



The Echo



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Fire-fighting mechanism remains invisible at revered shrines in Kashmir

ABID HUSSAIN

With hordes of devotees thronging the shrines across Kashmir, government is yet to learn lessons from past mistakes, failing to take safety measures for the protection of religious sites.

Despite Dastgeer Sahib and Khanqah-e-Moula blaze in last five years, the successive governments have not installed advanced fire-fighting mechanism at either of the shrines.

Blaming Wakf Board for 'lackadaisical approach' caretakers and devotees at Khanqah-e-Moula said, "Wakf authorities haven't done anything except making fire extinguishers available."

They insisted that aforementioned board must show interest in installing advanced fire control system at every shrine as early as possible.

The visitors at Dastgeer Sahib also raised questions over the invisibility of fire-fighting system, "Proper fire control remains non-existent," they said, adding onus was on the Wakf authorities.

Most of the revered shrines in Kashmir are under the jurisdiction of J&K Wakf Board which is headed by incumbent Chief Minister as Chairperson and Vice Chairman (VC). The board is presently without VC as he recently resigned.

People said for government it was not a herculean task to take preventive measures after architectural marvel's conflagration in Khaniyar a lustrum ago.

"No doubt shrine of Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani was again built but not equipped with much needed full proof safety-arrangements," a devotee at the Dastgeer Sahib (RA) shrine said.

Though Abdul Rehman Rishi a caretaker

“ IN ORDER TO AVERT MAJOR TRAGEDY GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE SEPARATE FIRE BRIGADE AVAILABLE ROUND-THE-CLOCK ”



NOCTURNAL BLAZE AT KHANQAH-E-MOULA, SRINAGAR, IN NOVEMBER, 2017.

FILE PIC

of Dastgeer Sahib is satisfied with the quick restoration of work after 2012 blaze, but Rishi is anguished over ineffective fire control system.

Stressing the need of making permanent fire brigade available Rishi said, "In order

to avert major tragedy government must make separate fire brigade available round-the-clock."

The dire need of making advanced fire control mechanism available again came

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LETHAL ATTRACTION

Why smart phones are a **health hazard** for children

FARHAT JAHAN

Excessive use of smart phones is damaging children's eyesight at an alarming rate in Kashmir, doctors warn.

Chiefly, the children are developing Computer Vision Syndrome, says Dr Aatif Ali Mir, an ophthalmologist at ASG Eye Hospital in Srinagar. The syndrome is marked by myopia or short sightedness, dryness, pain,

irritation and even allergy in the eyes. Aatif cited the case of a patient, a schoolboy named Aahil. He had been using smart phones – his parents', for watching videos, playing games – since several years when his eyes starting hurting. He did not tell his parents fearing they would forbid him from using a phone. Only when the pain grew unbearable did he complain to his parents. They consulted Aatif who diagnosed the child with myopia.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

"Aahil loved to read books but he lost interest after he got addicted to the phone," rued his father.

Aatif says his hospital sees 40-50 children every month who come with complaints of foreign

body sensation in eyes, watering, neck pain, headache, blurred vision. "Classical symptoms of Computer Vision Syndrome," he adds.

Smartphone screens emit blue-violet light, extensive exposure to which can damage vision, said Aatif. Some of the radiations from smart phones are also known to cause what's known as laser burn. "The person with laser burn would never be able

CONTD ON PAGE 02

Editor Speaks

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC) at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Awantipora, was established in 2008. The department, which would initially offer mainly news-oriented subjects, included some more job-oriented subjects in 2012, like Advertising, Public Relations and Corporate Communication and International Communication.

Since its inception, DJMC has been imparting skill-based training to students so as to enable them to work in various areas of media besides exposing them to different theoretical aspects of journalism.

The department offers specialization in four major types of media, viz., print, television, radio and online media. The specialized subjects are taught by subject experts, who possess rich experience in their respective fields. The department is now going to introduce PhD programme this year.

As an essential part of the course curriculum, the post-graduate students are supposed to internship with reputed media organisations. Every year, DJMC sends its students to various news organisations for internship in Kashmir as well as outside. The purpose of the internship programme is to help students get hands-on training in covering various types of situations, events and issues. The current issue of *The Echo* is based on the selective internship stories of journalism students published by various reputed newspapers.

The Echo

EXTRACTING SAND FROM NALLAH SINDH

Livelihood as community service in Ganderbal

SURIA HAMID

Every morning, an army of 4,000 men reach Nallah Sindh in Ganderbal to do the daily work of dredging the rivulet. These men extract

sand from the water body not for their livelihood alone but also as a community service to prevent their areas from flooding.

According to the Geology and Mining (G&M) department's District Mineral officer, Mohammad Manzoor, if the Nallah's dredging was not carried out, Ganderbal would be flooded every two years.

A devastating deluge ravaged the district in 1992, but since then regular manual dredging has kept the area away from further catastrophe.

According to one of the labourers, Mohammad Ashraf Bhat, who has been digging the sand here for the last four decades, of the 4,000 men at the site, around 1,500 do the work of extracting sand and gravel while the rest are truck drivers, builders, labourers loading trucks and others.

Last year, however, the G&M department stopped the manual dredging and dredged the rivulet using machines. This triggered a catastrophe because embankments collapsed and a truck driver was killed in the mishap, Manzoor said.

From then on, the practice of manually extracting sand

from the water body has been resumed, he added.

He told Kashmir Reader, "If dredging would not take place, it would cause floods in the river after every two years." He explained that locals carry away the extracted sand and other material from the river to sell it

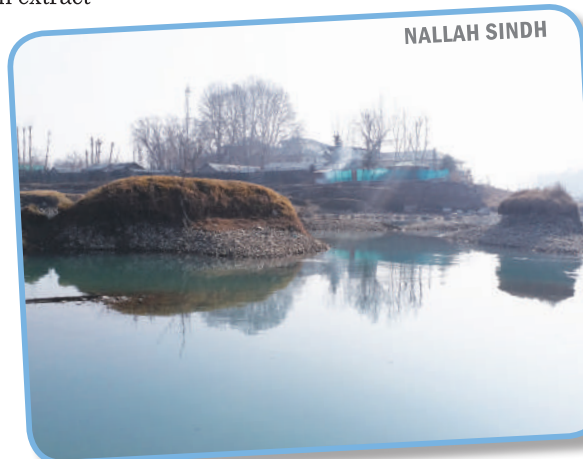
later for construction purposes, bringing revenue to the government. The sand from Sindh is in high demand in the Valley as it is considered the best for construction purposes for its quick consolidation.

According to truck driver Mohammad Ashraf at Gangerhama, where the sand is extracted, they have to pay royalty fee to the department according to different construction materials.

For gravel, the department charges them Rs 180, boulders Rs 160, soil Rs 150 and sand Rs 180. The drivers charge Rs 4,500 from a customer for a truckload of sand.

The water body is a source of livelihood for scores of locals, many of whom have been working there for more than four decades.

One such is 60-year-old Ali Mohammad Dar. He earns Rs 300 per day, he said, adding that his work goes beyond extracting sand as it also preserves the locality from the devastation of floods.



NALLAH SINDH

Published by *Kashmir Reader* on February 1, 2018

FROM THE PAGE 1...

Fire-fighting mechanism

to spotlight after the spire of 600 year old shrine of Hazrat Ameer-e-Kabeer Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani gutted before a fortnight.

Most of the shrines are fire-prone because of their architecture. The traditional Khatamband inside shrines is decorated with paper machie and coloured with highly inflammable paint.

Like Khanqah and Dastgeer Sahib, revered Naqsaband Sahib along with Bulbul Shah are also in a sorry state of affairs when it comes to fire dousing.

A devotee Irfan at Naqshband Sahib said 2012 incident was an alarm but government snoozed it until Khanqah happened. Consulting government to show 'wit and determination' Irfan added, "These shrines are Kashmir's glory and hence is obligatory upon government to protect them."

Jamia Masjid, unlike shrines this grand mosque of Kashmir is made of bricks and stone but is also vulnerable to fire.

The shrines in Kashmir either are mausoleums or house holy relics. Most of the

shrines which are considered to be a heritage in Kashmir are prone to fire. The sudden fire could raise the historical shrines to ground.

The Deputy Director of Fire and Emergency Services, Muhammad Akbar Dar told Brighter Kashmir that wooden structure of shrines warrant more protective measures. "Every shrine shall have a water reservoir not less than 50,000 litres," Dar maintained. Adding based on the height of shrines there must be hydrant system that would be connected to reservoirs. Besides manual hydrant system, Dar said, "An automatic sprinkler system is also necessary that works on temperature."

While talking to *Brighter Kashmir*, Chief Executive, J&K Wakf Board, Fayaz Ahmad Lone said, coming 'comprehensive' fire-fighting mechanism would cover everything as government is working on that.

"We have made fire extinguishers available at different shrines and our trained employees who stay there could operate them," Lone replied when asked about the im-

mediate steps board has taken after Khanqah blaze, lone said.

Published by *Brighter Kashmir* on December 2, 2017

Why smart phones are

to see normally. It's permanent and cannot be cured," he said. "We get a patient or two with laser burn every month."

Staring at a screen for a long period causes the eyes to blink at much less than the normal rate, which strains eye muscles. It also demands fine motor skills, which aren't developed in children, putting them at greater risk of developing Computer Vision Syndrome. Moreover, the blue light emitted by the screen penetrates children's eyes easily and deeper. According to the American Optometric Association, blue light is "nearly equal to ultraviolet light in wavelength and energy and thus very dangerous." It can lead to macular degeneration with age, which can cause blindness.

Yet, largely because parents are not fully aware of the health risks, smart phone use

among children is only growing in Kashmir. A quick survey of students in classes 5, 6 and 7 at SRM Welkin, Sopore, found that most of them use phones, the majority for over two hours a day, playing games and surfing the web. They largely use their parents' or siblings' phones but many carry their own.

The American Optometric Association advises parents to ensure their children do not stare at a phone for more than two hours at a stretch. At the least, they should follow the 20-20-20 rule: take a 20-second break after every 20 minutes of looking at the phone and look away at something about 20 feet away. They must also be regularly taken for eye check-ups. Not just ocular health, excessive smart phone use also causes neck and back pain, in both children and adults. It can disturb mental health and weaken memory as well, warns Dr Akash Yousuf Khan, a psychiatrist at Sub District Hospital, Sopore. "It could disturb biological clock of the body also and give rise to insomnia."

Published by *Kashmir Ink* on February 26, 2018

Kashmir farmers get bumper plum crop

IMTIYAZ PANDOW

Plums are grown in every part of Kashmir, but orchards in central Kashmir's Budgam district of the Bagati Kanipora belt are found rich in plums. Heavy rush of plum picking can be seen every year in the months of July and August.

This year plums are of great demand due to high yield and best quality productions. Orchardists and dealers are satisfied and have much hopes and expectations this. People are busy in harvesting Plums to supply them into various parts of Valley and outside Kashmir

Muhammad Maqbool Dar an orchardist, who owns 10 hectares of Plum orchard said, this season fruits are good in quality and quantity as well. "Usually we were harvesting about 1500 boxes in past, but this season we expect near about 3000 boxes."

Farmers have much expectations from their orchards. "Besides the expenditure for full year, our every hope is our Plum orchards," Dar added.

Plums are available in the market for two months only (July and August) as of its short shelf life. In order to increase its shelf life and sell it in the markets unhurriedly, Plum dealers directly shift the fruits to the Lassipora stores soon after plucked off from the plants.

"Plums have short span of ripening and could be available in the market for the shorter period of time. In order to reduce its perishability we shift fruits to stores for packing gradually and sell easily on reasonable market prices," said a dealer, Muhammad Ashraf Bhat.



From last many years the plum production has gone up as farmers have started to use pesticides and other sprays for their orchards. "In a year we spray thrice our orchards with best medicines for high yield production," said an orchardist, Bashir Ahmad Ganaie.

Ganie alleged that government officials do not pay any heed towards farmers otherwise there would be much better production. "Horticulture officials aren't doing anything for us. They should at least suggest us when and which spray to use for high yield and damage free fruit," he added.

Despite producing good fruit quality and high yield production, farmers are worried as

some unknown fruit diseases are damaging most of their fruits at the time of ripening.

"In every season at the time of ripening time we find some damaged fruits in our orchards but till now this problem persists. We request authorities to look into the matter," a group of farmers claimed.

" USUALLY WE WERE HARVESTING ABOUT 1500 BOXES IN PAST, BUT THIS SEASON WE EXPECT NEAR ABOUT 3000 BOXES "

Horticulture Development Officer Chadoora, Abida Malik while talking to Kashmir Observer said that Bagati Kanipora and Chadoora belts are the best Plum production zones both in quality and quantity

Responding to contentions made by orchardists she denied any negligence on part of her department. "Our department is working tooth and nail for reaching the farmers in order to make all the possible support from our department". She said that horticulture department publishes posters, booklets, schedules, and organizes various radio and TV programs from time to time in order to create general awareness regarding the maintenance of orchards.

On being asked about the available gov-

ernment schemes for plum cultivation and promotions, she said that there is not any separate scheme for it but there is a need to have such schemes in plum growing belts like Bagati Kanipora and Chadoora.

Abida hopes that the implementation of such schemes will help in improvement in plum fruit quality.

Most of farmers reap Plums by their own and supply to their dealers who has already made their payments in advance. This process of supplying fruits to their supposed dealers had distressed farmer fraternity of getting lesser prices for their fruits.

"We need high amount of money to maintain our orchards for the whole year as we spray our orchards thrice in a year. We cannot afford these costs by our own so we use to arrange those expense from our dealers to whom we are compelled to supply our fruits later on lesser prices," said a group of farmers.

They said that if government assists them for those expenses, they are sure that they can get sufficient amount of money on selling fruit by their own and it will help them to improve their living standard.

The farmers demand that horticulture officials should at least visit their orchards in a year in order to test the fruits so that they can identify the various fruit diseases and offer solutions to them.

Published by *Kashmir Observer* on July 17, 2017

Budgam boy turns his personal land into playground

... but is anybody noticing this gesture?

ABID HUSSAIN

At a time when prices of land are touching skies and people are seen doing everything fair and foul to hold on to as much as they can, here is a young boy who has turned in 22 kanals of his priced land to make a playground of it.

Riyaz Ahmed Bhat, a postgraduate, converted his land at Kakinmaran village in central Kashmir's Budgam district into a playground and named it "Friendz Cricket Stadium Kakinmaran (FCSK)," where he is not only promoting sports, but has also engaged three other persons.

Since July last year, Bhat has

successfully organized four cricket tournaments. "Teams from different areas, including Budgam, Srinagar, Beerwah, Magam, Bemina, Naraspora, Ompora, and elsewhere have participated in the last four tournaments," says Bhat.

Obviously, Bhat's stadium has become an attraction for the sportspersons of the district and elsewhere. "I want to engage youth in sports," he says.

Unfortunately, the fifth tournament that Bhat had started recently was halted by one of his neighbor, who alleged that the spectators are trespassing on his property.

"Had my neighbour not opposed the inauguration of fifth tournament, I would have surely concluded seven tournaments by now," says Bhat. He says that the ball sometimes land into my neighbour's property. "To avoid this

from happening, I am planning to construct a protection wall from my neighbour's side," he added.

Asked how this 'playground' idea struck him, Bhat says, "I always used to ponder that there is dearth



of playgrounds for the youth of Budgam, who are very enthusiastic about sports and this became the reason for me to establish the playground in my district."

Bhat has also employed three persons — among them two are into the job of umpiring, and one is a scorer.

He is convinced that in future he will employ more people at FCSK. "I have constructed four shops adjacent to the playground where I am going to sell sports equipments and will also provide canteen facility to the players and spectators," he says. "I am also planning to start a gym near the playground," he adds.

Interestingly, when most of the people in Bhat's locality prefer setting up brick kilns on their lands, he chose to do something unusual. "I was approached by few brick kiln owners who were giving me a handsome amount of money for this land, but I denied his offer," he says, adding that "I can get crores in exchange of my land, but I won't sell it." "I will take a few more kannals of land on rent in order to make this playground more attractive," he says.

The playground is located near

Kakinmaran village, on Budgam-Beerwah road, some seven kms from Budgam township.

Locals told 'Kashmir Images' that apart from tournaments, villagers play different games in the playground.

Bhat has also initiated the process of getting his playground registered. "I request the government to provide registration for the playground and sanction fencing for it," he says.

"I am looking forward to organize more cricket tournaments here in which the players will be provided with every cricket equipment except the bats," says Bhat, while appealing the Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Imran Raza Ansari, to provide cricket kits and related accessories for the forthcoming tournaments.

Published by *Kashmir Images* on March 29, 2018



IUST holds 8th executive council meet

The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) held its 8th executive council meet at varsity campus on March 24.

The meeting was chaired by Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi. Vice Chancellor University of Jammu, Prof R D Sharma, Vice Chancellor University of Kashmir, Prof Khurshid I Andrabi, Vice Chancellor Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Prof Javed Musarrat, and three nominees of the Chancellor IUST, namely Mian Altaf Sarwar, Nazir Ahmad Yattoo and Syed Showket Gayoor Andrabi attended the meeting.

The VC IUST gave a power point presentation on the progress the university has made in the academic, research and infrastructural areas. He also informed the participants about the future plans of the varsity.

The meeting discussed the agenda items, including the recommendations of the third finance committee and the fourth academic council.

The meeting also discussed creation of new posts, recruitment policy for academic arrangement, establish-



ment of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Cell, recommendations of selection committee for various faculty posts, etc.

Members of the Executive Council, who were present in the meeting included Prof Mushtaq A Qurishi, Dean

Academic Affairs, IUST, Prof A M Shah, Dean School of Business Studies IUST, Prof Khurshid A Tarzan, Dean of Students IUST, Hassina Wani, Principal Alamdar Memorial College of Nursing and Medical Technology IUST and Prof Reyaz Rufai, Registrar IUST.

IUST celebrates National Science Day

On the eve of National Science Day, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised a day-long seminar on the theme, 'Science and Technology for a Sustainable Future' on February 28. The university celebrates the National

also boosted the economy of the world," he said Prof Shah.

In his address, Dean School of Business Studies, IUST, Prof A M Shah, traced the history and underlined the role of Nanotechnology for the welfare of mankind.



“NANOTECHNOLOGY HAS MAGNIFICENTLY ENHANCED THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND ALSO BOOSTED THE ECONOMY OF THE WORLD”

Science Day annually to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect in India by renowned Physicist, Sir Chandrashekhara Venkata Raman in 1928.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr M Ashraf Shah, Associate Professor, Special Centre for Nanoscience, National Institute of Technology, Srinagar, who was the chief guest on the occasion, delivered a special talk on 'Nanotechnology and Sustainable Society'.

"Nano Technology touches every facet of our lives—be it searching answers to complex problems, or facilitating the lives of the sick and disabled. Nanotechnology has magnificently enhanced the quality of life and

"While most of these influences have been positive, there are few negative ones and the need of hour is to work together to minimize the negative influences," he stated. While addressing the gathering, Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, Prof Abdul Salam Bhat, deliberated on the role of Nanotechnology with respect to Islam.

Earlier, Head, Department of Food Technology, Prof M Ashraf Mir welcomed the guest and participants. Various university officials, heads of departments, faculty members and students from different streams were present on the occasion.

IUST organises 2-week research methodology workshop

A two-week research methodology workshop for faculty and research scholars, sponsored by Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), was held at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) from March 6 to 16. The workshop was jointly organised by Rinchen Shah Centre for West Himalayan Cultures, IUST and Center for International Relations (CIR), IUST.

In his inaugural address on March 6, Vice Chancellor, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, appreciated the two centres for organising the programme. He encouraged research scholars and faculty members to pursue quality and ethical research.

Workshop coordinator, Dr Sonam Joldan, said the workshop was organised keeping in mind the extreme importance of quality research. The workshop covered various aspects of research methodology including theoretical concepts, data collection techniques, data analysis besides providing the participants a hands-on experience of statistical research tools.

Faculty and research scholars from universities across India and from varied disciplines like management, political science, economics and allied fields attended the workshop. Sessions were held by eminent resource persons from Delhi University, Ambedkar University, Guru Gobind Indraprastha University, University of Kashmir, Central University of Kashmir, IUST and so on.



IUST clinches football title in second state sports championship

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) won the football title in the second State Sports Championship defeating the host, University of Jammu by 2-1 on March 27.

For IUST, the goals were scored by Furqan Zargar and Muneeb Altaf. The final match was played at the football ground at University of Jammu.

Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, Registrar IUST, Prof Reyaz Rufai, deans of various schools, and teaching, non-teaching and student fraternity con-

gratulated the team for the achievement.

Prof Siddiqi, while lauding the team spirit and consistency shown by IUST team during the entire event, said the university is committed to provide full support to its students to help them explore their hidden talents in extracurricular as well as co-curricular activities.

He also expressed his gratitude to University of Jammu for organising the event and stressed that more such events need to be organised by universities in the state.

The event was organised by Director-



ate of Physical Education and Sports, University of Jammu, in which 13 teams from the universities of J&K state participated.

Earlier, IUST made their way to the fi-

nals defeating Cluster University of Jammu by 3-0 in the semi-finals. Last year, IUST football team also won the football title in the first state sports championship held at University of Jammu.

“ IUST IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDE FULL SUPPORT TO ITS STUDENTS TO HELP THEM EXPLORE THEIR HIDDEN TALENTS IN EXTRACURRICULAR AS WELL AS CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ”

IUST organises 2-day workshop on Outcome Based Education

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised two-day workshop on ‘Outcome-based Education’ on March 26-27.

The inaugural function of the workshop was pre-

by the university under School of Technology are accredited by National Board of Accreditation (NBA).

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Siddiqi emphasised for the attainment of high academic and research standards in the university. He reiterated various initiatives especially recruitment of faculty and upgradation of infrastructure being taken up by the university.

Dean School of Technology, IUST Prof A H Moon, gave an overview of the objectives of the workshop and emphasised the importance of accreditation in light of achieving global recognition of various engineering programmes offered by IUST. The programme is being con-

ducted by Dr Yogesh P Velankar, engineering educationist consultant and adjunct faculty at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Banaras.

The programme was attended by over 160 faculty members from various departments of School of Technology, wherein they were put to number of hands-on exercises given by the NBA experts.



sided over by Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, Vice Chancellor, IUST. The workshop was held under TEQIP-III project being implemented by IUST. The purpose of the workshop was to sensitize faculty of various departments of the university about the benefits of aligning to the process of Outcome-Based Education, so that the programmes offered

IUST signs MoU with Mother Helpage Worldwide

With an aim to collaborate on knowledge partnership in the area of Academics, Research, Trainings, Entrepreneurship and Human Resource Development, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mother Helpage Worldwide, a government-recognised non-governmental organisation, on February 14.

The MoU was signed to create the best possible environment for teaching and learning process. Initially effective for three years, the MoU is said to facilitate the university in student and faculty exchange between university, and other institutions both within and outside the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi said the MoU will eventually help in creating a platform “to establish a mutual research cooperation in the areas, in which the university has expertise.”

“It will facilitate the university students to undergo the projects for entrepreneurship, innovations and start-ups. It shall also provide financial assistance wherever needed to university students in its various projects under implementation or in future plans,” he said.

Chief of the ‘Mother Helpage Worldwide’ Capt. Dr Sohail Nasti agreed to provide at least two scholarships per year to the poor but meritorious students, seeking admission in various programmes offered by the university.

REVIVING Heritage

TURNING KANI SHAWL WEAVING INTO AN ART

Wagoora is a hub of Pashmina weaving as the major chunk of the local population is believed to be engaged with this centuries-old profession, which is believed to be gifted by revered Sufi saint Mir Syed Ali Hamadani (RH). He brought various crafts and industries from Iran to Kashmir with the help of his 700 disciples including some carpet and shawl weavers. IMTIYAZ PANDOW reports.

While Kashmir is known for its natural beauty and is considered as the heaven on earth, there are several art forms which have been inspired from this beauty and are as famous as the valley itself.

Kashmir holds the distinction of producing high quality handmade Pashmina shawls, which are known for their uniqueness throughout the world. Kani shawl or Pashmina is a kind of shawl woven on a handloom by using bobbins instead of a shuttle with the delicate varied-colored spinning threads wrapped around them.

Defying poverty, two brothers from the remote Wagoora village in central Kashmir's Budgam district have excelled in this art of Kani shawl (Pashmina) weaving and their art has even earned them a National Award in handicraft, bringing laurels for them as well as the entire village. Bashir Ahmad Ganie was forced to quit studies and start working in his teens to earn livelihood after his father Muhammad Rajab died in accident and he had to shoulder the responsibility of his younger brother Fayaz Ahmad and widowed mother.

It was the time when Kani shawls were in great demand across Kashmir and earning from this profession was quite satisfactory. So, Bashir left the work of carpet weaving and opted to learn the Kani shawl weaving from a local instructor Farooq Ahmad Wani. "I took Pashmina weaving as a career to feed my widowed mother and to educate my younger brother as well," states Bashir. After gaining experience, he formed a village-level group, Pakiza Ruffle and Cotton Handloom (PRCH), which had 12 villagers as members.

But tragedy struck as Bashir was about to establish himself in shawl making. In 2002 he met with an accident and had to undergo three back-to-back surgeries in three months. "I found myself unable to work anymore. The unfortunate incident compelled me to take my younger brother out of school and take the responsibility of running the family as well as to bear my medical expenses," says Bashir.

While Bashir was undergoing treatment, he also began to guide Fayaz about Kani shawl weaving. One day, an idea struck

Bashir's mind to prepare a design of Kani shawl on a simple graph paper by a pen. Bashir attempted and did it after seeking help from his younger brother. After Bashir recovered, the brothers started to transform

shawl and submitted it to HWCS. The shawl was then sent to Delhi where its nomination for national award was made after holding five consecutive meetings in five years. After nomination, Bashir and Fayaz were in-

village, as nobody else has been till date been nominated for the national award.

The brothers are now selling their shawls in the famous markets of Chennai, Delhi and Faridabad, as they see huge demand for their product. Due to their accomplishments, Bashir and Fayaz are now invited to seminars and workshops Organised to provide tips to weavers. They believe the national award was the starting point for them. "Besides enhancing our earnings, the achievement made us capable to work independently and avoid the mass brokerage of this skill," adds Fayaz.

Bashir says Pashmina sector possess a wide range of employment opportunities. "Engaging the youth with this noble profession of craftsmanship, the state and central governments can use it as an opportunity to combat the unemployment challenges," he opines. Bashir adds that the weaver fraternity should send their shawls directly to the customers without the intervention of brokers. He has also urged the government to provide support to weavers of Kani shawls or they will be forced to quit tis profession. "The rise of machine-made shawls, low quality material and fake registrations are the biggest challenges for professional artisans to survive in this field," cited Fayaz.

Other weavers from the village demand that seminars and workshops must be organised to provide them exposure and also demanded availability of basic facilities, including regular health checkups, to cope up with the health issues arising due this work. They have also sought to organize exhibitions of their work at important cities so that they can directly sell their shawls to the customers.

"Bashir and Fayaz have revived the vigor for this handicraft by inspiring and motivating people opt for this art of Kani Shawl weaving as a career choice. Their proud achievement is an inspiration for all of us and we always try to seek every possible support from them and they never repudiate, so their achievement is the way one must follow to accomplish the path of success," says a young artisan.



FAYAZ AHMAD GANAIE

PHOTO: IMTIYAZ PANDOW

the graph design into a pashmina shawl. Luckily, when they were weaving the shawl, Vishesh Nootel, the then director of Handloom Weaving Centre, Srinagar (HWCS) visited their home. Nootel appreciated the brothers and asked them to submit the Shawl at HWCS after completion. However, it is not an easy task to weave a Kani shawl. It takes at least two to three months to complete a shawl as it is woven with at least 200-250 spools (Kanis) over a handloom with the delicate colored threads wrapped around them.

The shawl designed by the duo was much difficult to weave than the normal shawl as the coded pattern (Taleem) was self-produced. The pattern demanded 400-450 bobbins and six months of time to complete the shawl. The brothers were working with great enthusiasm but lack of funds posed a big hindrance. "We faced money shortage at that time. To arrange money for the basic requirements like raw material, bobbins and labour expenses, and to meet our day to day necessities, we sold the cow we had at our home," recounts Bashir.

After many hardships, they completed the

“ BESIDES ENHANCING OUR EARNINGS, THE ACHIEVEMENT MADE US CAPABLE TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY AND AVOID THE MASS BROKERAGE OF THIS SKILL ”

vited to Delhi in 2010 and awarded by Pranab Mukherji, the then President of India. The shawl designed by duo was returned back to them as honor.

"My eyes had tears of happiness when I first heard the news of their achievement," says their mother Ashiya. She said the honor was not only for them, but for the entire

ASER survey paints gloomier picture of education system in Kashmir

STUDENTS FAIL IN ARITHMETIC, READING, AND AWARENESS AMONG OTHER PARAMETERS

ABID HUSSAIN

The tall claims of government stands exposed in Jammu and Kashmir after Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2017 'Beyond Basics' released startling findings about the ailing education system in rural areas of the state.

In arithmetic, the report mentioned, 56% of students aged 14-18 were not able to divide a three-digit by one-digit, whereas 21% of those surveyed were not up to the mark in basic subtraction.

However, 86.2% of youngsters were enrolled in school up till class 12, the survey found.

In the national survey, each state was represented by a district and the ASER team choose to survey rural Budgam in J&K, which desperately failed to bring laurels to state.

The survey was conducted with 1154 youth in 936 households in 60 villages. According

to Census 2011, 87% of Budgam people live in rural areas.

In spite of digital India and cashless economy hype, Budgam is lagging behind in Internet and computer knowledge, nearly 63% and 71.8% of youth never accessed to former and latter respectively. In the financial participation, only 5.9% have used Internet banking, while 22.1% have used ATM services. However, 87.8% have their own

bank accounts and 60.1% of those surveyed have deposited or withdrawn money.

At least 22% of adolescents (aged 14-18) could not name their own state, while 34.4% failed to identify J&K on a map. About 30% adolescents could not read basic Class II level text, findings that punctured the education system in rural areas.

Regarding the out-of-school children, the largest household-based survey revealed that the drop-out rate increases with age. Between age 14-18, only 10.4% adolescents

were not enrolled in education institutions but at age 16-18, the percentage of such youth rises to 16.1%.

Figures released by ASER are disturbing for girls, who lag boys in almost all parameters. Under 17-18 age

group, 21.3% females were not enrolled in formal education system against 9.1% boys of the same age group. In terms of awareness, 77.5% and 77.6% of girls had never accessed the Internet and had not used computer against 44.4% and 64.4% of boys.

Notably, when it came to common calculations, Budgam ranked top with 67.7% youth

applying unitary method and in measuring hard length, the rural J&K with 63.2% of adolescents remained only after Kerala in whole India.

In daily tasks, J&K also fared better with 84% passed in counting money, 67.1% in adding weights, 90.5% in telling time, when it involved only the hour and 86.4% in telling both hours and minutes. Significantly, 47.5% of adolescents were also found to be working as well, excluding household work.

Meanwhile, ASER for the first time included the older age group of 14 to 18 in the survey. The aim was to find out what happens to Indian rural youth between elementary school and adulthood, the report said. The survey was conducted in 26 rural districts in 24 states in India, across 23,868 households and 28,323 youth aged 14-18.

Published by *Brighter Kashmir* on January 22, 2018



KONDBAL LOCALITY BEHIND POLLUTION IN MANSBAL LAKE WITHOUT STP

SURIA HAMID

The Kondabal locality living on the banks of the Mansbal Lake is one of the major contributors of pollution of the lake due to the absence of proper sewage treatment plant.

The refuse of their kitchens and washrooms directly goes into the lake, officials said.

The residents accepted the blame but say that they have no other option, "We are living in the danger of hillock as well as a threat of water from the lake. We are living a life of miseries. It will have its bad effects on us too," they said.

Chief Executive Officer Wullar Manasbal Development Authority Zulfiqar Muhammad Khan said there are seven villages surrounding the area but Kondabal is very close to the lake and their excreta and refuse goes in the Manasbal Lake.

Khan further added that a proposal was made by the former officers to make Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) at that site.

"But the decision was later changed and it was decided that 150 families living in the area should be shifted," he said. "But we have to build houses for them and it is a very costly project for the government."

Recently Tourism Minister has asked the Mansbal Development Authority officials to submit Detailed Project Report (DPR) for construction of STP, he said.

Khan also said that the STP will cost the government



around Rs 4 crore and in the second stage rehabilitation of the people will take place.

Talking further about the pollution caused by the waste of locality, the official said that there are more weeds on Kondabal side.

The lake has three villages on its shores, Jarokbal, Kondabal and Gratabal overlooking the lake. It is the deepest lake in Kashmir. Manasbal is considered as the 'supreme gem of all Kashmir lakes' with lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) nowhere more abundant than on the margins of this lake during July or August. It is also known for the different species of fish and lotus seeds.

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Ganderbal villagers rue lack of public transport

SURIA HAMID

Commuters in Wakura village of Ganderbal are complaining about the lack of public transport in the area.

Residents said that they have to wait for hours to board a bus to reach their destination.

Basit Ali, a student of 12th class told Kashmir reader that he is facing tough time daily to attend his tuition classes in Ganderbal. "I have to wait for long hours every day to return home. Only three buses ply on the route," he said.

He added that lack of buses or minibus service is forcing them to board sumos and is unaffordable for them.

He also said that they have brought the issue into the notice of Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Ganderbal many times.

Another commuter Dawood Ahmad also complained of reaching late to the office due to the lack of transport in the area.

DDC Ganderbal, Dr Piyush Singla said he will talk to ARTO and check how the frequency of buses can be enhanced in the area.

While speaking with Kashmir Reader Sohail Qadri traffic official of Ganderbal said, "they will start one more minibus in a week. Already there is sumo service and two minibuses moving on the route. Wakura is the major villages in district Ganderbal and is located at a distance of 20 km from Srinagar."

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A MORNING ALONG THE FAMOUS FLOATING VEGETABLE MARKET OF DAL LAKE

The famous vegetable market of Dal Lake is not just a utility souk for locals, but also a delight for the tourists due to its unique offerings and lake-side grandeur

The journey in reaching to *Gudhur* (Floating Vegetable market) is not less than an adventure. No road... no land... just the path of wood that creaks with every step. The market is just not about selling the vegetables and flowers, but also about social gathering. From chatting to the warmth of *Kangri*, people can be seen intensively involving into each other. The famous floating market of the Dal Lake starts at 5 in the morning and ends at 7:30 am. The purchase of the vegetables starts at the dawn and is over till sun shows up. The market is famous for its good variety of vegetables among locals. Not just the vegetables, *Shikaras* laden with different varieties of flowers can also be seen, which adds to the beauty of this market. It is also a main tourist attraction in the Srinagar as tourists can be seen enjoying the view of this market while sitting in *Shikara*. Locals also enjoy the hustle bustle of the market. Sitting on the deck, they can be seen chatting and enjoying the view of the market.

People living inside the premises of Dal Lake are actively involved in cultivation of vegetables. Being one and the only market of its kind in Kashmir and the oldest one too, floating market has not lost its beauty and is still famous among locals and tourists.

PHOTO-FEATURE BY UFAQ FATIMA



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