

## KASHMIR'S Toiling Childhood



**“I wanted to become a doctor,” Hanan says but the sense of his penury dawns upon him and he falls silent.**

**SUHAIL BHAT**

As the world was observing the Labour Day on May 1, Hanan (name changed), 11, leaves with a bundle of paper bags which he sells on the busy streets of Lal Chwok in Srinagar.

His face is gloomy as he wishes to go to the school, however, the circumstances have forced him to earn at such a tender age.

Hanan is one among the thousands of unfortunate children who have become the victim of child labour in Kashmir despite many laws banning the activity.

“I wanted to become a doctor,” he says but the sense of his penury dawns upon him and he falls silent. “I have to work to educate my sister, now my dream is to make her a doctor,” he says.

As per the official statistics, by the end of year 2012, there were 68293 children involved laboring hard to earn the wherewithal.

The situation is considerably bad in urban areas with 3.5 percent children form the work force while as 1.5 children from rural areas are child laborers.

Srinagar alone has 600 reported cases of child labourers and other districts also portray a dismal picture.

Independent research by a Kashmir University scholar reveals that there are as many as 2.5 lakh children in the state affected by the menace.

Despite enacting strict laws, like the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986, to safeguard the rights of children, the menace continues unabated due to the lack of ‘stringent implementation’.

Children are found working everywhere – in shops, in homes as

domestic help, on farms as labourers, in factories and on construction sites.

It is alleged that despite forming a part of main working force, the children are further exploited by being paid less than others.

The authorities say that government was taking ample measures to curb the menace, however, the poor economic conditions force the parents to send their wards to work.

“The social security schemes like providing financial assistance to the families will help to put a check to this menace,” says senior official at Department of Labour and Employment, JK, Mohammad Rafiq Bakshi.

Thus far we have rehabilitated 300 children, he claims adding that the department has also established 6 schools since 1999 for these children. “We provide free education, midday meals and vocational training besides we have ap-



pointed district wise inspectors to locate the affected lot,” he informs. While the government may claim of playing its part in this regard , the activists demand further action to remove the menace from the society. “Stringent measures have to be taken. Government should launch new schemes to help such families to improve their economic condition,” says social activist Abdul Rashid Hanjroo.

He adds that poor economic conditions clubbed with unemployment exacerbates the situation. The government and the civil society may take time to help these unfortunate souls, however, in a society where many households may have to suffer pangs of hunger, the labour for the children like Hanan is a necessary evil for the time being.

## Resisting the e-change..



# Kashmir Readers prefer PAPERBACKS over e-BOOKS



**“e-books hurt the eyes,” says Shazia, a student of Islamic University of science and technology. “It’s just a book with paper pages. I can flip them easily and as I do, the smell of real traditional books intoxicates,”**

**“Book reading has its own taste and people do buy books especially pieces of literature, although digitization added a pace in the race of book reading culture,” said Hafiz.**

### Is’haq Bhat

Conventional wisdom says e-books are destroying the reading as well as the business culture. E-books are cheaper, easy to acquire but the tactile feeling of a physical book is still the preferred norm among the readers in Kashmir.

While e-books are available in abundance across the internet, efforts are being made at every possible level to enhance the bank for the traditional books in Kashmir.

“e-books hurt the eyes,” says Shazia, a student of Islamic University of science and technology. “It’s just a book with paper pages. I can flip them easily and as I do, the smell of real traditional books intoxicates,” she adds.

The authorities are also making efforts to strengthen the traditional form of book reading culture in the valley by establishing libraries and providing easy access to the thousands of books available.

At present there are 140 public libraries in Jammu and Kashmir

including the City Central Library, Srinagar being the biggest and one of the oldest libraries.

The library houses more than four lakh books on diverse subjects, particularly about Kashmir history, culture and literature and General knowledge.

According to the officials, during the last two years more than 300 students have registered themselves in the library and the number is growing with each passing day.

The membership process is quite simple like setting up an account for online book services providers. “Anyone can avail the free service here. The person who intends to become the member of the library has to fill up a simple form provided by the department and get it attested by a government official,” says Dy. Director Library and Research Center, Jammu and Kashmir, Mohammad Subhan Bhat.

The Library also has a research wing that contains some rare manuscripts and a separate section for career oriented youth. “In Research and publication department we have manuscripts which have been digitized

under the national mission manuscript and those who are require them can apply to the department and get soft copies in the form of DVD’s and CDs,” informs Bhat

“In every City Central Library as well as in every district public library we have a separate corner for competitive examinations and title and study material for every subjects are easily made available to those aspirants who aim to appear in such competitive examination,” he further adds

Notwithstanding the impact of modern technology, the book dealers seem to be doing fairly good. Sales Manager at Gulshan Book Depot, Srinagar, Mohammad Hafiz said that digitization has nothing to do with book reading culture both are equally important.

“Book reading has its own taste and people do buy books especially pieces of literature, although digitization added a pace in the race of book reading culture,” said Hafiz.

The sale of books is increasing in the Valley contrary to the perception that the availability of e-books on the internet has diminished the trade. “Digitization has not affected

our business by any means and even young generation showing great interest in book reading and it has had a major spike in the trade,” revealed Hafiz.

Murtaza Ali, a student who is preparing for Civil service examination says he finds it vital to be a part of the library. “After leaving college the public library is the only place where I could get an atmosphere to read and can get any desirable study material which may not be possible at home.”

Ali also said that the library contains lot of books on diverse subjects like politics, culture and contemporary history of Kashmir which one could not get on internet.

PA to Dy. Director Library and Research Center, Jammu and Kashmir, who is an Author of the book ‘My People My Land Kashmir Perspective’ Mohammad Yasir Baba, urges a common man to avail these free facilities provided by government to gain knowledge in these public libraries. “There is no age bar to gain the knowledge. I myself started reading as well as writing after I got berth in the library department as an employee and later published a book.” *The Echo*

# Killer roads

## Accidents continue to claim lives in Kashmir



**In Srinagar city, the statistics provided by officials of Traffic department show as many as 152 died and more than 1000 were injured in more than 750 accidents in Srinagar during the year 2011-12.**

**Sajad Bhat**

**S**rinagar: It has been a month since the tragic road accident took place in Kandiwara, Koker-nag, remote hamlet in south Kashmir claiming the lives of nine students and injuring eleven.

As the locals continue to be in a state of shock, the accident forced the government to take certain measures and issue orders regarding the safety on roads.

The residents of the areas blamed the dilapidated condition and the narrowness of roads for this unfortunate mishap, thus suggesting a much needed demand for road widening not only in this hamlet but across the valley.

Not only in Kandiwara, the road accidents claim lives unabated across the valley.

In Srinagar city, the statistics provided by officials of Traffic department show as many as 152 died and more than 1000 were injured in more than 750 accidents in Srinagar during the year 2011-12.

The city traffic police figures reveal that 76 people were killed in 241 road mishaps in year 2011 and 65 lives were consumed in 511 accidents in 2012 in Srinagar, while as 511 and 538 people have been injured in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

The collective data about mortalities due to road accidents, across the state, will ascend tragically to more than a thousand during the same period.

The reason, as pointed out by experts, being narrow roads and reckless driving besides influx of more cars being pressed into service on these roads every year.

Superintendent of Police (Traffic) in the Srinagar City, Haseeb-ur-Rehman says that said that the department has been making every possible effort to minimize the roads accidents and subsequent mortalities and injuries. "Compared to the year 2011, number of accidents have decreased considerably," he told the Echo.

"We have been implementing various road safety improvement programs from time to time to inculcate the traffic sense in the people. Also we have seized countless bikes from youth who indulge in reckless driving," he added.

The traffic police Chief also said that the department will be organizing various awareness programmes informing people about safe driving mechanism and traffic rules.

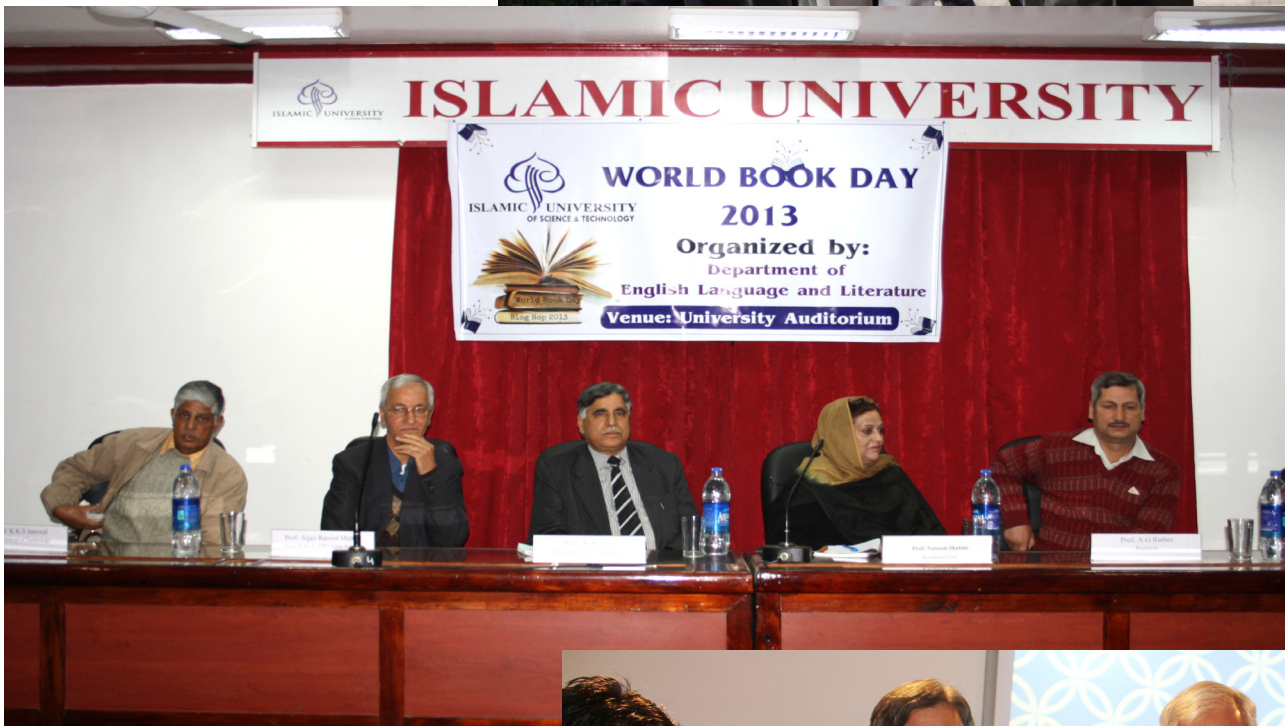
It should be noted that the number of vehicles has gone up from 0.4 million to 1.5 million in the last 10 years, while as no major road widening project has taken place.

Meanwhile, experts suggest certain measures that could minimize the rate of accidents on city as well as other roads across the valley. "Repair and expansion of roads coupled with setting up dividers on national highways, cautioning signals for hazardous locations, disseminating information on driving and road safety to masses through media and exemplary punishment for violating traffic laws are some of the main areas that need to be worked on rigorously by the government," Showkat Ahmad Lone, a civil engineer says.

He said that traffic police department has a crucial role to play in identifying and holding accountable reckless drivers and unstable or overloaded vehicles.

## IUST IN PICTURES

**Prof A R Trag and other faculty members accompanying Prof Sanjay Wadwalkar of Punjab University. Prof Wadwalkar was a part of 6- member UGC team to review facilities at IUST for grant of central assistance under Section 12(B) of UGC Act,1956**



**Sahitya Academy award winner, Prof. Naseem Shafaie, VC, along with VC, Prof. A R Trag and other varsity authorities at 'World Book Day' function organized by department of English, IUST on April 26.**

**VC IUST, Prof A R Trag distributing certificates after successful completion of 'AkashFor Education' workshop organized by IIT Mumbai**



**Prof. Emeritus of Dehli University and Adjunct faculty for International Centre of Spiritual Studies Prof Abdul Haque delivering lecture at Seminar Hall, IUST**

## IUST IN PICTURES



**Minister for tourism, Ghulam Ahmad Mir, VC A R Trag and noted satirist Zareef Ahmad Zareef at inaugural function of Spring Festival-2013 held at IUST on March 29.**



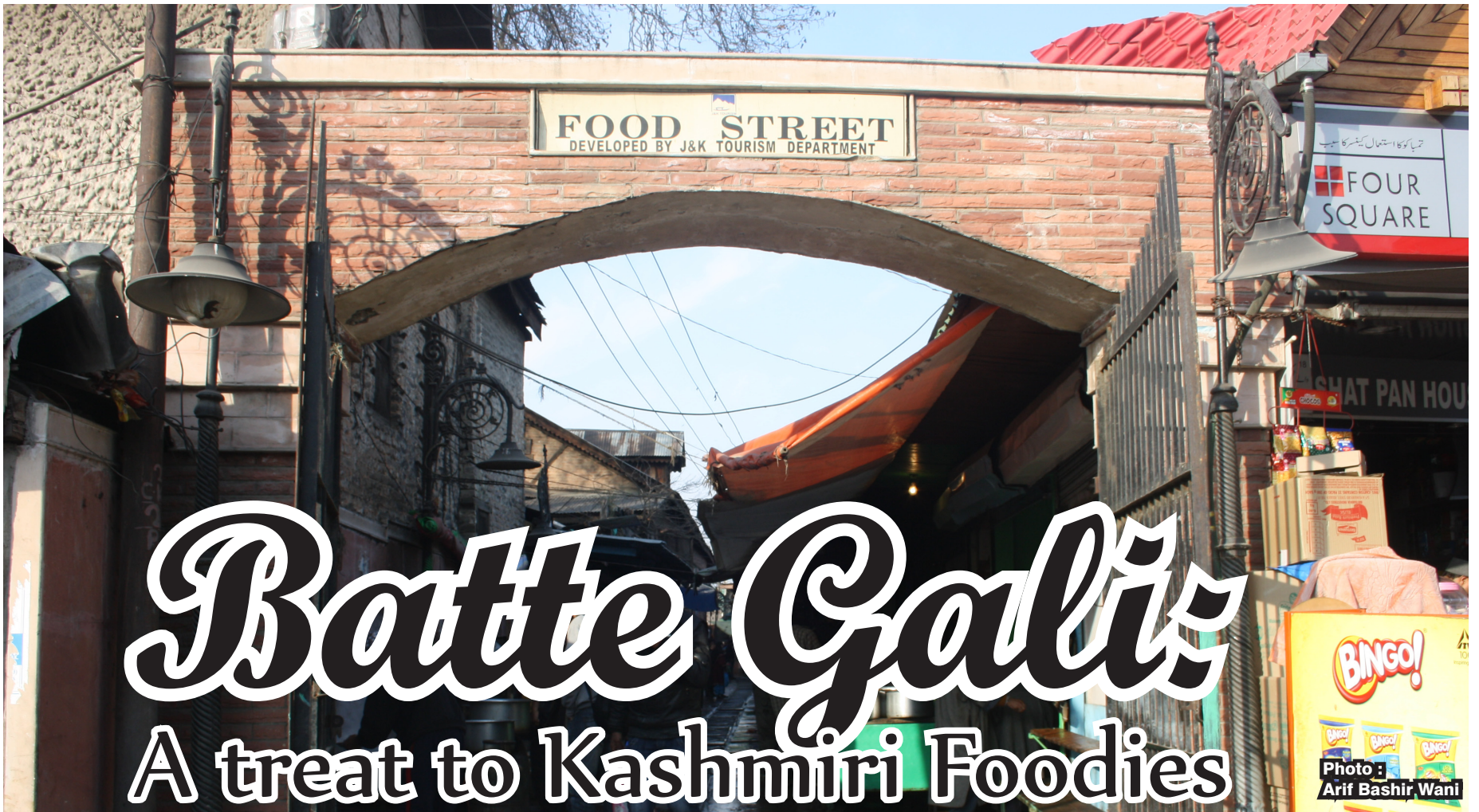
**Plantation drive at IUST.**



**Journalism students at street theatre workshop organized by Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS).**

**IUST students adjudged as overall winner in the National level business festival 'TATVA' organized by Mata Vaishnov Devi University, Katra on April 17**





# Batte Gali

## A treat to Kashmiri Foodies

**Wasim Abdullah**

**F**ast, inexpensive and full of flavor, the Food Street offers a lot to the hungry passer-by in Srinagar.

Known as Batte Gali in local parlance, this street is situated in Lalchowk and is fast becoming an attraction for the foodies.

The food street is serving the people coming from far across the valley at cheaper prices.

Apart from the people coming from other districts, many shopkeepers in the area and government officials from Srinagar enjoy their lunch at the Batte Gali.

“We find the food every tasty and hygienic. Low prices is an added attraction to this place,” says Manzoor Ahmad Wani, a government employee from of South Kashmir’s Tral township, who was having his afternoon meals at the food street.

Manzoor is a regular customer who has been coming to the food street from past many years. “I came here with my late grandfather and since then I have been coming to this place,” Says Wani.

After it was established the food street saw many phases. From being abuzz with customers to a deserted place, the food street has survived till date. “After the shifting of the biggest public transport yard commonly called as the KMD transport yard, the Batti Gali saw its dark phase. Many of us shift-

ed to other business,” says Ali Mohammad Bhat, a stall owner at the food street.

“It was after the state tourism department renovated this place that customers again started to pour in,” he added.

Bhat recalls that despite the dilapidated condition during those years, people especially the drivers from the transport yard continued to come here.

Notably, the department of Jammu and Kashmir tourism department renovated the street to attract not only the locals but also tourists. “The move by Tourism department paid off and the food street regained its lost glory,” says Bhat.

Other stall owners also appreciated the step by tourism department.

*The Echo*

## IUST celebrates World Press Freedom Day

**T**he department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC) celebrated the “World Press Freedom Day” here at the Islamic University of Science and Technology on May 3.

The students and the faculty members took part in different activities during the event and highlighted the importance of freedom of Press in present circumstances.

Speaking on the occasion, In charge, Head DJMC, Monisa Qadri emphasized that the journalists should enjoy maximum freedom in terms of expressing the truth. “They should strike a balance between responsibility and expression,” she said.

Qadri advised the students to work towards preserving the freedom of speech. Emphasizing on the need to

protect the freedom of journalists while discharging their duties Qadri said, “Despite working under pressure in places like Kashmir reporters have maintained higher standards of professionalism here.”

“The world bodies should work in consultation with one another to protect the interests of the media persons.”

During the event, students of DJMC screened a documentary highlighting the challenges faced by media personnel in Kashmir. The documentary was followed by a discussion on the press freedom and the role of authorities in ensuring free speech and expression. The programme aimed at encouraging students to express themselves in creative ways and saw students making unique and different media presentations.

*The Echo*

## US based filmmaker interacts with Journalism students

**U**S based Kashmiri video journalist Farooq Ahmad delivered a virtual lecture on video production to the students of Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Islamic University of Science and Technology on April 26.

In the one hour interactive session, Farooq laid emphasis on the various facets of video production and stressed upon the importance of research before producing a TV programme.

He said that Kashmir is the best subject for making a documentary. “In Kashmir, the issues range from the social to the political strata and various others. The material to be produced is available in abundance, we just need to capture it,” he said.

Farooq said that video production is an art and anyone equipped with the technicalities, will be able to produce a TV programme or a documentary. “Even an elderly person within your family can become a

subject. Just think creatively to capture something extra ordinary from the ordinary,” he added.

Farooq added that there was no dearth of funding for making a documentary. “However, your product should have the content and quality that the financier is looking for,” he said. He gave a detailed account about video editing and latest software’s that facilitate post production.

“There is everything available, however, it is the creative head which combines various shots to make it an effective sequence,” he added

He also stressed on importance of team work and dedication to be successful in the field.

It is pertinent to mention that Farooq is an alumni of Media Education Research Centre, KU and is currently working as a Free Lance Video producer and is a regular contributor to ESPN. He is also works as a teaching Associate at University of Cincinnati Raymond Walters College

*The Echo*



VAN HEUSEN



Henna Taj

**H**ave you seen the new collection by Allen Solly, Peter England or Van Huesen? The question will be tossed up to you in many ways. Reply affirmative or you are a 'geek'.

# BRAND CONSCIOUS Gen Y

## FOREIGN APPARELS AMUSE KASHMIR YOUTH

This is the modern Kashmiri youth, who prefers everything branded. From clothes to a pen, brands amuse and appease the generation Y Kashmiri.

"Brands are being associated with the identity now. The more brand conscious, more modern you are," claims Shaziya Akbar Lone, a Sociology student at Kashmir University.

Kashmir has come a long way to turn into a major market for leading global cloth brands. In last two decades the Kashmir's business sector has experienced massive change and huge shopping malls and classy showrooms under multinational brand banners have occupied market across the

Valley.

"There is huge demand for denims and designer jeans, suits and shirts" said Ayaz Ahmad, a showroom owner at Srinagar City's Lal Chowk.

Independent research has shown that brand-conscious Indian urban youth, belonging to the middle and upper middle-class segment, have been found to spend an average of Rs4000-Rs5,000 every month to upgrade their wardrobes.

The scene is no different in valley.

Aijaz Ganie, a Mass Communication and Journalism student says during the evening at a newspaper to fulfil his urge to wear branded clothing. "I

work on part time basis and save Rs 4000- Rs 5000 per month. I spend it all on buying the branded clothing and shoes," he says.

"Peter England Trousers, Nike shoes, Reebok T-shirts; these names just amuse me. In fact wearing these give me a unique identity," he says.

While the youth support wearing multinational brands for quality and durability, however, they denounce the show off about these branded items. "Show off is bad but durability attracts towards these brands," says an Islamic Studies Student at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Rukhsana Quyoom. *The Echo*

## Gowhar Geelani delivers lecture at DJMC

**N**oted writer and broadcaster, Gowhar Geelani, delivered a lecture to the students of Journalism and Mass Communication at Islamic University of Science and Technology, here on April 29.

Calling correct-pronunciation to be the essential quality needed for a journalist, Geelani asserted, "If you want to achieve a successful carrier in broadcast journalism, you have to master the art of pronouncing the words correctly."

He said that a journalist, nowadays, should possess the knowledge of all the forms of journalism. "In this world of competition, one should not restrict himself/herself to only one form of journalism but should possess knowledge of all the forms to survive in the field," he said.

After delivering lecture, he practically taught the students, at community radio studio, about the production of radio programs. He also entertained students by showing them some of the works he did for international news organizations. Gowhar Geelani is a writer/journalist with inter-



national experience. Essentially a Science graduate, Gowhar Geelani did his post graduation in Mass Communication and Journalism from the University of Kashmir, and soon an internship in Television and Video production from the University of Mysore in 2002.

With over a decade-long experience in active journalism, he has served premier international organizations like the presti-

gious BBC and Deutsche Welle (DW), aka Voice of Germany, in Bonn, Germany. He received DW fellowship in 2006 and within six months time was offered a formal contract as Editor for Radio and Web in Bonn, where he hosted prime time current affairs' radio and web programmes and produced weekly features on human rights, global politics and sports. He Played a significant role in developing DW's language website.



# VALLEY FAILS TO MEET THE MEAT DEMAND

**As per official statistics, in district Srinagar alone, mutton worth Rs 1.5 crore is consumed on daily basis and the scene is similar in other districts as well. The sheer amount of mutton that goes into the preparation of the traditional Kashmiri cuisine called 'wazwan' is mindboggling.**

**“New breeds like 'Kashmir Merino'(involving the Russian Merino, Deline Merino and the local breed) was developed to increase the productivity. Only thing which is lacking is that locals don't prefer sheep rearing in Kashmir,”**

## Javiad Lone

With 60,000 tons consumed every year, Jammu and Kashmir has the distinction of being India's largest mutton consuming state.

Despite having the best meadows, conducive agro climatic conditions, rich alpine pastures and other natural endowments that provide enormous scope and potential for rearing of sheep and goats in the State, Kashmir should indigenously meet the whopping demand, however, 50 per cent of mutton is being imported from other states.

As per official statistics, in district Srinagar alone, mutton worth Rs 1.5 crore is consumed on daily basis and the scene is similar in other districts as well. The sheer amount of mutton that goes into the preparation of the traditional Kashmiri cuisine called

'wazwan' is mindboggling.

Considering the fragile economic conditions, the state can hardly afford to lose so much money on the import.

Absence of local production at a large scale means that the prices are determined by dealers outside state, thus harming the state exchequer. “We are at mercy of suppliers based in Rajasthan. We can't bargain much or else they will stop the supply,” laments president Kashmir Butchers' Association, Khazir Muhammad Rigoo.

There is a yawning gap between supply and demand of mutton, which can be tapped and utilized to increasing the local mutton production, thus preventing flight of capital on this account, besides providing ample opportunities for generating employment in this sector.

The government is making efforts to invite Kashmir youth to-

wards sheep rearing, however, it is progress is too slow. “Funding and the policy was not the only problem with the sector, but there is dearth of trained manpower. Youth entrepreneurs are also showing least interest,” said Assistant surgeon and senior official at Directorate of Sheep Husbandry, South Kashmir, Dr. Rafiq Ahmad Shah.

“New breeds like 'Kashmir Merino'(involving the Russian Merino, Deline Merino and the local breed) was developed to increase the productivity. Only thing which is lacking is that locals don't prefer sheep rearing in Kashmir,” he added. The department is trying hard still the state has to import upto 30-40 percent, he admitted.

He said that the department was formulating some strategies by involving new breeds and additional research to increase mutton production. “Due to scientific intervention,

the annual body weight per sheep got increased from 10-15 Kgs to 30-40 Kgs. Additional research is required in this regard,” he said.

“We are also giving special subsidy to the youth who take Sheep rearing as their occupation,” he added.

Meanwhile, experts suggest certain measures to help the sheep sector flourish in the state. “The shrinking of the grazing land was also proving an impediment for the sector to flourish here. Unless the encroachment on grazing continues, we will not be able to increase the supply of sheep,” said an expert from Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department, JK.

He said that government must intervene directly and implement the Apex Court directions in this regard,” they added. “The Wildlife Department should also allow the breeders for grazing their sheep in the upper pastures,” he added.

*The Echo*