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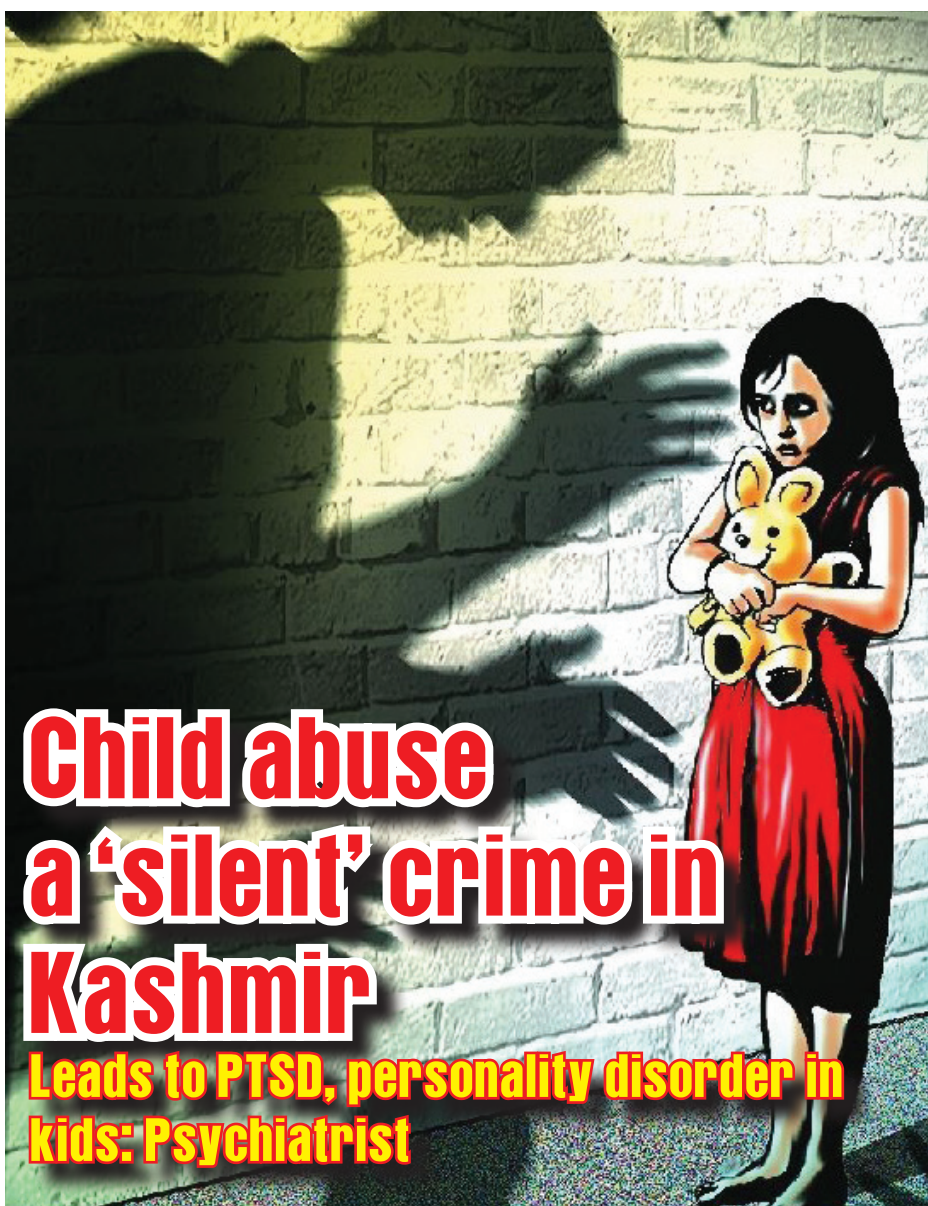
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## Child abuse a 'silent' crime in Kashmir

**Leads to PTSD, personality disorder in  
kids: Psychiatrist**

Representational pic

### UFAQ FATIMA

Recalling the moment when her soul was torn to pieces is like opening her deepest wounds. She was barely nine when she first realized how vulnerable as a girl she is.

Rifat Jan (name changed), 23, struggles to speak about what she terms as the worst phase of her life. She hesitates about revealing the scar left on her soul when she was sexually abused as a child.

Her dry eyes turn moist even before she utters a word. From being a jolly kid to now a depressed adult, Rifat's life is filled with agony of past with no faith in anyone whatsoever.

"He was a local plumber, whom my family knew from a long time. That day he was fixing a water tank on the roof, where I was playing. He held me from back and told me that we were just playing. His words are still fresh in my memory," narrates Rifat with her face

turning pale. "I wanted to run, but my legs turned numb," she adds.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a silent crime in Kashmir, which takes places in four walls and hardly comes to fore. It leaves a non-erasable mark on the psyche of children. They, thus, tend to have social and emotional imbalances

**"My mental health may stabilize, but I can never be the same again. I can never trust anyone in my life ever"**

in their lives.

Talking to the *The Echo*, Dr Arshad Hussain, Psychiatry Specialist, Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital, says, CSA is one of the major issues in the society. "The victim of CSA is vulnerable to many major diseases

like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), personality change, suicidal tendency and multiple personality disorder," he says.

Not only on one instance has Rifat faced a horrible incident. After being abused by an outsider, she was assaulted by a relative. "I had no idea that the worst was yet to come. What is more shocking is that it was my father's uncle," she says while breaking into tears.

She takes a pause, swallows her pain and continues. "I have never shared this with anyone. I was scared that no one will believe me," she says, adding that she remained silent to protect the family bonds.

Another victim, Shifa Yousuf (name changed), 14, was in her kindergarten when the principle of her school sexually abused her multiple times.

"I told my parents many times about it but they never trusted me. They believed his apparently decent appearance rather than my words," she recalls.

Shifa was not supported by her parents, which compelled her to shift to her maternal grandparents' home. Anger, irritability and mood swings became part of her personality. Shifa was finally taken to SMHS Hospital for treatment when she attempted to end her life.

"It's been five months since I am on regular counseling and medication. My mental health may stabilize, but I can never be the same again. I can never trust anyone in my life ever," shares Shifa.

Dr Hussain deems that parents can save such children from further damage by being a constant support to them. "The relationship with family, especially parents, can play an important role in helping the patient get out of the trauma. It provides a sense of positivity to the victims and they can openly talk about it," he says, adding that the family should patiently listen to the victims' concerns.

Talking about how to end the menace, he says, it is a deep-rooted issue, which cannot be eradicated easily. "We can minimize it by educating the families to make sure the company of their kids is good. Families should see to it whether the atmosphere around their children is safe or not," he says.

Many case studies reveal that the accused is often somebody whom the victim knows personally. However, owing to fear of molester and society, only a few CSA cases have been reported in the Valley.

"We have received many cases of CSA, wherein the molester was a domestic help. So parents should not trust anybody easily," says Dr Hussain.

Sociologists believe that child abuse is on

rise in Kashmir under the blanket of silence. "We live in a patriarchal society where people prefer silence in these cases, as disclosing is believed to cause further damage to victim's image," opines Dr Aneesa Shafi, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir.

She adds that child abuse is a social taboo, "where victims get more victimized." "Our cultural values are so dominant that we have taught our kids to remain silent on such issues," she states.

Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, passed in Indian Parliament in 2012, any sexual child abuse case needs to be handled. Unfortunately, the Act was not extended to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

It has been found that child abuse is not restricted to a particular gender. Referring to some international studies conducted on CSA, Dr Hussain says, males have also become victim of child abuse on several occasions,

**"Parents can play a key  
role in preventing the  
children from further  
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constant support to them"**

even though the number of female victims is much more.

Dr Aneesa says kids from both genders are vulnerable to such incidents "as perpetrators do not have gender as criteria to commit this grave sin."

Child abuse is believed to have such a drastic impact on the psyche of a person that sometime a victim later turns into a molester. "We have one such case where a man was abused multiple times. Having no support from family affected his mental state to the extent that he turned into a molester," reveals Dr Hussain. "But then he came to us for the treatment knowing that he was doing wrong," he adds.

Experts deem that mass awareness about CSA is need of the hour to teach children how to differentiate between a good and a bad touch. "We as a society should work together to create awareness and not to hesitate to speak openly about it. Only then the silence over this crime will break," says Dr Aneesa.

It is often said that justice is hardly delivered nowadays. But then, if a crime goes unreported, it is useless to expect that the perpetrators shall be brought to justice. Therefore, such crimes need to be reported both on societal and judiciary level, so that justice is delivered, not denied. ■■■■■

## DJMC HOLDS MEDIA CONCLAVE NOTED MEDIA PERSONS INTERACT WITH STUDENTS

SHERFUN NISA/ SURIA HAMID

To bridge the gap between aspiring and professional journalists, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised a day-long media conclave on December 6. The event titled 'Comm Con: A Conclave for Communication and Journalism Students' was co-hosted by PACT, an international development organisation. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, said the mentorship is the most important thing required in any field and particularly for media students. He made a special mention of healthy teacher-student interactions held outside the country. "Such interactions need to be held in Kashmir as well," he said. In his address, Dean Academic Affairs, IUST, Prof Mushtaq Ahmad Quraishi, said the event was an interface between the academia and media professionals to "lend value addition to media studies." Dedicating the event to journalists, who have sacrificed their lives

for people's sake, he said, reporters work fearlessly to gather and disseminate information.

Renowned investigative journalist, Saikat Datta, provided some tips on investigative journalism to media students. He advised them about getting information through Right to Information (RTI) Act.

"A journalist should file repeated RTIs to minimise the chances of rejection. Even if his or her plea is rejected, that too shall make a story," said Datta, who has an experience of two decades in journalism.

Sharing his work experience, Datta said, many government officials were arrested after his series of stories. "Government is a huge body, where left hand does not know about the right hand. As journalists, you can take an advantage of that," he said.

Deliberating on *Crowdfunding* for individual journalists and organisations, Bilal Zaidi, Founder and Community Coordinator of *CrowdNewsing*, said, nowadays social media has an influence on the opinion making.

"Earlier, say till a decade back, when I began working in media industry, Television would be the only medium to shape the public opinion. However, now even a *HashTag* can do the same," Zaidi said.

While deliberating on radio as a growing career option, radio jockey at Big 92.7 FM, Nasir Khan, said, radio is all about creativity.

"There are enormous career options in radio, like you can be a radio

**"Earlier Television would be the only medium to shape the public opinion. However, now even a HashTag can do the same"**

jockey or radio presenter, or you can work in production and post-production. This field is evolving day by day. Try to learn more and more," Khan told students.

Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, Prof Abdul Salaam Bhat said, the purpose of the media conclave was to sensitize the students about fair and objective journalism.

"Even the media-persons working in a conflict area outside have shouldered the responsibility to communicate the information based on facts to the society," said Prof Bhat.

Earlier, welcoming the guests, Head DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan said, the department has always tried its best to provide the best platform to journalism students with professional journalists working in the field. Correspondent, *Press TV*, Shahana Butt, Advertising professional Jaibeer Ahmad and Jammu Bureau Chief, *New Delhi Television*, Zaffar Iqbal, also spoke on the occasion. Among others present on the occasion were Heads, faculty and students of various departments of IUST, and media students and faculty of Central University of Kashmir, Cluster University and Government Degree College Anantnag. ■■■■



PHOTO: MUZAMIL SHAFI

## SAEED NAQVI VISITS IUST 'INDIAN MUSLIMS STILL SUFFERING'

SHERFUN NISA/ SURIA HAMID

Veteran journalist and author, Saeed Naqvi, visited the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) on November 7 and interacted with university faculty and students. The talk-cum-interaction session was organised by Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), IUST.

Naqvi, who was guest of honour on the occasion, dealt at length with his recently released book, *'Being the Other: The Muslim in India'*. He said the present-day sufferings of Indian Muslims find their causes deep-rooted somewhere in the history. "The book, which is based on the Muslim community of India, was written in the context that we are still suffering and we will continue to suffer," he said.

Naqvi deliberated on the history of communism and colonialism in Afghanistan and the defeat of Soviet Union. He also spoke about the foundation of Mujahideen by America.

Talking about the power of media, Naqvi cited an example of Iraq-American war, where the world was divided into two "antithetic audiences", in which one triumphed and the other was defeated. "It was one Television programme that divided the whole world into two audiences—one victorious and the other defeated," he

said, adding that it was for the first time in the history that world was experiencing war in the living rooms. Pertinently, Naqvi has covered severed major wars across the world ranging from 1971 Bangladesh War to 2011 Syrian Civil War.



Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi presenting memento to veteran author, Saeed Naqvi, at university auditorium on November 7. PHOTO: SHOWKAT DAR/IUST

Speaking about the political imbalance in the world, Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi said, democracy does not work in the current world due to prevalent hate politics. "Because of some hate mongers around the world, who have come up as the leaders, I

believe present day democracies have failed their societies," said the VC, chief guest for the session.

Requesting journalists to play a responsible role in bridging the gaps in different perceptions of the people, Prof Siddiqi said, "People in Kashmir need a solution and journalists have the caliber to bridge the gap between the perceptions of Kashmiri people and those of Delhi."

Speaking on the occasion, noted historian and founder Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Siddiq Wahid, appreciated the efforts of journalists and termed them as "real professors" of the world.

"While professors have turned into bureaucrats nowadays, journalists have assumed the role of professors," said Prof Wahid, who moderated the interaction session.

While paying gratitude to the guests, Head, DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan, said the session was aimed at exposing the students and scholars to varied perspectives that have contributed towards the making of the contemporary society. "Understanding of history is very crucial for a journalist. And Saeed Naqvi is a journalist, who has witnessed several important historical events," she said, and added, "So, his perspective and analysis is of great importance for journalism students."

Among others, Dean Social Sciences, IUST, Prof Abdul Salam Bhat, Dean Academic Affairs, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Qureshi, Dean School of Business Studies, IUST, Prof A M Shah, Registrar IUST, Prof Syed Riyaz Ahmad Ruffai, media faculty and students from several educational institutions, and heads, faculty and students of various departments of IUST were also present on the occasion. ■■■■



IUST PHOTO

## DJMC HOSTS 2-DAY PHOTO-TALK

SHERFUN NISA

Two-day photo talk-cum-workshop was held at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), on September 7-8. The workshop was organised by Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), IUST, in collaboration with Sony India Private Ltd.

Noted photographer and Sony alpha specialist, Sameer Ashraf, was resource person for the workshop.

Deliberating at length on photography, Ashraf said it is an art that cannot be taught in classrooms. "If you want to be a photographer,

first you need to have passion for photography and then learn the technicalities of camera," he told students, adding that experience is what differentiates a professional photographer from a budding one. Ashraf suggested to students to share their work through different platforms. "If you will participate in Sony World Photography Awards, we will be having next winner from IUST," he said.

He shared his work with students in the form of portraits, landscape, fashion and so on. He also talked about his project, 'Hues of Rajasthan', 2016, based on the lives of local people, and shared his experiences about Palestinian conflict, post-Afghanistan war and *Kumbh mela* that he covered in 2015.

Head, DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan said the department has always tried to compliment the theoretical knowledge with the practical training. "This workshop was one such effort. Mr. Ashraf has been a wonderful mentor in training the art of photography to the students," she said. ■■■■



Dr Shah Faesal

## ‘PUBLIC SERVICE IS A TEAM EFFORT’

*He studied medicine at a time when it would be regarded as the biggest achievement. He, however, soon realised his heart lied somewhere else. He shifted his focus to civil services and topped the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) exam. Now, for past seven years, he has been working at some critical positions in the administration. In an exclusive interview with The Echo reporter, Suria Hamid, Managing Director, J&K State Power Development Corporation, Dr Shah Faesal talks about his role as an administrator.*

**Q: Medical profession is a dream for many youngsters in Kashmir, which you had realized long back. But then you chose civil services as a profession despite being a medical doctor. Why this shift?**

In my case what happened was that once I entered medical school, I realised that I had come to a wrong place. I am more of a humanities person. My interest areas are literature, history, economics, poetry, art, music, etc. But since there was this craze of taking up medicine or engineering during 1990s, I think I also went with that trend and appeared in the entrance examination. Not that I regret having done that, but I think I didn't have enough information about various career options that time. May be if I had, then my choice would have been different from the beginning only.

**Q. Do you think shifting to civil services was a right decision?**

Now that I have been into administration for around seven years, I do keep asking myself the same question. I had appeared in civil services examination because I think one can really make a difference while serving at leadership positions in the government. But then public service has its own pitfalls. We have to work within a system that is far from perfect and many times we are compelled to overlook small wrongs to get the big picture right. I don't know if I had factored that in at the time when I took the exam. But then it has been just seven years. I think I need more time to make an opinion about it.

**“I opted for civil services because I think one can really make a difference while serving at leadership positions in the government”**

**Q. Can you sum up your role as an administrator so far?**

I have got the opportunity to serve at critical leadership positions in the government as Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Director Education and now Managing Director of a Hydropower Company. Public service is a long gestation investment. What we do today, the results are visible a little later, because our tenures are usually very short. I have tried to focus on evidence-based public policy. Whatever interventions I oversaw in education, rural development, livelihood and energy sector, I have looked at the available research on the subject and then moved ahead. I think what satisfies me is that I have not tried to over-use the stick or relied too much on gut feeling while pushing forward the development agenda of the government.

**Q. Do you think there is a need to revive public institutions? What changes should be done?**

Public institutions in our place are a work in progress. There is a lot to be done for getting the education right, or making the hospitals work well or focusing on employment opportunities for youngsters. It is a team effort and needs time.

**Q. What are the new projects in power development? How can these projects help in generating employment?**

Jammu and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation (J&KSPDC) Ltd is presently having 100 MW new projects under implementation. Another 100 MW are being awarded soon. Around 2200 MW are being done in Joint Venture mode and another 3000 MW are ready for implementation. We are looking at an investment requirement of around six billion dollars. That is huge for a state like ours and it is

obviously expected to generate employment. Hydropower sector is time-consuming and since there is a temporary slump in the national power market at the moment, development of new projects is being done only after doing due diligence.

**Q. You have served as Director School Education. What do you think should be done to help students recover the losses they have suffered due to unrest in Kashmir?**

I think we need a conflict-neutral model of school education in Kashmir. I am not sure if we can insulate schools from the violence that is so common-place now. It would be better if we can focus more on the use of Information Technology in education. Online resources like Khan Academy need to be promoted.

**Q. How much say does an IAS officer has in policy making?**

I don't know if that is good or bad, but the truth is that IAS officers do occupy most of the decision making, and senior policy positions in state and central government. Because of their advisory role to political executives, IAS officers do wield a lot of influence on the policy making.

**Q. In an earlier interview, you had mentioned that you have been inspired by the poetry of Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal. What you find so inspiring about it? Can u recall some lines for the audience?**

Lot of people think that I am an Iqbal-fanatic. But the truth is that I am just a student of Allama's poetry and I must admit that it has influenced me to a great extent. I admire Iqbal for the height to which he taken his art and also for the unique message that he has for the entire mankind. I recall his allegorical poem 'Lenin Khuda ke huzoor mein', where the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin is supposed to be talking to God about religion, capitalism, socialism, and other things dear to Lenin.

**Q. What do you think is the role of administration as well as people to make the system accountable and transparent?**

Administration is the system. Politicians just run this system. They are not permanent. It is the administration that has to adopt ideas of transparency and accountability. No outsider can foist that change on it.

**Q. In a Facebook post, you mentioned that you regret of not attending the university education. Can you throw some light on it?**

Yes, I think I should have been to a University and studied further. Since I got employed immediately after finishing medical school, I couldn't study further. I think, more than civil servants, this society needs researchers, technocrats, writers, scientists and those who make new things happen. Civil service is after-all an exercise towards status quo.

**“What satisfies me is that I have not tried to rely too much on gut feeling while pushing forward government's development agenda”**

**Q. What is your message for the youth of Kashmir?**

I wish to tell the youngsters that this world has huge appetite for talent. Just work hard and look beyond the four walls of the state. There is a whole world waiting to be captured—in science and technology, business, art, music, research, entrepreneurship, sports, and what not. Just come out of your shell and the world shall be at your feet. ■■■■



## A TRIP TO LADAKH DJMC ORGANISES ONE WEEK TRIP TO HILLY REGION

SHERFUN NISA/ UFAQ FATIMA

To give practical exposure to students, the Department of Journalism and Mass communications (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a week-long educational tour to Ladakh region from August 9 to 15. The tour helped students explore the region in terms of its culture, religious faith and beauty. Ladakh, popularly known as 'land of high passes', is a region in Jammu and Kashmir state, having China on the other side of the border. Inhabited by people of Indo-Aryan and Tibetan descent, Ladakh is famous for its adventurous tourism and unique culture. During the tour, the department visited several

historical places of Ladakh. Students produced documentary films, news packages, human interest stories, historical features and photo-essays.

"The basic aim of the trip was to expose the students to varied cultures, and Ladakh was an ideal place for it. Students worked in the field and produced different media products," says Dr Ruheela Hassan, Head, DJMC.

The department commenced its journey to Ladakh on August 9 and paid a visit to Kargil War Memorial, *Vijay Divas*, located in the lap of mountains in Kargil.

"I had read a lot about the Kargil war. It was my desire to visit the war memorial, which provided us an insight about the things that occurred during the war," says Aashiq Hussain, final year student, DJMC. The faculty and students later explored the culture and markets of Kargil.

On reaching Leh, the department first visited Shanti Stupa, the famous monastery. The students interacted with locals and tourists

to learn about the significance of the place. It is believed that Shanti Stupa holds the relics of the Buddha at its base, enshrined by the 14th Dalai Lama.

The department later visited the historical Masjid-e-Shahi Hamadan at Shey. The mosque was built in 1382 by Mir Syad Ali Hamdani, popularly known as Shah-e-Hamdani, a great Sufi saint and a preacher of Islam in Kashmir.

"Being from old Srinagar city, I frequently visit Khanqah-e-Moula Mosque. I always thought it is the only place where I can feel spiritually closer to Shahi Hamadan. However, Masjid-e-Shahi Hamadan, which was built by him, changed this perspective," says Shazia Yousuf, Assistant Professor, DJMC, IUST.

school in Asia by BBC London.

The department also visited Mahabodhi International Meditation Center founded by Buddhist monk, Bhikkhu Sanghasena. The center also runs a residential school, namely Mahabodhi School, and an old-age home. Students and faculty interacted with students



DJMC faculty and students at Mahabodhi International Meditation Center, Leh, on August 12. PHOTO: UFAQ FATIMA/IUST



Journalism students taking bytes for a documentary film on the way to Leh on August 10. IUST PHOTO: IMTIYAZ PANDOW/IUST

"The mosque lies at a clam place and in harmony with nature, which enlightens one more spiritually," she adds.

Next place to visit was the famous Shey palace located at Leh—**"I had read a lot about the Kargil war. It was my desire to visit the war memorial, which provided us an insight about the things that occurred during the war"** The palace houses a copper gilded statue of Buddha, which is 7.5 meters in height. The statue is gold-plated and has many silver and precious gems engraved on it.

The department also went to the Drake White Lotus School, famous by the name of Rancho's School. It has gained popularity after the super-hit Bollywood movie, *Three Idiots*, was shot there. The campus has won 12 international awards and was named as the most beautiful

and old age home inmates.

The trip was concluded with a visit to the world-famous Pangong Lake. Early in the morning of August 13, the department left for the lake, which has around 60 percent of its area in China. After eight hours of traveling, students

were thrilled to see the beauty of the colourful lake.

"Till now we had only seen the lake in movies and photographs. But being here is all together a different experience," says Zehra Shahid, a student, adding that she has also shot a documentary film on the lake.



## KARGIL: A BLEND OF UNIQUE CULTURES

UFAQ FATIMA/ SHERFUN NISA

It is not just its scenic beauty and breathtaking landscape that makes Kargil town a revered tourist destination. This district of Ladakh region is also known for its unique culture and peculiar customs.

The people of Kargil are descendants of Mongol, Dard and Mon races. It is believed that Pashkum and Omachikthang were the first inhabited in the district.

Spring season onsets late in Kargil—which is surrounded by mountain range in the lap of Himalayas—because of heavy snowfall during winters. The fall in temperature leads to slow melting of snow. Dras, a town in Kargil district, is the coldest place known in India.

With the onset of spring, a sigh of relief is heaved by people from the intense cold of winters. With this, marriage season starts in Kargil. There is a culture of early marriages in the district. "Islam endorses early marriages to prevent people from

any evil thoughts in youth," deems Abdul Gaffaar, a local.

The customs in their marriages are completely different from those of Kashmir. Instead of traditional songs and folk dance, people—both men and women—recite Naats (Praises of Prophet Muhammad PBUH), while bidding farewell to the bride.

The bride wears a heavy jewellery of silver and stones, and a traditional attire of Kargil, locally known as, Choga—a long gown.

Another interesting custom is the tea party organised by the groom's family for the bride and her companions on their way to groom's house. The guests are served with both nun chai and kehwa with halwa, bread and ghee.

Apart from fruits like apples, pears and grapes, people grow apricots in large numbers to boost their economy. The apricots of Kargil are famous across the country for their delicious taste. They are also dried and preserved for a longer time.

With passing of summer, people get busy in



A wedding ceremony in Shamsa village of district Kargil in Ladakh. PHOTO: SHERFUN NISA/IUST

from a particular area gather stock of wheat and collectively roast it in large pots. Later they distribute it among every household in the village. Earlier the inhabitants of Kargil used to shift to underground rooms in order to protect themselves from minus temperatures.

There is a custom, running from ages called, Loucer, in which an animal is killed by some households, stored in a separate room and consumed for winter break.

"The Loucer is still a trend in our villages because it gives us a reason to visit our neighbours in harsh winter. We sometimes do party at one place. This gives us a feeling of living," says Jahangir, a resident of Kargil.

Women in winters spend their time in knitting woollen sweaters, socks, gloves, mufflers, etc. Men, on the other hand, play polo on horses and archery.

Not only wedding ceremonies and festive occasions make Kargil a special place, but funerals too are performed in a traditional manner.

As per locals, cattle is sacrificed at the grave when somebody dies. "This custom is performed in order to seek forgiveness for the deceased," says Abdul Rehman, a local. ■■■■



## LADAKH SPECIAL

### WOMEN IN LEH TAKING A LEAD IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SURIA HAMID/ JUNAID BHAT

Contrary to common belief that business in Jammu and Kashmir is male-dominated, Ladakh—a province in the state—has been empowering its female folk. In Leh district particularly, the lanes of busy markets, like Moti Market, Main Market, Tibetan Refugee Market and Lal Chowk, could be seen dotted by women entrepreneurs.

With tourists thronging the region, numerous shops specializing in traditional handicrafts and colourful artifacts have opened up in

wide range of products, like jewellery, clothes, kitchenware, dry fruits, woolen products, vegetables and so on. Some of them also knit sweaters and socks, and weave shawls and sell them in winters. Different collections as per different seasons are, therefore, displayed in the showrooms.

“We are trying to break the stereotype that a woman can only be a good housewife, while men have to work outside the house. Nowadays, both men and women run their house as well as their business or office,” says Sanzen, 28, who runs a retail shop of clothes for kids, gents and ladies.

Another woman entrepreneur, Tsering Lamzo, runs a jewellery shop in the Moti Market—the stone hub of Leh. After passing her 12th standard, she focused on making a career in business. “I am working here for past couple of years. My family has supported me financially in establishing this business,” she says.

Tsering Palmo, who sells ladies’ readymade garments, lost her husband many years ago. Since then, she is running her shop at Old Leh Road. “I am very happy with my business, as it has made me independent,” she says.

Most of the ladies work from 7 am to 9 pm and earn Rs 5,000 to 10,000 a day. The male members in their house

usually return to home early in the evening and cook and serve food to their children. ■■■■



A woman entrepreneur selling garments at Main Market, Leh. PHOTO: UFAQ FATIMA/IUST

all markets. The shops and business establishments are mostly run by women, while majority of the men do government jobs.

Women of every age group in Leh have become entrepreneurs, who look after their house as well. They run shops selling a

**“We are trying to break the stereotype that a woman can only be a good housewife, while men have to work outside the house. Nowadays, both men and women run their house as well as their business or office”**

### KASHMIRI ENTREPRENEURS MAKING A MARK IN LADAKH MARKETS

IMTIYAZ PANDOW/ MUDASIR BHAT

With an aim to promote brand Kashmir, Kashmiri entrepreneurs are marking their presence in the busy markets of Ladakh.

Every year, soon after tourism season begins in Ladakh, a large number of Kashmiri entrepreneurs shift their businesses to Ladakh region. In every market in the region, showrooms are decorated with designed handicraft items of Kashmir. Pleasant weather post harsh winter season usually attracts tourists from all corners of the world to Ladakh. This increases tourist rush in Ladakhi markets, which compels Kashmiri entrepreneurs too to move to this tourist destination.

“Every season I shift my outlet to Ladakh in order to expand my business and earn a handsome amount,” says Khalid Amin, an entrepreneur from Srinagar. “Ladakhi markets are the best place to promote Kashmiri handicrafts.”

Kashmiri entrepreneurs sell various kinds of modern and traditional products of the Valley. Besides selling some other products, most of the Kashmiri entrepreneurs sell the items that reflect culture of Kashmir. This helps them sell their products to foreign customers as well.

“Kashmiri handicrafts attract more tourists than other items sold in Ladakhi markets,” opines Inam Aziz, another Srinagar-based entrepreneur at Ladakh.

Muneer Ahmad Khan from Rainawari, Srinagar, who has been dealing with readymade business for the past eight years

in Leh, says, Ladakh is a peaceful place that has a huge scope for every business. “I mostly deal with Chinese and Nepalese items, for most of my customers are from Nepal and other foreign

places,” he adds.

In spite of cultural and geographical variations, Ladakhi entrepreneurs have always welcomed non-local entrepreneurs to add variety to their markets. Tsewang Rigzin, a Ladakhi cloth merchant, says, “We have absolutely no problem in having competition with non-local entrepreneurs. We focus on our own business, they focus on theirs.” He further adds that non-local entrepreneurs have not only provided more choice to the customers, “but have also added to the beauty of Ladakhi markets.” Over a hundred Kashmiri traders are selling dry



FILE PIC

fruits in Ladakhi markets. Foreign tourists are believed to be fond of Kashmiri dry fruits. They usually purchase dry fruits in bulk and present them as a “special gift” to their families.

“Every tourist season, we sell several varieties of dry fruits because of their huge demand and earn a decent sum,” says Sheikh Saleem, a Kashmir-based dry fruit shopkeeper. ■■■■

**“Every season I shift my business to Ladakh, for it is the best place to promote Kashmiri handicrafts”**

### SHEY PALACE EMERGING AS ‘FAVOURITE’ TOURIST SPOT IN LEH

NAHIDA SHAFI/ IRFANA KUCHAY

Known for its traditional architecture, the historic Shey Palace of Ladakh is attracting tourists from every nook and corner of the world. Located on a hillock in Shey village—about 15 kilometres to the south of Leh on the Leh-Manali Road—the palace is better known as the ‘Palace of Peace’.

Shey palace was built in 1655 by King of Ladakh, Deldan Namgyal, in the memory of his late father, Singay Namgyal. It would be used as a summer retreat by the royal families of Ladakh.

The palace is currently managed by the Archeological Survey of India and is open for domestic as well as foreign tourists. “The palace is open from 6 am to 8 pm for the visitors. Every day over a hundred tourists visit here,” says Sonan

Angchuk, who sells entry tickets over the counter. The entry costs Rs 20 per head.

Inside the palace lies a giant copper statue with gilded gold. The statue is 12 metres tall and covers more than two floors of the monastery.

Tourists say they feel a spiritual connectivity with Shey monastery and plan to visit the palace in future as well.

“The place connects you to the nature. It feels so peaceful to be here. The

height, altitude, everything about this palace is amazing,” says Saumiya, a tourist from the United



Shey Palace, Leh. PHOTO: UFAQ FATIMA/IUST

States, adding that she would like to visit the place again.

Another visitor, Sughanda, from New Delhi, says whenever she visits Ladakh, the first place that comes to her mind is Shey palace. “It is my favourite tourist destination in Leh. One amazing thing about the palace is its terrace, where you enjoy the aerial scenic view and breathe freely,” she adds.

Jai Wadekar from Mumbai, says, it is his first visit to the palace. “It has been a good experience to learn about Buddhism as a religion as well as culture.” As per the locals, the priest of Shey monastery is changed every year on monks’ choice. “The salary of priest is also decided by the monks. There is no government interference at all,” says Angchuk. ■■■■



### DJMC organises lecture on PR

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a guest lecture on 'Government Public Relations' on July 5. Information Officer, J&K Department of Information and Public Relations, Nazir Ganaie, dealt at length with role of PR practitioners and PR departments in J&K.

"With new trends evolving in the field of Public Relations, it is becoming an increasingly challenging job for the PR personnel nowadays. More often than not, we are faced with situations that require effective crisis communications," he said, and added, "Equipping oneself with right knowledge and skills set is what will take you far in this field."

Ganaie further said the duty of a PR officer is to disseminate the credible information, "as credibility is equally important for journalists as well as PR professionals."

While sharing his work experience, he also briefed students about how Information department was performing its duties in an organised manner. Course Coordinator, Public Relations, Monisa Qadri, said the lecture was organised to aware students about the daily challenges that a PR practitioner is faced with and how PR campaigns are run in the practical field. ■■■■

### DJMC students, faculty visit DIPR

To get first-hand knowledge about the functioning of public relations system at government level, Journalism and Mass Communication students visited the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) on July 24.

While interacting with the students, Director Information, Muneer-ul-Islam, said the media students should have strong niche in writing, editing and technical areas, "so that they can excel in different areas of journalism."

He also announced that DIPR would explore the possibility of offering paid internship opportunities to Journalism students to hone their professional skills.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Director Information (PR), Sheikh Zahoor, who extensively deals with the official press releases, gave the students an insight of different wings of DIPR and their day-to-day functioning.

"Our prime job is to put the official engagements of government in public domain which we do through print, electronic and new media," he said.

Speaking on the session, Monisa Qadri, Course Coordinator of Public Relations at IUST, said the visit was organised to give an insight to the students of how PR department of government works.

The interactive session was attended by Joint Director Information (Headquarter) Abdul Majid Zargar, Assistant Professor, DJMC IUST, Dr Rabia Noor, and other Information officers of the Department. ■■■■



### IUST signs MoU with iQuasar

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) signed an MoU with iQuasar Software Solutions—a reputed IT company dealing with software development services, managed IT services and business process outsourcing services. The MoU was signed by Registrar IUST, Prof Syed Reyaz Rufai, and Business Development Head, iQuasar, Younis Baba, in presence of the officers of the university, on July 27.

The MoU is in line with a vision of the university to create an interface with the industry. It will pave way for IUST students to get instilled with the professional and technical skills that are in tune with the latest job market to enhance their employability.

The idea was propelled by the Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi. He said the local talent has to be accommodated by such endeavours working successfully within Kashmir. "These organisations will be giving back to the local community by tapping on the human resource potential of the state and thereby focus their energies on positive economic contributions to society," he said.

Chief Executive, iQuasar Tahir Qazi, said iQuasar has agreed to provide the best internship programmes to the university students at their doorsteps and also cater to their recruitments.

Registrar IUST, Prof Syed Reyaz Rufai, expressed his satisfaction over the initiative, "as the students will be exposed to the latest technologies being used in the real time corporate environment under the guidance of experienced mentors." ■■■■

### CEOs of iQuasar, Engineers Zone deliver lectures at IUST

As a part of series of sessions to provide career planning and placement opportunities to its students, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Awantipora, organised Special Career Counselling Sessions on August 18.

Chief Executive Officer, iQuasar, USA, Tahir Qazi and Chief Executive Officer, Engineers Zone, New Delhi, Irfan Ali, were the experts for the events. The CEOs delivered comprehensive lectures on entrepreneurship development, project startup and GATE/CAT awareness across the J&K state in general and Kashmir Valley in particular to the students of School of Business Studies and the School of Technology.

Speaking on the occasion, Qazi deliberated on how to change ideas into reality in the changing technologically advanced world.

Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, chaired the sessions. In his speech, the Vice Chancellor highlighted the need for career counselling and placements for the students. He also deliberated upon the future plans of the IUST in developing strong and efficient associations with reputed institutions and industries for the career development of the students.

The events were attended by students, faculty and other staff members of various schools and departments of the university. Each session was followed by a vibrant and fruitful interaction of CEOs with the students.

Later, Qazi and Ali applauded the efforts of Prof Siddiqi in working towards the overall development of the university and assured their full support in strengthening the vision and mission of the varsity. ■■■■

### Khurshid Ganai delivers special lecture at IUST

Noted bureaucrat and Chief Information Commissioner, Khurshid Ahmad Ganai delivered a special lecture on 'Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Age of Disruptive Technologies' on August 24. The lecture was organised by Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST).

In his address, Ganai deliberated on the essential features of fourth Industrial revolution and emerging technology as has been enunciated by CEO World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab in his noted work 'The Fourth Industrial Revolution'.



driven world," he said, today's generations cannot afford to go away from technology.

He called on students to become relevant for the future and 'up-skill' and 're-skill' themselves accordingly. "The jobs that will be taken up by coming generations are not even there right now, so you have to prepare yourself well and keep on upgrading your knowledge and skills consistently," Ganai said.

In his presidential address, Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, expressed his satisfaction over the productiveness of the lecture and called it a 'unique lecture' embedded with a plethora of knowledge. Earlier, in his welcome address, Dean Academic Affairs, Prof Mushtaq A Qureshi, talked about how an informed society and positive technology when used properly can pave way for developments. ■■■■

### IUST celebrates sports day

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) celebrated sports day on August 25. The day-long ceremony, organised by Directorate of Physical Education and Sports, IUST, was held to encourage the university students towards sports and felicitate the ones who have participated in various sports activities.

Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi and two renowned sports personalities of Kashmir, Bilquis Mir, noted Kayaker, and Akber Khan, renowned cyclist, were guests of honour for the sports day-cum-facilitation ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Siddiqi said, sports helps one to develop team spirit and leadership qualities.

"It also helps a person to accept failures in life, which otherwise often becomes hard to accept for some people," said Prof Siddiqi.

Referring towards IUST sports wing, Prof Siddiqi said, the university is currently working on two projects—athletic tariff and indoor stadium—for multipurpose sports activities, for which university has received a land of 80 kanals.

Emphasising students not to give up, six gold medals winner, Bilquis, dedicated her success to her mother. She is the first woman from Jammu and Kashmir to coach a national team.

She urged the university administration to make sports, a priority "in order to prevent students from indulging in wrong activities."

"I left Asian Games and returned to my state to motivate and support the youth of my own place, so that they will be the next national and international champions," she said.

First cyclist from J&K, who represented India in Track Asia Cup 2015, Khan insisted all to get a cycle and ride it. "Cycle does not use fuel. It runs on fat. So everybody should have a cycle and do cycling," Khan said.

The university football winning team, who won inter-universities football match with Jammu University, was awarded with certificates and mementos. Other participants of extra-curricular activities were also awarded.

Besides heads, faculty and students of various departments, Prof Mushtaq A Qureshi, Dean Academic Affairs, IUST, Prof Syed Riyaz Rufai, Registrar, IUST, Prof K A Tarzan, Directorate of Physical Education, IUST, were also present on the occasion. ■■■■



### Lecture on HR for community development held at IUST

A lecture on 'Importance of Creating Human Resources for Community Development' was organised by Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) on September 12. The resource person for the lecture was Dr Suhail Nasti, Disaster Medical Specialist and founder of Mother Helpline Worldwide.

Dr Nasti, who is currently working on the youth development initiatives in Kashmir, dealt at the length with the importance of educational institutions in imparting knowledge to youth, which, he said, can help them bring positive change in the society.

"IUST is a perfect place to impart technical as well as moral education to students. They can use both to build themselves and society as well," said Dr Nasti, who is also the first rescue pilot of the Valley.

Talking about various social evils in Kashmir like drug abuse, he said people have to work together to eradicate such menace.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, said universities are not only meant to give away the degrees, but also can play an active role in sustainable development of the society.

Among others, Dean Academic Affairs, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Qureshi, and heads and faculty of various departments of IUST were present on the occasion. ■■■■

### IUST holds peace building workshop

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a follow-up workshop on 'Peace Building and Journalism' in collaboration with Centre for Law and Development Policy (CLDP) on September 27.

Welcoming the guests and participants, Dr Ruheela Hassan, Head DJMC, talked about the learnings from previous workshop and said such workshops should be conducted in future also, "as they help the students see conflict in right perspective."

Shafat Naseem, Executive Director, CLDP, was the resource person on the occasion. He said they have conducted many workshops in Kargil, Leh, Kashmir and Jammu and have concluded that "everyone is surrounded by conflict by one way or the other." "Journalists should contribute towards relationship building and peace building measures," he said.

Sharing his experiences, noted film maker, Irfan Ahmad, said, nowadays human narrative is missing in the films. "We miss the empathy in our stories. We should not respond to violence with violence and to hatred with hatred," he added.

Meanwhile, a couple of documentary films were screened on the occasion. ■■■■

### DJMC students attend 15-day workshop on documentary filmmaking

Television specialisation students from Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) attended 15-day workshop on 'Documentary Filmmaking' organised by Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) from October 3 to 17.

Speaking during the valedictory session, Director, DIPR, Muneer-ul-Islam said the department is diversifying its activities and organising market-driven training programmes and workshops for media students and professionals. "The aim is to equip the media students with core skills," he said.

The workshop was also attended by media students from Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir, Department of Mass Communication and Multimedia Production, Government Degree College Baramulla, Department of Mass Communication and Multimedia Production, Government College for Women, Srinagar and Department of Mass Communication, Government Degree College Anantnag.



During the workshop, noted filmmaker, Gautam Chakraborty introduced students to the fundamentals of documentary film making, photography, videography and audio recording. He also discussed with students filmmaking techniques and approaches. ■■■■

### Journalism students interact with PCI team

Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) organised one-day interaction session for journalism students of the Valley with the members of Press Council of India (PCI) on October 10.

Chairman, PCI and former justice, Chandramauli Kumar Prasad, who presided over the event, said it was heartening to see a large number of students, especially girls, opting for journalism.

"Students should excel in life by excelling in studies rather than indulging in wrong activities. In fact, they can contribute to the country and state more through studies than through other activities," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Suman Gupta, PCI member, said he had met various journalists in Kashmir, who were facing certain problems. "I didn't find any organised group or press club of journalists over here, where they can appeal or press for their rights or can find a common solution," he added.

President, Indian Journalists Union, S N Sinha, while encouraging journalism students, said they are the future of journalism. He emphasised them to be versatile in journalism and be master of all trades. "You have to write, you have to take photos, you have to be the one-man-army," he told students.

Another speaker, Prakash Dubey, Group Editor, Dainik Bhaskar, who is also a member of Editors Guild of India, interacted with the students and shared his personal experiences. He said there is no security for a journalist, "only his mind and experiences can save him."

Besides others, Prabhat Kumar Dash, Senior Editor, Pratidin and C K Nayak, Senior Editor, The Shillong Times were also present at the session.

Earlier, welcoming the guests Director, DIPR, Muneer-ul-Islam, said that they will arrange these sessions in future also to help journalism students get exposure. He also said journalism students should work outside the state as well to boost their work. ■■■■

### IUST observes World Diabetes Day

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) observed World Diabetes Day on November 14.

Former Director SKIMS Srinagar, Prof (Dr) Abdul Hamid Zargar, who was the chief guest on the occasion, talked about causes and preventive measures of obesity and diabetes. In his talk on 'Emerging Trends in Obesity and Diabetes Mellitus: Its impact on Women', Dr Zargar stressed on changing the lifestyle habits.

Stating that diseases like diabetes and heart diseases have increased in India over the years, he emphasised on generating awareness among people about the causes of these



diseases. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, said developing countries suffer more in tackling health-related issues. He highlighted the role of diagnostic laboratories in detecting the diseases at early stage.

The event was attended by faculty, students and officials of IUST. The session was concluded with a question-answer session, in which students and faculty put forth their queries to Dr Zargar. ■■■■

### DJMC organises layout designing workshop

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised one week workshop on 'Newspaper and Advertising Layout' from December 18 to 27.

Senior layout designer, *Rising Kashmir*, Muneer Malik was the resource person for the workshop. He dealt at length with technicalities of In-design and other advanced layout software. Besides guiding students on designing broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, he also provided them with vital tips on advertising layout.

Workshop coordinator, Dr Rabia Noor, said the department organises layout designing workshop every year for its Print Specialisation students, so as to help them design newspapers, especially their specialisation products, independently. ■■■■

## PCOS ON RISE IN KASHMIR

29% GIRLS SUFFER FROM DISORDER: ICMR RESEARCH

UFAQ FATIMA

**P**olycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), a hormonal disorder that causes various health issues in young females, is on rise in Kashmir. Each month, hundreds of PCOS cases, especially of teenage girls, are reported in Valley hospitals.

A survey conducted by Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, in 2014, found that every third or fourth woman in Kashmir was suffering from PCOS. As per experts, the syndrome has been spreading at an alarming rate over the years in the Valley.

“The rate at which PCOS is increasing in Kashmir is astonishing,” said Dr Muhammad Ashraf Ganaie, Consultant, Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism, All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS).

“A recent research conducted at Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) showed that over 29 percent of young women in Kashmir show symptoms of PCOS,” said Dr Ganaie, who also serves as President, Metabolic Syndrome Pre-Diabetes—Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (MPPCOS), Kashmir.

**“PCOS is known as the mother of all life-style disorders. It is on rise among young girls due to junk food consumption and lack of physical exercise”**

He said the most common symptoms of PCOS include abnormal male-pattern hair growth, irregular cycles, severe acne, obesity and infertility in chronic cases.

Saima Bhat, 24, was recently diagnosed with PCOS when her



lower abdomen began to ache severely. “I got worried after I was diagnosed with PCOS and my mother literally cried. However, doctor assured me that it can be cured by following proper medication and diet,” she said.

Experts cited unhealthy lifestyle as the main cause of PCOS, particularly in Kashmir region, where women are less involved in regular physical exercise.

“PCOS is known as the mother of all life-style disorders. It is on rise among young girls due to junk food consumption and lack of physical exercise,” said Dr Rafia Andrabi, Consultant Gynaecologist, Florence Hospital, Srinagar. She is currently treating 15 girls, most of whom are between the age group of 16 to 22.

PCOS is not merely seen as a physical disorder in Kashmir. The social stigma of being infertile attached with it is what adds to the woes of the patients.

“PCOS as such is not a big deal, but society’s approach towards it makes it worrisome. In our society, unfortunately, girls with PCOS are believed to be unfit for marriage,” said Rehana (name changed), a university student. “My mother has strictly instructed me not to tell anyone about my disorder,” she added. ■■■■

## GOVT APATHY ‘MARS’ KASHMIR’S TRADITIONAL GAME

SQAY PLAYERS DECRY LACK OF FUNDS, INFRASTRUCTURE

SHERFUN NISA

**D**espite making tall claims to boost sports infrastructure in the Valley, government seems to have turned a blind eye towards Sqay martial arts.

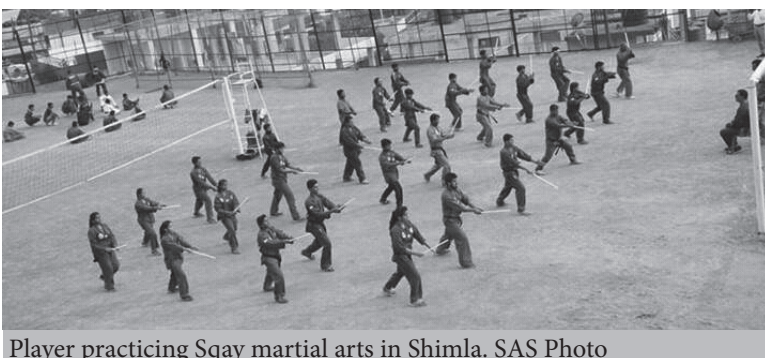
Even though the Sqay Association Shopian (SAS) has bagged gold at international level, the authorities do not lend its support to it.

“As the academy does not have its own building, we are compelled to practice and train school kids in a building of a local government higher secondary in evening-time,” says Zahid Mansoor, who recently bagged gold medal in International Sqay Championship Nepal.

Sqay is a South Asian form of sword-fighting that originated from Kashmir. It was first introduced by Mughal emperors. “Although Sqay is the traditional game of Kashmir, we have to approach every institution personally to promote the game, whereas it is the job of government to preserve and promote it,” says Mansoor.

He laments that inspite of their efforts to keep “the game of Kashmir” alive, government has been repeatedly neglecting their pleas to provide funds for the association. “We have received zero funds from the government so far. We spend money from our own pockets on the game expenditures,” he adds.

Suhail Hameed, 20, who too is a gold medallist in Asian Sqay Championship, has been learning Sqay since 2007. Nowadays, he teaches the



Player practicing Sqay martial arts in Shimla. SAS Photo

game to school students “just to keep it alive”. “This game is ours as it has originated from Kashmir. And now the world is playing it. But unfortunately, government does not support us,” he says.

Another player, Faizan Ayoub, 15, from Pinjura Shopian, popularly known as “Tiger” because of his Sqay skills, has won two gold medals in International Sqay Championships, six silver medals in School Games Federation of India (SGFI) and one bronze medal. SAS is not completely male-oriented, but has two international girl players as well, namely Suzain Zahoor and Injeela Mukhtar.

Tahir Hussain Wani, a tailor by profession, has been the mentor of every student in SAS. “In 1990s, Sqay was played for self-defence and now students learn it to earn 4.5 points in sports category. Unfortunately, no one plays it for Kashmir,” says Wani, who is considered to be the “Guru” of the game.

Talking to *The Echo*, Secretary General, Sqay Federation of India, Nazir Ahmad Mir, says, his interest in Sqay aroused when he read the history of Sqay martial arts in Kashmir. “However, over the time, the game saw a decline. But then, I tried to revive it, make it competitive and develop Kashmiri culture of Sqay playing,” he adds.

Mir appeals to the government to provide infrastructure and facilities to the “fighter” students, “who in future can make a name in world arena. ■■■■

## VOX POP

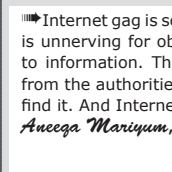
### Frequent Internet Blockade in Kashmir

**I**nternet has become one of the strongest means to give vent to one’s emotions. In Kashmir too, people use this medium to highlight their issues. However, nowadays, Internet blockade has become a norm in Kashmir, which not only curbs the freedom of expression of people, but also becomes a cause of distress and chaos in the Valley. The Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC), a Delhi-based organisation, in its recently released figures revealed that Internet services were shut 38 times in J&K between 2012 till July 10, 2017. In this regard, *The Echo’s* UFAQ FATIMA talked to some people from different spheres to seek their opinion about the Internet ban.



“Internet ban deprives us of our fundamental rights. I being a Fine Arts student don’t refer to textbooks. I get most of the study material from Internet. However, because of the ban, my studies are highly affected. Every now and then when something important is on cards, be it exams or semester projects, Internet ban makes it hard to get through. I am sure there must be some more logical solution to the Kashmir issue than Internet ban.”

*Nazia Kausar*, Music and Fine Arts Student, University of Kashmir



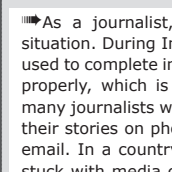
“Internet gag is something we have to face every other day. The frequent ban is unnerving for obvious reasons of miscommunication and inaccessibility to information. The ban also adds to the alienation of Kashmiri youth from the authorities. For every issue there is a solution, we just have to find it. And Internet ban is no solution at all.”

*Aweza Mariyum*, English Literature Student, University of Kashmir



“Internet is kind of a lifeline for today’s society. One wants to remain informed about the happenings around the globe. And nowadays studies are almost impossible without Internet. I need video lectures and other material continuously. How can one even think of a competitive examination when there is no Internet?”

*Nasir Mehmood*, Student, B.tech Electronics and Communication, University of Kashmir



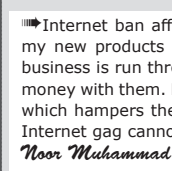
“As a journalist, I feel banning Internet is an absurd idea to control situation. During Internet gag, my work is badly affected. The story that I used to complete in a day took me three. I wasn’t able to do my research properly, which is an important part of the story. Besides, there are many journalists working with national newspapers, who have to dictate their stories on phone to their editors instead of sending them through email. In a country, where rest of the states are going digital, we are stuck with media gag, and curbs on freedom of speech and expression. Government is taking us back to backwardness by imposing ban on Internet.”

*Insha Lateef*, Reporter, *Rising Kashmir*



“Internet gag does not affect me much as I do not rely on it. But yes, due to easy access to Internet, our society, especially youth, has become severely addicted to net surfing. They become vulnerable to all the wrong and immoral stuff that is easily available on Internet. Imposing ban puts a halt to these activities. Besides this, it is only during the ban, people spend time with family and engage in talks, who otherwise can be seen engrossed in their mobile phones without even paying attention to their elders around them.”

*Faisal Firdous*, MBA student



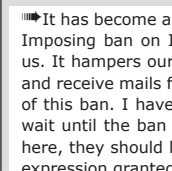
“Internet ban affects my business to a large extent as I cannot advertise my new products on social media. In this technological era, half of the business is run through Internet. Today most of the people carry plastic money with them. But due to Internet ban, swipe machines do not work, which hampers the businesses. Concept of so called ‘Digital India’ and Internet gag cannot go hand-in-hand.”

*Noor Muhammad*, Businessman



“Internet ban literally suffocates me as I cannot get connected with my family back in Kashmir. I get in touch with my friends and family via Skype or through other social media. The Internet ban totally breaks the communication. All I can say is that frequent Internet ban is one of the most pathetic steps taken by the government, which throws us back to Stone Age, where one had no clue about each other.”

*Zameena Wali*, BDS Student, Himachal Pradesh



“It has become a routine for authorities to snap Internet facility in Kashmir. Imposing ban on Internet every other day creates a lot of problems for us. It hampers our day-to-day activities. For instance, if I have to send and receive mails from my organisation, I am not able to do so because of this ban. I have not subscribed to broadband services, so I have to wait until the ban is lifted. If government wants to bring development here, they should let people enjoy their right to freedom of speech and expression granted by the Constitution.”

*Uzrat Nizam*, Journalist



## TICKET TO RIDE™

A day in life of a bus conductor

Even during cold and misty days of December, he leaves for work early morning. His day begins with calling out for passengers at the top of his lungs, and the practice continues throughout the day. A young boy of 18 years, Fazil Showkat, works as a bus conductor to support his family. The bus, driven by his father, takes its route in the morning from Jehangir Chowk in Srinagar and then travels through the old city. A shy and composed boy, Fazil loves to study, but doesn't get time for studies, for whole of his day passes inside or around the bus, which has become a second home to him. *The Echo* photojournalist, Ufaq Fatima trailed Fazil for a day to get to know what his day looks like.



This is where he reports for work



Here begins his day



Calling out loud to passengers is his regular practice



Heavy rush of passengers makes him happy



His calculations need to be quick and accurate



He returns money with sheer honesty



Evening is his lunch time



Healthy lifestyle is a distant dream for him



As the wheels rotate again, his eyes look for passengers