



The Echo

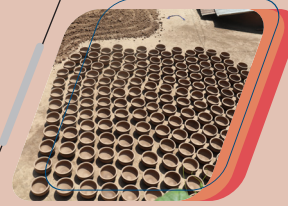


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Prof Shakil Romshoo takes charge as Vice Chancellor IUST, vows to turn challenges into opportunities

THE ECHO DESK

The Jammu and Kashmir administration appointed renowned earth scientist, Prof Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, as the Vice Chancellor of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) on August 14. Prof Romshoo took over from the acting VC of the university, Prof Talat Ahmad.

The order in this regard was issued by J&K Lieutenant Governor and Chancellor of IUST, Manoj Sinha, "in exercise of powers vested in him under Statute 2(1) of the Schedule appended to the Islamic University of Science and Technology Act, 2005."

Prof Romshoo, who has served as Professor and Head at department of Earth Sciences, Head Geoinformatics and Dean for Research at University of Kashmir, holds a sound reputation of a thorough researcher. His research interests include Hydrology, Glaciology, Geoinformatics and climate change.

Prof Romshoo has studied Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System from Asian Institute of Technology. He is a recipient of several reputed fellowships from Indian Academy of Sciences, Indian Society of Geomatics and Indian Society of Remote Sensing. He has also bagged Satish Dhawan Award from ISRO in 2018, National Geoscience Award from Government of India in 2013, Kasumigaura International Prize from Government of Japan in 2009, and CRDP Award of the year in 2016.

Prof Romshoo received a warm reception from university officials and faculty. Soon after his appointment as VC, he held several rounds of interactions with Deans, Heads of various departments, faculty members and other officials of the university, wherein he outlined his vision for the upliftment of the institution.

The interactions aimed at understanding the functioning of various departments in a better way as well as to work towards excelling in academics and research. Prof Romshoo stressed on converting the



— Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil A Romshoo

challenges into opportunities, "so that the IUST can scale new heights."

Pertinently, the IUST administration had advertised the VC post on May 15, two days before the term of the outgoing VC, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi—who served the varsity for five years in two consecutive spells—ended. The search committee formed by the government for the recruitment had shortlisted 14 candidates for their interaction with the committee members.

Prof Romshoo, who has served as Dean for Research at University of Kashmir, holds a sound reputation of a thorough researcher

VC interacts with female staff

In an endeavour to acknowledge the role of female staff in helping the varsity grow, Vice Chancellor, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Prof Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, held an interaction session with female faculty and officers of IUST as well as its constituent colleges on September 13.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Romshoo acknowledged the contribution made by the IUST's female faculty in "bringing excellence in all spheres of the university."

He stressed on promoting gender equality and eliminating gender discrimination. He added that some developed countries have adopted certain policies to bring down the level of gender discrimination. "I believe that the best way to fight gender disparity is to speak against it in order to instil confidence among other females," he said.

Meanwhile, Dean of Students, IUST, Dr Anisa Jan, gave a detailed presentation about the contribution of and issues faced by female staffers generally at workplaces. Prof Romshoo assured full support from the university administration in addressing the issues faced by the female staff. The interaction session was coordinated by Media Advisor to VC, Dr Monisa Qadiri.

Decade on, people await crossing Seer-Nambal bridge

KASHIFUL MUZAFAR WANI

Deemed as the lifeline for several villages in South Kashmir, the Seer-Nambal bridge in Anantnag district lies incomplete for past over a decade. The residents of Seer Hamdan area of Tehsil Mattan are aghast at Roads and Buildings (R&B) department over the slow pace of work right since laying of its pile foundation.

The bridge would have connected thousands of people across Dachinpora and Khavripora villages. However, so far merely four concrete pillars have been erected in the name of construction. The poor execution of work is causing huge inconvenience to the residents.



"We fail to understand as to what made the authorities stop the construction on the bridge mid-way that was sanctioned more than a decade ago," rues Muhammad Shaban, a local.

The project of the bridge was approved in 2005 during the tenure of the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, late Mufti Muhammad Syed following locals' repeated pleas to the successive regimes. The construction on the bridge over River Lidder was stopped many a time during all these years. "The construction work finally came

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Seer-Nambal bridge that lies incomplete for past over a decade. PHOTO: KASHIFUL MUZAFAR WANI/IUST

Contd. from P1

to a halt in 2008. Despite repeated assurances from the district administration to resume the construction soon, nothing concrete has been done on ground," residents complain.

Villagers are compelled to cross the river by foot as there are many educational institutions, a sub-district hospital and main markets on the other side of the river at Seer. Many people have also suffered injuries

while crossing the river. Recently, residents allege, a woman was drowned while trying to cross the river. Therefore, people are compelled to take longer routes.

"Our main concern is healthcare because the sub-district hospital is situated on the other side of the river, and hence we are not able to reach the hospital on time," laments Jana Begum, another resident.

Talking to *The Echo*, some local boys share how they yearn to play in a large playground, which, however, lies on the other side of the river. "We don't

want to risk our lives by crossing the river by foot, hence we don't get to play like other boys of our age do," they opine.

Pleading anonymity, one of the officials at R&B department, says, the work at Seer-Nambal bridge was halted due to the lack of funds. "But now funds have been approved by the government and tendering process is underway," he assures. "The pending projects of the government over the past 10 to 15 years shall now be taken up by the government on priority."

Kashmir's young artists revive calligraphy, yearn for recognition

SHADAB GEELANI

Art speaks where words are unable to explain. This proverb sums up the essence of calligraphy. This form of art emerged in Kashmir when the revered saint, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (RA) and his followers arrived along with some Persian calligraphers to introduce Islam and *Khush-Khat* or *Khushnavisi* (Islamic calligraphy) in the Valley.

The Mughal period further embarked the passion for calligraphy in Kashmir until their reign ended bringing a subtle disappearance to this artwork. However, some astounding attempts by today's youth to revive the calligraphy have paved way to change the "past is gone" narrative.

While some calligraphers through social media and marketing earn appreciation from the audiences, many find it hard to get recognition for their work.

"Art is still not considered a profession here, nor is its true value understood. Artists do not receive the dignity they deserve," laments Syed Ana Fatima, who is an architect and a calligrapher. Ana, who has been doing calligraphy since her school days, portrays the essence of Kashmir through her paintings and designs. She cites "lack of platforms" to showcase one's talent as a major roadblock in the growth of the art.

Rimsha Bazaz, another calligrapher, shares that even after having worked for four years as a freelance artist, she has not received the appreciation that she is worthy of. "Doing art for all these years and learning continuously means that you have come a long way, but the kind of support one needs to grow is lacking," she says.

Rimsha, who holds a degree in Electronics and Communication and currently works as a Research Analyst in Data Science, has worked on calligraphy frames, sketches and graffiti though "not to find any recognition."

"I have done many big projects of wall graffiti since 2017 and I can proudly say that I am the first female self-taught muralist. But I have never been recognised for the work I do," rues Rimsha, who started her Instagram page 'Scriveneworld' in

February 2017, with no intentions of doing business though.

"The hard work I have put in creating unique graffiti has literally gone unnoticed. But I believe that someday I will get what I deserve," she deems.

Seconding these views, Henna Nazia, another artist, states that art is generally neglected in Kashmir. "Art is not given any importance here. Artists do not get a proper platform and support from people to showcase their talent. Therefore, demand for art jobs is less as compared to trendy Information Technology or white-collar jobs," observes Henna, who has done her Master's in Business Administration from Islamic University of Science and Technology. She runs her small-scale online business namely, 'Glittery Celebration' that began in August 2020.



Coincidentally, Covid-19 lockdown has paved way for exploring creativity for many artists. "During these consecutive lockdowns, I was able to learn and create new forms of art, which otherwise would have taken a longer time," shares Rimsha, adding that she even made some earning during the lockdown.

Similarly, Henna, who had never thought of becoming a professional artist, amidst the lockdown last year, decided to turn her hobby into a profession. "And thankfully, the overall outcome was satisfactory."

Another calligrapher, Basit Muhammad, shares how often feeling "stressed" and "homesick" paved him the way to release his stress through the art of calligraphy. "It was as if the whole junk of stress would flow out through the ink of pen. That's how I got closer to this form of art," opines Muhammad,

who is a computer engineer besides being passionate about art and writing since his childhood.

Muhammad does calligraphy in English, Urdu and Arabic languages for past three years. "My artwork represents patience, consistency and balance through the letterforms. All these principles are not only important in calligraphy but in real life too," he says.

The young artists believe that government has a huge role to play in promoting calligraphy. Government, they insist—should create some good opportunities for artists. "Timely exhibitions and workshops should be conducted. Art institutions—government or privately owned—should be set up where artists can learn as well as teach," suggests Rimsha, adding that very few exhibitions take place that too without any proper announcement. "Artists

who are lucky enough to know about these exhibitions participate in them, while others lag behind."

Muhammad adds, "The government should provide the artists with sound opportunities to showcase their talent."

Despite all odds, however, the artists encourage budding artists to pursue their dreams. "An artist should always value their art. They know how much effort they have put into a certain artwork. So they should not demean it if it's not sold," says Ana. "Great things come with great struggle."

Muhammad emphasises that apart from self-improvement, artists should try to uplift and encourage each other.

As Leonardo da Vinci says, "Art is never finished, only abandoned." Even after abandonment, art can be revived, and this what young artists of Kashmir have proven.



Art is still not considered a profession here, while artists do not receive the dignity they deserve

DJMC hosts one-week national workshop on Communication Research

SYED AADIL/ ARJUMAND WANI

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a week-long national workshop on 'Communication Research: Tools, Methods and Approaches.' The workshop that was held from August 31 to September 5 was conducted both in online and offline form.

Over 80 academics from different universities across India participated in the workshop, wherein extensive lectures on various aspects of Communication Research were delivered by experts from renowned Indian institutions.

Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakeel A Romshoo, who presided over the inaugural session, lauded the Journalism department for touching the important area of Communication Research. He stressed that proper communication was imperative, "for many of the problems arise due to miscommunication."

Talking about the responsibilities of researchers, the VC said the researchers should choose areas that have at least some relevance to the society. He also spoke about the importance of using proper tools that make research more result-oriented. "The research outcomes should reach common masses and that is where a proper communication is required," said Prof Romshoo, who announced that the university shall soon engage a Dean Outreach.

In his keynote address, Prof Shafey Kidwai, former Chairman, Department of Mass Communication,

Aligarh Muslim University, dealt in length with emerging trends in Communication Research. He said due to lack of proper historical study on journalism, the subject is still in dormancy in India. "We live in an interconnected world, wherein nation states have become 'global states' that is why we

Rashid Naik, said the focus of the students should be on acquiring better communication skills rather than gold medals "because how we communicate is more important than mere degrees."

The inaugural session was also attended by Prof Naseer Iqbal, Registrar, IUST, Prof A M Shah, Dean Academic Affairs, IUST, Prof A H Moon, Dean School of Engineering and Technology, IUST, Prof Abdul Salam Bhat, Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, and faculty members of DJMC, while faculty and research scholars from IUST, and other universities across the country attended the session online.

The other experts to speak during the workshop included Prof Shahid Rasool, Dean School of Media Studies and Director Media and Public Relations Centre, Central University of Kashmir, Dr Krishna Shankar Kusuma, Associate Professor, AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, Prof Pitabas Pradhan, Chairman, Department of Mass Communication, Aligarh Muslim University, Prof

Arbind Sinha, Advisor at Centre for Development Management and Communication, MICA, Ahmedabad, Prof Aquil Ahamd from the department of Statistics and Operations Research, Aligarh Muslim University, Prof Sanjeev Bhanawat, former Head, Centre for Mass Communication, University of Rajasthan, and Dr Uma Shankar Pandey, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Surendranath College for Women, Kolkata.



Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil A Romshoo, delivering presidential address during the inaugural session of the national workshop on Communication Research held at the varsity on August 31. PHOTO: ZAHOOR AHMAD GILKAR/IUST

need to focus on global communication research and identify simultaneous trends," he said.

Welcoming the guests, Dr Ruheela Hassan, workshop coordinator and In charge Head, DJMC, expressed gratitude to the university administration for going ahead with the workshop despite a long halt to the on-campus academic activities. Meanwhile, a couple of short videos prepared by the department were also screened during the session.

In his address, Dean Research, IUST, Prof Haroon

ASSETS OF IUST: Placement Cell

RUQIA LATEEF/ FIRDOUS PARRAY

To ensure suitable career for its students, the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) set up a Career Counseling and Placement Cell (CCPC) shortly after its inception. The cell provides career development programmes, hands-on training in entrepreneurship and work experience at various companies and organisations through internships.

CCPC was established in 2007 with an aim to help university students enter corporate and professional world. Placement cell provides an appropriate guidance to establish linkage with job market and locate career opportunities in highly competitive occupational patterns. The cell functions in two domains, viz., placement and training.

Placement

The IUST has collaborated with various companies and agencies. The collaborated organisations and placement partners include HCL Info Systems, (NOIDA), Outlook Group, Hindustan Unilever Limited, Lifestyle, Reliance, Eureka Forbes, Mc

Department-wise placements		
S. No	Departments	Number of students placed
1	Department of Civil Engineering	72
2	Department of Computer Science and Engineering	64
3	Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering	80
4	Department of Electrical Engineering	41
5	Department of Food Technology	34
6	Department of Computer Science	30
7	Department of Management Studies	130
8	Department of Mathematical Sciences	27
9	Department of Arabic Language and Literature	14
10	Department of English Language and Literature	13
11	Department of Islamic Studies	18
12	Department of Journalism and Mass Communication	13
TOTAL		536

Donald's, Hero Honda, Big Bazaar, Café Coffee Day and others.

Eligible MBA students get a 100 percent placement in leading organisations, like Wipro CCLG, Canara Bank, Madura F&L, Axis Bank, ICICI Securities, RBS, WNS, Ocwen Financial Services and so on.

"The placement division facilitates jobs by vigorously reaching out to the professional world. The objective is attained by a targeted approach on three major stake holders—students, companies, and the university," says

Dr Iqbal Qureshi, In charge Head, CCPC.

Placement record

CCPC in collaboration with various reputed companies and organisations have placed 536 students in different on and off-campus placement drives. More than 500 students have been recruited in over 20 organisations.

Founder of Jammu Kashmir Policy Institute (JKPI)—a youth-driven think-tank—and alumnus of IUST, Javaid Trali, shares that the university has helped him a lot to grow professionally as well as personally. "Joining IUST as a student was the best decision of my life. The campus is poetry and it shapes you well," he says.

Training

The division sets a bridge between academics and professional or industrial world. This division focuses on the process of curriculum development in accordance with professional needs of the corporate world. The continuous interaction with the professionals through guest lectures and workshops makes learning process more dynamic. CCPC has been working on the principle that a productive interface between academia and industry is a critical requirement in contemporary times.

Building career opportunities for students

Anantnag's sub district hospital sans basic facilities



Sub-district hospital at Seer Hamdan area in Tehsil Mattan of Anantnag district. PHOTO: KASHIFUL MUZAFAR WANI

KASHIFUL MUZAFAR WANI

While the population of Anantnag district in South Kashmir has grown by leaps and bounds over the past few years, healthcare has sorely lagged. The vital sub-district hospital at Seer Hamdan area in Tehsil Mattan, which caters to major population of the district, lacks basic in and out-patient facilities.

A simple visit to the hospital reveals how patients suffer due to the lack of basic medical facilities, including a proper casualty ward, blood bank, digital X-ray machines and other essential equipment.

The situation remains so even as the hospital caters to a huge number of people living in Pahalgam, Aishmuqam, Salia, Nambal, Mattan, Hutmura, Nagbal and another dozen villages of the district. As such, patients visiting the hospital have to be referred to district hospital, which is 15 kilometres far-off.

The so-called casualty ward, comprising just three beds, lacks space, equipment and even doctors. The ward that has an area of around 15x15 square metre is too small to accommodate all the patients who need the facility.

"We do not have a full-fledged casualty ward. Therefore, we are not able to provide proper treatment to the patients," says a doctor pleading anonymity.

Similarly, the dental section of the hospital lacks space and equipment. An official at the dental section says, the hospital authorities had, for long, been demanding essential equipment, which, however, was never provided.

A nurse in the hospital, wishing not to be named, reveals that the hospital also lacks a blood bank. "Pregnant women, who need blood, suffer at the time of their delivery, and at times the delay in shifting them to the district hospital proves fatal," she adds.

Pertinently, in 2020, a pregnant lady had died due to the medical negligence, which led to a huge public outrage. On next day, the concerned Deputy Commissioner visited the hospital and took an action against the doctor.

A surgeon at the hospital reveals that they do not have required equipment to perform laparoscopic surgeries even though they have been demanding the same for a long a time.

The hospital also lacks digital X-Ray machine thus forcing the patients to avail the services of private centres at much higher rates.

Apart from the facilities, the doctors at the hospital rue lack of security. "On simple issues, attendants, at times, harass and beat us. There is no security at the hospital," says another doctor, who too wished anonymity.

The residents say that they have requested the concerned authorities to personally look into the matter and redress their grievances.

Talking to *The Echo*, the Block Medical Officer, Mattan, says, they have been demanding laparoscopy machine and some other facilities for the hospital for very long, but have not received any response from the government yet. Talking about the blood bank, he says, blood banks are meant for only district hospitals. "For sub-district hospitals, we have blood storages," he says.

Online education a challenge in Kashmir

RASHID UL KHAIR

Cracking NEET exams has been her long cherished dream. However, Covid-19 pandemic played a spoilsport in her preparations. With online classes being the norm at present, this 19-year-old is also struggling hard to prepare for the competitive examination.

Hailing from North Kashmir's Sumlar village in Bandipora, around 12 kilometers from the main town, Shifat Wani is braving all odds to pass her exams. She, however, could not attend all the online classes owing to several limitations in online mode of learning.

"I try my best to save mobile data as well as mobile battery since we barely get two hours of electricity here besides a week Internet signal," she laments. "It's really embarrassing to ask my father daily to pay for the Internet Add-on package."

While Covid-19 pandemic has been paralysing the world in lockdowns, the idea of 'work from home' and 'digital communication' is what keeps things moving. However, here in Kashmir, virtual

classes are giving students as well as teachers a tough time in the absence of high-speed Internet.

Looking for better Internet signal, many teachers have been seen giving classes from the balconies, whereas students meander from one room to another to listen to what the teacher says.

Ifshana Wani, a private school teacher in Bandipora region of North Kashmir, uses *Whatsapp* and *Zoom* applications every day to connect with her students. The education system, she says, has been badly affected in the Valley by back-to-back lockdowns since August 2019.

"Virtual learning process is merely a formality in remote areas, where broadband infiltration is extremely low and people are dependent on unpredictable mobile network," she reveals, adding that there was a dire need to revive the education sector in Kashmir.

For families, who cannot afford smart phones for each one of their children, online classes are a mockery. With coinciding timetables, it is not possible for children of the same family to make use of a solitary gadget to attend the classes.

With the ongoing pandemic still forcing online mode of classes to continue, it is believed that the learning process shall continue to suffer.

"Virtual learning process is merely a formality in remote areas, where broadband infiltration is extremely low and people are dependent on unpredictable mobile network"

Virtual classes compel parents to buy costly gadgets

RUQIA GANAIE

Where Coronavirus outbreak has crippled all major sectors across the country, Internet is what has kept education moving through online classes. This, however, has come with a cost. The online education has compelled people to buy smart gadgets to enable their children to attend online classes.

Many middle-class families, who could hardly make an earning during the pandemic, have been forced to buy their kids personal smartphones or i-pads for their classes. "While Covid-19 had already challenged our lives, online classes made things more difficult for us. We had no choice but to expend our savings on costly devices during such a crisis situation," Nazir Ahmad Shah of Rainawari area of Srinagar city.

Another parent, Mir Mushtaq, adds that well-off families, however, could easily afford such expenditures. "The economic divide in this pandemic has intensified an education divide and digital divide," he says.

The electronic gadgets, like smartphones, tablet computers, laptops and i-pads have been in demand even during the lockdown. Owing to pandemic, however, consumers switched from shops, supermarkets and shopping malls to online portals for the purchase of products, ranging from basic commodities to branded goods.

New models of expensive brands of smartphones have also stirred the market. That is why, the sale

of leading brand, Xiaomi Redmi, which is sold at a reasonable price, has grown. Many people are learnt to have preferred this brand for their children followed by Samsung.

On the other hand, the retailers complain that their business has been witnessing a slump for the past two years now. "We would make decent sales prior to Covid-19 outbreak and successive lockdowns. Even online education has not helped our business much, as people now prefer buying things online after getting good discounts," says an electronic goods retailer at Sopore town in North Kashmir, wishing not to be named.

According to a research report by *Canalys*—the leading global technology market analyst firm, electronic sale fell by 50 percent in 2020 due to the consecutive lockdowns for five months. The report further states that during the second wave of Covid-19, the sales fell by 13 percent though getting back on the track now. The sales have not only been affected by outgoing shopping only but through e-commerce as well, the report says.

Only a handful of retail shop owners, who operate in big markets, have sold a good number of smartphones this year, which, they believe, has been possible due to online learning system. "Our sales have increased by 30 percent than last year, which had dropped by 80 percent due to lockdown," says an electronic goods retailer. The sales of smartphones are believed to see an upsurge in coming days in the wake of Covid vaccination drives and launch of new products.

Gufkral: From Neolithic caves to potters' enclave

FIRDOUS PARRAY

It looks like any other village in South Kashmir blessed with scenic beauty. However, the hamlet of *Gufkral*—*Guf* (cave) and *Kral* (potter)—in Tehsil Tral is also a place of archeological significance, and perhaps one of the last bastions of the craft of pottery in the region.

Neolithic Marvel

As per the historical records, the site was first reported by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1962-1963. Later, the excavations were carried out by the Prehistoric Branch of ASI in 1981 (August 18 to October 20) by K D Benergy and A K Sharma.

The archaeologists established with radiocarbon dating that the settlement existed in the third millennium and later. The early Neolithic age suggests that the early man settled there. Like the Burzahama archeological site located in the suburbs of Srinagar city, Gufkral is one of the archeologist sites of the Neolithic period.

In his study, 'Gufkral 1981: An Aceramic Neolithic Site in the Kashmir Valley' published in *Asian Perspectives* in 1982-83 (Volume 25, Issue 2, pages 23 to 41), Sharma writes: "For the first time, it has been firmly established that in Kashmir Valley, there was also an Aceramic Neolithic period that the process of domestication of selected species of animals was attempted. People also recognised the food value of various grains as wheat and barley, and had started collecting them. Bone and stone tools were manufactured."

Sharma further notes that people lived in the open and in huts with floors sunk into the loessic (silt-sized sediment) deposits in order to protect the dwellers from gusty freezing winds. "They kept the floors tidy and beautiful by painting them with red-ochre."

The hamlet is located between two streams on a *karewa* (elevated table land). There were a number



Multi-chambered cave at Gufkral used by the residents for domestic purpose. PHOTO: FIRDOUS PARRAY/IUST



Manzoor Ahmad Kumar preparing an earthen pot. PHOTO: FIRDOUS PARRAY/IUST

of caves on the slopes of the 35 meter high mound. These caves are both single and multi-chambered with pillars. The present inhabitants of Gufkral—the potters (Kumar family)—still use some of these caves for storing charcoal or pottery. Many others remained unused and attracted wild animals before they were sealed by the locals.

Pottery on Death Throes

Gufkral is inhabited by 16 families. Pottery used to be their main occupation. However, over the years, most of them have abandoned this profession due to various reasons, like lack of government support in terms of welfare schemes, absence of modern equipment, shortage of special soil used for making earthen pots and declining customer demand for earthenware.

"Out of 16 families residing here, only five are now engaged in pottery making. Others have given up this profession as they face difficulties in earning a decent livelihood from it," reveals Hilal Ahmad Kumar, a resident of Gufkral, who studies at Central University of Kashmir.

Kumar's family is unable to support him financially for his education. He works as a manual labourer to meet the expenses of his studies.

Manzoor Ahmad Kumar, a local potter in his mid-50s, who has been engaged in pottery since childhood, says, restrictions by the authorities for extracting specially used clay from the nearby *karewas*, and lack of financial and technical support from the government has also led to the decline of this craft.

Moreover, the extensive use of the copper and steel utensils, and decorative items made of other such metals, has also resulted in decline of the craft of pottery in Kashmir. Another major reason for the decline is that the youngsters show little interest in continuing this profession partly due to meager earnings and partly due to their lack of awareness about this craft.

The families, who are still engaged in making pottery to earn their livelihood, mostly make *Kundal* (fire pot, used in *Kangris*), *Bugwaer* (kids money bank), *Tandoor* or earthen oven (a big cylindrical earthen pot used by the bakers for making bread), and other house-hold items, which are used as utensils as well as for decoration purposes.

Kashmir's Soudagar tradition loses charm

ARJUMAND WANI

There was a time when people would love to explore his transparent briefcase containing embroidery and hosiery items. Now, in his 80s, he hardly finds any takers for his products.

A resident of Khanqah-e-Moula locality in old city of Srinagar, Ali Muhammad Bhat works has been toiling hard as a street vendor, better known as *Soudagar* in local parlance, for past 50 years. Nowadays, he roams around the streets of Awantipora locality in South Kashmir carrying his small glass-framed briefcase packed with hairbands, rubbers, bangles, combs, mirrors and other products.

Earlier, Bhat would visit the paddy fields of Kulgam, Anantnag, Pahalgam and other places of the Valley, and would sell his goods in exchange of paddy grains and money. However, he says, this barter trade has declined now.

"It was at its peak during 1980s in the Valley, when people loved to explore my transparent briefcase, but this tradition is no longer there," Bhat laments, citing development in markets in the Valley for the decline of



Ali Muhammad Bhat. PHOTO: ARJUMAND WANI/IUST

the trade. "Therefore, this glass-framed briefcase lost its charm. I don't know how many youngsters today are familiar with it."

Bhat, who has two daughters to take care of, manages just three to four hundred bucks a day. He has currently taken shelter in a rented accommodation at Awantipora's Jawbrara area, for which he has to pay Rs 1000 as rent. "So, it is really difficult to make the both end meet."

Barter trade system is believed to have helped people of Srinagar and other places with fewer agricultural activities in times of economic meltdown. This is how they would manage to pile up rice sacks, which helped them during the hard times.

This tradition was at its peak during 1980s in the Valley, when people loved to explore my transparent briefcase, but not anymore



CAROUND

Delegation from Higher Education visits IUST

A delegation led by the Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Jammu and Kashmir, Sushma Chauhan, along with the department's Director Planning, G M Ganie and others visited Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) on September 8.

The delegation discussed the on-going and completed infrastructural development projects at IUST with Vice Chancellor, Prof Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, and other university officials.

Prof Romshoo, while welcoming the delegation, informed them about the ongoing and pipeline academic programmes and the infrastructural development projects.

Chauhan visited various university departments and centres including the Food Technology Block, Residential Quarter Block, Engineering Block and Nursing College, and appreciated the state-of-art facilities developed by the university. She lauded the efforts of IUST for timely completion of the infrastructural projects. She also appreciated its contribution in promoting higher education in science and technology.

Student exchange programmes, skill enhancement programmes and collaborations with other higher educational institutes in J&K were also discussed during the visit.



Director Planning, Higher Education, assesses IUST projects

Director Planning, Department of Higher Education, Jammu and Kashmir, G M Ganie, visited Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) on August 6. He took stock of various developmental projects undertaken by the university under CAPEX and RUSA as well as languishing projects.

Welcoming the guest, Registrar IUST, Prof Naseer Iqbal, apprised him about the progress made by the university on the academic as well as on the infrastructural front. Prof Naseer gave a detailed account of various ongoing projects at the campus.

Director Planning, while lauding the contribution of IUST fraternity for the growth and development of the university, expressed hope that the university shall continue to grow in future as well.



Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Jammu and Kashmir, Sushma Chauhan, in conversation with Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil A Romshoo (R) on September 8. IUST PHOTO.

Food Technology deptt hosts campus placement drive

Department of Food Technology, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised Campus Placement Drive on September 23 in collaboration with FIL Industries Pvt. Ltd. and SIDCO Electronics complex, Rangreth, for the positions of trainee chemist, chemist and microbiologist.

A large number of students having Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Food Technology participated in the drive. Senior

Manager Human Resources, Peerzada Arshad and Senior Quality Manager, Sarfaraz from FIL industries were part of the placement drive.

Dean Research, IUST, and Head, department of Food Technology, Prof H R Naik, during the threadbare discussion with the placement team emphasised for creating more Industry-Academia linkages "in order to provide the best available human resource to the Industry."



THE CAMPUS

National workshop on modern tools in Chemical Sciences held at IUST

A two-day national workshop on 'Modern Tools and Techniques in Chemical Sciences' was organised by the Department of Chemistry, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) on September 24-25.

More than 170 participants from different universities of India, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia participated in the workshop, during which in-depth sessions about advances in research within the discipline of Chemical Sciences were conducted by academics from various renowned institutions of India.

During the inaugural session, Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, who was chief guest, said such workshops help researchers conceptualize newer research outcomes and create possibilities for inter-disciplinary approaches. "It is important to know how to use modern tools and analysis in different domains of chemical and allied sciences, and how they are used to solve societal problems," he added.

Prof Romshoo further opined that Covid-19 has made people understand the importance of research, especially in the fields of pharmacy and medicinal chemistry, during tough times.

Speaking on the occasion, Dean School of Sciences, IUST, Prof G M Rather, talked about the achievements of the Chemistry department and its role in developing an entrepreneurial mindset among its students.

Keynote speaker, Prof Tokeer Ahmad from Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi, deliberated upon theory and techniques used in the field of 'X-Ray Defraction (XRD).

Workshop convenor and Head of Chemistry department, Dr Abid Shalla said it has been a significant programme wherein experts enriched the audiences with ample knowledge that shall go a long-way in creating expertise in the field of Chemical Sciences.

IUST organises webinar on drug de-addiction

Syed Mantaqi Memorial College of Nursing and Medical Technology (SMMCNMT), a constituent college of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) hosted one-day webinar on 'Drug De-addiction Awareness' on September 12 under the red ribbon club. More than 300 students besides faculty members from various colleges of Kashmir attended the programme.

Registrar IUST, Prof Naseer Iqbal, who was chief guest on the occasion, stressed on importance of organising such awareness programmes. He congratulated the principal and faculty of the college for making these programmes successful.

During the scientific session, Prof Yasir Hassan Rather, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College, Srinagar, and In charge Drug

De-addiction Center, IMHANS, gave a brief description about the current scenario of substance abuse at global, national and state level, with focus on adolescents being the target population. He also talked about the risk factors and the consequences of drug addiction.

Underlining the importance of generating awareness among youth regarding drug abuse, Principal SMMCNMT, Asmat Parveen, revealed the drug addiction scenario in Kashmir. She deliberated on causes of drug addictions, prevention strategies of substance abuse, and shared the data of use of substance and opioids in the country. She also shared the data of Kashmir where, she claimed, 60 to 70 percent students have fallen in the drug trap.

IUST, KU jointly hold webinar on extramural research with DRDO

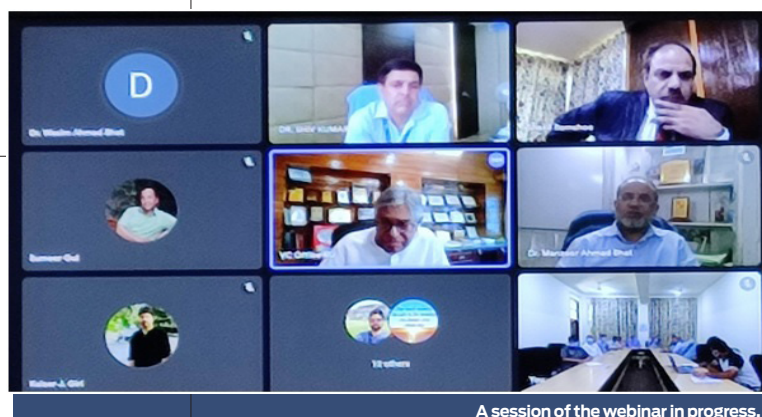
The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), and University of Kashmir jointly organise a webinar on September 6 in collaboration with Directorate of Extramural Research and IPR support (ER&IPR) support, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to generate awareness among faculty in the two institutions about various extramural funding schemes offered by the DRDO.

DRDO—a premier research and development organisation under Ministry of Defence—caters to development of defence technologies as per the existing and futuristic requirements of the country. It also supports academic institutions in their research pursuits.

The webinar, coordinated by the IUST, was attended by Vice Chancellor KU, Prof Talat Ahmad and Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil Ahmad Romshoo.

During his address, Prof Talat Ahmad spoke about the need for partnering with national research institutes like DRDO for addressing issues of societal importance and human resource development in frontier areas of science and technology.

Prof Romshoo highlighted the importance of building the technical ingenuity of the faculty in the two universities, so that they are able to network with other national and international institutes to avail the funding opportunities in research and development available at the national and international level. Both the Vice Chancellors emphasised the need of collaboration amongst University of Kashmir, IUST



and other universities within J&K for promoting high-quality research on the issues of scientific and societal importance.

During the webinar, Dr Shiv Kumar, Scientist 'G' and Director ER & IPR, DRDO delivered a detailed presentation on research opportunities supported by the DRDO for academic institutes in the country. He presented details of the schemes for establishing network with research community in various research centers and institutions, so as to establish Center of Excellence within Academic Institutions.

The webinar was attended by many faculty members from IUST and University of Kashmir, Deans of various schools and Heads of different departments.

Muharram: Month of Mourning

Muharram is the first month in the Islamic lunar calendar. Muslims, primarily Shiite Muslims, recite elegies and spend nights staying awake to lament the martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) grandson, Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) and his kin. In Kashmir, Shiite Muslims usually practice lamentation inside the premise of a holy building called 'Imam-Bada' in the local parlance. On the tenth day of the month, known as Ashura, people throng rendezvous roads to pound their chests, indulge in self-flagellation (not in-general) and recite elegies on loud speakers to mourn the martyrdom of *Ahl-al-bayt* (people of the Prophet Muhammad's house). On Ashura, a flag-like relic, *Alam*, is raised in the mourning processions. Meanwhile, *Zuljinah*, a decorated horse, is taken to the procession, which the mourners claim, shed tears over the commemoration of Ashura while recounting the moments of Karbala. An important part of Ashura is *Tazia*, made of wood and decorated with sacred things brought from the Karbala. It has a turban, Holy Quran and other belongings inside. *Tazia* is a replica of the mausoleum of Imam Hussain (PBUH). **PHOTOS AND TEXT BY BASHARAT AKHOON.**



Shiite mourners pounding their chests in an ambit with the *Alam* in the middle at Delina Baramulla.



People carrying holy relic (*Tazia*) on their shoulders in evening.



Shiite Muslims beating their chests on the commemoration of Ashura.



A Shiite Muslim carrying a container (*Mashaq*) to provide water to the mourners participating in *Youmi Ashura*.



A Shiite boy dressed in black holding a bunch of knives for self-flagellation on the day of Ashura.



A toddler wearing black clothes and headgear depicting an infant Asgar, who was martyred in Karbala.



Mourners touching *Zuljinah*—the decorated horse.



Attendants offering water to the commuters during Muharram procession, with hoardings of Iranian leaders in the background.