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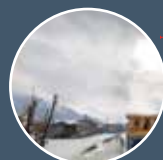
## KASHMIR VALLEY GETS FIRST 'SHIKARA AMBULANCE'

Full  
Story on P5

INSIDE  
STORIES



Installation of street lights  
in its final phase  
P02



Three unrepaired houseboats  
sink in Dal Lake  
P06



Nigeen residents aghast over roadside  
dumping of garbage  
P8



## Installation of street lights in its final phase

**Syed Junaid**

**Srinagar:** Srinagar is in its final phase to get full fledged installation of street lights all around the main lanes of the city. Under the Smart City project, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) is in its final stage to install streetlights throughout the city. The project for the installation of street lights was proposed in 2017 handled by the Srinagar Municipal Corporation and was held in two phases. The first phase of installation stands completed while the work on phase two is about to see the light of the day.

“The project was supposed to be completed in 2019. However, due to the political uncertainty in the state post August 5 and the subsequent lockdown imposed by the authorities due to Coronavirus pandemic, the work was stalled for almost an year,” said Zeeshan Ashraf, incharge of the Smart City project in the Eastern area of Srinagar city. He further added, “But now the project is almost complete. Only few lanes and by-lanes are to be covered in the Harwan, New Theed and Dargah area of the city and that will be done very soon.”

The project of installing street lights in the city was taken up in 2017, following the orders of the then Chief Minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti in order to make Srinagar city a Smart City and improve upon public facilities. Under this project, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation had started working on installing over 70,000 street lights in the city’s small lanes while the main roads were covered by Power Development Department (PDD).

While hailing such public oriented move by the authorities, Mehraj-u-din, a local shopkeeper in Shalimar area of the Srinagar city said, “The installation of street lights is a very good step by authorities. It had become almost impossible for us to venture out of our homes during nights in case of some emergency.” Another resident Ghulam Nabi Wani, a retired agricultural officer from Shalimar area said, “It was difficult for people to go for morning prayers as the light remains dim during morning prayer time. Now, we can sigh a relief as street lights would be on.”

The street lights have been installed in all 36 Municipal Wards of the city. Initially, they were installed at Dalgate, Residency Road, Nishat, Shalimar, Pantha Chowk and Khanyar followed by rest of the city. The defunct street lights were also repaired and made functional by SMC.

“The installation of the lights will help the businesses operate beyond evening hours. Also, people can move around freely during late evening time,” said Faizan Qadiri, an MBA student from Harwan.



**The project was supposed to be completed in 2019. However, due to the political uncertainty in the state post August 5 and the subsequent lockdown imposed by the authorities due to Coronavirus pandemic, the work was stalled for almost a year**



# Choon health care centre yet to come up, locals suffer

**Azmat Maqbool**

**Budgam:** Four years on, health care center at Choon village of Budgam District is yet to see the light of the day as authorities in the district have failed to complete the construction of the health care center. The construction of this ten bedded healthcare center had started in 2016 and is still incomplete.

The main reason for its incompleteness is the stay permission taken by the locals from the court due to which the construction of the project has run into legal tangles. The residents living near the location of the health center claim that they are left with meager space if the center is built and moreover it can be problematic for them as far as sanitation is concerned.

“My house is just behind the healthcare



center and there is very less space between my house and health center, if the health center starts working here we will suffer because of sanitation problem as well and I know there won't be enough sanitation measures taken,” said Mohammad Jamal, one of the residents.

On the other hand, the local residents

continue to suffer due to the unavailability of the medical facilities in the area. The residents are forced to travel long distances to sub district hospital Budgam to avail basic health care facilities.

“If the health center had been completed on time, our problems could have been resolved. But, now the issue has gone to court and it will take a lot of time,” said Sajad Ahmad, a resident of Choon.

“At the moment, people from nearby areas have to travel seven to eight kilometers to access basic healthcare facilities and that takes toll on them,” added another resident.

It is pertinent to mention that the work of the health center was resumed before the pandemic but had to be stopped owing to the circumstances of the Coronavirus pandemic.

# PHC Ashtangoo lingers without paramedical staff

**Sheikh Seher**

**Bandipora:** Public Health Center of Ashtangoo village in district Bandipora wears a deserted look as the centre is functioning without basic paramedical staff causing undue suffering to the people living in the area. “Government provided us a health centre years ago but most times it remains deserted as the center lacks the presence of important paramedical staff. The ones who are posted here are rarely present at the centre,” said locals of the area.

Due to this negligence of both the authorities and staff members locals are compelled to visit Bandipora district hospital during any health complication. “We are forced to either visit Bandipora district hospital or Sopore sub district hospital for minor illness,” locals said.

Ashraf Lone who hails from the same village added, “Even for minor complaints, we have to visit district hospital Bandipora. That increases both distance and suffering of ours.” “Not even a single paramedic staff member is available here. The centre stands abandoned,” he alleged.

Farooq Ahmad, another local resident said that they had brought this issue into the notice of local authorities but no action had been taken so far. “The authorities seem to be least bothered about our



problems. Four months have passed since we lodged our complaint but no action has been taken so far.”

The locals of the area have demanded that staff should be deputed to the centre at the earliest. “We want the paramedical staff as early as possible because we are suffering for no fault of ours,” demands Farooq Ahmad.

Meanwhile, an official from health department when contacted said that he will look into the matter and solve the issue as early as possible.



## Poor Budgam boy qualifies NEET with flying colors



**Tamana Aarizoo**

**Budgam:** Happiness surrounded everywhere at Umar's residence when the National Testing Agency declared its NEET results. Umar scored 553 marks out of 750. His happiness knew no bounds.

Umar Mir, an 18 year old boy, hailing from Budgam's Aarth village qualified the

national eligibility entrance test (NEET) in his first attempt. Umar, a son of a poor laborer, after passing his twelfth class exams had got admission on scholarship at Parraypora's Hope classes for the NEET entrance coaching.

Talking about his success, Umar exclaimed with

joy, "It has always been my aim to serve the needy. I'm thankful to Almighty for bestowing me with grand success." His parents, Abdul Rahim and Rasheeda Bano feel proud of their son's success. "We feel privileged to have a son like Umar. He has felt us proud."

While talking about his hardships, Umar

said that he too faced many hurdles while preparing for the entrance like other students in the valley particularly due to clampdown of 4G internet services but it did not deter him from reaching his goals. "2G internet was a problem but I worked hard without making any excuse."

Throwing some light on the role of his coaching center, Umar said, "Coaching does help a lot but one still has to rely on hard work. Although, coaching does guide a lot and moreover helps you to understand tougher concepts easily."

Umar's uncle, Ilyas Ahmad said, "Umar has always been a hard working student. Despite facing hardships he continued to work hard. By his grit and determination he was able to qualify the exam. Poverty did not dampen his spirits."

In his message to the NEET aspirants, Umar emphasized on hard work and proper time management. Umar said, "Concentration and absolute dedication towards the goal with proper time management are key to success."

## Pattan residents accuse revenue authorities for partial treatment

**Marki Aadil**

**Baramulla:** Inhabitants of Zangam village of Pattan area in north Kashmir's Baramulla district are on loggerheads with the revenue department. The residents accuse the authorities of only partly removing the illegal encroachments on the grazing land.

As per locals, tension prevailed in Zangam village when Tehsildar Pattan launched a drive to retrieve the encroached land. Bashir Ahmad, an elderly resident of the area said, "If government is really serious about retrieving the land from encroachers, they should retrieve it from everyone who has illegally occupied it. But only poor are targeted."

"Almost 900 kanals of land is under the people of this area that authorities claim to be illegal. But among those all occupiers only a selective few have been targeted," said Abdul Salam, another resident of Zangam village.

People claim that out of 900 kanals



only 13 kanals of land has been recovered by the authorities. "Some of us have been deliberately targeted when the entire area has been illegally occupied," said another resident whose land has been retrieved by authorities."

Giving further details, the people of the village said that peripheral area of the

irrigation canal flowing through in the area has also been encroached but no action was taken against such residents.

In this regard, Tehsildar Pattan, Salahuddin said, "We have taken this action on the instructions of the Divisional Commissioner. We will remove all encroachments in the area in coming days."

Meanwhile, it is noted that the present UT government had issued guidelines to all the district administrations to remove encroachments of illegally occupied land by the public.

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**KASHMIR VALLEY GETS FIRST  
'SHIKARA AMBULANCE'**



**Musaib Iqbal**

**Srinagar:** When there is a deadly disease around and you are a victim to it but at the same time your loved ones abandon then your courage speaks. This goes very well with a 50 year old Tariq Ahmad Patloo, a houseboat owner at Dal Lake. Tariq decided to convert his boat into an ambulance to ferry people to the hospital having medical emergency particularly those hit by COVID-19. The ambulance service floating on the waters has gained appreciation from both public as well as authorities and has been named as Shikara Ambulance.

"I became the victim of COVID-19 few months ago. Nobody came forward to help me," sighed Tariq.

He felt that he was being ignored by his closest companions when he needed them more. Recalling the time when boat riders neglected his pain, he realized that he was on his own. But it was one of his friends, Riyaz Ahmad, who ultimately came forward and took him to the hospital.

"I think the government has been making false promises from day one. Despite tall claims of providing medical help to the Covid victims government in reality has been doing nothing on ground," said Tariq.

After recovering from Covid, Tariq realized that there was no proper ambulance facility in the lake. Soon after, he started working on his boat to turn it into an ambulance. In this process, he received some financial help from a city based NGO.

"This boat ambulance is a very good step taken by Tariq Ahmad. It can save lives by carrying people during medical emergencies from the lake interiors," said Mohammad Ramzan, a local vegetable vendor.

Tariq Ahmad still works to improve the facilities inside his Shikara ambulance and said that the boat needs minor changes. He is making all efforts to make this boat fully equipped with round the clock service.

This boat ambulance is a very good step taken by Tariq Ahmad. It can save lives by carrying people during medical emergencies from the lake interiors

Housing hundreds of Shikaras and houseboats, there was no concept of an ambulance boat on the waters of Dal until Tariq came up with this idea. Tariq got struck with such innovation when he himself became victim of Covid-19 and nobody dared to take him to the hospital.



## Three unrepaired houseboats sink in Dal Lake



**Murtaza Ali**

**Srinagar:** Three houseboats submerged in Dal Lake after Srinagar city witnessed the season's first snowfall. Gulshan Palace, New Dogstar and Kismat after having failed to undergo repairs sank into the lake due to the weight of snow on their rooftops.

In a press note, spokesperson of Kashmir Houseboat Owners Association (KHBOA), Yaqoob Dunno said that he had already warned authorities about the defunct condition of houseboats. "Houseboat is a wooden fringe boat-cum-home structure that needs repairing, reconstruction and caulking from time to time."

"I many a times conveyed to the Government of India as well as JK administration to come forward and help the houseboat owners by providing financial relief to them as the caulking of each houseboat costs fifty thousand per year," Yaqoob added.

It is pertinent to mention that government has disallowed the repairing of houseboats in order to contain the pollution spreading in the lake. Although, the honorable High court has recently put forward its directions to the Tourism department to formulate a policy for reconstruction, repairing, registration and renewal of houseboats.

Yaqoob said that due to the recent lockdowns and uncertainty in the valley, the tourism sector witnessed zero revenue. "Majority of the houseboat owners took financial aid from banks, but now banks are putting

pressure on them to repay their debts."

Mushtaq Ahmad, owner of Gulshan Palace said that he approached the tourism department and bank for loans but was unable to get any support. "My houseboat would have been standing here and hosting tourists if I had been able to do the necessary repairs on time and earning my livelihood."

He is now living in a rented accommodation consisting of two rooms near Dalgate area.

While talking to the deputy Director Tourism, Mr. Riyaz Ahmad Shah, he said, "We have compiled a list of at least 49 houseboats which need serious attention. Among them majority are residential and only a few are commercial. We will very soon figure out their concerns."

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# Leopards on prowl in Baramulla

**Ifra Mushtaq**

**Baramulla:** People of Baramulla town have been living in constant fear from last few days as a leopard is roaming freely in the area. The leopard has been sighted at Kanli Bagh, Ushkura and Rangwar areas of the district and panic has gripped among the residents for their safety.

“I was going to Masjid for offering Morning Prayers, it was around 7am. On my way, I heard a scary and weird sound coming from an uninhabited house. I was frightened as I knew there is a leopard roaming in the town. From yesterday, I have offered prayers at home only,” said Abdul Rashid, a local resident.

“Now, I avoid going out on the streets in the early morning and evening,” he added.

Wajahat Hassan, a local resident said, “Currently everyone is afraid. However, it is not possible for us to stay inside every time. We have to go outside for work and other chores. The fear is palpable. We request authorities to help us out.”

Hanan Amin, a student said, “It’s been three days, leopard is still roaming in our locality. It seems like it is playing hide and seek with people. I have to go for my tuition classes early in the morning that I can’t afford

missing as I don’t have any other option.”

Meanwhile, when contacted, the local Wildlife officials said that they have installed cages where ever the leopard has been reportedly seen and are hopeful to capture him.



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## New street lights installed in Dalgate area

Solar Power Street lights illuminate at Gund Sarsingh, locals hail the move

**Nisar Lone**

**Ganderbal:** In a positive move towards the infrastructural development of common masses, the authorities in Ganderbal district installed solar power street lights at Gund Sarsingh village to illuminate the streets during night hours. The residents of Gund Sarsingh village feel elated over the installation of solar power street lights in their area and hail such move taken by the authorities.

While appreciating the move, a local resident, Mohammad Jameel said, "The Street lights installed in our area many years ago had become defunct and were working no more. We are happy over the installation of new solar power street lights."

It is notable that the residents of the village were facing lot of problems during any move at night hours as street lights were not working properly. The installation of new street lights has eased their problems and moreover is environment friendly. The lights have been installed in every panchayat halqa of the village.

"We used to face many problems while going for morning prayers and coming home from business at late night hours," said Habibullah Lone, another local of the area. He further added, "We are thankful to the Sarpanch of our village for his dedication towards the development of the area."

The locals also expressed their happiness over the progress in developmental works during past several months in their village.



## Nigeen residents aghast over roadside dumping of garbage



**Shagufta Rashid**

**Srinagar:** The bus stop adjacent to the VC Lane at Nigeen Hazratbal road has been turned into garbage dumping site. In absence of any SMC garbage container in the area, the waste collected from households is dumped on the roadside here.

Abdul Majid Wani, a local resident of Nigeen said, "We face a lot of problems while venturing out early in the morning. The garbage attracts a huge number of dogs who have made our life a living hell. We fear for our safety and that of our children too."

Stating further on the carelessness of local mutton shopkeepers and their lack of civic sense, he added, "The local mutton shopkeepers also dump their waste here. People won't change their habits until they are forced to."

Official records at Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) show that a total of 450 metric tons of waste is generated per day in Srinagar, 62% of which is organic waste, while the rest is inorganic including around 7% plastic waste.

According to the SMC, only 30% of households store waste while, the rest dispose their waste at public container bins or at open dumping sites.

Zareefa Bano, a local resident of Nigeen said, "My neighbors purposely dump their garbage on the streets of the area and most of them don't see anything wrong with their behavior and lack of civic sense."

"The garbage dumped on the streets pose a public-health threat, serving as a prime habitat for rodents and mosquitoes that can spread deadly diseases in the area," said a PG student living at a rented flat in the area.

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