for launching a successful career in media industry.

Kashmiri girl awarded best player in Summer Basketball League



Fasil Sidiq

SRINAGAR: In the recent Summer Basketball League, 20 teams participated. As heading team El calor Useeba's team won the league, moreover with scoring 20 points she was awarded best player.

Useeba Bashir was just 14, when she played her first National Basket Ball Championship at Maharashtra, while girls of her age were busy in academics. Recently she bagged best player in the Summer Basketball League held at Indoor Stadium, Srinagar.

From 6th class to 12th class, Useeba practised day in and day out. With dedication and hard work, Useeba was selected five times for the Nationals, and has played 3 times, she has been bagged best players award most of the times.

While holding basket ball in her hand Useeba said, "For me basketball is a passion, it is like oxygen, keeping me alive. I know many boys who play basketball for fun, but for me it is something that provides peace to my soul. Whenever I see basketball anywhere around, I can't resist myself. I just want to grab the ball and score. I owe everything to the basket ball."

Recalling her journey, Useeba said that being kid and playing any sports is difficult task, as one faces countless challenges. The biggest challenge I faced when I started playing basketball was to continue my studies. As I girl I feel life without education is incomplete in today's scenario but girls should learn and be active in sports as well", she added.

She further said "My father had a firm belief in me and supported me in every phase of my life. My mother understands my passion for basketball, and stands with me side by side, helping me to continue with my only passion. I was 14 years old when I played national in Maharashtra, but my parents never minded that."

Currently Useeba is pursuing Masters in Mass Communication and Journalism at Media Education Research Centre (MERC), Kashmir University, and her love for basketball is growing immensely with every passing day.

Kashmir University Hosts Seminars on National Development

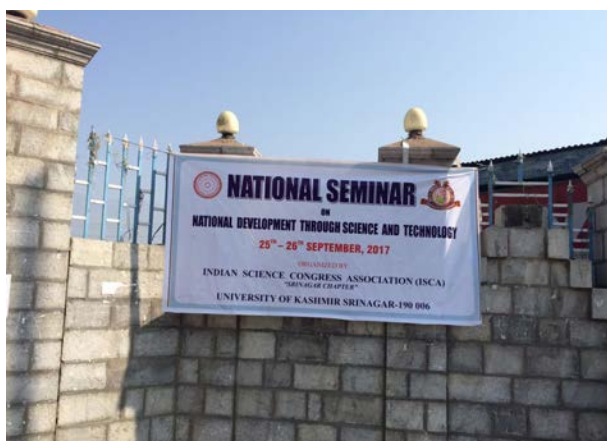
❖ Rashid Manzoor

SRINAGAR: The Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) conducted a seminar on "National Development through Science & Technology" at Gandhi Bhavan, University of Kashmir. The seminar was being organised by ISCA-Srinagar for 25 & 26 September, convened by Dr. Ulfat Jan, Professor and Head, Department of Zoology, University of Kashmir.

Many dignitaries from ISCA were present at the venue including Mr. Ashok Kumar Saxena (Former General President ISCA), Prof. Ganghadar (General Secretary of Membership Affairs, ISCA), P.P Mathur (General Secretary Scientific Activities, ISCA) & Vijay Laxmi Saxena (Council Member of ISCA). Besides, many members from organizing committee were also present including the Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University Prof. Khurshid Andrabi (Patron), Prof. Ulfat Jan (Convener), Prof. G Mustafa Shah

(Seminar Director) & many more.

P.P Mathur in his welcome speech said, "The objectives of the association are To advance and promote the cause of science in India, to hold an annual congress at a suitable place in India, to publish such



proceedings, journals, transactions and other publications as may be considered desirable".

The Association started organizing popular science lectures in different centers in India from 1962-63. The scheme envisages

constructive work for the popularization and advancement of science throughout the year. Till 1985-86 these lectures were delivered at seventeen centers spread over the country. However, this was restructured with the formation of Regional Chapters from 1986-1987. One of the major objectives of the ISCA is to inculcate the scientific temper among the people and to encourage young scientists to grow up steadily in this direction involving them in the programs relevant to fundamental, experimental and operational activities. With these objectives in view, ISCA started Chapters from 1986-87 in different places in India.

"I am happy that 2017 is the Srinagar chapter for ISCA, the dividends of this seminar are going to be quite high, i hope it will help and inspire scholars, teachers and students at large", said Dr. Ulfat Jan

ISCA is a professional body under department of Science & technology, Ministry of Science & technology, Government of India.

CITY RESIDENTS NOW PREFERRING TO DINE OUT

❖ **Firdous Azad**

SRINAGAR: People of the city have started thronging towards food outlets and multi cuisine restaurants for the dining as they have come up with fine dine food centers.

The restaurateurs too have come up with multiple dishes and cuisines which given a variety to costumers to choose from. 'We have our own clientele, we do our best to meet their expectation, so that they continue visiting our place' says the owner of Krishna daba.

The food street of Khayyam presents a festive look after the sun set. The street is infused with the smell of barbeques and grilled items. 'Most of the families prefer to eat in our shops, and others prefer to have it in their cars,' said the owner of a grill shop.

The Srinagar has been the epicenter of politicking and other stuff bereft of any cultural life. The commentators and businessmen have pinned high hopes on the coming winter season and the forthcoming summer and early spring seasons to recuperate the loses which they had to suffer.

Most of the food restaurateurs are from the age group of 20-30, that many assume is a good trend. Most of these restaurateurs are from other streams but due to the lack of opportunities they took to other adventures which many believe will go far to develop the entrepreneurs.

When asked, a lady accompanied by her family and friends said: "We quite often go out for dining, it is good to go out and have fun time with our family and friends"

'We had to go through tough times, but now the business is picking up,' owner of the grills restaurant said.

Cancer Society of Kashmir; an elixir for needy patients

❖ **Madhiya Nabi**

SRINAGAR: With the rise of cancer patients in kashmir,CSK (Cancer Society of Kashmir), located at Lal-Nagar, Chanapora, Srinagar provides anti-cancer drugs, medical examinations and consultations free of any cost for needy and poor carcinoma patients. The organization came into existence in 1999 with an aim to aware people about the various cancers prevalent in Kashmir and inform people about its different causes, symptoms which could help them to eradicate cancer at early stage.

CSK arranges seminars every year at colleges,schools,varsities to make people aware of disease. Over 36000

patients have been financially benefitted by the organization as of 2016, providing them free diagnostic facilities, till 2011, it had over 200 patients all across the valley. But, since 2011, there has been exponential increase in number of patients registered with CSK and majority of them come from lower income group.

Every Tuesday and Saturday, renowned Oncologists all across the valley like Dr. Gul Mohammad, the senior oncologist at SKIMS, Dr.Ashiq Hussain Naqsbandi, the former H.O.D of Government Medical College, Srinagar, Dr. Javaid, H.O.D Radiotherapy, Dr. Maqbool examine patients at CSK clinic after duty hours.

All the activities like free consultation, drugs, medical examinations run by raising charities,donations in the form of money,gifts, movable or immovable properties towards the corpus of society, to help them to realise the dream of cancer-free Kashmir.

"The moment I came to know that I am



suffering from cancer, I was devastated as I thought I will die within few months and moreover how will I be able to manage the expense of disease. But, thanks to Allah, he paved me the way to cancer society, which provided me free consultations, drugs and most importantly the courage that I can fight back. After the declaration, I survived almost two years and hopefully will survive more", said Hajra Begum, an elderly woman suffering from lung cancer.

"The aim of the centre was to provide an integrated and comprehensive cancer treatment to the patients under one roof,which is not possible anywhere in Kashmir. It's free of cost and needy patients should take its benefits and ever since its establishment, the Centre has done a commendable job for helpless, hapless patients and I am myself feeling blessed being associated with the cause since 2016", said Gul Mohammad, senior doctor at SKIMS, currently heading the CSK centre.

Premature fruit fall affects Baramulla growers



❖ **Pardeep Singh**

BARAMULLA: Premature fruit fall has taken a heavy toll on the lives of apple growers living in different areas of north Kashmir's Baramulla district thus affecting their annual turnover.

Fruit growers told MERC Times that premature fall of apples was affecting their annual yield.

Mohammad Anwar Malik, an orchardist from Dardpora, a village around 10 Kilometres from district headquarters is growing delicious varieties of apple trees on four kanals of land.

Harvesting for delicious variety of apple begins from middle of September. "The fruit started falling prematurely from July this year," Malik said, adding that "around 10 percent crop suffered premature fall".

He said that they were expecting a yield of around 400 boxes but around 40 boxes fell prematurely affecting his annual turnover.

He said that some inspection has caused to the apples few years ago. "The fruits develop some internal rots which has rottened them and subsequently

they are fall down," he said.

Bashir Ahmad Malik, another orchardist who grows delicious variety of apple on 3 kanals of land said that premature fruit fall has severely affected his orchard.

"We were expecting a yield of around 125 boxes," he said, adding that "around 100 boxes suffered prematurely fall"

He said that he was badly hit by the fall of unripe apple. "I invested around rupees 14000 on pesticides and fertilizers. I am expecting to earn rupees 5000 on the yield which means there is loss of rupees 9000 excluding labour," he said.

Various pesticide dealers have been exploiting the plight of orchardists by advising them to spray various pesticides to stop the premature fruit fall.

A senior official of Horticulture Department Kashmir said that it not advisable to spray any pesticide at this time.

"From some varieties the harvest season has already started and for other it will begin within 15 days, my advice to orchardists is not to use this pesticide at this time," he said.

Meet Kashmir's cricket Gabroo, who serves free of cost

❖ Mudasir Majeed

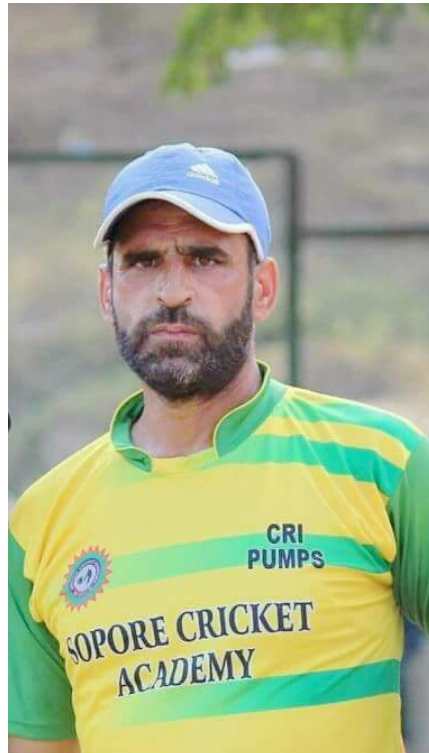
SOPORE : Hailing from north Kashmir's Sopore town, a 40 year-old, cricketer Mohammad Yousuf Gabroo is someone who has pain for his passion and is contributing for the upcoming generations free of cost.

Gabroo has keen interest in creating new talents from the Kashmir valley. "The promise of greatness seems to be an advantage, but it can also be a serious nuisance. World reserves a special touch of kindness, many sportsmen lack the financial support by which they cannot make their mark into the field of sports"

He is not only a cricketer but also a good sports person.

I have always been there for young generations to provide them quality sports," he said adding "And I am organising tournaments throughout valley"

"I love to see budding cricketers participating in various tournament and I feel there is very much support to provide among youth which will keep them in touch with the game" he said.



Budgam police organises sports festival



❖ ANEESA ASHRAF

BUDGAM: In order to promote the sports culture and to provide opportunity to the youth to show their talent, Budgam police organised a Mega Sports Festival U-19 at Sports Stadium, Budgam, on Friday.

The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Budgam Mohammad Harun Malik and Commanding Officer of CRPF 43 Bn Vinod Karthak. Various events like Cricket, Volley Ball, Football, Wushu, Kabbdi, tug of war and race etc to be played during the festival. A large number of students are participating in this mega event. Around 32 teams for cricket,

16 teams for Football and eight teams each for Volleyball and Kabadi are participating.

During the inaugural ceremony of Mega Sports Festival, a cricket match was played between Sahil CC, Naroo and Tehran boys Lakheripora. Tehran boys, Lakheripora while batting first scored 126 runs for 9 wickets in their limited 20 overs and in reply Sahil CC, Naroo scored 131 runs and won by six wickets. Among others SSP Budgam Tejinder Singh, Addl. SP Budgam Amod

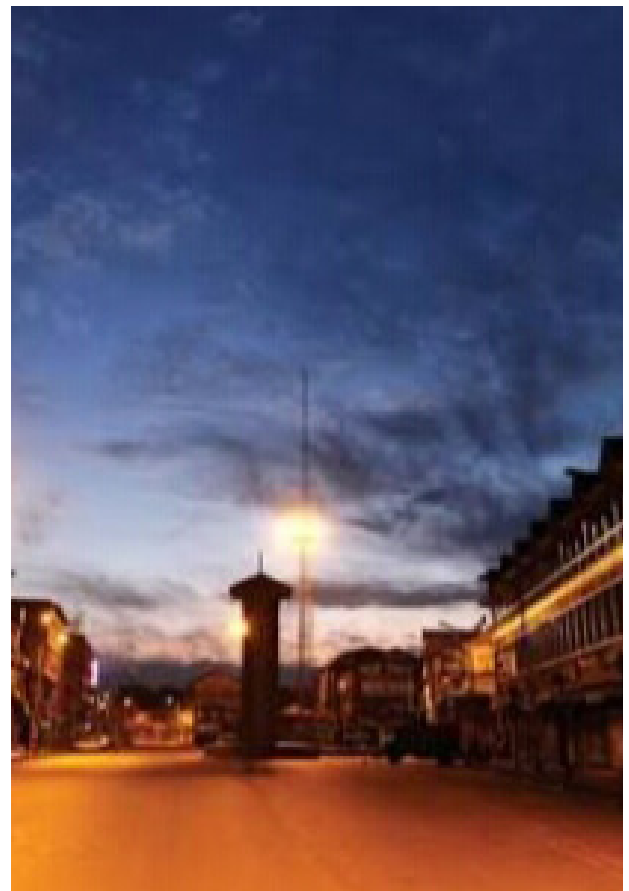
Ashok Nagpure and DySP (DAR) Budgam Mir Rasheeq were also present on the inaugural ceremony of the Mega Sports Festival.

While talking to MERC times, Mr. Nagpure said, "We are organizing this mega sports event only to make our young generations focused on it. They must know that sports are the part and parcel of their lives".

One of the participants of volley ball team, Ishtiyahq, said, "We are happy to be a part of this U-19 sports festival. We are enjoying and feel refreshed. We want these kinds of events to be organized annually".

"We are thankful to J&K police and CRPF who have made it a reality", he added.

NEW STREETLIGHTS NEAR LAL CHOWK REMOVED



Shaheen Shafique

SRINAGAR In a bizarre move, some of the recently installed streetlights near Srinagar's business hub Lal Chowk have been removed while the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) claims to be unaware about it.

The traders, including shopkeepers, observed a day-long shutdown on Monday against the National Investigation Agency's move to summon the president of Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation, Mohammad Yasin Khan.

However, the traders at Residency Road near Lal Chowk said they found some of the new streetlights removed when they returned to work on Tuesday morning.

Firdous Ahmad, who sells dry fruits, said the traders were happy with the new street lights as it gave the street a new look. "We were not having any problem with these lights but still the authorities removed the poles at night," he said. "They will not let our city to shine."

Secretary of Regal Chowk Traders Association, Farhan Kitab, said he raised the issue with the municipal corporation's commissioner, but "he hasn't called me back yet".

"There was no problem or objection from the shopkeepers of Regal Chowk and Residency Road but still they have removed the streetlights," Kitab said.

Spokesperson of SMC, Masrat Yousuf, told MERC reporter, the corporation did not know about the move. "There might be congestion in the streetlights and that is why the contractor might have removed some of them," he said.

However, she added the corporation does not interfere with the work till the contractor submits the final bill.

She said the corporation has allotted around 100 streetlights for the beautification of Srinagar city.

Kashmir considered best solar potential state in India

❖ **Ather Shah**

SRINAGAR: As per reports and analysis Kashmir is having great potential for solar energy, with great speed populace of Kashmir are installing solar plates at their homes to make energy from it

A recent study by Indian researchers has identified the eastern parts of Jammu and Kashmir; in the chilly shadows of the Himalayas can be the highest potential for solar energy generation in India”.

Traditionally energy that can be generated from sunlight is estimated solely on the basis of the amount of solar radiation incident in a particular place. But a new study says other parameters like ambient temperature, altitude; wind velocity and weather conditions tend to influence the energy generation to a great deal and therefore these factors must be taken into account before selecting a place for setting up a solar plant.

The study by Tirumalachetty Harinarayana, director of the Gujarat Energy Research and Management Institute in Gandhinagar, and Jaya Kashyap of the Malla Reddy Engineering College in Hyderabad is published Nov 17 in “Smart Grid and Renewable Energy,” an international journal.

“The combination of high altitude and low ambient temperature plays a crucial role in the efficient performance of the photovoltaic (PV) modules while wind velocity is a deciding factor in the energy generation process from the view point of heat transfer,” said



Tirumalachetty Harinarayana

“Therefore, what the developers really require for choosing the best place for locating a solar plant is a map of solar energy ‘generation potential’ and not just the solar radiation map.”

The researchers have for the first time produced such a map for India by simulating the various conditions in a computer and have identified 286 locations with high energy generation potential in different regions of the country. A more detailed map prepared for three states has identified 266 locations in Gujarat, 231 in Andhra Pradesh and 165 in Telangana.

The researchers have computed the month-wise solar energy generation potential -- and also the total energy that could be generated for the whole year -- at each of these locations. “The methodology followed in our study is through modelling using standard software

programmes,” Harinarayana said.

According to their report, most of India has substantial solar energy potential ranging from 680,000 -730,000 kilo-watt hours (KWH) per acre of land, except in Arunachal Pradesh and the eastern part of Assam that have the least potential.

The highest annual solar energy generation (750,000-800,000 KWH per acre) potential has been identified in the eastern parts of Jammu and Kashmir and the eastern part of Uttarakhand.

“Although the incident solar radiation in these regions is low when compared to the rest of the country, the energy generation potential is high due to the ideal combination of solar radiation, ambient temperature and wind velocity,” the authors explain.

In the case of Gujarat, most of the region has the potential to generate from 700,000-730,000 KWH of solar energy while the maximum (800,000 KWH) is limited to a small area in the district of Junagarh.

The authors say the new map they have produced will hopefully help solar developers to correctly estimate the energy generation and therefore the economics of a solar photovoltaic power plant in any place in India before setting it up.

This will help the country achieve the 20,000 MW target of the Jawaharlal Nehru Solar Mission by 2022.

In every home by 2030 in Kashmir it is said that solar plates will be installed in each and every home with the help of Jawaharlal Nehru Solar Mission

Babul-Iqbal on Baba demb road yet to see light of the day



❖ **Syed Burhan**

SRINAGAR: It was way back in 2011 when the foundation stone for a gateway to Shahr e Khass was laid by MLA Khanyar, Ali Mohammad Sagar. The gateway, to be called BabulIqbal, was a part of the beautification plan of BrariNambal lagoon. The gateway was scheduled to be completed by 2013 but even after a three years delay, it is yet to reach it's completion.

The government had sanctioned Rs. 1.20 crore for its construction but after six long years of delay, the project is yet to see light of the day. The

project involves Srinagar Municipal Corporation(SMC),UEED,LAWDA and Roads and building Department (R&B).

Locals are aghast at the slow pace of work on the gateway.They have appealed the authorities to get the project completed at the earliest.

“We are not able to park our vehicles on the roadside because of the construction material dumped here since last several years.” said Mohsin, a local there.

Despite several attempts, Commissioner SMC Shafqat Khan did not respond to our calls.

Restaurant penalized for overcharging on mineral water

Farheen Qureshi

SRINAGAR: Government on Monday claimed to have penalized a restaurant in Srinagar for overcharging on mineral water bottles. Eight other traders were also booked during the market check.

In a statement, the Legal Metrology Department said the restaurant was found to be charging Rs.30 for packed water bottle with the maximum retail price of Rs.20. However, the department did not disclose the name and whereabouts of the restaurant.

“The restaurant was booked on the prompt by a specific complaint received

from the Chief Minister’s Grievance Cell. We have issued a show cause notice to the management of the restaurant. An undertaking that such an offence will not be repeated in future was taken from the restaurant.” a concerned official said.

The department said it conducted market checking in various areas of Srinagar, including Zadibal, Dunipora, Khusalsar, Gojwara, KathiDarwaza, SaidaKadal, Shalimar and Theed. It claimed to have booked eight erring traders for violating legal metrology laws, collecting an amount of Rs 3800 from them as a fine.



Blue whale menace: awareness program launched by Islami jamiat Talaba



❖ Hikmatyar

KUPWARA: Islami jamiat Talaba does a great job in preventing young boys and girls from playing online blue whale 50 days Challenge game.

The Blue Whale challenge – a suicide game where the player is given various tasks by an administrator over a 50-day period, ranging from isolation to self-harm and ultimately suicide is not really new. Originated in Russia, the game has allegedly claimed over 130 lives around the globe.

The game, initially believed to be available on the social networking site VKontakte, is said to have got its name from the popular belief that blue whales sometimes beach themselves to die. “Islami Jamiat-e- talaba,” a student’s organization has launched an awareness campaign throughout Jammu and Kashmir to aware parents about the “Blue whale game” and its hazardous impact on their children.

Guardians of students have also been asked to monitor their wards and ensure they are not engaged in the game.

A memorandum has been sent by the organization to the Education department to ban the use of smart phones by children in schools in a bid to keep them away from the ‘Blue Whale Challenge’.

“Teachers have been requested to randomly check students while parents have also been asked to monitor activities of children,” District president Nadeem-I-Ilahe said.

“If a child appears tense or abnormal, it should be immediately noticed and counseled,” he added.

The President of this organization has asked their own officials to make efforts to contact school authorities and ensure that children are prevented from playing the game.

Taking cognizance of the suicides, the organization has also sent requests to social media giants such as Facebook, Google, and Instagram to remove links of the controversial game from their sites.

Khalid Bashir’s book released; Kashmir history’s narrative challenged

❖ Farooz Ahmad

SRINAGAR: Khalid Bashir, a former Kashmiri civil servant and an author has challenged the ‘dominant narrative’ in Kashmir. Bashir’s new book has evoked interest in literary circles as it also questions Kalhan’s ‘Rajtarangni’ by terming it an “incomplete” document.

At the release function of his book “Kashmir-Exposing the myth behind the Narrative”, Khalid Bashir said that his book challenged the narrative of persecution of Kashmiri Pandits during the Muslim rule.

The release function was attended by prominent journalists like Yusuf Jameel who moderated the event.

In his speech, Khalid criticized the prominent ancient historian Kalhana for documenting “incomplete” history in Rajatanagni.

“The book actually includes in a historiography that has gone almost unchallenged, and investigates a particular dominant narrative about Kashmiri Pandits. It challenges the narrative of persecution of Pandits during Muslim rule and forcible conversion of Kashmiris from Hinduism to Islam,” he said.

“Kalhana claims to have documented 4000 years long history but when you clearly analyze it only 1000 years are clearly mentioned in the entire document,” the author said.

Ahmed while reading introductory pages of his book claimed that Kashmiri Pandits enjoyed various privileges during Mughal rule by holding high positions in the administration.

“A lot of history about Kashmir is distorted. During King Zain-ul Abideen’s rule, Kashmiri Pandits especially Brahmins held high positions in the administration. They were given rent free land and the King himself participated in their rituals and festivals

“During Afghan era lot of Kashmiri Pandits had political power in their hands. Saproos, Kouls heading some of the



important departments is an ample proof,” he said.

The book mentions prehistoric Kashmir to the present times by using available Paleolithic evidence as well as ancient texts.

For the contemporary period, the author has consulted experts on various topics and an extensive archive of journalistic writing and reportage.

On the occasion, prominent journalist Muhammad Sayed Malik said the author has identified some of the distorted narratives that have been put in the historical records of Kashmir.

“The book has three components, history of Kashmir, movement and development of local media. Challenging dominant narratives is the crux of this book. He has identified some of the distorted facts in the history which he wants to change,” he said.

“Being a non -historian the books deserves a read. It should be known here why the author is challenging 5000 years long history,” he said.

Professor Quyoum Rafiqi who was the Chief Guest of the occasion lauded the author for the attempt and said that there was a need to revive the concept of oral history in Kashmir.

“We should move back to the oral history including folk lore and it needs to be preserved before it is destroyed.

PHE department in slumber as water scarcity hits Natipora

Musaib Hafiz

SRINAGAR: As residents of Dilsoz Coloney, Natipora complain acute water shortage from 14 days, Public health engineering (PHE) sleeps.

Inhabitants of Natipora, Mehjoor Nagar, Nowgam and Naikbagh suffer from water shortage as they have to wait for hours to fill a bucket.

Adil Ahmad, one of the Residents of Dilsoz Coloney told Merc Times “We are complaining from two weeks but we are not getting any response from authorities”.

“We urge authorities for immediate solution. Due to water scarcity, we move to other localities to fetch water which becomes difficult in the holy Month of Ramadan.” he said

Another local resident said the news circulated past week in another newspaper, but authorities did nothing to restore water supply as earliest as it is the basic need to everyone.

“We approached Executive Engineer Ajaz Qureshi few times and in charge officer Nazir Ahmad, to look over the matter but nothing happened.”

Nazir Ahmad in-charge officer PHE Natipora said “We are



doing our best to maintain uninterrupted water supply to areas.”

“We are adding Tangnar Water Supply Scheme, to overcome from water scarcity, which will boost water supply in the city, especially Panthachowk, lasjan, Nowgam and Natipora.” Ajaz Qureshi said.

Furthermore Qureshi said that, “Tangnar Water Supply Scheme undergoes in testing process, will take 15 days more to complete.”

The residents urged authorities to look into the matter at the earliest.

Govt. to provide 50% subsidy to mechanized Shikara taxi owners, unemployed youth

❖ **Aaqib Hyder**

Srinagar: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan on Thursday asked tourism department and other concerned authorities to prepare a scheme of mechanized Shikara taxis on river Jhelum. He said the government will provide 50 percent subsidy to Shikara owners besides training them free of cost.

During a meeting to review measures taken for promoting public water transport, Khan said, "An action plan is prepared as per the water

transport standards prevalent in Italy and other European countries."



"Department of Tourism will be the nodal agency which will frame terms

and conditions and media publicity of the scheme and will also send a complete

DPR to the Divisional Commissioner's office for approval," he said.

"There is a dire need to revive the water transport to boostup the tourism industry besides extending means of transport to general masses and generating employment opportunities for youth." a tourism official said.

Pertinently, Government on Wednesday announced that it will ply Jhelum cruise service twice a day at the cost of Rs. 25 per passenger to promote tourism.

Uri: Locals suffer as schemes fail to take-off



IDREES BUKHTIYAR

Uri (Baramulla): The government's various schemes for the construction of better roads in border town Uri of north Kashmir's Baramulla district has proved as a damp squib thus causing immense problems to the residents.

The local Roads and Building department (R&B) and Government of India's (GOI) ambitious Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojan (PMGSY) scheme have failed to provide the much needed relief, said the residents.

Locals in the town said that the roads constructed by these departments are dilapidated and bumpy and allege that many roads of the different villages have not been even macadamized so far.

"The roads here are in bad condition. Nobody from the

officials is paying any heed to repair these roads and make them good for the transportation," said Sadiq Ali, a local shopkeeper in the area.

He told MERC Times that they many a times approached the senior officials of the departments but all in vain. "We met the senior officials of R&B department and PMGSY but they only provided us with false assurances and did nothing for the betterment," he said.

People living in the main town complained that the men working on the road construction have not constructed any protection walls that are prone to landslides which pose threat to the lives of the people.

The residents living in the vicinity of the incomplete roads are mostly affected as their houses usually get damaged due

to landslides and negligence of authorities towards construction of protection walls.

The damaged roads of Uri town include Thajal-Charunda, Salmabad-Dardkote-Jabla, Syedpora- Hathlanga, Lower Garkote-Upper Garkote, Dapkulla- Kandi Kaller and many other.

Superintending Engineer R&B Baramulla, Abdul Majeed said, "Our main focus is on the macadamization work of Lagama-Garkote road and I assure you that will sort out all other issues."

Divisional Engineer (DE), PMGSY Uri, Nazir Ahmad Bandy said: "We are having two stages of road construction. In stage first we buy the land where we have to construct the roads and pay them the compensations. In stage second we macadamize the roads and hopefully this process will start from the month of April next year."

Shaan e Ahlibait Conference held at Parimpora



❖ **Mohammad Imran**

Srinagar: One day conference on islam held at Parimpora Srinagar named as 'Shaan e Ahlebait Conference, in which many prominent personalities spoke on the importance to follow the path of Muhammad (PBUH) and his family and Sahaba kiram and Fight against Social Evils, Cruelty has been the duty of Islam.

J&K Karwani Islami Moulana Ghulam Rasool Hami Said, "we Need To Follow the Path Followed by Imam Hussain (R.A) To Achieve Success. Following the path of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Ahlebait and Sahaba Kiram gave there lives in the way of islam".

Main Reason for Which Muslims are being Oppressed Today is farness From Quran and Ahli Bayat . Anti Islamic Agencies are trying to link Islam with terrorism and Extremism through Certain Policies and to Defy their allegations we need to get United and stand Karbala is the best example of unity and stand. he added

Moulana Hami Appealed World Humanity Organisations To Come Forward and Help Rohingya Muslims. He Said That the Imdad Foundation Of Karwani Islami Has Reached. Bangladesh and are Currently Providing Every Possible Help To Rohingya Muslims.

Besides, Karwani Islami has played a major role in promoting campaign on liquor ban in state and bring a law against it.

speaking with MERC TIMES Mushtaq Ahmed, a participant at conference said, "This event will not only help people to learn the principles of islam, but will also spread the mission of Imam Hussain who defend islam in Karbala.

Besides, TSA patron Molana Ab. Rasheed Dawoodi and other scholars spoke . Moulana Ab Rasheed Dawoodi spoke on the need of understanding Quran and Hadith to follow the real path of Islam so that the world comes to know what is the difference between real islam and Daiesh .

DEADLY HEMOPHELIA: THE BLEEDER'S DISEASE

I have a disease that will never go away, that is why I cannot play and often miss school, says Shahbaz



❖ Mahdeesa Altaf

Srinagar: The smile on the face of six-year-old hemophilia patient Shahbaz masks the pain he undergoes because of the failure to ensure his wellbeing and that of others like him.

"I have a disease that will never go away. That is why I cannot play and often miss school," Shahbaz said.

He has been admitted to the Hemophilia Daycare Center at the SMHS Hospital with a bleeding knee joint, a condition that will lead to stiffening of the leg and eventual disability in the limb.

Shahbaz is aware of that. But his condition could be better if clotting factors are available.

Hemophilia is a genetic disorder that impairs the body's ability to make blood clots, a process needed to stop bleeding. This results in people bleeding longer after an injury, easy bruising, and an increased risk of bleeding inside joints or the brain.

Doctors say that with adequate care, hemophilia patients live "near normal lives" in most parts of the world. However, in Kashmir, their story is tragic.

"Last week, his tooth had to be extracted and he continued to bleed for many days. There were no medicines here," said Ashiq Hussain, father of Shahbaz.

On a bed next to Shahbaz's, another six-year-old Hemophilia patient Mohammad Amin was being attended to by his distraught father. "I lost my elder son to a bleeding episode in 2014. I don't want to lose my only son now," Amin's father said and broke down.

At SKIMS, Soura, Amir Wani, another hemophilia patient is battling for life, his leg facing an amputation. "In three months, a wound in his hip turned into an abscess for want of clotting factors", said his family.

In 2012, the High Court had observed that failure to ensure appropriate treatment to hemophilia patients was "injustice" and "any such lapse would result in fixing the responsibility on an officer who has committed the lapse".

"If the respondent (the state) fails to discharge its duties then the petitioner would be at liberty to file appropriate application which shall be taken up for passing appropriate orders," the court had said.

However, for hemophilia patients, including children like Mohammad Amin and Shahbaz, disability is almost certain, given their recurrent, untreated bleeding episodes.

In February 2016, the Government Medical College Srinagar routed funds meant for anti-hemophilia drugs to the JK Medical Supplies Corporation (JKMSCL) and the supplies arrived thereafter. However, the use of these drugs was stopped on complaints of adverse reactions at the Hemophilia Center. Since then, the supply has neither been used, nor returned.

Prof Samia Rashid, principal GMC Srinagar, said the matter has been taken up with the authorities.

"We are on it," she said and declined to say anything more.

Accidental head scarf pin inhalation cases on the rise in valley



❖ Nausheen Naseer

Srinagar: Women wearing headscarves or the Islamic veils are a common sight in Kashmir. But experts warn that even a tiny mistake by women while fixing their headscarves may prove deadly as it could result in scarf pin inhalation. According to Eye Nose Tongue (ENT) specialists, a rising number of such inhalation cases among women wearing Islamic veils are being reported in the state.

Most of the cases are of women who accidentally inhale the pins while fixing their headscarves or veils. "They either cough or laugh while the pins are clenched between

their teeth and end up swallowing them," said Dr Rafiq Ahmad Pampori, an ENT specialist.

"I have been only seeing cases of 'bob pins' inhalation ever since I joined the department," said Dr Qurat, an ENT specialist at SMHS. "The pins either go into the lungs or get injected in the esophagus. In order to find out where the pin is stuck, the patient needs to undergo a procedure called Bronchoscopy with which we are able to view his lungs and airway," she said.

But the procedure is highly risky and may result in complications in the lungs of the patient, specialists warn. "If the bronchoscopy is unsuccessful, then we have no

option but to operate upon the patient. Like bronchoscopy, the operation also involves many risks," said Dr Pampori.

According to a 2015 study conducted by Srinagar's Government Medical College, 18 headscarf foreign body inhalation cases were found among women in the age group of 15 to 35 years. The study further revealed that "... all had positive chest radiography findings while commonest anatomical location was left main bronchus."

"We do get number of cases of inhalation of pins by women," said Dr Zubair Lone, post graduate doctor at SMHS. "Women need to be more careful while fixing their headscarves as those tiny pins could create problems for them by puncturing their lungs and if not diagnosed early they may have to undergo," he added.

"This is a serious problem and deserves our attention. Public awareness is very important so that women take care while arranging their scarves," said Dr Pampori.

PHC Humhama without healthcare facilities

Shahjhan Mughal

Srinagar: Government Primary Health Centre (PHC) Humhama on the city outskirts craves for adequate healthcare facilities as the Centre is poorly staffed and lacks basic amenities.

Officials said the Health Centre is working with only 25 per cent of sanctioned staff and about 75 per cent of the posts are lying vacant. The paramedical staff is almost non-existent with only one trainee, sources said, adding that there is no dresser available in the Health Centre, which could prove fatal if an emergency arises.

"There is only one Doctor and a nurse who are solely responsible for doing all kind of medical treatments as there is no specialist appointed for any kind of disease", a local resident said.

He said despite being located on the airport road the centre is in deplorable condition and remains shut most of the time.

"The PHC is located on the Airport Road and this road often witnesses frequent accidents but in absence of facilities, the injured are shifted to District Hospital Budgam. Even patients with minor accidental injuries are instantly referred to other hospitals of Srinagar without even providing them first aid," another local resident, said.



The women of the area said the PHC fails to provide pregnancy care. "Not a single test is done here. The centre lacks testing apparatus. ECG, X-ray machines are not here. How can one rely on it? It's a waste of money and space. The staff only comes here to kill time." Mehmooda, a local, said.

PHC Humhama caters to a huge population of Humhama, Boenpur, Gogo, Wanbal, Cooperative Colony, Gogo Highland Colony, Bilal Mohalla, Edigah Mohalla and Railway Colony. However, the PHC fails to meet the expectations of patients due to lack of staff, infrastructure and key diagnostic facilities.

Director Health Saleem Rehman assured that he will visit the Health Centre to take stock of the situation.

KASHMIR & DRUGS GO HAND IN HAND

❖ **Shahbaz Qutub**

SRINAGAR: The trend of drug addiction among youngsters, especially schoolchildren, is on the rise in Kashmir. Experts have warned that lack of family supervision could take a toll on the overall lives of the young souls.

There have been some specific reasons of the high incidence of substance abuse among youths, according to doctors who work with the young drug addicts.

Experts have blamed lack of quality relationship between the parents and their children as a major reason for drug abuse among youths in the Valley. “The trend of drug abuse is on the rise among schoolchildren as we have registered many such cases, where students of Class 10th to 12th are involved with drugs,” said Dr Muzaffar Ahmad, head of the only government-run drug de-addiction centre in Kashmir.

Many people blamed the lack of family support for the worsening problem. “The children who get involved mostly face lack of family supervision. The father leaves for office in the morning, mother too leaves and they hardly see what their children are doing,” said Yasir Arafat Zahgeer, who runs a private de-addiction centre in Srinagar, Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses. “And many times the children who are young get driven towards it due to peer pressure,” he added.

Stakeholders are alarmed at the fact that young people, in their productive years, are succumbing to substance abuse. The data at Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital (SMHS)- community centre where the drug abusers get treatment- reveals that 86 per cent patients being treated for substance abuse were less than 35 years old. “Mostly, schoolchildren who get into drugs are above the age of 13 years, as it has been observed that till Class VIII, students get attention from their families. The loophole lies in the family who fails to give quality time to children. In many cases, there can be other problems like personal relationships or conflict

between parents,” Yasir added.

The trend of drug consumption among schoolchildren is mostly with volatile solvents such as fluids, Fevicol, and cannabis among the rural children. “Mostly, the students who get admitted in the de-addiction centres are addicted to Fevicol, ink erasers and cannabis” said Dr Muzaffar.

The students, due to easy access to these things, continue to consume them. “The students get these things from school canteens or from stationery shop. There comes the responsibility of school authorities, government and the



families to prevent abuse,” said another expert, working with the drug de-addiction centre from the past 14 years.

Among the general age group, cannabis abuse has touched an alarming level across Kashmir. Most patients at Srinagar hospitals are cannabis addicts. According to a data maintained by the de-addiction centre at SMHS Hospital, 71 per cent people being treated for substance abuse are using multiple drugs, of which cannabis is the most common.

There are only three de-addiction centres in the whole

of Kashmir— one is run by the Police Control Room at Batamaloo, Srinagar, the other is at SMHS Hospital. The third, which is currently under renovation post floods, is a private centre at Karanagar. All three have a capacity of less than 40 beds.

The lack of proper treatment has also become one of the hindrances to prevent the rise of drug abuse among youths. “This menace can be handled in two ways. There must be more drug de-addiction centres which can help these children to lead normal lives and parents must look at their children’s activities and develop quality relationship with them,” Dr Muzaffar added.

In spite of the police claiming to have cracked down on drug peddlers, many said that it had become a norm in the police to let off the suppliers and lock the addicts up. “The government is not serious about bringing an end to the problem. Instead, most of the times, they arrest peddlers and set them free,” said an addict.

“The government should also look for substitutes for the fluids, so that students are not able to get them. This will also help in bringing down the substance abuse rate among schoolchildren,” Arafat added.

Experts also emphasised the dire need of awareness camps at schools so that students could be prevented from getting into the menace. “People who seek help with us are just a drop in the ocean. We need to address the problem at the grassroots level. Schools can play a larger role in getting students out of this addiction,”

said a drug de-addiction expert.

When asked, most private schools were in denial mode about the existence of such problem in their schools. But Showkat Ahmad Beigh, Director of School Education, Kashmir, said they were continuously making efforts to make students aware about harmful effects of drugs. “We mostly hold seminars in boys’ schools and I have directed the principals of all schools to make health clubs and involve students in making masses aware about the effects of drugs.

Unknown locals encroach Kupwara road

Will look into the matter: DC Kupwara

❖ **Pirzada Shakir**

Kupwara: A 50 feet wide Gushi Dedikote road in north Kashmir’s Kupwara district has been encroached by some unknown locals thus becoming a nightmarish for the local population.

Locals told MERC Times that the road has now turned into a narrow lane through which the passing of vehicles have become impossible and a tough job.

“Some people of the area are using the road as their private property as they have dumped cow dung and other construction material on the half of the road at many places,” said a delegation of locals.

They alleged that after repeated requisitions, the authorities have failed to address the grievances of people and to curb the violators who have made the



road pathetic for smooth movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Waseem Raja, a local said that we

have been knocking the doors of district administration from last one and a half year.

“But nobody is ready to pay any heed towards this sensitive issue,” he said.

Meanwhile, DC Kupwara has already given clear directions to Tehsildar Kupwara who wrote to concerned Naib Tehsildar for immediate action against the violators. “Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara Rajiv Kumar Ranjan after application moved to him by us directed Executive Engineer PMGSY Kupwara for spot verification and immediate action regarding the matter. Unfortunately he did not take-up this matter thus adding more miseries to life of common people,” locals said.

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara told MERC Times that he will personally look into the matter. “And will sent a special team to the spot for the necessary action,” the DC said.



Seminar on science and technology held at KU

❖ Sajidha

SRINAGAR: A two-day seminar—National Development Through Science and Technology—began at Kashmir University on Monday.

The national-level seminar is being organized by the Indian Science Congress Association (Srinagar Chapter), a university spokesperson said in a statement.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Ashok Kumar Saxena, former general president of the Association, said, “A meaningful academic discourse such as this provides the necessary fillip to undertake year-long scientific activities to young students and researchers who are the primary beneficiaries of such events and interactions.”

“Perhaps India is the only country in the world whose 70 percent population is

aged less than 35 years and this provides us an opportunity to sensitise our young generation about the advancements made in various fields so that they become the global leaders of tomorrow,” he said.

Addressing the audience, University’s Vice-Chancellor, Prof Khurshid Iqbal Andrabi said humans need to work in harmony with nature and not against it. “Once we start believing that the best

of the inspirations come from nature, we will start getting dividends in our scientific pursuits as the answer to our several dilemmas lies in the nature itself,” he said.

Earlier, Convener of the Association, Prof Ulfat Jan highlighted the aims and objectives of the seminar. The seminar director, Prof G Mustafa Shah, summarised various presentations being made in the two days.

Govt keeps thousands of Widow cases Pending

❖ Syed Shahriyar

SRINAGAR: More than 49000 widow and old age pension cases are pending with the government in Kashmir, who presently are not receiving monthly stipend through Department of Social Welfare.

As per the figures, presently the pending widow pension cases in Kashmir have piled up to 2852.

The documents reveal that 4947 widows are registered with the Department of Social Welfare in Kashmir.

The government during financial year 2016-17 have been sanctioned Rs 549.29 lakhs grants for the state under this scheme.

Almost 88 cases of widow pension beneficiaries have been weeded out during the last year.

“This years the state government has the annual target of Rs 207.77lakhs to be distributed as pension among the registered widows,” an official said.

Officials from the Social Welfare Department said that the government has not increased the funds for the Indra Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme due to which many beneficiaries are not receiving the stipend.

“We receive a certain amount from the Centre under



Indra Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme and then state government also contributes to make the amount per widow Rs 1000. But every years some are weeded out who die and their share is then given to few who are among the pending cases,” an official said.

Recently, the Committee on Public Undertakings (PUC) of Legislative Assembly has directed the

concerned department to take necessary steps to provide widow pensions clearing all pending widow pension cases of previous years.

Asha Begum, who claims to have registered her names with the department said that the department has not cleared her case for the last one year.

“For the last one year I have been making rounds of various offices. Every time I get assurances only but nothing is being done in my case,” she said.

Same is the case with old age pension scheme in which the pendency in Kashmir has increases up to 46,645 cases.

As per the documents, in Kashmir 72,265 beneficiaries are registered with the Department of Social Welfare Department for which the government has released Rs 5542.69 last year.

Almost 46,645 cases are pending under this category in Kashmir, who don’t receive grants from the state government.

Last year the government announced that old pensioners and family pensioners in state, aged 80 years and above, will get additional pension ranging from 20 per cent to 100 per cent, depending on their age.

When contacted the Director, Social Welfare Department Hashmat Ali wasn’t available to comment.