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# The Echo



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## MASS PROMOTIONS EMERGING AS 'NEGATIVE' TREND IN KASHMIR

### Mark a great leap back: Educationists



Parents accompanying their children to community classes amid curfew and shutdown at Hawal area of Srinagar during 2016 mass uprising. Over the years, mass uprisings have hampered education of Kashmiri children, who are forced to sit at homes when they ought to be in schools. PHOTO: RIYAZ BHAT/IUST

MUDASIR BHAT

Over the past some years, a new trend in education has been emerging in the Valley. At a time when an untoward situation takes a longer course, students are promoted to higher classes without their examinations being held.

In recent times, Kashmiri students have gone through the practice of mass promotion on a couple of occasions with not much time gap between the two. Be it floods of 2014 or mass uprising of 2016, the dire incidents in Kashmir have led the state government to declare mass promotion for school children.

Experts deem that the trend marks a great leap back, and is laying a negative impact on career and academic growth of the children. Renowned educationist and former Secretary, Board of School Education (BOSE), Bashir Ahmad, warns that the students promoted without examination to higher classes would be deficient in prerequisites for academic development, "and will find it extremely difficult to pursue new courses".

"It is a universal fact in education that what is tested is taught and learnt, and what is not tested is neither taught nor learnt. Tests provide a strong motivation to students to learn. If there are no tests and students are promoted without any evaluation, what will motivate them to learn?" he asks, adding that mass promotion is the "most undesirable trend" wrought with "dangerous consequences", and is "no solution to declining standards of education".

Another educationist, Firdous Ahmad,

laments that the government's decision of promoting all students from class one to nine and class 11 without letting them appear in examination could be detrimental for the future of students, especially because class 11 and nine form the foundation for class 12 and 10, respectively.

"Besides, these two classes are considered to be the preliminary step for competitive examinations like Common Entrance Test (CET), Integrated Information Technology (IIT), All India Engineering Entrance Exam (AIEEE) and so on," he adds.

A college lecturer, Tariq Ahmad, says, if the trend of mass promotion shall continue in future, it will have a negative effect on education of Kashmiri students "by making them habitual of it".

"In extreme conditions, the government should conduct examinations for at least higher classes and give relaxation in syllabi to students of lower classes," he adds.

As per official records available with the Department of Education, J&K government, around 15 lakh students enrolled in various private and government schools got promoted without appearing in examination in 2014 and 2016. In 2014, following the devastating floods that swamped the whole Valley, government announced mass promotion for the students from class one to nine and class 11.

Later, in 2016, government again declared mass promotion for school children, who had missed their curriculum activities for more than five months in the wake of unrest

in the Valley following the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen Commander Burhan Wani in an encounter with Army on July 8.

Talking to *The Echo*, parents express their concern over back-to-back mass promotions in the Valley. They opine that the decision of the government could be harmful for their kids' future in the long run, "which could in turn affect the future of state".

"Mass promotions can only weaken the base of our kids' career. If authorities want to safeguard the future of students, they should put an end to the practice of mass promotion once for all," says Manzoor Ahmad Wani, a parent. "Instead, they should conduct examinations at least for primary subjects like Science and Mathematics, if not for all," he suggests.

Ghulam Muhammad Bhat, father of a class 10 student, says, the authorities should have conducted examination for all the students after giving them relaxation in

syllabi.

Not just parents and teachers, students too understand the downsides of mass promotion. A group of students, who are presently studying in class 10 and 12, say, initially they were happy to learn about mass promotion, "but as soon as we joined new classes, we realised that we have lost a lot". "It is difficult to understand the new syllabus as we have not understood even the basics of previous one," they lament.

Experts believe, before promoting children to next class, it is essential to know their strengths and weaknesses. "You can't have quality education in educational institutions if students will be promoted to next class without exams. And the product we will have will be almost useless," comments Bashir Ahmad, adding that one cannot wash off hands from the responsibility of educational assessment of students for promotion of quality education.



PHOTO: SAQIB MAJEED



# COME WINTERS, MIGRATORY BIRDS FLOCK TO KASHMIR

GAZALA JAN

**K**ashmir has always been known for its hospitality. While it has been welcoming tourists from across the world, birds have been no exception.

The Valley provides shelter to millions of migratory birds who travel from numerous places during winters. Suitable climate and easy availability of food is what lure these birds to Kashmir. Birds living at higher altitudes flock to Kashmir to prevent themselves from the intense cold.

Hokersor, a wetland in Zainakot, is where migratory birds are first seen at the onset of winters. These birds come from various places like Siberia, Turkey, Russia, China and Philippines. Other wetlands where migratory birds can be found in Kashmir include Shallibug, Mirgund and Hygam besides lakes like Anchar, Manasbal, Wullar, Nigeen and Dal Lake.

“The migratory ducks and geese include Mallard, Garganey, Greylag Goose, Brahminy Duck, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Common Pochard and Northern Shoveler,” says Basheer Ahmad Dar, a Wildlife worker.

Migration of these birds to Kashmir is seasonal. “These

birds make their way to the Valley during September and spend entire winter over here in their temporary homes right till February 25. This year, migratory birds of around seven lakh species have moved from various countries to Kashmir Valley,” says Abdul Rouf Zargar, Wildlife Warden Wetlands Kashmir.

The migratory birds fall under the ambit of the local Wildlife department, who are supposed to take due care of them. “This includes feeding and safeguarding them,

even during harsh weather conditions,” says Imtiyaz Ahmad Wani, Block Officer, Wildlife

department. The migratory birds mostly reside on the wetland reserves. At evening, they move towards the water bodies. “The migratory birds mostly feed upon *Singhada*

(water chestnut), which is their basic food,” says Ghulam Ahmad Dar, another Wildlife worker.

Tourists from across the world visit the Kashmir wetlands to see the view of migratory birds. However, like tourists, these migratory birds too return to their native places on the arrival of summer season. ■■■■

**“This year, migratory birds of around seven lakh species have moved from various countries to the Valley”**



Migratory birds rejoicing in the waters of Dal Lake, Srinagar. PHOTO: MUZAMIL MATTOO/IUST

# MUSLIM FAMILY LOOKS AFTER SHIVA LINGAM, SETS EXAMPLE OF KASHMIRIYAT

RIYAZ BHAT

**S**ince the time Kashmiri pandits have migrated in large numbers from the Valley, a Muslim family has been taking care of a Shiv Ling at north Kashmir’s Ganderbal district. The Shiva Ling—a representation of the Hindu deity—which is situated inside the Tumul cave, is being visited by thousands of Kashmiri pandits, including locals as well as migrants. The visitors often express their gratitude to the Syed family. The devotees pay obeisance at the cave dedicated to the goddess Ragnya Devi, popularly known as Kheer Bhavani, while Muslims, in a gesture of brotherhood, erect stalls to distribute refreshments among the pilgrims.

Muhammad Amin Syed, who presently looks after the Shiva Ling, says, “From early 1990s till 2012, my father, Noor Muhammad, used to take care of this cave. But after he left for the heavenly abode, I took the responsibility of the Shiva Ling.”

The Shiva Ling and the house of Muhammad Amin fall in the same vicinity, so he visits the cave everyday to ensure its cleanliness. Devotees say because of his care-taking, the cave is so clean that “one cannot find even a speck of dust there”.

“I feel quite obliged to have been assigned the task of the care-taker. I visit the cave twice a day to make sure that it is being cleaned efficiently,” says Amin.

Besides taking part in maintenance of the cave, Amin also

participates in the Hindu festivals to share their joy and spread the message of secular brotherhood.

“I have been participating in Kheer Bhavani festival since my childhood. I remember how Noor Muhammad, who then was the care taker of this cave, used to distribute sweets and milk among both Muslims and Hindus on the eve of any Hindu

festival here,” says Muhammad Ramzan Dar, a local.

Both local Hindus and Muslims contribute for the maintenance of the shrine by donating alms. “With majority of population in the village being that of Muslims, most of the charity comes from us for the development of this shrine. However, pilgrims and devotees also pay alms to the Shiva



Devotees collecting Prasad from a Muslim care taker of Shiv Lingam at Gandarbal cave temple in north Kashmir. PHOTO: FAISAL KHAN

**“I visit the cave twice a day to ensure that it is being cleaned efficiently”**

Linga,” says Pandit Hari Prasad Bhat, a Hindu priest, who collects money and alms from locals as well as pilgrims. ■■■■

## 'VISUAL LANGUAGE IS UNIVERSAL'



*Known for his political cartoons worldwide, he has earned a name in the world of art. With 10 years of experience and an array of national and international awards under his belt, he endeavours to give a face to the sufferings of Kashmiri people. His cartoons have been widely shared especially on social media. Having previously worked with some regional newspapers, he is currently working for the news portal, Scoopwhoop. In an exclusive interview with The Echo reporter SHOWKET RASHID, noted Kashmiri cartoonist MIRSUHAIL talks at length about his profession.*

- Q.** You are a known figure in the world of art. Tell us how did this field fascinate you?
- A.** Actually I started drawing cartoons from my childhood, and gradually this hobby turned into my passion. My mother supported me very much as she was very close to my maternal grandfather, who was also an artist and a musician. This is where from this journey started. There was nothing that could stop me from pursuing my passion.
- Q.** When did you think to turn your passion into profession?
- A.** Well, I have been working as a cartoonist right since my college days. Actually, a senior designer happened to be my friend. He was aware about my art and thus introduced me to this field.
- Q.** Has anyone been your inspiration?
- A.** There are many cartoonists whom I admire. But I love Tom and Jerry cartoons the most. Besides, the sufferings of Kashmiri people inspired me towards this art as I relate my own sufferings with those of others.
- Q.** How do you generate ideas for your cartoons?
- A.** I always talk to people about different issues and something new often comes up. Suppose I would be discussing price hike issue with my mother and some idea would strike my mind and I would use that in my cartoon.
- Q.** How much time does it take to make one cartoon?
- A.** It depends on what kind of idea it is. As soon as I get an idea, I start drawing a cartoon. Now that I have 10 years of experience, it takes me hardly 10 minutes to make a cartoon.
- Q.** What kind of atmosphere do you prefer while making a cartoon?
- A.** I don't work in a particular situation. You see, you have to work in every situation. So I am always ready to work in any kind of atmosphere. I can work anywhere.
- Q.** Which of your cartoons has been close to your heart?
- A.** Every cartoon is very special for a cartoonist. But some of my cartoons have been quite popular and have had an impact on people. For instance, during April 2015 Nepal earthquake, my cartoon based on biased coverage by Indian media went viral on social networking sites Twitter and Facebook after Nepali people slammed mainstream Indian media for insensitive coverage under the tagline #GoHomeIndianMedia.
- Q.** Why are most of your cartoons about Kashmir?
- A.** Kashmir is a disputed region. The issue has an international appeal. In fact, as I said earlier, it is the sufferings of people here that have attracted and inspired me towards the art.
- Q.** Some of your cartoons were censored by government. What do you have to say about that?
- A.** They do it because I always criticize government. As I said, Kashmir is a disputed region. You know how authorities work, and curb freedom of speech and expression in Kashmir. In fact, I don't feel there is freedom of speech and expression at all in Kashmir.
- Q.** How much impact do you think cartoons have on people in Kashmir?
- A.** Cartoons have always been appreciated everywhere. I always try to make a cartoon, which can be understood worldwide and not only in Kashmir. See, visual language is a universal communication. Even uneducated people can understand it easily, and obviously cartoons are very impactful.

## SEMPORA BRIDGE A DISTANT DREAM FOR RESIDENTS

RIYAZ BHAT

Despite tall claims of development made by government prior to elections, the bridge that is supposed to connect Seerbagh and Shalina areas with National Highway 1 (NH01) at Sempora still lies nowhere, forcing people to cross River Jhelum by boats.

Due to the lack of bridge in the area, residents of Seerbagh and Shalina feel it unsafe to cross the river by boats especially in evenings. Many of them have suffered grave injuries while crossing the river.

"During 2014 floods, when the water level of Jhelum started receding, I suffered labour pain. My family members were worried for my life, for there was no means of transport available," narrates 27-year-old Naseema Sheikh of Seerbagh. "Somehow my brother managed to persuade a boat rider to cross the Jhelum. As I stepped into the boat, the boatman suddenly lost the balance of the boat and I fell down. With the result, I suffered several injuries in my head and uterus, which caused death of my baby," says Nasima with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Locals say, they feel more insecure after the sunset when boat usually turns off, especially in winters. "In that situation, we have to cover a long distance through alternate routes to reach home," says Shazia Bashir, a 19-year-old student.



Seerbagh residents crossing River Jhelum by boat. PHOTO: RIYAZ BHAT

**"Lack of bridge in our area affects my studies, for I have to leave from my tuition centre mid-way so as to catch a boat before evening"**

to leave from my tuition centre mid-way so as to catch a boat before evening," she says, adding that, otherwise, her classes end at 5 pm daily.

While expressing resentment over the government's "indifferent" approach, the locals say, they have been demanding this bridge for last 15 years, "but the concerned

authorities pay no heed to our woes". "Many untoward incidents have taken place due to the lack of this bridge, but it seems the government is unaware of all the incidents. All we have been hearing these years is that next year government will construct a bridge," a group of locals lament.

Talking to *The Echo*, Executive Engineer, Roads and Buildings (R&B) division 1, Imtiyaz Qadri, says, his team has thrice got negative result of the soil test in Seerbagh area, where the bridge is supposed to be constructed. "So constructing a bridge there is not possible now. We are planning to construct a bridge in the nearby area of Seerbagh," he adds. ■■■■



## DEMONETISATION TAKES TOLL ON VALLEY BUSINESS COMMUNITY

IMTIYAZ PANDOW

Even as demonetisation is believed to have a limited impact in Kashmir, the move has weighed heavily on the business community of Kashmir. Valley businessmen have taken a hit owing to abruptly announced ban on 1,000 and 500 rupees notes.

Entrepreneurs lament that they faced various problems in running their enterprises after demonetisation was implemented. "The limited cash withdrawal has directly affected our business transactions. It became difficult to pay miscellaneous expenses to meet the daily requirements of our businesses," says Riyaz Ahmad, a plywood factory owner.

Market observers and businessmen opine that the Valley was already facing a financial crunch due to summer uprising of 2016, hence "demonetisation added to the chaos among business community of the Valley".

"We were about to recover the losses we incurred due to 2014 floods, but then 2016 unrest took place that knocked down the business community. And when we were again trying to recover, demonetisation move took us back," says Ahmad.

Pertinently, on November 8, 2016,

## INTERNET BLOCKADE IT SECTOR SUFFERS MONETARY LOSSES, LAY-OFFS

SAJID ALI

With Internet services continuously blocked in Kashmir for months together, the burgeoning Information Technology sector of Kashmir has been suffering daily losses of whopping Rs 40 to 50 lakh. Thousands youngsters working in the industry have also been laid off, forcing scores of families to starve.

Following the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander, Burhan Wani, at Kokarnag on July 8, the Internet blockade has rendered many private Internet service providers close their operations in Kashmir.

According to Jahangir Rehman, Chairmen of Information Communication Technology Association, the Internet breakdown has been incurring them huge losses of Rs 40 to 50 lakhs a day, forcing many private Internet service providers to reduce human

resources. Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, announced scrapping of 500 and 1000 rupees Indian currency notes from the midnight and also announced the issuance of new 500 and 2000 rupees notes in exchange of the old ones. The Modi-led government claimed that



demonetisation would set crack-down on growing black money and corruption in India. However, in the days following the demonetisation, banks and ATMs across the country faced severe cash shortage with adverse effect on a number of businesses.

Post announcement of demonetisation, new currency notes

were not available for some days. After new notes were available, the amount to be withdrawn from ATMs was limited to Rs 2,000—not sufficient enough for running businesses.

"Even after new currency notes were available, many ATMs remained out of cash for many days due to which most of the entrepreneurs faced acute cash shortages," says Mushtaq Ahmad, a wood dealer.

Demonetisation has also hampered the functioning of banks and financial institutions of the Valley. "It has been really difficult to handle the heavy public rush to the banks, due to which our routine work remained disrupted," says Ajaz Ahmad, Nehama branch manager, J&K Bank.

Experts see demonetisation as an "ill-planned" move. A researcher in Economics, Nissar Ahmad, says, the step should have been taken in a way that would not have made people suffer. Talking about the impact of demonetisation on Kashmir economy, he says, the economic class of Kashmir usually remains affected with back-to-back strike calls, geographical factors and natural disasters, "so demonetisation has only added to the woes". "Kashmiri people invest their extra money either in businesses or purchase of properties, that is why demonetisation has had not a good impact on Kashmir economy," he says, adding, however, in Kashmir, not many long queues have been observed outside ATMs unlike in other states of India. ■■■■

## RERELIANCE JIO MAKING STRIDES IN KASHMIR

AAQIB NAIK

With Reliance Jio adding to its customer base every day, other mobile service providers operating in the Valley have taken a huge hit. While many mobile operators have lost their customers to Jio, others have been forced to reduce tariff by large extent.

Over the past many years, there has been a tough competition for attracting mobile and Internet users among Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Bharti Airtel, Aircel, Idea Cellular and Vodafone India. However, Jio's unlimited data and voice calling offers have affected the sales of every other mobile operator.

"Since BSNL is a government-owned service provider, it will remain there no matter what. But yes, our sales have definitely been hit because of Jio," admits Aamir Bashir Naik, Junior Telecom Officer, BSNL.

Similarly, Marketing Manager Aircel, Sudhir Sharma, says, Jio's attractive offers have affected not only Aircel, but other operators as well.

Muhammad Abbas, who works as a retailer with Bharti Airtel, laments that Jio's schemes have badly affected the business of the company. "I have been working with Airtel since 2004 when it became the second operator to start mobile services in Kashmir after BSNL. All these years, Airtel had maintained a good customer base. However, Jio has attracted most of the customers towards its tariff plans," he says, and adds, "Now hardly two or three customers visit my kiosk for mobile recharge."

Pertinently, during 2016 unrest, mobile services were barred in the Valley for a couple of months, while Internet was blocked for around five months. The move to ban Internet affected everybody from students to traders, and especially those who are directly dependent on Internet for livelihood. Jio's unlimited offers came at a time when people were data-hungry in every sense of the term. Thousands of people have subscribed to Jio 4G to enjoy its high speed Internet and



free voice calling.

"I am a student and I need Internet every now and then for downloading study material. Internet services provided by mobile operators other than Reliance Jio have either been expensive or slow. But with Jio, I can now search for any information in just a click," says Ishtiyahq Ahmad Bhat from Shopian.

Nissar Ahmad, who runs a browsing centre, Netcafe, says, Jio has made things easier for him, "as I require high-speed Internet round the clock". "Earlier I would avail services of BSNL, which mostly used to be poor," he adds.

To mention, Jio services were commercially launched on September 5, 2016. As per Jio officials, it acquired 16 million subscribers within the first month of commercial operations, and crossed 50 million subscriber mark in just 83 days. The company crossed 100 million subscribers on February 22.

At the launch of Jio, Reliance Industries Chairman, Mukesh Ambani, announced 'Reliance Jio Welcome Offer', whereby users were provided with four GB of free data usage per day at 4G speed and unlimited calling service. The offer lasted till December 31, 2016. With this offer coming to a close, the company announced the 'Jio Happy New Year Offer', extending free services for another three months till March 31. The offer came as a jolt to those who expected Reliance Jio to start charging for mobile services from January 1.

This is not it. Later, Jio announced a new subscription service, namely 'Jio Prime', as per which the users could continue with free services for roughly Rs 10 per day for three months.

In order to stay in competition with Jio, other service providers are coming up with new data and voice calling plans every day.

"Aircel is now coming up with new special voice and data plans to stay in competition with Jio and hold back the customers," says Sharma. ■■■■





ASSETS OF IUST

DJMC: WHERE JOURNALISTS ARE MADE

NAJLAH HAMID

With an endeavour to address the emergent demands in media industry, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) established the Department of Journalism in 2008. The department, which would initially offer mainly news-oriented subjects, was turned into Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC) in 2012.

Head DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan says, in order to create more job opportunities for students, they are being taught courses like Advertising, Public Relations and Corporate Communication, and International Communication apart from basic Journalism subjects. "The syllabus is diverse and well designed, and is not confined to a particular field in media industry," she says, adding that the specialized subjects are taught by subject experts, who possess rich experience in their respective fields. She adds that the department is now introducing PhD programme as well.

The department brings out a quarterly newsmagazine, *The Echo*, to which Journalism students contribute news and feature stories. "The publication provides a platform to our students to do stories on various issues, thereby helping them polish their news writing and gathering skills," says Dr Rabia Noor, Editor of the newsmagazine.



Media Lab of DJMC, IUST PHOTO: SAQIB-UR-REHMAN/IUST

Besides this, the department runs a community radio studio, where students get an opportunity to edit and broadcast a radio programme, *Pesh Kadam*. The weekly programme is aired by *Radio Kashmir* on FM 102.6 MHz of its Commercial Broadcasting Service. The programme was launched in May 2009 by Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, in collaboration with Panos South Asia, a non-profit organisation. Panos funded the project till March 2011. Since then, *Pesh Kadam* is being produced by university students and community members of Awantipora in 50-50 participation.

"Community radio is one of the biggest assets not only for DJMC students but also for students from other departments as well as local community. Students gain hands-on experience of reporting and editing for radio," says Shazia Yousuf, Coordinator, community radio studio.

For new media training, the department has a state-of-the-art media lab equipped with Macintosh computer systems, where students learn advanced media software.

"Nowadays, are the most desired organisation. Therefore, in such a manner that in the age of Convergent Amin Bhat, In charge,

Students in their third choice of specialization television and online us grow in a particular basics of all subjects," Print specialisation

Another student, became more confident were improved after I I am quite satisfied with

**"The specialized subjects are taught by subject experts, who possess rich experience in their respective fields"**

multimedia journalists people in any media we train our students they are able to survive Journalism," says Isra media lab.

semester are given the between print, radio, journalism. "This helps field after learning opines Ufaq Fatima, a student.

Sherfun Nisa, shares, "I and my writing skills joined this department. this course." ■■■■

CAMPUS TALENT

MEET MULTITALENTED MANAN

SADAF AIJAZ

He was barely five when he sketched his first painting. At a tender age of 16, he composed his first song. A multit talented artist, Manan Khan is a gifted painter, singer and composer.

The 20-year-old artist is pursuing B.Tech Civil Engineering at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST). He has participated in numerous painting and singing competitions right since the age of five and won various awards.

Khan was a runner-up in 2015 in '*Kashmir's Got Talent*' show, a grand platform of art. He composed his first song in his 11th standard after he attended a two-month workshop with alumni of KM Music Conservatory, Chennai, which is run by the musical genius, A R Rahman. The alumni were on a visit to Delhi Public School, where Khan studied.

"When I was 16, life was somewhat stressful and the anxiety inside me made me compose the song '*Aye Khuda*,'" recalls Khan.

The song was later released in September 2015 in IUST during the visit of National Assessment Accreditation Council (NAAC) peer team to the varsity and fetched a great response.

With his increasing love for music and Kashmir, Khan composed his second song in 2014 along with his friend Hujat Kirmani. The song '*Hamay Astoo*' has got over 15,000 views



Manan Khan

on social media and has been highly appreciated by Kashmiri youth.

At Resurgence—the university fest of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra—Khan has been a winner in poster competition, joint winner in photography and second runner-up for band performance. Besides, he has been the first runner-up in poster competition at University of Kashmir's Spring Festival, *Sounth-2017* held this year on March 20-23.

"I believe, the best reward for me is the improvement I make with every art form I create," he shares.

For Khan, art is the way of his living. Born in a conflict region, Khan sees his homeland as a platform to explore his art in many forms.

"I owe every bit of my art to Kashmir, which has been an inspiration for me. As they say, conflict is the best place for art to thrive in. I believe, when your freedom of speech is

curbed, it is the desperation that makes a person an artist," he deems. Khan, who childhood has of his colours and melody now aiming to explore vast his unending passion.

Khan suggests to suppress their creativity, express it through various

**"The best reward for me is the improvement I make with every art form I create"**

to express things

seen the rainbow of his music, is horizons of art with

young artists not to "rather find ways to means". ■■■■



## DJMC HOLDS LAYOUT DESIGNING WORKSHOP

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a week-long workshop on 'Layout Designing' for third semester students on February 20 to 27.

Senior layout designer at daily Rising Kashmir, Muneer Malik, who was the resource person for the workshop, guided the Journalism students to design broadsheet and tabloid newspapers.

Malik, who dealt at length with technicalities of In-design and other advanced layout software, said he was hopeful that the students would make the best use of the workshop and their knowledge in the field.

Sharing his experience at IUST, Malik said it was an honour to be the part of the department and university for a week. "Besides, the cooperation the students have shown has been highly encouraging for me," he said.

Head DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan, said the workshop on layout designing is conducted every year for Print Specialization students in their third



semester, while this year all third semester students attended the workshop. "We aim to provide the students with practical knowledge of print media, so that they can independently develop and design any format of newspaper," she said.

Workshop coordinator and Assistant Professor, DJMC, Dr Rabia Noor, said it was important for Journalism students to learn technical courses as well apart from traditional journalism, "so that they can have an edge over others when they go out in the field".

Students expressed their satisfaction over the workshop and hoped that the department will conduct more of such workshop in future.

"It has been a quite useful workshop. We learnt the Adobe In-design software, which has been taught to us in a simple and effective manner. Now we are confident that we can design our print projects very well," said a Print Specialisation student.

## IUST CELEBRATES NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

Paying tribute to former President of India, (late) Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's pioneering work to uplift differently-abled people, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) observed National Science Day on February 28.

The event was co-sponsored by Jammu and Kashmir Department of Science and Technology (JKDST), Anantnag.

In his inaugural address, Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, emphasised on people to "change their mindset towards specially-abled persons".

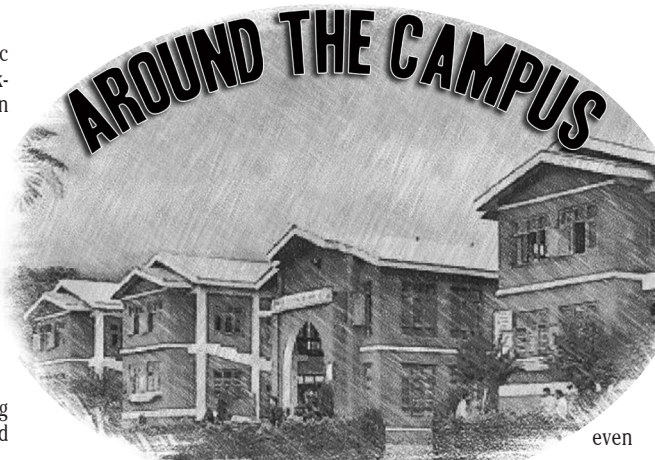
"People should behave appropriately and encourage specially-abled persons to do something big in their lives, so that they too can live a normal life," he said.

Earlier, welcoming the guests, Dean, Academic Affairs, Prof Mushtaq A Qureshi, said with advances in science and technology, specially-abled people would go far ahead in the competitive scenario of the world.

Acknowledging the contributions of Dr Kalam, Prof Qureshi said he had



bestowed the nation with scientific education, because of which "today



common people can have access to science and technology." "Because of him only, development of prosthetic limbs was possible," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dean, Faculty of Applied Science and Technology, University of Kashmir, Prof G. Mohi-ud-din Bhat, said, inventions and innovations are fruits to technology and "we are lacking both these basic things here".

Another speaker, Dr Arshid Pandit, Senior Scientist, Department of Human Genetics, SKIMS said people who fight battle of life 24x7 with a smile are called warriors. He added that physical disabilities should never be considered a hurdle in way of achieving one's goals.

Meanwhile, a performance of specially-abled students from Zaiba Aapa Institute of Inclusive Education (ZAIIE) Bijbihara served as an inspiration for one and all. Besides, IUST distributed a cash prize among each of them.

Among others present on the occasion include former Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof. Siddiq Wahid, Registrar IUST, Prof. A G Rather, Secretary Wakf Board Muhammad Rafi Bhat, Director Jammu and Kashmir Institute of Mathematical Science, Amar Singh College, Prof Asiya Siddiqi, District Officer Srinagar, JKDST Bilal Ahmad, Former Head Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Dr A S Shawl, Deans of various faculties IUST, Principles of various colleges, HoDs, faculty members and students of different departments of IUST.

## PLACEMENT CELL HOSTS DIGITAL MARKETING WORKSHOP

To explore business avenues in digital marketing, Career Counselling and Placement Cell, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a day-long workshop on Digital Marketing Training on March 8.

The workshop was organised in association with Centre for Youth Development Private Limited, a Delhi-based company, and Digital Vidya, Asia's largest and leading digital marketing training company.

"The aim of this programme was to impart marketing knowledge and skills to students to help them absorb in various organisations in the field of digital marketing and simultaneously set up their own business units," said Zahid G Khaki, Assistant Professor, Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, IUST.

The workshop was attended by faculty and students from various departments. Nahida Shafi, a student of IUST said it was a rich experience to attend the workshop. "Such workshops should be conducted for Business Management students, who want to take up business as their profession. Entrepreneurs can also learn a lot from workshops on Digital Marketing," she further said.

## DJMC ORGANISES WORKSHOP ON PHOTOJOURNALISM

A week-long workshop on Photojournalism was organised by Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), on March 1 to 9. The



workshop was conducted by Javed Dar, senior photojournalist, Xinhua—China's official news agency. During the workshop, students were taught technicalities of camera handling and functioning.

Sharing his experiences with students, Dar said photojournalism in Kashmir is a challenging job due to the unusual situation in the Valley. "Even though I have studied in Asian Academy of Film and Television (AAFT), it is the field that has taught me practical photojournalism. As a photojournalist, I have developed all the skills myself while working in the field," Dar said, who is also one of the contributors of the book of 'Witness: Kashmir 1986-2016/ Nine Photographers'. His work has also been published in the book 'Gardens and Graves', which is based on Suvir Kaul's essays, Kashmiri poetry, and Javed Dar's photographs.

Head, DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan, said having a journalist like Dar to interact with Journalism students is much required for their professional training. "He is a good trainer and professional, and was a right choice to make the students understand the challenges and struggles faced by photojournalists in a conflict-like situation," she said.

Workshop coordinator and course instructor, Photojournalism, Isra Amin Bhat, said the course is extremely practical-oriented, "so it is important for students to gain practical knowledge about this field".

Students were seen satisfied throughout the workshop and were enthusiastic about learning practical photojournalism.

"He not only taught all students at individual level but also inspired us by his experiences that he shared in the class," said Mukhtar Dar, a Journalism student.

## JOURNO INTERACTS WITH DJMC STUDENTS

Students of Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), had an interaction session with journalist and ex-student of the department, Bilal Kuchay, on March 13.

Kuchay, who is currently reporting for UK's oldest independent agency, Caters News Agency, advised students not to be confined to one area in Journalism, "but to be an all-rounder in media of all sorts—be it print, radio, television or online". "Dream big, stay focused and make effective use of social media," he told students.

## IUST STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SOUNT FESTIVAL, BAG 2 POSITIONS

The students of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) participated in the four-day Spring Youth Festival, Sount-2017, which was organised by University of Kashmir (UoK) on March 20-23.

The festival comprised debate, elocution, poster-making, collage, painting, cartoon-making and spot photography.

Manan Khan from B.Tech Civil Engineering department, IUST, bagged second prize in poster-making, while Ufaq Fatima from Department of



Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC) bagged fifth prize in spot photography.

"This festival was timely, especially after six months of break from academics. We interacted with students from other institutions and shared our views with each other, which was really refreshing," said Sadaf Aijaz from DJMC, IUST, who participated in a debate competition based on women politicians, adding that such activities help in brain storming and change monotonous routine.

Students of various colleges and universities participated in the festival. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic, Srinagar, Sargun Shukla was the chief guest of the event. She concluded the festival by distributing winning certificates and prize money among the students.

Compiled by  
Sherfun Nisa & Ufaq Fatima  
Photo-Credit:  
Ufaq Fatima & Mudasir Bhat

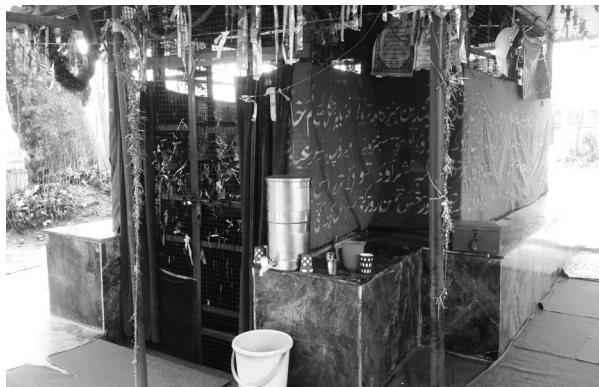


## 'HEALING' SPRING

People visit Shardha Naag with hope to get cured

SHERFUN NISA

Hope helps to heal. This is what is believed by most of the people. More often than not, people pin their hopes on religious places more than hospitals and clinics to cure their ailments. An apt example of it is Shardha Naag at district Kulgam of south Kashmir, which is visited by scores of people to treat their dermal issues.



Shrine of Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali (RA) located at Khee Jogipora village of district Kulgam in south Kashmir. PHOTO: SHERFUN NISA/IUST

Shardha Naag, a spring at Khee Jogipora village, is believed to cure skin rashes and other dermal problems. Every year, people from nearby villages in hundreds visit this holy spring to get them treated.

Locals claim that the decades old spring has assumed importance after the birth of the famous saint, Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali (RA), popularly known as Nund Reshi, Alamdari Kashmir and Sheikh-ul-Aalam. Even though history says the birth place of Sheikh ul Alam is Qaimoh village of same district, but locals of Khee Jogipora argue that he was born in their village.

"Sheikh-ul-Alam was not born in Qaimoh but in Khee Jogipora village. His mother Sadre Moij conceived him at Shardha Naag when a flower called Heegund fell in her lap," claims Abdul Majeed Mantoo, who serves as Imam of Jamia Alamdar Masjid and has also been part of Cultural Academy, Srinagar.

The spring is located at the centre of the holy shrine of Nund Reshi. Believers have tied threads across the shrine in the hope their wishes would be granted.

Safiya Akhtar has been visiting the spring for past several months. She brings her children too to let them bath in the holy water. "I have a black scar on my thigh, which causes me itchininess, so I visited here on seven Sundays so as to cure the scar," says Safiya.

"It is not only me who is a frequent visitor, but many people, especially ladies, visit the shrine to get their wishes fulfilled or problems solved," she adds.

Another lady from a nearby village, Shahzada, visits the shrine very often, "so that Allah will bestow me with a child".

"I am married for past six years and am yet to have a child, so I come here every Sunday and pray to Allah for the same," she says.

Inside the shrine, there are seven stones, which have their own significance. "When that flower fell in the lap of Sadre Moij, she fainted for some time by its fragrance. So she lied down on a stone and rubbed her hand on another one. One of the stones have foot prints of Alamdari Kashmir," says Mantoo, adding that they have preserved all those stones.

The committee, which runs the shrine and spring, has built a library named as Bazm-e-Sheikul Aalam, where they have preserved poetry of Sheikul Aalam.

## CLIMATE CHANGE, HUMAN INTERVENTION DECLINE KOKERNAG FISH PRODUCTION

AAMIR ALI

Known for being one of the largest fish hatcheries in South Asia, Kokernag Fish Hatchery (KFH) is now imperilled by human intervention and climate change.

As per the officials, pollution has made its way to waters of the hatchery, which has become a threat for the survival of fishes.

"This hatchery has been producing 40 metric tonnes of new breed of trout fish per year and 25,000 Kilograms per day, however, climate change and continuous rains have resulted in decline in the production," said Shareef Ahmad, Farm Manager, KFH.

"A couple of years back, the floods caused by cloudburst damaged the whole



Kokernag Fish Hatchery PHOTO: AAMIR ALI/IUST

hatchery and washed away almost all fishes," he said.

He added that although the waters were free from any dreadful fish disease like viral hemorrhagic septicaemia, infectious pancreatic necrosis and bacterial diseases, "human intervention has badly polluted the water, which in turn has become a threat for the fishes".

KFH, which is spread over 300 kanals of land, was established in 1984 by state government with the assistance from European Economic Community (EEC). Earlier, two types of trout namely Rainbow trout and Brown trout were produced here, however later Rainbow trout were shifted to Dachigam since they feed on natural food rather than artificial feed. KFH, also known as 'Village Trout Fish Farming' provides seeds to other states including Assam and Meghalaya and countries like Bhutan.

Talking to *The Echo*, Chief Project Officer, KFH, Abdul Majid Tak said they are making efforts to fight the effects of climate change and continuous rains on fishes. "Every year we produce advanced fishes double than the estimated produce, so that if any untoward situation takes place we may not face dearth of fishes," he said. ■■■■



# SUGGESTION BOX

*Proper heating arrangements should be made for students in winters. Besides, the visibility in the class rooms must be improved by installing better lighting system.* ■■■■

Shah Faisal, B.Tech Electronics and Communication student

*We usually have to walk amid billows of dust, especially in the university bus yard and around canteen, which is not good for our health. So, the roads and pavements within the campus must be macadamised on priority.* ■■■■

Anzer Ahmad, B.Tech Electronics and Communication student

*We face a lot of disturbance*

*in huts during lectures due to noise coming from the surroundings. Therefore, our classes should be conducted in concrete buildings of the university.* ■■■■

Sidra Nazir, English Language and Literature student

*In the age of technology, digital classes are a new way of learning at college and university levels. These should be introduced in IUST as well.* ■■■■

Amardeep Singh, B.Tech Electronics and Communication student

*There are two beds available in each hostel room.*

*However, each room has to be shared by three girls, due to which we cannot study properly in the hostel.* ■■■■

Sumaiya Asad, third semester student

*The ratio of contractual to permanent teaching faculty is 70:30, which is neither good for the progress of the university nor for the temporary faculty. Thus, this ratio needs to be changed to at least 50:50.* ■■■■

IUST Contractual Faculty

*As told to Sherfun Nisa*



## Winter Delicacies of Kashmir

Winter in Kashmir is not all about biting chills and icy breeze. It has its specialities too, among which traditional winter cuisines are revered the most. During the harsh season of winter, people prefer to stay indoors and enjoy different varieties of food. For centuries, Kashmiris have relished foods like dried fish and vegetables, pickles, and pulses of various kinds to survive during the extreme winter. The tradition lives on even today.

Photos and text by UFAQ FATIMA.



### Thul Razma (dried cranberry beans)

The consumption of pulses goes high during winters as people prefer to cook easy-to-make dishes during the harsh season. Pulses like *Thul Razma* (dried cranberry beans), Kashmiri *Razma* (red kidney beans), *Moong Daal* (Mung beans), etc., are considered to be a feasible diet during winters.



### Harissa

which has come to be known as the King of Kashmir's winter cuisines, is a smooth paste of mutton served with hot vegetable oil. It is one of the most favourite winter delicacies among Kashmiris. Hot sizzling *Harissa* is enjoyed mostly at breakfast with Kashmiri naan and optionally Kebabs.



### Hokhgaad (dried fish)

is a traditional food of Kashmir since centuries. Local people dry fish in summer and keep a stock of dried fish for winters. Dried fish is sold by vendors throughout the chilly season.



**Noon Chai** (salty tea) is the most popular drink in Kashmir, which is mostly preferred during winters. People enjoy the sips of pink Noon Chai, which is usually prepared in traditional Kashmiri copper flask called *Samovar*.



**Kashur Anchar** (Kashmiri pickles) is prepared from different chopped vegetables like carrot, radish, cauliflower, *Nadru* (lotus root) and so on. The vegetables are mixed with spices and oil, and preserved for around a month. The consumption of pickles increases especially during winters in the Valley.



**Hokhsyun** (dried vegetables) are consumed throughout the winter season in Kashmir. Dried vegetables like *Alahachi* (dried bottle gourd), *Wanganhachi* (dried brinjal), *Ruwanganhachi* (dried tomatoes) and *Hand* (a green leafy vegetable) are enjoyed by most of Kashmiri people during winters. The vegetables are sun-dried by local women folk in their homes and preserved for winter consumption.