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A Monthly Newsletter by Jammu & Kashmir Policy Institute (JKPI)

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J&K govt ties up with Meesho to support 1,800 SHGs, women entrepreneurs



Jammu: The Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (Umeed) and Meesho, India's fastest-growing internet commerce company signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the growth of 1,800 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by providing them an online platform to launch and grow their business and empower the rural women entrepreneurs.

A government spokesman said that the MoU was signed and exchanged in the presence of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, here at Raj Bhavan.

Congratulating women entrepreneurs of the SHGs and Meesho officials on the occasion, the LG said that the partnership will help in building lives and livelihoods for rural communities and provide greater access to economic activities, financial independence to rural women entrepreneurs.

“The partnership of Rural Livelihoods Mission and e-commerce giant Meesho is a significant step in making niche products of Jammu and Kashmir available to the wider customer base, providing SHGs global market to grow their business, and making them Aatma-Nirbhar,” he said.

“From shawls and carpets to ‘phool kari’, Jammu & Kashmir’s arts and crafts have earned global recognition for their uniqueness. Going online with Meesho will

allow these women to sell such products to all corners of India and benefit from higher visibility and additional income. Digital inclusion will help them become self-employed entrepreneurs and fulfill their aspirations of achieving financial independence,” he said.

JKRLM Umeed and Meesho have already identified products created by these SHGs that can be sold on the online platform, such as Chabhari and Bina grass items, papier-mâché, essential oils, woollens and crewel embroidered products, made across J&K. JKRLM Umeed on its part will provide all necessary support to boost the digitization of these women entrepreneurs through access to the internet and financial services, it was informed.

Sinha said the partnership will also provide an opportunity to both JKRLM & Meesho to scale up rural enterprises from grass-root to large scale and bring the change in rural women’s lives.

The LG also highlighted the efforts of the government for promoting women entrepreneurship by building strong grassroots institutions that can foster enduring transformation.

“For the last two years, we have been working towards re-imagining the rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir and providing a strong market linkage and



Through this partnership, we hope to amplify our efforts in that direction and enable these Self-Help groups from J&K realize their full potential. We will provide them with all the tools and guidance they need to grow their business online with Meesho...

e-commerce platforms to exploit the potential of artisans. About 5.5 lakh women are associated with more than 64,000 SHGs and almost every panchayat has two women entrepreneurs today,” he said.

“J&K has abundant talent in handicrafts, and through this cooperation, we will be able to empower a large number of women which in turn will empower the community as well as this Union territory,” he added.

Sanjeev Barnwal, co-founder and CTO, Meesho, said, “We are privileged to work with Umeed-JKRLM and the J&K Government to further our mission of democratizing e-commerce. Women entrepreneurs are a key growth engine of India’s economy and Meesho has empowered lakhs of them to succeed in the online world.”

“Through this partnership, we hope to amplify our efforts in that direction and enable these Self-Help groups from J&K realize their full potential. We will provide them with all the tools and guidance they need to grow their business online with Meesho,” he said.

Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary asked the JKRLM to devise a comprehensive system for product certification to create a brand value. E-commerce is the way forward and more focus

should be given on showcasing our products in virtual showrooms, he added.

Mandeep Kaur, Administrative Secretary, Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj briefed about the initiatives taken to link local products with e-markets.

Indu Kanwal Chib, Mission Director, JKRLM briefed on the key aspects of the MoU.

She said the partnership with Meesho will not only give the SHG women good prices for their products, but also a new identity to their entrepreneurship development. Through this association, women artisans will get access to a potentially wider market base while locally produced, unique products from J&K will become available to millions of Meesho customers across the country, strengthening rural businesses, she added.

A short film on livelihood generation initiatives of JKRLM was also showcased on the occasion.

Mridhu Slathia, Additional Mission Director, J&K Rural Livelihoods Mission, Jammu; Prachi Bhuchar, Head-Public Policy and Government Affairs Meesho and senior officials were present during the MoU signing ceremony.





Commercial Floriculture emerging as a new form of employment across J&K

Schemes like MIDH, RKVY, ATMA boosting the Sector in UT

SRINAGAR: Commercial Floriculture in Jammu and Kashmir is helping the farmers to multiply their profits with the help of Government sponsored schemes and other related interventions.

Commercial Floriculture, a specialized form of Horticulture aimed at augmenting the income of Growers and generating employment opportunities involves setting up Ornamental Nurseries, Aromatic oil crop farming like Lavender, Cut flower production of Rose, Carnation, Gerbera, and Liliium, among others as well as Bulb production of Iris, Daffodils, Dahlia, Liliium, Gladiolus, Peonia, Cyclamen, Ranunculus, etc.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) like MIDH, RKVY, and ATMA are being implemented for the promotion of the commercial Floriculture Sector in J&K. The department is organizing regular sessions of training within and outside J&K for farmers/growers in order to make them aware of modern trends in Floriculture Sector.

Unemployed youths and farmers register themselves under these schemes and started their own businesses in loose and cut flower production, aromatic plant cultivation, ornamental nursery, and use of integrated farming for their employment and revenue generation.

Floriculture products mainly consist of cut flowers, pot plants, cut foliage, seed bulbs, tubers, rooted cuttings, and dried flowers or leaves. The important floricultural crops in the international cut flower trade are Rose, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Gargera, Gladiolus, Gypsophila, Liatris, Nerine, Orchids, Archilea, Anthurium, Tulip, and Lilies.

Notably, the cultivation of lavender as part of commercial Floriculture has changed the fortunes of farmers in Jammu and Kashmir under the 'Aroma Mission or Purple Revolution', an initiative of the Central government towards transforming the lives of UT's farmers' community.

As per official data, Purple or Lavender Revolution was launched in 2016 by the Union Ministry of Science &

Technology through the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR) Aroma Mission. The aim of the mission is to support domestic aromatic crop-based agro-economy by moving from imported aromatic oils to home-grown varieties.

Lavender cultivation is practiced in almost all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Under the mission, first-time farmers were given free lavender saplings while those who had cultivated lavender before were charged Rs 5-6 per sapling.

Farmers are happy with the farming of unconventional aromatic plants under the Aroma Mission. The mission promotes the cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils that are in great demand by the aroma industry.

Rubbeena Tabassum from Yarikalan Chadoora, Budgam has become an inspiration for many youths, particularly women due to her dedication and passion which eventually helped her to set up Nursery of Flowers.

Since then it has been no look back for Rubeena, as she is having a busy schedule with her engagements in Nursery.

Rubeena says that she started her venture titled United Floritech with cut flowers. "I started a variety of flowers in my Nursery by adding flowers like Liliium, Glidulous, and other flowers. Due to huge public demand, I had to hire additional manpower, says Rubeena. Now I am not only self-employed, but I provide employment to other workers," Rubeena said with a sense of satisfaction.

Department of Floriculture also contributed a lot by providing 50% financial assistance to erect structures and assistance in procuring high-value variety flowers which eventually resulted in the flourishing of My Nursery of Flowers, she says.

Bharat Bhushan, a resident of village Lehrote, Block Bhalla Doda feels proud of his decision of adopting lavender farming as his income has gradually increased beyond expectations. Seeing my success all my fellow villagers have switched from maize to lavender farming," he said.

After ODOP scheme, Rajouri district witnesses surge in milk production



SRINAGAR: India is home to several agricultural and non-agricultural (including manufacturing) products that are region-specific and every district has products that are unique and provide livelihoods and generate income.

To realize the true potential of a district, fuel economic growth, and generate employment with an aim of impetus to rural entrepreneurship, the Government has launched a transformational scheme One District One Product (ODOP) under Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

Rajouri, a border district of the J&K UT has been selected as a dairy district under the scheme as it has huge potential in the dairy sector. The dairy sector is one of the crucial sectors in the Indian economy that not only provides employment to rural households but also contributes to the economy of the country.

The dairy field is among the biggest in the Agriculture sector, especially in animal husbandry. This is because there are pastoral societies that keep a big number of cows and also other people who just keep cows as a means for second income earning. The major occupation of the rural people of Jammu and Kashmir is agriculture and livestock rearing making it a major source of income and employment here.

The dairy sector not only generates income and employment among the farmers but also supplements the varied nutritional requirements of the individuals. District Administration under the overall supervision of the District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Vikas Kundal has been taking several measures to strengthen the dairy sector, and efforts being made to enhance milk production in the district.

The Department of Animal Husbandry is also working out on all the modalities to help the dairy farmers enhance milk production in the district to make the district an export hub for the identified products.

The Department of Animal Husbandry has worked on all parameters before rolling out the

schemes. The Department has organized number of awareness camps, house visits, and other distribution activities in the far-flung areas of the district.

The major support has been provided by the Panchayat Raj Institutions as they are the backbone of the government. They play a very prominent role in implementing the schemes that are introduced by the government for the socioeconomic development of the people.

Another factor that contributed to the expansion of the dairy sector is that the department is in complete contact with the beneficiaries and the department also facilitated them during the Pashudhan Mela at Lakhanpur.

It is because of the untiring efforts of the District Administration and Department of Animal Husbandry that the district has witnessed fairly reasonable growth in terms of milk production from 3.67 lacs liters per day to 3.85 lacs liters per day since the launch of the ODOP scheme in the district and has become milk surplus.

The field functionaries of the department are also encouraging the farmers to take benefit of these farmers' friendly schemes being implemented by the Department for their socio-economic development.

After an increase in production, the major concern for the dairy unit holders is the market linkage facilities; and the department is also working on the lines to establish dairy cooperative societies to provide market linkages to the societies in the district.

Efforts of the District Administration are also fully backed by the dairy farmers of the district who are also extending full support for the successful implementation of the ODOP initiative of the Govt.

The farmers have also expressed their gratitude to the Government for launching these ambitious schemes for their welfare and appealed for continuing such initiatives in near future also to ameliorate their socio-economic status.

Govt making reformative interventions to amplify milk production across J-K



IDDS creating better livelihood opportunities for youth

SRINAGAR: J&K Government is working on multi-pronged strategy to increase milk production and double the Dairy farmers' income with unique initiative of Integrated Dairy Development Scheme (IDDS).

With an aim of Doubling Farmers' income from dairying, the Administration is working tirelessly to ensure utmost priority is being extended to dairy development in the union territory by way of implementing various developmental schemes, initiatives, policies, among others.

IDDS is a major scheme which not only focuses on providing

financial assistance, but also supports the dairy producer by providing milking machine, bulk milk cooling unit at 50% subsidy as well as other benefits. The scheme also provides paneer making machine, khoya making machine, dahi making machine, cream separator machine, ice cream making machine, butter and ghee making machine, milk van, milk ATM and DG Set, to aspiring entrepreneurs who try to create their start-ups in dairy sector.

Dairy is one of the most important sectors and the vast population living in rural areas relies on dairy and livestock for their livelihood. Therefore, improving the position of the dairy sector in Jammu and Kashmir is directly proportional to improving the socio-economic condition of people.

One of the beneficiaries Fareeda Bano of Mulnar has established one Dairy Unit comprising of 5 cows under IDDS. Farida had experience in rearing cows but was awaiting an opportunity to extend it on larger scale was a challenge for her.

In the meantime, Fareeda came to know about recently launched IDDS scheme and applied for it. Her unit got approval for establishment and since then there is no looking back.

After establishment of this venture, Fareeda produces around 70-75 litres of milk everyday with the presence of around eight quality heifers. She has expressed her gratitude to Animal Husbandry Department and all the staff that stood with her during the course of establishment and making it a very hassle free process.

Similarly, Mushtaq Ahmad Wani of Danihama, Hazratbal established one Dairy Unit comprising with five cows under IDDS.

Wani had good experience in rearing cows but was awaiting an opportunity to extend it. His unit got approval for establishment and he is earning a handsome profit from this venture. The daily milk production witnessed from his farm is about of 75-80 litres per day.

Wani had also applied for purchase of Milk Van under the same government scheme which he also got approved and successfully purchased the Milk Van which has highly benefited him towards dissemination of the milk to adjoining villages and some individual customers.

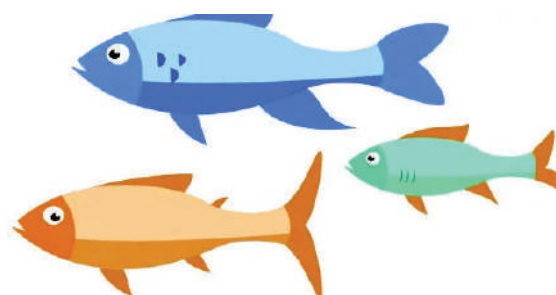
J&K Government is making reformative interventions on daily basis to bring new dawn of White Revolution across Jammu and Kashmir, besides creating better livelihood opportunities for farmers and those associated with dairy production.

J&K's first trout fisheries FPO registered at Anantnag

ANANTNAG: Anantnag district has got the first trout fish farmers FPO registered under a project funded by NABARD.

The said FPO has been incorporated by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt of India as a farmer Producer Company under the name 'Glacial Trout FPO' and is being implemented by an NGO, Human Welfare Foundation under the guidance of the Department of Fisheries, Govt of J&K.

DDM NABARD, Rouf Zargar stated that this was the first FPO in J&K to have been registered in the fisheries sector under the Companies Act. This is a pilot project to promote trout fish in the Dachnipora cluster of Anantnag and the registration of FPO was a



major achievement, he added.

With more than 100 fish farmers as members of FPO, there are 10 farmers enrolled on the board of directors in the FPO, DDM NABARD said adding that one more FPO is being proposed to be formed in Anantnag district to cover the fish farmers of Khoveripora Cluster.

Deputy Director Fisheries, Siddiq Wani said that Govt of India has been laying more focus on the formation of FPOs in all allied sectors of agriculture and special focus has been given to the fisheries sector.

He said many schemes have been launched by the government for the development of aquaculture under a cluster approach to bring the blue revolution and every scheme focuses on FPO formation.

Trout fish has been identified as a product under the scheme "the one district one product" in the Anantnag district, he stated adding that FPOs can mitigate the problems of farmers with regard to production and post-production sales and marketing.

Govt simplifying rules and procedures to boost business in J&K

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir administration is working to boost business investment and enhance income of the local population by simplifying rules and procedures, and digitising records, senior officials said.

The Union Territory, since the abrogation of Article 370 from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, has received investment proposals from various business houses to the tune of about Rs 56,000 crore while sanctions have been granted to proposals worth Rs 38,000 crore, they said.

The work is already on for projects worth about Rs 12,000 crore, a top official of the administration said.

He said Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has directed officials and authorities to ensure that all activities that are linked to the people are made “vibrant and viable”.

The government is translating land records into as many as 22 Indian languages so that investors can readily use them and even locals can peruse them, a senior revenue department official said.

For this purpose, software developed by C-DAC is being used, he added.

Officials said the Union Territory (UT), over the last three years, has attracted investments mainly in the manufacturing and food


processing sectors, and some projects in automobile and allied sectors are being discussed at present.

“The aim is to boost the overall economy of the state. At the same time, we are working on the tourism sector and development sector in a major way so that the income of locals can be boosted. The government has recently relaxed and streamlined guidelines related to opening of home stays in the Kashmir Valley, including in remote areas,” a senior officer said.

People having four or less rooms with basic living amenities for tourists can obtain the licence by applying on the tourism department portal, he said. We are holding hospitality-related training for the hosts, the officer said.

Some new locations for adventure sports are being developed and the infrastructure present at Gulmarg and other locations is being improved, the officer said.

“The aim of all these initiatives is to ensure that the local youth does not drift towards terrorism and at the same time, Kashmiris get the benefits of what they deserve. Defining Kashmir only through the security scenario should end,” another officer said.



Strawberry cultivation picking up in J&K, providing employment opportunities to youth

SRINAGAR: Strawberry cultivation is picking up in J&K thus yielding good fortunes and providing ample employment opportunities to youth.

Both Government of India and the J&K Government are providing loans coupled with technical handholding to young farmers to attract them towards the farming business.

The favorable climatic condition in the J&K has provided ample opportunities for the youth to take up strawberry farming as a business for better sustainability.

Farmers in Gassu Batpora village on the outskirts of Srinagar city are happy with the bumper crop of strawberries.

Having the highest number of people growing strawberries, Gassu is famously known as the 'Strawberry Village' where farmers cultivate tonnes of exotic berries on hundreds of acres of land every year.

It is also the first one to produce strawberries in the entire Kashmir valley with women and children chipping in to taste the success of this fruit.

In recent years, strawberry has emerged as a cash crop in the valley with many vegetable farmers switching to strawberry cultivation.

Besides strawberries, Kashmiri fruits like apples, cherries, grapes, apricot, and plum are also very famous across the world for their quality and rich taste and are bringing good returns to the Valley's farmers.

Defense personnel Dheeraj Kumar began his second innings as Agripreneur and has become a role model for many aspiring Agripreneurs especially the youth who are looking forward to making fortunes in Agriculture & Allied sectors.

The Progressive Farmer Dheeraj Kumar hailing from Haripur Village of Border Sub Division Hiranagar has cultivated strawberries on a field measuring 22 Kanal. With the handholding of the department, he has cultivated three

different varieties viz. Camarosa, Winter Dawn & Nubila.

Regarding the support extended by the department, an official said that out of the total investment of Rs 6 lakh by the farmer, the department has provided a subsidy to the tune of Rs 2.86 lakh which is nearly 50% of the total investment and it is expected to produce a yield of Rs 15-20 Lakhs which is in line with the PM's vision of Doubling the farmers' income.

In addition to this, the department has also provided a subsidy to the farmer on the purchase of power tillers and installation of the drip irrigation system.

Dheeraj Kumar has engaged around 10 people for leveling, picking, packaging, and transport purposes, which he termed as a gratifying experience as offering the avenues of employment to the locals has given him great happiness.

He is supplying his produce to the Big Malls and Business houses viz. Jammu Basket, Easy Day, Big Bazar, Markets in and around Pathankot, and areas in the periphery of Punjab adjoining Kathua.

With the implementation of the Horticulture Mission in J&K, there has been a significant improvement in production and productivity which has ultimately resulted in changing the financial scenario of the farming community. Besides economic upliftment, Horticulture 1/8th acre of land of Abdul Ahad Mir was brought under cultivation of strawberries in Gousoo under Horticulture Mission.

With the continuous guidance of the department, the farmer emerged as a leading strawberry grower who earned National and State awards. Starting from a meager land of 1/8th acre of land, now the entire village and the adjacent villages have adopted the cultivation of strawberries which has now touched around 40 acres of land in the vicinity. The annual income of the farmer per acre is about 5 lacs as compared to 20,000 to 25,000 prior to the adoption of diversification.

Mushroom farming emerging as new form of employment among J&K youth

SRINAGAR: With the latest technological interventions of the J&K Administration as well as subsidy for Mushroom growers, Mushroom production has registered a substantial increase across Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna, a National Agriculture Development Programme, mushroom cultivation is the focus area, and Mushroom growers are equipped with quality seeds and trained in scientific cultivation techniques. Kashmir boasts hundreds of success stories in the mushroom cultivation business and the administration's 50 percent subsidy and technical knowledge are making the cultivation profitable among growers.

J&K government is emphasizing upon stakeholders for encouraging and promoting Mushroom Cultivation, potential entrepreneurship for youth in a big way. With the recent government interventions, forest dwellers in Jammu Shivaliks are being given formal training and instructions about mushroom collection and processing techniques, market knowledge as well as market access, so that their efforts pay them their rightly earned share.

Mohammad Ishfaq Malla of Battapora, Baramulla district of north Kashmir started growing mushrooms in 2018 and is now reaping the rewards with government help. The 38-year-old agripreneur currently makes around Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh per year from mushroom farming, spawn production, and training of aspiring mushroom farmers.

Malla is currently producing 1.5–1.75 quintals of mushrooms annually and sell-



ing them for Rs 250 per kilogramme. He is grateful to the horticulture division for providing him with a platform and aiding in his marketing.

“In the future, I intend to create a mushroom farm through which I would not only cover the entirety of north Kashmir but also place young people in jobs,” he said. He advised those who are interested in mushroom cultivation to visit the agriculture department for any assistance and occasionally seek the advice and guidance of the officials.

Similarly, Tahmeena, a resident of Pulwama received training in growing Mushrooms from the Agriculture Department. “I came to know from one of my friends about the advantage of growing mushrooms and how it can help us in our day-to-day in-

come,” she said.

Tahmeena has got basic training in Mushroom cultivation from J&K Agriculture Department. “During the training, the Agriculture Department made us aware of the seeds, heating system, threat of insects, and so on. It was a 40 days training process and it was quite commendable how women like me and others were trained,” Tahmeena said.

She says opportunities like these are important for hundreds of women who want to be self-independent and make a name for themselves. A woman should explore other opportunities as well that have been provided by the Jammu and Kashmir government and they should look forward to earning a livelihood, Tahmeena added.

GI Certification boosts prominence of Kashmiri Saffron in international markets

SRINAGAR: As the farmers are happy with the bumper saffron crop this year, the GI Certification of Kashmiri Saffron by the Geographical Indications Registry would also cease the adulteration of it and will put an end to the marketing of Saffron cultivated in other countries under the garb of being produced in Kashmir.

The adulteration of saffron was earlier affecting the economic interests of the farmers associated with this crop. To give a boost to saffron production in Kashmir, J&K Government has launched new initiatives including the introduction of GI Tagging.

GI sign is used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.

Saffron growers are hopeful that they will now get a better price for their produce after the introduction of the GI tag to the saffron grown here. Kashmiri Saffron is grown at an altitude of 1,600 m to 1,800 m above mean sea level, which adds to its uniqueness and differentiates it from other saffron varieties available across the world.

Saffron is cultivated and harvested in the Karewas (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir and has been assigned a Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry. The spice is grown in Pulwama, Budgam, Kishtwar, and Srinagar regions of Jammu & Kashmir.

Iran is the largest producer of saffron in the world and India is a close competitor. However, with the GI tag of Kashmir saffron, India becomes the only Saffron producing Country for which GI has been assigned which will result in more prominence in the export market thereby boosting exports as well as helping the farmers to get the best remunerative price for economic sustainability.

Kashmir is having the distinction of producing one of the best saffron in the world, therefore it should be our individual/collective and moral responsibility to preserve this golden spice not only for a large number of families directly associated with the cultivation of saffron but for generations to come.



‘Waste to Wealth’: Dist Admin Rajouri recycles waste to save environment

SRINAGAR: The recycling of waste to create manure and sell plastic for recycling is becoming a very effective way of combating the immediate threat it possesses to the environment as well as preventing the outbreak of diseases in Sunderbani area of Rajouri district.

The constant piling of garbage and waste was a cause of concern for the Sunderbani administration who saw landfilling as the only option, which is not environment friendly.

Sensing the gravity of the situation, the district administration Rajouri led by Deputy Commissioner, Vikas Kundal, immediately recognized the need for scientific waste disposal. Deputy Commissioner Rajouri held regular brainstorming sessions with the Chairperson Municipal Council (MC), Sunderbani, officers of MC Sunderbani, and other councilors to come up with a solution.

After regular sessions, it was decided to treat the solid waste technologically and utilize the end product as compost for agriculture fields.

To address the issue, the Administration decided to restore the defunct Solid Waste management plant so that the waste is disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner.

After the restoration of the plant, the uphill task for the Municipal Committee was the collection of the waste, the segregation of the waste, and the transportation of the garbage to the treatment plant/Solid Waste Management Plant.

The task was overcome by the deployment of waste collection buses in all wards for waste collection. Special committees of the senior citizens of the concerned wards were also constituted to look after their wards for required waste collection and segregation. The committees ensured proper cleanliness by MC workers and the motivated public to segregate waste at home and dispose of it properly during the morning in waste collection vans.

The step was welcomed by the public, and people started to flock towards the waste vans in the morning to pour the segregated waste into the waste-collection vans.

The Administration deployed ten people in the treatment plant who segregate the waste at the plant and ensure only the required waste is being poured into the plant. Importantly, only biodegradable waste is brought to the treatment facility, while the plastic waste is sold to the local vendors for Rs 32 per kg. The biodegradable waste brought to the facility for further treatment is then converted into manure.

“We are making money out of waste. Our treatment plant is operational, and produced 1600 kg of compost till date, of which 400 kg have been sold to agencies, farmers, and residents at Rs 12 per kg,” said Executive Officer, MC Sunderbani.

President MC Sunderbani says the initiative has improved the cleanliness of the city on a larger scale and we are hopeful that Sunderbani will get a better ranking this time. He is also praised by Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal, for extending help in the revival of this old and defunct plant.

“Waste is wealth. We are implementing the most effective waste management model—one that is both cost-effective and profitable—and the district administration is working to replicate it in other municipal committees and councils throughout the district,” Vikas Kundal said. “The time has come for everyone to join hands and make history in Rajouri, to make it the cleanest city,” he added.

The Deputy also highlighted that specific steps are being taken to make Rajouri a clean and beautiful city; MRF facilities in most of the MCs have been completed and will be commissioned soon.

He also said that separate land for the establishment of a solid waste management plant has been identified in other MCs of the district.

Kundal also said that it is an effort of the MCs that one of our MC Kalakote has received the Swachh Survekshan Award-2022 which is testimony that we are committed to ensuring better living conditions for the public.

Govt approves free of cost medicines for LSD

Jammu: The Administrative Council (AC) which met here under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, approved the proposal for provision of free of cost medicines to Lumpy Skin Disease affected farmers of J&K, an official press release informed.

It said Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, attended the meeting.

In J&K, all the 20 districts are affected with the disease, with 56,146 cattle having contracted infection till date out of which 1,564 animals have died.

The affected farmers are in distress due to medical expenses which range from Rs 6,000 to Rs 10,000 and accordingly, to provide relief to the farmers, provision of free of cost veterinary medicines to LSD affected farmers has been made to ease the financial burden of the farmers for treating the disease, the press release said.



J&K Admn establishes E-Unnat platform to obtain feedback on service delivery

Step emerging as a game changer to curb delay in service delivery, arrest red-tapism

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Administration has made a remarkable achievement in the digital journey of Jammu and Kashmir with e-Unnat providing a window for the government to obtain feedback from citizens on any subject related to service delivery to identify areas for further improvement.

The interface of e-Unnat is user-friendly as it has been created with an aim to make all Government services accessible to the common man at the click of a button and ensure efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and reliability of such services to realize the basic needs of the common man.

Through e-Unnat, citizens need to first register and apply for any service by filling an application form. After that, they will receive an output certificate/report as the service deliverable.

Notably, to provide a major impetus to transparent, citizen-friendly, and efficient governance, Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta recently inaugurated the integration of the Public Service Guarantee Act (PSGA) portal, having Auto-Appeal System feature with the e-UNNAT.

With this step, the J&K government has now integrated the online dashboard (<https://aas.jk.gov.in>) for all citizen-centric services available on e-Unnat Portal, as per the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Guarantee Act, 2011 (PSGA).

In the process, J&K has become the first UT in the country to implement such a system. This step of the government is expected to be a game changer as it empowers the citizens and would go a long way in curbing delays in providing services to citizens, weed out red tapism, inefficiency, lethargy, and culture of apathy, and impunity.

Under this system, the service delivery timelines, details of defaults, and penal provisions thereof, besides the generation of statistics and drill down facility, together with auto-escalation/auto-appeal feature is available online.

The aim of the government in incorporating the auto-appeal and auto-escalation features in the portal is that the provisions of the PSGA get integrated into the online application processing and service delivery mechanism to be strictly adhered to.

Meanwhile, J&K also became the first union territory to launch its own Unified Citizen Services Portal (<https://eUnnat.jk.gov.in>) incorporating 'Meri Pehchaan' (National Single Sign-on) to make available Citizen Centric Services to the common man under a single portal.

The TEJAS Dashboard on the e-UNNAT portal would show, at a glance, the online e-service applications received, services delivered, applications pending, applications rejected et al, with the delayed services delivery break-up further displayed based on time delay periods, less than a week, one to two weeks, more than two weeks, and so on.

At the same time, the e-UNNAT portal now also provides a glimpse into the My Scheme portal of the Government of India by mapping, initially, six schemes of the J&K government and providing access to information on those by re-directing through a single URL.

‘Preparations for winter season at Gulmarg’

More slopes, skiing facilities, other snow activities being made available this season

Local hoteliers assure full support to make season memorable

Srinagar: Secretary Tourism & Youth Services & Sports, Sarmad Hafeez, today took a detailed review of the preparations made by respective Departments for the upcoming winter season at the World famous resort of Gulmarg.

Sarmad Hafeez took a detailed review of the arrangements made by the Tourism Department, JKTDC, Gulmarg Development Authority & Cable Car Corporation, Youth Services & Sports to make the winter season at the famed destination more interesting and hassle-free for visitors.

Addressing the meeting, the Tourism Secretary impressed upon the concerned Departments and agencies to work together as a single entity to ensure that all facilities at Gulmarg are kept in a state of readiness and visitors leave the destination with memorable experiences.

MD, JKTDC, Menga Sherpa; Director, Tourism, Kashmir, Fazlul Haseeb; CEO, Gulmarg Development Authority, Ghulam Jeelani, officers of Tourism Department, Youth Services & Sports, JKTDC, Indian Institute of Skiing & Mountaineering were present in the meeting.

Sarmad Hafeez asked the concerned Departments to work on innovations and new ideas for making the coming season memorable for visitors. In this regard, he suggested working on concepts like illuminations, winter carnival, snow activities, skiing, cuisine, music etc besides quality services in different segments of the tourist interface.

The Tourism Secretary also took a detailed review of the logistics at the destination and directed their upgradation and proper upkeep. He reviewed the snow clearance plan and road connectivity, drinking water supply, homologation of slopes, signages at the destination, snow safety, working of ski patrols and rescue teams, medical facilities etc. at

the destination.

Sarmad Hafeez also reviewed the status of facilities and services available at the local club and other outlets of the JKTDC and directed constant monitoring and innovation. He also reviewed the calendar of skiing courses being run by the Youth Services Department and IISM and directed close coordination between them and the Tourism Department for optimal results.

The Tourism Secretary asked the local hoteliers to prepare for the coming season in their own way and make improvements in services, rates and experiences for the tourists. He sought their support in creating new experiences at the winter destination so that tourists return back with joyful memories.

The representatives of local hoteliers, who attended the meeting, assured the Tourism Secretary of their cooperation and support in making the coming winter season at the famed destination a success. They also appreciated the efforts by the Department for improving and strengthening the infrastructure and facilities at the destination.

The meeting was informed that two more slopes with lifts are being added to the facilities which would ensure the availability of much more and dispersed skiing facilities to the visitors at the world-famous ski resort besides work at the historic church is nearing completion.

The meeting was also informed that a snow clearance plan has already been prepared in consultation with the concerned Department and district administration. A medical ambulance has already been made available by the Cable Car Corporation for evacuation of the sick tourists, the meeting was informed.

8.35 Cr action plan approved for Rehabilitation Council



'Plan to benefit 6800 beneficiaries; saturate provision of tricycles among SAP'

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, today chaired the Executive Council Meeting of the Council for Rehabilitation of Widows, Orphans, Handicapped & Old

Persons (Victims of Militancy) established by Social Welfare Department (SWD), J&K.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Home; Commissioner Secretary, SWD; Executive Director, Rehabilitation Council; Representative from Department of Planning along with other concerned officers.

Dr Mehta enquired from the Council about its performance during the previous year. He impressed upon them to accelerate the seeding of beneficiary accounts with Aadhar numbers. He directed them to complete the task within a month.

The Chief Secretary enjoined upon the Council that their work is of paramount importance. He asked them to provide timely assistance to all the victims and take all measures to rehabilitate them well.

He stressed on saturating the distribution of tricycles among all the Specially Aabled Persons (SAP) as per the directions of the Lieutenant Governor of the UT. He directed that all the youth taken to different parts of the country under 'WatankoJano' programme should be facilitated in every manner and their stay made comfortable at every city they visit.

During the Council meeting, it was revealed that an action plan of Rs 8.35 Cr has been formulated for the year 2022-23 for coverage of 6800 beneficiaries. It was stated that its components consist of a pension of Rs 1000/month to widows, old aged persons, and Specially Aabled Persons besides marriage assistance of Rs 40000 to young widows or grown-up daughters.

The meeting was also informed that the Council proposes to provide Motorized Tricycles to all the remaining registered 2700 cases of SAPs during the year as per the directions of the Lieutenant Governor. It was further informed that under 'WatankoJano' sponsored by the Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI the Council is going to take about 500 children from its orphanages, Balashrams/Narineketan of the Department to cities like Mumbai, Lucknow, Jaipur, Hyderabad, etc.

SKIMS performs rare stenting procedure

Srinagar: For the first time in Jammu and Kashmir, doctors performed an airway stenting procedure (Y-SEMS Tracheobronchial stent) with a flexible video bronchoscope system at SKIMS, Soura.

The rare procedure was performed at the department of Pulmonary by a medicine team including Director SKIMS, Prof. Parvaiz A Koul, Prof. Sonaullah Shah, Dr. Nazia Mehfooz, and Dr. Zubair Ahmad Thoker supported by an anesthesia team headed by Dr. Altaf Hussain Mir and Dr. Irfan Hussain Dar along with the team of technicians, an official of the institute said.

HOD General Medicine, Prof Sonaullah Shah informed that this procedure was done on a 35-year-old male who is a case of operated CA esophagus with nodal reoccurrence compressing his left main bronchus causing the collapse of his left lung with hypoxemic Respiratory failure.

In view of the non-affordability and difficulty in transporting this patient outside of UT of J&K due to severe respiratory failure for this procedure, the Pulmonary

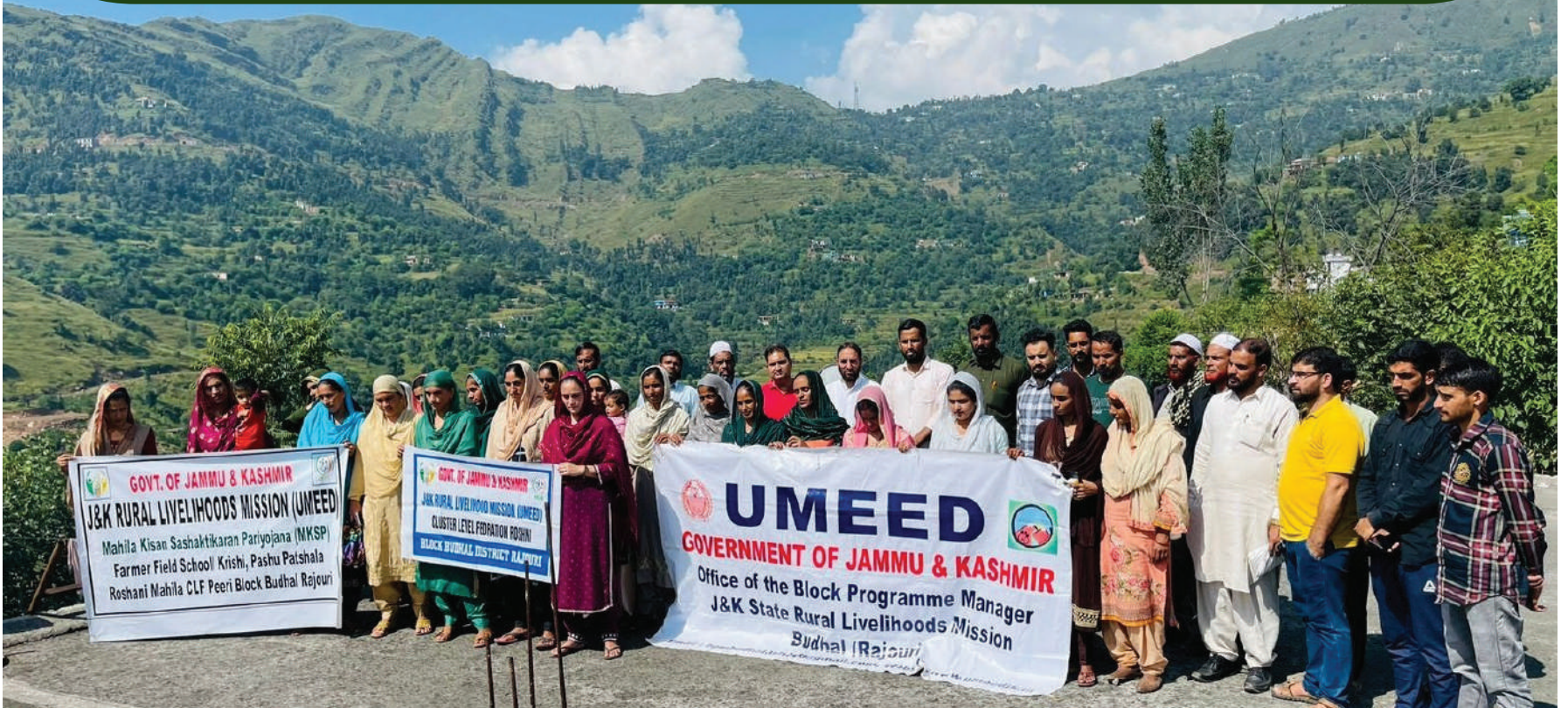
medicine team decided to conduct this procedure at SKIMS Soura. After arranging all the logistic support, the procedure was successfully performed. The patient is now planned for radiotherapy, he added.

He further said that routinely this procedure is done by a rigid bronchoscope system under general anesthesia. Previously patients were referred outside for airway stenting.

These types of palliative procedures are important in giving quality life to such patients and will be continued by the Department in the future to avoid referral outside UT of J&K.

Director SKIMS, Dr. Parvaiz A Koul congratulated the department for conducting the procedure and assured support on behalf of the administration for such endeavors in the future.

NRLM helping women to become self-reliant



KULGAM: The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), a poverty alleviation project implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India is playing a significant role to make the passionate women self-reliant and financially independent in Kashmir.

As part of the project, Self Help Groups (SHGs) are being created and proper handholding of members by the mission is ensured to make them confident and trained to establish any

business unit to earn a livelihood.

Ruqiya Rashid, a young and passionate girl from village Pahaloo who dreamt of becoming self-reliant and not being dependent one, and in order to cherish her dream she became an active member of NRLM which provided her a platform to fly high and realize the dream of owning her own business unit.

Divulging the details, Ruqiya said that she joined NRLM in 2019 and

presently is operating SHG with a title Name (KHAN) and is also the proprietor of a cosmetic shop at Pahaloo.

Besides, Ruqiya is also engaged with Knitting and has taken part in various exhibitions.

She added that she has also supplied her products and is receiving orders from outside the district and is earning her livelihood and feeling proud to be financially independent.

AC enhances financial powers of PRIs, approves advance payment to meet demand of more than 4600 FPS dealers

Jammu: The Administrative Council (AC) which met here under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, approved the delegation of powers for granting Administrative Approval to Gram Panchayats, Block Samitis and Zila Parishads for execution of works whose expenditure will be met out of Panchayats' own resources.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the LG, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, J&K attended the meeting.

In order to promote the involvement of PRIs in the development process, the government has further empowered the Panchayati Raj Institutions financially, an official press release informed.

It said the Gram Panchayats have been vested with an authority to accord Administrative Approval to works from Rs 1.00 to Rs 5.00 lakh, the Block Samitis have been delegated powers to accord Administrative Approval to works ranging from Rs 5.00 to Rs 20.00 lakh and the Zila

Parishad now has the powers to accord Administrative Approval upto Rs. 1 crore.

The PRIs will be able to incur expenditure as per General Financial Rules and guidelines related to AA, TS, and e-tendering, the press release said.

It said the decision comes as a significant step towards empowering PRIs as it shall enable them to set their own priorities and help them in timely execution of works out of the own resources of the panchayats.

In the backdrop of its mission to enhance inclusive growth of rural areas in the Union territory, the government through this decision aims to promote self reliance in financial matters, the press release said.

Meanwhile, the Administrative Council also approved the proposal for advance payments in favour of FPS dealers on account of their margin on monthly basis under NFSA scheme.

Administrative Council approved

Advance Payments of 75 percent Central share on account of FPS dealer's margin, on monthly basis under NFSA scheme, out of Revolving Fund (Foodgrains) Account, pending release of such claims by Government of India, an official press release informed.

It said since the flow of funds of Government of India under NFSA is not regular and there was persistent demand of FPS dealers for payment of commission at the rate of Rs 180 per quintal to Fair Price Shop dealers, the AC authorized for making payments as commission in advance of receipt of funds thereby benefiting 4630 FPS dealers across the UT. This amount shall be recouped as and when Central share is released by the GoI.

The proposal has financial implications of Rs 32,95,05,998 (@Rs 180/quintal) during each Financial Year but the same shall be recouped as and when funds are received from GoI.

J&K bags top awards under PMAY-URBAN during IUHC 2022



Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir has won top awards in implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-Urban) during three-day India Urban Housing Conclave 2022 (IUHC 2022) organized by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in Rajkot, Gujarat, an official press release informed here.

The conclave was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the 19th of October, 2022.

J&K has won two awards including 'Overall best performing Union Territory and best performing UT for implementation of Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs).

Principal Secretary, H&UDD, Dheeraj Gupta received the award on behalf of the UT government.

The conclave included an exhibition of departmental stalls highlighting the achievements and best practices adopted across the states and UTs in the implementation of the Mission.

PMAY-U is a flagship Mission of the Government of India being implemented by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) which addresses urban housing shortage among the EWS/LIG and MIG categories including the slum dwellers by ensuring a pucca house to all eligible urban households by the year 2022, when Nation completes 75 years of Independence.

Pertinently, J&K has achieved 100 percent saturation in the implementation of the PMAY Mission. About 44,701 beneficiaries have been identified and approved under BLC component, out of which, 44630 dwelling units have been grounded and will be completed within the prescribed time schedule.

The UT government has for the first time introduced a new initiative wherein interest-free loan/subsidy is being provided for an amount of Rs. 2.00 lakh per beneficiary for construction of dwelling unit under BLC component. Besides, 336 houses are being reconstructed under Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) at Sunjwan, Jammu while 968 flats are being constructed at Bhalwal and lower Roopnagar Jammu under Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) component.

Also, a Demonstration Housing Project (DHP) under Technology Sub-Mission (TSM) of the Mission has been taken up at Bhalwal, Jammu. The technology to be used for DHP is EPS Core Panels. After completion, J&K Housing Board will not only gainfully utilize the structure but will also showcase it as the latest proven alternate/green technology solution suitable to the geo-climatic & hazardous conditions of Jammu region.

The Government of Jammu & Kashmir is committed towards ensuring that there is no urban houseless in the Union Territory by March 2023.

J&K govt includes 15 more castes in reservation for socially backward classes

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday issued a notification including 15 more castes that would now benefit through the 4 percent reservation in jobs etc for socially backward classes.

As per the notification, 15 more castes have been included in the list of socially backward castes in Jammu and Kashmir.

The now included social castes are Waghey (Chopan), Ghirath/Bhati/Chang community, Jat community, Saini community, Markabans/PonyWalas, Sochi community, Christian Biradari (converted from Hindu Valmiki), Sunar/Swarankar Teeli (Hindu Teeli along with already existing Muslim Teli), Perna/Kouro(Kaurav), Bojru/Decount/Dubdabay Brahmin Gorkans, Gorkhas, West Pakistani refugees (excluding SCs) and Acharyasa.

Certain modifications have also been made in the existing social castes by subsisting their names.

According to the notification, potters (Kumahars), shoe repairers (working without the aid of machines), Bangies Khakrobes (sweepers), barbers, washermen and Dooms have been respectively replaced by Kumahars, Mo-



chi, Bangies Khakrobes, Hajjam Atrai, Dhobi, and Dooms (excluding SCs).

The social caste list has been redrawn on the recommendations of the Jammu and Kashmir Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission which was constituted by J&K Government in 2020. Former High Court Judge, G. D Sharma heads the three-member panel.

The other significant change made in the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules is that the words "Pahari speaking people (PSP)" have been subsumed with "Pahari ethnic people".



Kulgam witnessing blue revolution

District records production of 205 MTs of fish in 2021-22

KULGAM: District Kulgam is bestowed with vast pristine water resources which offer ample scope for the development of cold water fisheries, particularly trout.

The Department of Fisheries has infused cohesive and elaborated steps to tap the aqua potential of the district and ensured proper implementation of Centrally Sponsored schemes on the ground for creating employment avenues to double the income of fish farmers with a focus on enhancing fish production of the District through the intervention of new technology in the field of aquaculture under various schemes.

Assistant Director Fisheries Kulgam, Mushtaq Ahmad Shah said that fish production of 205 MTs has been recorded during the year 2021-22, which includes 80 MTs of trout.

He added that the department has established 98 fish farming units in the private sector besides one trout feed mill and one hatchery (Trout Seed Production Unit) in the district.

During the current FY 2022-23, 15 Trout Units have been sanctioned under PMMSY Scheme for which DLIC has been conducted and beneficiaries have been selected.

We have a Trout Hatchery Unit in the District where quality

trout seed is being produced and supplied to private trout fish farmers of the District.

“A private Trout Feed Mill has been established in the private sector under PMMSY Scheme and the Trout Feed Mill is having a production of 2 tons/day, capable of producing cooked extruded floating feed which is easily digestible with minimal wastage,” added AD fisheries.

He also said that this Feed Mill will cater to the demand for trout feed in the District and will also supply to adjacent Districts of Shopian, Anantnag, and Pulwama.

AD added that the feed Mill will also reduce the transportation charges incurred by the fish farmers who have to transport Trout Feed from Trout Feed Mill Mansbal. “As the district has witnessed a boom in the tourism sector, Aharbal Trout Stream in District Kulgam has become world famous for its prized fish catch.”

The Department is regularly stocking the stream with Rainbow Trout Fish seed to sustain its fish biomass so that anglers can fetch a good catch. The Angling permits are issued through online mode both to local anglers and foreigners, he said.

With regard to the welfare schemes, there are 419 fishers in the District registered with the Department who exploit the natural fisheries resources to earn their livelihood.

He also added that assistance of Rs 1.30 lac is being provided to the houseless fishers for the construction of low-cost houses and so far 232 houses have been constructed in the District under the scheme.

J&K Bank share-price rises to 52-week high

SRINAGAR: In a significant spike today J&K Bank share touched its 52-week-high price at Rs 45.45 on NSE & BSE.

The scrip eventually settled at Rs 44.25 on BSE and Rs 44.20 on NSE registering over 5% growth while witnessing total trading of over 30 million shares during the day. Notably, the share has registered a return in excess of 40% since the declaration of Sept 2022 quarterly/half-yearly results outperforming the sectoral and broader indices.

Celebrating the price rise at the Bank's corporate headquarters, MD & CEO Baldev Prakash called it a big moment for the Bank and thanked all the stakeholders especial-

ly the governments of twin UTs (J&K and Ladakh) for their continued support, Bank's Board of Directors for their valued guidance and above all Bank's valuable customers and clients for their unflinching trust and loyalty. All the Bank's Vertical Heads, Divisional Heads, GMs, DGMs, Zonal Heads, Cluster Heads attended the brief celebratory function through video-conferencing on the occasion.

While addressing the Bank's staff on the occasion, MD & CEO said, “Our share has touched the 52-week high price with the Bank's market capitalization crossing the milestone of Rs 4000 Crore to make it a memorable day for all of us. I believe, it is the fructification of individual efforts that each one of you is putting in every day to achieve the business goals of the Bank that includes improving the Asset quality by reducing NPAs and managing SMAs,” adding, “Riding on the back of healthier financial numbers, planned organisational transformation and improving work-culture; our market perception is on a rising curve with the value proposition being acknowledged by the mar-

ket players. We must ensure that the scrip maintains the upward trend by delivering improved results on a sustained basis.”

“And I assure all the stakeholders that we won't allow anything to impede our journey towards growth and glory,” MD asserted.

Besides expressing his pleasure on the enthusiastic participation and contribution of staff towards achieving the business goal of Rs 2.22 Lac Cr by the end of this fiscal, he further said, “Since our dreams and aspirations are associated with this institution, I am sure that we will continue to work together as a cohesive team to accomplish all the business goals through our tried and time-tested institutional resolve.”

On the occasion, expressing their faith in and appreciation for his strong leadership and prudent guidance, the participants congratulated MD & CEO Baldev Prakash for the Bank's improving performance and perception. “Together, we have done it and together we shall accomplish all the organizational goals in the future as well,” echoed the participants in unison.



DoTA J&K conducts first-ever Tribal Migratory Survey for Nomadic Tribe

SRINAGAR: The Department of Tribal Affairs (DoTA) J&K has conducted first ever Tribal Migratory Survey for Nomadic Tribe in J&K UT after independence through different Deputy Commissioners of the UT and also provided 200 Vehicles for the transportation of these nomadic families from Jammu to Srinagar and vice versa.

This was stated by the Nodal Officer/Coordinator, Javaid Ahmad Parray in a one-day Awareness camp cum Training Seminar held at Government Women's College M.A Road Srinagar.

The camp was attended by DDC, BDC Members; ADDC Srinagar, Zahoor Ahmad Mir; Chief Education Officer Srinagar, Majid Ahmad Kohli; Deputy Chief Education Officer, Gulshana Akhter; Principals of various GDCs, ITIs, Polytechnic Colleges, ZEO's & INO's of various Educational Institutions of Srinagar District.

Speaking on the occasion the Nodal Officer/Coordinator said that the Department had made all 30 Hostels functional and 25 more Hostels will be made functional by end of the March 2023 with the aim that more and more ST students who belong to far-flung and backward areas can avail the facilities provided by the Department.

He said that the Department will open one EMRS (Eklavya Model Residential School) in each District of the J&K UT, EMRS is in house Boarding School where from 1st to 12th can avail the Education facilities on 100 percent Government Expenditure. He said that at present 05 EMRS are functional in the UT.

The Nodal Officer/Coordinator said that the Department has also expanded the network of other developmental activities

in all districts of J&K such as the inclusion of 180 Villages in Jan Abhiyan, the establishment of Cluster Tribal Model Villages, upgradation of Schools in Tribal areas, upgradation of Primary Health Centers, establishment and construction of new PHC's, Schools, Community Halls, Transit accommodations, providing of Smart Cards to Nomadic Tribal, etc.

He further said that the aim of these awareness camps is not only to participate but to educate or aware the students about the different Scholarship Schemes and their benefits.

Speaking on the occasion the ADDC Srinagar, Zahoor Ahmad Mir said that such type of awareness camps provides opportunities for the community to avail and receive information about the policies and programmes of the Government.

He said that this kind of awareness programmes also provides opportunities to receive feedback from the general public regarding the actions and agendas of the authorities.


The Chief Education Officer Srinagar, Majid Ahmad Kohli stressed and put the responsibilities to the Headmaster/Principals and INOs for making 100 percent inclusion of the ST students falling under their jurisdiction so that they can timely avail the benefit of the Scholarship Schemes.

The convener of the programme, Reyaz Ahmad Shah gave a brief introduction to the Schemes being implemented by the Department.

The technical team comprising Javeed Ahmad Baba and Liyaqat Ali briefed and provided on-spot training to the participants regarding National Scholarship Portal.



THE DEPARTMENT WILL OPEN ONE EMRS (EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL) IN EACH DISTRICT OF THE J&K UT, EMRS IS IN HOUSE BOARDING SCHOOL WHERE FROM 1ST TO 12TH CAN AVAIL THE EDUCATION FACILITIES ON 100 PERCENT GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE.



Milk & Craft villages to be established in every district of J&K

PULWAMA: The Nodal Officer/Coordinator Tribal Affairs Department, Javaid Ahmad Parray today said that the Milk and Craft Villages will be established in every district of UT of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Nodal Officer/Coordinator Tribal Affairs Department said this during a one-day awareness cum training programme held at Government Degree College Pulwama.

The camp was attended by DDC Chairman Pulwama, Syed Bari Indrabi; DDC Member and, Standing Chairman for Education Dr Harbaksh Singh; DDC members of Pampore and Achgoza; ADDC Pulwama, Dr Abdul Aziz Sheikh; BDC Sangerwani, CEO Pulwama and Principals of various Government Degree Colleges, ITIs and Polytechnic Colleges, Warden G&B/ST Hostel Pulwama, ZEOs, HoDs and INOs of Pulwama.

Speaking on the occasion, the Nodal Officer/Coordinator said that the aim for conducting these kinds of awareness camps throughout the UT is to aware the general public particularly the Scheduled Tribe community of the different development programmes, welfare schemes and policies implemented by the Department of Tribal Affairs.

He said that under the close supervision of Secretary Tribal Affairs, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary the Department has introduced and expanded the network of various Developmental Schemes for the Welfare of the ST community throughout the UT of J&K.

The Nodal Officer/Coordinator said that the Department has recently introduced 300 new skilled courses for the ST students so that they become self-employed and can create job opportunities for other unemployed youths of the UT. He said Department has recently enhanced 120% in all formats of Post-Matric Scholarship, mapped 9th and 10th Pre-Matric Scholarship on the National Scholarship Portal and inclusion of all STs in Pre-Matric Scholarship from class 1st to 8th.

He also informed that Department has created various employment-generating programmes for the welfare of the unemployed youth of the UT by the opening of a Sheep Farm, Dairy Farm, Vandhan Kender's and sponsoring various projects through TRIFED.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC Chairman Pulwama suggested that these kinds of programmes be also conducted in Tribal dominated areas where more and more people can avail the benefits of the different schemes being implemented by the Department.

The Technical Team of Tribal Research Institute (TRI) Liyaqat Ali and Javeed Ahmad Baba briefed the ZEOs, HoDs and INOs about the submission and verification of applications on the National Scholarship Portal and also redressed the various queries related to NSP raised by the participants.

The awareness camp was also addressed by the Chief Education Officer, Nazir Ahmad Reashi.

Centre grants 265 DNB medical seats to J&K

New Delhi: In sync with Prime Minister's vision of "Health for All," the government has granted 265 Diplomat of National Board (DNB) postgraduate medical seats to several government hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir across 20 districts.

The step will not only benefit people of Jammu and Kashmir, but the doctors there will also get an opportunity of being trained in their own region, a Health ministry statement said.

Tapping into this homegrown medical workforce would lead to an effective healthcare delivery system in the Union Territory, it said.

"With the vision of providing trained specialists in almost

every district of Jammu and Kashmir, the Government of India took this as a challenge in a mission mode," read the statement.

"The Ministry of Health along with National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) took a lead role and ensured that several postgraduate seats of NBEMS are granted to various government hospitals of Jammu and Kashmir," it said.

As a consequence, at present there exist more than 250 PG seats across 20 districts in phase 1 of the expansion plan. Two more PG seats will be granted in the second phase.

Fifty percent of the PG seats are reserved for local in-service doctors to provide them with the opportunity for postgraduate training.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir will be benefited as modern quality healthcare will become more affordable and accessible in almost all the districts. This in turn, would further enhance the quality of primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare, the statement said.

The Indian government has also increased the number of examination centres in the UT to ensure that the candidates do not have to travel to other states to appear in the entrance examinations, the statement said.

NHM releases ranking of Public Health facilities on JK e-Sahaj for October

JAMMU: National Health Mission, Jammu and Kashmir today releases a ranking of Public Health facilities on the Hospital Management Information System (JK e Sahaj) for the month of October 2022.

Under the first phase of implementation of this initiative, 578 facilities have been covered and more will be further extended to other facilities in a phased manner.

It is pertinent to mention that JK e-sahaj (Electronic System for Automation of Hospital Administration J&K) was formally launched on 4th November 2022 as part of Jashn-e-Sehat, by the Lieutenant Governor for different types of facilities i.e. Tertiary care, District Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and some New Type PHCs. JK E -Sahaj has been integrated with Rapid Assessment System (RAS), 104 Centralised Health Helpline for outbound calling and the RCH portal of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

In the category of Associated Hospitals of Government Medical Colleges, the first rank has been clinched by Psychiatric Disease Hospital, Jammu followed by Chest Disease Hospital, Jammu, Chest Disease Hospital, Srinagar, GMC Kathua, and Govt. Dental College, Jammu.

In the category of District Hospitals, DH Bandipora secured the first rank followed by Government Hospital Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, DH Kulgam, DH JLN, Srinagar, and MCCH Anantnag.



In the category of Community Health Centres (CHCs), the first rank has been clinched by CHC Seer, followed by CHC Kreeri, CHC(AH) Ghagwal, CHC Zachaldara, and CHC Ramgarh.

In the category of Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and UPHCS, the first rank has been secured by PHC Upper Hathal, Rajouri followed by PHC Kanachak, Jammu PHC D K Pora, Anantnag, PHC Bijhama, Baramullah.

The ranking has been done on the basis of registration, conversion of EMR (Electronic Medical Record) and Patient feedback uploaded on the portal of JK e Sahaj for the month of October 2022, on a real-time basis. The detailed list of facilities has been shared on the NHM website.



Beekeeping ventures emerging as a new hope for J&K youth

THE HONEY PROCESSING UNITS CONSIST OF AN AUTOMATIC HONEY PROCESSING PLANT, A MOISTURE REDUCTION UNIT, A STORAGE CHAMBER, and a bottling unit. It performs multi-functions, including preheating, processing, moisture reduction, filtration, and bottling of the honey.

NBHM aims to promote beekeeping, self-sustaining employment avenues in rural areas

SRINAGAR: Beekeeping ventures across J&K have emerged as the epitome of new business among the local unemployed youth.

Many people in Jammu and Kashmir, most of them youth, are able to earn a livelihood, because of honey bee colonies that have come up in different regions across J&K. With time, more and more young men and women are turning towards bee-keeping as dozens of local honey brands have earned a good reputation across the markets.

Honey processing units established under the apiculture development scheme will go a long way in helping the beekeepers as the department is facilitating the processing of crude honey produced by the farmers free of cost. The bee-keepers are provided with a logo as well as testing for successful marketing of honey for remunerative returns.

The honey processing units consist of an automatic honey processing plant, a moisture reduction unit, a storage chamber, and a bottling unit. It performs multi-functions, including preheating, processing, moisture reduction, filtration, and bottling of the honey.

Pertinently, the department is promoting Ramban white honey of the autumn season under 'one district one product', which is known for its best quality, colour, and taste.

Beekeeping forms the potential part of integrated farming

and can play an important role in doubling the farmer's income, being a non-competitive off-farm activity. It also has the potential of employment generation due to wide agro-climatic diversity enabling round-the-year bee flora availability.

Notably, the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) aims at promoting Beekeeping and providing self-sustaining employment opportunities among farmers and unemployed youth in rural India.

Under the programme, beneficiaries are provided with bee boxes, live bee colonies, tool kits, and training.

Waseem Rafiq Bhat is a resident of Aglar village of Shopian district received active support from the Department of Agriculture in his venture. He currently owns about 1,000 bee colonies. Apart from ensuring a sustainable livelihood for himself, he engaged more than 10 youths of his village in beekeeping, who now possess their own colonies.

Similarly, another beekeeper, Farooq Ahmad Shiekh, who hails from Kupwara, said that he gets honey three to four times a year from his 100 apiaries established in his backyard in Handwara. "I get two harvests in Kashmir and another in Jammu and earn sufficient for my family. Though at times due to climate changes bee mortalities lead to losses but most of the time I generate good profit," Farooq said. He adds that Kashmir nectar comes from the organic flora in the vast forests



Kashmir Handicraft Artisans honoured with 2 Shilp Guru, 6 Nat'l awards



NEW DELHI: Handicraft artisans from Kashmir have brought laurels to the Valley by bagging two Shilp Guru and six National level awards in different craft categories.

The Shilp Guru Awards are given to legendary master craftspersons in recognition of excellent craftsmanship, product excellence and the role played by them as gurus in the continuance of crafts to other trainee artisans as a vital part of traditional heritage.

The Awards were started in 2002, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the resurgence of Handicrafts in India. The Award consists of a gold coin, Rs 2 lakh prize money, a Tamrapatra, a shawl, and a certificate.

The National Awards are being awarded since 1965 for outstanding craftsmanship in different craft categories. The Award consists of Rs.1 lakh prize money, a Tamrapatra, a Shawl, and a certificate.

The Shilp Guru awards was conferred by Vice President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar while the National Level awards were conferred by the Union Minister of Textiles, Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal at Vigyan Bhawan here.

The award categories were announced for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019 amidst an august gathering that included Officers from the office of Development Commissioner Handicrafts.

Addressing a gathering after presenting Shilp Guru and National Awards, the Vice President said that the unique talent of our master craftsmen is representative of Bharat. "With your subtle workmanship, you embellish and enrich India's cultural diversity. You represent India's rich tradition of skills and craftsmanship," he told the Shilp Gurus awardees.

Dhankhar described Indian craftsmen as the impactful ambassadors of our culture and creativity and said that by honouring them, the nation is honouring those generations of

unknown skilled craftsmen, who have left behind such a rich legacy.

While congratulating the Prize winners, he assured the artisan community of the country of all possible support. He also stressed upon preserving this unique skill that is responsible for the production of world-famous Handicraft Products.

The awards were given in different categories that included Sozni, Paper Machie and Carpet.

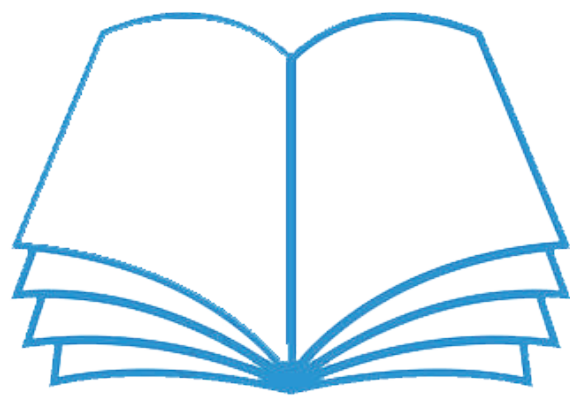
Bashir Ahmad Bhat of Sonpah Beerwah and Iqbal Hussain Khan of Gazi Doori were awarded Shilp Guru awards for the years 2018 & 2019 in the Jamawar Shawl craft and Paper Machie respectively.

Similarly, the National awards were conferred upon Muzaffar Hussain Khushoo of Kathi Maidan Srinagar (Paper Machie, 2019), Zahoor Ahmad Bhat of Shalla Bagh Zadibal (Sozni Embroidery, 2019), Safdar Ali Mir of Sonpah Beerwah (Sozni Embroidery, 2018), Smt Parveza Bano of Kathi Maidan Alamgari Bazar (Sozni Embroidery, 2018), Akthar Hussain Rather of Hawal Kral Pora (Paper Machie, 2017) and Ghulam Ali Sheikh of Shahoo Sachan Kulgam (Hand Knotted Carpet, Double Sided, 2017).

Rachna Shah, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Shri Shantmanu, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, awardees from across India, and other dignitaries were also present.

Meanwhile, Director Handicrafts & Handloom Kashmir, Mahmood Ahmad Shah has extended his greetings to the awardees.

"The Department is aware of the creative talent that is available in Village Sonpah of District Budgam as a result a DPR for developing the Village as the craft Village has been prepared and submitted to GOI," he said.



JKPI Publications

SAFFRON FARMING IN KASHMIR: STATUS, FUTURE, AND ISSUES



ADEELA HAMEED

Kashmir is one of the major saffron-producing regions and the second-largest contributor of saffron to the global market. Grown in the Karewa (highlands) soils of Kashmir, it is an important cash crop providing employment to about 5% of the total rural workforce in the valley. The crop is cultivated in the districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Budgam, Shopian, Anantnag, Baderwah, and Kulgam. Pampore in district Pulwama serves as a major hub of saffron cultivation. Some prominent saffron villages of Pampore are Khunmoh, Zewan, Balhama, Sampora, Ladhoo, Chandhara, Woyan, Khrew, Shar Konibal, Dussu, Namblabal, Kadlbal, Hatiwara, Samboora, and Lethpora.

Saffron farming which is common in the Kashmir valley and the Indian subcontinent is confronted with the interconnected challenges of inadequate irrigation and drought. Farmers in Kashmir would depend on the winter snow in the previous years, which seeped into the soil all throughout spring and summer, keeping it moist despite the region's strong sun. But climate change has led to scarce rainfall and snowfall in the valley, which has driven the soil to become dry and unsuited for the crop.

The Red Gold of Kashmir

Saffron is a perennial crop. When the spring season (Sonth) starts, preparations for saffron cultivation begin. Plowing is delayed if more rains arrive as too wet soils are not good for corms. From field observations, the farmers have deciphered that towards the end of June, it is necessary to plow the land again for the removal of weeds. A good time for sowing corms, which cost 50,000 rupees per kanal, or 1/8 of an acre, is in the second week of August till the first week of September. The field then needs timely showers till the flowering season. The crop lasts for about 10-15 years after sowing. However, the lifespan of corms depends upon the type of soil and the presence of moisture in the soil.

In mid-October, the plants begin to sprout by themselves from the soil. The flower picking or harvesting season of saffron is very short. It starts nearly in the first week of November and up to its last week. A good flower collector can collect as many as 3000 flowers a day. These flowers are gathered in special baskets made out of willow. The plucking is done on alternate days or after every two days depending upon the production and yield of the crop. The flowers are then sorted and dried.

Reduced productivity of Saffron in Kashmir

The area under saffron cultivation in 1997 was 5707 hectares, and the production was 16 million tons approximately. However, with the passage of time, the area as well as production of the Saffron declined. According to data sources from the Department of Agriculture, by 2015, the area had reduced to 3674 hectares and production was 9.6 million tons with a yield rate of 2.61 kg/ha.

Some important factors that have contributed to less production of saffron are:

Rainfall

Rains have a direct relationship with the production of saffron. It is reported that areas receiving 100-150 cm of well-distributed rainfall, with snow in the winters, are best suited for saffron cultivation. Rains in September are also essential for meeting the water requirements of corms for good flower yields. However, mountainous parts of the valley have showcased a drastic decrease in precipitation (10.3 mm/year) while flood plains welcomed a relatively less rate of decrease of 3.6 mm/year. The foothills and Karewas have shown a moderate rate of decrease of 6.3 and 5.8 mm/year, respectively.

Technological poverty and unaware farmers

The use of outdated technology has also resulted in the loss of soil fertility and a decrease in production. There is a need to bring awareness among the farmers regarding post-harvesting methods and the newest techniques for storing the crop. Kashmiri saffron has a good amount of crocin in its fresh stigmas (14-17%). However, it is found to have decreased (9-11.5%) after harvesting and storing because of poor post-harvest handling, less knowledge about the right time and stage of separating the stigma from style, popularizing the use of solar dryers, branding, etc. Kashmir, thus, lacks in terms of production, with an average yield of 2.23 kg/ha as compared to 8.24 kg/ha in Spain and 10.0 kg/ha in Italy.

Disease

Intensive cultivation and monoculture of saffron, together with the continuous use of diseased material, has resulted in recurrent incidences of corm rot diseases caused by pathogens.

Distribution through fraudulent middlemen

The price of saffron in Kashmir is generally determined by firms and middlemen supplying the cash crop to the rest of the country. Small farmers sell their produce to these parties and under their elusive conditions receive minimal profit. Very few are able to sell directly to the dealers in the national markets of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Amritsar, etc. The government has, on the other hand, not been able to provide incentives or create a market where local farmers can sell their products at suitable rates.

Climate change

Prolonged dry spells have left the saffron farmers worried. The crop is mainly dependent on rain. As discussed earlier, if rains arrive at the sprouting and pre-flowering stages, flowering is optimum and saffron yield is good. However, due to insufficient rainfall, the region has seen the lowest productivity in the past 30 years. During the years 1999-2003, the productivity reduced from 3.12 kg/ha to 1.57 kg/ha. However, in 2004-05, favorable rainfall improved productivity to 2.96 kg/ha. The next 13 years would then see an average of 8.71 metric tons yield. In 2015, the crop totaled 9.6 metric tons of saffron, from 3,674 hectares of land. While the exact numbers haven't been calculated, farmers and scholars both agree that, in 2016 and 2017, the output fell to less than 10% of 2015's numbers.

The National Saffron Mission Program

The Union Government of India, in August 2010, approved a plan of approximately 373 crore INR under The National Saffron Mission Program (NSMP) to rejuvenate saffron production in Jammu & Kashmir. It was planned that this amount would be disbursed till 2014 and 9.50 crore INR was to be distributed among the farmers for replantation of corms. Under the scheme, every farmer was promised a sum of 25,000 INR for each kanal of land. They would also be encouraged to adopt new technologies like seed

diversification and transformation. The project aimed at improving saffron production and yield by providing quality seeds and a state-of-the-art water supply. The task was entrusted to the Department of Agriculture and the Mechanical Engineering Department of the erstwhile state.

Anticipated Results of the National Saffron Mission

1. **Saffron recovery:** Sophisticated post-harvest techniques would be practiced, like quality saffron drying, to improve saffron recovery by 27%, which in turn would increase production by 5 million tons.
2. **Public sector nurseries:** It was said that 800 hectares of land would be brought under saffron cultivation, and for that public sector nurseries would be established.
3. **Productivity enhancement:** The productivity of saffron would be increased from 2.50 kg/ha to 5 kg/ha. The total production would also be enhanced from 9.46 MT to 18.5 MT without including new areas for cultivation.
4. **Price discovery through transparent transactions:** The objective was to develop a well-organized market system that would reduce intermediate costs of brokerage which would help in availing better quality saffron for customers as well as helping farmers get their fair share in trade.

However, the mission failed to achieve its true objectives at all levels, leaving saffron farmers with no means to continue cultivation. They were forced to shift to other trades and farming practices. As an example, to combat the changing environment, 108 borewells – made by drilling inside the ground to store rainwater – were built. But only 8 out of the envisioned 128 sprinklers were set up, and most are still not in use. Advocates are of the opinion that local farmers, who had long relied on age-old techniques, were not properly educated about the changing conditions, or the methods for the benefit of their crop. While many others believe that farmers found the mission's intrusive nature unwelcome in their fields, making it verbally known that the land's sanctity had been tampered with.

To add to the woes, Iranian saffron has begun to enter India through secondhand channels. Because of its lower price, it is packaged and sold as Kashmiri saffron much to the farmers' chagrin. Though high

in novelty, the regional original spice is in no position to compete with its Iranian counterpart.

Geographical Indication Tag for Kashmir Saffron – A silver lining amidst the crisis

Kashmir has been assigned a Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry. And with the GI tag of Kashmir saffron, India became the only Saffron producing Country for which GI has been assigned which boosted the prominence of the spice in the export market. The GI Certification has also ceased the prevalent adulteration of Saffron and put an end to the marketing of Saffron cultivated in other countries under the garb of being produced in Kashmir.

Recommendations

Despite the struggles, more than 20,000 families are still associated with the saffron economy in the Kashmir valley today. These saffron cultivators are bent on adopting newer techniques to grow saffron, making sure the heritage and quality of Kashmiri saffron are kept alive. As climate change impacts its production, scientists are shifting to a new technique for cultivating one of the world's most expensive Himalayan spices: indoor cultivation.

To further enhance the production of saffron, a few things are to be considered:

- The facility of good quality and high-yield seeds.
- Extension in the area of cultivation and production.
- Widespread use of solar and air driers. Financial help is to be provided for their purchase.
- Proper training for packaging the produce.
- Experts' complete and equal coordination with the saffron growers.
- Marketing is also one of the main problems of farmers. So, it is necessary that cooperative societies are formed to sell saffron at decent prices.
- Rejuvenating the NSMP so that all the above parameters are delivered thoughtfully under the umbrella of a supervisory department.



POCSO Act: Features, Challenges, Controversies and Recommendations



MEHVISH ISMAIL

Introduction

Child sexual abuse is an unpleasant reality that is progressively being documented worldwide. In India, where child sexual abuse has reached epidemic levels, it is a crime that is underreported. There has been a rise in sexually transmitted infections among children during the past two decades. Children who are sexually abused frequently have some kind of relationship with the offender. Consequently, less unclear and harsher punishment is required to address the issue of child sexual abuse. In order to effectively combat the horrible crimes of child sexual abuse and exploitation, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 was created. It is a comprehensive law on sexual abuse that broadens the range of sexual offenses that can be committed, mandates reporting of abuse, and establishes standards for the evaluation of victims.

A child who is protected is a potential national resource, whereas an exploited child may first become a victim before turning against them. A child requires safety, security, harmony, love, and care in order to develop fully and reach his or her potential. But it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to make the environment conducive to the holistic development of a child. As human values are changing and humanitarian principles are gaining momentum, we should consider the child to be the most fundamental and imperative element of the nation. It is our duty to work together in accomplishing the goal of the well-being of all children.

The extent of child sexual abuse in India

The issue of child sexual abuse is widespread throughout the world. There are 430 million children in India (according to the 2011 Census), and issues like poverty, a lack of basic amenities for a better standard of living, and a lack of education make the issue of child sexual abuse much worse. The National Crime Records Bureau (2016) findings made it abundantly evident that child rape was involved in 36,022 (34.4%) of the cases recorded under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012. The highest percentages of child abuse instances (15.3%, 13.6%, and 13.1%, respectively) were reported in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.

According to a recent study on the frequency of sexual abuse among adolescents in Kerala, 36% of males and 35% of girls had suffered sexual abuse at some point in their lives. Shocking findings from a comparable survey undertaken by the Government of India on 17,220 children and adolescents to determine the prevalence of sexual abuse indicated that every second child in the country was sexually molested; among them, 52.94% were boys and 47.06% were girls. Assam reported the most cases of sexual abuse (57.27%), followed by Delhi (41%), Andhra Pradesh (33.87%), and Bihar (33.27%).

POCSO ACT 2012

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 has been drafted to strengthen the legal provisions for the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation. According to POCSO Act 2012, a “child” is a person who has not

completed the age of 18 years. The act is gender-neutral, providing protection to children of both sexes.

According to Chopra (2015), the POCSO Act prescribes these sexual offenses against children: Penetrative sexual assault is when a person inserts a penis, or any other object into the body of a child or asks the child to do so. Aggravated penetrative sexual assault, is when a trusted person or any government employee inserts a penis, or any other object into the body of a child or asks the child to do so. Sexual assault is when a person with sexual intent touches the child’s private body parts or asks the child to do so. Aggravated sexual assault is when a trusted person or any government employee with sexual intent touches the child’s private body parts or asks the child to do so. A person is said to commit sexual harassment upon a child when such person is with a sexual intent comment or follow or gaze a child or shows any pornography to the child using a child for pornographic purposes.

Salient features of the POCSO Act

- “Children” according to the Act are individuals aged below 18 years. The Act is gender-neutral.
- Different forms of sexual abuse including but not limited to sexual harassment, pornography, and penetrative & non-penetrative assault are defined in the Act.
- Sexual assault is deemed to be “aggravated” under certain circumstances such as when the child is mentally ill. Also when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trusts such as a doctor, teacher, policeman, or family member.
- Adequate provisions are made to avoid re-victimization of the Child at the hands of the judicial system. The Act assigns a policeman to the role of child protector during the investigation process.
- The Act stipulates that such steps must be taken which makes the investigation process as child-friendly as possible and the case is disposed of within one year from the date of reporting of the offense.
- The Act provides for the establishment of Special Courts for the trial of such offenses and matters related to them.
- Under section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules lies with the central government. To monitor the implementation of the Act, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority. Both are statutory bodies.
- Section 42 A of the Act provides that in case of inconsistency with provisions of any other law, the POCSO Act shall override such provisions.
- The Act calls for mandatory reporting of sexual offenses. A false complaint with intent to defame a person is punishable under the Act.
- The act was amended in 2019 to increase the minimum punishment from seven years to ten years. It further adds that if a person commits penetrative sexual assault on a child below the age of 16 years, he will be punished with imprisonment between 20 years to life, with a fine.
- The Act defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a child, including photographs, video, digital, or computer-generated images indistinguishable from an actual child. The Act is critical as it clearly defines child pornography and makes it punishable. The amendments also penalize the transmitting of pornographic material to children and propose synchronizing it with the IT Act.

- The Act enhances punishment for sexual offenses against children with a provision for the death penalty.

Challenges and controversies

Child sexual abuse is a multidimensional problem having legal, social, medical, and psychological implications. There are certain drawbacks in the law around the following issues:

Consent: The POCSO Act is silent in this situation and does not provide any specific guidance if the child or teenager refuses to undertake a medical examination but the family or the investigating officer insists. The matter of permission in such situations has to be clarified immediately. However, in order to save the child's life, emergency care must be started without addressing any concerns about legality or permission.

Medical evaluation: In accordance with Section 27(2) of the POCSO Act, a female physician is required to conduct a medical evaluation of a female child or teenage victim. The available medical officer must, nevertheless, offer emergency medical care according to the law. In contrast, the Government medical officer on duty is required by the Criminal Law Amendment Act and Section 166A of the Indian Penal Code to examine the rape victim without fail. This ambiguous legal situation develops since there are no female doctors accessible.

Cost of treatment: The medical community and institution are legally required to give survivors free medical care under the law. The State should be responsible for covering the costs if there are inadequate facilities or if expensive procedures are necessary; otherwise, the hospital could give shoddy medical care or might deny the survivor thorough care.

Consented sexual intimacy: The POCSO Act of 2012 considers sexual contact between two adolescents or between an adolescent and an adult to be unlawful because no exception has been made to the law's prohibition on sexual contact with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of consent, the gender, marital status, or age of the victim or the accused. To avoid prosecution under the POCSO Behavior of 2012, it is recommended that any consensual sexual act that may be considered penetrative sexual assault should not be a crime when it occurs between two consenting minors. Contrarily, the most recent amendment to the Indian Penal Code regarding rape laws in 2013⁸ states clearly that the age of consent for sex has been fixed at 18, and as a result, anyone who engages in consensual sex with a child under the age of 18 can be charged with rape, potentially leading to an increase in rape cases. Obstetricians and gynecologists must record all instances of MTP (medical termination of pregnancy) carried out on children, which is another grave consequence (below 18 yr).

Child marriage: According to the POCSO Act of 2012, child marriage and the consummation of child marriage are both prohibited. Even while child marriage is against the law in India under secular law, it is permitted under some personal laws, which makes issues more complicated¹⁰. When the legislation is up for revision, these problems need to be addressed.

Training: The POCSO Act, 2012 has to be taught to medical, teaching, judicial, legal, and law enforcement institutions immediately. The major obstacles are finding information, monitoring it, and raising public awareness. One of the key factors in delivering comprehensive care and justice is training all the stakeholders. Additionally, there is an urgent need to teach all medical students and primary care physicians the delivery of child-friendly interviews, systematic assessments, evidence gathering, prophylaxis for HIV and STDs, family counseling, and frequent follow-up.

Role of mental health professional: Child sexual abuse cases seldom present with definite symptoms of genital trauma¹¹. As a result, evaluating a victim of child sexual abuse involves specialized knowledge and methods in history collection, forensic interrogation, and medical examination. When the youngster is being questioned in court, the involvement of the mental health expert is vital. There can be both immediate and long-term negative effects on a person's mental health from child sexual abuse. In order to provide the victim with follow-up care in the event that

psychiatric disorders emerge, mental health professionals must offer individual counseling, family therapy, and rehabilitation¹².

Reporting: It is common knowledge that most instances of child sexual abuse go unreported. Furthermore, for many family members as well as survivors, recognizing and disclosing child sexual abuse is a very difficult and highly personal choice. Both survivors and family members experience feelings of embarrassment and humiliation as a result of the act remorse, rage, frustration, and emotional distress. They are kept mute and subjected to prolonged torment out of fear of becoming victims again due to medical examinations, the criminal justice system, and uninformed society members.

Amplification Resulting from digital technologies

Digital and mobile technology have increased child exploitation and abuse. Online bullying, harassment, and child pornography are just a few examples of the newer types of child abuse that have evolved.

Ineffective legislation: Although the Government of India passed the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act 2012 (POCSO Act), it has not succeeded in preventing the sexual abuse of children. There are several explanations for this. low rate of conviction rate: If one averages over the last five years, the rate of convictions under the POCSO legislation is just approximately 32%, and 90% of the cases are still ongoing.

Judicial Delay: The Kathua Rape case took 16 months for the primary accused to be found guilty, despite the fact that the POCSO Act expressly states that the full trial and conviction procedure must be completed in one year.

Unfriendly to Children: Difficulties in determining the child's age. Particularly rules that prioritize biological age rather than mental age.

Recommendations

Child's Interest First: A child shouldn't be subjected to needless suffering only to guarantee a successful prosecution, especially when it may be prevented by connections to the juvenile justice system.

Training for Police Officers: When it comes to crimes against minors, especially cybercrime, investigative authorities must continually improve their capabilities. A module on "offenses against children" should be included in the curriculum of police academies and training programmes, including refresher training programmes, so that students can become familiar with child-related laws, such as the POCSO Act, their goals and procedures, and investigative and forensic techniques.

Training for Special Court Judges, Special Public Prosecutors, and Legal Aid Attorneys: When dealing with and assessing the evidence of a child, the Special Courts employ the same standards and competencies as utilized for adults, which undermines the goals of the POCSO Act. It is essential that the Special Courts investigate the child's condition with the help of the child's attorney and/or support person and do not take the child's deposition at face value.

Infrastructure for Special Courts must be improved, resources must be appointed, and POCSO Act-mandated special procedures must be followed

Increase the number of Special Courts and equip them with the necessary facilities and personnel.

Conclusion

A child's psyche is scarred by sexual abuse, which causes depression, emotional anguish, and mental impairment. POCSO Act unquestionably includes protections against child pornography and sexual assault. The penalties for sexual offenses against children have grown more severe as a result of the change in 2019. However, India still needs to do far more to reduce child sex crimes.

The Non-Alignment Movement and Its Relevance Today



RAHUL WANKHEDE

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the people of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other regions of the world at the height of the Cold War.

The creation and strengthening of the socialist block after the defeat of fascism in World War II, the collapse of colonial empires, the emergence of a bipolar world, and the formation of two military blocks (NATO and the Warsaw Pact) brought about a new international context that led to the necessity of multilateral coordination between the countries of the global South.

In this context, the underdeveloped countries, most of them in Asia and Africa, felt the need to join efforts for the common defense of their interests, the strengthening of their independence and sovereignty, the cultural and economic revival of their people, and also to express a strong commitment with peace by declaring themselves as “non-aligned” from either of the two nascent military blocks.

During the early days of the movement, its actions were a key factor in the decolonization process, which led later to the attainment of freedom and independence by many countries and the establishment of new nation-states.

While some meetings with a third-world perspective were held before 1955, historians consider that the Bandung Asian-African Conference, held in Bandung on April 18-24, 1955 is the antecedent to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement; its expressed goal was to identify and assess world issues at the time and coordinate policies to deal with them.

In 1960, during the Fifteenth Ordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 17 new African and Asian countries were admitted, in which a key role was played in this process by the then Heads of States like Shri Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, who later became the founding fathers of the movement and its emblematic leaders.

It was through this process that Nehru came to be seen as an international statesman, both domestically and even outside India. Nehru’s vision of NAM included the political decolonization of Asia and Africa. Moreover, other leaders agreed with him that the recently attained political independence was just a means to attain the goal of economic, social, and cultural independence.

Some facts about NAM that deserve a mention:

1. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a forum of 120 developing world states that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.
2. After the United Nations, it is the largest grouping of states worldwide
3. The movement originated as an effort by some countries to avoid the polarized world of the Cold War.

Context and Concept of NAM

The term “non-alignment” was coined by Shri V K Menon, in his speech at the United Nations in 1953, which was later used by Indian Prime Minister, Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru during his speech

in 1954 in Colombo, in which he described the Panchsheel (five restraints) which would later become the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Nehru was one of the architects of the Non-Aligned Movement; his objective was not to stay neutral on issues and challenges confronting the international community but to adopt common and joint positions based on the merits of each case. In addition, Nehru was highly committed to fighting against colonialism, imperialism, racism, and apartheid, and to creating a new international economic order which would be fair and equitable and safeguard the interests of developing countries. It is common knowledge in international relations, that a coherent group increases negotiating and bargaining power rather than individual nation-level activism; NAM fitted, thus very well into Indian interests at the global level back then.

A newly independent and poor country like India which had just suffered the horrors of a painful Partition and population transfers was not in a position to take a very strong and out-of-the-box stand on any international issue.

The five-year plans after 1950 also clearly reflect that the priority of that era was social and economic development that would enable the country to grow and improve its self-image.

In such a scenario moving towards any particular ideology or power bloc would have meant letting go of opportunities and resources available on the other side. Also since our foreign policy back then was not very strict and we needed to keep all options open in case any one source of support or resources got constrained, it was quite a realistic and pragmatic viewpoint to carry on with the idea of Non-Alignment.

India was thus able to get the required help, from all possible quarters, at the same time maintaining its image of being a nonaligned state, at least till the 1970s.

Moreover, the independence of India gave hope to other smaller nations that were yearning for independence, whose informal leadership eventually fell in the hands of India, which now could not risk losing this support if it aligned with any particular bloc.

The idea of NAM also gave sufficient space for moving around, especially on issues like nuclear disarmament, wherein Nehru was quite vocal about the complete removal of nuclear weapons from the world, at the same time, he had given a go-ahead for starting a civilian nuclear program in India, very well realizing that this is the only reliable option if dis-armament fails or India gets threatened by a nuclear strike.

Therefore, somewhere down the line, the rhetoric of NAM also had an element of realism, that was ultimately linked to Indian national interests as perceived and understood by the then political decision-making elite.

As far as India is concerned it would be useful to distinguish between the philosophy and ideology of “Non Alignment” which lays emphasis on strategic independence and autonomy, and the “Non Aligned Movement” which seeks to take a collective position on challenges faced by the developing world. This necessarily tends to be the lowest common denominator.

India’s experience of the Non-Aligned Movement was disappointing as the Group decided to take an equidistant position in India’s 1962 war with China, in the 1965 war with Pakistan, and the 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion. India has however felt it useful to continue to support and actively engage with the Movement because it has provided a high profile and strong voice to India in international fora and affairs. Jawaharlal Nehru preferred to call it a movement but not an organization in order to avoid the bureaucratic implications of the latter.

He conceived it not to play a passive role in international politics but to formulate its own positions in an independent manner so as to reflect the interests of its members. Thus, the primary objectives focused on the support of self-determination, national independence and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States,

non-adherence to multilateral military pacts, and the independence of non-aligned countries from great power or block influences and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Since the foundation of NAM, Nehru had waged a ceaseless battle to ensure that people being oppressed by foreign occupation and domination can exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

A quick look at the 10 principles of the Bandung Conference explains very well why Nehru emphasized NAM as a realist approach to foreign policy:

Respect for fundamental human rights and the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.

Non-intervention or non-interference in the internal affairs of another -country.

Respect for the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

Non-use of collective defence pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers.

Non-use of pressures by any country against other countries.

Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.

A peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation.

Respect for justice and international obligations.

For India, the concept of non-alignment began as a policy of non-participation in the military affairs of a bipolar world and in the context of colonialism aimed towards optimum involvement through multi-polar participation towards peace and security.

Nehru's concept of non-alignment brought India considerable international prestige among newly independent states that shared its concerns about the military confrontation between the superpowers and the influence of the former colonial powers. By laying the foundation stone of 'Non-Alignment Movement', India was able to establish a significant role for itself as a leader of the newly independent world and in multilateral organisations like the UNO.

Evolution of NAM

The tenets of NAM evolved over a long period. One of the prime movers behind its evolution was undoubtedly Jawaharlal Nehru.

Nehru was in Europe for two years 1925-'27 where he participated on behalf of the Indian National Congress at the first International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism held in Brussels.

It was when the League Against Imperialism and National Independence was formed at the culmination of the conference—with Nehru being one of the members of its executive committee—an organised opposition to colonialism and imperialism began in a concerted way.

Nehru's thoughts were firmly molded by the deliberations at the 1927 Congress, where he interacted with many heads of States. By taking the initiative to express solidarity with other anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements, and being at the forefront of the Indian national movement, Nehru gradually became a prominent Indian statesman with international stature. The major foreign policy decision that Nehru, as head of India's interim government, made was his declaration that India would not join groups of states that were aligned against each other but would strive to establish friendly relations with all countries. This was clearly visible when Nehru decided to continue India's membership with the British Commonwealth despite, very strong domestic opposition.

During a radio address on September 7, 1946, Nehru said, "We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale... The world, in spite of its inner rivalries and hatreds and inner conflict, moves inevitably towards closer cooperation and the building up of a world commonwealth. It is for this One World that

free India will work, a world in which there is the free cooperation of free peoples, and no class or group exploits another."

Relevance today

The end of the Cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 proved to be a watershed in the evolution of NAM. NAM was forced to carve out a new role for itself as its initial objectives of de-colonization and the end of apartheid had been largely realized by then. Although ensuring peace, security and economic development of developing countries has emerged as the new mantra to be pursued by the movement, there has been a scant agreement between members on policies required to fulfill these objectives.

This is so because several members of the grouping including India have been strengthening their engagement with the developed world to invite capital, technology, better management practices, larger markets, etc. to improve the economic conditions of their citizens.

An important advantage of the NAM summits is the opportunity it provides to leaders of the movement to meet and confabulate with each other on issues of bilateral, regional, and international concern. India should hence continue to engage actively with the Movement and derive the maximum benefit possible for itself and the members of the group.

Current challenges facing the NAM include the necessity of protecting the principles of International law, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism, defending human rights, and working toward making the United Nations more effective in meeting the needs of all its member states in order to preserve international peace, security, and stability, as well as realizing justice in the international economic system. Thus, there is considerable scope for improvement within NAM and for adapting itself to the changing global politics.

Conclusion

The non-aligned nations were unable to fulfill the role of peacekeepers during the Indo-China war of 1962 and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 despite meaningful attempts. The non-aligned response to the Bangladesh Liberation War showed most of the non-aligned nations prioritized territorial integrity above human rights. It was during this period, that India's non-aligned stance was questioned and criticized.

Nehru was opposed to the conformity required by both blocs in the Cold War, as it was the least costly policy for promoting India's diplomatic presence, a sensible approach when India was weak and looked down upon by both blocs and the best means of securing economic assistance from abroad. India played a lone hand against colonialism and racism until many African states achieved independence after 1960.

India played a very prominent role as a facilitator at the 1954 Geneva Peace Conference on Indochina, whereafter non-alignment appeared to have come of age.

The difficulty was always to find a definition of this policy, which caused a credibility gap between theory and practice. In the early years, there was economic dependence on donor countries who were nearly members of western military pacts. Indian equidistance to both Koreas and both Vietnams was shown by India recognising neither.

Nehru's misgivings were confirmed when only two members, Cyprus and Ethiopia, of the conference supported India in the war with China.

The years following Nehru's death saw the atrophy of his idealism, and non-alignment during his successors eventually phased out. Every international organisation has a shelf life, though many survive for years in semi-neglect. The League of Nations was given the coup de grâce after seven years of inactivity only in 1946, even after the United Nations had come into being. The Commonwealth will last only as long as the British find it useful.

Few among even our serving diplomats could tell what transpired at the last Non-aligned Conference or where the next will be held, and whether in the future either the theory or practice of NAM could again be put to any use in Indian foreign policy, because in diplomatic maneuvering you have to keep all options open, always.

After all, national interests are permanent, ideology, the rhetoric of neutrality, strategic ambiguity, and policy changes are temporary, and this is something that the founding fathers of NAM understood very well; national interest being the primary reason why those nations decided to be apart of NAM back then.

Women's Role and Motivation to Join Terrorist Organizations



YASHI SINGH

Introduction

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon instead it can be tracked down to the 19th century. There is no universal consensus of the international community on the definition of terrorism though General Assembly adopted a resolution 49/60 in 1994 to cover numerous armed activities deemed to be “terrorist” in its essence. There was an attempt made by the UN to elucidate the nefarious activities carried out by terrorists.

According to the author, Terrorism can be defined as the approach to inflict violence on the people at large whilst creating fear to satiate religious, economic, political, or social aims. We often perceive the nature of terrorism as being masculine but diverting from the mainstream idea, it becomes vital to have gender-neutral viewpoint vis-à-vis terrorism. At this juncture, scholars need to look at the role of women in terrorism as an offender. Seeing a woman with a gun could be a horrid picture for those who are witnessing it through the lens of the male dominant society, nonetheless, we should not forget that the first person to be indicted in the court of justice was Vera Zasulich in 1878 for terrorism.

This article is not repudiating women being victims and targets of terrorist groups because women are often induced by social, economic, political, and religious motivations. Additionally,

personal quandaries could also lead to female radicalization and there have been several instances where women joined terrorist groups like ISIS, Al-Qaeda, LTTE, or its subsidiary organizations for several reasons including underrepresentation in a political system, indoctrinations articulated by the violent extremist and their promises to have dignified life after death, lingering on the idea to take revenge or the unhappiness which stems out of the state of poverty or family problems and vulnerability to sexual exploitation, abuse, rape, etc.

This article attempts to highlight the causes that goad women to act as both perpetrators and victims. It compares the role of women and their motivations in regard to terrorist groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIS) and Boko Haram. The article argues that women today have a pertinent identity to play in carrying out terrorist activities and we are in the era where women are not limited in their operation as backstage agents but are instead stepping into the roles of combatant which were conventionally considered as masculine. Moreover, there have been instances where women have been found to radicalize their husbands.

Political Motivations:

Women are repelled by their participation in the domain of politics, especially at a time of political instability, under-representation, and ethnonationalism, in such a scenario women chose its path which leads to violent extremism. Eventually, these grounds also engendered a feeling of separatism from the state which advances them toward terrorism. Policies and Global order which seem to be unfair and unjust to women could also motivate them to join the insurgency movement. Women in The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Chechnya took up arms because they were convinced by the ideologies made by men to have a separate state from Sri Lanka and Russia respectively.

Economic Motivations:

Economic deprivations are also a substantial cause for women to choose terrorism because they are fascinated by the comforts and the salary being facilitated by the terrorist groups. Both the women in primary or secondary roles are being given economic benefits as a mother, wives, educators, backstage agents, recruiters, and combatants by the extremist group. The salaries are rewarded according to the position and work of women in a terrorist organization. The author conjectures that such organizations are highly structured like cooperate firms. Krieger and Meierrieks suggested that there is a higher prospect for terrorists to spur women from poor countries to get aligned with their propaganda concomitant with economic opportunities. Further, by minimizing the cost of (opportunity) brutality caused to others. In simpler terms, women have to give up little to gain economic resilience by functioning as primary or secondary agents.

Religious Motivations:

In a seminar with Covint Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Dete Aliah narrated that the women in Indonesia are egged on by terrorists by wrapping their propaganda with religious indoctrination including the promise to get into heaven whilst bringing 40 members with them. Further, the idea of women's responsibility to be a part of Jihad. Such motives are deeply entrenched through online platforms, magazines, and other networks of communication. Terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda have successfully influenced women based on their religious philosophy of the Caliphate. The author asserts that the underpinning values of any religion are to be interpreted in a positive direction and with the intention of not getting astray with the propaganda led by terrorist or radical groups.

Other Motivations:

Depression and vulnerability caused due to family problems, poverty, loss of family members and other determinants exhort females to take on the mantle of a terrorist. They can see dignified lives for themselves. Females are utilized as a part of the strategies by terrorists to attract male members and the romantic relationship with the male members of the organization also encourages women to remain in the group for a longer period. The other factors include the feeling of alienation from the state, the need to feed their children, or wreaking vengeance from the State for the loss of their husband, brother, or other relatives during the face-off between the Military and Terrorists. The author believes that in such a scenario, the role of their brother, husband, or any other family member could be of civilian or terrorist.

Comparative Analysis: ISIS and Boko Haram

Women's Role in ISIS

In the past few years, the role of women in ISIS has been emerged as "Jihadi Bride" in the media wherein women make Hijrah (emigration) to join the movement. They are told by the Caliphate that their contribution to the organization is to "marry a fighter" so that in the future it becomes problematic for the men to leave their families even if they want to. ISIS's involvement in sexual violence, abuse, and sexual slavery has been its approach toward women from its commencement. Their role ranges from delivering logistic cushioning to merely being a wife, or teacher, or recruiting other women and men. Since 2017, ISIS has started losing its power foot on its territories and have expanded the role of women as a suicide bomber or combatant in the name of protecting the caliphate which contradicts its earlier ideology of not engaging women in qital (struggle). Al-Khansa Brigade is solely dedicated to the women's police force under the umbrella of ISIS. Biden Administration took cognizance of the women's active role in terrorism and it has furthermore comprehended its seriousness.

The doyens have suggested expanding our peripheral vision of witnessing the women terrorists as combatants rather than only expecting women to operate as secondary support. The experts also discerned that the ISIS women who came back to the US served lesser sentences than men.

Women's Role in Boko Haram

Boko Haram was not always known for their dastardly deeds until in 2009 they chose the path to seek vengeance and decided to reduce the Government of Nigeria to rubble. The foundation of the organization was laid on peace and prosperity to proselytize Islam in Northern Nigeria because they felt that the government was economically alienating them. In 2009, an attempt by police to intimidate the members of Boko Haram which later on turned into a violent squabble killing Mohammed Yusuf who was the founder of Boko Haram made the group seek retribution on behalf of their leader, and since 2009 it has initiated its iniquitous activities like kidnapping and utilizing girls and women to act as suicide bombers.

In 2014, the group kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from Chibok town in northeast Nigeria, and thereafter they were either used as a source of earning revenue or were coerced to marry the Boko Haram fighters. Boko Haram for the first time in 2014 engaged its first female suicide bomber and in 2017, The Economist asserted that Boko Haram has unequivocally surpassed LTTE which had the highest record in employing women as suicide bombers. The other roles of women are inclusive of wife, breeder, sexual slave, recruiter, and combatant. It is ascertained that women can easily mobilize both genders because of their reach to the population at large.

The pundits have affirmed that Boko Haram has exploited Christian women and used rape as a tactic to create offspring who can further advance their mission to spread their ideologies. Recruitment of women is both voluntary and involuntary. Deliberate recruitment often results in the enlistment of women or girls by abduction and subsequently, they are recruited as sex slaves, fighters, or suicide bombers. Gaffey stated that since 2017, almost two-thirds of Boko Haram suicide bombers were women. The Government of Nigeria is calling out for assistance from International Community. Many States including India have come forward to find a pertinent solution for counter-terrorism strategies in Nigeria.

Recommendations:

It is requisite for government institutions to widen their perspective of terrorism by witnessing women as potential terrorists.

To strengthen the response to terrorism, the author recommends starting to identify women as voluntary perpetrators rather than just victims.

However, the evidence from a report suggests that we have a considerably low representation of women in police forces. Women constitute up to 15% of police forces worldwide. States have to accommodate more women officers because there have been instances where female terrorists concealing suicide appliances have escaped the checkpoints knowing that they are lesser chances to confront women officers.

The state is recommended to propel academicians to carry out extensive research on the subject matter to have a better understanding of the role and motivations of women joining terrorist groups and hence succor the government to understand needed interventions.

The State needs to take necessary actions to curb economic, political, and social instability as they all are used as incentives by the terrorist group to prod women by giving them all the comforts which State cannot provide to all its citizens during given uncertainties.

Mental Health Professionals should voluntarily provide interventions, especially in a region encircled by conflicts and uncertainties.

‘Nazneen Yaar Maine...’ represents the mainstream values of Kashmiri culture



JK POLICY INSTITUTE

At a time when competing communities are investing enormous energies in valorizing their culture as “civilized” and that of others as “savage”, it is pleasant to see the artistic expression of shared Kashmiri culture, and that too in what is called “popular” or “pop culture”. And it includes knowledge, belief art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by people as members of society.

Indeed this is what binds together Lalla Vaakh (Lalla Ded’s verses) with Shiekh’s Shrukhè (Shiekh Nooruddin’s shlokas or verses). This is what runs as a common thread in the blood and beliefs of Noor Mohammad and Raj Pandit, and Salim-Sulaiman, who are otherwise separated by long years in terms of their age, as well as living experiences.

A poem written and composed by a poet and folk singer of Kishtwar (Ghulam Nabi Dolwal or Janbaaz Kashtwari) some four decades back, is picked up and rendered by music composers of Sindhi (Rajasthani) lineage on modern strings and beats, complimented by a whole lot of other vocal and music artists, is the latest surprise on the tube.

It deserves special mention because it is, in a long while — or perhaps for the first time – that we see the shared Kashmiri culture being mainstreamed. It is very likely that all those who have re-created this “Nazneen Yaar Maine Ye Chu Mulakat...” did so purely for commercial considerations, or out of their love for music, without any political intentions or motives. But for a society torn apart by competing narratives vis-à-vis politics and culture – even by default, the musical venture has opened a new

window into the mainstream values of Kashmiri culture, that is to say, interfaith peace and harmony.

There is already tons of literature on conflict resolution talking about the primacy of culture as a tool for negotiating some of the very tricky questions concerning people’s identities. Culture matters, they say. According to Richard H. Solomon, former president at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP): “When it comes to trying to facilitate an end to a conflict, it is important to have some understanding of the cultures of the belligerents; such knowledge will help a negotiator determine what the parties really want (and don’t want), and what they are prepared to do (and not to do).”

Kavin Avruch, the celebrated cultural anthropologist who has spent a lifetime theorizing how culture could be used to mediate peace between competing people sharing similar or even not-so-similar cultural spaces, stresses the use of culture as one of the many possible tools for understanding conflict, and possibly also of resolving it. “Much of the field of conflict resolution is based on the fundamental belief that resorting to physical violence in the process of social conflict is a prime example of wrongheaded problem-solving. The fact that most cultures at some point and in some circumstances sanction this solution is proof that culture needs to be not only analyzed and understood for purposes of conflict resolution but rethought and re-imagined – re-engineered – as well.”

In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, there is ample evidence pointing to different communities stressing their divergent political beliefs and goals, as also their distinct religio-political or ethnonational identities, and linguistic markers to highlight and bargain for basic needs. Of course in doing so, none have really been concerned about the resultant schisms, which certainly have impacted the overall complexion of this region in terms of its political power and importance, as also that of the individual entities.

For a long we have seen Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits at loggerheads, pulling each other down by whatever means and machinations they could mobilize. We have seen the combination of Gujjars and Bhakerwals being dismissive of every good thing (like concessions of reservation) coming

Nazneen Yaar Maine Ye Chu Mulakat” is a good beginning in this direction. The attempt must be encouraged and replicated big time. Music and poetry, of course, are easy picks, but there are other areas of unity, commonality, and camaraderie as well between the communities which need to the re-imagined and re-engineered to RE-GROW the broken ties and trust between them.



to the Paharis. We have seen Dogras of the Jammu region being opposed to the Kashmiri people of the Valley, and those living in the Ladakh region (in erstwhile J&K) are not happy with both Kashmiris and Dogras. There are countless other fractures within and between the communities, like their economic and social status, whether they live in cities or towns or in the countryside (rural-urban divide) which have been manipulated by varied actors with ulterior political motives and purposes.

The shared culture of different communities, which could have been a factor for cohesion, has for some reason not been explored and exploited as a cementing force for peace. Instead, it has always been used to rip them apart. In Kashmir, for instance, there is a very attractive template of fraternity and harmony, say among the Pandits and the Muslims, in the culture both have lived and shared.

Kashmir has had Ustad Mohammad Abdullah Tibetbaqalsinging “Bel Tai Madal...” a Leela in Lord Shiva’s praise with a such sublime finesse that even to this day this masterpiece from the Sufiana maestro’s wide repository continues to be the most popular Aarti (Hindu ceremony in which lights with wicks soaked in ghee are lit and offered up to deities while singing hymns) of the Kashmiri Pandits. We have instances of Panditsingers entering the studios of Radio Kashmir Srinagar (now All India Radio, AIR Srinagar) to record Naats (poems in praise of Islam’s Prophet – PBUH) only after they underwent ablution(ritual cleaning Muslims do before prayers) first.

There are countless instances of Muslims learning Persian and

even Arabic, including the holy Quran, from Pandit teachers. Even to this day the milk and pudding (Kheer), and even flowers offered to the goddess – Mata KheerBhavani (Ragnya Devi temple)– come from Muslim households.

Even to this day, the elderly Pandits swear — “Dastgiras Path” – in the name of Muslim saint Dastgir Sahib (Shiekh Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani, whose shrine is actually in Baghdad, Iraq). Pandits visiting the temple of Sharika Mata atop the Koh-e-Maran (Hari Parbat) hillock in Srinagar early in the mornings would necessarily descend via Makhdoom Sahib’s shrine to pay obeisance there as well. A temple (of Mata Kali) and Khanqah-e-Maula (mosque associated with Mir Syed Ali Hamdani) have existed together for centuries on the banks of River Jhelum. People of both communities have equal reverence for Cherar-e-Sharief (shrine of Shiekh Nooruddin Wali, whom Pandits also call Nund Reshi).

One can go on and on counting so many similar illustrations which signify commonalities between the two communities. In Kandi Baramulla, there is a village called Bandi. In this village lives a man whose name is Ghulam Muhammad — literally meaning the “Slave of Muhammad (PBUH)”. But this gentleman is known in the village as Muhammad Mandir (Mandir meaning a Hindu temple). Do you know why?

Ghulam Muhammad was working as a menial help and chowkidar at the Rani Temple in Gulmarg. Pandit exodus from the Valley during the early and mid-nineties saw this temple falling to ruins because there was hardly anyone visiting Gulmarg and certainly none going to the temple. Even the priest had left. But Ghulam Muhammad stayed put, guarding the temple and taking care of its upkeep in whatever manner he could. After the passage of some years when tourists from mainland India started trickling into Kashmir again, some of them would go to Gulmarg and many would visit the Rani temple also – of course only at the prodding of local tourist guides who would tell them this is the temple where the famous Bollywood number ‘Jai Jai Shiva Shankar’ for the film Roti was shot.

So whenever tourists would come, Ghulam Mohammad would open the temple doors for them so that they could pray. With time, Ghulam Mohammad started performing small rituals including Aarti for them, and steadily he became so proficient in it that he would give even a trained Brahmin priest a run for the money. This is how this Muslim priest acquired the sobriquet Muhammad Mandir!

This is the real Kashmir. But unfortunately, such realities of our culture have been lost to the din of exclusivity that every single community has chosen to preach and propagate, the consequences of which are there for everyone to see.

This is where Avruch’s suggestion that “culture needs to be not only analyzed and understood for purposes of conflict resolution but rethought and re-imagined – re-engineered – as well” makes a lot of sense.

“Nazneen Yaar Maine Ye Chu Mulakat” is a good beginning in this direction. The attempt must be encouraged and replicated big time. Music and poetry, of course, are easy picks, but there are other areas of unity, commonality, and camaraderie as well between the communities which need to the re-imagined and re-engineered to RE-GROW the broken ties and trust between them.

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